

*‘Pilgrim through this barren land’*

**Maintaining Welsh Connections and Culture in Vancouver, B.C., Canada**

**M.A. Celtic Studies Dissertation**

**by Marilyn P.A. Hames (UWTSD #1503976)**

**2020**



## **Master's Degrees by Examination and Dissertation**

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1. This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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Date: 10 November 2020

2. This dissertation is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of: M.A. Celtic Studies

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3. This dissertation is the result of my own independent work/investigation, except where otherwise stated.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Abstract .....	v
Acknowledgements .....	vi
CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER TWO – HISTORICAL CONTEXT .....	7
2.1 Welsh history and motives for migration .....	7
2.2 Welsh emigration to North America .....	9
2.3 British Columbia and the Welsh .....	11
2.4 Vancouver’s changing landscape and accessibility .....	17
2.5 Being Welsh and becoming Canadian .....	19
2.6 Welsh cultural identity in a multicultural society .....	21
2.7 Diaspora, <i>hiraeth</i> and birth of the Vancouver Welsh Society .....	25
CHAPTER THREE – RESEARCH METHOD AND RESULTS .....	29
3.1 Research method, data-gathering, recording and verification .....	29
3.2 Survey results .....	30
3.2.1 Welsh connections, identity and emigration .....	30
3.2.2 Experiencing and defining Welshness .....	32
CHAPTER FOUR – WHY WELSHNESS IS MAINTAINED IN VANCOUVER .....	37
4.1 Connections and keeping in touch .....	37
4.2 <i>Hiraeth</i> .....	37
4.3 Pride in Welsh culture and community .....	40
CHAPTER FIVE – HOW CONNECTIONS AND CULTURE ARE KEPT ALIVE .....	41
5.1 Visits, correspondence and media .....	41
5.2 The role of the Vancouver Welsh Society .....	42
5.2.1 Cultural events .....	42
5.2.2 Welsh language .....	45
5.2.3 Religious and folk customs .....	46
5.2.4 Social gatherings and groups .....	47
5.3 Other Welsh organizations .....	47

CHAPTER SIX – CONCLUSION .....	49
Bibliography .....	53
Appendix A: Invitation to Participate .....	60
Appendix B: Information Sheet .....	61
Appendix C: Consent Form .....	63
Appendix D: Survey Questionnaire and Sample Tabulated Response Forms .....	65
Appendix E: Interview Form, Sample Questions and Mode of Transcription .....	74
Appendix F: Broadcast Thank-you .....	75
Photos 1-3 B.C.'s Wagon Roads and Railways, 1860s-1880s .....	5
Photos 4-6 Vancouver's Railway Depot and Port, 1880s-1910s .....	6
Photo 7 Victoria, 1858 .....	11
Photo 8 Barkerville to Williams Creek, c. 1865 .....	15
Photo 9 Map of the Great Vancouver Fire, 1886 .....	18
Photo 10 South Vancouver Post Office, 1916 .....	19
Photo 11 Cambrian Hall, built 1929.....	21
Photo 12 Cambrian Singers in Cardiff, 1983 .....	35
Photos 13-19 VWS Events at the Cambrian Hall, 2008-2019 .....	44

**N.B.** Spelling convention for Welsh words:

Recognizing variations in the spelling of Welsh words, particularly Anglicized plurals and proper names in common North-American usage amongst the diaspora, the latter versions will be used instead of correct Welsh, except where quoting a source. For example:

Eisteddfods, not Eisteddfodau

Gymanfas, not Gymanfau

Gymanfa Ganus (or hymn-sings), not Gymanfa Ganau

This is not intended to undermine the integrity of the Welsh language, but to reflect its contemporary adaptation and usage in a Canadian setting.

## Abstract

Once considered a last outpost of the British Empire, what is unique about British Columbia, is that being so remote, it was beyond the reach of the earliest waves of Welsh emigrants seeking freedom from poverty or religious oppression. Instead, explorers, gold-miners and entrepreneurs paved the way for economic migrants who continue to seek better opportunities in Vancouver where the diaspora, represented by the Vancouver Welsh Society, gathers in their Cambrian Hall. Besides celebrating Welsh traditions and language, members tell stories of the Welsh who helped found the Province, played key roles in developing Vancouver, and continue to contribute to the business, professional and cultural life of the city.

Canadians are encouraged to integrate while retaining their ethnic customs, but what defines Welshness? Why and how have Welsh migrants or their descendants in Vancouver, tried to maintain their culture, language and connections? Can anything satisfy *hiraeth*, or bridge time and space to fully belong in the hyphenated worlds of Welsh-Canadians? Those were the questions I set out to answer, documenting the results in this thesis.

Chapter One outlines my motivation, purpose and the scope of this study. Chapter Two, based on a literature and archive search, describes the context of Welsh immigration to B.C., notions of Welshness and identity, and the role of the VWS. Chapter Three summarizes the results of surveying and interviewing members of the VWS. By comparing their responses with historic situations and experiences, recurring themes provide a framework for identifying enduring versus evolving attitudes and values. Chapter Four discusses why Welsh culture is maintained in Vancouver, while Chapter Five explains how it is kept alive by a small minority group. The Conclusion highlights how a sense of Welsh identity, heritage and *hiraeth* inspire the diaspora to keep their traditions alive while adapting to today's multicultural societies.

## Acknowledgements

Preparing this dissertation during the COVID 19 pandemic would not have been possible without the sage advice, assistance and support of Dr Elizabeth Edwards,<sup>1</sup> my supervisor, and Professor Dr Jane Cartwright;<sup>2</sup> research notes from Dr Gethin Matthews;<sup>3</sup> help from the Vancouver Welsh Society including Dr Antone Minard's<sup>4</sup> Welsh classes, Eifion Williams' essays, Alwyn Rogers as webmaster<sup>5</sup> and all the wonderful volunteers who responded to my research questionnaire and interviews; librarians Keith Bunnell<sup>6</sup> and Amber Norcott;<sup>7</sup> and lastly, from my husband for his unstinting encouragement and copious cups of coffee.

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<sup>5</sup> During the COVID pandemic the only way of reaching all members of the VWS with information, invitations to participate, updates and thanks was via the website, since all personal contact details are confidential. Only after voluntary response directly to me was the qualitative research component able to be conducted.

<sup>6</sup> Reference and Collections Librarian, University of British Columbia.

<sup>7</sup> Librarian, Vancouver Public Library and Archives.

*‘Pilgrim through this barren land’*<sup>8</sup>

**Maintaining Welsh Connections and Culture in Vancouver, B.C., Canada**

CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

Nighttime—not that it made any difference down there. ‘Duw, this is doing absolutely nothing to enhance my career!’ His Valleys accent said it all—I knew what he meant. Shovelling coal, sweat glistening in the dim light at the bottom of the breaker station as we dug out the tail pulley yet again, his sing-song humour relieved the frustration and struck me as strangely comforting deep beneath B.C.’s snow-clad mountains. As a proud Welsh woman and engineer who had emigrated to Canada in the 1970s, I had done my share of pioneering and welcomed the adventure, but this had to be the low-point in my upwardly-mobile ambitions—my partner’s too, apparently. His wry, almost incongruous comment spoke volumes, summing up our situation precisely.<sup>9</sup>

We may not have burst into a chorus of *Calon Lân* like Welsh miners of old were wont to do,<sup>10</sup> but as latter-day pilgrims in a foreign land, there was no mistaking the camaraderie of shared toil, danger, aspirations and countless memories constantly reshaping the collective consciousness of the Welsh. What is unique about British Columbia, is that being so remote it was beyond the reach of the earliest waves of Welsh emigrants seeking freedom from poverty or religious oppression. Instead, this example illustrates another facet of Welshness that persists in the diaspora—not the romantically heroic or quaint stereotypes, but real-life economic migrants, like me, who landed safely on other shores seeking better opportunities.

For centuries Welsh people have moved not only to survive, but for advancement. Whether seeking education and better prospects in England, or plentiful farmland and prosperity in other fields such as mining and smelting, their skills and entrepreneurial spirit has hastened progress overseas, bringing them success too. Sadly, the downside to this was the dark side of colonialism which cost indigenous peoples their ancestral lands and traditional lifestyles. While acknowledging this, my focus is on the Welsh immigrants, not Canada’s First Nations whose treatment is a complex issue and separate subject beyond the scope of this thesis.

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<sup>8</sup> W. Williams and P. Williams (alt. transl.), ‘Guide me, O Thou Great Jehovah’, *Common Praise—Anglican Church of Canada* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 2998), #565.

<sup>9</sup> M.Hames, *Journal*, (1983). Reflection on a personal journal entry.

<sup>10</sup> E. Williams, ‘The Welsh Gold Miners of Cariboo’ in *A Toast to Wales* (Vancouver, Self-published, 2018). This describes Welsh miners’ sabbath-keeping, hymn-singing, hardships and hopes, quoting from Harry Jones’s 1862/3 journal in B.C.’s Archives. R.L. Lewis, *Welsh Americans—A History of Assimilation in the Coalfields*, Kindle Edition (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), p. 153. This says miners sang hymns.

Welcomed in North America for their skills, Protestant work ethic and respectability during the rapid nation-building era of the nineteenth century, they were not discriminated against for having a distinct language and customs. On the contrary, being the élite of the industrial workforce and considered the most cultured in B.C., their formative influence outshone their numbers because of the two-way assimilation<sup>11</sup> that occurs in flexible multicultural societies.

Today, Canadians are actively encouraged to become fully integrated while retaining their ethnic customs, but given globalized worldviews, what defines Welshness? Why and how have Welsh migrants or their descendants in Vancouver, B.C. tried to maintain their culture, language and connections? Having been born in Cardiff and raised as an English-speaking chapel-goer, although I have kept in close contact with family and friends, visiting Wales regularly, that was not enough to satisfy the persistent *hiraeth*. After retirement from mining and ministry<sup>12</sup> I pursued Welsh language and Celtic studies hoping to discover why and how others bridge time and space to fully belong in the hyphenated worlds of Welsh-Canadians. This documents my findings.

Sandwiched between impenetrable mountains and the Pacific Ocean, British Columbia (B.C.) was isolated from most of North America and also from Britain, except via the Horn—at least until the 1850s and 60s Gold Rushes secured its Provincial status and the promise of a trans-Canada rail link<sup>13</sup> as incentive for joining Confederation. In fact, Vancouver was considered one of the last outposts of the British Empire with a population of just 1000<sup>14</sup> when the first passenger train arrived in 1881, (see Photos 1-6). Now a thriving cosmopolitan city with 2.5 million living in its metropolitan area, of the 45,000 claiming Welsh background in the 2016 census,<sup>15</sup> only 120 called Welsh their mother tongue—probably immigrants, since loss of the

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<sup>11</sup> Lewis, *Welsh Americans*, p. 3. In transnational, reciprocal interactions, Lewis explores the persistence of identity by evaluating the continuity and change in the framework of homeland/hostland.

<sup>12</sup> Hames, *Journal*, (2019). ‘Retired! First non-stipendiary Worker Priest in the Anglican Church of Canada, Diocese of New Westminster; and first female V.P. Engineering, and V.P. Research and Technology for two international mining companies. Job done!’

<sup>13</sup> A. Seager, ‘The Resource Economy, 1871-1921’, in H.J.M. Johnston, (ed.), *The Pacific Province—A History of British Columbia* (Vancouver/Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1996), p. 207. Map 4 shows the land grants to various railways in B.C., including parts of what is now Vancouver. For further discussion, see B.G., Miller, ‘A Short Commentary on Land Claims in BC’, *11<sup>th</sup> Annual National Land Claims Workshop*, (October 2003).

<sup>14</sup> COVID restrictions prevented the checking of sources which are unclear whether this includes any indigenous Musqueam, Squamish or Tseil-Waututh peoples who had villages in the area prior to non-native settlement. R.L. Carlson, ‘The First British Columbians’, and R. Fisher, ‘Contact and Trade, 1774-1849’, in H.J.M. Johnston, (ed.), *The Pacific Province*, pp. 12-67. These outline the pre-colonial presence of indigenous peoples, by major native groups, their first contact with European fur traders and settlers, and the consequences.

<sup>15</sup> ‘Census Profile, 2016’, *Statistics Canada*, Catalogue 98-316-X2016001 (Ottawa, Statistics Canada, 2017).

language by a second generation is common amongst fully-integrated diaspora. However, despite English being dominant even in the ‘old country’, Welsh passion and pride not only finds a voice in Vancouver bars during rugby internationals, but its presence is felt in concerts, classrooms and committees, in hospitals, mines and many other walks of life.<sup>16</sup>

Often lumped in with the English and far outnumbered by other ethnic groups, nevertheless, distinctive Welsh ways impressed other pioneers, and the Vancouver Welsh Society (VWS)<sup>17</sup> still gathers at the Cambrian Hall to fly the flag, celebrating Welsh culture and ties to Wales. Enthusiastically continuing or adapting traditions associated with Welsh people everywhere, VWS members also tell stories unique to the Welsh in B.C.—stories about explorers and prospectors who helped found the Province, portraits of entrepreneurs who played key roles in the development of Vancouver, and tales of immigrants whose skills still contribute to the business, professional and cultural life of the city. Such stories receive short shrift compared with those about Welsh settlers east of the Rockies or south of the Canadian border. Perhaps that will be corrected if some nuggets I unearthed prompt others to explore this territory.

Building on research Dr Gethin Matthews and Eifion Williams graciously shared, I collected information from back-issues of the VWS *Newsletter* then surveyed and interviewed members of the Society in parallel with a literature and archive search. The latter was halted after an initial data-gathering when public facilities and libraries were closed because of COVID 19, thereafter being limited to on-line resources.

Conducted according to strict protocols approved by the UWTSD Ethics Committee,<sup>18</sup> as a fellow member of the VWS, my qualitative research was enriched by being a participant observer of events others described. The primary objectives were:

- To capture first-hand memories and stories that reflect *hiraeth* as experienced by VWS members whose pride in, or curiosity about their heritage motivates them to preserve, restore and adapt Welsh customs in a twenty-first century urban environment;

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<sup>16</sup> Lewis, *Welsh Americans*, pp. ix-x. The Welsh were instrumental in the North American industrial revolution, but invisible, [tending to dissolve into the background of large cities, but Lewis highlights their contributions].

<sup>17</sup> *Cymdeithas Gymreig Vancouver*, also known as the Vancouver Welsh Society abbreviated to VWS or Society.

<sup>18</sup> *Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice* (University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 2017-2020). Also, see Footnote 155. With a doctorate based on qualitative research, I used data-gathering tools and methods that ensured confidentiality and protected voluntary participants, as well as their identities—if they chose the latter.

- To stimulate a greater awareness of the connectedness to *Yr hen wlad*<sup>19</sup> deeply felt by the Welsh diaspora despite the opportunities and challenges experienced by Welsh immigrants and/or their descendants living half a world away in Vancouver;
- To describe if and how participants try to maintain or study a minority language and share aspects of Welsh culture in a multicultural society.

This could benefit three groups: the VWS as it updates its history and helps Canadians seeking their Welsh ancestors and roots; Welsh organizations wanting to learn more about what the current diaspora cherish; and First Nations people in Canada who are working to maintain or restore their own languages and cultures, so may see parallels in the ‘Welsh revival’.

By analyzing and comparing the responses with historic situations and experiences, recurring themes emerged that provide a framework for identifying enduring versus evolving attitudes and values. Answers revealed changing definitions or characteristics of Welshness which are discussed in association with notions of national, cultural and personal identity, while context explained the push-pull motivations<sup>20</sup> that affected patterns for migration and role of the VWS.

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<sup>19</sup> *Yr hen wlad* (The old country) is doubly meaningful for the diaspora, both as the land of their origin and for its almost sacred antiquity captured in the Welsh national anthem *Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau* which begins: ‘*Mae hen wlad fy nhadau...*’ (‘O land of my fathers...’), by Evan James and sung to the tune by James James (1856).

<sup>20</sup> Lewis, *Welsh Americans*, p. 3. ‘Richard A. Easterlin’s “Push-Pull” model explained immigration within the processes of economic modernization, as rapid industrialization in the United States...’ demanded labour with the necessary skill-sets, thereby undermining their home economies.



Photo 1. The Cariboo Wagon Road 186-  
Photographer unknown, British Columbia Archives and Records Service (HP 763)



Photo 2. CPR Train approaching a tunnel 2 miles above Yale with Cariboo Road above  
Photographer unknown, VPL Accession Number: 3264



Photo 3. First CPR passenger train to arrive in Vancouver, 1887  
Major J.S. Matthews collection, Vancouver City Archives, AM54-S4-: Can P6



Photo 4. Pacific Express (the train from Montreal) at the CPR depot 188-, Vancouver  
Dominion Photo Company Photo, VPL Accession Number: 21856



Photo 5. First Nations war canoe race in Burrard Inlet *c.* 1890  
Major J.S. Matthews photo collection, Vancouver City Archives, AM54-S4-: In P16

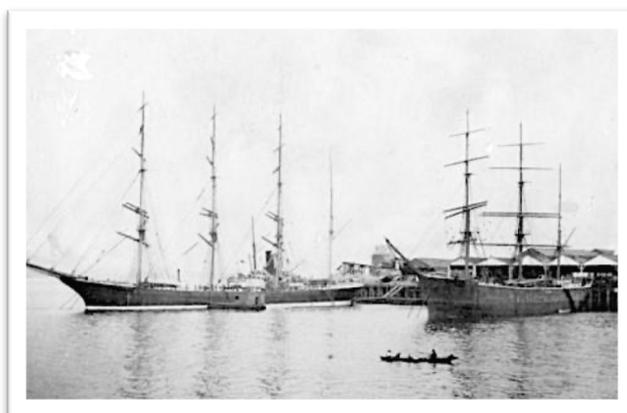


Photo 6. Ships anchored off Hastings Sawmill 1913  
Major J.S. Matthews photo collection, Vancouver City Archives, AM54-S4-: Bo P494

## CHAPTER TWO – HISTORICAL CONTEXT

### 2.1 Welsh history and motives for migration

From conquering nomads to territorial tribes who settled in Wales, by the time of Hywel Da, the *Cymru* had laws<sup>21</sup> dictating property rights, obligations and social pecking order based on kinship ties, with bards to sing their praises, preserving the memory of prestigious pedigrees. Eventually defeated and colonized, they had to adapt, only reuniting if inspired by a common cause. After the Act of Union, society splintered into two main groups: a large rural Welsh-speaking underclass versus the ambitious noble landowners and the wealthy who looked to England for advancement.<sup>22</sup> By mid-Victorian times, the two social classes at loggerheads were the Welsh-speaking, Nonconformist, Liberal peasants, miners and foundry-men, versus English-speaking, Anglican, Tory landowners, ironmasters and mine managers.<sup>23</sup> This oversimplification ignores the rise of the urban middle class, including professionals from whose ranks most of Vancouver's recent Welsh immigrants emerged, but epitomizes the two ends of the social spectrum with their own loyalties and historic motivations to move.

Welsh history, with its laws, crises and socio-economic conditions that plunged many into poverty, forced the destitute to rely on charity, prompted people move from the rural to urban and industrial areas,<sup>24</sup> and drove waves of emigration abroad, is well-documented elsewhere. Therefore, we will only scratch the surface of that story—enough to let us dig deeper into Canadian soil and delve into the context of the Vancouver-Welsh mindset.

Since 1485 many Welsh people have been on the move. Publications often refer to three main phases of migration, but because the flow to B.C. was lower and later than that to other parts of North America or destinations in Britain, it is instructive to list the conditions that motivated smaller moves and waves too, as summarized overleaf.

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<sup>21</sup> J. Rhys and D. Brynmor-Jones, *The Welsh People*, Fourth Edition (London: Unwin, 1906), pp. 180-196. Full-blooded *Cymru* believed they had a common ancestor, but *Cymru* status could be conferred following inter-marriage after four generations, or nine generations of residency. Kindred to the 4<sup>th</sup> degree affected succession, to the 7<sup>th</sup> carried responsibility for homicides, with the 9<sup>th</sup> degree from a common ancestor comprising a '*cenedl*' group, (p. 196). M.E. Owen and D. Jenkins, (eds), *The Welsh Law of Women*, Kindle Edition (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2017), Locs. 435-6, 518-532 and 2709ff. In terms of marriage, this explains its different forms and the importance of kinship, with legal responsibilities spanning four generations in medieval Welsh Laws.

<sup>22</sup> G.E. Jones and D. Smith, (eds), *The People of Wales* (Llandysul: Gwasg Gomer, 1999), p.79.

<sup>23</sup> Lewis, *Welsh Americans*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>24</sup> Small-holders, crofters and upland squatters on common land were gradually squeezed out by enclosures, bad harvests, recessions or plague, then the introduction of tithes, tolls and shorter tenancies added to their plight.

In the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries the nobility and the ambitious moved to England for education, advancement at court, in their professions and commercial endeavors—especially in London. Farmers and craftspeople travelled to market towns, drovers took livestock further afield and sailors plied coastal trade, while some rural poor migrated to urban centres for work. However, the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries saw transatlantic migrations to the East Coast of North America, beginning with agricultural settlements in Canada's Maritimes<sup>25</sup> and America's colonies of Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania. The latter attracted wealthy Dissenters fleeing religious oppression, such as Quakers and Baptists, as well as idealists hoping to preserve their Welsh language or knew no other. By 1700 over 6000 had already settled in the Welsh Tract.<sup>26</sup>

The 19<sup>th</sup> century began with rural migrants escaping poverty, especially from West Wales when high rents, shorter farm tenancies, and finally tolls sparked the Rebecca Riots, but failed harvests on top brought the threat of famine, destitution and the workhouse except for paupers whose passage to North America was funded by their parishes, and the lucky ones who could afford to emigrate, perhaps assisted by family. After the Napoleonic War, an economic downturn followed by fluctuations in the coal and metals markets sparked a series of strikes and pressure groups like the Scotch Cattle. The bitter strife sent waves of miners and industrial workers in search of better conditions and pay in other parts of the Empire, but thousands ended up in America encouraged by ties and chain migration.<sup>27</sup> Staying closer to home, some moved from rural areas to the Valleys to take up new trades while farming smallholdings, but recessions often defeated them. Other craftspeople, such as the weavers whose cottage industry could no longer compete with the English woolen mills, joined the ranks of a quarter of a million Welsh exiles living in London, Liverpool or Manchester where they built Welsh chapels and societies.<sup>28</sup>

In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Wales was hard hit by high unemployment during the Depression when 380,000 left, including many young people from the Valleys,<sup>29</sup> followed by an exodus of graduates in the 1950s to 70s, then another significant outmigration of skilled workers in the wake of pit closures and twilight years for heavy industries as Wales moved to a post-industrial society.

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<sup>25</sup> The Maritimes is the term for Canada's Atlantic region and provinces, but not B.C. on its Pacific coast.

<sup>26</sup> Jones and Smith, *People of Wales*, p. 96. The Welsh 'made up perhaps a third of the... 20,000 white settlers'.

<sup>27</sup> Lewis, *Welsh Americans*, pp. 5-6. This quotes 30,000 arriving from Wales by 1850, and 100,000 by 1890.

<sup>28</sup> E. McLean, *The Extent of 'Welshness' Among the Exiled Welsh Living in England, Scotland and Ireland* (Lampeter: UWTSd M.A. Dissertation, 2013), pp.11-12.

<sup>29</sup> Jones and Smith, *People of Wales*, p.190. Most of the 50,000 who left the Rhondda were 'aged between fifteen and twenty-nine', including the devastating 'exodus of [marriageable] young women'.

## 2.2 Welsh emigration to North America

While Henry Tudor held court in London,<sup>30</sup> attracting his Welsh supporters and high society, Welsh drovers took livestock across the border to markets, and sailors plied the coastal trade, with some following the explorers and fleets in roaming further afield.<sup>31</sup> One hundred years later, the mythic Madoc was alleged to have left for North America in 1594,<sup>32</sup> but Welshman Sir Thomas Button, an officer in the Royal Navy, certainly sailed in search of Henry Hudson and led an expedition trying to navigate the North West Passage in 1612.

In 1617, the first attempt to establish a Welsh colony in Newfoundland, called Cambriol,<sup>33</sup> predated the landing of Pilgrims on the Mayflower in Massachusetts. Religious persecution<sup>34</sup> prompted Welsh Quakers to move to the 'Welsh Tract' in Pennsylvania, joining other Non-conformists in the 1682-1700 migration of 2000 families. Idealistically, some sought a New Wales.<sup>35</sup> Bad harvests in 1790 caused a second wave of Welsh migrants, but details of their story in Canada picks up again in the early nineteenth century when shiploads of Welsh left Camarthen, Liverpool and Bristol, for New Cambria in Nova Scotia and Cardigan Settlement in New Brunswick.<sup>36</sup> Many of the original settlers in these 'marginal outposts' had skills, but were not farmers, nor used to clearing virgin forest, so had to learn to survive on charity for eighteen months and through two Canadian winters before their crops and hunting or trapping could sustain them. It took ten years before some owned cattle so any semblance of prosperity was achieved, but before that they had to work the land in order to gain title to it. A church

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<sup>30</sup> G.A. Williams, *When was Wales? A History of the Welsh* (London: Black Raven, 1985), p.117. This describes how Henry Tudor, as Henry VII, 'kept St. David's Day and packed his court's minor offices with Welshmen', while J. Davies, *A History of Wales* (London: Penguin, 2007), p. 219, notes how 'Tudor enthusiasts among Welsh historians delighted in portraying Henry's court as a place where the Welsh were held in high honour'.

<sup>31</sup> McLean, *The Extent of 'Welshness'*, p. 30.

<sup>32</sup> P. Thomas, *Strangers from a Secret Land: the Voyage of the brig Albion and the founding of the first Welsh settlements in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), pp. 47-49. As the 'symbol for many aspirations', he embodied the 'Welsh dream of heroic Atlantic possibility....'

<sup>33</sup> C. Bennett, *In Search of the Welsh Dragon: The Welsh in Canada* (Renfrew: Juniper Books, 1985), pp. 46-51. After twenty years of privation and near-starvation, it is assumed most of the survivors returned to Wales.

<sup>34</sup> Thomas, *Strangers*, pp. 37-39, 83. From the late seventeenth century until the early nineteenth, Baptists were amongst the most influential Dissenters in North America, but Methodists and other Nonconformists also helped establish the 'Welsh chapel tradition'.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38. Besides 'religious tolerance', many hoped to found a Welsh-speaking nation, 'a *Gwladfa*, or home from home'. That same ideal prompted Welsh emigration to Patagonia two hundred years later, as described in: Williams, R.B., *Gwladfa Patagonia: The Welsh colony in Patagonia, 1865-1965* (Cardiff: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymry, 1965).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 150, 157-63. Arriving without the necessary funds, provisions, tools or seeds, many hard-working poor who arrived depended on charitable appeals to the citizens in nearby towns to provide what they needed to build rudimentary cabins, clear and prepare the land, plant seeds, and avoid starvation until their first harvest.

and school were the institutions that defined true settlement.<sup>37</sup> People in Wales heard about such nascent communities through a network of intelligence and collaboration<sup>38</sup> between ships' owners, advertising, and letters carried back on 'packet-ships'. Ship lists attest to communal migrations, while letters praising the opportunities or offering assistance inspired chains of individuals<sup>39</sup> similar to thousands ending up in America, encouraged by personal ties—hence the term 'chain migration'.<sup>40</sup> However, moves that fragmented communities and families, inevitably shifted people's focus and loyalties.

Despite preachers schooling the Welsh into thinking of themselves as the lost tribe of Israel,<sup>41</sup> having to endure the wilderness and stick together to succeed in the New World,<sup>42</sup> many fled Canada's harsh conditions, moving south. By the 1820s, the Welsh were capitalizing on their knowledge of mining anthracite in Pennsylvania,<sup>43</sup> so skilled miners, smelters and engineers could make good livings in America where their expertise and technical advances developed in Wales largely contributed to establishing the coal, iron and competitive steel industries.<sup>44</sup> In Canada, the same know-how was needed in the Cape Breton collieries<sup>45</sup> and manufacturing hubs 'back east', for building railways, in searching for steam coal to power industrial progress, and finally to tap the huge mineral resources in B.C.. Outnumbered by the Scots and Irish, or hidden among the English, evidence of the Welsh presence is preserved in letters, newspaper articles and inherited family histories. In urban centres and rural townships Welsh chapels and societies flourished as far west as Alberta, welcoming members of the diaspora from elsewhere, including 300 Patagonians in 1902.<sup>46</sup> The Prairies were easier to farm than the

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., pp. 216-27.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., pp. 48 and 83.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 85. The *Albion* carried groups of people from the Llŷn Peninsula and villages in West Wales. Bennett, *In Search*, pp. 83-93 and 83-93. About 300 Patagonian Welsh moved together to Canada, versus the chain of [sponsored] settlers to London Township, Upper Canada in 1821.

<sup>40</sup> G. Matthews, *Welsh in the Gold Rushes*, (Unpublished essay, undated and unpaginated). 'Migrants generally followed a pathway that had already been trodden...'. Also, Lewis, *Welsh Americans*, p. 43.

<sup>41</sup> Thomas, *Strangers*, pp. 22, 94-95, 120-25. Religion had infused their patriotism with a holy purpose, so leaders such as a pious ship's pilot were viewed as the model 'master'—their 'shepherd', thus extending Christian symbolism to ships like the *Albion* that carried them to the New World as their 'Ark'.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., pp. 214-16.

<sup>43</sup> Lewis, *Welsh Americans*, p. 6.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., pp. ix-x.

<sup>45</sup> Odell, C.M., 'Men and Methods in the Early Days of Mining in Cape Breton', *Transactions of the Canadian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy*, Vol. XXV, 1922, pp. 1ff. Exposed seams had been mined since 1720, followed by small-scale operations between 1784 and 1820, but shaft-sinking was necessary to mine the major underground and undersea coal deposits.

<sup>46</sup> Bennett, *In Search*, pp. 26, 45, 52, 87, 94. United Empire Loyalists 'became eligible for land' in Upper and Lower Canada after the American War of Independence; the Patagonians could register '160 acre homesteads' for ten dollars, likewise the American Welsh who gravitated to communities like Wood River around 1900.

remote valleys in B.C., although the flat, fertile river plain east of Vancouver was quickly put to pasture or the plough to feed the hungry miners who transformed history in the West.<sup>47</sup>

### 2.3 British Columbia and the Welsh

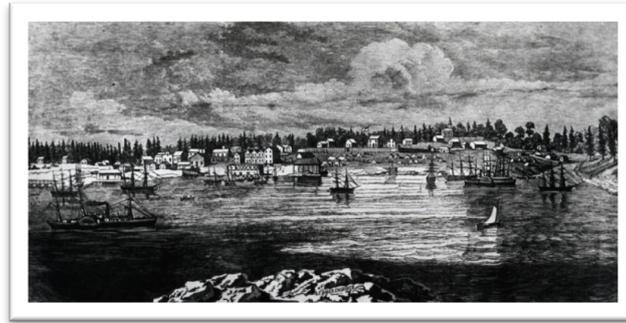


Photo 7. Victoria, 1858  
Courtesy Jewish Museum and Archives of British Columbia<sup>48</sup>

For the first 200 years that Welsh emigrants had been crossing the Atlantic to settle in North American farming and industrial communities, except for explorers and fur-traders with depots on the West Coast of what would later become B.C., none had penetrated its mainland. Fort Victoria, founded in 1843 as Hudson's Bay Company's (HBC) main outpost controlling trade with the First Nations,<sup>49</sup> became the centre for the growing logging, fishing and coal industries on Vancouver Island. Given its strategic importance to shipping, Britain established a naval base nearby to protect the busy port, (Photo 7), and vital supply of spars for sailing ships, especially its wartime fleet. By the mid 1800's, Victoria was attracting well-connected, highly-educated men as HBC officers, while entrepreneurs and investors began to build businesses or buy lots in this fledgling administrative outpost of Empire where patriotic military types could retire with a parcel of land. Remittance men and people with means branched out into ranching, setting up orchards or assembling huge farms resembling British

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<sup>47</sup> J. Barman, *The West Beyond the West—A History of British Columbia*, Revised Edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996). Discussing what is now B.C., the book title illustrates that point in Canadian history when the West was wherever the frontier of European settlement had progressed from 'back east', but the *West beyond the West* refers to the land stretching from the Rockies to the Pacific Ocean. Writing from the current Vancouver perspective, this thesis uses the term the West for B.C., but at one time it used to include Alberta.

<sup>48</sup> R.R. Taylor, 'The Mysterious and Difficult Hermann Otto Tiedemann', *The Ormsby Review*, Nov. 26<sup>th</sup> 2017. < bcbooklook.com > [accessed 8 October, 2020].

<sup>49</sup> Thomas, *Strangers*, pp. 54-62. While using outdated terminology for First Nations peoples, this offers a brief account of their early contact and relationship with the colonists who misunderstood them. *Musqueam: giving information about our teachings*, (Vancouver: Museum of Anthropology, University of British Columbia, 2020). This offers teaching kits about the Musqueam and their ancestral territory in what is now called Vancouver.

country estates.<sup>50</sup> Few initially arrived with their families, so women were scarce until the bride ships brought their precious cargoes of potential wives, pioneers, nurses and teachers.

The limited accessible arable land, but ample other rich resources of the mainland remained largely untapped until reports of placer gold found in gravel beds on the Thompson and Fraser Rivers in 1858 sparked the first influx of miners—20 to 30,000 of them,<sup>51</sup> mostly via Victoria from San Francisco. With the voyage around Cape Horn taking up to five months and costing seven-times the passage from Wales to the East Coast,<sup>52</sup> it was far beyond the reach of most working class people unless they were grub-staked for the Gold Rushes of the 1850s and 60s. Given the overwhelming numbers of Americans, the British army was sent to keep the peace with First Nations,<sup>53</sup> maintain order and support the HBC registering claims while approval of Provincial status rushed through parliament for fear America would annex this vast, valuable slice of the continent. However, with thousands working their ways upstream using sluice-boxes or panning for gold, its easy supply was soon played out, prompting a mass exodus.

Enter the Welsh—hard-rock miners capable of digging shafts<sup>54</sup> in search of underground gold deposits—the first identifiable groups to emigrate directly from Wales to B.C. in the 1860s. Of the Welsh lured to the goldfields by false news<sup>55</sup> and gold-fever, fervent Nonconformists were heard singing hymns, so likely knew the words of *Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah*.<sup>56</sup> Hardly barren, B.C. was densely forested—a different kind of wilderness which survivors of

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<sup>50</sup> M. Harper and S. Constantine, *Migration and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford Scholarship Online, 2001). ‘The class-conscious orchardists of British Columbia modelled their... [lifestyles] on a gentrified southern English society...’.

<sup>51</sup> Barman, *The West*, p. 379. After the mass exodus of prospectors, B.C. entered Confederation in 1871 with an estimated population of 36,000, 70% of whom were First Nations, so only 10-11,000 were non-native settlers.

<sup>52</sup> See Footnote 63 for travel cost.

<sup>53</sup> Barman, *The West*, pp. 63-71. Contrast how some indigenous traders, gold discoverers/diggers were accused of thefts by the sluice-box stampedeers of the first Gold Rush ‘trespassing’ by the thousands on traditional First Nations’ land and destroying major fish runs, with the Welsh reports of native honesty and kindness that saved the lives of many returning from hundreds of miles inland, defeated by the later Cariboo Gold Rush reported by letters in: A. Conway, ‘Welsh Gold Miners in British Columbia During the 1860s’, *British Columbia Historical Quarterly*, (expanded version of the original article in the *National Library of Wales Journal*, Vol. 10), January 1957-October, 1958, pp. 58 and 65. See letters published in the *Merthyr Telegraph* and *Gwladgarwr* in 1862.

<sup>54</sup> Lewis, *Welsh Americans*, pp. 18-19. In Wales, by 1837 the ability to sink shafts 2000 feet deep to reach the lucrative steam coal seams had already been proven by ‘pioneering entrepreneurs’, [whereas in Barkerville underground gold was found a trifling 40 to 60 feet below surface, yet deep enough to daunt the uninitiated who knew nothing about hard-rock mining and timbering support methods].

<sup>55</sup> K. Storey, ‘Donald Fraser, *The Times*, and the Gold Rushes of British Columbia’, *B.C. Studies*, No. 193, Spring 2017, pp. 65-68, 73-76. Fake, and/or exaggerated news articles discussed low-tech panning and sluicing for alluvial gold, but hard rock, underground mining was required in the Cariboo, or ‘New Caladonia’.

<sup>56</sup> W. Williams, 1719-91, P. Williams, 1722-96, (alt. transl.), ‘Guide me, O...’, *The Methodist Hymn Book*.

the long trek into the interior and harsh winters<sup>57</sup> described in harrowing letters<sup>58</sup> exposing the lies that only benefitted shipping lines and shopkeepers. An estimated 39% starved and only 10-15% reached their destination,<sup>59</sup> often thanks to groups pooling their resources for one to continue while the others looked for other work which was scarce.<sup>60</sup> B.C. eventually barred paupers,<sup>61</sup> but only after many prospectors were left destitute or dying. Fortunately, Welsh skills could be put to work in Nanaimo's coal mines, pioneering routes through B.C.'s rugged terrain and blasting railway tunnels through the Rockies.<sup>62</sup> Unlike the East Coast where relatively quick trans-Atlantic passages made re-emigration or seasonal work possible, this was not practical for folk on the West Coast until steam-powered transportation made the complete link across land and sea.

Alan Conway and Dr Gethin Matthews describe the dire conditions and disappointments of the Welsh who joined the Cariboo Gold Rush. Sadly, Donald Fraser's misleading reports in *The Times* exaggerated the fortunes to be made while minimizing the difficulties of accessing the underground deposits, crippling costs of provisions and gruelling 700-mile journey from Victoria.<sup>63</sup> Before the first arrivals could relay the truth, Welsh newspapers had already promoted this as a God-given chance for workmen to be wealthy, prove themselves and create a better life—heaping scorn on failures. In early 1862 about 500, many from Merthyr and Aberdare, joined the stampede, 'helped' by 4<sup>d</sup> Handbook, map and emigration agents.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> G. Matthews, 'Gold Fever: The Stampede from South Wales to British Columbia in 1862', *North American Journal of Welsh Studies*, Volume 5, 2 (Summer 2005), pp. 68-72. Maybe 10-15% of the 'gold seekers who left Wales' reached the Cariboo goldfields.

<sup>58</sup> E. Williams, 'The Welsh Gold Miners of Cariboo' in *A Toast to Wales* (Vancouver, Self-published, 2018). This quotes a distressing letter home from John Price in 1862 who described the 'many dead' on the [Cariboo] trail, and others left to die beside it.

<sup>59</sup> Storey, 'Donald Fraser, *The Times*,' p. 12. Estimate of 39% from letter by 'Veritas' to the *London Standard*, 3 November 1863. Matthews, 'Gold Fever', p. 72. The 'probable... success rate lies between 10 and 15%'.

<sup>60</sup> Conway, 'Welsh Gold Miners', pp. 51ff. Firsthand experiences are cited in letters, newspapers and editorials.

<sup>61</sup> J. Norris, *Strangers Entertained—A history of the Ethnic Groups of British Columbia* (Vancouver, B.C.: Evergreen Press, 1971), pp. 46-47. Initially welcomed to fill the land, then later to maintain rapid growth, but the Aliens Ordinance of 1885 prohibited paupers or anyone likely to become a public charge.

<sup>62</sup> Bennett, *In Search*, pp. 42-43. 'One thousand jobs were... offered to Welshmen on... the [CPR] Crows Nest Pass extension', [but fifteen years before that, railway construction demanded similar skills, plus minework in Fernie, B.C., discoveries of iron ore, lead, copper, silver gold, mica and marble all attracted expert miners].

<sup>63</sup> Storey, 'Donald Fraser, *The Times*,' p. 14, and Conway, 'Welsh Gold Miners...' pp. 60-70. Besides the exorbitant prices of provisions and equipment for a season's digging, it could cost £200 to travel from Victoria to the Cariboo on top of the typical year's wage to cover the £40 passage from Britain. Those who could not afford a carriage ride or to overnight in the staging houses along the trail had to sleep rough and walk carrying their essential provisions and kit described in: Conway, 'Welsh Gold Miners', pp. 55, 58 and 73.

<sup>64</sup> Conway, 'Welsh Gold Miners', pp. 52, 58, 59 and 61.

Typically skilled young men from the upper working class, one well-organized group of 26 in the ‘Company of Adventurers’ led by J. Evans, maintained the Welsh language, held poetry competitions and kept the Sabbath as a day of prayer, having signed a two-year prospecting contract covering expenses, guaranteeing families pay, and promising a share of any profits. Of the hundreds who left Wales for the Cariboo in 1862, only two found gold that year, and by April 1893 it had lost its appeal. Those who reverted to coal mining on Vancouver Island, having gained the expertise that was traditionally passed from father to son,<sup>65</sup> would soon be challenged by the influx of cheap unskilled labour and new technology. Despite unrest, this also opened opportunities for the Welsh to qualify for supervisory roles, even mine managers. This occurred in America too, but it was a different group flooding the unskilled labour pool in Nanaimo,<sup>66</sup> raising serious safety concerns since the gassy nature of the coal could cause explosions and rockfalls which resulted in two disasters in 1887-88 costing over 200 lives.

Strike action for safer working conditions and better pay for the skilled coal-hewers working at the face was met with contempt, lockouts and force by one of the most powerful owners,<sup>67</sup> making things worse despite support from the community. Some studied to rise through the ranks, or open new mines, but many of ‘labour’s aristocracy’ who trained from childhood to handle the demands, dangers and difficulties of working underground left to open ‘sawmills, shops, boarding-houses’,<sup>68</sup> or saloons. Others moved into farming or maritime occupations, and like many second-generation ‘American-Welsh miners who changed fields...’, enjoyed success in the ‘fluid class structure based on ability’.<sup>69</sup> However, given B.C.’s rich mineral resources, specialists in breaker construction and shaft-sinking which involved complex timbering, drainage, ventilation and haulage,<sup>70</sup> would soon be able to leverage their skills.

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<sup>65</sup> Lewis, *Welsh Americans*, pp. 93-95, 103. Knowledge and a work-based culture in occupational communities was beneficially transferred to sons. L. Bowen, *Boss Whistle—The Coal Miners of Vancouver Island Remember* (Lantzville, B.C.: Oolichan Books, 1982), p. 226. It is said that: ‘Probably the best way... to learn the fine art of mining was as a backhand... with an experienced digger...’, usually the boy’s father. ‘Experience was the most important factor in acquiring a coal miner’s ticket’. To rise to ‘fireboss... third-class ticket’ overseeing ‘ten or more and firing their shots,’ miners had to complete a course... pass an exam on Mine Regulations, Laws, gases, ventilation and practical matters, besides holding ‘...First Aid and Mine Rescue... Certificate[s].’

<sup>66</sup> Lewis, *Welsh Americans*, p. 137. In America, the so-called Slavic invasion, epitomized American prejudices against unskilled immigrants. [In B.C. it was mainly Chinese workers, who faced prejudice.]

<sup>67</sup> M. Leier, ‘Labour Movement’, in Francis, D., (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of British Columbia* (Madeira Park, B.C.: Harbour Pub., 2000), pp. 395-98. This summarises the rise and struggles of B.C.’s Labour Movement.

<sup>68</sup> J.D. Belshaw, ‘The British Collier in British Columbia: Another Archetype Reconsidered’, *Labour / Le Travail*, Vol. 34, 1994, pp. 18-19, 28; Lewis, *Welsh Americans*, pp. 115-6.

<sup>69</sup> Lewis, *Welsh Americans*, p. 95.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 95, 102-110. Similar opportunities had already opened up in America.

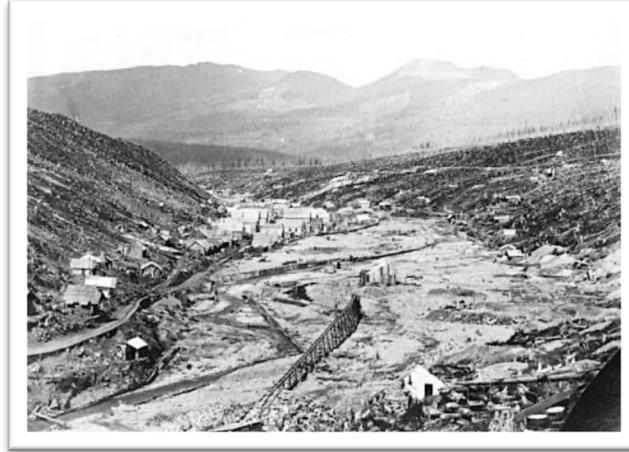


Photo 8. Barkerville - Williams Creek, Cariboo, "Gold Mines" c. 1865  
Major J.S. Matthews collection, Vancouver City Archives, AM54-S4-: Out P165

British Columbia never had a Welsh township. However, a strong community spirit helped early settlers triumph over hardships to build their first Cambrian Hall in Barkerville which burned down in 1868. Its namesake in Vancouver has been home to the VWS since 1928, linking us to the present day. The remote mining camps were a man's world,<sup>71</sup> but when the likes of Williams Creek, (six miles from Barkerville, as captured in Photo 8 above), became a permanent settlement the Welsh 'set up Sunday School, had Eisteddfods,... and... a St. David's Day dinner'<sup>72</sup> which by the late 1860s was attended by 197 men and 6 women.<sup>73</sup> With their reading and debating clubs, such pockets of Welsh people were lauded as the most cultured by the *Victoria Times*, providing leading citizens like Harry Jones, 'the last survivor [from the Company of Adventurers]... who became a member of the Provincial legislature in 1903'.<sup>74</sup> A parallel trend in America saw Welsh become 'town officials... [allowing] their religion, language and leisure culture... rise to prominence,...'<sup>75</sup> with even greater success stories already established in the industrial centres of the eastern States by 1850.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Conway, 'Welsh Gold Miners', pp. 58 and 61. In 1862, having left Victoria W. Jones wrote: '... we have learned to live without the support of a woman', and J. Price's letter to his wife said the 'roughness is beyond imagination'.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., pp. 73-74.

<sup>73</sup> Matthews, 'Gold Fever', p. 63.

<sup>74</sup> M.E. Chamberlain, 'The Welsh in Canada: Historical Sources', *Welsh History Review—Cylchgrawn Hanes Cymru*, Dec. 1, 1998: 19, 2., p. 285.

<sup>75</sup> D.M. MacRaid and P. Payton, 'The Welsh Diaspora', in D.M. MacRaid, et al., (eds), *British and Irish Diasporas—Societies, Cultures and Ideologies*, Kindle Edition (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 2019), locs. 7895, 7924 and 7950.

<sup>76</sup> Lewis *Welsh Americans*, pp. 6-7.

Back in Wales, ‘the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815’ had caused heavy taxation, on top of a drop in corn prices and reduced coal demand,<sup>77</sup> then subsequent downturns added to the misery and turmoil that made many seek a new start in the New World<sup>78</sup> where they quickly became model citizens.<sup>79</sup> With or without a utopian vision for a New Wales/New Cambria,<sup>80</sup> the resurgence of Welsh nationalism in the latter half of the century that blossomed in various forms related to language, religious enthusiasm sustained by Nonconformist chapel-culture,<sup>81</sup> and the politics of dissent that championed social justice issues, was carried by emigrants throughout the diaspora from London and Liverpool<sup>82</sup> to far-flung corners of the Americas as well as Commonwealth countries such as Australia, New Zealand and S. Africa. While the Welsh language was hard to sustain, even discouraged for the second generation needing to use English to integrate and get on, Gymanfas and Eisteddfods or related festivals persist.

Parallel with this push to leave Wales, in 1894 the Canadian government ‘published a... booklet [in] Welsh... to attract famers... [in a] campaign to... settle the West,... exploiting ...industrial unrest... such as the Penrhyn quarrymen’s strikes...’<sup>83</sup> to recruit immigrants into coal-mining as well as agriculture. Foremen, engineers and managers were also encouraged, while for women, there were new openings for teachers, nurses, domestic and office staff. In B.C., ‘one of the main incentives was to preserve British heritage,’<sup>84</sup> so the small pockets of

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<sup>77</sup> Bennett, *In Search*, p. 41.

<sup>78</sup> See Footnote 24 on the plight in rural areas. Thomas, *Strangers*, pp. 92-94. Some stated their main motive was ‘...for the children [who were] hungry’. However, ‘Hypocrites pretend to serve God, but desire to get rich!’ MacRaid and Payton, ‘The Welsh Diaspora’, *British and Irish Diasporas*, loc. 8150. Various ‘gold rushes in the [mid-1800s attracted] hundreds of potential prospectors,... [but] widespread destitution [in the 1840s],... and major downturns in coal and iron [in the 1870s prompted]... waves of emigrants.... [Unfortunately,] those who went to Canada... during the 1870s found similar stagnation there.’

<sup>79</sup> Lewis, *Welsh Americans*, p. 110. Norris, *Strangers Entertained*, pp. 79-80. Notable examples in B.C..

<sup>80</sup> Thomas, *Strangers*, pp. 3, 112-16, 157-58; and Bennett, *In Search*, pp. 41, 47-50, 88, 94. In Canada’s Atlantic Provinces, besides Cambriol, the short-lived Welsh colony on the Avalon Peninsula of Newfoundland founded in 1617, Thomas describes the 1818 New Cambria settlement in Nova Scotia, then 1819 arrival of the Welsh who developed Cardigan Settlement in New Brunswick. On the Prairies, Bennet describes Welsh towns of Bangor in Saskatchewan (p. 88) and Wood River, Alberta (p. 94). Land tracts for Welsh colonies were granted in what would become the eastern States of America, *Y Wladfa* founded 1865 in Patagonia, and in Australia. In the UK, strong Welsh communities also formed in London and Liverpool and a number of border towns.

<sup>81</sup> Lewis *Welsh Americans*, p. 15. *History of the United Church of Canada*. <united-church.ca> Amalgamating Canadian Methodists, Congregationalists and most Presbyterians in 1925, it is dedicated to social justice, but the Social Gospel inspired political action amongst Protestants in Canada before that, first appearing in the 1880s.

<sup>82</sup> McLean, *Extent of ‘Welshness’*, pp.11-12. [A quarter of a million Welsh exiles] live in London, Liverpool or Manchester where their communities built Welsh chapels and societies.

<sup>83</sup> Chamberlain, ‘The Welsh in Canada’, pp. 266-69, and 282. Note: the ‘West’ here probably implies as far as the Rockies, namely Saskatchewan which also attracted Welsh settlers from Patagonia, and Alberta offering opportunities in farming and coal-mining where ‘...prestige [and better pay] attached to being a skilled Welsh miner’, (p. 282).

<sup>84</sup> Norris, *Strangers Entertained*, p. 70.

Welsh were never pressured ‘to abandon their traditional community life’.<sup>85</sup> In practice, while adapting quickly, they preserved ‘reminders of the “Land of their Fathers,...” [with their] songs, poetry and oratory... [even] heard in the wilderness,...’ Maintaining ‘Sabbatarianism ...[their] social and cultural centres... [such the Cambrian Hall also] served as churches’.<sup>86</sup>

In the twentieth century, Wales was hit hard when high unemployment during the Depression drove many young people from the Valleys,<sup>87</sup> while in Canada, farmers fleeing drought and crop failures in the Prairies migrated to B.C.. Britain’s ‘brain drain’<sup>88</sup> during the 1950s to 70s, corresponded with the huge influx of educated and skilled workers to B.C. after WWII when the shame of racist policies and mistreatment of its Asian citizens was finally redressed.<sup>89</sup> Yet another significant wave of skilled workers left Wales in the wake of pit closures and twilight years for heavy industries. While certain professionals had to re-qualify in B.C., they integrated ‘quickly... [into the] ethnically-neutral’<sup>90</sup> urban centres. As for ethnic associations which had provided fellowship and links with the ‘old country’, their importance ‘climaxed in the 1950s, when immigration was at its peak,’<sup>91</sup> then diminished with the parallel ‘decay in family structure’<sup>92</sup> as work relationships began to dominate. By the 1960s, B.C.’s social values had matured enough to encourage everyone to share the richness of their backgrounds within a multicultural society<sup>93</sup> through festivals, concerts, film-shows and food-fairs.

## 2.4 Vancouver’s changing landscape and accessibility

Vancouver itself has experienced several major growth periods. The first was prompted by the arrival of the railway in 1886, at nearby Port Moody,<sup>94</sup> which transformed a collection of

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., pp. 52-53.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., pp. 78-79.

<sup>87</sup> Jones and Smith, *People of Wales*, p. 217.

<sup>88</sup> Bennett, *In Search*, pp. 73-75. Ontario, attracted many of ‘these modern “New Canadians” ’ who were professionals or skilled workers with jobs to come to and seeking advancement. Some took ‘the “thousand dollar cure...” [returning to the UK temporarily] before settling down.

<sup>89</sup> Norris, *Strangers Entertained*, pp. 30-33, and 46-49. This outlines the transition from British advantage and protectionist immigration policies, to changes in legislation and attitudes that addressed earlier inequalities.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., pp. 9, 17-19.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., pp. 38-41.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., pp. 24-26.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., pp. 40, 44.

<sup>94</sup> Barman, *The West*, pp. 107-110. Speculation drove land prices there so high that the CPR changed its plans and built its terminus in ‘the small lumbering enclave of Granville on the south shore of Burrard Inlet, known locally as Gastown,...’. The ‘new city of Vancouver was incorporated on 6 April 1886... [and] first scheduled train from the east arrived... on 23 May 1887, (p. 108). By 1891 the CPR... employed...’ about a tenth of the

clearings for logging camps and lumber mills with a population of under 1000, into a bustling townsite of nearly 14,000 people by 1891, despite the Great Fire of 1886, (see Photo 9 below). Businessman, sailors and railwaymen soon added to the ranks of Welsh settlers in sufficient numbers that by 1912 press cuttings refer to ‘choirs, Welsh society banquets, women’s clubs and, ... plans for the formation of a Welsh battalion in 1916’.<sup>95</sup> In fact, during the first decade of the twentieth century, ‘migrants poured into the city,’<sup>96</sup> raising numbers to over 100,000 and creating a construction boom, but development of its suburbs in the 1950s and 1960’s saw it reach a million by 1971. Fifty years later, what had been an ‘Anglo-Canadian... city’<sup>97</sup> now enjoys cultural diversity and a more knowledge-based economy with thriving education and technology sectors, while normally boasting Canada’s largest port, prosperous trade, tourism, film-making, television,<sup>98</sup> construction and various resource-based industries.

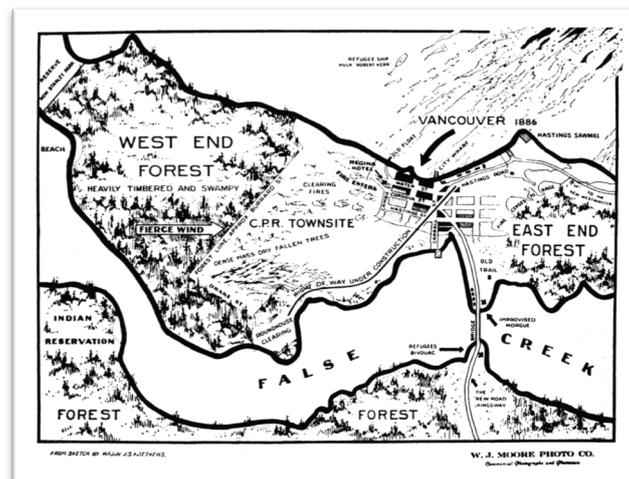


Photo 9. The Great Vancouver Fire 1886  
From Major J.S. Matthews’ sketch, Vancouver City Archives, AM1562-: 75-54

Today’s nine-hour direct flights between the UK and Vancouver are a far-cry from the four-to five-month sailings around the Horn. Even the introduction of steamships, which could cross the Atlantic in ten to fifteen days by the mid 1800s, were of little benefit to west-bound travellers until the Canadian Pacific Railway between Montreal and Vancouver was opened. Before that, the overland journey beyond the reach of train or stage-coach was slow and

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city’s workforce as ‘officials, trainmen or labourers’, while Vancouver rapidly developed as a ‘service centre... [with] men and women working in trade, clerical or domestic work, the professions or transportation’, (p. 110).

<sup>95</sup> Chamberlain, ‘The Welsh in Canada’, pp. 285-6. This lists: *The Province*, *Colonist*, *World* and *The Times*.

<sup>96</sup> N. MacDonald, ‘A Critical Growth Cycle for Vancouver, 1900-1914’, *B.C. Studies*, No. 17, Spring 1973, pp. 26-28. This describes the four surges in Vancouver’s growth up to the date of its publication.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27. Also, City of Vancouver ethnicity tables from the 2011 Census shows people of European background numbering the same as Asian, [at 46 to 47% each].

<sup>98</sup> The latter three industries are currently impacted by the Covid 19 pandemic, so not following the norm.

dangerous, while the most expensive, but fastest six- to eight-week alternative from the UK was by ship to Colon, stage-coach across the Panama isthmus, then sailing up the Pacific Coast. Messages took months until telegraph lines and undersea cables were complete, then only wealthy individuals, big businesses and major newspapers<sup>99</sup> could afford to use them. Despite letters taking longer, postal services were vital, (see Photo 10), and even in the 1960s most people still wrote because transatlantic telephone calls were expensive, so a rare treat.



Photo 10. South Vancouver Post Office (1916), Main Street at East 15th Avenue  
Stuart Thomson, photographer. Photo: City of Vancouver Archives, CVA-356

## 2.5 Being Welsh and becoming Canadian

Many early Welsh arrivals ‘subscribed to *Y Drych*,... published in New York’<sup>100</sup> since 1851 and merging with *Ninnau* in 2003. Welsh newspapers and journals were commonplace on both sides of the Atlantic, often reprinting the same cut-and-paste articles or letters. Literacy built links. Religion helped spread Welsh literacy through Sunday Schools, then sustaining the language through Bible-reading and hymn-singing. The Church in Wales also helped pioneer education,<sup>101</sup> but *Gymanfa Ganus*<sup>102</sup> are associated with the Chapel culture of teetotal Methodists and Baptists whose social and spiritual lives revolved around such communal

<sup>99</sup> Storey, ‘Donald Fraser, *The Times*,’ p. 17. ‘In the latter half of the nineteenth century,... [this aided] the creation of press monopolies’. Before that, news, such as information about the gold rushes was shared through informal networks. Storey refers to S. Potter, *News and the British World: the emergence of an imperial press system, 1876-1922*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>100</sup> Bennett, *In Search*, p. 169. There had also been a ‘short-lived [unnamed] Welsh paper on the West Coast’.

<sup>101</sup> Rhys and Brynmor-Jones, *The Welsh*, pp. 481-82. By 1738, about two-thirds of adults had learned to read Welsh, using the Bible, at Circulating Schools started by G. Jones [a Church of England priest and Methodist].

<sup>102</sup> Bennett, *In Search*, pp. 152-157. Provincial and North-American festivals of hymn-singing in four-part harmony ‘under direction of a guest conductor’ developed from local Sunday *Gymanfas*.

events as well as their religious meetings.<sup>103</sup> In the mid 1850s, 80% of Welsh people were Nonconformists whose enthusiasm was fuelled by the religious revival of 1859.<sup>104</sup> This explains their observed ‘fervour and devotion, [on the trails and] ... deep inside the mines’.<sup>105</sup>

Unique language, customs and culture which were fostered by Nonconformist affiliation<sup>106</sup> distinguished the Welsh, providing them with a clear identity and cohesiveness, living as minority groups. John Norris described their cultural resilience this way:

In one sense the Welsh are the oldest colonial people in the Commonwealth, and one of its most notable examples of ethnic survival. Since the thirteenth century they have been part of an English kingdom: but no people, unless perhaps the Jews, have so successfully, and against such great odds, preserved and revived their native culture. Thus, on their arrival in British Columbia, the Welsh immigrants are already experienced in resisting a dominant culture, but also in absorbing it...in taking it selectively and contributing to it.<sup>107</sup>

Creative assimilation meant they contributed not only as skilful, industrious model citizens, ‘conforming to the norms... and expectations of [their host] societies...’,<sup>108</sup> but culturally in their love of the arts which they projected with a distinct, assertive, yet accommodating voice. Witness their introduction of Eisteddfods that became competitions in English too, producing fine performers for the concert-stage and the organizers or backbone of many a choir.

Each generation has had to adjust to the ‘changing cultural pattern of B.C.,... but ethnicity survives.’<sup>109</sup> The speed and process of integration to assimilation depend on such factors as: ‘reasons;... cultural background,... and education;... role... status and work;... religion; recreation [and] politics....’,<sup>110</sup> but the commonest reason given is economic.

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., *In Search*, pp. 124-149. Unlike the Welsh ‘settlements’ and Toronto, there was no Welsh Church in Vancouver, instead services at the Cambrian Hall every second Sunday of the month, (p. 140).

<sup>104</sup> Davies, *A History of Wales*, p. 505. This affected the whole of Wales, as did the revival of 1904-05.

<sup>105</sup> Bennett, *In Search*, p. 130-31, and 137. However, the Welsh who joined the Gold Rush and coal miners of Nanaimo ‘witnessed and worshipped’ with services in Welsh, and even sang hymns down the mines, (p. 137).

<sup>106</sup> Anglicans and Nonconformists both fostered and suppressed Welsh language and culture at different times.

<sup>107</sup> Norris, *Strangers Entertained*, p. 78.

<sup>108</sup> MacRaid and Payton, ‘The Welsh Diaspora’, *British and Irish Diasporas*, Locs. 8541 to 8553. Quote: ‘...it was cultural assertion rather than cultural resistance that... typified the Welsh settlements overseas. The Welsh language and other cultural attributes were... symbols of identity.... deployed to ensure... a distinctive place... [and] voice.... as superior migrants,... upright citizens... [and] possessors of important industrial skills vital to the economic development of their host countries’.

<sup>109</sup> Norris, *Strangers Entertained*, p. 2. From the Canadian perspective, the main criterion that differentiates an ‘ethnic group... is neither ethnic origin nor mother tongue, but a conscious identification with a group... [a] sense of belonging to a group whose roots are not in Canada.’

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., p. 3-53. These influences are discussed separately and in detail.

## 2.6 Welsh cultural identity in multicultural society



Photo 11. Cambrian Hall (built 1929) on 17<sup>th</sup> Ave, at Main Street, 2 blocks from Post Office  
Photographer unknown: City of Vancouver Archives 786-61.25

The saying that distance makes the heart grow fonder is true for many immigrants who some say are more Welsh than the Welsh.<sup>111</sup> So who are the Welsh, how are they defined? Perhaps poking fun at the exaggerated characteristics or efforts to preserve outdated or even artificial customs, the uninitiated may underestimate the pride and passion of Welsh-Canadians that *hiraeth* breeds, no matter how misplaced or overblown. However, as Bennett observed: ‘the flame of patriotism often burns brighter overseas than it does at home’.<sup>112</sup>

In the shifting sands of foreign shores and domestic policies to integrate people on the move, notions of identity, whether national, cultural or personal have become more fluid or certainly multi-faceted, challenging notions of immutability and static ethnicity. While absolutes may be dissolving<sup>113</sup> in the sea-change from local to global citizenship and acceptance of diversity, it is understandable for folk who feel cast adrift to cling to something which will most likely keep them afloat, be it their beliefs, mother tongue, or community that offers secure social identity by reinforcing shared values and experiences. This is where associations such as the VWS play a valuable role, and the Cambrian Hall<sup>114</sup> can act like an anchor for the community,

<sup>111</sup> Lewis, *Welsh Americans*, p. 129. ‘One South Walian who visited his American relatives in 1912 declared them “ten times more Welsh than they were at home. They are Welsh to the core”.’

<sup>112</sup> Bennett, *In Search*, p. 6.

<sup>113</sup> Lewis, *Welsh Americans*, p. 2. This lays out the ‘...challenge to find an interpretive framework... for the fragmented identities... [of] migrant groups and the of the people themselves’.

<sup>114</sup> Purpose-built as a Hall it is reminiscent of the simple, square-plan early nineteenth century Welsh chapels. Compare its exterior, (Photo 11 above), with Gwynfil Chapel Llangeitho, Ceredigion, and Llithfaen Chapel in *The Story of Nonconformity in Wales*, Welsh Religious Building Trust, <welshchapels.org>.

encapsulating, albeit small-scale, institutional Welshness<sup>115</sup> with its library, pictorial and trophy displays, performance and social spaces, plus Welsh classes, ethnic and folk events.

It took B.C. until the 1960s<sup>116</sup> to revoke prejudiced immigration policies, and although the Welsh Assembly published a multicultural Vision for 2010,<sup>117</sup> aspects of cultural privilege surfaced in a paper on the *Curriculum Cymraeg* which describes pupils experiencing hierarchies of Welshness. Sobering comments on ‘imagined diversity’ when components of Welsh culture and language predominate might be applied to other countries grappling with plurality, or indeed any group including diaspora, where birthplace, bloodline, or mother tongue send subtle messages about the pecking order.<sup>118</sup>

Nasadowska argues that while we can change our nationality, religion and social class, the language of our thoughts and feelings is our mother tongue which we cannot change.<sup>119</sup> It’s part of our moral DNA, our ‘operating system’ and at the heart of national identity.<sup>120</sup> It is more complex in Wales, or in colonized areas such as B.C., where language shifts have taken place. In both these cases English has become the dominant language, and has been for generations, but with far greater cultural cross-fertilization in Wales where pre-existing lifestyles and experiences were sufficiently similar to permit mutual understanding and promote two-way assimilation. An example is the rhythm and alliteration in the writing of

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<sup>115</sup> Jones and Smith, *People of Wales*, pp. 153-54, 173-78). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Welshness became associated with national institutions that were being established in culture and sport, the use of an anthem, setting up of the University of Wales in 1893, its National Museum and National Library in 1908, and even before Cardiff became its capital in 1955, its civic centre at Cathays Park demonstrated a new pride.

J. Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), pp. 199-200. This mirrored other European nation-building projects, including a new interest in local archeology.

<sup>116</sup> Norris, *Strangers Entertained*, pp. 49-51. Finally, ‘legislation... changed to admit people, not on the basis of race or origin,...’ [Chinese Canadians were given suffrage in 1947, and Aboriginal Canadians were allowed to vote in 1960]. P.R. Grant, ‘“Canadian, Eh?” An Examination of the Multidimensional Structure and Functions of the National Identity of Immigrants and of those Raised in Canada’, *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (2016), p. 68. This research shows ‘that belief in cultural diversity and...cultural freedoms are not just associated with, but are part of the national identity of Canadians living in Western Canada’.

<sup>117</sup> *A Culture in Common—A Vision for 2010* (Cardiff: Senedd, undated, 2001 inferred), pp.1-81. The full Vision. Jones and Smith, *People of Wales*, p. 149 attests to over forty nationalities in Cardiff in the 1880s, [but prior to that, the industrial revolution being forged in the Valleys attracted an immigration from elsewhere in Britain, while ships heading around the world with precious cargoes of copper from Swansea, dubbed ‘Copperopolis’, or coal, iron and steel from Newport as well as Cardiff also carried evidence of prosperity that attracted a reverse migration.]

<sup>118</sup> Lewis, *Welsh Americans*, p. 137. This discusses a possible gradation of identity defined by language as the ‘dominant marker of Welshness’ as originally ‘enshrined’ by *Y Drych*, to including birth and/or descent, then questions how Welsh immigrants could ‘become Americans without surrendering their own culture’.

<sup>119</sup> M. Nasadowska, ‘Personal identities are not given once and for all, but can be re-shaped and changed’, *Language and Culture Online*, Oct. 31, 2009. (Unpaginated).

<sup>120</sup> Leerssen, *National Thought*, p 218.

Anglo-Welsh poet Dylan Thomas whose style is recognizable as Welsh though expressed through the medium of English. On a broader scale, take the use of English in North American Eisteddfods<sup>121</sup> which even anglicizes the spelling in the title for these bastions of Welsh culture which have morphed into festivals.

The latter is typical of ‘doing Welshness’ which the diaspora try to achieve through heritage celebrations such as Gymanfa Ganus (*sic*) and St. David’s Day festivities. Such so-called ‘symbolic ethnicity’ typically requires only ceremonial knowledge of the language for Welsh descendants abroad to be able to participate. Is their knowing how to pronounce the printed words of hymns and folk-songs, without being fluent, so different from how non-Welsh speakers are able to enjoy belting out the National Anthem at rugby internationals in Cardiff?

Back in the 1770s, the ‘real Welsh’ were considered the ordinary people who spoke Welsh when language and religion were linked to ethnicity, class, culture and nationality.<sup>122</sup> By then, Wales was becoming a modern society with a growing middle class and transatlantic connections, soon to be leading the world from booming urban industrial centres being forged—quite literally, in Copperopolis and the Heads of the Valleys. Besides farming, in North America, Welsh doctors and lawyers soon swelled the professional ranks, while waves of industrial immigrants with their specialist skills in quarrying, hard-rock mining, shaft-sinking and smelting accelerated the growth of iron and steel-based manufacturing, during the 1800s. Thriving in America’s fluid class structure, their hard-working respectability, literacy and love of learning fostered by Nonconformist chapel-based communities, strong family values and mutual-help societies, paid off with promotions and management positions as the lower echelons of the workforce were replaced by unskilled laborers from elsewhere. No longer underdogs, though continuing to support social justice, and fight for improvements to safety legislation and work practices, their collective bargaining approach took trade unionism into the broader arena of political parties, while upward mobility and job diversification displaced the iconic stereotypes. Identifying increasingly with their adopted country where English was needed for advancement, and chapel-culture was swiftly disappearing in the shift towards a secular society, especially in Vancouver, what traits of Welshness remain? The most obvious are cultural events, passion and patriotism satisfying both parts of their hyphenated identity,

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<sup>121</sup> Lewis, *Welsh Americans*, pp. 148-51 Eisteddfods were said to be the ‘university of the poor’, but Gymanfa Ganus were not competitive, and included women. The Tonic sol-fa sight-singing method helped too..

<sup>122</sup> Jones and Smith, *People of Wales*, pp. 84, 87-97.

but of necessity Welsh birth has receded as a qualifier, along with language which has come to assume a more symbolic role.

A more holistic definition of Welshness might include anyone who is willing to say ‘I am Welsh’ whether or not they were born in Wales, or can speak Welsh, yet have an affiliation for the people and affection for the language<sup>123</sup>—either language perhaps. In the words of the *2010 Vision*, the Welsh Assembly endorsed the notion of a ‘Shared, distinctive and creative’ community—a good description for Vancouver that captures the soul of Welsh-Canadians too.

Leerssen says culture ‘manifests as a set of behavioural choices and preferences transmitted across generations’, which I would argue can also function as a ‘portable fatherland’,<sup>124</sup> like language. Based on collective choices, solidarity and a mindset no longer confined by territory, a person’s sense of identity, belonging and nationality can change. Even pedigrees once thought important to maintain the likes of Britishness in B.C. have long ceased to dominate society in cosmopolitan cities like Vancouver, while the ‘cocktail of different ancestries’<sup>125</sup> in Europe is writ large globally, especially in the migrant ‘meting pot’ of the Americas. Meanwhile, Canada’s full-blood indigenous minorities, namely, the First Nations and Inuit, as well as the Métis of mixed ancestry are trying to retain or recover their cultural heritages, including traditions preserved by storytellers who function like Welsh bards of old.

Bards were skilled entertainers and keepers of the collective memory transmitted through the oral traditions of story-telling, reciting bloodlines and describing historical events that could legitimize the positions of noble hosts, praise them, and teach their children their heritage.<sup>126</sup> Experts adjudicated at an Eisteddfod—a sitting of the court that licensed bards, granting them certain privileges. A competition held by Lord Rhys in 1176,<sup>127</sup> was revived by Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, neglected for a time, finally evolving into ‘the National Eisteddfod’.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> McLean, *Extent of ‘Welshness’*, pp. 23-24. In 1998 *Plaid Cymru* ‘adopted a policy of bilingualism.... [which defined a] ‘Welshman’ (*sic*) ...on the basis of domicile.’ Welsh descent was unnecessary ‘provided that the person was well disposed towards the Welsh language’.

<sup>124</sup> Leerssen, *National Thought*, p. 186.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, *National Thought*, p. 242.

<sup>126</sup> Rhys and Brynmor-Jones, *The Welsh*, pp. 254-55.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 516-18. In 1176, Lord Rhys held a banquet in Cardigan, awarding chairs for the ‘best poet... and best musician’ in the British Isles. Caerwys was said to the venue for a ‘great Eisteddfod [c.] 1100’, again in the ‘fifteenth year of the reign of Henry VIII’, and also in 1568 under Elizabeth I’.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 517-21.

Sadly, the association of high and low culture with cosmopolitan versus the rural folk arts<sup>129</sup> which became popular in the wake of modernization, fails to appreciate, therefore underrates Welsh high bardic accomplishment with its complex metrical and lost musical modes.<sup>130</sup>

Promotion of biblical literacy helped stabilize the language and form the ‘purity of the Welsh character’,<sup>131</sup> including their ‘thrifty carefulness... [so] competitive advantage... overseas,’<sup>132</sup> but some said it hindered progress. Puritan scorn for superstitious rituals, suspected idolatry and frivolity removed the mystical and visual expressions of faith, and prohibited boisterous celebrations. Reduced to a religion of the Word, Welsh became almost sacrosanct. Bans on popular culture such as ‘musical gatherings,... competitions,...’<sup>133</sup> dancing and secular poetry were reinforced by the Evangelical Revival, redirecting artistic talents to the hymn-writing and singing which became synonymous with the Land of Song and its diaspora. Although, it took years for the National Eisteddfod to include folk-dancing, visual arts and science,<sup>134</sup> the pomp and ceremony, like pre-match rugby rituals, feed Welsh passion for nostalgic solidarity.

## 2.7 Diaspora, *hiraeth* and birth of the Vancouver Welsh Society

No longer confined to the Jews, the term diaspora has come to describe any major group of exiles, refugees or emigrants scattered from their homelands.<sup>135</sup> The Welsh diaspora includes ex-pats who want to retain their collective identity<sup>136</sup> and ties with Wales, but need to adapt to new environments that provide different worldviews and new lenses through which they view the old country.<sup>137</sup> In fact, for those who do not visit Wales to see it first hand, visual images

<sup>129</sup> Leerssen, *National thought*, pp. 204-05, and 209.

<sup>130</sup> Jones and Smith, *People of Wales*, p. 105. This says: ‘by the 1720s.... Old musical notations were already incomprehensible, the instruments... all but extinct, and the difficult poetic metres... fading from memory’.

<sup>131</sup> Thomas, *Strangers*, pp. 35-36.

<sup>132</sup> MacRaill and Payton, ‘The Welsh Diaspora’, *British and Irish Diasporas*, loc. 7817.

<sup>133</sup> Jones and Smith, *People of Wales*, p. 107.

<sup>134</sup> C.S. Trosset, ‘The Social Identity of Welsh Learners’, *Language in Society*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (June 1986), p. 180. This cites the prominence of verbal arts in Wales, but need to promote music of all genres, visual culture and media arts. Lewis, *Welsh Americans*, pp. 129-30, 151-53. Eisteddfods were so popular they became civic singing festivals, ‘without regard to ethnic identity or even language....’ but Gymanfas continued to use Welsh.

<sup>135</sup> McLean, *The Extent of ‘Welshness’*, p. 29.

<sup>136</sup> Lewis, *Welsh Americans*, p. 129. Work dominated most people’s lives, but ‘middle-class Welsh Americans ... worried about preserving “Welshness”’. Jones and Smith, *People of Wales*, p. 216. Many upwardly mobile Welsh people who emigrated to the likes of Canada by choice, rather than necessity, in the 1960s and 70s were ‘keen to maintain a sense of national identity’.

<sup>137</sup> P. Garrett, N. Coupland and H. Bishop, ‘Globalization and the visualization of Wales and Welsh America: *Y Drych*, 1948-2001’, *Ethnicities*, Vol 5, No. 4 (December 2005), p. 560. Viewed ‘from afar’, an unreal, idealized Wales might contrast with busy, overcrowded ‘modern’ America. N. Coupland, et al., ‘Imagining Wales and

featured in the media and publications such as *Y Drych* literally help form their impressions. No matter how ideal, outdated or anachronistic they may be, they market a romantic vision of Wales to a segment of the diaspora that yearns for something they miss, even if it no longer exists or perhaps never did. That idealized longing, perhaps prompted by fond memories of people or places is part of *hiraeth*—an elusive experience difficult to define because it is not confined to sentimental nostalgia, strong attachments, or romantic yearning for what seems absent or the unattainable in contemporary life, generating ‘a deep sense of incompleteness tinged with longing... at the heart of one’s own identity’.<sup>138</sup> Ethnic societies help satisfy those feelings for faraway stakeholders<sup>139</sup> by stimulating the ‘flux of memory’<sup>140</sup> that ‘connects our souls’<sup>141</sup> to our earliest recollections of magical moments like St. David’s Day.

The first St. David’s Day Banquet in Vancouver was held in 1907, only moving from hotel ballrooms to the Cambrian Hall later, as numbers diminished. One of the entrepreneurs who contributed to the building of the Hall, as well as being President of the Board of Trade, a founding member of the Vancouver Art Gallery and Symphony, and a major donor to UBC was Chris Spencer. His father, David, had abandoned plans to join the Gold Rush to make his fortune by opening a chain of stores, then adding ranching and ownership of the *Victoria Times* newspaper to his portfolio.<sup>142</sup> Three other prominent businessmen named on the 1929 cornerstone of the Hall arrived in Vancouver in the 1880’s, namely: Joseph Jones a dairy farmer, fireman and School Trustee who donated the land, ‘Johnathan Rogers who travelled on the first passenger train to Vancouver... and Thomas Edwards’.<sup>143</sup> Both the latter were pioneer builders who diversified into other enterprises, and together with their wives were ‘staunch supporters of Welsh activities...’,<sup>144</sup> while also serving in various civic capacities.

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the Welsh Language: Ethnographic Subjectivities and Demographic Flow’ *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, Vol. 25. No. 4 (December 2006), pp. 369-70.

<sup>138</sup> G. Cimino, *Hiraeth, Saudade, and the Sense of Longing and Belonging*, (Presented at DCU, Aug. 24, 2015), p. 1 [estimated, unpaginated].

<sup>139</sup> N. Morgan, A. Pritchard and R. Pride., ‘Marketing the Welsh Diaspora: The appeal to *hiraeth* and homecoming’, *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Cardiff: University of Wales Institute, 2002), p. 70.

<sup>140</sup> Lewis, *Welsh Americans*, pp. 307-08.

<sup>141</sup> Cimino, *Hiraeth, Saudade*, p. 2 [estimated, unpaginated].

<sup>142</sup> E. Williams, ‘The Welsh in British Columbia’ in *A Toast to Wales*, pp. 3-4 [estimated, unpaginated].

<sup>143</sup> M. Davidson, *The Welsh Society of Vancouver—An Anecdotal History* (Vancouver: The Welsh Society of Vancouver, B.C., 1996), pp. 1-2, and 9. This history of the VWS, is supplemented and updated by its regular *Newsletters* which include the essays and brief biographies collected together in Williams, *A Toast to Wales*.

<sup>144</sup> Davidson, *The Welsh Society*, pp. 1-2.

By 1900, a growing Welsh community with its own social events and sports teams inspired others to make the 2- to 3-week trip to Vancouver, where the *Cymrodorion Society (sic)*—precursor of the *Cambrian Society* founded in 1924, then renamed the *Welsh Society* in 1973, provided a warm welcome and assistance from 1908 on.<sup>145</sup> Like many ethnic associations in Canada that began as mutual-aid societies,<sup>146</sup> the *Cymrodorion* helped newcomers adjust, provided fellowship and engaged in philanthropic projects like raising disaster relief funds.<sup>147</sup> It organized a huge ‘St. David’s Day concert and dance... [in 1910], and Vancouver’s first Eisteddfod... in 1912.... [with cash prizes for] choirs, solo voice, harp, piano... violin, and elocution...’.<sup>148</sup> By then, there were annual Gymanfa Ganus, monthly bilingual services and weekly Sunday socials at various venues until the Cambrian Hall opened in 1929.

The Women’s Auxiliary teas helped the Hall survive the Depression and fund repairs in the 1970s when volunteers converted the lower level into a pub-like social space called the Red Dragon. A grant allowed further renovations and the addition of a stage in the 80s upstairs. Now a Heritage Building, the Hall remains the only purpose-built one in North America. An Anniversary Dinner marks this during the ‘Welsh weekend’ which usually includes a concert featuring Welsh artists and at least one of the choirs founded by members of the VWS.<sup>149</sup> Regular *Newsletters* published since the 1996 *Anecdotal History*<sup>150</sup> show that these traditions, and many more discussed in Chapter 5, continue to this day except for the VWS Eisteddfods. After being ‘a focal point of... [its] cultural life for four decades’,<sup>151</sup> they were discontinued in the late 60s in favour of festivals, concerts and sponsoring Welsh artists to perform instead.

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid., pp. 3, 8 and 17. Archival data attest to its meeting on January 24, 1908, the *Constitution and By-Laws of the Cambrian Society of the City of Vancouver, B.C.*, being incorporated on March 12, 1927 and changing its legal name in 1973 to *The Welsh Society of Vancouver, B.C.*, [now locally known as the Welsh Society or VWS].

<sup>146</sup> Norris, *Strangers Entertained*, pp. 38-41. Such societies initially acted as a ‘beachhead’ for new immigrants to alleviate loneliness by providing familiar customs, cuisine and social interactions using their ‘first language’, but since the 1960s the emphasis shifted to transmitting their culture to society because schools, workplaces and occupational associations have accelerated social acculturation.

<sup>147</sup> Bennett, *In Search*, pp. 23, 157, 167. ‘One of the earliest recorded Welsh groups in Canada was a *Cymmrodorion Society* founded in the 1860s in Victoria, B.C., by some Cariboo miners.’ [This and the one in Vancouver were branches] of the ‘Honorable Society of Cymmrodorion,... founded in London, England in 1751 for... studying literature and the arts connected with Wales’. [Note occasional spelling: *Cymrodorion*].

<sup>148</sup> Davidson, *The Welsh Society*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., p. 21. ‘The Vancouver’s Welsh Men’s Choir was started in 1980 as a division of the Welsh Society,... becoming autonomous... in 1987’. The Vancouver Orpheus Male Choir, formed in 1992, also has a close relationship with the Welsh Society through some of its members and founder.

<sup>150</sup> Archived *Newsletters* dating back to 1991, available at [www.welshsociety.com](http://www.welshsociety.com), continue the story providing insightful articles, obituaries and tributes, as well as details and photographs of VWS events. Older *Newsletters*, are archived at the Hall, with a library, historic photographs and memorabilia on display in its Red Dragon.

<sup>151</sup> Davidson, *The Welsh Society of Vancouver*, p. 16.

Over the years, members of the VWS have been recognized for their service to the Welsh diaspora, greeting the ‘exiles’ at the Welsh National Eisteddfod,<sup>152</sup> serving on the organizing committee of the NAFW, and writing articles for *Ninnau*, *Enfys* and *Celtic Connections*. The VWS has sent relief to those in need, and hosted many visiting choirs, soloists, rugby teams and major events, including: the 1958 West Regional Gymanfa Ganu attended by 1500, the 1980 Gymanfa of the Welsh National Gymanfa Ganu Association of North America and 2013 North American Festival of Wales in Richmond (Metro Vancouver), plus the 2017 Celtic Studies Association of North America’s Annual Conference. As for flying the flag in Vancouver, the Society was prominent during the city’s 1946 Jubilee, the 1953 Coronation celebrations, B.C.’s 1958 Centennial and British Week during *Expo ’86*. In 2016, when almost 45,000 of Vancouver’s 2.5 million people were of Welsh origin,<sup>153</sup> the VWS had 143 members—a number that has fluctuated barely 10% in the past twenty years—but thanks to their passion, labours of love and up-to-date website,<sup>154</sup> many others enjoy their events. We can too. Our digging is done, so let us see what they say. Come.

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<sup>152</sup> Lewis, *Welsh Americans*, pp. 48-49. The special day for ‘the “exiles” (*Cymry a Wasga*)... set aside for them at the annual national eisteddfod in Wales... ended in 2005...’, [having been replaced by an opening address]. Garrett, et al., ‘Globalization and the visualization of Wales’, pp. 542-49. *Y Drych*’s photographs of the National Eisteddfod show bards in ceremonial vestments, and an American at the ‘Cymru a’r Byd’ tent (p. 547).

<sup>153</sup> *Statistics Canada, 2016 Census* also recorded 474,805 people of Welsh origin of the country’s 34.5 million. Chamberlain, ‘The Welsh in Canada’ pp. 265, and 288. This says that early Canadian censuses ‘did not provide a separate category for the ‘Welsh’... [but] they were there from the beginning. John Cabot’s *Mathew* may have had a Welsh Master, Edmund Griffiths, in 1497. Two great Canadian explorers, Thomas Button and David Thompson certainly had Welsh antecedents.’ As ‘one of Canada’s ‘founding people’... a daffodil is one of the symbols that decorate its Parliament Building’.

<sup>154</sup> McLean, *Extent of ‘Welshness’*, pp. 41-43.

## CHAPTER THREE – RESEARCH METHOD AND RESULTS

### 3.1 Research method, data-gathering, recording and verification

Qualitative research methods<sup>155</sup> were used to investigate the why and how Welsh immigrants to Vancouver and their descendants maintain their Welsh connections, culture and language, define Welshness and experience *hiraeth*. While complying with strict ethical standards,<sup>156</sup> and sharing some similarities with oral history methods,<sup>157</sup> unlike the latter, the intended outcome was not the collection of high-quality recordings for depositing in public archives. On the contrary, voluntary research subjects were guaranteed that after they have reviewed the excerpts from their interviews to be quoted, the recordings would be destroyed, and until then they would be filed safely. Appendices A to E document the UWTSD-approved data-gathering tools based on informed consent to participate, the commitment to confidentiality, and methods to protect volunteers' identities—should they choose the latter. Supervised by Dr E. Edwards, the project was conducted in phases that allowed fine-tuning after feedback. Historical, biographical and anecdotal data, including *Newsletter* articles, provided a context for new survey information to be collected, helped design the survey, and supplied additional perspectives for the confirmatory triangulation of data and ideas typical of such studies. For broader comparison, I also read Canadian exploration and settlement stories, studies on the Welsh diaspora, language and identity, different ways of defining Welshness, and *hiraeth*.

The nineteen participants in the study were self-selected by responding to an all-member invitation accompanying information about the project emailed via the Society's webmaster. Some also agreed to being interviewed by consenting to the conditions that were explained in a detailed Information Sheet accompanying the Consent Form, including possible publication of their stories, but with options to remain anonymous or withdraw at any time.

Participants were given Questionnaires to help them describe their backgrounds, memories, connections, and current efforts to maintain (or restore) the Welsh language, heritage and

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<sup>155</sup> J.W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design—Choosing Among Five Traditions* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998), pp. 29-40. Biographical vignettes help tell the 'story' of this cultural group. [Recognizing experts differ in their use of terminology and opinions about the applicability and limitations of specific methods, I approached this as an ethnographic study, but it might be argued that the project could have been treated as biographical or a blend of both.]

<sup>156</sup> *Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice* (University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 2017-2020).

<sup>157</sup> *Oral History Recording Agreement* (London: The British Library, 2020 download), and *Is Your Oral History Legal and Ethical?* (London: Oral History Society London, 2020 download).

traditions, including how they share or adapt these within Vancouver's multicultural society. Reflection exercises helped individuals identify and articulate milestones and phases in their cultural awareness and attachments, tracking any shifts in their attitudes and activities. Follow-up phonecalls were conducted to clarify or amplify answers. Based on the responses, I interviewed six who represented different ages-groups and involvements with the VWS, ranging from first-generation immigrants to descendants of earlier Welsh settlers, and who varied in their current ties to Wales as well as efforts to maintain or learn Welsh.

Questions prompted participants to share their own thoughts and memories which I coded according to related words and phrases, looking for emerging themes, patterns or exceptions. This was iterative, because data needed to be grouped different ways before patterns emerged that could tell an accurate, but coherent story, while doing justice to the apparent anomalies that challenged, or enlarged my understanding of other peoples' meaning-making.

The ability to answer the research questions, anticipated from positive conversations with VWS members prior to advertising, was achieved thanks to their help and enthusiasm.

## 3.2 Survey results

### 3.2.1 Welsh connections, identity and emigration

Of the nineteen respondents: two were born in Canada of Welsh ancestry; fifteen emigrated from the UK as adults—the majority citing job opportunities or work as their main reason, with travel or adventure as a secondary motivation; and two accompanied their parents who moved for similar reasons. Most emigrated with their partners or family, but only three mentioned relatives already in Canada. Twelve were born in Wales, most of whom completed their schooling there with some of them working in Wales afterwards; three lived in Wales for eight to eleven of their formative years and two visited family there regularly, spending school holidays with them. All had at least one parent born in Wales.

Both born-Canadians had researched their Welsh roots and genealogies extensively, visited Wales and family-members there many times, and described themselves as 'very Welsh', one

saying it ‘in my genes—I am touched by Welsh music and anything Welsh’.<sup>158</sup> The two who emigrated as children did not ‘think about it’ much it back then, but became more aware of their Welsh roots over time—one cherishing the memories, yet realizing that present reality is different<sup>159</sup> given the many changes that have taken place.

Of the other fifteen surveyed, one feels intensely Welsh, six described their nationality as Welsh-Canadian or Canadian with Welsh origins, while the remainder identified themselves either as Canadian, or British and Canadian by virtue of the passports they held. In terms of how Welsh or attached to Wales they felt when they emigrated, answers ranged from ‘none’ or ‘not very [having] taken it for granted’, to ‘very’ because of a ‘strong sense of belonging’<sup>160</sup> there, being ‘attached to people and home area’,<sup>161</sup> or ‘I love every blade of grass there’.<sup>162</sup> Between these extremes, one who lived on the border of Wales, and another who left it years before emigration described their sense of Welsh identity as confused, dulled or submerged while trying to make a new life and new friends, or thought the move temporary. Some saw no change in their attitudes, others mourned the passing of Welsh family members or contacts which reduced their sense of attachment. On the other hand, one who ‘For thirty years lived in the B.C. interior and had little contact with other Welsh émigrés and no opportunity to speak the language,...’<sup>163</sup> resumed the connection when he retired to Vancouver and joined the VWS. Two others who are studying the language noted how their sense of ‘connection and interest in Wales... had increased’,<sup>164</sup> and ‘attachment to [the] heritage’ had also grown with age.<sup>165</sup> Another felt that ‘There’s a strange heightened emphasis to being Welsh once one has left the homeland’.<sup>166</sup> Perhaps that is what those who were born in Canada inherited.

Except for one person who gained fluency working in Welsh as an adult, after having studied it for years, the other six who rated themselves as fluent or competent in the language all spoke it in the home, socially, and at school, but only two of them went to Welsh-medium

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<sup>158</sup> ‘*Pilgrims through this barren land*’—Maintaining Welsh Connections and Culture in Vancouver, Questionnaire. (See Appendix D). Questionnaire Response, (QR hereafter), Susan Thomas.

<sup>159</sup> QR Paul.

<sup>160</sup> QR Anon. A.

<sup>161</sup> QR Anon. G.

<sup>162</sup> QR ‘Grug’.

<sup>163</sup> QR Eifion Williams.

<sup>164</sup> QR J. Pryce.

<sup>165</sup> QR Anon. B.

<sup>166</sup> QR Mathew Iestyn Parry.

schools. Another nine studied Welsh at school, but at best claimed to be able to ‘cope OK’, while most said they only acquired a basic knowledge or few phrases.

### 3.2.2 Experiencing and defining Welshness

While proud of being born in Wales, feeling at home there, or longing for it nostalgically, only one stated it as requirement for being Welsh. However, ‘there is a big difference in the upbringing.... Welsh people are Celtic, not Anglo-Saxon. I feel different...’<sup>167</sup> said another.

Opinions concerning whether being able to speak Welsh is one of the hallmarks of Welshness ranged from considering it a major factor and cherishing Welsh poetry, to feeling excluded for not having been able to understand it. However, one of the fluent speakers pointed out that Anglo-Welsh writers and poets such as Dylan Thomas are ‘more Welsh than many think’<sup>168</sup> because of the way they use language. ‘Ah, the words... my relatives in Wales spoke English with a Welsh accent,...’<sup>169</sup> but accent is distinctive too, ‘reinforcing my sense of Welshness when asked about it’<sup>170</sup> wrote another. Nevertheless, twelve have taken VWS Welsh classes, and two others have helped out, but neither of born-Canadians have attended yet. A third-generation Canadian explained that her ‘grandmother,... born in Cheltenham,... said if you want to get around in the world you need to speak English, so the kids never learned Welsh, [but as a] singer,... she felt a huge connection... with the Welsh that was part of her soul.’<sup>171</sup>

One had lobbied for Welsh language rights. Another recalled ‘the idea that Welsh speakers were “country bumpkins”. I came from a proud Welsh home... and [this] ...made me want to fight for recognition of Wales and the Welsh.... Our choir performed... concerts using the theme “Home”. Many of us are from the UK and... I had to speak after a cockney who... experienced the bombing of London.... Talking about my upbringing... initially [I] spoke in Welsh.... [to] illustrate that different parts of the UK were and are still very different.’ He thought his ‘upbringing in a Welsh-speaking area instilled in me my sense of Welshness’.<sup>172</sup> He and another person had coached Vancouver choirs on Welsh pronunciation.

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<sup>167</sup> Interview with Anon. F.

<sup>168</sup> Interview with Eifion Williams.

<sup>169</sup> QR Paul.

<sup>170</sup> QR Anon. B.

<sup>171</sup> Interview with Lynn.

<sup>172</sup> QR Anon. F.

During the war, one lady's parents arranged for her to leave Liverpool to stay with family members in Aberystwyth, then Anglesey, until she was sent to boarding school in Wales, although there was 'nothing Welsh about it'. Initially immersed in Welsh, then learning to speak 'proper English', she had 'a great time... free as birds... on the farm, [speaking] a mixture... [and] coped OK', but only rates her fluency as 'fair'.<sup>173</sup> Another recalled that her 'grandmother was forced to only speak English in school, so my mother never learned Welsh... My father had always felt Welsh even though he was raised on the Wirral...'.<sup>174</sup> On the other hand, thousands of miles away, a descendent of Welsh immigrants, remembered 'Some of the first words I learned when I was little,... were *cwch, caws, cawl*...'.<sup>175</sup>

After studying Welsh during school, university and at *Cwrs Madog*, one person realized that he was fluent '...when I started to use Welsh day-to-day in an office environment. It was in Aberystwyth... in an office which was a very pro-Welsh environment,... when I first had conversations with colleagues or friends, or business people on the phone or in person, and realized that that whole conversation had been conducted in Welsh... I remember... a couple of occasions... I did interviews for radio in Welsh [that] were work-related. It's when you... are speaking Welsh, but you can't remember every word,... it's sort of acceptable to throw in [an] odd English word... [yet] it was valuable to speak Welsh at a pretty good level'.<sup>176</sup>

Another Welsh-speaker admitted using 'a lot of English words, but I never know whether we used to use English or... I've forgotten a word... I phoned a friend,... talked twenty minutes and I had no problem,... we intermixed English and Welsh quite freely. I did O Level Welsh and no way could you use English words when you were writing. People from North Wales tend to say... [theirs] is true Welsh, but it's not, just a different form.... In recent years I've been going to North Wales [and] tried to speak to people in Welsh,... I get... self-conscious because they tend to use different words and I wonder whether I'm right or not.... [Living abroad] we don't speak to each other in Welsh and our kids don't speak Welsh at all...'.<sup>177</sup>

Eisteddfods featured prominently as evocative and formative events. Twelve had competed in or attended Eisteddfods—in chapels, at school, in various levels of the Urdd from the local

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<sup>173</sup> QR Mary Lewis.

<sup>174</sup> QR Anon. C.

<sup>175</sup> Interview with Lynn.

<sup>176</sup> Interview with Mathew Iestyn Parry.

<sup>177</sup> Interview with Anon. F.

heats up to the finals, while one proudly reminisced about the Welsh National Eisteddfod. Music in general and hymn-singing in particular also had an impact through Gymanfa Ganus which remains popular in Wales and North America, or at Welsh rugby internationals, while for one person reciting poetry is his forte and for another it was dance. Association with male voice choirs or VWS's Cambrian Singers continued these traditions, but the most poignant memory shared was, as a boy '...in the night, waiting for sleep,... I would hear the... miners singing hymns and arias as they walked home from the collieries, their faces black from coal, before the pithead baths—before I knew my grandfather had died from the black lung...'.<sup>178</sup>

Not only the 'sounds of Wales' but its tastes linger in naming Welsh cakes, *cawl*, pikelets, and the aromas of blackberry pies baking in stove-warm kitchens. As if satisfying all the senses, St. David's Day was paramount, being marked by: competitions or concerts and rousing choruses of *Mae hen wlad...*<sup>179</sup> wearing national costume or daffodils; speeches and banquets with leek soup at the VWS or hotel ballrooms in Vancouver; but especially in Wales where for some the half-day school holiday crowned the celebrations. 'The ceremonies, the music and the poetry—the words.... and a little bit of the visual, in the dressing up.... It's identity...'<sup>180</sup> and that matters to members of the VWS. Three of the women still wear, or referred to the Welsh costumes specially made for the Cambrian Singers that represented fashions worn in the different shires during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, (see Photo 12 overleaf).<sup>181</sup> Druidic vestments are also worn at the ceremonial start to the St. David's Day Open House, (see Photo 15, page 44), while red rugby shirts are donned for appropriate social occasions.

A member of the Vancouver Orpheus Choir was glad their director had recently introduced Sol-fa, saying 'That's how I was taught in Wales.... Let me show you a Welsh Hymnbook—*Y Caniedydd* ... in Sol-fa. [At] the Gymanfa Ganu that the Welsh Society has, one year a choir was over from North Wales... Sitting next to one of them [I] showed him the music—

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<sup>178</sup> QR Paul.

<sup>179</sup> '... *fy nhadau*...' or 'fy mamau' as one anonymous responder suggested.

<sup>180</sup> Interview with Paul.

<sup>181</sup> Davidson, *The Welsh Society*, pp. 18-19. Bill Walker researched and designed the costumes which VWS members met in the Hall every Friday to complete. Thomas, *Strangers*, pp. 117,138 and 154. 'When the *Albion* put in to Kinsale en route to Saint John in 1819, the traditional dress of the Welsh women drew comment....' Considered 'oddly dressed' when they arrived in the Maritimes, they would have stood out in their 'tall beaver hats and shawls'. Conway, *Welsh Gold Miners*, p. 67. As for Welsh miners in B.C., in November, 1863, Price wrote: 'There is no mistaking the Welsh lads... with their fustian jackets, corduroy trousers and 3s 6d caps....'

normal music, five lines and so on. “I can’t read that” he said, “I can only read the Sol-fa”. It is far more versatile,... easy.’<sup>182</sup>



Photo 12. Cambrian Singers in Cardiff, 1983, photographer unknown, Davidson, *The Welsh Society*, p. 19.

Chapel-going and associated prayer-meetings, discussion groups and the Band of Hope had a major influence on those growing-up when there was little else to do in their communities. ‘The chapel with its preaching and its hymns has had quite an effect on me. The hymns and the learning of hymns is the background to my joining a choir since retiring. The sermons as well as being religious teachings, often stressed that we were Welsh....’<sup>183</sup> Raised Methodist, one explained that ‘the only times we were compelled to go was on Sundays—three times. There was a *Cwrdd*—a prayer meeting on Tuesday, a *Seiat*—discussion group on Wednesday or Thursday,... [and] on Friday night the Band of Hope—an offshoot of the Temperance Movement of the late nineteenth century.... [was] a big thing,... so we signed the *Pledge*.’<sup>184</sup> Echoing that, another explained: ‘I didn’t drink at all until my last year in undergraduate.... in my youth there wasn’t anything really going on other than at the chapel.... Sundays there was Morning Service, Sunday School in the afternoon, and Evening Service... [and] before Sunday School, there would always be a hymn-singing practice... because every year new Tonic sol-fa hymns would be produced and we would learn them.’ Describing identical weekday activities at his Calvinistic Methodist chapel, he added: ‘In its way it was very strict in the sense that there was definitely no alcohol.... Even other things—I was the first child

<sup>182</sup> Interview with Anon. F.

<sup>183</sup> QR Anon. F.

<sup>184</sup> Interview with Eifion Williams.

who decided to take dancing lessons.... My mother was not in favour and my father was ambivalent.... [as an] elder,... We'd been doing country-dancing... not ...ballroom....'<sup>185</sup>

While some customs, like the *Mari Lwyd*, are being resurrected in Wales and by the diaspora, others may also be candidates for renewal—take New Year's Day *Calennig* which one lady associated with growing up amongst the London Welsh, attending St. Benet's.<sup>186</sup> She also remembered gathering on the platform of Paddington Station as members of London Welsh community honoured their dead returning home by 'singing them out'<sup>187</sup> with the traditional funeral hymns whenever a coffin was loaded into the guard's van on the last train of the day. It speaks volumes about the loyalty of the *exiles*.<sup>188</sup> By contrast, another cherished memories of rural life in Wales, enjoying baling shorn wool, collecting eggs or taking geese to market.

Several are passionate about watching rugby, thrilled by the singing and roar of the crowd at Principality Stadium. Glorifying in past '...youthful attendances at Cardiff Arms Park,...' an obvious fan commented: 'One characteristic I should mention is the Welsh love for rugby, shared even by rugby players and supporters in other countries...'.<sup>189</sup> 'Fair play', unabashed enthusiasm and singing, lively 'humour and... [being] chatty',<sup>190</sup> hospitality, friendliness and kindness, were other qualities that completed the profile of the Welsh in the responses.

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<sup>185</sup> Interview with Dr D. Llewelyn Williams.

<sup>186</sup> QR 'Grug'.

<sup>187</sup> QR 'Grug'.

<sup>188</sup> Hames, *Journal*, (2020). 'Dad must have witnessed this many times when he drove the old GWR steam trains on the Paddington-South Wales run.'

<sup>189</sup> QR Eifion Williams.

<sup>190</sup> QR Anon. B.

## CHAPTER FOUR — WHY WELSHNESS IS MAINTAINED IN VANCOUVER

## 4.1 Connections and keeping in touch

Every immigrant had tried to keep in contact with family members, many with friends, and a few with former teachers or classmates. While the frequency and method had altered, most felt it was very important—‘incredibly so’ in some cases, increasing with age and reinforced by bereavement. The born-Canadians echoed similar if heightened sentiments, cherishing their roots and inheriting the practice of letter-writing, including its modern e-equivalents.

4.2 *Hiraeth*

Asked how and when they experience *hiraeth*, answers from ‘all the time’ to ‘never’ bracketed a typical longing for Wales which can be triggered by: other people,<sup>191</sup> because of their personal association, accent or the likes of broadcaster Huw Edwards’<sup>192</sup> voice; sounds, often music—specifically the spine-tingling singing of the national anthem, certain hymns and male-voice choirs; but also the language itself, especially for those who understand it. Visual prompts in the form of photographs, videos or TV programmes serve as reminders of the ‘landscape near areas where they lived or visited’,<sup>193</sup> its ‘winding roads, hedgerows and old buildings’,<sup>194</sup> or even the locations for ‘Dr Who... filmed in and around Cardiff... could transport... [one person] back and induce a little *hiraeth*...’.<sup>195</sup> Stimulating the senses, it is visceral, ‘usually... manageable’,<sup>196</sup> but stronger for some as they grow older so spend more time thinking back. One man wondered what it would have been like never to have left and another concluded, ‘If fate had made it possible, I think I would have gone home to live’.<sup>197</sup> Things change, but they left because even as professionals they ‘didn’t have any money...’<sup>198</sup> or ‘could not afford to buy a house’ in the UK, so accept that as expats ‘grow older,... they

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<sup>191</sup> QR J. Pryce, one example [he gave prior to COVID restrictions]: attending ‘large family gatherings’.

<sup>192</sup> QR Anon. G said his ‘accent and descriptions of Llanelli, where he grew up, [and acted as MC for a concert] was very moving’; and Interview with Mathew Iestyn Parry described how his ‘reading the news—the voice of authority with a Welsh accent, but also coming on the BBC,...’ triggered *hiraeth*.

<sup>193</sup> QR Anon. B.

<sup>194</sup> QR Anon. C.

<sup>195</sup> QR Mathew Iestyn Parry. Having worked on film locations, in Wales, he recognized them.

<sup>196</sup> QR Mathew Iestyn Parry. Stated he ‘keeps to [a] certain level of Welshness-threshold most of the time, so no one thing can catch me off guard and reduce me to a blubbing wreck’.

<sup>197</sup> QR Nerys (Preece) Haqq.

<sup>198</sup> Interview with Anon. F.

become more sentimental about Wales, the Welsh and their origins.... [Hence] the success of the [Bilingual] service,...<sup>199</sup> and importance of the VWS because ‘Welsh classes [and] Welsh speaking help remind me of the past, and I think it’s about time to think about it now.... [But] I wouldn’t be so involved... if it wasn’t for the Welsh Hall,... it’s a place to congregate...’.<sup>200</sup>

‘*Hiraeth* is a longing to feel connected to your culture, a homesickness you can feel, even at home’.<sup>201</sup> The elapsed time between visits makes a difference, with frequent trips being the best ‘cure’ for some, but one described being ‘pulled in two directions’,<sup>202</sup> while another likened her ‘love of Vancouver and the ocean [to trips she’d] experienced to Aberystwyth’.<sup>203</sup> Corresponding with friends and family in Wales, ‘keeping track of things’<sup>204</sup> there via social media or ‘good Welsh deep dive into the internet’,<sup>205</sup> ‘chatting with Welsh learners online’,<sup>206</sup> and involvement in the VWS all help satisfy *hiraeth*, but sometimes it takes ‘a good cry’.<sup>207</sup> Two others said the same, while a few admitted to tearing-up or their hair standing up during the anthem. Understanding the need to pursue ‘a career and that its cultural cost was perhaps unavoidable’,<sup>208</sup> some felt that *hiraeth* is never satisfied, yet amongst Welsh people anywhere ‘there is always ...a shared... affinity for the cultural and historical characteristics that define what it means to be Welsh.... the innate longing for the familiar “sounds” of Wales’.<sup>209</sup>

It starts from childhood, even for one who had lived in England but visited family in Wales, those ‘...early memories are strong,... part of your history, your makeup, your identity.... good times... at Christmas,.. at school [there] one year.... [and with] my uncle and aunt in a caravan that they rented... [which] would rock around from the wind... as though you were on a... trip somewhere, but when you opened the door you were still in the same place. We’d go on an adventure every day amongst the sand dunes and... caves, at Rhossili, exploring.... There was a farmhouse on the hill coming up from the beach,... looked so windswept.... [but] the most mystical [image] would be seeing the ponies... up the side of a hill, not far from me,

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<sup>199</sup> Interview with Eifion Williams.

<sup>200</sup> Interview with Anon. F.

<sup>201</sup> QR Anon. C.

<sup>202</sup> QR Anon. A.

<sup>203</sup> QR ‘Grug’.

<sup>204</sup> QR. Nerys (Preece) Haqq.

<sup>205</sup> QR Mathew Iestyn Parry.

<sup>206</sup> QR Anon. B.

<sup>207</sup> QR Paul.

<sup>208</sup> QR Dr D. Llewelyn Williams.

<sup>209</sup> QR Eifion Williams.

...and then the sky, and the clouds blowing by. That... evokes Wales, [also]... sitting by the fire in my aunt's kitchen... coal fire,... lovely and warm, but as soon as you went away from the fire it was cold. In the summer, [we] would pick blackberries, and she would bake them into a pie—delicious with cream—we didn't have... refrigerators with ice cream'.<sup>210</sup>

As for Eisteddfods, one recalled competing '...in recitation because I couldn't really sing.... Chapels in the region had their own Eisteddfods.... even a cash prize [of] ten shillings. Around that time I was a caddie on a golf course and received three shillings and sixpence for a round, so if I won the poetry competition, it was equivalent to working for three rounds.'<sup>211</sup> One of my most memorable was [when] I trained a group of girls, only one of whom spoke Welsh, to participate in a choral recitation of *Y Bugail Brain*. They practiced hard [and] won by a country mile! It was my best achievement in my opinion!'<sup>212</sup> Eisteddfods loom large in people's memories, some as spectators at the International one in Llangollen, or the National. 'Watching... nieces compete in a singing competition on stage at the Urdd Eisteddfod—live, via a livestream on the S4C or Urdd website... [was] a hard dose of *hiraeth* to assimilate'.<sup>213</sup> Others competed at various levels, for example, at: 'the National Urdd Eisteddfod in 1996... we had won several local competitions to get there and had progressed... to finally compete on the main stage. Our performance was broadcast live on S4C. At the time I was terribly embarrassed..., now I'm glad I had the opportunity to participate in something that continues to exist as [a] uniquely Welsh event'.<sup>214</sup> 'Linking their identity with Welsh soul and the arts, one said 'It brings tears to the eyes.... '*Hiraeth*'.... the soul emotion... erupting from every pore.... the Welsh capacity for connection with their identity... in a passionate way'.<sup>215</sup>

'When I was ten... [as] a visitor in Wales albeit doing a lot of things that were not touristy... out on the farm with my uncle and my cousins... it was different because I was a city-slicker from Vancouver. It was hilarious—I didn't know that hens made eggs.... But... it didn't become a fantasyland. It wasn't a Disneyland for me, it was real. My family, and things... made it more real. And I fit in,... I find it funny when I go back... and think "they've put a

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<sup>210</sup> Interview with Paul.

<sup>211</sup> Interview with Dr D. Llewelyn Williams.

<sup>212</sup> QR Dr D. Llewelyn Williams.

<sup>213</sup> QR Mathew Iestyn Parry.

<sup>214</sup> QR J. Pryce.

<sup>215</sup> Interview with Lynn.

parking lot there, or where's the train station?" It's not the same as what I grew up with.... Anytime you go somewhere else you learn what you take for granted at home....'<sup>216</sup>

Letters from the early 1800s said 'the chain of memory,... sense of identity and emotional loyalty... [was] contradicted by a voyaging spirit....'; 'Wales was just an echo, 'Welshness' ... at best an elusive pride';<sup>217</sup> '*Hiraeth* may be a wilful destiny. The emigrant must accept his choice, not water the root he has cut himself'.<sup>218</sup>

### 4.3 Pride in Welsh culture and community

Arguing that 'Welsh culture,... enriches other countries,... [but] B.C., especially Vancouver, also owes a great debt to Welsh... entrepreneurship,...' one felt they 'should be known as... Welsh... [because] where they came from influenced what they did...., [but] never lost their love for Wales.... They were also the ones that built the Cambrian Hall'.<sup>219</sup> Convinced that entrepreneurship often accompanied the search for opportunities, he included: his 'great-uncle [who] had gone from a farm in Camarthernshire to the Boer War, then emigrated to Canada... to farm on the Prairies, where... [land was] \$10 a quarter-section;.... a lot people who went... to Patagonia [albeit motivated] to keep the language and the Nonconformist religion;.... entrepreneurs on Merseyside before that...;'<sup>220</sup> plus economic emigrants like himself.

Another proud Welshman who had a successful career before emigrating said, 'For me it is ultimately who I am, so it's integral. [It's] changed... a little, being removed from Wales... but it's hard to explain, hard to say why it's important—it's just me. When I got a Canadian passport and told my mother, she said "But you will always be Welsh won't you?" I said "Yes, of course I will!" I'm Canadian too, but always Welsh... [Whether] Wales is playing rugby... or my interests, they can be cultural interests, I see things through a Welsh prism.... I studied a lot of Anglo-Welsh literature at university, so all those Welsh writers,... poetry... [felt] very important to me. I identified with that, so it embraces me as being Welsh.'<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Interview with Lynn.

<sup>217</sup> Thomas, *Strangers*, pp. 250 and 255. Second quote is the author's own musing on what he had discovered.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 258.

<sup>219</sup> Interview with Eifion Williams.

<sup>220</sup> Interview with Eifion Williams.

<sup>221</sup> Interview with Mathew Iestyn Parry.

## CHAPTER FIVE – HOW CONNECTIONS AND CULTURE ARE KEPT ALIVE

## 5.1 Visits, correspondence and media

From Christmas cards and quarterly letters, to regular phone calls (once they became more affordable), or more recently, weekly Skype sessions, frequent emails and even daily contact via Zoom or some similar ‘app’ have become the norm for some. Half of those surveyed still visit people in Wales once or twice a year, another three going every 2-4 years, and several combining trips with choir tours, playing tourist or attending ‘the Eisteddfod’. With one exception, only health concerns, deaths or cost have curtailed or prevented most from making regular ‘pilgrimages’. One Canadian-born, said ‘Over the years I’ve made some really fast friends in the community,... there. What is the connection?... It’s not family,... it’s more than that,... we share not just interests, but who we are... more Welsh than anything else.’<sup>222</sup>

The internet has transformed the ease, immediacy and sense of connection in terms of staying in touch with Welsh people, culture and news, including access or subscriptions to online newspapers, periodicals, books, music, drama (sometimes with subtitles), or the visual arts.<sup>223</sup> Several tune into WalesOnline or S4C, and one thought it surprising and very significant that ‘... *Dechrau Canu, Dechrau Canmol* and... *Oedfa Dechrau Canu, Dechrau Canmol*,... are available to me the same Sunday as... in Wales....’<sup>224</sup>

Asked if electronic communication helps bridge the miles, another said, ‘Absolutely, it’s perfect. I’m... sat at the computer all day.... so always... plugged in, and I can see what’s happening in Wales on both a national and personal level. Anytime I want to connect with a friend,... Welsh, or a Welsh institution, organization or store, I can do it instantly by social media and the internet. It’s critical.... For those people... who are less used to these modes of communication,... [the VWS is] so important to them—it really serves a purpose.’<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> Interview with Lynn.

<sup>223</sup> QR Anon. C described an interest in ‘custodial aesthetics’.

<sup>224</sup> Interview with Dr D Llewelyn Williams.

<sup>225</sup> Interview with Mathew Iestyn Parry.

## 5.2 The role of the Vancouver Welsh Society

While boasting hundreds in its heyday, VWS membership has remained steady at 130-150 since 2000, but many visitors are also attracted to its normal full slate of activities described in this section, as its website<sup>226</sup> and *Newsletters* attest.

As the daughter and granddaughter of VWS members who joined it when they arrived in 1907 and were present when the Cambrian Hall was built, one of the Canadian-born interviewees and her mother had been part of the Society ‘all [their] lives’.<sup>227</sup> Members who joined during the 1960s and every decade since then were also represented in the group surveyed—the most recent registering in 2019. Several joined soon after their arrival in Vancouver, by personal invitation or chance meetings, attracted by the chance to sing, socialise and speak their home language with other expats and Welsh-Canadians. The VWS’s practical hospitality was still very alive in the 70s, as one gratefully described: ‘I, my husband and three children arrived in Vancouver knowing no one.... [and] fortunate to be introduced to the Welsh Society... three days after our arrival. We were welcomed with open arms, and offered all kinds of help. We were shown all the usual tourist spots, invited to dinners, helped to find a place to live.... also loaned a piano so that our daughter could continue her studies.... I make it my duty to repay this kindness by doing whatever I can to keep the Society and Welshness alive and well’.<sup>228</sup>

While people’s involvement ebb and flow with the natural progression of life, their interests tended to remain focussed on what drew them to the Society—the cultural and social events, a chance to learn or use Welsh, and an unbridled passion for singing and following Welsh rugby. Individuals highlighted different ways the VWS has been important as a ‘home-from-home’ as will be discussed next.

### 5.2.1 Cultural events

As is fitting amongst Welsh people everywhere, the St. David’s Day Dinners with speeches, toasts, entertainment and community-singing were popular from the start. Several attended

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<sup>226</sup> [www.welshsociety.com](http://www.welshsociety.com) Normal activities suspended under COVID 19 restrictions are listed in the current *Newsletter* on VWS’s website which also contains archived *Newsletters*, Welsh language resources and more.

<sup>227</sup> QR Lynn.

<sup>228</sup> QR Gaynor E.

the grand banquets in downtown hotels during the 1960s, while photographs from the '40s pan ballrooms packed<sup>229</sup> 'full of people who had come from Wales at various times'.<sup>230</sup> An Open House at the Hall continue the weekend celebrations with a Druidic ceremony, poetry and 'eating of the leek', followed by *cawl*, Welsh cakes and more community-singing. The VWS's Anniversary and Christmas dinners also regularly bring society members and friends together, with addresses, performances and community-singing that fosters a connectedness both with those present, others back in Wales or elsewhere, and those who had 'passed on'. The Photos 13 to 19 overleaf offer a snapshot of these events.

The VWS used to hold Eisteddfods—huge ones according to the programmes, but by the end of the 1960s they discontinued for the lack of resources.<sup>231</sup> Instead, the VWS sponsors young Welsh artists to perform at annual concerts, often pairing them with one of the local choirs.<sup>232</sup> 'They enjoy the exposure and people go because 'somebody from Wales' means something,... and at the same time the VWS [has] the publicity,... the pleasure,... a connection.... and exposure to the community too, [therefore more] membership, so we are holding our own.'<sup>233</sup>

One member attends the Welsh National Eisteddfod regularly. He translates Welsh poetry to help others 'understand the meaning [since I don't want] to recite... to a vacuum.... It only works for some things, because... [it] doesn't work if you cannot somehow give the flavour of... the sound, or... convey the feeling of the poem... [and] put in some rhythm...'<sup>234</sup> As Editor of the *Newsletter*, he also remembered that 'Artro Evans whose father, it turned out, had won two chairs,... submitted an article... called the *Black Chair of Birkenhead*,.... He also added a couple of verses and I decided to translate... them.'<sup>235</sup> Other examples of Dr D. Llewelyn Williams' translations include: *Y Blotyn Du* by Hedd Wyn, *Y Llwynog (The Fox)* by R. Williams Parry, and *Eirlyisiau (Snowdrops)* by Waldo Williams.

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<sup>229</sup> Interview with Lynn. Counting heads from historic photographs could provide a guesstimate of the VWS membership. Unable to access these in the Hall during the COVID restrictions, similar on-line photos of the Vancouver Hotel Ballroom filled with the same configuration of tables suggest it held 250-300.

<sup>230</sup> Interview with Lynn.

<sup>231</sup> MacRaid and Payton, 'The Welsh Diaspora', *British and Irish Diasporas*, loc. 8522. 'Eisteddfodau in many ways typified the Welsh journey from noticeable ethnic community to assimilated (mostly) English-speaking citizen of the New World.'

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, loc. 8522. The VWS epitomizes how the Welsh diaspora 'adapted to the changing environment as best they could, projecting Welshness in new ways but safeguarding [the values of] a literary, musical, educated people.'

<sup>233</sup> Interview with Lynn.

<sup>234</sup> Interview with Dr D. Llewelyn Williams.

<sup>235</sup> Interview with Dr D. Llewelyn Williams. VWS *Newsletter*, February, 2017, contains the article and verses.



Photo 13. St. David's Day Banquet, 2008, photographer unknown, *VWS Newsletter*

Photo 14. Open House, 2012, photographer unknown, *VWS Newsletter*



Photos 15 and 16. St. David's Day Open House in Cambrian Hall's Red Dragon, 2019, (the author reads a life of the saint and the Prayer of St. David), photographer: R. Baldwin. Both featured in *VWS Cylchgrawn Gymdeithas: Rhifyn Arbennig—Society Newsletter, Special Edition* for the Cambrian Hall's 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, October 2019.



Photos 17, 18 and 19. St. David's Day entertainment and a performance of Dylan Thomas' *Under Wilk Wood* on the Cambrian Hall stage; *Mari Lwyd* in the Red Dragon, photographer: R. Baldwin, #17 and #19. All featured in *VWS Cylchgrawn Gymdeithas: Rhifyn Arbennig—Society Newsletter, Special Edition* for the Cambrian Hall's 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, October 2019.

Presentations of Dylan Thomas' *Under Milk Wood* and *A Child's Christmas in Wales* also spread Welsh culture. The Dylan Thomas Circle is not part of the VWS, but several members are. One said that 'A lot of Welsh-speaking people and people in Wales didn't like Dylan Thomas because he wrote in English, ... I like to stress that being Welsh doesn't necessarily mean you have to speak Welsh. Being Welsh is more a state of mind. I love the poetry of ... Welsh writers who have written in English—Dylan Thomas especially....'<sup>236</sup>

### 5.2.2 Welsh language

Welsh is heard at all VWS events and a small number of Welsh-speakers meet regularly at the Hall to maintain their fluency. 'A lot of us get rusty. We just try to keep the conversation in Welsh, but any topic can come up.'<sup>237</sup> It is 'like meeting friends in a coffee shop.... We used to have people with very good language capabilities.... [use an English word and one would] get annoyed after a while. Today it's very different.'<sup>238</sup> Usually no more than six people, 'One... is from North Wales, not too far from my area.... [which] was predominantly English-speaking because people came there to enjoy the summers, then... bought houses....'<sup>239</sup>

As the only language spoken by some of the miners heading to the goldfields, Welsh was also the preferred tongue and a common bond for many early immigrants. With the pressure to integrate<sup>240</sup> and influx of native Welsh-speakers dwindling, many now focus on Welsh history, culture or other aspects of their heritage.<sup>241</sup> Nevertheless, Welsh-classes at the Hall, currently offered by Dr Antone Minard, a Celtic Scholar who encourages lively conversation as well as good grammar and reading skills, have proved increasingly popular with younger people, attracting attendees ranging from their twenties to eighties.

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<sup>236</sup> Interview with Eifion Williams.

<sup>237</sup> Interview with Eifion Williams.

<sup>238</sup> Interview with Anon. F.

<sup>239</sup> Interview with Dr D. Llewelyn Williams

<sup>240</sup> MacRaid and Payton, 'The Welsh Diaspora', *British and Irish Diasporas*, loc. 8577. '...the price of [their] success... was linguistic assimilation... [so] the Welsh continued to give voice to their identity through the medium of English...'

<sup>241</sup> Bennett, *In Search*, pp. 26-27. Summarizing a three-stage model for 'the pioneer experience... [: firstly] the immigrant projects the customs and values of the old country onto [the] new environment... [and] harks back to the old life...; [next], the new generation [often views] old customs as outdated.... eager to adhere to Canadian ways,... [as] memories of the past recede...; [lastly] an interest in one's roots. The past is far enough removed ...to be seen through a romantic haze, and... old customs are revered, as part of [their] cultural heritage'.

Twelve of the respondents have taken Welsh classes at VWS, and two others have attended to help out. Six of the learners have also taken courses at university or *Cymdeithas Madog*—*Cwrs Cymraeg*, through SSiW<sup>242</sup> and other online resources. Although self-assessed comfort-levels in speaking, reading or writing Welsh vary, notably every immigrant surveyed has tried to learn or maintain the language. One of the Canadian-born members plans to join its Welsh classes, while the other is extremely proud of her heritage, but chooses to use English.

### 5.2.3 Religious and folk customs

The Bilingual Service continues a tradition shared by members whose religious sensibilities were shaped by their chapel upbringing, although not all were Nonconformists—some were Church of Wales or Anglican who also worship at Vancouver’s Cathedral. In its current form, the monthly VWS Service, which is attended by ten to twenty people, includes hymn-singing, a reading from the Bible in both Welsh and English, prayers and a *Sgwrs* on various topics, followed by a *tê bach*. The music and words capture memories of a way of life enriched, but governed by strict moral sense. Retiring to Vancouver, one man was drawn into the VWS by these services, saying, ‘It took me back to my youth, especially the hymn-singing.... I met people who were brought up... as I was—good chapel-goers [who] competed in Eisteddfod[s] and... communicated in Welsh.... I probably... did most of the *Sgwrses*.... Then... [a friend] asked if I would write something for the *Celtic Connection* newspaper... which had very little Welsh. I did.... I have also contributed to *Ninnau*,... and *Yr Enfys* for the overseas Welsh.’<sup>243</sup>

The VWS holds at least one *Gymanfa Ganu* a year featuring guest conductors and soloists. It is well-supported by men from the two offshoot choirs, with everyone enjoying a *tê bach* afterwards. The annual Carol Evening often has a reading of *A Child’s Christmas in Wales* and features festive goodies with mulled wine and cranberry cocktail, a catered Christmas Dinner, and Children’s Christmas Party are all well-attended. Dr Llewelyn Williams also introduced *St. Dwynwen’s Day* festivities which have become very popular with love poetry and limerick competitions,<sup>244</sup> as well as sinfully-delicious delicacies, including the ubiquitous Welsh cakes. The latter are the hallmark of Welsh hospitality, served-up on every occasion

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<sup>242</sup> Say Something in Welsh (SSiW) offers conversational courses on-line. Duolingo has written format too. The far more exhaustive notes for the VWS lessons are freely available on the Society’s website.

<sup>243</sup> Interview with Eifion Williams.

<sup>244</sup> Interview with Dr D. Llewelyn Williams.

from a *tê bach* to banquet, using a recipe preserved in a cookbook VWS members created that is cherished in many homes as a sacred artifact, despite fading, torn or dog-eared pages.<sup>245</sup>

The *Mari Lwyd* was introduced in 2018, echoing a renewed interest in such folk-traditions in Wales too. Sparking a debate, because some members had no memory of it in their part of Wales, the custom was actually very well-received and has continued since.

#### 5.2.4 Social gatherings and groups

Offering a convivial atmosphere for ‘chapel’ services, Welsh lessons and speaking practice, a book club, genealogy group and folk-music, the Red Dragon in the Hall basement also hosts many social events, including *Noson Lawen* with presentations on the likes of Welsh legends or rugby, complemented by and pub- or quiz-nights. Dances have evolved from ballroom styles and Welsh folk-dancing with demonstrations by trained members in historic costumes, to *Twmpaths*, *Ceilidhs* or Barn Dances. Summer picnics have morphed into garden parties. At the Spring Sales, Welsh Cakes, *Bara Brith* and home-baked goods are major fund-raisers.

Passionate about tracing their ancestry, at least eight to ten members of the Welsh Genealogy Group meet regularly, but ‘if we have something special like... on DNA, we’ve had as many as twenty, some... from British Columbia Genealogy Society.... [which] gives us an opportunity... to promote Wales and the Cambrian Hall’.<sup>246</sup> A descendant of immigrants, she explained, ‘I am very interested in history,... how people socially developed ...why they connect... [or] feel connected. Genealogy fits into that,... [as] more than a general interest... it is who I am.... The more exposure you have, more familiarity with things, events, people and characteristics, you find... [out] more about yourself.... For [me] that has been a search, but not until... well into adulthood.... Being Welsh for me was also... part of a search.’

#### 5.3 Other Welsh organizations

A quarter of those surveyed have attended the large-scale Gymanfas as part of the NAFOW Labour Day weekends (which alternates between the East and West Coasts of North America),

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<sup>245</sup> QR Anon. B and Anon. G.

<sup>246</sup> Interview with Lynn.

that are organized by the WNAA, or WNGGA<sup>247</sup> as it was called. VWS members have served on its Board and as President. By being involved, one found ‘a big difference [between] the American and Canadian Welsh and their organizations. In Canada, we have far more... who were born in Wales. In the United States,... [having] been there three, four, five generations, or more, they don’t have the [same] direct connection with family.... It makes a difference. The [NAFW is]... able to put on a lot more... [including] seminars. It broadens your understanding, as well as making connections with people in other places...’<sup>248</sup> Other VWS members have been involved with *Cymru a’r Byd* and remembered one giving the address at the National Eisteddfod in Wales. Individuals also maintain their personal connections to organizations in Wales, for example: BAFTA *Cymru* and Bangor University Alumni.

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<sup>247</sup> Interview with Lynn. She explained the name change of the annual Labour Day weekend WNAGG to the North American Festival of Wales because the general public is unfamiliar with the Welsh term *Gymanfa Ganu*: ‘...ever since the... one... in Richmond B.C., in 2003, the National or *Gymanfa Ganu* weekend has been called the NAFW,... and the organization that runs this is now called the WNAA.’

<sup>248</sup> Interview with Lynn.

## CHAPTER SIX — CONCLUSION

Historically, the Welsh have been defined by: their geographical area; their tribal bloodlines, kinship ties and affiliations; language and culture preserved in medieval texts and generations of respect for bardic skills that have evolved into new genres; their customs and oral history; religious fervour and spirit expressed in hymn-singing; a love of learning fostered by Biblical literacy, Sunday Schools and libraries; natural resources fuelling the industrial revolution and commerce; love of rugby as ‘everyman’s’ sport;<sup>249</sup> in resistance to oppression through wars against the Romans and Anglo-Normans invasion, but later in the Rebecca Riots, strikes and Scotch Cattle, Chartism<sup>250</sup> and party politics in support of Liberalism then Labour, as well as the organizations and movements that promote social justice wherever the diaspora land.

Most of that time, there was a pecking order of power with a tiny controlling minority at the top—the early Welsh Princes and warlords being replaced by overlords from Norman and Marcher barons to the local landowners and elite, then captains of industry. Meanwhile, the lowest ranks of subsistence farmers and laborers in fields, quarries, mines and smelters who lived and worked in appalling, primitive conditions were prone to utter destitution in years of poor harvests or economic downswings. Their neighbours one rung up the ladder, the skilled artisans and workers in cottage industries then factories, could also fall victim of swings in the developing international market of supply and demand. Therefore, despite the risks, the quest for freedom of religion and language, escape from poverty, and promise of potential opportunities, prompted many Welsh people to emigrate.<sup>251</sup> Besides attempts to create Welsh colonies,<sup>252</sup> how else has Welshness<sup>253</sup> survived and the diaspora adapted to multiculturalism?

Were any distinctly Welsh characteristics refined in this crucible of history—qualities tough enough to be preserved in the fire of ‘progress’, yet malleable enough to be reworked through

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<sup>249</sup> Jones and Smith, *People of Wales*, p. 227. Being Welsh historically implies being rugby supporters since it was ‘symbolically, Wales’ national sport, yet in terms of participation, association football...’ was stronger.

<sup>250</sup> J. Wood, ‘Perceptions of the Past in Welsh Folklore Studies’, *Folklore*, Vol. 108 (1997), pp. 95-99. Adding to ‘concepts of a pre-industrial rural idyll... sanitized exhibitions of “typical” miners’ quarters in... local museums’ [hardly explain these events, organizations and movements that have come to symbolize an heroic proletariat].

<sup>251</sup> McLean, *Extent of ‘Welshness’*, p. 29. Starvation, poverty, violence or conditions leading to these are a push. Less essential are the pull of advancement and upward mobility, sometimes tied to socio-political aspirations.

<sup>252</sup> See Footnote 80 for examples, the most enduring being *Gwladfa* in Patagonia,

<sup>253</sup> Bennett, *In Search*, p. 25. ‘Some say that the truly Welsh person must be born in Wales’, but this raises difficulty in defining a Welshman or Welshwoman ‘when applied to Canada.... [where], over the past two or three centuries,... “pure” Welsh blood has been spread more thinly’.

the experience of emigration to still bear the stamp of Welshness? From that small portion of the diaspora that belongs to the Vancouver Welsh Society, members surveyed were asked ‘What for you defines ‘Welsh’ and characterizes ‘Welshness’?’<sup>254</sup> One said ‘language is a big factor’,<sup>255</sup> and ‘commitment to the language and culture...’<sup>256</sup> said another. Despite a pride in the heritage, with ‘background and language’<sup>257</sup> being important distinctions for one person, two of the fluent Welsh speakers did not consider language as essential to being Welsh, while a third voiced concern that ‘attempts at defining Welshness... [are] exclusive’. Although a knowledge of the land and its traditions, love of its culture and concerted efforts to keep certain customs alive, were repeatedly expressed, one wrestled with that because ‘traditional aspects of Welsh culture seemed a bit forced, anachronistic or exclusive, [with] so many rules and conventions’.<sup>258</sup> Several struggled to describe something less tangible—what one called the ‘soul’ of the people evident in their passion for their own brand of the arts and style of hospitality, friendliness and kindness<sup>259</sup>—something that is totally inclusive.

Birthplace, origins or, more broadly, ancestral roots remain a factor in how many immigrants identify themselves, not only the Welsh, but as one put it: ‘It is important to me that anyone who chooses to define themselves as Welsh is allowed to. It’s a matter of personal choice. For me, it is who I am.... It is very hard to say what makes one Welsh, other than one saying [it] out loud. It’s such [a] mix of culture, language, feeling, longing, knowing and accepting—integral and vital. It is identity. A state of being.’<sup>260</sup> ‘I grew up being aware of being Welsh,.. I am what I am...’<sup>261</sup> echoed another, and as if in a rising refrain others sang out it’s ‘just part of me’,<sup>262</sup> it is ‘a state of mind’,<sup>263</sup> and ‘I am Welsh, it’s a fact’.<sup>264</sup>

As ambassadors, one woman represented Wales in lacrosse, (an indigenous sport originating in Canada), but those I surveyed also included a filmmaker and member of BAFTA Cymru, a translator of Welsh poetry and a published writer of historical essays, several choir members

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<sup>254</sup> *Questionnaire*, Appendix D, Questions A 26 and B 49. ‘Part A: For those who emigrated to Canada’ and ‘Part B: For those of Welsh background whose ancestors emigrated to Canada’ respectively.

<sup>255</sup> QR J. Pryce.

<sup>256</sup> QR Dr D. Llewelyn Williams.

<sup>257</sup> QR Anon. F.

<sup>258</sup> QR J. Pryce.

<sup>259</sup> Leerssen, *National Thought*, p. 423. This discusses ‘perceived temperament’ as another possible ‘marker’, along with language and traditions.

<sup>260</sup> QR Mathew Iestyn Parry.

<sup>261</sup> QR Anon. E.

<sup>262</sup> QR Nerys (Preece) Haqq.

<sup>263</sup> QR Mary Lewis.

<sup>264</sup> QR Anon. E.

or musicians, academics, teachers or other professionals. The list goes on. However, besides their occupations or other interests, they choose to be members of VWS which promotes the Welsh as contributors to a city that prides itself in being multicultural. Both B.C. and Vancouver owe a debt to entrepreneurs such as David and Chris Spencer, Jonathan Rogers and Thomas Edwards, the early miners who bushwhacked into the interior, and explorers such as Thomas Button and David Thompson. This illustrates why Wales should be proud of its diaspora who still spread values of decency that are prized by the lands that receive them.

Pressures to integrate have almost eliminated the use of Welsh in second- or third-generation immigrants, and natural attrition is not being offset by the reduced influx of young Welsh-speakers. Still, online language courses, speaking-practice platforms, Welsh programmes and social media allow anyone who is keen to learn plenty of alternatives with easy access. Instead of Welsh being a passport into an expat community that served as a ‘beachhead’ or home-away-from-home, it is enjoying a renaissance in Wales, amongst its diaspora and with others passionate about the fate of the language,<sup>265</sup> or other minority ‘indigenous’ languages. For some, Welsh is the subject of academic curiosity, along with ‘Celtic Studies’ generally. For others, learning it helps forge a connection, no matter how distant, with long-lost relations and ancestors being traced via genealogical resources, while for still others who are drawn to fantasy literature and gaming,<sup>266</sup> it may help these virtual worlds feel real. The VWS Welsh classes are open to anyone, regardless of background or motivation, and in that community of learners the same welcome and assistance is offered that characterizes Welsh hospitality at ‘home and abroad’. Identity is no longer solely dependant on pedigree,<sup>267</sup> or dictated by place of birth, but is a ‘state of mind’<sup>268</sup> and a matter of personal choice that is a benefit of cultural pluralism and trans-ethnic mutual influence<sup>269</sup>—as the Vancouver-Welsh experience.

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<sup>265</sup> Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, pp. 34-35. Such passion contradicts the stated opinion that amongst immigrants ‘the celebration of origins’, including saints’ days and presumably language, ‘was usually cosmetic rather than crucial’. However, their statistic is sobering given that by the 1960s, ‘only 15% of UK immigrants in Canada had joined ethnic associations’—the very time when immigration was at its peak.

<sup>266</sup> Thomas, *Strangers*, pp. 35-6. Were the original immigrants fired by ‘religious fantasy’ instead—open to God and the sea?

<sup>267</sup> G.H. Jenkins and M.A. Williams, (eds), *The Welsh Language in the Twentieth Century* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), p. 681. As C.H. Williams concludes in the final chapter ‘Restoring the Language’: ‘The distinctly modern feature of bilingual identity in Wales is that it is based increasingly on contextualized individuality rather than on ethnic or ancestral affiliation. The challenge in this new situation is to enable the Welsh language to flourish as a co-equal anchor of multiple identities in a rapidly changing world...’.

<sup>268</sup> E. Williams ‘Three Remarkable Welshmen’ in *A Toast to Wales*, p. 3 [estimated, unpaginated]. This quotes Lloyd George who said: ‘National feeling has nothing to do with geography... it’s a state of mind’—a belief about being Welsh stated in responses to the Questionnaire.

<sup>269</sup> Lewis, *Welsh Americans*, p. 3. This discusses pluralism and trans-ethnic mutual influence versus an earlier homogenizing paradigm.

The search for a better life motivates most migrants, but Dr Gethin Matthews asks whether the gold miners were ‘exiled patriots or simply money-grabbing mercenaries...’.<sup>270</sup> One hundred and fifty years later, the majority of Welsh immigrants in the VWS surveyed gave ‘work, career, or job opportunities’ as their primary reasons for moving to Canada. While the ‘get rich quick’ inducements have long-since played out, like the gold, perhaps the proverbial inherited Protestant hard-work ethic still holds the promise of ‘paying off’, even if the wildly successful folk who founded the forerunner of the VWS belonged to the pioneering era. Still, many of those surveyed were part of the ‘brain drain’<sup>271</sup> from Britain who helped Vancouver move into a knowledge-based economy, so benefit from technologies that allow them to maintain their Welsh connections, culture and language, supplementing VWS gatherings as the closest to ‘home’. So the story goes on.

*‘Excited? Absolutely @#%&\$ ecstatic!’* he said, unlocking the core shack. *Chwarae teg*, only the Welsh can reel off geo-log data, making it sound like they’re reciting poetry. Then I saw the cylinders of hard rock shot through with gold... from the deep,... so deep, surely we touch creation.<sup>272</sup>

It is like that when we plumb people’s passion—precious. I hereby stake a claim on behalf of the Welsh to something deep within us—the why we need to stay connected, the *hiraeth*. But keep digging to find how to keep or adapt our culture alive in today’s multicultural societies.

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<sup>270</sup> Matthews, *Welsh in the Gold Rushes*, [unpaginated].

<sup>271</sup> Lewis, *Welsh Americans*, p. 3. This contrasts ‘proud retainers and aspirational modernizers...’. [However, I would argue for both]

<sup>272</sup> Hames, *Journal*. Time and place confidential.

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## Appendix A: Invitation to Participate

30<sup>th</sup> March, 2020

Distributed to all Members of the Vancouver Welsh Society, by the Webmaster:

Helo Ffrindiau, Hello Friends,

You may recognize me (below) from Vancouver Welsh Society events or language classes. However, you may not know that for my M.A Celtic Studies dissertation I am researching: ‘Why and how Welsh migrants to Vancouver, and/or their descendants try to maintain their Welsh connections, culture and language’.

Some wonderful folk have already been kind enough to share their own research, memories and information, and made very helpful suggestions, but now I am reaching out to find out whether you would be willing to do any (or all) of the following please:

- A) Answer an e-questionnaire (20-30 minutes);
- B) Be interviewed possibly by phone, Skype or FaceTime, because of COVID 19 self-distancing (30-45 minutes);
- C) Share memories, stories or observations (can be brief ‘nuggets’ or longer reflections—your decision).

To validate the research, ideally I would need: 16-20 respondents to the questionnaire; 6-8 interviews and a selection of illustrative ‘stories’. You would have the option of being credited by name, or remaining anonymous, and the chance to review any of your quotes prior to my submission of the dissertation.

While I am a few weeks away from starting this phase of the research, it occurs to me that because of our need to self-isolate, this might be the perfect time for you to enjoy thinking about this topic—perhaps pulling out a photo-album or starting a scrapbook, jotting down memories or writing about your life as someone who treasures your Welsh heritage—in a word capturing the ‘hiraeth’. Maybe you have already done some ‘life-writing’ or work on your ancestry, so this would be an excellent chance to review and update it.

Hopefully, together we can add another chapter to the history and life of the Vancouver Welsh Society and its members. My commitment to you will be to not only share my dissertation with anyone who is interested, but to create a ‘show and tell’ suitable for the Society. I have been busy reading a number of memories, essays and books on Welsh history, migration and the Welsh in Canada, but my efforts to dig into archival records were interrupted by library closures.

As for me—I was born and brought up in Cardiff, studied engineering in England and worked as an engineer, firstly in bridge-building, then in mining for 35 years. I also hold a doctorate in spirituality and am a retired non-stipendiary Anglican priest so understand appropriate confidentiality. My Welsh heritage is very important to me and seems to be more so the older I grow. Is that a common experience? We’ll see...

Please email me at [hamesmpa@shaw.ca](mailto:hamesmpa@shaw.ca) if you are interested in being involved in this study.

In the meantime, I hope you are keeping well and safe and send my very best wishes,  
Marilyn Hames

## Appendix B: Information Sheet

*‘Pilgrim in a Barren Land’*  
**Maintaining Welsh Connections and Culture in Vancouver, Canada**  
 Marilyn Hames’ M.A. Dissertation Research

### INFORMATION SHEET

As a University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) M.A. Celtic Studies student and fellow member of the *Vancouver Welsh Society*, I greatly appreciate your being willing to participate in my research into ‘Why and how Welsh migrants to Vancouver, and/or their descendants try to maintain their Welsh connections, culture and language’. Thank you very much—diolch yn fawr.

To assure you and UWTSD that this will be conducted in accordance with their *Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice*, before proceeding further, along with this *Information Sheet* (expanding on my introductory email), I am sending a *Consent* form which needs to be returned to me via email or post by **23<sup>rd</sup> April, 2020**, if possible please. You can withdraw at any time, be credited by name for your contribution, use a pseudonym or remain anonymous if you prefer. A similar choice will be offered to cover any information that was already shared by members of the *Society* during the preparatory stage for my research which asks volunteers to complete an *e-Questionnaire* with the option of being interviewed for illustrative details or stories later.

The *e-Questionnaire* will comprise some open-ended questions and a series of quick-response ones with space which you can expand to add further information. You will be asked to answer only what you feel comfortable responding to, making a best guess if necessary. Depending how much you choose to write, it could take longer than the estimated 30 minutes to complete.

After completing the *e-Questionnaire*, those who consent to being interviewed may be asked to amplify by providing further information such as illustrative details, memories or stories. This will take 30-45 minutes, at a mutually-convenient time—possibly by phone, FaceTime or Skype if the COVID 19 self-distancing requirements do not permit meeting face-to-face. The sessions will be recorded for the purpose of my note-taking and transcribing any excerpts I plan to quote. Interviewees will have an opportunity to review and keep a copy of such transcripts prior to their use in my dissertation, or for other purposes such as a paper or presentation on the research. The recordings will be stored in a safe place until the study is complete and checked, then erased.

To validate the research and provide a range of illustrative examples or stories as to why and how people try to maintain their Welsh connections and customs in Vancouver, ideally I need: 16-20 respondents to the *e-Questionnaire*; and 5-6 interviews. The initial response to my emails indicates sufficient positive interest to achieve this. That is wonderful. However, if you have any questions or concerns, please email me at: [hamesmpa@shaw.ca](mailto:hamesmpa@shaw.ca) or contact my supervisor Dr Elizabeth Edwards at: [e.edwards@wales.ac.uk](mailto:e.edwards@wales.ac.uk) if you have any complaints.

As for timing: once I receive your completed *Consent to Participate* at: [hamesmpa@shaw.ca](mailto:hamesmpa@shaw.ca), I will email you the *e-Questionnaire*, asking that it be returned to me by **30<sup>th</sup> April, 2020** please.

In the meantime, if you find the current COVID 19 social-distancing or self-isolation a perfect time to think about this topic, I encourage you to perhaps:

- Pull out a photo-album to peruse, or start a scrapbook;
- Jot down memories or write about your life as someone who treasures your Welsh heritage—in a word capturing the ‘hiraeth’;
- Review and update any 'life-writing' or work on your ancestry you have done;
- Consider what for you defines being ‘Welsh’, and characterizes ‘Welshness’.

Hopefully, together we can add another chapter to the history and life of the *Vancouver Welsh Society* and its members. My commitment to you will be to not only share my dissertation with anyone who is interested, but to create a ‘show and tell’ suitable for the *Society*. Thanks to the wonderful members who have shared their own writings and suggestions, I have read a number of great memoirs, essays and books on Welsh history, migrations and the Welsh in Canada.

You may have met me at *Society* events, or Welsh classes, but know little about my background. I was born and brought up in Cardiff, studied engineering in England and worked as an engineer, firstly in bridge-building, then in mining for a total of 35 years, emigrating to Canada in 1976. I also hold a doctorate in spirituality based on qualitative research and am a retired non-stipendiary Anglican priest, so understand the demands of appropriate confidentiality. My parents also came from Cardiff, but although we spoke English at home and in chapel, I learned basic Welsh at school, joined the *Urdd* and competed in Eisteddfods. My Welsh heritage is very important to me and seems to be more so the older I grow. Is that a common experience? We shall see.

I will send you this *Information Sheet* and the *Consent to Participate* in Word as well as the body of an email for you to download, or cut-and-paste to insert your responses, whichever is easiest. If you have any difficulties with it, please email me. Alternatively, if you prefer a paper copy and stamped return-addressed envelope, please email me your postal address.

Thank you again for being willing to participate in this project which is something close to my heart, and hopefully will benefit each of us and the *Vancouver Welsh Society* in various ways.

Best wishes,

Marilyn Hames (The Rev. Dr)  
M.A. Candidate UWTSO

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Please return this form by **23<sup>rd</sup> April, 2020** to Marilyn Hames at: [hamesmpa@shaw.ca](mailto:hamesmpa@shaw.ca)

Thank you,

Marilyn Hames (The Rev. Dr)  
M.A. Candidate UWTSD

## Appendix D: Survey Questionnaire (and Sample Tabulated Response Forms)

### *'Pilgrims through this barren land'*

### Maintaining Welsh Connections and Culture in Vancouver

### Questionnaire (paper format)

Date: \_\_\_\_ April, 2020

**Purpose:** This is to capture research information into why and how Welsh migrants to Vancouver, Canada, and/or their descendants try to maintain their Welsh connections, culture and language.

Only answer **Part A** or **Part B**, offering what you can and feel comfortable in doing, making a best guess if necessary. Circle, **change font colour**, or **highlight** choices that best apply, providing other information in the spaces which you can expand, or continue on a separate page if that is easier.

**Part B** is for those whose ancestors emigrated to North America, and settled in Canada.

**Confidentiality:** Your name will not be revealed unless you wish it to be, but if you want, I will be happy to show you if, or how the information is incorporated into the thesis prior to it being finalized.

**Name (or Pseudonym):** \_\_\_\_\_ Do you wish to remain anonymous? Y/N

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#### **Part A** For those who emigrated to Canada:

1. Were you born in Wales? Y/N. If not, where? \_\_\_\_\_. In a Welsh community? Y/N.
2. Was your mother born in Wales? Y/N. Father? Y/N. If not, in a Welsh community? Y/N.
3. Between what ages did you live in, or visit Wales regularly? Lived/Visited: \_\_ to \_\_ years.
4. Were you Welsh-speaking: at home? Y/N, at school? Y/N, at work? Y/N socially? Y/N.
5. Did you attend a Welsh-medium School? Y/N. If not, did you study Welsh? Y/N: \_\_ years.
6. How fluent were you? Fluent/Competent/Coped OK/Basic/Knew some phrases /Not at all.
7. What Welsh events and/or customs do you remember?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. At what age or stage in life did you emigrate? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Did you come directly to Vancouver? Y/N. If not, via \_\_\_\_\_
10. Did you come with other family members? Y/N. If yes: Parent(s)/Sibling(s)/Partner/Child(ren)/Other \_\_\_\_\_?
11. What brought you/them here: Opportunities/Work/Adventure? Other \_\_\_\_\_

12. Did you keep in contact with people in Wales? Y/N. Family/friends/colleagues/ \_\_\_\_\_?  
How, and how often? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. How important were those connections initially? \_\_\_\_\_. Recently? \_\_\_\_\_  
Was there a time or reason that changed? \_\_\_\_\_
14. How 'Welsh' or attached to Wales did you feel when you emigrated? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
15. What contributed to your sense of 'Welshness' or lack of it? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
16. How has that changed over time? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
17. How do you describe your nationality today?
18. When did you join the Vancouver Welsh Society? \_\_\_\_\_. What were your primary interests?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
19. How have your interests or involvement changed? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
20. Have you taken/given Welsh lessons at the Society? Y/N. Any others? \_\_\_\_\_.  
How comfortable are you now? Orally: \_\_\_\_\_. Reading/writing : \_\_\_\_\_
21. Which other Welsh organizations do you belong to? \_\_\_\_\_
22. How often do you return to Wales? \_\_\_\_\_ Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
23. How else and how often do you stay in touch with Welsh people, culture and news? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
24. How or when do you experience 'hiraeth'—a longing for Wales? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
25. What satisfies that longing most? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
26. What for you defines being 'Welsh' and characterizes 'Welshness'? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
27. Is there a memory, story or experience that illustrates any of the above, or that has shaped  
your sense 'Welshness' and/or 'hiraeth'? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Part B For those of Welsh background whose ancestors emigrated to Canada:**

28. Describe what you know about your family's Welsh background, reason for leaving Wales, when they came to Canada, and continued connections with the culture and people of Wales: \_\_\_\_\_

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29. Did they keep in contact with people in Wales? Y/N. Family/friends/colleagues/\_\_\_\_\_. How? \_\_\_\_\_

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30. Did you speak Welsh at home? Y/N. Were you fluent? Totally/Somewhat/Barely/Not at all.

31. What customs, memories or stories did they share with you that affect how Welsh you feel?

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32. How did this affect you growing up in \_\_\_\_\_, or Vancouver? \_\_\_\_\_

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33. Have you continued, researched or rekindled family relationships? Y/N. How? \_\_\_\_\_

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34. Did any relatives belong to a Welsh Society? Y/N. If so, which and how were they involved? \_\_\_\_\_

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35. When did you join the Vancouver Welsh Society? \_\_\_\_\_. What were your primary interests? \_\_\_\_\_

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36. How have your interests or involvement changed? \_\_\_\_\_

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37. Have you taken Welsh lessons at the Society? Y/N. Any others? \_\_\_\_\_. How comfortable are you now? Orally: \_\_\_\_\_. Reading/writing : \_\_\_\_\_.

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38. Which other Welsh organizations do you belong to? \_\_\_\_\_

39. How 'Welsh' or attached to Wales do you feel? \_\_\_\_\_

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40. What contributes to your sense of ‘Welshness’ or lack of it? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
41. How has that changed over time? \_\_\_\_\_
42. Does anything hinder your enjoyment of feeling Welsh in any way? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
43. How do you describe your nationality? \_\_\_\_\_
44. How old were you when you first visited: Wales? \_\_\_ years. What impression did you have?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
45. How often do you return to Wales? \_\_\_\_\_ Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
46. How else and how often do you stay in touch with Welsh people and news—and why?  
\_\_\_\_\_
47. How or when do you experience ‘hiraeth’—a longing for Wales? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
48. What satisfies that longing most? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
49. What for you defines being ‘Welsh’, and characterizes ‘Welshness’? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
50. Is there a memory, story or experience that illustrates any of the above, or that has shaped your sense ‘Welshness’ and/or ‘hiraeth’? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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I much appreciate your taking the time to complete this questionnaire and hope that it has highlighted some interesting points for you too. You will be offered a chance to review any of your comments I plan to use in my dissertation (even if they are quoted anonymously) before its submission, and I will summarize the results in a form suitable for presentation the Vancouver Welsh Society.

Thank you very much!

Marilyn Hames (Rev. Dr)  
M.A. Candidate UWTSO

*'Pilgrims through this barren land'***Maintaining Welsh Connections and Culture in Vancouver****QUESTIONNAIRE (email format)**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_ April, 2020

**Purpose:** This is to capture research information into why and how Welsh migrants to Vancouver, Canada, and/or their descendants try to maintain their Welsh connections, culture and language.

Only answer **Part A or Part B**, offering what you can and feel comfortable in doing, making a best guess if necessary. **Delete choices that do not apply**, providing other information in the spaces which you can expand. **Part B** is for those whose ancestors settled in Canada.

**Confidentiality:** Your name will not be revealed unless you wish it to be, but if you want, I will be happy to show you if, or how the information is incorporated into the thesis prior to it being finalized.

**Name (or Pseudonym):** \_\_\_\_ Do you wish to remain anonymous? Y/N

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**Part A For those who emigrated to Canada:**

1. Were you born in Wales? Y/N. If not, where? \_\_\_\_\_. In a Welsh community? Y/N.
2. Was your mother born in Wales? Y/N. Father? Y/N. If not, in a Welsh community? Y/N.
3. Between what ages did you live in, or visit Wales regularly? Lived/Visited: \_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_ years.
4. Were you Welsh-speaking: at home? Y/N, at school? Y/N, at work? Y/N socially? Y/N.
5. Did you attend a Welsh-medium School? Y/N. If not, did you study Welsh? Y/N: \_\_\_\_ years.
6. How fluent were you? Fluent/Competent/Coped OK/Basic/Knew some phrases /Not at all.
7. What Welsh events and/or customs do you remember? \_\_\_\_\_
8. At what age or stage in life did you emigrate? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Did you come directly to Vancouver? Y/N. If not, via \_\_\_\_\_

10. Did you come with other family members? Y/N. If yes: Parent(s)/Siblings/Partner/Child(ren)?
11. What brought you/them here: Opportunities/Work/Adventure? Other \_\_\_\_\_
12. Did you keep in contact with people in Wales? Y/N. Family/friends/colleagues/\_\_\_\_? How, and how often? \_\_\_\_\_
13. How important were those connections initially? \_\_\_\_\_ Recently? \_\_\_\_\_ Was there a time or reason that changed? \_\_\_\_\_
14. How 'Welsh' or attached to Wales did you feel when you emigrated? \_\_\_\_\_
15. What contributed to your sense of 'Welshness' or lack of it? \_\_\_\_\_
16. How has that changed over time? \_\_\_\_\_
17. How do you describe your nationality today? \_\_\_\_\_
18. When did you join the Vancouver Welsh Society? \_\_\_\_\_. What were your primary interests? \_\_\_\_\_
19. How have your interests or involvement changed?
20. Have you taken/given Welsh lessons at the Society? Y/N. Any others? \_\_\_\_\_. How comfortable are you now? Orally: \_\_\_\_\_. Reading/writing : \_\_\_\_\_.
21. Which other Welsh organizations do you belong to? \_\_\_\_\_
22. How often do you return to Wales? \_\_\_\_\_ Why? \_\_\_\_\_
23. How else and how often do you stay in touch with Welsh people, culture and news? \_\_\_\_\_
24. How or when do you experience 'hiraeth'—a longing for Wales? \_\_\_\_\_
25. What satisfies that longing most? \_\_\_\_\_
26. What for you defines being 'Welsh' and characterizes 'Welshness'? \_\_\_\_\_
27. Is there a memory, story or experience that illustrates any of the above, or that has shaped your sense 'Welshness' and/or 'hiraeth'? \_\_\_\_\_

**Part B For those of Welsh background whose ancestors emigrated to Canada:**

28. Describe what you know about your family's Welsh background, reason for leaving Wales, when they came to Canada, and continued connections with the culture and people of Wales: \_\_\_\_\_
29. Did they keep in contact with people in Wales? Y/N. Family/friends/colleagues/\_\_\_\_? How? \_\_\_\_\_

30. Did you speak Welsh at home? Y/N. Were you fluent? Totally/Somewhat/Barely/Not at all.
31. What customs, memories or stories did they share with you that affect how Welsh you feel? \_\_\_\_
32. How did this affect you growing up in \_\_\_\_, or Vancouver? \_\_\_\_
33. Have you continued, researched or rekindled family relationships? Y/N. How? \_
34. Did any relatives belong to a Welsh Society? Y/N. If so, which and how were they involved? \_\_\_\_
35. When did you join the Vancouver Welsh Society? \_\_\_\_\_. What were your primary interests? \_\_\_\_
36. How have your interests or involvement changed? \_\_\_\_
37. Have you taken Welsh lessons at the Society? Y/N. Any others? \_\_\_\_\_. How comfortable are you now? Orally: \_\_\_\_\_. Reading/writing : \_\_\_\_\_.
38. Which other Welsh organizations do you belong to? \_\_\_\_\_
39. How 'Welsh' or attached to Wales do you feel? \_\_\_\_\_
40. What contributes to your sense of 'Welshness' or lack of it? \_\_\_\_
41. How has that changed over time? \_\_\_\_\_
42. Does anything hinder your enjoyment of feeling Welsh in any way? \_\_\_\_
43. How do you describe your nationality? \_\_\_\_\_
44. How old were you when you first visited: Wales? \_\_\_\_ years. What impression did you have? \_\_\_\_\_
45. How often do you return to Wales? \_\_\_\_\_ Why? \_\_\_\_\_
46. How else and how often do you stay in touch with Welsh people and news and why? \_\_\_\_
47. How or when do you experience 'hiraeth'—a longing for Wales? \_\_\_\_\_
48. What satisfies that longing most? \_\_\_\_\_
49. What for you defines being 'Welsh', and characterizes 'Welshness'? \_\_\_\_\_
50. Is there a memory, story or experience that illustrates any of the above, or that has shaped your sense 'Welshness' and/or 'hiraeth'? \_\_\_\_\_

I much appreciate your taking the time to complete this questionnaire and hope that it has highlighted some interesting points for you too. You will be offered a chance to review any of your comments I plan to use in my dissertation (even if they are quoted anonymously) before its submission, and I will summarize the results in a form suitable for presentation the Vancouver Welsh Society.

Thank you very much!

[Marilyn Hames](#)

## Appendix D: (Survey Questionnaire and) Sample Tabulated Survey Response

**Survey Answers: A Q1-6, 8-11, B Q 28, 30-33**—Group A: Birth to emigration,  
Group B: Ancestral background

Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11
	M/F	L/V	H S W So		Fluency				Em reason
Y	Y/Y	L0-27	N	N, 2y	Basic	27y, in 2001	Y	Partner (change)	Work, Adventure
Y	Y/Y	L0, V0-33	H, S	N, N	Competent	35y	Y, fr Nott'ham	H'band	Work, Opport's
N	Y/Y	L0-8, V sum hols	H, S in W	Y	Fluent	24y, in 1964	N, via Guelph On	To join sister	Work
Y	N/Y	L0-18, V&L18-25	N	N, 4y	Some phrases	~25y	Y	N	Work, Adventure
Y	Y/Y	L34y	N	N, 5y	Coped OK	33y	Y	Partner & kids	Work
N*	Y/N	L0-18	N	N, 14y	Some phrases	26y, in 2007	Y, fr 7y in Engl	N	Some C'dn family

**Survey Answers: A: Q7,14-17, B: Q31, 39-41, 43**—Remembered events and customs, Welshness, nationality

Q7	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17
Events & customs	How W/attached when em	'Welshness' factors	Changes?	Nationality
Eisteddfods: Urdd, Nat'l, –competed in creative dance, visited Inter'l Eist	Emig w W partner. Always had a strong sense belonging	Landscape, pride of nat'n often looked don on, represented W in sport	None	W Canad'n
Church/Chapel S Benet's Kids' New Year pennies	Very, 'love every blade of grass there'	Tapes played in car	Alone, nobody here knows Fam	London W -Canad'n
S David's Day, wearing– W costume & daffodil, W assemblies at Scl, Chapel Gymanfa Ganus, rugby, W cakes, pikelets, cawl	More now. Always was important & IDd as W, but lived away 7ys before emg so didn't think about it. In Van wanted to meet Canad	Being asked about my W accent reinforced it. So did vists to W & Fam.	Attachment to my heritage has grown as I grew older	W, then Canadian. Proud of both but W first

These are excerpts from five tables that each had two sections relating answers from Group A who are immigrants to Group B whose Welsh ancestors emigrated to Canada. Other Tables looked at themes of: keeping in touch; involvement with VWS or other Welsh organizations; and *hiraeth*—satisfying it, or not, and stories that illustrate that.

Hidden here are the columns that record whether or not the respondents wanted to remain anonymous, or identified either by name or a pseudonym, also the analytical coding column.

### Appendix E: Interview Form, Sample Questions and Mode of Transcription

Interviewee >	__:00 pm, ____ May, 2020 (604) ____ ____
Introduction and check-in	Thank you! How are you and your family coping by the COVID crisis? >>> How are you managing to work? >>> You have family in Britain, are they OK? >>> I am going to start recording now if that is OK, but as I mentioned in the Information Sheet, you will have a chance to read any excerpt from the interview I plan to use, and I will then destroy the recording. <i>Fine.</i>
05:20.00	I want to back-up to the Questionnaire... review comments. Why do you feel maintaining Welsh culture and language is important—firstly on a personal level, then your impression of why other members of the VWS seem to consider these important? <i>Well, for me &gt;&gt;&gt;</i>
07:00.00	Concerning the language, can you tell me more about your study and use of it, when you realized you are fluent, and what that has meant?
07:20.00	<i>My &gt;&gt;&gt;</i>
09:53.00	What opportunities do you have for speaking Welsh these days? >>>
10:08.00	You have explained about the language, but would you say the culture is integral with you? What aspects of the culture? <i>I think &gt;&gt;&gt;</i>
10:38.00	You have mentioned belonging to the Urdd, did you ever compete in their Eisteddfod? <i>As a child &gt;&gt;&gt; I also competed in &gt;&gt;&gt;</i>
11:42.83	Great. Can we go back to the ‘Why’ again. You said that have been a member of the Welsh Society for __ years, and looking back through issues of the Newsletter I know have involved you have been. That means you have met a lot of the people, so what’s your sense in general terms why there is that energy and motivation for people here in
12:10.10	Vancouver to keep up the customs? <i>Back in the &gt;&gt;&gt;</i>
14:00.00	What difference has social media made? Does it bridge the miles? >>>
14:30.00	How about visits to Wales? >>>
16:00.00	Really, there’s only one other question that I would ask if you could help me with—you already gave the one story about ‘hiraeth’ but is there any story, or any experience that jumps up as a highlight in your life that would be the spark for a moment of hiraeth and comes to you from time-to-time unbidden sort of thing? <i>Yes &gt;&gt;&gt; OK. And another example &gt;&gt;&gt;</i> (A lively exchange of memories and opinions followed.)
41:22.00	Thank you! And farewells.

## Appendix F: Broadcast Thank-you

1 May, 2020

Distributed to all Members of the Vancouver Welsh Society, by the Webmaster:

Annwyl Ffrindiau—Dear Friends,

I cannot thank enough the volunteers who have helped me with my research into ‘why’ and ‘how’ we maintain our Welsh connections and culture. Responses to the Questionnaire have painted an incredibly rich and inclusive picture of what it means to be part of the Welsh Diaspora—people with different backgrounds and experiences, yet united by a love for various facets of our heritage. Diolch yn fawr iawn—thank you very much!

While this COVID crisis has highlighted how precious life is, so how precious people and our relationships are, the need for social-distancing has confirmed the importance of staying connected. Perhaps because of the timing, that has added a whole different layer of meaning to the study, and depth of thought expressed in the responses which I hope to consolidate into presentation suitable for the Society.

The next stage will be to interview a few of the volunteers for illustrative details and stories via phonecall, FaceTime, Skype or Zoom, given the health risks of face-to-face meetings. However, I invite you all to think about ‘why’ and ‘how’ you maintain your Welsh connections and culture, because clearly it is important to you as members of the Vancouver Welsh Society. Even if you have not volunteered for the research study, I would love to hear any thoughts about those questions you are willing to share with me please at: [hamesmpa@shaw.ca](mailto:hamesmpa@shaw.ca)

Until I can thank you in person, try to stay safe, keep well and do whatever you can that gives you and others joy.

Diolch yn fawr iawn eto,  
Marilyn