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Making Communities in Modern Wales Caernarfonshire in the Late Victorian and Early Edwardian Eras

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Making Communities in Modern Wales: Caernarfonshire in the Late Victorian and Edwardian Eras

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Philosophy

Bangor University

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Abstract

This study analyses local communities in Caernarfonshire in order to offer new perspectives on Welsh society in the late Victorian and early Edwardian eras. This has been seen as a period of major change in Wales characterised by economic modernisation and national awakening. However, with some notable exceptions, previous research has mainly focused on the industrialised communities of the south Wales coalfield, and the diversity of experiences across Wales has been more often acknowledged than researched.

After setting the subject in a wider historiographical context which highlights the limitations of established narratives and identifies key areas requiring investigation, the thesis devotes a series of chapters to case studies of Caernarfonshire's urban, maritime and agricultural and industrial communities. The use of specific case studies aims to address the challenge posed by the complex and multilayered nature of communities. Caernarfonshire was geographically diverse and contained communities different in make-up and outlook. Agricultural areas were dominated by a few landowning families distanced by language, religion and politics from the majority of the county's inhabitants. Fishing and maritime trade provided the economic basis for coastal communities such as Porthmadog, while the growth of the tourist trade in Llandudno gave rise to a different kind of community. The development of the slate industry, much of it by large landowners, transformed the county giving rise to population movement and industrial urbanisation.

The urban communities studied are Caernarfon, Conwy and Pwllheli. The agricultural/maritime settlements analysed are Carnguwch, Tudweiliog, Pistyll and Betws-y-Coed and the industrial areas are upper Llanwnda and the lower part of Llanberis parish. The census returns for 1881 and 1901 form the basis of the analysis and profiling of the chosen communities. These sources, which are as inclusive as it is possible to be, help give a common analytical structure to the examination of the communities. This quantitative analysis is extended and enriched with qualitative evidence by using a wealth of other sources such as court records, council archives, school logbooks, contemporary reminiscences and newspapers which help to humanise the study. This combination of analytical methods facilitates the analysis of the selected communities in Caernarfonshire and how they developed and changed over the period.

Declaration

Yr wyf drwy hyn yn datgan mai canlyniad fy ymchwil fy hun yw'r thesis hwn, ac eithrio lle nodir yn wahanol. Caiff ffynonellau eraill eu cydnabod gan droednodiadau yn rhoi cyfeiriadau eglur. Nid yw sylwedd y gwaith hwn wedi cael ei dderbyn o'r blaen ar gyfer unrhyw radd, ac nid yw'n cael ei gyflwyno ar yr un pryd mewn ymgeisiaeth am unrhyw radd oni bai ei fod, fel y cytunwyd gan y Brifysgol, am gymwysterau deuol cymeradwy.

I hereby declare that this thesis is the results of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. All other sources are acknowledged by bibliographic references. This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree unless, as agreed by the University, for approved dual awards.

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Abbreviations used in footnotes

CAS	Conwy Archive Service
CDH	<i>Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald and North and South Wales Independent</i>
TCHS	<i>Transactions of the Caernarvonshire Historical Society</i>
GAS CRO	Gwynedd Archives Service Caernarfon Record Office
NWC	<i>The North Wales Chronicle and Advertiser for the Principality</i>
NWE	<i>The North Wales Express</i>
WCP	<i>The Welsh Coast Pioneer and Review for North Cambria</i>
WHR	<i>Welsh History Review</i>
YGG	<i>Y Genedl Gymreig</i>

Chapter 1: Setting the Scene: Ways and Means

The aim of this study is to analyse local communities in Caernarfonshire in order to offer new perspectives on Welsh society in the period 1880 to 1914. This has been seen as a period of major change in Wales characterized by economic and social developments and by national awakening. However with some notable exceptions previous research has been mainly focused on the industrialised communities of south Wales. The county of Caernarfon was chosen as the basis for this study. J. E. Lloyd at the end of the period under consideration here wrote of a county which had distinctive characteristics because of its geographical features: ‘Mountains and the sea have made Carnarvonshire what it is, and have given it a character of its own that is hardly matched by any other county in Southern Britain’.¹ This reflected a wider tendency to make geography a central factor in explaining Welsh history, as seen, for example, in O. M. Edwards’ popular history of Wales in 1901 with its famous opening sentence declaring that ‘its mountains explain its isolation and its love of independence; they explain its internal divisions, they have determined throughout its history, what the direction and method of its progress were to be’.² However, geography was only one defining aspect of Caernarfonshire. Administratively Caernarfonshire had a distinguished history – Caernarfon itself had been the focal point for the administration of the later medieval Principality of North Wales and it then became the county town where the quarter sessions were held.³ Caernarfonshire was a county with a clearly defined centre – unlike its neighbour, the county of Merioneth. The election of the Caernarfonshire County Council in 1889 reinforced the identity of the county as a clearly defined unit. In addition, Caernarfonshire provided a microcosm of different kinds of communities – the county therefore was an area of analysis as feasible as any other. The diversity of experiences across Wales has been more often acknowledged than researched. Dai Smith wrote that ‘Wales is a singular noun but a plural experience ... the diversity that is the true mark, in every sense, of this nation’s maturity.’⁴

¹ J. E. Lloyd, *Carnarvonshire* (Cambridge, 1911), pp. 2ff. See also H. Pryce, ‘J. E. Lloyd and the History of Caernarfonshire’, *Transactions of the Caernarvonshire Historical Society*, 66 (2005), 14-37 for a discussion of Lloyd’s conceptualisation of the county.

² O. M. Edwards, *Wales* (London, 1901).

³ See D. Rhydderch-Dart, ‘Caernarfonshire 1855-1865: A County as Reflected in its Quarter Sessions Records’ (MRes Thesis, Bangor University, 2015).

⁴ D. Smith, *Wales: A Question for History* (Bridgend, 1999), p. 36.

The main research questions which this study seeks to answer can be summarised as: how diverse were the communities in Caernarfonshire and how did they adapt to changing social, economic and migratory circumstances at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century? In order to answer these overarching research questions it was necessary to explore the social and economic characteristics of the communities and to analyse how much these settlements with their diverse profiles shared in common.

Microcosmic studies of communities, or parts of communities, add to our knowledge of population structure, background, economy, migration and way of life. They give us an insight into some sectors of the community which are often underrepresented in sources – women, children and the socially and economically disadvantaged. Such studies can be a tool to look at the connection of towns to industrial centres and to rural communities together with the interaction, if any, of these communities. As previous work has shown microcosmic studies enable the analysis of the way such settlements can adapt to changing circumstances.⁵ Such detailed studies tend to be articles, often theme based, using a breadth of sources but concentrating on one locality. For example a study of Poor Relief in mid nineteenth-century Colyton, Devon, concentrates on the period 1851-1881. The poor of the parish are studied by bringing together the census enumerators' schedules with primarily the records of the Axminster Union. The author of this study states that 'Colyton is one small parish and it is impossible to say how typical it was'.⁶ This thesis by presenting microcosmic studies of nine communities within Caernarfonshire offers in-depth analysis of the individual settlements and comparative data for several types of communities. The research context is therefore wide.

Raymond Williams defines community as a concept which from the nineteenth century onwards became increasingly associated with locality while also encompassing a set of relationships. He claims that '...what is most important...it seems never to be used unfavourably'.⁷ The definition of community has been discussed at length by

⁵ Examples of such studies are S. Thomas, 'The Enumerators' Returns as a Source for a Period Picture of the Parish of Llansantffraid, 1841-51', *Ceredigion*, 4 (1960), 408-421, H. G. Williams, 'Nantucha, Llanberis 1851: Portrait of a Changing Community', *WHR*, 22, 1 (2004), 52-79, E. A. Benjamin, 'Aberystwyth Borough: A Demographic Study of the 1841 Census', *Ceredigion: Journal of the Cardiganshire Antiquarian Society*, 9, 2 (1981), 135-49 and D. Rhydderch-Dart, "The Great Relief of the Overcrowded Slums": The Development of Twthill in Late Nineteenth-Century Caernarfon', *WHR*, 28, 3 (2017), 515-548.

⁶ J. Robin, 'The Relief of Poverty in Mid Nineteenth-Century Colyton', *Rural History*, 1, 2 (1990), 215.

⁷ R. Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London, 1976), p. 65-66.

historians.⁸ Calhoun argues that such communities are based on multiple bonds which tie individuals to their groups.⁹ He identifies elements which constitute a community – ‘the relationships amongst social actors’ who may or may not be bound to certain localities¹⁰, holding collective goods and having collective responsibility, the latter introducing agencies of enforcement¹¹ or kin as in societies based on family or clan and connected to a locality.¹² Therefore identity is based on large social groups with which the individual identifies such as kinship.¹³ In urban areas such groups underwent frequent change.¹⁴ The definition as set out by Light will be adopted in this study – that community is ‘people within a particular locality [who] perceive a shared experience that is both defining and defined’.¹⁵ As Bill Jones has pointed out ‘people can possess a multiplicity of identities’.¹⁶ The concept of identity itself has been questioned and debated. During the period of this study Wales developed national institutions and appeared to share common values of Nonconformity and Liberalism. However the face of Wales was rapidly changing and the idea of a Welsh identity likewise changed between communities and between areas. Brubaker and Cooper have argued that although the concept of identity has been used as a tool of analysis and has produced much which is ‘legitimate and important’, the term itself is ‘flat’ and does not convey the complex nature of people, their networks, how they view themselves, individual stories and histories.¹⁷ The decline of the Welsh language reflects this. It demonstrates the shift of population, the out-migration of Welsh heartlands and the in-migration from outside Wales to the heavy industries of south Wales. Caernarfonshire was not part of this pattern but the balance of population and growth within Wales as a whole had changed out of all recognition. Merfyn Jones sets the scene for Gwynedd – and particularly Caernarfonshire – in the opening chapter of his book on the north Wales quarrymen, touching on land ownership, infrastructure, wealth, work and class.¹⁸

⁸ See for example C. J. Calhoun, ‘Community: Toward a Variable Conceptualization for Comparative Research’, *Social History*, 5, 1 (1980), 105-129.

⁹ Calhoun, ‘Community’, p. 115 and p. 119.

¹⁰ Calhoun, p. 110.

¹¹ Calhoun, p. 112.

¹² Calhoun, p. 115.

¹³ Calhoun p. 127.

¹⁴ Calhoun, p. 123.

¹⁵ J. Light, ‘Manufacturing the Past – The Representation of Mining Communities in History, Literature and Heritage: “...Fantasies of a World That Never Was?”’, *Llafur*, 8, 1 (2000), 19.

¹⁶ B. Jones, ‘Banqueting at a Moveable Feast: Wales 1870-1914’, in G. E. Jones and D. Smith (eds.), *The People of Wales* (Llandysul, 1999), p. 177.

¹⁷ R. Brubaker and F. Cooper, ‘Beyond “Identity”’, *Theory and Society*, 29 (2000), 34.

¹⁸ R. M. Jones, *The North Wales Quarrymen 1874-1922* (Cardiff, 1981), p. 1-16.

Within counties or regions there was a ‘pronounced microlevel, loyalties and identities could focus on a particular district ...’¹⁹ It was these communities which developed a self-confidence based on a common culture.²⁰

There is comparatively little that has been written about Caernarfonshire during this period but the study benefits from research analysing a number of themes that has been published to date for Wales and other countries and from more general accounts of the history of Wales, some of which are outlined in this chapter. This study uses several works which give general interpretations of the history of Wales during this period, not only for their content but also as a guide to the attitudes and bias of the historians of modern Wales which have coloured the emphasis of the research that has already taken place. Much of the history of Wales has been written in works which analyse specific areas, issues or periods but in the 1980s and 1990s two books in particular gave a unifying narrative which cover the period of this study. K. O. Morgan’s *Rebirth of a Nation: Wales 1880-1980* as part of the Oxford History of Wales²¹ and John Davies’s *A History of Wales*.²² The former book has a wide remit in which Morgan analyses politics, social and cultural issues.²³ For a historian with such deep knowledge of Welsh Liberalism and of Lloyd George he provides a broad account of this period with an expert overview of developments throughout Wales. In his treatment of the political scene, Morgan stresses that in Wales the world of Liberalism was ‘a highly local one’ which was demonstrated in Wales ‘more strikingly ... than in any other part in Britain’ with the new transition to democracy and the formation of the new county councils.²⁴ His in-depth knowledge of the political makeup and organisation in Wales gives valuable insights into administration at local level as shown in his statement that the Liberals ‘caucused amongst themselves for aldermanships, coronerships and chairmanships of vital committees’.²⁵ On the whole his view is upbeat, speaking of a nation ‘less tormented, more secure, more at peace

¹⁹ B. Jones, ‘Banqueting at a Moveable Feast’, p. 176.

²⁰ I. G. Jones, *Communities: Essays in the Social History of Victorian Wales* (Llandysul, 1987), p. 156 and p. 150.

²¹ K. O. Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation: 1880-1980* (Oxford, 1981).

²² J. Davies, *A History of Wales* (London, 2007).

²³ See K. O. Morgan, ‘Wales in British Politics: Forty Years On’, *Llafur*, 9, 1 (2004), 19-23, in which Morgan briefly compares this book with his earlier publication, *Wales in British Politics*, writing that in the later publication he did far more work on the social foundations of politics.

²⁴ Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation*, p. 52.

²⁵ Morgan, p. 53.

with itself and a wider world'.²⁶ Detailed studies of communities in Caernarfonshire do not always support this view. In discussing the Edwardian 'High Noon', Morgan himself underlines the dichotomy in the Welsh economy – a booming coalfield, a depressed slate industry and an under resourced agricultural sector.²⁷ John Davies's book, remarkably written without a single footnote or reference, is an undoubted achievement. Its chapter on the Rhondda, Aberystwyth and Bethesda covers the period 1850-1914. Within the chapter's hundred pages, Davies discusses the land, rural questions and politics in north Wales. His coverage of industrial history is largely centred in north-west Wales on the Penrhyn-Bethesda area. Davies returns to more comfortable ground of the Rhondda and Tonypandy quite rapidly. The coverage of social, community and demographic aspects of north Wales in this period is much weaker than that of south Wales communities, in particular those of the valleys. As a book of this nature is a synthesis of the work of many historians, it reflects areas where the larger body of research has been carried out.

Mention should be made here briefly of the works of two historians: Gwyn Alfred Williams and Dai Smith which reflect respectively Marxist and a south Wales valleys-centric attitude to Welsh history.²⁸ Williams's *When Was Wales?* is a comparatively brief overview of Welsh history with many thought-provoking assertions. For example, he describes the 'traditional' Wales of Nonconformity and Welsh speaking with its educational and national institutions made possible by industrial wealth. However he continues 'that "traditional" Wales was, in some other very real senses, a reaction against this new Wales'.²⁹ Such assertions can be tested against the experiences of Caernarfonshire communities and whether the assertion applies more to communities in other areas of Wales depending on, for example, population growth and migration patterns. Smith underlines the importance of community experiences and their diversity.³⁰ He writes of Wales in the 1890s as a country of 'shared experiences of religion, language, work and sense of place'.³¹ The rapid industrialisation of south Wales with its dramatic increase of population created a

²⁶ Morgan, p. 122.

²⁷ Morgan, p. 124-125

²⁸ See S. Berger, 'Working-Class Culture and the Labour Movement in the South Wales and the Ruhr Coalfields, 1850-2000', *Llafur*, 8, 2 (2001), 38 quoting Smith 'the making and the breaking of the valleys are ... the central themes of twentieth-century Welsh history which become the basis of Welsh self-perception and identity'.

²⁹ G. A. Williams, *When Was Wales?* (Middlesex, 1985), p. 180.

³⁰ Smith, *Wales*, p. 36.

³¹ Smith, p. 21.

different kind of community which expressed itself increasingly in the English language. Smith believes that Gwyn A. Williams's and John Davies's view of Welsh history was too static. Wales has undergone continuous change and has experienced a common human history: 'linguistic, cultural and social – that makes it the Welsh experience'.³²

Different in structure but broad in coverage are the works of Ieuan Gwynedd Jones who believed that any historian of Wales is by definition a social historian and 'can be no other'.³³ Much of his work is devoted to the mid nineteenth century which also influences the approach to the study of later decades.³⁴ His description of a society 'fractured and uneasy with itself' reverberates through later decades of the nineteenth century.³⁵ Jones's treatment of community provides thoughtful and thought provoking studies. His approach to a study of the valleys underlines two ways in which one can analyse a coalfield community. Firstly from the outside giving the physical evidence of growth both demographically and economically. This is a measurable and quantitative approach. Secondly from the inside portraying and understanding social relations and consciousness.³⁶ These two approaches Jones believes will show in communities 'what elements were of permanent importance in their composition, how their origins determined their eventual shape and character'.³⁷ His study of Merthyr Vale analyses the development of the community in physical and human terms. He emphasises that the nature of the work provided a sense of community and an increasing interest in social questions. Comparisons can be drawn with the slate industry communities in Caernarfonshire. Jones also emphasises in several studies the importance of local administration – 'I have put local government before parliamentary politics for that was how it was.'³⁸ He stresses the complexity of social structure in communities as in his study of the Monmouthshire valleys.³⁹ Jones's work blazed 'pioneering paths opening up and explaining the nature of Welsh society in the nineteenth century'.⁴⁰ His

³² Smith, p. 37.

³³ I. G. Jones, *Explorations and Explanations* (Llandysul, 1981) p. 269.

³⁴ K. O. Morgan, 'Tom Ellis versus Lloyd George: The Fractured Consciousness of Fin-de-siècle Wales', in G. H. Jenkins and J. Beverley Smith (eds.), *Politics and Society in Wales, 1840-1922* (Cardiff, 1988), p. 94.

³⁵ I. G. Jones, *Mid-Victorian Wales: The Observers and The Observed* (Cardiff, 1992), p. 109.

³⁶ Jones, *Communities*, p. 140.

³⁷ Jones, p. 140.

³⁸ Jones, p. 188.

³⁹ Jones, p. 170.

⁴⁰ G. Williams, 'Ieuan Gwynedd Jones', in Jenkins and Smith (eds.), *Politics and Society in Wales*, p. 4.

work informs this project, as it has the work of generations of historians, with its detailed individual studies of communities, themes and culture.

Berger, in comparing south Wales and the Ruhr, has argued that, for example, the communities of south Wales and their experiences have not been placed in a ‘comparative context’ which would make ‘differences between regional developments come into focus more sharply and make us aware of the many peculiarities which shaped regional histories’.⁴¹ There are few in-depth comparative studies and certainly little work of this nature has been pursued in a Welsh context. Thematic issues have been compared at regional level. For example, Dodd in his researches compared the north Wales region to Lancashire and Yorkshire exploring economic decline in the regions. Dodd underlines in his economic comparisons in the regions the fact that ‘... economic conditions in north Wales became more and more assimilated to those of the rest of the kingdom ...’ while the gap between rural and industrial Wales grew larger.⁴² Demographic movements throughout Wales have been commonly compared and contrasted on a county and regional basis.⁴³ Dot Jones has studied and compared women’s work in rural Cardiganshire and in the Rhondda Valley.⁴⁴ However comparative studies rarely cross the Welsh border as Berger points out.⁴⁵ Berger argues that comparisons can help to establish explanations for developments within national, regional or local areas.

Different in character and purpose, Carmarthenshire has attracted the attention of one historian, Russell Davies, a protégé of Ieuan Gwynedd Jones. Davies has produced a richly textured analysis of the county and its communities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.⁴⁶ Using a wide spectrum of sources and especially newspapers Davies analyses the lives of individuals in communities. This

⁴¹ Berger, ‘Working-Class Culture’, 7-8.

⁴² A. H. Dodd, *The Industrial Revolution in North Wales* (Cardiff 2nd ed., 1951).

⁴³ See for example J. Williams, ‘The Move from the Land’, in T. Herbert and G. E. Jones (eds.), *People and Protest: Wales 1815-1880* (Cardiff, 1988), pp. 11-45.

⁴⁴ D. Jones, ‘Serfdom and Slavery: Women’s Work in Wales, 1890-1930’, in D. R. Hopkin and G. S. Kealey (eds.), *Class, Community and the Labour Movement: Wales and Canada 1850-1930* (Aberystwyth, 1989), pp. 86-100.

⁴⁵ Berger, ‘Working-Class Culture’, 8. See also ‘Conclusion’ in N. Evans and H. Pryce (eds.), *Writing a Small Nation’s Past: Wales in Comparative Perspective, 1850-1950* (Farnham, 2013), p. 312 in which Berger takes his argument further to call for the comparative studies of national histories and placing Wales within a European context.

⁴⁶ R. Davies, *Secret Sins: Sex, Violence and Society in Carmarthenshire 1870-1920* (Cardiff, 1996) Russell Davies has also produced two volumes about the social history of Wales and the Welsh. R. Davies, *Hope and Heartbreak: A Social History of Wales and the Welsh, 1776-1871* (Cardiff, 2005) and R. Davies, *People, Places and Passions: “Pain and Pleasure”: A Social History of Wales and the Welsh, 1870-1945* (Cardiff, 2015).

historian has made the people of Carmarthenshire the central focus of his work.⁴⁷ Davies portrays the strains felt by both individuals and communities in Carmarthenshire in this period. Caernarfonshire and Carmarthenshire shared characteristics. For example, both had large agricultural areas and industrial centres which saw substantial increases in population. Davies lifts the lid on the prejudices and bigotry within society and exposes the plight of those members of the community least able to protect themselves such as the unmarried mother and those suffering from issues of mental health. These matters are common to all communities and the consequences affect social life and cohesion in Caernarfonshire as they did in Carmarthenshire. Day describes people as ‘boundary drawing animals – thus one is bound to have those who are included and those who are excluded’.⁴⁸

In terms of county histories which either spanned the centuries or partially covers the period of this study, Caernarfonshire has only one volume, covering the period 1284-1900, in which A. H. Dodd provides insights into the social, political and economic background of the county.⁴⁹ The book was based on a series of extramural lectures that Dodd had delivered about fifty years ago. As Neil Evans points out ‘it was still difficult to work on the modern period with archives only just beginning to open up’.⁵⁰ Dodd’s achievement in producing such a work is to be much admired and historians of Caernarfonshire ignore his study at their peril. His study was by its very nature a broad overview of the county’s development and history. It is comparatively sparse in its coverage of the late nineteenth century. However the work succeeds in conveying the diversity of the county and analyses the elements of political, administrative, religious and economic life which affected the nature of Caernarfonshire’s communities. For instance his view that the quarrying communities ‘created an entirely new type of social community, with a vigorous culture and sturdy independence unsuspected by those who see only the drab exterior’ illustrates that in the early 1960s Dodd was thinking in terms of communities and their shared experience.⁵¹ He was also a historian who, as later generations of historians such as

⁴⁷ M. Johnes, ‘Wales, History and Britishness’, *WHR*, 25, 4 (December 2011), 619. Johnes writes of the need for histories like that produced by Russell Davies which is people centric: ‘such a history needs to address the diversity of the Welsh people’.

⁴⁸ G. Day, *Community and Everyday Life* (Abingdon-on-Thames, 2006), p. 60.

⁴⁹ A. H. Dodd, *A History of Caernarfonshire* (Caernarfon, 1968).

⁵⁰ N. Evans, ‘Beyond 1282: A. H. Dodd and the Problem of Modern Welsh History’, in Evans and Pryce (eds.), *Writing a Small Nation’s Past*, p. 233.

⁵¹ Dodd, *A History of Caernarfonshire*, p. 253.

Williams and Smith advocated, was active in conveying the history of communities and of Wales to an engaged public.

Thus far this chapter has outlined works which either give a broad-brush overview of this period or a regional/county emphasis. The themes which this study uses for comparison and insights cover a wide range of topics. As this project takes the county as the area for analysis it will be looking at the interrelationship of communities and public services. Works relating to local administration informs this study giving an opportunity to assess its role, challenges and how it reflected the life of the communities of the county. It does not look in-depth at the process of local administration at all its various levels but uses the administrative evidence produced to illuminate aspects of county and community life. Literature relating to local administration covers a myriad of subjects and divides broadly between those which are primarily devoted to the development of administration and those which reflect aspects of its application. With respect to the first kind of study the works of Sidney and Beatrice Webb can be used for the developments in local government during the nineteenth century – a necessary background since they throw light on the accrual of local government responsibilities which became absorbed at county, rural and urban district level from 1888 onwards.⁵² Thornhill links the connection of social needs such as sanitation and poor relief to developments of local government in England. He claims that the Local Government Act of 1888 setting up county councils in England (as in Wales) was ‘an emaciated version of the government’s intentions’.⁵³ W. P. Griffith’s study of county government and politics in Anglesey is useful as it analyses developments in one of Caernarfonshire’s neighbouring authorities with which it had economic and social links together with a similar linguistic makeup.⁵⁴

Communities in Caernarfonshire were diverse – the county had urban centres, industrial, maritime and rural areas. Environment helped to dictate the type of life led by people in these various communities. Urban history has been the focus of several historians, especially the role of towns and cities in an analysis of society, class and politics.⁵⁵ A number of studies have been published which have contributed to our

⁵² See S. Webb and B. Webb, *The Parish and the County*, English Local Government, Volume 1 (London, 1906) and S. Webb and B. Webb, *Statutory Authorities for Special Purposes* (London, 1922).

⁵³ W. Thornhill, ‘Introduction’, in W. Thornhill (ed.), *The Growth and Reform of English Local Government* (London, 1971), p. 9.

⁵⁴ W. P. Griffith, *Power, Politics and County Government in Wales: Anglesey 1780-1914* (Llangefni, 2006).

⁵⁵ M. Savage, ‘Urban History and Social Class: Two Paradigms’, *Urban History*, 20, 1 (1993), p. 62.

understanding of this period.⁵⁶ Wales had a champion of urban history in Harold Carter whose work can still be used to provide comparisons of urban developments throughout Wales.⁵⁷ However further studies in Welsh urban development, and especially so for north Wales, are long overdue.⁵⁸ According to Neil Evans urbanisation and the interrelationship between towns and their rural areas should be a major theme in Welsh history.⁵⁹ Caernarfonshire's urban centres have received some attention. Studies devoted to Caernarfon and Bangor are useful to this study but in some cases there is a lack of in-depth profiling of the communities.⁶⁰ Caernarfonshire towns had different urban experiences. For example, Caernarfon retained and increased its historic role as an administrative centre and provider of services. Although it benefitted from the tourist trade it did not develop as a tourist attraction comparable to Llandudno where the Mostyn estate supervised that town's development in order to attract the middle classes of Lancashire. Evans compares the development of resort towns in north and south Wales. Those in the south developed later than the resorts in the north: by the mid-century Aberystwyth and Barmouth were exploiting the tourist trade while it was during the 1880s that Porthcawl and Barry Island became tourist hotspots especially for the workers of south Wales.⁶¹ The industrial communities had grown, much like their counterparts in the south Wales valleys, at a rapid rate and established a new kind of society in Caernarfonshire. Some such industrial settlements were larger than others and were more urban in character whilst others were isolated

⁵⁶ For example see A. Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (Middlesex, 1968). This book, as the title suggests, concentrates mainly on cities but discusses aspects of development common to all urbanized areas. A useful and informative introduction is provided by R. J. Morris, 'Urbanization', in R. J. Morris and R. Rodger (eds.), *The Victorian City: A Reader in British Urban History 1820-1914* (London and New York, 1993), pp. 43-72. J. Brown, *The English Market Town* (Marlborough, 1986) provides a broad introduction with interesting analysis of some aspects of smaller urban centres in England. For an Irish perspective see T. W. Freeman, 'Irish Towns in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', in R. A. Butlin (ed.), *The Development of the Irish Town* (London, 1977), pp. 101-138. Also see R. Newton, *Victorian Exeter 1837-1914* (Leicester, 1968) which looks at 'the history of human communities' in a provincial centre.

⁵⁷ H. Carter, *The Towns of Wales* (Cardiff, 1965).

⁵⁸ P. Borsay, L. Miskell and O. Roberts, 'Introduction: Wales, a New Agenda for Urban History', *Urban History*, 32, 1 (2005), 13-14. See also Introduction to L. Miskell, *'Intelligent Town': An Urban History of Swansea, 1780-1855* (Cardiff, 2006), pp. 7-8.

⁵⁹ N. Evans, 'Rethinking Urban Wales', *Urban History*, 32, 1 (2005), p. 130.

⁶⁰ See for example L. Lloyd, *The Port of Caernarfon 1793-1900* (Caernarfon, 1989) and P. E. Jones, *Bangor 1883-1983: A Study in Municipal Government*, (Cardiff, 1986).

⁶¹ N. Evans, 'The Urbanization of Welsh Society', p. 12. See also I. Pincombe, 'From Pit to Paradise: Porthcawl's Changing Identity, from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Century', *WHR*, 25, 4 (December 2011), 533. A. Fletcher, 'The Role of Landowners, Entrepreneurs and Railways in the Urban Development of the North Wales Coast During the Nineteenth Century', *WHR*, 16, 4 (December 1993), 514-541.

centres with fewer, communal amenities. Croll looks at the development of Merthyr from a ‘quintessential frontier town’ into a more mature, civilised urban centre. Several parallels can be drawn with similar, smaller such developments in Caernarfonshire.⁶² A study of the south Wales coalfield warns against the assumption that communities in that area were homogeneous. Chris Williams argues that such an assumption leads historians to ignore evidence of social fracture within individual communities.⁶³ The link with rural life remained for many quarrying areas. The work of Merfyn Jones has touched on this aspect and his study encourages further investigation into this characteristic of community in some areas of Caernarfonshire.⁶⁴ Jones argues that the wages earned in the quarries subsidised the workers who had small tracts of land and enabled families to remain on their farms or smallholdings. In this way ‘the impoverished agriculture of the Snowdonia hills was therefore able to sustain a level of population higher than any income from the land could provide’.⁶⁵ However Jones points out that despite this connection with farming, the quarry workmen would increasingly identify himself as a quarryman rather than a farmer.⁶⁶

Rural communities, their politics and tensions form an important part of many works which illustrate the complexity and multifaceted nature of rural life.⁶⁷ David Howell, an historian who has devoted most of his researches to rural Wales, has analysed land ownership, occupancy and labour in the nineteenth century. He writes of an almost hand to mouth existence of many farmers drawing comparisons with the situation in England and Scotland.⁶⁸ Howkins’s study of rural England between 1850 and 1925 gives a valuable profile of rural communities by stressing their diversity and underlining the fact that these communities were ‘certainly not an homogenous rural world’.⁶⁹ His work analyses a number of areas in England looking at, for instance, rural poverty and social structure. This study of Caernarfonshire benefits from the

⁶² A. Croll, *Civilising the Urban: Popular Culture and Public Space in Merthyr, c.1870-1914* (Cardiff, 2000).

⁶³ C. Williams, *Capitalism, Community and Conflict: The South Wales Coalfield, 1898-1947* (Cardiff, 1998), p. 62.

⁶⁴ R. M. Jones, *The North Wales Quarrymen*, p. 17-19. See also J. Benson, *British Coalminers in the Nineteenth Century: A Social History* (Dublin, 1980), pp. 81-111. This book is wide ranging and discusses several aspects of the lives of miners drawing on evidence from many areas in Britain.

⁶⁵ Jones, p. 20.

⁶⁶ Jones, p. 21.

⁶⁷ See for example M. Jones, ‘Rural and Industrial Protest in North Wales’, in Herbert and Jones (eds.), *People and Protest*, pp. 165-196. See also Jones, *Explorations*, pp. 83-163 for an important contribution to the discussion of rural life and politics.

⁶⁸ D. W. Howell, *Land and People in Nineteenth Century Wales* (London, 1978), p. 18.

⁶⁹ A. Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England: A Social History 1850-1925* (London, 1991), p. 14.

comparisons and analysis made by Howkins and also from his wide-ranging references. An article which makes use of census returns and reports analyses male farm service in the Midlands and Southern England relating this area to the national picture. It studies the work force and social relations in these areas.⁷⁰ Similar analysis has been carried out for the rural case studies in this work. Changes occurred in landholding during the period of this study. An overview of these changes in Wales is examined in an article by John Davies on the fragmentation of estates.⁷¹ Davies points out that ‘the concentration of land in the hands of a few families was certainly more marked in Wales than in England’. Fragmentation of estates started slowly from the 1870s onwards and a small proportion of tenants began to buy their own farms. Davies analyses the sale of the Gwydyr estate in 1894 as an example of this trend.⁷²

Social issues such as health have been addressed by Welsh historians and again notably by Ieuan Gwynedd Jones for the mid nineteenth century.⁷³ More recent research has started to look at matters of mental health and stress. Conditions were exacerbated by living standards as were physical illness.⁷⁴ Keir Waddington has analysed the impact of poor sanitation and lack of clean water supply on public health in rural communities.⁷⁵ The research underlines the difficulties of improving the rural situation because of poverty, topography and a lack of will in the communities to do so where people were ‘prone to shut their eyes and ears and hold their noses’.⁷⁶ This topic is explored using extensive sources for the Caernarfonshire communities in this study.

The connection between health and poverty has been explored by historians but not extensively so for Caernarfonshire.⁷⁷ Poverty, and quantifying poverty, has been

⁷⁰ A. Howkins and N. Verdon, ‘Adaptable and sustainable? Male Farm Service and the Agricultural Labour Force in Midland and Southern England c. 1850-1925’, *Economic History Review*, 6, 2 (May 2008), 467-495.

⁷¹ J. Davies, ‘The End of the Great Estates and the Rise of Freehold Farming in Wales’, *WHR*, 7, 1 (1974), 186-212.

⁷² Davies, ‘The End of the Great Estates’, 189.

⁷³ See for example Jones, *Mid-Victorian Wales*, pp. 24-53.

⁷⁴ See for example P. Michael, ‘From Private Grief to Public Testimony: Suicides in Wales, 1832-1914’, in A. Borsay (ed.), *Medicine in Wales c.1800-2000: Public Service or Private Commodity?* (Cardiff, 2003), pp. 40-64 and R. Davies, ‘Inside the House of the Mad: The Social Context of Mental Illness, Suicide and the Pressure of Life in South West Wales 1860-1920’, *Llafur*, 4, 2 (1985), 20-35.

⁷⁵ K. Waddington “‘It Might not be a Nuisance in a Country Cottage’: Sanitary Conditions and Images of Health in Victorian Rural Wales”, *Rural History*, 23, 2, (October 2012), 185-204 and K. Waddington “‘I Should Have Thought That Wales was a Wet Part of the World’: Drought, Rural Communities and Public Health, 1870-1914”, *Social History of Medicine*, 30, 3 (2016), 590-611.

⁷⁶ Waddington, “‘It Might not be a Nuisance in a Country Cottage”, 198.

⁷⁷ The contribution of oral history to this debate is illustrated in C. Bundy and D. Healy, ‘Aspects of Urban Poverty’, *Oral History*, 6, 1 (Spring, 1978), 79-97. It provides fascinating insights into the conditions of life from the end of the nineteenth century onwards.

under-researched in Wales.⁷⁸ For Caernarfonshire much of the discussion of poverty and pauperism has been focused on the workhouse.⁷⁹ Research carried out on the workhouse has thrown light on policy, process and administration of laws and regulations relating to the treatment of the poor. It has also shown attitudes to elements of social welfare such as medical support and education. However the workhouse represented, as Lindsay points out, a section of the community which was ‘segregated ... when their only crime was that of being poor’.⁸⁰ Out relief in Caernarfonshire unions has been understudied and would prove a rich vein for the social historian. For example the many complaints about paupers with considerable savings⁸¹ were balanced by the reports of the establishment in some communities of pay stations to facilitate the payment of out relief to save older paupers a long walk to ‘secure their weekly pittance’.⁸² Numerous works have been published about aspects of the way in which paupers were treated.⁸³ Poverty was a reality in the communities of the county. This is well attested in this study. Kate Roberts (1891-1985), in her autobiographical work *Y Lôn Wen*, wrote of her community in the Nantlle Valley pre-1914 ‘Pobl yn ymladd yn erbyn tlodi oedd pobl fy nghyfnod i, yn methu’n glir cael y deopen llinyn ynghyd’ (People fighting poverty were the people of my time, quite unable to make ends meet).⁸⁴ An article by Jean Lindsay on child poverty in Caernarfon is an example of the use of evidence from one organisation to illustrate the plight of some children.⁸⁵ The link between theft by children and supplementing the family with food and fuel

⁷⁸ S. A. King and J. Stewart, ‘The History of the Poor Law in Wales: Under-Researched, Full of Potential’, *Archives*, 36 (2001), 134-148.

⁷⁹ See for example C. F. Hughes, ‘The Workhouses of Caernarvonshire 1760-1914’, *TCHS*, 7 (1946), 88-100, D. L. Jones, ‘The Fate of Paupers: Life in the Bangor and Beaumaris Union Workhouse 1845-71’, *TCHS*, 66 (2005), 94-125 and J. Lindsay, ‘The Problems of the Caernarfon Union Workhouse from 1846-1930’, *TCHS*, 52-53 (1991-92), 71-85.

⁸⁰ Lindsay, 85.

⁸¹ *CDH*, 11 September 1891.

⁸² *CDH*, 10 September 1897.

⁸³ A very small sample would be D. Feldman, ‘Migrants, Immigrants and Welfare from the Old Poor Law to the Welfare State’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 13 (2003), 79-104, R. Vorspan, ‘Vagrancy and the New Poor Law in Victorian and Edwardian England’, *English Historical Review*, XCII, 362 (1977), 59-81 and P. Thane, ‘Women and the Poor Law in Victorian and Edwardian England’, *History Workshop*, 6 (Autumn, 1978), 31-51.

⁸⁴ K. Roberts, *Y Lôn Wen/The White Lane* (translation by Gillian Clarke) (Llandysul, 2009). Kate Roberts (1891-1985) was a novelist, short story writer and journalist. She was born and brought up in Rhosgadfan. Her work was heavily influenced by the life of the slate quarrying area and she depicts the hardship and domestic life of that society.

⁸⁵ J. Lindsay, “‘Feed My Lambs’: An Account of Child Poverty in North Wales in the Late Victorian Era”, *TCHS*, 61 (2000), 89-98.

has been established and illustrated by oral history.⁸⁶ Crime can be a gauge of a community and individual circumstances. The many works of D. J. V. Jones have analysed crime in England and Wales and placed these crimes within a community context.⁸⁷ Gender issues and social problems can be highlighted by analysing what was regarded during the period of this study as criminal activity.⁸⁸

The various communities of Caernarfonshire developed into societies which reflected their own individual cultural and political characteristics. There is a large body of work which analyses matters such as religion, language, Liberalism, the rise of labour and the relationship between employer and employee. Pryce wrote in 1974 about ‘culture areas’ in north-east Wales for a period somewhat earlier than this project. This analysis underlines the importance of looking at each area individually and not making sweeping generalisations.⁸⁹ Much of this article devotes its attention to the question of the Welsh language in the area. The subject of language and in particular the fate of the Welsh language has been researched by many historians. A notable contribution was made in a volume about the 1891 language census in which Porthmadog is a featured chapter.⁹⁰ Parry shows that in Porthmadog 54.8% spoke Welsh only, 40.6% spoke both English and Welsh but only 4.6% spoke English only. This volume provides useful comparative material. It analyses the language returns of a number of communities linking the findings to social and economic structures in these areas. The language question was politically charged with some claiming that the use of the Welsh language had been exaggerated whilst others argued that the ability to

⁸⁶ S. Humphries, 'Steal to Survive: The Social Crime of Working Class Children, 1890-1940' *Oral History*, 9, 1 (1981), 24-33.

⁸⁷ See for example D. J. V. Jones, *Crime, Protest, Community and Police in Nineteenth-century Britain*, (London, 1982), D. J. V. Jones, *Crime in Nineteenth-century Wales*, (Cardiff, 1992), D. J. V. Jones, 'The New Police, Crime and People in England and Wales 1829-1888', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 33 (1983), 151-168 and D. J. V. Jones, 'The Poacher: A Study in Victorian Crime and Protest', *Historical Journal*, 22, 4 (1977), 825-60.

⁸⁸ See for example L. Zedner, 'Women, Crime and Penal Responses: A Historical Account', *Crime and Justice*, 14 (1991), 307-362, R. Sauer, 'Infanticide and Abortion in Nineteenth-Century Britain', *Population Studies*, 32, 1 (March, 1978), 81-93, D. James, "“Drunk and Riotous in Pontypridd”: Women, The Police Courts and the Press in South Wales Coalfield Society, 1899-1914", *Llafur*, 8, 2 (2002), 5-12 and B. Bennison, 'Drunkenness in Turn of the Century Newcastle Upon Tyne', *Local Population Studies*, 52 (Spring, 1994), 14-22.

⁸⁹ W. T. R. Pryce, 'Industrialization, Urbanization and the Maintenance of Culture Areas: North-East Wales in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', *WHR*, 7, 1 (1974), 307-340.

⁹⁰ G. Parry and M. A. Williams, *The Welsh Language and the 1891 Census* (Cardiff, 1999). See also H. P. Manning, 'The Streets of Bethesda: The slate quarrier and the Welsh language in the Welsh Liberal imagination', *Language in Society*, 33 (2004), 517-548 and B. Thomas, 'A Cauldron of Rebirth: Population and the Welsh Language in the Nineteenth Century', *WHR*, 13, 1 (1986), 418-437. The latter article hardly makes a mention of North Wales. G. Parry, "“Queen of the Welsh Resorts”: Tourism and the Welsh Language in Llandudno in the Nineteenth Century", *WHR*, 21, 1 (June 2002), 118-148.

speak English was much exaggerated.⁹¹ Caernarfonshire is regarded as one of the heartland Welsh regions which drew its labour force from largely Welsh-speaking areas whereas the southern coalfield, although it too drew originally from its surrounding counties, and then from further west, it then attracted a greater influx of immigrants who did not speak Welsh. This cultural division in Wales has given rise to lively debate. Sherrington in his article on O. M. Edwards and the industrial classes draws attention to an early example of views expressed about this dichotomy in Wales.⁹² Religion, political culture and labour relations form an important part of any community profile.⁹³ They may well go a long way to define a community and deepen an analysis. Kent, in an article looking at the role of religion in several towns and cities in late nineteenth-century England, makes the case for not generalising the role of religion in the cultural structure: ‘an industrial town like Rochdale seems very remote from Dorchester’ and stresses that religious organisations, although they shared certain common elements, could also be a source of conflict.⁹⁴ Similarly Berger identifies different religious identities as deepening divisions within the Ruhr working class.⁹⁵ Undoubtedly this was also the experience of Caernarfonshire and Wales in general. Comparative material even within small areas shows how neighbouring communities can differ. Merfyn Jones’s study of unionisation in the quarries illustrates how within a few miles the reaction to unionism differed greatly.⁹⁶

⁹¹ Parry and Williams, *The Welsh Language*, p. 11 and Rhydderch-Dart, “The Great Relief of the Overcrowded Slums”, 515-548.

⁹² E. J. Sherrington, ‘O. M. Edwards, Culture and the Industrial Classes’, *Llafur*, 6, 1 (1992), 28-41. Sherrington quotes Edwards’s comment that ‘the quarrymen are not like the colliers, they are more civilised, more evangelical and they prefer to suffer rather than to do anything wrong’.

⁹³ Discussion of chapels and chapel societies are made in each chapter and further explored in the conclusions of chapter five.

⁹⁴ J. H. S. Kent, ‘The Role of Religion in the Cultural Structure of the Later Victorian City’, in Morris and Rodger (eds.), *The Victorian City*, pp. 322-342. It is difficult for the period 1880-1914 to obtain reliable statistics for congregations in Wales. A background can be given by I. G. Jones in *Explorations*, pp. 17-52 and 217-235. See also R. Tudur Jones, *Ffydd ac Argyfwng Cenedl: Hanes Crefydd yng Nghymru 1890-1914*, 2 volumes (Swansea, 1981-1982). For an assessment of Methodist reactions to the growing call for disestablishment see R. Pope, ‘Welsh Methodists and the Establishment in the Nineteenth Century’, *The Welsh Journal of Religious History*, 6 (2011), 31-48. See also Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England*, pp. 179-185 where he links ‘religion and personal bitterness’ to the formation of agricultural trade unionism. Certain denominational histories such as the volumes produced by W. Hobley, *Hanes Methodistiaeth Arfon* published at various dates in the 1920s can throw light on social life and religious attitudes in the county.

⁹⁵ Berger, ‘Working-Class Culture’, 16.

⁹⁶ Examples of such works are Jones, *The North Wales Quarrymen*, M. Jones, “‘Of Men and Stones’: Radicalism and Protest in North Wales, 1850-1914”, in Hopkin and Kealey (eds.), *Class, Community and the Labour Movement*, pp. 101-118, M. Jones, ‘Rural and Industrial Protest in North Wales’, in Herbert and Jones (eds.), *People and Protest*, pp. 165-196, C. Parry, ‘Fabianism and Gwynedd Politics, 1890-1918’, *TCHS*, 29 (1968), 121-136, C. Parry, ‘The Independent Labour Party and Gwynedd Politics, 1900-1920’, *WHR*, 4, 1 (June 1968), 47-66, C. Parry, ‘Gwynedd Politics, 1900-1920: The Rise

Communities reflect the economic structure in which they exist. Writing in the early 1980s John Williams pointed out that economically Wales ‘was simply part of the British economy’.⁹⁷ Rural economic conditions in Britain are discussed in the books of Howkins and Howell.⁹⁸ Dodd has an eleven-page section on the development of the agricultural economy in Caernarfonshire from 1780 to 1900 of which one paragraph only is devoted to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁹⁹ Aspects of the rural economy are highlighted in works and articles such as those discussing land ownership and the land question.¹⁰⁰ The impact of improved infrastructure on marketing has also been researched.¹⁰¹ The economy of coastal areas was dictated by the diversity of their activities. For example, Jenkins writes of five shipping companies being established between 1875 and 1879, many of which received investment from quarrymen.¹⁰² Those primarily concerned with ship building and the export of slate in particular declined during the period of this study. Industrialisation changed the face of communities throughout Britain and Europe introducing new settlements, huge demographic movements, fresh political ideas and brought about substantial cultural impact. The economic aspects of industrialisation centred on the slate quarrying communities in Caernarfonshire which had an accompanying knock on effect on the ports, their communities and their trade.¹⁰³

Demographic issues are central to this study – the pattern of settlement, migration and stability of population. The second half of the nineteenth century saw a

of a Labour Party’, *WHR*, 6, 3 (June 1973), 313-328 and P. E. Jones, ‘The Women’s Suffrage Movement in Caernarfonshire’, *TCHS*, 48, (1987), 75-112.

⁹⁷ J. Williams, *Was Wales Industrialised? Essays in modern Welsh history* (Llandysul, 1995). The overwhelming emphasis in this book is placed on South Wales.

⁹⁸ Howell, *Land and People* and Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England*.

⁹⁹ Dodd, *A History of Caernarfonshire*, pp. 232-243.

¹⁰⁰ See for example Davies, ‘The End of the Great Estates’, 186-212.

¹⁰¹ For example, see D. W. Howell, ‘The Impact of Railways on Agricultural Development in Nineteenth-Century Wales’, 7, 1 (1974), 40-62.

¹⁰² D. Jenkins, ‘Llongau y Chwarelwyr: Investments by Caernarfonshire Slate Quarrymen in Local Shipping Companies in the Late Nineteenth Century’, *WHR*, 22, 1 (2004), 80-102. See also for example E. Hughes and A. Eames, *Porthmadog Ships* (Caernarfon, 1975), M. Elis-Williams, *Bangor Port of Beaumaris* (Caernarfon, 1988), K. McKay, ‘The Port of Milford: The Fishing Industry’, in D. W. Howell (ed.), *Pembrokeshire County History*, 4 (Haverfordwest, 1993), pp. 174-186 and L. Phillips, ‘Pembroke Dockyard’, in Howell (ed.), *Pembrokeshire County History*, pp. 152-173. There are several articles, including oral testimony, in *Maritime Wales* which could be used to throw light on economic matters relating to maritime communities throughout Wales such as A. Eames, ‘O Bwllheli i Bendraw’r Byd: Agweddu ar Hanes Forwrol Pwllheli a’r Cylch Gan Mlynedd yn ôl, 1879’, *Maritime Wales*, 25 (2004), 72-92.

¹⁰³ Works devoted to the slate industry include analysis of the economics of the slate industry inform this project. See Dodd, *The Industrial Revolution*, J. Lindsay, *A History of the North Wales Slate Industry* (Newton Abbot, 1974), Jones, *The North Wales Quarrymen* and D. Roberts, ‘The Pembrokeshire Slate Industry’, Howell (ed.), *Pembrokeshire County History*, pp. 138-151.

dramatic growth and shift in the population of Wales. By the early twentieth century the bulk of the population was to be found in the counties of Glamorgan and Monmouthshire. This ‘accentuated the disparity between the two parts of the country – in population, in resources and in lifestyle’.¹⁰⁴ In Wales as a whole the population rose from over 1.5 million in 1881 to just over 2.4 million in 1911. The demographic experience varied from county to county. For example Anglesey, Merionethshire and Cardiganshire saw continuous decline in population whereas, for example, Caernarfonshire and Flintshire saw their populations increase.¹⁰⁵ This study of Caernarfonshire analyses communities which experienced increase in population and inward migration and also communities which either remained comparatively stable or experienced decline. Migration of labour to work in industrial centres has been analysed in several studies.¹⁰⁶ Concentrating mainly on material available in the 1851 and 1871 census, Peter Ellis Jones has analysed migration into the slate belt of north Wales and also linked this to the emigration of quarrymen to the United States and Canada in times of industrial slowdown. His study underlines the findings of other historians about the ‘Welshness’ of the quarry labour force and its communities.¹⁰⁷ Migration of labour, albeit fairly local to the area, had an impact on Caernarfonshire communities. For example, networks of help were established as described by Kate Roberts in *Y Lôn Wen*. In this autobiographical work Roberts discusses community and migration to a small quarrying settlement writing ‘Daeth y bobl yma o leoedd eraill i

¹⁰⁴ G. E. Jones, ‘Wales 1880-1914’, in T. Herbert and G. E. Jones (eds.), *Wales 1880-1914* (Cardiff, 1988), p. 6.

¹⁰⁵ Davies, *People, Places and Passions*, p. 22. See also K. J. Cooper, *Exodus from Cardiganshire* (Cardiff, 2011). The detailed study of out-migration from Cardiganshire by Cooper portrays a rural community with small scale industries such as woollen manufacture, clog making, fishing and minor quarrying together with a more flourishing lead mining industry. Farming could have very low profit margins with a farmer often working side by side with the labourer with little to distinguish between the two in the social structure.

¹⁰⁶ See for a general discussion on migration D. E. Baines, ‘The Use of Published Census Data in Migration Studies’, in E. A. Wrigley (ed.), *Nineteenth Century Society: Essays on the Use of Quantitative Methods for the Study of Social Data* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 311-335. See also R. Lawton, ‘Mobility in Nineteenth Century British Cities’, *The Geographical Journal*, 145, 2 (July, 1979), 206-224, A. Hinde, ‘The use of nineteenth-century census data to investigate local migration’, *Local Population Studies*, 73 (Autumn 2004), 8-28 and J. A. Sheppard, ‘The provenance of Brighton’s railway workers, 1841-61’, *Local Population Studies* (Spring 2004), 16-33.

¹⁰⁷ P. E. Jones, ‘Migration and the Slate Belt of Caernarfonshire in the Nineteenth Century’, *WHR*, 14, 1 (1988), 610-629. A study of emigration from Cornwall and Gloucestershire could be used for comparative purposes. See R. Duncan, ‘Case Studies in Emigration: Cornwall, Gloucestershire and New South Wales 1877-1886’, *The Economic History Review*, 16, 2 (1963), 272-289. M. Jones, ‘Welsh Immigrants in the Cities of North West England 1890-1930: Some Oral Testimony’, *Oral History*, 9, 2 (Autumn, 1981), 33-41 – this brief article based on oral testimony gives an interesting insight into the life of many who left north Wales for the cities of north west England.

dir gwyr yf sâl ei ansawdd. Yr oeddent yn gynefin â thir gwell cyn hynny. Gallech eu cymharu bron ag ymfudwyr Prydeinig i'r trefedigaethau. Felly yr oedd yn rhaid iddynt ymddibynnu llawer ar ei gilydd.' (The people came from elsewhere to poor virgin land. They had known better land. They were almost like British emigrants to the colonies.

Therefore they had to depend a great deal on each other.)¹⁰⁸

Demographic studies also analyse the social structure of communities. This forms an important part of the community profiles. Research has been carried out on general topics using census returns and information contained in population reports to parliament.¹⁰⁹ These usually cover large areas of Britain examining the theme rather than the locality. Microstudies of smaller communities based on the enumerators' returns are particularly illuminating.¹¹⁰ For example Williams's study of Nantucha, Llanberis, in 1851 is of particular relevance to this thesis.¹¹¹ Although covering a period thirty years earlier than the analysis of this project it provides useful background information for the upper part of the parish of Llanberis – an ‘unpromising setting...dependent on subsistence farming in a pastoral economy whose staple was the rearing of sheep and goats together with a few cattle’.¹¹² Most households housed a quarryman, the majority of the population was native to Llanberis and any in-migration was short distance. Men outnumbered women in 1851 in a settlement which offered little female employment or occupational opportunities. As Williams illustrates, the enumerators' returns allowed for quantitative assessment and objective analysis. Within the present study of nine communities the use of the enumerators' returns for two census years together with a number of other sources also facilitates analysis of change over a period of time. There is a need to look in greater depth at communities in Caernarfonshire and this study attempts to fulfil this brief by analysing place and

¹⁰⁸ Roberts, *Y Lôn Wen*, p. 49-50. See also J. B. Hilling, ‘The Migration of People into Tredegar During the Nineteenth Century’, *Gwent Local History and Journal of Gwent Local History Council*, 100 (Spring 2006), 19-40 which shows community networking in Tredegar which also raises the question of how long it takes a community to assimilate. See N. Evans, ‘Immigrants and Minorities in Wales, 1840-1990: A Comparative Perspective’, *Llafur*, 5, 4 (1991), 5-26 for a discussion of immigrant minorities in Wales. It mainly deals with South Wales probably because of the weight of evidence.

¹⁰⁹ See for example W. A. Armstrong, ‘The Use of Information about Occupation’, in Wrigley (ed.), *Nineteenth Century Society*, pp. 191-310, R. Lawton, *The Census and Social Structure: An Interpretive Guide to Nineteenth Century Censuses for England and Wales* (London 1978), E. Higgs, ‘Women, Occupation and Work in the Nineteenth Century Censuses’, *History Workshop Journal*, 23, 1 (1987), 59-80 and Higgs, ‘Domestic Servants and Households in Victorian England’, *Social History*, 8, 2 (1983), 201-210.

¹¹⁰ See footnote 5.

¹¹¹ Williams, ‘Nantucha, Llanberis 1851’.

¹¹² Williams, 53.

locality, purpose and economy, social development and cohesion. To achieve this the following methodology was adopted.

Methodology

In order to build a picture of Caernarfonshire communities at this time it is necessary to investigate the society and economy of the county. To this end a series of case studies is used to analyse the complex and multi-layered nature of communities.

Caernarfonshire was geographically diverse and contained communities different in makeup and outlook. Agricultural areas were dominated by a few landowning families distanced by language, religion and politics from the majority of the county's inhabitants. Fishing and maritime trade provided the economic basis for coastal communities such as Porthmadog, while the growth of the tourist trade on the north Wales coast in towns such as Llandudno gave rise to a different kind of community. The development of the slate industry, much of it by large landowners, transformed the county giving rise to population movement and industrial urbanisation.

The communities chosen as illustrative of the county's settlements are:

Urban communities

- 1) Caernarfon
- 2) Pwllheli
- 3) Conwy

Small rural/maritime communities

- 4) Tudweiliog
- 5) Pistyll
- 6) Carngeuwch
- 7) Betws-y-Coed

Industrial communities

- 8) The lower part of Llanberis parish
- 9 & 10) The upper part of Llanwnda parish

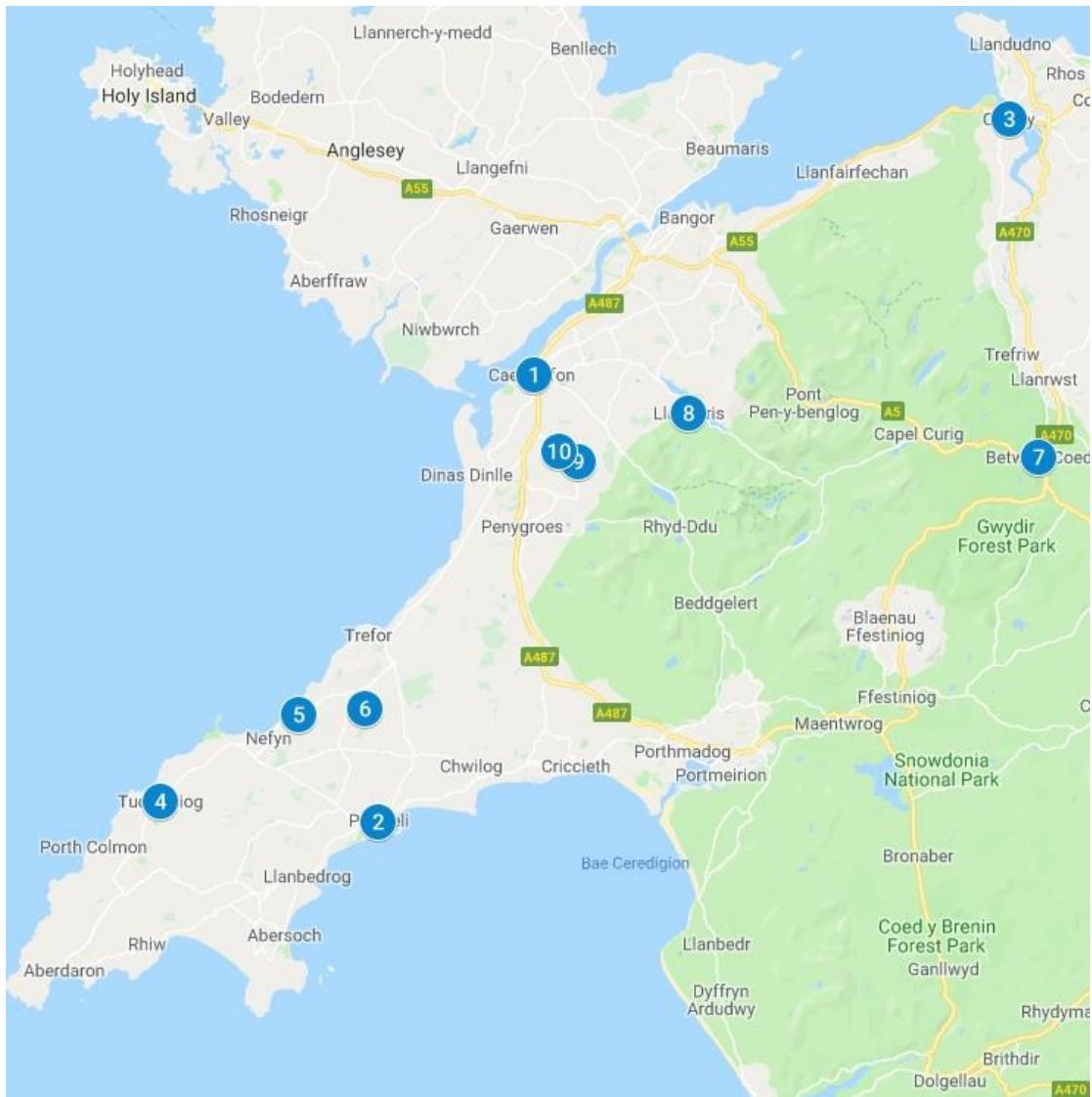


Figure 1: Map of present-day Gwynedd.

I have grouped the communities according to type – although that also comes with provisos. The types of communities were less clear-cut than this categorisation might imply but they have been adopted for the purposes of analysis as indicating the predominant nature of the communities thus labelled. Many communities are small, rural but with an industrial mix. For example Pistyll has the Llithfaen stone quarries as a backdrop to the rural area. This is reflected in its population and structure. I have also tried to get a geographical spread.

In the following chapters a number of themes are used as a means of profiling the communities. They remain the same for all the case studies. Each begins by situating the community in its area and explaining its development as a settlement before analysing its population during the period of the study, outlining numbers, growth, stability, migration, origins and sex ratio. The social structure is then explored

giving, for example, the details of household structures and what these imply about the community's economy and society. Housing is studied as a means to provide a partial gauge to community development and living standards. The economy of the area and the community are then assessed using occupational details. Social developments, culture, religion, education and leisure activities are analysed in the body of the work and particularly in chapter five. While the linguistic profile is part of the official census record from 1891 onwards it is, in common with the other themes studied in these chapters, investigated in the light of a wider body of evidence.

The enumeration district choices for Pwllheli (3) and Conwy (2) covered the whole towns. The analysis for Caernarfon entailed selecting more enumeration districts – five in all. For Caernarfon the enumeration districts chosen covered in excess of a third of the town's population. For the earlier period my previous work on Twthill can also supplement the work.¹¹³ The choice for Caernarfon centres around the lower areas of the town and the developments along the river on one side and the grid development of terraces and courts leading to the commercial centre on the other. These were mixed neighbourhoods with a large proportion of working class and poor inhabitants side by side with some white collar and professional inhabitants. These enumeration districts were just a stone's throw away from grandly named residences like Doric Column Villa. These districts form a cohesive geographical area and reflect the social mix represented in the majority of Caernarfon's enumeration districts. In the chapter which analyses the industrial areas parts of the enumeration districts were selected in the parishes of Llanwnda and Llanberis. For Llanwnda the upper part of the parish amounted to three enumeration districts in 1881 and two for 1901. The latter year covered the same area but the districts were enlarged.¹¹⁴ For Llanberis two enumeration districts in the lower parish were selected for both years.¹¹⁵ These included the village of Llanberis and its surrounding area. In both areas the findings were compared to those of the whole parish. The study for the urban and industrial areas was based on a sample of one household in five. In order to assess the accuracy of the sample findings checks were made by analysing whole areas within the sample such as entire streets. No significant deviation from the sample findings was

¹¹³ Rhydderch-Dart, "The Great Relief of the Overcrowded Slums", pp. 515-548 and D. Rhydderch-Dart, "'The Time of Cholera': The Background to the Development of the suburb of Twthill in Caernarfon", *TCHS*, 74/75 (2013/2014), pp. 103-116.

¹¹⁴ RG11/5564 Llanwnda – 1881 and RG13/5269 Llanwnda – 1901.

¹¹⁵ RG11/5566 Llanberis – 1881 and RG13/5270 Llanberis – 1901.

discovered – this had also been the case in my study of Twthill. The small populations of the enumeration districts of the rural areas led to a decision to analyse all the inhabitants of the various communities in the relevant chapter. Sampling would not have produced a satisfactory base for the analysis.

The population details were entered onto a spreadsheet which I developed. Using an ID for a tally and reference I entered the following details: address, name, relation to head of household, condition, occupation and birthplace. Age was entered with gender definition. Once all details were entered the spreadsheets were formatted as tables. This made them searchable and facilitated detailed analysis. I began counting overall numbers for the male and female population under various themes including age brackets, employment and birthplace. From this averages could be taken. The data uncovered produced valuable information and surprising results for certain communities. An example of one of these spreadsheets is shown here:

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1	ID	Address	First	Surname	Rel	C	MA	FA	Occupation	Employ	Born	Lang
2	1 Baladava House	Elizabeth A	Owen	Head	Widow	56 Grocer	Own account (at home)	Isle of Man	Isle of Man	Both		
3	2 Baladava House	John R	Owen	Son	Single	26	Station Master	Caernarfonshire	Caernarfonshire	Both		
4	3 Bedwargoed House	Margaret	Hughes	Head	Widow	56	Woollen Manufacture Employer	Living On Own Means	Landdeiniolen	Landdeiniolen	Both	
5	4 Bedwargoed House	Rowland Evan	Roberts	Brother	Single	53	-	Caernarfonshire	Caernarfonshire	Both		
6	5 Bedwargoed House	Robert Jeffrey	Hughes	Son	Married	23	Woollen Weaver	Worker (at home)	Landdeiniolen	Landdeiniolen	Both	
7	6 Bedwargoed House	Jeremiah	Hughes	Daughter	Married	24	Traveller In Flannels & Worker	Caernarfonshire	Caernarfonshire	Both		
8	7 Bedwargoed House	Thomas Morris	Jones	Son-In-Law	Married	30	-	Caernarfonshire	Caernarfonshire	Both		
9	8 Bedwargoed House	Martha	Jones	Daughter	Married	28	-	Caernarfonshire	Caernarfonshire	Both		
10	9 Bedwargoed House	Margaret	Griffith	Niece	Single	29	Shirt Maker	Worker (at home)	Caernarfonshire	Caernarfonshire	Both	
11	10 Bedwargoed House	Eluned Hughes	Jones	Grand Da -	-	0	-	Caernarfonshire	Caernarfonshire	Both		
12	11 Bedwargoed House	Elizabeth	Williams	Servant	Single	21	Domestic Servant	Anglesey	Anglesey	Both		
13	12 Paris House	Margaret	Owen	Head	Widow	57	Grocer (Shopkeeper)	Own account (at home)	Caernarfonshire	Caernarfonshire	Both	
14	13 Paris House	Elizabeth	Owen	Daughter	Single	22	-	Anglesey	Holyhead	Both		
15	14 Paris House	John John	Davies	Brother	Single	49	Slate Quarrier	Caernarfonshire	Caernarfonshire	Welsh		
16	15 Idan House	Thomas Wm	Jones	Head	Married	48	Slate Quarrier	Caernarfonshire	Caernarfonshire	Welsh		
17	16 Idan House	Jane	Jones	Wife	Married	48	-	Caernarfonshire	Caernarfonshire	Welsh		
18	17 Idan House	Edward	Williams	Brother-Single	-	57	-	Caernarfonshire	Caernarfonshire	Welsh		
19	18 Idan House	Jane	Phillips	Servant	Single	18	Domestic Servant	Caernarfonshire	Caernarfonshire	Welsh		
20	19 Padarn View	John E	Thomas	Head	Married	50	Slate Quarrier	Worker	Rhosyrfan	Both		
21	20 Padarn View	Mary	Thomas	Wife	Married	48	-	Caernarfonshire	Caernarfonshire	Both		
22	21 Padarn View	John J	Thomas	Son	Single	30	-	Caernarfonshire	Caernarfonshire	Both		
23	22 Padarn View	Jane	Thomas	Daughter	Single	23	-	Caernarfonshire	Caernarfonshire	Both		
24	23 Padarn View	Richard Lloyd	Thomas	Son	Single	16	-	Caernarfonshire	Caernarfonshire	Both		
25	24 Bron Ellian	Owen V	Hughes	Head	Married	32	Slate Quarrier	Worker	Caernarfonshire	Caernarfonshire	Both	
26	25 Bron Ellian	Kate	Hughes	Wife	Married	34	-	Caernarfonshire	Caernarfonshire	Both		
27	26 Manchester Row	William	Jones	Head	Married	75	Pattern Maker	Worker	Caernarfonshire	Caernarfonshire	Welsh	
28	27 Manchester Row	Ellen	Jones	Wife	Married	76	-	Caernarfonshire	Caernarfonshire	Welsh		
29	28 Manchester Row	Evan W	Jones	Son	Single	54	Joiner	Worker	Caernarfonshire	Caernarfonshire	Both	
30	29 Manchester Row	Dora	Williams	Grand Da-Single	-	14	-	Caernarfonshire	Caernarfonshire	Both		
31	30 Bank Buildings	John Vaughan	Williams	Head	Married	59	Grocer And Book Seller	Own account (at home)	Montgomeryshire	Meifod	Both	
32	31 Bank Buildings	Anne Vaughan	Williams	Wife	Married	60	-	Caernarfonshire	Caernarfonshire	Both		
33	32 Bank Buildings	Winifred V	Williams	Daughter	Single	21	-	Caernarfonshire	Caernarfonshire	Both		
34	33 Lane Terrace	Evan R	Evans	Head	Married	52	Slate Quarrier	Worker	Landdeiniolen	Landdeiniolen	Welsh	
35	34 Lane Terrace	Anne	Evans	Wife	Married	53	-	Caernarfonshire	Capel Curig	Welsh		
36	35 Lane Terrace	Maggie	Griffith	Niece	Single	19	Domestic Servant	Denbighshire	Denbighshire	Welsh		
37	36 Field Terrace	George	Hutton	Head	Married	73	Slate Quarry Labourer	Ireland	England	English		
38	27 Field Terrace	Mellie	Hutton	Wife	Married	77	-	Ireland	Ireland	Irish		

Figure 2: Llanberis Enumeration District 8 (1901).

Once analysed a wide range of sources was harnessed to the numerical profile to produce a characterisation of these communities. The census returns for 1881 and 1901 form the basis of the analysis and profiling of the chosen communities. These sources, which are as inclusive as it is possible to be, help give a common structure, focus, analysis and discipline to the examination of the communities. This quantitative analysis is extended and enriched with qualitative evidence by using a wealth of other sources such as court records, council archives, school logbooks, contemporary reminiscences and newspapers which help to humanise the study.¹¹⁶ This combination of analytical methods adopted in the following chapters and in the conclusion helps to answer the research questions of this thesis and to analyse the diversity of the selected communities in Caernarfonshire and how they developed and changed over the period.

¹¹⁶ E. Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou* (Middlesex and New York, 1980). The famous study of Montaillou by Le Roy Ladurie also adopted the approach of using a central document, the register of an inquisition between 1318 and 1325 carried out by Jacques Fournier, Bishop of Pamiers in Ariège and later to become Pope Benedict XII in Avignon. He used this record as a key to introduce us to the beliefs and way of life of the villagers.

Chapter 2: Three Boroughs: Communities in Transition

Introduction

Urban history – and in particular that of non-industrial urban communities – has been understudied in Wales¹¹⁷ and particularly so it can be argued in north Wales. Gallant attempts have been made to trigger further urban studies – contributions by Borsay, Miskell, Roberts and Evans have set out the debates surrounding the history of Wales' urban settlements.¹¹⁸ Underlining their approach is the conviction that the history of Welsh towns is a multifaceted story which varies from town to town according to individual circumstances and experiences. These alter with the course of time – a fluidity stressed by Griffiths for the medieval period and underlined by Evans as a possible way forward in depicting developments in subsequent centuries.¹¹⁹ Miskell writes that ‘much of the existing historiography of nineteenth century urban Wales has been dominated by research on towns linked to the coal and iron belt’.¹²⁰ In this way much of the experience of urban Wales has been seen as linked to the country’s industrial development. Towns such as Carmarthen in the south-west which, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, was one of Wales’ largest centres has not been studied in great detail. The same is true of most of the towns in north Wales which have attracted very little recent research. By the second half of the nineteenth century the growth of urban Wales became spectacular and by the latter years of that century became comparable to their English counterparts. Cardiff boasted a population of 164,000 and Swansea had 94,500 inhabitants. This was very much a different league to the urban centres of Caernarfonshire. However this should not detract from the urban nature of less populated towns where civic life and government undertook with varying success measures to improve towns such as introducing improvements in sanitation and water supply, cleaning the streets, inspecting housing, policing and negotiating to improve street lighting. As early as 1837 a Parliamentary report noted the increasing population of Caernarfon and outlined the work of the Corporation in paving the roads within the town and arranging for gas lighting in Caernarfon. It also drew attention to

¹¹⁷ See Borsay, Miskell and Roberts, ‘Introduction’, p.5.

¹¹⁸ Evans, ‘Rethinking Urban Wales’, pp. 114-131.

¹¹⁹ See Evans, p. 125 where he quotes Griffith’s article ‘After Glyndŵr: an age of reconciliation?’ in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 117 (2002), p. 139.

¹²⁰ Miskell, ‘Intelligent Town’, p. 7.

the Corporation's attempts to supply water side by side with a private company.¹²¹ Dodd believes that Caernarfon 'was the only one of the five boroughs where the corporate machinery was really working'. This is a view which is borne out in the records.¹²² Further improvements in Caernarfon in particular relating to water supply had been instigated in the 1860s and gathered momentum after the outbreak of cholera in 1866.¹²³ Conwy put in place piecemeal improvements in the town especially after the mid-century. For instance the supply of water to the town was a serious problem and in 1869 after two summers of severe water shortage the borough council supported the construction of a reservoir financed by 'as many shareholders in the town as possible'.¹²⁴ Side by side with these measures came a cultural life and development of local institutions.¹²⁵ Urban communities reflected in parts the background to their initial settlement – economic, geographic and in some cases administrative. They also reflected the backgrounds of their inhabitants. The urban community was therefore informed by many varied strands of experience which gave an identity and determined a role for these towns. 'Community ... is not some kind of product of conditions – it is the condition of existence', as Ieuan Gwynedd Jones so intuitively wrote.¹²⁶ The debates surrounding Welsh urban development have also called into question 'the stark rural/urban divide.'¹²⁷

What is clear is that communities within an urban setting were made up of several different layers which reflected the role of that community in its area but also the sociological makeup of its inhabitants.¹²⁸ The urban experience meant shared space, shared workplace, shared leisure activities, shared experiences: there was a common bond which united the urban dweller. Often the shared aim would be simply survival. Did such bonds unite people across social divides or did class and work divisions come into play? Such divisions were more obvious in some communities and

¹²¹ See Parliamentary Papers, *Report by the Commissioners for the Municipal Corporation Boundaries (England and Wales): Aberystwith – Faversham Part I Volume XXVI: Carnarvon* (London, 1837).

¹²² Dodd, *A History of Caernarfonshire*, pp. 398-406 which outlines aspects of the urban administration in Caernarfonshire towns during the nineteenth century and their moves towards modernisation.

¹²³ Rhydderch-Dart, "The Time of Cholera".

¹²⁴ COB2/17.

¹²⁵ See Croll, *Civilising the Urban*, p. 19 about his discussion of Merthyr's 82 Nonconformist chapels which produced 'the most enthusiastic of all the civic projectors' and discussions in the public sphere also carried out in local government and newspapers.

¹²⁶ Jones, *Communities*, p. 156.

¹²⁷ Evans, 'Rethinking Urban Wales', p. 122.

¹²⁸ Evans, 'Rethinking Urban Wales'. Evans' article explores the link of urban sociology and identity stressing Dyos' view of the process of shifts in the economic and social structure of population and the cultural adaptations required in an urban settlement.

not so evident in others. For example, quarry owners and landlords may not have been part of the social mix in some areas whilst small-time bosses lived cheek by jowl with their employees. It could therefore be argued that the urban areas allowed for the growth of an influential body (of men usually) who were a middling sort of class and who stamped their own aspirations and aims on urban settlements.¹²⁹

Urban settlements in Caernarfonshire were comparatively small in size but accounted for a high proportion of the county's population.¹³⁰ This was not as high as the overall UK urbanisation trend. Cannadine points out that with the possible exception of Belgium and Holland the United Kingdom as a whole was by the end of the nineteenth century the most 'densely populated and heavily urbanised nation on the planet'. Two thirds of the UK's population lived in towns.¹³¹ This was part of the 'expanding frontier' referred to by Jones.¹³² For example Bangor in the second half of the nineteenth century had a population of around 10,000, Porthmadog's population grew from 885 in 1821 to over 5,000 in 1881 and Llandudno's grew from 1,131 in 1851 and approached 10,000 in 1901. Unlike the three old boroughs which will be analysed in this study these urbanisations were later developments in response to new economic stimuli – Bangor's port grew in response to industrial developments in its hinterland and it became a hub for railway communications, Porthmadog was a busy port and ship building centre offering maritime services for the southern part of the county and northern Merionethshire and Llandudno's fate was decided by landowners who saw their opportunity to accrue wealth in the burgeoning tourist industry. Urban development as a consequence of industrial growth will be treated separately in this study. Urbanisations therefore varied in nature and they certainly varied in success. It was the fluidity of their development and sustainability which strikes one.

The choice for this study of three established old boroughs provided geographical coverage of the county based on urbanisations which served a hinterland and were part of the maritime background which was so important to Caernarfonshire. Their life was reflected in identifiable administrative bodies with inherited powers

¹²⁹ For a discussion of this issue see for example Julie Light, 'The Middle Classes as Urban Elites in Nineteenth Century south Wales', *WHR*, 24, 3 (June 2009), p. 34. Light states 'there seems to be a consensus that the middle classes are hard to define, to count, to categorise'.

¹³⁰ S. A. Royle, 'The Development of Small Towns in Britain', in M. Daunton (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, vol. 3 (Cambridge, 2000), p. 158 where he compares the urban density of Caernarfonshire with Dorset, Wiltshire and Shropshire.

¹³¹ D. Cannadine, *Victorious Century: The United Kingdom 1800-1906* (London, 2017), p. 387.

¹³² Jones, *Communities*, p. 218.

from their borough background together with further powers accrued in piecemeal local government reforms. Croll sees the development of local government structure in Merthyr as a sign of a more settled, mature urban centre.¹³³ Similarly, J. Ll. W. Williams and Lowri Wynne Williams stressed the role of local government machinery in the urbanising of new settlements – ‘Llwyddiant y cynllun i drefoli’ [‘The success of the urbanisation plan’].¹³⁴

Of the three urbanisations chosen for analysis in this study Caernarfon was by far the largest having seen a substantial increase in numbers from the mid-century onwards. The county itself almost quadrupled in population during the nineteenth century:

1801	41,521
1811	49,655
1821	58,099
1831	66,818
1841	81,093
1851	87,870
1861	95,694
1871	106,121

However during the period of this study the rate of growth slowed considerably with a slight drop in 1891 and 1911 but still illustrated an overall healthy increase if not as dramatic as earlier.

1881	119,349
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¹³³ Croll, *Civilising the Urban*, p. 18.

¹³⁴ J. Ll. W. Williams and L. W. Williams, ‘Ai’r Star, Y Wern Uchaf ynteu Cae Garw ac nid Bethesda, y Dylai’r Enw Fod? Datblygiad Prif Bentref Chwarelyddol Dyffryn Ogwen yn y Bedwaredd Ganrif ar Bymtheg’, *TCHS*, 77 (2016/1017), 123.

1891	118,204
1901	126,883
1911	125,043 ¹³⁵

The overall growth in the county's population is accounted for partly by the development of existing and new urban communities and the more modest growth of others. The three sample borough communities chosen for this chapter illustrated both tendencies.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century Edmund Hyde Hall wrote *A Description of Caernarvonshire 1809-1811* which helps to place the three boroughs and their development within the context of the nineteenth century. In it he briefly described the three boroughs. Underlining his description of Conwy was the stress on the town's past greatness and present decline. In 1806, he reported, there were 182 houses in the town inhabited by 189 families. 'To this number no addition has been subsequently made ... as the town exhibits in every part a character of stagnancy and melancholy quite unlike the rest of the county.'¹³⁶ Hyde Hall predicted the 'fatality ... over the prosperity of this place'.¹³⁷ Conwy had lost much of its borough dignity – the Assizes were no longer held in the town which had little to attract the gentry.¹³⁸ Hyde Hall blamed much of this decline on the poor transport infrastructure and the dependence on a ferry rather than a bridge.

Pwllheli fared much better in Hyde Hall's assessment. Since 1800 140 new houses had been built within ten years. However these were poorly constructed and usually rebuilt on earlier occupied sites.¹³⁹ He noted an active export trade – mainly

¹³⁵ Parliamentary Papers, *Census of England and Wales, 1911: Tables of the Area, Houses and Inhabitants* (London, 1912).

¹³⁶ E. Hyde Hall, *A Description of Caernarvonshire (1809-1811)* (Caernarfon, 1952), p. 69.

¹³⁷ Hall, p. 70.

¹³⁸ See Parliamentary Papers, *Fifteenth Report of the Commissioners Appointed Under the Acts of 4 Geo. IV. C. 74, 7 & 8 Geo. IV. C. 35, 3 & 4 Will. IV. C. 43, and 6 & 7 Will. IV. C. 35. for Vesting in Them Certain Bridges, &c. and for the Improvement of the Road from London to Holyhead and from London to Liverpool* (London, 1838). This gives a detailed insight into the workings of the borough and its officers. The report stressed the loss of the assizes and their centralisation in Caernarfon and the moribund nature of the borough courts which had taken no action on civic nuisances 'within living memory'.

¹³⁹ Hall, *A Description of Caernarvonshire*, p. 282.

grain – from the port and the opportunity for systematic employment in the ship building trade. He observed that the provisions in the local market were plentiful and cheaper than in other parts of the county. He represented Pwllheli as serving the whole Llŷn Peninsula and also supplying food by export to Liverpool markets.¹⁴⁰ He regretted that Pwllheli did not exploit its fishing trade more consistently as it had good supplies of salmon and excellent oysters. As for the employment market he noted that Pwllheli people changed employment often.¹⁴¹ The town was the only place in Caernarfonshire where he had observed women going around barefooted, carrying their shoes and stockings and washing their feet in a stream before entering the town. A contemporary of Edmund Hyde Hall, Richard Fenton, described his tours of Wales in the years between 1804 and 1813. His descriptions of Conwy and Caernarfon yield little about the state of those towns. However, he is more forthcoming about Pwllheli describing it as ‘considerable and well-built with a number of good shops’ but he is critical of the lack of manufacturing and trade within the town.¹⁴²

Hyde Hall described Caernarfon as a town with plentiful supplies of food although, as in Pwllheli, he claimed that fishing was not exploited to its full potential.¹⁴³ He noted a number of ‘strangers’ in the town – possibly suggesting a more cosmopolitan air – and a plentiful supply of shops and good medical assistance. The town was well served by hotels and inns. Its port was busy exporting slates, some provisions, copper, bales of paper (made in Llanrug) and some coarse cloth. Ship building was not flourishing at the time of his report. By 1837 the port is said to have been suitable for vessels of 400 tons but that the harbour was principally frequented by ‘small Coasting Vessels’ exporting slates and copper ore.¹⁴⁴

Although Caernarfon was more populous than Conwy and Pwllheli all three were small urban communities.

¹⁴⁰ Hall, *A Description of Caernarvonshire*, p. 283.

¹⁴¹ Hall, p. 284.

¹⁴² R. Fenton, *Tours in Wales (1804-1813)* (London, 1917) pp. 46-47.

¹⁴³ Hall, *A Description of Caernarvonshire*, p. 192.

¹⁴⁴ Parliamentary Papers, *Report by the Commissioners for the Municipal Corporation Boundaries (England and Wales)*.

Conwy

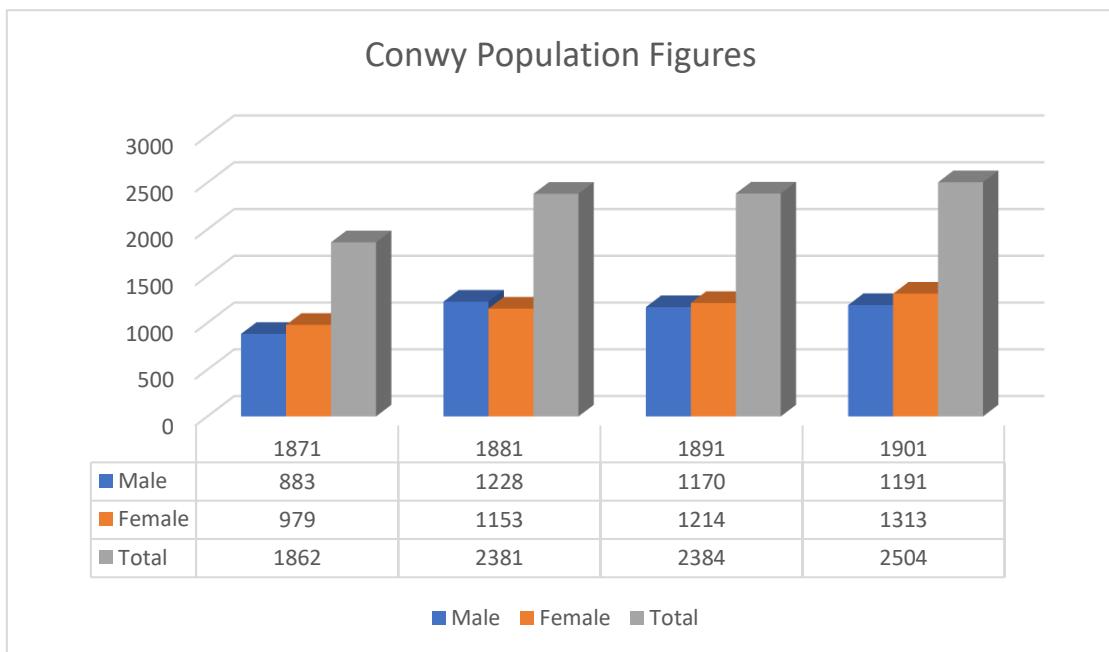


Figure 3: Conwy population table.

Pwllheli

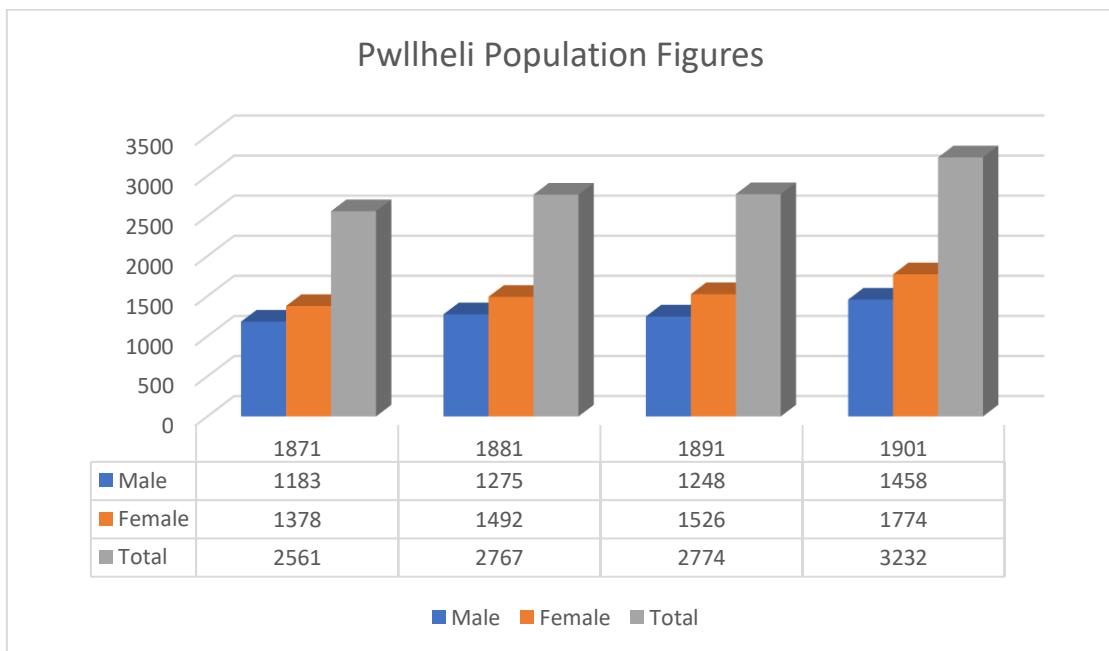


Figure 4: Pwllheli population table.

Caernarfon

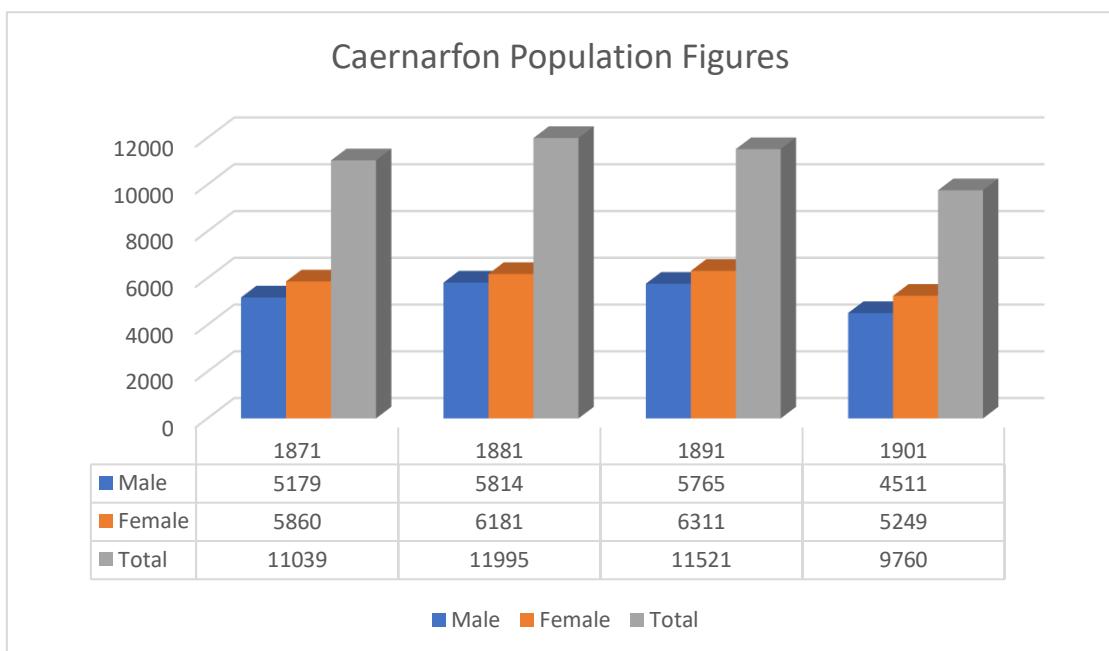


Figure 5: Caernarfon population table.

Much discussion has taken place as to the importance of whether it is the size of the urban community or rather the function that it performs which dictates its role. Harold Carter divided Welsh towns into various classes and so, for example, he underlined Caernarfon's role as a regional centre and Pwllheli as a local centre providing services for the Llŷn Peninsula.¹⁴⁵ This was a fairly common pattern of development. For example, Pembroke was a small country town of medieval origin which functioned as a market and trading centre for the peninsula south of the Cleddau estuary.¹⁴⁶ In Ireland the pattern for towns was based on the need for markets in different areas. As with the three boroughs studied here many such towns had a long history and may have remained small but it was their trading facilities that gave them their most essential function.¹⁴⁷ Freeman takes as a rule of thumb that in the post-1851 period the smaller the town the less able it was to cope with change.¹⁴⁸ In Wiltshire, for instance, the market town of Great Bedwyn, lost out to its larger neighbours of Marlborough and Hungerford. Its population during the mid-century to the 1880s

¹⁴⁵ Carter, *The Towns of Wales*, p. 63.

¹⁴⁶ R. Lewis, 'The Towns of Pembrokeshire, 1815-1974', in Howell (ed.), *Pembrokeshire County History*, p. 46.

¹⁴⁷ T. W. Freeman, 'Irish Towns in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', in Butlin (ed.), *The Development of the Irish Town*, p. 102.

¹⁴⁸ Freeman, p. 133.

exceeded 2000 but then fell to 1627 in 1901.¹⁴⁹ The decline continued throughout the twentieth century. Many market towns stopped growing in the period between 1831 and 1861. Their population either declined or remained fairly constant after this period. In Wales and England, as in Ireland, it was the small or ‘middling’ towns which suffered most from this trend. These tended to have weaker markets and a smaller range of services.¹⁵⁰ These factors, together with a growth of a much larger neighbour, Llandudno, would appear to hold true of Conwy. Towns such as Pwllheli and Caernarfon had strong markets, a certain degree of industry and services which proved a protective buffer for these boroughs.

Carter points out that no Welsh town exceeded ten thousand in population in 1801 and only four had more than five thousand inhabitants. By 1901 twenty-eight towns had more than ten thousand and fifty-five had more than five thousand population.¹⁵¹ Gunn argues that there is no consensus as to what constitutes urban and concluded that ‘qualitative factors such as the concentration of administrative functions, markets and cultural institutions are relevant’.¹⁵² In writing of the south Wales collier in the mid-nineteenth century Jones underlined the fact that urbanisations held an attraction for the rural dweller ‘a means of escape from the miserable conditions, in terms of the primary needs of life, of the rural worker’.¹⁵³

Towns – be they long established or new communities – should be taken within the context of the area and county. In 1851 in the region of twenty-five per cent of Caernarfonshire’s population lived in small towns and by 1901 this percentage was a little smaller. Only three towns, Caernarfon, Bangor and Llandudno reached a population of around ten thousand by 1901. In Wales as a whole in 1851, 18.4% of its population lived in small towns and by 1901 this figure was 10.4%. This was a higher proportion than in England with 14.6% in 1851 and 7.8% in 1901 but less than in Scotland with 19.5% in 1851 and 19.2% in 1901.¹⁵⁴ In 1891 the total population of all three towns in this analysis amounted to 17,143 out of a county population of 119,349

¹⁴⁹ A. P. Baggs, J. Freeman, C. Smith, J. H. Stevenson and E. Williamson, 'Great Bedwyn', in D. A. Crowley (ed.), *A History of the County of Wiltshire, Volume 16*, (London, 1999), pp. 8-49. *British History Online* <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/wilts/vol16/pp8-49> [accessed 17 November 2017].

¹⁵⁰ J. Brown, *The English Market Town* (Marlborough, 1986), p. 118.

¹⁵¹ H. Carter and S. Wheatley, *Merthyr Tydfil in 1851* (Cardiff, 1982), p. 1.

¹⁵² S. Gunn, ‘Urbanization’, in C. Williams (ed.), *Companion to Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2008), p. 239.

¹⁵³ Jones, *Communities*, p. 120. See also K. J. Cooper, *Exodus from Cardiganshire* (Cardiff, 2011), p. 77-79. Cooper expands on the atrocious living conditions in the countryside throughout Wales.

¹⁵⁴ Royle, ‘The Development of Small Towns in Britain’, p. 157, 170-171.

which accounted for almost 15% of the county's inhabitants. By 1901 with a reduced population of 15,493 the three boroughs formed around 12% of the county's total population of 126,883. As will be later explored in this chapter the difficulties of these communities in matters such as housing, social problems and economic hardship were similar to those suffered in much larger conurbations. In his study of York Rowntree made the point that although that city was much smaller than London it contained slums which 'are probably as bad as any to be found in London'.¹⁵⁵ What was different was the scale. Proportionally the three boroughs in this study remained centres of some importance but their significance needs to be assessed in the light of an analysis of their sociological makeup.

The study of the census returns for these communities illustrates the stability, migration and fluidity of the towns. They may also suggest areas of stagnation. Between 1881 and 1901 – the census years chosen for in-depth analysis – the population of Caernarfon dropped by about 19% while the much smaller town of Pwllheli saw an increase in population of over 15% and Conwy's figures remained comparatively static.

Population Profile

Conwy

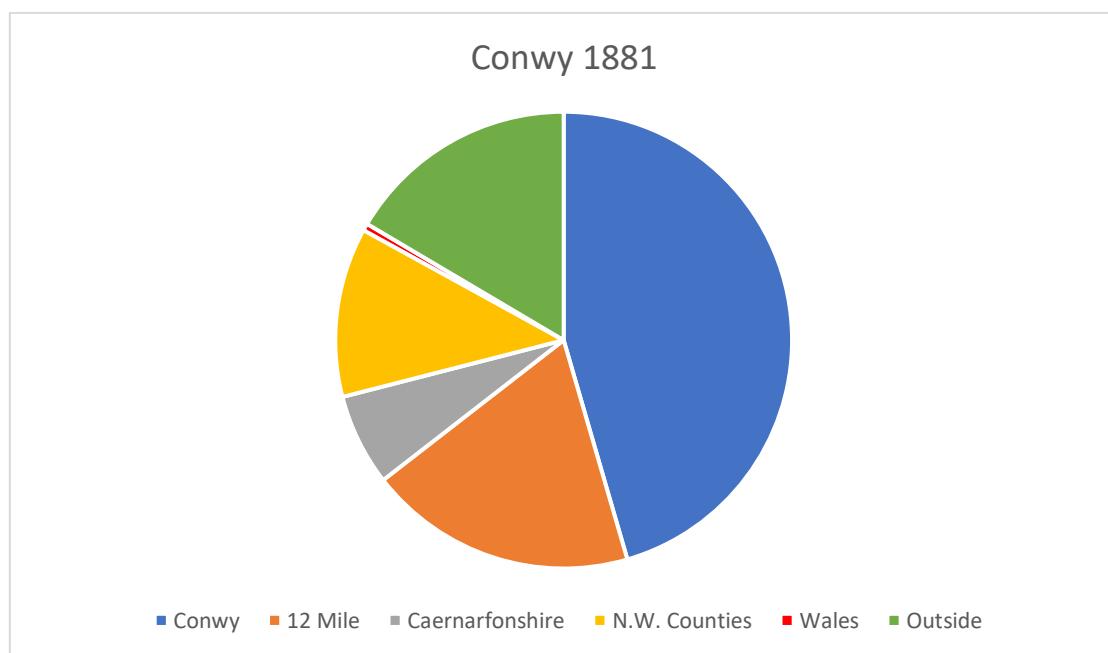


Figure 6: Population origins of Conwy in 1881.

¹⁵⁵ B. S. Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life* (London, 1902), p. 179.

The census returns for Conwy in 1881 show that 45.5% of the population was native to the town.¹⁵⁶ Of those aged under fifteen, who formed 30% of the total population, 68% had been born in Conwy. Of young people aged between fifteen and twenty-nine, which made up 31.5% of the population and was the largest number of any age bracket, the percentage of those born in Conwy was 40%. This suggests a substantial number of families moved into Conwy and may well have been recent migrants. The migratory nature of some families which reflected a maritime area was also evident. For example, at 17 Erskine Terrace the household of Hugh Davies, aged forty-five and a mariner from Tywyn, Caernarfonshire, is a case in point. His wife was from Cardiff, one son was born in Tywyn, two in Amlwch and only the last in Conwy.

19% of those who had moved into Conwy came from the area forming a twelve-mile radius around the town – mostly from the Conwy Valley and also from the eastern side of the estuary, much of which lay in the county of Denbighshire. Conwy would, in some ways, be a natural centre for these areas as they formed part of Conwy's Poor Law Union and was the location of the workhouse which also acted as a rudimentary hospital giving in-patient treatment.¹⁵⁷ About 18.5% of the town's population was drawn from the rest of Caernarfonshire and north Wales while in the region of 17% came from elsewhere – predominantly from England with a small number from Scotland and Ireland. Economic reasons appear to be the main factor in dictating migration varying from unskilled labour to skilled trades, maritime callings to professional positions. We therefore find Thomas Horn of Ireland as a boarder in Newborough Terrace, employed as a platelayer, William Ramsden of Halifax as a boarder at 3 Church Street, a bootmaker, Anthony Salthouse of Blackpool living at 2 Plas Isa Court and a fisherman by trade and lastly Samuel Brocklehurst of Staffordshire, a boarder in Bryn y Ffynnon and a building surveyor. All had transferable skills and the nature of their addresses suggests that it may well be only one – the fisherman – who was a long-term resident.

In the census enumerator's returns for Conwy in 1881 the workhouse returns were included with those of the town – they were presented separately in 1901. Of the 103 people enumerated in the workhouse in 1881, 55% were from the parishes which formed the Conwy Union and the remaining came from an array of locations within

¹⁵⁶ TNA, Records of the General Register Office RG11/5581, Conway – 1881 ED 1 and 2.

¹⁵⁷ The building of the Conwy workhouse did not start until the late 1850s.

England and Wales. In the overall analysis of the Conwy census returns undertaken in this study the workhouse returns have been excluded.

Excluding the workhouse the sex ratio in Conwy town was approximately 52% female and 48% male. Some males were not at home on the night of the census like the stonemason husband of Catherine Hughes of Lower High Street and the female percentage may also have been marginally increased by, for example, a number of live-in servants in the hotels and taverns. The census of 1901 illustrates a remarkably similar ratio.

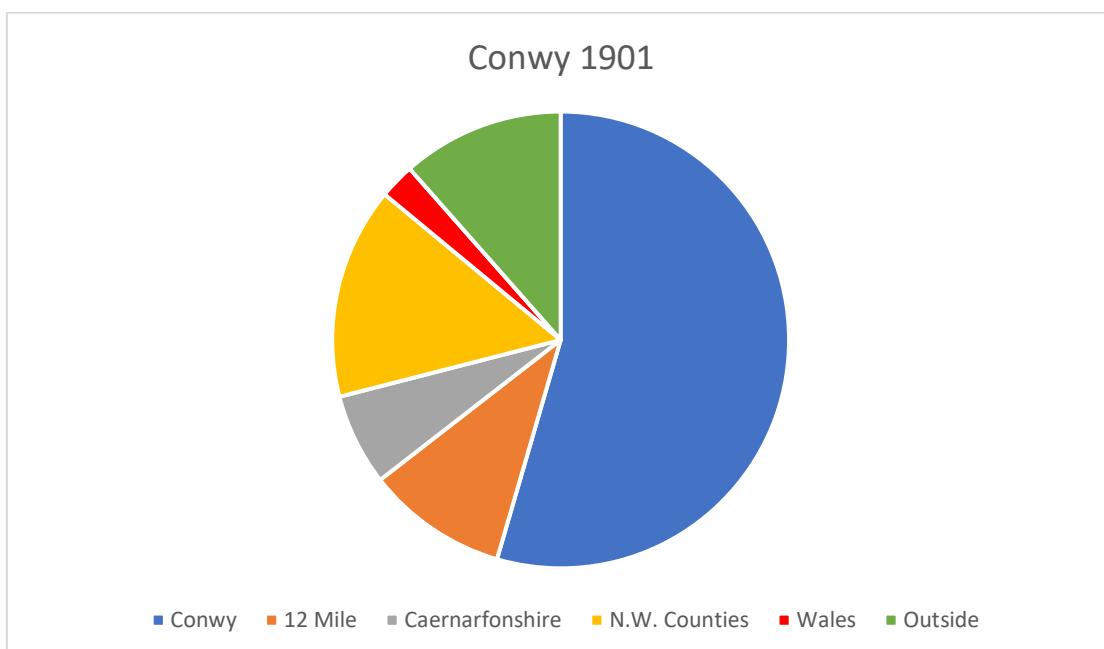


Figure 7: Population origins of Conwy in 1901.

As Conwy entered the twentieth century it did so with a population which had more or less flat lined after 1881. By 1901 of the inhabitants of Conwy 54.5% had been born in the town.¹⁵⁸ Of those aged under fifteen which formed a quarter of the town's population – 92% had been born in Conwy. This is a substantial increase on the 1881 figures. Of the town dwellers aged between fifteen and twenty-nine there is little difference to the 1881 figures. 54% of this age group had been born in the town. Neither is there much variation of those over thirty from the age profile in 1881. Well in excess of a third of the population belonged to these age groups. By 1901 the age profile of Conwy was somewhat older than it had been twenty years previously.

Only a tenth of the inhabitants of Conwy in 1901 were drawn from the twelve-mile local area, a further 6% came from other areas of Caernarfonshire and 15% from

¹⁵⁸ TNA, Records of the General Register Office RG13/5286, Conway– 1901 ED 1 and 2.

other north Wales counties. There was certainly a drop in the figures of those resident in the town from accessible local areas. This could partly be explained by people's increasing ability to commute to work but also reflected the opportunities offered by other centres in the neighbourhood such as Llandudno and other tourist destinations along the coast and inland. The age profile of lodgers in Llandudno in 1891 shows that the majority was aged between thirty and forty years old suggesting that most were employed in the resort.¹⁵⁹ In the region of 14% of the town's population came from further afield. This figure was similar to that of twenty years previously. Undoubtedly the census returns suggest that of those who had moved to Conwy many were employed in the hospitality trade at all levels. Many of these people would probably move on to other areas and the customers in lodging houses such as hawkers would certainly have had a temporary stay. For example at 2 Lower High Street Margaret Jones of Conwy at eighty years of age who spoke Welsh only ran a common lodging house which on census night had fourteen boarders who came from places such as Ireland, south Wales and other areas of north Wales but also housed three from Conwy. Their callings were various such as hawkers, labourers, miners and domestic servants. It is safe to assume that a majority of these boarders were migrant workers.

Pwllheli

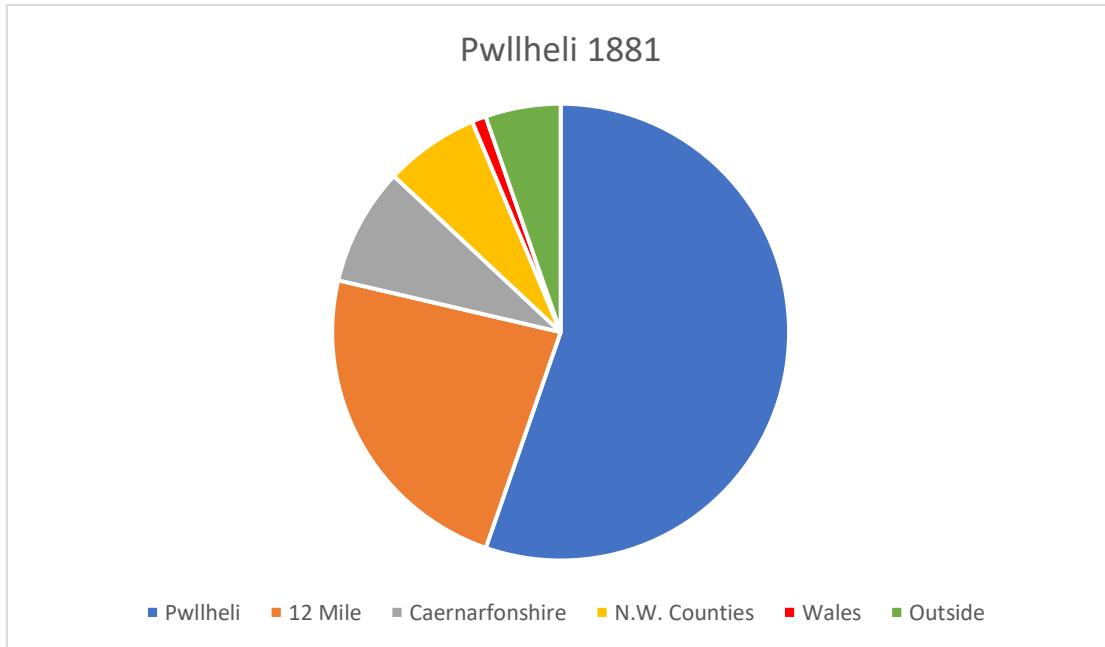


Figure 8: Population origins of Pwllheli in 1881.

¹⁵⁹ See G. Parry, “Queen of the Welsh Resorts”: Tourism and the Welsh Language in Llandudno in the Nineteenth Century’, *WHR*, 21, 1 (June 2002), 142.

In 1881 55.5% of the inhabitants of Pwllheli had been born in the town.¹⁶⁰ Of those aged under 15, which made up 37% of the population, almost three quarters had been born in Pwllheli. The age group between 15 and 29 constituted almost a quarter of the population and of these half were from the town. The remaining population of those aged over 30 constituted approximately 40% of the inhabitants of which in the region of 38% had been born in the town.

The population also drew its inhabitants from the surrounding area – almost a quarter had been born within a twelve-mile radius of the town. They did not form in any way a homogeneous group – for example a retired master mariner aged fifty-eight from Llanengan and living at 20 New Street, Elen Davies a licensed victualler originally from Nefyn and now living in Penlan Street and the usual numbers of domestic servants and charwomen who had migrated from the countryside to find employment. A fifth of the population was drawn from outside this tight region of the town and surrounding area – 15% from other areas in Caernarfonshire and the rest of north Wales and only 5% from the rest of Wales and further afield. This is in contrast to a much larger proportion of incomers from other areas as in the case of Conwy. This may well reflect Pwllheli's location and lack of economic opportunities at this time. The sex ratio in Pwllheli in 1881 was 54% female and 46% male – a ratio that remained fairly constant in 1901. This ratio is open to a number of interpretations. For example absentee husbands working away predominantly at sea and the number of female domestic servants and widowed, separated or unmarried women who were able to find employment more easily in a town.

As in Conwy the returns for the workhouse are included as part of the town's enumeration districts but have not been included in the analysis of the town community. Out of forty-nine residing in the workhouse forty-four belonged to the Pwllheli Union. Of these fourteen denoted as patients are described as idiots although only three have no formal employment attributed to them and only three are over the age of seventy.

¹⁶⁰ TNA, Records of the General Register Office RG11/5557 Denio – 1881 ED 5, 6, 7 and 9.

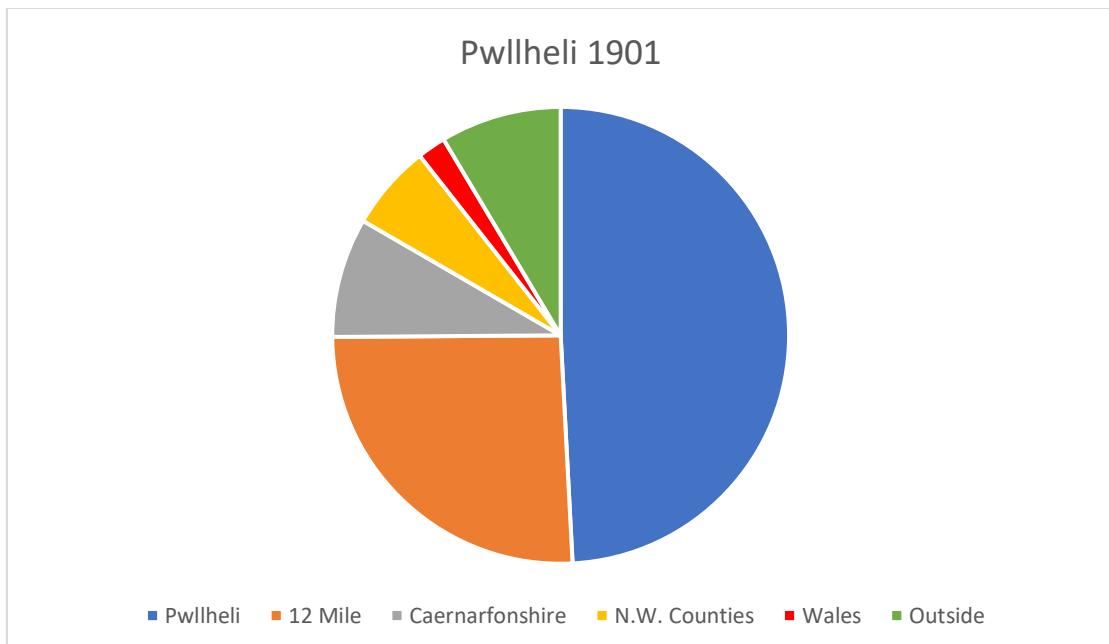


Figure 9: Population origins of Pwllheli in 1901.

At the beginning of the twentieth century Pwllheli was entering a period of population increase – modest but assured. By 1901 those living in the town who had been born there had decreased in percentage to 49%.¹⁶¹ Of those aged under 15 who formed 30% of the town's population, 72% had been born in Pwllheli. In the age bracket of 15-29 which made up over a quarter of the inhabitants 48% were natives of Pwllheli: a very similar profile to the 1881 census. Again as in 1881, the 1901 census shows that a quarter of the population came from a twelve-mile radius of the town. A higher proportion of these people were concentrated in one enumeration district which was in the northern part of Pwllheli – Sand Street, Caernarvon Road and running into Abererch Road where they made up 41% of the population. In 1901 approximately 14% came from the rest of Caernarfonshire and north Wales – again not very different from the 1881 census. However, those from further afield made up in the region of 12% of the population as compared to 5% in 1881. Rather misleadingly one traveller noted in 1898 that ‘an enterprising cockney coach driver’ who lived in Pwllheli had informed him that there were only three English people living in the town.¹⁶² The increase of incomers underlines the fact that the town was beginning to become more attractive as a place of work and investment to others.

¹⁶¹ TNA, Records of the General Register Office RG13/5265 Denio – 1901 ED 6, 7 and 8.

¹⁶² A. G. Bradley, *Highways and Byways in North Wales* (London, 1898), p. 355.

Caernarfon

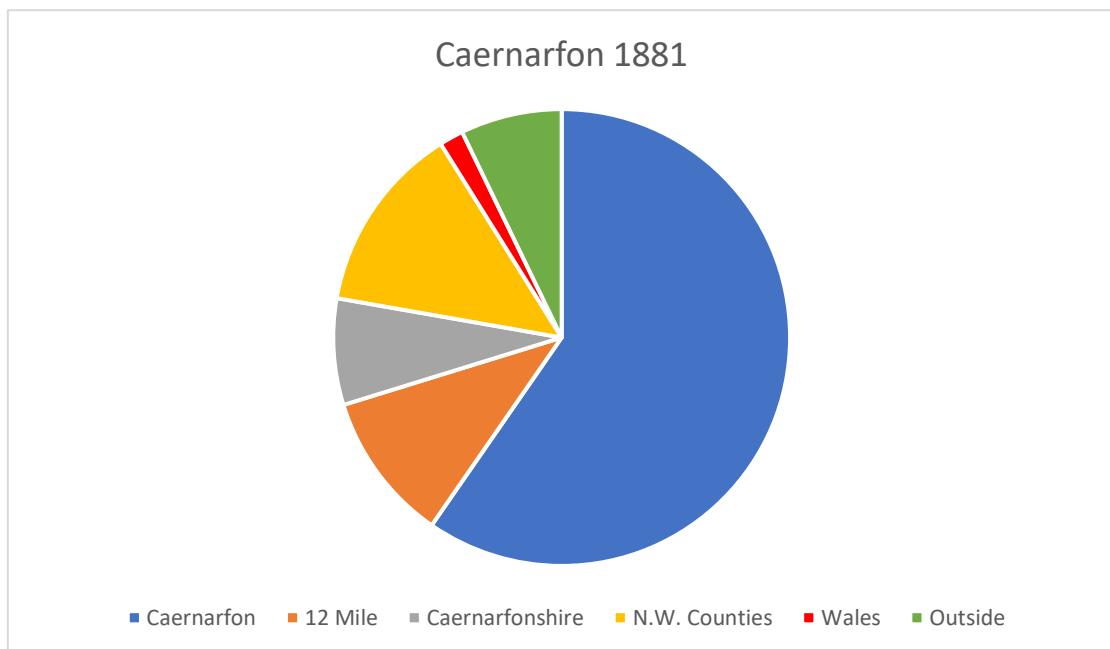


Figure 10: Population origins of Caernarfon in 1881.

Caernarfon represents a far larger settlement than either Pwllheli or Conwy. Therefore for the purposes of this study it was decided to choose a representative number of enumeration districts – in all five.¹⁶³ In 1881 almost 60% of the inhabitants in all these enumeration districts had been born in Caernarfon. In the age group under 15 which formed 34% of the population of these enumeration districts around 80% had been born in the town. Of the age group 15-29 which consisted of 25% of the population about 60% of these came from Caernarfon. Of the remaining 41% of the population which was aged over 30, 52% were born in the town. When comparing the age profile of the three towns in this study there is comparatively little difference in their age profiles.

Over 10% of Caernarfon's population in these districts was drawn from a twelve-mile radius while from the rest of Caernarfonshire and north Wales the percentage was about 20%. A tenth of the inhabitants came from further afield. At 56 St. Helens Road, for example, a local grocer and his wife lived together with their two children. Both parents had been born in Caernarfonshire but their children, aged 10 and 5, had been born in Victoria, Australia. Possibly tempted by the Gold Rush to Ballarat

¹⁶³ TNA, Records of the General Register Office RG11/5568, Llanbeblig – 1881, RG11/5569, Llanbeblig – 1881, RG11/5570, Llanbeblig – 1881, RG13/5272 ED 5, 9, 10, 12 and 13, Llanbeblig – 1901, RG13/5273, Llanbeblig – 1901 ED 5, 7, 9, 10 and 11.

where the elder child had been born, they may well have considered their prospects to be better in Caernarfon.

The sex ratio for these enumeration districts was 53% female and 47% male – for the whole of Caernarfon it is 52% female and 48% male therefore the variation is negligible. In 1901 the sex ratio for the whole town had altered somewhat within the region of 46% male and 54% female. Within the sample enumeration districts the figures largely reflect this trend with 47% male and 53% female.

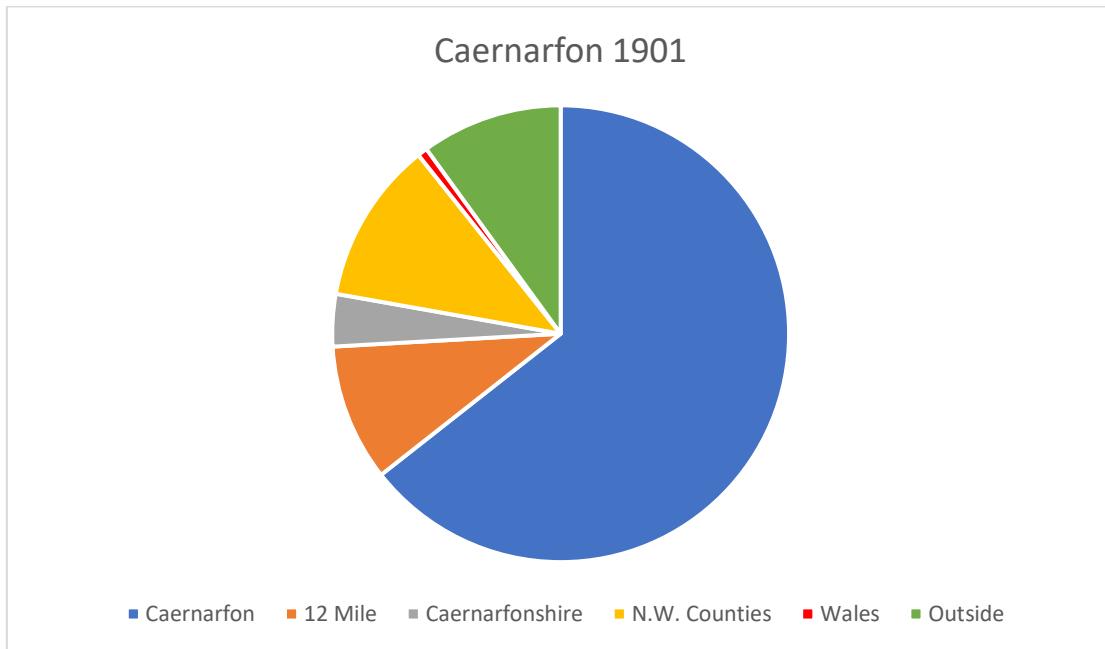


Figure 11: Population origins of Caernarfon in 1901.

In 1901 63% of the population in the sample enumeration districts were native to the town. Of those aged under 15 which made up 28% of the population, 84% came from Caernarfon. Those aged between 15-29 constituted around 28% of the inhabitants and of these 65% were from the town originally. It is in the older age groups of those aged over 30 the figure drops somewhat of those born in Caernarfon. These age groups constituted 44% of the population in these enumeration districts of which 48% were Caernarfon born. The younger age groups formed a smaller proportion of the town than they had in 1881 but the proportion of those born in Caernarfon had increased. This may well suggest that the town was not attracting as many people from outside and those who were in the town represented families who had been settled in Caernarfon for many decades. Around 10% still came from a twelve-mile radius of the town and of those from the rest of Caernarfonshire and north Wales the percentage had been reduced to 15%. In the region of 12% came from further afield. At 4 St. Helen's

Terrace, for instance, a multigenerational family lived – all of whom were newcomers to Caernarfon – Huw Evans, aged 40 from Amroth, Pembrokeshire who is described as a teacher of technical education, his wife and son, both born in Kent and his mother and father in law, aged 83 and 98, from Kent and Northamptonshire respectively. They had settled in an area where 20% of the inhabitants came from outside Caernarfon and its twelve-mile radius – areas which on the whole had better housing. Generally in areas in which as high a proportion as around 70% native to Caernarfon were living the housing tended to be of poorer quality and many homes were subject to demolition in the early twentieth century.

Linguistic Profile

In 1901 the census returns also noted whether those over the age of three and upwards spoke Welsh, English or both languages. For the whole of Caernarfonshire 10.3% spoke English, only 47.7% spoke Welsh only and 41.9% spoke both languages.

Conwy

Conwy certainly does not reflect this profile. In the years leading up to the mid-nineteenth century the author of a report on the borough of Conwy, T. J. Hogg, claimed that few of the witnesses he called in Conwy were familiar with the English language and was sceptical of the abilities of translators – ‘it is hard for a judge to do justice who is ignorant of the language of the country’.¹⁶⁴ By 1847 it was noted that in the local school several could understand English and ‘express themselves in intelligible language.’¹⁶⁵ In 1895 J. E. Southall, in his study of the language returns, drew attention to the linguistic threat posed in the district of Conwy by Llandudno – ‘Welsh has Llandudno to contend against’¹⁶⁶ – and by his analysis of the 1901 returns he bitterly complained of the curriculum in the district county school based in Llandudno where ‘unhappily Welsh is banished ... and [the school] cannot much longer ignore a language spoken in the county by nearly 90% of the people’.¹⁶⁷ By 1901 a tenth of the

¹⁶⁴ Parliamentary Papers, *Fifteenth Report of the Commissioners*, Carnarvonshire: Conwy pp. 16-17.

¹⁶⁵ Parliamentary Papers, *Reports of the Commission of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales* (London, 1847), part 3, p. 25.

¹⁶⁶ J. E. Southall, *The Welsh Language Census of 1891* (Newport, 1895), p. 23.

¹⁶⁷ J. E. Southall, *The Welsh Language Census of 1901* (Newport, 1901), p. 21. In his 1891 analysis Southall had noted in his Merionethshire entry that ‘it is satisfactory to find that through the wise foresight of Thomas E. Ellis M.P. Welsh is to be an absolutely compulsory subject of instruction in the Merionethshire intermediate schools.’

town's population spoke Welsh only, 14% spoke English only and the overwhelming majority – 76% - claimed to speak both languages. The figures analysed by Parry giving the 1891 linguistic profile for Llandudno shows that in that resort 12.9% spoke Welsh only, 41.4% were bilingual and 45.7% spoke only English.¹⁶⁸ The Welsh speakers were largely confined to the poorer areas of the town and the Great Orme. The figures for Llandudno and Conwy therefore for the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century are in stark contrast illustrating the very different social and cultural makeup of these two urban neighbours.

Pwllheli

In Pwllheli the linguistic profile was very different to that of Conwy and illustrates the settlement patterns of these towns. Half a century earlier in evidence to the commissioners examining the state of education in Wales the vicar of Pwllheli had complained that the town was ‘50 years behind Carnarvon’ and that the people were very deficient in their knowledge of English. The mistress of the Pwllheli infant school who spoke no Welsh complained that the ‘tradespeople at Pwllheli and the middle classes generally, are so ignorant of English that no intercourse can be carried on without a knowledge of Welsh’.¹⁶⁹ Of the Pwllheli inhabitants of 1901 38.5% spoke Welsh only, 5.25% spoke English only and 56.25% spoke both languages. There is evidence that in Pwllheli those from other Anglicised or English-speaking areas became assimilated. For example, in New Street the lighthouse keeper and his family of seven children lived – the youngest being eight years of age, named Llewelyn and born in Pwllheli. The remaining members of the family had been born in London or Kent. The parents spoke English only but all the children spoke both languages.

Caernarfon

Linguistically the sample enumeration districts for Caernarfon showed that 28% spoke Welsh only, 9% spoke English only and 63% spoke both languages.¹⁷⁰ None of the

¹⁶⁸ Parry, “Queen of the Welsh Resorts”, 135.

¹⁶⁹ Parliamentary Papers, *Reports of the Commission of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales*, part 3, pp. 29-30.

¹⁷⁰ Parliamentary Papers, *Reports of the Commission of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales*, part 3, p. 35. Much was made in this report about the ignorance of the English language among the older inhabitants of the town and praise was given to the Caernarfon Infant School where it was claimed ‘the infants acquire a surprising knowledge of English, and at home are looked to as the general interpreters for their respective families.’

urban communities reflected the overall linguistic profile of Caernarfonshire. This is a feature which reflected the needs of business and the role that these centres played within the county. In his analysis of north-east Wales during the mid-nineteenth century Pryce notes that it was only in the small market towns where there was ‘a tendency for Welsh communities to become bilingual communities’.¹⁷¹ However in Caernarfon there were variations in linguistic patterns between enumeration districts. For example, in enumeration district 11, where 70% had been born in the town, the number of monoglot Welsh was the highest percentage in the sample standing at 47%. The occupational profile was mixed but what sets this enumeration district apart is an older age profile: 38% were aged over 45. The enumeration district with the smallest number of monoglot Welsh speakers was enumeration district 5 where 16% spoke Welsh only. Here 49% were native to the town and 22% was aged over 45. This district also had the highest number of people enumerated from outside Wales standing at 20%. Its occupational profile was mixed. Age and origin of the inhabitants would appear to have a defining effect on the linguistic pattern. The degree of fluency and honesty of the returns are matters of conjecture.

¹⁷¹ Pryce, ‘Industrialization, Urbanization and the Maintenance of Culture Areas’, 336.

Housing profile

Conwy

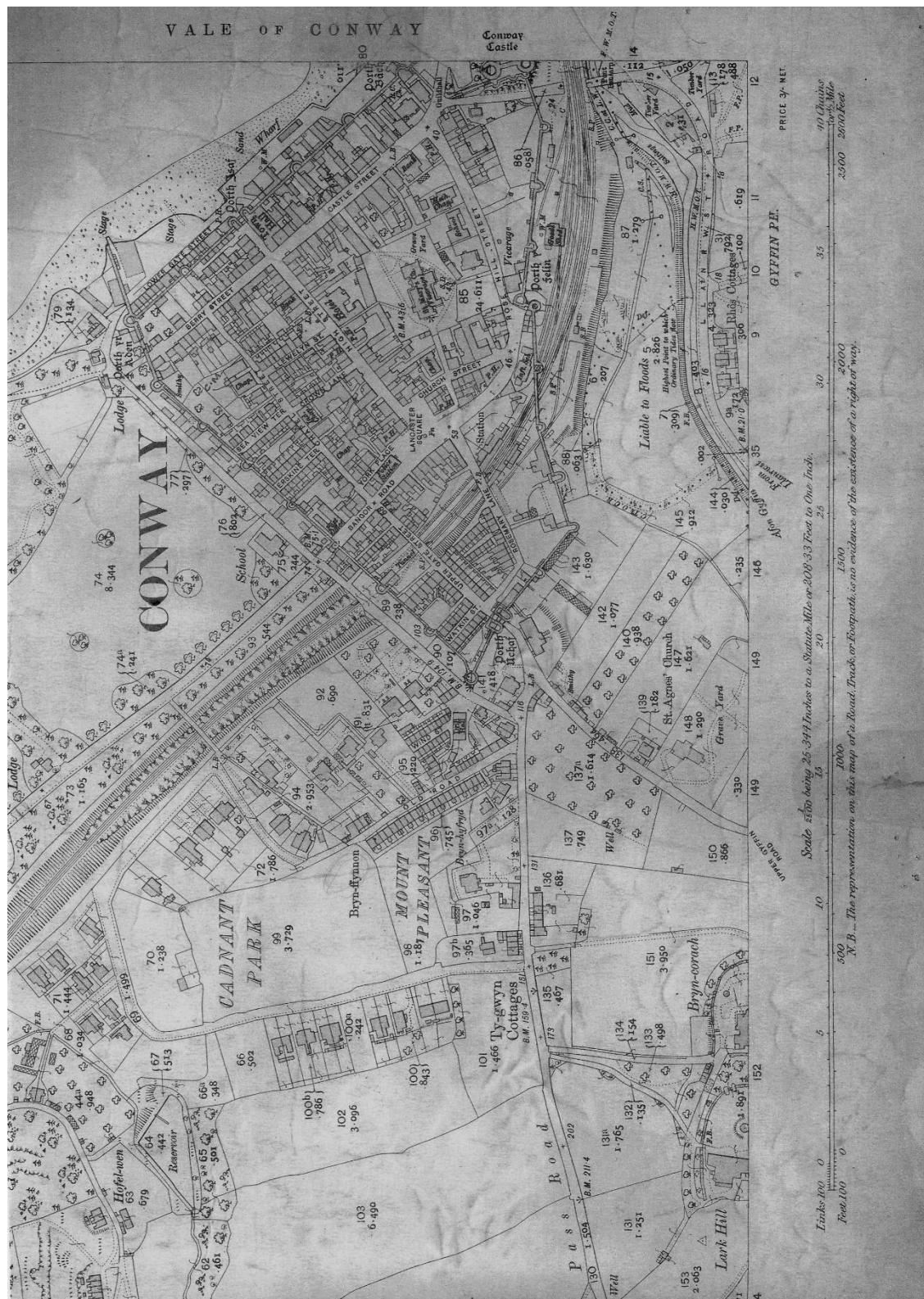


Figure 12: Conwy OS 25" IV.12 1913. The map shows the enumeration districts analysed and illustrates new housing outside the walls of the old town.

Housing stock also dictated the attractiveness or otherwise of an urban centre. It also limited, to an extent, the expansion possibilities. In 1881 the number of inhabited houses in Conwy was 459. Since 1871 the town had undergone a population increase of about 28% but the housing stock had only increased by 14%. By the 1901 census the population of Conwy had increased by a modest 5% since 1881 but the number of inhabited houses had risen by about 12%.¹⁷² Workman's dwellings were often discussed by the Borough Council but few decisions were taken. However, in 1892 it was decided to approve the building of six new houses for workers.¹⁷³ Undoubtedly much of the town's housing was in need of improvement. In June 1894 notices were issued to those keeping pigs in their backyards as there had been a local case of swine fever and pigs were ordered to be removed six months later from Berry Street.¹⁷⁴ In 1898 it was ordered that legal proceedings should be instigated against the owners of houses which had no water supply or sanitation.¹⁷⁵

At the turn of the century further housebuilding took place outside the walls of the town but much of this was for the middle class and yet again the council deferred decisions about working men's dwellings.¹⁷⁶ In discussing poor housing conditions in urban areas of Carmarthenshire Davies sees the problem as affecting the 'tone of local politics in the period up to the First World War ... these conditions symbolised social inequalities ...'.¹⁷⁷ According to the Chief Constable of Liverpool in 1903 there was a decrease in community disorder and brawling with the demolition of the 'back to back courts ... the enclosed courts gave two quarrelsome people no chance of getting away from each other ...'.¹⁷⁸ By 1905 in Conwy the whole question of housing became contentious and was debated in the press. 'Pro Bono Publico' described himself as a 'working man' and underlined the need for 'fit accommodation for my fellow workmen in Conway. We want houses fit to live in, at a reasonable rent and situated within reasonable reach of the town.' The state of housing, he claimed, was 'not only disgraceful, but a positive danger, a menace from both a moral and hygienic point of view'. He claimed with considerable justification that the Corporation had neglected its

¹⁷² See Dodd, *A History of Caernarvonshire*, p. 405 where he states that in Conwy there were 'no acute problems of poverty or housing to contend with.' This is a somewhat rosy view of the true situation.

¹⁷³ COB2/28.

¹⁷⁴ COB2/28.

¹⁷⁵ COB2/29.

¹⁷⁶ COB2/30.

¹⁷⁷ Davies, *Secret Sins*, p. 67.

¹⁷⁸ C. G. Pooley, 'Patterns on the Ground: Urban Form, Residential Structure and the Social Construction of Space', in Daunton (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, p. 447.

duty which ‘almost amounts to criminality’.¹⁷⁹ The council undertook to look for sites and investigate the matter as they had done so many times before. This time the newspaper took credit and promised to monitor the situation ending its report ‘Cliqueism has had a very tolerable hand in the government of the borough thus far: a fairer and purer power deserves a turn now.’¹⁸⁰ However in 1906 the council attempted to charge a local builder extortionate amounts for the lease of land on the Morfa to erect artisan houses. Some councillors recognised the danger of local feeling and attempted to pass a motion to give a prize of £10.10.0 for the best set of plans for working men’s houses. However the motion was defeated.¹⁸¹ A series of letters again appeared in the press with a correspondent ‘Conovium’ opposing new housing development to which ‘Pro Bono Publico’ responded ‘... you also deserve hounding out of the place, and to have the whole of your plague nurseries razed to the ground’. In this letter he describes a ‘certain dwelling’ in Conwy ‘containing a living room measuring 11ft by 9ft with one window ... a sleeping room of the same capacity ... tenanted by a man and wife, two grown up daughters, one grown up son, and two younger sons’.¹⁸² The discussion of housing in the press is the best evidence that we have which conveys social tension in the town. The local vicar was reported to have preached in the parish church a sermon impressing upon the council the need for social justice and the role the council should take in ‘social reform’. The vicar continued by stating that the ‘... Tories have, on all occasions, opposed giving facilities to private speculators to build a number of dwellings for the working classes, and it is not at all probable that the corporation will adopt the Housing Act for some time ...’¹⁸³ It took until 1910 for the Borough Council to take positive steps to set in motion a housing scheme which it did in a bad tempered meeting which criticised the record keeping of the council and correctness of its minutes.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁹ *WCP*, 1 December 1905.

¹⁸⁰ *WCP*, 9 December 1905.

¹⁸¹ COB2/32.

¹⁸² *WCP*, 15 December 1906.

¹⁸³ *CDH*, 22 November 1907.

¹⁸⁴ *North Wales Weekly*, 9 December 1910.

Pwllheli

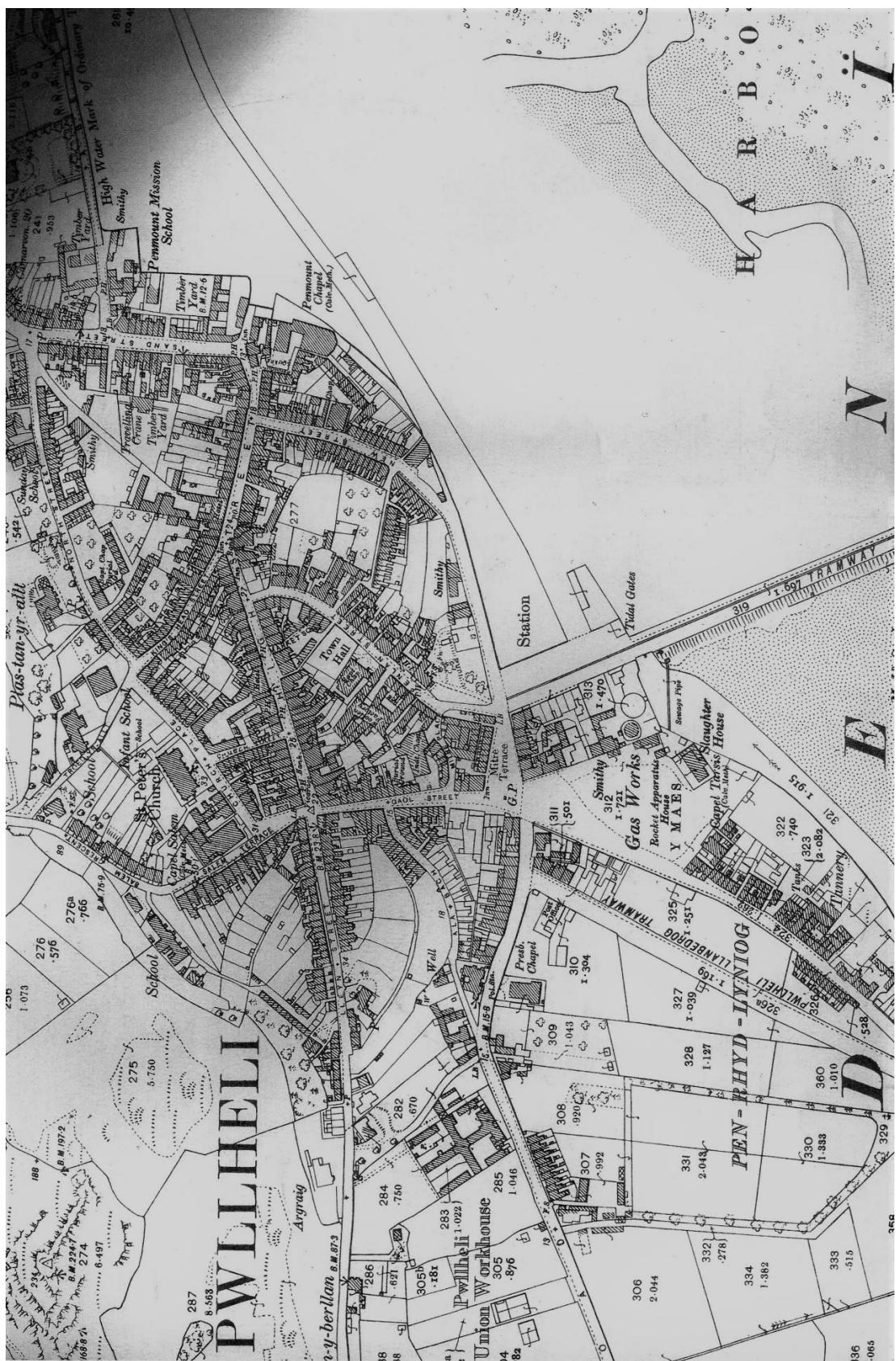


Figure 13: Pwllheli OS 25" XL8 1911. This map shows the majority of the area analysed including the old town and parts of the new development of Cardiff Road. The West End and promenade are not shown.

Housing in Pwllheli, as in all the urban centres, gave rise to much debate and criticism. In 1881 there were 669 houses. Bye laws were adopted in 1879 stating that new houses and buildings should open onto clean pavements and that the cleansing of earth closets, privies, ash pits and cesspools should be carried out to ensure the good management of an open bathing space.¹⁸⁵ During the early 1880s the Medical Officer of Health and Sanitary Inspector insisted on the control of pigsties in the town's backyards and ordered the provision of earth and water closets where necessary in the Gadlys area. When complaints arose the town council called upon the police to 'exercise more vigilance in the matter' of pig keeping. The town had lost its small borough police force in the late 1870s and had joined the county constabulary. This comment in the minutes could reflect Pwllheli's attempt to flex its muscles as far as the police force was concerned.¹⁸⁶ Steady improvement of sewerage and water supply at this period made Pwllheli a more attractive proposition for economic and tourist development and negotiations with the Churton estate for the development of the beach front continued over a number of years.¹⁸⁷ Undoubtedly the borough was a key player in these developments. The state of housing in the town remained a matter of concern. An outbreak of typhoid fever in 1889 focused the attention of the town council. The medical officer of health reported that all three cases of typhoid had been found in 'one of the cellar residencies'. His report gave a vivid account of living conditions of the poorest in Pwllheli: the premises were 'in a very bad state. There is a very large accumulation of manure, ashes etc in a midden at the back of the next house and a pigsty with several pigs which is within three feet of the house wall ... These cellar dwellings were condemned a considerable time back ... they are undoubtedly very unwholesome and are specially prohibited to be occupied' under the Public Health Act (1875).¹⁸⁸ The Act also provided for fines against the owners who let out such property. Cellar dwellings as such are not noted in Conwy or Caernarfon although these towns also had substandard, crowded and insanitary houses. They were a feature of, for example, northern English towns with their high density, back to back and court dwellings which also had separately inhabited cellars.¹⁸⁹ Manchester had prohibited

¹⁸⁵ GAS CRO XB12/1/4.

¹⁸⁶ GAS CRO XB/12/1/5.

¹⁸⁷ GAS CRO XB/12/1/5. See D. G. L. Hughes, *Pwllheli: An Old Welsh Town and its History* (Llandysul, 1991), p. 24-26 for background to Churton.

¹⁸⁸ GAS CRO XB12/1/5.

¹⁸⁹ Pooley, 'Patterns on the Ground', p. 447.

cellar dwellings by a local act in 1853.¹⁹⁰ Discussions in the council turned to building new houses and removing ‘eye sores’. Side by side with these debates the council was rapidly disposing of much of its corporate property which included housing in some of the poorer parts of the town.¹⁹¹



Figure 14: CRO GAS XS/197/75 The new West End development in Pwllheli.

Never far from the council agenda was its vision to promote Pwllheli as a spa town and in 1894 it hit on the idea of the town as a winter resort and advertising it as such ‘for the purpose of making it more attractive to visitors’. An advertising campaign which it assured the ratepayers would not incur any costs for them.¹⁹² Within months bad weather made economic and housing conditions worse for the poorer inhabitants of Pwllheli. A relief fund was set up together with soup kitchens. There was evident unrest in the town about housing conditions as a petition of ratepayers was presented to the council about the housing of the working class. Local property owners were approached to encourage them to build houses. From 1896 onwards piecemeal improvements were made to the existing housing stock and Solomon Andrews,¹⁹³

¹⁹⁰ J. Burnett, *A Social History of Housing 1815-1970* (Cambridge, 1978), p. 155.

¹⁹¹ GAS CRO XB12/1/5.

¹⁹² GAS CRO XB12/1/6.

¹⁹³ Solomon Andrews (1835-1908) was born in Trowbridge, Wiltshire. In 1851 he was working as a baker and confectioner in Cardiff. A shrewd business man he developed several enterprises – for example cab companies, trams and omnibuses in many centres in the UK. His business interests expanded to extractive industries and property development. He recognised the development potential of Pwllheli. On his death the *Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald* (13 November 1908) described him as a remarkable man who had little education and only in his later years had learnt to read and write.

housing developments and ‘his intention of building houses for workmen on his estate’ led to a council decision ‘to keep to one side at present’ its part in providing working class housing.¹⁹⁴ However the council continued its pursuit of landlords to improve their housing and provide sanitation. For example in 1906 Ellis W. Jones, the owner of houses in North Road, wrote to the council undertaking to improve his houses in compliance with the notice that he had received and in January 1911 that the council had decided to close housing which was unfit for human habitation.¹⁹⁵ By 1901 with the new developments in the town the number of houses stood at 750. This is described in a travel book of the late 1890s as ‘New Pwllheli’ where ‘painfully new, white houses is much in evidence.’¹⁹⁶ When in 1911 Pwllheli Town Council was approached by the Local Government Board enquiring about the building of houses for the working classes, its response was that the Welsh Gardens Cities Ltd. was contemplating developments in the town which would make some housing available for the working class.¹⁹⁷ These plans did not come to fruition. However, the town had room to build and also a desire to expand. It was one of the means it possessed to reinvent itself.

Although he came to Pwllheli as late as the 1890s he had been made, by the time of his death, the first freeman of the town.

¹⁹⁴ GAS CRO XB12/1/6.

¹⁹⁵ GAS CRO XB12/1/7-10.

¹⁹⁶ Bradley, *Highways and Byways*, p. 357.

¹⁹⁷ GAS CRO XB12/1/10. Beddoe Rees was by profession an architect and chairman of the Welsh Gardens Cities Ltd. which was a commercial undertaking. The Cardiff suburb of Rhiwbina was its most famous project. Rees was an industrialist and Liberal politician.

Caernarfon



Figure 15: Caernarfon OS 25" XV4 1890. This map shows the area analysed. The enumeration districts in this study are situated west of the Pavilion.

The number of inhabited houses for 1881 in Caernarfon was 2515.¹⁹⁸ Caernarfon Borough had been proactive in its attempts to improve housing during the second half of the nineteenth century. The sample enumeration districts chosen for Caernarfon reflect areas of new housing together with the older housing of the borough. The outbreak of typhoid and cholera in the town during the 1860s focused the Corporation's attention on the need to build housing for a growing population and to improve sanitation. Impetus was given to these developments by the then mayor Sir Llewelyn Turner who also became chairman of the Local Board of Health.¹⁹⁹ The Corporation was active in imposing planning regulations and in 1876 for instance resolved that 'no buildings be built' without permission and no home occupied without a certificate from the surveyor.²⁰⁰ Attempts were made to improve the living environment – by ordering the usual removal of pigs but also by controlling the slaughtering the slaughtering of animals outside unregistered premises which were often in residential areas such as Crown Street, Baptist Street and Snowdon Street.²⁰¹ Drainage and sewerage works were improved in 1894 and the property owners compelled to connect to the improved system.²⁰² Demolition of buildings was undertaken by the Corporation in order to create public spaces as in castle square in 1895.²⁰³

¹⁹⁸ All three boroughs had housing problems but Caernarfon's were particularly acute. See Rhydderch-Dart, "The Great Relief of the Overcrowded Slums", p. 526 and Rhydderch-Dart, "The Time of Cholera", pp. 103-116. In 1871 when Caernarfon was undergoing population growth the new suburb of Twthill was populated by 62% of people from outside the town.

¹⁹⁹ See Sir Ll. Turner, *The Memories of Sir Llewelyn Turner* (London, 1903) who relates in fascinating detail the living conditions in Caernarfon during the 1860s.

²⁰⁰ GAS CRO XD1/752.

²⁰¹ GAS CRO XD1/753.

²⁰² GAS CRO XD1/347.

²⁰³ GAS CRO XD1/754.



Figure 16: GAS CRO XS/1497/3/5 Castle Square, Caernarfon c.1900.

78/5.

The attention of many authorities was directed to the development of the model village of Port Sunlight established by the Lever Brothers. Bangor corporation sent a representative to the village to see what could be achieved²⁰⁴ but there is no record that any of the three boroughs in this study did the same. However, many of the ideas introduced in Port Sunlight percolated through the communities such as creating public spaces around houses. By 1900 improvement schemes under the Housing of the Working Classes Act (1890) were underway in Caernarfon which included demolition work in Mountain Street, Baptist Street and Crown Street. Buildings were to be erected in order to house those who had been displaced. Purchasing substandard houses continued, closing orders were placed on dwellings and further building of new housing was carried out by the corporation in already established communities.

²⁰⁴ P. E. Jones, *Bangor 1883-1983: A Study in Municipal Government*, (Cardiff, 1986), p. 62.



Figure 17: ©GAS CRO XS/2044/1. An example of dilapidated housing in Caernarfon c.1910.

There was evidently strong feeling in the Corporation and the town that inhabitants ‘should not be compelled to leave the town for the want of proper accommodation.’²⁰⁵ The population of the town had decreased substantially by 1901 – by about 18.5% and the number of inhabited houses numbered 2209 which represented a reduction in the region of 12% in the housing stock.

The provision of better housing for the inhabitants of Caernarfon was a substantial task for such a small town. Some of the older housing in Caernarfon such as Baptist Street and Chapel Street formed part of the area covered by the sample enumeration districts in this chapter. Many of these houses were built in the 1820s and 1830s and by the late nineteenth century they were part of an area of ‘deteriorated slums’.²⁰⁶ Similar conditions existed in many towns. In Carmarthen, for instance, the slums were ‘built in the early days, dilapidated and insanitary’ and workers houses were described as ‘squalid hovels’.²⁰⁷ Some of the poorest people in the town lived in these areas. In 1903 the Medical Officer of Health wrote to the Corporation about the

²⁰⁵ NWC, 4 November 1899. Also see Parliamentary Papers, *First Report of the Commissioners on the Housing of the Working Classes (England and Wales 1884-1885)*, (Questions 479-481). In his evidence to the Commissioners on the Housing of the Working Classes in 1884-1885, Hugh Owen gave evidence about Clerkenwell where the increase in population had not been as great as expected. He reported that poor housing drove people elsewhere in search of accommodation and despite the convenience of reaching the workplace the desire for improved housing was more important.

²⁰⁶ Carter, *The Towns of Wales*, p. 230.

²⁰⁷ Davies, *Secret Sins*, p. 64-65.

condition of Baptist Street: ‘the street is undoubtedly the worst in the town ... the occupiers most filthy in their habits ... there exists here much squalor (sic) and misery which is impossible to describe ...’²⁰⁸



Figure 18: ©GAS CRO XS/2044/1. An example of one of Caernarfon's courts with one privy c.1910.

In 1907 the same officer inspected ‘the courts and poorest parts of the town’. Such reports give an insight into housing conditions in these districts. For example, Baptist Street was described as 340 feet long and with a width varying between six foot seven inches to fifteen feet. Twenty-nine houses were occupied, seven unoccupied and one was a stable. The houses were dark, gloomy, insanitary and dilapidated. His inspection of Mount Pleasant Alley described four ‘dilapidated houses’, with two WCs for six houses found in ‘filthy and unusable state. Slop water runs the whole length of the court in a gutter’.²⁰⁹ Rowntree made use of similar reports made by the Medical Officer of Health in York in 1900 in his study of the spread of typhoid in the city. In the report the MOH described similar housing conditions to those which prevailed in Caernarfon. It would appear however that Caernarfon’s water supply was better as there were no major outbreaks of diseases related to waterborne bacteria during this period.²¹⁰ The Medical Officer of Health in Caernarfon recommended the provision of baths and a washhouse – ‘this is now done in some of the large towns with

²⁰⁸ GAS CRO XD1/348.

²⁰⁹ GAS CRO XD1/626.

²¹⁰ Rowntree, *Poverty*, p. 186.

excellent results'. It was these officers who also drew attention to the rents charged for such housing.²¹¹ The register kept to note public nuisances in Caernarfon such as blocked drains, poor sanitation and accumulations of rubbish contains interesting information concerning the owners of these properties.²¹² Many lived in houses no better than the ones that they rented out. In all probability these owners had a little disposable income which enabled them to buy 'fag ends of leases' with only a few years left to run but gave a fair return on investment. In 1907 an editorial appeared in the press about the 'disgraceful scenes' in Caernarfon caused by a fight of locals, both men and women. It claimed that such disturbances were 'confined to areas within the housing area' which were inadequate. Rents were charged for houses that 'lack the primary essentials of a decent dwelling.'²¹³

Housing standards were always contentious issues reported widely in the press and debated at length by the Corporation. In 1918 Caernarfon's Sanitation Officer had been in post for twenty-five years and to mark this anniversary he published a letter to the Corporation noting what had been achieved during this period.²¹⁴ He described housing as 'the question of the day but it is a question which is full of difficulties'. His description of Caernarfon and its poorer inhabitants conveyed their appalling standard of living: 'only those who visit the homes of these people and who have occasion to go to their sleeping rooms can realise the low standard of living ... then we have people in comfortable circumstances who are up in arms when anything is done in regard to housing, people who are continually looking at the £. s. d. side of everything...' However, his resumé of work achieved by the Corporation in improving housing since the early part of the 1890s is impressive. For instance, five out of twenty-nine courts, 190 houses had been demolished, 212 had been closed because they were unfit for human habitation and 2771 water closets had been installed. This document conveys clearly a sense in the town and amongst at least some of its officers of a need for social justice and a means of achieving this through public provision of improved amenities.

²¹¹ See Burnett, *A Social History of Housing*, p. 145 which quotes a contemporary survey of 1891 drawn up in the United States that illustrated the higher rents paid in Britain to those in France, Germany, Belgium or Switzerland.

²¹² GAS CRO XD1/603.

²¹³ NWE, 19 July 1907.

²¹⁴ GAS CRO XD1/347.

Household structure

Conwy

The household structure in Conwy in 1881 and 1901 reflects the migratory pattern illustrated by the census returns. Those households which are composite in nature – those which contained the core family together with servants remained the same for 1881 and 1901: 15% of all households. The biggest percentage change is seen in households which consist of family members only: 65% in 1881 and 78% in 1901. One contributory reason for this could be the decrease in the number of domestic servants between 1881 and 1901.²¹⁵ These households varied widely in structure. Some are nuclear families and others are multigenerational. It is important not to make assumptions about the pattern or indeed the centrality of the nuclear family with both male and female heading the unit.²¹⁶ Evidence is often sparse to illustrate either the breakdown or indeed the existence of a nuclear family but there are pointers. Within Conwy some families were headed by working women as will be discussed later in this chapter, others by women, not working and described as ‘wife’ or ‘widows’. The former may well have been separated and the latter may have been a term of convenience. Court records for Conwy, unlike Caernarfon, yield little on legal separations apart from their registration²¹⁷ and few cases are brought for desertion.²¹⁸ The breakdown of the family structure is illustrated by a case of bigamy brought against a Conwy couple in 1897 and during the hearing the police gave an excellent character to the accused woman, Mary Elizabeth Davies, whose legal husband was a notorious drunk who had ‘three weeks after marriage … threatened to kill her with a poker … on one occasion he broke two of her ribs …’.²¹⁹ At the trial a sympathetic judge imprisoned Davies and her new partner for two days and ordered that they then be discharged immediately.²²⁰ In England and Wales between 1857 and 1904 there were 5,327 bigamy trials. This is a figure that probably represented about one in five of bigamous relationships in the country. Leniency was usually the order of the day as the wife had often been subjected to a violent partner as was the case of Mary Elizabeth

²¹⁵ A decrease of almost 10%. See p. 95-99.

²¹⁶ See P. O’Leary, ‘Masculine Histories: Gender and the Social History of Modern Wales’, *WHR*, 22, 2 (December 2004) for a wide-ranging discussion which includes this issue.

²¹⁷ CD4/1/1/5.

²¹⁸ CD4/1/1/2. One example is a charge against a John Evans for leaving his wife who had become chargeable to the Conway Union.

²¹⁹ *Evening Express*, 7 January 1897.

²²⁰ NWC, 23 January 1897.

Davies.²²¹ In his study of Carmarthenshire Russell Davies analyses similar cases in south-west Wales and the undoubtedly tensions which existed within families and relationships during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Such strains were reflected throughout all communities.²²² Violence, drinking and family breakdown were as much a symptom of social and economic tensions as a cause.

The household structure which had decreased substantially was the number of those who kept lodgers. In 1881 these accounted for a fifth of all households in Conwy but by 1901 they only consisted of 7%. The dearth of lodgers may well be illustrated by one example. In 1901 Jane Parry, aged sixty and living at Eithinog, Conwy, described herself as a lodging housekeeper. She had previously resided with her family at Wind Street, Conwy. A young widow, she had no occupation in 1881 and 1891 and had not only provided a home for her family, she had also adopted her own grandson. Sometime between 1891 and 1901 she, together with one son and adopted son, had moved leaving her daughter and her family in Wind Street and embarked on a new venture of keeping a lodging house. In the 1901 census she had no lodgers so she may have found trade rather slow. However, the keeping of lodgers may well have been part of a hidden economy as owners of property may not have wished to comply with the rules and regulations pertaining to lodging houses. In 1894, for example, the sanitary inspector and police called at a house in Berry Street and were refused admission. The following day they observed twenty-two people leaving the property.²²³

²²¹ G. S. Frost, *Living in Sin: Cohabiting as Husband and Wife in Nineteenth-Century England* (Manchester and New York, 2008), p. 74.

²²² Davies, *Secret Sins*, p. 175-182.

²²³ COB2/28. There are several similar cases in the petty sessions registers as for example in CPS1/2/3/47 when several people in Chapel Street in 1901 were charged with keeping lodgers without a license.



Figure 19: Postcard of Berry Street, Conwy c.1910.

Pwllheli

The household structure for Pwllheli in 1881 shows that 69% were family only houses, 22% still retained servants and were therefore composite as were 9% of households which housed lodgers. As in all the urban communities the family household could consist of many generations as in the case of John W. Davies, a native of Pwllheli aged 63 who lived in town and farmed elsewhere employing three men. In Pwllheli he shared his house with his wife, a single daughter and grandchildren whose parents were evidently elsewhere. The number of households employing domestic servants exceeded a fifth of the total. So for example the manager of the National Provincial Bank, originally from Breconshire, his wife from Pembrokeshire and their cashier son employed Mary Roberts from Aberglaslyn, Caernarfonshire, as a general domestic help while at 12 North Street Robert Jones, aged twenty-six, a blacksmith described his sister, aged twenty-one as a housekeeper. They housed three lodgers – two of whom were paupers aged seventy-eight and thirty-five from Bottwnog and Liverpool respectively. These paupers would have been in receipt of out relief which would in the case of these two include a lodging allowance. This would be a welcome source of income for people living in the community. There is nothing to suggest that in this case the lodgers were related to the householder but the housing and support of parents by married children was expected and, in some cases, enforced. There are very few

enforcements in Pwllheli but in 1911 for instance the Pwllheli Guardians made an order at the petty sessions to obtain a contribution from a Thomas Jones for ‘maintenance of a relation’.²²⁴

By 1901 the number of households which contained family members only had risen to 74% while those with servants had decreased to 15%, similar to the figures in Conwy and Caernarfon. In evidence given for the Pwllheli Union to *The Royal Commission on Labour: The Agricultural Labourer* in 1892 it was reported that there was a scarcity of trained and experienced dairymaids in the area as they were ‘drafted into domestic service in England by visitors’ who visited the coast during the summer.²²⁵ It is highly likely that this is the case for those already in domestic service in the town. There was a slight rise in the numbers keeping lodgers to around 11%. This small rise represented lodgers following a wide spectrum of callings such as teachers, clergy, trades and labourers. Again the family centred households were often intergenerational and also reflected different family structures. For example, at 12 Llawr Gorse, Pwllheli, we find forty-six-year-old Jane Hughes, single, a woollen weaver employing one worker together with her daughter and son. The former was a house servant and the latter was a grocer’s apprentice. Both children had been born in the workhouse.²²⁶ Court records throw some light on the social strains within the family structure. Bastardy orders in the Pwllheli court were frequent as many of the mothers were based in the workhouse whilst others lived in the town. For example, one successful bastardy case was brought by Ann Jones of King’s Head Street against Richard Christmas Evans in 1901. The latter had moved a number of years previously to work in South Wales and returned home to Pwllheli for extended stays during the summer. The evidence submitted to the court in such cases illustrates well the type of life, community and housing of some in Pwllheli at the turn of the century.²²⁷ Strains caused by addiction or depression made others less able to cope. These people could be charged and imprisoned. Such was the case of a Pwllheli widow, Elizabeth Quayle, aged forty-eight, who was found drunk in charge of fifteen children in a ‘very filthy’ house. The beds had straw mattresses and were ‘wet through’ and the eldest daughter, Mary, complained that the mother sold the children’s clothes. The children were

²²⁴ X/QS/1911.

²²⁵ Parliamentary Papers, *Royal Commission on Labour: The Agricultural Labourer*, vol. 2 (London, 1892), p. 146.

²²⁶ XPE/19/189.

²²⁷ GAS CRO XLC/5/7.

removed and sent to the workhouse and the mother was imprisoned in Caernarfon for three months with hard labour.²²⁸

Caernarfon

The household structure in 1881 for the sample enumeration districts of Caernarfon show that 73% of households were occupied by only family members. As in the other boroughs analysed in this chapter these households varied greatly in structure with in-laws, grandchildren, nieces and nephews sharing the same house. For example at 18 Well Street Rebecca Ellis, age seventy-two, a charwoman, from Caernarfon lived with three granddaughters, a daughter and son in law and their four children – in all a household of ten people. Overcrowding was common in some areas and regularly referred to in the press and in the reports of the officers of the borough. ‘A degraded social state’ led to overcrowding according to the Sanitary Inspector.²²⁹ A cross generational family living in Glancledr Court in 1881 was Elizabeth Daniel, a charwoman, aged sixty-seven, with a widowed daughter, aged twenty-nine, also a charwoman, a single daughter, aged twenty-six, an unemployed domestic and a grandchild, Hugh, aged three. Their living conditions would have been appalling and their income barely capable of supplying the necessities of life. None are recorded as in receipt of poor relief but the head of household, Elizabeth, appeared in the court records as ‘soliciting prostitution’, probably a pimp for her two daughters.²³⁰ At 2 Mount Pleasant Alley a three generation family was enumerated. The head of household, Ellen Williams, aged sixty-seven, widow was described as being ‘supported by son in law’. He also supported a wife and two children.²³¹ Family breakdown is traceable in the records with the inclusion of a note by the enumerator of wives or husbands who had been deserted by their partners and in court records when there were

²²⁸ GAS CRO XLC/5/11.

²²⁹ GAS CRO XD1/347.

²³⁰ GAS CRO XLC/2/4/7.

²³¹ In evidence to the Parliamentary Commission, *Report from the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor with Minutes of Evidence 1895 (Volumes 1 and 2)* (Question 594) one witness who had been involved in local government in north east England reported ‘I think that the neglect of parents by their sons and others who are legally liable to support them amongst the poorer classes, is one of the crying sins of the day.’ The report for 1895 gives evidence for the Dolgellau Union when one ex-Guardian claimed that in that rural union it was his experience that children were dutiful to their parents (Question 8695). See Robin, ‘The Relief of Poverty’, 208 where Robin has some such evidence for Colyton but quotes the work of A. Digby, *Pauper Palaces* (London, 1978), p. 227 which analyses the situation in Norfolk where farm labourers were required to support their elderly parents although the offspring were in receipt of small wages. The application of the Poor Law and payment of out relief varied from one area to another.

attempts to secure maintenance payments as in the case brought by Jane Francis against John Francis for domestic abuse. Both lived in Tanrallt in 1891.²³²

14% of households kept lodgers. For example at 18 North Penrallt John Bryan, age thirty-four, a poultorer lived with his wife, three daughters and two sons together with three lodgers. Lodgers themselves were varied. Some were associated with the business of the house in which they were living such as the grocer's assistants living in Newborough Street, others who may have been short term lodgers as an employee of the prison service living in Segontium Terrace and a hawker living in Cadnant Lane but described in court records as a prostitute.²³³ A large lodging house housing fifteen people was situated on Bridge Street and owned by the Nelson Emporium, established in 1837 and which gradually expanded by buying shops and houses in that street.²³⁴ This became Caernarfon's Regent Street.²³⁵ A further 13% of households were composite employing domestic servants and general help. For example Ellen Radcliffe, age 20 from Anglesey, was employed as a servant by an aunt and niece at 3 South Street.

By 1901 82% of households contained family members only and the patterns of kinship were as varied as in 1881. Again the court records give evidence of wives and children becoming dependent on poor relief because of the desertion of the bread winner and attempts to obtain maintenance in fractured relationships.²³⁶ The minute books of the Borough Courts convey the horror of households under strain. Catherine Lewis, formerly of Pool Lane, a mother of four children, one of whom was illegitimate, brought a case against her husband, William, for domestic abuse and drunken behaviour in 1905: 'I cannot live any longer with defendant. I am afraid of him.'²³⁷ She claimed to have never been in debt and that as a couple she and her husband had opened an account in Lloyds Bank. A separation order was granted and custody of the children was given to the mother. Debt and drink appear in most of these cases but it was sometimes the husband who applied for a separation order as in the case of John Bennett in 1903 who claimed that his wife was 'continually drunk'

²³² Thane, 'Women and the Poor Law', 33. Thane lists marriage breakdown as one of the main causes of poverty amongst women.

²³³ GAS CRO XLC/2/4/7.

²³⁴ Davies, *People, Places and Passions*, p. 62. On a larger scale David Morgan expanded in the same way in the Hayes in Cardiff. Having opened his first drapery shop in 1858 he expanded his leased premises in the Hayes by buying adjoining shops, public houses and a hotel.

²³⁵ M. Thomas, 'Cymraeg y Nelson', *Y Casglwr*, 1 (March 1977).

²³⁶ GAS CRO XLC/2/4/7.

²³⁷ GAS CRO XLC/2/3/2.

after taking to drink in Jubilee Year.²³⁸ He was given custody of the children. Wives were commonly accused of drunkenness by their husbands and of pawning the clothes of the family. The court proceedings themselves must have been traumatic for a family as children were brought into court to give evidence against one or other parent.

10% of households were composite and employed live-in domestic servants. Servants were not necessarily employed only in the large villas. For example in Dinorwic Street William Jones, a retired master mariner, his wife and daughter had a live-in general servant aged 18 from Caernarfonshire. 8% of homes kept lodgers – this is a considerable reduction on the 1881 figure, which may reflect that there was not such pressure on housing because of a decrease in population and with the demolition of houses in these areas some lodgers, who were in the main single, were able to move to other districts. All this together with better transport links to Caernarfon meant that working in the town did not necessarily imply living in Caernarfon.

Employment profile: Male

Settlement	1881	1901
Conwy	89%	90%
Pwllheli	75%	94%
Caernarfon	93%	96%

Percentage of males of fifteen years and over in employment.

Conwy

Illustrative of the economic life and background already discussed in this chapter is an analysis of the workforce of the three boroughs. Such an analysis gives an insight into the structure and driving forces within the communities. The number of economically active males in Conwy in 1881 was 51% of the total male population. However in the age group over 15 those economically active was 89%. By 1901 57% of all males were in employment – of those aged 15 and over 90% were economically active. There is little difference in the figures.

In 1881 few noted that they were employers – in fact only 2% entered any such information. However these figures are highly suspect as some workers were also evidently employers as for instance in the case of hotel owners employing hotel staff

²³⁸ GAS CRO XLC/2/3/2.

and in the case of tradesmen where the evidence strongly suggests that they employed family members as in the butchery trade. By the 1901 census the means of noting if an inhabitant was an employer were more formalised. Within the male workforce 8% described themselves as employers. However the vast majority of male workers in Conwy were employed.

Conwy's economic development during the nineteenth century was somewhat uncertain. As a centre of administration and as a maritime centre in the county the town faced challenges. Spread of occupations in this borough was wide but it was strongly biased towards the retail and service industries.



Figure 20: GAS CRO XS/2156/1 Conwy c.1900 illustrating some of Conwy's commercial outlets.

For instance in 1881 28% of males in employment were working in trades such as plumbers, blacksmiths and shoemakers. For example at Newborough Terrace in the home of Ellen Hughes, aged forty-eight, widow, one finds her son, a carpenter, another son a joiner and a lodger who is a plumber. All three had evidently served an apprenticeship while the only daughter at home and of an age to be working had her sights confined to domestic service. Those involved in retail accounted in 1881 for 23% of males in employment – butchers, grocers and tailors for instance who would provide commercial services to the town and the surrounding district.²³⁹ A trade

²³⁹ See E. A. Wrigley, 'The Changing Occupational Structure of Colyton over Two Centuries', *Local Population Studies*, 18, 18. Largely using parish records Wrigley notes the growth in dealing, retail and service employment in the market town of Colyton. This was a sign of 'rising incomes which can sustain diversified forms of employment'.

directory of 1880 reflects the trades and retail establishments of the town. It illustrates that Conwy had in the retail sector the essentials necessary for the town and surrounding area with a handful only of luxury shops mainly for confectionary.²⁴⁰

12% of the male workforce in 1881 was involved in maritime related work – fishermen, boatmen, mariners, ships' carpenters and those working in marine stores. For instance at 13 Lower Gate Street William Parry, a local man aged sixty-five, is a sailor and a few doors away at Porth Richard Thomas was a ship's carpenter and his son Robert was also in the same trade. Within one family household at 18 Berry Street one finds two master mariners and one able bodied seaman. The latter family had all been born and brought up in Trefriw which can well be described as one of the lost ports of Wales. As early as the late 1820s the inhabitants recognised that lack of investment in the harbour was leading to a downward turn in Conwy's prosperity. They submitted on behalf of the owners of vessels, Captains and inhabitants of Conwy a petition to the borough council which pulled no punches and certainly showed local awareness of investment that was taking place in other parts of the county. The petition for a new quay argued that it would be 'beneficial to the town and trade of Conwy that vessels may discharge a load alongside the quay ... without waiting for the tide'. The petitioners wanted improvements to be in line with work that had been carried out in Caernarfon. There was a feeling that economic opportunities contingent upon town improvements were not equal within the county. The petitioners complained of the lack of work for the 'working classes' who are 'in appalling difficulties for the want of work and are nearly starving in our streets'.²⁴¹ Improvements to the harbour duly took place in the early 1830s but these provided a temporary answer only to any ambitions the maritime community may have had to greater developments of the harbour. The port was only able to accommodate lighter vessels and never developed into a major ship building centre as did Caernarfon and Pwllheli.²⁴² There was little incentive to develop Conwy as a port. Its exports of copper and lead had dwindled together with the slate produced in the Conwy valley which had at one time been brought by sailing ships from Trefriw to the port of Conwy. During the second half of the nineteenth century the export centres lay in the west of Caernarfonshire with links to the major slate quarrying areas of Caernarfonshire and Merionethshire. In a fishery enquiry held

²⁴⁰ *Slater's Directory of North Wales 1880.*

²⁴¹ COB2/668/1.

²⁴² Dodd, *The Industrial Revolution in North Wales*, p. 128.

at Conwy in 1878 it was claimed that between 80 and 100 families earned money by collecting mussels and sending them to English markets.²⁴³ One witness, Mrs Jane Lloyd, 71, stated that she had been employed as a mussel gatherer since the age of 9. However it was stressed by several witnesses that the mussel beds had deteriorated and many fishermen had extended their fishing interests to fishing a range of fish, in particular mullet. The Conwy community was clearly anxious to retain the town's jurisdiction over the mussel beds and the Corporation claimed that they were the 'guardians of the public over this property'. The discussions during the enquiry provide fascinating details of the way a section of the inhabitants earned a living by scouring the foreshore without seeking any permission. Pride in the rights of an ancient borough certainly came to the fore when it was felt that controls could be placed on these activities. A box of old charters was produced at the hearing. This contained very fragile documents, illegible by 1878 but it was claimed that they bore the signature of Llewelyn ab Iorwerth.²⁴⁴

General labourers and carters made up 18% of the workforce. Much of this work must have been casual and intermittent apart from those labourers who worked directly for the railway company. By 1881 the railway employed about 5% of the Conwy workforce – signalmen, inspectors, booking clerks, labourers and platelayers – wide-ranging jobs which gave employment opportunities to blue collar and labouring members of the community. Evidently the town was eager to retain employment opportunities with the railway with its mix of skilled and unskilled jobs. During the mid-1880s the railway yard was moved from Conwy to Bangor and the headmaster of the Conway Boys School noted in September 1885 his concern at the loss of the yard and the work for the town's people which led to '... boys ... continually leaving as the parents are compelled to take up their residence there [Bangor]'. Up to 25 boys had left the school to move to Bangor by October 1885.²⁴⁵ Professional services such as the law, administrative, building and financial services, which included by now the Post Office, accounted for 7% of the male workers. A comparatively small number but covering a breadth of work – for example building surveyors, registrar, bankers, solicitors and ministers of religion. Agriculture and gardening gave work to 4% of the male population and 1.5% were employed by a local quarry. A small number also

²⁴³ NWC, April 5 1878.

²⁴⁴ NWC, April 5 1878.

²⁴⁵ CAS CES3/1.

found employment in domestic work such as hotel boots and indoor servants who worked on farms in the outermost rural limit of the enumeration district.

By 1901 the percentage of workers employed in various trades had dropped quite considerably to about 19% in the working male population reflecting, for instance, the decrease in shoe or boot makers. The need for footwear was naturally no less but much of this demand was satisfied by dealers buying in shoes from manufacturers from areas such as Northamptonshire which came to dominate shoe manufacturing. Improvements in transportation and infrastructure eased the way for the development of a national market based on regional division of labour. The importation of factory-made goods also reflected a growing awareness of fashion. For example at 24 High Street William Hughes, aged seventy-four, from Conwy kept a boot and shoe dealership employing one assistant.



Figure 21: Postcard of High Street, Conwy (early twentieth century).

Other trades are well represented so for instance one finds at 4 Pool Lane Evan Hughes, aged fifty-three, originally from Llangollen lived with his family (all monoglot Welsh speakers) working as a journeyman tailor. He and his family had been settled in Conwy for many years and one can only assume that he was employed locally on a more formal basis than simply on a daily contract which was the pattern of work with many journeymen tailors. The retail sector in 1901 remained at the same level as in 1881 which again reflects the flatlining of the population and the lack of development of a wider market for the area. A trade directory of 1895 suggests a

certain development – albeit small – in the diversity of the retail and service establishments in Conwy. For example a hairdresser had opened a business in the high street and a ‘fancy repository’ had also opened.²⁴⁶

Labourers accounted for in the region of 19% of the male workforce. However much of this work was likely to be seasonal or casual. The town council in 1901 cut its workforce in the interests of economy – a move which was unpopular and led to ‘intense feeling’ in the town.²⁴⁷ By 1903 increased unemployment in Conwy was a matter of concern in both the council and the press. When the Borough leased its granite quarry to a London company part of the agreement was that relief work for three days weekly should be provided to ‘all married men and sons supporting mothers’.²⁴⁸ Lack of prosperity amongst the inhabitants of Conwy is also illustrated by the decision to feed children from the Conwy Infants School in the town hall twice a week.²⁴⁹

The maritime sector had decreased to 8% of the working population. Most were fishermen working on their own account but the maritime community also had a young boat maker, Sam Blundell, aged twenty-two from Conwy living in Chapel Street. The master of a stream dredger, John Evans, lived in Lower Gate Street. His work would have been closely associated with the mussel industry. All in all however the maritime community was shrinking, showing less diversification and having to make a living from a quayside which lacked investment.

²⁴⁶ *Slater's Directory of North and Mid Wales 1895.*

²⁴⁷ *CDH*, 20 December 1901.

²⁴⁸ *CDH*, 30 January 1903.

²⁴⁹ CAS CES3/8.



Figure 22: Postcard showing the Conwy foreshore towards the quay in the early twentieth century.

A letter was sent in 1899 from the Sawing, Moulding and Wood Turning Mills, Conway, to the borough council asking for improvements to the harbour – ‘a long felt want’.²⁵⁰ It stressed that a better port with a recognised authority to deal with charges would bring prestige to the town. The letter complained that ‘ship captains are constantly complaining of the multiple and outrageous charges made upon them for petty services ... there does not exist an active Board of Supervision to control the boat sharks who infest the place ... and makes it extremely difficult to charter at all ...’. However the town’s opportunities for a share in port trade in Caernarfonshire had by this point long passed and the future for those ports which had developed with investment in the county was also bleak. Mussel fishing therefore was central to what remained of maritime occupations in the town and the rights of the fishermen on the foreshore became a heated debate in the early 1900s. In a special meeting with the fishermen the council upheld the rights of the local fishermen against ‘trespassers’ from Cheshire since the actions of the latter was ‘most unfair to the fishermen of this Borough who depend on the industry for their livelihood’. The Cheshire cohort did their musseling at night by lanternlight, fishing unsustainably to the detriment of the fishing beds. The council decided to police the foreshore at night.²⁵¹ A local petition

²⁵⁰ CBO2/30.

²⁵¹ COB2/32.

dated October 1907 was submitted to the council in support of the fishermen against ‘... a violation by outsiders of the fishermen’s rights.’²⁵²

As the tourist interest in the town increased a number of craft were used as pleasure boats. By 1911 there were in all eighty-three such vessels inspected – many were old and ten in need of repair. Amongst these were fifteen sailing boats – eleven open and four half-decked. Inspectors were charged with keeping good order amongst the boatmen and ensuring that they were licensed. One inspector in 1910 reported that some boatmen were drunk while in charge of pleasure boats.²⁵³ The boatmen were frequently criticised for plying for trade too aggressively.

Professional services such as the law, finance, local authority administration together with the Post Office accounted for 10% of the male working population. At Broneryr Levi John from Llanboidy, Carmarthenshire, lived on his own. He worked as a sanitary inspector in the area. At 12 Castle Street John Williams from Conwy lived and was a solicitor in the town. Local administration became more visible in the town during the first decade of the twentieth century. It was decided that the Corporation should be housed in one building – a move for efficiency but also an attempt to establish identity. Previously corporation offices had been scattered throughout Conwy. In 1907 Albert Wood, Bodlondeb, a member of the Corporation and one time mayor, gave the town a building in Castle Street.²⁵⁴ The site was used for new offices which were deemed ‘comfortable to the dignity of the town’.²⁵⁵

Smaller numbers were involved in agriculture and gardening, a proportion similar to that found in 1881. By 1901 around 8% were employed by the railways in jobs ranging from porters to cleaners to firemen and engine drivers. These employment opportunities may have been centred in Conwy but also in Llandudno Junction. As in Caernarfon there had been concern in Conwy in the 1890s that the L&NW Railway was dismissing monoglot Welsh speakers. The matter came before the town council in November 1894. The council decided to issue a strong protest to the company about this matter.²⁵⁶ Printing and publishing accounted for 4% of the male workforce.

²⁵² COB2/32.

²⁵³ COB2/32.

²⁵⁴ A native of Cheshire, Albert Wood was a keen historian who had paid for the statue of Llewelyn ap Iorwerth in Lancaster Square and had provided a drinking fountain for the town in 1898 to celebrate further improvements in the Borough’s water supply and the building of a new reservoir.

²⁵⁵ COB2/32.

²⁵⁶ COB2/28.

Somewhat more unusually A. C. Meyer from Wavertree, Lancashire, had moved into Arvona and was a landscape artist.

Pwllheli

Of Pwllheli's total male population in 1881 around 56% were economically active. Males aged fifteen and over constituted about 63% of the male population and in this age bracket three quarters were in employment. By 1901 the percentage of males in employment was 63%. In the age bracket of fifteen and over which was around 67% of the total male population there was a 94% employment rate. There was clearly an active employment market in Pwllheli reflecting new enterprises and investment in the town. These are discussed later in this chapter.²⁵⁷ 3% only described themselves as employers in 1881 and by 1901 around 7% entered themselves in the census as employers.

The largest group of male workers in 1881 in Pwllheli – around 27% – were employed in some kind of trade. These trades were wide ranging including watchmakers, saddlers, stone masons, joiners, tanners, cloggers and cabinet makers. Many of these reflect the trades required by an agrarian community and also possibly in other trades such as joinery and carpentry they reflect transferable skills which would have been used previously in maritime callings. The granite industry employing sett makers provided Pwllheli with welcome employment opportunities for tradesmen.

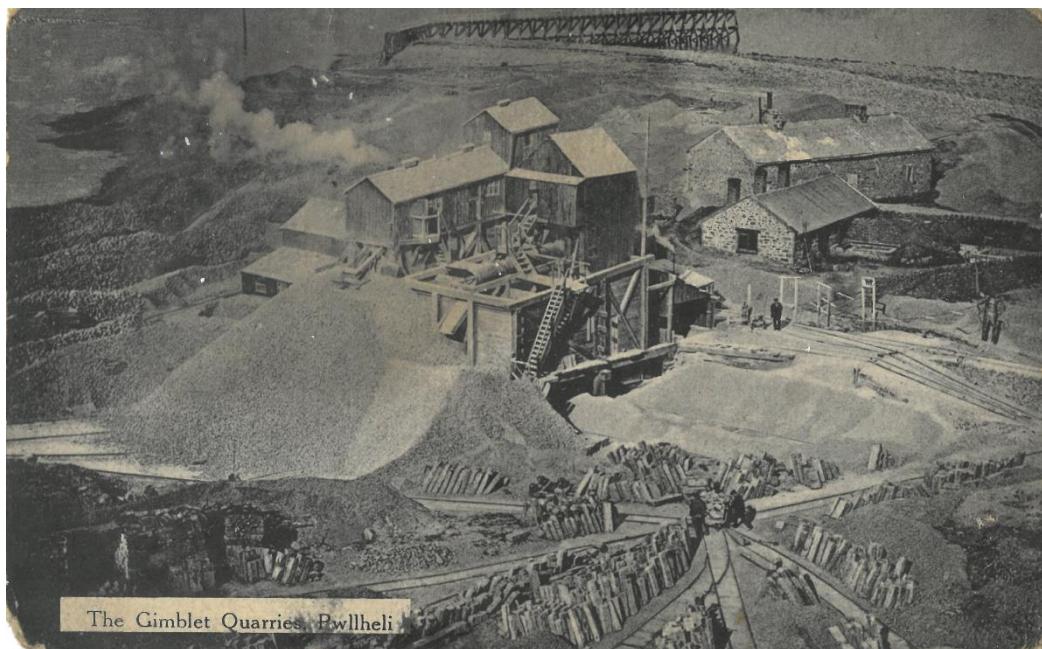


Figure 23: GAS CRO XS/3600/7 The Gimblet Quarries, Pwllheli c.1890s.

²⁵⁷ See p. 86.

Pwllheli's position as a local centre serving its rural hinterland and the Llŷn Peninsula is reflected in the number of male workers involved in service and retail – 20%. For example at 11 King's Head Street Owen Jones, originally from Llanrwst, was a china merchant. Numerous butchers, grocery and provision stores, fishmongers and drapers were found in the town. Few covered the needs of a maritime/agrarian market town as well as Ellis Griffith, High Street, Pwllheli. In a trade directory entry of the 1880s he is described as a 'wholesale general iron monger ... agricultural implement agent, brush factor, dealer in ship chandlery, paints, oils etc...',²⁵⁸

Maritime employment still accounted for 12% of male workers. This percentage may well be an underestimate as it is clear that some seamen were away on census night. For example at both 19 and 33 New Street both wives are described as 'master mariner's wife'. The master mariners themselves were not at home. Others also employed at sea include sailors and fishermen. The overwhelming number following a maritime calling was native to Pwllheli. Agriculture provided a living for about 9% of the town dwellers. Pwllheli remained an active centre for the agricultural community of the area. Labourers were hired at its biannual hiring fairs. A feature of the area was that farm labourers and their families would relocate to the towns and villages and the labourer would travel to work on the farms at quite a distance from the family base. They would usually stay at the farm during the week. However when possible such workers would leave their agrarian employment and seek other opportunities in the town.²⁵⁹ Day labourers employed near the town of Pwllheli were better remunerated than in other areas.²⁶⁰ Multitasking at the Star Inn, High Street, was Griffith Thomas who not only kept the inn but also farmed and at 92 High Street John W. Davies lived in the town but also had a farm employing three men. A farm servant, William Hughes, was a lodger in Pwllheli at North Street and Thomas Marshall, of Staffordshire originally, was employed as warrener for trapping and possibly breeding game. A 'short stay' inhabitant of the town on census night was Cadwallader Thomas, a farmer of 450 acres with cattle, from Llanycil, Merionethshire, who was a prisoner at the police station at Ala Road.

²⁵⁸ Sutton's *North Wales Directory 1889-1890*, p. 169.

²⁵⁹ Parliamentary Papers, *The Agricultural Labourer*, p. 147. The report quotes the case of a farm labourer from Pwllheli travelling seven miles to work in the Criccieth area.

²⁶⁰ Parliamentary Papers, *The Agricultural Labourer*, p. 148.

General labourers made up 8% of the workforce. Much of their work may well have been somewhat precarious and seasonal. The labourer in the granite quarry would possibly have been a little more secure in his employment. Financial services employed a significant percentage – 6% – of the male population. These included bank managers, bank clerks, bookkeepers and those working for the Inland Revenue. Those who can be classed as professional/public service accounted for 5% of the employed males – for instance ministers of religion, solicitors and police. In the region of 5% of males were connected to the granite quarries. Other types of work which employed smaller numbers of men were the railway, car driving and, somewhat less easy to pigeon-hole, people such as Jacob Williams, originally from Llanbeblig, living at St. Tudwell's Terrace who doubled as court bailiff and photographer.

By 1901 the population of Pwllheli had risen as had the figures of males in employment. In many respects much remained the same as far as types of occupations and percentages were involved. The largest proportion of occupations – a quarter – was in various trades for instance joiners, wheelwrights, a number involved in the woollen trade and masons. Construction work on the new developments in Pwllheli provided employment for many trades – from the building of the new promenade in 1890, the construction of the south facing villas, hotels and shops in the years following and with work on improvements in local utilities such as lighting, sewerage and water supplies. Complaints in the press about lack of accommodation for the new spa put pressure on construction workers and in 1891 one of the houses under construction on the beach front collapsed killing three workers and injuring another three.²⁶¹ A fifth of men were employed in the retail and service industry with the usual mix of business such as drapers, butchers, provision dealers and a number of workers living in Pwllheli acting as agents for certain products. For example at 4 Kingshead Street William Prichard was a cycle agent; at 55 Sand Street Arthur James was an yeast agent and at 7, Bayview, John Williams acted as the local agent for Singer Sewing Machines. *Slater's Directory of North and Mid Wales 1895* described Pwllheli as a town which was ‘purely commercial’.²⁶² About 15% of male workers in Pwllheli were, by 1901, working in the granite quarry in occupations such as labourers, masons and sett makers. The height of the success of the granite quarries was in the first decade of the

²⁶¹ *Cambrian News and Merionethshire Standard*, 27 February 1891.

²⁶² *Slater's Directory of North and Mid Wales 1895*, p. 389.

twentieth century.²⁶³ Over a tenth of the town's male workforce remained in maritime callings – fishermen, ships carpenters, mariners and at 19 New Street the lighthouse keeper, Thomas White, from Blackwall, London, was living with his family and had been settled in Pwllheli for at least eight years. The press reported a certain amount of dissatisfaction locally with the work of the harbour authorities in 1890. An 'Old Tar' wrote that '... with all the talk about who is to collect the harbour dues one might expect that the harbour itself was properly attended to ...' He complained of fishing boats dropping anchor and thus blocking the channel to the harbour.²⁶⁴ However unlike Conwy, Pwllheli Borough Council was proactive in its pursuit of small-scale development and clearance of the entry to the harbour. For instance in 1891 it considered requesting that Pwllheli be made a fishery harbour and harbour of refuge. To this end a meeting was arranged with local fishermen.²⁶⁵ The town was eventually made a harbour of refuge at the beginning of the twentieth century with the assistance of David Lloyd George, the local MP. New landing slips were provided for fishermen and substantial investment in the harbour was instigated in 1901 in conjunction with an agreement made with the Cambrian Railways.²⁶⁶ In 1909 a new harbour and railway station were opened as a result of the continued co-operation between the town council and the Cambrian Railways. The mayor at the opening had no hesitation in saying that '... o holl ymgymmeriadau yr oedd Pwllheli wedi eu cario allan yn ei hanes ... yr hyn oedd yn cael ei gario allan y diwrnod hwnw [oedd] y mwyaf o'r godidocaf a fu erioed.' [*'... of all the undertakings that Pwllheli had carried out in its history that which was being carried out on that day was the most wonderful.'*] The opening ceremony showed a confidence in the economic future of the town whilst paying tribute to the contribution of £400,000 made by the late Solomon Andrews. Lloyd George sent a message to the ceremony '*lwc dda i Pwllheli a lwc ddrwg i'r Penwaig*' [*'Good luck to Pwllheli and bad luck to the herrings'*] as did Winston Churchill.²⁶⁷

Those involved in professional and public services which included several occupations – law, religion, education and financial services, for instance – accounted for around 7% of the workforce. Settled in Pwllheli's new 'West End' at 6 West End Parade was Thomas Houghton, a solicitor and his family and living in Cardiff Road

²⁶³ Hughes, *Pwllheli*, p. 176.

²⁶⁴ *CDH*, 19 December 1890.

²⁶⁵ GAS CRO XB12/1/5.

²⁶⁶ GAS CRO XB12/1/7.

²⁶⁷ *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 21 July 1909.

was Robert Garrett Roberts, the Wesleyan minister and his family. Pwllheli shared the same feature as many bigger towns and cities – a movement of the middle classes to the suburbs. In Pwllheli's case these constituted the new developments towards the sea.²⁶⁸

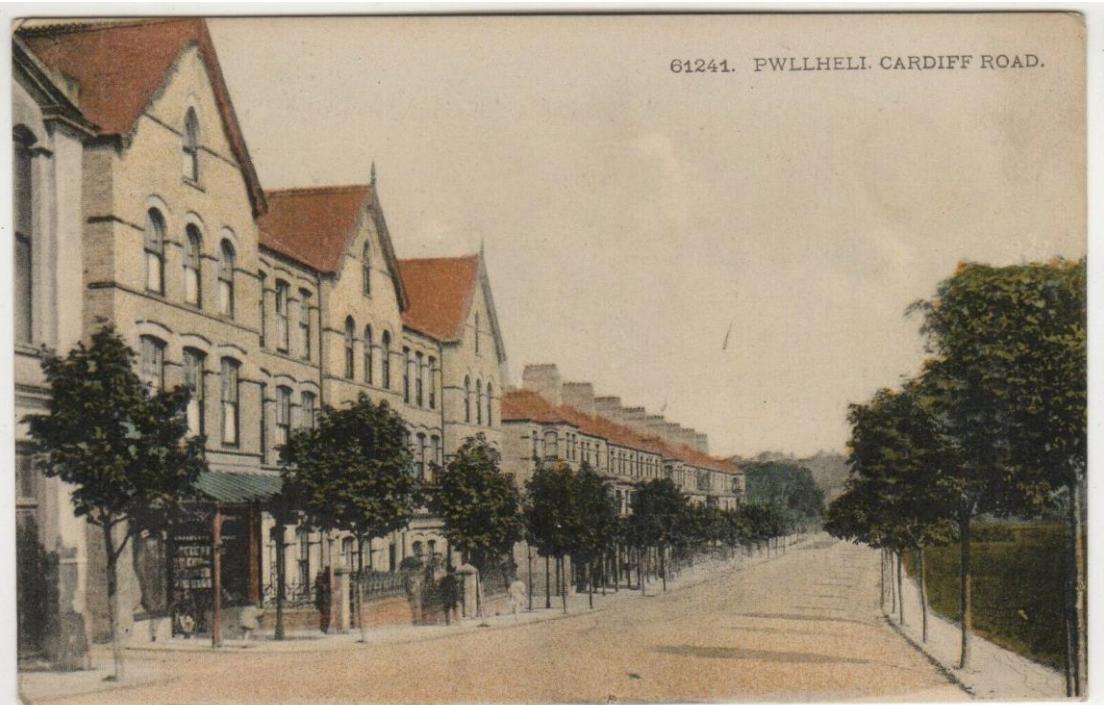


Figure 24: Postcard of Cardiff Road, Pwllheli early twentieth century.

In 1901 Cardiff Road was the home to three Nonconformist ministers. A calling to the up-and-coming resort with new housing and emporiums together with well-heeled visitors must have been very welcome to many a minister with middle class aspirations.²⁶⁹

Labourers and cartmen who could be employed in a large variety of occupations accounted for about 6% of the male workforce. Agricultural and related occupations had decreased since 1881 to 4% of the working male population. For instance John Morris, 32 King's Head Street, was a farmer and at 6 Abererch Road we find a farm labourer lodging. His surname was unknown to the householder and he is simply entered as 'William'. This decrease in percentage employment and town-based living reflects the tendency outlined by *The Royal Commission on Labour: The Agricultural Worker*.²⁷⁰ Cattle dealers and farm bailiffs were also based in Pwllheli.

²⁶⁸ M. Daunton, 'Introduction', in Daunton (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, p. 46.

²⁶⁹ See Hughes, *Pwllheli*, p. 279 and his discussion of the Calvinistic Methodist causes at the West End and South Beach and of the Rev. D. E. Davies in particular.

²⁷⁰ Parliamentary Papers, *Royal Commission on Labour: The Agricultural Labourer*, vol. 2, p. 91-92.

Pwllheli's transport links improved considerably at the turn of the century with the introduction of, for example, a tramway and bus services alongside the already existing rail links which had reached the centre of the town in 1909. This is reflected in the employment profile of Pwllheli. Hirst's recent study of the developments of resorts along Cardigan Bay shows that the development of the railway was particularly important in the growth of Pwllheli, Cricieth, Barmouth, Tywyn and Aberdyfi as spa resorts much as it was on the north Wales coast in Rhyl, Colwyn Bay and Llandudno. However this study illustrates that the distance of Pwllheli from the populous areas of urban and industrial England together with the lateness in developing the resort meant that it never attracted the numbers of visitors enjoyed by Llandudno and Rhyl.²⁷¹ Small numbers of male workers in the town were employed by the railway such as signalmen and railway porters, tram drivers and bus drivers who lived in the town. More unusually in 1901 Pwllheli could list among its resident workers a jockey.

Caernarfon

In 1881 of the sample enumeration districts in Caernarfon of the total male population over 60% were economically active. In the age bracket of fifteen and above 93% were in employment of some description. By 1901 the percentage of the whole male population in employment was in the region of 65% while amongst males aged fifteen and over there was an employment rate of about 96%. In 1881 the percentage of those describing themselves as employers barely reached 1%. This figure probably does not reflect the exact position or status of the inhabitants. For example at 1 St. Helen's Terrace, Henry Roberts from St. Davids, Pembrokeshire, aged sixty-six described himself as an 'active partner in flour mill'. The likelihood is that he had to employ at least some labour in his enterprise but he does not identify himself as an employer. By 1901 around 7% note that they were employers.²⁷²

In 1881 the largest percentage of men in the chosen enumeration districts were employed in some kind of trade – in all about 30% of the male workforce. The trades were varied which implies a diverse economy. For example at 31 New Street, John Jones from Caernarfon was in employment alongside many others from this area as an

²⁷¹ J. Hirst, 'Resort Development on the Cambrian Coast 1840-1914', (PhD Thesis, Aberystwyth University, 2017), pp. 236-9. Hirst also points out that by the end of the nineteenth century the railways aimed at making the service to Pwllheli slicker despite the delay in Afon Wen.

²⁷² In 1891 in the Twthill area 9% described themselves as employers.

iron moulder probably at the nearby De Winton ironworks which, in keeping with Caernarfon's maritime position, became a major supplier of boilers to steam ships. Several boiler makers such as Owen Ellis, 19 Uxbridge Street, therefore lived in the vicinity. Such work provided new apprenticeship opportunities to the young men of the town. Trades associated with building such as stone masons, joiners, house painters and plasterers were well represented as were blacksmiths and boot and shoemakers. Other trades such as weaving and upholstery were among the occupations. Evan Davies of 13 Wesley Street was a cotton weaver while at 20 South Penrallt, William Thomas and his son, both originally from Red Wharf Bay, were upholsterers. At 47 South Penrallt Daniel Osborne from Glasgow was a French polisher by trade. The latter two trades show that there was a demand in Caernarfon and district for these expensive services which were used in the more affluent Victorian house. Upholsters could also use their skills in upholstery work for carriages.

The second largest group of workmen were labourers – about 18% of men were employed in this unskilled sector with the greatest concentration of them in the poorest areas of these enumeration districts. At 5, Mount Pleasant Alley, all three members of the household were labourers – George and Catherine Edwards and their daughter also named Catherine. Much of the labouring work would have been casual and subject to the vicissitudes of trade and the seasons which exposed people to a cycle of poverty.

Retailers accounted for 13% of male employment in these districts – butchers, poulterers, bakers, grocers and milk businesses. At 54 Pool Street, Henry Lewis from Caernarfon kept a fancy shop and there were several drapers' establishments. It was noted in a contemporary trade directory that the town was 'well supplied with respectable and handsome retail establishments.'²⁷³

²⁷³ *Slater's Directory of North Wales 1880*, p. 33.



Figure 25: GAS CRO XS/1497/2/4 Yr Afr Aur, Caernarfon c.1910.

The slate and maritime trades were intertwined and provided between them 16% of employment opportunities. Some such as Griffith Owen of 22 Mountain Street was a slate quarryman and must have commuted to the slate quarries or possibly have stayed there during the week. John Davies of 31 Segontium Terrace, like many others in the area, worked on the quayside loading slate. These districts had an array of maritime work. At 8 Newborough Street, Robert Roberts, aged thirty-three, from Caernarfon was a master mariner and son of a retired master mariner. One sailor at home on census night was William Jones, 13 Wesley Street. Many sailors were evidently away as only their wives and families were at home. Trades at sea such as ship's carpenters also provided employment and it is likely that much of the rope maker's work was used by the marine trade. The local fishing industry gave employment to the small number of men such as John Roberts, age 53, living in Baptist Street. This was an unpredictable and seasonal occupation which may explain why fishermen lived in the poorer areas of the town.

Smaller numbers were employed by the railway – about 4%.²⁷⁴ The printing trade also employed around the same number in these areas. Some were still

²⁷⁴ Rhydderch-Dart, “The Great Relief of the Overcrowded Slums”, p. 533. In 1871 16% of males in Twthill were employed by the railway and in 1891 12% were so employed. Many of these men had migrated to Caernarfon and held skilled positions. Evidently the new housing development of Twthill attracted newcomers to the town.

undergoing their apprenticeship in the latter trade. Professional, financial and public services were represented in 6% of the occupations. An editor, Robert David Rowlands, better known as ‘Anthropos’, was in 1881 a lodger in Chapel Street. He was a native of Ty’n y Cefn, Corwen, and followed many callings before training as a minister of religion. Rowlands was part of the lively publishing scene in Caernarfon. He was on the staff of the newspapers *Yr Herald Cymraeg* and later *Y Genedl*.²⁷⁵ Other professions included the law, the ministry with the Wesleyan and Calvinistic Methodist minister living on the same – more salubrious – street. Also lodging in the area at 26 Segontium Terrace were a father and daughter – both are described as ‘professors’ of music and dancing respectively. There is no way of knowing how long they were staying in the area but they may well have been employed or looking for work in genteel households in the vicinity.

Agriculture and gardening provided work for in the region of 5% of these areas in Caernarfon. Some were gardeners and others farm labourers. At 46 South Penrallt a brother and sister described their occupation as farming 23 acres of land while at Cornhir Richard Evans entered in his return that he farmed 5 acres. Such landholding, especially the latter, would barely offer a subsistence level of income. Too small a number to quantify in percentage terms were militia men who lodged in the area. Many must have been scraping a living. Fourteen-year-old Thomas Davies who lived in 4, Cadnant Court, earned a living as a rag sorter. He lived at home with his mother and sister who were hawkers and four younger children. Theirs must have been a hand to mouth existence and living in appalling conditions. Griffith Jones of 58 Mountain Street was a scavenger, most likely employed by Caernarfon Borough Council. This again must have been a precarious living.

In 1901, as in 1881, the largest percentage of male workers in this area were those involved in trade. They constituted 26% of the workforce, a small decline on the 1881 figures. They include the usual mix of shoemakers, tailors, plumbers and those associated with the building industry – bricklayers, plasterers, carpenters and house painters. Some had more than one trade. At 67 South Penrallt Lewis Williams was a cabinet maker and grocer. As a worker it was probably a shrewd decision to be able to

²⁷⁵ Dictionary of Welsh National Biography, <https://yba.llgc.org.uk/en/s2-ROWL-DAV-1853.html?query=Anthropos&field=content> (viewed on 19/08/17). It was when he was the editor of the latter paper that he lived in Chapel Street. In 1887 he went on to become the minister of Beulah Chapel, Caernarfon and became editor of *Trysorfa'r Plant*. He died in 1944.

diversify in a town which was declining in population. Others such as Isaac Blackburn, originally from Caernarfon and living at 23 Uxbridge Street, were boiler makers employed at the local iron works. Emil Albert Korhigas, originally from Germany but whose youngest child of 10 had been born in Caernarfon, lived in 23 North Penrallt and worked on his own account as a tripe dealer and gut scraper. In 1909 the Medical Officer of Health drew up a list of all workshops in the town.²⁷⁶ In all there were 135 workshops in Caernarfon. These had been inspected under the regulations of the Factory and Workshop Act and included, for example, ten shoemakers, nine tailors, six cabinet makers, four printers, three cycle repairers, twenty bakehouses and one sailmaker. The variety of trades reflected in the full list suggests a town which was self-sufficient and with a capacity for serving the wider region.

Around 23% of males were occupied in the retail industry – butchers, grocers, provision dealers and fruiterers – to list just a small range of those selling mostly perishable goods. At the building called the North and South Wales bank in Pool Street there was a large draper's business run by David Roberts, originally from Llanrhaeadr in Denbighshire who had three assistants living in together with two domestic servants. Such a business would have been serving a large catchment area to maintain such a prosperous establishment. The retail sector had increased substantially since 1881.

18% of the male working population worked as labourers and carters: the same percentage as in 1881. One carter worked for the corporation and the two others described themselves as carters with mules. Labourers in the main are described as simply ‘general labourers’ while a few have a place of work attached to their occupation such as the iron foundry or type of labouring such as mason’s or coal merchant’s labourer. One suspects that the ‘general labourer’ would have to look for employment possibilities and his living was somewhat more precarious. Corporation work in the housing sector would have provided employment for the unskilled labourer as houses were demolished and sites cleared.

A smaller cohort of males worked in maritime related occupations – some 6% made up of small numbers of fishermen, sailors, ships carpenters and boat captains. According to an article in 1906 in *Baner ac Amserau Cymru* about forty to fifty people earned their living as fishermen in the town. As in all three boroughs there were complaints about the regulations relating to fishing such as the size of mesh allowed in

²⁷⁶ GAS CRO XD1/346.

nets and the length of the closed season. According to the newspaper the latter meant that the fishermen of Caernarfon had ‘ddim i’w wneyd (sic) ... o Medi cyntaf i Mawrth cyntaf’ [‘had nothing to do between 1 September and 1 March’].²⁷⁷ The courts appear to be fairly lenient in their dealings with the fishermen when rules were broken. For example when Robert Evans, Poole Street, Hugh Jones, North Penrallt, Elias Williams also of North Penrallt and Edward Jones, Poole Hill appeared in court for fishing in the closed season, the case was dismissed by the Chairmen to cries of ‘hear, hear’ from the ‘back of the court where a number of local fishermen had assembled’.²⁷⁸ Fishermen in Caernarfon were small-time traders probably supplying the local market. A ship’s stoker, James Edwards lived in 8 Mount Pleasant Square and at Min y Nant Walter Carradog Thomas earned his living as a marine engineer. The interrelationship of slate and maritime employment was still evident with slate loaders working on the quay. Edward Peters of 20 New Street was a slate contractor (loading) employing men. Work was also available in small factories producing writing slates. This was an industry which employed men and women. No longer is there a quantifiable number of workers who commuted from Caernarfon to work at the slate quarries. Someone like Lewis Thomas, Penybrynn Yard, aged seventeen originally from Anglesey was an exception. However the percentage number of males in occupations reliant on the slate quarries was 6%. This decline sets part of the economy of Caernarfon within the context of its hinterland. The general decline in the slate industry and the prolonged strike in the Penrhyn quarries had a clear impact on the employment patterns of the town. This was undoubtedly a contributory factor in the reduction of the town’s population.

Agricultural occupations figure a little more prominently in 1901 and involved in the region of 7% of the population.²⁷⁹ This is partly explained by the spread of housing into nearby farming areas and the enumeration districts including them in their division. The proximity of urban and rural was a feature in all the boroughs. This enabled farm labourers to live in the town so for example Robert Ellis at 14 Mountain Street was an agricultural labourer and John Davies at 49 Penrallt was a threshing machine driver. All these lived side by side with for instance iron workers, sailors and shop workers. This feature is reflected over decades in the census returns for the town.

²⁷⁷ *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 31 October 1906.

²⁷⁸ *CDH*, 1 October 1909.

²⁷⁹ This increase was also reflected in Twthill where in 1871 6% were employed in gardening and agriculture but by 1891 9% were employed in these occupations.

A small proportion of men were employed as domestic gardeners as were father and son Thomas Williams and William Williams, both from Caernarfon and living in Pool Street. They describe themselves as ‘workers’ rather than working on their account so presumably had settled places of employment. Other work sectors employed small percentages of the workforce in these districts. The number of professional and public service workers amounted to just around 3% of the male working population. For example there was a Collector of Income Tax in the more affluent housing. Members of the teaching profession, Post Office employees including a rural postman and members of the Caernarfonshire constabulary all had their homes in these districts but the professional/public sector had weakened. The printing industry remained at about the same levels as 1881 but there was decline in the numbers employed by the railway. As in Conwy there had been concern in the mid-1890s that the LNWR wished to sack monoglot Welsh platelayers. In Caernarfon there was an outcry in the press and in the Borough Council. The Borough in its deliberations stressed that this type of employment was of prime importance to the town as it gave unskilled workers occupations. It objected to the cavalier treatment of the railway company in its proposed treatment of a ‘large body of deserving men’ and that this was a ‘direct insult to the Welsh nation and language as well as an injustice to the men.’²⁸⁰ The threat of dismissal was withdrawn. Other occupations included the local bridgemaster, school caretaker, car drivers and the caretaker of the Post Office.

Employment profile: Female

Settlement	1881	1901
Conwy	49%	43%
Pwllheli	37%	30%
Caernarfon	34%	38%

Percentage of females of fifteen years and over in employment.

Although the census enumerates women it does not fairly reflect their economic contribution to the family income. This has to be done by interpreting the evidence and the household structure. What the listed occupations do is give an indication of opportunities that were available to women and also the status attributed to them. Higgs and Wilkinson in their discussion of the much debated use of nineteenth century

²⁸⁰ GAS CRO XD1/755.

census for women's occupations concluded that 'there appears no good reason why historians should not make full use of this extraordinary source for reconstructing the social and economic roles of women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century England and Wales'.²⁸¹

Conwy

The percentage of women as being noted in employment in Conwy in 1881 was 31% in the overall female population. Of those aged 15 and over, which made up 62% of the population, this percentage rose to 49% in formal employment. By 1901 out of the total female population of Conwy 29% were in employment. In the age bracket of fifteen years and above which made up 65% of the female population this percentage rises to 43%. These figures are considerably higher than both Pwllheli and Caernarfon and may reflect the number of young women who may well have been employed in the burgeoning areas such as Llandudno.²⁸² Very few young women and girls under the age of 15 are entered in the Conwy census as having an occupation but it is highly likely that there was a hidden economy where youngsters would have undertaken casual and intermittent work or would simply have been kept at home as a help but not in any formalised sense. In the 1881 census no female described themselves as an employer but evidently in some cases they would be regarded as such as in hotel owners and shop owners. Of those noted as being employed the largest number by far – 51% – were employed as domestic servants, general servants and cooks.²⁸³ Many of these were employed in the local hotels. A hotel keeper Robert Roberts of Rose Hill Street who himself was from Aberffraw, Anglesey, and had led a peripatetic life with his family with children born in Ireland and Porthmadog, employed four domestic servants, all of whom were from areas away from Conwy.²⁸⁴ Indeed 70% of domestic servants had been born in other areas. The majority of domestic servants was earning a living in establishments such as Mary Evans, aged twenty-one, from the Conwy Valley who lived with and worked as a servant for a mother and daughter, both grocers from Conwy. Women such as Ellen Davies, widow, aged sixty-three, living at Erskine

²⁸¹ See E. Higgs, and A. Wilkinson, 'Women, Occupation and Work in the Nineteenth Century Censuses Revisited', *History Workshop Journal*, 81, 1 (2016), 17-38.

²⁸² Jones, 'Serfdom and Slavery', p. 98. In Wales as a whole of those females aged over 10 in 1891 28.7% were in employment, 23.6% in 1901 and the same percentage in 1911.

²⁸³ W. A. Armstrong, 'The Use of Information about Occupation', in Wrigley (ed.), *Nineteenth Century Society*, pp. 191-310. In 1881 45.4% were employed in domestic service in England and Wales.

²⁸⁴ TNA, Records of the General Register Office RG13/5286, Conway – 1901.

Terrace eked out a living by being a laundress and also keeping a boarder while Ann Williams, aged twenty, living at 5 Plas Ucha with her widowed mother, two brothers and a number of lodgers earned her living as a charwoman which probably allowed her to help with domestic work at home as well. The next largest group of female workers were involved in the retail and service trade – as milliners, dressmakers, china dealers and grocers. These constituted 31% of females in occupation. A number of schoolmistresses lived in the town and the person who was the bookkeeper for The Castle Hotel was Ethel Kay from Jersey. As well as a female hotel proprietress the town also had female lodging housekeepers. Hotels and lodging houses must have provided some work at least for the women – 4% of the female workforce were washerwomen.

By 1901 42% of women in employment were domestic servants – fewer than in 1881. A number of these came from outside Wales, others were Welsh but had evidently moved into the town for employment and a number were native to Conwy itself. In all the majority – over 60% came from outside Conwy. So for example at Llys Llywellyn a household comprising of a head, originally from Canada, with children and lodgers, employed a domestic cook and housekeeper. The first came from Manchester and the latter from Richmond, Yorkshire. About half those employed as domestic servants were by now attached to hotels while fewer were live-in servants in purely family households such as that of William Hughes, Chemist, Castle Street living with his mother and employing an eighteen-year-old domestic from Conwy.²⁸⁵ *The Royal Commission on Labour: The Agricultural Labourer* noted in evidence taken in 1892 in Llanfyllin, Montgomeryshire, a county which had seen a substantial proportion of its inhabitants move away, that a high number of ‘Welsh girls are in great request as domestic servants’.²⁸⁶ This was a feature in most agrarian communities in Wales. In 1891 the census had shown that around 42.7% of all women with occupations in England and Wales were classed as domestic servants.²⁸⁷ In Wales many left for England but others drifted to smaller market towns such as Conwy and to the new spa towns. 4% of the female workforce were charwomen who were evidently employed as

²⁸⁵ See E. Higgs, ‘Domestic Servants and Households in Victorian England’, *Social History*, 8, 2 (1983), 201-210. Higgs discusses domestic servants in the light of Leonore Davidoff’s work and her stress on the changing nature of domestic service, its position in the economic structure and its reflection of new technology.

²⁸⁶ Parliamentary Papers, *The Agricultural Labourer*, p. 81.

²⁸⁷ W. A. Armstrong, ‘The Use of Information about Occupation’, in Wrigley (ed.), *Nineteenth Century Society*, pp. 255-281.

such on a regular basis as they described themselves as ‘workers’. A large proportion of the economically active women were employed in the retail and service industry – in all around 40%. This is a significant increase on the 1881 figures.²⁸⁸ These covered a breadth of occupations and positions such as Margaret Dougall, a licensed victualler at The Boat Inn, Adelaide Lewis a timber merchant at Muriau, numerous dressmakers, milliners, grocer and provision dealers and a Berlin wool shopkeeper.²⁸⁹ Other callings provided some work for the female population – nursing and midwifery, teaching and accounting work. By the 1901 census in England and Wales women constituted three-quarters of the workforce in the classroom. Nursing which had gained in prestige since 1887 when women could register themselves as trained professionals attracted over 60,000 workers throughout the country.²⁹⁰ 3% of the female workforce were lodging housekeepers. At 12 Llewelyn Street a local railway family whose head was a signalman with the LNWR Railway, had two sons who were railway stokers and also a wife who at forty-nine was also described as a railway stoker. In the region of 4% of women described themselves as employers.

For both census years the majority of females did not put any occupation against their names in the census returns. Fifty per cent of those of fifteen and over in 1881 had no occupational description and by 1901 there was a slight increase and around 57% had no such description in this age bracket. The likely reasons for this were various. In 1881 households which included family members and lodgers gave the wife no occupational description although it is evident that she must have been the primary person looking after that part of the household business. For example at 5 Pool Lane Catherine Morris, the wife of a general labourer and mother of a one year old child also had two boarders in the house. Some women may well have been helping at home: for example in 1901 at 8 Jubilee Terrace Jane Roberts, aged twenty-five, lived with her widowed father who was a general labourer. As an unmarried daughter she may well have been fulfilling all the duties of a housekeeper but this was not acknowledged in the census.²⁹¹ At the Boat Inn there were four daughters living at home with their licensed victualler mother. The eldest daughter was a schoolteacher

²⁸⁸ TNA, Records of the General Register Office RG13/5286, Conway– 1901.

²⁸⁹ Until the late 1880s ‘Berlin work’ was highly popular. It was canvas work and this needlework was popularised by the Great Exhibition of 1851 and by the newly emerging women’s magazines. Its popularity showed that there were many women with increased leisure time.

²⁹⁰ Cannadine, *Victorious Century*, p. 507.

²⁹¹ E. Higgs, ‘Women, Occupation and Work in the Nineteenth Century Censuses’, *History Workshop Journal*, 23, 1 (1987), 69.

but the other three have no occupation listed alongside their names. Their mother employed no servants so may well have been using her daughters as help in the Inn. A witness commenting on certain aspects of life in north Wales in the late 1890s noted the role played by women in the mussel industry in the area. He described in unflattering terms a ‘queer group of fearsome looking females … with large baskets on their backs, some dozen or twenty in number’ who went on board a broad beamed sailing boat to the mouth of the river to collect mussels.²⁹² No female however is described in the census as a mussel gatherer. This work would have been seasonal and it is fair to assume that it made a useful contribution to the family income. Such work would certainly have been strenuous and at times quite dangerous as it had to be carried out at the turn of the tide.

Pwllheli

Of the female population in Pwllheli in 1881 only 25% are described as having any occupation. The women aged fifteen and above constituted 62% of the whole female population and of these in the region of 37% were described as being economically active. By 1901 the percentage of females in the employment market had declined in the whole female population to 23% and in the age bracket of fifteen years and above to 30%. The number who entered whether they were employed or employers among women was negligible. Evidently some women were employing help in shops, hotels, lodging houses or other businesses, both in 1881 and 1901 but they did not note their employment status. One who did was Jane Hughes, 12 Llawr Gors, Pwllheli, who described herself as an employer.²⁹³

In 1881 half the formally employed women were in domestic service and over half of these were women from outside Pwllheli. For example at 46 High Street, Rachel Griffith, aged twenty-eight was from Rhiw and at Tower Villa Mary Jones was a domestic servant from Aberdaron. Housekeepers, cooks and nursemaids made up 9% of the female workforce. Pwllheli was a natural centre for employment for women whose home areas held few paid employment prospects. Over 20% of employed women worked in the retail and service sector.

²⁹² Bradley, *Highways and Byways*, p. 201.

²⁹³ See p. 73.



Figure 26: GAS CRO XS/197/76 High Street, Pwllheli showing a busy commercial centre in the town c.1900.

Ellen Davies, 3 Penlan Street, was a licensed victualler, unmarried and employing one household servant. Further down the same street Hannah Griffith was a grocer/provision dealer alongside her daughter and at 43 High Street two sisters, both from Pwllheli, were confectioners. Others worked as barmaids, shop assistants and dressmakers: all providing a service to the town. Washerwomen or charwomen made up 6% of the female employment market whilst a very small proportion was in professional work such as school mistresses and teachers. Many women appeared to have to supplement their income by diversifying their work. For example at 4 Penmount Place, Elin Evans, a widow is described as a ‘mangling woman’ but she also kept three lodgers and had three children of her own.

By 1901 there was a decline in the percentage of women employed. There may well be a multitude of reasons for this decline. Some females were possibly able to commute to work and would therefore not be enumerated in Pwllheli. Others who had, for instance, been employed as domestic servants had become fewer and within this

decreased number the percentage of women native to Pwllheli had lessened to 35% of the domestic servant market compared to almost 50% in 1881. It may also be that this was an effect of the Pwllheli ‘West End’ – new, prosperous housing where women did not and were not expected to earn a living. Many of these were the employers of domestic help. A number of these employees had been ‘imported’ to Pwllheli. For example in the household of the solicitor Thomas Houghton, his Liverpudlian wife and child at 6 West End Parade the two servants came from Ireland and Lancashire. Whether this reflected a shortage of suitable local women or was a case of family choice based possibly on language and family privacy are matters of conjecture. A few doors away the Welsh Calvinistic minister employed a monoglot English domestic servant from Liverpool. The latter appointment in particular appears a strange choice in a town where 38.5% spoke Welsh only.

Although the domestic labour market was smaller it remained the largest employment sector for women in 1901 at about 40%. Nurses in households accounted for 4% of the total female workforce. Washerwomen and charwomen held their own with around 5% working in these capacities. After domestic service the largest employer of women was in the retail and service industries. This sector now accounted for 30% of women employed and included for example shop keepers, dressmakers, confectioners, hotel keepers and weavers – a varied pattern of occupations. The prevalence of dressmakers in small towns was noted in 1893, ‘... the number of country girls, daughters of agricultural labourers, who go in for dressmaking is astounding and one wonders if half of their number get any work at all ...’²⁹⁴ As a business dressmaking lent itself to being home based or shop based employment allowing for full or part time work. Pwllheli’s expansion and increased visitor numbers demanded a new ‘shopping experience’ which gave employment opportunities to women in tailoring and in alterations. Shops such as the Bon Marche drapery establishment, Pollecoff’s Drapery in the High Street²⁹⁵ and W. O. Hughes’ business offering ‘ladies and gentlemen’s tailor and breeches maker ... made by skilled workmen under expert supervision.’²⁹⁶ Most of these employment opportunities were undoubtedly based on the new developments of Pwllheli as a spa and visitor centre.

²⁹⁴ Parliamentary Papers, *The Agricultural Labourer*, vol. 2, p. 11.

²⁹⁵ See C. Parry-Jones, *The History of the Jewish Diaspora in Wales* (PhD Thesis, Bangor University, 2014).

²⁹⁶ Bennett’s Business Directory North Wales 1910, pp. 190-192.

The Pollecoffs were part of the north Wales Hebrew community. The main Jewish communities in Wales were found in Cardiff, Merthyr and in the oldest settled Hebrew community in Swansea. Smaller communities were found along the North Wales coast in Bangor, Colwyn Bay, Llandudno and Rhyl. A synagogue was established in Bangor in 1894 when it was estimated that the Jewish population in that town had reached about one hundred. Kosher guest houses were set up in the seaside resorts which attracted Jewish visitors from the larger communities in England. The Pollecoffs who had fled the pogroms in Russia settled initially in Bangor and Holyhead. They established shops in many towns in North Wales including Pwllheli. They may well have initially hoped that Pwllheli could have shared in the Jewish visitor trade enjoyed by the other north Wales seaside towns. However Pwllheli had no facilities to aid the life of an observant Jew – no kosher butcher and no synagogue. Parry-Jones relates that even in the 1930s the one Jewish family in Pwllheli had its kosher meat brought by train from Liverpool or Manchester.²⁹⁷

By 1901 11% of females employed could be described as professional or in public service. Most of these were teachers such as Annie J. Roberts, 6 Salem Terrace, originally from Llanddeiniolen and bilingual and Ella Louise Henry, Manor, Pwllheli, originally from the Punjab and who spoke English only. The latter may well have been employed in a private capacity as a tutor or in one of the private schools which were from time to time established in the town.

For both census years the majority of women had no occupation listed. However what is listed gives us an indication of the opportunities available to women in small urban communities which served as a centre of a larger hinterland. Pwllheli underwent change and investment brought about by people who saw in the area an opportunity to develop a resort and spa. Such change was not dramatically reflected in the occupational profile of women. As in all communities it is likely that women in Pwllheli did informal work which fell outside the spotlight of the census. In 1885 Jane Parry of Llawrygors, North Road, Pwllheli, died suddenly. In the 1881 census she is

²⁹⁷ Little mention is made of Jews in the records of these communities. Unusually in Pwllheli workhouse in the 1890s one short term inmate was described as a domestic servant and of the ‘Reformed Jewish faith’ (XG1/65). The Jewish Chronicle in 1913 reported on a spate of burglaries in north Wales and the burning of a chapel in Pwllheli. It reported that the police had ‘circulated the description of a wandering Jew’ but in fact arrested a Scotsman. The paper complained that this was the second time a ‘wandering Jew’ had been suspected of crimes carried out by others (*Jewish Chronicle*, 11 July 1913). The report evidently hints at a degree of antisemitism and its view may have been coloured by the anti-Jewish riots in the valleys of south Wales in 1911. Such overt antisemitism was not evident in recorded sources in Caernarfonshire. The experience of the individual may have been different.

shown to be a native of Llandwrog, born in 1828, and without an occupation listed against her name. However a press report about her death wrote of her work over years of carrying milk from Gorphwysfa Farm every morning and that after her ‘going her ordinary round … she worked all the afternoon in a potato field’.²⁹⁸ As the council struggled to keep the roads of the old town clear it passed a resolution in 1890 that stalls could not be set up in the streets and squares which could cause obstructions. However a motion was proposed that ‘the old women who are inhabitants of the town and who have street stallages be excluded from the operation of this recommendation.’²⁹⁹ The motion was defeated. For many women this must have meant fewer opportunities for income generation either on a casual or a regular basis. Casual work would also be available during the summer season when visitors came to stay in the town for a few weeks. For example press reports in the very early stages of the development of the front in 1890 wrote of the ‘distinguished visitors’ who had either arrived or were expected. The bishop of London, Dr. Temple, was expected to visit for a few weeks and the Right Hon. Cecil Raikes, M.P. and Sir John Pulestone, M.P. took apartments for a month. Visitors came from further afield such as a Mr and Mrs. Heenar, Hyderabad, India who ‘expressed an opinion that Pwllheli has only to be made known amongst the Anglo-Indians to draw a large number of them here.’³⁰⁰

Caernarfon

In Caernarfon the percentage of females aged fifteen and over in the sample enumeration districts in 1881, who were listed with an occupation, was about 34%. Very few under fifteen had an occupation placed next to their census entry. Of those females in occupations the largest number, 40%, were involved in the retail industry. For example at 1 New Street Catherine Jones, the wife of a slate merchant, kept a grocer’s shop with her daughter Ellen as her assistant. The youngest daughter earned her living by sewing. At 58 South Penrallt, Catherine Hughes, a widow, was a provision dealer. Other women were employed as dressmakers and people such as Elizabeth Jones, widow, of School House was a shirt maker. Some women juggled home life with trying to earn a living. This was probably the case of Mary Davies of Wesley Street who had been according to the entry ‘deserted by husband’ and

²⁹⁸ NWC 4 April 1885.

²⁹⁹ GAS CRO XB12/1/5.

³⁰⁰ CDH, 25 July 1890.

described herself as a dressmaker. Whether these women retailed their products directly to the public or received commissions from other retailers is not clear in the census but for the purposes of this study they have been included with retailers. The majority of these women were from Caernarfon although in some areas women migrated into the towns because of the lack of employment opportunities in the countryside. Domestic service offered occupations to 38% of the female workforce. Not all were live-in servants for example at 50 Penrallt the household consisted of the head of household, his two sisters, his son and wife and grandchildren. Both sisters were general servants but evidently were not employed within the household. At Castle Square, Robert Ellis, head, unmarried was a grocer and employed a housekeeper and servant aged fourteen – one of the few under fifteen with an occupation.

Washerwomen and charwomen made up 10% of female workers. Their lot must have been precarious. At 8 Well Street Hannah Taite, a washerwoman lived, the husband is not listed and she had six children – five of whom had to be supported financially. The eldest at fifteen was a slate cutter. Other women were employed in writing-slate manufacturing, rag sorting and poster hanging. At Segontium Terrace, Elizabeth Mills, at seventy-five and originally from Cheshire, kept a lodging house. As described earlier in this chapter a couple of women were labourers by occupation.³⁰¹ A small percentage of women were paupers³⁰² or entered as ‘supported by family’.³⁰³

In 1901 of the female population about 25% were in employment. In the age bracket of fifteen and over around 38% were described as being with an occupation. Of those in occupation 36% were employed in retail and trade. The retail trades represented were almost exclusively dressmaking, stocking making and seamstresses. Most were noted in 1901 as being employed by others with a small number working on their own account. Representing the latter was Jane Williams, widow originally from Caernarfon and living at 9 Newborough Street. She is listed as a butcher and coal merchant. She lived with her extended family and a lodger. None of these appeared to

³⁰¹ See p. 98.

³⁰² Dot Jones’s study of pauperism in the Aberystwyth Poor Law Union 1870-1914 with its analysis of the changes in the composition of the pauper class set against the communities within the union. Jones’s article analyses the balance between indoor and outdoor relief and the pattern of the latter against the economic circumstances in the Aberystwyth Union. For instance between 1870 and 1885 the vast majority of paupers received outdoor relief while this trend was reversed between 1879 and 1881 reflecting a period of economic crisis. By 1885 the numbers receiving outdoor relief had recovered. Jones therefore uses these figures as an economic barometer for the period. See D. Jones, ‘Pauperism in the Aberystwyth Poor Law Union 1870-1914’, *Ceredigion*, 9, 1 (1980), 78-101.

³⁰³ No paupers were listed in the 1871 and 1891 census returns for Twthill.

be involved in her enterprises. The figure of female retailers is somewhat smaller than in 1881 which may have reflected the declining population and demand and the introduction of ready to wear clothes in shops such as The Nelson Emporium. As an advert for the shop claimed in 1898 ‘Yn ddiddadl nis gellir cael mewn unrhyw fasnachdy arall yng Ngogledd Cymry gymaint o ddewis o ... ddillad’ [‘Without doubt there is no better selection of clothing to be found in any other retail establishment in North Wales’].³⁰⁴ During the 1890s cheap train fares were available to bring people to the Nelson Emporium on Saturdays and by the first decade of the twentieth century the shop advertised itself as supplying up to the minute fashions and also arranged large winter sales. Walton discusses the role of advertising ‘it was a theme of the mid and late Victorian years ... it was overwhelmingly an urban phenomenon’.³⁰⁵ Much of this activity must have undercut local retailers and trades people. In 1909 the Medical Officer of Health reported that there were eighteen milliners’ workshops and eleven dressmakers’ workshops in the town.³⁰⁶ Some of these were probably sales outlets as well. It could also reflect that there were greater employment opportunities further afield to which women could commute.

Domestic servants and cooks accounted for 27% of female workers – a substantial decline on the 1881 figure. Some households retained live-in servants such as Richard Morgan at New Street who retained Dorothy Williams as a servant and Robert Norman Davies at Quellyn, a slate quarry agent. Others lived away from their place of work. At 22 Bridge Street there is an intriguing house where evidently a number of workers lodged in independent rooms – in all seventeen, all of whom described themselves as head of household. Amongst them are three domestic servants and the majority of the others, both male and female, worked in drapers’ establishments. 16% of female workers were employed as charwomen in these areas. Spin off employment from the slate industry such as writing-slate manufacturing and slate polishers accounted for 5% of the female population. Other occupations included lodging housekeepers and a harpist. By 1901 the number of professional/public service workers is no higher than it was in 1881.

³⁰⁴ YGG, 26 April 1898.

³⁰⁵ J. K. Walton, ‘Towns and Consumerism’, in Daunton (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, p. 734.

³⁰⁶ GAS CRO XD1/346.

As in all communities much of the work of women was not noted in the census such as keeping lodgers in the home, undertaking duties in a husband's business and freelance cleaning and washing. From the evidence of court records many women must have supplemented their income with working in the sex trade – either as prostitutes or as keepers of brothels. Perhaps this was 'a rational career choice' but it was most probably a decision made based on 'sheer desperation'.³⁰⁷ Illegal at the time the courts dealt with a steady stream of prostitutes – many of whom made regular appearances in court which suggests that this employment was undertaken over a number of years by the same women.³⁰⁸ There is no doubt that prostitution was more prevalent – and possibly more organised – in Caernarfon than it was in Pwllheli and Conwy. However it is also more traceable as the court records³⁰⁹ are town specific and the press more active in its coverage of court proceedings than in the other two boroughs. In late nineteenth-century Swansea prostitution was seen as a smear upon that town's civic reputation.³¹⁰ There is no evidence to suggest that the urban centres of Caernarfonshire differed in their view of prostitution.

Child/Youth profile

Schooling at elementary level was transformed in 1870 with the passing of an Act which allowed voluntary schools to continue but in areas where such provision was non-existent schoolboards were to be created. In 1880 education for children aged five to ten was made compulsory, the age was extended to eleven in 1893 and to twelve in 1899 and was later raised to thirteen. Fees were payable until 1891. In 1902 education became the responsibility of the county. The Welsh Intermediate School Act was passed in 1889 which gave pupils the opportunity of secondary education. The first such school in Wales was built in Caernarfon. These schools became known as County Schools and taught in essence a grammar school curriculum.

³⁰⁷ Cannadine, *Victorious Century*, p. 506.

³⁰⁸ GAS CRO XLC/2/4 Prosecution was a way of trying to curb prostitution in Newcastle for instance. See B. Bennison, 'Drunkenness in Turn of the Century Newcastle Upon Tyne', *Local Population Studies*, 52 (Spring, 1994), 17.

³⁰⁹ L. Zedner, 'Women, Crime and Penal Responses: A Historical Account', *Crime and Justice*, 14 (1991), 317. In 1890 7% of convictions against women were for prostitution in England and Wales.

³¹⁰ L. Hulonce, "A Social Frankenstein in our midst": Inciting Interpretations of Prostitution in Late Nineteenth Century Swansea', *Llafur*, 9, No. 4 (2007), 48.

Conwy

Just in excess of 30% of the inhabitants of Conwy in 1881 were aged up to and including fourteen years of age. In 1901 this section of the community accounted for 28% of the population. Around 82% in this age group in 1881 were described as scholars.³¹¹ Apart from the privately funded Conway College which drew its clientele from the middle classes over a wide region and a number of lower key private educational establishments, Conwy's educational provision was for the infant and elementary sectors. Although efforts were made to run a workhouse school, these were abandoned and children were sent to the local town schools. In 1889 for example Conway National Infants School sent a bill to the Guardians for £2.12.6 for indoor pauper children.³¹² 'Only in Conwy did the Church have a monopoly' of schools in Caernarfonshire in the last two decades of the nineteenth century.³¹³ The borough council had not shown the same enthusiasm for establishing a School Board as did other communities in Caernarfonshire. The reasons 'for different responses lay in different social outlooks'.³¹⁴ A County School was established during the first decade of the twentieth century in the more populous town of Llandudno which served the wider area.³¹⁵ After the introduction of compulsory education in 1870 there was a temptation in some households to use the term 'scholar' to hide the fact that the children were otherwise employed.³¹⁶ Some children had no entry because they were aged below five years while a small number had no description and for no apparent reason. For example the household of the draper in Manchester House, Lancaster Square, had seven- and six-year-old daughters but neither described as scholars. Again a small number had vocational descriptions such as John Smith, age thirteen, Rosemary Street, who had been apprenticed to his father John Smith, age fifty-three, a joiner. By 1901 the necessity to enter the term 'scholar', which had been somewhat vague, was dropped and children were to be described only if they were engaged in a

³¹¹ CAS CES3/7 and CES3/1 Conway National School (Infants) and Conway National Boys School. Five-year-old boys were taught needlework and older boys were given the opportunity to attend French classes.

³¹² CAS CES3/7.

³¹³ H. G. Williams, 'Elementary Education in Caernarvonshire 1839-1902' (PhD Thesis, University of Wales: Bangor, 1981), p. 310.

³¹⁴ Williams, p. 311.

³¹⁵ A useful overview of education in Conwy town has been put together by a local group and published online at http://orapweb.rcahms.gov.uk/coflein/D/DD2014_015.pdf

³¹⁶ E. Higgs, *Making Sense of the Census* (London, 1989), p. 83.

trade or industry by that work even if they also attended school.³¹⁷ There were comparatively few in the Conwy workforce aged fourteen or under in 1901 but there are examples such as Jerry Blundell, aged thirteen, of Chapel Street who was a telegraph messenger and Thomas Smith, aged thirteen, at Sunnyside who was an office boy. A snapshot of occupational opportunities for Conwy children can be seen in an Admission Register 1904-1931 for Conway Boys School.³¹⁸ These youngsters leaving school at fourteen would have been born between 1890 and 1922. Some had no employment lined up after leaving, a number were apprenticed to, for example, plumbers, tailors and hairdressers whilst some became golf caddies and a small number became fishermen.³¹⁹ In school girls were given classes in laundry work in Llandudno Junction³²⁰ and boys were given courses on gardening.³²¹ There was little opportunity for the children of the working classes to pursue education after the age of fourteen in Conwy and they could only do so if they won a scholarship to Bangor or to the County School in Llandudno after its establishment in 1907. The distance between Conwy and Llandudno together with the additional cost of travel must have constrained some promising students.

Pwllheli

Those aged up to and including fourteen years of age in Pwllheli in 1881 accounted for around 30% of the population and this remained relatively unchanged in 1901. In 1881 of those with a description under occupation on the census 60% were described as scholars while just 4% had occupations such as labourer, domestic servant and apprentices of various descriptions. Some were withdrawn from school at a very young age as in the case of William Morris, aged eleven and a half who went to work on a farm in 1887³²² and William Hughes also aged eleven who left school to go to work in 1889.³²³ By 1901 when only occupations were noted rather than schooling only a small

³¹⁷ Higgs, *Making Sense*, p. 83.

³¹⁸ CAS CES/1/2/1.

³¹⁹ CAS CG/3/365 – 382. A number of workhouse children were sent as apprentices to work in local Conwy establishments. See D. Gilbert and H. Southall, ‘The Urban Labour Market’, Daunton (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, p. 599 and the discussion of occupations of children leaving school in London and in large urban manufacturing districts. It is shown that many took the first job available – for example running messages – which meant hiring by the day and introduced the problem that many such positions did not lead into adult jobs.

³²⁰ CAS CES3/10.

³²¹ CAS CES3/3.

³²² GAS CRO XES1/114/6.

³²³ GAS CRO XES1/114/7.

number of those of fourteen and under were described as having an occupation – just in excess of 2%. These included domestic servants, weavers and apprentices. One anomaly was a young girl of ten originally from the Isle of Man who is described as a domestic servant in the home of William Henry Jones, tailor's cutter, and his family. Undoubtedly many young people undertook casual work which was not noted – labouring, fishing and errand boys. One only has to turn to school logbooks to find such evidence such as the complaints of headteachers in schools and visits by school attendance officers. Non-attendance at school was a perennial problem. In the early 1880s a Ragged School was set up at Traeth.³²⁴ Ragged Schools were funded by charity for the free education of destitute children. Considerable criticism appeared in the press about the School Board claiming that it was secretive, inept and lacked energy. One newspaper article reported that despite ‘fine school buildings … well paid staff … a compulsory officer … the children of the ignorant and poor class … a number of whom never had their names on any school register.’³²⁵ It was also claimed that nonattendance led to tradesmen who ‘grumble about the scores of children always in the streets who are a regular pest …’. This they claimed was partly caused by the National School not being visited by an attendance officer.³²⁶ One such irritant must have been David Owen Lewis who was readmitted to the National School in February 1891 ‘having been playing about the streets for seven and a half weeks’.³²⁷ A series of acts throughout the 1870s and the Mundella Act of 1880 made compulsory attendance statutory throughout the country. However whilst school fees were to be paid no compulsion would be successful. Complaints of non-payment of fees in Penlleiniau school were made by the headmaster – ‘their parents say they are too poor’.³²⁸ When in 1888 the headmaster informed the relieving officer about the absences of Willy Toleman, the child’s mother wrote a threatening letter to the school complaining that in consequence she had lost her parish relief. A year later Willy Toleman was readmitted to the school as he was resident in the workhouse. Girls were kept at home to help their mothers and boys found paid employment where they could. Despite letters of

³²⁴ GAS CRO XB12/1/4.

³²⁵ NWE, 9 May 1884.

³²⁶ NWC, 3 May 1884. See also Williams, ‘Elementary Education’, pp. 312-313 in which he discusses the National Society’s reluctance to impose compulsory attendance throughout the 1870s.

³²⁷ GAS CRO XES1/114/7.

³²⁸ GAS CRO XES1/114/6.

complaint to the quarry this was a recurring pattern. Others like John Hughes, aged thirteen, absented himself from school to work on the trams.³²⁹

Language was a barrier to education. In Penlleiniau National School for Boys in 1880 the monoglot English headmaster, Walter Henry Benskin, complained that the ‘children are very backward in their work, all through the school. Find great difficulty in making the children understand me.’³³⁰ Little wonder that a group of boys sat in this schoolroom for a number of days before they realised that they had been attending the wrong school. Children were moved from one school to another for a variety of reasons. Undoubtedly some were for religious preference when they were moved to Troed yr Allt Board School or when in 1906 two Roman Catholic boys were withdrawn from Penlleiniau School by their mother who wrote ‘... I am only too sorry they must leave, but under no circumstances can Catholics send their children to another school when there is one of their own to be had’.³³¹ Simmering tensions between Anglicans and Nonconformists were played out at a higher level – Nonconformists secured the removal of workhouse children from the National School to the Board School in 1898.³³² As Williams points out in 1896 Board Schools dominated the towns of Caernarfonshire – in Pwllheli, as in Caernarfon for instance, Board Schools had ‘by far the most pupils...to an appreciable extent the Nonconformist urban middle class had fulfilled its political aims ...’³³³

There was considerable lobbying within the community for a secondary school in the town. In 1884 the Pwllheli Literary Society heard a speech about the need for intermediate education locally, ‘... education being the chief question of the day in this part of the country it would be well for the inhabitants of Pwllheli to take the matter into their serious consideration’. The central position of Pwllheli in the south of the county and its nearness to the quarrying areas made the town an ideal location for such an establishment.³³⁴ Secondary education in Pwllheli was placed on a firm footing after the passing of the Welsh Intermediate Education Act (1889) with a school opening in 1895. This provided secondary education for seventy pupils, some of whom boarded in the town during the week.

³²⁹ GAS CRO XES1/114/7.

³³⁰ GAS CRO XES1/114/6.

³³¹ GAS CRO XES1/114/7.

³³² Hughes, *Pwllheli*, p. 233.

³³³ Williams, ‘Elementary Education’, p. 310.

³³⁴ *Denbighshire Free Press*, 2 May 1884.

Caernarfon

The percentage of the population of the Caernarfon sample enumeration districts aged under fifteen in 1881 was in the region of 35%. In one of the poorest areas with overcrowding and poor housing the rate was as high as 45%. By 1901 those aged under fifteen constituted in excess of 30% of the population. In 1881 two thirds of those under fifteen were described as scholars. A small number had an occupation such as John Jones, aged fourteen, 8 Mark Lane, employed as a baker and Ellis Griffith, aged fourteen, 8 Pool Lane was employed as a labourer. Others were domestic servants whilst many had no entry under occupation at all. However it is unlikely that these figures reflect the number of young people who undertook employment, paid or otherwise. Some may well have been simply absorbed into a family business. For example Robert Jones, a baker at 3 Snowdon Street with a wife and six children did not enter ‘scholar’ against any of their names. He simply defined them as baker’s son or baker’s daughter. They may well have been used to help in the family business. In 1901 only about 2% of those under fifteen were entered as employed – apprentices such as E. M. Griffith, aged fourteen of Garnon Street who was an apprentice milliner and Robert Hope, 3 Little Chapel Street who was at fourteen an apprentice blacksmith. Thomas John Davies, 10 Mount Pleasant Place, was at thirteen, a grocer’s porter while Catherine Roberts, aged fourteen and from Llanrug was a live-in domestic servant. Of those with no entries for occupation against their names some would of course have been in full time education – at least officially so – while it is probable others were in intermittent employment, helped at home or were unemployed.

Caernarfon had a number of schools, both British and National together with the Ragged School in Twthill established by the School Board in 1890. The latter served the poorer element of the town community and appears to have had its roots in the Sunday Schools.³³⁵ The logbook for the Ragged School illustrates the poverty of some of Caernarfon’s children. Free breakfast of coffee and buns were given on cold winter mornings. Evidently the headmaster felt that some children were abused at home. A female pupil was sent to the workhouse because her mother had been sent to prison for child neglect. The Inspector of Cruelty to Children was invited to the school to inspect several cases of suspected neglect.³³⁶ Secondary education for boys and girls

³³⁵ See J. Lindsay, ‘Twthill, The Ragged School of Caernarfon, 1890-1898’, *TCHS*, 57 (1996), 85-100.

³³⁶ GAS CRO XES1/45/1.

was provided by the County School established in 1894 to which a proportion of the pupils received local scholarships. For example in 1902 out of a total of 134 pupils, 24 pupils received financial help.³³⁷ At elementary level there appears to have been a degree of inclusivity in educating the children of the town. It was at the age of ten or eleven that children either moved on to the County School or be sent to private schools whilst the majority would have remained to complete their time in school in the classes for older children attached to the elementary school. Some of these schools took positive steps to engage the interest of the children. School libraries were established, paid for by the individual efforts of schools to raise funds which included Welsh and English books, children were encouraged to attend ‘gramophone concerts’ in the Guild Hall and in 1909 a visiting HMI discussed the importance of the teaching of history and the need to give ‘due attention … to the history of the town which is so prominently connected with the history of Wales.’³³⁸ Boys were given opportunities to learn swimming in the Corporation’s swimming baths. These baths were opened in 1905 and were filled tidally with sea water.³³⁹

Schools in Caernarfon did not have catchment areas. The early meetings of the Caernarfon School Board laid down rules concerning ‘walking distances’ but these varied for children of six, seven, nine and eleven years of age.³⁴⁰ Attendance at school could be casual. In 1880 the headmaster of the Caernarfon British School wrote that the Compulsory Officer had come to the school and ‘brought many of the streets arabs who are very rough, unclean and bare footed – felt it very difficult to get decent boys to sit near them.’³⁴¹ Press reports appeared about the ‘street arab difficulty’ in Caernarfon.³⁴² The Caernarfon School Board asked the advice of other boroughs including Wrexham, Birmingham, Wigan and Durham. These towns said that they had no great problem in dealing with the issue. This was not the view of the Caernarfon Board which decided to try and separate these street children by room or by school.³⁴³

³³⁷ NWE, 3 October 1902.

³³⁸ GAS CRO XES1/40/3.

³³⁹ GAS CRO XES1/40/3.

³⁴⁰ Williams, ‘Elementary Education’, p. 315.

³⁴¹ GAS CRO XES1/48/1.

³⁴² ‘Street Arab’ was a term used from the mid-nineteenth century onwards and denoted an urchin or homeless child wandering the streets and therefore living a nomadic life. It is used by Conan Doyle in his Sherlock Holmes stories – for example in *The Sign of Four*, chapter eight and *A Study in Scarlet*, part one chapter six. It was therefore used as a descriptive phrase of a way of life as lived by the Bedouin rather than as a racist slur.

³⁴³ NWC, 15 October 1880.

The Board was considered during the 1870s and 1880s to be complacent in its attitude to absenteeism but became more stringent during the 1890s.³⁴⁴ This was reflected in the Borough Court records which frequently noted the fining of parents for not sending their children to school.³⁴⁵ For example in 1891 five parents appeared in one court session for neglecting to send their children to school. Repeat appearances of the same families were common. In 1897 the headmistress of the Caernarfon National School for Girls complained of absences and lack of punctuality which characterised, she claimed, ‘the majority of children of this town’.³⁴⁶ The attendance of girls tended to be lower than that of the boys. An early report to the newly formed School Board showed that in the town’s British Schools out of 235 girls the average attendance was 133 whereas in the boys’ section the average was 127 out of 147.³⁴⁷ This trend continued. Williams states that by 1901 the average attendance at the Caernarfon Board School for boys had reached ‘an astonishing 96%’. He believes that part of the explanation for this upturn was that many of the parents had been educated under compulsory provisions and so were more accepting of the system.³⁴⁸ For example in 1899 only 72% of girls on the books of the Caernarfon Board School for girls were ‘habitually present’.³⁴⁹ Many were kept at home to help especially in the ‘annual spring cleaning’.³⁵⁰ When it was felt that a child was out of control and subjected to bad influences at home they were committed to an Industrial School.³⁵¹ These boarding schools established initially in 1857 aimed to introduce a destitute child to the habit of work and to fulfil their potential. In 1904 the magistrates decided to send one pupil, Gwen Morris, Tanrallt, to an industrial school for four and a half years because of her mother’s neglect.³⁵²

Poor housing and poverty played a significant part in the lives of a number of children in Caernarfon. Logbooks of schools in the town frequently wrote of soup kitchens and meals provided for the poor. For example on St. David’s Day in 1881

³⁴⁴ Williams, ‘Elementary Education’, p. 322.

³⁴⁵ GAS CRO XLC/2/4.

³⁴⁶ GAS CRO XES1/40/2.

³⁴⁷ GAS CRO XET/1.

³⁴⁸ Williams, ‘Elementary Education’, p. 330.

³⁴⁹ GAS CRO XES1/42/2.

³⁵⁰ GAS CRO XES1/42/2.

³⁵¹ GAS CRO XLC/2/4 which notes the cases of William Owen and the child of George Lester. Contributions by the parents towards the expense was expected by the court. See also Lindsay, “Feed My Lambs”, p. 94 and her discussion of the work of the Ladies Association for the Care of Friendless Girls, Caernarfon.

³⁵² GAS CRO XES1/42/2.

lunch was provided for the poor children of the town at the soup kitchen.³⁵³ Twthill Free School provided breakfasts.³⁵⁴ Poor hygiene amongst some pupils led one school to request that the managers provide a bath for school use as many in the lower standards ‘attend school in a filthy condition’. This was duly provided with ‘beneficial effect’.³⁵⁵

As a result of the work of the Inspectors of Cruelty to Children in 1898 William and Margaret Parry, Siloh Terrace were charged with neglecting three children.³⁵⁶ Their house consisted of two rooms, a kitchen and bedroom. Their furniture had been distrained for debt. The only food in the house were a few crusts and onions. The mother said that she was forced to go out and beg and to send the children out to beg as well and the husband had to try and make ends meet by poaching. The case was dismissed because the husband was a hard worker.³⁵⁷ Court Minute Books give detailed descriptions of the treatment of children in some homes when parents were charged with child neglect. In one home in 1903 Catherine Jones was intoxicated and admitted to drinking ‘some brandy’ while her child was ‘stinking’, malnourished and when the inspector called was ‘standing in the pool of vomit.’³⁵⁸ The mother was imprisoned. In another home a child slept in a bed which was ‘like a heap of manure’ and its head had marks of vermin bites. Both parents were imprisoned.³⁵⁹ Although these cases represented a small minority of the child population they contribute to our ability to profile this section of the community. Only the worst cases appeared in court but these illustrated deep problems within the lives of individuals and society.

Conclusion

The three towns in this study illustrate different stages of development. All show the impact of an extended transport infrastructure, economic diversity and the role of local government. The three borough settlements retained their position as market towns – providing services and goods to their surrounding areas. The towns showed an ability to be fluid in their growth and outlook. The demography of the three boroughs

³⁵³ GAS CRO XES1/48/1.

³⁵⁴ GAS CRO XES1/45/1.

³⁵⁵ GAS CRO XES1/42/2.

³⁵⁶ GAS CRO XES1/45/1. The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children was established in 1889 and under an Act of the same year penalties were introduced against people who ill-treated or neglected children. See also Lindsay, “Feed My Lambs”, pp. 89-98.

³⁵⁷ NWC, 23 December 1898.

³⁵⁸ GAS CRO XLC 2/3/2.

³⁵⁹ GAS CRO XLC 2/3/2.

illustrated the impact of economic change in their surrounding areas. Conwy's neighbour, Llandudno, had considerable investment made in its tourist trade and thus making it a major player in the area's economy. Pwllheli attracted inward investment in its development as a spa town which led to an increase in population. The only borough to suffer a loss in population was Caernarfon. Despite the opportunities offered to the county town by the public sector it was not sufficient to offset the decline in the slate industry and in the port. It is difficult to ascertain what proportion of the decrease in population may also be explained by people relocating to live outside the borough and commuting into Caernarfon to work. The state of housing in parts of the borough was very poor with dilapidated dwellings of which some were demolished, others closed as unfit for human habitation and many awaiting demolition. The housing stock had therefore decreased.³⁶⁰ Culturally and linguistically the towns remained essentially Welsh although the eastern reaches of the county with its borough town of Conwy assumed an increasingly Anglicised bent as illustrated in this chapter.³⁶¹

³⁶⁰ See p. 69.

³⁶¹ See overview and analysis of the similarities and contrasts between the boroughs in chapter five pp. 250-259.

Chapter 3: Rural Communities: Stagnation or Diversification?

Introduction

There has been a multifaceted approach to rural history in general. Aspects of rural communities during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have been studied in-depth often setting them against a background of decline, migration and hardship. Landholding, labour, crime, unrest and more recently a focus on the standard of living and ease of administration have been the subjects of a myriad of studies. Joan Thirsk, the doyenne of agrarian history research, drew the attention of historians to the importance of the variation in the individual stories of rural communities.³⁶² She wrote of England that it had ‘not one agrarian history but many’ and that historians should take ‘full account of the diversified character and fortunes of its many regions’.³⁶³

Variation in landscape, geographical situation and economic activity of the surrounding areas dictated the experiences of different communities. This variation is either stated or implied in many studies. For example David Jenkins in his work on south-west Wales underlined the differences of the role of geography and the social system in several areas³⁶⁴ and Alun Howkins underlined the diversity within areas giving examples in east Sussex which illustrate ‘how different, even within a small area, the experience of communities could be’.³⁶⁵ The countryside, as Howkins wrote, was ‘not an homogeneous rural world’.³⁶⁶ Using the whole of Wales as his canvass, David Howell’s study, which was ground-breaking at the time, traced the differences in areas with reference, for example, to the situation of landholding, labour and land use.³⁶⁷ Contemporaneous with this work was the research of D. J. V. Jones marking a new departure of highlighting crime and unrest against a rural background using sources which had not been used extensively in previous studies.³⁶⁸

³⁶² See T. Jones, ‘Opinion: What Factors Make a Particularly Locality Historically Distinctive, and How Might its Local History now be Studied?’, *The Local Historian*, 47, 4 (October, 2017), p. 325.

³⁶³ J. Thirsk, ‘The Content and Sources of English Agrarian History after 1500’, *The Agricultural History Review*, 3, 2 (1955), 79.

³⁶⁴ D. Jenkins, *The Agricultural Community in South-West Wales at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Cardiff, 1971), p. 68.

³⁶⁵ Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England*, p. 12.

³⁶⁶ Howkins, p. 14.

³⁶⁷ Howell, *Land and People*.

³⁶⁸ See Jones, *Crime, Protest, Community*, Jones, *Crime in Nineteenth-century Wales*, Jones, ‘The Welsh and Crime, 1801-1891’ in I. C. Emsley and J. Walvin (eds), *Artisans, Peasants and Proletarians* (London, 1985), pp. 81-103, Jones, “‘A Dead Loss to the Community’. The Criminal Vagrant in Mid-Nineteenth Century Wales’, *WHR*, 8 (1977), 312-344, Jones, ‘The New Police, Crime and People in

What emerges is that there was a complexity to rural communities because the people often lived on the economic margin which necessitated a mix of ‘economic and social relationships simultaneously … making survival … possible.’³⁶⁹ Sociological studies of rural communities have highlighted this complexity. Alwyn D. Rees’ research on Llanfihangel yng Ngwynfa originally published in 1950 looked in detail at the rural lifecycle, the impact of improving infrastructure and the role of community and family.³⁷⁰ The effect of the development of centralised commercial services in small market towns as for instance described by Rees, with the development of Oswestry again brings into question the urban/rural divide. Ancillary services within rural communities with various trades and service providers had meant that such areas could be largely self-sufficient. The population made most of the products necessary for everyday life and business. In her studies of Wensleydale and Swaledale, Hallas looked at rural craftsmen and their ability to adapt to changing circumstances.³⁷¹ Small shops buying in goods appeared and market towns also attracted the rural consumer base.³⁷² Undoubtedly these factors threatened the role of the rural craftsmen and the existing economic infrastructure of the countryside.

The impact of new developments affected rural life as they did urban centres. Rural transport links were key not only to economic life but also to social life. The effect of the railway on the Thames Valley in the study by Rosemary Stewart-Beardsley suggested that in that area the railway encouraged tourism ‘from the more wealthy sectors of society’³⁷³ as it did in Betws-y-Coed whereas Russell Davies stresses the key importance of improved road links in the life of rural areas ‘where the railway never arrived’.³⁷⁴

England and Wales 1829-1888’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 33 (1983), 151-168 and Jones, ‘The Poacher: A Study in Victorian Crime and Protest’, *Historical Journal*, 22, 4 (1977), 825-60.

³⁶⁹ G. Day, G. Rees and J. Murdoch, ‘Social Change, Rural Localities and the State: The Restructuring of Rural Wales’, *Journal of Rural Studies*, 5, 3 (1989), p. 231.

³⁷⁰ A. D. Rees, *Life in a Welsh Countryside: A Social Study of Llanfihangel yng Ngwynfa* (Reprint) (Cardiff, 1975).

³⁷¹ C. Hallas, ‘Craft Occupations in the Late Nineteenth Century: Some Local Considerations’, *Local Population Studies*, 44 (1990), 18-29.

³⁷² Rees, *Life in a Welsh Countryside*, p. 27; Day, Rees and Murdoch, ‘Social Change, Rural Localities and the State’, p. 231.

³⁷³ R. Stewart-Beardsley, ‘The impact of the Great Western Railway on the Social Structure of Five Rural Parishes in the Thames Valley 1830-1875’. Presented paper at the Economic History Society Annual Conference. <http://www.ehs.org.uk/dotAsset/b5608db0-0f2a-4e89-817d-f3bb03359b50.doc> (accessed: 08/03/18).

³⁷⁴ Davies, *People, Places and Passions*, p. 32.

The variety of experiences in rural communities is well illustrated in the different migration and emigration patterns found in counties – five Welsh counties, Anglesey, Breconshire, Cardiganshire, Pembrokeshire and Radnorshire saw a decrease in their population between 1851 and 1911.³⁷⁵ Cooper's study of Cardiganshire relates the experience of that county using census returns and other sources to explain the movement of population and the subsequent impact on the areas discussed.³⁷⁶ Despite some diversification within the county's economy the combination of harsh living conditions, increasing expectations of the population for a better standard of living and greater opportunities elsewhere all played their part in Cardiganshire's depopulation. As I. G. Jones pointed out 'the equation of disease with poverty as distinct from dirt was based initially on observations from country life'.³⁷⁷ The standard of living in rural areas has increasingly come under scrutiny. Waddington has analysed the physical difficulties of life in the countryside – poor water supply and insanitary sewage disposal: 'the nature of rural conditions ... rendered sanitary problems less visible when they occurred in rural environments.'³⁷⁸ Such studies find their echo in the evidence of the Caernarfonshire rural communities undertaken in this study.

Landholding, the role of estates, tenants and small farmers have attracted numerous studies. For example the effect of the break up of estates and shift in landownership has been analysed by John Davies.³⁷⁹ The impact of large landholders on the political, cultural and industrial life of many areas has formed the basis of individual studies and contributed to more general overviews of the country at all levels.³⁸⁰ Again this factor varied from area to area – estates for example varied in size, some parts of estates were on the periphery, the areas in which they were found offered different investment opportunities and the cultural and social profile of areas affected their influence.

The working conditions of small farmers, agricultural labourers and general rural labourers have been explored in all their complexity in several works already

³⁷⁵ W. A. Armstrong, 'The Countryside', F. M. L. Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950*, 1 (Cambridge, 1990), p. 120. Four English counties, Cornwall, Herefordshire, Huntingdonshire and Rutland also suffered decreases in their population.

³⁷⁶ K. J. Cooper, *Exodus from Cardiganshire* (Cardiff, 2011).

³⁷⁷ Jones, *Communities*, p. 330.

³⁷⁸ Waddington, "It Might not be a Nuisance in a Country Cottage", 186.

³⁷⁹ Davies, 'The End of the Great Estates', 186-212.

³⁸⁰ See for example M. B. Evans, 'The Land and its People, 1815-1974', in Howell (ed.), *Pembrokeshire County History*, pp. 3-38; Howell, *Land and People*; J. Davies, Cardiff and the Marquesses of Bute (Cardiff, 1981); Jones, *The North Wales Quarrymen*.

cited in this chapter. The effects of economic depression, harvest failure and mechanisation with the evident consequences on rural employment have been highlighted by the researches of, for example, Howkins, Howell, Colyer, Verdon and Caunce.³⁸¹ The regional variation is again key to such studies. Caunce warns against depicting the post 1850 century as simply a period of decline ‘some counties certainly suffered general and serious rural distress for most of the nineteenth century; but others emphatically did not.’³⁸² His study of northern England shows that there was a flourishing labour service in this area until around 1920 which was facilitated by hiring fairs. Howkins and Verdon draw comparisons between areas of Scotland, Lancashire and Yorkshire with reference to ‘living in’ farm labour – the ‘gwas’ in Welsh farming.³⁸³ Variation in the experience of different communities is also evident in the degree of unionisation of rural workers. This was reflected in Wales where, for example, there was a concerted effort over a short period of time in Anglesey and Caernarfonshire between 1889-1891 to obtain shorter working hours in both counties. The movement in Anglesey demanded further improvements to working conditions of farm labourers as well. Lleufer Thomas, in writing of Anglesey and the Pwllheli Union in 1893, expressed the view that the agitation started in Anglesey as a result of ‘men from the island work in the slate quarries of Caernarvonshire; they come home early on Saturdays … the knowledge of the shorter hours in the slate industry undoubtedly affected the minds of farm labourers…’³⁸⁴ In south Caernarfonshire where meetings were held in 1889 many farmers supported the cause of the labourers. Once this right had been won the movement came to an end without the formation of an official trade union.³⁸⁵ Much was local in character and failed to gain sustained widespread support. Howkins underlines the fact that one big weakness in rural unions was the exclusion of women from membership.³⁸⁶ Cannadine points to the early success of rural unionism which soon dissipated as the agricultural depression in many areas weakened the

³⁸¹ See for example A. Howkins and N. Verdon, ‘Adaptable and sustainable? Male Farm Service and the Agricultural Labour Force in Midland and Southern England c. 1850-1925’, *Economic History Review*, 6, 2 (May 2008), 467-495; D. W. Howell, ‘The Agricultural Labourer in Nineteenth-Century Wales’, *WHR*, 6, 3 (June 1973), 262-287; S. A. Caunce, ‘The Hiring Fairs of Northern England, 1890-1930: A Regional Analysis of Commercial and Social Networking in Agriculture’, *Past and Present*, 217 (November, 2012), 213-246.

³⁸² Caunce, ‘The Hiring Fairs’, p. 213.

³⁸³ Howkins and Verdon, ‘Adaptable and sustainable?’, p. 473-474.

³⁸⁴ Royal Commission on Labour: *The Agricultural Labourer*, vol. 2, p. 130.

³⁸⁵ See Howell, *Land and People*, p. 109.

³⁸⁶ Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England*, p. 185-191.

bargaining powers of the farm worker. Cannadine believes that the rural workers in the unions were more radical than has previously been supposed and draws attention to the campaign of Jesse Collings and Joseph Chamberlain for the improvement of the lot of agricultural labourers.³⁸⁷ He also stresses the variation in attitude to landholders in Wales where ethnic, religious and linguistic issues also came into play.

The role of rural labouring women has also been addressed notably by Verdon. Her thesis in 1999 largely concentrated on female labour in the East Riding of Yorkshire, Norfolk and Bedfordshire between 1790 and 1890. In this work Verdon illustrated how the employment patterns of women varied according to the local agricultural system, the method of hiring labour, the type of farming and the proximity to other employment opportunities. Much in her analysis of how women ‘make shift’ was reflected in the pattern that emerges in Caernarfonshire.³⁸⁸

Caernarfonshire

Caernarfonshire was a geographically diverse county and the communities selected for this study of Tudweiliog, Carnguwch, Pistyll and Betws-y-coed reflected this diversity. This was as true of the rural areas as it was of the urban and industrial. Writing in 1809-1811 Hyde Hall spoke of a county ‘now awakened into activity after a slumber of so many centuries’.³⁸⁹ However at the beginning of the nineteenth century Hyde Hall did little to hide his frustration at the lack of progress in agriculture in Caernarfonshire where ‘ignorance … is the prolific parent of enumerable evils …’³⁹⁰ Farming in the county was mixed with cattle rearing, arable and pasture. Dairy farming was important but the milk, butter and cheese of Caernarfonshire was not considered of such a good quality as that of other counties especially Devon. Complaints were made that local hotels in the county imported their butter from Devon and did not support local produce despite the fact that the butter in Llŷn was the ‘best butter in England’.³⁹¹ The enclosure movement and afforestation by landowners had led by the mid-nineteenth century to the loss of sheepwalks, summer grazing land and what had been perceived as rights by the rural community such as the gathering of wood, heath, peat and

³⁸⁷ Cannadine, *Victorious Century*, p. 396-397.

³⁸⁸ N. Verdon, ‘Changing Patterns of Female Employment in Rural England, c.1790-1890’ (PhD Thesis, University of Leicester, 1999), p. 270-271.

³⁸⁹ Hall, *A Description of Caernarvonshire*, p. 1.

³⁹⁰ Hall, p. 17.

³⁹¹ See evidence given to the *Royal Commission on Land in Wales and Monmouthshire, Minutes of Evidence* (London, 1893-1896), vol. 1, p. 520.

slate.³⁹² Attempts were made in Caernarfonshire to improve and professionalise farming practice from the late nineteenth century onwards by promoting agricultural education in the University of North Wales, Bangor, founded in 1884 and arranging lectures by the university in the rural communities. Dodd points out that the hope of an agrarian revolution in the county was ‘nipped in the bud.’³⁹³

Land was concentrated in the hands of a few families. This concentration of landholding far exceeded other counties in Wales: ‘put starkly, the figures mean that in the last quarter of the nineteenth century … almost half of Caernarfonshire was owned by five families.’³⁹⁴ These landlords were increasingly distanced by language, religion and politics from the majority of the rural communities. Howell wrote that in the last quarter of the nineteenth century estates of over 1000 acres occupied 60% of the total area of Wales. In 1883 estates in excess of 3000 acres constituted 67% of Caernarfonshire’s land, 61% of Anglesey, 48% of Merionethshire, 34% of Carmarthen and 55% of Glamorgan. In fact estates of more than ten thousand acres constituted 50% of landholding in Caernarfonshire compared to 40% in Merionethshire, 20% in Anglesey, 8% in Carmarthenshire and 25% in Glamorganshire.³⁹⁵ Most landlords only farmed limited parts of their estates with the remainder of the land let to tenant farmers. Howkins has argued that ownership of land is not an essential category for defining the peasantry but has been used specifically in the context of England as a means of analysis. He quoted the communities of Ireland, France and Spain in particular where ‘ownership of land was (and is) rare’.³⁹⁶ Howkins believed that the key defining factor was the family farm which were found throughout Britain. Fragmentation of estates in Wales started around 1870. Davies warns that this fragmentation should not be exaggerated and that only one estate in Wales had been badly affected by 1900 – the Gwydir estate, Betws-y-Coed, of Lord Ancaster in Caernarfonshire. The estate was sold in 1894 to a number of buyers and speculators,

³⁹² See F. Richardson, ‘The Enclosure of the Commons and Wastes in Nantconwy, North Wales, 1540 to 1900’, *The Agricultural History Review*, 65, 1 (2017), 49-73. Also Rhydderch-Dart, ‘Caernarfonshire 1855-1865’, p. 96-97 which gives examples of court cases when people continued to pursue these ‘rights’.

³⁹³ Dodd, *A History of Caernarfonshire*, p. 243.

³⁹⁴ Jones, *The North Wales Quarrymen*, p. 11.

³⁹⁵ Howell, *Land and People*, p. 21.

³⁹⁶ A. Howkins, ‘Peasants, Servants and Labourers: The Marginal Workforce in British Agriculture, c.1870-1914’, *The Agricultural History Review*, 42, 1 (1994), p. 52.

including Lord Penrhyn who already held extensive lands in many areas of the county and only a handful of farms were bought by sitting tenants.³⁹⁷

In Caernarfonshire the majority of tenants were small-time farmers. Increasingly leases were granted on a yearly basis rather than for life. The Welsh Land Commission Report showed that in the county only five holdings exceeded five hundred acres while 4756 constituted no more than fifty acres. The size of holdings together with the quality of the land and climate made farming a precarious livelihood.³⁹⁸ This led to the diversification of work undertaken by farmers and their families – combining for example the agrarian with fishing and work in quarries. Short term migrations for ‘injections of cash’ led to ‘workers from England, Scotland and Wales … [turning] … to sea fishing, to build Bayswater Road and Notting Hill Gate in London, to construct the new railways and to work in the docks …’³⁹⁹ This pattern was reflected in Caernarfonshire. Longer term movement of population leading to dramatic depopulation of areas and counties, when it is estimated that 100,000 people left rural Wales in the 1880s alone, was not part of the Caernarfonshire experience to the extent it was, for example, in Cardiganshire which reached the zenith of its population in 1871 and thereafter decreased decade on decade until 1951 with a loss in the region of 30% of its population.⁴⁰⁰ The following table based on census statistics illustrates the comparative situation of increase and decrease in the number of wage earners in agriculture in Wales between 1871 and 1891. These, of course, do not take into consideration the impact on ancillary rural employment in trade, crafts and retail.⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁷ Davies, ‘The End of the Great Estates’, 186-212.

³⁹⁸ See Howell, *Land and People*, p. 18 and Day, Rees and Murdoch, ‘Social Change, Rural Localities and the State’, p. 231.

³⁹⁹ Howkins, ‘Peasants, Servants and Labourers’, p. 56.

⁴⁰⁰ Davies, *People, Places and Passions*, p. 22-23. For Caernarfonshire population figures see p. 40-41.

⁴⁰¹ Royal Commission on Land in Wales and Monmouthshire, *Appendices to the Report* (London, 1896), Appendix E, p. 287.

No.	Registration Counties	1871-91	1871-81	1881-91
		Per cent	Per cent	Per cent
1	Radnor	-29.2	-23.4	-7.56
2	Brecon	-28.3	-23.9	-5.78
3	Denbigh	-28.3	-12.5	-6.05
4	Carmarthen	-28.2	-21.6	-8.59
5	Cardigan	-24.7	-14.8	-11.70
6	Flint	-24.1	-14.7	-11.03
7	Pembroke	-24.0	-15.5	-9.77
8	Montgomery	-22.3	-11.9	-13.83
9	Monmouth	-21.7	-9.4	-13.5
10	Glamorgan	-19.6	-10.8	-9.75
11	Merioneth	-10.8	-15.2	+5.07
12	Caernarfon	-2.1	-4.7	+2.57
13	Anglesey	-0.5	-11.0	+11.64
	Wales and Monmouthshire	-19.9	-13.9	-7.05

The total population figures of the rural communities chosen for this study illustrate the demographic tendencies and the impact of diversification on comparatively small districts. Tudweiliog, and the even more sparsely populated parish of Carnguwch, maintained their numbers at a static rate.

Tudweiliog

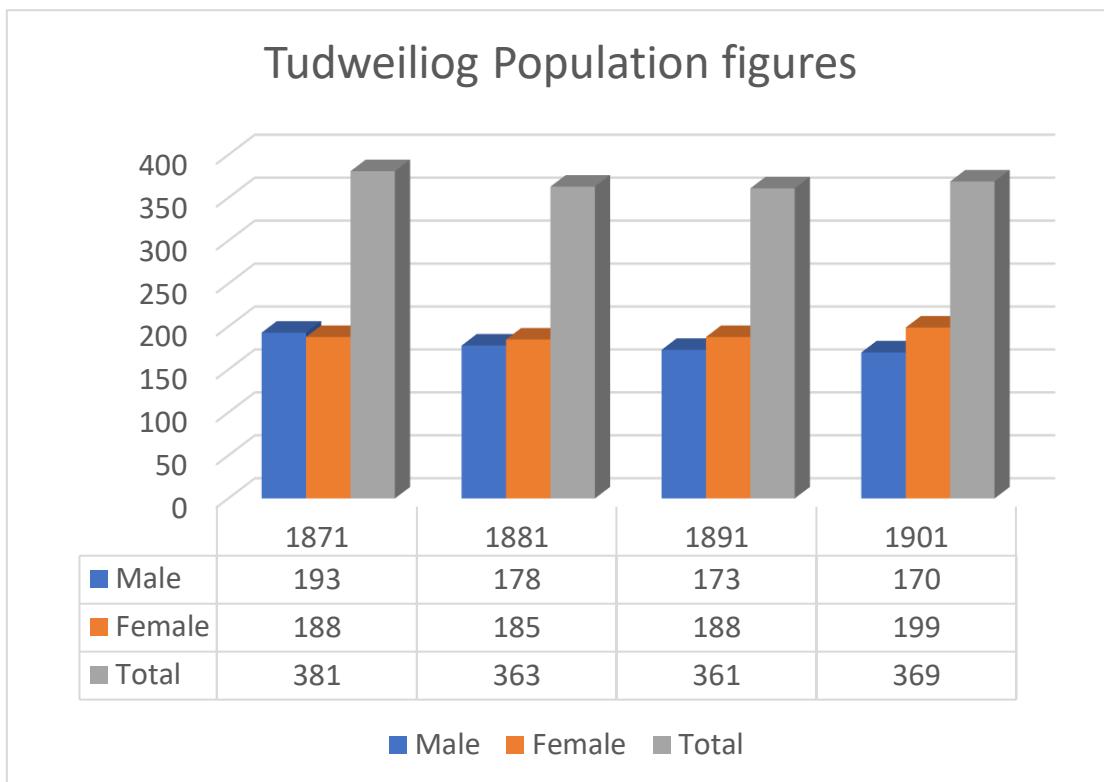


Figure 27: Tudweiliog population table.

Carnguwch

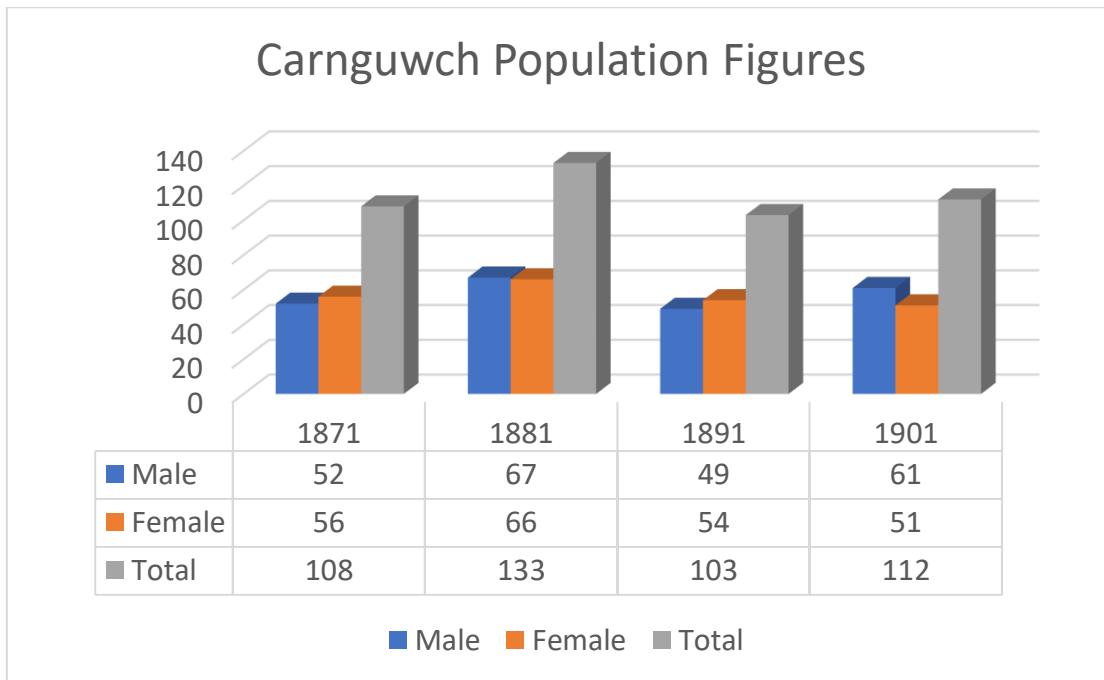


Figure 28: Carnguwch population table.

Both Pistyll and Betws-y-Coed illustrate rural areas which grew in population as a result of more diversified economies and inward investment – one through extractive

industry and the other through the development of the tourist industry and opportunities in lead mining.

Pistyll

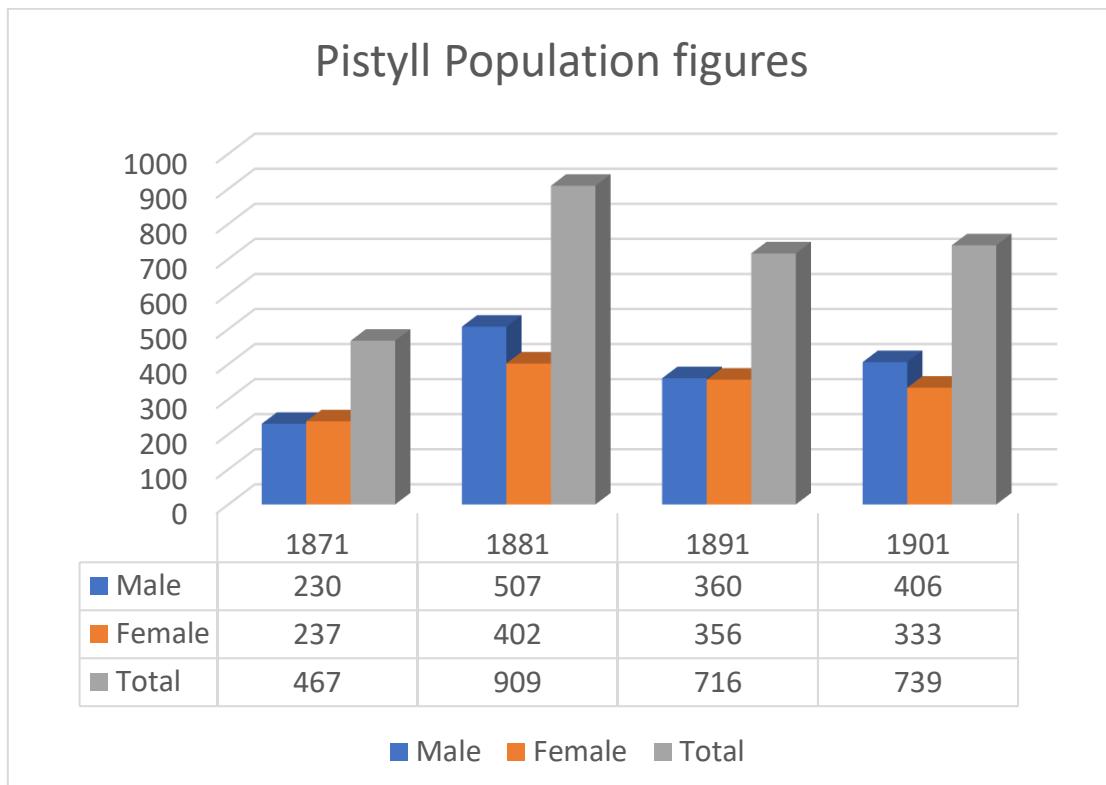


Figure 29: Pistyll population table.

Betws-y-Coed

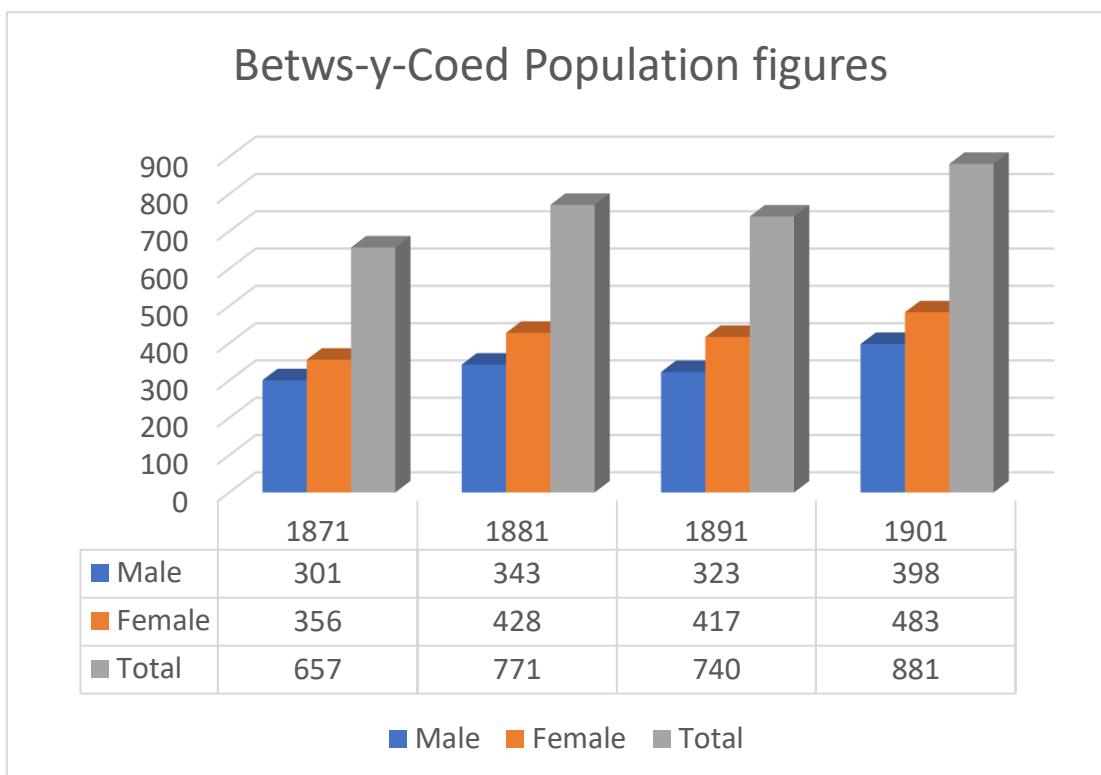


Figure 30: Betws-y-Coed population table.

Hyde Hall, who was unimpressed by the agrarian progress in Caernarfonshire at the beginning of the nineteenth century,⁴⁰² gave brief descriptions of the rural communities chosen for analysis. He agreed with Pennant's description of Tudweiliog as a 'flat and woodless tract'⁴⁰³ and hinted that since Pennant's visit in the late eighteenth century the place had deteriorated. The landowner, one of the Brynodol family, had let the local mansion to a tenant and moved to another area. Herring fishing was undertaken with vessels going as far as the Irish coast. The export of samphire and the export of black cattle was also undertaken from the various creeks around Tudweiliog. There was little expansion in the area with one new house only being built. There were 2 mills in the parish. Of Carngwch Hyde Hall has little to report describing it as 'a perfectly bleak and naked surface...and dreary...' ⁴⁰⁴ His view of Pistyll at the beginning of the century was very similar with its agriculture 'at once scanty and indifferent; yet some patches of land in corn...encourage the hope of a better and wider

⁴⁰² Hall, *A Description of Caernarvonshire*, p. 18-19 '...If improvements were advanced as far as they would go, the county would carry, I am convinced, at least three times its present quantity of stock'.

⁴⁰³ Hall, p. 271.

⁴⁰⁴ Hall, p. 281.

cultivation at a future period...’⁴⁰⁵ Hall’s impressions of Betws-y-Coed were more favourable. He wrote of road improvements and the existence of the three bridges ‘two of which are seated among scenes of peculiar beauty’.⁴⁰⁶ In 1800 he reported that Betws-y-Coed had eighty-four inhabited houses and four uninhabited. Eight new houses had been built in the first decade of the nineteenth century and a fulling mill and corn mill were operated in the parish.

By the 1840s Betws-y-Coed enjoyed far greater attention by travellers than any of the other rural communities in this study. Their descriptions were greatly enhanced by the pictures of the new and growing artists’ colony which conveyed a rural idyll. ‘William Hall described the place in terms of peat gatherers, fern gatherers, shepherds leading their flocks, drovers, ruddy cheeked girls, farm labourers and fishermen, all of whom sat comfortably and charmingly within the high Victorian Britain from which he looked back.’⁴⁰⁷ They paid little attention to the lead miners.

The tithe apportionment schedules of the mid nineteenth century give a snapshot of the land usage and ownership of land in the rural communities in this study. All to a greater or lesser extent have a mixed agricultural profile – arable, pasture and meadow and with far greater afforestation in Betws-y-Coed.⁴⁰⁸

	Overall Acreage	Arable (oats, barley, wheat)	Meadow/Pasture	Wood
Tudweiliog	2239	738	1480	-
Carnguwch	789	350	447	-
Pistyll	3829	1695	2134	-
Betws-y- Coed	3402	500	2157	754

The descriptions included in the schedules showed a patchwork of land ownership in the mid-century in all the rural areas of this study. This mix of ownership continued during the period of this analysis together with the addition of speculators

⁴⁰⁵ Hall, p. 260.

⁴⁰⁶ Hall, p. 131.

⁴⁰⁷ P. Lord, *The Betws-y-coed Artists’ Colony* (Aberystwyth, 1998), p. 59. William Hall was the biographer of the artist David Cox (1783-1859).

⁴⁰⁸ Information based on the tithe schedules found on <https://places.library.wales/> (accessed 26 April 2018).

looking for investment opportunities such as Solomon Andrews in Pistyll. As *The Cardiff Times* reported, ‘Mr. Solomon Andrews is now buying up mountains. The maker of Pwllheli has purchased the freehold of the Rivals – otherwise Yr Eifl – mountains.’⁴⁰⁹ By 1893 the farmers of the Pwllheli Union had turned increasingly to rearing stock.⁴¹⁰ There is little doubt that rural communities in this study illustrate Hyde Hall’s comment made much earlier in the century that ‘landlords as a body are of infinitely less importance than the tenantry of the country’.⁴¹¹ In describing the landholding of the area in 1893 the *Royal Commission on the Agricultural Labourer* stated that ‘few landlords...live among and enjoy the intercourse of their tenantry’. There were few freeholders – six in Pistyll and none in the other two parishes in Llŷn covered by this study.⁴¹²

Population Profile

Carnguwch

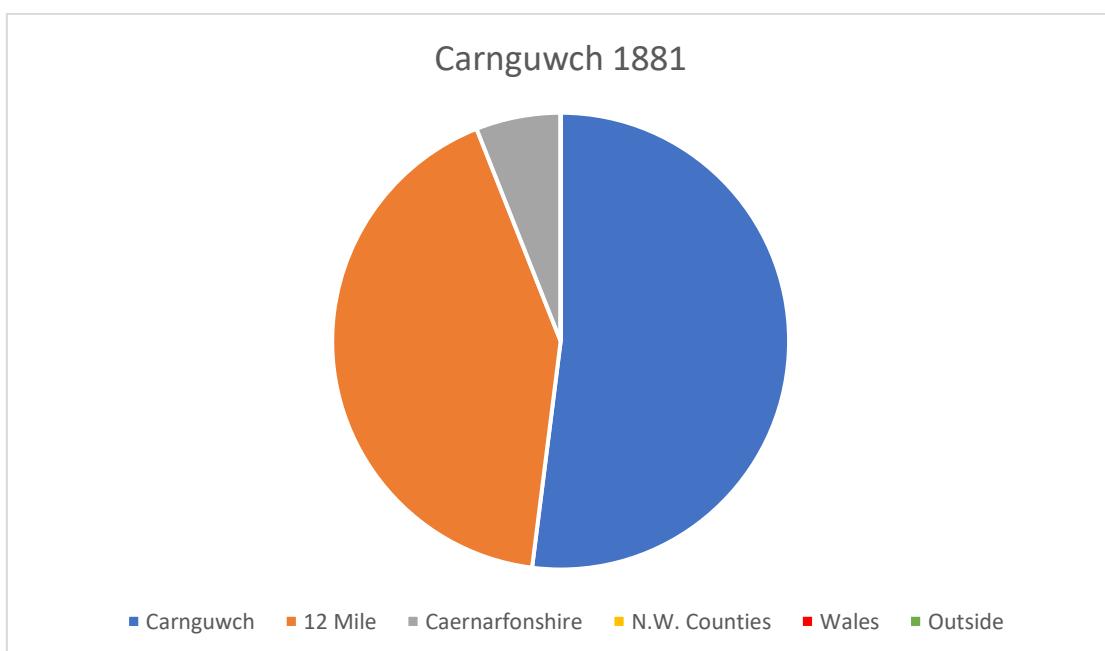


Figure 31: Population origins of Carnguwch in 1881.

Carnguwch is by far the smallest enumeration district to be analysed in this study. In 1881 its population of 133 constituted 52% of people born in the parish.⁴¹³ Of those aged fifteen and under which made up 35% of the total population 77% were native to

⁴⁰⁹ *The Cardiff Times*, 17 September 1898.

⁴¹⁰ *Royal Commission on Labour: The Agricultural Labourer*, vol. 2, p. 145.

⁴¹¹ Hall, p. 16.

⁴¹² *The Agricultural Labourer*, p. 145.

⁴¹³ TNA, Records of the General Register Office RG11/5556 Carnguwch ED 16.

Carnguwch. Just under one third of the parish's inhabitants were aged between fifteen and twenty-nine. Within this age bracket 45% were born in the enumeration district – a figure which dropped to 25% in the thirty to forty-four age bracket. The migratory pattern which emerges is fairly clear – a number took up residence in the parish to work in the nearby granite quarries and established young families in the area, thus sustaining population figures, while others native to the parish simply remained on small holdings or were in some way involved in the agricultural life of the parish. For example, at Llechengan, a holding of 26 acres the whole Jones family were native to Carnguwch and worked in agriculture. Single women who remained in the community where they were born just scratched a living.

42% of people living in Carnguwch came from a twelve-mile radius of the parish – many were probably temporary inhabitants such as young domestic servants like fourteen-year-old Sarah Jones at Ty'n y Mynydd from Clynnog. 6% only came from the rest of Caernarfonshire and a negligible percentage from elsewhere. It was not an area of wide appeal or opportunity. The overall sex ratio in 1881 was healthy – 50% male and 50% female. However in the fifteen to twenty-nine age bracket there is a distinct imbalance of 70% male and 30% female which illustrates the pattern of rural employment whether within families with single sons employed at home or other males, employed as agricultural labourers. It could also possibly point to girls and young women who went to work away from home on farms or possibly as domestics in urban settlements.

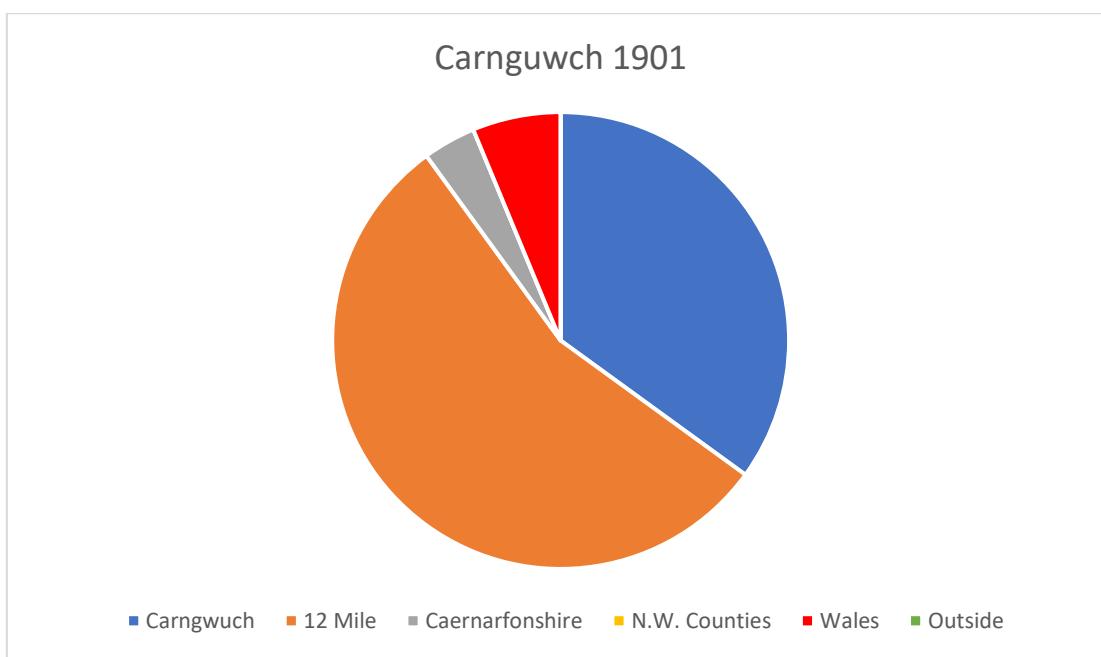


Figure 32: Population origins of Carnguwch in 1901.

By 1901 the overall population of Carnguwch had declined by 16%.⁴¹⁴ Those born in the parish made up 35% of the community and those under fifteen constituted 33% of the overall population. Of the latter group 55% had been born in Carnguwch – a much reduced figure from that of 1881. The age group of fifteen to twenty-nine had reduced to 22% of the overall population. Of these inhabitants in this age group only 15% had been born in Carnguwch – a smaller proportion of this age bracket than in 1881. This may reflect that with a downturn in population in the neighbouring parish of Pistyll housing had become available for those formerly living in the agricultural area of Carnguwch. With its retail establishment, pub, chapel and school it may have proved a temptation to move. By 1901 the age profile had shifted. Those aged thirty and over were 45% of the overall population compared to 34% in 1881. However there was within this reduced and older population a greater spread of incomers. 55% came from within a twelve-mile radius of the parish and 10% from the rest of Caernarfonshire and Wales. There were no incomers from outside Wales. The community however was still very much based on those from Carnguwch and its neighbouring parishes. People such as John Davies, employed in the quarries and originally from Llanidloes, Montgomeryshire, with two of his children born in Merthyr Vale was a rarity – probably induced to live in Llŷn by his wife, a native of Rhiw. The sex ratio was somewhat different by 1901 – 53% male and 47% female with no great anomaly in the fifteen to twenty-nine age bracket as found in 1881.

⁴¹⁴ TNA, Records of the General Register Office RG13/5262 Carnguwch ED 16.

Pistyll

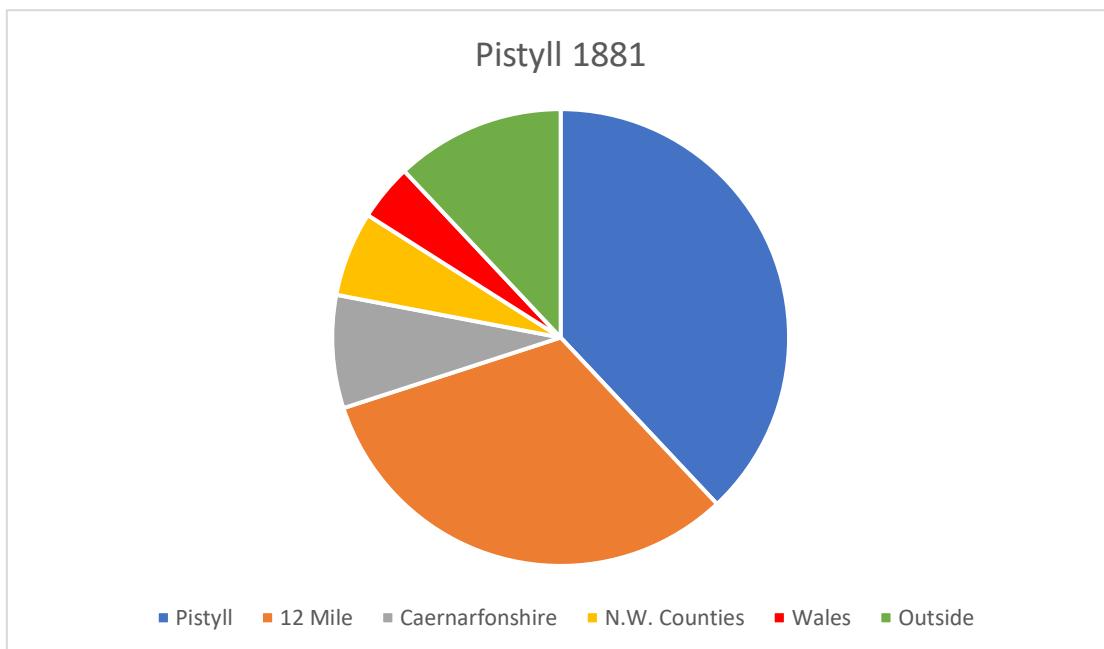


Figure 33: Population origins of Pistyll in 1881.

Pistyll's population in 1881 was divided between two enumeration districts and amounted to over 900 inhabitants.⁴¹⁵ It bordered the parish of Carnguwch and yet Pistyll had a more mixed population reflecting the more diverse economy.



Figure 34: GAS CRO XS/1615/20 A general view of Pistyll c.1915.

In 1881 38% of its residents had been born in the parish. Its age profile up to the age of fifteen was remarkably similar to its neighbouring parish. 35% of the population was aged under fifteen but within this age bracket just over a half had been

⁴¹⁵ TNA, Records of the General Register Office RG11/5561 Pistyll ED 17 and 18.

born in Pistyll – a figure which illustrates the migratory pattern into the area which doubled in population during the 1870s. A third of the community's population was aged between fifteen and twenty-nine and within this age range 28% had been born in Pistyll – a percentage which dropped to 20% in the thirty to forty-four age bracket. Of the older inhabitants of the area – aged forty-five and upwards 40% were native to Pistyll. This was a young community with 67% of its inhabitants aged under twenty-nine suggesting the opportunities offered by industrial growth, increased housing stock and retail outlets. These developed side by side with the agricultural community so for example John Evans, aged sixty-two, farmed sixty acres at Ty'n Mynydd – he and his family were all natives of Pistyll. Amongst his nearest neighbours were quarry labourers such as Richard Thomas, aged thirty-six from Edern, living at Ty'n Weirglodd and John Griffiths, aged forty-seven, settmaker, from Llanaelhaearn.

32% of Pistyll's inhabitants in 1881 came from within a twelve-mile radius of the parish, 18% came from the rest of Caernarfonshire and Wales while 12% had been born outside Wales. Many of the latter came from areas with stone quarrying backgrounds such as Leicestershire – in particular from Mountsorrel which by today has the largest granite quarry in Europe – and Cornwall. This migratory pattern is reflected in the sex ratio which was 55% male and 45% female but for the fifteen to twenty-nine age the males accounted for 62% of the population. Many of these were boarders locally or lived in houses known as The Barracks. There remained the element of single males living on farms as servants but these were subsumed by single males in other occupations. This was a community which had become increasingly diverse in a short period of time.

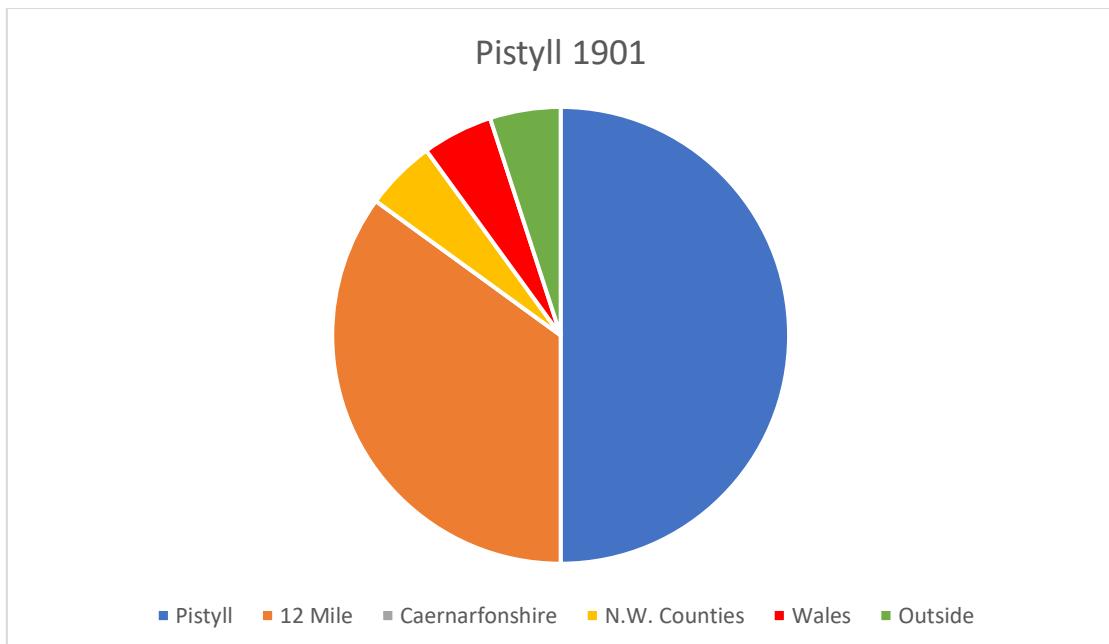


Figure 35: Population origins of Pistyll in 1901.

By 1901 the population of Pistyll had declined by about 19%.⁴¹⁶ Half the population had been born in Pistyll and of those under the age of fifteen which by 1901 accounted for 29% of inhabitants 80% had been born in the parish – a far higher figure than in 1881. This suggests a more settled community where the population although smaller had established roots. The age group between fifteen and twenty-nine now accounted for 26% of those enumerated, of whom 50% had been born in Pistyll – almost double the proportion noted for 1881. Of those aged thirty to forty-four which now made up 18% of the total 35% were native to the parish. 27% belonged to the older age group of forty-five upwards and in these age groups 63% had been born in Pistyll. This was an older age profile to the one presented in 1881 explained by a declining population and where migrant labour was not as evident. This is further illustrated by the migratory patterns suggested by the birthplace of the inhabitants – 35% came from a twelve-mile radius, 10% from the rest of Wales and 5% from beyond the borders of Wales. Many of these migrants were probably temporary only, for example, a number were boarders in areas such as Sea View Terrace in Nant Gwrtheyrn and came from Ireland and various counties of England. They remained monoglot English. Others evidently had been settled in Pistyll over a number of years and were bilingual such as Walter Simmons of Mountsorrel, Leicestershire, aged forty-five, a sett quarryman, married to a local woman who spoke Welsh only and they had a

⁴¹⁶ TNA, Records of the General Register Office RG13/5267 Pistyll ED 15 and 16.

bilingual family. He had been in Pistyll prior to 1881. Therefore of the community 85% came from Pistyll and its immediate vicinity – compared to 70% in 1881. The sex ratio remained the same as in 1881 for the whole community and the difference in the fifteen to twenty-nine age bracket was not as pronounced as twenty years earlier with 53% being male. Pistyll has a sex ratio in all age brackets which goes against the norm in both census years with more males recorded than females. Explanations for those of working age is possible but even in the earlier age groups there were substantially more males. There appears to be no obvious explanation for this anomaly. Whether some males were informally adopted as young children is open to conjecture only. Males may well have been considered less of a financial drain as they would have better prospects of employment in the future. Studies discussing the greater number of young males often found in rural areas have found that this phenomenon may not be totally attributable to the migration of females. Female labour was generally not valued as much as male labour at the end of the nineteenth century. Gallego-Martínez argues that there may well have been gender discrimination in the homes of southern Europe with, for example, ‘unequal allocation of food, care and/or workload within the household’. He finds similar attitudes in several European countries. This may well have led to higher female mortality rates in some rural areas from diseases such as tuberculosis.⁴¹⁷ Similar points are made by Hammel, Johansson and Ginsberg with specific reference to the United States but also comparing these patterns in other countries including Britain.⁴¹⁸ McNay, Humphries and Klasen draw attention to significant regional variation in the rate of female mortality. Excess female mortality in England and Wales was more prevalent in rural societies during the nineteenth century. The figures suggest the clustering of districts regarding mortality. Possible reasons outlined were economic structure, disease and the nature of female employment. Thus this particular study concentrates on working age females with very little attention paid to younger age groups. There is a need for greater research in this field.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁷ F. J. Beltrán Tapia and D. Gallego-Martínez, ‘Where are the Missing Girls? Gender Discrimination in 19th-Century Spain’, *Explorations in Economic History* (2017), 1-10.

⁴¹⁸ E. A. Hammel, S. R. Johansson and C. A. Ginsberg, ‘The Value of Children During Industrialization: Sex Ratios in Childhood in Nineteenth-Century America’, *Journal of Family History*, 8, 4 (1983), 346-366.

⁴¹⁹ K. McNay, J. Humphries and S. Klasen, ‘Excess Female Mortality in Nineteenth-Century England and Wales: A Regional Analysis’, *Social Science History*, 29, 4 (Winter, 2005), 649-681.

Tudweiliog

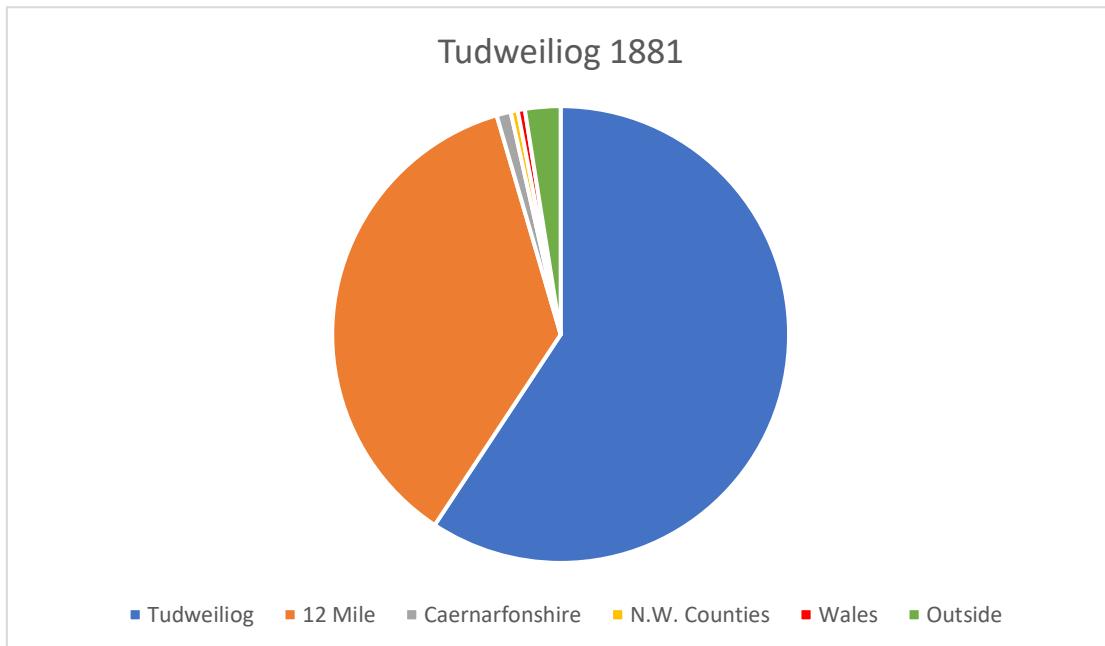


Figure 36: Population origins of Tudweiliog in 1881.

Tudweiliog's population remained static during the census years of 1881 and 1901.⁴²⁰ In 1881 59% of the inhabitants had been born in Tudweiliog and of those aged fifteen and younger which formed 29% of the total 86% were native to the enumeration district. The age bracket of fifteen to twenty-nine constituted 27% of the population and of these a third were from the parish. The parish had an older age profile with 44% aged thirty and upwards of whom a third had been born in Tudweiliog. Over a third of the population (36%) originated in areas within a twelve-mile radius and 5% only came from further afield. The figure illustrates the economic and work patterns of a small rural community with a number of live-in farm workers such as Evan Parry, aged twenty-one from Nefyn working and living at Tanllan, married labourers living with their own families such as David Jones, head of household, an agricultural labourer aged thirty-five living at 1 Tai'r Lôn with his wife and three children and a negligible number of incomers such as the local school master from Aber, Caernarfonshire. This was a static population and largely self-sufficient. The sex ratio in 1881 was 51% female and 49% male. There is no great imbalance in any age group. By 1901 the sex ratio was 54% female and 46% male with greatest imbalance being in the fifteen to twenty-nine age bracket when 61% were female which suggests that young males had

⁴²⁰ TNA, Records of the General Register Office RG11/5560 Tudweiliog ED 6 and 7 and RG13/5267 Tudweiliog ED 5 and 6.

migrated elsewhere to find work – possibly the Caernarfonshire slate quarries – but this may well have been a temporary phenomenon in a community which appeared to retain its stability. Tudweiliog's age profile again in 1901 veered towards the older age brackets with 45% aged over thirty.

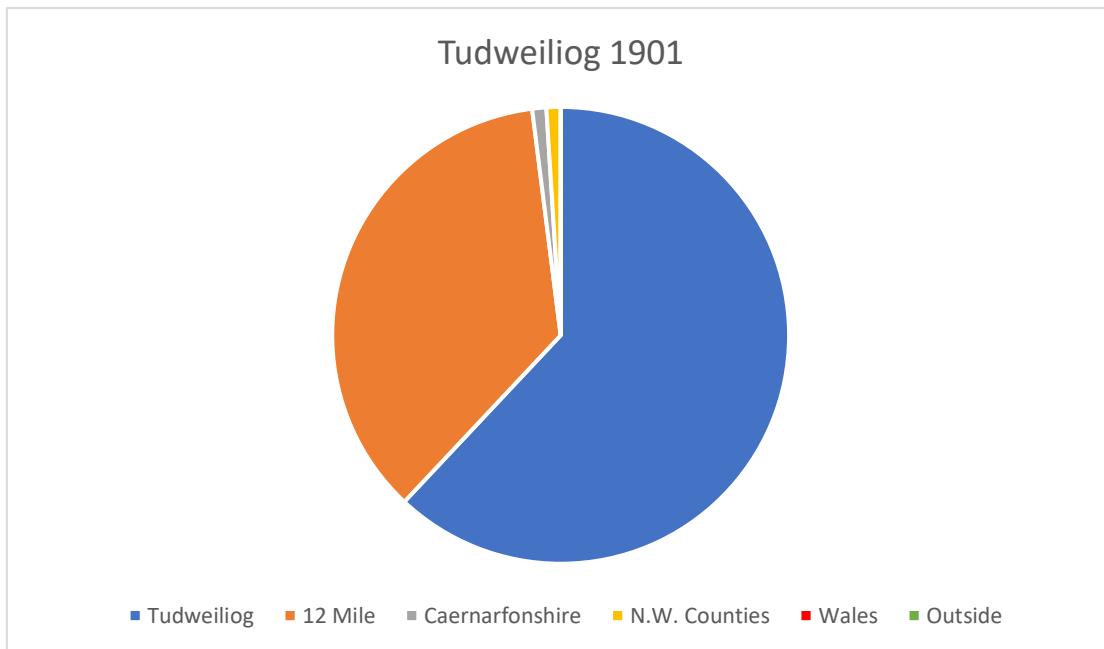


Figure 37: Population origins of Tudweiliog in 1901.

In 1901 62% of the inhabitants had been born in the parish and of the age group of fifteen and under (31% of the total) 81% were natives of the enumeration district. Over a third of the population came from a twelve-mile radius while 3% only came from other areas. These figures differ little from twenty years previously. Tudweiliog was, if static in numbers, stable in its population profile which allowed for a comparatively balanced community with a potential to allow for a certain continued self-reliance and individual identity firmly based within its geographical area.

Betws-y-Coed

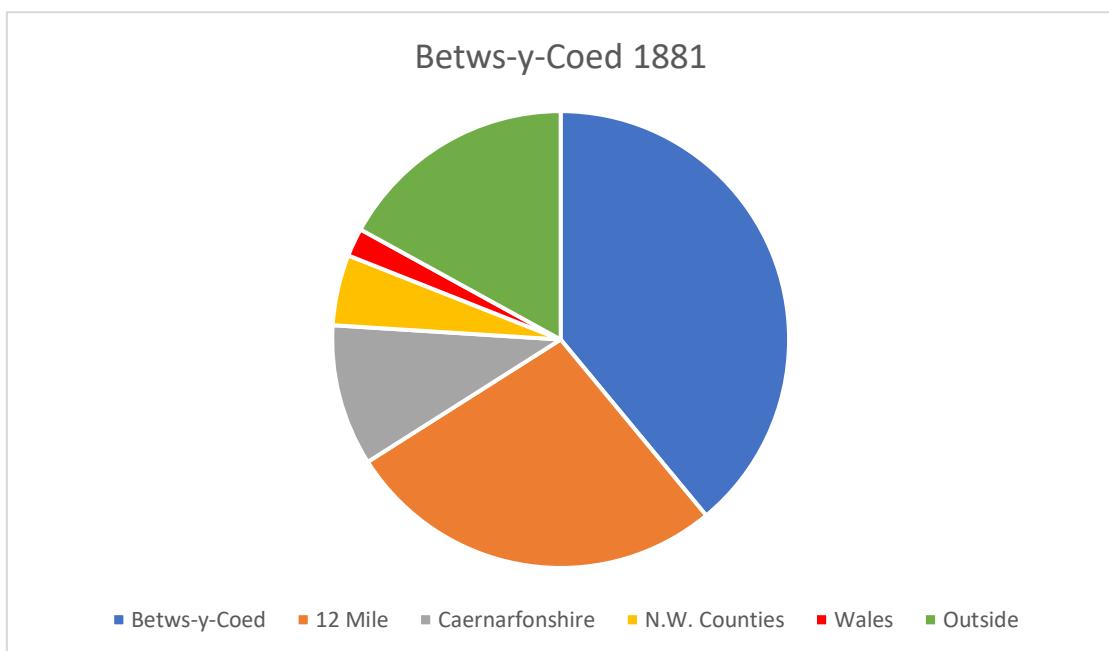


Figure 38: Population origins of Betws-y-Coed in 1881.

Betws-y-Coed was by far the most accessible area amongst the rural communities chosen for study being set in a valley with comparatively easy accessibility to Caernarfonshire and Denbighshire and coastal developments, to the slate industry of northern Merionethshire and to the tourist attractions of Snowdonia. It had its own mixed economy and outside investment. It was an area ripe for further developments which was reflected in its population profile.

In 1881 39% of the population had been born in Betws-y-Coed.⁴²¹ Of those aged fifteen and under which formed 29% of the population three-quarters were native to the community. 30% belonged to the age bracket of fifteen to twenty-nine of which less than a third had been born in Betws-y-Coed. Those over thirty made up 41% of the total of whom only 22% had been born in the parish. 27% of the population came from within a twelve-mile radius of Betws-y-Coed, 17% from the rest of Caernarfonshire and Wales and 17% from outside Wales. The migratory pattern is clear – the village was a centre for the railway, had the attractions of employment in the lead mines and slate quarries and was a burgeoning tourist centre with developments which provided employment in hotels, lodging houses and service providers side by side with an agricultural base. For example part of the village was settled by predominantly railway workers in station cottages drawn from as far afield as Staffordshire while hotels

⁴²¹ TNA, Records of the General Register Office RG11/5536 Betws-y-Coed ED 3 and 4.

recruited staff from a wide area. Utility providers such as those in the gas works came from Lincolnshire and many lead miners had migrated from Cornwall. Its diversified economy attracted both skilled and unskilled labour which formed the backdrop to the population profile. The sex ratio for 1881 was 55% female to 45% male and within the age brackets the imbalance is explained by the occupational patterns. The sex ratio for 1901 remains exactly the same with the imbalance at its most evident for those of employment age.

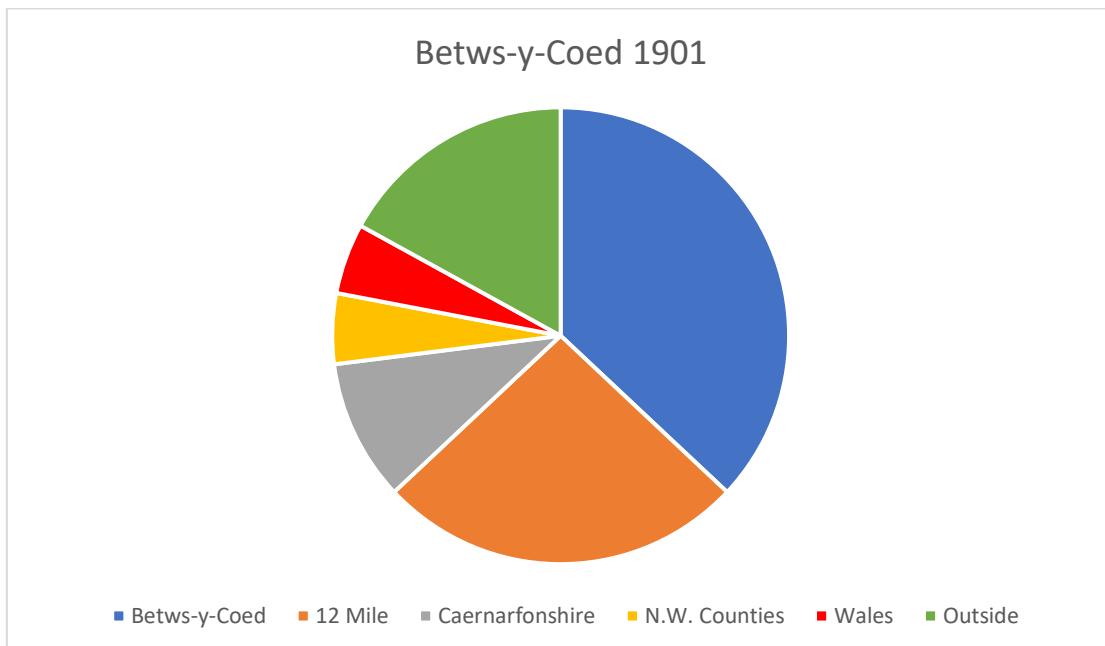


Figure 39: Population origins of Betws-y-Coed in 1901.

In 1901 the overall population for Betws-y-Coed had increased by around 10%.⁴²² The age profile was somewhat older with 22% being under fifteen years of age and 46% being thirty years and upwards. The population origins are remarkably similar to those of 1881 with 37% being born in Betws-y-Coed and 26% within a twelve-mile radius of that community. 20% came from the rest of north Wales and Wales and 17% from outside Wales. These included individuals who had returned from Patagonia like the family of C.V. Williams, Station Terrace. Both he and his wife had been born in Penmachno but their two eldest children were natives of Argentina. Living at Gethin Terrace as boarders were a father and son, Robert and Edward Jones, the former born in Blaenau Ffestiniog and the latter born in Chubut Province and now working in the quarries. It appears that a number of quarrymen had migrated to Betws-y-Coed by 1901 from more troubled areas such as Bethesda. For example at Ty'n Ddol William

⁴²² TNA, Records of the General Register Office RG13/5244 Betws-y-Coed ED 3 and 4.

and Richard Jones, aged twenty and eighteen respectively from Bethesda are enumerated as lodgers and at 3 Gethin Terrace, Hugh Hughes, aged fifty-four, his wife and children aged nineteen and nine were all natives of Bethesda. Betws-y-Coed with its small local quarry and easy access to the Ffestiniog slate belt would have provided welcome and familiar employment.

Linguistic Profile

Carnguwch

The linguistic profile of Carnguwch in 1901 shows that 100% of the total population spoke Welsh, of which 86% were monoglot Welsh speakers. The rural district of Llŷn within which 3 parishes in this study are found had an overall figure of 98% of people who spoke Welsh. As one of the most remote parishes it linguistically reflects the comment in the report on the Agricultural Labourer ‘the inhabitants [of Llŷn] are utterly free from English influence in social matters, and Welsh is the only medium of communication...’⁴²³

Pistyll

Pistyll’s linguistic pattern in 1901 reflects its more diverse population and economy. 75% were monoglot Welsh, 6% spoke English only and 19% were bilingual. Assimilation of English speakers into the Welsh speaking community was taking place in many instances. So for example at London House Robert Baum, originally from Scotland spoke both languages and had married Ellen, a native of Caernarfon while the overwhelming majority of English only speakers had settled in the Nant area of the parish establishing an English-speaking enclave in that area – ‘an island of Englishness in a sea of Welshness in Llŷn’.⁴²⁴ An English chapel was established to serve this community. The more rural area of the enumeration district, sparsely populated, was 98% monoglot Welsh and 2% bilingual.

Tudweiliog

Again in Tudweiliog – an area where 97% of the population came from the parish and vicinity – 100% of the population could speak Welsh: 83% were monoglot Welsh

⁴²³ Royal Commission on Labour: *The Agricultural Labourer*, vol. 2, p. 145.

⁴²⁴ E. Price, ‘Nant Gwrtheyrn and the English Cause’, *Gwynedd Archives Service Bulletin*, 3 (1976), 20-22.

speakers and 17% were bilingual. Those employed in trade, retail or professional roles constituted most of the bilingual section of the community. At Tir Bach Thomas Roberts, aged fifty-seven, and his son Robert Roberts, aged sixteen, both from Tudweiliog and running a family draper and grocer business were bilingual as was the pupil teacher and those who had maritime careers. In his evidence to the land commission Colonel Charles A. Wynne-Finch who held land in Caernarfonshire and Denbighshire gave information in particular about the Cefnamlch estate in Tudweiliog and his lands in Denbighshire which lay within a distance of about seven miles from Betws-y-Coed. When asked if he spoke Welsh Wynne-Finch said that neither he or his agents spoke the language and stated that ‘it would be an immense advantage if we could speak Welsh...’⁴²⁵

Young people and children of school age were usually enumerated as being monoglot Welsh speakers suggesting that the school system had not Anglicised this part of the community. At Bagillt, Tudweiliog, for example, there were four children aged between four and thirteen. None, according to the census, spoke any English. Southall had touched upon this subject in his analysis of the 1891 census language returns when he underlined the vitality of the Welsh language in the western areas of Wales which had overcome an educational regime ‘which was intended to minimise, if not obliterate...’ the Welsh language.⁴²⁶ The degree of empathy with the Welsh language (and Welsh culture) would also vary according to school and headteacher possibly with use of Welsh made without official logs being kept.⁴²⁷ In 1890 it was decided to give grants to schools which taught Welsh and the use of bilingual books was made permissible. The teaching of geography and Welsh history was also encouraged. This was a small but important step in the development of Welsh medium education. In her analysis of the 1891 Welsh language returns for Trefdraeth, Anglesey, Parry found that 89.4% of that community’s children were monoglot Welsh which she claimed showed that ‘the influence of the home, chapel and local culture was stronger than that of the education system.’⁴²⁸ When examined in 1847 the Church School in Tudweiliog appears to represent this trend half a century earlier.⁴²⁹ The

⁴²⁵ Parliamentary Papers, *Royal Commission on Land in Wales and Monmouthshire, Minutes of Evidence* (London, 1893-1896), vol. I, p. 650.

⁴²⁶ J. E. Southall, *The Welsh Language Census of 1891* (Newport, 1895), p. 31.

⁴²⁷ See Cooper, *Exodus from Cardiganshire*, p. 31 for increasing use of Welsh in the curriculum in Cardiganshire after 1890.

⁴²⁸ Parry and Williams, *The Welsh Language and the 1891 Census* (Cardiff, 1999), p. 443.

⁴²⁹ *Reports of the Commission of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales* (London, 1847), p. 44.

English schoolmaster had been a joiner but could understand and speak Welsh. It is evident from the report that much of the instruction must have been in Welsh as the children appeared to be able to follow and carry out mathematical calculations under instruction. The school supported and built by the landowners – the Cefnamwlch Estate – was evidently an institution of pride locally ‘yn rhagori o ran effeithlonrwydd ei haddysg yn y dyddiau hyn y ar lawer ysgol … yr ysgol hon oedd coleg yr enwog Eben Fardd.’⁴³⁰ [‘in those days excelled many schools in the effectiveness of its teaching … it was this school that was the famous Eben Fardd’s college.’]

Betws-y-Coed

The linguistic profile of Betws-y-Coed illustrates well the social changes that had taken place in a rural community. In 1847 when the population of the village was half that of 1901 a small number of children attended the only local school. According to the report ‘only one or two of the scholars had any acquaintance with the English language; most of them knew nothing at all about it’. When questioned in Welsh by the inspector the children had ‘some good answers’. The master, whose English was poor, allowed no Welsh in the school. In his biography of the artist David Cox, William Hall described Betws-y-Coed during the mid-nineteenth century. The village was small and comparatively unaffected by tourism and the fame it would achieve later in the century as a centre and inspiration for artists. Hall wrote ‘it could boast of only one small shop – a mere cottage…much Welsh and a little English, was spoken…’⁴³¹

By 1901 with the development of transport links and investment in tourism Betws-y-Coed had become far more diverse and anglicised. 24% only were monoglot Welsh speakers, 59% bilingual and 17% spoke only English. The latter figure was considerably higher than that for the whole county (10.3%). Those involved in the hospitality industry in hotels and guest houses, as for example, owners, servants and waitresses tended to be bilingual whilst a high proportion of those involved in slate quarrying were monoglot Welsh speakers. One witness giving evidence in the land commission in 1893 about the Conwy valley, where he had lived and worked all his life, said that most of the tenant farmers spoke Welsh only with very few exceptions

⁴³⁰ T. Williams, *Hanes Achos y Methodistiaid yn Tydweiliog a Phenllech* (Pwllheli, 1909), p. 39.

⁴³¹ Cited in Lord, *The Betws-y-coed Artists’ Colony*, p. 45.

but that their children understood and could speak English.⁴³² Railway employees represented a mix of bilingual and English speakers in the main while a handful of the unskilled platelayers were largely monoglot Welsh speakers.

The linguistic profile of these communities illustrated that the more remote areas on the western fringes were bastions of the ‘monoglot army’ who had generally left ‘the beaten track’. ⁴³³ Where economic diversification took place areas became increasingly bilingual with a growing element of monoglot English speakers. Parry and Williams have studied communities which illustrate this aspect. For example the study of Porthmadog shows that 4.6% of the town’s population spoke English only. In an analysis of language spoken in the intensely industrialised area of Dowlais 46.6% of the population spoke English only in 1891. Welsh was largely spoken by the older members of the community. In the most Welsh area of Glamorganshire – Pontardawe – 12.3% were monoglot English speakers. The proportion of English only speakers was 45.5% throughout Wales.⁴³⁴

Housing profile

Llŷn: Carngwuch, Pistyll and Tudweiliog

Housing and its problems held much in common for all the Llŷn study areas in this work. The analysis of this aspect will therefore be based on all three communities underlining the similarities and, especially in the case of Pistyll, the differences. In 1881 Carngwuch had 25 houses. By 1901 this figure stood at 23. Pistyll had 211 houses in 1881 and the same figure in 1901 whilst Tudweiliog had 78 houses in 1881 and 79 in 1901. This reflected the static population figures of Carngwuch and Tudweiliog and the downward trend in Pistyll’s numbers.

⁴³² Parliamentary Papers, *Royal Commission on Land in Wales and Monmouthshire, Minutes of Evidence* (London, 1893-1896), vol. I, p. 652.

⁴³³ Southall, *The Welsh Language Census of 1891*, p. 31.

⁴³⁴ Parry and Williams, *The Welsh Language*.

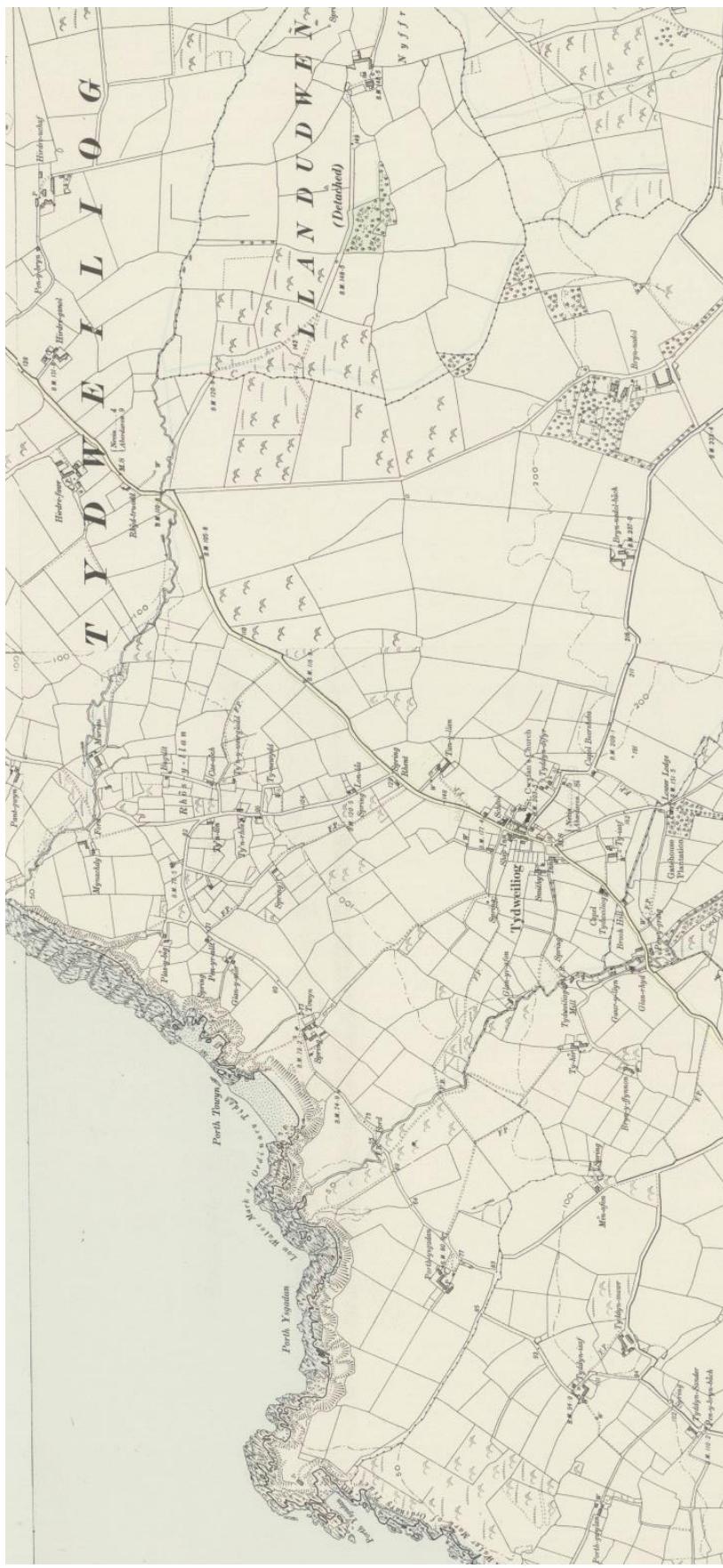


Figure 40: OS 6" to one-mile Caernarvonshire XXXIX SE 1901. A map showing Tudweiliog, a small village in a highly rural area.

Housing, employment and way of life were closely connected. *The Royal Commission on Labour: The Agricultural Labourer* in 1892 included valuable information about housing in the Pwllheli Union as does some of the evidence given to the Welsh Land Commission in 1893. The former is quite heavily reliant on the reports of the local authorities and their officers such as the Medical Officer of Health. Jones pointed out ‘...much of the criticism of housing and living conditions generally reflected views of the sanitary reformers and the medical officers of the central government...’⁴³⁵ The communities on the Llŷn Peninsula were scattered and especially towards the Western tip housing was to be found ‘grouped on the slopes’.⁴³⁶ Nearer to Arfon and Eifionnydd there were more populated villages which housed a more diverse range of people – this would be the case for Tudweiliog and Pistyll.



Figure 41: GAS CRO XS/585/106 Tudweiliog village early twentieth century.

Carnguwch by its proximity to Pistyll became more diversified in population but still retained elements of rural isolation. The older housing stock in Llŷn was described as wretched in *The Royal Commission on Labour: The Agricultural Labourer* which gave examples of not only appalling structural standards but also of the overcrowded conditions and ventilation within the houses. Newer houses had more space but equally poor ventilation. Side by side with this housing type was the extensive lodging facilities for farm labourers – much of it in unsuitable out houses

⁴³⁵ Jones, *Mid-Victorian Wales*, p. 49.

⁴³⁶ *Royal Commission on Labour: The Agricultural Labourer*, vol. 2, p. 149.

which provided little comfort or privacy. Whether in cottages or in farm lodging the quality of rural accommodation and sanitation became a matter of debate and concern in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century which is reflected in local government records and in newspaper reports.

Housing was built in piecemeal fashion. An early description of Llithfaen in 1837 by Eben Fardd described a new row of 13 cottages built while a dozen thatched cottages of the older housing stock were in a ruinous state except for four houses.⁴³⁷ By the period of this study the housing stock had doubled in size as the granite quarries became far more important in the local economy. With an increase in housing and population there was greater strain on drainage and sanitation. Scavenging was introduced in the 1890s.⁴³⁸ Certain houses were demolished since they were unfit for human habitation.⁴³⁹ Efforts were made to repair drainage in Llithfaen village and reports were made in the 1890s that several houses in Pistyll such as Liverpool Terrace, Llithfaen, had not been connected to the main sewers. The owner of the houses claimed that other houses were not connected to the sewer.⁴⁴⁰ Nothing was done immediately but an agreement was reached to extend the main drain ‘by installments’.⁴⁴¹

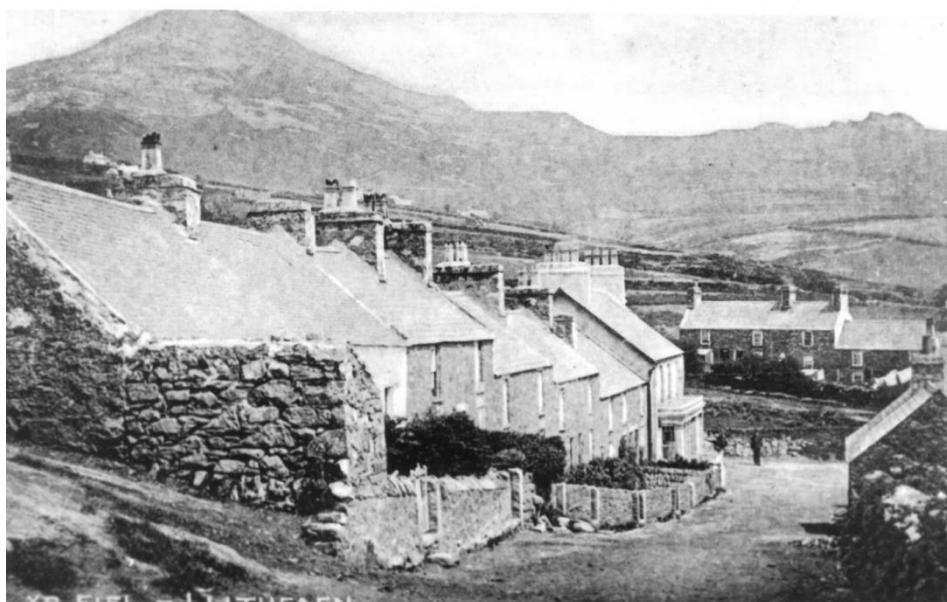


Figure 42: GAS CRO XS/3324/171 Housing in Llithfaen village early twentieth century.

⁴³⁷ Wales: A National Magazine, vol. 2, no. 11 (March, 1895).

⁴³⁸ GAS CRO XB13/157.

⁴³⁹ GAS CRO XG1/133.

⁴⁴⁰ GAS CRO XB13/157

⁴⁴¹ GAS CRO XB13/157.

There was no hope for mains sewerage in areas such as Carnguwch but shortcomings in houses were tentatively addressed by the Union Medical Officer of Health. He reported that the ‘Barracks’ house in Carnguwch was in 1882 totally unfit for habitation. Three adults slept in one bed and a child in a small cot in the same room. Carnguwch Parish Vestry stated that the building should be demolished.⁴⁴² Pigsties near houses such as Hafod, Carnguwch, in 1896, were ordered to be removed because of the recurrence of several infectious diseases in the home.⁴⁴³ In 1899 at a meeting of the Caernarfonshire Sanitary Committee the housing of the working classes was discussed. It was pointed out that it was ‘now generally recognised that there were large numbers of insanitary dwellings...in the rural areas.’ Dr Jones Morris of Porthmadog added that if there were rules that cowhouses should be ventilated ‘human beings should also be considered’.⁴⁴⁴ In 1906 several cases of typhoid were reported in Tudweiliog which serve to illustrate the many such cases in Llŷn which indicated poor, contaminated water supply in all probability.⁴⁴⁵ Outbreaks of typhoid occurred with regularity. In 1899 eight people had been affected by the disease in Llanaelhaearn – one person had died. The source of the infection was believed to be polluted well water which had been ‘the source of sickness and death for many years’.⁴⁴⁶ Contamination to wells from farmyards, pigsties, animals and cesspools was a common complaint in the countryside. Waddington gives an example of Cilcennin in west Wales where the village pump drew water for 423 people – much of the supply came from under the burial ground.⁴⁴⁷ The late nineteenth century experienced many droughts with one such period covering 1890-1909.⁴⁴⁸ Concerns about water supply throughout the area were evident in the minutes of the Llŷn Rural District Council. There was concern throughout the country about the insanitary state of rural housing and although bad in many areas the situation was acute in Wales.⁴⁴⁹ Overcrowding and poor structure were widespread. In England ‘few could believe that conditions in rural dwellings (in Wales) were as bad as described’.⁴⁵⁰ Pamphlets were printed in Welsh and English in

⁴⁴² GAS CRO XG1/133.

⁴⁴³ GAS CRO XB13/157.

⁴⁴⁴ NWE, 16 June 1899.

⁴⁴⁵ GAS CRO XB13/158.

⁴⁴⁶ NWE, 9 June 1899.

⁴⁴⁷ Waddington, “I Should Have Thought That Wales was a Wet Part of the World”, 596.

⁴⁴⁸ Waddington, 596.

⁴⁴⁹ See G. Roberts, ‘Sickness and Health in Caernarfonshire, 1870-1939’, in P. Michael and C. Webster (eds.), *Health and Society in Twentieth-Century Wales* (Cardiff, 2006), pp. 60-77.

⁴⁵⁰ Waddington, “It Might not be a Nuisance in a Country Cottage”, 192.

the mid-1890s giving advice on how to improve living conditions and warn of outbreaks of disease such as diphteria.⁴⁵¹ In the same year it was decided to have a house to house inspection of the whole district for sanitation purposes.⁴⁵² There were constant concerns about water supplies in country areas well into the twentieth century.⁴⁵³ Concentration on sewerage works tended to be mostly centred on the Nefyn area and Llithfaen – areas which were more populated and more easily dealt with. Little wonder that in a letter to the *North Wales Chronicle* in 1914 Sir John Hancock, the Honourable Secretary to the Welsh Housing Association, spoke of ‘the difficult rural areas’ of Caernarfonshire.⁴⁵⁴

Housing for many farm servants was within the farmer’s home or outhouses. Those living in these circumstances were either the single farm labourer or in some cases married labourers who had to find work away from home and boarded in the farmhouse. In evidence to the Royal Commission on Land in Wales and Monmouthshire in 1893 a witness described the type of life lived by those boarded in farms. He spoke of farm servants ‘prowling around’ farms, the lack of accommodation and recreation for these men. ‘In the old times they used to spend the evenings carving, now they do not do anything of a useful description unless it be reading the Welsh newspapers, and they walk about; some of them smoke pipes; it may be they go more to the inns than they did before.’⁴⁵⁵ There was no room for the servant to stay in the farmhouse after his meal and little welcome for him to sit with the family. With lodging in farms the labourers were provided with board. The standard of food provided varied from one farm to the next but according to one farm labourer from Llangybi, Caernarfonshire, ‘the farmers food is not of the best’. He complained on the reliance on salted meat rather than fresh meat and that ‘generally when a cow is killed for the farmer’s use it is one that could not be sold to a butcher.’ In bigger farms where servant girls were employed and did much of the cooking it was felt that these young girls were inexperienced in cooking skills and that the food was served almost raw. The local doctor at Llanaelhaearn believed that a school of cookery should be

⁴⁵¹ GAS CRO XB13/157.

⁴⁵² GAS CRO XB13/157.

⁴⁵³ GAS CRO XB13/160.

⁴⁵⁴ NWC, 16 October 1914.

⁴⁵⁵ Parliamentary Papers, *Royal Commission on Land in Wales and Monmouthshire, Minutes of Evidence* (London, 1893-1896), vol. I, p. 494-5.

established to educate and train the farm servants.⁴⁵⁶ Sleeping accommodation was outside in buildings unfit for that purpose. In 1910 a newspaper article highlighted the remarks of the Medical Officer of Health about the sleeping arrangements of servants quoting examples of men's bedrooms being above stables. In one case there were only three beds for four men and the air was 'second hand' after the horses. He also stated that the accommodation was dangerous, injurious to health and unfit for human habitation.⁴⁵⁷ Female farm servants were also placed in unsuitable accommodation in the farm 'though they sleep within the farm dwelling house the room is generally the poorest and the bed and bedclothes comfortless'. Often the farmer had to reach his sleeping quarters by going through the female servant's room.⁴⁵⁸ It was felt that more cottages should be built for married servants and the lot of single servants should be improved. Little wonder that living in these conditions tuberculosis rates were higher in the rural areas than in the urban and showed no sign of improving.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁶ Royal Commission on Land in Wales and Monmouthshire, Report (London, 1896), p. 632-637. See also *The Royal Commission on Labour: The Agricultural Labourer* for a detailed account about the diet and pattern of eating of rural labourers.

⁴⁵⁷ CDH, 30 December 1910.

⁴⁵⁸ Royal Commission on Labour: *The Agricultural Labourer*, vol. 2, p. 151. This arrangement was also described in the petty sessional minute book for the Pwllheli region (GAS CRO XLC/5/3).

⁴⁵⁹ See for example CDH, 27 May 1904 and the annual report of the Medical Officer of Health.

Betws-y-Coed

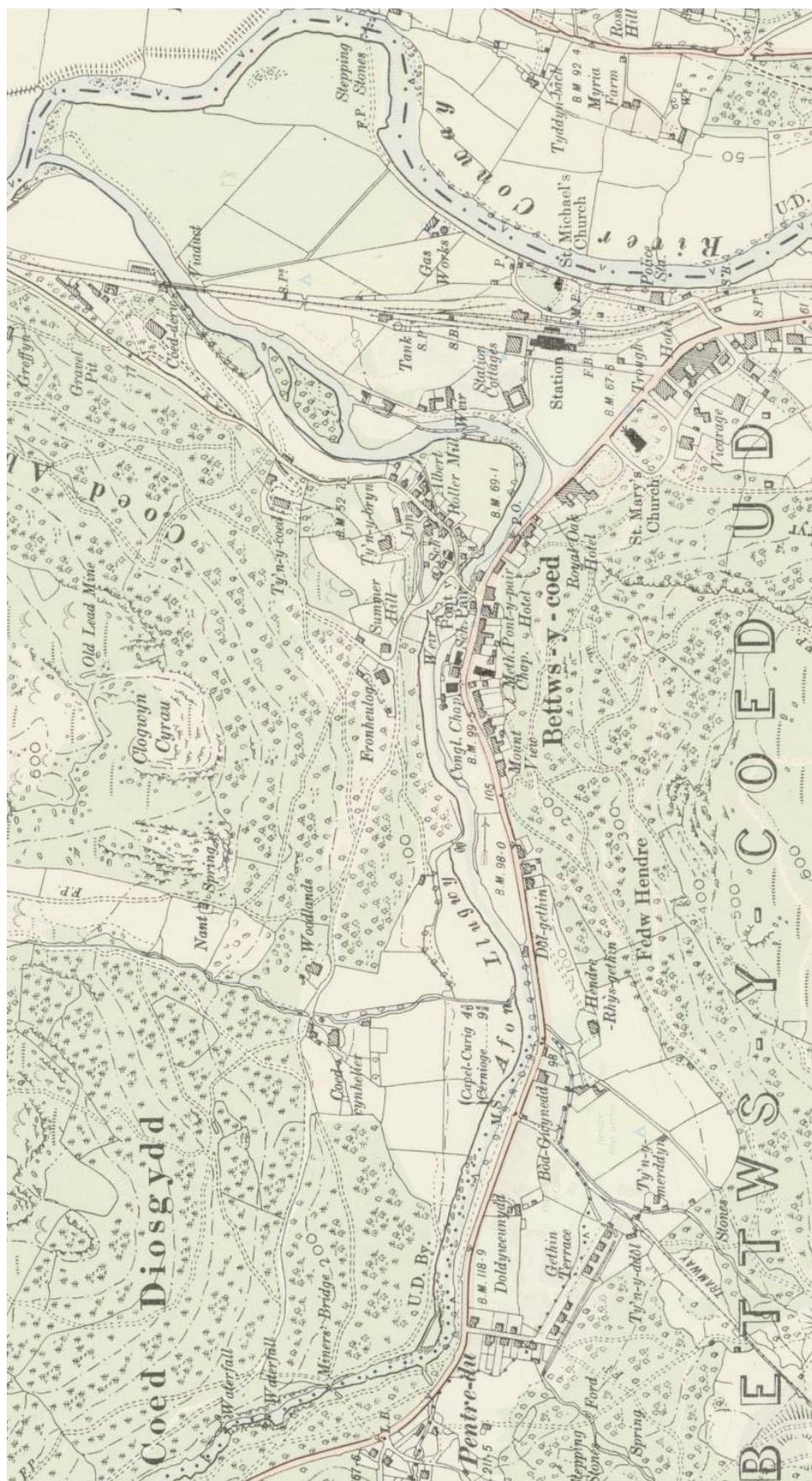


Figure 43: OS 6" to one-mile Denbighshire XVI SW 1900. Map showing the centre of Betws-y-Coed and new development towards Pentre-du and railway housing towards the river Conwy.

The number of houses in Betws-y-Coed had increased by over a third between 1851 and 1881. By that year there were 166 houses and by 1901 there were 183. Most of this increase would have been the terraced houses in the west of the village developed in the 1890s.

Despite its efforts – and considerable success – in marketing Betws-y-Coed as a healthy mountain retreat it was an area which had considerable difficulties with the standard of its housing stock, sanitation and water supply. In 1863 the village was depicted as ‘a treat to those who have been accustomed all their lives to the smoky towns or level valleys of England...’⁴⁶⁰ Such reporting hid the reality of the situation which lasted well into the twentieth century of poor water supply, bad sanitation and overcrowded housing. As Waddington wrote, a healthy, rural landscape, however picturesque, ‘sat uneasily with the mounting evidence of sanitary neglect...’⁴⁶¹ In 1898 just on the eve of Betws-y-Coed becoming an Urban District Council typhoid was reported in the village.⁴⁶² The Parish Council wrote to the Betws-y-Coed Rural District Council saying that sanitation arrangements were defective in the village. Because of the number of diseases in the area the Local Government Board appointed an officer to look into the sanitary arrangements and administration of Betws-y-Coed. Dr. Wheaton, the officer sent to look into the matter, wrote in his report that the whole area had unsatisfactory water supplies. Within Pentrefelin, an area of Betws-y-Coed, there was no connection to the public sewer and the sewage from the dwellings was either discharged into the river or seeped through rubble drains.⁴⁶³ Inadequate water supply was a constant worry and reflected in the discussions of the local authority. Short term measures of diverting water supplies to houses at certain times ‘most convenient to the villagers...for about an hour each day’ were undertaken.⁴⁶⁴ Other homes in Betws-y-Coed were not as fortunate. When it was requested that a water main be linked to Gethin Terrace in 1898 the request was turned down because the authority had no money to do so.⁴⁶⁵ Tensions surrounding water supply were caused by the high use of water in hotels, considered to be extravagant, compared to no supply to a large number of houses and to others where it was decided that water for domestic use only could be

⁴⁶⁰ NWC, 11 July 1863.

⁴⁶¹ Waddington, “It Might not be a Nuisance in a Country Cottage”, 190.

⁴⁶² CAS COB3/5/2.

⁴⁶³ *The North Wales Times*, 20 August 1898.

⁴⁶⁴ CAS COB3/5/2.

⁴⁶⁵ CAS COB3/5/3.

accessed. For parts of the village a water cart had to be used to supply homes ‘when streets in the centre were watered’.⁴⁶⁶ New waterworks were agreed to over a number of years with the ready cooperation of Lord Penrhyn but with a flat refusal from Lord Ancaster.⁴⁶⁷

Concerns about housing and sanitation persisted. In 1899 the Medical Officer of Health inspected a number of houses in Betws-y-Coed. In the ownership of the railway company at Station Cottages he found that many bedrooms had no means of ventilation and others were overcrowded – ‘the crowding is of course increased by taking in lodgers’.⁴⁶⁸ Refuse and ash pits were found around the homes and water was obtained from a pump. The disposal of refuse was a constant problem. In 1898, for example, the council was looking for dumping grounds and decided to approach the Gwydyr estate to bury rubbish in a corner of a field called ‘Yr Ynys’ and alongside the road for the convenience of the upper part of the village.⁴⁶⁹ Above the pump the surface level consisted of the station yard where fowls and ducks were kept. The Station House was badly ventilated in parts but more astounding was that an old urinal had been turned into a pantry and further urinals and water closets in the station were placed near the ‘new’ pantry and the air from these entered the pantry. In 1905 a serious outbreak of diphteria broke out in the vicinity. Eleven were affected and four died. All bedclothes, beds and clothes were destroyed. The disease was ‘imported from outside’ according to the Betws-y-Coed Urban District Council – an authority which was very sensitive to such issues in a village marketed as a health resort.⁴⁷⁰

At Pentredu the Medical Officer of Health found sewage discharged directly into the river. Four years later Pentredu was still defective in sanitation matters. Here Mr Sydney London, a quarry owner, owned 18 houses occupied by 110 individuals. The Local Government Board complained about his and the Urban District Council’s inertia. London was elected to the Betws-y-Coed Urban District Council and shortly afterwards work began to improve sewage systems in Pentredu. Thereafter relations with Mr London deteriorated with the landlord taking to the press to explain his

⁴⁶⁶ CAS COB3/5/3.

⁴⁶⁷ CAS COB3/5/5.

⁴⁶⁸ CAS COB3/5/3.

⁴⁶⁹ CAS COB3/5/3.

⁴⁷⁰ CAS COB3/5/5. See also J. Hirst, ‘Resort Development on the Cambrian Coast 1840-1914’, (PhD Thesis, Aberystwyth University, 2017), p. 186-188 in which the author describes the way in which the Cambrian Bay resorts stressed their health giving qualities.

position.⁴⁷¹ He wrote that the Urban District Council had wished him to contribute to the cost of drainage of the area which he refused. He accused the council of neglect ‘to keep the existing sewers clean and by allowing one of them to be made a common dumping ground for the refuse of the neighbourhood’. He warned of disease in the area ‘increased by the existence of open closet drains’. London took the authority to court and reached an out of court settlement. Drains were placed in the homes in Gethin Terrace by owners.⁴⁷² The supply of water, standard of housing, disposal of refuse, sewage and drainage remained constant matters of discussion for the Betws-y-Coed Urban District Council. Houses such as Hand Cottage, Mill Street, owned by Earl Ancaster was still standing in 1911 although scheduled for demolition many years earlier, Gethin Terrace remained with insufficient drainage and midden privies, inhabitants still carried their refuse to dump in the woods although many in the village were now served by a refuse gatherer, houses still had privies over streams which contaminated rivers and farm land and Railway Terrace was still reliant on a pump for water in 1913.⁴⁷³

Household structure

Carnguwch

The community of Carnguwch was small, dispersed but still reflected a number of different types of household structure. In all there were only 24 households in the parish. Of these almost a fifth were composite. For example at Carnguwch Bach Thomas Ellis farmed 212 acres alongside his sons and 4 live-in servants employed on the farm and in the corn mill. All the farm servants were single men and as reported in *The Royal Commission on Labour: The Agricultural Labourer* the number of married men in Llŷn employed on farms had decreased as they were often attracted by life in the villages.⁴⁷⁴ A couple of the composite households contained lodgers – the majority involved in the granite works and one woman farmer of 13 acres, aged eighty, who lived in Gwag y Mae. There was no indication that she was related to the family and may have been able to pay for a lodging out of the income of her meagre holding or may have been lodged with the family by the Pwllheli Union. The overwhelming

⁴⁷¹ WCP, 16 October 1903.

⁴⁷² CAS COB3/5/5.

⁴⁷³ CAS COB3/2/2/1.

⁴⁷⁴ *Royal Commission on Labour: The Agricultural Labourer*, vol. 2, p. 147.

majority of households – 80% – were occupied by the family only. Some of these were nuclear families like William Jones, Rhydau Gloewon, a farmer of 20 acres, married with two sons – aged twenty-four and sixteen – and two daughters. One of the daughters, aged twenty-eight, was evidently employed on the farm. The employment of family labour was an important feature of Welsh agriculture.⁴⁷⁵ As Howell wrote ‘farms were basically family run units’ and this is reflected in the household structure of Carnguwch. Acreage was on the whole small and pastoral farming used less labour. In his study of Glanllyn, near Bala, Merionethshire, Owen in writing of the second half of the nineteenth century found that in a farming economy run on a family basis, three quarters of the male labour on farms were members of an immediate family.⁴⁷⁶ Several intergenerational families were to be found in Carnguwch. For example in Blaenau seventy year old Robert Jones, lived alongside his seventy-eight year old wife and niece who appeared from the description as also their domestic servant while at Tŷ Uchaf Ann Jones described as the wife of the head of household but described herself as a farmer of 54 acres. She lived in a household of two daughters, a son in law and grandson. It appears that all, bar the grandson, were involved in the running of the farm.

By 1901 there was hardly any change in the number of households. The number of family only households had increased to 90%. The remaining 10% of households which employed other labour were, as one would expect, the larger farms and farms where the owner had reached an advanced age such as Henry Roberts, aged eighty-one at Hafod who employed his own son and a skilled farm labourer. Carnguwch Bach remained a substantial employer with five servants including a domestic servant. Only two boarders were recorded in the parish – both school mistresses. The family-based households remained the preponderant household structure but was certainly not unvaried. By 1901 at Rhydau Gloewon William Jones’ household remained family based as in 1881 but the family members had changed somewhat. Anne Jones had evidently returned home and with her nineteen-year-old illegitimate daughter, Eliza, had made Rhydau Gloewon their home. Both had no noted occupation recorded alongside their names. A high number of sons remained single and at home either directly working on the farms or living on the family farm and

⁴⁷⁵ Howell, *Land and People*, p. 95.

⁴⁷⁶ T. M. Owen, ‘Chapel and Community in Glan-Llyn, Merioneth’, E. Davies and A. D. Rees (eds.), *Welsh Rural Communities* (Cardiff, 1962), 187.

occupied in the quarries. At Blaenau Canol, for instance, the father remained at home as a farmer whilst the three sons worked in the quarry. A degree of economic diversification allowed such a family to remain in their area rather than move to another community. Such diversification and work pattern must have impacted on the social life and attitude of what had been almost exclusively an agricultural workforce.

Pistyll

Pistyll was a far larger parish and enumeration district having seen almost a doubling of its population between 1871 and 1881. In 1881 there were 197 households in Pistyll. Of these 66% were family only households. Some farms were run as family units as at Foel where John Jones farmed alongside his wife, single son and single daughter. Newly introduced terraced housing lent themselves naturally to single family occupancy but this was not entirely the pattern. For example of ten houses in Liverpool Terrace eight were family only houses – the other two were composite. The local shopkeeper and his family kept two boarders and a servant. Household structure was determined by work patterns. Therefore whole terraces reflected the development of the granite quarries. As stated previously in this study settlements of quarrymen from areas such as Mountsorrel were to be found. A number settled with their own households whilst a number became boarders in the area – their stay may well have been temporary. The common background in Mountsorrel must have provided the boarders with a network of associates and also a social network. There were sixty-nine boarders in forty-two households – all associated with the quarries. Similarly composite households could be found on farms as, for example, at Bwlch where Richard Owen farmed over 300 acres with the help of two servants, a wife at home and three children aged four to twelve without any schooling entry against their names. There were a number of multi-generational families in 1881. Llithfaenfawr had as its head of household Ann Jones, age sixty-nine, a farmer with a single son at home and three young children. At 7 Liverpool Terrace Mary Thomas, age seventy-one, was head of household living with her single son, a sett maker and her granddaughter aged nineteen as their domestic servant.

By 1901 the population of Pistyll had decreased by 20%, a decrease reflected in the newer households. There were 157 separate households. The percentage of family only units made up 75% of the whole. Bwlch Farm was run entirely as a family unit from the evidence of the 1901 census. There were seven children, three of whom were

aged twenty, nineteen and seventeen who were living at home with no occupation against their names which suggests strongly that they were used as farm workers. In 1881 the same farm had employed two live-in farm servants. The number of boarders had reduced to half the number of 1881. With a reduction in population it can safely be deduced that there was more housing available and less density of occupation. Farms still employed live in workers – Pistill Farm employed four such workers: a cattleman, ordinary labourer, carter on farm and a domestic servant. In 1881 this farm housed an eighty-year-old farmer together with two agricultural labourers and one domestic servant but by 1901 a younger generation had taken over with an increased staff including the employment of a cattle man. Did this suggest that by 1901 a new thirty-two-year-old farmer was attempting to improve the stock and farming methods? The ability of cowmen in Llŷn was mentioned by Lleufer Thomas.⁴⁷⁷ Concerted efforts were made in Wales to improve the cattle lines and especially that of the Welsh blacks.⁴⁷⁸ It was urged in a meeting of the Welsh Black Society to prohibit the importation of foreign store cattle. The meeting was presided over by Mrs Wynne-Finch.⁴⁷⁹ Increasingly during the 1880s cattle rearing became the main concern of farmers in Llŷn.⁴⁸⁰ The intensity of the farming affected the numbers of agricultural workers required to work the farm and be housed on the farm. Such regional differences and the nature of farming is well attested and affected both household structure and housing. Having studied seventeen counties in England and concentrating on holdings of 40 acres or less Howkins states that in the mid nineteenth century it took one man to work 35 acres of a mixed farm.⁴⁸¹ For many small farmers in Llŷn, as in east Lancashire, Northumberland and Durham, ‘the workplace and the home were the same place, the family and the workforce the same thing’.⁴⁸² Llŷn and the sample areas in this study provided good evidence for this.

Multi-generational families in Pistyll in 1901 were few in number. At 1 Liverpool Terrace, as in 1881, the shopkeeper had a more complex intergenerational household profile with a daughter, son-in-law and two nephews. Farms had more intergenerational inhabitants than the new industrial housing. This may reflect that a

⁴⁷⁷ Royal Commission on Labour: *The Agricultural Labourer*, vol. 2, p. 146.

⁴⁷⁸ Howell, *Land and People*, p. 136-138.

⁴⁷⁹ *The Pembrokeshire and General Advertiser*, 14 August 1908.

⁴⁸⁰ Royal Commission on Labour: *The Agricultural Labourer*, vol. 2, p. 145.

⁴⁸¹ Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England*, p. 38.

⁴⁸² Howkins, p. 41.

large part of Pistyll was comparatively recently developed and settled which would not prove a ‘draw’ for older generations settled elsewhere in their own communities to join younger members of the family.

Tudweiliog

Tudweiliog was for both census years the most agricultural area in this study. In 1881 the area contained sixty-three households. Two thirds of all households were family units. Married agricultural labourers lived independently of the farm as at 1 Tai'r Lôn where David Jones, aged thirty-five, an agricultural labourer lived with his wife, two daughters and son. Such employees could be employed at a distance from their homes to which they returned occasionally.⁴⁸³ Richard Hughes, aged thirty-three, farmed 11 acres at Glanygors which supported him and his wife while nearby at Caenewydd Robert Williams’ home was multi-generational and he farmed 21 acres with the help of two sons and a daughter in law. At Brynogolwyd Robert Roberts farmed 76 acres employing four farm servants: all were member of his family as was his housekeeper and dairymaid. Two young grandchildren were also at home on the farm. The key element in this type of household was family rather than accumulating wealth. Such a small farm would probably allow family member to do casual work on other farms in order to provide at least subsistence level.⁴⁸⁴ Nuclear families were the majority of those who lived in the village and provided a service. At 1 High Street John Hughes, aged forty-eight, a shoe and bootmaker lived with his wife and four children, two of whom were also boot and shoemakers.

Composite household structures, where they did exist, were predominant in farms. A holding as small as 24 acres at Pentrellech was run by the farmer, his son and a young servant while one son was a mariner. At Towyn, a 140-acre farm employed the farmer and three farm labourers. One son was a mariner and a further three children were of school age. According to Howell there were more indoor labourers in Wales because pastoral farming was more intensive. Stock needed to be constantly monitored. The majority of farm workers hired were farm servants throughout the nineteenth century in Scotland, Ireland and Wales. It remained dominant at the beginning of the twentieth century in, for instance, Cumberland, Westmoreland, Northumberland and

⁴⁸³ Royal Commission on Labour: *The Agricultural Labourer*, vol. 2, p. 147.

⁴⁸⁴ Howkins, ‘Peasants, Servants and Labourers’, p. 54-55.

Yorkshire.⁴⁸⁵ Supplying board and lodging on the farm was also considered a cheaper option of employment.⁴⁸⁶ Details of what was generally supplied in this way in Llŷn is given in *The Royal Commission on Labour: The Agricultural Labourer*.⁴⁸⁷ Such a household structure impinged directly on housing conditions and social life which has been discussed earlier in this chapter. There was little to romanticise in the life of the ‘lloft stabl’ but Hugh Evans in *Cwm Eithin* managed to do so. ‘...ni feddyliau neb fod y bywyd yn un caled, a difyr oedd yr oriau’ [‘Nobody considered that the life was a hard one and the hours were filled with enjoyment...’].⁴⁸⁸

By 1901 the number of households in Tudweiliog had increased to 78. There was little change in population figures. Over 70% were occupied by members of one family. Some farms had become family only units. For example at Tŷ Isaf the farm supported the farmer, his wife, son, three daughters and illegitimate granddaughter. In 1881 the same family had also employed a servant. By 1901 the son was also enumerated as working on his own account. Evidently part of the family income was derived from another source provided by the son. Many agricultural workers could provide a number of services, many of them seasonal, to improve the level of family income.⁴⁸⁹ Thomas Roberts at Ty’n Llan was hardly likely to have augmented his income greatly – he was a farmer and part-time preacher. Murpoeth’s head of household described himself as a small farmer, living at home with his son who was single and a joiner and with a single daughter. While the local rabbit catcher Richard Jones, Brynodol Bach lived with his wife and eight children. As already shown many family only households were intergenerational and also varied in structure – a grandmother, mother and illegitimate granddaughter, lived at Rhent and a shoemaker and his sister lived in 3 Tai Lon.

Composite households were equally varied. The Post Office housed the sub-postmaster and grocer together with his family and a domestic servant while at Tyddyn Difyr Ellen Jones, a farmer with her joint owner and sister, Elizabeth Jones lived with their brother and lodger, the curate. Farms represented the majority of composite households illustrating the variety of farm household structures created by the work

⁴⁸⁵ Howkins, p. 58.

⁴⁸⁶ Howell, *Land and People*, p. 94.

⁴⁸⁷ *Royal Commission on Labour: The Agricultural Labourer*, vol. 2, p. 152.

⁴⁸⁸ H. Evans, *Cwm Eithin* (Liverpool, 1931), p. 36.

⁴⁸⁹ Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England*, p. 40.

pattern of the holding – cattlemen, carters, yardmen, pigman, general labourers and a number of domestic servants.

Betws-y-Coed

In 1881 there were 161 households in Betws-y-Coed. Of these 58% were family only and the remaining 42% were composite. As previously noted areas of Betws-y-Coed were identifiable as work related and this is reflected in the household structure. The area where railway workers dominated tended to be family specific households with very few boarders – those so housed in this area were also in railway related work such as single platelayers and a railway fireman. These workers may well have been in Betws-y-Coed for short periods of time. At the Toll Gate the head was Ellen Jones living with her brother and illegitimate daughter. Farms were often family-based units – for example Mynydd Bychan was home to a blacksmith/farmer with his wife, five single sons and four single daughters with an illegitimate granddaughter. All sons were described as labourers and daughters as domestic servants at home.

Housing stock tended also to dictate the household structure – the majority of terraced housing was occupied by members of one family but these could be intergenerational with, for instance, at 2 Min y Don lead miner Evan Hughes, aged seventy-four, lived with his wife aged seventy-two and thirteen-year-old granddaughter described as a scholar. Such households would reflect a tendency to use females in a family to help in the home of relatives and place them in an area with more employment opportunity. It would also make educational facilities more accessible for the child or young person.

Composite households were more common in Betws-y-Coed than in any other area in this study. This reflected the work pattern of the village and area: the growing hotel and boarding house trade gave rise to households with a raft of employees such as housekeepers, waitresses, ‘boots’ and car drivers. Similarly larger farms had their own staffing framework while even small businesses such as a local shop also employed live in help. An area of comparatively small industrialisation, exposed to the vicissitudes of the market, gave rise to a migrant workforce which at times put strain on the household unit. A number of boarders would be housed in the area – 18% of households had lodgers. The larger houses attracted a number of householders in search of an area of natural beauty and others whose employment was dependent on a tourist economy. These houses employed domestic labour.



Figure 44: GAS CRO XS/2172/2 Betws-y-Coed village c.1910.

By 1901 with an increase of in the region of 10% in the population there were 177 households of which 52% were family only households and 48% were composite. There was therefore a decrease in the family only homes reflecting different emphasis in the local economy. Single family units tended to be smaller in size and some still reflected the one family farm such as Diosgydd Isaf set near the lead mines and afforestation areas with a female farmer, two single sons both lead miners and a single daughter. This 28-acre farm was the first completed holding of the reconstruction programme of the Forestry Commission in Gwydyr in 1925.⁴⁹⁰ New terraced housing had been developed at one end of the village which had increased the housing stock. So for example in Gethin Terrace 60% of the houses kept lodgers and many had multiple lodgers mostly associated in this part of the village with the slate quarries. The number of hotels and guest houses had increased providing a larger number of composite households and the number of domestic servants across all household structures had almost doubled in number. They in fact constituted 13% of the total population of Betws-y-Coed and 78% of employment amongst women enumerated with an occupation. This element of the household structure reflected the drift of women from other rural areas to tourist centres such as Betws-y-Coed where there would not have been the availability of this workforce locally.⁴⁹¹ In this way the household structure in Betws-y-Coed differed from the other rural communities in this

⁴⁹⁰ D. L. Shaw, *Gwydyr Forestry in Snowdonia: A History* (London, 1971), p. 19-25.

⁴⁹¹ Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England*, p. 13.

study as it reflected the growth of tourism on the one hand and the sporadic nature of the extractive industries on the other which led to the hiring of labour at short notice and equally to the termination of work.

Employment profile: Male

Settlement	1881	1901
Carnguwch	85%	85%
Pistyll	91%	89%
Tudweiliog	80%	94%
Betws-y-Coed	94%	87%

Percentage of males of fifteen years and over in employment.

Carnguwch

Within this very small community 62% of males were economically active. In the age bracket of fifteen and over 85% were in employment. A few noted that they were employers – all farmers. However it is evident from the entries that there were more employers enumerated with a household containing employees who simply did not note the fact.

For such a small population there was a surprising diversification of employment. By far the largest proportion of male employees in 1881 were associated with agriculture: in all 65%. For example at Tyddynbach John Jones farmed 17 acres and his son was a threshing machine operative while on the 350-acre farm of Carnguwchfawr Robert Roberts had three agricultural labourers living at the farm. According to the report of Lleufer Thomas on the agricultural labourer in Llŷn, most hiring of farm servants was made at the hiring fair where there appears to have been a tacit understanding between the labourers about the rates set for their hire on that day.⁴⁹² Caunce argues that hiring fairs ‘provided a surprisingly sophisticated management tool for getting the most out of the available farm labour within each locality...’⁴⁹³ Agreements between farmer and labourer were oral and the contract was enforceable as was shown in a number of examples of labourers appearing before the petty sessions court in Pwllheli for breaking the contract. In 1899, for instance, a

⁴⁹² Royal Commission on Labour: *The Agricultural Labourer*, vol. 2, p. 146.

⁴⁹³ Caunce, ‘The Hiring Fairs’, p. 221.

farmer, H. H. Williams, Llaniestyn (a parish situated about three miles from Tudweiliog) took a farm labourer to court, claiming the sum of two pounds for breach of contract because the latter had left his job within three days of his engagement. The labourer's defence was that he only had tea and bread and butter for every meal. 'He preferred receiving fifteen shillings less wages and have proper food.' The magistrates found for the farmer.⁴⁹⁴ Other agricultural labourers lived with their families like thirty-one-year-old William Jones at Tyddyn Cadwaladr. As the name of the house suggests there must have been some small amount of land with the upland home to help eke a living for a family with three children under the age of seven. William had become blind during the 1870s so life must have been hard. The house and field on which the house was built had been bought for William Jones and his family by his former master Evan Jones, Hafod. Both William and his wife had been servants to him for a number of years.⁴⁹⁵ The changing economic situation in the area was reflected in Carnguwch. By 1881 22% of the male population was employed in the granite quarries like John Owens, aged thirty-three, a sett maker from Llanbedrog living at Refail. Mariners made up 6% of the workforce – for example William Jones, aged forty-seven, was a master mariner living at Tan y Ffynnon. His son, J. G. Jones, aged twenty-four, was also a mariner. Retail and trade gave employment to a negligible number – the sparse scattered population meant that either the inhabitants had to be self sufficient and tailor their needs to available produce and skills or go further afield to access these services.

By 1901 the parish had experienced a decline in population. The percentage employment of males of fifteen and over was as in 1881 85% - of which 12% described themselves as employers. However the breakdown was somewhat different. 50% were involved in agriculture. In Carnguwch the parish council kept a close supervisory check on land used by the agricultural community. For example in 1895 it reduced the rateable value on several holdings when they lost the use of sheepwalks when Mynydd Cae Cribin was sold by the Faenol Estate and in 1910 the parish council allowed a farmer to graze his sheep on 'Comis y Tlodion' and charged six pence a head.⁴⁹⁶ Change was underway in employment patterns. The family at Tyddyn Cadwaladr remained the same as in 1881. The blind head of household at fifty-one

⁴⁹⁴ CDH, 9 June 1899.

⁴⁹⁵ GAS CRO XM/5460/13.

⁴⁹⁶ GAS CRO XP/Carnguwch Parish Council Minutes.

years was no longer employed as an agricultural labourer as entered in 1881 and his son had become an apprentice in the granite quarry. By 1901 35% of male employees were employed in the quarries. Whilst the remaining male workforce worked in trade and retail like Owen Roberts, aged fifty-five, a butcher living at Blaenau and David Evans, a servant at Carnguwch Bach, working as a corn miller. The son of a local bootmaker, Evan Williams, aged forty-three, single and living at home in Tan y Ffynnon had improved the family's social status by becoming a public accountant and one of the few in the parish who was bilingual. John Roberts, aged thirty-eight, living at Carnguwch Mill, had become a local authority highway labourer. Thus in a small population male employment became more diversified with the seeds of public service employment opportunities beginning to filter down to even somewhat remote communities.

Pistyll

Pistyll was enjoying an employment boom by 1881. During the 1870s the population had more or less doubled. Of the whole male population 66% were economically active but in the age brackets of fifteen and above 91% were in employment. By far the largest sector of employment was in the quarries: 54% of all males aged fifteen and over were earning a living in work associated with this industry. The development of large cities and urban areas had increased the demand for cobblestones or setts. These had been produced from the mid nineteenth century on the western part of the Eifl in Pistyll to meet the demand and were exported from the coastal strip of the parish in Nant Gwrtheyrn. The development of the quarries transformed the nature of the community – encouraging in-migration of labour and an economic base for the development of support services in the community.



Figure 45: Nant Gwrtheyrn, Pistyll 1972 before renovation ©Kate Jewell.

Local labour in the quarries was much in evidence – for example at Penisarhos John Griffiths, aged forty-seven, originally from Llanaelhaearn was a settmaker alongside his teenage sons, both born in Pistyll. Within the industry there were, of course, demarcations of jobs and levels of expertise. Living in Syneite Terrace were a quarry manager from Leipzig, Germany, an area of granite quarries and a quarry and mining engineer from Cornwall while at Tanyclogwyn locally born William Griffiths was a quarry labourer.

18% of males of fifteen and over were employed in agriculture. At Gwynys Owen Owens, a native of Pistyll, was a farmer of 400 acres, employing four labourers. Some had enough land to help eke a living. For instance at Tanypark a David Jones had farmed until the 1870s and the place was ‘digon faint i’w gadw adre’ [‘enough to keep him at home’] but he kept his family by working on local farms as a casual labourer. His son Thomas carried on the same type of life living in 1881 with his widowed mother and his niece, Mary, at home to look after Tanypark and also giving his nephew who worked in the quarries a home.⁴⁹⁷ Labourers who had a smallholding in Pistyll also had twenty acres of common at their disposal where they could pasture a cow or keep a few sheep.⁴⁹⁸ Single farm servants like William Jones, aged seventeen, from Ffestiniog, Merionethshire, lived in with his employer’s family at Bryn Celyn. The overwhelming majority of those described as agricultural labourers in Pistyll lived on the farms where they worked. In speaking of the East Riding of Yorkshire and of

⁴⁹⁷ GAS CRO XM/5460/13.

⁴⁹⁸ Royal Commission on Labour: *The Agricultural Labourer*, vol. 2, p. 150.

Aberdeenshire, Howkins wrote of a youth culture which existed of those employed as live-in servants ‘this was based on a masculine community defined by living in with other lads...’⁴⁹⁹ Those who described themselves as general labourers or simply labourers made up 12% of the workforce. Undoubtedly some of these would have been involved in agricultural work but were probably also employed as non-skilled labour in the quarries, employed in highway maintenance and also possibly as labourers in the port. Pistyll shared this dual identity of rural and industrial with many other communities. Howkins has drawn attention to the development of lead mining in Allandale, Northumberland and mining in the Forest of Dean. All forms of extractive industries were established in rural areas during the nineteenth century as in the counties of Durham and Nottinghamshire. However a degree of deindustrialization in rural areas took place from the late nineteenth century onwards.⁵⁰⁰

With the increased population in Pistyll there would have been a market and a demand for tradesmen and retailers. By 1881 these constituted 12% of the working population. At New Brighton John Jones, aged forty-five, from Llangybi and his son, John, aged sixteen, from Pistyll were joiners. Blacksmiths, shoemakers and tailors were among the other trades represented. Grocers, butchers and drapers’ shops supplied the everyday needs of the population while John Roberts, aged thirty-five, from Dwygyfylchi, ran the local pub. A coal merchant also lived locally to supply fuel to the growing number of houses. Many saw the opportunities of a new customer base and were evidently entrepreneurial by nature. One such was a local shoemaker, William Williams born around 1830. He was the son of a single mother, Mary Lewis, born in 1796 and who lived with him and his family at the Victoria Inn until her death in the 1870s. At one point he took over the Victoria Inn and by 1881 he had moved into a new house that he had built and named Cambrian House. He built several more houses in Pistyll and tried to open another pub but was prevented from doing so by the local council. A very small number were involved in maritime occupations such as a ship’s carpenter and a marine insurance clerk.

By 1901 the population of Pistyll had been reduced by almost a fifth. For the whole male population 62% were in employment but in the age brackets of fifteen and above 89% of all males were enumerated with an occupation. A higher percentage of

⁴⁹⁹ Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England*, p. 22.

⁵⁰⁰ Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England*, p. 215-216.

the male population – 64% - were involved in the quarries but this represented a comparatively static number of the workforce: the percentage is higher than in 1881 because the overall population had fallen by 1901. When Caernarfonshire County Council wrote to Llŷn Rural District Council in 1908 asking it to draw to the attention of its communities the likely job opportunities on offer in Penrhyn Quarry it may well have had areas such as Pistyll in mind.⁵⁰¹ Agriculture employed 25% of the population. At Gwniasa, for example, John Roberts, aged forty-nine, farmed, employing his nineteen-year-old son and two agricultural labourers, one of whom had been born in America, was married and according to the enumerator monoglot Welsh. At Tanyfoel a family all native to Pistyll farmed – the farmer, aged seventy-nine, employed his two single sons, aged forty-eight and forty. As in 1881 almost all those involved in agriculture lived on the farms where they worked and there was a strong dependency on family labour. Fewer were employed as tradesmen in the community – 5% of the workforce – a figure which probably represents the decline of rural trade and greater availability of goods in market towns. A small number of men were employed in retail – 2% of the workforce – like Robert Roberts, Mountain View, aged seventy-one who was the manager of the coop grocers. Unusually for someone in retail he was monoglot Welsh. There was a sprinkling of those employed at sea and a growing band of professional people like teachers and ministers of religion. The latter illustrating the effect of the population growth and concentration in Pistyll over the previous quarter of a century. The group of labourers and general labourers without any obvious place of employment enumerated in 1881 had all but disappeared. There may well have been less casual work available and certainly the housing building boom had passed. Of those over fifteen in 1881 3% entered themselves as employers. This figure had doubled to 6% by 1901.

Tudweiliog

Within the total male population of Tudweiliog 70% were in employment. Of those aged fifteen and above 80% were in an occupation. Of these 13% described themselves as employers. The majority of males – 72% – were employed in agriculture. The occupational pattern in agriculture within this parish illustrated the raft of such

⁵⁰¹ GAS CRO XB13/160.

employment. Large farms such as Brynodol where Hugh Jones farmed 448 acres employed live in farm servants, stable boys, groom and gardener.⁵⁰²



Figure 46: Brynodol Farm, Tudweiliog, an eighteenth-century construction.

In all the farm employed nine employees. Whereas at Beerseber Robert Williams was a married agricultural labourer, a native of Tudweiliog and living independently of his employers. Small farms such as Robert Roberts's holding of 10 acres at Tirbach gave him and his wife a living at age sixty-nine and seventy-one respectively but their single son, aged thirty-seven, was earning his living as a shopkeeper and draper. The community was still supporting a high proportion of trades – 17% of all men worked in this capacity. At 1 Bryntirion Thomas Roberts, aged sixty-one, originally from Llaniestyn, worked as a master blacksmith employing one man and in the village of Tudweiliog John Roberts, aged fifty-two, originally from Llannor, worked as a carpenter – one of several carpenters and glaziers living in the enumeration district. Tudweiliog could boast eight boot and shoemakers. Evidently the village and surrounding area had a nucleus of useful trades that would have been used by a wider catchment area. As Hallas pointed out the number of crafts in a rural nineteenth-century community ‘provides a useful guide to the degree of self-sufficiency and vitality of the community’.⁵⁰³ Retail outlets such as a baker, butcher, drapers and general shop and those supplying a service such as a weaver made Tudweiliog a very

⁵⁰² *Cardiff Times*, 3 January 1880.

⁵⁰³ Hallas, ‘Craft Occupations in the Late Nineteenth Century’, p. 22.

small scale commercial centre – a profile which is evident in previous decades. A local pub must also have added to its attraction. Occupations associated with these services gave employment to 5% of the male population. Only a small number – 3% - of those living in Tudweiliog were noted to have maritime careers. Some may well have been away from Tudweiliog for long periods of time as in the case of Captain Thomas Owen, Minafon, but the pull of home meant that they returned in retirement. Howell and Baber stress the separation of the rural and maritime in Cardiganshire during the nineteenth century.⁵⁰⁴ What is certain is that in areas of Caernarfonshire the link is seen as part of the identity of the various communities. Thomas Williams writes that at beginning of the Calvinistic Methodist cause during the eighteenth century in Tudweiliog when ‘yr oedd holl amaethwyr y rhanbarth hwn y pryd hynny yn bysgotwyr medrys...y gorfodid hwy i edrych tua’r môr, ac yno bwrw rhwyd a bach am helfa er cael enlyn i’w teuluoedd, ac arian i dalu y rhent...’ [‘all the farmers in this area at that time were able fishermen...they were forced to look to the sea and cast their nets and hooks for a catch to enable them to feed their families and to pay the rent’].⁵⁰⁵ Although not a main occupation in Tudweiliog fishing may well have played a part in the economy of the local families as did scavenging the coast in the wake of ships running aground.

By 1901 of the whole male population 65% were in employment. Those of fifteen and over had an employment rate of 94%. 11% described themselves as employers. The number employed directly in agriculture had fallen to 65% of those aged fifteen and upwards. At Hirdre Uchaf Morris Roberts, aged thirty-six, a native of Tudweiliog, farmed with a number of male live-in servants including a carter and a gorse gatherer. The use of gorse as winter fodder was peculiar to Llŷn – this was gathered from the hill sides.⁵⁰⁶ Hugh Jones in his study of Llithfaen refers to gorse gathering in that area where one labourer living in Cae’r Mynydd in Pistyll was known as Robin yr Eithin [Robin the Gorse]. Born in around 1793 and dying in the 1870s ‘hel a malu eithin fyddai ei waith ar hyd y gaeaf ar bob tywydd’ [‘collecting and shredding gorse was his work in all weathers over the winter’].⁵⁰⁷ Other farm workers lived away from their place of employment: for example, at Pentrepoeth a farm labourer, John

⁵⁰⁴ D. W. Howell, and C. Baber, ‘Wales’, in Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950*, p. 298.

⁵⁰⁵ Williams, *Hanes Achos y Methodistaidd*, p. 7-8.

⁵⁰⁶ See Parliamentary Papers, *Royal Commission on Labour: The Agricultural Labourer*, vol. 2, p. 145.

⁵⁰⁷ GAS CRO XM/5460/13.

Hughes, aged thirty-seven, lived with his family of five children. Others such as rabbit catchers were also living at Tudweiliog. The retail sector had grown slightly to 7% of the working male population – butchers, drapers, grocers and flour merchant. So, for example at Tirbach, Thomas Roberts, aged fifty-seven, a native of Bangor, was a grocer and draper, employing his sixteen-year-old son in the same position. All the family was bilingual as was the sub postmaster and grocer at the Post Office, Daniel Griffith, originally from Tudweiliog. Tradesmen's share in the employment market had decreased to 12% but still served the community as blacksmiths, carpenters, joiners and painters and shoemakers. Those employed at sea and still living in Tudweiliog made up 3% of the workforce. A considerable percentage – 13% – was described as labourers, general labourers and road workers. A number of these would undoubtedly have been part of the rural workforce, employed casually or hired for longer periods of time. Road workers and possibly some of the casual labourers would have been employed in public service improving the infrastructure of roads, bridges and cart roads in an area which did not enjoy the benefits of a railway. In speaking of the Tudweiliog area Wynne-Finch stressed how advantageous it would have been to have a railway in the area. Howell describes the impact of the coming of the railways on Pembrokeshire. Markets and prices improved for agricultural produce and the value of land also increased.⁵⁰⁸ Although the main roads had been improved in Caernarfonshire in recent years the smaller bye-roads were ‘so bad that I have heard complaints made...’⁵⁰⁹

Betws-y-Coed

In 1881 of the whole male population 67% were in an occupation – for those aged fifteen and over this percentage stood at 94%. Betws-y-Coed's occupation pattern illustrated at this time a balanced and broad-based economy. The largest percentage employment source was slate quarrying and lead mining which accounted for 21% of the workforce. For example at Tŷ Newydd lived David Jones, his wife and two sons. He is described as an unemployed lead miner but both sons are employed lead miners. Lead mining was an industry which flourished sporadically and this would explain the

⁵⁰⁸ See D. W. Howell, ‘Farming in Pembrokeshire, 1815-1874’, in D. W. Howell (ed.), *Modern Pembrokeshire: Pembrokeshire County History*, 4 (Haverfordwest, 1993), p. 88-89.

⁵⁰⁹ Parliamentary Papers, *Royal Commission on Land in Wales and Monmouthshire, Minutes of Evidence* (London, 1893-1896), vol. I, p. 649.

number of men who described themselves as lead miners ‘unemployed’ and the hope of employment attracted workers from areas where lead mining was already undertaken like Anglesey and Cornwall. Slate quarrying in Betws-y-Coed also provided local employment and accessible work at the quarries of the Ffestiniog area which also attracted those living in Betws-y-Coed. For example John Jones, aged forty and single, lived at home on a farm with his widowed mother and two single sisters. Although they employed an indoor farm servant, John was a slate quarryman. At Rhiwgri, Robert Hughes, aged forty-four, described himself as a slate quarrier and farmer of forty acres. His household consisted of his wife, four children and a domestic servant. Evidently slate quarrying provided supplementary income and could be flexible to suit the farming year. Agriculture provided work for 14% of male workers aged fifteen and above. These consisted of full-time farmers and those, as already described, who took on secondary employment in the quarries or as stonemasons. Indoor farm servants, farm labourers, carters, cowmen and river keepers made up the agricultural sector. Just 3% were employed as gardeners. Trade provided 17% with employment – joiners, blacksmiths, stone masons, plasterers and corn millers. There remained two shoemakers in the parish. The inclusion of a building contractor Evan Jones, aged thirty-seven, originally from Penmachno and living in Pyllan House illustrated that Betws-y-Coed was providing building improvement work – much of it in the tourist sector. The railways were substantial employers – 12% of males fifteen and over were so employed. The railway represented a community within a community settled in one area in railway company housing. Drawn from a wide catchment area the workforce was employed in several capacities – from stationmaster to porter and also included maintenance workers for the line such as labourers and platelayers. General labourers, many of whom probably depended on casual employment, made 9% of the workforce. Retailers of services were 11% of the male workers. Betws-y-Coed boasted the usual host of shops such as grocers, drapers and fruit dealers alongside a myriad of people employed in the hospitality business which made the village ‘perhaps the best halting place on the fringe of Snowdonia.’⁵¹⁰ The village was becomingly increasingly geared to the tourist trade with an ‘abundance of cars at the station’ meeting trains to take tourists on trips.⁵¹¹ Large hotels such as The Royal Oak run by Yorkshireman

⁵¹⁰ A. Heywood, *Guide Book – Bettws-y-Coed, Llanrwst, Capel Curig, Trefriw Illustrated*, (London, 1894).

⁵¹¹ Heywood, *Guide Book*.

Edward Pullen, who also farmed 70 acres, and The Waterloo Hotel run by retired doctor Latham Blacker McCulloch from Ireland provided upmarket accommodation by 1881 employing cabmen, grooms and ‘boots’. Both proprietors were very active in promoting the village and took an active part in administrative affairs.

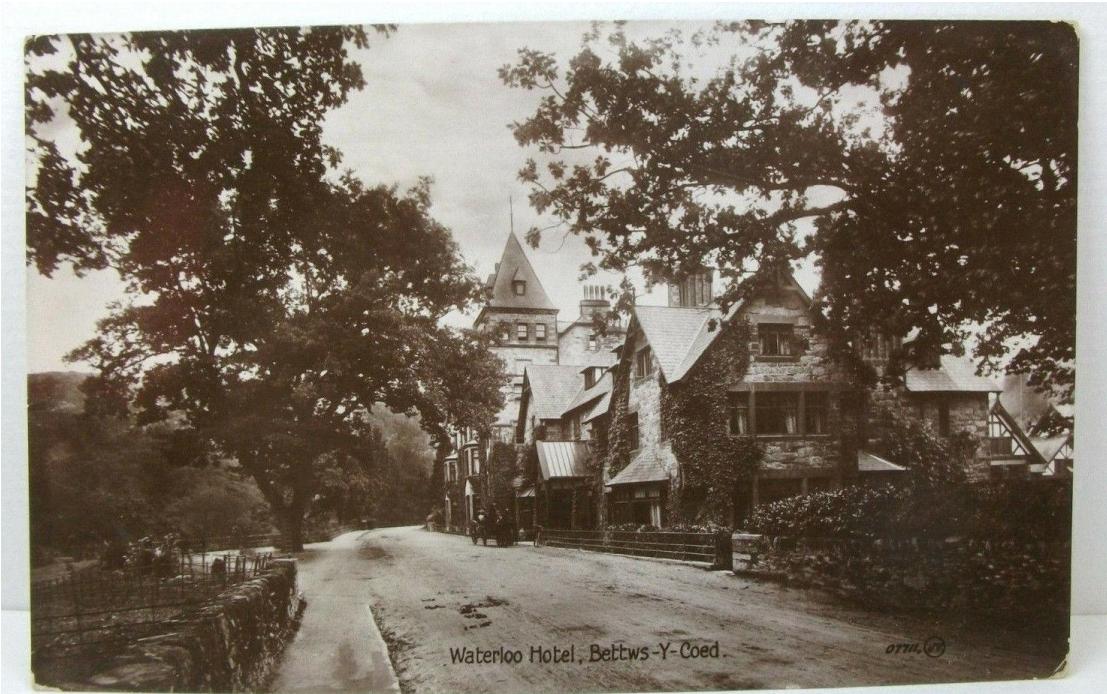


Figure 47: Postcard of Waterloo Hotel, Betws-y-Coed c.1900.

A number of males were also involved in letting apartments or rooms to visitors. At Rock House lived William Davies, a photographer, another spin-off of Betws-y-Coed’s tourist trade.

Independent ‘car drivers’ also earned a living providing services to the many visitors – a group of workers who would in time have to be controlled by local administrators. A small group of professional people was based in Betws-y-Coed ranging from a chemist and his apprentice, a surgeon living at Gorphwysfa, a vicar, ministers of religion and teachers. The village was becoming a more sophisticated centre. It also possessed a Post Office. Some artists such as Joseph Knight, from Manchester, lived with his family at Minafon. Knight was a founding member of the Manchester School of Painters in the 1870s. He was a successful painter and photographer. However the increasing number of hotels, boarding houses and marketing of Betws-y-Coed had led to most artists moving out of the village. Knight

went against this trend moving to Betws-y-Coed from Trefriw and lived in considerable comfort at Minafon.⁵¹²

In 1901 87% of males of fifteen and over were in employment in Betws-y-Coed in a population which had expanded by over 10%. The most noticeable difference in the employment pattern was the very large increase in those employed in lead mining and slate quarrying which accounted for 51% of the workforce. There were many lead mines in the Betws-y-Coed area and specifically in the Gwydyr Forest. Although the industry had been in existence since the seventeenth century, as noted before, its development had been sporadic. The mine dated from the 1870s but was worked more intensively in the period 1896 to 1905 when a great number of the mine buildings were erected.⁵¹³ Some mines like Aberllyn were viable and lead miners lived and worked in this area. For instance James Richards, age thirty-eight, was a lead ore dresser. He was from another lead mining area that of Tal-y-bont in Cardiganshire. Although married there was no wife or family enumerated with him. This suggests the possibility that he may well have moved north in search of work. In Cardiganshire there was a rapid decline in lead mining after 1881. In the Betws-y-Coed area of Caernarfonshire in 1881 the leadminers were unemployed but by 1901 the area was evidently a hive of activity attracting labour from other areas.⁵¹⁴ However production remained sporadic because market trends dictated the price of blend. For instance in September 1904 it was reported ‘it is with much regret we learn that work in these mines has now practically ceased and that in consequence many workmen are thrown out of employment.’⁵¹⁵ This mine remained in operation until 1921. The local slate quarries and those towards Blaenau Ffestiniog provided employment in slate quarrying. This pattern of working in quarries away from Betws-y-Coed was well established and was illustrated in an article. This noted a strong religious revival in Betws-y-Coed in 1859 and also stated that a number of ‘wyr a llanciau y Bettws pryd hynny yn gweithio yn chwarelau Blaenau Ffestiniog’ [‘men and young lads from Bettws worked in the quarries of Blaenau Ffestiniog at that time’] and introduced the enthusiasm for the

⁵¹² Lord, *The Betws-y-coed Artists' Colony*, pp. 120-121.

⁵¹³ *Gwydyr Mines Archaeological Assessment (G1194A)*. This is an overview of the Gwydyr Mines and a very useful assessment prepared by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust for the Snowdonia National Park Authority.

⁵¹⁴ Cooper, *Exodus from Cardiganshire*, p. 44.

⁵¹⁵ WCP, 9 September 1904.

revival there attracting between 1500 and 2000 co-workers to prayer meetings.⁵¹⁶ Trade and retail accounted for one fifth of the male workforce. Trade was represented by the usual stonemasons, blacksmiths, joiners and carpenters. Builders were more in evidence by 1901 – there had been a spate of building in Betws-y-Coed during the 1890s. For example Gethin Terrace was built and housed largely by those involved in the slate and lead works. By 1901 there was a cycle repairer in Betws-y-Coed – David Davies, originally from Penmachno. At the beginning of the twentieth century cycling became an increasingly popular and an important means of transport. It had previously been a middle-class past time. This opened up opportunities for the supply of cycle accessories and repair.⁵¹⁷ There had been a reduction in the number of men practising a trade. Retailers in 1901 included a bookseller for W. H. Smith – John Thomas Platt living in Bryn Derwen and originally from Cheshire. The railway had also cut back on its workforce and this provided work for 7% of males. Fewer living in Betws-y-Coed were involved in agriculture by 1901 – 9% of male workers were also employed but the number of domestic gardeners had increased. A market garden had also been established by William Rogers of Greffin. Tourism remained very important in the local economy. Increasingly the health benefits of a stay in Betws-y-Coed were underlined in promotional material. Much of this shows the hand of the proprietor of The Waterloo Hotel Dr. McCullough. Few tourist publications could have featured so prominently the death statistics for an area and the types of diseases suffered in Betws-y-Coed. Much is made of improving sanitation and efficient administration which had raised ‘the tone of the whole neighbourhood’.⁵¹⁸ A smaller number of men were employed as labourers or general labourers: less than half the number recorded in 1881. This may be that in some cases they were able to be employed as labourers in the mines rather than looking for casual labour. There was a general decline in the number of labourers and contemporaries noted this. The impact of the loss of a couple of families in small communities would be significant to their neighbours and difficult for us to assess.⁵¹⁹ Professional and public services included a physician, schoolmaster, ministers of religion and the local council’s Inspector of Nuisances. The post office

⁵¹⁶ F. Jones, ‘Diwygiad 1859 yn Bethesda, Blaenau Ffestiniog’, *Y Cyfaill o'r Hen Wlad yn America sef cylchgrawn o Wybodaeth fuddiol i'r Cymry*, Cyf. LXVI (November, 1903), pp. 480-486.

⁵¹⁷ Davies, *People, Places and Passions*, p. 74. See also article by S. Thompson, ‘The Cycling Craze of the 1890s in Wales’, *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 14 (2008), 114-126.

⁵¹⁸ Heywood, *Guide Book*.

⁵¹⁹ Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England*, p. 12.

gave a certain amount of male employment with three postmen living in the village. The police station was staffed by the local Sergeant of Police – John Breese, aged forty, of Pennal Merionethshire and next door the gas works housed John Cunningham and his family from Kent. He was the manager of the gasworks. The male occupation profile in 1901 illustrated a community which was growing, extending its housing supply to suit its workforce and an economy which was not – for the time being at least – so dependent on the tourist trade. What also emerges is that the diversification of occupations is strongly biased to lead and slate mining in 1901 after a temporary increase in the fortunes of the lead mines and the opportunities offered by slate quarrying in the early twentieth century would soon dissipate.

There was confidence in the buoyancy of the local employment market in the early twentieth century. When in 1907 Caernarfonshire County Council asked the Betws-y-Coed Urban District Council what provision it had made for the unemployed the latter authority replied that there had been ‘a constant demand for labour in connection with important undertakings in the area...’⁵²⁰

⁵²⁰ CAS COB3/5/8.

Employment profile: Female

Settlement	1881	1901
Carnguwch	27%	30%
Pistyll	25%	16%
Tudweiliog	45%	28%
Betws-y-Coed	33%	40%

Percentage of females of fifteen years and over in employment.

Carnguwch

In 1881 of the whole female population 10% were enumerated with an occupation – of those in the age bracket of fifteen and over 27% were employed. Of these half were in domestic service like Ellen Jones, age sixteen, from Abererch, at Hafod. 20% were charwomen – at the Barracks Margaret Thomas, aged fifty and from Carnguwch together with her illegitimate daughter Mary Thomas, aged twenty-five from Carnguwch, were both charwomen. Mary had three illegitimate children under the age of seven living at the Barracks. These women were referred to in the reminiscences of Hugh Jones as ‘o gymeriad lled isel ... Daeth un ohonynt i’r seiat yn Llithfaen ar adeg y diwygiad...dychrynnodd rhai wrth ei gweled fel dywedodd un hen flaeon yn sydyn “Wel Begw,...y bydd i di mor ffyddlon yn gwasanaeth Iesu Grist ag y buost yng ngwasanaeth y cythrael...”’ [‘of disreputable character...one of them came to the ‘seiat’ in Llithfaen at the time of the Revival...many had a shock seeing her so that one old deacon quickly said “Well Begw,...let us hope that you will be as faithful in the service of Jesus Christ as you have been in the service of the devil...”’]⁵²¹ 20% of the working women were farmers including eighty year old Jane Thomas from Carnguwch and living as a lodger but enumerated as farming 13 acres. Ann Jones, the daughter of a small holding, aged thirty and single, from Carnguwch earned her living as a dressmaker.

By 1901 of the whole female population 20% of women were noted to have an occupation – in the age bracket of fifteen and over 30% were enumerated as being economically active. 30% were farmers like Catherine Jones, aged seventy-seven, Tyddyn Bach. Her son, Thomas, aged thirty-three and single, remained at home working on the farm. A fifth of employed women were domestic servants like Maggie

⁵²¹ GAS CRO XM/5460/13.

Evans, aged seventeen from Nefyn at Carnguwch Bach and a further 20% were housekeepers like fifty-year-old Gwen Evans from Penrhyneddraeth who kept house for her brother-in-law at Carnguwch Fawr. The only charwoman by 1901 was Elizabeth Jones of Tyddyn Cadwaladr who one suspects had been the main stay of the family since her husband, William, had lost his sight. One son at least had left home to work in the valleys of south Wales and provided some monetary support for the family. A newspaper report recorded his death in a fatal accident in Treharris. On the morning of his death his mother had received a letter and one-pound postal order from him with the assurance that he was in good health.⁵²² Boarding at Bryn Awel were two twenty-three-year-old school mistresses, Mary Williams and Maggie Roberts. As with male employment public service jobs began to make an impression and offer opportunities in a small community.

Pistyll

16% of the whole female population were recorded in 1881 as being in employment. For those in the age brackets of fifteen and above 25% were enumerated as such. The vast majority – 78% – were in domestic service. There was a variety of domestic service. Some women lived-in like Catherine Davies, age twenty-three, from Pistyll, at London House which was a draper's establishment. Many young women still lived at home but were evidently employed as domestics elsewhere like Mary Hughes, aged twenty-three, from Pistyll and living at Ty Newydd, the daughter of an agricultural labourer and his wife. Others were described as general servants at farmhouses like Sarah Lewis, aged twenty, at Ty Gwyn a 160-acre farm whose duties undoubtedly would have included some farm work beyond the domestic duties of looking after the farmer, his family and three agricultural labourers. Others had their domestic duties highlighted and were described as housekeepers like twenty-three-year-old Elizabeth Griffiths at Ffridd a 100-acre farm run by an eighty-six year old, his seventy-nine year old brother and two farm labourers. Some women, of course, had migrated to other areas as domestic servants. One such case was Ann Jones, born in 1842. She was to be found as the domestic servant to John Meredith, born in 1830 and manager of Port Nant Quarry in 1871. From there she left to work for Dr. Gee, Abercromby Square,

⁵²² CDH, 31 May 1907.

Liverpool where she remained in service after Dr. Gee's death in the household of his Belgian widow, Madeleine.⁵²³ This must have been a common story.

15% of women listed with occupations were identifiable as agricultural workers – Ann Jones, Llithfaen Fawr, aged sixty-nine, farmed 120 acres, while at Wern Elizabeth Hughes, aged forty-four was the only woman by 1881 described as an agricultural labourer in the parish. Some agricultural work is seasonal and women may have worked for part of the year on farms but they are not enumerated as seasonal workers. The 1881 census was taken on 3rd April when there would have been very little seasonal work on a farm. Neither were the female relatives of farmers described as sharing in the farm's work.⁵²⁴ By the close of the nineteenth century the use of female farm labour was confined to harvest time in most of Wales but in south-west Wales female farm labour continued to be used in light farm work.⁵²⁵ A study of female agricultural workers in Northumberland and Cumbria showed that women were a vital part of the farming workforce into the twentieth century.⁵²⁶ Similar studies of Gloucestershire and Devon have shown the same pattern. No more than 6% of the female workforce was involved in retail. Some such as Dinah Evans at Liverpool House built her grocer's business so successfully that her husband, William, who had originally moved to the area to work in the quarries was able to give up the quarry work and work full time in the shop.⁵²⁷ The reminiscences of Hugh Jones also include some information about the undeclared occupations of women. For example Jane Griffith, born in 1807, the wife of agricultural labourer, Hugh Griffith, both at Tan y Ffordd, Pistyll in 1881, used to go around local farms in the area to buy eggs and butter. She would then take her purchases every Saturday to Caernarfon for resale.⁵²⁸ She also according to the census returns, kept two boarders. Keeping boarders was one of the ways women contributed to the family income – such work was an extension of her household duties as was the work of cultivating cottage gardens and land the

⁵²³ GAS CRO XM/5460/13.

⁵²⁴ See Verdon, 'Changing Patterns of Female Employment', p. 35-36 for a discussion of this enumeration.

⁵²⁵ Howell, *Land and People*, p. 97.

⁵²⁶ J. Gielgud, 'Nineteenth Century Farm Women in Northumberland and Cumbria: The Neglected Workforce', PhD Thesis, University of Sussex (1992) cited in Verdon, 'Changing Patterns of Female Employment', p. 23-24.

⁵²⁷ GAS CRO XM/5460/13.

⁵²⁸ GAS CRO XM/5460/12.

produce of which was a valuable addition to the family's living.⁵²⁹ At age seventy-four Jane was hardly work shy. This was a common pattern amongst those living outside the market towns. For instance in 1883 Robert Thomas, a master mariner of Llandwrog looked back on his youth in the mid nineteenth century and recalled going to market in Caernarfon with his mother taking a pig 'with a string fast its legs, and if suitable price was not got we had to bring it home again...' ⁵³⁰ Although Robert Thomas believed such a way of life would not exist by the 1880s it appears from Hugh Jones' reminiscences that smalltime trading in markets on a Saturday afternoon still took place. The profit margin must have been meagre but welcome.

By 1901 the number of women with a noted occupation had dropped to 11% of the whole population. Of those aged fifteen and over 16% were listed in this way. Again the large majority of women in jobs were domestic servants – in the region of 73%. Most described in this way by 1901 are found living in the homes of their employers. A far greater number of employed women by 1901 were in retail and trade as shopkeepers and dressmakers – around 26%. A very small percentage were working in education as schoolteacher and pupil teacher. No paupers were noted in 1881 but in 1901 a group of five female paupers are enumerated as neighbours in Tanyffordd. These were aged between sixty-seven and eighty-four.

Tudweiliog

30% of the whole female population were employed in Tudweiliog in 1881. Those belonging to the age brackets of fifteen and above the proportion was 45% of all females in named employment. This was a substantially higher proportion of employed females than in Pistyll and Carnguwch. The majority in employment – 77% – were employed as general servants. Within this group there was a mix of those employed in households such as Mary Prichard from Llaniestyn working for Griffith Owen, master mariner, at Lon Las and those working on farms such as Eliza Roberts from Rhiw, working for David Jones, a farmer of 131 acres employing two labourers, at

⁵²⁹ The transference of these domestic skills were similar to those in urban areas. See Verdon, 'Changing Patterns of Female Employment', p. 7-8 which highlights the work of S. Alexander on London in the nineteenth-century where women transferred their domestic skills such as cooking and cleaning to the market and the research of L. Davidoff on the interaction of home and work with the keeping of lodgers.

⁵³⁰ GAS CRO XM/4338. See also A. Eames, *Shipmaster* (Denbigh, 1980). The shipmaster Robert Thomas (1843-1903) wrote a remarkable diary so that his daughter Catherine Bruce would get to know her father despite his long absences at sea. In 1888 Thomas completed the fastest ever crossing to San Francisco in the S.S. Merioneth. He died in San Francisco in 1903.

Porthsgadan. The majority of such employees were found living-in on farms and many were local to Tudweiliog. Other general servants were employed at the local inn whilst others lived at home as in the case of Winifred Roberts living in a village house where her father was a carpenter, whilst at a small holding, Murpoeth, lived the niece of the head of household, Ellen Jones aged twenty-five with her illegitimate twins, Elizabeth and Mary, aged one year. Ellen describes herself as a general servant. Several women are described as housekeepers. At Blaenyddol Elizabeth Williams, aged thirty-nine, was housekeeper to Jane Jones, a farmer of 110 acres. She was married to a farm servant, a relative of Jane Jones. Living at home in Bryntirion was the only charwoman in the parish – twenty-three-year-old Catherine Davies, living with her widowed father, an agricultural labourer and three younger siblings, aged between six and twelve. She would undoubtedly have had to help with their care and upbringing. 11% of women with a recorded given occupation were described with their agricultural role defined as farmers and dairymaids. A shortage of dairymaids in Llŷn had been noted in *The Royal Commission on Labour: The Agricultural Labourer*.⁵³¹ This was seen as a loss of expertise to the farming community. This shortage was also felt in other areas such as the north east of England. Here it led to men taking on the task and thus segregating the agricultural workforce even more and confining women to indoor work.⁵³²

Retail gave employment to a further 12% of women – shopkeepers, drapers, baker and dressmakers. For example Mary Jones, a widow, aged forty-eight had a shop and drapery in the village and her daughter Elizabeth, was a dressmaker. She had a ready-made outlet for her products.

By 1901 the employment rate for women in Tudweiliog was much reduced. Of all females 19% were in a named occupation and for the age bracket of fifteen and above this was 28%. Verdon's work on Norfolk similarly shows a decreasing participation of women in the agricultural economy. Labourers disliked their female family members seeking employment although the women's contribution to the household finances was valuable.⁵³³ 'It meant the difference between privation and what they would consider sufficiency...'⁵³⁴ This held true of Caernarfonshire where women supplemented the family income in several ways often not acknowledged in

⁵³¹ *Royal Commission on Labour: The Agricultural Labourer*, vol. 2, p. 146.

⁵³² Verdon, 'Changing Patterns of Female Employment', p. 132.

⁵³³ Verdon, 'Changing Patterns of Female Employment', p. 219.

⁵³⁴ Parliamentary Papers, *Royal Commission on Labour: The Agricultural Labourer*, vol. 35 (London, 1893-4) p. 68.

census returns ‘There has grown up among the labouring class a greater desire to see the wife staying at home to attend to the wants of the family...though there is no objection to her undertaking such homework as she can do without absenting herself from her home...’⁵³⁵ Of this reduced female workforce in Tudweiliog 70% were employed as general servants but the figure represents only 60% of the number so employed in 1881. The greatest reduction had been that of women living-in on farms. For example at Brynодol where three female general servants had been enumerated in 1881, two were so employed there in 1901. On smaller farms such as Tŷ Isaf and Tyddydiffr where there had been a general servant in 1881 there was not one by 1901. 13% of employed females were farmers – for instance twenty-seven-year-old Ellen Jones farmed Tyddydiffr in partnership with her sister Elizabeth Jones, aged twenty-five. Both were single. Their unmarried brother also lived at home and they had a lodger, the curate. 11% were involved in retail. By 1901 they did run shops but were simply involved in production – dressmakers and shirtmakers. A small number of women were involved in other occupations. For example at Tainewyddion the midwife lived with her daughter, Hannah Griffith, aged eighteen and a pupil teacher.

Undoubtedly in all the rural communities described in this study much female work was not recognised or fell beneath the radar – sometimes deliberately so. The Chief constable wrote to Llyn Rural District Council in 1896 about the ‘growing evil’ of baby farming which was an infringement of the Infant Life Protection Act 1872.⁵³⁶ The pressure on women to work when possible must have been potent when there were young children in the family to feed. When childcare was not available within the family it is highly likely the care of the children was placed in the hands of others. For example in 1909 two women in Four Crosses ‘who had children in their charge’ were reported to have sent these children to school with scarlet fever.⁵³⁷

Betws-y-Coed

Of the whole female population in 1881 24% were in employment. Of women aged fifteen and above 33% were entered by the enumerator as having an occupation. 55% of these were in some kind of domestic service such as general domestic servants, housekeepers or washerwomen. Naturally a substantial number of these were

⁵³⁵ Royal Commission on Labour: *The Agricultural Labourer*, p. 10.

⁵³⁶ GAS CRO XB13/157.

⁵³⁷ GAS CRO XB13/159.

employed in hotels and guest houses. At The Waterloo Hotel Mary Roberts, single, aged twenty-seven, from Maenan was a housemaid/domestic servant while Elizabeth Hughes, aged forty-seven, from Llanrwst was a waitress. The youngest member of staff was also at the bottom of the pecking order – fifteen-year-old Sarah Huskin, from Ruthin, who worked as a scullery maid. The growing number of villas in this popular area employed an array of general domestic servants as at Gorphwysfa, the home of the local surgeon where Catherine Williams, aged eighteen from Ysbytty, was a general domestic servant.

A fifth of women with an occupation were involved in retail. Mary Gregg, aged thirty-six, from Madeley Staffordshire was a grocer's assistant and Catherine Pritchard, aged twenty-two from Llanddoged, ran the railway refreshment rooms assisted by two other women. There were numerous dressmakers and at Pont y Pair shop Margaret Jones, single, aged twenty-five, from Betws-y-Coed ran the grocers and draper's establishment. There was no lack of business acumen amongst the women of Betws-y-Coed. Two were enumerated as running a lodging house and hotel. Undoubtedly this was an underestimate of those women involved in providing accommodation in Betws-y-Coed and exploiting the opportunities of the area as an attraction and place to visit.



Figure 48: MS 1788/4/1071 Betws-y-Coed Pont-y-Pair 1889. Credit Leeds University.

Trade Directories were filled with the names of women who let and serviced apartments for visitors – for example Mrs Grace Parry, Glan Conway House, Mrs Alice Hughes, Coed y Fron and Mrs Roberts, Church Hill.⁵³⁸ 11% of women listed with an occupation were involved in agriculture. These included farm servants, dairymaids and a number of farmers like Mary Roberts, aged sixty-eight at Cwmlanerch, who farmed 120 acres and employed three labourers. Hugh Evans wrote in *Cwm Eithin*, a fictional area which in reality was based on the district of Llangwm about fifteen miles south of Betws-y-Coed, ‘bywyd caled oedd bywyd gwas ffarm, llawer caletach a chaethach oedd bywyd y forwyn...’ [‘the life of the farm servant was hard but that of the female farm servant was much harder and more confined’].⁵³⁹ He wrote of the female servants getting up at 5:30am carrying out the household chores and preparing food for the male servants. This was a pattern of life for many such employed women during the years covered by this study. In many families the work was undertaken by unpaid family members as recorded by George Ewart Evans in Suffolk during the early twentieth century.⁵⁴⁰ Women in smaller numbers were schoolmistresses, nurses and Jane Jones, aged fifty-one, from Betws-y-Coed was Post Mistress while her sister, Margaret, aged fifty-six, ran the grocer’s side of the business in the Post Office.

By 1901 the employment rate amongst women had increased. 31% of all women were in employment and in the age brackets of fifteen and upwards 40% were listed with an occupation. However the glass ceiling had not been broken. A much increased percentage of women were in domestic service – 78%. At Coed Derw, the home of Edmund Buxton, age sixty-three, of Hendon, Middlesex who lived on his own means, three females were employed as housemaid, parlour maid and kitchen maid. Hotels and boarding houses continued to be employers of a large number of domestic servants fulfilling numerous roles within this description such as hallmaid, pantry maid, laundry maid, housemaid, housekeeper and kitchen maid. This workforce was very varied in its origins with increasing numbers moving to Betws-y-Coed in search of work.

⁵³⁸ Sutton’s North Wales Directory 1889-1890.

⁵³⁹ Evans, *Cwm Eithin*, p. 44. Here Evans gave the view of the observer looking back at rural life in an earlier period rather than the more romanticised assumption he made that those who worked in agriculture were happy with their lot (see p. 157).

⁵⁴⁰ Cited in Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England*, p. 56.

The number of women employed in retail had fallen somewhat and the percentage so employed in an increased workforce was less significant than in 1881. By 1901 12% of women were in retail – people like Jane Williams, aged twenty and her assistant Catherine Evans, aged sixteen who were employed as confectioners by the head of the grocer’s business, Catherine Jones, aged sixty-three, at Tan Lan. Women were still active in keeping accommodation for rent. For example, Sophia Andrews aged thirty-nine, from Bethesda, ran a lodging house at Glan Conway House. 6% of women were employed in professional or administrative work – teachers and Post Office workers. Nurses made up 2% of the female workforce as did the much smaller percentage involved in agriculture. Grace Williams, for instance, aged sixty-two, was a joint farmer of Rhiwgri with her brother, Pierce Davies, aged fifty-nine. Grace had been widowed for many years and had three children, none of whom appeared to have wished to farm the smallholding. Both were part of the 24% monoglot Welsh population and represented a disappearing world and way of life in Betws-y-Coed. Rhiwgri land was forested after the First World War and the smallholding became a ruin.

Child/Youth Profile

Carnguwch

Just over a third of the population of Carnguwch in 1881 was aged under fifteen – about the same proportion as in 1901. Only one was in named employment in 1881 – a fourteen-year-old domestic servant. Under half in this age group are described as scholars. Both the 1833 and 1847 reports on education reported that no school was to be found within the parish. It is evident that sometime during the mid-century a school had been established in the church at Carnguwch by one Evan Evans who then went to Liverpool to be a schoolmaster.⁵⁴¹ Children from Carnguwch later in the century attended the school at Llithfaen. The logbook of Llithfaen school noted that in 1886 a William Jones was admitted to the school, aged nine, who had never before attended school.⁵⁴² This was William Jones, Gwag y Maen, who was five at the time of the 1881 census. The son of a granite miner in the quarries, William Jones, a native of Bryncroes, was evidently not attending school like his older brother in 1881.

⁵⁴¹ GAS CRO XM/5460/13.

⁵⁴² GAS CRO XES1/65/1.

By 1901 few aged fourteen and under were listed with an occupation – in this age group there was a settsman apprentice and a general helper on the farm at Carnguwch Bach. These represented the main employment opportunities in the parish. As in 1881 Carnguwch did not have a school during the period of this study. Its children would have to go to the nearby parish of Pistyll for their elementary education. A member of the Carnguwch Parish Council sat on the School Board. It is evident that in the 1890s Carnguwch was acutely aware that as the much smaller parish in population that it should only pay as a precept for the school what was commensurate with its size.⁵⁴³

Pistyll

In 1881 of those aged fourteen and under 58% were entered as scholars – all these were aged between five and fourteen. Even within this age group no description was given to some children. For example in Liverpool Terrace there was a son aged nine and daughter aged seven, natives of Pistyll who evidently did not attend school and neither were the children at Old Terrace aged seven to eleven, again all natives of Pistyll, enumerated as scholars. It appears that of those who were not listed as pupils in a school a majority belonged to the parish of Pistyll. Williams draws attention to the difficulties of getting children to attend schools in rural areas in the 1870s to 1880s.⁵⁴⁴ He believed that the question of low attendance – with only about a third attending regularly – at rural schools was worse than had been previously assumed partly because some parishes had no schools. It is worse still when one looks at the census enumerator's returns which show not low attendance but non-registration of children at schools. The Llithfaen school logbook notes that in 1875 for instance the education of some children had been 'neglected' and therefore older children had to be placed with younger age groups.⁵⁴⁵

Undoubtedly language was a barrier to the education of those who attended school – the headmaster complained bitterly that children knew no English. The headmaster's constant refrain is that he admits older children who 'know nothing' and children appear to be admitted, leave and are then readmitted. Geography must have played an important role as well. In 1904 *Llais Rhyddid* described the life of one of

⁵⁴³ GAS CRO XP/Carnguwch Parish Council Minute Book.

⁵⁴⁴ Williams, 'Elementary Education', p. 327.

⁵⁴⁵ GAS CRO XES1/85/1.

Pistyll's natives, William Roberts, a leading and able Nonconformist who moved to Liverpool to work as a timber merchant. In the profile it was stated '...un o luaws anfanteision Mr. Roberts ydoedd nad oedd yr un ysgol ddyddiol yn agos ato...' ['one of the many deprivations suffered by Mr. Roberts was that there was no daily school near to his home'].⁵⁴⁶ There remained an element of employing child labour during specific times of the farming year – in Pistyll absences were noted in April for potato planting and in May for stone picking. The evidence of David Davies, Llangybi (an area six miles from Pistyll) spoke of the hard work expected of children 'from morning to night. They are taken from school altogether when very young and during busy periods of the year. They are kept at home from attending school so that they may perform errands.'⁵⁴⁷ Howkins wrote of the 'family as workforce'. In some areas such as the south and east of England the informal use of children as labour lasted well into the twentieth century. In other areas particularly Northumberland the use of family labour was a contractual matter.⁵⁴⁸ Both the informal, as in Caernarfonshire, and formalised use of child labour underlined the importance of the contribution made by children to the family economy. There were, of course, specific reasons why some children did not attend school. The daughters of William and Margaret Jones, Old Terrace, Llithfaen, were deaf and dumb – a sensory disability not shared by their brothers. There would have been no local facilities to help such children and their future without doubt would have been precarious. Few young people of fourteen and under are described alongside an occupation. Some were at home on family farms and presumably employed as agricultural labourers like Robert Owens, aged fourteen, at Gwynys, others were employed in the quarries like Robert Evans, aged fourteen of Tŷ Croes and others like Mary Humphreys, aged fourteen, was employed as a general servant at Victoria Terrace. Older girls would of necessity be kept at home to look after younger siblings. For example the obituary in 1899 for Mrs. Elizabeth Davies, Llithfaen, gave an outline of her life. Her mother died when the children were young and the father had to work away from home. Therefore 'arni hi y disgynodd y Gwaith o ofalu am ddyletswyddau y teulu...nid ychydig o waith oedd hyny i un mor ieuanc...bu fel mam i'w dau frawd bychain...byddai gyda hwynt yn mhob moddion a gynelid yn y capel...' ['the work of

⁵⁴⁶ *Llais Rhyddid*, Cyfrol 3, Rhif 5 (August, 1904).

⁵⁴⁷ Parliamentary Papers, *Royal Commission on Land in Wales and Monmouthshire, Minutes of Evidence* (London, 1893-1896), vol. I, p. 539.

⁵⁴⁸ Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England*, p. 49-50.

looking after the family fell on her shoulders...the work was considerable for one so young...she was like a mother to her two small brothers...and would be with them at all the services that were held in the chapel...']. She was free to marry in 1897.⁵⁴⁹

By 1901 only 4% of the young people aged under fourteen were described as having an occupation. At age fourteen we have domestic servants, agricultural labourers, a cattle man and quarry workers. Only one younger at age eleven is described as working – Ellis Williams at Ty'n y Mynydd who was employed as an agricultural labourer. There is little doubt that many were not attending school regularly, if at all. The logbook for 1905 noted that children were still being admitted at age nine without any previous schooling and few gained scholarships to the county secondary school at Botwnnog.⁵⁵⁰ As Williams stated the evidence points to the fact that ‘social conditions and family poverty’ dictated the impact of schooling on children and limited their prospects in life.⁵⁵¹

Tudweiliog

Of the children and young people in the age brackets of four to fourteen over 80% were noted as scholars. William Jones, living with his grandfather, an agricultural labourer and his single mother at Tafarn Cottage, was unusually described as a scholar at age eighteen. A few at age three are also described as such but the bulk of scholars are aged four and upwards. Unlike Pistyll all the children of Tudweiliog of four and upwards have some kind of scholastic or occupational description against their names. This did not imply school attendance. School attendance in rural areas often meant a high degree of commitment. Children would in some cases need to walk three or four miles to school after helping at home with farm work and would then return home to more farm duties after school. A witness giving evidence to the Land Commission stated that Eben Fardd used to tell him that ‘pauper’s children were better off for schooling than farmers’ sons like myself. It is very much the same yet. It is the children’s unpaid labour that has enabled the farmers of this district to tide over their difficulties...’⁵⁵²

⁵⁴⁹ *Dysgedydd Y Plant*. April 1899.

⁵⁵⁰ GAS CRO XES1/85/1.

⁵⁵¹ Williams, ‘Elementary Education’, p. 338.

⁵⁵² Parliamentary Papers, *Royal Commission on Land in Wales and Monmouthshire, Minutes of Evidence* (London, 1893-1896), vol. I, p. 532.

The urge for self-improvement and education was encouraged by the Calvinistic Methodist cause. During the 1870s a small library was established in Pencaenewydd, Llangybi and this extended over time by gifts and money collected by the chapel. This scheme was extended to other districts.⁵⁵³ It appears that it was the children in these areas who used the libraries and not the adults. In Tudweiliog land was secured from the landowner Wynne-Finch of Cefnamwlch, for more land around their chapel so that they could establish a vestry and library for the area. A library of ‘dri chant o gyfroloau o’r llyfrau gorau yn y ddwy iaith’ [‘three hundred volumes of the best books in both languages’] was set up.⁵⁵⁴

Some aged fourteen and younger were in employment as domestic servants like thirteen-year-old Mary Esther Griffith, living in the village, a nursemaid, fourteen-year-old Laura Parry living at Brynодol and several males working on farms as stable boys and farm servants. Many must have had very harsh living circumstances – some coming from backgrounds which afforded them no protection and being employed as cheap labour. For instance in 1880 a widely reported case came before the Guardians of the Pwllheli Poor Law Union. The Guardian for Tudweiliog, Hugh Jones of Brynодol Farm, took a ‘strong looking lad’ to the meeting saying that the boy only had one suit of clothes and if he was given another he would keep him. Hugh Jones was reported as saying that ‘he would not give the lad clothes until he had earned them’. He stated that the boy slept in a dog kennel for which he was criticised by the other Guardians. Jones said that ‘there was as good a bed in the kennel as the lad would have with the men.’ It was stated that the boy was ‘not quite right’ and that he should be given money to enable him to get to his home union of Dolgellau.⁵⁵⁵

By 1901 in the age group of four to fourteen very few young people are in employment. For example Richard Hughes, aged thirteen was a general helper on the farm at Hirdre Isa, fourteen-year-old Mary Davies was a domestic servant at Hirdre Fawr⁵⁵⁶ and fourteen-year-old Griffith Roberts was a cattleman on Cwmistiruchaf. This does not mean that the children of school age would not be employed unofficially at home. The school logbook shows the attempts of the school attendance officer to improve attendance. Fair days and preaching meetings led to poor attendance as well.

⁵⁵³ Royal Commission on Labour: *The Agricultural Labourer*, p. 152.

⁵⁵⁴ Williams, *Hanes Achos*, p. 33.

⁵⁵⁵ *Cardiff Times*, 3 January 1880.

⁵⁵⁶ GAS CRO XG1/66. This young woman was admitted into the Pwllheli workhouse by her master in 1904.

Outbreaks of disease led to the closures of the school. For example in February 1908 the school was closed for three weeks because of an outbreak of influenza.⁵⁵⁷ The school became successful in its preparation of children for the scholarship to the county school – a fact well annotated in the logbook. However there were evidently strong feelings in Llŷn about the lack of opportunity for the poorer children and these were expressed in the press. In 1902 an article about the County School appeared. These schools were, according to the article, supposed to be ‘stepping stones to poor children to go from the elementary schools to the universities. What are the facts today? An occasional poor lad wins a scholarship and bursary...whose parents are too poor to pay the fees.’ However the article claimed that the children of wealthier parents were more likely to win scholarships, thus depriving the poor. ‘Scholarships were not established for the sake of wealthy parents but to assist poor parents to give education to their clever children.’⁵⁵⁸ The article illustrated that in this rural area that the poor were deprived even further by a system which benefited the better off and those who understood the system and how it worked. Entry into the County School would also have deprived the family of the scholar’s labour. In common with countless rural areas attending such a school meant boarding weekly away from home. William Gruffydd Williams of Tudweiliog gives the oral evidence for the early part of the twentieth century when he went on his bike to Botwnnog every Monday morning and stayed in lodgings all week before returning home at the weekend.⁵⁵⁹ Pride was taken in the achievements of local people who succeeded and some promoted the educational facilities of the area. One such person was Captain Thomas Owen, Minafon. In the early 1900s Tudweiliog school benefited from his efforts. He was the son of the mill at Tudweiliog and had a highly successful career at sea.⁵⁶⁰ He became closely involved with the administration of the school and contributed generously to its coffers. This was a man who identified with his home area and planned his return during his years at sea.

⁵⁵⁷ GAS CRO XES1/Tudweiliog.

⁵⁵⁸ *North Wales Observer and Express*, 12 September 1902.

⁵⁵⁹ GAS CRO XM/T/154.

⁵⁶⁰ A. Eames, *Gwraig y Capten* (Caernarfon, 1984).

Betws-y-Coed

94% of children and young people aged between four and fourteen were described as scholars in 1881. Very few were employed by the age of fourteen. However there were exceptions. William Jones, aged fourteen, from Ffestiniog, was an indoor farm servant at Cwm Dreiniog and at age eleven Elizabeth Owen, from Betws-y-Coed and living at Tan Allt with her uncle and his family was an apprentice dressmaker. A handful of children and young people did not have any occupation entered. For example at Bryn Pair Jane Jones, aged forty-six was a widow and described as a butcher/shopkeeper. She had five children – at eighteen Thomas was a butcher, at fifteen Owen was a lead miner but the two daughters and son aged six to thirteen appear to have been kept home probably to help run the family business and look after the home. At Penrallt Isa a farm of eighty acres all the children aged seven to fourteen were kept at home undoubtedly to help with farm work. In name however Betws-y-Coed seemed to have a high number of children registered to attend schools. There were occasional entries in school logbooks about admitting children at a fairly advanced age for the first time. For example in 1886 the Girls' School registered 'one girl who is very backward having never been to school before. She is eight years old.'⁵⁶¹ The logbooks also reflect the usual complaints about attendance found in most areas. At Glanllugwy School for girls a pattern common to other tourist areas emerges. Girls were used to help at home 'to prepare for visitors'.⁵⁶² This was also noted as a cause for absence in the Boys' School.⁵⁶³ The schools closed at the end of the Whitsun week 1890 as 'there were a number of excursions from various parts of England'.⁵⁶⁴ Outbreaks of contagious diseases closed schools as did the usual array of other causes – bad weather, chapel and church events and fairs. Some children were benefitting from the scholarships available to either Llanrwst or Bala Grammar Schools but these were the exception rather than the rule. The elementary school found it necessary to print circulars encouraging attendance so that they could 'pass their examination.'⁵⁶⁵

One criticism by the Inspectors was that the managers of the Girls' School were not resident in Betws-y-Coed and that this added to the pressure on the teacher who

⁵⁶¹ CAS CE/16/1.

⁵⁶² CAS CE/16/1 1871-1908.

⁵⁶³ CAS CE/16/4 Betws-y-Coed Boys School.

⁵⁶⁴ CAS CE/16/4.

⁵⁶⁵ CAS CE/16/4.

was ‘pale and careworn’.⁵⁶⁶ It was evident that outsiders, who probably brought money into the area, were being appointed as a matter of prestige. There were similar complaints in 1899 that too many outsiders could hold sway over elections to the school board.⁵⁶⁷ Underlying both complaints was a concern that local views be given precedence. That there was poverty amongst the children and in the area is implied in one brief comment in 1895 that the school was being used as a distribution centre for a clothing club.⁵⁶⁸ Little attention was given at this point to the Welsh language in the schools – there was a note that Welsh poetry had been learnt in the 1890s.⁵⁶⁹

In 1901 there was only a very small number of children/young people of fourteen and under in employment. For example Elizabeth Davies, aged fourteen and living at Green Bank was an apprentice dressmaker, Barbara Pritchard, aged fourteen, was a general domestic servant at the vicarage, and DPW Williams, aged fourteen, born in Argentina and living in Station Terrace was a telegraph boy. The schools began to reflect the cultural nature of the area. By 1910 the HMI reported that the curriculum was by that time ‘more suitable to the needs of the scholars than it used to be, and due attention is given to the Welsh language, the home language of most of the children.’⁵⁷⁰ Services to mark St. David’s Day were arranged and Welsh was freely used orally in the schools. Benbough-Jackson points out that the saints day became more popular from the 1890s onwards. Both sides of the religious divide – established church and Nonconformists – and of the political divide found in David a ‘flexible’ symbol. For the churchmen and Conservatives David helped to ‘root them in Welsh soil’ while the Liberals and Nonconformists ‘were busy casting him in their own image’.⁵⁷¹ The Girls’ School was not faring so well and by 1902 was ‘extremely unsatisfactory’. Improvements were demanded and these were delivered within a few years. A newspaper article on 9 December 1904 reported that the headmistress of the Girls’ School had informed Caernarfonshire County Council that she was prepared to carry out improvements on her school at her own expense.⁵⁷² This was part of the ongoing dispute about amalgamating the boys’ and girls’ schools in Betws-y-Coed.

⁵⁶⁶ CAS CE/16/1.

⁵⁶⁷ CAS COB3/5/3.

⁵⁶⁸ CAS CE/16/4.

⁵⁶⁹ CAS CE/16/1.

⁵⁷⁰ CAS CE/16/4.

⁵⁷¹ M. Benbough-Jackson, ‘Saint David Meets the Victorians’, *Journal of Victorian Culture Online*, 22 February 2013 <http://jvc.oup.com/2013/02/22/st-david-meets-the-victorians/> (accessed: 14/01/19).

⁵⁷² *The Weekly News and Visitors Chronicle for Colwyn Bay, Colwyn, Llandrillo and Conway*, 9 December 1904.

The impression given by the school logbooks is that the Girls' School was a far more anglicised establishment than the Boys' School primarily because the headmistress spoke little or no Welsh.

Conclusion

The rural communities chosen illustrate the further reaches of the county – from Llŷn in the west to the eastern edge bordering on Denbighshire. The Llŷn communities are in close proximity – chosen to explore the similarities and differences within small areas. Carnguwch with its very small population was often associated with neighbouring Pistyll. Whilst Tudweiliog remained more rural in character, Pistyll and the settlement of Llithfaen saw the introduction of a small industrial base with the development of the stone quarries. This introduced in-migration, a more diverse life and population to the area. Betws-y-Coed was an area which lent itself to a burgeoning tourist market and improved communications. It also had local lead mines and was within striking distance to the opportunities of employment in the slate industries of the Ffestiniog area. With this background it changed in administrative terms from being a rural district council to an urban district authority – the smallest such authority in England and Wales.

Demographically all rural communities analysed here remained fairly stable. The only exception was Pistyll which was exposed to the vicissitudes of trade in the granite industry. Tudweiliog was the parish in Caernarfonshire with the highest proportion of its male workers being employed in agriculture with Carnguwch running a close second. The employment numbers enumerated for women reduced considerably between 1881 and 1901 except for Betws-y-Coed where it increased to 40%. Well over three-quarters of these women in Betws-y-Coed were employed in domestic service either in prosperous homes or in hotels. As this chapter has shown a great deal of work in a woman's life was making shift.⁵⁷³ Diversification in the economy of the rural settlements led to developmental and migratory differences in these parishes. Pistyll and Betws-y-Coed attracted workers and investors from far afield. Whereas assimilation of those who remained in Pistyll appeared to have been the pattern in that parish, the result in Betws-y-Coed appears to have been one where a significant portion remained monoglot English and Anglican and the railway

⁵⁷³ See p. 120.

employees formed an enclave in their housing development. The impact of afforestation on the community would further affect the rural life of Betws-y-Coed after the First World War but is outside the scope of this study. A feeling of alienation and protest can be discerned in some rural areas.⁵⁷⁴ The final chapter in this study will explore the culture and identity of the rural areas.⁵⁷⁵

⁵⁷⁴ See p.187. Also see p.147 as well as p. 263.

⁵⁷⁵ See pp. 259-267.

Chapter 4: Two Communities in the Slate Quarrying Belt, ‘The Most Welsh of Welsh Industries’: Upper Llanwnda and Llanberis

Introduction

Dodd's words, as quoted in the title of this chapter, encapsulate much that characterised the slate quarrying industry in north-west Wales.⁵⁷⁶ Unlike the coal mining valleys of the south the slate quarries drew an overwhelming majority of their workforce from the surrounding area of the quarries and workers from further afield were few and far between. Jones illustrates this point by quoting the census figures for Merionethshire in 1891 which showed that only 36 Irish born males lived in the whole of Merionethshire.⁵⁷⁷ The industrial areas in this study of the lower part of the parish of Llanberis and the upper part of the parish of Llanwnda were therefore able to retain the Welsh language and carry on both daily life and much of their business in their native tongue. The same was true of the mining areas of south-west Wales – a largely locally recruited workforce meant that a high proportion of over 80% spoke Welsh at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁵⁷⁸ This point was made by Jones in his study of migration to the slate belt which ‘helped to strengthen Welsh culture in central Caernarfonshire’ in much the same way as it did in the mining communities of north-east Wales and the northern and western valleys in south-west Wales.⁵⁷⁹ However short-distance migration could be disruptive but not irreparably so to the individuals involved – they either uprooted their families or left their families to live in barracks during the working week. Therefore many retained their links at home living lives split between work and the original agrarian home base. This part of the workforce did not involve itself as much in quarry matters.⁵⁸⁰ New settlements were created in areas which had previously not been settled.⁵⁸¹ Kate Roberts in *Y Lôn Wen* wrote of a ‘mixed community’ in Rhosgadfan – a population drawn from Llŷn, Eifionydd, from the lower part of the parish of Llanwnda, Llandwrog and a few from Anglesey. This makes her description of an incomer from Montgomeryshire sound quite exotic.⁵⁸² Such

⁵⁷⁶ Dodd, *The Industrial Revolution in North Wales*, p. 203.

⁵⁷⁷ Jones, *The North Wales Quarrymen*, p. 15.

⁵⁷⁸ I. Matthews, ‘The World of the Anthracite Miner’, *Llafur*, 6, 1 (1992), 99.

⁵⁷⁹ Jones, ‘Migration and the Slate Belt’, 629.

⁵⁸⁰ R. M. Jones, ‘A Trade Union in Nineteenth Century Gwynedd: The North Wales Quarrymen’s Union 1874-1900’, *TCHS*, (1974), p. 98-99.

⁵⁸¹ Jones, ‘Migration and the Slate Belt’, 610.

⁵⁸² Roberts, *Y Lôn Wen*, pp. 54, 70.

communities contrasted dramatically with the industrial areas of Glamorganshire and Monmouthshire which with inward migration became far more cosmopolitan in nature. Early industrialisation in these counties initially drew mostly on the surrounding areas and on Welsh migrants from west Wales to the mines. The movement of migrants from the east increased in the latter two decades of the nineteenth century. Irish migrants had been settling in these areas since the 1820s.⁵⁸³ This established different developmental patterns within communities in north and south Wales. Pryce points out that the tendency to concentrate studies on the central valleys of south Wales has not recognised the fact that ‘cultural change may have been very different’ in other areas of Wales.⁵⁸⁴

The tendency to make mining communities appear homogeneous has been criticised by Chris Williams. He argued that more attention should be paid to the social structure within the communities.⁵⁸⁵ Within the quarrying areas there were differences in lifestyle and to an extent outlook. The different attitude of the various workforces to the union has been described by Jones – ‘the most obvious weakness was in the great variation in the union’s strength as between different areas...on the one hand, the lodges in Penrhyn and Dinorwig and, on the other, the ones in Dyffryn Nantlle, Ffestiniog and Corris.’⁵⁸⁶ In contrast Savage in his analysis of urban history and social class underlined the cohesiveness of mining communities and the strength of their political network.⁵⁸⁷ However Jones also stressed a certain homogeneity in the communities where the slate industry was concentrated in a relatively small area. This homogeneity was partly born of an overwhelmingly working-class community. In describing a valley community in south Wales Francis writes of a ‘shared, indeed common inheritance and experience – work, religion, politics, popular culture...the unusual lifelong collective learning of this Welsh industrial community’.⁵⁸⁸ However the geography of the quarrying areas of north-west Wales also encouraged a level of independence in its settlements.⁵⁸⁹

⁵⁸³ See Hilling, ‘The Migration of People into Tredegar During the Nineteenth Century’, 19-40 and P. N. Jones, ‘Population Migration into Glamorgan 1861-1911: a Reassessment’, in P. Morgan (ed.), *Glamorgan County History*, 6 (1988), 173-202.

⁵⁸⁴ Pryce, ‘Industrialization, Urbanization and the Maintenance of Culture Areas’, 309.

⁵⁸⁵ Williams, *Capitalism, Community and Conflict*, p. 62.

⁵⁸⁶ Jones, *The North Wales Quarrymen*, p. 114.

⁵⁸⁷ Savage, ‘Urban History and Social Class’, 72-73.

⁵⁸⁸ H. Francis, ‘Language, Culture and Learning: The Experience of a Valley Community’, *Llafur*, 6, 3 (1994), 85.

⁵⁸⁹ Jones, *The North Wales Quarrymen*, p. 115.

Basic to all these analyses is that stereotyping the worker and the community is not possible. O. M. Edwards promoted an early stereotype of the quarrymen of Merionethshire highlighting their intelligence and theologically based knowledge while bemoaning a lack of appreciation of the visual arts. He informed a quarry supervisor that he was fortunate to have such a workforce rather than workmen from south Wales.⁵⁹⁰ The work of Matthews on the anthracite miner underlines the distinctive nature of the coal-mining areas of Carmarthenshire. Here the anthracite miner saw himself as a craftsman and often balanced the rural and industrial lifestyle.⁵⁹¹ Jones, in his essay on the south Wales collier, wrote that 'it is difficult and dangerous to generalise about the Welsh collier at any time: the communities he created differed substantially from place to place and from time to time...'⁵⁹² The same could apply to the various quarrying communities of north-west Wales.

Light, with reference to the coal industry in south Wales, has stressed the possibility of using literary sources to balance our view of these communities as a whole: 'literary accounts...engage with a wider society rather than just the coal industry'.⁵⁹³ Some insights into, for example, the position of women in the quarrying areas of this study can be gleaned from novels of Kate Roberts and T. Rowland Hughes.⁵⁹⁴ Jones states that little is known about the wife of the quarryman or his daughters.⁵⁹⁵ As Berger notes for the Ruhr area of Germany and the south Wales valleys 'in the public sphere women were rarely present'.⁵⁹⁶ Employment opportunities were sparse and often confined to very few categories outside domestic service.⁵⁹⁷ In what is an understudied field literature is a welcome supplement to various commission reports.⁵⁹⁸ Such a source, like any other source, has to be assessed and taken within the context of its time and the tendencies of the author.

⁵⁹⁰ O. M. Edwards, *Tro Trwy'r Gogledd, Tro I'r De* (Wrexham, 1959), p. 5-13.

⁵⁹¹ Matthews, 'Anthracite Miner', p. 98.

⁵⁹² Jones, *Communities*, p. 107.

⁵⁹³ J. Light, 'Manufacturing the Past – The Representation of Mining Communities in History, Literature and Heritage: "...Fantasies of a World That Never Was?"', *Llafur*, 8, 1 (2000), 28.

⁵⁹⁴ T. Rowland Hughes (1903-1949) was a poet and novelist. He was born in Goodman Street, Llanberis and graduated from Bangor University and later from Oxford. He taught in Aberdare, Coleg Harlech and then moved to London for a brief time before returning to work for the BBC in Cardiff.

⁵⁹⁵ Jones, *The North Wales Quarrymen*, p. 41. Jones writes that much of what he gives as a profile is 'impressionistic'.

⁵⁹⁶ Berger, 'Working-Class Culture', 20.

⁵⁹⁷ L. J. Williams and D. Jones, 'Women at Work in Nineteenth Century Wales', *Llafur*, 3, 3 (1982), 23.

⁵⁹⁸ Williams, 'Nantucha, Llanberis 1851', 71.

In his study of coalminers during the nineteenth century Benson warns against stereotyping industrial settlements and stresses that ‘the reality is somewhat more complex’. Some were new settlements whilst others were ‘grafted on’ to existing villages and towns.⁵⁹⁹ Evans points out that a characteristic of urbanisations in Wales was that they were created ‘from effectively greenfield sites rather than from the influence of industrialisation on established urban cores’.⁶⁰⁰ Croll has shown that in the growth and diversification of industry in Merthyr the pattern of settlements changed. Satellite communities sprang up outside the old iron town. The development of the coal trade led to the establishment of settlements to the south of Merthyr such as Merthyr Vale and Treharris – ‘the district’s development shaped the built form’ and social structure.⁶⁰¹ In a brief spatial study of four areas in the north-west Wales slate belt Gwyn outlines the development of the different communities in the period 1800-1900. By the late nineteenth century north Wales produced three-quarters of Britain’s slate output and half the world’s output. Settlement patterns were dictated by proximity and access to the workplace and crucially the release of building land by landowners for housing. This, Gwyn asserts, led to ‘planned and controlled settlements’.⁶⁰² Setting a social analysis against the pattern of development of Bethesda Williams and Williams have given a fascinating account of the settlement and growth of that village.⁶⁰³ The study illustrates the increase in retail trade, improvement in infrastructure, the growth of a professional class together with a degree of class demarcation in housing.⁶⁰⁴ Concentrating on a social analysis to highlight changes brought about by industrialisation in an upland rural settlement Williams’ study of the upper part of the parish of Llanberis, Nantucha, in the mid-nineteenth century is based on the census enumerator’s books. The study gives a detailed and valuable account of social structure and life in one small community at a time of change and gives Nantucha a human face with which we can identify.⁶⁰⁵

Despite the hardship and the danger of the work historians have drawn attention to the fact that it was not poverty that was the keynote of the quarrying communities

⁵⁹⁹ Benson, *British Coalminers in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 81-83.

⁶⁰⁰ Evans, ‘Rethinking Urban Wales’, p. 126.

⁶⁰¹ Croll, *Civilising the Urban*, pp. 14-15.

⁶⁰² D. Gwyn, ‘The Industrial Town in Gwynedd’, *Landscape History*, 23, 1 (2001), 88.

⁶⁰³ Williams and Williams, ‘Ai’r Star, Y Wern Uchaf ynteu Cae Garw ac nid Bethesda’, *TCHS*, 77 (2016/1017).

⁶⁰⁴ This can be compared with developments in Merthyr Tydfil. See Carter and Wheatley, *Merthyr Tydfil in 1851*, in particular pp. 51-52.

⁶⁰⁵ Williams, ‘Nantucha, Llanberis 1851’, 52-79.

during their peak.⁶⁰⁶ For example a study of investment in shipping in north-west Wales by Jenkins has shown the investment of quarrymen through joint stock companies. Some shipping companies had their registered offices in Bethesda, Clwt y Bont and Llanberis.⁶⁰⁷ With a downturn in the fortunes of these shipping companies the quarrymen from the 1890s onwards also invested in Cardiff shipping. Roberts has shown that the new quarrying settlements and their amenities proved to be a social pull for the youth of the area providing entertainment, pubs and an opportunity to socialise – ‘mae modd gweld nad saint oedd pawb o drigolion y trefi a’r pentrefi’ [‘it is possible to see that not all the inhabitants of the towns and villages were saints’] to judge by police records.⁶⁰⁸

Community characterisation as discussed by these historians in relation to a number of areas will be explored in the study of the two industrial communities chosen for this chapter – the upper part of the parish of Llanwnda and the lower part of the parish of Llanberis. These settlements reflect the exploitation of mineral resources in what had been sparsely populated areas where people had previously made a living in challenging circumstances. Early descriptions of Llanberis give some idea of the isolation and subsistence living of the area. Writing in 1798 Evans described the original settlement of Nant Peris as having ‘a few miserable cottages’ and on the western side of Llyn Peris between the original settlement and the newer village of Llanberis he wrote of copper mines with about eighty miners working by candlelight. Women and children were employed to break up the ore and then wash it.⁶⁰⁹ Archaeology attests to the area’s early slate industrialisation. Boats dating from the medieval period onwards have been recovered from the lake. They were probably multifunctional – available for ferrying passengers, animals and slates.⁶¹⁰ Llanwnda is generally ignored by travel writers. Hyde Hall uses the parish as a point of reference

⁶⁰⁶ D. Roberts, ‘Y Deryn Nos a’i Deithiau: Diwylliant Derbynol Chwarelwyr Gwynedd’, in G. H. Jenkins (ed.), *Cof Cenedl III* (Llandysul 1988), pp. 177.

⁶⁰⁷ Jenkins, ‘Llongau y Chwarelwyr’.

⁶⁰⁸ Roberts, ‘Y deryn nos’, p. 171.

⁶⁰⁹ J. Evans, *A Tour through Part of North Wales in the Year 1798, and at Other Times; Principally Undertaken with a View to Botanical Researches in the Alpine Country, Interspersed with Observations on Its Scenery, Agriculture, Manufactures, Customs, History, and Antiquities*. (London, 1802), pp. 180, 186.

⁶¹⁰ See J. Roberts, *Dinorwig Power Station: Marchlyn Mawr Reservoir Archaeological Assessment*, Report No. 644 (Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, July 2006) and D. M. McElvogue, ‘A Study of the Archaeological Remains of Vernacular Boat Finds from North Wales in the Care of University of Wales Bangor’ (PhD Thesis, Bangor University, 2000).

for boundaries when describing other parishes in his description.⁶¹¹ He writes of encroachments on the wastes of Llanwnda and Llandwrog where seventy houses had been built.⁶¹² In 1826 Rhostryfan is described by Dodd as a ‘straggling’ community of about 140 houses and three chapels.⁶¹³ Williams wrote of the difficulty of the quarrymen in obtaining building land from landowners and that quarrymen therefore built ‘ar y rhos...y dechreuodd y chwarelwyr cyntaf adeiladu eu tai...’ [‘the first quarrymen began building their houses on moorland’].⁶¹⁴



Figure 49: Moorland near Rhosgadfan, Llanwnda ©Eirian Evans.

When writing of Llanberis, Hyde Hall stresses the natural beauty of the area. The old village ‘consists of about half a dozen houses about the church...but one new house has been built within the last ten years’.⁶¹⁵ Poor agriculture meant that little grain was grown and what was cultivated did not ripen well.⁶¹⁶ The tithe map of 1838 shows the land usage of the parishes.

⁶¹¹ Hall, *A Description of Caernarvonshire*, p. 202.

⁶¹² Hall, p. 202.

⁶¹³ Dodd, *The Industrial Revolution*, p. 78.

⁶¹⁴ GAS CRO XD4/7. These papers about the history of Rhostryfan were brought together by Gilbert Williams who was native to the area and a local headmaster in the early twentieth century.

⁶¹⁵ Hall, *A Description of Caernarvonshire*, p. 184-5.

⁶¹⁶ Hall, p. 185.

	Overall Acreage	Arable (oats, barley, wheat)	Meadow/Pasture	Wood
Llanberis	10,000	100	9088	112
Llanwnda	7919	1800	4117	-

In addition 2000 acres of common land are noted for Llanwnda.⁶¹⁷

The paucity of arable land in Llanberis (1%) testifies to the subsistence level farming of the area.⁶¹⁸ Within Llanwnda much of the common land – 25% of the parish – was situated in the upper part of the parish. The arable land which amounted to just under 23% of the parish acreage would be largely found in the lower part of the parish. This gave the area its characteristic pattern of smallholdings established by the quarrymen with its nucleated settlements of Rhostryfan and Rhosgadfan.⁶¹⁹

For the whole parish of Llanwnda the population reached its highest figure towards the end of the nineteenth century.

⁶¹⁷ Information based on the tithe schedules found on <https://places.library.wales/> (accessed 25 January 2019).

⁶¹⁸ Williams, ‘Nantucha, Llanberis 1851’, 53.’

⁶¹⁹ See Gwynedd Archaeological Trust Historic Landscape Characterization <http://www.heneb.co.uk/hlc/caernarfon-nantlthemes.html>.

Llanwnda

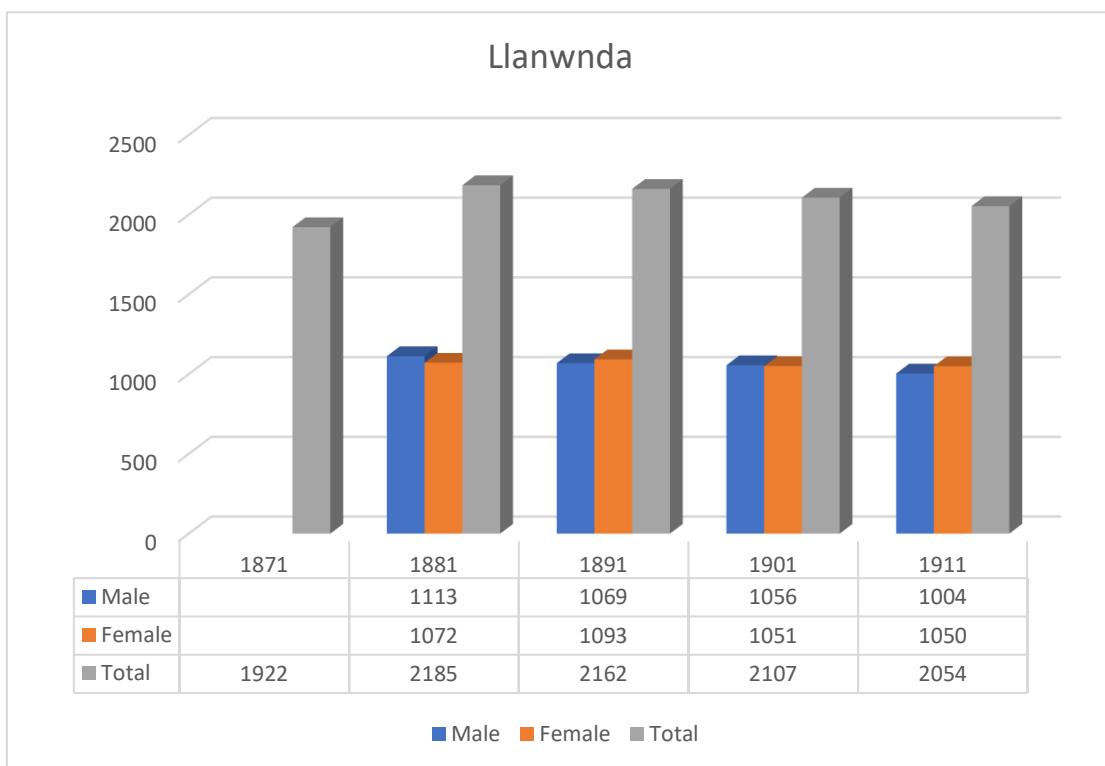


Figure 50: Llanwnda population table.

The population increase had been steady throughout the nineteenth century until 1881. It had stood at just over 1600 in 1851. The population increase in the parish of Llanberis showed a more dramatic upturn.

Llanberis

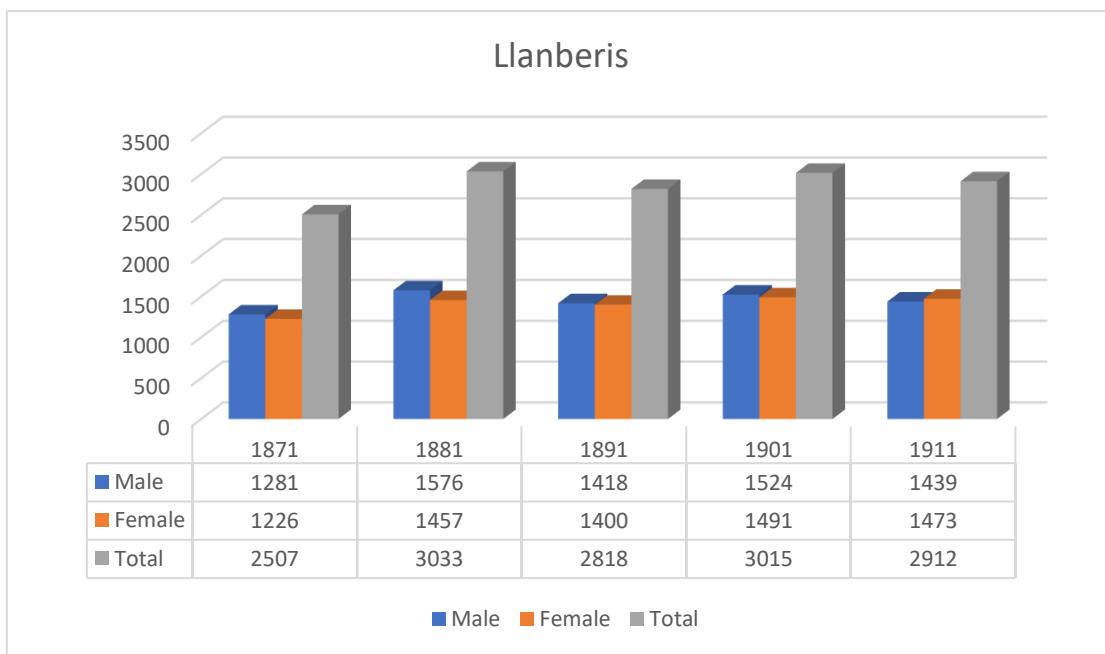


Figure 51: Llanberis population table.

By the turn of the twentieth century the population of Llanberis had tripled since 1851 reflecting the fortunes of the slate trade.

Caernarfonshire's slate quarrying industry was largely concentrated in three areas – the Penrhyn quarries in Bethesda, the Dinorwig quarries near Llanberis which drew its workforce from a number of villages such as Llanberis, Cwmyglo, Llanrug and Deiniolen and those of the Nantlle Valley with its main settlement at Talysarn. Whereas the first two quarrying districts of Penrhyn and Dinorwig were owned by single proprietors, that of the Nantlle Valley was controlled by a number of small companies. An essay which won the Christmas 1889 Rhostryfan Literary Festival gives a good overview of the many quarry workings in the area with some interesting details of how the quarries had been worked in earlier times. During the eighteenth century in Cilgwyn, for example, 'partners', usually a family group, would pay Lord Newborough 4 pence a year to work one section. The slate would then be transported to the Foryd in small quantities by horses. Local farmers made some income by supplying the horses. It was women who normally led the horses to the Foryd for the slates to be loaded.⁶²⁰

The largest quarries attracted the greatest in-migration of labour and this held true of the communities in the slate belt in this study. The quarry and industrial village of Llanberis grew to a greater extent and at a greater pace than the more scattered community of upper Llanwnda.⁶²¹ Owned by Assheton-Smith of the Faenol estate Dinorwig quarries together with those of the Penrhyn family dominated the slate industry in Caernarfonshire whereas the quarries of the upper Llanwnda area were in the hands of 'entrepreneurial adventurers'.⁶²² Hobley commented 'Nid yw tōn y chwarel mor amlwg yn unll yma ag yn Bethesda a Llanberis, a'r cylch' ['The quarrying culture is not as obvious anywhere here as in the Bethesda and Llanberis, and the surrounding area'].⁶²³

An overview of slate quarries and their areas was provided in 1873 by a correspondent of the *Caernarfon and Denbigh Herald*. The newspaper's editor expressed his belief that although the quarries were major employers in many areas of north Wales people knew little about them.⁶²⁴ The journalist spoke of the 'old

⁶²⁰ See Sylwedydd, *Traethawd Baratowyd at Gylchwyd Lenyddol Rhostryfan, Nadolig, 1889 ar y Testun Chwarelau Dyffryn Nantlle a Chymdoagaeth Moeltryfan* (Conwy, 1934).

⁶²¹ Jones, 'Migration and the Slate Belt', p. 623.

⁶²² Jones, *The North Wales Quarrymen*, p. 9.

⁶²³ W. Hobley, *Hanes Methodistiaeth Arfon, Dosbarth Clynnog* (Caernarfon, 1910), p. 100.

⁶²⁴ CDH, 2 June 1873.

'worldism' of the many quarries in the Nantlle district with working quarries employing several hundred side by side with abandoned workings. On his visit to Llanberis he commented on working conditions, new housing and the quarry hospital. Nothing was reported about any conflict between workers and management in these reports published the year before the formation of the North Wales Quarrymen's Union which found one of its strongholds in the more extensive quarrying district of Llanberis.

By the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century Rhostryfan, part of the upper parish of Llanwnda, had found its way into local trade directories which described the area as 'a scattered but extensive village in the upper part of Llanwnda parish'.

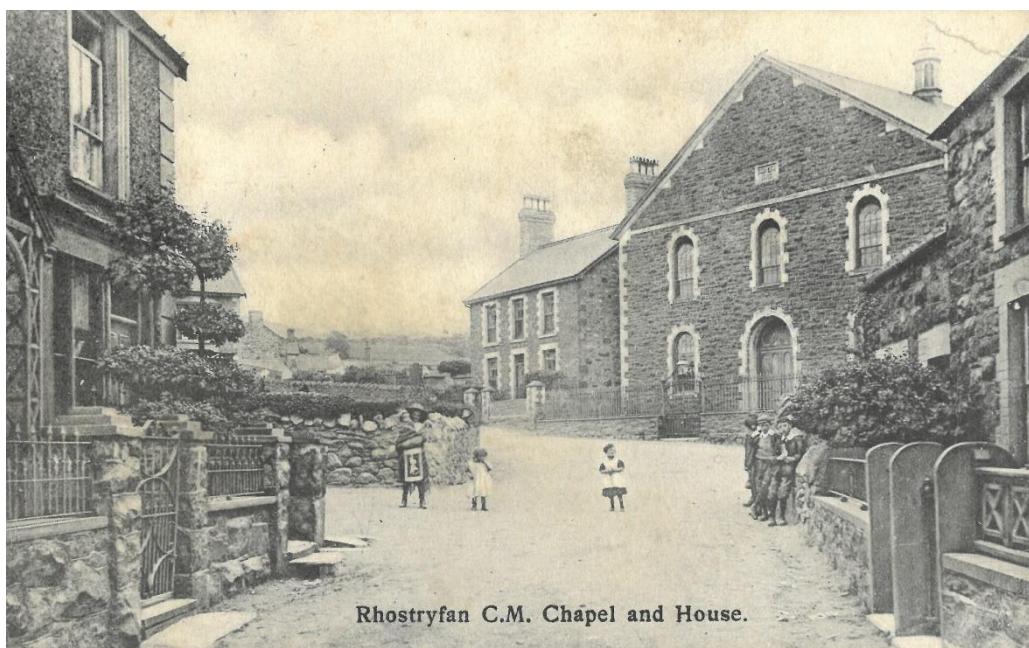


Figure 52: GAS CRO XS/1089/9 Rhostryfan village, Llanwnda c.1905.

The settlement boasted several shops, a post office and even a tea room probably associated with the north Wales narrow gauge railway.⁶²⁵ Llanberis' entries in trade directories illustrated the rapid development of that parish with its extensive slate quarries and busy tourist trade which necessitated the supply of hotels and apartments for tourists visiting Snowdon together with a choice of retail establishments.⁶²⁶

⁶²⁵ Bennett's Business Directory North Wales 1910 and Sutton's North Wales Directory 1889-1890.

⁶²⁶ Slater's Directory of North Wales 1880 and Slater's Directory of North and Mid Wales 1895.

Population Profile

Llanwnda

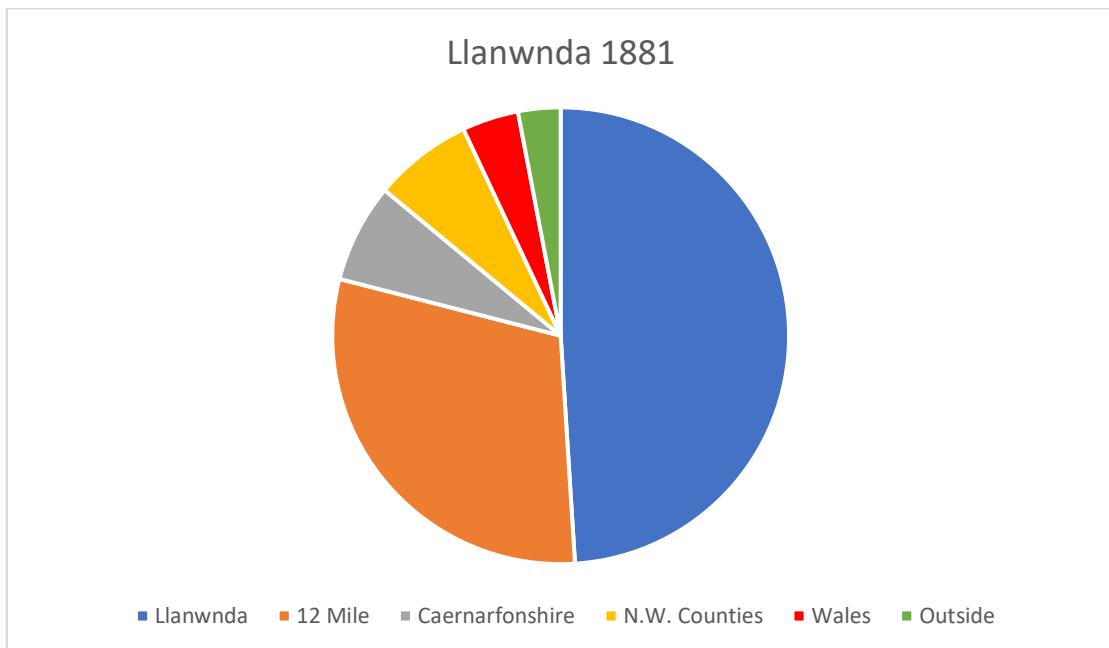


Figure 53: Population origins of Llanwnda in 1881.

The population of the whole parish of Llanwnda was flatlining for the period of this study. It was at its highest in 1881 and marginally less at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁶²⁷ In 1881 49% of the upper part of parish had been born in Llanwnda. Of the younger age group 54% of those aged under fifteen was native to the parish. This age group made up over 36% of the population. Of those between fifteen and twenty-nine 29% were born in Llanwnda. A third of the population was aged over thirty, of which 15% was from Llanwnda. 30% of the population of the upper part of the parish originated from within a twelve-mile radius of Llanwnda. Some such as T. G. Roberts was the Calvinistic Methodist minister at Horeb Chapel and he and his wife were natives of Port Dinorwig. Just under 7% of the residents came from the rest of Caernarfonshire and a similar figure from other counties in north Wales. Very few came to the area from the rest of Wales and only 3% from areas outside Wales. Belonging to the latter group was Matthew Wilson, slate quarry manager, who was from Scotland. He evidently had been settled in the area with his Scottish wife for over three years as his first child aged seven had been born in Scotland but his other three children had been born in the parish of Llanwnda. The age structure was balanced with

⁶²⁷ TNA, Records of the General Register Office RG11/5564 Llanwnda – 1881 ED 24, 25, 26 and 27.

over a third of the population being in the age groups up to fifteen, almost a third was aged fifteen to twenty-nine and over a third in the age groups of thirty upwards.

The sex ratio for the whole parish was 49% female and 51% male in 1881 but the ratio for the upper part of the parish was slightly different with about 47% being female and 53% being male. The ratio suggests that some women had moved to work in other areas and some single men had migrated to the upper part of the parish of Llanwnda to work in the quarries. For example Robert Williams, a slate quarry labourer, from Caernarfon was a lodger at Tŷ Canol and Richard Roberts was a quarry labourer lodging in Tŷ Coch but was originally from Llangian. At thirty-four the latter was already widowed.

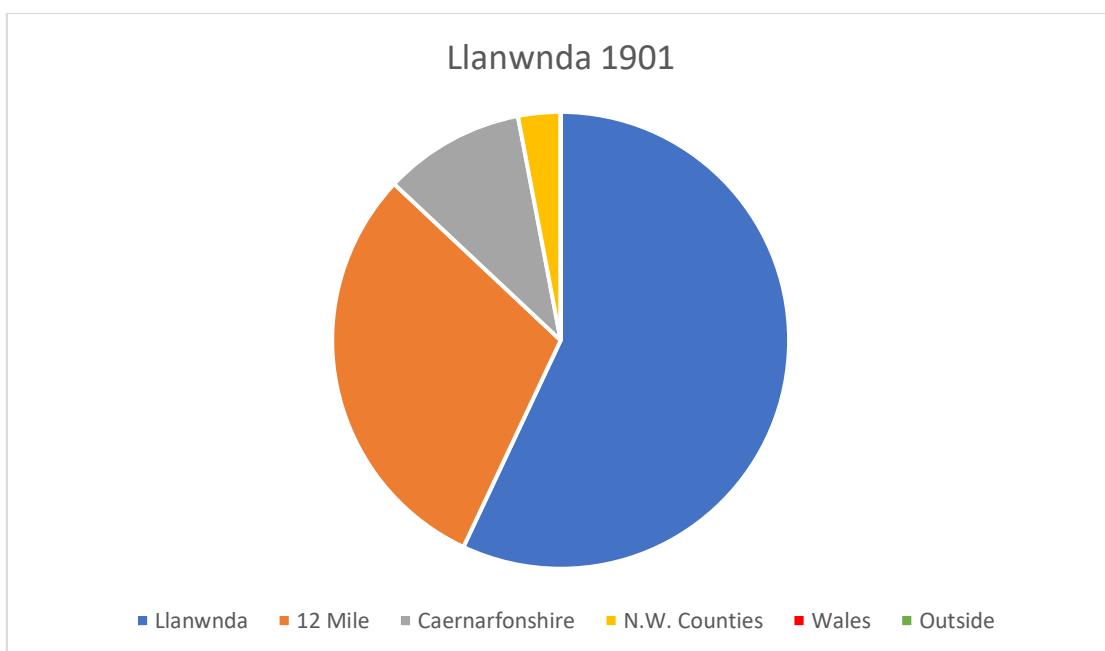


Figure 54: Population origins of Llanwnda in 1901.

The population of the whole parish of Llanwnda remained fairly static until the 1920s when there was a decrease of about 10%. In 1901 in the upper part of the parish 57% had been born in Llanwnda – a higher figure than in 1881.⁶²⁸ Of those under fifteen which made up over 31% of the population 26% were from Llanwnda, and in the age group fifteen to twenty-nine 13% were native to the parish. For example Hugh O. Roberts was a fifteen-year-old quarry worker, native to the parish, who lived in Rhosgadfan with his grandparents. He was probably working with his seventy-four-year-old grandfather, Owen Roberts, who described himself as a quarryman. The latter was a native of Llaniestyn. In 1881 Owen is shown to have seven children still living at

⁶²⁸ TNA, Records of the General Register Office RG13/5269 Llanwnda – 1901 ED 24 and 25.

home. He was evidently a long-term resident and appears at the same address in 1851 – with two young children. The fifteen to twenty-nine age group had declined in number by 1901 and formed 23% of the population. By the turn of the century the age profile was substantially older with 45% of the population being aged over thirty of which 18% were native to the parish. Almost 30% of the residents in this part of Llanwnda came from within a twelve-mile radius – a similar figure to 1881. Almost 10% of the people came from other parts of Caernarfonshire and over 3% from other north Wales counties. The figures for those from other parts of Wales and elsewhere were minuscule. The sex ratio for the upper part of the parish was 48% female and 52% male while for the whole parish it was 50% male and 50% female. These figures suggest that some women moved to other areas for employment or possibly for marriage but the area was not suffering from a large scale migration of women. In the second half of the nineteenth century in parts of Caernarfonshire including the areas discussed in this chapter the mortality rates in females aged ten to nineteen was higher than that of males.⁶²⁹ This stresses the particular susceptibility of women to tuberculosis made worse by poor housing conditions and bad sanitation. Hinde also points out that in Wales death ascribed to ‘other causes’ is a more widely used reason than in England. This description could cover a myriad of causes. Tuberculosis was often described incorrectly as bronchitis in many cases.⁶³⁰ This disease has been described as ‘the endemic disease in Caernarfonshire’.⁶³¹ Childbirth often carried a high risk to a woman’s life. More women died in childbirth than the number of men killed in mining accidents in south Wales.⁶³² An analysis of female mortality in the areas of this study would be informative but is outside the scope of this study.⁶³³

Linguistic Profile

In 1901 Gwyrfai was the urban district council area with the second highest number of Welsh speakers in Caernarfonshire with a figure of 98.25%. Bethesda had the highest number with 99.25% which Southall describes as an ‘...unusually large percentage.

⁶²⁹ See McNay, K., Humphries, J. and Klasen, S., ‘Excess Female Mortality in Nineteenth-Century England and Wales: A Regional Analysis’, *Social Science History*, 29, 4 (Winter, 2005), pp. 655-664.

⁶³⁰ A. Hinde, ‘Sex Differentials in Mortality in Nineteenth-century England and Wales’, Presented at the Economic History Society Conference, Cambridge, 1-3 April

2011. <http://12.161.242.125/dotAsset/51232af0-0ec5-4f88-a774-af1f8c53beec.pdf> (accessed: 24/02/19).

⁶³¹ Roberts, ‘Sickness and Health’, in Michael and Webster (eds.), *Health and Society*, p. 65.

⁶³² P. Michael, ‘An Overview of the History of Health and Medicine in Wales’, in Michael and Webster (eds.), *Health and Society*, p. 20.

⁶³³ See p. 134.

Has the Penrhyn strike driven away the English monoglots?⁶³⁴ Within the upper part of the parish of Llanwnda the numbers were almost 100% - 90% of the population was monoglot Welsh and 10% was bilingual. At Penrhos John R. Williams, a shopkeeper and boot and shoemaker, was monoglot Welsh whilst his wife was bilingual. The nearby grocer, William O. Jones, was bilingual and fitted into the more typical linguistic pattern of retailers. One of the few English only speakers in upper Llanwnda was the clergyman's wife whose birthplace was Ireland. Kate Roberts writes of one, William Bebbington, who came to live in the area shortly after the turn of the century. A native of Chester he became a labourer in the slate quarry and lodged with Jane Roberts, a farmer in Rhosgadfan. Initially he had spent his leisure time in Caernarfon – presumably feeling more at home there because of his lack of Welsh. During the 1904 revival he started attending the chapel in Rhosgadfan ‘cawsai ychydig grap ar y Gymraeg yn y chwarel’ [‘he had picked up a little Welsh in the quarry’] and thereafter improved his linguistic skills in Welsh to be able to take part in chapel services.⁶³⁵ The Welsh language was key to the work and social life of this area. The Welshness of the Rhostryfan area was stressed by Williams in his autobiography ‘rhyw hanner Saeson oedd ardal y Bontnewydd, a phob haflug yn teithio drwyddi ar y lôn bost’ [‘the people of Bontnewydd were sort of half-English with every type going through the village on the main road’].⁶³⁶ The isolation of areas in upper Llanwnda appears to have been viewed by this observer as a cultural strength.

⁶³⁴ J. E. Southall, *The Welsh Language Census of 1901* (Newport, 1901), p. 21.

⁶³⁵ Roberts, *Y Lôn Wen*, p. 290-292.

⁶³⁶ J. Williams, *Hynt Gwerinwr* (Liverpool, 1943), p. 15.

Llanberis

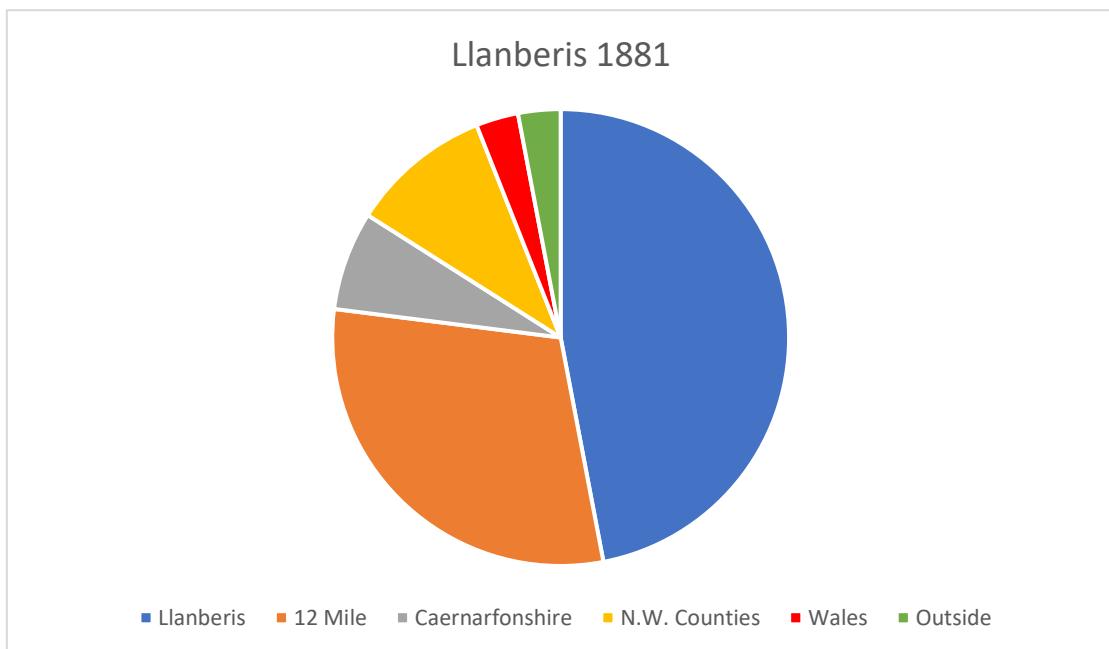


Figure 55: Population origins of Llanberis in 1881.

The population of the parish of Llanberis was at its height in 1881.⁶³⁷ Thereafter it declined showing a small increase in 1901 and thereafter a decrease of a third of its population by the mid twentieth century. In 1881 the age groups up to and including fourteen which made up over a third of the population in the lower part of the parish 28% had been born in Llanberis. At Tŷ Newydd William Owen, aged fifty-two, lived with his wife and ten children, all of whom, apart from one, had been born in Llanberis. Those between fifteen and twenty-nine formed a quarter of the population of the lower part of the parish and of these 11% were native to Llanberis. Almost 40% were aged over thirty and of these inhabitants almost 8% came from the parish. Overall over 47% of those living in the lower part of the parish had been born in Llanberis. However some had had a peripatetic life. For example Ellis Closs Jones, aged fifty-four, was a slate quarrier and had been born in Llanberis. His son, John, aged twenty-seven, an unemployed clerk had been born in New Jersey, USA. Their stay in the United States must have been fairly short as they were back in Llanberis by 1861 and were taking care of Ellis' mother who lived with them. She had been widowed and is described as a 'slate quarries widow'. She was still living with them at age 87 in 1881. Ellis' wife died in 1910 after fifty-seven years of marriage. Their two sons had emigrated in the 1880s – the elder, John, to Australia and the obituary strikes a sad

⁶³⁷ TNA, Records of the General Register Office RG11/5566 Llanberis – 1881 ED 10 and 11.

note: ‘a wna gwr neu wraig garedig ddigwydda ddarllen yr ysgrif hon yn y wlad bell roddi nodiad am hanes marwolaeth ei fam rinweddol yn rhai o’r newyddiaduron y wlad?’ [‘will anyone (who) happens to read this article in that the far country be kind enough to place a note about his virtuous mother in some of the country’s newspapers?’]. The younger son, Robert, emigrated to Vermont but kept in contact, returning home with his wife on visits and on the death of his mother.⁶³⁸ Almost a third of the population came from within a twelve-mile radius of Llanberis. Over 7% came from the rest of Caernarfonshire and 10% of the inhabitants came from other areas of north Wales. 4% were migrants from further afield such as Mary Ellis, the quarry agent’s wife, from Middlesex and the quarry manager and his wife Thomas and Mary Colliver from Cornwall. Their sixteen-year-old daughter had been born in Llanllechid. The sex ratio for this part of the parish replicated that of the whole parish – 48% female and 52% male. This figure probably reflects a number of underlying reasons such as single men lodging in the area and more opportunities for women to earn a living elsewhere. Between 1801 and 1901 males outnumbered females in the whole parish of Llanberis. It was only in 1911 that the female population began to exceed male numbers.⁶³⁹

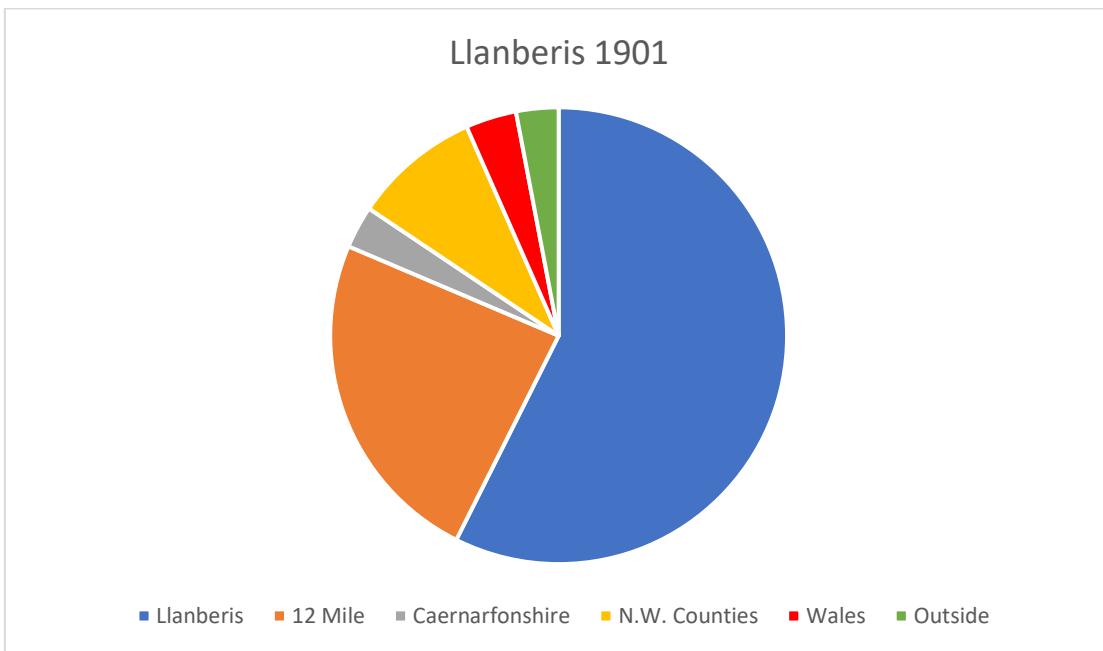


Figure 56: Population origins of Llanberis in 1901.

⁶³⁸ *Yr Herald Gymraeg*, 24 May 1910.

⁶³⁹ Vision of Britain <http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10103198/cube/GENDER> (accessed: 18/03/19).

By 1901 the population of Llanberis which had decreased by over 7% in the census of 1891 had regained 7% on that year's figures but was still marginally lower than in 1881.⁶⁴⁰ Overall of those living in the part of Llanberis in this study those born in Llanberis constituted 57.4% - a higher figure than in 1881. Of those native to Llanberis over a fifth belonged to the age groups up to and including fourteen, an age bracket which made up a quarter of the overall population. Over a fifth of the inhabitants were to be found in the fifteen to twenty-nine age group which made up a third of the population. 44% were aged above thirty of which 14% were native to Llanberis. About quarter of the population was from a twelve-mile radius of the parish, almost 3% came from the rest of Caernarfonshire. For instance in Ceunant Street, John Wynne, a slate quarry labourer, aged fifty-four, from Conwy lived with his wife Laura, aged thirty-four, from Beddgelert. 9% came from other counties from north Wales. Under 4% came from the rest of Wales and elsewhere. For example Tom Ward, a boarder, in Field Terrace, born in Nottingham described his work as 'porter and guide'. The sex ratio had closed somewhat. In the lower part of the parish 49.3% were female and 50.7% male. Again this replicated the overall figure for the whole parish.

Linguistic Profile

Llanberis, as is the case with Llanwnda, was in the Gwyrfai Rural District Council area and thus part of one of the most Welsh speaking areas of Caernarfonshire. In 1847 the education report gave a brief description of the educational opportunities in the Llanberis and Llanddeiniolen areas. The Dinorwig British School had eighty-five scholars and not one pupil spoke or wrote English.⁶⁴¹ However by 1901 the linguistic pattern in Llanberis was very different. Monoglot Welsh speakers accounted for almost 63% of the population, those who claimed to be bilingual were just under 36% and a very small proportion were monoglot English speakers. In the remaining enumeration district of Llanberis, that of Nantucha, which is not part of this study, 84.3% were monoglot Welsh speakers, 15.7% were bilingual. There were no English monoglots in

⁶⁴⁰ TNA, Records of the General Register Office RG13/5270 Llanberis – 1901 ED 7 and 8.

⁶⁴¹ Parliamentary Papers, *Reports of the Commission of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales* (London, 1847), p. 36.

this district.⁶⁴² Trade and tourism in the more diverse economy in the lower part of Llanberis must account for much of the difference.

⁶⁴² See Parry and Williams, *The Welsh Language and the 1891 Census*, p. 398. In the study of the commercial centre of Blaenau Ffestiniog 81.5% of the inhabitants were described as monoglot Welsh speakers, 16.7% as bilingual and 1.7% as English only speakers.

Housing profile

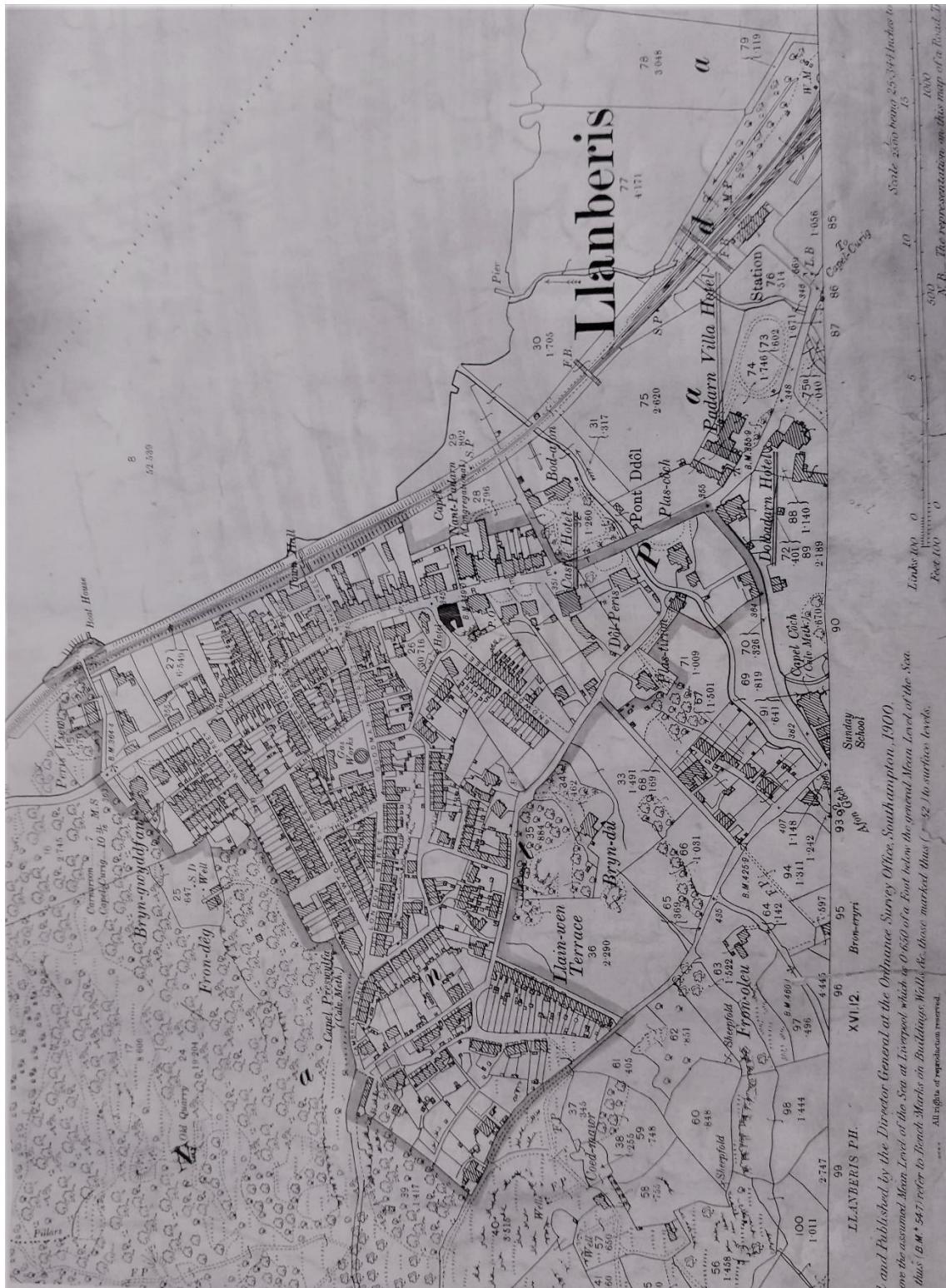


Figure 57: Llanberis OS 25" XVII12 1900. The village of Llanberis showing the development of terraced housing.

The overview of housing in the two study areas in this chapter will be discussed together in this section. Both formed part of Gwyrfai which came under the Sanitary Committee of the Caernarfon Poor Law Union and from 1895 they both came under the Gwyrfai Rural District Council. The upper part of the parish of Llanwnda represented an area of industrial activity in a rural setting and the lower part of the parish of Llanberis an industrial village with a mixed economy which led to a greater concentration of services. Both were areas which had experienced population growth – that of Llanberis being more dramatic than that of Llanwnda. With the in-migration of workers to the quarrying areas an increase in housing stock was inevitable but such growth also placed a strain on the infrastructure of utilities available. The housing stock for the whole of Llanwnda parish increased by over 40% between 1851 and 1881 – much of this would have been in the upper part of the parish and its settlements. Between 1851 and 1881 the housing numbers for the whole of parish of Llanberis had increased by over 200%.



Figure 58: GAS CRO XS/391/14 Llanberis village c.1900.

Dr Edward Davies has concentrated his analysis of health and welfare on the quarrymen of North-West Wales. It is a wide-ranging study which looks at housing, disease and welfare organisations in the various communities of the quarrying areas. He also draws attention to the effects of bad housing on the female population in particular. It is a work which makes a substantial contribution to the history of Caernarfonshire and Merionethshire and provides relevant and useful material for this

study.⁶⁴³ In discussing health in Caernarfonshire during the 1870 to 1939 Roberts sees the areas which contained the slate quarrying industry as ‘demonstrating both the problems of industrial towns and also the inherent deficiencies of rural environments’.⁶⁴⁴ Sanitation, water supply, housing and health were inextricably connected. Clean water supply to the various communities and areas of Gwyrfai was a constant refrain in the administration of the area.⁶⁴⁵ In 1896 the Gwyrfai Rural District Council passed that all residents in the area should pay one third of the cost of supply before they could be connected. This decision was reversed and it was decided that each case would be dealt with on its own merit.⁶⁴⁶ Llanberis had its own waterworks from 1895. They created a reservoir and sheep washing pen in 1896 with ‘due provision’ to avoid polluting the water supply. This remained a problem – in 1898 the water company was ordered by the Rural District Council to take measures to avoid pollution caused by sheep washing and farm refuse being washed down by the rain. Work continued in Llanberis connecting houses to the water supply and drainage system. Poor drainage in areas persisted. For example at Rallt Goch, Ceunant, Llanberis, 8 houses were subject to drains described as ‘hollol wallus’ [‘completely ineffectual’] but the Sanitary Inspector had complained for years to the council which did nothing but tell him to discuss matters with the inhabitants. He wrote that he could only use the phrase so often used to him: ‘I haven’t the heart to do it.’ The houses were leasehold and were to revert before long to the Ruthin Charity Commissioners. Similarly other houses were built on land belonging to the Goodman Charity Trust as at Bryn Terrace.⁶⁴⁷ Over the years the inhabitants had spent on the houses and the officer claimed it was ‘afresymol o beth gorfodi i lawer o weithwyr tlodion repario y tai hyn ugeiniau o honynt drwy’r pentref’ [‘unreasonable to compel many poor workers to repair these houses, scores of them throughout the village’].⁶⁴⁸

⁶⁴³ E. Davies, *The North Wales Quarry Hospitals and the Health and Welfare of the Quarrymen* (Caernarfon, 2003). See also Jones, *The North Wales Quarrymen*, pp. 31-43.

⁶⁴⁴ Roberts, ‘Sickness and Health’, in Michael and Webster (eds.), *Health and Society*, p. 62.

⁶⁴⁵ A brief study which links public health, sanitation and administration has been made of the Gwyrfai area between 1875 and 1914. It is an illuminating work as it draws together a number of sources to build a picture of this aspect of Gwyrfai’s communities. See H. G. Williams, ‘Public Health in Gwyrfai 1875-1914’, *TCHS*, 72 (2011), 69-86.

⁶⁴⁶ GAS CRO XB/15/2.

⁶⁴⁷ GAS CRO XD35/672.

⁶⁴⁸ GAS CRO XM/1917/5.

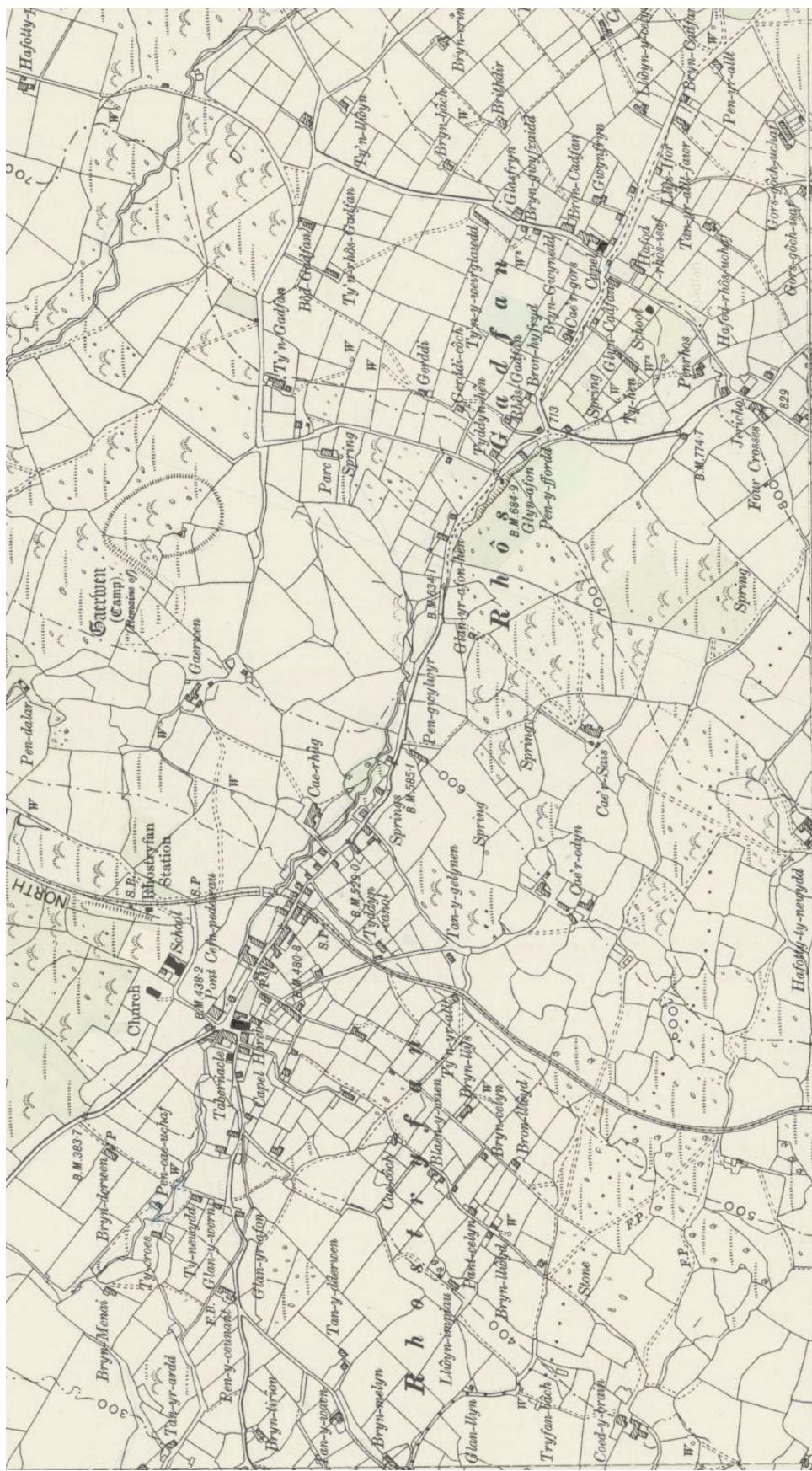


Figure 59: OS 6" to one-mile Caernarvonshire XXI NW 1901. Part of upper Llanwnda illustrating the Rhosgadfan and Rhostryfan settlements set against a patchwork of dwellings on the former common.

The upper part of Llanwnda and particularly the settlement of Rhostryfan had no such advantages of water supply for many years. The area depended on pumps which themselves were not always the source of clean water and susceptible to environmental threats. For example in 1896 the water at Pantffynnon Well, Rhostryfan, was found to be polluted. In the same year the Council recommended that Rhostryfan could take its water supply at Werglodd Gaerwen.⁶⁴⁹ While the Gwyrfai Rural District Council discussed the introduction of electric to the area in 1904 to encourage ‘the development of new industries’ the authority also had to admit that the Gwyrfai area was bedevilled by areas of uninhabitable and insanitary houses together with a poor water supply in the region.⁶⁵⁰ By 1905 it was decided to look at the water supply in Rhostryfan and area and that the village itself should be ‘sewered’.⁶⁵¹ The report of the Medical Officer of Health for 1906 recognised the fact that the sanitation of Rhostryfan had been improved with the construction of new sewers – with a total length of 500 yards – to which twenty houses had been connected.⁶⁵² However much remained to be done. Even in 1914 the school in Rhostryfan only had a dry closet and no access to drinking water in the immediate environs of the school.⁶⁵³ By 1909 patience was wearing thin and a letter was sent by the Rhostryfan Parochial Council to Gwyrfai Rural District Council telling them to ‘hurry up’ with their report on how they were going to supply that part of Llanwnda with water. An attempt to finance such work with voluntary subscriptions had failed.⁶⁵⁴ Having failed to obtain land to create a reservoir, land had to be rented. Work at last began in 1912 after several years of drought including 1911 in rural areas of north Wales.⁶⁵⁵

The houses themselves especially in the upper part of Llanwnda were a mixture of small holdings and terraces in the quarry settlements. According to Kate Roberts a house without land in the area was known as a ‘tŷ moel’ [‘a bare house’].⁶⁵⁶ Evidence given to the Royal Commission on Land related to the encroachments on Crown Lands on the upper part of the parish of Llanwnda and Llandwrog. It quoted a statement made in 1827 in the magazine *Lleuad yr Oes*. This article had claimed that these parishes had

⁶⁴⁹ GAS CRO XB/15/2.

⁶⁵⁰ GAS CRO XB/15/4.

⁶⁵¹ GAS CRO XB/15/4.

⁶⁵² GAS CRO XM/2961/150.

⁶⁵³ See Williams, ‘Public Health in Gwyrfai 1875-1914’, 77.

⁶⁵⁴ GAS CRO XB/15/6.

⁶⁵⁵ See Waddington, “I Should Have Thought That Wales was a Wet Part of the World”, 598.

⁶⁵⁶ Roberts, *Y Lôn Wen*, p. 45-46.

encouraged people to build houses on the common. Most of those who did so were quarrymen and by 1827 141 holdings had been built on 337 acres where 81 cows were kept and 683 people partly gained their living on this land. By improving the land over decades its value increased substantially and the crown rentals rose.⁶⁵⁷ The village of Llanberis developed as an industrial settlement with its rows of terraces and a commercial centre to serve the growing population and the tourist industry. Scattered small holdings and farms provided a backdrop to this centralised area. In 1895 there was a complaint in the Gwyrfai District Council that illness was caused by overcrowding in many houses – this also led, it was claimed, to ‘anfoesoldeb a meddwdod’ [‘immorality and drunkenness’].⁶⁵⁸ It was estimated that about 100 houses in the council area were unfit for human habitation. The same points were raised five years later by the Medical Officer of Health, Dr Fraser, and he identified areas where overcrowding was prevalent which included parts of the upper parish of Llanwnda in Penyffridd, Rhosgadfan and the housing at Bron Eryri, Rhostryfan. Lack of ventilation and light led to ill health in an area which should have been ‘nodedig naturiol iach’ [‘notable for being naturally healthy’].⁶⁵⁹ The Medical Officer of Health called upon the Council to build its own houses for workers. A case of overcrowding in Rhostryfan was reported to the Rural District Council in 1906. It concerned Ty’n Clwt, the home of Richard Edwards and his family of wife and nine children aged between three and twenty-three. The house was small – a kitchen, small bedroom and a smaller loft. The eighteen-year-old son was suffering from T.B. If the house was condemned the family would have nowhere to go.⁶⁶⁰ In the 1901 census the address of the family is given as Tŷ Canol, Rhostryfan – a dwelling with three rooms. The father and eldest son were slate quarrymen – the configuration of the family in 1906 suggests that of the children in the 1901 census at least one of the youngest had died and more had been born. Poor housing led to a high infant mortality rate. Kate Roberts described the housing in her native area. The village was ‘exposed and shelterless’ and she recalled her father lining the dairy and bedroom with timber and her mother piling quilts on their beds to try and keep the cold at bay.⁶⁶¹ In her novel *Traed Mewn Cyffion* [*Feet in Chains*] she wrote of

⁶⁵⁷ Parliamentary Papers, *Royal Commission on Land in Wales and Monmouthshire, Report* (London, 1896), pp. 591-597.

⁶⁵⁸ *Y Werin*, 26 January 1895.

⁶⁵⁹ *Y Werin*, 7 June 1900.

⁶⁶⁰ *WCP*, 12 October 1906.

⁶⁶¹ Roberts, *Y Lôn Wen*, p. 48.

the bedrooms being ‘damp and completely unhealthy for anyone to sleep in them. The dampness ran down the wall...’.⁶⁶²



Figure 60: Cae'r Gors, Rhosgadfan after renovation. This was Kate Roberts' childhood home.

A competition in the Christmas Literary Society Eisteddfod in 1909 in Rhostryfan and Rhosgadfan was for an essay under Gwyddoniaeth Deulaidd [Family Science] on the subject, ‘y mae hadau afiechyd heintus o’n hamgylch yn aml, mewn llwch, budreddi, awyr amhur, dwfr ac ymborth. Pa gyfarwyddyd a fuasech yn ei roddi er diogelwch rhagddynt?’ [‘the germs of contagious disease are about us often, in dust, in dirt, in bad air, water and food. What advice would you offer to make us safe from such germs?’].⁶⁶³ Llanberis’ housing stock attracted little debate – the village was situated near problem areas such as Ebenezer and Deiniolen where overcrowding was rife. The Faenol Estate stated to the Rural District Council that it had arranged to build eight new houses in Llanberis and intended to build a further twelve to fifteen houses in the village. The estate had also leased further land in the area which could accommodate a further eighteen houses. All leases would be from sixty to eighty-five years.⁶⁶⁴ Much of the housing in Llanberis was leasehold. In 1905 such leasehold property was discussed by Gwyrfai Rural District Council which claimed that those

⁶⁶² K. Roberts, *Traed Mewn Cyffion/Feet in Chains* (translation by Katie Gramich), (Cardigan, 2012), p. 25.

⁶⁶³ GAS CRO XD4/7.

⁶⁶⁴ NWE, 3 August 1900.

housed in property which belonged to the leasehold of the Faenol Estate were treated fairly. However ‘nearly all the houses in Llanberis were in the hands of the Ruthin Charity Trustees, and all applications for extensions of their leases were met by unreasonable demands’. It was felt that the problems of leasehold property should be raised in the House of Commons.⁶⁶⁵ Buying a house could be a strain on the finances of a family. For instance in 1894 John Huxley Thomas, a quarryman, of Ceunant Street, Llanberis, filed for bankruptcy. He claimed that sickness and loss of money by buying a house had caused his difficulties.⁶⁶⁶ The main push for improvements in Llanberis had been public utilities and then came the concern for improvements in street cleanliness. In 1899 there were complaints about the accumulation of manure and other nuisances in the village and by 1900 the parish council requested that village streets should be cleaned.⁶⁶⁷ By 1906 there was regular removal of house refuse.⁶⁶⁸ However at this point the authorities failed to proceed with closing four private slaughterhouses in the village and creating one new slaughterhouse on the outskirts.⁶⁶⁹ Individual problems occurred like that in one of the Tŷ Du houses in the village. The Sanitary Inspector was called upon in 1911 to deal with the problems posed by an old woman. It was decided to send her to the workhouse in November 1911 but she was still at home in December. He therefore went to Llanberis ‘to attend to the dirty Mrs Evans, Ty Du. Succeeded after much threatening for her to take a bath at 2 o’clock. Washed clean and clean clothes...’⁶⁷⁰ A simple but temporary solution.

There was much truth in the report given by Dr Parry Edwards, the Medical Officer of Health to the Gwyrfai Rural District Council in December 1909:

‘...Sylwodd y meddyg ei fod wedi myned trwy lawer o’r pentrefi, a gwelai ynddynt ysgolion wedi costio rhai miloedd o bunau a chapeli costus, ond yr oedd y bobl oedd yn myned i dalu am danynt yn byw mewn lleoedd – wel, nid allai eu galw ond cytiau...Dylid cael gwell tai o flaen ysgolion a chapelau costus’ [‘...the doctor had commented that he had been through many of the villages, and he saw in them schools which had cost several thousand pounds and expensive chapels. However the people who were going to pay for them lived in places – well, he could only describe them as

⁶⁶⁵ NWE, 13 October 1905.

⁶⁶⁶ CDH, 26 October 1894.

⁶⁶⁷ GAS CRO XB/15/3.

⁶⁶⁸ GAS CRO XM/2961/150.

⁶⁶⁹ GAS CRO XM/2961/150.

⁶⁷⁰ GAS CRO XM/1917/2.

hovels...better housing should take precedence over schools and expensive chapels'].⁶⁷¹

Household Structure

Llanwnda

In 1881 the largest percentage of household types in the upper part of the parish of Llanwnda was made up of the nuclear family and accounted for 63% of all households. They included families such as William Jones, aged thirty-five, a quarryman from Llanwnda, his wife and four children at Bryn Horeb, Rhostryfan. Some small farms housed a single family – at Hafotty Pen y Bryn, Rhosgadfan, John Jones, aged fifty-seven, from Llanystumdwy, farmed nineteen acres. His household consisted of a wife, and eight children, aged between six and twenty-seven, all of whom had been born in Llanwnda. The sons of working age were employed in the quarries. The household thus illustrated the nature of the local economy. Typical ‘industrial’ housing was to be found in Bron Eryri Terrace, Rhosgadfan. Of nineteen houses enumerated eleven were homes to the nuclear family. At 16 Bron Eryri Terrace, Robert Jones, aged forty-eight, a quarryman, originally from Anglesey, lived with his wife and three of his children including Mary, aged twenty-one, a dressmaker. In 1880 Mary had taken her brother John, a quarryman, to court for assaulting her and threatening to kill her. She accused him of knocking her head and kicking her legs. Her sister, Ellen, was produced as a witness and said that her father, Robert, had separated the siblings. The brother, John, was found guilty.⁶⁷² Dysfunctional families make no appearance in the autobiographies of local writers. Four of the houses in Bron Eryri were uninhabited and four houses had a different structured family group in occupation. Whether the number of uninhabited houses was such because the occupiers were away on the night of the census or reflected the beginning of the depression in the slate industry is not possible to assess.

30% of households were composite. This is also reflected in Bron Eryri Terrace. At 12 Bron Eryri Terrace Hannah Thomas, aged thirty, unmarried, a dressmaker from Llandwrog had within her home her thirteen-year-old quarryman nephew from Llanbeblig and a lodger, John Jones, aged twenty-three, from Aberdaron who also worked in the quarries. Of the composite households half were lodgings predominantly for quarrymen. At Wernlas Ddu, Rhostryfan, Grace Hughes, aged sixty-

⁶⁷¹ *Y Clorianydd*, 2 December 1909.

⁶⁷² GAS CRO XLC/3/2/4.

four, a widow ran the farm with the help of her sons and a live-in farm servant. Bigger farms evidently had a greater number of live-in servants but surprisingly small holdings sometimes employed servants. For example at Penisarhos, Rhostryfan, which consisted of 12 acres a thirteen-year-old live-in farm servant was employed. The local shop was the home to the owner, her children and an eighteen-year-old servant whose job was described as a ‘carter’ – presumably collecting stock and delivering goods.

Multi-generational homes made up 7% of the households. At Minffordd Terrace, Rhostryfan, John Parry, aged sixty, a stonemason, originally from Llanaelhaearn, had three grandchildren living with him and his wife. It is impossible to say how permanent this arrangement was. At Bryn Eithin, Rhostryfan, William Parry, a quarry labourer provided a home for his wife, two sons and mother, Catherine Hughes, widow, aged seventy, from Bryn Croes, Llŷn.

By 1901 the number of households in the area of study in Llanwnda had declined slightly. 73% of all households contained a nuclear family – a substantially larger percentage than in 1881. At Ty'n Lôn, Rhostryfan, Robert Jones, aged fifty-two, a slate quarryman, had a household consisting of his wife and six children. In Cae'r gors, Rhosgadfan, Owen Roberts, aged fifty, of Llanwnda, a slate quarryman had a family including a wife and five children – one of whom was Kate Roberts at ten years of age. Kate Roberts in her autobiography described the life of her household – her mother keeping enough stock around the house to supply the family with butter, eggs and buttermilk and just enough extra butter to sell to a handful of customers whilst her father and brother worked in the quarry. A small number of farms were run by the nuclear family only. At Penbrynsa John Parry, aged thirty-five, originally from Anglesey, farmed. He lived with his wife and four children, aged one to eight, all of whom were born in Anglesey. His work on the land must have been either a solo effort or most probably carried out with the help of his wife.

Composite households had declined in number by 1901 – in all 18% were composite which included just 5% of households which kept lodgers. At Gorsgoch, Rhostryfan, the household of William Williams, age thirty-eight, a slate quarryman, originally from Llanbeblig included his wife, six children and a boarder, Owen Roberts, age eighteen, slate quarryman, from Llandwrog. Some farms still employed live-in servants as at Caerdyn where Griffith Williams, aged forty-nine, a farmer, worked the land with the help of a carter, Robert Owen. They also employed a fifteen-year-old general domestic servant, Appie Roberts. Of the houses in Bron Eryri Terrace

in 1901 two had composite households keeping lodgers and all houses were inhabited unlike 1881. 9% of households were multigenerational such as Tanrallt, Rhostryfan, which housed Catherine Roberts, a widow, aged sixty, her son-in-law John and three grandchildren. In 1891 John had been living in Bron Eryri Terrace with his wife Mary and young daughter. Prior to 1901 his wife had died and John had moved to live with his mother-in-law. However by 1911 he had returned to Bron Eryri Terrace and was living with his second wife, Eliza Jane, a son from his first marriage and five children aged one to seven from his second marriage. Household and family structures were varied and often more complex than would first appear in an enumerator's entry.

Llanberis

The household structure of Llanberis like all other communities, reflects the economic and social pattern of the community. Over 60% of houses in the lower part of Llanberis were the homes of nuclear families. For example in the terraced housing of Snowdon Street, a type of housing which lent itself to family unit living, out of twenty-two houses seventeen housed the nuclear family only. For example at 6 Snowdon Street Robert Thomas, aged fifty-eight, was a slate quarrier. He lived with his wife, two slate quarrier sons and daughter who at twenty-five was an assistant mistress at a school. The whole family had been born in Anglesey which suggests that they had moved to Llanberis in the 1870s after the birth of the younger son. This was evidently an example of economic migration as both father and older son found employment and possibly greater opportunities were available for the schoolteacher daughter. Other nuclear households were much smaller. For example at Pant y Cafn Jane Davies, a widow aged seventy, reliant on poor relief lived with her single daughter, Catherine, aged twenty-seven, a dressmaker. Some smallholdings were family units. At Coed Mawr Margaret Morris, a widow aged sixty-four farmed 17 acres. She lived with her son and daughter – a slate quarrier and domestic servant respectively. Most in the lower part of Llanberis parish however lived in the industrial village of Llanberis with its terraced houses, shops and pubs. As Jones states in his overview of the quarrying areas: 'the quarrymen, therefore, can be seen to have had a peculiarly close connection with the land, but one which should not be overestimated.'⁶⁷³

⁶⁷³ Jones, *The North Wales Quarrymen*, p. 25.

When speaking of the nuclear family there are variations which are not obvious in an enumerator's return. One case hit the headlines in 1882. Robert Griffith, aged fifty-three, a quarryman living in Yankee Street, Llanberis, was accused of the attempted murder of two children. It transpired that Griffith had married his wife less than a year previously. She was considerably younger and the mother of two illegitimate children. His wife claimed that Griffith had set the children's bed alight whilst she was out. 'It was incidentally stated that the prisoner belonged to a queer family, his brother, whilst temporarily insane, having hanged himself a short time ago.'⁶⁷⁴ The charge was dropped.⁶⁷⁵ Not only was the family of a different makeup with a husband and possibly two fathers it was also dysfunctional.

In 1881 a quarter of all households were composite and of these about a fifth kept boarders. At 14 Turner Street, the head of household was Ellen Murphy, a widow aged forty-three. She made a living as a charwoman but also kept a boarder David Owen, age thirty-two who was in the slate quarries. Boarders or lodgers were according to Anderson 'the shadowiest of them all' as the components of the nineteenth-century household. They were a very important part of the household – in 1851 lodgers were present in 12% of all homes. However 'the subsequent history of lodging is even more obscure'.⁶⁷⁶ In a study of London Kay has shown that trade directories are not a good source for assessing the number of lodging houses as they tended to list larger establishments only.⁶⁷⁷ This was certainly true of the communities in this study. Those who gave lodgings to one or two people – usually men – would not advertise themselves as a business. Indeed many of their customers would be temporary residents of the area – possibly looking for work or escaping certain situations at home. Some of the latter make an appearance in the police register of charges for Llanberis. For example John Roberts, shoemaker, was charged by Wrexham Union for deserting his family as was George Murphy, labourer, for deserting his children.⁶⁷⁸ Areas such as Llanberis and its surrounding district must have offered some at least an anonymity and an opportunity to earn a living. Other composite homes had live-in domestic servants as did hotels. At Beech Bank John D.

⁶⁷⁴ *The Cambrian News and Merionethshire Standard*, 3 November 1882.

⁶⁷⁵ NWE, 10 November 1882.

⁶⁷⁶ M. Anderson, 'The Social Implications of Demographic Change', in Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950*, pp. 64.

⁶⁷⁷ A. C. Kay, 'A Little Enterprise of Her Own: Lodging House Keeping and the Accommodation Business in Nineteenth Century London', *The London Journal*, Volume 28, No. 2 (2003), p. 46.

⁶⁷⁸ GAS CRO XJ/1378.

Jones, a slate quarry manager, and his wife, kept a domestic servant Ann Ellis, age twenty from Llanberis. In the High Street the grocer, William Brymer, kept a substantial household – a housemaid, two assistant shopkeepers and four apprentice shopkeepers. A small number of farms kept live-in agricultural servants.

15% of households were multi-generational. At 4 Charlotte Street, Mary Jones was head of household and a dressmaker by calling. With her lived two quarrymen sons, a general servant daughter and two grandchildren. A number of households also cared for an older member of the family. For example at 5 Turner Street, Phillip Jones, aged fifty-six, a general labourer lived with his forty-nine-year-old wife, twelve-year-old daughter and seventy-six-year-old mother-in-law Margaret Ellis who was unmarried.

By 1901 almost two thirds of the population of Llanberis lived within the nuclear family. For example of the twenty-two houses in Snowdon Street nineteen houses were occupied by a nuclear family, a somewhat higher ratio than in 1881. In Rallt Goch, for instance, William Hughes, slate quarryman, lived with his wife and four children. Composite households made up in the region of 30% of households. Of this 9% were homes which kept boarders. At Frongoch, for example, Thomas Williams, a guard on the railway, was a boarder as was Humphrey Williams, a railway guard in Brynteg. The slate quarries still provided homes with a number of boarders – in Turner Street for example Henry Williams, a slate quarry manager was a boarder. Some may well have been weekly boarders leaving their families during the week. Others were in occupations in which one could relocate such as police and postmen. For John Davies, the central character in *O Law i Law*, the obvious choice for him when left alone on his mother's death was 'wacau'r hen dŷ i gyd wedyn, nos Sadwrn, i'm lodgings, a bore Llun yn ôl i'r chwarel.' ['empty the whole house. Then on Saturday evening go to my lodgings and on Monday morning back to the quarry.'][⁶⁷⁹] Businesses and hotels kept a number of live in staff fulfilling many occupations.

Multigenerational households had contracted substantially accounting for no more than 6% of the households. It may be that part of this reflected a slightly older age profile of the community.

⁶⁷⁹ T. Rowland Hughes, *O Law i Law* (Llandysul, 1991), p. 24.

Employment profile: Male

Settlement	1881	1901
Llanberis	100%	96%
Llanwnda	85%	98%

Percentage of males of fifteen years and over in employment.

Llanwnda

In 1881 in the age bracket of fifteen and over 85% of males were noted as being in employment in the upper of part of Llanwnda parish. A small number noted that they were employers as in the case of William D. Williams, Tan Rallt, a master shoemaker who employed four men. Others were evidently employers but did not note the fact. Farmers were the most likely to enter that they were employers.

The employment pattern of the area reflected its scattered settlement. The slate industry was undergoing a period of prolonged recession until the late 1890s. As Williams wrote of the 1880s when he went to work in the quarry ‘Yr oedd hefyd yn gyfnod gwan yn y chwarelau a’r cyflogau’n fychain’ [‘it was also a period of depression in the slate trade and the wages were small’]. Despite the downturn in trade he claimed that there was work for every boy who went to the quarries.⁶⁸⁰ Those boys who worked with fathers or family members stood a better chance of earning well as they could be associated with the bargain of which their relatives were a part but it was difficult for boys who were ‘ddigefn’ [‘without support’].⁶⁸¹ Almost half the employed males in 1881 were working in the various quarries as quarrymen, labourers and engine drivers. This work attracted small numbers from other areas of the country – people such as William George, aged thirty-five, from Aberdare who had married a fairly local woman from Llanddeiniolen. His stay in the area must have been quite short as he is not enumerated in the parish in 1871 or 1891. Some families such as that of Richard Williams illustrate the economy of the area – whilst Richard stayed home to farm 40 acres at Llwynbedw, his two sons of working age were quarrymen. Of the other five children aged three to seventeen none were in employment. It is likely that the two eldest girls at seventeen and thirteen helped on the land. The quarry wages must have been most welcome. The terraced housing in Rhosgadfan such as Bron Eryri Terrace was the home of numerous quarrymen. For example at 7, Bron Eryri, Robert

⁶⁸⁰ Williams, *Hynt Gwerinwr*, p. 46.

⁶⁸¹ Williams, p. 48-49.

John Evans, aged twenty-nine, worked in the quarries and he and his wife also had a lodger, Henry John Evans, aged thirty-five, also a quarryman. The probability was that the two men, who were both from Llandwrog, were brothers.

Over 17% of the inhabitants of upper Llanwnda in 1881 were involved in agriculture. Some, as already quoted previously, were in households which reflected a mixed economy of farming and quarrying. Others such as the Williams family at Gwredog Isaf farmed 100 acres. Thomas Williams had two sons at home, aged twenty and thirty-three, who probably worked the farm with two farm servants and a general servant. This was the same size of staffing as in 1871. In 1851 Thomas had employed three farm servants and a domestic servant. The workforce had therefore not changed – the change was in the personnel with family members assuming farming duties. Even less substantial farms employed outside labour. John Williams, at Pen y Cliff farmed 40 acres. He also had two live-in servants – John Williams, a farm servant, aged twenty-eight, widower, from Llangian and a domestic servant from Anglesey. Others farmed holdings which were family units as at Cae Mawr. William Jones, aged fifty-eight, farmed 31 acres with a son aged twenty.

The next largest employment bracket was trade in which over 11% of the males of upper Llanwnda were employed. A number of shoemakers were working in the upper part of the parish. William D. Williams in Tanrallt, aged thirty-two, from Llanwnda was a master shoemaker with a workshop of four shoemakers. He also owned a grocery shop and a farm. Williams wrote that the shoemaker's workshop had been established at the beginning of the nineteenth-century and at one time as many as twelve shoemakers worked in Tanrallt: 'Yr oedd sôn am esgidiau Tanrallt o Lanberis i Lanhaern' ['People spoke of the Tanrallt shoes from Lanberis to Llanaelhaearn'].⁶⁸² The usual country trades were also to be found – for example joiners, carpenters, stonemasons and blacksmiths.

Labourers constituted almost 6% of the male workforce – people such as head of household John Jones, aged thirty-two, at Ty'n Lôn. His wife's son-in-law living in the same household was also a labourer. At Rallt John Pritchard was still working as a labourer at the age of seventy-two. William E. Thomas had returned to Blaen y Waen, Llanwnda and worked as a labourer after some years in America during his youth. There he had been associated with the slave trade and had been impressed by the faith

⁶⁸² XD4/7.

and knowledge of the Bible of the slaves ‘gydai’u hanfanteision hwy’[‘with their disadvantages’].⁶⁸³ On his return he became a deacon in 1860 but does not appear to have been sympathetic to the plight of the slaves complaining that ‘rhai dioglyd oeddynt’ [‘they were lazy’].⁶⁸⁴ He died, aged sixty-four, in 1884. This sector of the workforce would have been available, for example, for seasonal employment in agriculture and for building work. How fully employed they were is not possible to assess.

Those involved in commerce and retail accounted for 5% of males employed. Grocers, such as Richard Edwards, aged thirty-two, who was also a coal merchant and butcher. Several tailors lived and worked in the area who would sell directly to their customers. The nearest substantial commercial centre to this part of the parish would have entailed a four mile walk to Caernarfon or after 1877 by the narrow-gauge line which had been constructed to try and ease the transportation of slate from the quarries.

A small number of professional men were to be found such as ministers of religion and an even smaller percentage of men were involved with the narrow-gauge railway such as the station keeper and train guard. Several had combined occupations – the most common being those who farmed and worked in the slate quarries and one who described himself as a coachman/gardener.

By 1901 over 70% of men were employed in the quarries reflecting an upturn in the trade. For instance at Bryneithin Daniel Job, aged forty-six, and his three sons aged eighteen and over were quarrymen and there were three young children still at home. Every house in Bron Eryri Terrace, Rhostryfan was occupied by slate quarrymen employed in different categories such as labourers, blacksmiths at the quarry, engine driver in the quarry and slate quarriers. The recession in the slate industry hit the upper part of the parish of Llanwnda badly.⁶⁸⁵ Caernarfonshire County Council attempted to ameliorate unemployment in the county. By 1908 reported unemployment in returns to Caernarfonshire County was 1,196 of the male workforce. No mention of the female workforce was made. Unemployment figures were considered to be substantially higher – probably in the region of 2000. The members of the council blamed local rural and urban district councils for being apathetic in sending in returns. It was claimed that the County Council was doing its best to improve the

⁶⁸³ Hobley, *Hanes Methodistiaeth Arfon, Dosbarth Clynnog*, p. 232.

⁶⁸⁴ Hobley, p. 233.

⁶⁸⁵ *Y Dinesydd Cymreig*, 7 October 1914.

situation. One councillor stated that many took on casual labour at fifteen shillings a week – a sum which could not support a family – and because of this type of employment they could not be registered as unemployed. It was reported that the public did not know what the County Council was doing in the matter.⁶⁸⁶ In the Rhostryfan and Rhosgadfan areas in 1914 140 head of households were unemployed and these had dependents consisting of 350.⁶⁸⁷ A meeting in Rhostryfan appealed to Gwyrfai Council to create work for these people.⁶⁸⁸ Work had previously been given to the unemployed in the Nantlle area by the County Surveyor of Caernarfonshire County Council breaking stones for road works but this was suspended as an ample supply of broken stones was available.⁶⁸⁹

The numbers who described themselves as farmers or employed in agriculture had reduced somewhat to just over 14%. For instance Erw was a farm run by Griffith Jones, with a farm servant from Brynsiencyn. The farm had been in the family for a number of years. Griffith's mother had been born there around 1829 and in 1881 the farm employed one servant but had four children aged eighteen and upwards who would also help on the farm. At Gwredog Isaf, discussed earlier in this chapter, the farm still employed two farm servants and a domestic servant as in 1881 but it was only the head of household, William Williams, who would have supplied permanent family labour. The children were too young to work full-time but it is highly probable that the eleven-year-old son would have had to help. By 1911 no live-in labour was employed. The farm was worked by William Williams and his youngest son – seasonal labour may well have been employed. Living in his own home was Ellis Roberts, aged seventy-six, with his forty-four-year-old wife and seven children. Ellis described his work as an agricultural labourer which would involve seasonal and maintenance work on various farms. His one son of employable age was a slate quarryman.

There was a slight increase in the number of men involved in commercial enterprise constituting under 6% of the males employed. At Pantcelyn a shopkeeper dealing in books resided and at Bron Meillion Richard Williams, originally from Nefyn, was a butcher. A driver and cart proprietor had set up business in Glan y Gors – Thomas Williams, a native of Llanwnda. In Four Crosses, Rhostryfan, there was a

⁶⁸⁶ NWE, 15 May 1908.

⁶⁸⁷ *Y Dinesydd Cymreig*, 2 September 1914.

⁶⁸⁸ *Y Dinesydd Cymreig*, 2 September 1914.

⁶⁸⁹ NWC, 22 May 1914.

grocer's shop run by William Jones. By 1910 Williams had either extended his business or he had sold himself short in the 1901 census, as in a business directory of 1910 his shop was listed as selling grocery, glass, china and hardware. He also described himself as an ironmonger.⁶⁹⁰

The one sector in male employment which showed a considerable decrease was that of tradesmen which by 1901 accounted for about 3% of employment compared to over 11% in 1881. There was a trend to buy factory made products which were available in towns such as Caernarfon. This may well have affected small time tradesmen in upper Llanwnda.⁶⁹¹ At Caeau Ucha sixty-year-old David Jones was a stonemason and at Gланaber, Rhostryfan, fifty-seven-year-old Griffith Owen, originally from Dyffryn Ardudwy, Merioneth, was a joiner. There were a number of shoemakers and cloggers still working in the area. According to Williams several came from Anglesey 'lle'r oedd gweithydd esgidiau enwog iawn' ['where there had been a very famous shoemaker'].⁶⁹² There was a very small cohort of professional people, such as a minister of religion and schoolmaster, and a much reduced number of general labourers. In this part of the parish of Llanwnda it was obvious that the work in the quarries had absorbed much of the male labour force in 1901 – a position which changed dramatically during the first decade of the twentieth century.

Llanberis

Of those males aged fifteen and over in the lower part of the parish of Llanberis, an age group which made up 65% of the male population in this area, the employment rate was nearly 100%. Very few entered themselves as employers although they evidently did employ staff within their establishments.

In 1881 almost 65% of males were employed in the slate quarry. Owned by Assheton-Smith Dinorwig quarry alone employed 2700 men in 1885 – a workforce which was largely drawn from several areas in the locality.⁶⁹³ The quarries of Penrhyn, Ffestiniog and Llanberis dominated the market in the later nineteenth century whilst smaller concerns began to decline.⁶⁹⁴ The slate industry was a small industry but it affected the nature of social development and settlement in the areas of north Wales

⁶⁹⁰ Bennett's Business Directory North Wales 1910.

⁶⁹¹ See p. 117 of this study.

⁶⁹² GAS CRO XD4/7.

⁶⁹³ Jones, *The North Wales Quarrymen*, p. 142.

⁶⁹⁴ Dodd, *The Industrial Revolution*, p. 221.

where it was the predominant source of employment.⁶⁹⁵ Population movement led to the creation of industrial villages such as Llanberis and in the larger quarries like Dinorwig men had to adjust to a working life of industrial discipline within an extensive workforce. The creation of a union (1874) and attempts to gain the allegiance of all the workforces in north Wales quarries met with limited success in a region subject to localism and an industry which calculated earnings on individual or team bargains made with the owner's representative in the quarry. However a growing militancy became evident in the union and an early illustration of this can be seen in the Dinorwig lockout of 1885. From 1890 quarrymen were more interested in improving conditions of work and were not so concerned about poverty as wages increased – as they did throughout the country – and the cost of living decreased. The Dinorwig Quarry Hospital was an important component of the quarryman's working life. The original hospital dated from 1860 and was rebuilt and improved in later decades when more sophisticated surgical treatment and x-rays were introduced.⁶⁹⁶ Of the terraced houses in Newton Street nineteen out of twenty-two houses were home to at least one person whose employment was in the slate quarries. Many households illustrated the mix of occupations which, if not directly quarry based, were dependent on the growth of population and the subsequent demand for services in the area. At Mount Pleasant Griffith Jones, aged forty-seven, from Llanwnda was head of household. He was a slate quarrier but also as lodgers he had the local GP, William Williams, and a pupil dentist, Hugh Lloyd.

In the region of 13% worked as tradesmen. Builders and joiners were prominent in this employment bracket. With the development of Llanberis as a tourist centre, side by side with its industrial base, such trades were required for building, maintenance and possibly could also be used in the quarries. In Lane Terrace David Roberts, aged sixty-four, originally from Nefyn, described himself as a 'builder etc'. He lived next door to another tradesman Edward Jones, aged fifty-six, from Llanbeblig, who was a baker. His son, aged fifteen, was also a baker. Bootmakers and shoemakers were well represented with one in Denbigh Terrace, Thomas Ingham, aged forty-seven, from Denbigh who employed four people – three men and a woman. He had evidently been settled in Llanberis for a few years – his wife was born in

⁶⁹⁵ Jones, *The North Wales Quarrymen*, p. 17.

⁶⁹⁶ See Davies, *The North Wales Quarry Hospitals*, p. 69-85. Some women were also treated in the hospital.

Cardiganshire and his eldest son, aged twelve, in Manchester. He and his wife were active in the Wesleyan cause. They held a tea party every Christmas day in their home and were generous in their gifts to the Sunday School ‘Yr ydym fel Wesleyaid yn ddyledus iawn i Mr Ingham am ei lafur gyda’r achos...’ [‘We as Wesleyans are very indebted to Mr Ingham for his work with the cause...’].⁶⁹⁷ Other tradesmen such as printers, blacksmiths, weavers and stonemasons were also found in the workforce.

9% of men employed were in the commercial sphere providing goods and services to the local population and for the tourist trade. At London House, Ishmael Davies from Denbighshire was a draper and commercial traveller with a daughter helping in the business while next door in Leeds House John M. Williams, from Llandwrog, was a tailor and draper. There were a myriad of draperies and tailors illustrating that Llanberis was a busy commercial centre. There were a variety of other outlets – for instance grocers, booksellers and a druggist in Apothecary Hall. Even a photographic gallery had been set up by Isaac Hughes, aged forty-eight, from Llanrwst. Hotel keepers and publicans provided hospitality services. A small number of workers were also employed by the railway company. The commercial mix suggests a vibrant local economy.

Agriculture provided a living for 5% of the population. At Tŷ Newydd William Owen, aged fifty-two, originally from Llanberis farmed 50 acres. Giving evidence to the Royal Commission on Land in 1893 Edward Humphries of the Royal Victoria Hotel who held the tenancies of several farms including the Victoria Farm, Llanberis, spoke of the scarcity of labourers especially in the quarrying area.⁶⁹⁸ Richard Owen, printer, Llanberis, also gave evidence ‘the small farmers, with certain exceptions, are all in straitened circumstances’ and unable to pay their shop bills.⁶⁹⁹ Most of the farms were run by the family only with no money to pay for farm labour. Common land had been appropriated by the landlords. Little wonder that agriculture became an increasingly unattractive proposition in the area – hard work in a harsh environment with small returns.

Professional occupations were 3% of the work available including ministers of religion, the local rector, schoolmasters and a doctor. Other occupations were confined

⁶⁹⁷ *Y Gwyliedydd*, 5 January 1887.

⁶⁹⁸ Parliamentary Papers, *Royal Commission on Land in Wales and Monmouthshire, Minutes of Evidence* (London, 1893-1896), p. 579.

⁶⁹⁹ Parliamentary Papers, p. 601-602.

to one or two people – too small to quantify in percentage terms. For example at 2 Lorne House, John Tidswell lived. He was the local bandmaster paid by Assheton-Smith to train the Llanrug Band. Tidswell evidently enjoyed a prominent position in the brass band culture. For instance he was the adjudicator in 1884 in Rochdale of a brass band competition where his decision ‘gave general satisfaction’.⁷⁰⁰ He became involved in the unrest of 1885 in Dinorwig Quarry and was sacked.⁷⁰¹ Staying at the Medical Hall with the local chemist and family were Joseph Parry, musician and his son Joseph H. Parry, also a musician, from Danville, Pennsylvania.⁷⁰² The *Genedl Gymreig* in its report of a concert of Undeb Corawl Eryri in April 1881 which performed works by Joseph Parry stated that he was present and conducted the choir and his son played the piano.⁷⁰³ The presence of the composer in the concert illustrated the liveliness and popularity of such cultural events in the community.⁷⁰⁴

By 1901 the population of Llanberis was more or less the same as it had been in 1881. It had dipped slightly by the census of 1891 and from the first decade of the twentieth century it showed a steady decline. In 1901 96% of males of fifteen and over were in employment. Employment in the quarries accounted for the overwhelming bulk of jobs in the lower part of the parish of Llanberis – almost 71% had work in the quarries. Slate production had decreased in the 1880s because of a lessening in demand but by the late 1890s there was an upturn in the slate trade which was short-lived. Therefore these figures for employment in the slate industry reflect this brief recovery. At Goleufryn, Llanberis, the head of household, Morris Jones, and his three sons were slate quarriers. Their income was sufficient to employ a fifteen-year-old domestic servant. Employment in the quarries took a downward turn during the early part of the twentieth century. A special meeting of Caernarfonshire County Council in 1905 was held to consider a report on the question of unemployment in the county. W. H. Williams, the secretary of the North Wales Quarrymen’s Union, drew attention to the hardships endured by quarrymen who were unemployed. During the discussion Lord

⁷⁰⁰ *Denbighshire Free Press*, 23 May 1884.

⁷⁰¹ Jones, *The North Wales Quarrymen*, p. 155.

⁷⁰² Joseph Parry, a native of Merthyr Tydfil, was born in 1841 and died in 1903. Having started work underground he and his family moved in 1854 to Danville, Pennsylvania. He studied music part time and then went to study in the Royal Academy of Music. He returned to the USA but was then appointed as the First Professor of Music at University College, Aberystwyth. On leaving Aberystwyth he worked for a number of years in Swansea and was organist at Ebenezer chapel. He lived in Penarth from 1888 and lectured in music at University College, Cardiff. He was a prolific composer.

⁷⁰³ YGG, 14 April 1881.

⁷⁰⁴ See p. 269.

Penrhyn stressed the number of men between twenty and thirty who were without work. It was believed that the probable explanation for this was that in times of depression the quarries dispensed with the labour of those men without dependants. It was decided to vote £500 to contribute to the improvement of roads by the unemployed and to apply for money from the Queen's Unemployed Fund.⁷⁰⁵

The number of tradesmen had declined since 1881 to over 8%. Stonemasons, plasterers, joiners and builders were still available to serve the community. However, the decline in numbers illustrated the decrease in building work because of the downward turn in the slate trade. Blacksmiths and shoemakers continued to make an appearance but in smaller numbers than in 1881. At Bedwargoed House, High Street, Llanberis there was a family of weavers and woollen manufacturers. They ran the business of their late father, Hugh Hughes, who was himself a woollen manufacturer and hosier.⁷⁰⁶ A smaller percentage of male workers were involved in commerce – around 6%. For example, John Vaughan Williams, aged fifty-nine, from Meifod, Montgomeryshire ran a grocery business and booksellers in Manchester Row and Edward Jones, aged sixty-one, a native of Llanberis, ran a grocery and drapery shop in Compton House. Men were involved in the hospitality trade such as Edward Armsden in the Castle Hotel and David Hughes, aged sixty, was a driver at a hotel. Llanberis had long been a tourist attraction but the opening of the Snowdon Railway in 1896 added substantially to its popularity enabling the easy ascent of Snowdon from the village of Llanberis. In 1897 one of the local newspapers wrote of the extra facilities in Llanberis ‘...the inhabitants look forward to a successful summer season as far as the visitors are in the question. The Snowdon Mountain Railway is working admirably.’⁷⁰⁷ Tourists were even targeted with advertisements for antiques ‘collected in the district’ and for sale in Bon Marché, Llanberis.⁷⁰⁸ The French name given to the shop carried with it an air of sophistication which was aimed at improving the shopping experience. A number of male workers was employed by the railway – around 3% of the workforce. It is not specified whether they were in the employ of the LNWR or the owners of the mountain railway – the Snowdon Tramroad and Hotels Company Ltd.

⁷⁰⁵ *Llandudno Advertiser and List of Visitors*, 30 December 1905 and XC/1 Caernarfonshire County Council Minute Book (uncatalogued records).

⁷⁰⁶ *Slater's Directory of North and Mid Wales* 1895, p. 224.

⁷⁰⁷ CDH, 2 July 1897.

⁷⁰⁸ *The "Borough" Guide to Llanberis* (Cheltenham, 190-), p. 96.

3.5% of the male workforce were in professional employment as for instance doctors, a cohort of Nonconformist ministers, the rector and chemists. Very small percentages were in employment as general labourers, police, employees of the copper mine or banks. One sector which had decreased substantially was that of males involved in agriculture which had dropped to around 2%.⁷⁰⁹ For example at Mur Mawr, Llanberis, John Ellis, aged seventy-six, from Llanberis farmed. He was single and had the help of a servant, Elizabeth Jones, from Anglesey and also kept a boarder William Jones, aged nineteen, from Anglesey who was a quarry labourer. Nearby Hugh Owen, aged seventy-five, from Llanberis, farmed Hafod Uchaf. He again had no designated farm help but would most probably have had to rely on his younger wife and general domestic servant. Hugh Owen was an example of one who had kept a farm and worked in the quarry – he was a steward for several years at Dinorwig and was a deacon at Capel Coch, Llanberis.⁷¹⁰ During his earlier working life mutual help with farming among quarrymen had been the norm but by the mid-1880s the system had been changed. An article by a special correspondent of the *Liverpool Daily Post* in 1885 had described the mood and complaints of the quarrymen during the Llanberis Lockout of 1885. He wrote of an ‘irritating tyranny’ felt by the men in the quarries. An example of tyranny was given as the arrangement for the gathering of the hay harvest – ‘the hay harvest must be speedily gathered or spoiled. It has been the custom of the men employed in the quarries to assist each other in gathering in their hay. This custom was...arbitrarily abolished’ by the quarry owners.⁷¹¹ A small number of farms such as Caerfran, Llanberis, employed a live-in cattleman while some agricultural workers lived at home and could possibly work for several farms when necessary.

Employment profile: Female

Settlement	1881	1901
Llanberis	33%	24%
Llanwnda	29%	18%

Percentage of females of fifteen years and over in employment.

⁷⁰⁹ See p. 229 of this study where the shortage of agricultural labourers in quarrying districts is discussed.

⁷¹⁰ CDH, 21 June 1901 and W. Hobley, *Hanes Methodistiaeth Arfon, Dosbarth Dinorwig* (Caernarfon, 1921), p. 77.

⁷¹¹ *The Cambrian News and Merionethshire Standard*, 25 December 1885.

Llanwnda

29% of females of fifteen and over were noted as being in employment in 1881. Within this group 44% of those in employment were in domestic service. Elizabeth Hughes, aged nineteen, of Gors was living at home with her family – the men of employment age in the household earned a living in the quarries while she described herself as a general servant. At Penrhos a family headed by David Thomas, aged sixty-one, a widower, together with five sons were all quarrymen. Their sister, twenty-year-old Mary, gave ‘housekeeper’ as her employment description. There was also a thirteen-year-old daughter at home. Undoubtedly Mary was working within the family – looking after seven people.

A third of the women in employment were providing commercial services as shopkeepers, dressmakers, milliners and shop assistants. At Ishoreb Laura Thomas, aged sixty-four, a widow, kept a shop. Her son worked in the quarries while her daughter, also named Laura, aged twenty-two, lived at home and had no employment description in the census returns. A general servant, Anne Jones, from Llanwnda was employed by the family. In 1861 the mother had been in business with her husband running a drapery and grocery business in the same place with eight children at home. By 1891 the business had evidently been wound up.

Just under 8% of employed women were in agriculture. Often, as was the nature of agriculture and settlement in the area, the holdings were small. Ellen Williams, aged sixty-nine, a widow, described herself as a farmer of four acres at Penlan. Margaret Jones, a widow, aged fifty, farmed five acres at Tanrardd. Her fifteen-year-old son provided towards the family income with his work in the quarries. In Bod Jacob Ellen Griffith farmed forty-seven acres with the help of one farm servant from Anglesey and also had her sister and brother in law living with her. At seventy years old Catherine Parry, a single woman, was a dairy maid. Ten years previously she had been a domestic servant and shared a home with her older sister who had been a laundress. This probably underlines the adaptability of women in an economy which did not afford them many opportunities.

A very small number of women earned an income from other declared sources – a nurse, whose employment in all probability was temporary, an annuitant and, at Plas Coch, a lodging housekeeper (Catherine Roberts, a widow, aged thirty-four). She kept two lodgers – a quarry labourer and a joiner. Most who kept lodgers did not enter the fact in the employment column but declared it in the relationship to head of

household. For example, Morgan Morgan, aged thirty-seven, was a slate quarryman lodging in Rhosgadfan with John and Maryann Hicks, originally from Suffolk.

Although the female would have been the housekeeper as her husband also worked in the quarries it was evidently not seen as ‘employment’ when Maryann also catered for a lodger. Jones poses the rhetorical question asking which coalminer in the Rhondda would enter his wife as a lodging housekeeper despite the fact that she was doing so and contributing to the family income.⁷¹² John died during the 1880s and Maryann either left the area or died as there is no note of her in any census after 1881.⁷¹³ Women such as Margaret Griffith, Shop Bron y Gadfan, was described alongside her husband as a grocer and flour merchant. She also acted as midwife in the area. When she became too old to do the work it was undertaken by Kate Roberts’ mother who also undertook general nursing duties – work that she had first done when left a young widow.⁷¹⁴

By 1901 the number of women in employment had decreased dramatically to 18%. In both England and Wales the number of women noted to be in employment increased until 1871 but thereafter there was a general decline in female employment until the First World War.⁷¹⁵ Over half were in domestic employment. Writing of south Wales, Howells states that ‘the census reports provide one of the most accurate ways to examine the changing size and occupational composition of the service workforce’.⁷¹⁶ Kate Williams, aged twenty-four, from Llandwrog, worked as a general domestic servant in Cae Sais and Ann Jones, aged fifty, from Llanwnda, worked as a domestic servant. The former lived in with her employers while the latter lived with her sister who was head of household. Together with the two single sisters lived Ellen, described as a niece to the head of household, aged thirteen. She may well have been Ann’s illegitimate daughter. One domestic servant who attempted to protect her rights was Jane Ellen Jones, Penfridd, who brought a case against her former employer William Jones, Llanwnda, for non-payment of wages owing to her. The latter claimed that Jane had left his service without notice saying that she was ill and that she had refused to

⁷¹² Jones, ‘Serfdom and Slavery’, p. 88.

⁷¹³ Their daughter, Rosa, also born in Suffolk, married a local quarryman, Thomas Griffith Trevor, from Caernarfon and lived in Llanberis. In 1891 she is described as bilingual – an example of how incomers, few as they were, became assimilated.

⁷¹⁴ Roberts, *Y Lôn Wen*, p. 198.

⁷¹⁵ Williams and Jones, ‘Women at Work in Nineteenth Century Wales’, 23.

⁷¹⁶ C. Howells, ‘Hidden Labours: The Domestic Service Industry in South Wales’, in L. Miskell (ed.), *New Perspectives on Welsh Industrial History* (Cardiff, 2020), p. 79.

return when she was offered lighter duties. The doctor supported the defendant and the court found in his favour.⁷¹⁷ At Tai Newyddion Mary Jones, single, aged forty-two is described as ‘mother’s help’. Her mother was seventy-six. This was the employment status given to a number of women in this area. A charwoman, Jane Griffith, aged fifty-seven, a widow, lived at Bodawen.

A number of women, around 30% of the very limited number in employment were in the commercial sphere as dressmakers in the main but Mary Jones, aged forty, a widow, was a woollen shopkeeper in Rhostryfan. Shops were overwhelmingly kept by men in 1901 and it is difficult to believe that the wives or daughters were not called upon to help. The number of professional women was extremely small – Marie Rees, aged twenty-five, from Dyffryn Ardudwy, was a teacher in the School Board’s school and Esther Pritchard, was at eighteen a pupil teacher. Marie boarded with the Pritchard household at Gaerddu. The father and son were quarrymen, one daughter was a domestic servant whilst two other daughters aged thirty and fifteen were at home with no employment mentioned. Without doubt paid employment opportunities were small in the area and had shrunk even further by 1901. However women continued to have lodgers in their households. They also had land and gardens in large tracts of the parish to attend to during the very long hours that the bulk of the male workforce were employed in the quarries. Undoubtedly work done by many women would not be acknowledged in the census – for example work such as occasional caring/nursing, midwifery and sewing. Kate Roberts related that one old woman earned money by pulling heather and carrying it to form the base of haystacks. During the winter the heather could also be used as kindling.⁷¹⁸ The expectations of women were high. In the Rhosgadfan and Rhostryfan literary competitions at Christmas time in 1909 the subjects for essays covered areas of family life seen as the woman’s domain and her responsibilities, for example, to provide the home comforts and happiness of the family, to provide a healthy diet and to ensure the health of children.⁷¹⁹

Llanberis

In 1881 of women aged fifteen and over 33% were in employment. In an area dominated by slate quarrying and poor agricultural land the opportunities for women

⁷¹⁷ *Yr Herald Gymraeg*, 25 October 1910.

⁷¹⁸ Roberts, *Y Lôn Wen*, p. 110.

⁷¹⁹ GAS CRO XD4/7 and p. 216.

were limited. About three-quarters of employed women were in domestic service as for instance in Birmingham House Ellen Phillips, aged twenty-three, from Llanberis was a live in general domestic servant in a business household – the family were flour dealers. At Snowdon View twenty-year-old Margaret Evans was a general servant in the home of the Congregational Minister who lived with his wife, three young children and widowed mother-in-law, aged seventy-nine. On the night of the census the family were also entertaining a visitor. A permanent household of six people. The figures and configuration of the family alone suggest what hard work domestic service was. Some women found positions as domestic servants on farms. At Llwyn Celyn, a substantial farm, was run by John Wheldon and an indoor farm servant. Catherine Jones, aged thirty-six, widow, from Llŷn was the general domestic servant. With such a small live-in workforce one must assume that Catherine may well have had to take on other duties on the 254-acre farm. A handful of housemaids were employed in the more affluent homes and tended to live at home – Catherine Jones lived at home in Bryniau y Gerddi with her family headed by her labourer father. She was a housemaid – evidently in another household. Housekeepers were often housekeeping for their family and it is highly likely that they were not remunerated for the work. Others have household members who were working in the quarries but not described as boarders. These, one assumes, would be paying for their board and lodging. They may well have been informal arrangements unlike those who classed themselves as lodging housekeepers. At the Post Office Jane Frances Evans, widow, aged forty-two, from Llansannan is described as a lodging housekeeper. She had no lodgers at the time of the census. Elizabeth Hughes, widow, aged sixty from Capel Curig kept a substantial lodging house at 9 Charlotte Street, Llanberis. Her daughter, aged twenty-two, born in Bethesda was a domestic servant in the establishment and two young grandchildren also lived in the house. At the time of the census there were four lodgers – a printer, shoemaker, plasterer and slate quarryman. Elizabeth's husband, a quarryman, had died in the 1870s and having by 1881 established a business as a lodging housekeeper she then moved during that decade to the High Street in Llanberis setting herself up as a baker and lodging housekeeper. She was undoubtedly a woman of initiative. Providing lodgings gave women a means to make a living. They took advantage of the demand for lodging and the flexibility offered by the work – it was a business which would suit many. According to Kay ‘it is important to recognise that this activity took a woman

into the public sphere'.⁷²⁰ However some women were probably never remunerated for their work in keeping lodgers. One such was Janet Evans who in 1878 was before the Magistrates Court for theft from the draper's shops of Ishmael Davies and John Phillips. Her parents 'kept her at home to look after the house, as they kept lodgers'. She had given birth to an illegitimate child during the year and was disgraced and shunned by her friends. She was imprisoned for four months. Despite a plea for clemency no consideration was given to her state of mind or powerless position.⁷²¹ There were a number of charwomen and washerwomen who would be able to serve the permanent population, hotels and tourists. At Blaenyddol Catherine Jones, aged thirty-nine, was a charwoman. Her husband, David, aged thirty-seven had been a slate quarrier but had become blind eleven years previously. They had five children all aged between two and eleven. Catherine also looked after her seventy-one-year-old blind mother-in-law and three lodgers. The pressure of work on such a woman is almost unimaginable. Their living would have been fairly precarious.

Almost a fifth of employed women were involved in retail. Dressmakers were well represented as were shop assistants. The hospitality business gave employment opportunities to female bookkeepers, manageresses, waitresses and cooks. A small number of women were directly involved in agriculture. For example in near proximity to each other Alice Williams, Bryn Coch, farmed 8 acres and Margaret Griffith, Pen y Ceunant, farmed 4 acres. They were both widows and both aged sixty-one. There is little doubt that other women were involved in farming work on a family holding but this was not acknowledged in the census returns. The only professional positions held by women were schoolteachers. In an area of fairly dense population there were employment opportunities for women in schools.

Many women would have been beneath the employment radar in census returns. In *O Law i Law* T. Rowland Hughes describes the history of the mangle found in the house of the main character John Davies. The latter's grandfather had been killed in the quarry and a local collection was made to help the widow. A mangle was bought for the family – 'Felly y daeth y mangyl i dŷ fy nain. Buan y gwyddai'r ardal fod y weddw yn golchi a manglio, a rhoddwyd iddi i gadw'r blaidd i ffwrdd, waith pur reolaidd' ['That is how the mangle arrived in my grandmother's house. The whole area

⁷²⁰ Kay, 'A Little Enterprise of Her Own', 51.

⁷²¹ NWE, 8 November 1878.

soon got to know that the widow was washing and mangling and she was given fairly regular work to help keep the wolf from the door’].⁷²² The difficulty for a woman who became a head of household was replicated in the mining communities of south Wales. Jones writes of a mother, widowed by a mining accident in the Cynon Valley who had to scrape a living – making ‘small beer’, toffee and faggots’.⁷²³

By 1901 the percentage of women in employment from the age of fifteen had decreased to 24%. In a brief overview of rural and industrial areas of south Wales Williams and Jones noted that the number of women working in Wales was always less than in England. In the industrial communities of south Wales even fewer were in employment. For example only 14% of females in the Rhondda were in paid employment. The reasons for this are not entirely clear – there could have been fewer opportunities for women in industrial settlements but it could be connected to ‘cultural differences’.⁷²⁴ The domestic service sector had declined quite dramatically to around a third of the employed women. This is a somewhat lower figure than the Welsh average which between 1871 and 1901 enumerated about half the females listed with an occupation as being in domestic service.⁷²⁵ Possible reasons for this difference in Llanberis, as in Caernarfon, would be wider employment opportunities and in Llanberis fewer female domestic servants in agriculture – mirroring the male employment pattern. In Rallt, Llanberis, Catherine Jones, aged twenty-one, from Llanberis was a general domestic servant but enumerated at home with her siblings who were quarrymen and a dressmaker. The rector still kept a domestic servant – Margaret Davies from Cheshire who was bilingual. The surgeon, Robert Roberts lived with his sister and employed a domestic servant and cook. Businesses retained domestic servants as they often had not only the family but live-in employees to cater for. There were a small number of charwomen and washerwomen but not as many as in 1881.

Over half the women employed were in retail by 1901. In the hospitality business they fulfilled the same type of employment as in 1881 – hotel keepers like Priscilla Thomas, aged sixty-seven, a widow from Pembroke, in the Snowdon Valley Hotel. Her late husband Thomas Thomas had run the hotel until his death. It was a

⁷²² Rowland Hughes, *O Law i Law*, p. 35.

⁷²³ Jones, ‘Serfdom and Slavery’, p. 93-94 citing the autobiography *From the Valley I came* by Wil Jon Edwards.

⁷²⁴ Williams and Jones, ‘Women at Work in Nineteenth Century Wales’, 27.

⁷²⁵ Williams and Jones, ‘Women at Work in Nineteenth Century Wales’, 23.

family affair with daughters as barmaid and cook and son as manager. Some live-in help was used as the hotel evidently had land and cattle. Retailers such as Bedwargoed House was again a family enterprise run by the widowed Margaret Hughes who employed her daughter-in-law Jemimah Hughes as a traveller in flannels and niece, Margaret Griffith, as a shirt maker and dressmaker. A busy retail scene provided opportunities for women as shop assistants. Milliners and dressmakers were again fairly numerous with dressmakers such as Agnes Hughes, aged twenty-nine, from Mountain Ash, living in Compton House, a grocery and drapery shop.



Figure 61: GAS CRO XS/2115/68 Part of the commercial centre of Llanberis c.1910.

The percentage of women in agriculture had increased somewhat but this was within the smaller female workforce. The holdings were often small and the farmers usually widows probably farming a handful of acres previously kept by husbands who were also quarrymen. Others such as Jane Griffith at Cwm Uchaf, Llanberis, farmed 150 acres which in 1881 had two farm servants working full time with the farmer, John Griffith, whilst the sons of the household were quarrymen. By 1901 she farmed with the help of one son whilst the other son remained a quarryman.

Professional posts for women remained in 1901 largely confined to teaching as in the case of Jane Parry, aged twenty-five, Cambrian Lodge, Llanberis, who was a teacher in the Board School. She lived at home with her parents and siblings – all native to Llanberis. Her father Robert was a slate quarryman and was still working as such age seventy when he had an accident in the quarry. He returned to work but was

not capable of working as he had before the accident. He took his own life.⁷²⁶ His depression may well have been compounded by the slowdown in the slate industry.⁷²⁷ Opportunities for women were highly restricted. When the Cymdeithas Ddiwylliadol met in 1901 the debate topic was whether women should work in public office. It was a lively discussion but those in favour won by only one vote.⁷²⁸

As with previous census returns much of women's work – sometimes remunerated and more often not – did not gain recognition. Much criticism was made of the abilities of the quarrymen's wife in matters of housekeeping and her extravagance in expenditure. A series of articles in *Y Geninen* in 1900 were written by a former Llanberis quarryman turned minister. He discusses the pride of quarrymen in their clothing and that the wife was 'yn hyn o beth yn bechadures fawr' ['was in this respect a major sinner'] and quotes O. M. Edwards and his view on the 'shabby genteel' dress of the wife 'paham eu bod eu crandrwydd more ddichwaeth' ['why is their grandeur so tasteless'].⁷²⁹ Miss Winifred Ellis, Cynlas, Merionethshire, the sister of Tom Ellis, gave evidence to the enquiry into the Merionethshire Slate Quarries in 1895 about her work instructing the women in the quarrying districts in the county about cooking. In answer to a question on the lack of economy amongst quarrymen's wives she said that she believed that they did not make 'the very best of their materials' and that many of the men were not well fed. She also stated her view that the wives were too fond of 'gay dress'.⁷³⁰ What is striking in such writings, as in official government reports, is the snobbery and judgemental attitudes of the observers whose life held little in common with the subject. Consumerism was encouraged by advertising – day trips to Liverpool and Manchester. In 1908 it was reported to Gwyrfai RDC that the LNWR would be running an excursion service from Llanberis and Nantlle to Liverpool on Tuesdays and Thursdays and to Manchester on Mondays and Wednesdays.⁷³¹ More local excursions were organised to the larger department stores in Caernarfon such as The Nelson and Yr Afr Aur. Consumerism was encouraged by advertising aimed at manipulating the female market and many shops offered credit to its customers.⁷³² The changing seasons and new fashions were

⁷²⁶ CDH, 20 April 1906.

⁷²⁷ WCP, 6 October 1905.

⁷²⁸ *Y Gwylieddydd*, 18 December 1901.

⁷²⁹ *Y Geninen*, April 1900.

⁷³⁰ *Report of the Departmental Committee upon Merionethshire Slate Mines* (1895), p. 133-134.

⁷³¹ GAS CRO XB15/6.

⁷³² Davies, *People, Places and Passions*, p. 58-60.

highlighted. Local Llanberis stores also advertised clothes ‘...made here, on short notice, on reasonable terms and in the latest style...’.⁷³³ Leusa, the wife of William Jones, represented a different era: the interwar years when the population and local economy were contracting set against the traumatic backdrop of the First World War.⁷³⁴ Popular culture like the cinema encouraged people like Leusa to dream of better times. Jones has drawn attention to the grind of many women in Rhondda households – ‘no bathrooms, no hot running water, no pithead baths’.⁷³⁵ The same held true of the industrialised communities in the quarrying areas. Roberts described the hard work of washing the clothes of quarrymen – scrubbing the corduroy trousers, then boiling them and boiling the cloth jacket ‘washing a quarryman’s clothes is heavy work’.⁷³⁶ Much was expected of the women. Pressures of life are shown in certain suicide cases. Ellen Morris, aged fifty, drowned herself in Llanberis Lake in 1907. Her husband informed the coroner that she had suffered fits of depression for a long time. She felt ‘very wicked’ and asked her husband to pray for her.⁷³⁷ In a pamphlet given to the quarrymen R. H. Mills Roberts of the Quarry Hospital, Dinorwig, gave advice about the health of the quarrymen. It was a set of instructions on dress, washing, diet and housekeeping.⁷³⁸ Much of the work in conforming to the advice would have fallen on the shoulders of the woman in the household.

Child/Youth Profile

Llanwnda

Over a third of the population of the upper part of Llanwnda belonged to the age groups of under fifteen. The parish of Llanwnda was reported in 1847 to have no school: ‘a national school is said to have existed in the parish, but it has been discontinued’.⁷³⁹ The same report gives an account of the school in Bontnewydd which was in the parish of Llanwnda although at some distance from the upper part of the parish.⁷⁴⁰ This however was the only school available in the mid-century and served

⁷³³ *The “Borough” Guide to Llanberis*, p. 42.

⁷³⁴ T. Rowland Hughes, *William Jones* (Aberystwyth, 1953).

⁷³⁵ Jones, ‘Serfdom and Slavery’, p. 93.

⁷³⁶ Roberts, [*Traed Mewn Cyffion*] *Feet in Chains*, p. 11-12.

⁷³⁷ NWE, 9 August 1907. See Davies, *Secret Sins*, p. 107. Davies claims that religion ‘sometimes intensified mental instability’.

⁷³⁸ GAS CRO DQ/1713.

⁷³⁹ Parliamentary Papers, *Reports of the Commission of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales* (London, 1847), p. 42.

⁷⁴⁰ Parliamentary Papers, p. 35.

the southern end of the parish of Llanbeblig and the whole parish of Llanwnda. Educational provision for the upper part of the parish during the mid-century until the formalising of educational provision and creation of a School Board in 1870 was patchy and often temporary.⁷⁴¹

Of the age groups from five up to thirteen almost all children were entered as scholars in 1881. Some were entered as scholars in the older age range as well such as Catherine Jones, age sixteen, living at Erw. Others at under thirteen may have been ‘half timers’ in school and working the other half in the quarry. In the 1880s ‘Ychydig oedd yr half timers’ [‘the half timers were few’].⁷⁴² Attendance caused problems at times. In 1880 William Cadwalladr was expelled from Rhostryfan School as he was over age. In 1881 he was fourteen and lived at home at Pant y Celyn. His father and elder brothers were working in the quarry while an eighteen-year-old sister was at home. Pant y Celyn was a small holding of some 5 acres and William may well have been occupied there during the summer months and only attending school in the winter when he would then take ‘advantage to affect the order’.⁷⁴³ Circulars were sent to parents to encourage school attendance and fathers were prosecuted for not sending their children to school. However it was acknowledged in 1889 in the logbook that many came from a long distance to school and implied that this impaired the children’s progress.⁷⁴⁴ Williams notes the same in his autobiography and despite the fact that many children were away from home ‘o wyth yn y bore hyd bump o’r gloch a gorfod cerdded trwy’r gwynt a’r glaw’ [‘from eight in the morning until five o’clock having to walk through the wind and rain’] they were still locked out of school at lunchtimes.⁷⁴⁵ The headmaster was appointed in 1879 and retired in 1918. A complaint was made to the school in 1889 by a parent about caning and corporal punishment as part of the headmaster’s regime.⁷⁴⁶

A small number of pupils appeared to have gone into employment at a very early age. For instance at Maes Gwyn, Ellen Thomas, age twelve, of Llanwnda, was a live-in servant/nurse and at Bryn Melyn Ucha. Anne Jones, aged thirteen, lived with her family but worked as a servant elsewhere. Most boys went to work in the quarries

⁷⁴¹ See GAS CRO XD4/7 which describes the history of education in Llanwnda until 1906.

⁷⁴² Williams, *Hynt Gwerinwr*, p. 49.

⁷⁴³ GAS CRO XES1/118/1.

⁷⁴⁴ GAS CRO XES1/118/1.

⁷⁴⁵ Williams, *Hynt Gwerinwr*, p. 25.

⁷⁴⁶ GAS CRO XES1/118/1.

after the age of thirteen and some as farm servants. There is little doubt that children and young people were used as labour at home and to fulfil other tasks. For example, Robert Parry, Sanitary Inspector of the Local Board of Health, went to Rhostryfan in July 1886 to visit Mary Thomas who was ill with typhoid. He wrote in his journal: ‘found that there was only a little girl attending her. Enquired about the neighbourhood and found at last the woman who washed for her who promised to see that the disinfecting was carried out.’⁷⁴⁷ Mary Thomas was a widow, aged seventy-four, who in 1881 was keeping a lodger. She was probably dependent upon the help of neighbours in her illness including the help of a young girl.

The Petty Sessions Minute Book for the Caernarfon Court in the mid-1880s illustrated the lack of facilities for the youth of the area. A case in 1885 gave a description of the young people of the locality on a Saturday night ‘scrapping’ and throwing stones as they wandered aimlessly. Fights would break out and continued when they attended chapel the following day.⁷⁴⁸

By 1901 under a third of the population of the upper part of Llanwnda was aged up to and including fourteen. In the region of 200 pupils were on the Rhostryfan Board School books during the first decade of the twentieth century. Kate Roberts recalls her elementary education at the end of the nineteenth century and turn of the century as being delivered half in Welsh and half in English and recalled ‘the headmaster trying for one week to stop us speaking Welsh by beating us’.⁷⁴⁹ Indeed corporal punishment was still a feature of the school despite the complaint in 1889.⁷⁵⁰ A fierce correspondence took place in *Yr Herald Cymraeg* in 1909 about the lack of facilities in Ysgol Rhostryfan – the fact that it was too small and had no lunchtime facilities for the children. It was also underlined that it was far from the homes of many children and had one year failed to secure success in the County School examinations. The dispute originated in the objection of Rhosgadfan parents to send their older children to Rhostryfan. An infants school had been established in Rhosgadfan in 1899. The parents initially went on ‘strike’, refusing to send the older children to Rhostryfan but this soon came to an end.⁷⁵¹

⁷⁴⁷ GAS CRO XM/1917/1.

⁷⁴⁸ GAS CRO XLC/3/2/6.

⁷⁴⁹ Roberts, *Y Lôn Wen*, p. 106.

⁷⁵⁰ Roberts, p. 106.

⁷⁵¹ *Yr Herald Gymraeg*, 12 October 1909; *CDH*, 8 October 1909.

Some of the boys found employment on the land but many were to be found in the slate quarries from the age of thirteen upwards. In this age group girls were either not working or a very small number were in domestic service. Further opportunities for some of the area's youth was the possibility of winning a place in the County School in Caernarfon. Lists of successful candidates, several of whom usually came from the Rhostryfan school catchment area, were published each year in newspapers. In *Traed Mewn Cyffion* Roberts describes the daily journey of one of the book's characters to attend the County School. There was no convenient transport in the morning so reaching school entailed a walk of four miles to Caernarfon with many other young people who either went to the school or worked in the shops and offices.⁷⁵² The youth who succeeded in obtaining higher education did not in the main return to their immediate home area on a permanent basis. 'Da gweled hithau [Kate Roberts] eto wedi dyfod i'w hen ardal am dro' ['it is good to see her [Kate Roberts] come again to her old locality for a visit'].⁷⁵³ She wrote with great affection of childhood and youth in the area, as did John Williams in *Hynt Gwerinwr* for a somewhat earlier period, but neither returned to the area to live.

Llanberis

In 1881 a third of the population was aged up to the age of fifteen. In 1847 the only school that provided education for the children of the rapidly growing populations of Llanberis and Llanddeiniolen was the Dinorwig British School. Its building had been financed by the quarrymen.⁷⁵⁴ There had been moves in the 1840s to establish a national school in Llanberis.⁷⁵⁵ With the introduction of school boards in 1870 the bulk of spending in Caernarfonshire was on the quarrying areas. Major improvements were made to the transferred British School in Llanberis.⁷⁵⁶ In a public meeting in 1870 held in Llanberis about the forthcoming educational changes it was stated that there were nearly 600 children in the lower part of the parish of Llanberis.⁷⁵⁷ By 1877 the local mood was self-congratulatory when the second inspection of the school presented its report which wrote of a school which was well conducted' and 'thoroughly

⁷⁵² Roberts, [*Traed Mewn Cyffion*] *Feet in Chains*, p. 67.

⁷⁵³ *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 4 April 1914.

⁷⁵⁴ Parliamentary Papers, *Reports of the Commission of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales* (London, 1847), p. 36.

⁷⁵⁵ Williams, 'Nantucha, Llanberis 1851', 73.

⁷⁵⁶ See Williams, 'Elementary Education', p. 302.

⁷⁵⁷ *CDH*, 17 September 1870.

satisfactory'.⁷⁵⁸ Most children between the ages of four and thirteen were entered as scholars in the 1881 census. This does not reflect attendance levels. In 1885 the percentage attendance in the School Board area was 75%. Among the girls it was almost 72% and among boys it was over 79%.⁷⁵⁹ Undoubtedly distance from school was used as a reason for non-attendance. In 1896 a child from Clegir was taken to the infant department of the school by her mother. She was already ten years of age and had not attended school 'as it was too far from home'.⁷⁶⁰ The School Board was fairly active in applying attendance rules and took several cases to court in the late 1870s and 1880s. In 1879 John Humphrey Jones appeared in the petty sessions for not sending a child to school. The pupil should have attended 302 times but was absent 231 times. The father's excuse was that the child 'was burnt and also he could not afford to buy child shoes'. The Board claimed that the child was 'playing about during time when school was open'. A fine of five shillings was imposed.⁷⁶¹ In a complaint by D. P. Williams, former chairman of Caernarfonshire County Council about policing Llanberis, it was claimed that the children of the village were 'most difficult to deal with' especially when they knew that there were no police on duty.⁷⁶²

On leaving school the majority of boys went to work in the slate quarries often introduced to the work by their fathers. At Pentre Castell thirteen-year-old Thomas Jones was a slate quarrier – probably alongside his thirty-five-year-old slate quarryman father, Owen. A number found employment in various establishments in the village of Llanberis such as Griffith Ellis who was an apprentice shopkeeper in the High Street. Others found apprenticeships in trades such as joiners and fitters. A small number went to work on farms. Of the girls some went on to be pupil teachers such as Lizzie Jane Williams, aged thirteen, of Leeds House. Most went into domestic service like fourteen-year-old Elizabeth Jones, of Mur Mawr, who lived in with the head of household John Ellis and thirteen-year-old Mary Hughes who lived in with a family of three at Snowdon Hall. Opportunities in paid employment for girls were particularly limited. A regular feature of the press was advertisements for domestic help at all levels of the household. The majority did not specify location, others gave some detail such as 'Richmond, London' while others appear at least to be more local. However as

⁷⁵⁸ *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 20 January 1877.

⁷⁵⁹ NWE, 6 March 1885.

⁷⁶⁰ GAS CRO XES1/68/4.

⁷⁶¹ GAS CRO XLC/3/2/4.

⁷⁶² NWC, 4 March 1893.

with most female employment girls would be kept home doing domestic chores or helping with a family business especially in tourist areas such as Llanberis. All such work went without recognition in the census returns.

By 1901 the percentage of children and young people in the lower part of the parish had declined to 25%. The slate quarries still proved to be the biggest draw for young men. John Evans, aged thirteen, of Ralltgoch Ceunant, was a slate quarryman as was Alfred Hughes, also aged thirteen of Victoria Terrace. The family links remained important. When John Davies in *O Law i Law* left school before the First World War he relates: ‘a chlir yn fy meddwl yw’r bore hwnnw pan ddechreuais...(fel) rhyw brentis o chwarelwr, hefo’m tad’ [‘I remember clearly that morning when I started as a sort of apprentice quarryman with my father’].⁷⁶³ In the left wing publication *Justice* in 1907 a correspondent had been on a tour of north Wales and returned with ‘some particulars of the employment of boys in the Dinorwig Quarries...’ One young man had informed the journalist that he had worked there between the ages of thirteen and fourteen but had ‘found the work too arduous’. He said that he had had to work 2000 feet up the mountain and had to be at his work by 7am and worked until 5:30pm. He received fifteen shillings a month and sometimes received even less.⁷⁶⁴

The work of girls was quite restricted – domestic service occupied the larger number. Shop work and apprentice dressmakers were paths for others. The majority in this age group had no occupation entered. One must assume that they worked at home or had the opportunity to progress to the County School. Other boys worked in apprenticeships – as for example tailors and carpenters. Caradoc Jones, aged fourteen, Havanah House was an apprentice tailor. Many had no occupation entered – they possibly had gone to the County School, helped at home or were casually employed. Until 1900 the children of Llanberis were provided with scholarships to attend the County School at Caernarfon until a County School could be provided in the area at Brynrefail in 1900. W. J. Gruffydd⁷⁶⁵ in his memoir *Hen Atgofion* relates that in Llanddeiniolen – the next parish to Llanberis with which it had in the mid-century shared a school – the stress on winning a scholarship to the County School became

⁷⁶³ Rowland Hughes, *O Law i Law*, p. 90.

⁷⁶⁴ *Justice*, 7 September 1907.

⁷⁶⁵ W. J. Gruffydd (1881-1951) was born in Llanddeiniolen. He attended the newly opened County School in Caernarfon and then went to Jesus College Oxford. He became Professor of Celtic Studies in Cardiff University and a Liberal MP representing the University of Wales seat until 1950. After his retirement he returned to live in Caernarfon.

increasingly urgent: ‘troed yr ysgolion ym mhob pentref yn arbenigfa i’r plant “disglair”’ [‘the schools in every village were turned into a special institution for the “bright” children’].⁷⁶⁶ These children now aimed to attend the county school and some to go onto university – ‘nid plant a oedd i gyd a’u bryd ar y chwarel’ [‘not all children saw the quarry as their future’].⁷⁶⁷ In an address in a prize giving day in 1908 Sir John Rhys underlined the importance of education for girls as well as boys. In particular he called for girls ‘to take their fit place in the colleges’ and he was pleased to see an increased number of women in the University of Wales. Sir John Rhys (1840-1915), a native of Cardiganshire and his wife, Elsbeth Hughes-Davies, a native of Llanberis were both avid supporters of female education and suffrage. They both had experiences of life and study in Europe before marrying and returning to Britain. Their two surviving daughters, Myfanwy and Olwen, were brought up in Oxford where their father became the first Professor of Celtic. Both girls pursued university courses with the accompanying difficulties for a woman of getting their qualifications recognised. Little wonder that John Rhys spoke about the rights of women to take their place in higher education.⁷⁶⁸ In discussing the future careers of the pupils at the County School he saw nothing to prevent them entering any field and heading the great government departments like Mr Lloyd George. However he believed that two callings in particular were of great importance – teaching and the ministry.⁷⁶⁹ A pattern which lasted for decades.

Conclusion

Both industrial communities in this area would appear to have much in common – an industry which had been long established in a rural setting. However the differences are equally striking – the growth in the quarries and the attitude to unionisation.⁷⁷⁰ Both settlements owed a large proportion of their life and prosperity to industrialisation and as in south Wales it was the trade cycle which over time diminished the community.⁷⁷¹ The pattern of daily life in work as in the individual homes was affected

⁷⁶⁶ W. J. Gruffydd, *Hen Atgofion* (Llandysul, 1982), p. 120.

⁷⁶⁷ Gruffydd, p. 165.

⁷⁶⁸ A. V. John, *Rocking the Boat: Welsh Women Who Championed Equality 1840-1890* (Cardigan, 2018), pp. 197-214. The chapter in this book (pp. 197-246) about Myfanwy and Olwen traces the history of the two remarkable sisters and details of the parents’ interests in women’s education and in educational reform.

⁷⁶⁹ NWE, 22 May 1908.

⁷⁷⁰ See p. 272-273.

⁷⁷¹ Jones, *Communities*, p. 150.

by the decline in the slate industry. There was a lack of opportunity to diversify in the local economy in Llanwnda. Tourism in Llanberis attracted visitors, boosted the local retail trades and led to the beginnings of providing local attractions like the Snowdon mountain railway. Even the quarry was made an attraction for tourists. A quarry guide, John Hughes, died in the quarry hospital in 1895. He had been a guide to Snowdon until he was appointed to the post of guide to the quarry.⁷⁷² As in Betws-y-Coed the railway links eased access to the village of Llanberis where hotels, guest houses and temperance accommodation offered the tourist a stay for a price which suited many pockets. Newspapers reported on the success of the tourist trade and Capel Coch, Llanberis, started to offer English services for the visitors.⁷⁷³ Linguistically the tourist trade led to growing bilingualism – in 1901 over a third were bilingual in Llanberis and only 10% were bilingual in Llanwnda. Administratively both Llanberis and Llanwnda were on the basic rung of local government under Gwyrfai Rural District Council and Caernarfonshire County Council. These latter bodies had their offices in Caernarfon strengthening the influence of the county town. Llanberis was particularly active in trying to use what influence it had in its parish council – most probably because of the services of the able administrator and local politician D. P. Williams.⁷⁷⁴ The distinction of having a county school was a source of pride locally. Llanberis County School was opened in 1900 at Brynrefail to serve Llanberis and district. Llanwnda remained within the catchment area for Caernarfon County School. As part of the cultural life of communities schools were an important contributory factor. Further cultural activities are explored in the final chapter.

⁷⁷² CDH, 13 September 1895.

⁷⁷³ WCP, 31 July 1903.

⁷⁷⁴ See footnote 867.

Chapter 5: Conclusions: Making Communities

The multiple identities of the Welsh people were reflected in the nature of their communities. The communities in this study adapted to their geography, economic opportunities and demography. The geography of all the settlements discussed helped to shape the development of those areas within the county. Where geography and investment allowed, improving transport links opened up parts of the county to outside influence. This was particularly true of the eastern settlements with their railway links and economic patterns of small-scale industry, rural afforestation and tourism.

Extension of the railway along the north Wales coast and its hinterland and also to Pwllheli made these areas accessible to tourists and gave the local population opportunities to reach not only the neighbouring urban centres but also larger conurbations. The knock-on result of these developments affected the local home market, the general economy and the bilingual profile. Llŷn with its poor infrastructure with no rail links and poor roads to its small, scattered communities remained somewhat detached and difficult to navigate.

Demography lent a certain stability to the areas and its migration patterns. In communities which showed growth the Welsh-speaking percentage retained healthy numbers. As discussed in this study there was no mass emigration from Caernarfonshire and movements of population within the communities in this study were overwhelmingly short distance. The population was able to sustain itself within the local economy and maintain a culture and language, much of which was already embedded in the locality. Most communities in this study had maintained much of their economic lifestyle at the end of the nineteenth century which had already been in existence for some time. The difference was that in some communities the scale of development led to an increased impetus in economic and social change as in the quarrying communities and in Pistyll with its granite works. The economy also became more diversified. The urban centres kept part of their maritime industry but administration, tourism and commercial services became more prominent. Such developments affected the employment profiles of men and to a certain extent that of women. The characteristics of a community are thus shown to be fluid, affected as these settlements were by changing demographic, economic and social circumstances. Belonging to a community gave a sense of roots – some of these were loyalties to the past, others an affinity to the land but later developments created new areas of loyalty

such as chapels, societies, schools and the individual's interpretation of community as found in some literary work. In this concluding chapter an overview of these will be made according to type of settlements.

Urban communities

The three boroughs analysed in this study were well established, disparate and not static entities. Urbanisation is an ongoing process dictated by many factors such as demography, housing, economic functions and communications. Links to their surrounding areas also affected the development of the three boroughs.⁷⁷⁵ To an extent they were given a form dictated by administrative structures but these varied in nature, in outlook and in influence. As illustrated in this study Caernarfon was the most administratively active of the three town councils. The size of the town and its acknowledged importance in the urban and county structure of Caernarfonshire was a strength in its administration. This, together with the borough's retention of its own Commission of the Peace, gave it a clear administrative identity.



Figure 62: GAS CRO XS/2246/3 Caernarfon's County Hall built in the mid-nineteenth century and used for the Quarter Sessions and Caernarfon County Council.

⁷⁷⁵ See Jones, 'Opinion', 324-334 for a short general discussion of locality.

Palmowski writes of the ‘attempt to realise the goal of community through local government’.⁷⁷⁶ He argues that the social changes in Wales during the nineteenth century ‘were problems for local government first and foremost’. Indeed he asserts that during the second half of the nineteenth century Liberalism was judged by its performance in local government and its social policies.⁷⁷⁷ This stimulating article comparing local government in England and Germany, although mainly concerned with urban areas, gives a thoughtful analysis of Liberalism in the context of local government which has wider implications. Caernarfon underwent adjustment as the economy of the surrounding area was adversely affected by the decline of the slate quarries. It was its increasing importance as an administrative centre for the county which allowed it to retain a meaningful role as a county town and business hub.

Pwllheli suffered the administrative consequences of a much smaller borough – despite its repeated appeals the town lost its own Commission of the Peace as there was not enough turnover for the court based on its crime figures. This was seen as a loss of local dignity by the mayor and the borough.⁷⁷⁸ However the borough in cooperation with landowners, in particular Solomon Andrews, and by developing a close working relationship with the railways, adopted a different vision for the town based on its natural advantages as a resort on the north side of Cardigan Bay. This transformed the future of the town into a draw for visitors and accentuated its position as a centre for the surrounding area with its improved facilities and transport system. Conwy’s position was fragile. Its administration at town level was on the whole reactive rather than proactive and its vision somewhat blinkered. All three administrations were capable of procrastination but in Conwy it was a perfected art. Conwy’s development was undoubtedly limited by the investment in Llandudno which had not only an economic impact on the area but also a cultural impact. There were signs that during the first decade of the twentieth century Conwy was adopting a more positive approach as it made greater efforts to market Conwy and its many tourist advantages which were within striking distance of the large northern English conurbations.

Each of these settlements had a strong sense of their own history and culture which has been touched on already. Conwy paid for research work to be carried out on

⁷⁷⁶ J. Palmowski, ‘Liberalism and Local Government in Late Nineteenth-Century Germany and England’, *The Historical Journal*, 45, 2 (June, 2002), p. 408.

⁷⁷⁷ Palmowski, p. 385.

⁷⁷⁸ NWE, 10 May 1901.

its records and its town walls.⁷⁷⁹ In 1881 the town council sought and obtained approval to acquire the castle as a town property.⁷⁸⁰ The castle became a venue for local social activities such as chapel teas and entertainments.⁷⁸¹ By 1912 a small museum in the castle was planned.⁷⁸² Caernarfon's castle housed a small museum and the town would have housed a national museum if given the opportunity.⁷⁸³ Caernarfon was also very aware of its own archival heritage and in 1905 passed a resolution that those records held in the Public Record Office and which had been studied by E. A. Lewis should be published. A subscription list was opened for this purpose.⁷⁸⁴ Pwllheli was self-conscious about its ancient independent rights as a borough but with the progression of local government and county policing these rights were largely a lost cause. Benbough-Jackson writes that people in an area 'might locate the soul of their locality in the past'.⁷⁸⁵ With the establishment of Caernarfonshire County Council there was a stress in the final meeting of the Provisional Council in March 1889 on the importance of the area's history. When discussing the old county seal its motto 'Eryr Eryrod Eryri' ['The Eagle of the Eagles of Snowdonia'] caused some mirth as it was asked what the meaning of these words was. However Alderman John Davies retorted that it was in a 'figurative sense' implying the 'deeds of prowess as applicable to the men of Caernarfonshire'. Alderman Lloyd George's insistence that all wording on the seal should be in Welsh carried the day although an English motto had been suggested by a councillor from Conwy.⁷⁸⁶ The discussion illustrates the linguistic dichotomy of the area and the anglicisation of the eastern part of the county.

Civic structures and improvements in all three boroughs showed signs of self-awareness. Caernarfon underwent considerable improvements but much was left undone. The Maes was cleared of rows of buildings to give an uninterrupted view of Queen Eleanor's Gate. These buildings had been bought by Assheton-Smith of the Faenol Estate with the sole purpose of demolishing the structure and improving the townscape.⁷⁸⁷, public baths were built as was the swimming pool.

⁷⁷⁹ COB2/30.

⁷⁸⁰ COB2/27.

⁷⁸¹ COB2/30.

⁷⁸² COB2/33.

⁷⁸³ GAS CRO XD1/757.

⁷⁸⁴ GAS CRO XD1/757.

⁷⁸⁵ M. Benbough-Jackson, *Cardiganshire and the Cardi, c.1760-c.2000* (Cardiff, 2011), p. 22.

⁷⁸⁶ NWC, 16 March 1889.

⁷⁸⁷ GAS CRO XD1/758.



Public Baths, Caernarvon.
Figure 63: GAS CRO XS/1901/2 Caernarfon swimming baths c.1905.

Where there had been overcrowding a number of slum dwellings were demolished and their places taken by impressive chapels in some areas. Aware of its need to have a large building capable of housing the National Eisteddfod in Caernarfon a company was formed under the chairmanship of the mayor to build the Pavilion in 1877.

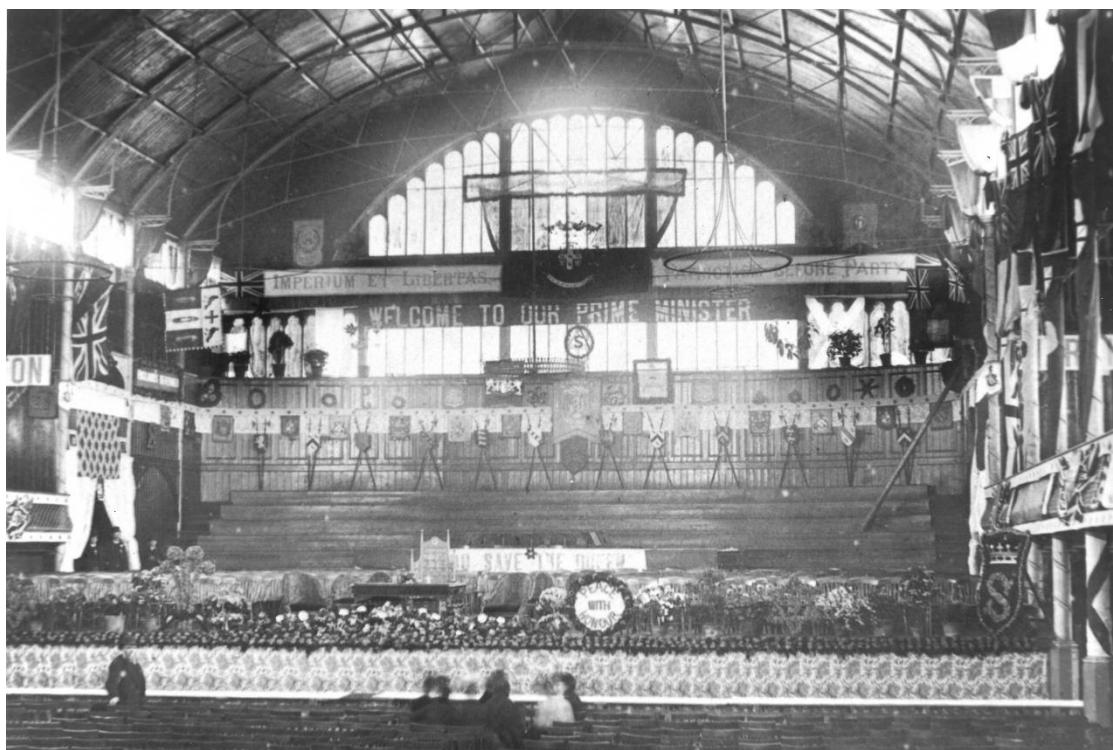


Figure 64: GAS CRO XS/1497/4 Caernarfon Pavilion.

This seated eight thousand people – the largest such structure in Wales. Its building was evidence of local confidence and pride and provided the town with a facility which was the envy of many. Pwllheli also underwent civic improvement of its Maes, housing and facilitated the building of a ‘new’ town with middle class villas, hotels, chapels and shops quite different in character to the original settlement.



Figure 65: Postcard of the Maes, Pwllheli c.1900.

This reinvention illustrated a determination to capitalise on the demands of leisure and pleasure of the age. The Council was also evidently aware of the townscape and in 1892 expressed its concerns about the eyesores in Pwllheli.⁷⁸⁸ Conwy was encouraged by the local landowner, Albert Wood of Bodlondeb, to assert its identity with new civic offices⁷⁸⁹ and financed the erection of a monument to Prince Llewelyn ap Iorwerth on Lancaster Square.

⁷⁸⁸ GAS CRO XB12/1/5 and p. 36-37 of chapter two.

⁷⁸⁹ COB2/32.



Figure 66: Statue of Prince Llewelyn ap Iorwerth on Lancaster Square (present day).

All three boroughs illustrated the development of social life in an urban setting which reflected a national tendency.⁷⁹⁰ Reading rooms were available and public libraries were established – somewhat later in Pwllheli than in the other two towns. The Free Church Council wrote to Pwllheli Council encouraging it to set up a public library.⁷⁹¹ Conwy established the Royal Cambrian Art Gallery in the 1880s.⁷⁹² All three communities made use of extension lectures provided by the university at Bangor. For instance in Caernarfon in 1884 a series of lectures was given to packed audiences in the Guildhall by the Principal of the University, Professor Reichel on English literature. In the meeting to arrange these lectures it was pointed out that they ‘were not intended to be mere popular lectures, prepared to as much to amuse as instruct, but they would be severely instructive’ and facilities were provided for the audience to take notes.⁷⁹³ It was hoped that ‘ieuenctid y dref o’r ddau ryw gymeryd mantais neilltuol ar y darlithiau’ [‘the youth of the town of both sexes will take great advantage of these lectures’].⁷⁹⁴ This enthusiasm for self-improvement was reflected in

⁷⁹⁰ Royle, ‘The Development of Small Towns in Britain’, p. 174.

⁷⁹¹ GAS CRO XB12/1/9.

⁷⁹² COB2/27.

⁷⁹³ NWE, 31 October 1884.

⁷⁹⁴ Y Goleuad, 8 November 1884.

the many societies in the towns such as the literary and debating societies of Pwllheli, similar organisations in the chapels of Conwy and a plethora of societies in Caernarfon. One such society in Caernarfon became the subject of heated debate in the press in the mid-1880s – the Segontium Society which was ‘destined to become an important factor in the intellectual development of Caernarvon people’. A lecture by its president, Sir Llewelyn Turner, on Roman Britain was criticised. Turner demanded a censure be passed on his critics whom he described as being insubordinate! A letter to the press criticising Turner was written with heavy irony underlining the profile of the membership of the society as consisting of ‘most, if not all, the principal men and women of the district’ and claiming that members of the Bench or town councillors could not aspire to be the Society’s president. The sarcastic tone of the letter illustrates social relationships and the tensions and divisions within communities.⁷⁹⁵

Chapels afforded a focus for community activities and social concerns. They provided leisure pursuits such as annual trips to holiday destinations, tea parties and Eisteddfodau. Chapels allowed a basis for ‘networking’ within communities and provided in particular the middle class and blue-collar workers opportunities to define their community and aspire to leadership. They also aided the assimilation of new residents to an area – in some ways the denominational system acted as a ‘club’ where members would transfer their membership from one chapel to another when they moved district. Missions to the poor connected to the mainstream religious bodies in the towns were established. For example in Pwllheli the Sand Street mission was started by Penmount Chapel and in Caernarfon Seilo Bach was set up to serve the poorer children of the town. Such activity together with charities (including those bodies to safeguard girls and young women) introduced what Morris describes as the language of class and poverty into urban centres.⁷⁹⁶ Women were particularly active with charity work which gave them the opportunity to take a lead in social issues. Adopting the language of class in 1881 the obituary to Mrs Edwards, Castle Square, who died at the age of 43, spoke of her commitment to Seilo Chapel and its mission to its ‘dosbarth isalaf’ [‘the lowest class’].⁷⁹⁷ In 1890 the secretary to the Mothers’ Meeting Turf Square, presented the outgoing secretary, on her leaving Caernarfon for

⁷⁹⁵ NWE, 31 December 1886.

⁷⁹⁶ R. J. Morris, ‘Structure, Culture and Society in British Towns’, in Daunton (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, p. 407.

⁷⁹⁷ YGG, 16 June 1881.

Aylesbury, with a sapphire ring. The society had been in existence for sixteen years and had a membership of 140. Its aim was to help the daughters of the poor of the town.⁷⁹⁸ Although these examples display a recognition of class distinction and paternalistic initiatives, the three boroughs in this study showed little evidence of class solidarity. All three towns had a mix of employment but not one large employer which would have contributed to the development of such solidarity. In all three the fishermen showed a sense of protectionism and awareness of rights and in Caernarfon and Conwy employment conditions in the railway company became tied to linguistic and national questions. Lloyd underlines the attitude of the railway companies and that of the LNWR in north Wales to the local people and their language comparing the experience of India where companies assumed a moral superiority to their ‘host region’.⁷⁹⁹ The political importance of railways was highlighted by the fact that they were high on the agenda of the new County Councils and politicians⁸⁰⁰ because of their key role in encouraging the tourist trade.⁸⁰¹ There was in all communities described in this study an underclass. The marginalised were to be found in all centres: these were people who for example suffered issues of mental health, relied on casual work, paupers and women who fell into prostitution whose life was blighted by poverty and poor housing. Dot Jones, in her study of the Aberystwyth Poor Law Union, has shown that women and children were the greatest number receiving relief in the community,⁸⁰² a finding supported by Thane in her researches into the Poor Law.⁸⁰³ Cannadine states that well over three million people lived in these degraded circumstances at the turn of the century.⁸⁰⁴

The growth in leisure time was a feature of the late nineteenth and twentieth century. Bank holidays were established in the 1870s and most workers enjoyed time off on Saturday afternoons.⁸⁰⁵ Sport and leisure activities were associated with all three types of settlements. The three towns had football clubs which could engender feelings of loyalty and identity. Mass spectator sports flourished after the 1850s and ‘football fever’ swept many areas of Britain in the 1880s. Although it became a mass pursuit,

⁷⁹⁸ YGG, 14 May 1890.

⁷⁹⁹ P. Lloyd, “‘The Great Railway Problem’: Politics, Railways and Nationalism in North Wales, 1870-1900”, *Welsh History Review*, 29, 1 (2018), 77.

⁸⁰⁰ For example see p. 87.

⁸⁰¹ Lloyd, “‘The Great Railway Problem’”, 97.

⁸⁰² Jones, ‘Pauperism in the Aberystwyth Poor Law Union’, 82. See footnote 302.

⁸⁰³ Thane, ‘Women and the Poor Law’, 29.

⁸⁰⁴ Cannadine, *Victorious Century*, p. 500.

⁸⁰⁵ Cannadine, *Victorious Century*, pp. 512-513.

much football at the time ‘illustrated localised forms of urban sociability’.⁸⁰⁶ Again Pwllheli found in Solomon Andrews a benefactor for sports. He built the Recreation Ground in 1899 with a cycle track, football and tennis facilities.⁸⁰⁷ Conwy Football Club requested to establish its ground on the Morfa in 1903.⁸⁰⁸ It had found it difficult to find a permanent home and the Council requested that the Police caution anyone playing football on the Morfa on a Sunday.⁸⁰⁹ Playing football on the street was common in urban areas. For example the authorities in Swansea prevented the playing of ball games on the streets and arrested those who did so.⁸¹⁰ Conwy’s sporting life was somewhat more exclusive. In common with all three towns a cricket club was established together with a badminton club. Cricket first appeared in north Wales in the 1840s and became less exclusive when it appealed to those who played or watched football during the winter but turned to cricket during the summer.⁸¹¹ Golf was an expensive import which added to the tourist attractions of the towns and had no pretence to be socially inclusive. Choirs – and a brass band in Conwy – could be somewhat more inclusive and allowed for greater social interaction and a feeling of community. However, the degree of participation and engagement in these social activities is difficult to assess. Many, one suspects, in the male population preferred the excitement of a bet on a game of cards and dice in the street – an activity which frequently led to prosecution. For example, in Caernarfon in 1891 the police visited a house and found eight boys playing dice around a table. The boys were described as ‘of the poor class’ and met for gambling purposes.⁸¹² According to the *South Wales Daily News* gambling was a national vice and was the road to ruin.⁸¹³ Leisure activities were divided along gender lines. Working class women, unlike working class men, did not have the resources to partake in leisure pursuits. Middle class females were exposed to gymnastics and games in schools ‘class was still of critical importance in the gender-divided world of sport’.⁸¹⁴

⁸⁰⁶ D. A. Reid, ‘Playing and Praying’, in Daunton (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, p. 773.

⁸⁰⁷ D. G. L. Hughes, *Pwllheli: An Old Welsh Town and its History* (Llandysul, 1991), p. 327.

⁸⁰⁸ COB2/31.

⁸⁰⁹ COB2/29.

⁸¹⁰ B. Rees, ‘Sport, Class and Identity at Swansea, 1870-1914’, *WHR*, 29, 4 (2019), 603.

⁸¹¹ J. Cowell, ‘Caernarfonshire Cricket in the Nineteenth Century’, *TCHS*, 77 (2016/17), 133-141.

⁸¹² *CDH*, 20 March 1891.

⁸¹³ *South Wales Daily News*, 30 August 1898.

⁸¹⁴ A. Croll, ‘Popular Leisure and Sport’, in C. Williams (ed.), *A Comparison to Nineteenth-Century History Britain* (Oxford, 2008), p. 407.

Culturally all three towns identified themselves with the Welsh language.⁸¹⁵ Although Conwy had the highest number of bilingual speakers it was still a town where the overwhelming number of its inhabitants spoke their native tongue. Its connections with the Conwy Valley strengthened the Welsh language element. A somewhat higher proportion of Conwy's population came from outside Wales. Caernarfon's sample enumeration figures are quite similar but possibly in a town the size of Caernarfon these inhabitants could be more easily assimilated. Pwllheli, despite its new urban development, remained the most Welsh-speaking of the towns – so much so that in 1916 a case before the magistrates in Pwllheli was held in Welsh. The Chair of Magistrates, the palaeographer and Welsh literary scholar Dr. Gwenogfryn Evans, said 'it was a Welsh court and that evidence should be given in Welsh ... we live in a Welsh country' and added that it was a 'duty to learn Welsh'.⁸¹⁶ For boroughs which were so aware of their history the language was very much tied into their identity. This linguistic culture combined with an active print culture – on a small scale in Pwllheli and Conwy – but on a large scale in Caernarfon which gave that town in particular an identity in both Welsh and English language newspapers. The press in Caernarfon had been active for many decades. By the mid-century at least eighteen magazines and papers were published and printed in the town.⁸¹⁷ From the mid-century the press in Caernarfon was gaining in financial security. Its value as a political voice and supporter of causes like disestablishment made it an important influence in formulating public opinion. It was Lloyd George's links with the Caernarfon press which gave him an understanding of how to use the press in his later career.⁸¹⁸ The press also ensured that the borough communities were, for better or for worse, 'knowable' through print.⁸¹⁹

Rural Communities

Tracey Jones suggested that an analysis of identity could be based on the work of A. J. H. Jackson who stated that the significance of locality should take into consideration its geographical space, its setting for social action and the interaction of its people with

⁸¹⁵ See p. 26.

⁸¹⁶ *Llais Llafur*, 9 September 1916.

⁸¹⁷ K. Owen, 'When Caernarfon was the Print Capital of Wales', <https://www.iwa.wales/click/2013/06/when-caernarfon-was-the-print-capital-of-wales/> (accessed 27 January 2020).

⁸¹⁸ A. Jones, *Press, Politics and Society: A History of Journalism in Wales* (Cardiff, 1993), pp. 134-135.

⁸¹⁹ Morris, 'Structure, Culture and Society in British Towns', p. 423.

place.⁸²⁰ This would appear to be relevant to all communities but particularly so to the rural communities where much of life was circumscribed by the geographical nature of the area and the ease of access to small, often scattered, settlements.

The identity of all communities in this study was influenced by their geographical position. The locations of the rural communities affected a way of life and livelihood. The western settlements of Llŷn were in all ways influenced by their location, nature of land, be it agricultural or exploited for its mineral content and accessibility to other areas and incomers. The three Llŷn parishes in this study, although geographically close to each other, were different in nature. They were either seaboard communities or within a short distance of the sea. The sea still provided Pistyll and its quarries with its transportation while the inhabitants of all three communities had to rely on road links as the railway was never extended to the area. The Carnywch parish council minutes illustrate the inadequacy of the roads and the condition of many was reminiscent of standards which had existed in the eighteenth century.⁸²¹ According to one writer the area of Pistyll and Llithfaen had become more isolated since the opening of the railway to Pwllheli: ‘cyn gwneud y Rheilffordd i Bwllheli byddai llawer mwy o deithio ar hyd y ffordd hon nag sydd yn bresennol’ [‘before the railway was built to Pwllheli there would be far more travel along the road here than there is at present’].⁸²² Communications affected much of the area’s social and marketing life. Poor infrastructure limited its economic development. This was especially true of the communities in Llŷn, unconnected as they were by a railway. In the more eastern settlement of Betws-y-Coed a rural community with extractive industries had developed over a considerable number of years. The village was made increasingly accessible by the railway and exploited initially by incomers and marketed as a health resort set in idyllic mountainous terrain already made famous by artists. Accessibility evidently changed the nature and profile of the community. All other communities in this study had rail connections which opened up areas to economic development and extended the social life of many to shopping and leisure opportunities in other parts of north Wales and north-west England. Thabault in his history of

⁸²⁰ Jones, ‘Opinion’, p. 324 citing A. J. H. Jackson, ‘Form, function and feeling: finding a community’s past and present, The Ermine Estate, Lincoln’ (Lecture for the history and heritage of post-war council estates: exploring landscapes and culture, symposium of Bishop Grosseteste University College Lincoln and University of Lincoln), 30 June 2011.

⁸²¹ GAS CRO XP/Carnywch Parish Council Minute Book.

⁸²² GAS CRO XM8898/2.

Mazières-en-Gatine, a village in western France, noted a similar pattern for this small community – the availability of ready-made clogs and ‘competition from the big Paris stores’.⁸²³

Waddington has argued that the Victorian and Edwardian period developed a new form of identity for rural communities – that of the association of the countryside with health: ‘idealisation of the rural and its link with purity and health acquired particular potency in late Victorian Wales’.⁸²⁴ This identity was fostered in Betws-y-Coed but the burden of evidence illustrated poor sanitation, appalling living conditions and disease. Betws-y-Coed Urban District ranked amongst the highest areas for those suffering from tuberculosis within the Caernarfonshire Combined Sanitary Authority.⁸²⁵ Similar conditions were found in the more isolated communities on the Llŷn Peninsula within this study. It was the more populous areas such as Nefyn which attracted much of the public investment in sanitation and drainage.⁸²⁶

Rural communities tended to be somewhat scattered. There could well be a nucleus as in three out of the four rural communities described in this study and they gave what social life existed to their surrounding areas. The importance of creating social institutions for rural populations had been stressed in the Report of the Royal Commission on Land in Wales and Monmouthshire published in 1896 where the chairman of Anglesey County Council tried to promote the idea of establishing ‘places for refreshment’ in all rural villages.⁸²⁷ There is no evidence that this ever happened. Cannadine points out that the investigations of the Royal Commission on Land as a whole were ‘simply disregarded’.⁸²⁸ However certain buildings were created which identified the communities with their aspirations both civic and religious. Betws-y-Coed felt the need to build a hall where the village and its environs could hold local events. A meeting was held in January 1886 in the village to consider building a public hall for the area. It was pointed out that there was ‘angenrheidrwydd mawr am y fath adeilad mewn ardal mor aristocrataidd a Bettws-y-Coed’ [‘there was a great need for such a building in the aristocratic area of Bettws-y-Coed’]. The meeting expressed the view that both inhabitants and visitors complained of the lack of such an amenity.

⁸²³ R. Thabault, *Education and Change in a Village Community*, trans. P. Tregear (London, 1971), pp. 153-154.

⁸²⁴ Waddington, “It Might not be a Nuisance in a Country Cottage”, 188-189.

⁸²⁵ CDH, 27 May 1904.

⁸²⁶ GAS CRO XB/13. This is well illustrated in the record of Llŷn Rural District Council.

⁸²⁷ Royal Commission on Land in Wales and Monmouthshire, *Report* (London, 1896), p. 650.

⁸²⁸ Cannadine, *Victorious Century*, p. 460.

Since the National School no longer allowed political meetings to be held there the need for a hall was even more urgent.⁸²⁹ Civic pride was also reflected by Betws-y-Coed Urban District Council which wished to root itself in history when it decided to include the Gwydir family crest in the authority's crest.⁸³⁰

With the exception of Carnguwch all the communities built chapels which were a source of pride and demonstrated linguistic, cultural and religious independence. These also provided a separate social stratification. Tom Ellis, the MP for Merionethshire, stated that through chapels 'Welsh villages have learnt during the last 150 years the most valuable lessons of self-government. Their chapels have been for them a splendid education in self-government: they manage these chapels and manage their organisations with admirable skill and success.'⁸³¹ Ieuan Gwynedd Jones stressed the importance of chapels in instructing their members of how to organise a social life.⁸³² In a community such as Tudweiliog the foundation and development of the chapel showed what was considered a local strength of a community settled from one generation to the next. Thomas Williams wrote of families in the Tudweiliog chapel who embraced the cause well into the fourth and fifth generation.⁸³³ Llithfaen with its increasing population provided fertile ground for the establishment of chapels and churches. For instance in 1883 the Baptists built a chapel which could seat 150 people. The *Genedl Gymreig* placed this new structure in a historical context by relating that the members had been meeting in a barn at Llithfaen Mawr for two years – 'hen le enwog yw yr ysgubor i fagu a meithrin eglwysi' ['a barn is a famous old place to rear and foster churches'].⁸³⁴ A reference which identified a new community with well-established European Protestant tradition – but without the threat of persecution. Similarly the Calvinistic Methodists appealed to the historic nature of their cause which dated back to a time in Llithfaen before the inhabitants would 'troi cerrig y mynyddoedd yn fara' ['would turn the stones of the mountains into bread'].⁸³⁵ People retained a feeling of identity not only with the area but also with these institutions and would return on Sundays to attend services and maintain their link within the community. This was the case of Mrs Jane Hughes, Nefyn, who together with her

⁸²⁹ *Y Gwyliedydd*, 10 February 1886.

⁸³⁰ CAS COB3/5/3.

⁸³¹ Royal Commission on Land in Wales and Monmouthshire, Report (London, 1896), p. 646.

⁸³² Jones, *Communities*, p. 134.

⁸³³ Williams, *Hanes Achos*, p. 16.

⁸³⁴ YGG, 26 September 1883.

⁸³⁵ GAS CRO XM 8898/2.

watchmaker husband had left the area for Anglesey and had then moved to Nefyn. The couple regularly attended the services in Llithfaen.⁸³⁶ Jones, in writing of the valley communities of south Wales underlined the importance of chapels in bringing a social life to isolated communities.⁸³⁷ This was equally true of rural communities. The building of chapel vestries in rural areas fulfilled the needs not only of the religious cause but also facilitated social and cultural interaction.⁸³⁸ Such undertakings were examples of community self help. The buildings represented the confidence of a group in their own ability to sustain the work. ‘I eglwys o weithwyr cyffredin, yr oedd gwneud y fath adeiladu eang a chostus yn anturiaeth fawr, “ond roedd gan y bobl galon i weithio”’ [‘For a chapel of ordinary workmen doing such extensive and costly building was a considerable undertaking “but the people possessed the desire to undertake the work”’].⁸³⁹

The establishment of libraries in the Calvinistic Methodist chapels of Llŷn has already been referred to.⁸⁴⁰ The scheme was extended in the early part of the twentieth century when the chapel at Llithfaen had decided to replenish and extend its stock of books with financial aid from the Rebecca Hussey Book Charity and the Dr Williams Trustees.⁸⁴¹ Llithfaen was politically aware and in 1885 they established a Liberal Society. ‘Ymunodd lluaws mawr a’r gymdeithas’ [‘A large number joined the society’] and it elected the Reverend R. Jones (Baptist) as its president. It was decided that a meeting of the society should be held every fortnight to discuss the important issues of the day especially disestablishment.⁸⁴² Community action also led to Pistyll and Carnguwch taking a decision in a well attended meeting in 1887 to join the Anti-Tithe League, a cause actively promoted in Llŷn, as elsewhere, by David Lloyd George.⁸⁴³ In a report on the meeting *Caethwas Gwyn* [Gwyn the Slave] wrote ‘Pa beth sydd yn fwy anghyfiawn na fod Cymry ymneilludol yn talu at gynhaliaeth Eglwys Lloegr...’ [‘What can be more unfair than that Nonconformist Welsh people have to pay towards the support of the Church of England...’].⁸⁴⁴ Jones underlined the fact that in

⁸³⁶ *Y Greal*, September 1886.

⁸³⁷ Jones, *Communities*, p. 148.

⁸³⁸ See p. 270. Kate Roberts believed that we should not exaggerate the social role of chapels in her area.

⁸³⁹ GAS CRO XM8898/2.

⁸⁴⁰ See p. 186.

⁸⁴¹ GAS CRO XM8898/2.

⁸⁴² YGG, 4 February 1885.

⁸⁴³ The Anti-Tithe League had been established initially in 1886 in Ruthin under the influence of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist, Thomas Gee.

⁸⁴⁴ YGG, 19 January 1887.

Caernarfonshire 80% of the tithes were in clerical hands and not in lay hands. ‘The tithe problem in Caernarfonshire was a clerical problem.’⁸⁴⁵ In all the four rural communities in this study the evidence was that the tithe payment was increased and in Betws-y-Coed it stated that ‘Ni chlywodd neb yn holl ddyddiau’r ddaear sôn am y fath beth a pherson yn troi yn ôl o’r degwm’ [‘No one in the history of the world has heard of a parson turning away from accepting the tithe’] and the tendency was to increase tithe payments when the farmer had improved the farm.⁸⁴⁶ Politics mirrored religion in this movement.

The interest in self-improvement was also reflected, as in urban and industrial areas by numbers of societies, literary and debating groups and choirs, established in all the communities. The United Literary Society in Betws-y-Coed carried out its activities in English although we can see from newspaper reports that the majority of participants were Welsh speaking. The society with such lectures as ‘The Welshman as a Musician’ was considered to be a ‘source of much literary gain to the young people of the village’.⁸⁴⁷ Debates such as ‘which is the most favourable for a young man to be religious, the town or the country?’ drew many speakers from the female population of the village despite the fact that the subject matter was male orientated.⁸⁴⁸ It appears that societies and activities connected to the chapels were the sphere in Betws-y-Coed where the Welsh language – the language of the majority – was used.

Choirs and music festivals formed part of the social life of the areas in this study and brought different communities together for concerts and performances. In all areas regional activities contributed to the tapestry of social interaction. For example the Calvinistic Methodists arranged musical festivals for Llŷn and its location moved from year to year.⁸⁴⁹ Eisteddfodau and temperance meetings – the latter linked at times to literary societies – were regularly held in the chapels of these communities. Tudweiliog staged a flower show for the first time in 1892 which drew participants from a wide catchment area.⁸⁵⁰ Not all joint ventures were successful. In 1911 Pistyll arranged a tea party to mark the king’s coronation. Carnguwch parish was asked to join

⁸⁴⁵ Jones, *Explorations*, p. 34-35.

⁸⁴⁶ S. E. Jones, ‘Hanes y Degwm yng Nghymru yn ystod y Bedwaredd Ganrif ar Bymtheg, gyda sylw arbennig i “Ryfel y Degwm”’ (PhD Thesis, Bangor University, 2017), appendix 3 where Jones cites the questionnaire from *Y Faner* 1881-1882 pertaining to the rights of the farmer and which elaborated on tithe payments.

⁸⁴⁷ WCP, 3 April 1903.

⁸⁴⁸ WCP, 26 February 1904.

⁸⁴⁹ CDH, 24 June 1904.

⁸⁵⁰ NWC, 10 September 1892.

the celebration where costs were to be covered by voluntary contributions. The contributions fell short and Carnguwch was asked to help with paying the deficit. This request was refused because Carnguwch felt that it had paid ‘mwy na digon’ [‘more than enough’].⁸⁵¹ The Sunday School trip became – and remained – a highlight in the calendar. For instance in 1899 Llithfaen Calvinistic Methodist chapel in cooperation with the quarry owner, Solomon Andrews, arranged a trip to Plas Glyn y Weddw where they were to enjoy tea.⁸⁵²

There was an interest in the opportunities on offer in formal education in all communities and in their Board and County Schools. This interest was not universal as is shown by the degree in absenteeism in the schools of the areas. However some settlements in this study were active and publicly expressed their interest in the press about educational provision especially at intermediate level as in Llanberis and Llŷn. In the latter community educational opportunities became associated with local rights.⁸⁵³ In the catchment area of Caernarfon it was believed that the quarrying communities would prove to be fertile ground for recruiting pupils because families ‘would contribute towards the expenses of sending promising boys’ to the proposed school.⁸⁵⁴

Friendly societies such as the Oddfellows Society in Betws-y-Coed were established as self-help organisations to give their members aid when needed. In 1892 the Betws-y-Coed Oddfellows had almost £700 in one of its funds to help sick people.⁸⁵⁵ As with housing and sanitation there was an undertone suggesting that there was a feeling that the lot of the rural communities needed improvement.

Similar to the urban and industrial communities the linguistic identity of rural communities remained strong. In Llŷn Welsh was overwhelmingly the language of everyday life and activity. The communities of Llŷn were often described in press reports as the epitome of Welsh language and culture. ‘Gwlad dawel yw Lleyn ar y cyfan...y mae gennym feirdd a llenorion na raid i Gymru eu harddel...’ [‘Llŷn is on the whole a quiet area...we have poets and writers that Wales has no need to

⁸⁵¹ GAS CRO XP/Carnguwch Parish Council Minutes.

⁸⁵² GAS CRO XD/28/2003. Solomon Andrews had bought Plas Glyn y Weddw from the Madryn estate in 1896. It opened as a public art gallery showing the works of artists such as Turner, Constable and Gainsborough. Andrews made the Plas a tourist destination by adding tea rooms and creating pleasure gardens for visitors. The gallery remained open until the Second World War. See <https://www.oriel.org.uk/en/the-andrews-family> (accessed: 09/02/19).

⁸⁵³ See p. 186.

⁸⁵⁴ NWC, 24 May 1890.

⁸⁵⁵ *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 20 January 1892.

acknowledge...’].⁸⁵⁶ J. E. Lloyd wrote of the ‘rustic simplicity’ of Aberdaron in the early twentieth century.⁸⁵⁷ Lloyd, according to Pryce, therefore believed that places like Aberdaron on the Llŷn Peninsula ‘belonged to the past, largely cut off from the progressive developments of the industrial age’.⁸⁵⁸ Where immigration took place, as in Pistyll, the newcomers either absorbed the linguistic identity of the place or moved on. Betws-y-Coed was somewhat different. Its geographical position, transport links and economic development as a tourist destination made it a more mixed community with higher numbers of in-migration. Local administration often represented the entrepreneurs and their investment interests. Although a very high percentage of the population spoke Welsh in 1901 the advance of the English language and bilingualism was notable. Writing of the movement of the language frontier in the first half of the nineteenth century in the industrial valleys of south Wales Jones stated that the change was complex – ‘it was not a movement of Welsh to English...but rather a bilingual society in which the Welsh understood some English and the English some Welsh.’⁸⁵⁹ Betws-y-Coed was to some extent an example of this kind of change but was of course situated within a richly Welsh hinterland. It took the encouragement of HMIs for the schools in Betws-y-Coed to promote at least some elements of the Welsh language and culture.⁸⁶⁰

Less tangible is the feeling and affinity often noted that was felt by rural communities to the land and areas in which they lived where the pattern of life was often dictated by the agricultural year. Evidence given in cases before Petty Sessions often measured timescale by fair days and the importance of these as social gatherings was evident.⁸⁶¹ Increasingly the life in areas such as Betws-y-Coed was measured by the tourist season and the changeable fortunes of its extractive industries. Pistyll’s pattern of life was split between its agricultural community, those who combined agriculture and quarrying and the industrial workers. Many remained in their communities throughout their lives, others moved to communities which they made their own and a number who had pursued careers elsewhere returned to their home area as did Captain Thomas Owen of Tudweiliog. His wife wrote in her diary ‘...mae

⁸⁵⁶ YGG, 20 November 1889.

⁸⁵⁷ Lloyd, *Carnarvonshire*, p. 99.

⁸⁵⁸ Pryce, ‘J. E. Lloyd’, 28.

⁸⁵⁹ Jones, *Communities*, p. 230.

⁸⁶⁰ See p. 189.

⁸⁶¹ GAS CRO XLC/5/3.

Tom...yn meddwl llawer iawn o gael Cors Iago...' [‘Tom thinks a great deal about acquiring Cors Iago...’] in Tudweiliog.⁸⁶² On this land he built in 1883 his home of Minafon to which he returned after years at sea. In her chapter in *Modern Pembrokeshire* Evans quotes a short poem by Crwys which begins:

Rhwng afon Taf a'r Efail Wen
Mae darn o dir lle bu dy dras
Yn trin a throi o fore hyd hwyr
A chadw'i erwau'n raenus las.

[‘Between the river Taf and Efailwen there is a portion of land which your forbears cultivated and turned from morning to night, and kept its acres in good heart.’]⁸⁶³ Such sentiment has been linked to the work of the philosopher J. R. Jones (1911-1970), himself a native of Pwllheli:⁸⁶⁴ ‘It is said of one experience that it is one of the most agonising possible ... that of having to leave the soil of your own country forever, of turning your back on your heritage, being torn away from the roots of your familiar land’.⁸⁶⁵ The feeling of identity owed much to the idea of being rooted in a community but also showed that the identity of a community is fluid and affected by changing economic, demographic and social circumstances. This was illustrated in different ways in each of the rural areas discussed.

Industrial communities

Both industrial communities in this study were in areas which had long absorbed a certain level of industrial activity side by side with a rural economy which was characterised by its difficult terrain. Initially supporting small sparse populations these areas grew with the demand for slate and also in the case of Llanberis with a growth in the tourist trade. Despite industrial growth these communities attracted in-migration of an overwhelmingly local nature – most of the populations had been born in the respective parishes or within a twelve-mile radius. This is a feature which Ieuan Gwynedd Jones when discussing the Swansea Valley views as a contributor to stability

⁸⁶² Eames, *Gwraig y Capten*, p. 84-85.

⁸⁶³ Evans, ‘The Land and its People’, p. 18.

⁸⁶⁴ <http://yba.llgc.org.uk/en/s2-JONE-ROB-1911.html> A Professor of Philosophy at Swansea University he became increasingly aware of the importance of roots believing that the loss of such roots was a danger to Wales and to the Welsh. He died in 1970.

⁸⁶⁵ Quoted in P. Cloke and P. Milbourne, ‘Deprivation and Lifestyles in Rural Wales – II. Rurality and the Cultural Dimension’, *Journal of Rural Studies*, 8, 4 (1992), p. 366.

within the communities – ‘distances were not so great as to destroy the social linkages of family’.⁸⁶⁶ The strength of the Welsh language in all facets of life – home, chapel, commercial life, work and the union – gave these communities a sense of rootedness. In areas such as Llanberis bilingualism became more common reflecting the needs of its more diverse economy and improved infrastructure – it remained, however, a community where almost all could speak Welsh.

As with every sample community in this study the wish to improve public utilities was particularly clear in Llanberis. The debate surrounding the problems of water supply to the village showed an acute sense of local identity. A meeting of the parish council objected to granting the Llanberis Water and Gas Company the contract for improving facilities. Cost was part of the argument but more prominent was the determination, expressed by D. P. Williams that Llanberis ‘should keep their water in their own hands’.⁸⁶⁷ Public lighting in the streets was installed by an outside company in 1897 but the water supply was provided by the Llanberis Water Company. The latter came in for criticism and was enforced to improve its services by Gwyrfai Rural District Council.⁸⁶⁸ However the undertakings by Llanberis illustrated a confidence and sense of civic self-improvement. The upper part of Llanwnda was not so well placed as far as public utilities were in question as the problems of securing land for providing a water supply illustrated.⁸⁶⁹ This may in microcosm be an illustration of tension between the agricultural and industrial nature of the area. Civic identity was more clearly defined in areas of more pronounced demographic growth and where there was a nascent middle class which could give an impetus to development.

Societies such as literary societies and organisations like brass bands, choirs and in Llanberis a football club gave an opportunity for local community expression and interaction.⁸⁷⁰ Self-help societies such as the Oddfellows in Llanberis which formed the Snowdon Lodge were important in communities as sources of aid. At their annual outing in 1879 they held a procession in Llanberis headed by the Llanberis Brass Band. Such processions and rituals were more evident in urban centres. How

⁸⁶⁶ Jones, *Communities*, p. 201.

⁸⁶⁷ NWE, 18 January 1895. See Williams, ‘Public Health in Gwyrfai 1875-1914’, p. 85. D. P. Williams was a local chemist, a Liberal and a chairman for many years of Caernarfonshire County Council. His contribution to public service was highly valued.

⁸⁶⁸ CDH, 30 September 1898.

⁸⁶⁹ See p. 213.

⁸⁷⁰ One of the founders of Llanberis Football Club was the quarry hospital doctor, Dr. Mills Roberts, who had been a goalkeeper for Preston North End and Wales. See <https://bywgraffiadur.cymru/article/c3-MILL-HER-1862> (accessed: 24/04/19).

regularly they took place in Llanberis is not clear and the event in 1879 appears to have been part of a recruitment drive.⁸⁷¹ In Rhostryfan the rules of the *Cymdeithas Lenyddol* (Literary Society) underlined self-improvement – ‘...amcan y Gymdeithas fydd meithrin chwaeth lenyddol yn yr aelodau, datblygu a choethi eu meddyliau, a rhoddi mantais iddynt i ymarfer yn y ddawn o siarad yn gyhoeddus...’ [‘...the aim of the society is to promote literary taste in the members, to develop and refine their minds and to give them the advantage of practising the talent of public speaking’].⁸⁷² Membership was confined to a connection with Horeb or Tabernacl chapels and to the approval of the committee. At the turn of the century the programme was a selection of lectures on literary, historical, political and religious subjects. This was a circle in which women took a full part both as committee members and giving lectures. As in the choirs the gender divide was crossed in cultural activities. Croll points out that in south Wales musical organisations were ‘remarkably ‘open’ institutions’. This may well be part of the attraction of choral singing in many of the communities in this study.⁸⁷³ Llanberis had built its own public hall which had run into debt in 1878. However it was decided that the situation was not very serious and the hall continued to serve the community.⁸⁷⁴

Chapels, however, confidently reported that they had paid all their debts. During the period of this study the chapels themselves and their administration were remarkably male orientated. For example the minute books of Rhostryfan chapel – Horeb – betray male dominance within the chapel community. Meetings were held which decided on the activities and business of the chapel, nominating the women expected to clean the chapel with no undertaking to consult.⁸⁷⁵ A typical entry in the minute book of Horeb chapel in Rhostryfan was that of 1894 when after the seiat the *Cyfarfod y Brodwr* (Meeting of the Brothers) laid down that in its decision of choice of new minister a subcommittee of ‘brodwr’ (brothers) should be set up to look at the choice of applicants and then inform the ‘brodwr’ in the congregation of their findings.⁸⁷⁶ However in its charitable work and dispersal of money to the poor the chapel tended to favour payments to women and children – some receiving aid over a

⁸⁷¹ CDH, 13 September 1879. See also P. O’Leary, *Claiming the Streets: Processions and Urban Culture in South Wales c. 1830-1880* (Cardiff, 2012), pp. 82-87.

⁸⁷² GAS CRO XD4/7.

⁸⁷³ Croll, *Civilising the Urban*, p. 116.

⁸⁷⁴ YGG, 7 March 1878.

⁸⁷⁵ GAS CRO XD4/1/1.

⁸⁷⁶ GAS CRO XD4/1/1.

number of years. Certain societies such as *Cymdeithas Ddirwestol y Merched Rhosgadfan* were as the name implies for women only. In 1878 a temperance meeting was held in Llanberis in conjunction with Capel Coch. It was acknowledged in a report of the meeting that the temperance movement was particularly supported and given impetus by the women of the area who had already started holding their own meetings. Eighty had signed the pledge and many of these claimed that they had previously been ‘yn gaethlon i’r diod feddwol’ [‘dependent on alcohol’].⁸⁷⁷ The new Caernarfonshire County Council underlined the dangers of excessive drinking in 1891 and pushed for a veto or a limit on licenses that could be granted to public houses ‘in view of the poverty, crime, disease, insanity and expenses caused in the county’.⁸⁷⁸

Inclusive social events for local Sunday Schools and communal suppers were organised by the women in all communities in this study.⁸⁷⁹ Frankenberg writes of the segregation of men and women in Glynceriog in north-east Wales where women ‘form a corporate group...which determines the pattern of much of life’.⁸⁸⁰ Chapel literary societies arranged trips to places such as Dinas Dinlle and Betws-y-Coed and Sunday School outings were a highlight of the year for children. In 1894, for instance, the Congregational Sunday School of Llanberis visited Faenol Park where they saw exotic animals and where food was provided. The children left along the ‘grand drive, singing Band of Hope tunes’.⁸⁸¹ Kate Roberts believed that describing the chapels as social centres in her area was not quite true – unheated chapels and lack of vestry space meant that people did not socialise after services: ‘so everyone except the young people went home straight after the sermon, the youth tended to go to the literary and children’s meetings and the older people to the seiats’.⁸⁸² The chapels in areas of development had been built almost as a ‘marker’ of these settlements and were regarded as civilising influences in these communities.⁸⁸³ They undoubtedly fulfilled a spiritual need but they also affirmed the growth of the settlement in areas where previous needs had not required – or could not sustain – such centres.

⁸⁷⁷ YGG, 7 March 1878.

⁸⁷⁸ GAS CRO XC/1 Caernarfonshire County Council Minute Book (uncatalogued records).

⁸⁷⁹ For example see reports in YGG, 22 June 1897, *Yr Herald Gymraeg*, 10 March 1908.

⁸⁸⁰ R. Frankenberg, *Communities in Britain* (Middlesex, 1969), p. 92.

⁸⁸¹ CDH, 15 June 1894.

⁸⁸² Roberts, *Y Lôn Wen*, p. 52.

⁸⁸³ See Croll, *Civilising the Urban*, p. 19-20 where he discusses the role of chapels as part of the public sphere.

The upper part of the parish of Llanwnda had no convenient church within the locality but a chapel of ease – sometimes known as Rhostryfan Mission Church – was established to serve the growing population. However with the growth and shift of population in the parish of Llanberis a church for the lower part of the parish of Llanberis was dedicated in 1885 – much of it paid for by Mr Assheton-Smith who had inherited the Faenol Estate and the Dinorwig quarries from his great uncle in 1858.⁸⁸⁴ About £100 was subscribed monthly by quarrymen to the church who also gave their labour voluntarily to the building work.⁸⁸⁵ Previously the church community had met in a small, poorly built church on an exposed site. The monetary contribution and voluntary work of the quarrymen appears a little surprising in the face of the growing call for disestablishment in the area. The County Council minuted in 1893 that in Wales ‘more than one parliamentary election declared by unexampled majorities in favour of Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Church of England’ and the council wished this vote to be respected so that Wales could rid itself of an ‘anomaly and injustice which is becoming intolerable to the great majority of Welsh people’.⁸⁸⁶ The identity of the parish was sustained by the removal of the medieval font from the original church for the parish, St. Peris, to the new church.⁸⁸⁷ The Roman Catholic cause in this period made little progress in the developing industrial communities despite the efforts of an enthusiastic convert in the early 1870s described in a letter to the press as a ‘foneddiges bwysig iawn yn yr ardal hon...y mae wedi agor math o ystafell i gynnal addoliad Pabyddol yn y lle hwn’ [‘a very important lady in this area...has opened a type of room to hold Catholic services in this place’].⁸⁸⁸ The anti-Catholic nature of the letter was evident as it described Roman Catholicism as attractive only to ‘offeiriad, merched ac arglyddi...pobl fawr, wedi eu dwyn i fyny wrth allorau y ferch’ [‘priests, women and lords...the socially elevated who have been brought up at the altars of women’]. According to the letter it was a movement which undermined the Nonconformist identity and heritage of Wales. As O’Leary states ‘that

⁸⁸⁴ On his coming of age in 1869 he assumed the name of Assheton-Smith, having been born George William Duff.

⁸⁸⁵ NWE, 26 June 1885.

⁸⁸⁶ GAS CRO XC/1 Caernarfonshire County Council Minute Book (uncatalogued records).

⁸⁸⁷ <https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/300003769-church-of-st-peris-llanberis#.XP-uXohKiUK> (viewed: 11 June 2019).

⁸⁸⁸ *Y Tyst a'r Dydd*, 19 July 1872.

antipathy to Rome occupied a central place in the culture of Nonconformity...that appealed to less cerebral passions'.⁸⁸⁹

Identity is entrenched in a community's heritage both spiritual and secular. Undoubtedly employment in all areas gave rise to populations of different outlooks, political awareness and work patterns. This was for example true of the industrial communities. There was a relative lack of solidarity among the quarrymen – they appeared to think of themselves as belonging to their own locality. The same is true of nineteenth- and twentieth-century coal miners: '...the regional perspective of the standard trade union histories should warn against any blanket national generalisations'.⁸⁹⁰ Industrial, economic and social differences prevailed in the much larger mining industry as they did in the smaller quarrying communities. Membership of the North Wales Quarrymen's Union rarely exceeded 50% of those employed in the industry.⁸⁹¹ Llanberis became a strong centre for unionisation while the upper part of the parish of Llanwnda was never totally convinced of the values of strength through unionisation – in 1905, for instance, Ellis Davies and D. R. Daniel⁸⁹², spoke in Rhosgadfan about the advantages of unionisation⁸⁹³ and in 1908 permission was granted for the union to address the workers in Moeltryfan quarry. This was the first time such a meeting had taken place.⁸⁹⁴ By this time disputes in Moeltryfan Quarry were as much concerned with loss of employment as with pay and involved union and non-union members.⁸⁹⁵ This underlined the area's localism and failure to centralise union control. The obituary of William Hughes, Rhosgadfan, in 1914, appears to illustrate the dichotomy of the area's industrial workforce identity.⁸⁹⁶ He had worked in the local quarries for over sixty years and had no formal education. However he had taught himself to write and was an avid reader – 'diwinyddiaeth oedd ei faes mwyaf hoffus' ['theology was his preferred study']. A keen member of the Sunday School and a convinced temperance man he also joined the Independent Labour Party when a branch was set up in Rhosgadfan as he believed that the party was one which could

⁸⁸⁹ P. O'Leary, 'When Was Anti-Catholicism? The Case of Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Wales' *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 56, 2 (April 2005), 316.

⁸⁹⁰ Benson, *British Coalminers in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 214-215.

⁸⁹¹ Jones, *The North Wales Quarrymen*, pp. 106-107.

⁸⁹² D. R. Daniel was appointed in 1896 as organiser of the N.W.Q.M.

⁸⁹³ *Yr Herald Cymraeg*, 17 October 1905.

⁸⁹⁴ *Yr Herald Cymraeg*, 13 October 1908.

⁸⁹⁵ See Jones, *The North Wales Quarrymen*, p. 297.

⁸⁹⁶ *Y Dinesydd Cymreig*, 20 May 1914.

also be depended upon to ‘cefnogi moesoldeb’ [‘back morality’].⁸⁹⁷ No mention of the union is made in the obituary.

Identity was highly localised and affected by geography and the nature of life found in semi-rural industrial settlements. One could possibly compare the differences in outlook to that of the coalminers of south-west Wales. Matthews points out that in the anthracite district the involvement of many colliers in small-time farming led Mabon⁸⁹⁸ to comment in 1903 that these workers showed ‘greater independence than most workmen possess’.⁸⁹⁹ In the communities described in this study the mix of farming and quarrying is evident – some workers doing both and other households with members of the family staying on the land and others working in the quarries. These were as much a part of the industrial community as their fellow workers who lived in villages with a landscape dominated by drab terraces and chapels. A strength of the quarrymen according to the series of articles written by a former native of Llanberis in *Y Geninen* in 1900 was that it was as a class of workers ‘ei wneyd i fyny o’r un genedl’ [‘was made up of one nation’].⁹⁰⁰ The truth was more complex – a nation is made up of numerous communities and identities and this was no different when it came to discussing the homogeneity of quarrymen or their communities.

Consciousness of identity in the industrial settlements has to some extent been conveyed by the literary contributions of people local to these areas. Some have already been used and quoted in this study. The application of literary sources gives us a perspective, which if carefully assessed, can deepen and enrich our understanding of these settlements. Within the identity of a community there are several underlying identities – such as that of young people, the old, women, migrants, employment groups – which are not equally represented in historical evidence. Autobiographies and literature can partially lift the veil on these. They give a sense of place as a backdrop to their work and allow an insight into the life of many who would not appear in any

⁸⁹⁷ Gruffydd, *Hen Atgofion*, p. 33 notes that his grandparents turned from the Liberal Party to the Labour Party ‘Hynny oedd datblygiad naturiol eu hegwyddorion’ [‘that was the natural development of their principles’].

⁸⁹⁸ William Abraham, otherwise known as Mabon, was the first president of the South Wales Miners’ Federation and M.P. for Rhondda. His main importance lies in his work as a trade unionist. He was made a Privy Councillor in 1911 and died in 1922. See <https://biography.wales/article/s-ABRA-WIL-1842> (accessed: 24/04/19).

⁸⁹⁹ Matthews, ‘Anthracite Miner’, p. 98.

⁹⁰⁰ *Y Geninen*, January 1900.

other source.⁹⁰¹ Roberts admits that in her autobiography she left out the ‘bad things and bad people’ of her neighbourhood.⁹⁰² However a sanitised version is better than no memoir. Her novels are somewhat more inclusive. Baines, in her study of Caradog Prichard,⁹⁰³ underlines the mythology of the cultured quarrymen bent on self-improvement as perpetuated in much literature.⁹⁰⁴ The idealisation of the quarrymen as described by O. M. Edwards⁹⁰⁵ was set against the more realistic assessment of Roberts.⁹⁰⁶ Baines writes of Prichard’s work and its description of the quarryman’s community as not only located in the quarry but also in an equally important forum in the *Blw Bel*.⁹⁰⁷ T. Rowland Hughes’ work, much of it based on Llanberis life and characters, gives some insight into a quarrying community. Although his writings tend to be somewhat idealised and less gritty than that of Prichard, the reader is introduced to multifaceted characters who are as likely to prop up a pub bar as attend chapel.

The task set for this thesis was to assess the diversity of communities in Caernarfonshire and the ways in which they adapted and changed to economic and social pressures over the period studied as well as to analyse what these communities held in common. The study was given a structure by the detailed analysis of the census. A challenge was set by the fact that the same kinds of sources were not available for all communities.⁹⁰⁸ However there were enough official sources such as court records, education archives and council minutes together with numerous other archives to give a balanced view. Evidently communities differ according to economic growth, location, employment patterns – all that defines them as viable settlements and defines their social structure. It is the way they adapt and develop that differentiates them. However the elements which they hold in common such as language, culture, religion and politics can also unite them in attitude and purpose. All communities have a mix of

⁹⁰¹ See M. Reeve, & A. McCominey, ‘Grim up North?: Northern Identity, History, and Heritage’, *International Journal of Regional and Local History*, 12, 2 (2017), 65-76.

⁹⁰² Roberts, *Y Lôn Wen*, p. 302.

⁹⁰³ Caradog Prichard (1904-1980) was born in Bethesda, the son of a quarryman. His father was killed in a quarry accident in 1905 which resulted in the poverty of the family and subsequent mental illness of his mother who spent over thirty years in the mental hospital at Denbigh. A noted poet he earned his living as a journalist in north Wales and subsequently Cardiff and London. His only novel published in 1961, *Un Nos Ola Leuad* [One Moonlit Night], was based on Prichard’s own background and took the literary world by storm. Baines, M., (2015). PRICHARD, CARADOG (1904-1980), novelist and poet. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. Retrieved 22 August 2019, from <https://biography.wales/article/s10-PRIC-CAR-1904>.

⁹⁰⁴ M. Baines, *Yng Ngolau'r Lleuad* (Llandysul, 2005), p. 120-123.

⁹⁰⁵ Edwards, *Tro Trwy'r Gogledd*, p. 5-13. See p.240.

⁹⁰⁶ Roberts, ‘Y deryn nos a’i deithiau’. See p. 241.

⁹⁰⁷ Baines, *Yng Ngolau'r Lleuad*, p. 123.

⁹⁰⁸ See for example p. 259 and comparison of newspaper sources.

this commonality. It is the threat to and deviation from these shared features that give rise to community differences and development.

What emerged was a wealth of material enabling the answering of the research questions. There were distinctive aspects common to all the settlements in this study. The Welsh language is one important marker but one which changed during the period under analysis – the eastern part of the county became more anglicised whereas, for example, the rural areas of Llŷn retained a high monoglot Welsh population.⁹⁰⁹ Culturally all communities were active with participatory activities such as literary societies, choirs and sports. In rural areas membership of a choir meant the regular involvement of several areas. Self-improvement was evidently the keynote in many such activities. Leisure pursuits in urban and more populated settlements was greater whereas sparsely populated communities illustrate the use of much leisure time in socialising and walking from one farm to another until late at night.⁹¹⁰ It is important to note that each of the towns in this study had at least a small rural element as part of their makeup: either as employment or sometimes a place to poach. The towns were comparatively small and were within easy walking distance to the surrounding countryside. The industrial settlements, especially upper Llanwnda, combined rural and industrial activities and was firmly set in a rural background. Settlements were largely influenced by employment and economic opportunities that were in turn partly shaped by their geographical location. Most obviously the pattern of life in the slate quarrying districts was circumscribed by the hours set down by the employers. The slate quarries of Llanberis and upper Llanwnda were not new phenomena in the nineteenth century but had expanded because of inward investment during the second half of the century. Both settlements changed during this period but the more dramatic increase in the slate trade in Llanberis, together with its diversification as a prominent tourist destination, led to greater entrepreneurial activity and the rise of a middle class. In the Llŷn parishes of this study communities within a short distance of each other demonstrated the effect of varying economic stimuli. Pistyll with its granite quarries and the settlement in Llithfaen and Nant Gwrtheyrn flourished for a few decades before experiencing trading difficulties and the subsequent decrease in population. The population profile of Betws-y-Coed was influenced by its geographical position and

⁹⁰⁹ See p. 139-141.

⁹¹⁰ GAS CRO XLC/5/3.

economic growth. Indeed economic diversification led to changes most particularly, as far as tourism was concerned, in initially three of the communities – Pwllheli, Llanberis and Betws-y-Coed with Conwy entering the stakes a little later. In all communities women shouldered a heavy burden of work, whether declared or not. They kept the home, lodgers, tended gardens and made money where possible with the sale of produce. A minority of women were in declared paid employment. This meant that a woman's sphere of action was limited. The census gives us details of individual lives which can be fleshed out in other sources. Household structures as analysed in each community in this study reflect employment and social patterns in the area – the temporary stay of Mountsorrel workers in Pistyll,⁹¹¹ quarrymen in Llanberis⁹¹² and paupers in Pwllheli.⁹¹³ The structure of the family as shown in the households of single families is varied – single parents⁹¹⁴, intergenerational members⁹¹⁵ and those who used the term 'widow' as a description to suggest respectability. An underclass in society, for example prostitutes and habitual drunkards, is recognisable in more densely populated areas. This may well be because of policing or the greater numbers that belonged to this strata in the towns and larger villages. This feature is also probably linked to ideas in urban areas of what constituted civilised behaviour and respectability.⁹¹⁶ In more sparsely populated communities what is usually reported touching on individual behaviour are cases of illegitimacy.⁹¹⁷

Democracy at community level differed in type and effectiveness. The boroughs had well established administrative bodies, some of which were more effective than others.⁹¹⁸ Betws-y-Coed transformed its position and became an Urban District Council in 1895 while other settlements expressed their views in parish councils. The latter varied greatly in tone and in engagement with community issues. Llanberis used its parish council effectively to improve and secure local amenities. Civic and housing improvement was often the result of the interaction of the basic democratic body such as the parish or borough and the district council. During the period of this study it is possible to discern the growing political and cultural influence

⁹¹¹ See p. 132.

⁹¹² See p. 236.

⁹¹³ See p. 72.

⁹¹⁴ See p. 73.

⁹¹⁵ See p. 157.

⁹¹⁶ Croll, *Civilising the Urban*, p. 9.

⁹¹⁷ See for example GAS CRO XLC/5/3.

⁹¹⁸ See p. 38.

of the County Council which would increasingly, with time, affect communities.⁹¹⁹ Cultural differences are what distinguishes one group or settlement from another.⁹²⁰ Differences in communities became more pronounced with the impact of in-migration as in Betws-y-Coed and also with greater exposure to other areas made possible by transport links, especially the railway. Together with the greater centralisation of public and retail amenities, clearer divisions were discernible between settlements.

The analysis of communities in this study has shown them to be fluid entities made up of and influenced by individuals who belonged to or had moved into a settlement. The makeup of a social group can change as members altered their roles within the community. Our view is coloured by the way these places are interpreted by those who look at them from the outside and how the members of a group see themselves. Cohen, in discussing boundaries, social change and construction of community, wrote ‘...the language, family structures, political and education institutions, economic processes, and religious and recreational practices of communities come to have a certain apparent resemblance to each other’.⁹²¹ Much of Caernarfonshire was similar in type – its language, politics and religion. As the press noted at the first county council elections Caernarfonshire was ‘highly Non-Conformist and Radical’.⁹²² All communities in this study illustrated an ability to adapt – whether it was Tudweiliog and its change to an almost exclusive agricultural economy with less emphasis on fishing or Betws-y-Coed and its development as an artistic colony and tourist draw. In these case studies we find that where there is diversification it is because of economic, geographical and work influences on both men and women. These factors underlie the reasons for the differences such as linguistic patterns, civic undertakings and employment opportunities.

The aim of this study has been to portray communities and their development in Caernarfonshire by setting them in the context of their time, environment and experience and ensuring a geographical balance for the chosen sample settlements. The importance of such communities – however small – must not be underestimated. They all contributed to the economic, cultural and social tapestry of the area enriching its life and character. As Glanmor Williams wrote: ‘not to care for the claims of little

⁹¹⁹ See p. 225 and p. 189.

⁹²⁰ A. P. Cohen, *Belonging* (Manchester, 1982), p. 6.

⁹²¹ A. P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (London and New York 1989), p. 44.

⁹²² NWE, 25 January 1889.

communities, whether local or national, is to be deaf to the still small voice of common humanity. That must be reckoned a cardinal sin in any historian.⁹²³

⁹²³ G. Williams, 'Local and National History in Wales', D. Huw Owen (ed.), *Settlement and Society in Wales* (Cardiff, 1989), p. 22.

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- XC Caernarfonshire County Council
- XE Caernarfonshire Education Records
- XG1 Pwllheli Poor Law Union Records
- XG2 Caernarfon Poor Law Union Records
- XD1 Caernarfon Borough Council
- XB12 Pwllheli Town Council
- XB13 Llŷn Rural District Council
- XB15 Gwyrfai Rural District Council
- XLC Petty Sessional Records
- X/J Caernarfonshire Constabulary Records
- XP Civil Parish Records
- XPE Parish Records
- XD4 Gilbert Williams Papers
- XD28 Solomon Andrews Papers
- XD34 Papers of the Wesleyan Circuit Caernarfon
- XD35 Yale and Hardcastle Papers
- XD49 Capel Coch Papers
- X/Dorothea Quarry Records
- X/Maps and Plans
- XS Photographic Collection
- X/Dinorwic Quarry Records
- XM/Maps
- XM Miscellaneous Collection
- XM/T Collection of oral history recordings
- X/NWQM Papers of the North Wales Quarrymen's Union
- XD2 Newborough Estate Collection

XD5 Coed Helen Estate Papers
X/Poole Papers
X/Vaynol Estate Papers

Conwy Archive Service

CE Conwy Education Records
CO1 Conwy County Borough Records
COB2 Conwy Borough Records
COB3 Betws-y-Coed Urban District Council
CG3 Conwy Union Records
CPS Conwy Petty Sessional Records
CPE Parish Records
CD4 Porter Solicitors Papers

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