



## Special Report

# Wales 2007 and Onward

By Sion Llwyd (Gweriniaethwr/Republican)

These are the thoughts of a disillusioned Welshman on returning from a long visit to Wales.

In Llais, Winter 2003, I gave you my impressions, "Wales 2003 and Onwards", on how I found the position of Wales, socially, culturally and politically (the text of the article can be found at [www.wss.org.au/images/Llais.pdf](http://www.wss.org.au/images/Llais.pdf)).

Since then I have received a number of comments from Wales, sadly all concurring with the conclusions I made.

Having returned again to Wales this year, I have been asked to prepare this follow-up article, to express my thoughts on the direction the country is now following. I am reluctant to do so, to state what I have seen and what I believe.

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Firstly, it depresses me, and why should I inflict this upon fellow my Welsh in exile? I feel the need to turn away from reality, to know in my heart of hearts that all is not well yet to close my eyes, to shut my mind to it and to dream all is well, have a cup of tea, do my job, practise my harp, train a choir, sing hymns and folksongs, escape into TV, rugby – to say to myself, "I don't want to be bothered by such things – I am not political" – and as an excuse to my conscience say to myself, "anyway I can't do anything about it". In other words to hell with the future of Wales; I'll wave the flag, barrack and sing for Wales; I'll enjoy being Welsh as I see it in my dream. Better still it is easier to not dream and turn away from the pain!

Secondly, in spite of wonderful work being enthusiastically done with respect to all aspects of Welshness throughout most of Wales, I see the real Wales disappearing under a suffocating cloud of ever spreading Anglicization. I do not wish to accept this – to give up hope for my country. I do not wish to see the death of our heritage, our literature, our poetry. I do not wish to give up hope for my language. I do not wish to give up hope for what is Welsh in essence – of that which makes a Welsh person Welsh. I do not wish to give up hope for the possibility that Wales can yet be a nation in her own right. ("She is a nation in her own right", you say? "Rubbish", say I, and from what I read, and note from Westminster reports, "less and less so every day!"). I do not know why the Welsh politicians are allowing the death of their nation.

Thirdly, how can I be critical of Wales from this distance when there are many good souls and brilliant

minds there fully aware of the problems keeping the country in a form of subjugation and who are striving to find answers against almost insurmountable forces? (Here I mean the forces of Westminster, their greed for power and territory and their need to control, and worst of all, what appears to be forces of apathy, impotence and inertia of the Welsh majority in submission)

Fourthly, I note the arguments of the Assembly and the parties in Wales. I read the bulletins from Westminster and listen to what the people are saying; I read the papers and listen to the news, but two months is not enough time to absorb and assess the many problems, sentiments, intentions, reluctances, hopes, necessities, interacting forces and confines that confront the populace, the businesses and the politicians. And so I give you only over-riding generalizations of what I see to be valid.

### Perspectives

It is easy to see the forest from a distance when one is not lost in it. The form and severity of the subjugation is not obvious when immersed in daily life in Wales. It is accepted as normal! Also, visiting Wales every two years one gets time shots of processes and one notices changes. Because of this they appear as stark projections especially when one is alert to, and concerned with such matters and not blindly visiting, immersed in romance, business, family matters, sightseeing or touring.

So these observations and impressions are given with:

- regret - for a Wales that is being stealthily eaten away from the borders;
- sadness - that the English give little respect to Welsh nationality, identity, heritage, culture, language and aspiration for independence;
- dismay - at what appears to be apathy, inertia and impotence on the part of the Welsh majority;
- hope - that the nation re-awakes soon ... before there is no point in trying;
- belief - that Wales has always had the potential to stand as a nation in her own right and has yet the political vision, will and focus, to bring this about;
- fear - a realization - that Wales will cease to be Welsh Wales if a stand is not made;
- gladness - at the growth of Welsh spirit, pride and cultural expression, and a joy at the open

use of the Welsh language;

- almost disbelief in the incongruity that I have seen where great enthusiasm and effort is spent uplifting the national spirit (which is great) whilst the very foundations are being slowly but surely removed.

These are not isolated views by the way. The points made in this article are well understood by many in Wales. Individuals throughout Wales are most disturbed at the state of the nation as are institutions. (See the aims of Cymuned, Plaid Cymru and Cymru Rhydd. Addresses are given below)

## Social

### Positives:

In the Fro Gymraeg there is more Welsh being outwardly spoken – in the streets and the cafes, by young and old. The feeling that it is improper to speak Welsh when foreigners are around seemed to have disappeared. The first mode of address is Welsh.

A recognition and satisfaction of being Welsh is seen throughout Wales. This is seen in the efforts of individuals and firms demonstrating a wish to express their Welsh identity – to be seen to be different from being English or British. The word, “British” in current usage, means part of a union controlled from Westminster.

This word is being seen more and more for what it means in reality. In the use of the word, Welsh (or Scottish) national right and identity are subsumed by a loyalty to an assumed more important, English elite and power, and in the process, any independent national potential is destroyed or at least deflated.

Also I note the use of the word “British” in common practice in news-reports. Events incurred causing disapproval are reported to be the responsibility of the British even when the Welsh have nothing to do with them. One can usually substitute “English” in such cases (many Welsh are annoyed by the use of the word “British”).

Any anti-English sentiment on the writer’s part exists only where Welsh national identity is being damaged, and the potential for Welsh independence is being opposed by English occupation, abuse, destruction and rule.

Apart from those areas where there has been an influx of non-Welsh, parents call for a Welsh upbringing for children in schools, and the work force realizes that Welsh laws and independence are desperately needed to prosper. Under present practices they are not faring at all well. There is opposition to this from the incoming non-Welsh. Arguments are seen in newspapers, radio programs, council arguments and beyond. (See below)

More Welsh people I spoke to were aware of the

silent, legal take-over of land and the moving away from Wales of the younger generation. Some were very angry in that they could do nothing about it.

There is an enormous effort being made to generate a sense of national identity by the Welsh. This touches all walks of life. There is a pride amongst the Welsh.

The spirit is strong and the efforts to sustain and improve the Welsh state of being and culture in all respects have gained in momentum. Cymuned is having a substantial impact in many ways in an attempt to counter the silent invasion.

Welsh schools are proving to be more successful than English schools.

All non-Welsh speaking people spoken to were proud of being Welsh and revered the language and regretted being unable to converse in it.

### Negatives:

Most English people I met thought of Wales merely as an extension of England – just another district in which to live or to own property to let for holidays – a district with some annoying laws. Most had nothing to do with the Welsh and knew nothing of the history, language or heritage, let alone of the wish by many Welsh that Wales might have national aspirations! This is reflected in the attitude of disinterest in and disregard for things that are truly Welsh.

Not all, but the majority of Welsh people are blind to the fact that Wales, and with it the essence of what is Welsh, is being wiped out. This is not an exaggeration. A process of legal (in English law) ethnic cleansing is occurring – not by the Polish – this is very minor, but by the English. Wales is being bought out and the Welsh are legally impotent to stop it. The encroachment is relentless. Some councils are attempting to counter the movement but others are compliant. (For example read up on the proposed Erddig housing estate

<[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/north\\_east/6970456.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/north_east/6970456.stm)> and see how the developers work the populace to their own ends. The surveys mentioned in this article were not conducted. Only three survey forms could be found in the district when checked!

In this example, the mud is stirred to obfuscate the process by bringing in a secondary project as an excuse: the providing of a bypass road to reduce traffic problems.) In most cases the powers that be ride rough shod over the villagers. The argument that they do this in England too is a most objectionable comment. This is not England. The land of Wales should be protected by an independent Welsh parliament. Beautiful parts and memories of my home village have disappeared under council estates.

The fringes of Wales are anglicized. The towns along the east edge of Wales are Welsh in name and history. There is little Welsh spoken there and little interest in things Welsh. Welsh flags appear to attract custom.

The seaside resorts, and especially their hinterlands, from Prestatyn to Rhyl are an utter disgrace to Wales. What I have noticed is that the creep is stealthily moving on. More

and more inland is being bought up by non-Welsh. Welsh people cannot be expected to give their properties away to other Welsh! The slogan, “Dal dy dir” “Hold to your land”, is noble and ideal but unfair to loyal Welsh people who feel guilty for being unable to abide by it. I sensed that there was anger and despair on the part of those forced to sell – to let go of their part of Wales to the non-Welsh. It is happening everywhere I was told. The fact that the English are buying up properties in France and Spain is no let-out! This has nothing to do with France or Spain and what is happening in Wales is a huge take-over threatening the very existence of a nation.

New roads are being built to make it possible for non-Welsh to have properties in Wales and to commute to work in England. The roads are not being put there for the benefit of the Welsh.

I could list hundreds of examples where such forces are having impact. If you query my thoughts I suggest you check with one of the organizations that are dedicated to saving Wales. Check out the addresses given below.

## Culture

Why should I inflict this upon my fellow Welsh in exile?! Because I feel that every true Welsh person will be keen to know the state of the nation! Although it has been said to me here in Sydney, “We don’t want to think about it”, I think many in the community here need to hear this side of the story.

### Heartbreak and joy

Joy! Wales is alive with music and dance at all levels from popular through folk, choral and classical. In many ways we can be so proud of Wales and this especially at the folk level. From the streets to the gymanfaoedd, the plygein, and the eisteddfodau there is a vibrant following. The National eisteddfod was a huge success. Gwenfydd, the president of the Newcastle Bro Hunter Welsh Society, worked there on the maes and gave glowing reports. I am aware that there is a Welsh Jazz scene but cannot comment upon it as I have had no experience of it. The popular style Welsh songs and singers have a very wide following – a godsend to the sustaining of the Welsh language – “taking over from where the bible left off!” my friend in Dolgellau commented.

Heartbreak!: Returning to the silent take-over! The nation is being infiltrated, gradually flooded, – estate by estate is being built for an overflow from England, properties are being bought up – farm by farm, and with this the culture is being extinguished, eaten away and many Welsh people find that they have to leave Wales. Many Welsh do not realize what is happening. Some ignore it; close their eyes to it. They cannot see that the need to focus on the problem is far more important than the next hundred eisteddfodau or how many people can speak Welsh. That, or they are

resigned to their impotence. Many look inwards and give their time and effort to what is indeed a vibrant Welsh revival in education, the language and in culture generally. They do not care to turn around and as a unified force address what is a real silent cancer. (Ymdaith y Crangod) This is one serious aspect of the trap in which Wales is caught.

## Choirs and Places

I have a special interest in choirs having sung in a number and having trained some. My uncle Gwilym was a member of the Rhos choir and my earliest memories here are of powerful and gentle sounds coming from powerful and gentle men. Very serious they were. Today the tradition is strong. Many villages have their own choir and I attended some practices. I was very impressed by the arrangements and compositions being made by the various conductors and accompanists.

## Poetry

My uncle George was a poet. He was more like a gnome than a bard. He caused me, I believe, to think and see things through his poetic eyes. His presence and thoughts would sometimes bring tears to my eyes. It was a joy to be with him. Everything in the world was conscious to him and Wales was the most beautiful place in God’s creation. At the essence of our nature is Welsh poetic mentation. Welsh poetic forms are merely means to express poetic thought and are closely related to the language itself. It is sad that non-Welsh speakers are denied access to a wealth of our literature embedded here. A suggestion for attaining some insight can be touched on through a recent publication: “The Bloodaxe Book of Modern Welsh Poetry: 20th-Century Welsh-Language Poetry in Translation”

<http://www.amazon.com/Bloodaxe-Book-Modern-Welsh-Poetry/dp/1852245492>

Poet, Menna Elfyn, edited the volume with novelist, John Rowlands.

“This book is for the world. It’s certainly for people who don’t speak Welsh, who don’t read Welsh, but are genuinely interested in Welsh poetry.” “In the past, Welsh poetry has been the greatest secret in Europe because we’ve always kept it to ourselves, and it’s high time we shared that richness.” “And then there was the joy, of course, of receiving wonderful translations, which are new poems almost. They are new poems in another language, but born in the arms of the old poems.”



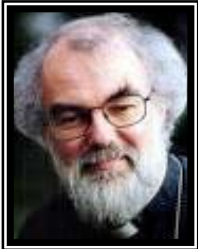
## Religion

Poetic and spirituality awareness do not conflict with Welsh national aspirations. However when it comes to religions and their various sects it is a different matter. Each has its own values, understanding of the purpose of

existence and ways of seeing the world. Each generates strong specific loyalties. Many of these loyalties are to entities beyond Wales.

Wales does not have a state Church.

The Church in Wales (*Yr Eglwys yng Nghymru*) is Anglican but the Archbishop of Canterbury does not have any formal authority in Wales.



I am especially attracted to the poetry of Rowan Williams. However I am not an Anglican. I am sure that the Anglican church might thrive in a Welsh republic but at present I see it as one of the forces of opposition to an independent Wales in that it requires loyalty to an English institution under the English

crown. It is a confusing subject. I know of an Anglican minister who is a fervent Welsh nationalist! Catholicism is strong in Wales. Not long ago there was considerable antagonism between Catholicism and the protestant followings. Today there is far better communication and acceptance.

The church having the largest following is the Presbyterian Church of Wales.

I would suggest the following for an in depth view on religion and nationalism.

Densil Morgan, University of Wales, Bangor, *Beyond the New Wales: Spirituality and National Identity at the Beginning of a New Millennium*

Trystan Owain Hughes, University of Wales, Bangor, *An Uneasy Alliance: Welsh Nationalism and Roman Catholicism*

## Communication

Communication in Wales for the benefit of the Welsh has been, and still is a disgrace! England has always been paranoid about “subversion”. (subversion that is, to English thinking) I would add that the paranoia was and is well founded!

In the past the language itself was suppressed. This was a reality. I myself was forbidden in primary school to use Welsh. Newspapers had to be in English as were court hearings and legal matters.

It was difficult to travel any major distance in Wales. South Wales was virtually cut off from the North. The main transport avenues were to permit movement into and out of Wales

Today, for the Welsh, similar principles and problems related to communication remain.

## The language

Whether you can speak it or not, the Welsh language is an essential aspect of being Welsh, essential to the

heritage of Wales and her future, (Can you imagine a Germany without German – an England without English?) yet I noted vehement arguments occurring in Wales in relation to the teaching of the language in some schools. I do understand both sides of the argument, but it is happening because of the encroachment and the use of Wales as a place to be taken over and used with disregard for values intrinsic to the nation. Wales is on course for larger icebergs than this one.

## The papers.

Most districts publish their own Welsh paper. These are a godsend to the language! They are concerned with community affairs, people and events and are confined to small districts. (For example: “Y Bigwn” Papur Bro Dinbych) They don’t provide a wide Welsh coverage. The wider Welsh coverage is catered for by such publications as the Western Mail – and the regional papers: Mold & Buckley Chronicle, Flint & Holywell Chronicle, Deeside Chronicle, Flintshire Chronicle, Wrexham Mail, Flintshire Mail, North Wales Weekly News, The Abergele & St.Asaph Visitor, Caernarfon & Denbigh Herald, Holyhead & Anglesey Mail, Yr Herald, Llandudno Advertiser, Rhyl/Prestatyn Visitor, Vale Advertiser, Bangor & Anglesey Mail, South Wales Echo, Cynon Valley Leader, Gwent Gazette Methyr Express Pontypridd & Llantrisant Observer, Rhondda Leader Glamorgan Gazette, etc..

These papers all support and sustain the status quo, keeping the populace informed of arguments and events in the communities. They are all owned by Trinity Mirror which claims to be the largest newspaper publisher in the UK and the second largest in Europe. A full list of Trinity Mirror Group holdings can be found at <http://www.ketupa.net/trinity1.htm>.

Likewise in radio and TV broadcasting the BBC has dominance. Wales is treated as a backwater. Newyddion, the video internet news in Welsh is very difficult to pick up and of very poor quality if one manages to access it. Try: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/welsh/>. It is difficult for any Welsh national voice to be heard. Incidentally, the BBC news is of far better quality, and is immediately accessible, in Spanish or Russian. Channels of potential subversive communication in Wales are prevented from functioning effectively.

## The internet

The internet is another godsend to the Welsh language, the promotion of Welsh culture, business and commerce. (“Taken over where the bible left off) As one communications outlet for the promotion of an independent Wales and independent Welsh thinking it is a threat to the powers that be. More and more of Wales is coming on-line – homes, schools, institutions, businesses. Even YouTube and Utube “Wales” or “Welsh” is brimming with entries.

## Politics

Westminster, with respect to devolution, is especially afraid of the national aspirations and potential of Wales. Wales is played down as much as possible in all public comment outside Wales. The impression is implied that Wales is of little account and is subsumed by England.

England is afraid of a breakdown of the “United Kingdom”, and quite rightly so! Wales is as foreign to England as is France (in some respects more so) and has sought for a long time to wipe out the difference but without success. (That is what makes us Welsh!) I recall an English friend saying to me in a street in Caernarfon, “They all speak a foreign language here”. Wales needs to go it alone. The catch is that at present England cannot do without Wales – not the other way round! Think about it. Whenever England has come to the point of not needing a colony what has it done? England without Wales and without Scotland would diminish England’s standing in the world. It is really a question of can England stand on its own? It is not difficult to assess that where economies are concerned, Wales and Scotland would be far better off going their own ways than they are at present. England is a sad drain on Wales.

The terribly sad thing is that Welsh politicians in the Conservative, Liberal or the Labour camps owe more loyalty to their parties than they do to Wales. If not, and they are Welsh at heart, they are either myopic or are subconsciously behaving like apprehensive ostriches, because to an outsider it is obvious that the problem needs to be addressed now and it is not going to go away.

We are aware that the politicians have so many important functions of the immediate present to contend with, running the country, attending committees after committees, reading reports, meeting people, arguing cases, making decisions, looking to the next election, etc., that it is difficult for them to tear their minds away that they might reflect broadly on the way their country is heading. Further, politicians do suffer from a disorder. They are not prepared to address that which is contentious, and this is the biggest contention of all. It screams to be addressed. It is a storm that is wiping the real Wales away.

In balance I clearly see: Do the Welsh want Wales to stay Welsh (and note that, to be realistic! becoming totally divorced from English rule can be the only solution) or do they want little England? It is black and white. It is here, now – not tomorrow.

Over such a thing as this, without leadership, diverse forces and interests in the nation will argue for ever, and knowing the Welsh, without leadership they will never agree. (I think the English know this full well and will keep the Welsh arguing about anything!)

Looking at the state of the nation with its diverse forces

and interests, change has to come through dedicated, loyal (to the country) and courageous Welsh politicians. Herein lies hope! but who on earth could get politicians of differing faiths to look at, let alone agree on, such contentious an issue as independence? Herein lies despair!

Can the Welsh people call upon the leaders in Wales of all the sundry parties to confer to set up the Republic of Cymru? That is to set aside all thoughts of previous political commitments to Westminster and the UK system and to work in a dedicated union to bring our nation to a respectable free state in the world?

### **If only!**

If only the leaders of Welsh Tory and Welsh Labour along with Plaid Cymru, Cymru Rhydd and so on, could meet to agree on the forming of a democratic future for Wales as an independent, free standing nation, and work together to achieve what millions of Welsh in the past have striven for, died for, prayed and suffered for ... they would go down in the annals of history and the minds of the Welsh as the greatest of all Welsh heroes – of all time!

If only the leaders of the parties in Wales could reflect, with an open, non-political mind and reach out with a vision of Wales as an independent nation, a change could occur and Wales could blossom! (Instead it is one of the poorest countries in Europe.)

If only the Welsh people would call on their leaders to lead!

Such are the thoughts of a disillusioned Welshman on returning from a long visit to Wales. As Cymuned clearly sees the writing on the wall! Wales has “a simple choice” – Do something about it or “move on, forget about Wales, scrub her legends and songs out of your heart, and don’t shed any tears as her communities, language and society continue to fall to pieces”.

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### **What can we do?**

If you are Welsh your conscience will not let you sleep without your doing something positive!

#### **Stir your relatives back home to vote – don’t hold back!**

Two of my relatives say they can’t be bothered. The others are furious about the situation.

#### **Vote yourself if eligible**

Although Westminster will not permit you to vote on matters to do with Wales or Scotland or devolution, if you are a British citizen you can apply to vote on general UK matters some of which will pertain to Wales. See:

<http://britishexpats.com/news/latest/dont-lose-your-uk-vote/>

#### **Subscribe to Cambria**

[www.cambriamagazine.com](http://www.cambriamagazine.com)

## Subscribe to Yr Enfys

<http://www.wales-international.org/english/yrenfys.html>

## Join Cymuned

At least join Cymuned to keep abreast of what is really going on.

[http://cymuned.net/blogsaesneg/?page\\_id=21%22](http://cymuned.net/blogsaesneg/?page_id=21%22)

(or Google for Cymuned)

## Obtain a Welsh email address:

“Yourname@carucymry.com” - Using this address any return mail is sent to your normal email address. It costs nothing to members of Cymuned.

## Read up on Welsh thought condensed in Cymuned:

[www.Walesneedsyou.com](http://www.Walesneedsyou.com)

## Check out Golwg:

[http://www.golwg.com/pages/index\\_e.asp?language=english](http://www.golwg.com/pages/index_e.asp?language=english)

## Join Plaid Cymru

Plaid needs support. You may not agree with everything they do but it is the party that stands for Wales.

Information

<http://www.plaidcymru.org/content.php?nID=105;IID=1>

Membership form

<http://www.plaidcymru.org/uploads/publications/119.pdf>

Plaid Cymru president Dafydd Iwan



<http://dafyddiwan.com/english/index.html> ...

## Subscribe to Llafargwlad (Cylchgrawn gwerin gwlad) (Given in Welsh and English)

<http://www.carreg-gwalch.co.uk/cymraeg/cylchgrawn%20llafargwlad.html>

## Promote Wales and Welsh culture here

### Join the Welsh Society Cymdeithas Cymry

See membership form on the webpages

<http://www.bethnesaf.org/>

## Teach or learn Welsh

If you speak Welsh you can help the teaching team to teach the language in Sydney

## Y Gronfa

Donate to Y Gronfa here in Sydney.

The Gronfa is the fund that subsidises and promotes Welsh culture, eisteddfodau and Welsh language in Australia.

## Join a Welsh Choir

Cantorion Sydney (male voice choir)  
99795584

Sydney Welsh Choir (mixed choir)  
99972019

## Attend Welsh events (See Events in bethnesaf)

A few weeks ago I attended the annual gymanfa of the Newcastle Bro Hunter Society

Ardderchog! The church was packed and the choir, the Tudor Singers, was brilliant under Dr Keith Murray Allan.

## Write

Write an article or poem in English or Welsh for the next Llais or for Bethnesaf.