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Shaun Evans

‘Coming of Age’: Landowners and tenants in nineteenth-century Carmarthenshire¹

Introduction: estates in Welsh society

Of all the research contributing towards our growing understanding of the historical influence and significance of landed estates in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Wales, it is south-west Wales in general, and Carmarthenshire in particular, which has provided the greatest focus for analyses. The historiography to which this body of scholarship has given rise incorporates an array of contrasting interpretations and perspectives, ranging from David Williams’ classic analysis of the context to the Rebecca Riots, Herbert M. Vaughan’s obituary to the *South Wales Squires*, Francis Jones’ biographical accounts of the lineages which occupied the region’s country houses and Leslie Baker-Jones’ often stinging critique of the ‘Tivyside’ gentry.² The region also provides the backdrop for two of the most comprehensive and considered studies of Welsh gentry culture and landowner-tenant relations, in the form of David W. Howell’s *Patriarchs & Parasites* and Matthew Cragoe’s assessment of the ‘moral economy’ of Carmarthenshire’s landed estates.³ Many of the most important conclusions advanced by Howell and Cragoe uncomfortably rub up against the dominant narratives and popular perceptions of modern Welsh history. However, a steady flow of landowner biographies and family and estate-specific case studies continue to deepen, refine and reframe understandings. These include Lowri Ann Rees and Mary Thorley’s recent work on the Middleton Hall, Aberglasney and Cwmgwili estates, and John E. Davies’ meticulously researched analysis of the Cawdor influence.⁴ Articles and reviews featured in the most recent volumes of *The Carmarthenshire Antiquary* underline the continuing relevance of the landed estate to various forms of historical enquiry. Ongoing scholarship includes welcome efforts to address themes and issues which are essential for a fuller understanding of the operations and connections of estates and country houses, including an increased focus on the roles and experiences of women (including as landowners in their own right), the multiperiod fashioning of landscapes and built environments, the intermediary role of the land agent and connections with colonialism.⁵

This corpus, in all its diversity, underlines the significance of the landed estate as an integral part of life in nineteenth-century Wales. It includes assessments of the interests, influences and identities of landowners across spheres ranging from politics and local government, to agriculture and industry, religion and culture, architecture and landscape. However, such landed power was experienced across all layers of society, extending beyond the agricultural economy of rural Wales into urban and industrial realms, but felt most acutely by those individuals and communities who lived or worked on the estate, or provided goods or services to the *plas*. Principally, it was the ownership and management of land which underpinned the social status, political influence and economic capacity of the gentry, squirearchy and aristocracy. A patchwork of landed estates, large and small, each usually with a country house of some description at its symbolic core, enveloped much of the Welsh landscape – a territorial influence which was extended through waves of Parliamentary Enclosure.

These estates, in turn, provided an integral part of the physical setting for people’s daily lives and experiences, especially in the form of housing and work. Consequently, the landowner’s management of their estate, use of the land, investment in improvement and fashioning of the landscape – usually through the intersection of a land agent – was of immense social and economic consequence to the people living and working on the estate. For tenants, fair rents, security of tenure, access to resources, abatements during times of hardship and compensation for improvements and damage by game were some of the most important levers of livelihood, welfare and prosperity which were dependent on the landowner’s approach to the management of their

estate. These were some of the factors which made 'land' and the landowner-tenant relations which prevailed upon it, a central feature in nineteenth-century Welsh society.

The various studies of Welsh estates and gentry culture, outlined above, have advanced wildly different interpretations of the tenant-landowner relationship, largely centred on the relevance, existence, extent or consequences of cultural, political and religious division in Welsh communities between an anglicised, Tory, Anglican, alienated and absentee landowning class on the one hand, and a Welsh-speaking, nonconformist and politically radical *gwerin* majority on the other. To take two examples, David Williams asserts that: 'As the [nineteenth] century progressed, the social history of rural Wales resolved itself almost exclusively into a struggle between the landowners and tenants'; whereas Matthew Cragoe concludes that: 'Any model which seeks to present the Welsh countryside as divided irrevocably between two opposing, monolithic factions, the one landholding, Anglican and aristocratic, the other tenant-farming and nonconformist, is probably too simplistic.'⁶ This article is positioned within this historiographical context.

Despite their prominence as mass public events, 'coming of age' celebrations have not previously been subject to comprehensive and considered academic attention.⁷ These occasions positioned landowners in face-to-face scenarios with those communities over whom they claimed their social status and authority on account of ownership of land. The proceedings and discourse of these events, recorded in primary source material, offer distinctive insights and perspectives for reassessing social and cultural identities in the Welsh countryside. The analysis reframes the debate, arguing that landowner-tenant relations are best understood through reference to direct interactions between tenants and landowners.

The coming of age of J. W. Gwynne Hughes of Tregib (1879)

Residents of Llandeilo awoke on the morning of Friday, 21st November 1879 with a great sense of excitement and anticipation.⁸ Today was a public holiday in the locality: all business and work was suspended. For some months, people 'of all ranks and parties' had apparently 'commonly talked of, and eagerly looked forward' to the day ahead. Serious preparations had been in progress for at least a month, following public meetings convened to discuss plans for the occasion, attended by 'most of the tradesmen of the town and a great number of the Tregib tenantry'.⁹ Today promised to be one of great celebration and festivity, in which the whole community and all sections of society were invited and encouraged to partake. Llandeilo's church bells rang continuously from dawn, overwhelmed at regular intervals by the booming of cannon from the surrounding countryside. This acoustic onslaught persevered throughout the day. Huge evergreen arches, wreaths and displays of laurel, ivy and holly had been erected throughout the town, with virtually every property in the locality hoisting flags, banners, bunting, mottos and coats of arms. The principal streets of Llandeilo were awash with colour and decoration, the highlight being the figure of the bespectacled 'old Welsh matron, dressed in the costume of her native land', which had been erected on the balcony of the Castle Hotel. Dozens of Welsh and English inscriptions of congratulations and good luck were displayed throughout the town: '*Hir oes a llwyddiant*', 'Tregib forever', '*Groesaw calon I etifedd Tregib*', '*Heddwch a llwyddiant*', 'Long life and a Welsh wife'.

By 2pm the streets were packed with crowds of people. The newspaper report of the proceedings insisted that 'it was natural that such an event should be hailed with an unusually grand display by the inhabitants of Llandilo and the country around it'. Today, J. W. Gwynne Hughes (1858-1917) of Tregib attained his majority: it was his twenty-first birthday.¹⁰ As his train arrived into the town at 2.16pm he was greeted with loud cheers and a large procession fronted by the band of the First Glamorganshire Artillery Volunteers escorted him through the decorated streets and assembled well-wishers. His carriage was unharnessed from its horses and carried by men to the entrance of Tregib where he was formally addressed in front of the gathered crowd. Later in the afternoon the

inhabitants of the town and tenantry of the estate remained in the grounds of Tregib, which played host to a festival of rustic sports for children. As the darkness descended, Gwynne Hughes was regaled at a celebratory dinner at the Cawdor Arms, whilst outside huge bonfires were lit and fireworks set off, continuing the public celebrations into the early hours of the morning, assisted with a plentiful supply of *cwrw da*. Commenting on the impression made by the festivities, a reporter noted that:

Rarely in any part of the kingdom have we seen such a thoroughly genuine and enthusiastic demonstration, or rejoicing carried out on such an extensive scale; and we should say that for the young people of the district, whose minds must have been captivated by the grandeur of the proceedings, last Friday will be a day to talk of to their children and children's children.

This had clearly been a major event in the locality. It was one of many 'coming of age' celebrations held on Carmarthenshire estates across late-eighteenth, nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. The number of participants in such festivities varied according to the status of the landowner and extent of the estate: it was estimated that between 1,500-2,000 people assembled in the grounds of Glanbrydan Park for the coming of age of Ernald E. Richardson (1869-1909) in 1890; and special trains paid for by Viscount Emlyn (1847-1911) brought about 2,000 guests to Gelli Aur (or Golden Grove) from Llandysul, Carmarthen, Llandovery and Llanelli to celebrate his heir's majority in 1891.¹¹ In the words of David W. Howell, these occasions were 'of symbolic importance in the history of landed families', but they were equally significant to those communities and individuals partaking in the festivities.¹² 'Within living memory there has been nothing like it in north Carmarthenshire', wrote a reporter following the 1878 coming of age of Sir James Hamlyn Williams-Drummond (1857-1913) of Edwinsford.¹³ The report of Walter Fitz-Uryan Rice (1873-1956) of Dinefwr's majority in 1894 narrated that:

Crowds might have gathered to laud Hywel the Good; thousands might have collected to welcome Sir Rhys ap Thomas on his return from many a victory, but none met with a more steadfast purpose to honour the house of Dynevor than the thousands who assembled to celebrate the coming of age of the heir to the barony and all that is noble connected with the family.¹⁴

Even the smaller-scale celebrations which accompanied the coming of age on the Llethr Llestri estate were described as 'a red-letter day in the history of Llanddarog'.¹⁵

Marking majorities: celebrations of inheritance and continuity

What was a 'coming of age' celebration and why was it marked with such festivity? It basically marked the twenty-first birthday of the heir to a landed estate, the occasion when they – but usually a 'he' – attained their majority. It was an important life-cycle event which formally marked the progression from childhood to adulthood and, significantly, meant that the heir was now legally permitted to own land. This occasion had historically been recognised as significant in a legal sense, but until the late-eighteenth century was rarely marked with the sort of mass public ceremony experienced at Tregib in 1879. These events were celebrated in a similar fashion across Britain and Ireland, but in Wales a precedent seems to have been set by the famous coming of age celebrations accompanying Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn (1749-89) of Wynnstay's birthday in 1770. Thereafter, across the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, they became a fixture on a majority of landed estates, large and small, throughout Wales. The Tregib example, described above, was one of perhaps a few dozen such celebrations held in Carmarthenshire across this period.

Landowning families were enthusiastic about these occasions because they stressed continuity and the preservation of status: dynastic continuity and the continued enactment of power, influence and authority by the family into the next generation. They were highly multigenerational affairs, with an emphasis on the past, present and future: on ancestry and tradition, the contemporary

representatives of the family and heir. If the father, or in some cases the father and grandfather of the heir was still alive, the celebration recognised that there was a member of the lineage ready to take on the roles and responsibilities of landownership on their deaths. On other occasions the celebrations were infused with added significance because they signified the formal inheritance of the estate by the heir, as at Tregib in 1879. This was also the case in January 1875 when Gilbert Lloyd Elliot (1854-99) succeeded to the Dolhaid estate following the deaths – in fairly quick succession – of his great-grandfather J. R. Lewes Lloyd (d.1858) and father, Thomas Elliot (1825-70).¹⁶ In this instance there was a significant emphasis on the new landlord being the *representative* – through his mother and grandmother – of the old family of Lloyd, with a responsibility to ‘keep up the long-famed reputation of the house’.

Despite the impression of strength, stability and permanence habitually exuded from landowning families, there was nothing inevitable about the production and survival of an heir to continue the family’s influence into the next generation. In studies of landownership in eighteenth-century Glamorgan, Merioneth and Montgomery, historians have pointed to degrees of ‘demographic catastrophe’ which, they argue, fundamentally altered the composition and cultural outlook of landed society, signalling the displacement of multiple longstanding lineages of old *uchelwyr* families from the Welsh countryside and a deterioration in social relations with the common people.¹⁷ David W. Howell has questioned the extent to which these conclusions should be applied to south-west Wales across the eighteenth century, but it is unquestionably the case that into the nineteenth century, multiple ‘new’ families succeeded in acquiring or establishing Welsh estates through marriage, inheritance or purchase, often as an investment of fortunes made through industry or commerce.¹⁸ The coming of age celebrations held on the Llangennech Park, Glanbrydan and Castell Gorfod and Bryncaerau Castle estates in the 1890s centred on recently established landowning families, who had acquired wealth in industries such as copper and brewing.¹⁹ These families promoted coming of age festivities as a way of cementing their positions in landed society, adopting an established tradition as means of furthering their legitimacy and longevity. Such occasions were celebrated as enthusiastically as majorities marking the next generation of longstanding Welsh gentry families. Furthermore, though the focus of the celebration was usually a male heir, the early-twentieth century heralded a greater number of such occasions focusing on female heiresses; which in Carmarthenshire included Eleanor Thursby-Pelham at Abermarlais (1900), Gladys Morris at Coombe (1902), Lily Gwynne-Hughes at Tregib (1905) and Dorothea Pryse-Rice at Llwyn-y-Brain (1915).²⁰

The anatomy of celebration

We know so much about coming of age celebrations because they regularly filled the columns of local newspapers, irrespective of their political leanings. They also gave rise to a variety of records, now preserved in estate archives and an extraordinary range of paraphernalia and material culture. The nature of the celebrations generally followed the pattern witnessed at Tregib in 1879: Gwynne Hughes’ majority was also celebrated on his Corngafr and Pant Du estates in Carmarthenshire and Caernarfonshire respectively.²¹ On some of the larger estates the occasion could extend over a whole week, taking in all the localities where the family owned land or exerted influence. The ceremony could also range significantly in scale, from gatherings of a couple of dozen tenants and servants – as was the case on the Alltyferin estate in Llanegwad in 1897 – to the thousands who partook in the vast coming of age celebrations on the Bute, Powis, Plymouth, Wynnstay, Mostyn, Vaynol, Nannau and Tredegar estates. The scale and sumptuousness of the festivities held on the Cawdor estates in 1811 appear to have been unprecedented for south-west Wales at that time.²²

Local committees were established to organise proceedings and administer subscriptions, sometimes months in advance; there was always an emphasis on the *voluntary* and *spontaneous* nature of the celebrations, though in reality the family in question were centrally involved in

arrangements. In 1786, for example, the Dynevor family disbursed £108 14s. 8½d. to the townspeople of Carmarthen to celebrate the coming of age of George Talbot Rice (1765-1852).²³

In addition to the activities arranged at Tregib in 1879, barrels of strong special ale were often brewed at the time of the heir's birth and served twenty-one years later on his coming of age, giving rise to much merriment. Indeed, the birth of an heir often precipitated public celebration: in March 1849, tenants on David Jones' (1810-69) Pantglas estate constructed a bonfire in Penlan Park and drank to the health of the new heir 'in a bumper of *cwrw da*'.²⁴ Communal eating and drinking were important elements, with *cwrw da* playing a central role in the celebrations. The rustic sports competitions which usually accompanied the festivities – tug of war, long jump, blindfolded wheelbarrow races, donkey races, climbing greasy poles and dancing – were occasionally met with derision from local nonconformist ministers. Indeed, the festivities possibly quite deliberately sought to preserve or resurrect some older customs and traditions which the moralistic movement of Methodism had largely succeeded in washing away from the Welsh countryside.²⁵ The emphasis was very much on community cohesion and the leadership of all parts of that community by the landowning class. In this respect they were highly orchestrated affairs. Hundreds, and on occasions thousands, of tenants, servants, labourers, local tradespeople and neighbours were invited to eat, drink, toast, sing, cheer and celebrate in the huge marquees that were specially set up in the grounds of country houses.

Another common part of the occasion involved the procession of a fat ox (often with gilded horns) and a number of sheep through the local town or village, which would be butchered or roasted and distributed amongst the poor with servings of bread. Such charitable gestures were designed to give the whole community a stake in the festivities. For his heir's majority in 1876, George Jones of Ystrad House paid for the distribution of forty cwt. of coal to the poor of Llandovery and those living within a four-mile radius of the town.²⁶

The bonfires which were erected and lit made an incredible impact on the landscape, often visibly marking the bounds of the estate's influence. The bonfire constructed at Abermarlais in 1900 was said to be 45ft high and had taken several days to set up; and on the occasion of Viscount Emlyn's majority in 1868 bonfires were lit on all the highest peaks surrounding Gelli Aur: at Pencoed, Golwg-y-byd, Pantglas, Pen-pal, Llanarthne, Dryslwyn Castle, Castell Gwrychion and Llangathen as well as in the grounds of Golden Grove itself – proclaiming the occasion to all within the vicinity and acting as focal points for singing, poetry, dancing and drinking.²⁷ Bonfires formed the central element in how the Corngafar tenantry celebrated the majority of their new landlord in 1879:

The Corngafar Estate likewise celebrated the auspicious event with bonfires and beer and merry-making. For days previously willing hands had been set to work. Furze, ferns, brambles and other "burnables" fell before sweeping bill-hooks and then horses and gambos had to do their part on bringing these prickly materials together. Load after load were piled upon one another till Snowdon-like, the huge heap towered into the very heavens. This again was well sauced with tar, petroleum and benzoline oils. One of these inflammable pyramids, the joint production of several of the tenants, stood on the bank of Corngafar, while the old veteran of Bronygar had made another equally bulky on the Bronygar hill. Soon after sunset on Friday night last, Bryant and May's matches were applied to these and straightaway the night became day again. The scene reminded us of the olden times ... While basking in the full blaze of these crackling fires, several casks of '*cwrw coch*' were drained to their very dregs. Many were the glasses drunk, but more were the blessings invoked upon the '*meistr ieuanc*' ... The bards made sonnets of congratulation and merry lads and lassies made the keen night air ring with the strains of song.²⁸

Many celebrations also included picnics or teas for local schoolchildren. Elsewhere in Wales there are also examples of children receiving commemorative mugs or medals as mementos of the occasion: mugs were commissioned to commemorate a coming of age at Alltirodyn, Cardiganshire,

in 1914, for example.²⁹ Similarly, the occasion would often leave a lasting mark in the landscape, though the erection of a permanent structure of public utility such as a water fountain or clock via public subscription; one of the best examples being the town clock in Machynlleth.

Landownership in Welsh society, culture and history

These occasions provide distinctive insights into Welsh society and culture across the period c.1770-1920, particularly the position that the gentry, squirearchy and aristocracy occupied in that society and culture. The proceedings directly engage with the roles and responsibilities expected of these landowners; they articulate why landed estates were so influential across all spheres of life; and they provide indications of the gentry's identity – their incorporation into a British polity, but also the nature of their engagements with Welsh culture, heritage and language. Perhaps most significantly, they provide evidence for the operation of landowner-tenant relations: from the perspective of landowners, but also importantly, from the perspective of tenants, individually and collectively. The published reports of proceedings preserve, *verbatim*, the 'voices' of many individuals underrepresented in the history of Welsh landed estates: the views of landowners and radical politicians have tended to dominate. It is the face-to-face coming together of the landowning family with the community of tenants, servants, neighbours and other local inhabitants which gives value to these occasions from a historian's perspective. Comparable evidence of such discourse is occasionally found in reports of occasions such as wedding celebrations, anniversaries, rent-day dinners, homecomings and the opening of new public infrastructure or facilities.

Coming of age celebrations paint a very different picture of landowners and landowner-tenant relations to what is normally asserted in the dominant narratives of Welsh history. The powerful political campaign pursued across the second half of the nineteenth century by radical nonconformists centred on disestablishment of the Anglican Church and disintegration of the social and political power of 'landlordism'.³⁰ The narratives constructed to fuel these campaigns have exerted a profound effect on how later historians have interpreted Wales' rural, social, cultural and agricultural pasts.³¹ As David W. Howell has concluded, the political objectives accompanying Welsh national reawakening in the nineteenth century included the creation of a 'myth of oppression' – 'depicting landlords as totally out of sympathy with their tenants' – which had only a tenuous or occasional basis in the reality of lived experience.³² An assessment of coming of age celebrations further challenges, or at least complicates, deeply embedded narratives of gentry anglicisation, alienation and absenteeism. It also contradicts simplistic assertions of irrevocable division and rupture in Welsh valleys and villages between a minority of 'oppressive' landowners and their agents on the one hand, and almost everyone else – characterised as a uniform *gwerin* community – on the other. Welsh-speaking and nonconformist tenants embraced these celebrations as enthusiastically as any other parts of society: there is little evidence that such events were ever boycotted, notwithstanding any underlying grievances and tensions.³³

Even allowing for hyperbole and embellishments within the reporting of a deeply politicised Welsh newspaper press, the extent of active community involvement and genuine celebration is undeniable.³⁴ This was sustained across strained periods, such as the agricultural depression of the 1880s, a period which saw the Welsh Land Question emerge as a major issue in Welsh political discourse, providing the impetus for the establishment of the Welsh Land Commission which reported on the operation of estates and the nature of landowner-tenant relations.³⁵ Landowners were fully aware of the political implications of such demonstrations of attachment and goodwill, and understandably appropriated such occasions as evidence of widespread public acceptance of the landed estate as a mainstay in the life of Wales. As the heir to the Ystradwrallt estate, Vaughan Philipps Stokes (1891-1955), commented at his coming of age celebration in 1913: 'in these days when so much is being done to set class against class and tenant against landlord, it is very gratifying to find that in Carmarthenshire at least, the old order still remains'.³⁶ Efforts to extract political

capital from the event are also evident in *The Carmarthen Journal's* report of the majority of Alan Ralph Peel (1886-1914) of Taliaris Park in 1906:

If Carmarthenshire has one proud boast surely it is that of the excellent relationship which exists between landlords and tenants. Over and over again this most satisfactory state of affairs is referred to at public gatherings of agriculturalists and abundant proof of the truth of the statement is to be found on all occasions when any happy event is celebrated in the family of the landowners. Then the tenants combine to do honour to the family, and the enthusiasm which invariably prevails is sufficient guaranteed that the words are not mere platitudes.³⁷

Addressing tenant-landowner relations

How might such scenes and sentiments of joy and celebration be explained, especially in the context of a prevailing historiography which suggests a pervading picture of antipathy and hostility towards 'landlordism' and a prevalent desire amongst the *gwerin* for emancipation from the structures of the landed estate?

On one level these occasions were about fun and festivity: a rare opportunity to enjoy plentiful food and drink, a day off work and a range of enjoyable activities. This point is put into sharper focus when considering the social and economic conditions of life for large sections of rural Wales, brilliantly depicted by David Williams.³⁸ As the report of a coming of age celebration on the Maesgwynne estate in 1816 noted, the 'plentiful dinner [and] liberal supply of the Welshman's favourite beverage ... contributed to dissipate ... the gloom and melancholy, occasioned by the great and general depression of the farming interest'.³⁹

On another level they were about community, local networks and place: many such occasions morphed into celebrations of locality, an opportunity to assert communal identities, cultural traditions and affiliations, above and beyond the birthday of the heir.

Finally, widespread public engagement was in recognition of the reality of the existing social hierarchy: the influence of the landed estate and the fact that the landowning family at the centre of the occasion could exert a significant impact – positive or negative – on the lives, experiences, wellbeing and future prosperity of individuals, families and entire communities. As the report of Gwynne Hughes' coming of age noted, 'it was *natural* that such an event should be hailed by the inhabitants of Llandilo and the country around it'.

This is not to suggest a continually rosy picture of landowner-tenant harmony: there are abundant examples of grievance, discord, injustice, distrust and protest – illustrated by the attacks on landed property during the Rebecca Riots, the writings of Samuel Roberts ('S. R.', 1800-85), the political evictions associated with the 1859 and 1868 elections, the Capel Llwynrhydowen affair of 1876 and the political traction of the Welsh Land Question, for example.⁴⁰ Many of these instances wrapped up underlying religious, cultural and political differences with social and economic grievance, and were effectively assimilated into a powerful narrative of endemic and longstanding landowner oppression. But few landowners were in the mould of the infamous squire of Peterwell.⁴¹

Widespread participation in coming of age celebrations was not mandated by compulsion but guided by prudence and practicality. The proceedings suggest that tenants and other groups belonging to the Welsh working and middle classes were not voiceless recipients of their local squire's will and authority. At the same time, the communal nature of the occasions imply that public recognition, legitimisation and approval remained an important consideration for landowning families. Coming of age celebrations reflect the reality that much of Welsh society operated within the structural parameters of the landed estate. The necessity and willingness of individuals and communities to live, work and experience life as part of this hierarchal framework persisted until the

mass sale and breakup of estates and country houses in the early-twentieth century, despite the growth in nonconformity, industrialisation and democracy across the previous century. What is often seen in the evidence of coming of age celebrations are active efforts by tenants and other interested groups to use the occasion as a culturally significant moment to delineate and negotiate the bounds of their deference, their position within the estate and their expectations of their current and future landlords.

The centrepiece of a coming of age celebration was always the public recitation and presentation of the address, or in some instances a series of addresses from various interested parties. At Tregib the principal address was delivered in the presence of the assembled crowds once the procession had arrived outside the house. A special platform was sometimes erected for this purpose – allowing all those present to witness the exchanges. The address took a physical form, either as a framed item or an album. The text was usually richly illustrated with iconography relating to the family and locality, and their shared history, and was, in the case of bound albums, accompanied with long lists of subscribers – usually tenants, employees and local inhabitants – who had contributed financially towards its production.⁴² Many of these addresses are still displayed on the walls of country houses across Wales: they were designed to be retained as heirlooms. During the ceremony the address was read out to the heir (in English, Welsh or bilingually) in the presence of the crowd. The wording was usually carefully considered, as in the address presented to Gwynne Hughes in 1879:

To John Williams Gwynne Hughes, Esq., of Tregib

We, the inhabitants of Llandilo and its neighbourhood, in conjunction with the tenantry of your Carmarthenshire Estates, have much pleasure in offering you our most sincere and cordial congratulations on the occasion of your attaining your majority. We rejoice that the true liberality and many other good qualities, which gained for your ancestors the esteem and regard of your countrymen, have been so fully inherited by you: and have much pleasure in availing ourselves of this opportunity to assure you that the name and memory of your forefathers, including those of the ancient race of Gwynne, as well as those who in succession inherited the Tregib Estate, as also your uncles, who for so many years served their Queen and country, at home and abroad, have made a deep and lasting impression on all around you. We wish also to acknowledge the generous and willing assistance rendered by your late father to the town of Llandilo, towards the procuring of a better and more efficient supply of water for its inhabitants, which will be ever gratefully remembered. We further rejoice that we have every reason to believe that you will take an active and diligent part in all public and local matters connected with the administration of the affairs of your native land and county, and thereby prove yourself a worthy successor of your ancestors, and a true scion of the house of Tregib. We feel, therefore, on this happy occasion, unfeigned pride and pleasure in presenting you our congratulations and earnest wishes that you may long live in health and happiness to enjoy the estates to which you have this day succeeded; and, in conclusion, venture to hope that your great love for your native country will induce you to reside permanently amongst us, “*Yn hen wlad y Cymry*”. Signed on behalf of the inhabitants and tenantry, William Philipps, Chairman of the Committee. Llandilo, Nov. 21, 1879.⁴³

This address was formulated by the inhabitants of Llandilo and representatives of the Carmarthenshire tenants of the estate. In its own words, it delivered the congratulations with ‘unfeigned pride and pleasure’: the tone was overwhelmingly positive, lauding praise on the family. In a similar fashion to the tradition of medieval Welsh praise poetry (*canu mawl*), this was not necessarily about creating an accurate record of ‘actual deeds done’; it was more about providing a template or model of desired behaviour: delineating expectations, roles and responsibilities.

The virtues of landownership were often framed in ancestral terms: the Tregib address discussed the ‘name and memory of your forefathers’, ‘the ancient race of Gwynne’ and reminded the heir that his father had played an active part in bringing a water supply to the town. The address created ancestral role models for the young heir – delineating a package of paternalistic expectations and

qualities that Gwynne Hughes should perform in his new role, as inherited from the idealised images constructed of his noble predecessors. The address boldly challenged the heir to 'prove yourself a worthy successor to your ancestors'; and urged him to 'take an active and diligent part in all public and local matters connected with the administration of the affairs of your native land and county'. These sentiments were mirrored in the speeches accompanying the majority of W. F. D. Saunders of Glanrhydwr in 1872: 'He now steps into a position in which he is to uphold the high and honourable character which his ancestors have borne in this country for many generations'.⁴⁴ One of the banners displayed in Llandeilo in 1879 was inscribed with the words: 'May he live to be like his ancestors'. Such statements were designed to shape how the young heir would act and behave as a landowner – what he should do with his position of power and privilege. In publicly receiving such instructions the heir often acknowledged the message in his response, promising to adopt and fulfil the ancestrally framed roles and responsibilities delineated by the address. The extent to which this was achieved in practice, across the lifetime of the landowner, is of course debateable.⁴⁵ But this should not detract from the publicly narrated model of landownership presented through the address and the accompanying belief – however optimistic – that it had the potential to shape behaviour and responsibility.

The formal address was always supplemented with many other speeches during the course of the festivities, including, customarily, from the oldest or principal tenant of the estate. These speeches from tenants usually reiterated the significance of long-term bonds between landowner, tenant and agent; the fact that the functioning of the estate and success of agriculture depended on mutually-beneficial relations between the same; and often praised – as shorthand for subtly demanding – security of tenure and fair rents. These speeches often give the impression that the tenants' affiliation with the estate was as strong, if not stronger than that of the landowning family: presenting a picture of a hereditary community of landowners and tenants with a long-term and shared affiliation to place. As the landowning family proceeded to the next generation, coming of age celebrations provided an opportunity for tenants, and other groups, to reset or reassert relations on the estate, in a public and almost contractual manner. Put simplistically, tenants consented to the hierarchy of the estate which underpinned the social status of the landowner, but in return expected the landowner to conform to the model of prescribed behaviour.

In the context of the proceedings, there is evidence of landowners recognising this negotiated position. As stated by Hugh Frederick Vaughan Campbell (1870-1914) at his coming of age 1891: 'an estate depends on the goodwill that exists between landlord and tenant'; and the previous year young Ernald Richardson had announced at his own majority that he would endeavour to ensure 'that the cordial relations between landlord and tenant, which have existed at Glanbrydan from the time of my grandfather may never be diminished or broken'.⁴⁶ Likewise, in responding to the speeches at his coming of age in 1878, Sir James Williams Drummond (1857-1913) announced that he 'hoped that the respect and affection which has heretofore been shown by all classes towards the old house at Rhydodyn will not fail in my hands'.⁴⁷ The coming of age loaded the heirs to landed estates with the responsibilities of landownership and local leadership.

Delineating landowner roles and responsibilities: residency

The Tregib address, transcribed above, directly referred to one of the issues that was important to tenants across Wales: that their landlord should 'reside permanently amongst us'. Matthew Cragoe and David W. Howell have disproved traditional assertions that there was an endemic problem with absentee landlords in Carmarthenshire, but on individual estates various forms of partial-absenteeism could be problematic.⁴⁸ The Cawdors had lands and interests across Wales, Scotland and England: as articulated by John E. Davies, they were very much a *British* aristocratic family, with an accompanying need to have a physical presence in multiple spheres and domains. At the time of John Frederick Campbell's (1790-1860) coming of age in 1811 it was Stackpole Court in

Pembrokeshire which hosted the primary Welsh celebrations; and it was quite understandable in 1868 when the Gelli Aur tenants ventured the hope that they would see the young heir residing in *their* neighbourhood.⁴⁹

This was also an issue at the coming of age of Gilbert Lloyd Elliot of Dolhaidd in 1875. Since the death of his father, the family had resided in Weston-super-Mare, depriving landlord and tenant of the familiarity, personal connection and mutual understanding of local needs and circumstances which were critical for the successful operation of the estate and its agricultural and societal endeavours.⁵⁰ It is notable that one of the gifts occasionally presented to the heir on his twenty-first birthday was a map or survey of his estate: assisting him to understand his domain and develop a connection with his lands, encouraging him to invest and be a force for good in the locality.⁵¹ This was especially important if the heir had spent long periods away from the locality. Gwynne Hughes, for example, had received his education at private school, Cheltenham College and Jesus College, Oxford. (Re)connecting the heir with his landholdings was an important aspect of coming of age discourse. Tenants of the Royston Court estate in Ferryside delighted in the fact that Reginald Vivian Gery, heir to the estate, 'had been brought up amongst us from childhood' and had 'always been ready to mix with and associate with all of us men, women and the boys of the village on terms of simple humanity and equality'.⁵²

Similar sentiments regarding the importance of landowner residence informed the 'Long life and a Welsh wife' sentiments and mottos regularly delineated at such occasions. Following the attainment of adulthood, the next big lifecycle and dynastic event was marriage: it was regularly asserted that marriage to a Welsh wife would not only encourage residence in Wales, but also a greater retention of Welsh cultural and linguistic sympathies.

Delineating landowner roles and responsibilities: The Welsh language

Concerns about landowner absenteeism linked to another important issue sometimes raised at such celebrations: the ability of the landowner to speak Welsh, especially in parts of Wales where *Cymraeg* remained embedded as the primary language of life. Whilst the Elliot family had been residing in Weston-super-Mare the management of the Dolhaidd estate was entrusted to a relative, Capt. Gwinnett Tyler (1828-86), owner of the Mount Gernos estate in Cardiganshire. In addressing the heir to Dolhaidd at his coming of age celebration, Tyler remarked that:

I feel the great difficulty, I may say responsibility, as between landlord and tenant in not being able to converse in the language of the country. It is one of the greatest drawbacks there is. They should be able to meet together, converse and talk together and live together ... long may these happy feelings between landowner and tenant continue here; and the only way in which they can be maintained is by the landlords learning to converse their tenants in their own language.⁵³

This speech was met with large applause and approval from the congregated tenantry. In the words of Tyler, the inability to speak Welsh was the one thing missing from the heir's otherwise excellent education. Tyler's remarks follow a pattern seen across predominately Welsh-speaking areas of Wales, with many young gentlemen standing up to make their first public appearances on attaining their majorities and apologising for not being able to speak Welsh. By the late-nineteenth century the evidence of coming of age proceedings suggests that this had been recognised as an issue by landowners, with many heirs receiving lessons prior to their majority in order to say a few words in Welsh: efforts that were always appreciated in the public arena of the festivities.

This is not to conclude that all landowners in nineteenth-century Wales were unable to speak Welsh; coming of age celebrations provide examples of a number of small and large estate owners addressing their tenants in Welsh, with varying degrees of fluency. Indeed, the celebrations on estates such as Mostyn in Flintshire, Llanarth in Monmouthshire and Nannau in Merioneth give an

impression of immense Welsh cultural and linguistic immersion. Much more research is required to understand the relationship between Welsh landowners and the Welsh language from the sixteenth to the early-twentieth century.⁵⁴

Irrespective of the Welsh-language capabilities of the heir, the communal nature of such festivities ensured that the Welsh language usually had a prominent presence at such celebrations. Francis Pemberton, heir to the small Mudlescwm estate, in Cydweli, for example, received his address in Welsh at his coming of age in 1906: it is uncertain if he understood its contents.⁵⁵ There are innumerable examples of Welsh-language speeches, banners, praise-poems and songs being performed in celebration of the majorities of Welsh- and non-Welsh-speaking landlords. There is no sense that *Cymraeg* was excluded from such festivities; as with other components of the celebrations, the Welsh language was another element which stressed tradition, heritage and community.

Landowner identities: Performing Britishness and Welshness

The celebrations provide other useful insights into the complex cultural identities of landowners. The formal dinners forming part of the festivities always included a series of toasts and speeches, demonstrating loyalty and association with the royal family, army, Anglican Church and British Empire. The Lord Lieutenant of the county, local MPs (normally fellow landowners until the later-nineteenth century) and Bishop were also toasted. These aspects of the celebration underline that the landed elite in Wales, like the rest of Welsh society, was fully integrated into the British state and invested in a British national identity.⁵⁶ Lawrence Colby (d.1914), heir to the Ffynone and Rhosygilwen estates, had his coming of age celebrations delayed by two years because at the time of his birthday he was away with the Grenadier Guards fighting in South Africa: 'sacrificing home comforts to do duty for his Queen and Country in a foreign land'.⁵⁷ He died on the Western Front during the First World War. Such landlords unquestionably viewed themselves as forming part of the British and English establishment, but rarely to the exclusion of an often-profound expression of Welsh patriotism.

Historians have often interpreted the identity of the gentry and aristocracy in Wales through a binary model of anglicisation, which is too simplistic. More than one landowning family in Carmarthenshire had strong connections to Scotland, for example. At the coming of age celebrations at Edwinsford in 1878, Edwina Augusta Williams, Lady Ferguson Davie (c.1833-89), reminded the crowd that 'although my nephew is on his father's side a Drummond and a Scotsman, I hope and feel sure he will never forget that on his mother's side he is a Williams of old Rhyddyn, and a Welshman'.⁵⁸ Much to the delight of the assembled crowds, the heir to Dinefwr proclaimed in 1894 that: 'I am a Welshman, I am proud to say'.⁵⁹ Ernald Richardson of Glanbrydan announced at his coming of age that 'the happiest days of my life have been spent in dear old Wales, the country in which I have been born and brought up, and you have today cemented the affection I feel towards her'.⁶⁰

Welsh identities were expressed and performed in other ways. The coming of age of Lawrence Colby of Ffynone and Rhosygilwen in 1903 included poetry in English and Welsh, Welsh speeches and the singing of *Hen Wlad fy Nhadau*.⁶¹ The celebrations at Llangennech Park for the coming of age of Glyn Morton Evans in 1895 were boosted with a string of bardic recitations.⁶² Harp music, *penillion*, Welsh songs and tunes were often intermixed with the toasts and speeches at coming of age dinners: these occasions usually had a distinctively Welsh flavour. In some parts of Wales, coming of age (*dyfodiad i'w oed*) celebrations provided an occasion for the composition of numerous Welsh poems, reminiscent of the days when *canu mawl* formed a critical part in the cultural life of the Welsh *plas*. Sometimes, local and regional *eisteddfodau* offered prizes for poems or historical essays relating to a forthcoming celebration.

The Welsh identities and local attachments of landowners were also expressed through ancestral heritage. The heir's long-deceased ancestors often loomed large on such occasions. The celebrations provided impetus for local newspapers to produce lengthy articles on local history, with the activities and achievements of the landowning family occupying a prominent part in such narratives. The coat of arms, crest and mottos of the family – often alluding to historic Welsh ancestral figures – featured prominently in the aesthetics of such celebrations. Speeches from both landowners and tenants habitually referred to ancestors as a means of embedding the family within a Welsh or local historical consciousness. At his coming of age in 1913, Vaughan Philipps Stokes was reminded that the Philipps of Cwmgwili and Ystradwrallt were 'one of the most ancient families in the Principality and dates back to the princes of South Wales – and much of the land has been in their possession from father to son for nearly 500 years'.⁶³ Such statements were often factually problematic, but this did not really matter. They were made to stress or invent deep connections between the family and the locality, adding a sense of legitimacy to the position of leadership and authority inherited by the heir, and loading him with the ancestral weight of responsibility as future custodian and representative of the historic estate.⁶⁴

The reports of Walter Fitz-Uryan Rice's coming of age in 1894 reflected on the significance of these connections, associating the young heir with the memory of Rhodri Fawr (d.878), his namesake, Urien, sixth-century King of Rheged and the exploits of Sir Rhys ap Thomas (1449-1525): 'one of the greatest Welshmen that ever lived'.⁶⁵ The report concluded that:

Llandilo and the house of Dynevor have ever been most closely connected. What is the history of Dynevor is the history of Llandilo, and Llandilo has shared the joys and griefs of Dynevor from the time Dynevor Castle was the abode of the Welsh princes, to the present day.

This cohesive message of a deeply entwined community of landowners and tenants, inhabiting the same place over generations, back into the depths of Welsh history, was incredulous but symbolically highly resonate on such occasions. In this instance, the implication was that the heir had responsibility, as the next representative of Dinefwr, to go on to make his own history: to lead a useful life that would enrich the estate's rich heritage for the benefit of all within the locality.

Conclusion: The decline of Welsh estates

Coming of age celebrations continued into the early-twentieth century and on some estates into the 1950s and '60s, though by this time they were lesser affairs, having lost much of their social and cultural significance.⁶⁶ Their decline followed that of the estates, country houses and families they were created to celebrate and preserve: the mass break-up of landed estates and country houses, especially after the First World War, coupled with the loss of political, social and economic power by landowners in the Welsh countryside, rendering them superfluous.⁶⁷ However, for the nineteenth century, when landed estates still constituted a mainstay in the life of Wales, the insights provided into society and culture by coming of age celebrations are intriguing. In line with traditional interpretations, the centrality of the landowner-tenant relationship emerges from these proceedings as an integral element in Welsh society. The evidence of the face-to-face discourse witnessed on these occasions suggests that this relationship should not be viewed in simplistic terms: an oppressed *gwerin* majority seeking liberation from the tyranny of an alien 'landlordism'. Instead, the proceedings point to the individuals and communities living and working within the hierarchy of a landed estate, which often acted as an important focus for individual and communal identities, and a widespread public willingness to negotiate social roles, responsibilities and expectations within this framework. It is this evidence of direct interaction between tenants and landowners which furnish the best insights into the intricacies of social and cultural identities in the Welsh countryside.

¹ A version of this paper was first presented at Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society's 2020 Annual Conference, *The Landed Estate in South-West Wales*, held at the Carmarthen Campus of the University of Wales Trinity St. David on 22/2/2020. Many thanks to Tom Lloyd for his comments and suggestions. The author is currently preparing a book on *Coming of Age: Estates in Welsh Society, c.1770-1920*, which will expand on the themes of this article.

² D. Williams, *The Rebecca Riots: A study in agrarian discontent* (Cardiff, 1955); H. M. Vaughan, *The South Wales Squires* (London, 1926); F. Jones, *Historic Carmarthenshire homes and their families* (Carmarthen, 1987); L. Baker-Jones, *Princelings, privilege and power: The Tivyside gentry in their community* (Llandysul, 1999).

³ D. W. Howell, *Patriarchs & Parasites: The gentry of south-west Wales in the eighteenth century* (Cardiff, 1986); M. Cragoe, *An Anglican Aristocracy: The moral economy of the landed estate in Carmarthenshire, 1832-1895* (Oxford, 1996). Howell's earlier *Land and People in nineteenth-century Wales* (London, 1977) remains the foundational text for understanding the operation of the landed estate and landowner-tenant relations in nineteenth-century Wales.

⁴ L. A. Rees, 'Middleton Hall and Aberglasney: two Carmarthenshire landed estates and their families, c.1780-1875', Unpublished Aberystwyth University PhD Thesis (2009); M. Thorley, "'What a beastly thing money is': The financial fortunes of the Philippses of Cwmgwili', *The Carmarthenshire Antiquary* 56 (2020), 51-62; John E. Davies, *The Changing Fortunes of a British Aristocratic Family, 1689-1976* (Woodbridge, 2019). Other useful Carmarthenshire case studies include: G. Morgan, *Dinefwr: A Phoenix in Wales* (Llandysul, 2014); D. Owen, *Powell Maesgwynne: Philanthropist, sporting great and Radical hero* (Carmarthen, 2012); A. Dulley, 'The Gwyn estates in Carmarthenshire: the Blaensawdde estate', *The Carmarthenshire Antiquary*, 37 (2001); M. Cragoe, 'The Golden Grove interest in Carmarthenshire politics, 1804-21', *Welsh History Review*, 16, 1 (June, 1992), 467-93; R. J. Colyer, 'The Edwinsford estate in the early nineteenth century', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 26, 2 (1975); L. Baker-Jones, 'Pantglas and the Jones families', *The Carmarthenshire Historian* 12 (1975). See also David T. R. Lewis' valuable series of compilations on the Dolaucothi, Edwinsford, Golden Grove and Aberglasney estates (2012-2020). For further studies consult the index of *The Carmarthenshire Antiquary*.

⁵ For Lowri Ann Rees' contribution to an assessment of these themes see 'Frustrations and fears: The impact of the Rebecca Riots on the land agent in Carmarthenshire, 1843', in L. A. Rees, C. J. Reilly and A. Tindley (eds.), *The Land Agent: 1700-1920* (Edinburgh, 2018); 'Welsh Sojourners in India: The East India Company, Networks and Patronage, c. 1760-1840', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 45, 2 (2017), 165-187; 'Middleton Hall', *East India Company at Home, 1759-1859*, <https://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/eicah/middleton-hall-case-study/>; 'Aberglasney', *East India Company at Home, 1759-1859*, <https://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/eicah/aberglasney-case-study/> (Accessed 26/6/2021). For the architecture of Carmarthenshire's country houses and estates see T. Lloyd, J. Orbach and R. Scourfield, *The Buildings of Wales: Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion* (New Haven 2016) and for a survey of designed landscapes see *Historic Parks and Gardens of Carmarthenshire* (Welsh Historic Gardens Trust, 2016).

⁶ Williams, *Rebecca Riots*, p. 68; Cragoe, *Anglican Aristocracy*, p. 26.

⁷ For previous assessments of Carmarthenshire coming of age celebrations see Howell, *Patriarchs*, p. 184 and Baker-Jones, *Tivyside Gentry*, pp. 196-201.

⁸ The reconstruction of the day's proceedings, outlined in the paragraphs below, is based on the lengthy report in *The Welshman*, 28 November 1879, p. 6. Unless otherwise stated, all newspaper reports referenced in this article derive from the National Library of Wales' invaluable *Welsh Newspapers Online* resource: <https://newspapers.library.wales/>.

⁹ *The Welshman*, 31 October 1879, p. 2.

¹⁰ For the history of the Tregib estate see Jones, *Carmarthenshire Homes*, p. 186; F. Jones, 'Taliaris', *Archaeologia Cambrensis* CXVII (1968), 157-71.

¹¹ For the Glanbrydan festivities see *The Carmarthen Journal*, 8 August 1890, pp. 2-3; 15 August 1890, p. 5; *The Cambrian*, 1 August 1890, p. 8; 8 August 1890, p. 7. For the Gelli Aur celebrations see *The Carmarthen Journal*, 18 September 1891, p. 5; *The Western Mail*, 17 September 1891, p. 6; *The South Wales Daily News*, 18 September 1891, p. 6. See also Martin Connop Price's notes on the railway and the gentry in this volume.

¹² Howell, *Patriarchs*, p. 184.

¹³ Reports printed in *The Welshman* and *Llanelly Guardian* transcribed in D. T. R. Lewis, *A History of the Edwinsford and Clovelly communities* (2017), pp. 32-36. I am grateful to David Lewis for a copy of the book.

¹⁴ *The South Wales Daily Post*, 7 September 1894, p. 4; *The Western Mail*, 7 September 1894, p. 6

¹⁵ *The Carmarthen Journal*, 18 March 1892, p. 3.

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- ¹⁶ *The Welshman*, 22 January 1875, p. 6.
- ¹⁷ P. Jenkins, *The making of a ruling class: The Glamorgan gentry 1640-1790* (Cambridge, 1983); M. Humphreys, *The crisis of community: Montgomeryshire 1680-1815* (Cardiff, 1996); P. R. Roberts, 'The decline of the Welsh squires in the eighteenth century', *National Library of Wales Journal* 13 (1963-64), 157-73. See also G. H. Jenkins, *The foundations of modern Wales: Wales 1642-1780* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 93-102, 261-72.
- ¹⁸ Howell, *Patriarchs*, pp. 7-49, 223-26.
- ¹⁹ *South Wales Daily Post*, 21 August 1895, p. 4; *South Wales Daily News*, 13 February 1890, p. 3; *The Welshman*, 14 February 1890, p. 8. Reports of the Glanbrydan festivities are referenced above. For the backgrounds of these families and estates see Jones, *Carmarthenshire Homes*, pp. 25, 74, 105-06.
- ²⁰ *The Cambrian*, 21 September 1900, p. 7; *The Carmarthenshire Weekly Reporter*, 10 January 1902, p. 2; *The Welshman*, 3 March 1905, p. 8; *The Carmarthen Weekly Reporter*, 3 March 1905, (Supplement), p. 2; *The Carmarthen Journal*, 29 January 1915, p. 5.
- ²¹ *The Welshman*, 31 October 1879, p. 3; *The North Wales Express*, 28 November 1879, p. 5.
- ²² *The Carmarthen Journal*, 5 October 1811, p. 3; 16 November 1811, p.3; 23 November 1811, p. 3; 30 November 1811, p. 3. Many thanks to John Davies for his notes on the Cawdor celebrations.
- ²³ Referenced in Howell, *Patriarchs*, p. 184.
- ²⁴ *The Welshman*, 16 March 1849, p. 2.
- ²⁵ This is discussed in P. Morgan, 'From a death to a view: The hunt for the Welsh past in the Romantic period', in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.), *The invention of tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 43-100.
- ²⁶ *The Western Mail*, 22 December 1876, p. 8.
- ²⁷ *The Cambrian*, 21 September 1900, p. 7; *The Welshman*, 21 February 1868, p. 6.
- ²⁸ *The Welshman*, 28 November 1879, p. 2.
- ²⁹ 'Alltyroddyn mugs', *Casgliad y Werin Cymru | People's Collection Wales*, <https://www.peoplescollection.wales/items/388135> (Accessed 25/6/2021).
- ³⁰ I. Gwynedd Jones, *Explorations and Explanations: essays in the social history of Victorian Wales* (Llandysul, 1981); K. O. Morgan, *Wales in British Politics, 1868-1922* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 1-27; M. Cragoe, *Culture, Politics and National Identity in Wales, 1832-1886* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 142-72.
- ³¹ For similar conclusions see G. Elwyn Jones, *Modern Wales: A concise history* (2nd edn., Cambridge, 1994), pp. 158-61; P. Jenkins, 'Seventeenth-century Wales: definition and identity', in B. Bradshaw and P. Roberts (eds.), *British consciousness and identity: The making of Britain, 1533-1707* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 235. See also F. M. L. Thompson, Review of Cragoe, *Anglican Aristocracy*, *Welsh History Review* 19, 1 (June, 1998), 168-70.
- ³² Howell, *Land and People*, pp. 42, 149, 151.
- ³³ The political tensions surrounding the coming of age of John Davies Lloyd of Alltyroddyn in 1871 will be considered in the author's forthcoming book on the subject.
- ³⁴ For the Welsh newspaper press in the nineteenth century see A. G. Jones, *Press, politics and society: A history of journalism in Wales* (Cardiff, 1993). The politicisation of land in the Welsh press is considered in S. Evans, "'The battle of the Welsh nation against landlordism': The response of the North Wales Property Defence Association to the Welsh Land Question, c.1886-1896", in S. Evans, T. Mc Carthy and A. Tindley (eds.), *Land Reform in the British and Irish Isles since 1800* (Edinburgh, forthcoming 2021). Of the newspapers most frequently referenced in this article, *The Carmarthen Journal* was a consistent proponent of Toryism and Anglicanism; *The South Wales Daily Post* was also Conservative leaning. *The Carmarthen Weekly Reporter* was more Liberal in its political sentiment; and *The Welshman* an English-language vehicle of Welsh radicalism. Welsh-language newspapers have not been consulted in the preparation of this article.
- ³⁵ For an excellent summary see D. Ll. Thomas, *Welsh Land Commission: A digest of its report* (London, 1896).
- ³⁶ *The Carmarthen Journal*, 24 October 1913, p. 5.
- ³⁷ *The Carmarthen Journal*, 12 February 1909, p. 7.
- ³⁸ Williams, *Rebecca Riots*, pp. 62-117.
- ³⁹ *The Carmarthen Journal*, 25 February 1916, p. 3, quoting an article from the same publication dated 1 March 1816.
- ⁴⁰ Important works on these themes include L. A. Rees, 'Paternalism and rural protest: the Rebecca riots and the landed interest of south-west Wales', *Agricultural History Review* 59, 1 (June 2011), 36-60; M. Cragoe, "'A Contemptible Mimic of the Irish': The Land Question in Victorian Wales", in M. Cragoe and P. Readman (eds.), *The Land Question in Britain, 1750-1950* (London, 2010), pp. 92-108; M. Cragoe, 'The Anatomy of an Eviction Campaign: the General Election of 1868 in Wales and its aftermath', *Rural History*, 9 (1998), 177-93; J. Graham Jones, 'Michael Davitt, David Lloyd George and T. E. Ellis: The Welsh Experience, 1886', *Welsh History Review* 18, 3 (1997), 450-82; D. J. V. Jones, *Rebecca's Children: A study of rural society, crime and protest* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 45-98; P. Jones-Evans, 'Evan Pan Jones – Land Reformer', *Welsh History Review* 4, 2 (1968), 143-59;

I. Gwynedd Jones, 'Merioneth politics in mid-nineteenth century: the politics of a rural economy', *Journal of the Merioneth Historical and Record Society* 5 (1965-8), 273-334. See also Baker-Jones, *Tivyside Gentry*, pp. 292-305.

⁴¹ B. Phillips, *Peterwell: The history of a mansion and its infamous squire* (Lampeter, 1997).

⁴² For a general survey see J. P. Wilson, *Beauty in Letters: A selection of illuminated addresses* (London, 2021). I am grateful to Tom Lloyd for this reference.

⁴³ The address was reproduced in *The Welshman*, 28 November 1879, p. 6, which is the source of this transcription. The original was printed and mounted by Mr. J. Lockyer, printer and stationer of Llandeilo.

⁴⁴ *The Welshman*, 4 October 1872, p. 3.

⁴⁵ A typically complimentary obituary to J. W. Gwynne Hughes is printed in *The Carmarthen Journal*, 5 January 1917, p. 5 which compares favourably with the 'instructions' delineated in his coming of age address. However, in seeking to assess the character, achievements and popular opinion of individual landowners, historians should treat obituaries with extreme care.

⁴⁶ *The Cambrian*, 1 August 1890, p. 8; *The Carmarthen Journal*, 18 September 1891, p. 5.

⁴⁷ Transcribed in Lewis, *Edwinstford*, pp. 32-36.

⁴⁸ Howell, *Patriarchs*, pp. 214-15; Howell, *Land and People*, pp. 42-43; Cragoe, *Anglican Aristocracy*, p. 16, f/n. 10.

⁴⁹ *The Carmarthen Journal*, 16 November 1811, p. 3; *The Welshman*, 21 February 1868, p. 6.

⁵⁰ *The Welshman*, 22 January 1875, p. 6.

⁵¹ *The South Wales Daily Post*, 21 August 1895, p. 4.

⁵² *The Carmarthen Weekly Reporter*, 28 July 1910, (Supplement), p. 2.

⁵³ *The Welshman*, 22 January 1875, p. 6.

⁵⁴ The best analysis of the gentry's use of the Welsh language is R. J. Moore-Colyer, 'Landowners, farmers and language in the nineteenth century', in G. H. Jenkins (ed.), *The Welsh Language and its Social Domains, 1801-1911* (Cardiff, 2000), pp. 505-32. See also W. Ogwen Williams, 'The survival of the Welsh language after the Union of England and Wales, 1536-1642', *Welsh History Review* 2, 1 (1964), 67-93. For Carmarthenshire see Baker-Jones, *Tivyside Gentry*, pp. 306-19.

⁵⁵ *The Carmarthen Weekly Reporter*, 20 July 1906, (Supplement), p. 2.

⁵⁶ J. Davies, 'Victoria and Victorian Wales', in G. H. Jenkins and J. Beverley Smith (eds.), *Politics and Society in Wales, 1840-1922* (Cardiff, 1998), pp. 7-28.

⁵⁷ *The Carmarthen Journal*, 28 August 1903, p. 5.

⁵⁸ Transcribed in Lewis, *Edwinstford*, pp. 32-36.

⁵⁹ *The South Wales Daily Post*, 7 September 1894, p. 4; *The Western Mail*, 7 September 1894, p. 6.

⁶⁰ *The Cambrian*, 1 August 1890, p. 8.

⁶¹ *The Carmarthen Journal*, 28 August 1903, p. 5.

⁶² *The South Wales Daily Post*, 21 August 1895, p. 4.

⁶³ *The Carmarthen Journal*, 24 October 1913, p. 5.

⁶⁴ For the importance and manipulation of ancestry in nineteenth-century Wales see S. Evans, 'Inventing the Bosworth tradition: Richard ap Hywel, the "King's Hole" and the Mostyn family image in the nineteenth century', *Welsh History Review* 29, 2 (December, 2018), 218-53.

⁶⁵ *The South Wales Daily Post*, 7 September 1894, p. 4; *The Western Mail*, 7 September 1894, p. 6.

⁶⁶ For a post-war example see the reports of the coming of age of Grismond Picton Philipps of Cwmgwili: *The Carmarthen Journal*, 23 May 1919, p. 6; *The Carmarthen Weekly Reporter*, 23 May 1919, p. 6.

⁶⁷ For context see J. Davies, 'The end of the great estates and the rise of freehold farming in Wales', *Welsh History Review* 7, 2 (December 1974), 186-212; T. Lloyd, *The Lost houses of Wales: A survey of country houses in Wales demolished since c.1900* (2nd edn., London, 1989); Vaughan, *South Wales Squires*.

Postscript: The author would be grateful for any evidence of coming of age celebrations in Wales prior to 1770 and would also welcome information about any commemorative ware and illuminated addresses associated with Carmarthenshire coming of age celebrations. Please contact at shaun.evans@bangor.ac.uk.