

**THE WELSH AND SCOTTISH
GAELS
IN THEIR NEW WORLD
COLONIES –
a comparison of education
achievements in the wider
socio-linguistic context.**

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1. INTRODUCTION.

The purpose of this presentation is to portray a picture across time of migrants from the old to the new world and back again.

The tables which follow should be read through the eyes of a Celtic time traveller, be they Welsh speakers or Scottish Gaelic speakers. In both cases our travellers begin their journey through time before their fellow countrymen began to migrate, either in the Welsh case from Wales to Yr Wladfa in 1865 (part of the Patagonian area of the Argentine Republic, in Chubut Province) or the Gaels from Scotland to Cape Breton Island (in Nova Scotia Province, Canada) from 1802 onwards.

Our travellers begin in their own country where the provision for education in their native tongue is minimal. Once they arrive in their new world colony the early years are taken up with basic survival. Gradually these monoglot Celtic settlers develop their own indigenous institutions, notably religious, but also educational. However eventually these are absorbed into the mainstream colonial system – either Spanish or English language. The migrant cultures are now "inferior" and decline sets in.

The language and culture may have died as in other Celtic new world colonies. However, renewed connections with the old world kindle the dying embers. New alliances are formed across the Atlantic. When our time traveller returns to the old world – to Alba and Cymru, he finds a different linguistic environment. He wonders if the new world could have been better if the more favourable political environment of the mid nineteenth century had lasted ? How enlightened really is the old world in the twenty first century ? Can they learn from each other and lead a resurgence of Celtic learning ?

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April 2003.*

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|-----------|---|---|------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. | INTRODUCTION. | | | |
| 2. | WALES 1860 | | | |
| 3. | YR WLADFA | - | 3.1 | Early independent days |
| | | - | 3.2 | Cwm Hyfryd |
| | | - | 3.3 | The Dark Years |
| | | - | 3.4 | After the Centenary |
| | | - | 3.5 | Today |
| 4. | CYMRU 2002 | | | |
| 5. | SCOTLAND 1802 | | | |
| 6. | CEAP BREATAINN | - | 6.1 | Early days |
| | | - | 6.2 | Later days |
| | | - | 6.3 | Modern Period. |
| | | - | 6.4 | Today |
| 7. | ALBA 2002 | | | |
| 8. | YR WLADFA + CEAP BREATAINN– Comparisons. | | | |

2. WALES 1860

- 1588 - Translation of Old and New Testaments into Welsh
- 1801 - 600,000 Welsh speakers – 95% population.
- 1850 - W.T.R. Price – linguistic boundary. – 69% population in Welsh/bilingual area.
- 1911 - 975,000 Welsh speakers – 45% population
- 1847 - Brad y Llyfrau Gleision – "Reports of the Commissioners of Enquiry into the State of Education in Wales".
 - Criticism of the mainly English medium day school.
 - Almost praise for the nonconformist, Welsh medium Sunday Schools.

| | Welsh | Bilingual | English | Total Pupils |
|------------------|-------|-----------|---------|--------------|
| - day schools | 0.1% | 18.0% | 81.9% | 76,975 |
| - Sunday schools | 55.6% | 29.1% | 15.3% | 252,937 |

- 1840-1870 - Wales transferred from an agricultural country to an industrial country.
- 1840's - Very infrequently is Welsh referred to in the national debate about education.
- 1871 - 70% population in Welsh/bilingual area some 750,000 Welsh speakers
- Schools - National Society – Anglican church – mainly English medium
 - British Society – nonconformist – mainly Welsh medium
 - Very lowly paid, untrained 'teachers'.
- Publishing - Religious newspapers and books in the main.
- 1854 Y Gwyddoniadur Cymreig – a complete Welsh language encyclopaedia.

3.1 YR WLADFA – EARLY INDEPENDENT DAYS.

- 1865 - first settlement – 153 settlers.
- 1868 - first school – under an old boat – Rawson.
- 1877 - first purpose built school.
- 1877 - Education Committee (!) – 3 schools – Rawson, Glyn Du, Trelew
 - taught to count in Welsh in 'tens' not 'twenties' (as is the traditional Welsh counting system)
 - publishing of text books in Welsh before in Wales.
- 1878 - "Gwerslyfr i Ddysgu Darllen Cymraeg" – first Welsh language primer.
- 1880 - "Daearyddiaeth ac Hanesiaeth Amerig y De" – Geography and History of South America.
- 1881 - "Gwerslyfr Cymraeg – i Sbaeneg" – Welsh-Spanish text book.
- 1892 - "Hanes Weriniaeth Ariannin" – History of the Argentine Republic.
- 1893 - 10 schools – state 3 Spanish medium, 2 state (Welsh medium), 5 independent Welsh (medium)
 - population of lower valley = 2,500 – 87% Welsh speaking.
- 1896 - Argentinean law – all teaching in Spanish.
 - two schools taught through Spanish in main towns,
- 1899 - Buenos Aire's Government takes over schools. Free education in Spanish to 14 years.
 - Welsh teachers transferred to other areas.
- 1902 - President Roca's visit – all public education in Spanish.
- 1906 - Welsh Intermediate School opened in Gaiman – fees – catered for pupils 14+
 - Chapels and Sunday Schools were source of education in Welsh.
- 1911 - Welsh medium night schools in the winter months.
- 1912 - Last Welsh settlers arrived – population 4,000 (2,300 total migrants since 1865)

3.2 YR WLADFA – CWM HYFRYD.

- 1887 - pioneers from lower valley to Andes
- 1891 - school and chapel in a "central place".
- 1890s - Sunday Schools established.
- 1896 - school opened in Trevelin.
- 1902 - school opened in Esquel.
- 1903 - 100 Sunday School scholars.
- 1914 - population 1,500 – 90% Welsh

3.3 YR WLADFA – THE DARK YEARS.

- 1923 - 17 chapels in lower valley. 600 Welsh farms
 - 1,266 adults and 1,097 children attended chapels.

- 1925 - free 'Spanish' secondary school opened in Trelew.

- 1920s - children punished for speaking Welsh in school – "W.N."
 - All Spanish education, anti Welsh bias.

 - teachers frustrated by inability of children from Welsh homes to understand Spanish on entering school. Trauma for children.

- 1928 - collapse of Welsh institutions – Co-operative Store included.

- 1947 - Ysgol Camwy the fee paying Welsh medium school closes.

3.4 YR WLADFA – AFTER THE CENTENARY

1965 - first official visitors from Wales for 50 years.

- estimate of Welsh speaking populations:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|
| - rural lower valleys – 50-75% Welsh | 4,000 |
| Gaiman and Trelew | 850 |
| rural Cwm Hyfryd | 2,500 |
| Trevelin and Esquel | <u>650</u> |
| | <u>6,000</u> |

(would have expected 21,000 through birth and death trends since 1911, therefore – 62%)

- scholarships to Coleg Harlech

1974 - Ysgol Feithrin – Welsh medium nursery school opened in Gaiman.

- Ysgol y Camwy reopens under the Provincial Government.

1990 - First voluntary teacher of Welsh to adults visits

- Students to 6 week intensive Welsh Language course in Lampeter.

1996 - Welsh Office pays for 3 teachers to visit Yr Wladfa each year (2 lower valley, 1 Cwm Hyfryd). Scheme continues under the Welsh Assembly Government.

3.5 YR WLADFA – TODAY – SUMMARY OF TEACHING OF WELSH LANGUAGE TODAY.

(a) Lower Valley – Chubut.

- Gaiman - Ysgol Feithrin
- Ysgol Gynradd (no. 100)
- Coleg Camwy ^{28/31} 4th year take Welsh instead of French.
- Ysgol Cerdd Gaiman.
- Trelew - Ysgol Feithrin
- "Ysgol Gymraeg"
- Canolfan Dewi Sant.
- Rural - Bryngwyn Primary School
- Bryngwyn Agricultural School (linked with Coleg Glynllifon is wider).

Many schools with Welsh names - now fashionable.

(b) Cwm Hyfryd.

- Trevelin - "Ysgol Gymraeg Trevelin" } 50 children
- another school } 8 – 14 years
- Esquel - Ysgol Feithrin.
- "Ysgol Gymraeg yr Andes".
- Language Centre – 2nd language classes for 14-16 year old in secondary school.
- Agricultural Technical School (linked with University of Wales, Bangor).

(c) Adults

700 people attend Welsh Classes – 150 hours per week.

- Literary groups - Trelew, Gaiman.
- Merched y Wawr - Gaiman.
(Welsh medium Women's Society)
- Eisteddfodau - Trelew, Gaiman, Trevelin.
(Welsh medium competitive festivals).

NOW about 2000 speakers?

4. CYMRU 2002

| | MAINLY WELSH INSTRUCTIONS | SOME WELSH INSTRUCTION | WELSH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| <u>Number of Schools</u> | | | |
| Primary | 442 | 80 | 1,102 |
| Secondary | 53 | - | 155 |
| <u>Number of Pupils</u> | | | |
| Primary | 51,344 | 5,034 | 222,337 |
| Secondary | 29,967 | - | 158,185 |

Nursery Education (1996).

| | NUMBER | CHILDREN | WELSH SPEAKING | NON-WELSH SPEAKING |
|-------------------|--------|----------|----------------|--------------------|
| Nursery group | 632 | 10,230 | 4,075 | 6,135 |
| Youngest children | 395 | 4,792 | 2,250 | 2,542 |

Tertiary Education.

Courses through the medium of Welsh mainly available at University of Wales, Bangor; University of Wales, Aberystwyth and Trinity College, Carmarthen.

Adult Education

20,000 people learning Welsh in adult classes every year.

2001 Census

Between 575,000 and 660,000 Welsh speaker s- quarter or more of the population.