

A329, The Making of Welsh History

EMA: Dissertation

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**Resistance to the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 in North Wales
1834-1865**

A Means of Preserving Society and Culture

With thanks to: All of the tutors of A329, especially Dr Catherine Preston who offered support and guidance throughout. I would like to thank my husband and children, for putting up with my constant talk and excitement during this year.

I would like to dedicate this to my Mum, who passed away in August 2019. The stories she shared with me, passed down to her by her gran, concerning London women, workhouses and her experiences of living during the blitz inspired my interest in history.

Thanks Mum.

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Abbreviations:

PLAA - Poor Law Amendment Act

PLC – Poor Law Commissioners

Introduction

The PLAA, 1834, planned to address increasing costs of welfare provisions, caused by population increase and the effects of urbanisation, which fundamentally altered welfare systems across England and Wales. Its principle of less eligibility and constraining entitlement to workhouse admission, was meant to act as deterrence and decrease claimants, (Loftus and Shave, 2018). Prior to 1834, poor relief was typically offered outdoors, limited to questions of settlement, with parish vestries holding administrative responsibilities, which is confirmed by Bevan-Evans', (1965-1966), in his study of Treuddyn, which is solely based on parish vestry records, whilst Ellis (1926), offers a similar of Dolgelley, that exhibits the authors support of the new welfare regime, and Dodd, (1926) has written extensively covering the old poor law in North Wales. Stewart and King, (2004) pg. 69, note 'the dearth of historical writing on this topic', and whilst they suggest that other studies fail to consult newspapers, they too fail to do so, in this piece. Hulonce (2016), pg. 10, agrees, that there is a lack of studies covering the PLAA in Wales, in comparison to England. This study, of poor law children, takes a wide approach, covering both England and Wales and offers substantial information, concerning both. Lindsay, (2000), too, offers a wide-ranging study that juxtaposes poor relief in North Wales and East Lothian. Nevertheless, a study of Welsh welfare regimes, under the PLAA, that includes newspaper reports, will add new insight into this little researched topic.

Richardson, (2017), suggests that, despite the PLAA attempting to offer uniformity, Wales' welfare systems remained distinctive, Stewart and King, (2004), pg. 71, agree, by suggesting that it remained, 'merely a continuation of the old'. Why was Wales' welfare system so unique? Jenkins, (1992), suggests that the PLAA was specifically intended for English circumstances, that didn't take into account the effect that Welsh heavy industries had on the labour market. Hankins, (1998-1999), pg. 72, agrees that Welsh welfare systems were distinctive, however, he suggests this was down to a continuation of old patriarchal systems, that resulted in the formation of strong bonds, between farmer and workman which ensured peace remained, whereas in England riots occurred. Snell, (2009) supports the existence of strong ties, by suggesting that Welsh guardians attempted to make workhouse life as comfortable as possible and whilst this source offers a broad approach covering England and Wales, it only dedicates three pages specifically to Wales. Hulonce, (2016), challenges this, by stating that workhouses provided better living conditions, across both England and Wales. This dissertation plans to assess if workhouses offered a sympathetic regime in North Wales.

Richardson, (2017), highlights that the PLAA had very little impact on the practice of giving outdoor relief, whilst Davies, (1978), agrees that the building of workhouses did very little to reduce those claiming outdoor relief. Croll, (2017), suggests that Wales' ability to avoid workhouse construction is renowned. The question is, can Welsh avoidance of workhouse construction be considered as unique? Evans and Jones, (2014), believe so, and suggest that some unions resisted building a workhouse for many years, Rhayader, 1877, whilst Presteigne never complied. This dissertation aims to show that the delay in building workhouses led to a predominance of still offering out-door relief, which can be considered as resistance to the PLAA.

Hankins, (1998-1999), pg. 91, suggests local administration gradually declined, under this new regime, whereby parish vestries lost administrative responsibility to English governing bodies, controlled by Edwin Chadwick, Secretary. Could it be that a loss of local autonomy was enough to trigger resistance? English authority over Welsh welfare systems would have led to English correspondence being written to Welsh speaking guardians, which could have affected the use of the Welsh language, which is supported by Snell, (2009), whilst Dewar, (1967), in his study of George Clive, Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, suggests that the language did challenge the establishment of the new poor law in South Glamorgan. Evans and Jones, (2014), suggest that addressing commissioners in Welsh, and asking for the translation of pamphlets, bought time. Therefore, was the Welsh language used as a form of resistance to the PLAA, or language preservation, in response to English attempts to thwart its use?

Davies', (1968), study of old welfare regimes in Cardiganshire and North Wales, suggests that unmarried mothers were treated callously, whilst Henriques, (1967), suggests that the old poor law encouraged promiscuity, with paternity being placed on men to gain subsidies. However, she suggests that in England, paternal responsibility was being placed on strangers, in Wales, women were honest and trustworthy. Nevertheless, the PLAA planned to address problems of illegitimacy, by removing paternal responsibility. If Davies' (1985), pg. 176 statement, 'they treated illegitimate and legitimate offspring on par', is taken as a true representation of Welsh ideologies, then the illegitimacy clause must have caused friction. However, Hankins, (1996-1997), challenges this, by suggesting that unmarried pregnant women were removed from the parish, in order to avoid costs. This dissertation plans to assess whether illegitimacy can be considered a part of Welsh culture, and how the illegitimate clause affected the offering of poor relief, in North Wales,

Therefore, the overall focus of this dissertation is to ascertain whether Welsh resistance to the PLAA was born, not only from a lack of discord between England and Wales, but as a way of preserving its

society and culture. In order to do this, Chapter One, '*The Establishment of Welsh Resistance*' will indicate why Wales was considered resistant. Chapter Two, '*The Effects of English Imposition*' will consider the effects of this English law, whilst evaluating if English views of the Welsh, including the language, generated resistance to the PLAA born from cultural preservation. Chapter Three, '*Life inside a North Wales Workhouse*', will ascertain if workhouse life was indeed a better existence, and what steps were taken to avoid institutionalisation, whilst Chapter Four, '*Questions of illegitimacy*', will consider Welsh responses to the illegitimacy clause, and its impact.

This dissertation will use primary source evidence from the Annual Reports of the Poor Law Commissioners, '*The Wrexham Recorder*' (1848), and the '*Pwllhelli Admission and Discharge Records*' (1853-1856), which will provide statistical data. It will also use the '*Reports of the Commissioners of Enquiry into the State of Education in Wales*', (*The Blue Books*), to evaluate how English viewpoints of the Welsh language affected its use, whilst both, Richard, (1884), '*Letters and Essays on Wales*', and Williams, (1848), '*Remarks on the Reports*', offer Welsh responses, to the Blue Books. Llanfyllin's Union Correspondence, and Welsh newspapers will provide evidence of workhouse life and Welsh viewpoints of the PLAA. Whythen Baxter's, (1841), '*The Book of Bastilles*', also highlights negative responses to the workhouse regime.

Chapter One

The Establishment of Welsh Resistance

The PLAA saw many regions across England and Wales requiring an operational workhouse's, in order to accommodate the poor, (Loftus and Shave, 2019). Evans and Jones (2014), pg. 103, suggest that 'Welsh unions were indeed far more likely to resist or delay building a workhouse', than, in even the most resistance English region of West Riding of Yorkshire. Both Higginbotham, (2021), and Beckett (2016) support that both Wales and Northern England were resistant, therefore Chapter One will offer comparisons to the West Riding of Yorkshire, and an English region, not considered as resistant, Essex. This will exclude Gilbert Unions, that were exempt, and for analysis purposes, the areas to be covered in the region of North Wales are, Anglesey, Caernarvonshire, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Merionethshire and Montgomeryshire.

Historians suggest, Dodd, (1926), Evans and Jones, (2014), that Wales lacked pre-existing workhouses, which could be made use of. This does appear to be the case, Higginbotham's, (2021), workhouse database indicates that of 18 Unions formed in North Wales, only 9 had pre-existing workhouses, none of which were suitable for re-use. Therefore, the construction of new workhouses, in North Wales, was a necessity, which could have generated delays in construction owing to this added financial burden. Table 1 highlights the extent of costs caused by building workhouses in North Wales, during the years 1838-1839, in relation to total expenditure, 1841:

Table 1: Workhouse Ordered to be Built, During 1838-1839, Their Cost in Comparison to Poor Law Expenditure, 1841

Sources: *Fourth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, (1838), Fifth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, (1839), and Ninth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, (1843).*

District/Union	Cost	Total Expenditure For District, 1841	Percentage of Expenditure	Construction Year
Caernarvonshire				
Bangor & Beaumaris	£3,800			1845
Carnarvon	£4,000			1846
Conway	£3,535			1858
Pwhelli	£3,525			1839
Total	£14,860	£20,893	141%	

Denbighshire

Ruthin	£6,050		1838
Wrexham	£6,525		1838
Total	£12,575	£31,401	40%

Flintshire

Holywell	£6,525		1838-40
St Asaph	£5,499 16s 5d		1838-39
Total	£12,024 16s 5d	£19,980	38%

Merionethshire

Bala	£1,970		1839-41
Corwen	£3,400		1840
Festiniog	£3,200		1839
Total	£8,570	£15,005	57%

Montgomeryshire

Llanfyllin	£5,267 10s		1838
Newton & Llanidloes	£8,292		1837
Total	£13,559 10s	£28,365	44%

The region of Caernarvonshire appears the most affected, its cost of workhouse construction was an extra 41% more than the total expenditure for the year 1841. However, only one of these intended workhouses was built during the period 1838-1839. Snell, (2009), suggests, that poor law expenditures were dropping, prior to the 1834 act, however, building costs of workhouses, stopped this trend. Nevertheless, a report from Savage, (1837), indicates that the price for building Llanfyllin workhouse, was £4,681, which is above the average of £3,250, Table 1 indicates the actual cost, £5,2670, 10s, (*Fourth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, 1838*), which indicates that additional costs were not being avoided. Furthermore, Savage, (1837), pg. 1, reports that 'the same reasons are offered for the extra expense as were made for the Newton and Llanidloes Union', indicating this was common across North Wales, which suggest that cost can-not be considered a causable factor, to delaying workhouse construction. Evans and Jones, (2014) pg. 111, support this, by suggesting that, 'it would not seem to be the case that Welsh unions chose to use the 1834

legislation as a means to drive down costs.’ Richardson (2017), pg. 1, suggests that whilst Welsh unions attempted ‘to preserve the previous low-cost system of poor relief’, his findings indicate that costs of Llanrwst Union, were not impacted by the implementation of the PLAA. Nevertheless, Evans and Jones, (2014), and Croll, (2017), suggest that Wales can be considered highly effective in its ability to avoid workhouse construction, which does appear to be the case. This is highlighted in Table 2, which offers comparison to Essex and West Riding of Yorkshire:

Table 2: Timespan Between Union Formation and Workhouse Construction

Excludes pre-existing workhouses used for substantial periods and Exempt Gilbert Unions.

Source Higginbotham, (2021).

Time span between Union Formation and Construction	Total Number of workhouses built:		
	North Wales	West Riding of	Essex
Within: 3 Years	9	6	12
5 Years	1		3
10 Years	2	2	
25 Years	5	1	
40 Years	1	1	
Total	18	10	15

It can be seen that in both West Riding of Yorkshire and North Wales, only half of workhouses were built within five years of union formation, as opposed to Essex, where all workhouses were built, within five years. The percentage of unions able to hold out for plus ten years, is striking, 44% in North Wales, and 40% in West Riding of Yorkshire, which suggests that delaying construction was on par, in these regions. Additionally, (Evans and Jones, 2014), indicate that two unions, Todmorden, West Riding of Yorkshire and Rhayder, Mid Wales, were able thwart construction, for thirty-four years, whilst Presteign, Mid Wales, never built a workhouse, its union was dissolved in 1877, (Higginbotham, 2021). The tactic of delaying construction, appears to have caused frustration to the PLC and guardians, Day, (1839), cited in Owen, (1990), pg. 121, suggests that their visit to Newton and Llanidloes construction site, caused the guardians to express ‘extreme disappointment and

displeasure in finding the workhouse in such a backward stage.’ Therefore, North Wales, and the West Riding of Yorkshire, can be considered as distinctive, in their ability to delay workhouse construction.

The desired effect of the PLAA to cease out-door relief, and limit welfare to institutionalisation, (Loftus & Shave 2019), does not appear to have happened in North Wales. Hankins, (1998-1999), suggests that resisting workhouse construction, meant that out-door relief could still continue, and this would avoid the institutionalisation of paupers. This does appear to be the case, during the years 1842 -1846, when there was still high proportion of outdoor relief, offered in North Wales. This is highlighted in Table 3, and is in comparison to two English regions:

Table 3, Number of Paupers Receiving Indoor and Outdoor Relief, in North Wales, Essex and West Riding of Yorkshire, 1840 & 1845

Sources: *Eighth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, (1842), Twelfth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, (1846).*

	1840			1845		
	Indoor	Outdoor	Total	Indoor	Outdoor	Total
North Wales						
Anglesey	-	4,585	4,585	-	5783	5738
Caernarvonshire	-	8,060	8,060	155	10,158	10,313
Denbighshire	231	6,295	6,526	566	6,942	7,508
Flintshire	-	6618	6618	519	5393	5,912
Merionethshire -	-	5,518	5,518	233	5,821	6,054
Montgomeryshire	-	6,681	6,681	550	8,528	9,078
TOTALS	231	37,757	37988	2,023	42,580	44,603
English Regions						
Essex	3,367	20,793	24,160	8,037	37,202	45,239
West Riding						
Of Yorkshire	3,040	45,289	48,329	3,810	47,566	51,376

It can be seen that in 1840, six years after the PLAA, North Wales only had one district with operational workhouses, whilst in 1845, Anglesey was still managing to avoid institutionalisation. In 1845, in comparison to both Essex and West Riding of Yorkshire, North Wales appears to have been the most effective at resisting workhouse admission, with only 2,023 indoor paupers, whereas West Riding of Yorkshire saw 3,810, Essex 8,037. Table 3 indicates that in 1845, both North Wales and West Riding of Yorkshire had similar numbers receiving outdoor relief, 42,580, 47,556, respectively. However, as a percentage of their 1841 populations, (385,085 and 790,751, respectively), 11% of the population was receiving outdoor relief in North Wales, in West Riding of Yorkshire, it was 6%. It can therefore be ascertained that North Wales had a higher percentage of papers receiving outdoor relief than in West Riding of Yorkshire, which marks it as distinctive.

Hankins, (1998-1999), suggests that in South Wales, Crickhowell workhouse, was unable to cope with high numbers of paupers, a similar situation is reported in North Wales, Jenkins, (1992), suggests that Bangor and Beaumaris could only accommodate a tiny proportion of the areas poor. This suggests that the high rates of outdoor relief, can be linked to a lack of workhouse space. *The Fourth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissions*, (1838), indicates that the Bangor and Beaumaris workhouse could house 200 inmates, which is 1% in relation to its 1831 population size, of 19,972, (Higginbotham, 2021). The district of Caernarvonshire, in 1844, saw 9,501 paupers in receipt of poor relief, (*Twelfth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, 1846), with a total workhouse capacity of 820 (Higginbotham, 2021). This meant that it could house only 8.6% of its district claimants, however in reality it had only 133 workhouse inmates, (*Twelfth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, 1846), 1.4% of the areas poor, which suggests there was either a lack of operational workhouses, or an avoidance of institutionalizing paupers. Lindsay, (2000), supports the latter, by suggesting that Bangor and Beaumaris workhouse, housed 85 inmates in September 1865, in a workhouse which could house 200, (Higginbotham, 2021). The Wrexham Recorder, (1848), suggests a similar situation, September 1848, saw 1,968 paupers in receipt of poor relief, only 218 were institutionalised, in a workhouse that could house 400, (Higginbotham, 2021). This situation appears to have frustrated the PLC, Day, (1842), complains of Llanfyllin, 'the workhouse was erected for 250, whereas there are currently 139 inmates.' Therefore, a combination of lack of space, and the effectiveness of avoiding placing paupers inside workhouses, led to high levels of outdoor relief still being offered, which firmly places North Wales' welfare system as unique.

Chapter Two

The Effects of English Imposition

Bevan and Evans, (1965-1966), pg. 32, suggest that prior to the PLAA parishes saw local autonomy as 'one of the most serious duties laid by parliament upon the parishioners', whilst Ellis, (1926), suggests that meetings were not seclusive to vestries, all parishioners could attend and therefore have responsibility for their own. The PLAA, saw the English Government dictating new rules and regulations, halting parish responsibility, which Davies, (1978), pg. 245 suggests caused 'resistance to local government, to the new central administration'. Historians suggest, Stewart and King, (2004), Hankins, (1998-1999), that Wales lacked administration, which also, could have led to issues arising from new welfare structures. Newspaper reports, suggest a fractious relationship between England and Wales, *The Welshman*, (1843), pg. 4, reports that, 'The Welsh want a full enquiry into the new Poor Law, but they have little hope of such an enquiry even being entered into by a commission', whilst *The North Wales Chronicle & Advertiser for the Principality*, (1850), pg. 4, states, 'The letters are not worth notice. The Poor Law Commissioners have evidently been of that opinion and have thrown them in the waste paper basket', which both suggest a consensus that calling for reform would prove futile. *The Welshman*, (1843), pg. 4, additionally indicates that Wales, '[has] been suffering under a load of petty oppressions which have goaded them into resistance', whilst *The Principality*, (1848), pg. 5, states that 'still we would use whatever means to lessen the duties of Government and most emphatically oppose any fresh intervention on its part', both of which imply that England's interference did generate resistance.

The amount of governmental control is indicated in *The North Wales Chronicle and Advertiser for the Principality*, (1837), pg. 1, which reports that 'The New Poor Law has given to the commissioners arbitrary and unconstitutional powers', whilst further adding that the poor are at the mercy of the English Government, whom have taken away the right of those who pay taxes, to expend monies in order to benefit those in their own parishes. This suggests that tension was caused by removing the responsibility of the parish and replacing it under governmental control, which meant that tax payers lost agency, in the welfare of their own people. Llanfyllin's union correspondence indicates just how far this control went, with its Clerk, Humphrey Lloyd Williams, writing to the PLC, providing details of the cost of building its workhouse, which he suggests are remarkably high, (Williams, 1837). The PLC, consider 'the estimate to be too expensive and request further explanation', (The Poor Law Commissioners, 1837, pg. 1). William's is therefore, is obliged to provide further explanation, which he suggests is caused by the need for a tunnel, to carry away the drainage for a

considerable distance, (Williams, 1837). He subsequently provides supporting written documentation, from the architect, Penson, (1837), and Savage, (1837). This suggests that guardians had to provide considerable evidence to support this workhouse's cost, whilst highlighting that guardians lacked authority. Additionally, it gives a sense that the English mistrusted Welsh guardians, whilst the dates of these letters, 21st June - 19th July 1837, suggest that it took just under one month to gain approval, effectively buying time.

Hankins, (1996-1997), pg. 56 suggests that 'one commonly held view was that it was wrong to rely for poor relief on the state: morally it was the duty of the church'. *The Principality's*, (1848), pg. 5, report, entitled 'Ought there be a Poor Law' suggests that, 'the law of nature, or in other words, the will of God, is such that those who attend these conditions shall enjoy food, raiment [and] shelter', which it considers are lacking in this new welfare system. Additionally, *The Principality*, (1848), pg. 5, suggests that laws should offer, 'protection of the life, liberty and property of its subjects', whilst imploring readers consult, Hurlburt, (1845), '*Essays on Human Rights and their Political Guarantees*'. In this source, Hurlburt, (1845), pg. 27, suggests that 'Government emanates from the moral attributes of mankind. It is a thing of moral necessity and its power and obligation are of a moral kind.' Therefore, this suggests that the Welsh considered that the English Government was failing, on moral grounds, in this new law, which it implies is inhumane. It would appear that, whilst English imposition did cause friction, Welsh ideologies of moral and Christian values were provoked by the placing paupers into a workhouse, and this too caused resistance to its implementation.

Clive, (1836), Assistant Commissioner, cited in Dewar, (1967), pg. 51, indicates that, 'two or three magistrates had begged him to get the act translated into Welsh', which suggests that a language barrier was causing issues. Furthermore, Dewar, (1967), pg. 257, suggests 'Clive complains that because of the language problem it was necessary to employ "natives", as relieving officers', indicating the necessity of having relieving officers, who could speak Welsh, in order to converse with paupers, (Olds, 2015). Evans and Jones, (2014), pg. 110, use Dewar, (1967), to support that, the use of the Welsh language, and requesting pamphlets be translated, '[was] in the context of a long campaign of obstinacy and foot-dragging, very effective ways of buying time.' This implies that the Welsh language was used as a form of resistance and evidence does suggest that its use did challenge the PLAA's implementation, in North Wales. Williams, (1837), pg. 1, Clerk to the Board of Guardians, Llanfyllin Union, writes to the PLC, drawing attention to the irregularity of some the guardians returns, stating that, 'Thanks to the Reverend David Hughes, for re-examining the Welsh text of the Reverend Archer Clive's Pamphlet.' A similar situation is reported from South Wales, a letter to the Poor Law Commission from Day, (1842) suggests that, in an investigation of Cardiff's

Union Medical officer, Mr Davies, 'the first from the list taking some time as evidence was presented in Welsh, which had to be interpreted'. It can therefore be concluded that the Welsh language, was proving problematic, however, it is questionable if its use was intended to resist the PLAA.

English views of the Welsh language, during the nineteenth century, are on the whole, negative. The People of Wales, (1999), suggests that it was used mainly by those of lower orders, whilst highlighting that, 'the Welsh language was a language of sedition, that people could plot in the Welsh language.' *The Blue Books*, offer an insight into how the English viewed the Welsh language, with Lingen, (1848), pg. 4, suggesting of Welsh workmen, 'his language keeps him under the hatches, being one in which, he can neither acquire nor communicate the necessary information', which implies that the language restricted employment opportunities. Furthermore, Griffith, (1848), cited in Symons, (1848), pg. 312 states, 'I have heard of an overseer who has just been punished for not rightly administering a law which is only written in a language to which he is a stranger', which supports Snell, (2009), pg. 257, who states that, 'writing letters in English to Welsh speaking guardians may not have helped to persuade unions of their intransigence'. Nevertheless, *The Blue Books* contain statements made by Welshmen, and whilst Denning, (1848), cited in, Symons, pg. 359, suggests that 'I cannot too strongly express my opinion about the necessity of getting rid of the Welsh language', Price, (1848), cited in Symons (1848), pg. 312 suggests that stopping its use will, 'banish many prejudices that the people not seem to imbibe from their vernacular tongue.' This suggests that the English were intolerant of its use, however Price (1848), cited in Symons, pg. 312, adds that, 'the really Welsh portion of the people are very tenacious of their native language and would regard with displeasure any means of doing away with it', indicating that the Welsh passionate and protective of their own native tongue.

Morgan, (1991), pg. 23, suggests that Symons is reported to have failed 'to invite to a public meeting in Abercarn Sir Benjamin Hall, MP, [...] who was set on ensuring the survival of the Welsh language', which implies that commissioners were selective in who they sought evidence from, and therefore untrustworthy. Sir Hall, who potentially could have supported the Welsh language, was instrumental in organising the first Welsh language service, in an Anglican Church, which occurred in December 1843, five years prior to *The Blue Books* publication, (Williams, 1959). This indicates that Commissioners could have had knowledge of Sir Hall's support of The Welsh language, and therefore he was excluded from meetings. Williams, (1848), pg. 6, further suggests, that *The Blue Books* did not offer 'comparative merit as regards of those of England and other countries' which too indicates manipulation of evidence. Nevertheless, Richard, (1884), pg. 37, indicates that, attempts were made to preserve the Welsh language, 'as soon as any considerable number of them settle in any town or

district, their first care is to erect a place for worship and religious instruction in their native tongue'. Additionally, Vaughan Johnson, (1848), pg.321, reports that North Wales had, 82,580, English speakers, 313,740, Welsh speakers, in 1848, which whilst this table was used to indicate a lack of English speakers, it also suggests that Welsh was the predominant language. Therefore, evidence suggests that whilst the use of the Welsh language could have caused issues with the implementation of the PLAA, its use could have been a necessity of those administering poor relief, as their native tongue, and its continued use can be seen as a way of preserving an important part of Welsh identity.

Chapter Three

Life inside a North Wales Workhouse

Historians suggest, Lindsay, (2000), Snell, (2009), that the body of guardians mainly consisted of farmers or clergymen, whilst Davies, (1978), additionally adds that PLC invited farmers to participate in parish affairs, in an effort to increase their social standing. Hankins, (1998-1999), pg.74, additionally adds that the PLC thought that by familiarising them in an English world of business, this would, 'raise the character of Welsh Farmers and Yeoman', which they hoped would improve their social conduct, to, 'act openly in public under circumstances in which conduct is scrutinised and character formed.' However, Whythen Baxter, (1841), pg. 421, suggests that the Welsh nobility, were used as, 'tools of the Poor-Law Commissioners, to delude and betray their confiding tenants and labourers into slavery', both of which indicate English attempts to change Welsh sociocultural traditions and habits. Hankins, (1998-1999) further suggests that maintaining farm livestock constantly needed labourers on hand, which led to strong ties developing between farmers and their employees, whom were both working and living in close proximity. Snell, (2009), pg. 257 adds that a similar situation arose, by attending chapel meetings 'causes them to become personally acquainted and they [the poor and the guardians] became friendly.' This does appear to be the case, Williams, (1949), pg. 30, states that, in 1841, John Griffiths Methodist Preacher visited Holywell, whereby he, 'preached in the open-air to a congregation which, it was alleged, numbered not less than 1,500.' Furthermore, in Rhymney, South Wales, Sunday Church services occurred three times a day, with there being over two hundred people attending each service, (Gray-Jones, 1964), which indicates that there was an opportunity of people mixing, from different social backgrounds, at ecclesiastical events. Historians suggest, Snell, (2009), Davies, (1978), that the formation of close relationships, led to Welsh guardians offering a sympathetic workhouse regime, which lessened the effects of the principle of less eligibility.

The Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald, (1848), reports that Carnarvon workhouse had, 'the inconvenience of not having a sufficient supply of water', whereas, Day, (1841), cited in Owen (1990), suggests that Newton and Llanidloes workhouse had appalling sanitary conditions, seven ill children were sharing one room, one bed, whilst infection rates were increased, by the sick using the same privy as other inmates. Taylor, (2021), cited in Higginbotham, (2021), pg. 1, suggests that Wrexham workhouse, had grim medical and sanitary conditions, December 1857, saw an increase in fever, whilst an inmate Edward Jones, attempted to cut his own throat. However, Taylor, (2021), cited in Higginbotham, (2021), pg. 1, reports that, its workhouse master, William Bragger, showed

kindness, by ensuring that inmates wore different clothes as opposed to uniforms, 'in order to give them a sense of individuality and to lessen the stigma of being in the house'. This suggests that Welsh guardians were compassionate, and did not view the status of inmates as indicative of idleness. *The Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald and North and South Wales Independent*, (1849), pg. 5, states that John Townsend, Esq, 'has just presented the board of guardians of the Wrexham Union a library for the use of the inmates of the workhouse', which, together with highlighting sympathy, further implies the Welsh considered it was a moral duty, to offer charity, for the poor. Whythen Baxter, (1841), pg. 145, reports that a Mr Walter 'recollected that a magistrate had complained to him of a union no fewer than twenty-two miles in length', which meant that some paupers would have to walk eleven miles in order to gain relief. It therefore, appears that those from many different social standings were sympathetic to workhouse inmates, and the poor. Hankins, (1998-1999), suggests that the segregation of inmates, was criticised, after being separated from her husband, Gwenllian Thomas, an inmate of Crickhowell workhouse, accidentally threw herself from the window, whilst searching for her husband. *The Jury's Foreman*, (1839), is cited by Hankins, (1998-1999), as expressing, 'the jury's abhorrence at: that clause in the new poor law sanctioning the separation of man and wife.' *The Glamorgan, Monmouth and Brecon Gazette and Methyr Guardian*, (1838), pg. 4, supports this by suggesting that, 'Are we then the advocates [...] of the terrors of the new law? By no means! Least of all of its "separation clause"', which suggests that the segregation of inmates was considered unjust, and inhumane.

Owen, (1990), suggests that the PLAA stipulated that it was a legal obligation to ensure that food did not exceed the diets of able-bodied labourers, living within the district. However, the master of Llanfyllin union, appears sympathetic to inmates, he 'had private interviews with able bodied paupers, [and] expressed regret that they 'are here as in prison' (Day, 1842). This is believed to have initiated paupers complaining about food, much to the dismay of the PLC, who report Mr Menlove's conduct as irregular whilst threatening, 'to issue a prohibitory order should this practice continue', (Day, 1842, Pg. 1). A similar situation is reported by Hankins, (1998-1999), in South Wales, whom suggests that food in Crickhowell workhouse was similar to its gaol, however, in Carmarthen workhouse, its food is reported as being inferior, to its gaol. Llanfyllin's workhouse medical officer, Evans, (1849), writes to the PLC, calling for a change in diet, which he suggests is injurious to health and causing illness. He does, offer a resolution, 'replacing some of this [wheat] with barley flour with would provide extra bread at no additional cost', (Evans, 1849, pg.1) which indicates attempts were made, to improve conditions. Pwllheli Workhouse (1853- 1856) Admission and Discharge Register, indicates that diets were discriminative, designated accordingly to age, sex and able-bodied or

infirm, which suggests penalisation, of the able-bodied. Jones, (1849), confirms this, by indicating that Llanfyllin's dietary table, was only amended for the sick. Supplies also appear to be lacking in Llanfyllin, Evans, (1849), pg. 1 highlights that 'breakfast is thick gruel made with water not milk as in most workhouses', which is supported by Brown, (2019), who suggests Llanfyllin's remoteness meant it lacked resources. Therefore, it can be ascertained guardians did attempt to minimise harsh workhouse environment's.

As indicated in Chapter one, outdoor relief remained the preferred method of welfare, in Wales, as opposed to placing paupers inside a workhouse. This is supported by Davies, (1978), pg. 273, who suggests, 'many guardians preferred to grant outdoor relief rather than fill these institutions', and Snell, (2009), pg. 310, who indicates that Carnarvon Workhouse had, 'very few paupers in the workhouse other than children, imbeciles and the sick poor'. The avoidance of institutionalisation is reported by Pryce and Edwards, (1980), pg. 60, who indicate that in Llanfair Caennion, 'in the house of Ann Davies, a 71 year old pauper [...] we find her unmarried daughter and three male lodgers', two of which list their occupation as 'pauper', which is suggested was a way of avoiding Llanfyllin workhouse. *The Provincial Medical Journal*, (1842), indicates that efforts were successively made to keep the mentally ill, out of workhouses, of the insane poor in North Wales, 19 were in English lunatic asylums, 32 were in Welsh workhouses, however, 303 were living with relatives, whilst 300 were farmed out and living with strangers. Additionally, *The North Wales Chronicle and Advertiser for the Principality*, (1844), shows the expense per head, of lunatics in Ffestiniog, '5 lunatics and 14 idiots, is one shilling and six pence farthing: all of them are reported to be in lodgings and with friends.' It also appears that guardians attempted to keep the able-bodied out of workhouses, Menlove, (1842), pg. 1, wrote to the Poor Law Commission, stating that, 'the privilege of giving outdoor relief, as in Nottingham Union [...] would be of great benefit', whilst implying that the workhouse was, 'filling rapidly', however, at this time the workhouse only housed 139 inmates, as opposed to its capacity of 250, (Day, 1842, pg.1). It can therefore be concluded that the Welsh were effective in keeping paupers out of the workhouse which can be linked to the Welsh forming strong emotional ties, with paupers, and the ideology that the new welfare regime was immoral and inhumane.

Chapter Four

Questions of Illegitimacy

The Poor Law Commissioners Report, (1834), pg. 173 suggests that ‘Bastardy [...], is a growing evil in Wales’, with Henriques, (1967) indicating that in 1830, illegitimacy rates, in Wales, were one in thirteen, as opposed to one in twenty, in England. However, the illegitimacy clause appears to be born from an English ideology, that pregnancy out of wedlock should be penalised, which can be seen in *The Blue Books*. Symons, (1848), pg. 296, suggests that, in Wales ‘nothing is thought of having a bastard, and when in the family way – they walk as publicly as a married-women’, whilst Vaughan Johnson, (1848), pg. 543, reports of, ‘the utter disregard of common natural decency and shame amongst the people’, which is in relation to a sexual act, committed in daylight, that resulted in pregnancy. Nevertheless, the PLAA, (1834), Clause 72 states that, the Elizabethan Act ‘concerning bastards [...] hereby declared null and void’, and thereon, paternal payments to the mother, ceased, fathers were only expected to pay the parish for the child’s upkeep. However, Anne Lewis, an inmate of Llanfyllin Workhouse, writes to the PLC indicating that guardians had discharged her on the premise, that being in the workhouse for eighteen days, ‘was sufficient to compel John Humphreys, putative father of the child, to pay maintenance, so she left’, (Lewis, 1841, pg.1), which indicates that either the illegitimacy clauses were being ignored or avoided. The PLC, however, annotate this, reminding that monies paid by the father are to reimburse the parish, whilst suggesting that it would be illegal to pay these to the mother. A letter from the PLC to Llanfyllin Union, reports that, ‘the father should not be called upon for the money due under the order of affiliation except to reimburse the parish for previous expenses occurred’, (Poor Law Commissioners, 1838, pg.1), which indicates that attempts were made, by the PLC, to enforce this clause. *The Wrexham and Denbighshire Advertiser*, (1858), pg. 4, reports that, ‘Thomas Phillips of Borrass, was summoned by Mary Piercy of Broughton, for refusing to support a bastard child’, Phillips was subsequently ordered to pay the midwife and costs, whilst *The North Wales Chronicle and Advertiser for the Principality*, (1862), pg. 6, reports that, ‘Jane Davies, obtained an order of 1s. 6d. per week upon Thos. Williams, the father of her illegitimate child’. This indicates that in North Wales, it was still considered paternal responsibility to pay maintenance to mothers of illegitimate children, whilst guardians and magistrates appear to act in a sympathetic manner. This can be considered as resistance to the PLAA, and suggests that Welsh views of illegitimacy, were altogether different to English ideologies.

Snell, (2009), pg. 277, suggests that, 'claimants thought to be the most undeserving such as vagrants of mothers of illegitimate children, were especially penalised', in relation to the practise of offering outdoor relief, whilst Lindsay, (2000), pg. 49 agrees, by suggesting that many of the able-bodied and mothers of illegitimate children were placed into Bangor workhouse, when it opened in 1845. Hulonce, (2016), pg. 65, suggests that in South Wales, outdoor relief was to be refused to mothers of, 'bastard children, except in cases of sickness or 'urgent necessity', however, she additionally points to the case of Sarah Williams, whom had twin, illegitimate children. Williams is able to leave with one child, whilst leaving the second in the workhouse, indicating that both guardians and inmates did have some agency. *The North Wales Chronicle and Advertiser for the Principality*, (1852), pg. 3 suggests that, 'it is shown by a return, just printed that on the 1st Jan last, there were 3,453 mothers of illegitimate children in the receipt of outdoor relief', the preceding year, saw 3,707, which indicates Wales was effective in avoiding workhouse admission for illegitimate mothers and children. This is further supported by the Pwllheli Admissions Register, (1854-56), which indicates that in 1854, only 5 cases of illegitimate mothers with children and 5 women who faced pregnancy removal orders, were reported, whilst the year 1855, saw only 1 mother admitted and 4 having removal orders. However, Owen, (1990), pg. 157, supplies details of those who absconded from the Newton and Llanidloes workhouse, which includes, Mary Thomas, 'Servant, able-bodied with 2 bastard children, all 3 re-admitted', and 'Ann Evans, 25, single-unmarried mother unable to support her bastard', which suggests that workhouse conditions were unbearable for these two women. Nevertheless, Henriques, (1967), pg. 110, suggests that 'there was tension that this clause would impact infanticide, which *The North Wales Chronicle and Advertiser for The Principality*, (1839), pg. 1 confirms, by indicating that a new born illegitimate baby was found abandoned by the road near Cefn-y-cwmwd, however in this instance, the mother is not treated with sympathy, 'The child has been taken care of the unnatural mother is in custody'. Nevertheless, it does appear that in North Wales, mothers of illegitimate children were kept out of workhouses, and were still able access out-door relief and paternal subsidies.

Wrexham History, (2012), pg. 1, suggests that, 1842, saw, '42 out of 49 single mothers in the Wrexham workhouse were there because of the practice of allowing young men to pay night-time visits to female servants in agricultural areas of the union', which appears to have been a common practice, across North Wales. The Guardians of Llanfyllin Union, (1842), pg. 1, report of similar occurrences, whilst linking high levels of illegitimacy to, 'their practice of allowing 'a free intercourse between the female servants and men, after bed time'. However, as previously mentioned, many union guardians, were also local farmers which could be an explanation as to why single mothers

were not frowned upon, nor penalised to the same degree, as in England. Even so, the farmers of Llanfyllin, were advised to request character testimonials, from future female employees, and to stop men paying their servants night-time visits, (*Guardians of Llanfyllin*, 1842, pg. 1), whilst a campaign in Congleton Union, neighbour to Wrexham, attempted to stop this practice, ‘and for that purpose, we will keep our doors securely fastened’, (*Higginbotham*, 2021, pg. 1). This suggests that whilst Welsh ideologies of illegitimacy, differed to that of English views, North Wales saw issues being recognised, and steps were being taken to minimise its prevalence.

The Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald and North and South Wales Independent, (1849), pg. 8, suggests that, ‘all alike are sent to the workhouse together, - young and old – the innocent and the guilty, to mix with the depraved and the prostitute’. This implies that the Guardians of Ruthin Union were aware that housing the innocent, together with the degenerate, could lead to further immoral behaviour. Hughes, (1848), pg. 107, supports this, by suggesting that many of those whom were educated within the workhouse, ‘returned, [...], with an additional burden to the rate payers, or after having pursued a career in prostitution’, whilst additionally suggesting that the risks of placing young and older females together, could lead to the learning of further immoral behaviours. *The Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald and North and South Wales Independent*, (1850), pg. 5, supports this, by reporting that many of those who leave Wrexham workhouse, ‘almost invariably when discharged become street walker’s’. Whereas, both Lingen, (1848), and Symons, (1848), both suggest that prostitution was a rarity, ‘there is less open wickedness as regards to prostitution, than in England’, (Symons, 1848, pg. 307), Vaughan-Johnson, (1848), pg.404, suggests that in North Wales, ‘the principal defects in morals are those of intoxication and prostitution.’ Strange, (1980), indicates that in the latter part of the nineteenth century, prostitution was indeed a problem, in South Wales. He suggests that in Merthyr Tydfil’s China district, a campaign to stop a life of vice was led by Anglican missionaries, which resulted in ‘six girls leave China, only to return soon after complaining bitterly about the conditions inside the workhouse’, (Strange, 1980), pg. 76). *The Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald and North and South Wales Independent*, (1849), pg. 8, proposes a solution, if pauper children could attend industrial schools, this would teach good practices. Consequently, the offering of outdoor relief, in Wales, as opposed to placing paupers into a workhouse, would most definitely have avoided young girls learning immoral behaviours, and therefore resistance to the PLAA, in this instance, would have preserved social order.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that costs, incurred by the necessity of building workhouses, can-not be considered a causable factor in resisting the PLAA, in North Wales. Whilst building costs were substantial, which was generated by a lack of pre-existing workhouses, guardians did not attempt cost cutting measures, as the cost of some workhouse, in North Wales were above average. However, it is delaying construction, is evident in North Wales, which was an effective means of resistance, with six workhouses taking over twenty-five years to build. The high number of paupers, still claiming out-door relief, in comparison to Essex and West Riding of Yorkshire, can be linked to an inadequacy in the capacity of workhouses, an effective campaign to avoid placing paupers into a workhouse, which can be considered as resistance to the PLAA and marks North Wales', welfare systems as unique.

The loss of local autonomy, to an English governmental control, and a loss of agency in deciding how poor relief was offered, resulted in tension becoming apparent, between England and Wales, however, this alone was not what initiated Welsh resistance. English attempts to change the sociocultural traditions and habits of Welsh farmers, in an attempt to make them comply with English ideologies, also triggered attempts to maintain Welsh cultural practices. The English also attempted to stop the use of the Welsh language, and replace it with their own, which could have led to attempting to ensure that its use continued, and therefore preserving an important part of Welsh culture and identity. However, whilst historians, Dewar, (1967), Evans and Jones, (2014), have indicated that, the Welsh language was used as a delaying tactic, its use could have been a necessity, as many people could only speak and understand Welsh, during this time period.

In North Wales, close social relationships, formed in employment and ecclesiastical events, led to masters, guardians and magistrates showing compassion towards inmates. Charitable acts still occurred, and these were seen as Christian moral duty, whilst the separation of husband and wife, was considered to be challenging God's will. Conditions inside Welsh workhouses were still unsanitary, lacked supplies of both food and water and food whilst discriminations were made, according to age, sex, able-bodied and the infirm, however, some Welsh guardians did attempt to make life inside, more comfortable, whilst an effective campaign ensured that many people were not institutionalized. It can be ascertained that the Welsh viewed the PLAA as immoral, inhumane and unethical, which had religious connotations, and it was this that led to an avoidance of the workhouse regime.

The illegitimacy clauses were based on an English ideology that un-married mothers should be viewed with contempt and whilst fathers avoided paternal responsibilities, sole blame was placed on women. This however, was not the case in North Wales, where many guardians avoided placing unfortunate women into workhouses, whilst fathers were still expected to fund their child's maintenance, regardless of marital status. Mothers of illegitimate children also, still claimed outdoor relief, thus avoiding workhouse admission. Therefore, it can be concluded that, in North Wales, illegitimacy was not viewed, with the same disapproval, as it was in England. The practice of allowing men to visit servants at night, suggests that farmers were not concerned about its consequences, however attempts were made to address this issue, in order to reduce rates of illegitimacy. Furthermore, in North Wales, it was recognised that placing the innocent with the degenerate, came with the risk of women learning immoral behaviours, and workhouses became known as breeding grounds of vice. Therefore, actions were taken to avoid placing people into a workhouse, in order to maintain social order and avoid increasing crime rates.

Overall, it has been shown that resistance to the PLAA and the workhouse regime, was a way of preserving Welsh society and culture. This included maintaining Welsh sociocultural traditions, habits and important aspects of Welsh identity, whilst ensuring that social order and Welsh ideologies were preserved, in order to avoid the influence of an English generated law and its imposition.

7636 words

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