



Open Research Online

Citation

Hayes, Siobhan Mary (2019). West Monmouthshire, a Community in Crisis: To What Extent Was the Extreme Poverty Experienced in West Monmouthshire During the Inter-War Years Affected by Changing Local and National Attitudes Towards Relief, and Its Influence on Public Perception of Welfare Issues? Student dissertation for The Open University module A826 MA History part 2.

URL

<https://oro.open.ac.uk/60346/>

License

(CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0) Creative Commons: Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Policy

This document has been downloaded from Open Research Online, The Open University's repository of research publications. This version is being made available in accordance with Open Research Online policies available from [Open Research Online \(ORO\) Policies](#)

Versions

If this document is identified as the Author Accepted Manuscript it is the version after peer review but before type setting, copy editing or publisher branding

West Monmouthshire, a Community in Crisis:

To What Extent Was the Extreme Poverty Experienced in West Monmouthshire During the Inter-War Years Affected by Changing Local and National Attitudes Towards Relief, and Its Influence on Public Perception of Welfare Issues?

Siobhan Mary Hayes

BA (Hons) Modern English Studies (Wales)

A dissertation submitted to The Open University

for the degree of
MA in History

January 2019

WORD COUNT: 15,935

ABSTRACT

West Monmouthshire grew with the nineteenth century iron industry, but by the end of World War I, apart from residual steelworks located in Ebbw Vale, was almost entirely dependent on coal. Both industries were in decline and by 1921 mass unemployment was taking hold. This study examines firstly government and non-governmental influences on West Monmouthshire's poor, followed by the experience of poverty during the inter-war years. It asks whether West Monmouthshire's experience influenced public perception of welfare issues, and local and national attitudes towards poor relief.

Initially, the government's view was that poverty was a local problem, which the local community should relieve from within its own means. The local Bedwellty Guardians however, continued to provide relief based on perceived necessity rather than their ability to pay, and were suspended by Minister of Health Neville Chamberlain in 1927 for being over-generous with relief, and ignoring government loan conditions. The paid guardians who succeeded them drastically reduced relief scales; single, unemployed men were not granted relief, and with no work available locally, many were forced to migrate. Conditions in West Monmouthshire continued to deteriorate through the days of the Means Test and Unemployment Assistance Board, until the needs of World War II restored full employment.

The study concludes that although the relative prosperity prevalent in Britain made people slow to grasp the situation in West Monmouthshire and other distressed areas, gradually people did become aware, and at the end of the nineteen-twenties, expressed their sympathy by contributing to a national appeal, the Lord Mayors' Fund, which attracted more donations for the distressed areas than it had done for any previous cause. As exposure of conditions in West Monmouthshire continued through Hunger Marches and coverage associated with Royal visits, it became evident to both politicians and public that poverty of this magnitude was a national rather than local problem, influencing the move towards nationally-funded and administered benefits which were eventually incorporated into the Welfare State. West Monmouthshire's approach to provision of cost-effective medical care was a further influence on the Welfare State, through local MP Aneurin Bevan.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACTii

TABLE OF FIGURES.....iv

PERSONAL STATEMENT v

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....v

ABBREVIATIONSvi

Chapter 1: Introduction 1

Chapter 2: Political Intervention in the Poverty Relief of West Monmouthshire9

Chapter 3: The Extent and Impact of Non-Governmental Welfare Support27

Chapter 4: The Experience of Poverty in West Monmouthshire43

Chapter 5: Conclusion61

Bibliography64

TABLE OF FIGURES

<i>Figure 1 The Poor Law Unions of Monmouthshire</i> _____	2
<i>Figure 2 Insured Male Unemployment Levels, Monmouthshire and Great Britain Jan 1927-Jul 1939.</i> __	4
<i>Figure 3 Numbers of Relief Applications, Jun 1925-26.</i> _____	11
<i>Figure 4 Weekly Relief Rates in Shillings, November 1925.</i> _____	12
<i>Figure 5 Half-Yearly Expenditure on Out-Relief in the Bedwelty Union, September 1925-27.</i> _____	15
<i>Figure 6 South Wales & Monmouthshire Allocation of Lord Mayors' Fund, 1928-1930.</i> _____	39
<i>Figure 7 Typical weekly allowance to maintain a family of four.</i> _____	45
<i>Figure 8 Crude Infant Death Rates for West Monmouthshire and England & Wales, 1918-39.</i> _____	52
<i>Figure 9 Population Change by Age Range and Gender, West Monmouthshire 1931-39</i> _____	56

PERSONAL STATEMENT

I declare this dissertation is entirely my own, independent work.

Some of this dissertation builds on work submitted for assessment for the Open University A825 End of Module Assessment, Part II.

No part of this dissertation has previously been submitted for a degree or other qualification at the Open University, or any other university or institution.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr Jane Adams for her invaluable support as my supervisor for this dissertation, and Dr Stephen Bunker for his advice during preparation of the original proposal.

ABBREVIATIONS

BU	Bedwellty Union
GA	Gwent Archives
MAS	Medical Society
NLW	National Library of Wales
NSPCC	National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
NUWM	National Unemployed Workers' Union
PAC	Public Assistance Committee
PLU	Poor Law Union
SCF	Save the Children Fund
SWCC	South Wales Coalfield Collection
SWMF	South Wales Miners' Federation
TNA	The National Archives
UAB	Unemployment Assistance Board
UD	Urban District
WMAS	Workmen's Medical Aid Society

Chapter 1: Introduction

This dissertation examines the extent to which the extreme poverty experienced in West Monmouthshire during the inter-war years was affected by changing local and national attitudes towards relief and was itself an influence on public perception of welfare issues. It argues that while initially only local people and politicians saw the depth of the situation, growing evidence from West Monmouthshire and similar areas helped convince national politicians and public opinion of the need for change from the mixed system of local support through the Poor Law combined with limited central arrangements for pensions, medical treatment and unemployment pay, to centrally administered benefits for all.

Situated in the area indicated as ‘Tredegar B.U.’ on the map in Figure 1, West Monmouthshire’s economy and population grew with the iron industry in the late eighteenth century; by the nineteen-twenties, the local economy was almost entirely dependent on coalmining.¹ The term ‘West Monmouthshire’ refers to the Public Assistance Committee (PAC) area which replaced the Bedwellty Poor Law Union (PLU) in 1930, sharing almost identical boundaries. Key towns were Rhymney, Tredegar, Ebbw Vale, Nantyglo and Blaina, and Blackwood. In May 1926, the General Strike closed most of the local collieries; between ongoing industrial action from the

¹ John Elliott and Colin Deneen, ‘Iron, Steel and Aluminium’, in *The Gwent County History. Vol. 5: The Twentieth Century*, ed. by Chris Williams and Ralph Alan Griffiths (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013), pp. 60–61.

miners' lockout, and declining export trade, many never reopened.² The residual iron and steel industry based in Ebbw Vale also suffered from increasing trade difficulties until a new mill based on advanced technology was commissioned in 1938.³

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 1 The Poor Law Unions of Monmouthshire⁴

There was growing realisation that coalmining was declining, taking with it whatever prosperity existed in predominantly single-industry areas such as West Monmouthshire.

² Beatrice Webb and Sidney Webb, *English Poor Law History: Part 2, Volume II, The Last Hundred Years*, English Local Government Series, IX (London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd, 1963), p. 933.

³ Elliott and Deneen, p. 62.

⁴ Copied from: D.B. Hughes, 'Poor Law History in Monmouthshire Since 1834: Chapter 1, The Formation of the Unions', *Presenting Monmouthshire*, 1969, from an original held at the Gwent Archives. 'BU' stands for 'Bedwellty Union'.

Sandwiched between two World Wars which provided a temporary boost to the local economy, this period saw previously inconceivable levels of unemployment.⁵ The crisis came to a head in 1926: with debts to the government exceeding a million pounds, the local Bedwellty (PLU) was effectively bankrupt.⁶ Chamberlain suspended the elected guardians for failing to adhere to government loan conditions, replacing them with appointees who immediately reduced the number of people awarded relief, and the amounts given.⁷ The Depression and Means Test of the 1930s further increased poverty and discontent, with male unemployment levels for Monmouthshire as a whole peaking at fifty-three percent in October 1932.⁸ As Figure 2 shows, unemployment in Monmouthshire was considerably worse than in Britain overall for the entire period between January 1928, and July 1939 when the effects of rearmament and the expectation of war took full effect:

⁵ Webb and Webb, pp. 933–34..

⁶ ‘Why Not the West Ham Way with Bedwellty?’, *Western Mail*, 17 December 1926, p. 6.

⁷ Stephanie Ward, *Unemployment and the State in Britain: The Means Test and Protest in 1930s South Wales and North-East England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), p. 17; *Bedwellty Union: Report of the Guardians Appointed by the Minister of Health to Constitute the Board of Guardians for the Bedwellty Union*, (Cmd 2976), 1927.

⁸ ‘Monmouthshire AdmC through Time: Work and Poverty Statistics, Percentage Unemployed by Category of the Insured’, *A Vision of Britain Through Time* <http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10025060/cube/lui_unem_percent> [accessed 13 November 2018].

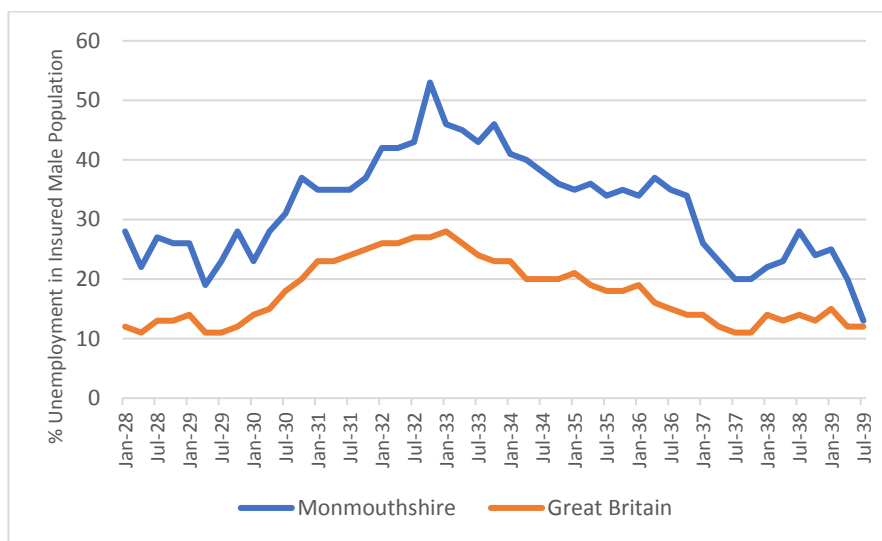


Figure 2 Insured Male Unemployment Levels, Monmouthshire and Great Britain Jan 1927-Jul 1939.⁹

Chapter Two examines the provision of support through the PLU and PAC and argues that successive governments implemented tactical measures when there was clearly no immediate prospect of relief, and a strategic approach was needed. It demonstrates that the elected guardians were not equally implicated in the actions which led to their suspension, and that West Monmouthshire's protest against levels of poverty relief continued into the days of the PAC. It explores the influence of trade unions and the local Communist Party.

Chapter Three analyses the extent and impact of welfare provided by non-governmental groups, including workmen's institutes, medical aid societies, and charities. This

⁹ 'Great Britain Dep Through Time: Work and Poverty Statistics, Percentage Unemployed by Category of the Insured', *A Vision of Britain Through Time* <http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10090283/cube/lui_unem_percent> [accessed 10 November 2018]; 'Vision of Britain: Monmouthshire AdmC'. Consistent data sets are not available for the full inter-war period, or for West Monmouthshire alone. Note 'Monmouthshire AdmC' includes the County Borough of Newport.

highlights the activities of the young Aneurin Bevan in the Tredegar Workmen's Institute, and the Medical Aid Society which influenced his ambitions for the NHS.¹⁰ The chapter demonstrates an increasingly 'mixed economy' of welfare as neither mutual aid organisations nor national appeals, such as the Lord Mayors' Fund, could provide sufficient support.¹¹ Demonstrating that publicity attracted by charities helped foster a wider understanding of West Monmouthshire's plight, the chapter examines the Quakers' efforts in Brynmawr, and the 'adoption' arrangements made with wealthier towns such as Eastbourne.¹²

Chapter Four examines the experience of poverty in West Monmouthshire, including aspects of domestic economy, health, employment, housing and migration. It highlights the impact on family life: young girls were often obliged to leave home and enter domestic service, while unemployed parents became dependent on working children. Unemployed single men faced a choice between migration or becoming a further drain on family finances.

Key primary sources include records of the Bedwellty PLU, and its successor, the Monmouthshire PAC.¹³ Data from minutes and correspondence are supplemented with information drawn from government papers, *Hansard*, and reports commissioned by the

¹⁰ Aneurin Bevan, 'A Free Health Service', in *In Place of Fear* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1961).

¹¹ *Hansard*, 5th Series, 13 March 1929, vol. 226, cols 113-230.

¹² Pamela Manasseh, 'The Brynmawr Experiment 1928-1940 Quaker Values and Arts and Crafts Principles' (unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Plymouth, 2009): note that although Brynmawr itself lies just outside the West Monmouthshire boundary, it is immediately adjacent to Nantyglo and Blaina; 'What About Rhymney?', *Eastbourne Gazette*, 1 January 1930.

¹³ Gwent Archives (GA), CSWBGB/M1/27-38, Bedwellty Board of Guardians: Minute Books 1919-30.

Labour Party and the Pilgrim Trust.¹⁴ Drawing on the reports of the appointed guardians, comparison is made between the situation of the Bedwellty Guardians and those of Chester-le-Street, suspended for similar reasons in 1926.¹⁵ Oral history interviews conducted during the nineteen-seventies by local historian and Labour politician Hywel Francis provide first-hand insight; the subjects of these interviews were relatively well-educated men, deliberately selected for their political activism and leadership roles within the community.¹⁶ As this source includes no women, reference is made to Sian Rhiannon Williams and Carole White's collection of women's stories, in order to access the voices of women coping with diminished family budgets.¹⁷ Autobiographical insight has been drawn from Neville Chamberlain's letters to his sisters, and Aneurin Bevan's *In Place of Fear*.¹⁸ The *South Wales Gazette* provides detail of the Bedwellty Guardians' meetings during the critical period preceding their suspension, and extensive use has been made of both local and national newspapers.

Existing secondary analysis of the Bedwellty PLU suspension, including that of Sian Rhiannon Williams, has focused on the political standoff between guardians and government.¹⁹ Acknowledging the Poor Law in Wales to be 'under-researched, full of potential', Steven King and John Stewart call for examination of the impact of the New

¹⁴ William Temple and Investigators for the Pilgrim Trust, *Men Without Work: A Report Made to the Pilgrim Trust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938); *The Distress in South Wales*; 'History', *The Pilgrim Trust* <<https://www.thepilgrimtrust.org.uk/about-us/history/>> [accessed 10 December 2018].

¹⁵ *Chester-Le-Street Union: Report of the Board of Guardians on the Administration for the Period 1st January, 1927, to 30th June, 1927*, (Cmd 2937), 1927; Cmd 2976.

¹⁶ *Audio Collection*, South Wales Coalfield Collection, Swansea University, (SWCC).

¹⁷ Sian Rhiannon Williams and Carole White, *Struggle or Starve: Women's Lives in the South Wales Valleys Between the Two World Wars* (Ceredigion: Honno Ltd, 2008).

¹⁸ Neville Chamberlain and Robert C. Self, *The Neville Chamberlain Diary Letters* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), II; Aneurin Bevan, *In Place of Fear* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1961).

¹⁹ Sian Rhiannon Williams, 'The Bedwellty Board of Guardians and the Default Act of 1927', *Llafur*, 2.4 (1979).

Poor Law on the individual; however, theirs is a general review, focused neither on Bedwellty, nor the inter-war period.²⁰ This dissertation aims to follow King and Stewart in reviewing local experience and attitudes in the context of the changing political background, and to build on Williams' work by investigating the impact of successive political decisions on the people of West Monmouthshire. Other key secondary sources include Lynn Hollen Lees' *The Solidarities of Strangers*, which observes that society has continually struggled to balance claims of self, family, and community, a struggle reflected in the government's attitude towards poor relief in the face of mass unemployment.²¹ Steven Thompson considers health as an index of poverty: the health risks of unemployment for men may have been reduced by their removal from the hazards of coalmining, while women and children unsurprisingly suffered worse health as a result of increased poverty.²²

Derek Fraser describes the 'great paradox' of the inter-war years, where most of Britain saw a rise in wages and standards of living, yet areas like West Monmouthshire suffered deep decline.²³ The importance of a study of West Monmouthshire during this period is that while its experience was not widespread in Britain, as people became aware of its poverty, they were forced to rethink the concept of the 'undeserving poor' and question

²⁰ Steven King and John Stewart, 'The History of the Poor Law in Wales: Under-Researched, Full of Potential', *Archives*, 36 (2001), 134–48.

²¹ Lynn Hollen Lees, *The Solidarities of Strangers: The English Poor Laws and the People, 1700-1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 1.; TNA, MH68/265, 'Bedwellty Union: Board of Guardians (Default) Order, 1926', p. 265.

²² Steven Thompson, *Unemployment, Poverty and Health in Interwar South Wales*, *Studies in Welsh History*, 25 (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006), p. 4.

²³ Derek Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State*, 4th Edition (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 219.

whether impoverished communities could really be expected to support those without income.

Chapter 2: Political Intervention in the Poverty Relief of West Monmouthshire

Introduction

Pre-war Liberal welfare reforms removed certain classes of the poor, including some sick and elderly, and those recently unemployed through no fault of their own, from the stigma of the New Poor Law.¹ However, the law still assumed that able-bodied people of working age would be able to find employment if they tried. Any support needed in the meantime would be provided by their local PLU. At the end of the First World War, existing legislation did not anticipate the collapse of the dominant industry in an area such as West Monmouthshire, a community of more than 160,000 people, or consider that a community thus impoverished would not have the resources to adequately support its own unemployed.²

This chapter analyses changing legislation and attitudes during the inter-war period, and their impact on provision of poverty relief in West Monmouthshire. As unemployment increased and the incomes of the employed fell sharply, the Bedwellty PLU found itself increasingly unable to meet the cost of relief. government loans were available, but associated conditions challenged the predominantly-Labour guardians' desire to provide 'work or maintenance', and in February 1927, they joined the guardians of West Ham and Chester-le-Street in default for being over-generous with relief and failing to adhere

¹ Derek Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State*, 4th Edition (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 175–206.

² Census, 1921, *Findmypast* <https://search-findmypast-co-uk./search-united-kingdom-records-in-census-land-and-surveys/and_census> [accessed 27 July 2018].

to government loan conditions.³ The ministry-appointed guardians who succeeded them were salaried employees, living outside the immediate area, and applied the rules strictly leaving many without adequate means of support.⁴ In 1930, local councils became responsible for poor relief, returning once again to locally-nominated guardians for assessment and day-to-day relief, but under the oversight of a PAC with wider responsibilities including overall control of income from rates, and management of the substantial debt incurred by the Bedwellty PLU.⁵ These changes took place against a background of loss of faith in the South Wales Miners' Federation (SWMF), and the growth of communism accompanied by social unrest, particularly in Nantyglo and Blaina, the poorest part of West Monmouthshire.

The Ministry of Health and the Bedwellty Guardians

Mass unemployment grew in West Monmouthshire as the mines returned to private ownership from their partly-nationalised wartime status in 1922; that the government struggled to adjust to the implications is apparent, given the three amendments made to Unemployment Insurance during 1921, one of which reversed changes implemented only a few months previously.⁶ In March 1925, local MP George Barker informed the House of Commons that Unemployment Insurance had been withdrawn from five hundred Abertillery miners who had been unemployed for some time, and had not made

³ The National Archives (TNA), MH68/265, Bedwellty Union: Board of Guardians (Default) Order, 1926.

⁴ Gwent Archives (GA), CSWBGB/M1/36 Bedwellty PLU Minutes 1927.

⁵ 'Bedwellty Union Debt', *The Times*, 31 October 1929, p. 16.

⁶ Bernard Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State: Society, State, and Social Welfare in England and Wales, 1800-1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 204.

either thirty National Insurance contributions in total, or eight within the last two years.⁷

These men were forced to apply to the Bedwellty PLU, which had already borrowed £400,000 from the government, and would clearly struggle to meet further claims on this scale.⁸ Figure 3 shows that neighbouring Pontypool and Merthyr PLUs were in similar positions, leaving few options for employment within reasonable travelling distance:

PLU	Jun-25	Jun-26	% Increase
Bedwellty	45,603	58,070	21%
Merthyr	45,627	64,214	29%
Pontypool	11,134	12,832	13%

Figure 3 Numbers of Relief Applications, Jun 1925-26.⁹

Faced with unprecedented unemployment and hardship, and unable or unwilling to reduce expenditure, Bedwellty was obliged to seek a further government loan in

⁷ *Hansard*, HC, 5th Series, 9 March 1926, vol. 181, cols 965-1089.

⁸ *Hansard*, HC, 5th Series, 02 March 1925, vol. 181, cols 22-23.

⁹ Source: 'Who Pays the Bill?', *Western Mail*, 15 October 1926, p. 11.

November 1925. Conditions included reduced scales which, as Figure 4 shows, were nevertheless in some cases better than those of neighbouring PLUs:

	PLU		
	Bedwellty	Merthyr	Pontypridd
Parents, 2 children	34s	33s	32s
Parents, 3 children	38s	36s	37s
Parents, 4 children	38s 6d	39s	40s

Figure 4 Weekly Relief Rates in Shillings, November 1925.¹⁰

‘Extras’ including boots, clothing, false teeth, and cash grants were allowed only by exception: a public meeting at Blaina heard, to cries of ‘shame’, that the Ministry had refused funeral payments, insisting that ‘paupers [...] should be buried in paupers’ graves’.¹¹ Local protest was vociferous but guardian Walter Conway pointed out that before proposing alternatives, ‘they had first to convert people of their own rank [...] fellow-workmen who were complaining about the burden of the heavy rates’.¹² Conway, a retired miner who had lived in the workhouse as a child, was often the voice

¹⁰ ‘Suggested Scales’, *Western Mail*, 2 November 1925, p. 8; GA, CSWBGB/M1/33, Bedwellty PLU Minutes November 1925.

¹¹ ‘Protest Meeting at Blaina’, *South Wales Gazette*, 6 November 1925.

¹² ‘Bedwellty Board’, *Western Mail*, 4 November 1925; Michael Foot, *Aneurin Bevan: A Biography*, Kindle Edition (London: Faber and Faber, 2008), I, loc. 912.

of moderation, although his advice was not always taken.¹³ For example, in early 1926, the guardians accepted Conway's view that a single man earning four pounds a week should maintain his unemployed parents and invalid sister, but rejected a compromise with Ministry of Health conditions, which involved a mother contributing to her child's medical care.¹⁴

The Bedwellty Guardians were predominantly from mining families, living in the community they served and sensitive to local problems.¹⁵ As Sian Rhiannon Williams notes, in contrast with neighbouring Crickhowell, Bedwellty's policy was to follow Ministry rules regarding relief of strikers.¹⁶ However, guardians from Blaina did not always comply. A Ministry of Health briefing revealed that more than eight hundred ineligible strikers were relieved during a single week of May 1926, while some Relieving Officers circumvented rules applying to strikers by giving extra relief to their mothers.¹⁷ Blaina Relieving Officers' records were not to the expected standard, nor had their committee exercised the expected level of oversight.¹⁸ Six months later, the guardians heard that over a fifteen-week period, Blaina had generated medical notes for extra nourishment to a value nearly two hundred pounds above that for the remaining five Bedwellty districts together; some guardians, including Walter Conway, felt Blaina had been 'very generous at the expense of the other districts', and guardians' meetings

¹³ Foot, I loc. 907.

¹⁴ 'Wage-Earner Applies for Relief', *South Wales Gazette*, 16 March 1926; GA, CSWBGB/M1/34, Bedwellty PLU Minutes May 1926, p. 167.

¹⁵ Census, 1921 and 1931; 'Boards of Guardians', *South Wales Gazette*, 10 April 1923, p. 4.

¹⁶ Williams, p. 70.

¹⁷ TNA, MH68/264, Briefing, Commissioners' Office for South Wales, November 1926.

¹⁸ TNA, MH68/264.

grew fractious.¹⁹ From this point onwards, suspension of the guardians was inevitable, precipitated by Blaina's continual disregard for agreed loan conditions. Relations between Ministry and PLU deteriorated further as deputations pressed the guardians to seek improved scales and relief for single men.²⁰ In May 1926, the General Strike and the lockout which followed made Chamberlain even more intransigent, insisting that 'single men in lodgings should not be relieved, and will therefore be evicted and foodless'.²¹ Chamberlain knew the Bedwellty workhouse was already full; he clearly intended the men should migrate.²² Urged on by Bedwellty ratepayers, Chamberlain suspended the guardians in February 1927.²³ While Chamberlain's efforts to rein in the guardians reflect what Bentley Gilbert saw as evidence of a 'narrow bureaucratic inhumanity', there is little doubt that some guardians continued to ignore Ministry guidelines right up to their suspension.²⁴

The Appointed Guardians

Following a short period under existing Commissioners, Chamberlain appointed three salaried guardians from outside West Monmouthshire to run the Bedwellty PLU, including Major Dixon, an Abergavenny guardian.²⁵ Numbers receiving outdoor relief

¹⁹ 'Strong Resentment', *South Wales Gazette*, 12 November 1926, p. 8.

²⁰ GA, CSWBGB/M1/34, Bedwellty PLU Minutes, 28 April 1926.

²¹ TNA, MH68/262, Overdrawn Treasurer's Account and Strike Emergency Arrangements 1926, Memorandum: Francis to Strohmeyer, 21 May 1926.

²² TNA MH68/262, note from William Hall, Clerk to the Bedwellty Guardians.

²³ TNA, MH68/265; 'Deputation of Ratepayers', *Western Mail*, 3 December 1926.

²⁴ Bentley B. Gilbert, *British Social Policy: 1914 - 1939* (London: Batsford, 1973), pp. 204, 210-12; Neville Chamberlain and Robert C. Self, *The Neville Chamberlain Diary Letters* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), II, p. 29.

²⁵ *Hansard*, HC, 5th Series, 23 July 1929, vol. 230, cols 1191-1197.

in West Monmouthshire fell from 16,750 to 5,062 within the first two months.²⁶ As Figure 5 shows, the reduction in out-relief between March and September 1927 was astonishing, amounting to more than eighty per cent in the first full half-year of the appointed guardians' tenure:

Half-year ended:				
30-Sep-25	31-Mar-26	30-Sep-26	31-Mar-27	30-Sep-27
£102,420	£119,027	£318,694	£210,083	£38,322

*Figure 5 Half-Yearly Expenditure on Out-Relief in the Bedwellty Union, September 1925-27.*²⁷

The average number of people relieved each week reduced from 11,484 between September 1926 and March 1927, to 1,391 in the half year to September 1927.²⁸ To achieve this, the appointed guardians stopped relieving men living in lodging houses and single able-bodied men with no dependents; many were forced to consider migration, which was undoubtedly the intention, although at this stage, there were few schemes and little assistance available.²⁹ If single men remained at home, they needed to share whatever relief had been allocated to the rest of the family or, like Ben Morris

²⁶ Chamberlain and Self, II, p. 315, letter to Hilda Chamberlain, 17 October 1925; Beatrice Webb and Sidney Webb, *English Poor Law History: Part 2, Volume II, The Last Hundred Years*, English Local Government Series, IX (London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd, 1963), p. 935.

²⁷ Based on data drawn from *Bedwellty Union: Report of the Guardians Appointed by the Minister of Health*, Cmd 2976, 1927, p. 5.

²⁸ Cmd 2976, p. 7.

²⁹ 'TNA MH68/262'; migration will be discussed in Chapter 4; Cmd 2976, p. 6.

from New Tredegar, eat at a local relief committee soup kitchen.³⁰ Provision of ‘extras’ such as clothes, boots and coal became a rare occurrence.³¹

As Sian Rhiannon Williams shows, the rules were particularly harsh on larger families, and those where the only adult was an unemployed man: in March 1927, a widowed father with seven children had his weekly benefit cut from twenty-five shillings to fourteen.³² The appointed guardians to Chester-le-Street, another PLU subject to the *Default Act*, had implemented similar cuts, reducing the total value of their relief payments by approximately fifty per cent within four months; however, unemployment in Chester-le-Street had fallen and the appointed guardians had begun repaying loans, and reducing rates, which was not possible in Bedwellty despite strict economies.³³ There was little evidence that those refused relief found jobs: in November 1927, pressed to justify his claim that ‘in despair a lot of the unemployed obtained work’, Chamberlain admitted having only ‘a general impression [...] derived from verbal conversations’.³⁴ Abertillery MP George Daggar asked why new factories were not being sited in his constituency; Hore-Belisha for the Board of Trade said that developers

³⁰ ‘SWCC, AUD/22, Interview: Benjamin Morris’, 1979.

³¹ Cmd 2976, p. 6.

³² Bedwellty Guardians’ Correspondence 1927, Clerk’s Report, cited in Williams, p. 9.

³³ *Chester-Le-Street Union: Report of the Board of Guardians*, Cmd 2018, 1926, p. 5; *Hansard*, HC, 5th Series, 23 July 1929, vol. 230, cols 1239-1250.

³⁴ *Hansard*, HC, 5th Series, 17 November 1927, vol. 210, cols 1103-1105.

chose their own locations, taking account of rates and ease of transport, both of which were an issue in West Monmouthshire.³⁵

Both ends of the political spectrum expressed concern at the approach of the appointed guardians. The mainly Conservative Ebbw Vale Ratepayers' Association complained of 'brutal methods' of the appointed guardians towards widows and others.³⁶ During 1928, Labour Party representatives toured Monmouthshire and Glamorgan, finding Nantyglo and Blaina 'in a desperate condition', with Abertillery 'not far behind'.³⁷ They found rent arrears, widespread dependency on charity and support from relatives, and that most privately-owned homes had been sold or heavily mortgaged.³⁸ Medical officers worried about the health of children, infants and new mothers, while teachers attributed truancy from school and training centres to lack of boots and clothing.³⁹ Envisaging little prospect of industrial recovery, the investigators accepted that while 'partial evacuation' might be necessary, this should not be 'pursued through the abject misery of the men and women who live in the district'.⁴⁰ In 1929, Susan Lawrence, MP for East Ham North, credited this report with being the catalyst for The Lord Mayors' Fund, a national appeal in aid of distressed areas such as West Monmouthshire.⁴¹ During the same debate, Aneurin Bevan, recently elected MP for Ebbw Vale, noted that even Bedwellty Conservative Clubs had condemned the state of Poor Law Relief under

³⁵ *Hansard*, HC, 5th Series, 1928, vol. 215, cols 825-950.

³⁶ 'Bedwellty Relief', *Western Mail*, 15 October 1927.

³⁷ Labour Party Committee of Inquiry, *The Distress in South Wales* (London: The Labour Party, 1928).

³⁸ *The Distress in South Wales*, p. 6; SWCC, AUD/22.

³⁹ *The Distress in South Wales*, pp. 5-6, 9.

⁴⁰ *The Distress in South Wales*, p. 7.

⁴¹ *Hansard*, 23 July 1929.

the appointed guardians.⁴² Clearly, exposure to conditions in West Monmouthshire was beginning to change both national and local attitudes towards poverty.

The Monmouthshire Public Assistance Committee

In August 1929 the new Labour Government replaced the appointed guardians for West Ham, Chester-le-Street and Bedwellty with county council nominees. The following April, counties themselves took over responsibility for Poor Relief under the terms of the *Local Government Act (1929)*, establishing Public Assistance Committees (PACs) to administer Ministry-approved relief schemes, and appointing local Guardians' Committees to assess individuals and provide relief within the scheme.⁴³ In Monmouthshire, the West Monmouthshire Guardians' Committee covered the former Bedwellty PLU area. As recommended by the *Local Government Act (1929)*, the PAC had appointed experienced PLU guardians to lead Guardians' Committees.⁴⁴ Fraser notes that one aim of transferring the Board of Guardians' powers to the PAC was to reduce opportunities for Labour guardians to offer generous relief rates.⁴⁵ Monmouthshire was burdened with the debts of the former Bedwellty Union, at the time of suspension amounting to £1,100,000, of which the Ministry excused £780,000.⁴⁶ Servicing the remaining £320,000 cost more each year than the Monmouthshire Police Force.⁴⁷ Given the inherited debt, the PAC was determined to keep West Monmouthshire within the rules. Between 1930 and 1935, the PAC routinely rejected

⁴² *Hansard*, 23 July 1929.

⁴³ *Local Government Act 1929*, 19 Geo. 5 C.17, pp. 5–7; *Hansard*, 23 July 1929.

⁴⁴ 19 Geo. 5 C.17, p. 8; *Hansard*, 23 July 1929.

⁴⁵ Fraser, p. 222.

⁴⁶ 'Bedwellty Union Debt'.

⁴⁷ 'Bedwellty Union Debt', p. 16.

West Monmouthshire's allocations of trousers for workmen or maternity wear, sharply reminding guardians that grants of clothing should be 'confined to necessitous persons proceeding to sanatoria or hospitals, and to necessitous girls [proceeding to] domestic service'.⁴⁸ Given the continued reminders and rejections, it is not credible that West Monmouthshire Guardians expected their recommendations to succeed; they must therefore have been a form of protest. The PAC's successful intervention to prevent any further catastrophic effect on the county's finances demonstrates the success of government policy in this respect.

Recognising that locally-funded relief systems would be unable to cope with any additional influx of unemployed, in 1931 MacDonald's National Government introduced 'Transitional Payments' for those whose eligibility for Unemployment Insurance had expired. Although centrally-funded, payments were administered by the PACs, with local guardians charged with conducting a household Means Test, the first time recipients of a national benefit had been subject to such a measure.⁴⁹ MacDonald was keen to ensure the new scheme appeared more generous than Poor Relief, but since the Means Test was administered by local guardians, any difference was obscure to recipients, who as Ward notes, had often made many years' National Insurance contributions and resented 'the taint of the Poor Law'.⁵⁰ Abertillery miner Clarence Lloyd saw Macdonald as a 'bloody traitor', claiming to be Labour, but designing

⁴⁸ GA, C/SWPA/M/1, Monmouthshire PAC Minutes, 1931'; GA, C/SWPA/M/2, Monmouthshire PAC Minutes, 1931-32, pp. 129-30, 135; GA, C/SWPA/M/6, Monmouthshire PAC Minutes, 1935-36.

⁴⁹ Fraser, p. 229.

⁵⁰ Stephanie Ward, 'The Means Test and the Unemployed in South Wales and the North-East of England, 1931-1939', *Labour History Review*, 73.1 (2008), 113-32.

measures to ‘crush and destroy family life’.⁵¹ During the first three months of operation, the Monmouthshire PAC dealt with 16,000 cases, yet their chairman said they had saved only £700 ‘at the expense of the poorest people in the county’; he added that the Means Test was ‘ruining family life in Monmouthshire as sons and daughters were leaving home [...] so that their parents could obtain unemployment benefit’.⁵² By February 1932 the government was concerned that some PACs, including Monmouthshire, were demonstrating ‘unjustifiable laxity in ascertaining the means of applicants for transitional benefits’.⁵³ The Ministry of Labour issued ultimatums to several PACs including Monmouthshire and Swansea. Swansea PAC was superseded; Monmouthshire agreed to review procedures, and no further action was taken.⁵⁴ However, experience with the defaulting PLUs had shown that tough measures were more readily implemented by those with a degree of detachment from the local population: Bevan pointed out that Major Dixon, Chairman of the appointed guardians in Bedwellty, was considered ‘reasonable and humane’ as an elected guardian in Abergavenny, yet in Bedwellty, where he could ‘simply motor into the district and out

⁵¹ SWCC, AUD/332, Interview: Clarence Lloyd, 1974.

⁵² ‘The Means Test’, *Western Mail*, 4 February 1932, p. 12; ‘The Position in South Wales’, *The Times*, 25 July 1932, p. 15.

⁵³ ‘Serious Disclosures’, *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 24 February 1932, p. 4; *Hansard*, HC, 5th Series, 05 April 1932, vol. 264, cols 25-111.

⁵⁴ Stephanie Ward, *Unemployment and the State in Britain: The Means Test and Protest in 1930s South Wales and North-East England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), p. 75.

of it as quickly as possible after insulting and bullying the people', had the reputation of being 'more barbarous than any other administrator'.⁵⁵

Aiming for a more consistent approach, in 1935 MacDonald's government centralised support for those whose national insurance benefits were exhausted under an Unemployment Assistance Board (UAB), removing the long-term unemployed from the scope of the PAC in yet another step towards the Welfare State.⁵⁶ It soon became clear that UAB scales would frequently be lower than those allowed by the PAC, and that the hated Means Test would be rigorously enforced; in West Monmouthshire, there were demonstrations at Nantyglo and special meetings of the PAC.⁵⁷ The following month, the government hastily introduced interim measures known as the 'Standstill Act' allowing PAC rates to be claimed if these were preferable; this did not deter a conference of Labour women in Abertillery from deploring the UAB for providing 'totally inadequate scales' and 'destroying the unity of family life', nor did it prevent further protest in West Monmouthshire.⁵⁸ Meanwhile, the Special Areas Commissioner proposed a Severn Bridge to aid economic recovery in South Wales, but the government

⁵⁵ *Hansard*, 23 July 1929, vol. 230, cols 1192, 1195.

⁵⁶ *Unemployment Act 1935*, 24 & 25 Geo. 5 C.29.

⁵⁷ 'Demonstration by Unemployed', *Western Mail*, 11 January 1935, p. 13.

⁵⁸ *Unemployment Assistance (Temporary Provisions) Act 1935*, 25 & 26 Geo. 5 C. 6; 'Labour Women', *South Wales Gazette*, 22 February 1935, p. 1.

rejected the idea both in 1935 and 1937 as having a lower priority than Defence spending.⁵⁹

Local Activists and Trade Unions

The dominant Trade Union in West Monmouthshire was the SWMF. Ben Morris from New Tredegar in the Rhymney Valley remembered the ‘Fed’ of his youth as the advice bureau; its officials ‘virtually ran village life’, and were the only people to challenge local coalowner Powell Dyffryn.⁶⁰ The degree of unionisation depended on local leadership capability: Morris said that following the General Strike, union membership was only around sixty per cent in the Rhymney Valley, whereas at Markham, where there was ‘better leadership at Lodge level’, it approached one hundred per cent.⁶¹ After the General Strike, more than 70,000 miners deserted the SWMF.⁶² Tredegar committee member Oliver Powell recalled a time of ‘bitterness and hatred’, as middle-aged men had no possible hope of rebuilding savings spent during the strike, and ‘directed their venom’ at the strikers.⁶³ Francis and Smith note that the Settlement Agreement with the coalowners had promised there would be no victimisation following the return to work, but this was often dishonoured and men like Powell found themselves hated by workers and blacklisted by owners.⁶⁴ Michael Foot contends that during the thirties unions were

⁵⁹ *First Report of the Commissioner for the Special Areas (England and Wales)*, Cmd 4957, 1935, p. 25; *Report of the Commissioner for the Special Areas in England and Wales for the Year Ended 30th September 1937*, Cmd 5595.

⁶⁰ SWCC, AUD/22.

⁶¹ SWCC, AUD/22.

⁶² Hywel Francis and David Smith, *The Fed: A History of the South Wales Miners in the Twentieth Century*, New Paperback Edition (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), p. 78.

⁶³ SWCC, AUD/316, Interview: Oliver Powell, 1973.

⁶⁴ Francis and Smith, p. 75; SWCC, AUD/316; SWCC, AUD/329, Interview: Phil Abrahams, 1974; SWCC, AUD/332.

‘fighting a losing battle’ for wages, and felt unable to take on additional responsibilities for the unemployed.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, through sponsorship of local MPs, including Charles Edwards, George Daggar and Aneurin Bevan, the SWMF retained considerable political influence in West Monmouthshire.⁶⁶

In Abertillery, Nantyglo and Blaina, the combination of disillusionment with the SWMF plus the poverty of long-term unemployment, drew men like Phil Abrahams and Clarence Lloyd to the Communist Party and its offshoot, the National Unemployed Workers’ Movement (NUWM).⁶⁷ Abrahams said there were ‘thousands’ of NUWM members in Blaina, while the Communist Party itself numbered approximately one hundred and twenty people; neither organisation was well-represented in other parts of West Monmouthshire.⁶⁸ As local Communist recruiter, Abrahams sought only people who would be ‘the vanguard of the workers’ and ‘sober, upright citizens’ for Party membership.

Protest marches were part of life in West Monmouthshire. In 1923 1,700 unemployed men marched on the guardians at Tredegar, with an even larger march being led by Aneurin Bevan in 1925.⁶⁹ Women often marched with the men, but might separately make points that their husbands would not publicly support: in April 1923, three hundred Abertillery women joined an all-women demonstration proposing resolution through negotiation and arbitration rather than lockouts and strikes, and the introduction

⁶⁵ Foot, I, loc. 2575.

⁶⁶ Francis and Smith, pp. 17, 242.

⁶⁷ SWCC, AUD/329.

⁶⁸ SWCC, AUD/329; SWCC, AUD/316.

⁶⁹ ‘New Demands’, *Western Mail*, 11 January 1923, p. 5; ‘March of 8,000’, *Daily Herald*, 26 November 1925, p. 6.

of a secret ballot for Trade Union members.⁷⁰ Local delegates on the Hunger Marches of the nineteen-thirties were mainly from Abertillery, Nantyglo and Blaina, with Clarence Lloyd attending all three, and remembering the 1936 march as being the best organised, with better food and sleeping arrangements.⁷¹ Oliver Powell joined the 1926 march, but ‘couldn’t see the point’ of attending more.⁷² In March 1935, the anti-Means Test ‘Blaina Riots’ took place. Intending a deputation to the guardians, a contingent of 5,000 from Nantyglo marched towards Blaina, and was met by a cordon of police.⁷³ Opinions differ as to who started the fight that ensued, but seven policemen and nine protesters required medical attention, with more from both sides suffering minor injuries.⁷⁴ Eighteen men were charged: eleven, including Phil Abrahams and Clarence Lloyd, received prison sentences of up to nine months, while the others were either cleared or fined. All were known Communists, or members of the NUWM.⁷⁵ Speaking in 1974, Abrahams asked ‘Why the words “Great Riot”? I remember there wasn't a window broken, there wasn't a single bit of damage anywhere, except to police batons on workmen’s heads’.⁷⁶ Publicity from the Blaina area certainly kept West Monmouthshire in the public eye, although perhaps not always in a positive light. Regarding the Hunger Marches, a letter from a newsreel editor to the Commissioner of Police in London reveals that news producers were asked not to film the 1934 marchers;

⁷⁰ ““No Lockout, No Strike””, *South Wales Gazette*, 23 April 1926, p. 10.

⁷¹ SWCC, AUD/332; ‘Coalfield Web Materials’ <<http://www.agor.org.uk/cwm/>> [accessed 3 December 2017].

⁷² SWCC, AUD/316.

⁷³ *Hansard*, HC, 5th Series, 1935, vol. 299, cols 1584-85.

⁷⁴ *Hansard*, 25 March 1935.

⁷⁵ ‘Sentences - Blaina Riots’, *The Times*, 19 July 1935, p. 16; Martyn Thomas, ‘The Blaina Riots 1935’, *Abertillery Online* <<http://www.abertillery.net/oldabertillery/tales/blainariots.html>> [accessed 20 July 2018].

⁷⁶ SWCC, AUD/329.

whether this was for security reasons, or because the government was concerned the marchers might attract public sympathy is unclear.⁷⁷

Conclusion

Political intervention in poverty relief for West Monmouthshire between the wars reflected the struggle between socialist ‘maintenance or work’ principles and the older concept of the ‘undeserving poor’. When poor relief was administered locally by those continually exposed to West Monmouthshire’s hardships, maintenance was as generous as possible within the rules (or, in the case of the Bedwellty PLU, sometimes outside them). When control was removed from West Monmouthshire, as in the case of the appointed guardians and the UAB, rules were strictly administered, and even punitive; the impact of this will be explained in more detail in Chapter 4. West Monmouthshire’s overly-generous implementation of the rules sent a clear message to the government that tough measures required central administration.

Both the regime of the appointed guardians and the UAB’s implementation of the Means Test caused real hardship, leading to protests from diverse viewpoints including the Ebbw Vale Ratepayers’ Association, the Labour Party enquiry of 1928, and the Bedwellty Conservative Association. While Blaina’s efforts to undermine government rules may have been counter-productive in the short-term, growing public sympathy

⁷⁷ TNA, ‘Marchers Not to Be Filmed’, Letter: Editor, Universal News, to the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, 3 February 1934
<<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/education/resources/thirties-britain/#teachers-notes>> [accessed 20 December 2018].

from those encountered on Hunger March routes may account for the improvement to food and sleeping arrangements during the 1936 march. Police efforts to prevent filming of the 1934 march may reflect government concern that marchers would attract public sympathy.

The main government strategy for resolving West Monmouthshire's unemployment was to force young, single men to migrate by denying them relief if they remained at home. High rates resulting from government debt and the cost of poor relief, and poor transport connections deterred potential industrial development, yet successive governments failed to address the financial difficulties, and MacDonald's government refused to invest in proposals for a Severn Bridge, which would have initially brought construction work to Monmouthshire, and then improved the transport situation. The frequency and speed of changes to newly-introduced policies evident in Lloyd George's three amendments to Unemployment Insurance in 1921, and MacDonald's rapid turnaround on UAB policy in 1935 suggests a lack of forethought.

This chapter has shown that inter-war government policies led to considerable hardship in West Monmouthshire; the next chapter will examine the involvement of the non-governmental sector.

Chapter 3: The Extent and Impact of Non-Governmental Welfare Support

Introduction

This chapter examines the extent and impact of non-governmental welfare support in West Monmouthshire between the wars, including examples of mutualism, external philanthropy, and the growing interaction between voluntary and state aid. Representing mutualism, the workmen's institute was a feature of every Valleys town, usually one of its most prominent and well-used buildings, and a source of pride. Medical aid societies provided vital support in communities dependent on a dangerous industry and represented a move towards independence from facilities previously provided by the employer. Examples of external philanthropy include major charities such as Save the Children Fund, the Pilgrim Trust, which was founded in 1930 to help with Britain's 'most urgent needs', and support provided by individual towns, which helped bring the poverty of West Monmouthshire to wider notice.¹ The interaction between the government and the Lord Mayors' Fund emphasises growing acceptance that non-governmental welfare could not alone address long-term structural poverty such as that experienced in West Monmouthshire. In 1928, twenty-eight per cent of the insured male population of Monmouthshire, in excess of 100,000 men, were unemployed, and as Figure 2 in Chapter One shows, the situation grew much worse during the 1930s.

Additional secondary sources for this chapter include Geoffrey Finlayson's article on

¹ 'History', *The Pilgrim Trust* <<https://www.thepilgrimtrust.org.uk/about-us/history/>> [accessed 10 December 2018].

the ‘moving frontier’ between voluntarism and state support between 1911-49.² In his essay on welfare provision in the ‘distressed mining areas’, Bernard Harris highlights the substantial ‘mixed economy’ of charity and government support, with particular reference to the Lord Mayors’ Fund.³

Institutes and Libraries

Workmen’s Institutes were cultural, educational and social hubs, owned and managed by the community. Usually bought with the aid of loans or donations from the main local employer, operational funding was via deductions from wages.⁴ Institutes typically included a library and public reading room, and a hall which could be hired for political meetings, concerts or adult education.⁵ There were games rooms, and slipper baths for men and women. In larger institutes such as Tredegar and Ebbw Vale, touring theatre productions were popular diversions and useful sources of income.⁶ Women and children could use the Institutes as family members.⁷ Families without connection to the local employer could pay an ‘outside’ rate, and individual activities were often open

² Geoffrey Finlayson, ‘A Moving Frontier: Voluntarism and the State in British Social Welfare 1911–1949’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 1.2 (1990), 183–206.

³ Bernard Harris, ‘Government and Charity in the Distressed Mining Areas of England and South Wales’, in *Medicine and Charity Before the Welfare State*, ed. by Jonathan Barry, Studies in the Social History of Medicine, Kindle Edition (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 213–14.

⁴ Chris Baggs, ‘The Whole Tragedy of Leisure in Penury: The South Wales Miners’ Institute Libraries during the Great Depression’, *Libraries; the Cultural Record*, 39.2 (2004), 115–36 (p. 119).

⁵ ‘Tredegar Workmen’s Hall and Institute’, *Coflein* <<http://www.coflein.gov.uk/en/site/414878/details/tredegar-workmens-hall-and-institute-tredegar-temperance-hall>> [accessed 18 September 2018]; ‘Powell’s Tillery Miner’s Institute – A History’, *Out Of The Blue Artifacts* <<https://outoftheblueartifacts.com/powells-tillery-miners-institute-a-history/>> [accessed 18 October 2018]; ‘Tredegar Amenities’, *Western Mail*, 11 January 1926, p. 8; ‘Blaina Workmen’s Hall and Institute’, *Coflein* <<http://www.coflein.gov.uk/en/site/414883/details/blaina-workmens-hall-and-institute>> [accessed 30 September 2018].

⁶ ‘On Tour’, *Stage*, 9 February 1928, p. 1.

⁷ Baggs, ‘Leisure in Penury’; ‘Tredegar Honours Mr. Aneurin Bevan’, *Western Mail*, 30 September 1946, p. 5; SWCC, AUD/316, Interview: Oliver Powell, 1973.

to all upon payment of a fee.⁸

The range of activities available demonstrates that mining communities had a keen interest in current affairs and in ‘bettering themselves’ through education and reading. The institutes thus facilitated a way out of the pits for men like Aneurin Bevan, who attended the Central Labour College, and Archie Lush, who obtained an Oxford scholarship despite leaving Grammar School at the age of fourteen.⁹ Sports might also broaden horizons: the Tillery Institute included a gym, which sent two representatives to the 1920 Olympic Games, and had ladies’ teams competing at national level during the nineteen-twenties.¹⁰

As mass unemployment reduced the numbers able to afford full subscriptions, many institutes ran into financial problems. By 1924, the Blaina Reading Institute was in debt and dependent on whist drives and concerts for income.¹¹ The growing numbers of unemployed might struggle to afford even reduced fees, although there were charitable book loan schemes, such as that set up by the Pilgrim Trust.¹² Ebbw Vale and Tredegar institutes leased space to a cinema, with Tredegar taking over their cinema completely from 1936.¹³ By adopting a more commercial model, which Finlayson describes as ‘non-profit distributing voluntarism’, the institutes were able to survive the difficulties

⁸ ‘Tillery Miner’s Institute’.

⁹ SWCC, AUD/338, Interview: Archie Lush, 1972.

¹⁰ ‘Tillery Miner’s Institute’.

¹¹ ‘Blaina Reading Room’, *South Wales Gazette*, June 1924.

¹² National Library of Wales (NLW), H9 19a 30, Dr Thomas Jones C.H. Papers: South Wales Settlements and Centres, Letter: Betterton to Jones, 21 November 1934.

¹³ SWCC, AUD/338; SWCC, AUD/316.

of the inter-war period.¹⁴

In 1921, Aneurin Bevan and a group of friends with similar interests formed a socialist discussion group known as ‘the Query Club’.¹⁵ Aiming to challenge the continuing dominance of town life by the Tredegar Iron and Coal Company, Query Club members sought election to key local committees, including those for the Medical Aid Society and the Workmen’s Institute Trustees. A key target was control of the Workmen’s Institute Library, claimed by Bevan in 1926 to have the ‘largest turnover of books between John O’Groats and Land’s End’.¹⁶ Thanks to income from the cinema, the library committee could order extensively, continuing what Archie Lush later described as the ‘conscious education of the proletariat’.¹⁷ Finlayson highlights the frequent tension between accepting external funding and maintaining independence: the cinema income enabled the Tredegar Institute Library to remain outside the county system.¹⁸ To the surprise of his tutor, Lush could borrow all the books needed for his Oxford PPE degree from the Institute library, while other Query Club members requested left-wing politics and philosophy, poetry and travel books.¹⁹ The focus on political reading was not unique to Tredegar: Abertillery communist Clarence Lloyd remembered studying Marx and Engels through books borrowed from the Tillery Institute.²⁰

¹⁴ Finlayson, p. 205.

¹⁵ Michael Foot, *Aneurin Bevan: A Biography*, Kindle Edition (London: Faber and Faber, 2008), I, locs 653-655.

¹⁶ SWCC, AUD/338; SWCC, AUD/316; Foot, I, loc. 646; ‘Tredegar Amenities’.

¹⁷ SWCC, AUD/338; ‘Tredegar Workmen’s Hall and Institute’.

¹⁸ SWCC, AUD/338; Chris Baggs, ‘“Carnegie Offered Money and a Lot of South Wales Refused to Have It: It Was Blood Money”: Bringing Public Libraries to the South Wales Valleys 1870 to 1939’, *Library History*, 17.3 (2001), 171–79 (p. 175); Finlayson, p. 185.

¹⁹ SWCC, AUD/338; SWCC, AUD/316.

²⁰ SWCC AUD/332, SWCC, AUD/332, Interview: Clarence Lloyd, 1974.

Medical Aid Societies

In West Monmouthshire, there were separate societies at Abertysswg, Ebbw Vale, Rhymney and Tredegar.²¹ Eligibility for membership required residence within the town, and employment at local pits or iron works; benefits were extended to immediate dependent family, the precise level of benefits varying from one society to the next.²² Societies were controlled by elected committees of members, and subscriptions were collected from wages by employers.²³ ‘Unemployed rates’ were available, although as the Pilgrim Trust investigators observed, non-working families struggled to afford the level of cover they needed.²⁴

The Tredegar MAS gave Aneurin Bevan, as patient and committee-member, first-hand experience of an insurance-based health service, free at the point of delivery, and funded via income-based contributions, a progressive tax which, as Curtis and Thompson point out, was then unique to South Wales.²⁵ Acknowledging their influence when medical aid societies were about to be replaced by the NHS, Bevan told them ‘you have shown us the way and by your very efficiency you have brought about your own cessation’.²⁶ Membership cost 3d per pound of income to Tredegar-based

²¹ The National Archives (TNA), MH77/94, ‘Registered Medical Aid Societies’, 1946. Note this is based on the Ministry of Health’s 1944 list of approved societies.

²² TNA, MH49/26/M.5.17/1 Part VII, TNA, MH49/26/M.5.17/1, *Rules of the Tredegar Workmen’s MAS, May 1937-1944*.

²³ *Tredegar WMAS Rules*.

²⁴ William Temple, *Men Without Work: A Report Made to the Pilgrim Trust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938), p. 142.

²⁵ Ben Curtis and Steven Thompson, “‘A Plentiful Crop of Cripples Made by All This Progress’: Disability, Artificial Limbs and Working-Class Mutualism in the South Wales Coalfield, 1890-1948”, *Social History of Medicine*, 27.4 (2014), 708–27 (p. 716).

²⁶ Cited in: James Q Wilson, ‘The Family-Values Debate’, *Commentary*, 95.4 (1993), 24.

employees of local coal companies and their dependents.²⁷ Other Tredegar residents might join for a similar fee, although there were waiting periods before they could claim more expensive treatments such as surgery or high-quality artificial limbs.²⁸

Demonstrating Finlayson's 'moving frontier' towards state funding, basic services were provided under the National Insurance Act 1911.²⁹ Novelist A.J. Cronin was a doctor at Tredegar in the nineteen-twenties, and used his experience as the basis for *The Citadel*, which was made into an Academy Award-nominated film in 1938.³⁰ Sally Dux notes the film was re-released in 1946, illustrating the benefits of a free health service to a wide audience just as the Welfare State was being established.³¹

Funded via the same model as the workmen's institutes, medical aid societies faced similar financial challenges. Tredegar MAS tried requiring contributions towards artificial limb repairs but was obliged to rescind this rule following protests.³² Ebbw Vale MAS was forced to sell a convalescent home at a loss in 1921, as thirteen thousand local men became unemployed, and could at most afford the reduced 'unemployed rate'.³³ Luckily, a grant from the Miners' Welfare Fund helped cover the loss and

²⁷ *Tredegar WMAS Rules*.

²⁸ *Tredegar WMAS Rules*.

²⁹ TNA, MH49/26 M.517.1, Part VII, Tredegar Medical Aid Society, 1937-37; *National Insurance Act 1911*, (1 & 2 Geo. 5 C. 55); Finlayson, pp. 196–206; Aneurin Bevan, 'In Place of Fear: A Free Health Service 1952', *Socialist Health Association*, 1952 <<https://www.sochealth.co.uk/national-health-service/the-sma-and-the-foundation-of-the-national-health-service-dr-leslie-hilliard-1980/aneurin-bevan-and-the-foundation-of-the-nhs/in-place-of-fear-a-free-health-service-1952/>> [accessed 19 December 2018].

³⁰ A.J. Cronin, *The Citadel*, Kindle Edition (Bello, 2013); *The Citadel*, dir. by King Vidor (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1938).

³¹ Sally Dux, 'The Citadel (1938): Doctors, Censors and the Cinema', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 32.1 (2012), 1–17 (p. 15).

³² Gwent Archives (GA), GB 218.D3246.1.8, Tredegar MAS Minutes, 22 August 1935, p. 218.

³³ GA, GB0218.D914, Ebbw Vale Workmen's Medical Society, 1918-39; 'Ebbw Vale: Nineteen Thousand Discharged', *Daily Herald*, 14 February 1921, p. 5; 'Ebbw Vale Dispute', *Scotsman*, 27 September 1922, p. 11.

maintain benefits.³⁴ This had been established in response to the Sankey Report's comments that coalowners took insufficient care of employees' welfare, and was funded via tonnage-based contributions from employers and income-related payroll contributions from miners.³⁵ It made community grants for recreation, health and education purposes, and funded pit-head baths. By June 1923, £423,063 had been collected for South Wales and Monmouthshire, increasing to £1,758,628 by 1936.³⁶

Charity and Philanthropy

Harris points out that during the inter-war period, the government's view was that growth of state welfare provision should be limited while private charity should help meet 'exceptional need'.³⁷ Following a visit to the coalfields in 1926, Lady Astor launched a special appeal on behalf of the Save the Children Fund (SCF), which was already working with pre-school children and pregnant and nursing mothers in Monmouthshire.³⁸ In 1934, SCF set up an open-air nursery school in neighbouring Brynmawr, aiming to give children time away from the 'evils of indiscipline and neglect' considered inherent in the unemployed household.³⁹ Employing

³⁴ GA, GB0218.D914.

³⁵ *Mining Industry Act 1920*, (10 & 11 Geo. 5 C. 50), Section 20; *Hansard*, HC, 5th Series, 22 November 1920, vol. 135 cols 1-3; *Coal Industry Commission: Vol. II, Reports and Minutes of Evidence on the Second Stage of the Inquiry*, (Cmd. 360), pp. 527, 639.

³⁶ *Hansard*, HC, 5th Series, 1923, vol. 166 cols, 1755-6W ; *The Colliery Year Book and Coal Trades Directory 1938* (London: The Louis Cassier Co. Ltd, 1937), p. 657.

³⁷ Bernard Harris, 'Government and Charity in the Distressed Mining Areas of England and South Wales', in *Medicine and Charity Before the Welfare State*, ed. by Jonathan Barry, Studies in the Social History of Medicine, Kindle Edition (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 206.

³⁸ 'For Miners' Children', *The Times*, 3 June 1926, p. 17 (p. 7); 'The Women's Leader: The Appeal for the Miners' Children', *Common Cause*, 11 June 1926, p. 7; *Education Act 1921*, 11 & 12 Geo. 5 C. 51.

³⁹ SCF Collection, Birmingham University (SCF), SCF/A1221 (M8/3), 'SCF, Origins of the Nursery School Committee', 1943, cited in; Rebecca Gill and Daryl Leeworthy, 'Moral Minefields: Save the Children Fund and the Moral Economies of Nursery Schooling in the South Wales Coalfield in the 1930s', *Journal of Global Ethics*, 11.2 (2015), 218-32.

professionally-trained staff and granted recognition by the Board of Education, the nursery's operational costs were centrally-funded in an example of what Finlayson describes as the 'moving frontier' between private and state funding.⁴⁰

Other organised philanthropic groups operating in West Monmouthshire included the Pilgrim Trust and the Society of Friends. Both focussed on finding occupation for the unemployed and promoting self-sufficiency. In 1932, the Society of Friends opened a small-scale factory in neighbouring Brynmawr, repairing boots and making hosiery and high-quality furniture; by October 1934, the factories employed forty-five men, in an area with a population of 7,000.⁴¹ By providing a means of livelihood that might lead to at least partial independence from Unemployment Benefit or Poor Relief, the scheme attracted the interest of the Commissioner for Special Areas and in 1935 was awarded a grant of £4,000.⁴² The boot-making enterprise obtained the contract to supply the relief efforts of the Lord Mayors' Fund in 1929, and eventually became self-sufficient.⁴³ Furniture-making continued until 1939 when, anticipating a downturn in demand for high-quality items, both workers and factory transferred to the munitions industry.⁴⁴ Recognising that the likelihood of finding regular work decreased with age, the Society of Friends developed 'subsistence production' opportunities for seventy older men.⁴⁵ Demonstrating again the growing mixed economy of support, the Society's efforts were

⁴⁰ Gill and Leeworthy; Finlayson, p. 184.

⁴¹ 'New Boot Factory at Brynmawr', *The Times*, 30 September 1937, p. 9; 'Garden from Coal Tip', *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail*, 17 March 1932.

⁴² *First Report of the Commissioner for the Special Areas (England and Wales)*, (Cmd 4957), 1935, p. 22.

⁴³ 'Brynmawr Furniture-Makers Must Shortly Close Down Owing to the War', *Western Mail*, 1 February 1940, p. 1.

⁴⁴ 'Prince George In Wales', *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail*, 7 December 1931, p. 5; Peter Lord and John Morgan-Guy, 'Visual Culture', in *The Gwent County History. Vol. 5: The Twentieth Century*, ed. by Chris Williams and Ralph Alan Griffiths (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013), pp. 275–76.

⁴⁵ 'The Brynmawr Experiment', *The Times*, 10 September 1938, p. 7; *Men Without Work*, p. 21.

aided by £82,000 in grants from the Special Areas Commission.⁴⁶

Co-operating within the voluntary sector, the Pilgrim Trust supported the SCF's nursery schools, and worked with the Order of St John to train youngsters from deprived areas as first aid cadets; hearing about the latter, the Prince of Wales emphasised the benefits of such a service in a mining area.⁴⁷ The Prince and his brother George made several visits to West Monmouthshire, and were particularly impressed by schemes such as those organised by the Pilgrim Trust and the Society of Friends.⁴⁸ As newsreel shows, neither the Royal Family nor the camera accompanying them shied away from visiting derelict mining towns; this helped bring the plight of areas like West Monmouthshire to the notice of the general public.⁴⁹ Finlayson notes that abolition of the Means Test in 1930 aroused suspicion of 'scroungers and malingerers': where people had the opportunity to visit West Monmouthshire for themselves, see it through newsreel, or read passionate articles by people from their own backgrounds, this suspicion reduced.⁵⁰

Smaller initiatives included a scheme for affluent towns to 'adopt' deprived parishes.⁵¹

One area to benefit was Rhymney, which was adopted by Eastbourne in late 1928: clothes and money were received with gratitude.⁵² A year later, following a visit to Rhymney by two Eastbourne councillors, food vouchers were provided; Eastbourne

⁴⁶ 'Work of Subsistence Production', *The Times*, 19 July 1937, p. 20.

⁴⁷ 'Importance of First Aid To-Day', *The Times*, 17 May 1933, p. 11.

⁴⁸ 'The King and Queen In South Wales Tour of Distressed Villages', *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 14 July 1937, p. 1; 'Of South Wales', *Liverpool Echo*, 17 December 1931, p. 7.

⁴⁹ 'Prince George In Wales'; *Prince of Wales with Miners* (British Pathé, 1918); *Prince of Wales Visits Miners* (Reuters - Gaumont British Newsreel, 1929); *Workless* (British Pathé, 1929); *The King in South Wales* (British Pathé, 1938).

⁵⁰ Finlayson, p. 193.

⁵¹ 'Winter in South Wales', *The Times*, 23 November 1928, p. 17.

⁵² TNA, MH 79/304, Memorandum on Adoption, 1928.

cared only that beneficiaries were ‘impoverished’, not how they came to be in that situation.⁵³ Donating vouchers rather than food itself enabled Rhymney’s grocers to benefit too. Similar arrangements were made elsewhere, including St Leonards’, Hastings and Bexhill with Nantyglo.⁵⁴ These schemes were small-scale relative to the overall situation: given unemployment levels, donations of one or two thousand pounds, while very welcome, had little overall impact.⁵⁵ However, the relationships helped expose the extent of depression in West Monmouthshire to a wider and more prosperous audience. One shocked Eastbourne councillor described his visit to Rhymney in the *Eastbourne Gazette*, explaining the realities of large families trying to manage on less than two pounds a week; gradually, people in middle-class heartlands became aware of the situation in West Monmouthshire, and tried to help.⁵⁶ Their efforts were sometimes given wider publicity, for example in *The Times*.⁵⁷

During the General Strike and lockout, families often depended on local relief. However, the Labour Party’s Report into the *Distress in South Wales* noted that Blaina, Rhymney and Nantyglo in particular had virtually exhausted community resources, and therefore needed external help.⁵⁸ Blaina’s co-op, one of the oldest in South Wales, was forced to prohibit further withdrawals after seeing its share capital fall from £250,000 in 1920 to £80,000 in Feb 1928, while annual sales dropped from £800,000 in 1920 to

⁵³ ‘Appreciation from Rhymney’, *Eastbourne Gazette*, 15 January 1930.

⁵⁴ TNA, MH 79/304; ‘Willesden Council’, *West London Observer*, 14 December 1928; ‘British Legion Women.’, *Bexhill-On-Sea Observer*, 24 October 1925, p. 5.

⁵⁵ See Chapter One Figure 2; ‘Appreciation from Rhymney’.

⁵⁶ ‘Plight of Rhymney’, 26 December 1928, p. 1.

⁵⁷ ‘Adopting Towns’, *The Times*, 19 September 1933, p. 9.

⁵⁸ *The Distress in South Wales* (London: The Labour Party, 1928), pp. 5–7.

£175,000 in 1939.⁵⁹ Organisations such as the Abertillery Maternity Relief Committee provided food, clothes and blankets for pregnant women, while the Miners' Federation of Great Britain funded 'soup kitchens' to provide what miner Ben Morris described as a 'solid meal of corned beef and potatoes each day'.⁶⁰ Sue Bruley comments that sixteen thousand people every day were fed by soup kitchen or school meals in Abertillery.⁶¹

'Mixed Economy' Approaches

Both Minister of Health, Neville Chamberlain, and President of the Board of Education, Lord Eustace Percy, believed the burden of relieving the deprived coalfields should be shared with private benefactors.⁶² As matters grew steadily worse in West Monmouthshire, in 1928 the Lord Mayors of London, Cardiff and Durham established a fund to help relieve poverty, initially focussing on the South Wales, Durham and Northumberland coalfields. Although a private 'Mansion House' appeal was a common vehicle for raising funds, in this particular instance, Ministers Chamberlain and Percy, were heavily involved in defining its parameters.⁶³ They decided to focus on boots and clothing for necessitous women and children, clothing for young people about to start

⁵⁹ 'Interesting Dates in the History of Blaina Coop', *Blaina and Nantyglo* <http://blaina.gwenheritage.org.uk/content/catalogue_item/interesting-dates-in-the-history-of-blaina-coop> [accessed 3 September 2018].

⁶⁰ Neville Kirk, Keith Gildart, and David Howell, 'Beatrice Green', *Dictionary of Labour Biography* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); South Wales Coalfield Collection (SWCC), AUD/332; SWCC, AUD/22, Interview: Benjamin Morris, 1979.

⁶¹ 'Beatrice Green and the Unsung Heroines', *walesonline*, 2017 <<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/lifestyle/nostalgia/beatrice-green-unsung-heroines-behind-12628495>> [accessed 1 December 2018].

⁶² *Hansard*, HC, 5th Series, 20 December 1928, vol. 223 cols 3378-79; *Hansard*, HC, 5th Series, 26 March 1928, vol. 215, cols 825– 950.

⁶³ TNA, ED24/1391 Part II, Record of meeting held 30 March 1928.

work, and supplementary feeding of children, as they considered these to be uncontentious.⁶⁴ The launch was promoted by *The Times*, and the King and Queen made immediate contributions.⁶⁵ In spite of royal patronage, by December 1928, it was clear that donations alone would be insufficient to meet present need, and the scheme was relaunched with the added incentive of a pound for pound 'matched funding' from the government. The scheme was extended to other 'distressed areas' and, further confusing the boundary between voluntary and state aid, charities were allowed to apply for matched funding provided they adhered to Lord Mayors' Fund rules.⁶⁶ Now responsible for fifty percent of the money in the scheme, Percy was forced to establish a means for distributing and managing donations. Leslie Hore-Belisha, MP for Plymouth Devonport, suggested that slow progress would discourage donations, although Percy disagreed.⁶⁷ However, the public was becoming aware of the urgency of the situation in the coalmining areas, and out of frustration, towns like Northwood had sent their donations directly to the Society of Friends in Monmouthshire for immediate use, even though this meant losing out on the matched funding.⁶⁸

As the table below shows, South Wales and Monmouthshire was the biggest beneficiary of the Fund, being allocated approximately fifty-one percent of the money made available.

⁶⁴ TNA, ED24/1391 Part II.

⁶⁵ 'The Queen's Appeal: Gifts to Cardiff and Newcastle', *The Times*, 8 December 1928, p. 12.

⁶⁶ 'Local Money for Local Needs', *The Times*, 5 January 1929, p. 7.

⁶⁷ *Hansard*, HC, 5th Series, 28 January 1929, vol. 224, cols 599-602.

⁶⁸ 'Distressed Areas', *Uxbridge & W. Drayton Gazette*, 1 February 1929.

	Total Available	S. Wales & Monmouthshire Allocation	S. Wales & Monmouthshire Percentage
Boots and clothing	£873,420	£340,000	39%
"Starting work" outfits	£389,000	£280,000	72%
Food vouchers	£90,545	£65,000	72%
School meals	£32,060	£19,756	62%
TOTAL	£1,385,025	£704,756	51%

Figure 6 South Wales & Monmouthshire Allocation of Lord Mayors' Fund, 1928-1930.⁶⁹

The rules of the Fund were sometimes inconsistent or frustrating. The Lord Mayors' Fund was designated for boots and clothing, and any surplus money could not be diverted to other urgent needs, such as much-needed maternity support in Rhymney.⁷⁰ Anyone leaving home to attend training or 'reconditioning' was ineligible for boots or clothing but might be awarded a new outfit if they found employment.⁷¹ Announcing planned closure of the scheme in 1930, the Lord Mayor of London noted that more than £777,000 had been raised in donations alone, exceeding any previous Mansion House appeal, and that such generosity 'cannot have been without an adverse effect upon many other deserving funds'.⁷² Health Minister Arthur Greenwood believed the newly-created PACs should be able to meet future need; however, unemployment levels and distress in West Monmouthshire continued to rise as the Depression took hold.⁷³

The PAC also worked with the voluntary sector, particularly with regard to health, and

⁶⁹ Source: Harris, 'Government and Charity in the Distressed Mining Areas of England and South Wales'. All figures approximate.

⁷⁰ NLW, H9 19a 30.

⁷¹ TNA, LAB 2 2045 2F1941 1935 Part 2, 'LMF Funding for Training and Reconditioning', 1930.

⁷² 'Closing Date, *The Times*, 27 March 1929, p.14.

⁷³ *Hansard*, HC, 5th Series, 24 March 1930, vol. 237, col. 29; See Figure 2, Chapter One.

‘social services’, making annual donations to hospitals, nursing associations, and organisations such as the NSPCC which helped monitor ‘at risk’ children.⁷⁴ The Salvation Army fulfilled a similar role with regard to women. The wide geographical reach of these agencies enabled the PAC to maintain a watch over potentially vulnerable women and children placed outside Monmouthshire. Bernard Harris commented on the ‘substantial increase’ in the practice of statutory authorities to make donations of this kind during the inter-war period, noting that charities came to supplement the state’s role, rather than simply acting as an alternative.⁷⁵

Conclusion

In terms of the extent of non-governmental welfare provision available in West Monmouthshire between the wars, there was a great deal of variety. To meet basic needs, charities such as SCF and the Society of Friends provided food beyond that available via official local sources such as the PLU and the PAC. In periods of particular hardship, such as the miners’ lockout following the General Strike, feeding stations were provided by the Miners’ Federation, or by individual donations. The Society of Friends and the Pilgrim Trust offered training opportunities for the unemployed, and particularly supported those least likely to find employment in local industries. While the impact of these efforts was bound to be limited relative to local unemployment levels, the support of the Royal Family and publicity given to the work of the Pilgrim Trust, the Society of Friends, and the adopting towns gave people from

⁷⁴ GA, C/SWPA/M/2, Monmouthshire PAC Minutes, 1931-32, 4 May 1931.

⁷⁵ Bernard Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State: Society, State, and Social Welfare in England and Wales, 1800-1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 187–88; GA, C/SWPA/M/6, Monmouthshire PAC March and April 1935.

more prosperous areas an often-shocking insight into the plight of West Monmouthshire and similar areas, gradually changing the perception that long-term unemployment was 'undeserving'.

The Lord Mayors' Fund provided additional relief from 1928-1930, its emergency appeal facilitating a co-ordinated, mixed-economy approach which demonstrated what a permanent, fully state-funded operation might be able to achieve. However, it closed in 1930, while underlying problems remained, and unemployment grew as a result of the Depression. It is interesting to contrast the government's concern to ensure the Lord Mayors' Fund was focussed on clearly 'deserving' sectors such as pregnant women and children with the feelings of Eastbourne, keen to help the impoverished, however they came to be in that situation, showing that concerns regarding the 'deserving' or 'undeserving' nature of poverty were increasingly irrelevant to the general public. A change of tone in the press is also evident: throughout the Lord Mayors' Fund campaign, *The Times* frequently linked the distress with unemployment without suggesting the poor were to blame for their situation.⁷⁶

Medical aid societies provided a vital service at a reasonable cost to both employed and unemployed. Workmen's institutes provided opportunities for self-improvement and education that would not otherwise have been available, and much-needed entertainment and diversion. Their impact amongst the employed was high, as membership of those eligible approached one hundred percent; however, they

⁷⁶ 'The Stricken Coalfields', *The Times*, p. 17.

sometimes excluded the unemployed, who struggled to afford the fees.⁷⁷ Mutual aid schemes such as the Tredegar MAS influenced a generation of Labour politicians, including Aneurin Bevan, who carried forward some of their ideas, including Tredegar's progressive income-related subscription, into the Welfare State. The changing role of mutual aid in West Monmouthshire throughout the twentieth century, including the involvement of women, is a potential area for further study.

Inter-war West Monmouthshire saw a move from a choice between mutual aid and charity on one hand, and the Poor Law on the other, to a 'mixed economy' of support, as the Miners' Welfare Fund began to offer grants to workmen's institutes and medical aid societies, a model also noted by Finlayson; national and local government worked with charities and with each other.⁷⁸ The trade-off for the Valleys towns was to see the independence they had won from typical paternalistic employers replaced by greater dependence on the state. Chapter Four examines the experience of poverty in West Monmouthshire including the success of the support provided by both government and non-governmental agencies.

⁷⁷ SWCC, AUD/338.

⁷⁸ Finlayson, p. 200.

Chapter 4: The Experience of Poverty in West Monmouthshire

Introduction

Chapter Four examines the experience of poverty in West Monmouthshire from the perspective of the domestic economy, housing, health, employment and migration. It assesses the domestic economy to understand how much money families had available, and what opportunities were available for making money go further. It will show that health issues affected men, women and children in different ways, as men spent less time in a dangerous working environment, while women faced the pressures of feeding a family on an insufficient budget. The housing stock of West Monmouthshire was in poor condition and the government showed little inclination to help improve the situation since it was hoping the population would decline. Employment issues were gender and age-based, with girls obliged to leave home and enter domestic service as soon as they left school, while boys found it increasingly difficult to retain work once entitled to an adult wage, and unemployed parents became dependent on working children. Young people in particular felt forced to migrate, dividing families and sometimes exposing the young to danger.

The chapter draws on four key primary sources: firstly, the oral history interviews of West Monmouthshire men held by the South Wales Coalfield Collection at Swansea University, the reports of the Special Area Commissioners, and the Pilgrim Trust's 1938

report, *Men Without Work*.¹ Since these sources provide a very male-dominated view, examples have also been drawn from Williams and White's extracts from women's autobiographies in *Struggle or Starve*, although the majority of these women were from neighbouring valleys.²

Domestic Economy

A 1934 House of Lords debate drew attention to the gap between proposed UAB scales, and the amounts recommended by the British Medical Association (BMA) to provide sufficient nutrition; separate analysis included amounts for heating, lighting and cleaning.¹ For a family of four including two adults and two children under ten, the UAB scale allowed 23s.6d. exclusive of rent, while the BMA scale recommended 26s.8d.; the deficit increased for larger families.³ During the same debate, Lord Strabolgi drew attention to the fundamental problem which had existed since the days of the PLU: the scales assumed the need for relief would be temporary, and did not account for replacing furnishings or household maintenance.⁴ Four years later, the Pilgrim Trust came to similar conclusions when producing its own scale:

¹ William Temple, *Men Without Work: A Report Made to the Pilgrim Trust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938); South Wales Coalfield Collection (SWCC), AUD/22, Interview: Benjamin Morris, 1979; AUD/215, Interview: Walter Powell, 1974; AUD/332, Interview: Clarence Lloyd, 1974; *First Report of the Commissioner for the Special Areas (England and Wales)*, Cmd 4957, 1935; *Third Report of the Commissioner for the Special Areas (England and Wales), November 1936*, Cmd 5503; *Report of the Commissioner for the Special Areas in England and Wales for the Year Ended 30th September 1937*, Cmd 5595.

² Sian Rhiannon Williams and Carole White, *Struggle or Starve: Women's Lives in the South Wales Valleys Between the Two World Wars* (Ceredigion: Honno Ltd, 2008).

³ *Hansard*, HL, 5th Series, 20 December 1934, vol. 95, cols 653-78.

⁴ *Hansard*, HL, 5th Series, 20 December 1934, vol. 95, col. 671.

Parents' Food	12s.6d.	Man: 6s.9d., woman: 5s.9d.
Children's Food	7s.8d.	3s.10d. each
Parents' clothing	1s.7d.	Man: 11d., woman: 8d.
Children's clothing	1s.2d.	7d. each
Cleaning/Light	1s.	For up to four people
TOTAL	23s.11d.	

Figure 7 Typical weekly allowance to maintain a family of four.⁵

These allowances were hardly generous: the weekly clothing allowance of 11d. for a man aged between sixteen and seventy would not buy a basic working singlet (1s.11¾d.), or two pairs of socks (1s.1½d.).⁶ In 1935, workmen's boots cost at least 8s.2d., nearly nine weeks' worth of a man's clothing allowance.⁷

The employed were barely better off.⁸ From the 1921 strike, average annual earnings in the coal industry fell to almost half their wartime level and remained thereabouts for the remainder of the decade, with a mean weekly wage of 48s.⁹ The Pilgrim Trust's 1938 survey of the 'Deprived Areas' showed the gross financial difference between employment and unemployment could be as little as ten shillings a week for a family of four, largely irrelevant once the costs of going out to work, and deductions for

⁵ *Men Without Work*, p. 420. Adults aged between 16-70, two children under 14, exclusive of rent and coal, July 1936.

⁶ Advertisement, *South Wales Gazette*, 16 January 1925.

⁷ Gwent Archives (GA), C/SWPA/M/6, Monmouthshire PAC Minutes, 1935-36.

⁸ *Report of the Industrial Transference Board 1928*, Cmd. 3156, 1929, p. 7.

⁹ *Hansard*, HC, 5th Series, 17 November 1931, vol. 259, cols 658-9. Data provided by the Secretary to the Mines. Data for 1921 and 1926 was not included due to impact from lengthy strikes. Data for 1930 was also affected by a strike.

membership of unions, institutes and medical aid had been covered. Working families also needed to begin repaying relief granted as a loan and rent arrears.¹⁰

Those earning were expected to help maintain unwaged relatives. Aneurin Bevan's sister contributed more than half her weekly wage of two pounds towards supporting the unemployed Bevan and their mother, leaving her scarcely enough to pay for deductions, bus fares, and respectable clothes, let alone save for her own future.¹¹ Foot says Bevan was unable to forget the 'aching humiliations' this type of situation caused amongst working-class families.¹² The Labour Party's 1928 investigation, *Men Without Work*, noted the psychological pressures on middle-aged men forced to depend on their children, a situation exacerbated by the 1931 Means Test and the strictures of the UAB.¹³ Charitable initiatives including the subsistence production, and factory schemes discussed in Chapter 2 could help both family finances and self-esteem, although the numbers involved were small.

The women's role in maintaining the family budget was pivotal. Steven Thompson describes some of the strategies adopted, such as buying cheap broken biscuits or other 'defective' food; one Bedwellty woman walked miles to access cheaper shops in the next town while others risked not paying rent for a week in order to buy boots.¹⁴

'Authority' might give with one hand and take back with the other: the education

¹⁰ *Men Without Work*, p. 204. Although the study does not cover West Monmouthshire, it includes the nearby Rhondda.

¹¹ Michael Foot, *Aneurin Bevan: A Biography*, Kindle Edition (London: Faber and Faber, 2008), I, loc. 566.

¹² Foot, I, loc. 568.

¹³ *Men Without Work*, p. 147.

¹⁴ Steven Thompson, *Unemployment, Poverty and Health in Interwar South Wales*, Studies in Welsh History, 25 (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006), pp. 46–50.

authority fed necessitous children at school, but the Ministry of Health obliged guardians to deduct one shilling a week from the child's relief in return.¹⁵ This was more than some parents could afford, so they withdrew their children from school.¹⁶ Women cut down on their own food, with men always the priority: Maggie Pryce Jones from Trelewis said the one egg or slice of bacon the family could afford was always given to the man.¹⁷ Beatrice Wood from Dowlais said '[the] priority was food, not eating it, but how to get it'; as a nine year-old, she tasted her first cocoa at a Salvation Army-provided breakfast, and scavenged for discarded cabbage leaves and damaged fruit when market was over.¹⁸ Children were co-opted into the economy of 'makeshifts'. Heulwen Williams from Rhymney remembers her teacher referring to another child as 'the cabbage carrier' because she missed school to make deliveries for her shopkeeper sister, while nine year-old Walter Powell had a Saturday job delivering tea.¹⁹

Housing

Men Without Work found the level of home ownership in West Monmouthshire had formerly been high (Ben Morris from New Tredegar suggested around forty per cent), but that owners had been forced to sell or mortgage their homes to pay living costs and

¹⁵ The National Archives (TNA), MH68/264, Note of meeting between Ministry of Health and Board of Guardians' representatives, 26 June 1926.

¹⁶ TNA, MH68/264, Note of meeting between Ministry of Health and Board of Guardians' representatives, 26 June 1926.

¹⁷ Williams and White, p. 134.

¹⁸ Williams and White, pp. 126, 118.

¹⁹ Williams and White, p. 100; SWCC, AUD/215.

meet debts; falling house prices would have left many with negative equity.²⁰ Rent was often in arrears: as a communist activist, Phil Abrahams was involved in many demonstrations to prevent evictions.²¹ Rented or owned, existing housing stock was in a poor state: *The Times* correspondent described ‘long lines of tenements [...] erected on rubbish tips, many being badly-ventilated, and of the back-to back type with practically no sanitary arrangements’.²² The situation had not improved by 1938, as a Quaker volunteer discovered:

The houses were actually falling down and had to be supported by great hulks of timber. Often cattle lived on the ground floor and human beings above. There were open sewers running through the streets, and once beautiful rivers were full of garbage.²³

Minister of Health Chamberlain was not keen to build new houses in West Monmouthshire. Meeting local MPs in 1925 to discuss the situation in Blaina, he claimed to be sympathetic, but felt there were ‘1,000 too many people living there’, and said that if they moved away, there would be no need for additional housing; he offered no suggestion as to how this might be achieved.²⁴

²⁰ *The Distress in South Wales* (London: The Labour Party, 1928), p. 6; ‘SWCC, AUD/22’; *Hansard*, HC, 5th Series, 26 March 1928, vol. 215, cols 825–950.

²¹ *The Distress in South Wales*, p. 6; SWCC, AUD/329, Interview: Phil Abrahams, 1974.

²² ‘Housing in South Wales’, *The Times*, 24 June 1919, p. 14.

²³ ‘Plight of Welsh Unemployed’, *Taunton Courier, and Western Advertiser*, 4 June 1938, p. 3.

²⁴ ‘Mr. Chamberlain’s View’, *South Wales Gazette*, 27 February 1925, p. 6.

Single working men might lodge with friends rather than remain at home where guardians, PAC and UAB alike expected them to contribute towards maintenance of non-working relatives; initially they might simply pretend to be lodging elsewhere, but as Beatrice Wood describes, the intrusive attention of the 'Means Test Man', who might enter the home at any time unannounced, had made this more difficult by the time of the UAB.²⁵ Unemployed single men generally received no relief; In 1923, some built 'caves' dug into the hillside near Ebbw Vale constructed from stone, sacking, and flattened-out salmon cans.²⁶ Just outside West Monmouthshire, a similar community existed at Newbridge in the late twenties.²⁷ Following introduction of the Means Test in 1931 the casual ward reported a large increase in the number of vagrants, and was forced to equip an old army hut to deal with the influx.²⁸

Health

Given the hazards of working in the mining industry, men were arguably healthier when unemployed; this was emphasised when a 1927 underground explosion at Cwm killed fifty-two men.²⁹ As a boy in New Tredegar, Ben Morris was familiar with the protocol of a mining fatality: 'dead men were covered over and carried on the shoulders, you always knew they were dead'.³⁰ Unremitting poverty brought its own hazards: on the

²⁵ Williams and White, p. 126.

²⁶ 'Ebbw Vale Cave Men', *South Wales Argus*, 12 December 1923.

²⁷ 'Newbridge Huts', *South Wales Argus*, 5 April 1927, p. 2.

²⁸ GA, C/SWPA/M/2, Monmouthshire PAC Minutes, 1931-32, p. 439.

²⁹ 'Cwm Disaster', *South Wales Argus*, 2 March 1927.

³⁰ SWCC, AUD/22.

same page as the report of the Cwm explosion, the South Wales Argus records the suicides of two former miners from the area, and there are many similar reports throughout the period.³¹ Beatrice Wood, whose account is published in *Struggle or Starve*, remembers ‘a lot’ of suicides at this time.³²

Brought up to physical work and living in an area where almost any journey from the home involved a hill, miners might be expected to have a good standard of fitness. However, the acceptance rate for those attempting to escape the Valleys by joining the army contradicts this: in 1929, the Lord Lieutenants' Conference at Cardiff was told that over 7,000 miners had applied to enlist in the army, of whom only 917 had been accepted, rejections being mainly due to poor health, or inability to meet the required standard of education.³³ Malcolm Stewart, Special Areas Commissioner, hoped the physical labour of cultivating allotments for which the Commission had made grants would help improve lack of fitness from long-term inactivity as well as adding variety to the diet.³⁴

By 1928, sufficient local children were suffering from malnutrition for ‘milk meals’ to be offered in school to those with medical certificates.³⁵ Infant mortality rates were a preoccupation throughout the inter-war period: Thompson notes the Glamorgan Medical

³¹ ‘Cwm Disaster’; ‘Coroner’s Verdict of Suicide’, *South Wales Gazette*, 16 January 1925; ‘Man Found Hanging’, *South Wales Gazette*, 27 March 1925, p. 12; ‘Abertillery Man’s Suicide’, *South Wales Gazette*, April 1926; ‘Two More Suicides’, *South Wales Gazette*, 19 February 1926.

³² Williams and White, p. 118.

³³ ‘Lord Mayors’ Fund, Miners Applying to Enlist’, *The Times*, 5 January 1929.

³⁴ Cmd 5503, p. 407.

³⁵ *Hansard*, HC, 5th Series, 16 May 1928, vol. 217, col. 1091.

Officer of Health consistently denied any link between mortality levels and unemployment; however, by 1934, his Nantyglo and Blaina counterpart was convinced of a link between high infant mortality rates and unemployment.³⁶ As Figure 8 below shows, the crude infant death rate for West Monmouthshire only dropped below that for England and Wales once during this period. Charles Webster notes in ‘Healthy or Hungry Thirties?’ that 1932 was the first year in which no English or Welsh County or County Borough had recorded an infant mortality rate of above one hundred; however, the rate for the Urban District of Nantyglo and Blaina exceeded this five times between 1920 and 1938.³⁷ In West Monmouthshire overall, while there was a downward trend in infant mortality, distinct peaks coincided with particularly hard times, notably the General Strike and tenure of the appointed guardians in 1926 and 1927, and the implementation of the Means Test in 1931; peaks in 1933 and 1937 follow high unemployment levels in the previous twelve months.³⁸

³⁶ Thompson, p. 218.

³⁷ Charles Webster, ‘Healthy or Hungry Thirties?’, *History Workshop*, 1982, 110–29.

³⁸ Unemployment figures are given in Chapter 1 Figure 2.

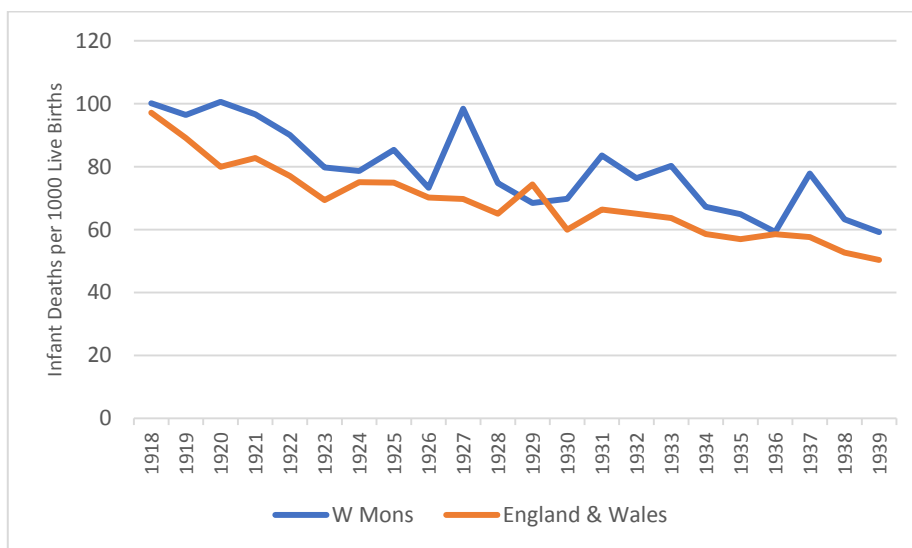


Figure 8 Crude Infant Death Rates for West Monmouthshire and England & Wales, 1918-39.³⁹

Like other deprived areas, Monmouthshire had a high birth rate, impacting the health of the mothers, and as Constantine points out, adding to family poverty.⁴⁰ Beatrice Wood said that many young women sought illegal abortions, rather than have another mouth to feed.⁴¹ In June 1925, the first hospital-based birth control clinic in Britain opened in Abertillery, supported by Marie Stopes. Despite considerable initial interest from

³⁹ Source: Abertillery, Bedwellty, Ebbw Vale, Nantyglo and Blaina and Tredegar, UD through Time: Life and Death Statistics: Infant Deaths, <http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10127178/cube/inf_deaths> [accessed 6 October 2018].

⁴⁰ *Third Report of the Commissioner for the Special Areas (England and Wales), November 1936*, p. 18; Stephen Constantine, *Social Conditions in Britain, 1918-1939*, Lancaster Pamphlets (London: Methuen, 1983), p. 21.

⁴¹ Williams and White, p. 129.

women and the endorsement of the local SWMF lodge, vehement opposition from clergymen was a deterrent and the clinic closed after only sixteen months.⁴²

Poor living conditions made it easy for disease to spread. In November 1927, during the administration of the appointed guardians, there were more than one hundred cases of smallpox in Ebbw Vale, and thirty-eight in Nantyglo and Blaina.⁴³ The local medical officer told Nantyglo and Blaina councillors 'you are in a seriously unenviable position – your water supply is dangerously polluted, small-pox is spreading, your death rate is twice what it was last month and 78 per cent of your male population are unemployed'.⁴⁴ A *Western Mail* report of 1936 described the prevalence of tuberculosis in Monmouthshire.⁴⁵

Employment

Boys might find employment at first but were often laid off once due an adult wage. In 1926, the Abertillery Chamber of Commerce heard of an eighteen year-old who worked as a shop assistant, for which the pay scale was twenty-one shillings, but was only paid the thirteen shillings due an errand boy; a representative from the shop assistants' union said the complaint was 'a general one'.⁴⁶ Another lad's employer had not paid his national insurance contributions, leaving him unable to claim unemployment benefit

⁴² Margaret Douglas, 'Women, God and Birth Control: The First Hospital Birth Control Clinic, Abertillery, 1925', *Llafur*; 'Birth Control', *South Wales Gazette*, April 1925; 'Clinic Now Open', *South Wales Gazette*, 12 June 1925; 'Ideals of Birth Control', *South Wales Gazette*, 13 November 1925.

⁴³ 'Small-Pox at Nantyglo and Blaina', *South Wales Argus*, 29 November 1927; 'Small-Pox at Ebbw Vale', *South Wales Argus*, 22 November 1927; Frank Fenner, 'The Incidence and Control of Smallpox Between 1900 and 1958', in *Smallpox and Its Eradication* (Geneva: World Health Organization, 1988), p. 318.

⁴⁴ 'Small-Pox at Nantyglo and Blaina'.

⁴⁵ 'Human Factor In Tuberculosis', *Western Mail*, 29 August 1936, p. 8.

⁴⁶ 'Shop Assistants' Grievance', *South Wales Gazette*, 26 February 1926, p. 12.

when laid off.⁴⁷ Most boys started in the pits when they were fourteen; Ben Morris describes leaving the local grammar school on his fourteenth birthday, and beginning work underground the following Monday.⁴⁸

The nature of Valleys industry meant there were relatively few paid jobs for women.⁴⁹ Walter Powell remembered some working ‘on top of the pit’ in 1924, but the practice seems to have ended soon after this.⁵⁰ Many left for domestic service, but in 1932, the *Western Mail* complained that racism towards Welsh people appearing in London courts, where their nationality was constantly emphasised, was likely to deter girls from leaving their homes in Wales to seek the ‘venturesome course’ of employment in London.⁵¹ Constantine notes the racism against Welshmen who sought employment in the growing Midlands motor industry.⁵²

Special Areas Commission policy was to provide grants only to schemes employing married men over thirty-five, partly because they found it more difficult to find new jobs than younger men, but also to discourage young, single men from remaining in the area when they ‘might be better off’ settling elsewhere.⁵³ The 1937 report into the Special Areas noted the problem of the ‘older unemployed man’ was especially marked in South Wales, where the number of men over thirty-five had increased from sixty percent in 1936, to sixty-seven percent the following year.⁵⁴

⁴⁷ ‘Shop Assistants’ Grievance’.

⁴⁸ SWCC, AUD/22.

⁴⁹ Bernard Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State: Society, State, and Social Welfare in England and Wales, 1800-1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 4.

⁵⁰ SWCC, AUD/215.

⁵¹ ‘Slander on Welsh’, *Western Mail*, 16 April 1932.

⁵² Constantine, p. 12.

⁵³ Cmd 4957, pp. 19, 35.

⁵⁴ Cmd 5595, p. 26.

Malcolm Stewart noted with frustration that the Special Areas Act made no direct provision for reducing unemployment; while changes made in 1937 permitted the Commissioner to invest in private industry, the only substantial new enterprise to be located in West Monmouthshire was the redevelopment of the Ebbw Vale steelworks which began in 1935.⁵⁵

Migration

Between the 1921 census and the data collection for the 1939 Register, the population of West Monmouthshire fell by eighteen percent, while that of England and Wales rose by seven.

⁵⁵ *Third Report of the Commissioner for the Special Areas (England and Wales), November 1936*, p. 3; Cmd 5595, p. 2.

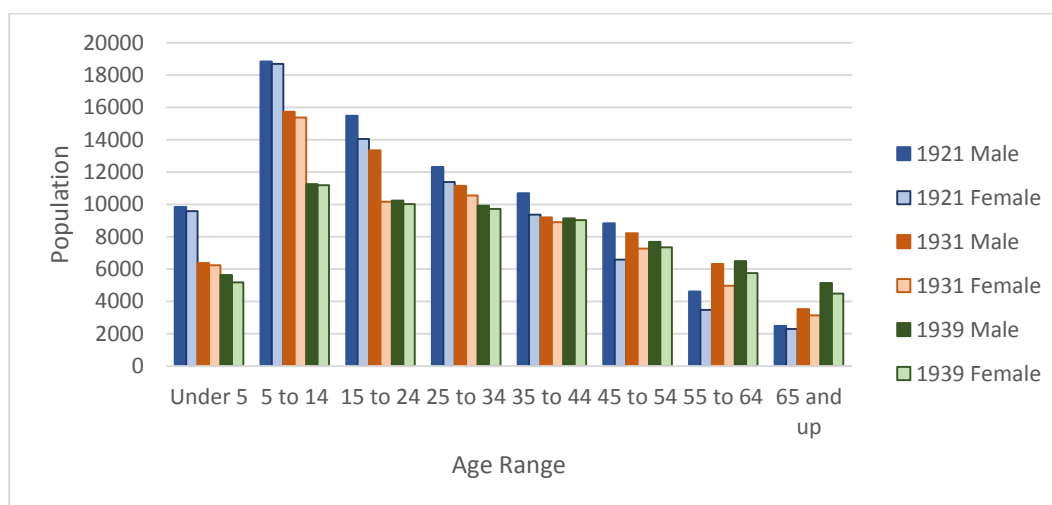


Figure 9 Population Change by Age Range and Gender, West Monmouthshire 1931-

39⁵⁶

As the table above shows, the biggest drops in population were in the youngest sectors.

Also clear is the steady rise in numbers of those aged fifty-five and over. The exodus of girls and young women for domestic service is most evident in the 1931 cohort of fifteen to twenty-four year-olds.

New Tredegar collier Ben Morris, born in 1907, describes how the girls of his generation went into service in London as soon as they were fourteen, only remaining at home ‘if there were lots of sons and mother needed help’.⁵⁷ Some found poor positions: Clarence Lloyd from Abertillery said that frustrated with conditions, they ‘went up on the streets in London, that’s why you hear such a talk about the Welsh girls in

⁵⁶ ‘Census, 1921 and 1931’, *Findmypast* <https://search-findmypast-co-uk./search-united-kingdom-records-in-census-land-and-surveys/and_census> [accessed 27 July 2018]; ‘1939 Register’, *Findmypast* <<https://www-findmypast-co-uk/1939register>> [accessed 27 July 2018].

⁵⁷ SWCC, AUD/22, ‘SWCC, AUD/22’.

London'.⁵⁸ In 1930, The National Vigilance Association described a 'significant and disturbing migration' of Welsh girls arriving at Paddington Station to work in domestic service without having researched the 'safety and desirability' of the situation offered.⁵⁹ The press condemned girls for refusing domestic service posts and lambasted their families if a girl found herself in a poor situation; the 'Woman Correspondent' of the *Western Mail* commented acridly that tales of families which made extraordinary efforts to ensure their daughters were in good positions were typically overlooked in favour of stories of Welsh girls 'driven to wrongdoing by unwholesome conditions'.⁶⁰ There were few opportunities for domestic service in West Monmouthshire itself: Ben Morris notes that by the inter-war years, coalowners, teachers and clerics had moved to 'more salubrious areas'.⁶¹

As Chamberlain had intended, young men without relief also left home.⁶² In 1928, former Ebbw Vale MP Tom Richards said that the unemployed were 'expected to tramp the area in a hopeless quest for work'.⁶³ Unless formal transference schemes paid for people's fares to search for work wider afield, often their only option was to walk, following traditional 'wanderers' routes from one casual ward to the next, which might be more than twenty miles away.⁶⁴ One effect of this migration policy was the

⁵⁸ 'SWCC, AUD/332'.

⁵⁹ 'Welsh Girls Coming to London', *The Vigilance Record*, January 1930, cited in 'Small Country, Big History; Themes in the History of Wales: Unit 6 Women's Lives in Wales Between the Two World Wars', *OpenLearn Cymru* <<http://www.open.edu/openlearncreate/mod/oucontent/view.php?id=55156>> [accessed 28 August 2018].

⁶⁰ 'Mothers of Welsh Maids. the Revelation of a Night Train Journey', *Western Mail*, 28 November 1928, p. 5.

⁶¹ 'SWCC, AUD/22'.

⁶² TNA, MH68/262, Overdrawn Treasurer's Account and Strike Emergency Arrangements 1926.

⁶³ TNA, HLG 30/63, Deputations and Reports of Distress in Coalfields 1928-32.

⁶⁴ TNA, MH57/64, TNA, MH57/64, Vagrancy: Survey of Casual Wards, Special Survey Sept 1930-31, pp. 3, 18.

‘abnormal proportion of sick and aged persons’ amongst those remaining, which acted as a deterrent to investment in new facilities in West Monmouthshire and similar areas.⁶⁵

Some chose to go abroad: local newspapers regularly offered work for miners and their families on Canadian farms, but there were requirements for fitness, and later, experience of farming.⁶⁶ Letters in the *South Wales Gazette* show that some did not find work on arrival, while others could not adapt to life so far away from any town. Children could be removed from ‘harmful and wretched’ family environments in Britain and be sent to Canada; sadly, it later emerged that some suffered abuse in their new country.⁶⁷

In September 1937, the Report of the Special Areas Commission showed that 21,489 people had left South Wales in the previous twelve months and were known to have found work elsewhere: of these, fifty-nine per cent had been assisted by the Industrial Transference Scheme, or by a combination of the scheme and support from a charity, while the rest had found work for themselves.⁶⁸ Stephen Constantine points out that most of Britain was not depressed and that by 1938, many people’s wages were thirty per cent higher than before the war with reduced cost of living; the policy of

⁶⁵ Cmd 4957, pp. 19, 35.

⁶⁶ ‘Welsh Miners For Canada’, *Western Mail*, 11 May 1929, p. 9.

⁶⁷ 2017, ‘Former British Child Migrants Seek Apology’, *CBC*, 2017
<<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/the-current-for-march-15-2017-1.4024740/former-british-child-migrants-seek-apology-from-canadian-government-1.4024801>> [accessed 5 December 2018]; Cmd 5595, p. 177, ‘Conditions in Canada’, *South Wales Gazette*, 5 and 19 March 1926.

⁶⁸ Cmd 5595, Appendix VI.

encouraging migration from areas of depression to those of growth made sense, but the means of achieving it was harsh.⁶⁹

Conclusion

The experience of poverty in West Monmouthshire was that poor relief legislation invariably made life harder. Relief scales in this period were insufficient to fulfil the basic needs of everyday life, meaning the main preoccupation for many was simply to find their next meal, with the costs of taking work often eroding the difference between being employed or unemployed. Beyond the basics, families could not afford to replace household furnishings as benefits regulations were not designed for long-term unemployment. The people whose experience is cited here had access to free breakfasts, or might benefit from allotments and subsistence work, but although charitable efforts and those of the Special Areas Commission helped, they could not entirely fill the gap between necessity and availability. Having decided the best strategy was a reduced population, the government did not invest in new housing and infrastructure, which added to the misery of those remaining, and deterred fresh private investment.

The most consistent attitude during this period was the expectation that young, single men should move wherever they could find work. This was evident in 1925, when Chamberlain said of Blaina, that there were '1,000 too many people living there' and that additional housing would not be required if they moved away, and implicit in the Special Areas Commission's approach to employment opportunities during the 1930s,

⁶⁹ Constantine, pp. 17–18.

which favoured the middle-aged and elderly.⁷⁰ Along with the expectation that girls just out of school would enter domestic service many miles from their home, the policies that drove emigration were a success in that they achieved an eighteen per cent reduction in the population of West Monmouthshire between 1921 and 1939, but they achieved this in a manner that was very hard on close-knit Valleys families, and on the young men and women who faced the choice between being a burden on their families, living in destitution, and migration. Taking account of the experience of the poor of West Monmouthshire, it cannot be accepted that those responsible took adequate steps to relieve their misery: the image of a young girl scavenging for discarded cabbage leaves to help feed her family makes it clear that many people had difficulty finding sufficient food to keep hunger away on a daily basis, while infant mortality rates, the ease with which infections spread, and stories of suicide show that people's physical and mental wellbeing was clearly suffering.

⁷⁰ 'Mr. Chamberlain's View'.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In terms of the perception of welfare issues in West Monmouthshire, initially only those with first-hand experience of the area appreciated the depth of the situation. Living in a tight-knit community, the Bedwelty Guardians and local politicians could see relief scales were insufficient for basic needs, and that as the duration of unemployment grew, not allowing extras such as false teeth or new bedding was leading to real misery. The stigma of Chamberlain's insistence on paupers' burials added to the humiliation of West Monmouthshire's unemployed, who prior to 1921 had been well-paid, skilled workers, able to afford their own homes. Exposure to the austerity of the appointed guardians' regime, and later, the Means Test, began to change perceptions locally: the same ratepayers who had asked Chamberlain to suspend the elected Board of Guardians condemned their appointed successors' attitudes to the poor as brutal. Gradually, as more outsiders visited West Monmouthshire, Britain became aware of conditions: the Labour Party produced their report, *The Distress in South Wales*, which MP Susan Lawrence said influenced the inception of the Lord Mayors' Fund, which itself attracted attention to the 'Distressed Areas'; delegates from 'adopting' towns, and voluntary workers visited, and returned home to write shocked descriptions in their local newspapers; newsreel of royal visits was shown in cinemas around Britain. The fact that the standard of food and sleeping arrangements made available along the 1936 Hunger March route were better than on previous events suggests a growing level of support, but perhaps the most telling indication of public opinion was the fact that the Lord Mayors' Fund attracted more donations than any previous appeal from the Mansion House.

However, this generosity was insufficient to meet the needs of West Monmouthshire and other distressed areas, and the government was forced to provide matched funding. When the appeal closed, the Lord Mayor of London pointed out that while it had been very successful, this had been at the expense of other causes. While men like Chamberlain and Percy had hoped that private charity would be able to fill the gap between state funding and necessity, it was clear that people's generosity was not limitless, and that donations to the cause of the moment would reduce donations elsewhere, making charity a risky prospect for providing fundamentals of long-term welfare support.

The growing acceptance that the poor of West Monmouthshire and similar areas should not be blamed for their plight, seen for example in the attitude of the Eastbourne 'adopters' towards Rhymney, paved the way to public acceptability of a move from the locally-administered Poor Law to state-funded welfare. As more aspects of poor relief came under government control, administration was increasingly centralised; the experience of the Bedwelty Guardians and the Monmouthshire PAC had shown the difficulty of remaining dispassionate and realistic when providing relief to the immediate, close community.

A major issue that was effectively shelved at the coming of war was the need to either move work to West Monmouthshire or evacuate the district. Depopulation had been a natural consequence of industrial collapse in the past, although never on the scale of urban districts like West Monmouthshire. In 1937, more than forty per cent of migrations from the area were effectively achieved by population drift, miserably enforced throughout the period by denying benefits to those most capable of migrating,

or making it otherwise financially difficult for them to stay. The only new enterprise attracted to West Monmouthshire during this period was the new Ebbw Vale steel works, which like the coal industry, survived the War. However, in reality, the location and terrain of West Monmouthshire made it undesirable for settlement and development other than that exploiting local natural resources, and that had not really changed.

Through its workmen's institutes and medical aid societies, the South Wales steel and mining communities demonstrated that social, cultural and medical facilities could be provided on a cost-effective basis through progressive taxation. Since then, many of the social and cultural aspects have become the remit of local councils. The experience of the Tredegar Workmen's Medical Aid Society influenced Ebbw Vale MP Aneurin Bevan's plans for the NHS, providing a lasting, positive legacy from inter-war West Monmouthshire. The impact of changing patterns of mutual aid in West Monmouthshire throughout the twentieth century is a potential area for further study.

Bibliography

PRIMARY SOURCES

Manuscript Sources

Gwent Archives

CSWBGB/C/29, Bedwelty Union Out-Relief Advisory Committee Papers, Nov 1923-May 1924

CSWBGB/M1/33, Bedwelty PLU Minutes, November 1925

CSWBGB/M1/34, Bedwelty PLU Minutes, 21 April 1926

CSWBGB/M1/34, Bedwelty PLU Minutes, May 1926

CSWBGB/M1/36, Bedwelty PLU Minutes, 1927

C/SWPA/M/1, Monmouthshire PAC Minutes, Jan-March 1931

C/SWPA/M/2, Monmouthshire PAC Minutes, 1931-32

C/SWPA/M/3, Monmouthshire PAC Minutes, 1932-33

C/SWPA/M/4, Monmouthshire PAC Minutes, 1933-34

C/SWPA/M/6, Monmouthshire PAC Minutes, 1935-36

D914/2, Ebbw Vale Workmen's Doctors Fund General Minute Book, 1937-1941

GB 218.D3246.1.8, Tredegar MAS Minutes, 22 August 1935

GB0218.D914, Ebbw Vale Workmen's Medical Society, 1918-39

The National Archives

ED24/1391 Measures Taken to Relieve Distress in Mining Areas, Including Administration of the Lord Mayor's Fund, 1928-30

HLG 30/34, Special Areas: Financial Position of Local Authorities, Public Assistance Liability, 1935-35

HLG 30/62, Unemployment: Hunger March, Draft Bill to Prohibit, 1932

HLG 30 63, Special Areas: Distress in Coalfields, Investigation of General & Medical Inspectors, Cabinet Papers 1928-33

HLG 30/65 Industrial Transference of Adults: Regulations: Special (Derelict) Areas, 1935-36

LAB 2/2045/2F1941/1935/Parts II, 1935

Finance Department: Correspondence regarding the disbursement and administration of monies from the Coalfields Distress (Lord Mayor's) Fund, 1935

LAB 2/2045/2F1941/1935/Part I, 'Marchers Not to Be Filmed', Letter: Editor, Universal News, to the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, 3 February 1934

<<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/education/resources/thirties-britain/#teachers-notes>> [accessed 20 December 2018]

MH 79/26.5, Report into the Administration of the Bedwellty Union, 1926

MH49/26 M.517.1, Part VII, Tredegar MAS, 1936-37

MH49/26/M.5.17/1, Part IV Tredegar WMAS Accounts, 1928

MH57/64, Vagrancy: Survey of Casual Wards, Special Survey, Sept 1930-31

MH68/262, Overdrawn Treasurer's Account and Strike Emergency Arrangements, 1926

MH68/264, Briefing, Commissioners' Office for South Wales, November 1926

MH68/264, Note of Meeting between Ministry of Health and Board of Guardians' Representatives, 26 June 1926

MH68/265, Bedwellty Union: Board of Guardians (Default) Order, 1926

The National Library of Wales

CHAR 50,045/9, Correspondence with the Charity Commissioners Concerning Charities in Wales and Monmouthshire, 1920-22

H9 19a 30, Dr Thomas Jones C.H. Papers: South Wales Settlements and Centres, 1927-52

Printed Sources

Acts of Parliament

Education Act 1921, 11 & 12 Geo. 5, Ch. 51

Local Government Act 1929, 19 Geo. 5, Ch.17

Mining Industry Act 1920, 10 & 11 Geo. 5, Ch. 50

National Insurance Act 1911, 1 & 2 Geo. 5, Ch. 55

Unemployment Act 1935, 24 & 25 Geo. 5, Ch. 29

Unemployment Assistance (Temporary Provisions) Act 1935, 25 & 26 Geo. 5 Ch. 6

Parliamentary Papers

Bedwellty Union: Report of the Guardians Appointed by the Minister of Health, Cmd 2976, 1927

Chester-Le-Street Union: Report of the Board of Guardians, Cmd 2018, 1926

Chester-Le-Street Union: Report of the Board of Guardians, Cmd 2937, 1927

Coal Industry Commission: Vol. II, Reports and Minutes of Evidence on the Second Stage of the Inquiry, Cmd 360, 1919

First Report of the Commissioner for the Special Areas (England and Wales), Cmd 4957, 1935

Third Report of the Commissioner for the Special Areas (England and Wales), Cmd 5503, 1936

Report of the Commissioner for the Special Areas in England and Wales for the Year Ended 30th September 1937, Cmd 5595

Hansard

Hansard, HC, 5th Series, 22 November 1920, Vol. 135

Hansard, HC, 5th Series, 3 March 1921, Vol. 138

Hansard, HC, 5th Series, 18 April 1921, Vol. 140,

Hansard, HC, 5th Series, 13 July 1923, Vol. 166

Hansard, HC, 5th Series, 9 March 1926, Vol. 181

Hansard, HC, 5th Series, 29 March 1927, Vol. 204

Hansard, HC, 5th Series, 17 November 1927, Vol. 210

Hansard, HC, 5th Series, 26 March 1928, Vol. 215

Hansard, HC, 5th Series, 23 July 1929, Vol. 230

Hansard, HC, 5th Series, 24 March 1930, Vol. 237,

Hansard, HC, 5th Series, 29 April 1930, Vol. 238

Hansard, HC, 5th Series, 17 November 1931, Vol. 259

Hansard, HC, 5th Series, 05 April 1932, Vol. 264

Hansard, HC, 5th Series, 25 March 1935, Vol. 299

Hansard, HC, 5th Series, 22 July 1936, Vol. 31

Hansard, HL, 5th Series, 20 December 1934, Vol. 95

Newspapers/Periodicals

Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette

Bexhill-On-Sea Observer

Common Cause

Coventry Evening Telegraph

Daily Herald

Eastbourne Gazette

Era

Exeter and Plymouth Gazette

Gloucestershire Echo

Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail

Hastings and St Leonards Observer

Liverpool Echo

Scotsman

Sheffield Independent

South Wales Argus

South Wales Gazette

Stage

Surrey Advertiser

Taunton Courier, and Western Advertiser

Thanet Advertiser

The Times

West London Observer

West Sussex Gazette

Western Mail

Western Morning News

Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer

Printed Reports

Gwent Archives, *County Development Plan Part 1: County Area Report of Survey and Analysis* (Newport: Monmouthshire County Council, 1954)

National Library of Wales, Parliamentary Labour Party, *The Distress in South Wales*. 1928. (London: The Labour Party)

The National Archives, MH49/26/M.5.17/1, *Rules of the Tredegar Workmen's MAS, May 1937-1944*

Printed Books

Bevan, Aneurin. 1961. *In Place of Fear* (London: MacGibbon & Kee)

Chamberlain, Neville, and Robert C. Self. 2000. *The Neville Chamberlain Diary Letters* (Aldershot: Ashgate), II

Cronin, A.J. 2013. *The Citadel*, Kindle Edition (Bello)

The Colliery Year Book and Coal Trades Directory 1938. 1937. (London: The Louis Cassier Co. Ltd)

Kelly's Directory of Monmouthshire & South Wales. 1923. (London: Kelly's Directories Limited)

———. 1926. (London: Kelly's Directories Limited)

The Distress in South Wales. 1928. (London: The Labour Party)

Webb, Beatrice, and Sidney Webb. 1963. *English Poor Law History: Part 2, Volume II, The Last Hundred Years*, English Local Government Series, IX (London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd)

Temple, William, *Men Without Work: A Report Made to the Pilgrim Trust*. 1938. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)

Year Book of the Council of the County of Monmouth 1922-23. 1922. (Newport)

Maps

The Poor Law Unions of Monmouthshire, copied from: D.B. Hughes, 'Poor Law History in Monmouthshire Since 1834: Chapter 1, The Formation of the Unions', *Presenting Monmouthshire*, 1969, from an original held at the Gwent Archives

Oral Sources

Swansea University, South Wales Coalfield Collection

AUD/22, Interview: Benjamin Morris, 1979

AUD/215, Interview: Walter Powell, 1974

AUD/316, Interview: Oliver Powell, 1973

AUD/329, Interview: Phil Abrahams, 1974

AUD/332, Interview: Clarence Lloyd, 1974

AUD/338, Interview: Archie Lush, 1972

Film Sources

Prince of Wales with Miners. 1918. (British Pathé)

Prince of Wales Visits Miners. 1929. (Reuters - Gaumont British Newsreel)

Workless. 1929. (British Pathé)

The King in South Wales. 1938. (British Pathé)

The Citadel. 1938. (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer)

SECONDARY SOURCES

Books

Barry, Jonathan, and Colin Jones. 2002. *Medicine and Charity Before the Welfare State*, Kindle Edition

Barry, Jonathan, Colin Jones, Peter Lord, John Morgan-Guy, and Andy Croll. 2002. *The Gwent County History, Vol. 5: The Twentieth Century*, Kindle Edition, ed. by Williams Chris

Beddoe, Deirdre. 1989. *Back to Home and Duty: Women Between the Wars, 1918-1939* (London: Pandora)

Bruley, Susan. 2010. *The Women and Men of 1926: A Gender and Social History of the General Strike and Miners' Lockout in South Wales*, Kindle Edition (Cardiff: University of Wales Press)

Constantine, Stephen. 1983. *Social Conditions in Britain 1918-1939* (Abingdon: Abingdon: Routledge)

- Foot, Michael. 2008. *Aneurin Bevan: A Biography*, Kindle Edition (London: Faber and Faber), 1
- Francis, Hywel, and David Smith. 1998. *The Fed: A History of the South Wales Miners in the Twentieth Century*, New Paperback Edition (Cardiff: University of Wales Press)
- Fraser, Derek. 2009. *The Evolution of the British Welfare State*, 4th Edition (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan)
- Gilbert, Bentley B. 1973. *British Social Policy: 1914 - 1939* (London: Batsford)
- Green, David G. 1993. *Reinventing Civil Society: The Rediscovery of Welfare Without Politics*, no. 17 (London: IEA Health and Welfare Unit)
- Harris, Bernard. 1994. 'Government and Charity in the Distressed Mining Areas of England and South Wales', in *Medicine and Charity Before the Welfare State*, Studies in the Social History of Medicine, Kindle Edition, ed. by Jonathan Barry (London: Routledge)
- . 2004. *The Origins of the British Welfare State: Society, State, and Social Welfare in England and Wales, 1800-1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan)
- Hollen Lees, Lynn. 2008. *The Solidarities of Strangers: The English Poor Laws and the People, 1700-1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
- Humphreys, Robert. 2001. *Poor Relief and Charity, 1869-1945: The London Charity Organization Society* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave)
- Kirk, Neville, Keith Gildart, and David Howell. 2003. 'Beatrice Green', *Dictionary of Labour Biography* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan)
- Self, Robert C. 2006. *Neville Chamberlain: A Biography* (Aldershot: Ashgate)
- Supple, Barry. 1987. *The History of the British Coal Industry. Vol. 4: 1913 - 1946: The Political Economy of Decline* (Oxford: Clarendon Press)
- Taylor, A.J.P. 1965. *English History 1914-1945*, Oxford History of England (Oxford: Oxford University Press)
- Thomas-Symonds, Nicklaus, and Neil Kinnock. 2015. *Nye: The Political Life of Aneurin Bevan* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co)
- Ward, Stephanie. 2013. *Unemployment and the State in Britain: The Means Test and Protest in 1930s South Wales and North-East England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press)

- Weinbren, Daniel. 2007. 'Supporting Self-Help: Charity, Mutuality and Reciprocity in Nineteenth-Century Britain', in *Charity and Mutual Aid in Europe and North America Since 1800*, ed. by Paul Bridgen and Harris Bernard (Routledge,), pp. 67–88
- Williams, Sian Rhiannon, and Carole White. 2008. *Struggle or Starve: Women's Lives in the South Wales Valleys Between the Two World Wars* (Ceredigion: Honno Ltd)
- Williamson, Philip. 2007. *The Monarchy and Public Values, 1900-1953*, ed. by Andrzej Olechnowicz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)

Articles and Conference Papers

- Atkins, Peter. 1912. 'School Milk in Britain 1900-1934', *Journal of Policy History*, 19.4: 395–427
- Baggs, Chris. 2001. "'Carnegie Offered Money and a Lot of South Wales Refused to Have It: It Was Blood Money'" Bringing Public Libraries to the South Wales Valleys 1870 to 1939', *Library History*, 17.3: 171–79
- . 2004. 'The Whole Tragedy of Leisure in Penury: The South Wales Miners' Institute Libraries During the Great Depression', *Libraries; the Cultural Record*, 39.2: 115–36
- Bloor, Michael. 2002. 'No Longer Dying for a Living: Collective Responses to Injury Risks in South Wales Mining Communities, 1900-47', *Sociology*, 36.1: 89–105
- Burge, Alan. 2012. 'Individual Problems Have Collective Solutions: Looking Back Towards a Welsh Co-Operative Future?', *Journal of Co-Operative Studies*, 45.3: 48–53
- Burge, Alun. 2007. 'The Co-Operative Movement in South Wales and Its History: "A Task Worthy of the Most Sincere Devotion and Application"', *The Welsh History Review = Cylchgrawn Hanes Cymru*, 23.4: 59–71
- Colpus, E. 2011. 'The Week's Good Cause: Mass Culture and Cultures of Philanthropy at the Inter-War BBC', *Twentieth Century British History*, 22.3: 305–29
- Curtis, Ben, and Steven Thompson. 2014. "'A Plentiful Crop of Cripples Made by All This Progress": Disability, Artificial Limbs and Working-Class Mutualism in the South Wales Coalfield, 1890-1948', *Social History of Medicine*, 27.4: 708–27
- . 2017. 'Disability and the Family in South Wales Coalfield Society, c.1920–1939', *Family & Community History*, 20.1: 25–44
- Douglas, Margaret. [n.d.]. 'Women, God and Birth Control: The First Hospital Birth Control Clinic, Abertillery, 1925', *Llafur*

- Dux, Sally. 2012. 'The Citadel (1938): Doctors, Censors and the Cinema', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 32.1: 1–17
- Finlayson, Geoffrey. 1990. 'A Moving Frontier: Voluntarism and the State in British Social Welfare 1911–1949', *Twentieth Century British History*, 1.2: 183–206
- Fisher, K. 1998. 'Clearing up Misconceptions': The Campaign to Set up Birth Control Clinics in South Wales Between the Wars', *Welsh History Review = Cylchgrawn Hanes Cymru*, 19.1: 103
- Fisher, K. 2000. "'She Was Quite Satisfied with the Arrangements I Made": Gender and Birth Control in Britain 1920–1950', *Past & Present*, 169.1: 161–93
- Francis, Hywel. 1976. 'Workers' Libraries: The Origins of the South Wales Miners' Library', *History Workshop Journal*, 2.1: 183–205
- Gill, Rebecca, and Daryl Leeworthy. 2015. 'Moral Minefields: Save the Children Fund and the Moral Economies of Nursery Schooling in the South Wales Coalfield in the 1930s', *Journal of Global Ethics*, 11.2: 218–32
- Gorsky, Martin. 2008. 'Public Health in Interwar England and Wales: Did It Fail?', *Dynamis*, 28
- Harris, Bernard. 1995. 'Responding to Adversity: Government- Charity Relations and the Relief of Unemployment in Inter- War Britain', *Contemporary Record*, 9.3: 529–61
- Hayburn, Ralph H. C. 1971. 'The Voluntary Occupational Centre Movement, 1932–39', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 6.3: 156–71
- Hughes, D.B. 1969. 'Poor Law History in Monmouthshire Since 1834: Chapter 1, The Formation of the Unions', *Presenting Monmouthshire*
- Linehan, Denis, and Pys Gruffudd. 2004. 'Unruly Topographies: Unemployment, Citizenship and Land Settlement in Inter-War Wales', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 29.1: 46–63
- Marr, W. L. 1977. 'The United Kingdom's International Migration in the Inter-War Period: Theoretical Considerations and Empirical Testing', *Population Studies*, 31.3: 571–79
- Michael, Pamela. 2008. 'Public Health in Wales (1800–2000): A Brief History', in *Faculty of Public Health Conference* (presented at the Faculty of Public Health Conference, Cardiff: Chief Medical Officer for Wales)
- Miller, Fredric M. 1976. 'The Unemployment Policy of the National Government, 1931–1936', *The Historical Journal*, 19.02: 453

- Minutes of the Joint Committee for the Promotion of Educational Facilities in the South Wales and Monmouthshire Coalfield, 1929*. 1929. (Workers' Educational Association (Cardiff))
- Mohan, John. 1997. 'Neglected Roots of Regionalism? The Commissioners for the Special Areas and Grants to Hospital Services in the 1930s', *Social History of Medicine*, 10.2: 243–62
- Rose, Jonathan. 1989. 'The Workers in the Workers' Educational Association, 1903-1950', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 21.4: 591–608
- Smith, Roger. 1987. 'Utopian Designer: Paul Matt and the Brynmawr Experiment', *Furniture History*, 23: 88–97
- Stafford, Paul Tutt. 1937. 'Unemployment Assistance in Great Britain', *American Political Science Review*, 31.3: 433–54
- Thompson, Steven. 2008. 'From Paternalism to Industrial Welfare: The Evolution of Industrial Welfare Capitalism in the South Wales Coalfield' (presented at the Annual Conference of the Economic History Society, University of Nottingham)
- Ward, Stephanie. 2008. 'The Means Test and the Unemployed in South Wales and the North-East of England, 1931–1939', *Labour History Review*, 73.1: 113–32
- Webster, Charles. 1982. 'Healthy or Hungry Thirties?', *History Workshop*: 110–29
- Williams, Sian Rhiannon. 1979. 'The Bedwellty Board of Guardians and the Default Act of 1927', *Llafur*, 2.4
- Wilson, James Q. 1993. 'The Family-Values Debate', *Commentary*, 95.4: 24
- Zweiniger-Bargielowska, I.M. 2001. 'Miners' Militancy: A Study of Four South Wales Collieries', *Welsh History Review = Cylchgrawn Hanes Cymru*, 16.3: 356

Unpublished Essays and Theses

- Manasseh, Pamela. 2009. 'The Brynmawr Experiment 1928-1940 Quaker Values and Arts and Crafts Principles' (unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Plymouth)

Websites

- '1939 Register'. [n.d.]. *Findmypast* <<https://www-findmypast-co-uk/1939register>> [accessed 27 July 2018]

- ‘Abertillery, Bedwellty, Ebbw Vale, Nantyglo and Blaina and Tredegar, UDs through Time: Life and Death Statistics: Infant Deaths’, *A Vision of Britain Through Time*, <http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10127178/cube/inf_deaths> [accessed 6 October 2018]
- ‘Abertillery, Bedwellty, Ebbw Vale, Nantyglo and Blaina and Tredegar UDs through Time: Historical Statistics on Population for the Local Government District’, *A Vision of Britain Through Time*, <<http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10127178/theme/POP>> [accessed 6 October 2018]
- ‘Beatrice Green and the Unsung Heroines’. 2017. *walesonline* <<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/lifestyle/nostalgia/beatrice-green-unsung-heroines-behind-12628495>> [accessed 1 December 2018]
- Bevan, Aneurin. 1952. ‘In Place of Fear: A Free Health Service 1952’, *Socialist Health Association* <<https://www.sochealth.co.uk/national-health-service/the-sma-and-the-foundation-of-the-national-health-service-dr-leslie-hilliard-1980/aneurin-bevan-and-the-foundation-of-the-nhs/in-place-of-fear-a-free-health-service-1952/>> [accessed 19 December 2018]
- ‘Blaina Reading Institute’. [n.d.]. *Blaina and Nantyglo Community Archive* <http://blaina.gwenheritage.org.uk/content/catalogue_item/blaina-reading-institute-2> [accessed 11 September 2018]
- ‘Blaina Workmen’s Hall and Institute’. [n.d.]. *Coflein* <<http://www.coflein.gov.uk/en/site/414883/details/blaina-workmens-hall-and-institute>> [accessed 30 September 2018]
- Census, 1921, *Findmypast* <https://search-findmypast-co-uk./search-united-kingdom-records-in-census-land-and-surveys/and_census> [accessed 27 July 2018]
- Census, 1931, *Findmypast* <https://search-findmypast-co-uk./search-united-kingdom-records-in-census-land-and-surveys/and_census> [accessed 27 July 2018]
- ‘1939 Register from Findmypast.co.uk’, <<https://www-findmypast-co-uk.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/1939register>> [accessed 5 September 2018] **Bibliography**

