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Wyn Roberts: The Blue Dragon?

Conservatism, Welsh Patriotism and North Wales c. 1970s- 1990s.

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Wyn Roberts: The Blue Dragon?
Conservatism, Welsh Patriotism and North Wales c. 1970s-
1990s.

By Matthew William Day

Bangor University 2022



Abstract

Lord Roberts of Conwy or Sir Wyn Roberts MP is a figure who remains largely unknown within Welsh and British politics. Wyn Roberts remains an unusual figure within politics as he was both Welsh and Conservative, two terms oft coined as contradictory.

In his time at the Welsh Office Wyn Roberts was responsible for a plethora of ideas which helped to radically change the political landscape of Wales, including his most important achievement of passing the Welsh Language Act of 1993. Whilst Wyn Roberts is certainly neglected in the British political historiography, he is also often unmentioned in the history of Wales. This thesis looks at the life, ideas, and policies of Sir Wyn Roberts to determine his importance to modern Wales, by examining his career, his Welshness and his British unionism. It will examine his identity to ascertain what his ideals were, and this thesis will then explore how this impacted upon Wales. It adds to the growing corpus of Conservative history of Wales, an area of historiography which contains many lacunas, but is gradually burgeoning. This thesis will make extensive use of the diaries of Lord Roberts of Conwy in the National Library of Wales, which contain no less than 18 volumes worth of entries from a man who spent 30 years at the front line of politics in Britain. His diaries will be used in conjunction with material from local archives in north Wales and Parliamentary sources to trace what Wyn Roberts did for Wales and how this resonated with his own ideals. A key focus will be provided on themes including cultural nationalism, the Welsh language, the A55 road-construction project, the projection of a 'global' Wales and Roberts's position in the tumult of the 1990s for the Conservative Party. This thesis contends that there was a Welsh Conservative strain of thought, dubbed the Blue Dragon, of which Wyn Roberts was a central proponent. It is largely a political strand which seeks to preserve and foster what it means to be Welsh, though in a Conservative, and mostly British unionist, context.

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Abbreviations.

- TWW, Television Wales and West.
- CCO, Conservative Central Office.
- CPA, Conservative Party Archive.
- NLW, National Library of Wales.
- WPA, Welsh Political Archive.
- WRD, Wyn Roberts Diaries.
- WLS, Welsh Language Society
- WLA, Welsh Language Act.
- ERAW, Education Reform Act (Wales)

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Introduction

Has there ever been a Welsh Politician who has achieved more for Welsh identity and culture than Sir Wyn? But, yet again too many commentators and historians obsess about devolution referendums and disregard everything that does not suit their narrative.¹

This is an apt question put by the then leader of the Welsh Conservatives Paul Davies in 2020. To put it simply, and as will be contended in this thesis, no, there has never been a politician who has done so much for Wales as Wyn Roberts (MP for Conway 1970-82 then Conwy 1982-1997) but remained so unrecognised in the wider Welsh historiography. In this instance we are talking about a rarer breed of Welsh politician, a Welsh Conservative politician. Though there are many Conservative MPs who come from Wales, in this case it is a Welsh Conservative who remained loyal to both the party but also to his sense of Welsh identity.

In this Paul Davies could be construed as being technically correct, historians in Wales tend to focus heavily on the devolution narrative and the historiography of Welsh nationalism through the prism of Plaid Cymru (and Labour), thus side-lining the Conservative Party in Wales and individuals such as Roberts. Paul Davies' statement has a lot of similarities to one of Wyn Roberts' last ever diary entries.

'The Welsh approach to history is also veering to make devolution the climax of our achievement... Historians are a mercurial lot, slavishly interpreting the past to please those who dominate the present. History is indeed written by the winners.'²

This passage demonstrates that Roberts' thought extended much further than politics. Wyn Roberts' statement has many similarities with the statement given by Paul Davies. If the claim of Paul Davies is accepted, then it suggests that Wyn Roberts' prediction at the end of the millennium was indeed accurate, making it a valid pathway to examining what was Wyn

¹ Paul Davies MS, 'We will revolutionise access to our history and culture – and in every part of Wales,' 7 August 2020, Welsh Conservatives Blog.

² Lord Roberts of Conwy, *Right from the Start: The Memoirs of Sir Wyn Roberts*, (Cardiff, 2006) p.1

Roberts's political identity, and what did he do for Wales? The year 2020 marks 50 years since Lord Roberts of Conwy, then known simply as Wyn Roberts, was first elected as an MP for the Welsh constituency of Conwy. As a Welsh Conservative, a term Labour politician Barbara Castle once coined as being contradictory, he was a rare breed within Welsh politics.

In the popular sphere Wales is often considered to be part of the heartlands of the Labour Party, true when taken into consideration the implications of the 1997 general election or even the 1995 local government election in Wales: in both the Welsh Conservatives faced an electoral failure in Wales they had never seen before or have ever seen since, including gaining zero MPs in 1997. However recent elections challenge this view to a certain degree, the 2019 general election saw the Conservative Party win 14 seats Welsh seats, including two that had belonged to Labour for decades, Wrexham has been labour since 1935.³ Between the elections of 2015 and 2017 even Gower went Conservative.⁴ The 2019 results were also a repeat of 1983 result which also saw 14 Welsh seats go to the Conservatives, with one of the MPs in these seats being Wyn Roberts. Ironically, it stands as a monument to how indelible Wyn Roberts was for the Welsh Conservatives when he was the one of few from the 1970s group still standing by the 1997 general election, when he entered the House of Lords as Lord Roberts of Conwy.

This PhD examines aspects of the life, ideas, and identities of Lord Roberts of Conwy, to ascertain the nature of Welsh Conservatism and the contributions of one individual to the Welsh people and to Wales. Roberts is an archetype of Welsh Conservatism, speaking Welsh as his first language from childhood to his death in 2013. This thesis will argue that a type of Welsh Conservatism existed within the party, even though it is typically described as the party of England or British unionism. Dubbed the Blue Dragon, this type of conservatism flourished in Wales under the Welsh Office in Roberts's period. The term 'Blue Dragon' has previously been used to refer to the Welsh Conservatives, on example is Mike Benbough-Jackson's article for the *Planet*.⁵

³ Stephen Morris, 'Things can't get worse': Wrexham turns Tory amid Welsh Labour losses,' *The Guardian*, 13 December 2019.

⁴ Stefan Rhys, 'General Election 2015: Gower won by Conservatives for first time since 1906,' *Wales Online*, 8 May 2015

⁵ Mike Benbough-Jackson, 'Diagnosing the Blue Dragon Blues: The Dilemma of the Welsh Conservatives,' *Planet*, 150 (2002) pp.62-69

Welshness and the issue of identity is a contentious and hotly contested topic within the histories and historiography of Wales. If one were to look at any primary examples, the overarching theme of this identity, of which a consensus is reached, is that of the language question in Wales. Since devolution, and the immediate aftermath of the establishment of the National Assembly in Wales, the question of identity became increasingly politicised amongst political parties.^{6 7} With the Conservative party having to work the hardest of all to establish its own Welsh agenda, which is surprising as the below table shows post 1945 the Conservative party has consistently placed second in General Elections in Wales.

General Election Years.	Labour Party % Of Welsh votes.	Conservative Party.	Liberal Party.	Plaid Cymru
1945	58.6%	23.8%	14.9%	1.1%
1950	58.1%	27.4%	12.6%	1.2%
1951	60.5%	30.8%	7.6%	0.7%
1955	57.6%	29.9%	7.3%	3.1%
1959	56.4%	32.6%	5.3%	5.2%
1964	57.8%	29.4%	7.3%	4.8%
1966	60.7%	27.9%	6.3%	4.3%
1970	51.6%	27.7%	6.8%	11.5%
1974 (October)	49.5%	23.9%	15.5%	10.8%
1979	47.0%	32.2%	10.6%	8.1%
1983	37.5%	31.0%	23.2%	7.8%
1987	45.1%	29.5%	17.9%	7.3%
1992	49.5%	28.6%	12.4%	8.9%
1997	54.7%	19.6%	12.3%	9.9%

Figure 3: General Election vote share for Wales.⁸

Each party - the Conservatives, Labour and Plaid Cymru – have been identified with their own ideologies and ‘branding’ regarding the notion of a Welsh national identity. Plaid Cymru

⁶ J. Bradbury & R. Andrews, ‘State Devolution and national identity: continuity and change in the politics of Welshness and Britishness in Wales,’ in *Parliamentary Affairs*, 63.2 (2009) pp.229-249

⁷ S. Williams, ‘The Politics of Welshness: A response to Bradbury and Andrews,’ *Parliamentary Affairs*, 71.2 (2017) pp.305-323

⁸ Matthew Leeke, ‘UK Election Statistics: 1945-2003,’ House of Commons Library, Research Paper 03/59, 1st July 2003. p.12.

carries the claim ‘the party of Wales,’⁹ Labour, who have always retained solid support base in the South Wales valleys, areas associated with ‘Welsh Wales.’ The Conservatives were often seen as an English/British party, consistently anti-Welsh: an image that Wyn Roberts undermines to a degree. Due to this, the Conservatives too have had to work harder than any other party to attempt to establish a Welsh Identity for the party, especially, after Secretary of State for Wales, John Redwood’s attempt at miming the Welsh anthem in 1994 where his gesticulations demonstrated how much the main party was out of touch with Wales and Welsh heritage, and permanently damaged their reputation for the rest of the decade.

In the post-devolution world, the Conservatives had succeeded at gaining some form of a Welsh identity, Nick Bourne’s speech to the Conservative Party conference in 2007 offered a glimpse of this vision.¹⁰ Bourne, leader of the Conservatives in the Welsh Assembly, was seen as Welshifying the Tories, with a shift in the party view to being in favour of the existing levels of Devolution. The party adapted well to Devolution since this existed as another level of a multi-level governance environment (and one that ensured representation for them due to the element of proportional representation in Assembly elections), certainly better than they did in the 1990s. Put simply, the party has often had an issue with identity crises in Wales it often finds its Welsh identity then just as often forgets what this means.

As Simon Brooks argues, ‘Welsh Conservatism was loyal to British institutions like the church and crown and... could maintain a communitarian identity.’¹¹ At the same time the party itself is often referred to as being the English Tory Party for much of its history, Welsh Conservatism does exist, as do Welsh Conservatives, though it is important to note that a Welsh Conservative is different to a Conservative from Wales. The first typically embodies Conservative politics tailored towards Wales, whilst the other could fall into the category of simply being Conservative who by geographical randomness happens to be from Wales or representing a seat in Wales. As Emily Jones puts it Conservatism in its raw form is belief in the organic nature, of both society and in politics; coupled with both a reverence for history and tradition. Finally, respect for both religion and order. (lowercase) c/Conservative

⁹ Plaid Cymru, The Party of Wales, website <http://www2.partyof.wales/> (Last accessed 18 May 2018)

¹⁰ Nick Bourne, ‘A New Conservative vision for Wales,’ Conservative Party Conference, 1 October 2007.

¹¹ Simon Brookes, *Pam Na Fu Cymru: Methiant Cenedlaetholdeb Cymraeg*, (Why Wales Never Was: The Failure of Welsh Nationalism) (Cardiff, 2015) p.51

indicates the political tradition of a party, whereas (Uppercase) C/conservative is an intellectual tradition.¹² Wyn Roberts was a Welsh Conservative, a living embodiment of a Conservative Welsh identity that existed prior to devolution and the modern attempts to embrace Welshness. Indeed, the thought and actions of Roberts may have garnered them some electoral success. Though, as shown above, the Tories had embraced the Welsh dimension to greater appeal post-devolution, Wyn Roberts existed as a form of the Welsh dimension in the party in an era prior to devolution.

Sam Blaxland, the key and pioneering historian of the Conservative Party in late 20th century Wales, has noted the Conservatives have examined what made them unelectable in Wales.¹³ Historically, the party has always forgotten the lessons it learned surrounding their own Welsh identity, leading to concrete attempts to examine the Conservative's role in a devolved Wales.¹⁴ However, even prior to the post devolution attempts of Welsh identification in the Conservative Party, it is known that the Conservatives spent some time examining what was christened as the 'Welsh Dimension' of British Politics. The evidence for this exists in the 1975 report of the same name which argued that a lot of the candidates were 'too posh' or Anglican for Wales.¹⁵ This does not mean to say that the party did not possess an element of the Welsh Dimension they did in the form of Wyn Roberts.

Under the efforts of Wyn Roberts, the road network, across north Wales in particular, expanded; more people owned their own houses, foreign investment in Wales increased exponentially as did the amount spent on Wales, and the future of the language was even more certain thanks to his efforts. It is important to note that it was not solely due to him that all this happened, but without him much less would have happened in and for Wales. This thesis shall contend that the Conservatives had a vital asset in the possession of, and actions of, Lord Roberts of Conwy: he existed as the exemplar 'Blue Dragon'. Though the party promptly failed to utilise him as an invaluable addition to the Welsh identity of Conservatives – he never achieved the main Cabinet role of being Secretary of State for

¹² Emily Jones, *Edmund Burke & the Invention of Modern Conservatism, 1830-1914*, (Oxford, 2017)

¹³ Sam Blaxland, 'The Conservative Party in Wales 1945-1997,' PhD thesis, Swansea University, (2017) p.361

¹⁴ David Melding AM, *'Have we been anti-Welsh? An essay on the Conservative Party and the Welsh Nation,'* (2005)

¹⁵ 'The Welsh Dimension Report' 1975, Conservative Party Archive, Bodleian Library, Oxford University. CRD 4/15/4/2

Wales -he did not fail to utilise the Conservative Party, and their access to levers of power, to better the cause of Wales. Wyn Roberts exists almost as a hitherto unacknowledged Welsh political hero for the Conservative Party, adding to the pantheon of political heroes affiliated to the other parties in Wales: David Lloyd George for the Liberals, Aneurin Bevan for Labour, and Gwynfor Evans as Plaid's mythical 'Gwynfor'. A political biography of Wyn Roberts therefore makes practical and historiographical sense.

A short biography of Wyn Roberts.

It stands to reason that this thesis will not be a comprehensive overview of the whole life of Wyn Roberts, and since it explores specific themes that can be tied to broader sentiments in Wales and in British politics, a short biography is provided here to provide an overview of his early years and pre-politics career. It is followed by a summary of his years in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords. This thesis maintains focus on his years in the House of Commons, from 1970 until 1997 when Roberts joined the House of Lords, with a particular focus of the governments of both Margaret Thatcher and John Major.

Ieuan Wyn Pritchard Roberts was born in Llansadwrn, Anglesey on the 13th of July 1930. His father the Reverend Evan Roberts was a Methodist minister at Capel Penucheldref, and writer of a weekly column in the Methodist theological publication *Y Goleuad*. His mother Margaret Roberts was a teacher at the local school.

Wyn Roberts was a first language Welsh speaker and fully bilingual speaking English also. This was to be expected from a middle-class family in Wales at the time, as the career expectations would have required the use of English as well as Welsh. Similarly, this reflected the inter-generational change prominent in Wales, from religious tendencies to media and education respectively that all drove towards the use of English. The family were generally Liberal of the old Lloyd George tradition, though in his lifetime Wyn Roberts would, of course, become a prominent member of the Conservative Party in Wales.

With the passing of the 11-plus exam and the winning of a scholarship this allowed for a young Wyn Roberts to go to the prestigious Harrow School in London, a world away from life at the Beaumaris County school. After Harrow he went on to do his military national service, as was expected in the period, with the King's Royal Rifle Corps. Roberts was based

in Vienna in 1949, he was involved in a phone tapping operation in which he tapped a telephone cable which linked to the Russian's Headquarters. This would later form part of a larger phone tapping operation in Berlin, known then as 'Operation Silver.'¹⁶

Thereafter, he won another scholarship to go to University College Oxford in which he read History and where his interest in politics was reported to be minimal. Politics was his passion and was something he would come to discover later in journalism. After graduating he did an apprenticeship with the *Daily Post* in Liverpool between 1952-1954 as a sub-editor. Coincidentally the north Wales version of this was also the local newspaper of his childhood. Then between the years of 1954-57 he was a news assistant for the BBC. For the period of 1957-1968, he was involved in the early years of Welsh commercial television for Television Wales and the West. His specialist areas in TWW were in news, special events and in the Welsh Language element of the company, and from 1963 he served in the role as an executive producer for TWW. He worked for TWW until 1968 and then for its replacement HTV (Harlech). It was from his time at TWW that his interest in politics emerged, and his distaste of TWW's replacement that caused Wyn Roberts' career change toward politics.¹⁷

In 1970 the year when the Edward Heath government was elected, was the period in which Wyn Roberts became a Member of Parliament for the Conway constituency, (later called Conwy after the 1983 constituency changes) as a Welsh Conservative MP. For his second career he started off as a Parliamentary Private Secretary (PPS), "the place of which recruitment to the frontbenches begins."¹⁸ As PPS to Peter Thomas the then Secretary of State for Wales from 1970-74 it was his role to, "hear and keep his minister in touch with backbench opinion and channel comments and complaints to him."¹⁹ This Roberts would do, enabling him to delve into the foundations of Conservative structures and governance.

¹⁶ Gordon Corera, *MI6: Life and Death in the British Secret Service*, (London, 2011)

¹⁷ Lord Roberts of Conwy, *Right from the Start: The Memoirs of Sir Wyn Roberts*, (Cardiff, 2006) p.71

¹⁸ Philip Buck, 'The Early Start towards Cabinet Office, 1918-55,' in *the Western Political Quarterly*, 16.3 (1963) pp.624-632

¹⁹ R.K. Alderman & J.A. Cross, *The Parliamentarian*, (1967)

Having been sworn in as an MP on the 30th June 1970.²⁰ Wyn Roberts delivered his maiden speech on the 9th July 1970,²¹ stating.

“I am told that a speech need not be interminable to be immortal. I am happy to assure hon. Members that this maidenly performance has no ambition to be either... Like most of North Wales, my constituency is full of poetry, and occasionally the poetry is peppered with politics...”²²

Such allusion to the Welsh language culture in his first remarks in Parliament demonstrates Wyn Roberts’ attachment, and indeed love, of Welsh culture, and he repeated the point several times throughout his maiden speech. Afterwards his mentions in the House of Commons are scant for 1970 though given his timing was barely weeks before the summer recess of Parliament this is perhaps understandable. For the rest of the 1970s Wyn Roberts came to be known as being an incredibly active Member of Parliament. 1974-79 saw him as opposition spokesman for Wales having won again in the 1974 general election with a 2,806 majority of the Conway votes.²³ Roberts saw his next major promotion from a PPS to the next rung of the political ladder, a Parliamentary Undersecretary of State (hereafter abbreviated to PUSS) for the Welsh Office in 1979. The USS is a role in which a junior MP of the governing party assists a Secretary of State.²⁴ A role of somewhat dubious importance for, “No one who hasn’t been a PUSS has any conception of how unimportant a PUSS is.”²⁵ Though a role of doubtful significance, he was still at the fore of Westminster politics for the period. It was in 1987 that the final promotion of a career in the House of Commons came to Wyn Roberts when he became a full Minister of State for the Welsh Office after that year’s 1987 general election, he served as a minister in the Welsh Office from 1979-1995.

After an illustrious career in parliament and elevation to Sir Wyn Roberts in 1991 he would play an active role in the government of John Major, to the extent that Major often consulted

²⁰ Hansard, HC Deb 30 June 1970 vol. 803 cc15-32 c.297

²¹ Hansard, HC Deb 9 July 1970 vol. 803 cc860-988 c.890

²² Hansard, HC Deb 9 July 1970, vol. 803 cc860-988 c.890

²³ 1974 General Election Results, Feb, <http://www.ukpolitical.info/1974Feb.htm> Oct, <http://www.ukpolitical.info/1974Oct.htm> (Last Accessed 17 August 2018)

²⁴ Cabinet Office, *Cabinet manual*, (1st Ed.) HM Government (October 2011) pp.21-28

²⁵ Comment by the Duke of Devonshire, in Philip Ziegler, ‘Cavendish, Andrew Robert Buxton II, Duke of Devonshire 1920-2004,’ in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford, 2008)

Wyn Roberts on most issues to do with Welsh affairs. His most favourable achievement came in the form of the passing of the Welsh Language Act in 1993²⁶ which elevated the position of the Welsh language amongst public bodies in Wales. Several obituaries of Roberts have credited him as responsible, painting him almost as the critical insider who oversaw the passage of the act.²⁷ Similarly, Roberts was credited by Welsh Liberal Lord Hooson for the act, who stated in a Lords debate, “For years Sir Wyn has pursued a persistent and dogged path on this issue.”²⁸ However, the Welsh language and political devolution were separate elements for Roberts, and in 1997 he was against the passing of Welsh Devolution for the Welsh, replicating his ‘no’ vote in the previous devolution referendum in 1979 citing economic reasons as to why he was against it. However, later Roberts would become instrumental in the formative years of the National Assembly for Wales.

Upon retirement from the House of Commons, 1997 saw Wyn Roberts’ elevation to the House of Lords as the Baron Roberts of Conwy, of Talyfan in the County of Gwynedd, better known as the Lord Roberts of Conwy in 1997.²⁹ He would serve as the leading Welsh Conservative in the House of Lords and would play an active part in post devolution Wales, assuring his lifelong belief that devolution must be controlled from Westminster came in its entirety.³⁰ This is not an entirely differing view from the belief once stated by Aneurin Bevan,³¹ albeit 50 years earlier that there was room for political devolution (albeit not in the economic sense). After publishing his memoirs in 2006³² Roberts semi-retired from the House of Lords in 2007, though would serve on the Silk Commission looking at greater powers for the Welsh Assembly, during David Cameron’s premiership. Wyn Roberts died in the village of Rowen, Conwy on 13th December 2013.³³

²⁶ Welsh Language Act 1993, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1993/38/contents> (Last Accessed 17 August 2018)

²⁷ ‘Obituary: Lord Roberts of Conwy,’ in *BBC News*, 14 December 2013.

²⁸ Hansard, HL Deb, 19 January 1993, vol.541 c.853

²⁹ Hansard, HL Deb, 5 November 1997, cc1398-1450 c.1407

³⁰ Lord Roberts of Conwy, *Right from the Start: The Memoirs of Sir Wyn Roberts*, (Cardiff, 2006) p.71

³¹ Aneurin Bevan also held the view that governance should come from Westminster.

³² Lord Roberts of Conwy, *Right from the Start*: (Cardiff, 2006)

³³ ‘Lord Roberts of Conwy – obituary,’ in *The Telegraph*, 17 December 2013

Historiography.

Four Welsh Historical Traditions?

Labour.

On Welsh historiography, Martin Johnes wrote,

*The fact that so much... Welsh Labour history has been written... is testament to how much the left in Wales has been committed to the history of Wales.*³⁴

Labour History in Wales, or on occasion known or rather branded as the history of Wales, is a subject of which has been subject to what could be claimed as abundant amounts of study. Such as to the extent that it has practically become the history of politics and society within Wales itself. Such an expanse of research on the Labour Party in Wales, began in the 1960s, with the history from below movement. The beginnings of this came from a social history of Wales, with a focus on labour history, small 'l,' before developing into studies of the Labour Party and its culture in Wales. This is reflected 20th century voting trends in Wales with the Labour Party from the interwar years undeniably always the first party in Wales per number of seats and number of voters. For more on the historiography see Duncan Tanner et al.,³⁵ *The Labour Party in Wales*. The introduction provides one of, if not, the most thorough accounts of Welsh Labour historiography that has ever been provided.

One example of a historiographical debate from the Labour history of Wales is the notion of the Red Dragon and the Red Flag debate. This discourse maintains that two separate strains of thought existed within the Labour party in Wales, especially from 1945. The Red Flag symbolises 'Britishness' and Labour unionists from Wales, whilst the Red Dragon is symbolic of 'Welshness,' and Labour members who were moderately Welsh nationalist in their support for Welsh language and political devolution. This is a particular form of discourse which was formally identified in 1989 by Welsh historian Kenneth Morgan.³⁶ The

³⁴ Martin Johnes, 'For Class and Nation: Dominant Trends in the Historiography of Twentieth Century Wales,' in *History Compass*, 8.11 (2010) p.1262

³⁵ Duncan Tanner, Deian Hopkin, Chris Williams, *The Labour Party in Wales, 1900-2000*, (Cardiff, 2001)

³⁶ Kenneth O. Morgan, *Red Dragon, and the Red Flag: The Cases of James Griffiths and Aneurin Bevan*, (Aberystwyth, 1989)

authors John Campbell and Merfyn Jones³⁷ are ones who have made use of this concept in Labour history, and J. Graham Jones³⁸ also has utilised a form of this concept in his work. It remained quiet in the field of labour history, until it was recently revisited by Andrew Edwards and Mari Wiliam, in their joint article on the subject. In this they argue that an examination of internal views of the Labour party between paints an intricate picture not normally found by general histories of Labour, or of Welsh Labour. They contest that these divisions were not so encrusted as 'Red Dragon v Red Flag' suggest, saying that Labour was a coexistence of "... the 'red flag' of centralism, socialism and 'Britishness,' (and) 'Red Dragon' tradition, which placed a greater emphasis on self-autonomy, the language and 'Welshness.'" ³⁹ This particular strain of thought applied to the notion of the Blue Dragon in this thesis, with Wyn Roberts a firm Conservative who concurrently funnelled his politics into Welsh language policy and the vibrancy of Wales.

Nationalist.

On nationalist history Kenneth O. Morgan wrote as early as 1971,

"Welsh nationalism forms a major theme in the evolution of British democracy... has become academically respectable and commercially marketable."⁴⁰

Typically, an interesting point given the fact that Plaid Cymru, the party most representative of political Welsh nationalism, has an electoral record far less successful than that of the Conservatives in Wales. Indeed, there is only one instance in the post war period in which Plaid Cymru was the second party of Wales, and that was the Conservative electoral wipe-out of 1997. Plaid Cymru has an interesting and visible amount of historiography within Wales, even though electorally it has always had limited success. The narrative of its build up as a political force and of the people behind it remind one of the more constant themes within

³⁷ Merfyn Jones and I. Rhys Jones, 'Labour and the Nation,' in Duncan Tanner, Chris Williams and Deian Hopkin (eds) *The Labour Party in Wales 1900-2000* (Cardiff, 2000) pp.241-63

³⁸ J. Graham Jones, 'The Union Jack, the Red Flag and the Welsh Dragon: The Dilemmas of Goronwy Roberts and James Griffiths,' in *Llafur, Journal of Welsh Peoples History*, (2016)

³⁹ Andrew Edwards & Mari Elin Wiliam 'The 'Red Dragon/Red Flag' Debate Revisited: The Labour Party, Culture and Language in Wales, 1945-c. 1970.' *The Welsh History Review*, 26.1 (2012) pp. 105-127; Ibid. p.106, Ibid. p.107

⁴⁰ Kenneth O. Morgan, 'Welsh Nationalism: The Historical Background,' in *Journal of Contemporary History*, 6.1 Nationalism and Separatism (1971) pp.153-172

Welsh historiography. This focuses on both Saunders Lewis⁴¹ as the founder, and Gwynfor Evans as a leader of Plaid and its first MP.⁴² Much of the historiography examining Plaid Cymru is in Welsh⁴³ but there is a solid selection in English however, there is minimal study to do with Welsh political thought in general.⁴⁴ Hywel Davies in the 1980s produced a rigorous study of Plaid's early years and the political scientist Laura McAllister⁴⁵ covers the emergence of Plaid as a political party primarily in the post-1945 era. Owen Jones has contested that when Labour loses support... Plaid gains support as a nationalist party.⁴⁶ The debates surrounding Plaid are numerous, ranging from accusations of being Fascist,⁴⁷ to its concerns over the governance of Wales. This stands as the second most prominent political historical tradition within modern Wales, one of Nationalism.

Liberal.

In the 19th century and into the Edwardian era, the Liberals were viewed as the main voice and party of Wales. After the David Lloyd George revival,⁴⁸ the party faded into obscurity during the interwar years with its supporters switching to either the Conservative or Labour Parties.⁴⁹ This is often cited as a reason for the rise of the Labour Party in Wales.⁵⁰ The Liberal Party has history older than that of the Conservative Party itself, in both England and Wales, it is necessary to have a history of it. However, the issue with the Liberal party in Wales by the period that is considered by this thesis, is that it has been overtaken by Labour, Conservatives and Plaid to be the third or fourth party in Wales. Despite this the Liberal party still retains a larger share of Welsh historiography than the Conservative Party in Wales. As

⁴¹ Alun R. Jones & Gwyn Thomas, *Presenting Saunders Lewis*, (Cardiff, 1983)

⁴² Gwynfor Evans, *Land of my Fathers*, (Talybont, 1998)

⁴³ For example, see; Robin Chapman, *Un bywyd o blith nifer: cofiant Saunders Lewis*, (Llandysul, 2006), Richard Wyn Jones, *Rhoi Cymru 'n Gyntaf. Syniadaeth Plaid Cymru. Cyfol 1*, (Cardiff, 2007).

⁴⁴ Exceptions to the rule are Emyr Williams, 'The Social and Political thought of Saunders Lewis,' PhD Thesis, Cardiff University, 2013. Aneurin Davies, 'The Political Thought of Aneurin Bevan,' PhD Thesis, Cardiff University, 2020.

⁴⁵ Laura Mc Allister, *Plaid Cymru: The Emergence of a Political Party*, (Bridgend, 2001)

⁴⁶ Owen Jones, *Chavs: The Demonisation of the Working Class*, (London, 2016) p.233

⁴⁷ Richard Wyn Jones, *The Fascist party in Wales? Plaid Cymru, Welsh Nationalism and accusation of Fascism*, (Cardiff, 2014)

⁴⁸ Kenneth O. Morgan, *David Lloyd George, Welsh Radical as Worlds Statesman*, (Westport, 1982)

⁴⁹ Trevor Wilson, *The Downfall of the Liberal Party, 1914-1935*, (London, 2011)

⁵⁰ Cyril Parry, *The Radical Tradition in Welsh Politics: a study of Liberal and Labour Politics in Gwynedd, 1900-1920*, (Hull, 1970)

recently as 2014, Russell Deacon⁵¹ wrote a history of the Welsh Liberals, he also chairs the Welsh Liberal History Society, which further reinforces the idea of the Liberals receiving a bigger share of the historiography than the Conservatives.

Similarly, when it comes to Welsh political heroes the Liberals have more biographical works of Welsh individuals than the Conservatives do. As is discussed below, David and Megan Lloyd George, and William Gladstone could all be considered as Liberal Welsh political heroes. Interestingly, this serves as another historiographical tradition in Wales, on which has more works attributable to it than Conservatism.

Conservative?

*Welsh Conservatism? The two terms are contradictory!*⁵²

So quipped Barbara Castle, in an interview quoted from the memoirs of Wyn Roberts.⁵³ This is testament to just how much modern Welsh history is to do with labour and the Labour Party in Wales. As demonstrated, in labour historiography there is much written about famous Welsh politicians such as Aneurin Bevan, James Griffiths to name two prominent figures. For the nationalist narrative both, Saunders Lewis, Gwynfor Evans are given due attention. There is, however, no academic biographies or PhD theses on any individual Welsh Conservatives, neither pre-1995 nor post to the present date.

The Nationalist narrative in modern Welsh historiography is significant for the period given that it is only in the last 20 years that Plaid has gained any form of power with the creation of the Senedd. For much of the twentieth century and indeed the twenty-first century the Conservatives have consistently placed second in Welsh elections. This is more than the second party of Wales, which has failed to capitalise on its success across the twentieth century. The Conservatives have made up ground electorally since the 1997 electoral disaster.

⁵¹ Russell Deacon, *The Welsh Liberals: The History of the Liberal and Liberal Democrats*, (Cardiff, 2014)

⁵² Barbara Castle interview, quoted from Lord Roberts of Conwy, *Right from the Start: The Memoirs of Sir Wyn Roberts*, (Cardiff, 2006) Also, Wyn Roberts Diary, vol 10. 20 July 1980.

⁵³ Lord Roberts of Conwy, *Right from the Start: The Memoirs of Sir Wyn Roberts*, (Cardiff, 2006) p.133

What is often a side-lined and significant area for Wales in the historiography, is the uniqueness of the area dubbed British Wales, this is an area is typically of people who speak English more than Welsh and has many retirees from England and a greater propensity to vote Conservative. However, historians have typically opted to study places or people synonymous with Wales, say the Valleys or the party of Wales (be that Labour or Plaid Cymru). Such an assertion is backed up by Gwyn Alf Williams's view of a 'Romantic' and 'Industrial' Wales.⁵⁴ There are certain localities of Wales where the Welsh Conservatives have always held a strong social base. These areas include Conwy (and other parts of North Wales), Monmouthshire, and Pembrokeshire. The demographic make-up of Wales still fits into the categories provided by Dennis Balsom's Three Wales Model. Although Sculley and Wyn Jones refute the orthodoxy of this model,⁵⁵ it is however, the valid model for the period studied by this thesis. These areas of often strong Conservative support typically fit into areas of Balsom's 'British Wales,' although they are still areas that have a strong Welsh identity to them, albeit as Daniel Evans has suggested, not at the peak of the 'hierarchy of Welshness.'⁵⁶ This fourth strand of Welsh political historiography of Conservatism, is a radical and possibly an intrinsic part of modern Welsh historiography.

If one were to examine the Conservative histories of Britain, looking at gender, and the middling classes remain ways in which a Conservative lens could be used to study Wales. Non-Conformity, and the battle with the Church of England in Wales, is a way in which a Conservative strand stands out in nineteenth century Wales. A Conservative analysis of Wales reveals a new paradigm in which provides a differing analysis to that of the Labour tradition. This is compared to the working class, labour history or the nationalist history of Wales. It is a narrative of a struggle to find an identity for a party that is inherently unionist but at the same time having to accept the national uniqueness and heritage of one of its sub-states. Wyn Roberts stood as a prime example of this from the 1970s.

⁵⁴ Gwyn Alf Williams, *When was Wales? A History of the Welsh*, (London, 1985)

⁵⁵ Roger Sculley & Richard Wyn Jones, 'Still Three Wales? Social location and electoral behaviour in contemporary Wales,' in *Electoral Studies*, 31.4 (2012) pp.656-667 p.666

⁵⁶ Daniel John Evans, 'Welshness in 'British Wales': negotiating national identity at the margins.' *Nations and Nationalism*, 25.1, (2019) pp.167-190.

As of time of writing it would be wrong to assert that this conservative tradition in Wales is a new idea to the historian. Sam Blaxland has made great strides towards the discipline looking at the Conservatives in post-1945 Wales in his PhD and producing academic articles discussing the need for such a history.⁵⁷ Sam Blaxland calls Conservative history a radical approach, it is radical in the sense that it goes against the general historical areas studied by historians of Wales.

If there is another reason as to why the Conservatives have been side lined by Welsh history, it may stem from the difficulty faced in trying to find and locate the evidence and primary sources for the Conservatives in Wales. Sam Blaxland has explained why it is so difficult, to research the Conservatives in Wales.⁵⁸ Another more pertinent question is where would one begin regarding themes? Gender history, religion, the unique grassroots approach adopted by Blaxland of Conservative associations and local party branches, Class studies, a complex analysis from the top? Or biographizing the life of a Welsh Conservative. Biography for example, is a way of researching Conservative history which could be utilised to bring several approaches together. This approach has been done for the labour prism on Welsh history with Paul Ward's biography of the renowned socialist and Welsh figure, Huw T. Edwards,⁵⁹ and of course, the volume of works, academic and otherwise for Aneurin Bevan, have contributed to this as well. The same can be said for both the liberal and nationalist strands, with David Lloyd George and Gwynfor Evans respectively.

Conservative women are another potential way in which Wales can be studied, though the historiography for this as a general subject is still generally lacking for Britain despite two Conservative female PMs. Though there is an interesting amount on these two Conservative women in Britain; Beatrix Campbell,⁶⁰ Mitzi Auchterlone,⁶¹ Clarisse Berthezene.⁶² More

⁵⁷ Sam Blaxland 'A Swingling Party? The need for a history of the Conservatives in Wales,' in *North American Journal of Welsh Studies*, 9 (2014) pp.1-10

⁵⁸ Sam Blaxland, 'The Conservative Party in Wales 1945-1997,' PhD thesis, Swansea University, (2017)

⁵⁹ Paul Ward, *Huw T. Edwards: British Labour and Welsh Socialism*, (Cardiff, 2011)

⁶⁰ Beatrix Campbell, *Iron Ladies: Why Do Women Vote Tory?* (London, 1987)

⁶¹ Mitzi Auchterlone, *Conservative Suffragists: The Women's Vote and the Tory Party*, (London, 2007)

⁶² Clarisse Berthezene and Julies V. Gottlieb (ed.) *Rethinking Right-Wing Women: Gender and the Conservative Party, 1880s to the Present* (Manchester, 2017)

generally on women's history, Martin Pugh,⁶³ and Brian Harrison.⁶⁴ Securing legal rights and the duties of Women remain the focus of Conservative women's discourses. One of few concise works focusing on Conservative women in Wales is a journal article by Sam Blaxland.⁶⁵ In this he examines the role played by Conservative women in the Conservative Party during the 20th century.

In particular, the focus of works of Conservative women is upon Thatcher. The works of Hugo Young,⁶⁶ Damian Barr,⁶⁷ Charles Moore,⁶⁸ air more on the more acerbic side with a general dislike of Thatcher. Otherwise, there is Hilary Mantel's,⁶⁹ fictitious work on Thatcher or Caroline Slocock's⁷⁰ more moderate account of Thatcher in power. This work assesses the legacy of the woman herself, Slocock is a feminist and writes what is certainly a full & non-partisan account of her time with Thatcher. Such works are typically political, though some do focus on her leadership style, see Ghita Ionescu.⁷¹ Given the recentness of Theresa May's current premiership discourses are incipient at the time of writing though, Virginia Blackburn's⁷² biography of Theresa May is an exception. Another example of women's history is one from the grassroots, what they did as fundraisers and campaigners for the party. The wives of some politicians are another example of how they can be studied in Wyn Roberts case his wife was Enid Roberts, was active amongst the grassroots Conservatives in Wales.

⁶³ Martin Pugh, *Women's Suffrage in Britain, 1867-1928*, (London, 1980), and 'Politicians and the Woman's vote 1914-1918,' in *The Journal of the Historical Association*, 59.197 (1974) pp. 358-374

⁶⁴ Brian Harrison, James McMillan, Patricia Hilden, 'Some Feminist Betrayals of Women's History,' in *The Historical Journal*, 26.2 (1983) pp.375-389

⁶⁵ Sam Blaxland, 'Women in the organisation of the Conservative Party in Wales, 1945-1979,' in *Women's History Review*, (2018) pp.1-21

⁶⁶ Hugo Young, *One of Us: A Biography of Margaret Thatcher*, (London, 1989)

⁶⁷ Damian Barr, *Maggie and Me*, (London, 2013)

⁶⁸ Charles Moore, *Margaret Thatcher, The Authorised Biography, Volume One: Not for Turning*, (Milton Keynes, 2013); *Margaret Thatcher, The Authorised Biography, Volume Two: Everything she Wants*, (Milton Keynes, 2015)

⁶⁹ Hilary Mantel, *The Assassination of Margaret Thatcher*, (London, 2014)

⁷⁰ Caroline Slocock, *People Like Us: Margaret Thatcher and Me* (London, 2018)

⁷¹ Ghita Ionescu, *Leadership in an Interdependent World: The Statesmanship of Adenauer, De Gaulle, Thatcher, Reagan and Gorbachev*, (London, 1991)

⁷² Virginia Blackburn, *Theresa May: The Downing Street Revolution*, (London, 2016)



Figure 4: Wyn Roberts in 1974, talking to constituents.

Though it would be rather topical, and essential, in current historiography to study a Welsh conservative woman, (in this case Enid Roberts), it is more necessary at this stage, to focus on Wyn Roberts as the politician, especially as there has seldom been any academic study of such a Welsh Conservative, and since he was the public figure in the partnership he has left a much more expansive archival trace.

Since there is a rich vein of work on Labour, Plaid and Welsh identity, the purpose of this thesis is to identify the interactions between the Conservative Party and markers of Welsh identity. Conversely, it is also useful to consider what the Welsh nation and the people involved have done to shape the Conservative in Wales. As there is a notion of conservative identity in the era prior to devolution, in fact a living embodiment in the actions and impetus of Sir Wyn Roberts on Wales.

In a blog for *The Spectator*, for the run up to the 2017 general election, the political scientist Roger Scully wrote.

‘The astonishment is that the Conservatives winning in Wales offends many deeply held and cherished myths and assumptions, The Welsh don’t do Conservatism, surely?’⁷³

⁷³ Roger Scully, ‘Why Wales decided to forgive the Tories? In *The Spectator*, 4 May 2017, available on <https://blogs.spectator.co.uk/2017/05/why-wales-decided-to-forgive-the-tories/> (Last accessed 14 February 2018)

The Welsh do have many Conservative links and roots in Conservatism. This issue, however, is as noted by the political scientist Richard Wyn Jones.

‘...Conservative fortunes in Wales evince a remarkable consistency: 2001 was but the last example of a phenomenon traceable prior to 1945 whereby the Tories do consistently worse in Wales than England. Yet the decline of the Scottish Tories has occasioned much comment and analysis, little attention has been paid to the fortunes of their colleagues in Wales.’⁷⁴

The point made by Richard Wyn Jones is that, if one were to examine any of the C/conservative historiography, they would find a vast library of works generally relating to the Conservative Party or to works on the Conservatives in England. This historiography covers a staggering number of subjects, the authors; Stuart Ball,⁷⁵ Dennis Kavanagh,⁷⁶ Tim Bale,⁷⁷ David Seawright,⁷⁸ Mark Pitchford,⁷⁹. all are examples of works on the Conservative Party. Thatcherism is another trend, as is a ‘women’s’ history of Thatcher herself; Richard Vinen,⁸⁰ Hadley & Ho,⁸¹ Hay & Farrell,⁸² Peter Clarke,⁸³ and Eric J. Evans⁸⁴ Even the Scottish Conservative Party has a trove of works committed to it, given it was very

⁷⁴ Richard Wyn Jones, Roger Sculley and Dafydd Trystan, ‘Why do the Conservatives Always Do (Even) Worse in Wales?’ in *British Elections & Parties Review*, 12.1 (2002) pp.229-245 p.229

⁷⁵ Anthony Seldon & Stuart Ball, *The Conservative Century: The Conservative Party since 1900*, (Oxford, 1994); Stuart Ball, *The Conservative Party since 1945*, (Oxford, 1998)

⁷⁶ Dennis Kavanagh’s works are numerous, including studies of most general elections and political patterns of the latter twentieth century. Though Dennis Kavanagh, *Thatcherism and British Politics: The End of Consensus?* (Oxford, 2002) is best for reference.

⁷⁷ Tim Bale, *The Conservative Party: From Thatcher to Cameron*, (Cambridge, 2016)

⁷⁸ David Seawright, *The British Conservative Party and One Nation Politics*, (London, 2010)

⁷⁹ Mark Pitchford, *The Conservative Party and the extreme right 1945-1975*, (Manchester, 2011)

⁸⁰ Richard Vinen, *Thatcher’s Britain: The Politics and Social Upheaval of the 1980s*, (London, 2009)

⁸¹ Louisa Hadley & Elizabeth Ho, *Thatcher and After: Margaret Thatcher and Her Afterlife in Contemporary Culture*, (Basingstoke, 2010)

⁸² Stephen Farrell and Colin Hay, *The Legacy of Thatcherism: Assessing and exploring Thatcherite Social and Economic Policies*, (Oxford, 2014)

⁸³ Peter Clarke, ‘The Rise and fall of Thatcherism,’ in *Historical Research*, 72.179 (1999) pp.301-322

⁸⁴ Eric J. Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism*, (London, 2004)

electorally stable in Scotland.⁸⁵ The 1950s general election results demonstrate as much, with the total Conservative count being 31 Scottish seats.⁸⁶ More studies may yet follow in the future after the losses of the Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP), in the 2017 general election.⁸⁷ The authors; Gerald Warner,⁸⁸ David Torrance,⁸⁹ Alexander Smith,⁹⁰ and Andrew Liddle & Ruth Davidson,⁹¹ are examples of those who have studied Conservatism and the Conservative Party in Scotland. This is just an example of the amount of historiography that has been associated with the Conservative Party and Conservatism in both England and Scotland when compared to the amount done for the Conservatives in Wales.

There too are different ways in which the focus is maintained on the Conservatives, spanning high politics, grassroots politics (a study of leagues & associations in particular) the larger party membership and the foot-soldiers.⁹² A regional outlook is popular as an approach, such as Aubel, Thomas Williams⁹³ or J. Bates.⁹⁴ The local party organisations too remain a popular approach.⁹⁵ Sam Blaxland makes use of this in his comprehensive analysis of the Conservative Party in Wales. Finally, the biographical approach is used for a lot of Prime Ministers, especially Thatcher where biographies are numerous. This thesis on Wyn Roberts covers a lacuna in this historiography by focusing on a biographical element.

⁸⁵ P. Lynch, 'Saving the Union: Conservatives and the 'Celtic fringe'. In *The Political Quarterly*, 75.4 (2004) pp.386-391

⁸⁶ Lukas Audickas & Richard Cracknell, 'UK Election Statistics: 1918-2018: 100 years of Elections,' (2018) House of Commons Library, Briefing Paper, CBP7529

⁸⁷ The Scottish Tories gained 12 seats from the SNP, full figures available on 'Election 2017: Scotland's result in numbers,' <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-40246330> (Last accessed 25 February 2018)

⁸⁸ Gerald Warner, *The Scottish Tory Party: A History*, (London, 1988)

⁸⁹ David Torrance, *'We in Scotland': Thatcherism in a Cold Climate*, (Edinburgh, 2009); *Whatever Happened to Tory Scotland?* (Edinburgh, 2012)

⁹⁰ Alexander Smith, *Devolution and the Scottish Conservatives: Banal Activism, electioneering and the politics of irrelevance*, (Manchester, 2011)

⁹¹ Andrew Liddle & Ruth Davidson, *Ruth Davidson: Strong Opposition*, (London, 2018)

⁹² Anthony Seldon, Stuart Ball, *The Conservative Century: The Conservative Party since 1900*, (Oxford, 1994)

⁹³ Thomas Wyn Williams, 'The Conservative Party in Northeast Wales, 1906-1924,' PhD Thesis, University of Liverpool, (2008)

⁹⁴ J. Bates, 'The Conservative Party in the Constituencies, 1918-1939,' PhD Thesis, Oxford University, (1994)

⁹⁵ Stuart Ball, 'Local Conservatism and the Evolution of Party Organisation,' in Anthony Seldon, Stuart Ball, *The Conservative Century: The Conservative Party since 1900*, (Oxford, 1994)

As is demonstrable, there is a staggering amount of literature on both the Labour party and of Plaid Cymru in Wales.⁹⁶ As is demonstrable thus far there is plenty written on the party generally in England, even on the party in the four nations sense, what historiography has been written on the Conservatives in Wales specifically pales in comparison. The surprising point of this trend is that, historically the Conservatives have usually always been the second party in Wales in terms of number of constituency seats held in parliament. As the below table⁹⁷ for the 1983 general election demonstrates.

Party	Seats	%	Total votes
Labour	20	52.6	603,858
Conservative	14	36.8	499,310
SDP/Liberal Alliance	2	5.3	373,358
Plaid Cymru	2	5.3	125,309

Figure 5: Table of 1983 General Election Results.

Except for the general elections of 1966 and 1997, the latter possibly due to the destructivity of Thatcherism in the theorised, idealised part of Wales for National Identity, this being ‘Welsh Wales.’ The same is true for 1995, where the Conservatives were all but eliminated in the Welsh local government election. However, as far as the general elections of 2015 and 2017 are concerned, the Conservatives have returned to second position per capita of seats in Wales. Eleven seats in 2015⁹⁸, down to eight in 2017.⁹⁹ This is even despite devolution, giving Wales an assembly in a step towards self-governance. Only twenty years after both local and national eliminations.

⁹⁶ For full listings of both Labour and Nationalist historiographical works see Bibliography.

⁹⁷ Data obtained from, ‘General Election Results for 1983,’ HoCLRN 117.

⁹⁸ General election results for Wales, 2015. Available on, <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/full-welsh-results-general-election-9212002> (Last accessed 30 January 2018)

⁹⁹ General election results for Wales, 2017. Available on, <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/politics/full-general-election-results-wales-13159082> (Last accessed 30 January 2018)

Welsh Conservative Historiography

There is a rich history to the Conservatives in Wales, starting from the Victorian period with the formation of the Conservative Party, coming right through to the Twenty-First Century. Despite this, however, the historian's art has been lacking on the Conservatives in Wales, with the significance of the party within Wales largely being ignored by both historians and the wider populace. However, a precious and select few works do exist for the Conservative Party and Conservative history in Wales which have started to redress this imbalance in Welsh historiography with a greater proliferation emerging since 2010. For the vast majority of the twentieth century however, Wales has remained as a mere side note in the index pages of general Conservative histories,¹⁰⁰ memoirs and autobiographies of Conservatives¹⁰¹ and general studies of the Conservatism in Britain.¹⁰² Farrell and Hay's work on Thatcherism in particular is interesting for lacking much mention of Wales given the legacy of Thatcherism in Wales.¹⁰³ Works which focus on Wales specifically, have really only started to come to the fore in the twenty-first century, many lacunas remain. The equilibrium is starting to balance, but Conservative history has a long way to go before it matches the sheer level of Labour history in Wales.

In a way, an attempt to do what is considerable as a first 'conservative' history in Wales has been done, as far back as the 1970s, though this attempt was met with much disapproval by the ever-expansive labour history in this period. The authors David Howell¹⁰⁴ and Richard Colyer,¹⁰⁵ take this Conservative approach to 19th century Wales. However, it would be wrong to state these as truly 'conservative,' the studies are moderate in their approach and

¹⁰⁰ Stuart Ball, *Portrait of a Party: The Conservative Party in Britain 1918-1945*, (Oxford, 2013) and Robin Harris, *The Conservatives – A History*, (London, 2011) Both cover imperative years of the Conservative Party, including the inter-war years and the Thatcher years. Years in which, the Conservatives had an immense impact on Wales, though it is seldom mentioned.

¹⁰¹ Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, (London, 2011) For all the Thatcher governments achieved in Wales, Thatcher herself neglects or refrains from mentioning Wales.

¹⁰² A prominent example of this is Stephen Farrell and Colin Hay, *The Legacy of Thatcherism: Assessing and exploring Thatcherite Social and Economic Policies*, (Oxford, 2014)

¹⁰³ Thatcherism is a reason as to why the Conservative Party gained 0 seats within Wales in the 1997 general election.

¹⁰⁴ David Howell, *Land and People in Nineteenth-Century Wales* (Cardiff, 1977)

¹⁰⁵ Richard Colyer, *The Welsh Cattle Drovers: Agriculture and the Welsh Cattle Trade before and during the Nineteenth Century*, (Cardiff, 1976)

take an early revisionist stance against the orthodoxy of historians for this period, the Welsh view of this period of examining the working people. Howell and Colyer are simply more sympathetic to the (usually Conservative) landlords in their works than other authors of this period are.¹⁰⁶

Roger Sculley's view follows what is the typical narrative for Wales, that the Welsh don't do Conservatives or Conservatism.¹⁰⁷ There is precious few who have noted this trend, despite it being noted that has been little by way of attempting to rectify this. Both Andrew Edwards et al.¹⁰⁸ and Geraint Thomas¹⁰⁹ have started to rectify this in their regional analysis of the Conservatives in various parts of Wales, including North west Wales. Geraint Thomas¹¹⁰ for one argues that the effectiveness of Tories in Wales dampened by the effectiveness of both Liberal and Labour support in Wales, both who portray Tories as Anti-Welsh. As part of the role of the dominant parties of the period shaping perceptions since Thomas covers the early half of the Twentieth Century. Matthew Cragoe has also contributed as an author who has examined the Conservative party in Wales. Still, there is very little by way of conservative or Conservative Party historiography in Wales, certainly little in the biographical realm. However, Conservatives & Conservatism are not a complete lacuna within Welsh historiography, though they are still subject to change. Dylan Griffiths¹¹¹ for example utilised a Wales approach, again on a regional level, to assess British territorial politics during the Thatcher era. However, in this at the time of publication, prior to Devolution, he maintains a scepticism against Wales owing to how much Westminster controlled it and that autonomy from Thatcherism was non-existent. Some of the actions of Wyn Roberts such as with Welsh

¹⁰⁶ The 'other authors' mentioned are covered in the bibliography.

¹⁰⁷ Roger Scully, 'Why Wales decided to forgive the Tories?' In *The Spectator*, 4 May 2017, available on <https://blogs.spectator.co.uk/2017/05/why-wales-decided-to-forgive-the-tories/> (Last accessed 14 February 2018)

¹⁰⁸ Edwards, Andrew & Tanner, Duncan & Carlin, Patrick, 'The Conservative Governments and the Development of Welsh Language Policy in the 1980s and 1990s,' in *The Historical Journal*, 54.2 (2011) pp.529 – 551

¹⁰⁹ Geraint Thomas, 'The Conservative Party and Welsh Politics in the Inter War Years,' in *English Historical Review* 533.128 (2013)

¹¹⁰ Geraint Thomas, 'The Conservative Party and Welsh Politics in the Inter War Years,' in *English Historical Review* 533.128 (2013)

¹¹¹ Dylan Griffiths, *Thatcherism and Territorial Politics: A Welsh Case Study*, (Aldershot, 1996)

language education,¹¹² and his confrontation with Thatcher would suggest that his analysis was with hindsight inaccurate.

There have been attempts to address the balance of Labour to Conservative History within Wales. These attempts, though a start, still have a long way to go to readdress the balance of Labour in Wales. Another issue is that the dominant parties in this period also play a role in shaping such perceptions, Labour often noted the Tories as being anti-Welsh or even labelled the SNP as ‘Tartan Tories’ when they supported Margaret Thatcher in 1979.¹¹³ Kenneth O. Morgan’s views are typical of this writing, and in his 1995 work he wrote, “...Conservatism has played only a marginal part... in Welsh political consciousness, and as a result I am unable to think of any single biography which focuses on a Welsh Conservative.”¹¹⁴ Such a view is now dated to an extent, but not entirely so as shown in the introduction and the aim of this thesis in providing a first academic biography of a Conservative that is focused on the Welsh angle.

John Davies for example in his works on Welsh History as stated previously are impressive, though in his *History of Wales*,¹¹⁵ Davies does cover to extent the Conservative Party in Wales throughout the twentieth century. However, given the original publication date Davies was in no position to mention the extensive additions to the survival of the Welsh Language made by the Conservative Party for the period of the latter twentieth century. Could one find any examples of Conservatives significant to this Welsh language policy? Wyn Roberts, Peter Walker, Nicholas Crickhowell, all of whom have made extensive contributions to the survival of the Welsh language.

The superlative critical view of the Conservatives in Wales, which sums up best the anti-conservative feeling within Wales, is the view of Gwyn Alf Williams. Williams for example is acidic in his critique of the Conservatives in Wales, “the baron, the bishop, and the brewer... (the) unholy trinity of Toryism,”¹¹⁶ is perhaps the best quote to sum up his deeply personal feelings stemming from a mixture of Marxism and Welsh nationalism. Such critical

¹¹² See Chapter 2.

¹¹³ ‘SNP 11 were the original ‘Tartan Tories,’ in *The Scotsman*, 2 October 2014.

¹¹⁴ Kenneth O. Morgan, *Modern Wales: Politics, Places and People*, (London, 1995)

¹¹⁵ John Davies, *A History of Wales*, (London, 2007)

¹¹⁶ Gwyn Alf Williams, *When was Wales? A History of the Welsh*, (London, 1995) p.217

views however, overall, are products of a deep seated anti-tory feeling within Wales, pertinent with academics whose political leanings are in line with Labour and the left. These are some of the more general opinions of historians on Conservatism in Wales. However, this does not mean that all historians of Wales lean to the left, there are certain authors who have examined or even exclusively focused on the Conservative Party in Wales.

It is not just historians that examine the Conservative Party, the former Welsh Assembly member David Melding¹¹⁷ is another who has contributed to the works on Conservatives in Wales. His essay *Have we been anti-Welsh?*¹¹⁸ Is a perfect example of the Conservatives trying to examine their own electability in Wales. A true start for Conservative studies relating to Wales comes long after that of Labour, circa 1980s. Felix Aubel held this ground for many years, as the only one to have done a comprehensive study in Wales.¹¹⁹ Thomas Wyn Williams has also studied the Conservatives for a PhD thesis which considers the Conservative Party in Northeast Wales in a similar timeframe to that of Aubel.¹²⁰ Matthew Cragoe examines the role of the landed elite or the typical tory landowners.¹²¹ Sam Blaxland's work is the only one to comprehensively cover the Conservative Party in the whole of Wales for the latter twentieth century.

Felix Aubel, (a former Conservative candidate, and Welsh speaker) is one example of someone who have written about Conservatism in Wales.¹²² His analysis on the period 1880-1935, though excellent, is limited as whilst it has a focus on Wales it is only a chapter within a collected volume of works on the Conservatives in Britain. It too is limited in its timescale also by covering fifty years of the Conservatism in Wales, though is based off previous

¹¹⁷ David Melding is a former Welsh Assembly Member of the Senedd.

¹¹⁸ David Melding, *Have we been anti-Welsh? An essay on the Conservative Party and the Welsh Nation*, (Cardiff, 2005)

¹¹⁹ Felix Aubel, 'Welsh Conservatism, 1885-1935, Five studies in Adaption,' PhD Thesis, University of Wales, Lampeter, (1995)

¹²⁰ Thomas Wyn Williams, 'The Conservative Party in North East Wales, 1906-1924,' PhD Thesis, University of Liverpool, (2008)

¹²¹ Matthew Cragoe, *An Anglican aristocracy: The Moral Economy of the Landed Estate in Carmarthenshire, 1832-1895*, (Oxford, 1996)

¹²² Felix Aubel, 'The Conservatives in Wales, 1880-1935, in Martin Francis and Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska (ed) *The Conservatives and British Society. 1880-1990*, (Cardiff, 1996) pp.

works such as the PhD thesis on Welsh Conservatism which is much more comprehensive.¹²³ Felix Aubel is one of few authors who has covered the era between the latter part of the nineteenth century 1860 to 1945, though this is more on nature of Conservatism, than on the Conservative Party. It is also limited to 5 constituencies in South Wales, based on Aubel's locale and his knowledge of the areas. Matthew Cragoe and Sam Blaxland are two who have done rigorous histories of Conservatives in Wales spanning different periods of the modern era. Matthew Cragoe¹²⁴ focuses on the Victorian period within Wales, although he has studies elsewhere including a focus on the Conservatives post Second World War and pre devolution,¹²⁵ arguing that the response of the party in Wales was a response to the new political world after 1945, more than a response to the greater prominence of Welsh nationalism of the 1960s and 1970s.¹²⁶

Tomos Davies¹²⁷ is an example with his master's thesis in which he analyses the Welsh Conservative Party and how it responded to a sub-state government in Wales and Devolution after 1997. He argues that the party has pragmatically responded to devolution despite it being ideologically against it, the ideological issues often being the central and devolved party's Achilles' heel. This echoes the findings of the political scientist Richard Wyn Jones et al.¹²⁸ who asked the question as to why the Conservatives have traditionally always done worse in Wales than in other parts of Britain. Jones's conclusion was that the perception of

¹²³ Felix Aubel, 'Welsh Conservatism, 1885-1935, Five studies in Adaption,' PhD Thesis, University of Wales, Lampeter, (1995)

¹²⁴ Matthew Cragoe, *Culture, Politics, and National Identity in Wales 1832-1886*, (Oxford, 2004) and Matthew Cragoe, *An Anglican aristocracy: The Moral Economy of the Landed Estate in Carmarthenshire, 1832-1895*, (Oxford, 1996) and Matthew Cragoe and Chris Williams (Ed.) *Wales and War: society, politics, and religion in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries*, (Cardiff, 2007)

¹²⁵ Matthew Cragoe, 'Defending the constitution: The Conservative Party and the idea of Devolution, 1945-74,' in Williams, Chris & Edwards, Andrew, *The art of the possible: Politics and governance in modern British history, 1885-1997: Essays in memory of Duncan Tanner*, (Oxford, 2015) pp.162-171

¹²⁶ Matthew Cragoe, 'We Like Local Patriotism': The Conservative Party and the Discourse of Decentralisation, 1947-51,' *English Historical Review*, CXXII.498 (2007) pp.965-985 p.965

¹²⁷ Tomos D. Davies, 'Singing the Blues?' Explaining the electoral performance of the Conservative Party in Wales. Also, Tomos D. Davies, (2008). 'Change' or 'Continuity?' *The Sub-State Politics of the Welsh [British?] Conservative Party 1997-2007* (Master's Thesis), Aberystwyth University).

¹²⁸ Richard Wyn Jones, & Roger Scully, & Trystan, D. (2002). Why do the conservatives always do (even) worse in Wales? *British Elections & Parties Review*, 12(1), 229-245.

the Tories as an English party uninterested in Wales was off-putting to voters in Wales, reinforced by the absence of clear-cut Welsh structures and discourse within the party.

Whilst Davies and Richard Wyn Jones et al. examine the post devolution party from a political studies angle. Sam Blaxland, however, is amongst the most current within Welsh Historiography relating to the study of the Conservative Party in Wales in the pre devolution era. In addition, he also lays a firm challenge to the typical Welsh political tradition. In an article for the *North American Journal of Welsh Studies*, Blaxland argues for the need of a history of the Conservatives in Wales.¹²⁹ Arguing for an “...intellectual agenda which legitimises certain questions and closes others down.”¹³⁰ Blaxland’s studies too, remain the most relevant in terms of understanding the limited history of the Conservatives within Wales. Identifying an interesting and alternate method in which the current narrative of Welsh political historiography does not fit. However, Blaxland’s works are only the beginning, as his focus remains on the South Wales region, so beloved of Labour historians. Blaxland does cover to some extent the other regions of Wales and identifies useful avenues for other Conservative historians to pursue. Ultimately, Blaxland’s PhD thesis¹³¹ goes a long way towards readdressing the balance in Welsh historiography. and is the first comprehensive study to address the Conservative Party in Wales post 1945, adopting a grassroots analysis atypical amongst many political historians, he examines the foundations of the Conservative Party in Wales to build what is a stunning example and rare work of the Conservatives in Wales, which this thesis aims to build upon via a biographical approach looking at Wyn Roberts as a case study from north Wales.

Andrew Edwards¹³² in his work *Labour’s Crisis* has taken the Conservatives into account in his study of the problems of Labour in Northwest Wales during the post-war decades. In this he demonstrates that the Conservative Party were not as anti-Welsh as previously assumed. It is also contended that the party examined and made efforts to address the local issues, resulting in the selection of Wyn Roberts as a man of firm Welsh credentials to sit in the

¹²⁹ Sam Blaxland, ‘A Swinging Party? The Need for a History of the Conservatives in Wales’, in *North American Journal of Welsh Studies*, 9 (2014) p.1-10

¹³⁰ Ibid. p.3

¹³¹ Sam Blaxland, ‘The Conservative Party in Wales 1945-1997,’ PhD thesis, Swansea University, (2017)

¹³² Andrew Edwards. *Labour’s Crisis: Plaid Cymru, the Conservatives, and the decline of the Labour Party in North-West Wales, 1960-74*, (Cardiff, 2011)

relatively safe seat of Conwy. However, Roberts remains a spectral figure in academic historiography, although as Edwards hints, there is so much scope in delving into his career.

Similarly, to this Duncan Tanner in conjunction with Patrick Carlin and Andrew Edwards, have conducted further studies on the Conservatives in Wales.¹³³ In their joint article they reassess the contribution of the Conservatives towards Welsh language policy across the 1980s and 1990s, including the contributions of Wyn Roberts. Even though Tanner was firmly a Labour historian, the article acknowledges that the Conservatives achieved far more in this period towards the sustenance of the Welsh language that is traditionally assumed. This remains the only way in which the contributions of Wyn Roberts have been directly acknowledged in academic works and again shows exactly where this thesis fits into the existing historiography.

There are new works on the Conservative Party in development at the time of writing. Sam Blaxland has a forthcoming book on the history of the Conservative Party in Wales based off his PhD thesis. Works like this demonstrate that the subject of the Welsh Conservatives is by no means dead or at a dead end: on the contrary, as a historical subject it has never been more alive than it has been in the last decade. One common argument with the Conservative Party is that unlike other political parties in Wales it does not have a national narrative or a tradition within Wales. One additional reason for this is that both the Labour Party and to a lesser extent the Liberal Party/Liberal Democrats have their own Welsh political heroes, whereas a lacuna in tackling individual Welsh Conservatives leaves this an underdeveloped and under researched area within historiography.

¹³³ Andrew Edwards, & Duncan Tanner & Patrick Carlin, 'The Conservative Governments and the Development of Welsh Language Policy in the 1980s and 1990s,' in *The Historical Journal*, 54.2 (2011) pp.529 – 551

Welsh Political Heroes?

“History does nothing, it possesses no immense wealth, fights no battles. It is rather man, real living man who does everything, who possesses and fights.”¹³⁴

As was bluntly put by Marx in assessment of history, history is about the people. On the opposite pole is the dated ‘Great Man Theory,’ that history is the biography of great men or of leaders, as premised by Thomas Carlyle, and later became conflated with fascist and authoritarian notions of leadership.¹³⁵ Welsh history unsurprisingly favours the ‘history from below’ movement, and when it focuses on individuals, this is done from a perspective of their impact on everyday lives (Bevan and the NHS is the classic example).

However, ironically, this movement is also wittingly or unwittingly responsible for usage of the Great Man Theory, in their focus of Labour movements, L/labour history, the miners strike(s) and so on also comes a focus on the greats of the era such as Aneurin Bevan. The 1970s saw the creation of the Society of Welsh Labour History, and its journal, the appropriately named *Llafur* (Labour). *Llafur*¹³⁶ was also, inadvertently, or not, instrumental in further irrevocably tying the history of Wales and the Labour Party further together. Other projects exist add to this. These are, the Coalfield history project of 1971-74¹³⁷ and the creation of the South Wales Miners Library at University College Swansea in 1973.¹³⁸ In addition of these, however, comes a peripheral focus on individual figures pertinent to such events.

These figures in question for the 1945 period are, in the main, for Labour, Aneurin Bevan and for Nationalism or Plaid Cymru, Gwynfor Evans. It seems too that to examine the people is to also examine the leaders amongst them; in the case of Wales not national leaders (due to the

¹³⁴ Karl Marx, quoted from E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (Basingstoke, 2001) p.43

¹³⁵ Thomas Carlyle, ‘The Hero as Divinity,’ in *Heroes and Hero Divinity*, 1840; *On Heroes, hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History*, (London, 1841)

¹³⁶ Further information about *Llafur* is available on its website <https://www.llafur.org/> (Last accessed 12 February 2018)

¹³⁷ A report of this project is available, Glanmor Williams, *South Wales Coalfield Project 1971-74, Sponsored by the Social Sciences Research Council. Final Report*, (1974)

¹³⁸ Further information of the South Wales Miners Library is available on <http://www.swansea.ac.uk/iss/swml/#history-of-the-south-wales-miners-library=is-expanded> (Last accessed 12 February 2018)

absence for most of the 20th century of a devolved Welsh assembly), rather leaders of groups and community leaders.

The Labour Party has several figures which could be construed as ‘Welsh political heroes.’ James Griffiths and Aneurin Bevan to name two such figures. The Liberal Party/ Liberal Democrats even has one of these Welsh political heroes in David Lloyd George, the PM for part of World War One (to 1916) who is also remembered for his pre-Edwardian ardency for the shibboleths of Welsh Liberalism, such as Welsh disestablishment.

One of the key stimulants for this thesis was to query why Welshmen such as Bevan and Evans have been given almost a mythological position in the pantheon of modern political heroes, but Wyn Roberts pushed to the side-lines? Bevan has become a central post-war Labour figure, being from south Wales and a part of the popular image of the politics within Wales being dominated as a radical left-wing outpost in the UK. Whilst Evans as a member of Plaid is seen as a Welsh hero for being the first Plaid Cymru MP in 1966 and contributing to the Thatcher U-turn on establishing the Welsh television channel in 1982 and his ardent advancement of the Welsh language. Whilst these achievements are very worthwhile topics of study, it does not justify the neglect of Wyn Roberts: a Welsh Conservative who had been involved in Welsh TV for the years 1957-1969, and from 1970-2010 a vigorous Conservative figure in both Houses of Parliament, who did so much for Wales on linguistic, infrastructural, and economic fronts. Roberts’s reverence for Welsh culture resonated with Evans’s in many respects, and both could be termed Welsh language patriots (if not nationalists).¹³⁹ Rhys Evans in his biography of Gwynfor Evans challenges many of the assumptions held and cherished by the Welsh nationalists.¹⁴⁰ Whilst there were major differences between them in terms of their attitude towards the Union, both were also proudly Welsh and concerned about the survival of the Welsh language, but only one is venerated.¹⁴¹ Alas Roberts, if mentioned in the works of history, is portrayed as a man on the side-lines of politics, whereas, in reality, he had a front seat and greater access to governmental political power than Evans ever had.

¹³⁹ A. Thomas, ‘Language policy and nationalism in Wales: A comparative analysis.’ in *Nations and Nationalism*, 3.3, (1997) pp. 323-344.

¹⁴⁰ Rhys Evans, *Gwynfor Evans: A Portrait of a Patriot*, (Tal-Y-Bont, 2008)

¹⁴¹ P.M. Rawkins, ‘An Approach to the Political Sociology of the Welsh Nationalist Movement,’ in *Political Studies*, 27.3 pp.440-457 p.446

‘Aneurin Bevan knew that his South Wales had in his own lifetime to 1952 walked a tightrope between ‘aspiration’ and ‘realities’ that gave its history awesome implications.’¹⁴²

The literature concerning Aneurin Bevan is interesting, for most place emphasis on his life as a Welshman to great extent, the biographies of him demonstrate this. Vincent Brome was first to write about Bevan,¹⁴³ though it does little to advance the academic argument. Michael Foot’s two-part biography of Bevan¹⁴⁴ indeed helps to paint an intricate picture of the man himself. Foot undoubtedly, as leader of the Labour opposition in the early 1980s and as a politician, had access to an abundance of professional material such as Cabinet papers. However, as a friend of Bevan he also undoubtedly had access to much in way of private material, this though leads to the problem plaguing his biography, arguably its hagiographic nature. Nicklaus Thomas-Symonds¹⁴⁵ work is one that considers the background of Bevan as a South-Walian. Dai Smith¹⁴⁶ too examines Bevan in a South Wales context.¹⁴⁷ It is therefore a truism, that there is a literal treasure trove of works relating to, directly or indirectly referencing Aneurin Bevan, and these are only a fraction of the main examples. Further to the biographical works thus far referenced, there too are the various dramatizations and references of Bevan’s life which should be considered in relation to his popular figure. For example, Welsh playwright, Gwyn Thomas’ play *A Tongue for Stammering Time*.¹⁴⁸ Bevan was also voted in first place by the Welsh people in the 100 Welsh heroes’ poll, and was placed 45th in the 100 greatest Britons poll.¹⁴⁹ Similarly, Bevan also has a think tank named after him, The Bevan Foundation, which focuses specifically on Welsh problems.¹⁵⁰ Also, for

¹⁴² Dai Smith, *Wales! Wales?* (London, 1984) pp.131-132

¹⁴³ Vincent Brome, *Aneurin Bevan: A Biography*, (London, 1953)

¹⁴⁴ Michael Foot, *Aneurin Bevan: A Biography: Volume 1: 1897-1945*, (London, 2008); and *Aneurin Bevan: A Biography: Volume 2: 1945-1960*, (London, 2008)

¹⁴⁵ Nicklaus Thomas-Symonds, *Nye: The Political Life of Aneurin Bevan*, (London, 2015)

¹⁴⁶ Dai Smith, *Aneurin Bevan and the World of South Wales*, (Cardiff, 1993)

¹⁴⁷ Dai Smith, *Wales! Wales?* (London, 1984) pp.127-133

¹⁴⁸ Gwyn Thomas, *A Tongue for Stammering Time*, (1973) National Library of Wales, *Gwyn Thomas Papers*, G197. Also, Paul Ferris, *Nye*, (1982); Andrew Price, ‘Nye Bevan,’ in *Militant*, 601, (1982) p.6

¹⁴⁹ ‘100 Welsh Heroes,’ poll, quoted from Mark Lawson-Jones, *The Little Book of Wales*, (Stroud, 2016) p.68

¹⁵⁰ The Bevan Foundation, available on, <https://www.bevanfoundation.org/> (Last accessed 10 April 2019)

much of the persona of Bevan as a Welsh hero, his political thought has only recently been studied by Nye Davies of the Cardiff Governance Centre.¹⁵¹ Indeed, Aneurin Bevan is a Welsh figure and Labour politician who is quite often invoked on many occasions in literature. Michael Foot for one, invoked the spirit of Bevan for his evening Standard review of John Davies' *A History of Wales*, "Aneurin Bevan would have read page after page of this book with rising delight." Though such a view is not surprising given Bevan's reputation as Foot's lifelong hero, it also paints him as an individual, albeit a British unionist, passionate about the Welsh past.

Similarly, the invocation of Bevan has been subject to much in the way of recent revival with the 70th anniversary of the creation of the National Health Service. More interestingly it appears to be not just Labour, but Plaid that is also invoking the spirit of Bevan and his image of Welshness. In their 2016 manifesto Bevan is referenced, with the Plaid Cymru manifesto contending, 'Wales now needs to conjure up the spirit of Bevan in reinventing the NHS for tomorrow's Wales.'¹⁵² Even Jeremy Hunt the health secretary of the time in 2016 takes any opportunity to compare himself to Bevan, in matters on the NHS. More interestingly is the amount of reference that is given to Bevan by modern day Conservatives. David Cameron quoted Bevan in a house of Commons debate, 'if (Aneurin) Nye Bevan were here today, he would want a seven-day NHS...'¹⁵³ Bevan seemingly has become a political figure that can be harnessed or moulded to fit in with any Welsh political ideology, malleable across the entire political spectrum of parties in Wales. It is true that, the reference here is about Bevan and his role in the creation of the NHS as opposed to his Welshness. However, it remains no less important, as it is still invocation of Bevan as a person, and the allusion that the NHS had Welsh origins. For the Conservatives to invoke or to mention Bevan is propagandist. To state that Bevan, a politician remembered for being devoutly Socialist and who described the Tories as being 'lower than vermin', would agree for the sake of the NHS that the Conservatives could manipulate his name is quite preposterous. However, this is arguably further proof of how much Bevan is invoked in the modern day, achieving a cross-party icon-

¹⁵¹ Aneurin Davies, 'The Political Thought of Aneurin Bevan,' PhD Thesis, Cardiff University, 2020.

¹⁵² Plaid Cymru 2016 general election manifesto.

¹⁵³ Hansard, 24 February 2016, Column 292.

like image on both British and Welsh platforms, even though his support for Welsh devolution was lukewarm at best, and often distinctly hostile.¹⁵⁴

Therefore, Aneurin Bevan is seen much as an archetypal essence of Welshness, with an unchallengeable legacy of the NHS. John Campbell staunchly refutes much of the literature to do with Bevan, believing a lot of his career, other than his crowning achievement in the establishment of the National Health Service was that of a failure.¹⁵⁵ It is possible too that, past authors have contributed to create a view of South Wales, through an analysis of figures such as Bevan, as being devoutly and radically left wing. Though, Nye Bevan is poignantly remembered for his role in the creation of the NHS, what did he specifically do for Wales, beyond being a born Welshman? Bevan too does stand as a figure, not just in Welsh history but more prominently as an important figure in British history, though there is a focus on him as a Welshman.

Thus far there has been a focus here on Aneurin Bevan as a most prominent example of someone who could be treated as a Welsh political hero. This is simply because, as examples go Aneurin Bevan is focused on in both academic and public discourse, as a major or even by some arguments the Welsh political hero for Wales. By comparison there is seldom comment either in academic or public discourse on a figure such as Wyn Roberts, whose contributions to the Welsh language and its major legislative overhaul have mainly been overlooked.

The idea of a Welsh political hero can be applied to many Welsh figures such as Gwynfor Evans or to Saunders Lewis, it is also applicable to Liberal figures such as David Lloyd George. However, it has never been applied to any Welsh Conservatives, such as Wyn Roberts, though Roberts is not alone in this; Geraint Morgan, Stefan Terlezki,¹⁵⁶ and Peter Thomas, to name just a few could be construed as Welsh political heroes in their own ways. Wyn Roberts would be the main consideration as a Conservative Welsh political hero, based off his lasting impact on the current generation of Welsh Conservative MPs, his visible Welshness and for what he did legislatively and policy-wise for Wales. It could be argued that the lack of a Welsh Conservative 'hero' is in part due to the lack of any full biography on

¹⁵⁴ Martin Pugh, *Speak for Britain: A New History of the Labour Party*, (London, 2011) pp.222-3

¹⁵⁵ John Campbell, *Nye Bevan and the Mirage of British Socialism*, (London, 1987)

¹⁵⁶ Stefan Terlezki, Conservative MP for Cardiff West in 1983-1987.

a Welsh Conservative who was active as such (Michael Heseltine had Welsh connections but was not generally viewed as a ‘Welsh’ politician). Mini biographies do exist, such as those on Welsh Conservatives in the Dictionary of Welsh Biography, or in the Welsh Political Icons podcast series.¹⁵⁷ However, a lack of any full-scale academic biographies, along with the lumping of the Conservatives as part of the marginalised British Wales, goes lengths to explain why no such Conservative figure exists in the historiography of Wales.

Methodology and Sources.

This thesis will be a biography of Wyn Roberts, the methodology for this will consist primarily of documentary research as the core focus. It will make use of both quantitative and qualitative research data, though will primarily be qualitative as it makes use of a biographical format. The issue with biography as put by Brian Roberts is that there is not a ‘precise definition but to indicate various, often interrelated, approaches to the study of individuals.’¹⁵⁸ Therefore, this thesis will make use of the personal documents of Wyn Roberts in the form of his diaries, alongside other archival sources, with the aim of writing what is an academic biography of the subject. However, a further methodological concern is raised in ‘that qualitative methods differ on the balance between reliability and validity.’¹⁵⁹ Given that the main source is a diary and thus for opinionated, it reveals the subjects view of events which can be affirmed or denied when used in conjunction with other sources.

The use of a biographical approach has been chosen for this thesis a simple reason that no academic biographies exist on any Welsh Conservative who served Wales, similarly, few exist of Conservatives who were born in Wales. Though the analytical use of a biography could be used for any Welsh Conservative, only one Welsh Conservative has been chosen, in this case Wyn Roberts for several reasons. First, is based on how much it is reported that he as an individual has done for Wales. Second, is a more practical concern regarding the availability of sources, which can often be an issue to acquire when it comes to the Conservative Party in Wales. Third, is that as a figure Wyn Roberts was quintessentially Welsh in his upbringing, his first career and his political life, he was a Welsh Conservative

¹⁵⁷ Welsh Political Icons podcast series, available on, <https://www.podash.com/podcast/1382863/> (Last accessed 28th April 2022)

¹⁵⁸ Brian Roberts, *Biographical Research. Understanding Social Research*, (Buckingham, 2002) p.2

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. p.6

not just a Conservative born in Wales. Finally, Roberts has an interesting story to tell, a story that encompassing 15 years at the Welsh Office under Thatcher and Major, 27 years as the MP for Conwy, and 80 years as a Welshman.

Biographies can convey a mythological version of an individual, through the repetition of certain facets. For example, over time several biographies assert the identity of the chosen figure in place of birth (take Wales?). Then given time, the over assertion of a simple fact encompasses the whole to become the immutable fact of a subject's life. Research by means of a biography can be undertaken by many forms. One such is the examination of material such as diaries, letters memoranda and other such materials associated with a person.¹⁶⁰ A biography concerns itself with the examination of the life of a person, sometimes to analyse a larger whole. Typically, it would consider the life of a person in chronological order, though there are several forms of biography which exist.¹⁶¹ An intellectual biography disregards the chronological order of a life to examine the main themes related to a life or career, to build a narrative of life based on this as opposed to following order. A definitive example is Joel Whitebook and his intellectual biography of Freud.¹⁶²

Both the Canadian and German schools of historiography have contentious problems with the use of biography within academic historical works. The term, "The bastard child of academe,"¹⁶³ is the view that is taken by many scholars towards biography. Otherwise, biography has also been known as history's unloved step child.¹⁶⁴ On the other side of this thought, David Meisler¹⁶⁵ has contested that it is high time biography was used more widely in academic history, as it contains valuable insights into mentalities, influences and

¹⁶⁰ Brian Roberts, *Biographical Research. Understanding Social Research*, (Buckingham, 2002)

¹⁶¹ These include, but most certainly is not limited to, Life Writing, Scholarly Chronicle, Memoir Biography, Narrative Biography, and Intellectual Biography. See 'An Introduction to Biographical Research, *American Educational Research Association*, available on, <http://www.aera.net/SIG013/Research-Connections/Introduction-to-Biographical-Research> (Last Accessed, 2 January 2019)

¹⁶² Joel Whitebook, *Freud: An Intellectual Biography*, (Cambridge, 2017)

¹⁶³ Steve Weinberg, 'Biography, the bastard child of academe.' *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 54.35, (2008)

¹⁶⁴ David Nasaw, 'Historians & Biography: Introduction,' in *American Historical Review*, 114.3 pp.573-78

¹⁶⁵ David Meisler, 'The Biographical Turn and the case for Historical Biography,' in *History Compass*, (2017) pp.1-10

connections to broader society.¹⁶⁶ Though this is problematic, and as put by S. Loriga that, “The border separating history and biography has always been anything but peaceful.”¹⁶⁷ And the admission of Caine that, despite the recognition of historians of the usefulness of biography, there is much ambivalence over its use.¹⁶⁸ This can present epistemological issues concerning methodology such as a general overlap of material: if each chapter is thematic rather than chronological then there the risk that the same story is told over and over again from different thematic perspectives.

Even throughout this rocky existential debate, the last 40 years or so has seen the ‘golden age of biography’ in academia,¹⁶⁹ though this is not necessarily the case for the UK. Since biography, at least in the popular sphere, has always been a widely accepted form of writing, perhaps the realm of biography being in both the academic and popular sphere in the UK has complicated the view of it as a traditional approach to intellectual history. An academic or intellectual biography, the basis of what this thesis entails, overcomes interpretive angst apparent in many other forms of biography, what C. Rollyson has described as the ‘intellectual apologia.’¹⁷⁰ It shows that an account where the fervent intrusion into life is done with justice and care for the subject of consideration, and places him in the broader context of his life and times.

Another contentious issue with any biography, especially when the subject in question is either a religious figure or a politician, concerns hagiography. Any hagiographical concern is the having or possessing an excessive flattery of the subject matter or person in question, though a hagiographical account would typically concern a religious subject such as a saint.¹⁷¹ It is however a valid concern pertaining to political biography, say a biography about a Labour politician by a similarly an author with the same political leanings. Arguably then

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. p.7

¹⁶⁷ S. Loriga, ‘The role of the individual in history: Biographical and historical writing in the nineteenth and twentieth century,’ in H. Renders, & B. de Haan (eds.), *Theoretical discussions of biography: Approaches from history, microhistory, and life writing*, (Leiden, 2014) pp. 75–93

¹⁶⁸ B. Caine, *Biography and History*, (New York, 2010)

¹⁶⁹ Lucy Riall, ‘The Shallow End of History? The Substance & Future of Political History,’ in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 40.3 (2010) pp.163-179

¹⁷⁰ C. Rollyson, *Biography: A user’s guide*, (Chicago, 2008)

¹⁷¹ Definition of ‘Hagiography,’ in Cambridge Dictionary, available on, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/hagiography> (Last Accessed 2 January 2018)

work could become hagiographic in nature. There are examples of this on both ends of the political spectrum. Michael Foot's writings on Bevan¹⁷² is a classic example for the left, as is Boris Johnson's writings on Winston Churchill¹⁷³ for the right of the political spectrum. Many of Winston Churchill's other biographies could be construed as considerably hagiographic in nature.¹⁷⁴ Similarly, writings can carry this hagiographic concern prior to release, such as Charles Moore¹⁷⁵ on Andrew Roberts' biography of Churchill.¹⁷⁶ These works also have reflexivity issues, Churchill's for example usually consider him as a political entity, even though throughout his life he was a prolific writer and author two things that do not get taken into consideration.¹⁷⁷

This issue is the same for books on Thatcher,¹⁷⁸ As a politician who in ways was against big industry, and a political figure who typically is attributed to the death of some of the major industries in Britain such as mining, herself became a massive industry for biography. As of December 2018, some 31 of these exist, 32 if counting Charles Moore's authorised biography part 3 as of 2019. As for Clement Attlee,¹⁷⁹ the title given by Bew, *the Man who Made Modern Britain*, makes his base argument all too evident. Similarly, all the biographies listed tend to come from non-academic authors so the issue of possessing the same political views as the biographical subject is often an issue. Such precedents of hagiography in academic works are rare as the author typically is aware of his own leaning and how they may, unchecked, influence the writing. The biographies of Welsh subjects tend to demonstrate this. Similarly, biographies of Welsh people are another rarity in Welsh historiography, beyond those of big figures such as Aneurin Bevan and Gwynfor Evans. One exception to this is Paul

¹⁷² Michael Foot, *Aneurin Bevan: A Biography: Volume 1: 1897-1945*, (London, 2008); and *Aneurin Bevan: A Biography: Volume 2: 1945-1960*, (London, 2008)

¹⁷³ Boris Johnson, *The Churchill Factor: How One Man Made History*, (London, 2014)

¹⁷⁴ Martin Gilbert, *Churchill: A Life*, (London, 1991); Roy Jenkins, *Churchill: A Biography*, (London, 2001), Paul Johnson, *Churchill*, (New York, 2009), Peter Clarke, *Mr Churchill's Profession: Statesman, Orator, Writer*, (London, 2012), Candice Millard, *Hero of the Empire: The Making of Winston Churchill*, (New York, 2016), Andrew Roberts, *Churchill: Walking with Destiny*, (London, 2018)

¹⁷⁵ Charles Moore, 'If only we had a politician who talked to Britain,' in *The Daily Telegraph*, October 2018.

¹⁷⁶ Andrew Roberts, *Churchill: Walking with Destiny*, (London, 2018)

¹⁷⁷ Jonathan Rose, *The Literary Churchill: Author, Reader, Actor*, (London, 2015)

¹⁷⁸ Patricia Murray, *Margaret Thatcher*, (London, 1980); Charles Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorised Biography: Volume One: Not for Turning*, (London, 2013); & *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorised Biography: Volume Two: Everything She Wants*, (London, 2015),

¹⁷⁹ John Bew, *Clement Attlee: The Man Who Made Modern Britain*, (Oxford, 2017)

Ward on Huw T. Edwards as a Welsh Socialist,¹⁸⁰ and of an academic biography.¹⁸¹ There is to certain extent an extreme hagiography concerning biographies of Aneurin Bevan.¹⁸² Brief biographical entries on Wyn Roberts, such as in the National Library in Wales database, tend to also have the same hagiographic problems as they are usually authored by people of the same political view: the icons biography of Wyn Roberts is authored by Janet Finch Saunders AM,¹⁸³ of the Welsh Conservatives she also represents Wyn Roberts' old constituency of Conwy. This presents itself as a subjectivity issue, as the holding of the same beliefs can influence the research account, especially in the case of a personal connection, and when material is written as a quasi-obituary.

There are few exceptions to the lacuna that is the lack of biographies on Welsh Conservatives. With the creation of the DWB the online Dictionary of Welsh Biography,¹⁸⁴ there are now mini biographies, it also contains a few basic biographies of Welsh Conservatives. Also, one of the works of Sam Blaxland on the Welsh Conservatives is a journal article on Conservative MP for Cardiff Southeast, Ted Dexter¹⁸⁵ and a journal article of Conservative MP for Denbigh Geraint Morgan.¹⁸⁶ It is in this lacuna that this thesis serves its purpose in filling what is possibly the first completely comprehensive biography of a truly Welsh Conservative.

Biographies of Conservatives who were born in Wales, are not in a state of lacuna, when compared to Welsh Conservatives. There exists two on Michael Heseltine who was born in

¹⁸⁰ Paul Ward, *Huw T. Edwards: British Labour and Welsh Socialism*, (Cardiff, 2011)

¹⁸¹ Mari Jones, 'The story of Huw Thomas Edwards the unofficial Prime Minister of Wales,' in *Daily Post*, 19 August 2010.

¹⁸² Michael Foot, *Aneurin Bevan: A Biography, Volume 1, 1897-1945*, (London, 1962); & Volume 2, 1945-1960, (London, 1973) are prominent example of this. See also, Nicklaus Thomas-Symonds, *Nye: The Political Life of Nye Bevan*, (London, 2016)

¹⁸³ Janet Finch Saunders, 'Welsh Political Icons – Wyn Roberts,' Podcast, Available on <https://www.listennotes.com/podcasts/welsh-political/25-welsh-political-icons-wyn-RUO7znmvho/> (Last accessed 11th April 2022)

¹⁸⁴ Dictionary of Welsh Biography, on <https://biography.wales/> (Last Accessed 4 January 2019)

¹⁸⁵ Sam Blaxland, 'The curious Case of Ted Dexter and Cardiff South East,' *The Conservative History Journal*, 2.4 (2015) pp.8-11.

¹⁸⁶ Sam Blaxland, 'Denbigh Constituency's First and Final MP: a Study of Geraint Morgan,' in *Denbighshire Historical Society Transactions*, 65 (2017) pp.87-99

Swansea, with Michael Crick¹⁸⁷ and Julian Critchley¹⁸⁸ being the authors of the said works. Born in Wales, Heseltine arguably did try to keep Welsh roots when he sat for the Gower constituency. His seat was eventually chosen for him to help combat the resurgent Liberal Party under Jeremy Thorpe. Both biographies, however, were written by university friends of Heseltine so possibly have the same concerns of reflexivity. Similarly, there is Geoffrey Howe who was born Port Talbot, at the time of writing he has no biographies attributable to him but is an example of a person who is self-described as Welsh, though he sat in an English seat.¹⁸⁹

In an issue of *Contemporary British History* in 1996 four authors debated the use of political biography. Patrick O'Brien,¹⁹⁰ launched his scathing critique arguing biography presents the subject as a representative or as extraordinary, noting that historians see political biographers as people who succumb to one or the other.¹⁹¹ This is not dissimilar to hagiography. On the other hand, the authors; Pauline Croft,¹⁹² John Derry,¹⁹³ and Nigel Hamilton¹⁹⁴ all launched their respective defences of political biography. Croft's response is to stress the individuality of people within social groups.¹⁹⁵ Derry's defence is not without its agreement of O'Brien's criticisms of political biography, he does think that his assertion is strong but lacks illustration.¹⁹⁶ Hamilton maintains the datedness of O'Brien's outlook of political biography given, at the time of the article's publication, in 1996, biography was a discipline with a growing interest.¹⁹⁷

Today there are several examples of this 'political biography,' usually on the larger figures of politics such as earlier referenced on the larger Conservative figures such as Thatcher,

¹⁸⁷ Michael Crick, *Michael Heseltine: a biography*, (London, 1997)

¹⁸⁸ Julian Critchley, *Heseltine*, (London, 1987)

¹⁸⁹ Geoffrey Howe, *Conflict of Loyalty*, (London, 2007)

¹⁹⁰ Patrick O'Brien, 'Is Political Biography a Good Thing?' in *Contemporary British History*, 10.4 (1996) pp.60-66

¹⁹¹ Ibid. p.60

¹⁹² Pauline Croft, 'Political Biography: A Defence (1),' in *Contemporary British History*, 10.4 (1996) pp.67-74

¹⁹³ John Derry, 'Political Biography: A Defence (2),' in *Contemporary British History*, 10.4 (1996) pp.75-80

¹⁹⁴ Nigel Hamilton, 'In defence of the practice of biography,' in *Contemporary British History*, 10.4 (1996) pp.81-86

¹⁹⁵ Pauline Croft, 'Political Biography: A Defence (1),' p. 68

¹⁹⁶ John Derry, 'Political Biography: A Defence (2),' p.75

¹⁹⁷ Nigel Hamilton, 'In defence of the practice of biography,' p.81

Churchill, Cameron. Otherwise, political biography can be for the use of reappraising a subject, Crines et al.¹⁹⁸ reappraise Harold Wilson in history they use a collected essay which focuses on themes, policies, and perspective. This nominally gets around the issue of singular biases of the author, by using several authors.

Paul Ward's book on Huw T. Edwards is a vibrant example of political biography in action. Choosing a subject who has a rationale and explicable reason for being absent from both Labour and Nationalist history, despite being an active figure in both within Wales and known as the 'Unofficial Prime Minister of Wales'.¹⁹⁹ Ward chooses to represent the subject within British history and Welsh history,²⁰⁰ demonstrating an effective template for this study of Wyn Roberts.²⁰¹

It is the intent of this thesis to draw on prominent themes in the history of Wales, such as language and identity, and to argue that Wyn Roberts epitomised a Blue Dragon, a figure who believes in centralism, the language, and an emphasis of 'Welshness', even when dealing with global matters or road-planning A cultural nationalist who throughout his political career prioritised his Welsh identity within the context of British unionism.

The use of the biographical approach accounts for the individual level which, as identified in the Welsh political heroes' section, exists as a lacuna for the Welsh Conservatives. Other works on the subject have either focused on the Conservatives on a party level via examining the Welsh Dimension or the party structure specifically in relation to Wales. Finally, the limited number of works on the Conservative party in Wales tend to focus on a national level, or as the party in Wales. These are potential issues that can come in with the use of biography as the layers of analysis can overlap: Wyn Roberts dealt with issues that affected the Party level, and issues that affected Wales as a whole. This should not present a problem owing to the particular focus of an analysis of Wyn Roberts, any other data pertaining to the party or to Wales will be general facts that are required for context.

¹⁹⁸ Andrew C. Crines & Kevin Hickson, *Harold Wilson: The Unprincipled Prime Minister? Reappraising Harold Wilson*, (London, 2016)

¹⁹⁹ Paul Ward, *Huw T. Edwards, British Labour and Welsh Socialism*, (Cardiff, 2011) p.4

²⁰⁰ Ibid. p.4

²⁰¹ Ibid. Conclusion p.2

This thesis focuses on Wyn Roberts for many reasons, simply the availability and quantity of material, constituency located in 'British Wales', makes understanding the identity issue easier. For much of the issues concerning the Conservatives in Wales, as noted by Blaxland, its neither attitude of the historian or historiographical weaknesses, it is the problem of identifying source material on or about the Conservatives²⁰² on a nationwide and party level.

This problem, however, is tackled relatively neatly by the singular focus of a biography: instead of having to identify every facet of the grassroots of the Conservatives in Wales, it must identify the source material for the individual level. The main source for this is the diaries of Wyn Roberts which were donated to the National Library by his wife Enid Roberts in 2015.²⁰³ Originally started to "...chronicle the progress of the quiet revolution which Mr Heath and the Conservative Party are pledged to carry out,"²⁰⁴ the diaries became not only became a great help to Roberts in digesting the meaning of 30 years' worth of events,²⁰⁵ but have become an vital and vastly underused resource to historians of the Conservative Party and of Wales.

The diaries alone span the length of some 30 years with no less than 18 volumes which document from a first-hand account decades of Westminster politics with Wyn Roberts personal views on many affairs for the period. It too makes use of the Welsh office papers which are stored in the National Archives in Kew, Surrey. Also, of the Archives of the Conservative Party which are kept in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. For the post devolution era in 1997 any available Conservative papers are held for the better part in the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth.

Hansard will be utilised for much of the period 1970-1997, as Wyn Roberts was an active Member of Parliament in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords for every year he was active. Wyn Robert's contributions to Parliament between 9 July 1970 to 16 March

²⁰² Sam Blaxland, 'The Conservative Party in Wales 1945-1997,' PhD thesis, Swansea University, (2017) p.34

²⁰³ Eryl Crump, 'Lord Roberts of Conwy's political diaries donated to the National library of Wales,' in *Daily Post*, 28 September 2015

²⁰⁴ Wyn Roberts Diaries, Wednesday 4 November 1970. Vol.1, National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth.

²⁰⁵ Lord Roberts of Conwy, *Right from the Start*, p.341

2005 alone total to an impressive 11233 entries.²⁰⁶ This is invaluable for gauging the events of the period and more importantly the opinions and Roberts's public discourse. Though this does provide some methodological concerns surrounding the selection and seclusion of the material, due to the sheer amount of information involved. Therefore, this can be mitigated by either by focusing on either certain years, or as this thesis does, on certain events. Chapter 3 on the A55 is an example of how to narrow down the Hansard entries and combine with diary entries for a detailed analysis.

Though it is often identified as an important source for biography, oral history²⁰⁷ will not be utilised for this biography. This is due to the incorporeal form of most of the people who surrounded Wyn Roberts during his younger years and his time as an MP. Also, as this thesis is to take the form of an academic biography, interviewees who knew Roberts are bound to be more subjective in their views of him. Though, it is a prose form that though subject to advantage, mainly it being a rich and varied source for a historian,²⁰⁸ it has a multitude of disadvantages.²⁰⁹ However, given the role of both sound and film in documentary analysis, such as other archived interviews and television appearances, these will be deployed as supplementary primary sources where available in the thesis.

The project will make use of newspapers as an invaluable source. If taken into consideration the political leaning of certain newspapers, they are fantastic for regional news and for immediate events. National papers report the story though only cover the basics; regional newspapers tend to contain more specific detail. As an example, the Conwy archives contains a file of local newspaper clippings pertaining to the Conwy Marina,²¹⁰ each contain specific details, views, and decisions on the Marina. Many of these clippings include pertain to Wyn Roberts involvement.²¹¹ The nationals tend to cover only the bigger aspects of the Conwy

²⁰⁶ Wyn Roberts Hansard Index, <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/people/mr-wyn-roberts/index.html> (Last accessed 16 October 2018)

²⁰⁷ Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, (Oxford, 2014)

²⁰⁸ Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, (4th Ed.), (Oxford, 2017) p.5

²⁰⁹ Trevor Lummis, *Listening to History: The Authenticity of Oral Evidence*, (Bungay, 1988) p.5

²¹⁰ Conwy Marina Newspaper cuttings, CO2/9/13/101, Conwy Archives, Llandudno.

²¹¹ 'Marina rebels in 'back us' plea to MP,' in *Western Mail*, 7 November 1990.

Marina construction.²¹² There remain several regional newspapers available to this thesis, many of which are readily accessible. Earlier examples include the *North Wales Weekly News*, and the *Western Mail*, both of which are widely available as source material for historians. Though the *Western Mail*, has never been successful in North Wales to the same extent as its South Wales circulation.

In addition to newspapers, a knowledge of how to collate local history was necessary as this thesis is partially regional based.²¹³ A prime example of this is chapter 3 which examines Robert's role in the creation of the A55 dual carriageway, which cuts through the heart of his Conwy constituency. The local history of this alone spans some 40 years, with Roberts at its heart from 1974 onwards, making local archives, specifically the Conwy Archives, beneficial. The collections on the A55, cover the expanse and span the whole of the construction timeframe, though, if specifically searching for 'Wyn Roberts' in the archive catalogue, beyond 1979 general election pamphlets, there is seldom mention of him.²¹⁴ To find more specific articles, therefore, is to examine specific local events, such as the construction A55, where the sporadic mentions of him escalate into something much more commonplace.

The structure of this thesis will be chapters consisting of a thematic element placed in a chronological order based on which ones Wyn Roberts would have first encountered during his career. Chapter two for example, will examine his role in Welsh television, since his first career was with the then Television Wales and West, preceding his subsequent involvement in the Welsh fourth channel and the creation of Sianel Pedwar Cymru, S4C.

²¹² Prime example of the nationals. *The Observer*, in 1995 the only mentions of the Conwy Marina come from the classifieds, offering houses for sale. The concerns of the 'Marina rebels' were realised.

²¹³ James Mackay, *Collecting Local History*, (Essex, 1984)

²¹⁴ 'Pamphlets: Candidates for 1979 General Election in Conwy Constituency,' in Conwy Archives, Llandudno. CX575

Research Questions & Chapters.

Each chapter will hold a thematic focus intended to help answer four principal research questions.

The research questions posed in this thesis are fourfold,

1. Who was Lord Roberts of Conwy and what was his contribution to the Welsh nation?
2. What findings are unearthed about Roberts's views and ideas in his extensive diaries?
3. Was there a specific form of Welsh Conservatism in the latter half of the twentieth century, The Blue Dragon, that can be shaped around elements of Roberts's identity and career?
4. What were the contributions of Welsh Conservatism to the Welsh nation?

The first two chapters will deal with what made Wyn Roberts the perfect Conservative candidate for Conwy whilst also ascertain the crucial elements of being a 'Welsh Conservative'. Is there any differentiation in Conservatism in Wales as opposed to a greater whole of Britain?

Chapter One will analyse the historical, cultural, and political identity of Wyn Roberts to an extent. This is to determine why in 1970 a man who comes from what is described as a 'vaguely liberal family,' ultimately decided to run for the Conwy seat with the Conservative Party. Why not the obvious choice of Welsh Labour, or the nationalists of Plaid Cymru, or at the time the recently resurgent Liberal Party? It will then examine his subsequent relations with other Conservative politicians, such as with Margaret Thatcher. It will also briefly look at his relationships with his contemporary North Wales MPs, as how he interacted with them could prove vital in defining his character. Chapter one also deals in part with the early career of Wyn Roberts, his involvement in the burgeoning Welsh television industry with his time at the then Television Wales and West, TWW. It will examine the reasons behind the collapse of TWW and Roberts eventual decision to join the Conservative Party under Edward Heath. All this contributes to understanding the foundations of a 'Welsh Conservatism.'

The next chapters will examine the career of Wyn Roberts between 1979 and 1996, developing further ideas about what the Conservatives did for North Wales? This includes improving the roads of Wales, Welsh language preservation and increased Welsh-language education provision across Wales.

Chapter Two ‘a saviour of the Welsh Language,’ will focus on the period of his life post 1970 as a politician and MP for Conwy. It will examine his involvement in Welsh Language policy and controversies, including the Welsh Fourth Channel and in the subsequent involvement in the establishing of Sianel Pedwar Cymru, S4C. Demonstrable from this is how integral he was to Wales, for both the language, and for the north. It will then go on to examine the role he played in education for Wales with the Education reform (Wales) Act 1988, and examines the 1993 Welsh Language Act, the political child of Wyn Roberts. It also explores Wyn Roberts’s various dealings with Welsh language protestors and Cymdeithas yr Iaith, The Welsh Language Society (WLS). The issue of language in the identity of Wales is one that has been examined in relation to the Conservative party in Wales (with the Conservatives mainly conveyed as the ‘enemy’ of Welsh language activists), though it has never been examined from the point of view of a Conservative insider such as Wyn Roberts.

Chapter Three, ‘A55 the road of opportunity’ explores the claim that Roberts ‘built more roads than the Romans.’²¹⁵ With what will be one of the first historical examinations of the creation of the A55 and Roberts role in it. Though he was, obviously, not there at the very beginning of the A55 road improvements in the 1930s, the development of the road was a matter that he took close interest in following his re-election in the Conwy constituency in 1974. He would eventually be there to open the Conwy tunnel with HM Queen Elizabeth II in October 1991. The historiography on roads is vastly understudied, to the best of known knowledge, the A55 has never been examined historically in relation to its creation.

Chapter Four, Wyn Roberts in a Global Wales? examines the role Roberts played in the attempts to modernise the Welsh economy via globalisation and Direct Foreign investments. This is to be done by examining the role of official visits conducted by Roberts as a Minister of State for the Welsh Office. It focuses on the role played by Roberts in getting Wales into the trans-national and inter regional European trading bloc, the Four Motors of Europe. It

²¹⁵ ‘Lord Roberts of Conwy,’ in *The Times*, 7 January 2013.

then focuses on the Roberts efforts in North America and Asia and how he made almost exclusive use of Welsh culture abroad to achieve his aims.

Chapter Five will be based on ‘The crisis of the Welsh Conservative?’ As Wyn Roberts notes in his memoir, his diaries of the time around 1995 were ‘deplorable of the state of the Conservative party.’ In relation to his notes on the downfall of Conservatism and the Conservative Party in Wales, which give an intricate picture of the party in the 1990s. Roberts was the only Welsh Conservative to return to frontbench politics post 1997 general election when he entered the Lords, giving him some unique insights into a turbulent period in Conservative Party history. It will focus on Roberts’s perspective on the fall of the Conservative Party in Wales in the 1990s. Starting with the national issues which affected the party across all four nations of the UK, it will then examine the specific local issues which affected the party within Wales. The issue of the party’s collapse has never been examined in historiography with specific reference to the Welsh Dimension, specifically what caused the party to become so unpopular in Wales.

Ultimately, this thesis will argue that Wyn Roberts gave rise to the notion of the ‘Blue Dragon’ in modern Welsh political history, thus both shedding new light on well-trodden grounds in Welsh historiography (such as the Welsh language), and demonstrating the value of more unexplored topics, such as the history of roads, in illuminating the complexities of post-1970 Welsh politics and identity.

Chapter One: Wyn Roberts: The Blue Dragon?

‘What alarms me is that no one appears to be in control of any changes that may come and that we are heading for a destiny not of our choosing. We are being guided by a strange compass and there are no great principles or high values to speak of. Spin has replaced truth.’²¹⁶

Written at the end of the twentieth century by the then Lord Roberts of Conwy, this passage forms one of the last sporadic entries in his diaries.²¹⁷ It sums up Wyn Roberts’ view of his 30 years in parliament, it also suggests that Wyn Roberts’ priorities may not have been devolution but rather cultural achievements or Welsh language legislation. Such a focus on Wales and any consequences suggests a view that is markedly different to the views of other Conservatives of the age, the view of a ‘Blue Dragon.’

This chapter will propose that Wyn Roberts existed within the Conservative party, as a Welsh strand or a Blue Dragon strand if you will. This places an emphasis on autonomy from above, or rather Centralism from Westminster, on language policy and Welshness, a general strand of Welsh Conservatism not regularly studied. Though the red flag from Kenneth Morgan’s²¹⁸ work is synonymous with centrism, the Blue Dragon counterpart that has been chosen to demonstrate Roberts’ Welshness supports a form of centralism. The Blue Dragon also, arguably, demonstrates the kind of Welsh Conservatism, which exists in the form of Assembly Members such as Paul Davies, or David Melding. On the other hand, we have the ‘blue flag’ of the Conservative Party, which is often seen as English to its very core, either One-Nationism or Thatcherism, Centralist and above all English. This is arguably what brought about the slow decline of the Conservative party in Scotland.²¹⁹ There are similar

²¹⁶ The diaries of Wyn Roberts, vol. 18, Monday 27 December 1999, National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth. WYNROBERTDIARIES. Hereafter, any diary entries will be referred to by entry date and volume. Simply, given the amount of usage it would double the footnotes of this thesis.

²¹⁷ This quote appears in his memoir, the diaries available in the National Library of Wales end in July 1996. It is possible that this quote comes from a further volume that has not been made available in the National Library of Wales.

²¹⁸ Kenneth Morgan, *Red Dragon and the Red Flag: The Cases of James Griffiths and Aneurin Bevan*, (Aberystwyth, 1989)

²¹⁹ David Torrance, *Whatever Happened to Tory Scotland?* (Edinburgh, 2012)

questions about the Tory vote, meaning Scotland is not alone, the same goes for the North of England,²²⁰ this trend is particularly noticeable in Liverpool.²²¹ Such notions of examining Conservatives this way, have been considered before. An article for the *Guardian* uses a similar method to look at Peter Walker the Welsh Secretary between 1987 and 1990.²²² It dubs him as ‘The Phoenix’ marking him as a man responsible for a resurgence of Conservatism in Wales. There is also the claim made by Roger Scully for the general election of 2017, that the Welsh Dragon could turn blue,²²³ though it proved not to be the case with a loss of 3 seats since the 2015 general election.²²⁴ However, at the 2019 general election the Conservative party did gain a historic 14 seats,²²⁵ an event not seen since the Thatcher years at the 1983 general election. The Conservatives still have some support from areas in Wales, and at several times over the years areas of Wales have turned blue.

Wyn Roberts was by all accounts an incredible talent and asset for the Conservatives, he was responsible for a great number of issues whilst an MP. For the Conservatives a party with an English leaning reputation, to have Wyn Roberts in their midst, was a long-standing lacuna partially filled. At the very least, to have another Welsh speaking MP who was active in politics was a success for the party, Geraint Morgan had been in politics for 10 years before Roberts but was by no means as active an MP.²²⁶ This is what makes Wyn Roberts interesting, a Welsh Conservative in an era where popular opinion often perceives the Conservatives as the party of England. As surmised by Thatcher in conversation with Roberts.

²²⁰ Peter Kellner, ‘Why northerners don’t vote Tory,’ in *Prospect*, (November, 2013) available on <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2013/10/21/why-northerners-dont-vote-tory> (Last accessed 9 April 2019)

²²¹ David Jeffrey, ‘The Strange death of Tory Liverpool: Conservative electoral decline in Liverpool, 1945-1996,’ in *British Politics*, 12.3 (2017) pp.386-407

²²² Michael White, ‘The Red Dragon and the phoenix,’ in *The Guardian*, 7 February 1989

²²³ Roger Scully, ‘The Welsh dragon is about to turn blue,’ in *The Sunday Times*, 14 May 2017.

²²⁴ General Elections online, available on, <https://electionresults.parliament.uk/election/2017-06-08/results/Location/Country/Wales> (Last accessed 13 April 2019)

²²⁵ ‘General Election 2019: Tories claim big scalps in Wales,’ on *BBC News*, 13 December 2019

²²⁶ On Hansard, Geraint Morgan appeared in the House of Commons a total of 671 times across a 23-year period. See; <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/people/mr-william-morgan-1/index.html>, (Last accessed 21 May 2020)

“You have nothing! You contribute nothing! The only Conservatives in Wales are the English who moved in.”²²⁷

The very existence of Wyn Roberts contradicts this statement from Thatcher. Wyn Roberts existed as a Blue Dragon, or a Welsh Conservative who often put Welsh culture and identity at the forefront of his policies. As an example, this is perhaps most evident in his visits abroad where he often prioritised engaging with Welsh Associations, whilst advertising Wales on a global stage. This is not something that an English person who moved into Wales is likely to have done. It was, however, perhaps Wyn Roberts’ failure to gain the top office of Secretary of State, that is the reason why he is largely unmentioned in both the history of modern Wales and the history of the Conservative party. However, it was being a Welsh figure which made Roberts significant and crucial within the realms of both Conservative and Welsh histories. Roberts’ role lies behind many of the key events of his life rather than at the fore, with roads, education, and the Welsh language being a few policies he was responsible for. Therefore, this chapter will examine Wyn Roberts historical, cultural, and political ideas. It is imperative to look at Wyn Roberts through these lenses rather than just as a politician, for both historical and cultural thought are crucial to defining what makes a ‘Blue Dragon.’ Similarly, Wyn Roberts also had a career with Television Wales and West for over a decade before he became an MP, events that happened here influenced some of Wyn Roberts thinking as a politician.

The apparently paradoxical statement by Thatcher, on Conservatives in Wales, sums up the problem of the Conservatives being considered as an Anglo-centric and English party. Especially when comparable with the Labour, Nationalist, and Liberal traditions of Wales. The notion of adopting a Welsh identity and the Welsh language in the Conservative Party, is nothing new in the world of Conservative history. Andrew Edwards et al.²²⁸ have conducted such a study focusing on the quintessentially Welsh region of Northwest Wales, Gwynedd or in Balsom’s term Y Fro Gymraeg²²⁹. Similarly, as a party it has a long track record of

²²⁷ Lord Roberts of Conwy, *Right from the Start: The Memoirs of Sir Wyn Roberts*, (Cardiff, 2006) pp.221

²²⁸ Andrew Edwards & Duncan Tanner & Patrick Carlin, ‘The Conservative Governments and The Development of Welsh Language Policy in the 1980s and 1990s,’ in *The Historical Journal*, 54.2 (2011) pp.529-551

²²⁹ Dennis Balsom, ‘The Three Wales Model’ in John Osmond, (ed.) *The National Question Again: Welsh Political Identity in the 1980s*, (Llandysul, 1985) p.45

handling Welsh language issues, and of Welsh affairs. The addition of Wyn Roberts certainly helped the Conservatives on Welsh matters, even more so on language issues. He existed as a certain paradox within the party, Welsh speaking adding another layer of complexity to his identity, but he remained typically Conservative when it comes to centrism, a ‘Blue Dragon’ if you will.

If asked why the ‘Blue Dragon’ and not the ‘Red Dragon’ as both attest and pertain to a similar view of ‘Welshness’ and the language; simply, the ‘Blue Dragon’ is sympathetic to a strand of Conservatism, Welsh Conservatism. A Welsh Conservatism which could have become even more prevalent in the post-devolution era, as the issue of independence and each party’s stance and Welsh Identity have become highly politicised issues. The Conservative strand has argued that since devolution they have strived the hardest to forge their own identity.²³⁰ Wyn Roberts existed as a pinnacle of this Welsh Conservative strand of Conservatism, (or as the ‘Blue Dragon’) in the three decades before, since 1970 and the years after the 1997 referendum. When the Conservative Party finally had learnt from past mistakes and embraced Welshness.

Carl Lofmark contends that, “In Wales... the dragon is not... a symbol of the monarchy, but a national symbol reserved for representatives of the whole people...”²³¹ Wyn Roberts could be considered as one such representative of the whole people at the Welsh Office which represented the people of Wales. (Though Welsh, Roberts placed his emphasis on Centralism, Unionism, the language and ‘Welshness.’) Therefore, he is arguably a ‘Blue Dragon,’ or a Welsh Conservative much like his Welsh and Labour counterparts Aneurin Bevan and James Griffiths are portrayed in the historical discourse over the Red Flag and Red Dragon.

The Blue Flag²³² could therefore stand as the opposite of the Blue Dragon as a way of demonstrating English Conservatism. As the Conservatives already had strong support from one region, in this scenario it would be an encapsulation of the areas already popularly perceived to be strongly Tory, such as various south England seats. Since Wyn Roberts was

²³⁰ Sophie Williams, ‘The Politics of Welshness: A Response to Bradbury and Andrews,’ *Parliamentary Affairs*, 71.2 (2018) pp.305-323

²³¹ Carl Lofmark, *A History of the Red Dragon*, Welsh Heritage Series No 4. (Llanwrst, 1995)

²³² ‘How blue is my valley?’ in *The Economist*, 10 May 2017

not the only Welsh Conservative, and as this thesis retains singular focus, and any Welsh Conservative can be branded a Blue Dragon if they meet the right criteria. The goes for any Anglo centric Tories who in theory could be branded as ‘Blue Flag’ Tories. What makes the Blue Dragon interesting is that though there has always been some form of acknowledgement of the Welsh dimension or an awareness of a Welsh identity within the party it has always been at its strongest within the Welsh Conservative members of the party. Also, nobody has ever tried to name a Welsh strand of Conservatism, a plethora of works can be attributed to the Anglo centric strands, but none to a specific Welsh strand.

This does not mean that it does not exist, after all polls show near unprecedented support for the Conservative Party in Wales in this era with 14 seats in 1983,²³³ and 11 in 1987 general elections.²³⁴ Even though Conservatives historically always had marginal success in Wales. Thatcher herself socially appealed to the working classes with policies such as the Right to Buy, a policy which Roberts supported wholeheartedly, and held part responsibility for when it came to its implementation in Wales.²³⁵ The Blue Dragon could be a superlative example of what it is to be a Welsh Conservative. This chapter will therefore examine the thought of Wyn Roberts, including historical, cultural, and political thought to determine what accurately makes this ‘Blue Dragon’ of Welsh Conservatism. In addition, it is unfair to label Roberts as the only ‘Blue Dragon,’ for more than one Welsh Conservative has existed. It was in the 1980s that the efficacy of such a group came to the fore over the policies in Wales, similarly as with everything else Conservative in Wales, it is possible that it faded into obscurity with the fall of the Conservative Party in 1997.²³⁶ With each generation of politicians usually comes a different way of thinking or ideology, therefore the Blue Dragon could be something specific only to Wyn Roberts generation.

Added to this is the fact that ideology is often considered as a murky area for many Conservatives. The party is often styled around the idea of Conservative principles, such principles being along the lines of tradition, opposition to change, favour of free enterprise, private ownership, or socially traditional ideas. All these are favoured by differing Conservative ideologies, and there is a sparsity of academic articles who do a good defence

²³³ General Election results, For 1983 House of Commons, LR N.117

²³⁴ General Election results, For 1983 House of Commons, LR N.353

²³⁵ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 1, 1980-1981.

²³⁶ See Chapter: 5.

of Conservative principles. Many of these Conservative principles Wyn Roberts inhabits in some form. A lot of these form the two souls of Conservatism, one where Conservatives must protect values and institutions from their opponents but also an internal struggle for ownership of their own political tradition.²³⁷ A lot of this issue can be seen in Wyn Roberts, with his desire to protect Wales, Welsh institutions, and Welsh Culture. Roberts also falls on the other soul of Conservatism, struggling at times to be a Welsh Conservative in a party that came across and either English or at times anti-Welsh, much similar to the impression that was given for most of the 1990s. Wyn Roberts struggled to own this as his own political tradition.

However, a major issue in tracing the thought of someone such as Wyn Roberts, is the lack of written works about and by the subject. Beyond his memoir, *Right from the Start*, there are no other works which maintain a focus on Wyn Roberts, certainly no biographical works. With a figure such as Thatcher, or for a Welsh example Aneurin Bevan, the number of biographies devoted to them creates a new issue. It is hard to ascertain the true thought with so many differing analyses, the true thought could be lost in layers of subjectivity. It is necessary to go to the beginning or to choose someone who has never had their thought examined. Wyn Roberts is a pivotal example, someone who stood as an opposite to the perceived reality of a Labour Wales, but also someone who documented his 30 years in politics in excessive detail in his diaries. From these and an examination of what he did for Wales, it is possible to glean his political thought, termed as the Blue Dragon. However, before examining Wyn Roberts' politics, given that half of Roberts life was he had spent in a religious background before studying history followed by a spell in journalism prior to entering politics, it is necessary to examine his role within these, as they could play a large role in his thinking.

Wyn Roberts, pre–Television Wales and West.

The first role of Wyn Roberts is simply that of his early years prior to TWW, his religious and historical days since he achieved his degree in History at Oxford. In addition of this, from Robert's early years he was in touch with an unusual hybridity, being both Welsh speaking but also being in very English institutions, at one hand in touch with Welsh nationalism and right at the other end with a form of British nationalism. This hybridity is something that

²³⁷ Edmund Fawcett, *Conservatism: The Fight for Tradition*, (Princeton, 2020)

Wyn Roberts would have to deal with across all his careers, from this he was also in touch with issues that affected the whole of the UK.

Similarly, religion also forms the basis of some of the identity of Wyn Roberts; first, his father was a Methodist minister in his village and Roberts was raised as a Methodist in his childhood. However, despite his Methodist upbringing the area of his childhood, Anglesey, was a rural area which was marked by church disestablishment from the Lloyd George administration.²³⁸ A split not dissimilar to the English elite world of Oxford Roberts would come to know. In his village of birth, Llansadwrn, Roberts notes that it was subjected to such a split. That,

“The church end... (of Llansadwrn) was alien territory to us chapel folk and we seldom ventured there without a trace of anxiety in our hearts.”²³⁹

Such a split or differences between Welshness and Englishness Wyn Roberts had known from his childhood in both his educational and religious backgrounds. Though he would always support the Welsh he never seemed to hold any issue against the English either.

Wyn Roberts by his earliest form of childhood education studied in a Welsh speaking school in Beaumaris, for adult education he entered the English world at Harrow before studying history at Oxford. Therefore, he was arguably before being a journalist, politician, or a Lord, a historian by training, though Roberts has noted that ‘Politics had always attracted me.’²⁴⁰ History has obviously always dictated his politics, and his diaries. His Welsh Political Archive lecture in 1995 on Devolution demonstrates such,²⁴¹ for in his lecture Roberts makes a timeline that is traceable. Similarly, in Roberts’ memoir, he states ‘my interest in politics was minimal during university.’²⁴² This is a somewhat paradoxical statement for someone who, would later become the MP for Conwy for some 27 years, followed by a peerage in the House of Lords for a further 16 years, until his death in 2013. It suggests that history was

²³⁸ Kenneth Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, (Cardiff, 1963) pp.259-79

²³⁹ Lord Roberts of Conwy, *Right from the Start: The Memoirs of Sir Wyn Roberts*, (Cardiff, 2006) p.8

²⁴⁰ Lord Roberts of Conwy, *Right from the Start*, (Cardiff, 2006)

²⁴¹ Sir Wyn Roberts, ‘Fifteen years at the Welsh Office, 1979-94’ The Welsh Political Archive: 9th Annual lecture, National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth. 1995.

²⁴² Lord Roberts of Conwy, *Right from the Start*, (Cardiff, 2006)

what he was truly interested in, a veneration for his own Welsh heritage and culture could suggest why he always did his best for Wales.

Wyn Roberts' time at Oxford brought Roberts into contact with the 'great' historians and indeed the English elites of the age, a far cry from his Welsh roots in Llansadwrn. Although Harrow had almost certainly achieved this on its own, as had his national service, Oxford was another league altogether. Two such examples are as his history lecturer Hugh Trevor-Roper,²⁴³ and his phenomenal work *The Last Days of Hitler*,²⁴⁴ and the historian Christopher Elrington. Wyn Roberts held him in high regard and even noted Elrington's contribution to history in a letter to *The Times* newspaper,²⁴⁵ upon the latter's death in 2009. In addition to this, his memoir references books, which include Johann Goethe's, *Poetry and Truth*,²⁴⁶ and John Morley's (the) *Life of Gladstone*.²⁴⁷ This was a poignant work for Wyn Roberts, as it was what he was reading the day he found out his father had passed away. Gladstone interestingly was a prominent figure in Liberal Wales, having his own Library located in Hawarden,²⁴⁸ and several historical works on the topic.²⁴⁹ This also ties into the Liberalism prominent around Wyn Robert's childhood, as Megan Lloyd George had once visited his childhood home.²⁵⁰ Though this will be examined further on in this chapter. Wyn Roberts had clearly known some of the historians of his era, and from certain entries in his diaries it is clear they influenced him to a certain degree. His historical thought on certain matters clearly influenced some of his decision making in parliament, from these it is possible to discern his thoughts on history. On such a debate about British history in the House of Lords Roberts stated at some length to the house, that,

²⁴³ Hugh Trevor Roper, 17th Century historian of Britain and of Europe.

²⁴⁴ Hugh Trevor Roper, *The Last Days of Hitler*, (London, 1947)

²⁴⁵ Lord Roberts of Conwy, 'Christopher Elrington,' in *The Times Digital Archive*, 11 August 2009, (Last accessed 28 June 2019)

²⁴⁶ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *From my Life: Poetry and Truth; 1811-1833*, (London, 1932)

²⁴⁷ John Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, (London, 1927)

²⁴⁸ The only Prime Ministerial Library of the UK, Gladstone Library is in Hawarden.

²⁴⁹ See; K.O. Morgan, 'Gladstone and Wales,' in *Welsh History Review*, 1 (1960) pp.65-82, K.O. Morgan, 'Gladstone, Wales and the New Radicalism,' in P.J. Jagger (ed.) *Gladstone*, (London, 1988) pp.123-36, Matthew Cragoe, *Culture, politics, and National Identity in Wales*, (Oxford, 2004) p.36

²⁵⁰ Lord Roberts of Conwy, *Right from the Start*, (Cardiff, 2006) p.6

Contrary to Emerson's interesting dictum that, 'there is no history; only biography', the revisionists reject the significance of individuals. I wonder what Cromwell or Churchill would think of that. My objection to the view of revisionists is that history without heroes and villains is dull and unedifying. I suspect that the airbrushing of personalities from history is a secret vice of the inferior second-hand scribbler of history who seeks his own glorification and that of his personal, potted retrospective view imposed on our complex and ever-changing past.²⁵¹

Wyn Roberts was clearly and contestably very anti-diluvian in his approach, by modern standards. Rejecting revisionist thought in favour of views that are founded before the History from Below. Though given his 1950s education as a history student this would not be an unsurprising view for someone with historical training in this era to hold. It would be fallacy to put Roberts into the people category, though he was certainly not a 'great man' or nation leader to the extent of figures such as Churchill. It is possible that never getting to the position of Secretary of State for Wales²⁵² saw to that. It does do justice given the views of Wyn Roberts to consider a biographical approach, he is a most important figure in both history and as a political figure. Similarly, his love of history, is made clear from both his diaries and documents over the Welsh curriculum. Such as his role in the creation of bilingual education, but also separate curricula for England and Wales. As he notes in

When I think of my own induction to an enduring love of history, I think of a pre-Raphaelite, textbook picture of a smartly dressed, golden-haired and noble Caractacus in chains before an effete Charles Laughton look-alike emperor in Rome. I am glad to see that Caractacus is mentioned as suitable for study at Key Stage 2. The social history counterpart is the Twentieth Century story of the two ancient Britons, Dai, and Ianto, who appeared in the Coliseum about that time. Ianto, the duller of the two, asked who the lady was in the imperial box, next to the chap wearing the laurel leaves. Dai, ever knowledgeable, replied, "I'll tell you later; here come the lions".²⁵³

In addition to thought, there is a much more practical application of Robert's historical training in the timeline of events. As a historian the notion of building a timeline seemingly came naturally to Wyn Roberts. It is demonstrable time and again throughout his life in

²⁵¹ Hansard, HL Deb. 27 March 2000, vol. 611, cc576-92, c581

²⁵² 'Welsh language proved a barrier to top job,' in *Western Mail*, 21 February 2006.

²⁵³ Hansard, HL Deb. 27 March 2000, vol. 611, cc576-92, c584

politics. A major example of his timeline is on Devolution in a lecture for the Welsh political archive in 1995.²⁵⁴ Starting in 1964 he traces devolution up to the point of the Welsh Political Archive speech.

The same historical thought is demonstrated countless times across the 30 years' worth of diary entries. Of the last major diary entries, of Wyn Roberts, he states on the matter of devolution and the approaching new millennia.

“The historians are busy rewriting history. The history of the UK has become the ‘story of the isle’ in deference to devolution and closer union with Europe. The Welsh approach to history is also veering to make devolution the climax of our achievement...”²⁵⁵

Such was the significance of this entry was major enough to Roberts that he utilised it to conclude his 2006 memoir. His historical thought and love of history would follow him all his life, it was a disappointing result in his Oxford exams that turned Roberts away from Academe to the outer world.²⁵⁶ There is further evidence of his historical thought being with Roberts throughout his life, in his diaries there is a letter from Roberts to Glanmor Williams, the then Head of History at Swansea University. In this letter Wyn Roberts congratulates Williams and applauds him on his forthcoming history book.²⁵⁷ Throughout his political years he kept in touch with such historians, this further demonstrates his enduring love of history.

This view of Wyn Roberts is one where he has a problem with the teleological view of history, this is something that is often expressed in Conservative thought. Conservatives often turn to history in reflection of what must be observed, to understand what deserves allegiance but also what is certain for a good society.²⁵⁸ For Wyn Roberts a history that focuses on

²⁵⁴ Sir Wyn Roberts, ‘Fifteen years at the Welsh Office, 1979-94’ The Welsh Political Archive: 9th Annual lecture, National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth. 1995.

²⁵⁵ Lord Roberts of Conwy, *Right from the Start: The Memoirs of Sir Wyn Roberts*, (Cardiff, 2006) p.1 In theory this comes from Wyn Roberts Diary, vol.?, 27 December 1999, the 18th volume stops in 1996, which suggests this was a sporadic entry that did not get donated to the National Library of Wales.

²⁵⁶ Lord Roberts of Conwy, *Right from the Start: The Memoirs of Sir Wyn Roberts*, (Cardiff, 2006) p.45

²⁵⁷ ‘Letter from Wyn Roberts to Glanmor Williams,’ Wyn Roberts Diaries, WPA, NLW, Aberystwyth.

²⁵⁸ John Kekes, ‘What is Conservatism,’ *Philosophy*, 72.281 (1997) pp.351-374 p.353

Devolution, something which he campaigned against, would in his view not make a good society.

Finally, though Roberts moved on from his historical studies the lessons he earned were obviously never forgotten, for he created an invaluable historical resource. He documented his life in his diaries and created what is contestably one of the most important historical resources in the last thirty years of the twentieth century. These diaries were deposited in the National Library in Aberystwyth in 2015 by Enid Roberts two years after his death in 2013. They remain original and uncensored, a true and emotive account of thirty years in frontline politics. Alas his time as a potential historian was short lived, though he never forgot the lessons. Wyn Roberts moved on to become a journalist and a broadcaster for the next seventeen years of his life. The apparent problems for the Blue Dragon of being both Welsh speaking and the Englishness of the party are apparent long before the Conservative Party gained Wyn Roberts as such a vital asset. Roberts was a cultural nationalist; he had a fond love of his home country of Wales but also preferred Wales being within the union. This can be seen in his career with TWW and his earlier attempts to preserve the Welsh language.

Wyn Roberts, a Cultural Nationalist?

‘Of course, as a Welshman, I wished to see political and national self-confidence in Wales... the harsh reality was that Wales was financially dependent on the UK.’²⁵⁹

It is not ludicrous to claim that Roberts’ cultural thought was more in line with the conservative strand of Plaid Cymru. This would also suggest that a general strand of conservatism exists in Welshness. Since “Plaid Cymru’s connection with the linguistic and cultural renaissance in Wales during the 1960s is well known. The Conservatism of some of its supporters rooted in the movement should not be understated.”²⁶⁰ Though increasing left radicalism would have destroyed any chance for Wyn Roberts in Plaid Cymru, this would not be the case for his brand of Cultural Nationalism.

²⁵⁹ Lord Roberts of Conwy, *Right from the Start*, p.330

²⁶⁰ Duncan Tanner, et al. *Labour Party in Wales*, (Cardiff, 2000) p.268

As with the discovery of new avenues of history in the advent of devolution, such as the ‘four nations’²⁶¹ approach to British history. Comes the obvious statement by historians that, “Nationalists... are... not simply those who formed Plaid Cymru... but those who felt that there was a Welsh nation with a distinctive sense of identity...”²⁶² With this too is the fact that people can be both Nationalist and hold Liberal values.²⁶³ However, it was the realisation that Nationalism in Wales was not necessarily one in which completely belonged to the Nationalist trend of Welsh history. It was inclusive of all who could be considerable as Welsh, including Labour it is also applicable to Welsh Conservatives.

It is important to note that all political nationalists are cultural nationalists, but not all cultural nationalists were political nationalists. The issue is defined of sorts by E.T Woods, that “...cultural nationalism has become a stretched concept...”²⁶⁴ Cultural Nationalism can encompass any facet that refers to the culture of a nation. Gwynfor Evans was a cultural nationalist as he also did what he thought could advance Wales, but he was also very much a political nationalist. The difference between the two is also put by Woods, ‘...if political nationalism is focused on the achievement of political autonomy, cultural nationalism is focused on the cultivation of the nation.’²⁶⁵ By this definition Wyn Roberts was a cultural nationalist simply because everything he did was for the advancement of Wales within the union rather than a focus on autonomy for Wales. This is demonstrated throughout several of the chapters of this thesis, Wyn Roberts was a cultural nationalist, just not necessarily a political one.

Wyn Roberts was Welsh to his core as a cultural nationalist,²⁶⁶ just not necessarily in the economic sense for Roberts accepted Wales reliance on Westminster. This rather than a

²⁶¹ See, Naomi Lloyd-Jones and Margaret M. Scull, *Four Nations Approaches to Modern ‘British’ History: A (Dis)United Kingdom?* (London, 2017)

²⁶² Andrew Edwards and Wil Griffiths, ‘Welsh national identity and governance 1918-45,’ in Duncan Tanner et al. (ed.) *Debating Nationhood and Governance in Britain, 1885-1945*, (Manchester, 2006) p.118

²⁶³ Gal Gerson & Aviad Rubin, ‘Cultural nationalism and liberal values: An elusive synthesis,’ in *International Political Science Review*, 36.2 (2015) pp.197-213; Tetsuya Taguchi, ‘Welsh nationalism and Cultural Identity,’ in *Journal of Culture and Information Science*, 1.1 (2006) pp.1-7

²⁶⁴ E.T Woods, ‘Cultural Nationalism,’ *Sage Handbook of Cultural Sociology*, (2016) p.1

²⁶⁵ E.T Woods, ‘Cultural Nationalism,’ *Sage Handbook of Cultural Sociology*, (2016) p.1

²⁶⁶ A form of nationalism in which a nation is defined by a shared culture as opposed to ancestry.

nationalist of the Plaid Cymru brand, in Plaid there was a Conservative strand that Wyn Roberts views are similar too, but since members of Plaid Cymru want Welsh independence and Wyn Roberts views were against this it would explain why he did not join Plaid Cymru. Wyn Roberts' focus was on Centralism, control from Westminster, and at first being an opponent of Devolution in 1979 are proof of this.

Therefore, Wyn Roberts cannot be considered as a Nationalist in the Plaid Cymru sense however he can be considered as a cultural nationalist, for he does much for the Welsh Language and Culture, but his actions never veered towards any form of independence for Wales. Ironically, much of his thought here concerning Wales, shares similarities with the thought of Aneurin Bevan, who too believed in control from Westminster. It was Robert's belief that Wales, though a country, was best served from Westminster. Such centralism is not unheard of though is unusual for somebody who considered himself,²⁶⁷ along with numerous others, as a patriot.²⁶⁸ Language issues too were one of the main struggles of Wyn Roberts life, starting in the 1960s with Television Wales and West. TWW was a channel set up to cater for both the west of England and Wales between 1956 and 1968, Wyn Roberts worked for TWW for all its time on air. It was well regarded for its local programmes particularly, its local Welsh language programmes, featuring Welsh language programming at a time when debates were being held about the threat of TV to the Welsh language. Wyn Roberts was acting as part of a practical solution and as a Welsh speaker and a member of the Bardic Gorsedd he was the ideal person to do so. Wyn Roberts here is serving as a cultural nationalist purely in a Welsh context without any politics complicating the process.

It was an issue the party had to contend with, a view of an overtly Anglo-centric angle that had long plagued the Conservative Party. Though the Party certainly attempted to get rid of the image of being an overtly English party. The policies of the Conservative party towards the nations of Ireland,²⁶⁹ Scotland²⁷⁰ and Wales in the 1970s prove this. For Wales the party adopted an approach coined the 'Welsh Dimension' of British Politics. The problem is having Wyn Roberts as a Welsh speaker and Conservative is a rather obvious Welsh Dimension in

²⁶⁷ Lord Roberts of Conwy, *Right from the Start*, (Cardiff, 2006) p.76

²⁶⁸ Lord Thomas of Gresford, to name just one. Hansard HL Deb. 21 April 1998, c1070

²⁶⁹ Stephen Kelly, 'No textbook solutions to the problems in Northern Ireland': Airey Neave and the Conservative Party's Northern Ireland Policy, 1975-1979,' in *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, 29 (2018) pp.237-260

²⁷⁰ David Torrance, *Whatever Happened to Tory Scotland?* (Edinburgh, 2012)

the English party. Though undoubtedly speaking Welsh and being a Conservative did come with some problems, such as being a common target for Welsh language protestors. As Roberts was a cultural nationalist, his thinking was in line with the general Conservative party policy towards Wales. As David Melding notes this was a theme that was all too common with the Welsh Tories favouring or fostering variety. The party in the 1950s after all had to get inventive in responding to such demands of cultural nationalism. Though it did not support devolution for it could pose a threat to the United Kingdom, for the fear of destroying economic unity between the nations.²⁷¹

Though the Conservatives have spent decades examining what made them unpopular in Wales,²⁷² the 1970s attempts to examine what made the Conservatives electable in Wales are particularly pertinent for they coincide with the arrival of the greatest of assets, a Welsh speaking MP, a Welsh Dimension was now to be found within the Conservative Party itself. Such a shift can also be seen in policy, for example, the Welsh Dimension Report²⁷³ of 1975 questioned the suitability of certain candidates in Welsh seats arguing that some came across as ‘too posh.’ This suggests that the party itself was or had become aware of the image problem they had in Wales and were making efforts to do something about it. Though the Conservatives did try to examine this ‘Dimension’ the ‘Welsh Dimension’ as a phrase refers generally to do with anything that is specifically regarding a Welsh perspective. Not just with the Conservative Party policy toward Wales.

In another report, authored by C. Butler, came a focus on the Welsh language, ‘Cymraeg: Iaith Ein Plant’ (Welsh: The Language of our children). Butler contended that the struggle for the Welsh language was at the heart of Conservative philosophy in the need to respect tradition.²⁷⁴ Though these efforts could easily have been undermined by the party refusing to support devolution in 1979, it was further compounded by the issues created by the U-turn over the Welsh Fourth Channel in the 1980s where such tradition was disrespected. These

²⁷¹ David Melding, ‘Have we been anti-Welsh?’ in *Will Britain Survive beyond 2020?* IWA (Cardiff, 2009) p.142

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ ‘The Welsh Dimension Report,’ (1975) CPA, Bodleian Library, Oxford. CRD 4/15/4/2

²⁷⁴ C. Butler, *Cymraeg: Iaith ein Plant (Welsh: The Language of our children)* Wales Conservative and Unionist Council (Cardiff, 1980) CPA, Bodleian Library, Oxford. CRD 4/15/4/3 Copy also available at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth.

issues would only arise again in the 1990s when the Conservative Party once again forgot to respect Wales.²⁷⁵

For much of the duration of his career in parliament Roberts retained a focus on Welsh language issues, such as bilingual education. The culmination of such efforts was the 1993 Welsh Language Act. There is another bonus of speaking Welsh, survivability, according to an article Wyn Roberts was, ‘...totally immune to reshuffle fever... Sir Wyn has survived every one of 14 years of reshuffles. Pym, Moore, Parkinson, Tebbit, Howe, Lawson, Thatcher herself, they have all come and gone, but Sir Wyn lasts forever... He is the only Tory fluent in Welsh.’²⁷⁶ It seems that the Blue Dragon was a vital asset to the Conservative Party. The party itself had spent years championing Welsh policy, only to see itself undermine its own attempts. Roberts was pivotal to most of the Welsh specific policies or the Welsh Dimension of several others throughout his 27 years as the MP for Conwy. Much of Wyn Roberts earlier life with TWW was spent championing the Welsh Language after all, additionally there was cultural issues faced by Wyn Roberts in this era are apparent during the closure of TWW.

In 1993, the Welsh Language Act²⁷⁷ was enacted, putting Welsh on an equal footing with the English language. This act is synonymous with Sir Wyn Roberts, his brainchild if you will or rather, ‘his proudest achievement.’²⁷⁸ However, for Wyn Roberts his advocacy and attempts to preserve the Welsh language, predates this act by decades, ever since he started at TWW. Arguably, Wyn Robert’s interest in the preservation of the Welsh language is evident and stems from his time as a producer for TWW (Television Wales and West), for Welsh language programmes.²⁷⁹ His further record for involvement in matters of the Welsh language stem from 1980-2 over the creation of the Welsh fourth channel that would become S4C. Much of what Wyn Roberts was involved in with TWW demonstrates his cultural thought, as a cultural nationalist he both directly and indirectly spent over a decade creating programmes to enhance the cause of the Welsh Language. The closure of TWW also plays

²⁷⁵ See Chapter 5.

²⁷⁶ Andrew Rawnsley, ‘Reshuffle fever brings delirium to Westminster,’ in *The Guardian*, 27 May 1993.

²⁷⁷ Welsh Language Act 1993, available on <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1993/38/contents> (Last accessed 12 July 2018)

²⁷⁸ ‘Welsh language proved a barrier too top job,’ by *Wales Online*, 21 February 2006, available on <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/welsh-language-proved-barrier-top-2354805> (Last accessed 17 July 2018)

²⁷⁹ ITV Archives, National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth.

greatly into one of Roberts' strengths as a politician with the Welsh Fourth Channel, with the reasons behind TWW's closure giving him the lessons to avoid it happening again. Much of this will be examined in chapter two of this thesis, however the downfall of TWW is examined here owing to how well it shows of Wyn Roberts as a cultural figure in Wales.

In 1959, Wyn Roberts was involved in the production of various Welsh language programmes as a producer. *Camau Cyntaf* (First Steps) was an educational programme which ran a first series comprising of 15 episodes from 18th Sept 1959 - 1 Jan 1960, these focused on the basics of learning Welsh. As such these episodes taught different aspects of the Welsh language, ranging from simple phrases to events such as Christmas with presenter Miss Cassie Davies, an HM Inspector of Schools.²⁸⁰ The potential importance of such a programme is threefold. First, it was a programme fortunate in its timing, for it was not only the first time (not just in Wales but in Britain) that a television company had directed its resources in such a particular way for the teaching of Welsh. *Camau Cyntaf* made use of several different teaching and learning techniques with an aim, in the words of Cassie Davies.

“The aim of this first series was to give non-Welsh speaking people some knowledge of the language. To help those who have a little knowledge, to brush up their vocab and to help maintain the interest of those who speak the language thoroughly.”²⁸¹

Second, *Camau Cyntaf*'s broadcast date of October 1959 to January 1960 comes from a time when the Welsh language was in an inexorable decline. This was before the *Tynged yr Iaith*, or the Fate of the language speech) of Saunders Lewis.²⁸² This was an event that influenced Wyn Roberts, who would later describe as disturbing, owing to his fear that it would ignite Welsh speaking Zealots backed by the WLS.²⁸³ Also, one which made the Welsh language a Conservative Party priority, if only more constructive ideas could be found within the disruptive supporters in Wales. As an example, the 1967 act²⁸⁴ validated both languages,

²⁸⁰ Lyn Ebenezer, *Operation Julie: The World's Greatest LSD Bust*, (Talybont, 2010) pp.4-5; also, The Hadow Report 1931, HM Stationary Office, London.

²⁸¹ TWW, Television in the land of song, 23 May 1960, NLW Aberystwyth

²⁸² Saunders Lewis, *Tynged yr Iaith* (Fate of the Language), 1962

²⁸³ Lord Roberts of Conwy, *Right from the Start*, p.128

²⁸⁴ Welsh Language Act 1967, available on, <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1967/66/enacted> (Last accessed 24 April 2019)

though proved destructive with its concession of English superiority. Roberts was an exemplar, though the success of his later attempts is dubious, as the census records show that such a declining trend continued until the next century.

Year:	No* of Welsh speakers.	Year:	No* of Welsh speakers.
1901	929.8	1961	656.0
1911	977.4	1971	542.4
1921	922.1	1981	508.2
1931	909.3	1991	500.0
1951	714.7	2001	576.0

Figure 6: Welsh speakers as according to census data, throughout the twentieth century.

However, the third point serves as an example of Roberts as one of these constructive exemplars. Third, arguably too if television carries such an impetus in the national identity of Wales, as does the Welsh language, then *Camau Cyntaf* is considered as being of key importance in the history of television in Wales, and a key point in Welsh language preservation. This, with Wyn Roberts as producer, is a demonstrable attempt to help preserve the language. The magnitude of this is mute when compared to Tynged Yr Iaith's impact, such as being 'the catalyst'²⁸⁵ of Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg (the Welsh language Society).²⁸⁶ However, the fervent Gwyn Williams has argued that Welsh film production was an idea that was a part of the initial stimulus of Tynged Yr Iaith 1962.²⁸⁷ It is notable fact that, *Camau Cyntaf* predates 1962, both prior to Tynged Yr Iaith & the creation of Cymdeithas Yr Iaith Gymraeg (WLS). Wyn Roberts was doing more for Welsh culture and the language than most in this period. Whilst others were campaigning for the language, Wyn Roberts was being highly practical in his attempts to solve the problems around the preservation of the language, at this point the majority were either debating about it or engaging in acts of civil disobedience that usually had the consequence of being damaging

²⁸⁵ John Davies, *A History of Wales*, (London, 1994) p.649

²⁸⁶ Welsh Language Society website, <https://cymdeithas.cymru/> (Last accessed 12 July 2018)

²⁸⁷ Gwyn Alf Williams, *When Was Wales?* (Cardiff, 1985) p.292

towards a campaign. This is the view that Roberts held toward towards activism throughout the 1980s.

The next notable TV that Wyn Roberts was involved with, served as a sequel to *Camau Cyntaf*, is *Croeso Christine* (Welcome Christine) consisting of some 24 episodes, broadcast in 1966, this was another later series which was designed to help teach Welsh. The impact of this later series is subject to debate. On one hand the presenter of the series, Christine Godwin, dropped out of hosting the show after winning an internal TWW contest to host it, citing the shows dullness as the reason.²⁸⁸ Also, for the investiture of Prince Charles as the Prince of Wales, to familiarise Charles with Welsh history and culture and to learn a bit of the language, the aim was to use *Croeso Christine* as a teaching aid. This shows the efficacy of *Croeso Christine* as a teaching aid if it is being used to educate Prince Charles. The authority's attempts were for naught as 22 of the 24 episodes had been wiped,²⁸⁹ though this is not unexpected for a television service which deleted a lot of its programmes.

On the other hand, there was an accompanying book to go with the series by published by (TWW) Television Wales and West, written by Mati Rees & R. Brinley Jones.²⁹⁰ It was marketed as a 'a course designed to help you gain command of easy conversational Welsh.'²⁹¹ It was aimed at the 1,862,709 million who TWW hoped to help learn to speak Welsh,²⁹² (based of 1961 census figures). Too, *Croeso Christine* did go on for several series compared to the lesser amount of series for *Camau Cyntaf*. The series has been described as the most far reaching of Television Wales and west programmes by Lord Derby in the 1967 Annual General Meeting in Cardiff.²⁹³ Further to this *Croeso Christine* has been repeated several times over the years and continued to be broadcast even when (Harlech) HTV owned the franchise in 1969. As proven by the *guardian* television guide from the year 1969.²⁹⁴

²⁸⁸ *Croeso Christine: learning Welsh for beginners/TWW, sound recordings; Lessons 1-4 NLW North AGSSC / 33 (33 3446 Cell E4), Lessons 5-8 NLW North AGSSC / 33 (33 4143 Cell E4), Lessons 9-12 NLW North AGSSC / 33v (33 4107 Cell E4), 1967.*

²⁸⁹ Alan Travis, 'Public records: Much harping over the investiture: papers reveal wrangles, musical and otherwise, over Prince of Wales Ceremony,' in *The Guardian*, 21 July 2000.

²⁹⁰ Mati Rees & R. Brinley Jones, *Croeso Christine! Croeso Christine! Learn to Speak Welsh*, (Cardiff, 1967)

²⁹¹ Ibid. P.7

²⁹² TWW, Untitled Advert, in *The Observer*, 12 February 1967 p.13

²⁹³ Lord Derby, Statement to TWW's AGM, Pontcanna Studios, Cardiff, 18 May 1967,

²⁹⁴ 'Television (guide): BBC-1,' in *The Guardian*, 22 September 1969 p.2

Croeso Christine is too examined by Brian Goombridge in his book,²⁹⁵ on the use of adult education dated from 1967.



Figure 7: Croeso Christine accompaniment beginner's handbook. (Cardiff, 1967)²⁹⁶

Wyn Roberts attempts to aid in the preservation of his first language vividly demonstrate his cultural thought, at a time when the Welsh language was in crisis. For Roberts as a cultural Nationalist, such shows aid in the preservation of the culture without the detriment to anything else. The production of these programmes comes at a time when Gwynfor Evans wrote his work in which he argued television as one of the biggest causes of a 'deleterious effect' in the Welsh language but also that it is an opportunity to help improve the circumstances of the Welsh language.²⁹⁷ Wyn Roberts was certainly using this opportunity, in the instances of *Camau Cyntaf* and *Croeso Christine* it is most certainly an attempt, to improve the Welsh language. Aside from Welsh language TV programmes. Wyn Roberts also aimed to make 'less highbrow' programmes for the Welsh audience, the kind of programmes that aired on the BBC that were not entertaining, this included both entertainment shows and documentaries. Some of which would go into potentially helping to shape the political thought of Wyn Roberts. These programmes would bring him into contact

²⁹⁵ Brian Goombridge, *Adult Education – The Formative Phase*, (London, 1967)

²⁹⁶ Picture of cover taken on 19 November 2019.

²⁹⁷ Gwynfor Evans, *Rhagom I Ryddid, (Onwards to Freedom)*, (Bangor, 1964) p.115, see also, *Byw neu farw? y frwyr dros yr iaith a'r Sianel deledu gymraeg, (Life or death?: the struggle for the language and a Welsh TV channel)*, (1980)

with some of the Welsh cultural giants of the twentieth century such as the poet Gwyn Thomas for the creation of *The Growing People*, an award-winning documentary.

Some of the ‘less-highbrow’ programmes included in this were, *Amser Te* (Tea Time) the longest running of Television Wales and West (TWW), tea time show with something for everyone that was presented by Myfanwy Howell²⁹⁸ (Several videos and clips are available in the NLW for *Amser Te*). Other programmes which Wyn Roberts personally hosted, included *Gair Am Air* (Word for Word), a televised word game for married couples, airing from September 1961 till the final episode which aired 30th May 1962. Also, a panel game in which the contestants had to try and guess who the secret competitor was, the standard TWW prize of £20 was awarded to the winner. All these are prime examples of these less ‘highbrow’ programmes, aimed at the grassroots, when compared to *Camau Cyntaf*.

In 1965, during the penultimate years of TWW Wyn Roberts was brought into contact with the poet Gwyn Thomas²⁹⁹ for the filming and production of the documentary *The Growing People*.³⁰⁰ (A Recording of which is available in the National Library of Wales.) A documentary which would later go on to win an award in 1967. This too was the first time of which a British film crew, (or perhaps more appropriately a Welsh TV crew) was allowed into Russia, instead of having one provided for them by the secretive Soviet state. Also, *the Growing People*, was a prime example of award-winning television production that TWW had by this point, (1966/7), become known for. This made the loss of the ITA license even more shocking. *The Growing People* is most important for it involved Wyn Roberts, as producer.³⁰¹ For the documentary in an account of his trip Wyn Roberts notes.

²⁹⁸ Myfanwy Howell, ‘tea time recipes – as shown on TWW’s *Amser Te*’, in *Television Weekly*, (Hereford, 1962)

²⁹⁹ Gwyn Thomas is a general Welsh writer, dramatist, and broadcaster. Known for writing short stories, Novels, and Plays, such as *A Tongue for a Stammering Time*, about Nye Bevan.

³⁰⁰ ‘The Growing People,’ *HTV Wales*, 1st May 1960 in National Library of Wales, NLW North ITV (AT17 VIDEO)

³⁰¹ ‘Russia-The Growing People’. Photocopied script of television documentary for TWW, together with an incomplete account by Wyn Roberts of his trip to Moscow with Gwyn Thomas and a newspaper article written by him regarding the trip.’ *Gwyn Thomas papers*, G215/1-3. National Library of Wales.

“These people are just finding out that when you divide things equally there’s not so much to go around.”³⁰²

The Growing People, as a documentary may even have ultimately helped to determine the political choice for Wyn Roberts, having suffered no delusions of the detrimental kind of life possible under a communist state.

Similarly, such sentiments would have also turned him away from Plaid Cymru, especially when considered his opinion on Saunders Lewis’ speech.³⁰³ Wyn Roberts was dubious about Tynged Yr Iaith owing to the revolutionary and law-breaking sentiments associated with it. This was at a time when there were many debates surrounding the threat of television to the Welsh language, amid calls for an independent Welsh television service.³⁰⁴ The likes of Gwynfor Evans and Tynged Yr Iaith were calling for campaigning for the Welsh language. The Blue dragon’s approach can already be seen to be different here, prior to politics Wyn Roberts was engaging in new and practical measures to ensure the survival of the language via television.

This thought was along the lines of cultural nationalism, but with economic unity with England. Though the period of the 1960s was also turbulent for the actions of Trade Unions within Britain, especially after the tumultuous failure of Barbara Castle and ‘In Place of Strife, in the 1970s.’³⁰⁵ This combined with such an expansive view of the life of an ordinary Russian would have given him an inordinate amount of knowledge for the time of the kind of life that was possible under extreme forms of Communism. Not something that, a man who would go on to do so much for his country would want.

This was not only the first time that Gwyn Thomas, had worked for TWW such as the occasional hosting of *Here and Now*, a TWW new programme. Other programmes abroad included Gwyn Thomas in New York in May 1964, also a visit to Cannes in a programme called *The Hot Spot*. Other programmes include one about Spain, titled, *The Darker*

³⁰² ‘Russia: The Growing People,’ *Gwyn Thomas Papers, G114*, National Library of Wales.

³⁰³ Saunders Lewis, *Tynged Ir Iaith (Fate of the Language)*, 1962

³⁰⁴ Jamie Medhurst, *A History of Independent Television in Wales*, (Cardiff, 2010) p.15

³⁰⁵ ‘In Place of Strife: A Policy for Industrial Relations, Barbara Castle, (1969) LAB 44/288

Neighbour.³⁰⁶ Making substantial use of Welsh culture, in this case a cultural icon, is something else that the Blue Dragon would go on to do during his career in politics. During the making of Welsh programmes Wyn Roberts is leaning into the Welsh element, this is something he would do during official visits when promoting Wales abroad.³⁰⁷

Finally, Wyn Roberts aided in a series in conjunction with another media personality John Betjeman titled, *Wales and the West*, airing for 12 episodes between 1962-3 exploring the relationship between Wales and towns in the west of England. Though Wyn Roberts would have little to do with this series compared to previous programmes, it did echo a problem that he would have to deal with at the end of TWW. This leads to the second cultural issue that aided in the formation of Wyn Roberts' cultural thought, faced during the era of 1955-1969 whilst at TWW, it was the problem of catering for two different cultures and languages.



Figure 8: Television Wales and West logo.

“No other station... is bilingual; no other station... has to donate a certain amount of time for... the Welsh Language. ... The culture of Wales is a challenge to TWW... I trust we shall never fail you.”³⁰⁸

This quote is symptomatic for the time of Television Wales and West, showing the advantages of it at the time, as a bilingual TV company that served different audiences. This would also ultimately prove to be not only symptomatic during the time of TWW, being a notable problem for the majority of TWW's lifetime. But also, one of nails in the coffin, one

³⁰⁶ ‘The Darker Neighbour. Photographed script of a television film about Spain for TWW,’ 1966, *Gwyn Thomas Papers*, G193. National Library of Wales.

³⁰⁷ See Chapter 4.

³⁰⁸ Speech by Viscount Cilcennin, Chairman of Television Wales and West, Cardiff Business Club, January 1960.

of numerous reasons as the downfall of TWW in 1968, with the loss of the contract to HTV. At TWW's start it was perhaps the most enterprising of TV studios of its age, with two boards, a Welsh board that met at Pontcanna studios, and the normal board which met at either Pontcanna or London.³⁰⁹ It meant to serve the two audiences. Even the start proved problematic for TWW, originally it was meant to go live in 1956, after several issues TWW broadcast its first programme in January of 1958. Even from the time of TWWs beginning there still existed calls for an 'adequate television service for Wales,'³¹⁰ with complaint about the timing of Welsh language broadcasting. This prompted a swift defence statement from TWW, defending the Welsh language programming element of TWW.³¹¹ The cracks were beginning to show, even at the beginning

Wyn Roberts considered the BBC as 'highbrow' it was aimed at a particular audience whereas Television Wales and West was to be aimed at the 'working man', or for a popular audience."³¹² One could almost say it sounds like Television with a human face, or rather a more popular form of television. Wyn Roberts was further quoted in the *Manchester Guardian*, that the aim of TWW was an "Estimation that the station would serve approximately 400,000 Welsh speakers... to do some linguistic missionary work. Up to now he thinks Welsh language broadcasting has been two eggheaded."³¹³ In opening Welsh TV, at the time of the 'golden age' of TV Wyn Roberts had a hand in broadcasting to the masses. From this it is also clear that despite his time at Harrow and Oxford Roberts had not forgotten his firm Welsh roots.

During his time at TWW Roberts was responsible for a multitude of functions, for example, he hired Owen Roberts³¹⁴ for Television Wales and West in 1961, noting his potential and burning passion for Welsh affairs.³¹⁵ Wyn Roberts' time at TWW also brought him the claim

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ C H Setts, 'TV Programmes for Wales: A separate channel wanted,' in *The Manchester Guardian*, 31 July 1958

³¹¹ Huw T Edwards, et al. 'Television in Wales,' in *The Manchester Guardian*, 6 August 1958.

³¹² Wyn Roberts, *Independent Television in Wales*, (Cardiff, 1961)

³¹³ 'Winning over the Welsh to commercial TV: New station opens for West and Wales,' *The Manchester Guardian*, 15 January 1958

³¹⁴ Owen Roberts was a famous Welsh journalist.

³¹⁵ Meic Stephens, 'Owen Roberts: Journalist who established himself as a pioneer of Welsh-language television,' in *The Independent*, 29 November 2012

to fame of working with the stars, the likes of Richard Burton and Dame Shirley Bassey. His time here also brought him into contact with politicians from all sides of the political spectrum, Edward Heath, and Harold Wilson to name a few. It was an auspicious time to be at TWW for it certainly succeeded in drawing audiences away from the BBC who had previously held a monopoly on Welsh TV. Wyn Roberts was at the forefront of hiring bright new talent for the company as well as associating with the famous names of the time. Alongside whom he met, is also what he did for Roberts was responsible for much of the Welsh language element of TWW. From January 1964, TWW became responsible for the area covered by Wales West and North. Now it did not only have to cater for two countries, but also for a country that had a clear linguistic division between North and South.

With this came three distinct audiences for TWW to cater for, included the West. It was too in this period a probable split between English and Welsh TV came to the fore with programmes split between Welsh language TV in Cardiff, and English TV being filmed in Bristol. Such cracks were evident from the beginning with the creation of TWW, they would prove divisive in the end. 'All good things... Come to an End'³¹⁶ is the amalgamation of the last two programmes to ever air on TWW. After, what was a stellar year in 1967 for TWW the loss of the franchise came as something of an unexpected nature to all. The first reason is the London base of company headquarters, Wyn Roberts did suggest that a move from the London base could be and should be necessary, though this was never happened possibly due to the loss of the contract.

Second, the complacency of directors in relying on TWW's record without offering a clear plan of the future, whereas the new HTV came across as a fresh option. This was the reason that made it to parliament at the time of TWWs closure.³¹⁷ Third, 1963 saw Television Wales and West take on the burden of WNW, otherwise known as Teledu Cymru. ITV's clear and concise financial disaster of North Wales broadcasting merged with the Northwest of England. Finally, the problem of TWW (as its name suggests) catering for two nations and two languages creating constant complaints amongst the prospective audiences. These complaints about the bilingual broadcasting even reached the House of Commons, Devon for example was in range to be a recipient of Welsh language broadcasts meant for Wales,

³¹⁶ An amalgamation of the final two programmes to ever air on Television Wales and West.

³¹⁷ Hansard, HC Deb. 28 June 1967, vol. 749 cc.422-69 c.452

causing much fury and complaints from the English language residents, the same was true for the Welsh who received programmes meant for the West of England.³¹⁸ The problem that prompted such complaints was summed up neatly in a Commons debate on the matter.

“The West of England objects... to Welsh culture by TWW... Wales, has no particular liking for the programmes... (for) the West of England.”³¹⁹

Similarly, the same view is taken by Wyn Roberts that the “separatism of Wales and West...”³²⁰ is a reason that is quoted by Wyn Roberts as a problem for TWW to contend with, this meaning having to cater for two very distinct and different regions. One region used adverts such as the one below, which states that most people across the whole of Wales watch TWW’s programmes, it was the same problem for the West of England.

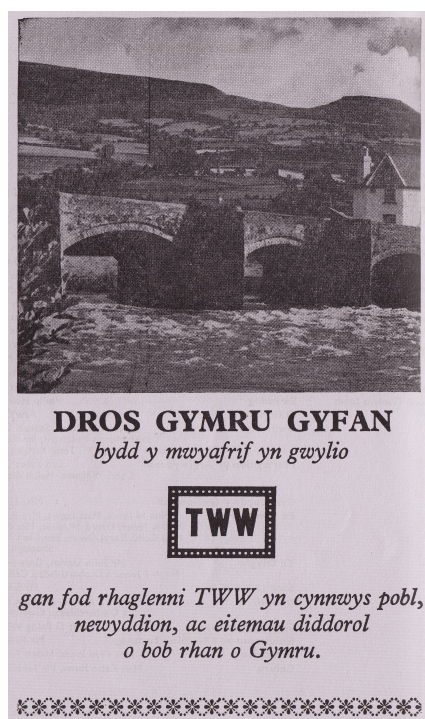


Figure 9: Welsh Language Advert for TWW.

³¹⁸ Hansard, HC Deb. 25 February 1963, vol. 672 cc907-1031 c.978

³¹⁹ Hansard, HC Deb. 18 July 1963, vol. 252 cc.321-87 c.331

³²⁰ Production Policy memo from Wyn Roberts to John Baxter and Bryan Michie, 17 May 1965, quoted from, Jamie Medhurst, ‘Servant of Two Tongues: the demise of TWW,’ in *Llafur: Journal of Welsh Labour History*, 8.3, pp.79-87 p.85

TWW's lack of adaptability is a major factor, especially considering the BBC had plans to split its West and Wales service years prior to TWW's closure.³²¹ There also is the factor that by the point of TWW's closure there existed several different channels which catered for Wales, three of these alone came from the BBC with BBC 1, and BBC west. With BBC Wales catering specifically for Wales, though still a bilingual channel. The BBC too had better coverage across Wales, reaching some 1.5 million people.³²²

TWW was certainly missed, a newspaper article saying thanks for TWW exemplifies this.³²³ The Television Act 1964³²⁴ was supposed to allow for successive contracts, such as it was in TWW's case. This created what was a marked 'Effect on programme standards and operations of the contractors who now have only the fag-end of a lease... what one might call the TWW problem...'³²⁵ The end of TWW prompted the complaints of Lord Derby which were documented in newspaper article,³²⁶ which also prompted a response from Derby's contemporaries. The closure was not handled well, with the last part of TWW's contract being sold to Harlech for £500,000. The resulting un-readiness of HTV to take over broadcasting meant a proxy TV company, Independent Television Service for Wales, and the West, formed using the leftover programmes from TWW, until HTV was ready to start broadcasts. The closure of TWW was down mainly to cultural clashes between England and Wales which Wyn Roberts was all too aware of, as a child, as a Welsh TV producer and would come to know all too well as a Welsh Conservative politician.

It was the closure of TWW and his subsequent unhappiness at the replacement company HTV (Harlech) that led to Wyn Roberts career change to politics. It was during Roberts' career in parliament that his final involvement in independent Welsh television came to the fore over the Welsh fourth channel and the eventual creation of S4C. For much of the debates surrounding the Welsh Fourth Channel and S4C, Roberts was a vocal proponent, almost as

³²¹ Hansard, HC Deb. 7 November 1961, vol.648 cc.778-9

³²² Hansard, HC Deb. 16 June 1964, vol. 696 cc.158-9w

³²³ 'Television Today: Thank You Television Wales & West,' in *The Stage*, Thursday 7 March 1968

³²⁴ Television Act 1964, available on <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1972/11/schedule/6/crossheading/television-act-1964/enacted> (Last accessed 28 September 2018)

³²⁵ Hansard, HC Deb. 28 June 1967, vol. 749 cc.422-69 c.433

³²⁶ 'Monumental Injustice' by ITA over award of contract, says Lord Derby,' in *The Guardian*, 21 June 1967

much as Gwynfor Evans, for an entirely Welsh TV channel. Roberts' experience in dealing with the bilingual issues that so plagued TWW, would become not only necessary but vital when it came to the Conservative U-turn on the Welsh Fourth Channel. It was also his career with TWW that led to Robert's involvement in politics, having dealt with politicians he decided to become one himself. The closure of TWW however, exemplified the problems that Roberts would have to face during his decades in Parliament. A clash of cultures, one of which was heightened to no end as a Welshman in what was a very English centric party.

The issues Wyn Roberts faced during his career with TWW certainly act as a precursor to similar issues he would face as a politician. Wyn Roberts would come to exist as a Blue Dragon or a Welsh Conservative in a very Anglo-centric party, an issue he was familiar with from his time with TWW. His career with TWW could have aided in the creation of the Blue Dragon identity since Roberts now had a unique insight into the cultural divide between Wales and England. He was involved in the media in what was a time of change for Wales, an identity based off religion changed to one of media. Wyn Roberts would go on to serve Wales in another time of change, this time it would be political. With this Roberts was active in several Conservative governments and political traditions, but also both the English and Welsh Conservatives. It is also important to note that his identity as a cultural nationalist, whilst not the most well-known, is the most important. As will be seen in chapter 5 his loyalty above all else was to Wales.

Thus far this chapter has examined the notion of Wyn Roberts as a cultural nationalist, perhaps best evidenced simply by all the things he did for Wales whilst at TWW. This in a way makes him an incredibly important cultural figure as well as a political one. The next section of this chapter will deal with Wyn Roberts the politician, the ideologies that he was involved with and political influences on Roberts, though with over 40 years in politics there are many to choose from. This chapter will also briefly consider his relationships with Prime Ministers he served under along with his contemporary Welsh MPs from North Wales, whatever party they might hail from, to see if they had any impact upon his political thinking.

Sir Wyn Roberts, the Politician.

“Some friends in the Labour Party and Plaid Cymru were surprised when I declared myself a Conservative Contender for the recently vacated candidacy at Conwy.”³²⁷

This chapter has thus far examined Wyn Roberts in his pre TWW years and his time as TWW, however, it is the last identity of Wyn Roberts that is the one that he is best known for, it is that of a Conservative politician. It is possible that Roberts’ early military career in national service, as well as exposure to such British elitism at both Harrow and Oxford would have orientated Roberts towards Conservatism. Otherwise as Wyn Roberts states in his memoirs, there is little reason why he chose the Conservative Party, over either the Labour Party or Plaid Cymru.³²⁸ Otherwise there is little explanation for why someone described as a coming from a ‘vaguely liberal background’ would choose to align with the Conservative Party, beyond convenience. Guto Bebb, MP for Aberconwy did this, he came from an even further afield position being a Plaid Cymru activist to becoming a Conservative MP. Ideology is something that will be examined in relation to Wyn Roberts, however, he is more grounded in Conservative principles rather than thought.

Indeed, it is odd for a family that described itself as liberal, in the David Lloyd George tradition, (as Wyn Roberts claims during his upbringing), that Roberts chose the Conservatives. Roberts was from a Welsh speaking, nonconformist, and middle-class family. Though the decline of the Liberals, from the Lloyd George fashion, could have been an option for a man like Wyn Roberts. The Liberal nationals from the interwar years had merged into the Conservative Party, and a few Welsh politicians of the time had followed this trend, Geraint Morgan one of Wyn Roberts contemporaries could be considered as one such example.

Roberts does not fall into any certain category or ideology within the party. As is argued by Green the Conservatism is not a political system nor an ideology³²⁹ but to treat all Conservatives as lacking their own ideology to be radically fallacious. He further notes that,

³²⁷ Lord Roberts of Conwy, *Right from the Start*: (Cardiff, 2006) pp.76-77

³²⁸ Ibid. pp.74-78

³²⁹ E.H.H. Green, *The Crisis of Conservatism: The Politics, Economics and Ideology of the British Conservative Party. 1880-1914*, (London, 1997) p.311

‘Conservatives always possess a clearly definable frame of reference which informs their vision of and response to issues and events. Without such a frame of reference there would be nothing to indicate what made their views, arguments, and activities Conservative’³³⁰

Therefore, if Wyn Roberts does not clearly fit into any of the classical Conservative ideologies it would not matter as he would have his own Conservative ideology which he follows. One that clearly takes the concerns of Wales as precedence to the overall concerns of the Conservative Party, say a Blue Dragon. As Green further notes biographies of leading political figures have previously distorted the understanding of Conservative ideologies.³³¹ Therefore, a biography of Wyn Roberts might reveal an aspect of Welsh Conservatism not regularly demonstrated owing to him not being a leading figure in British politics.

It is more than probable that Wyn Roberts simply filled a political opportunity due to being a pragmatic conservative. Though this was a symbolic twist for the Conservative party to have a Welsh speaker in their ranks. At a time when the order to gain electoral supporters in his North Wales constituency, was up against what was a very English Centric, Conservative Party in the period. It is easy to suggest this, though with his background in Welsh Television it is likely that he was already a popular figure amongst the Welsh. He was also responsible for large attempts to preserve the language via the use of television. Therefore, his love of Wales and his ‘Welshness’ are certain. It is certain why Roberts went the Conservative way, but not so certain is his own reasoning for it.

Roberts himself attempts to provide his reasoning as to why he chose Conservative.³³² Though his reasoning is simplistic, as he considered Plaid Cymru to be a non-starter and he had dislike of the Labour Party owing to Trade union disruption. Other than his development, and the events behind his career at Television Wales and West. There is little rationale for such a decision especially after Roberts attributed the fall of TWW to the Conservative

³³⁰ Ibid. p.312

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² Ibid. pp.74-78

minister Charles Hill.³³³ As the chairman of the independent Television Authority, throughout the 1960s, Hill was involved in much of the reforms to ITV.

It was at this point that Roberts started his diary, as he put it to chronicle the revolution about to be carried out by the Conservative party,

‘To chronicle the progress of the quiet revolution which Mr Heath and the Conservative Party are pledged to carry out.’³³⁴

Much of the first volume³³⁵ chronicled this supposed revolution, it ended with bitter disappointment, volume 5 of the diaries began

‘Ted Heath seems a defeated man. He is not liked either in the party or the country. As things stand, we are due for a shattering defeat for lack of leadership.’³³⁶

This supposed revolution never arrived under the Heath government, it would be years later under Thatcher that such a ‘Conservative revolution’ occurred across the UK, this revolution would come to affect Wales in many ways. Wyn Roberts noted Heath was known for his U-turns on policy, and in certain instances his political cowardice.³³⁷ Though this is not unexpected given the political climate at the time. It was such politics under Heath that were supported by Roberts. Some of which would become principal tenets of Thatcherism.³³⁸ As an example, Roberts was emphatic of the policy to sell council houses introduced under Heath and was certainly supportive when Margaret Thatcher continued the trend.

³³³ Bill Jones, ‘Broadcasters, politicians and the political interview,’ in Bill Jones & Lynton J. Robins, *Two Decades in British Politics: Essays to Mark Twenty-One Years of the Politics Association*, (Manchester, 1992) p.60

³³⁴ Wyn Roberts Diary, 4 November 1970, Vol.1

³³⁵ Wyn Roberts Diary, November 1970-October 1971, Vol 1

³³⁶ Wyn Roberts Diary, 6 September 1974, Vol.5

³³⁷ Adam Evans, ‘U-turn if you want to,’ in *IWA*, 19 May 2013, available on, <https://www.iwa.wales/click/2013/05/u-turn-if-you-want-to/> (Last accessed 14 April 2019)

³³⁸ ‘Past Prime Ministers, Sir Edward Heath, available on, <https://www.gov.uk/government/history/past-prime-ministers/edward-heath> (Last accessed 14 April 2019)

Wyn Roberts natural choice was not as an ideological conservative; neither entirely Burkean, One-Nation or Thatcherite. For Wyn Roberts such ideological concerns of Conservatism were in line with the party that he chose to follow. It was an entirely pragmatic choice of which party he could follow Roberts was not opposed to change though frowned upon radicalism. Given his historical understanding, his ideas are easily grounded in history. At the time he could not possibly have any comprehension of the impact he would have within Wales, whether they knew it or not. As such his impact could be felt in Wales for much of the next four decades, even after his death Wyn Roberts impacts upon Wales through measures such as the Welsh Language Act.

Wyn Roberts was not a follower of any grand ideologue of Conservatism, favouring a more evolved political tradition. He certainly held a lot of similarities with the Burkean tradition first identified in Burke's 1790 work on the French revolution.³³⁹ Such were the ideals of Edmund Burke he is considered, by some, as the inventor of modern Conservatism.³⁴⁰ Such a traditional Conservatism had some roots in Wales, since Burke did champion the idea of 'little platoons,'³⁴¹ for the Conservatives as associations, prevalent throughout Wales.³⁴² Although given Burke's ideas resonate quite well with the traditional Plaid Cymru stance, with many similarities,³⁴³ and given the 'blue dragon' championing of Welshness then such a strand could fit quite well with the Blue Dragon. However, it is also possible that since Burke favoured the little platoons that all but died out in Wales by the 1990s around the same time that such a Welsh Conservatism also disappeared from Wales that the Blue Dragon also had similarities with the Conservatism of Burke.

The next grand tradition is so termed as 'One Nationism' originating from the ideas of Benjamin Disraeli. The ideas behind it originate from Disraeli's works *Sybil, or the Two*

³³⁹ Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolutions in France*, (1790)

³⁴⁰ Emily Jones, *Edmund Burke and the Invention of Modern Conservatism, 1830 -1914*, (Oxford, 2017)

³⁴¹ Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolutions in France*, (1790)

³⁴² Sam Blaxland, 'The Conservative Party in Wales 1945-1997,' PhD thesis, Swansea University, (2017)

³⁴³ Dan Boucher, 'Why the big society is more Welsh than English,' in *The Big Society in a Small Country: Wales, Social Capital and Self Help*, Institute of Welsh Affairs, (Cardiff, 2013) p.41

Nations,³⁴⁴ and *Coningsby*³⁴⁵ though the term ‘one nation’ does not originate from this work, it was coined later.³⁴⁶ This is also the type of Conservatism which reportedly governs the Conservative Party in its current governance of Britain, mentioned by both David Cameron and Theresa May. Though the governments have also before been considered as children of Thatcherism in a way, despite the personal Conservatism of their respective Prime Ministers.

One-Nationism as an ideology is the most applicable to Wyn Roberts. Since the tenets favoured are most in line with Roberts views. First, it reflects a certain belief in society, such as Robert’s belief in Wales with a highly independent culture, but as part of the same economic entity of the United Kingdom and not self-governing. Second, individuality given Roberts’s emphatic support for road building and home ownership he is applicable to this as well, though this is also a part of Thatcherism. For a final note, it is also the doctrine exercised by the Conservative Party when Roberts stood for election in 1970. Though the efficacy of the party in this era was dampened by the politics of the era, it is certainly the type of Conservatism that is applicable to Wyn Roberts though not the one he spent most of his time working with, for that accolade belongs to Thatcherism.

The final variety of Conservatism is Thatcherism,³⁴⁷ is an interesting one given it was more a response to the events as and when they happened at the time not a grand Conservative Ideology or political ideology, at least Thatcher herself did not consider it to be one quipping that, “I do not consider Thatcherism to be an ‘-ism,’ if I ever invented a political ideology it certainly was not my intention.”³⁴⁸ As such it itself is subject to such amounts of discourse, from social sciences, history & politics,³⁴⁹ this does not mean it was popular for at the time it

³⁴⁴ Benjamin Disraeli, *Sybil; or the Two Nations*, (1845)

³⁴⁵ Benjamin Disraeli, *Coningsby*, (1844)

³⁴⁶ A.W ‘The Meaning of Conservatism,’ in *The Economist*, 13 August 2018 P.R. Ghosh, ‘Disraelian Conservatism, a financial approach,’ in *The English Historical Review*, vol.IXCIX issue. CCCXCI (1984) pp.268-296, P. Smith, Disraelian Conservatism and Social Reform, J. Vincent, ‘Was Disraeli a Failure?’, in *History Today*, 13 (1981) pp.5-8

³⁴⁷ Ian Gilmour, *Inside Right, A Study of Conservatism*, (London, 1977)

³⁴⁸ Margaret Thatcher speech, (2003) quoted from Louisa Hadley & Elizabeth Ho, *Thatcher and After: Margaret Thatcher and Her Afterlife in Contemporary Culture*, (Basingstoke, 2010) p.7

³⁴⁹ Dennis Kavanagh, *Thatcherism and British Politics*, (Oxford, 2002); see also, Eric J. Evans, *Thatcher, and Thatcherism*, (3rd Ed.) (Abingdon, 2013), and Stephen Farrell and Colin Hay, *The Legacy of Thatcherism: Assessing and Exploring Thatcherite Social and Economic Policies*, (Oxford, 2014)

earned itself disapproval from both the Church of England and the Queen.³⁵⁰ Awareness of Thatcherism is key to understanding Wyn Roberts for he was a member of parliament for when Thatcherism itself responded to the events of the nation. A large part of this thesis and indeed Roberts's diaries chronicle what he did during the 18 years of Conservative governments, under both Margaret Thatcher and John Major. At times it was a way of doing things that he agreed with, which proved to be beneficial to Wales, and at others it proved to be one of the ideals that Wyn Roberts struggled to work with.

Wyn Roberts' views do not completely ascribe to classical Conservatism and does not fit into any of the Conservative ideologies, he does however fit in with a lot of the Conservative principles such as pragmatism in several ways, after all, the party often styled itself as practical, organic, and non-ideological. It is in this that the Conservative Wyn Roberts can be found.

First is his teleological view of history which is one such example of a Conservative thought. Where he writes that the historians are busy rewriting history to make devolution our climax, he is concerned that the wrong issues will become studied. A similar view is provided by Paul Davies at the start of this thesis where he states that historians obsess about devolution referendums.³⁵¹ This could personally go against Wyn Roberts' view of a good society, since his view was always of a Wales that was dependent on Westminster, a traditional view that he had long served.

Second is Wyn Roberts' pragmatic approach. The simplicities of pragmatism and sentiment tend to govern a Conservative,³⁵² though a love of tradition is not unusual in this either. For Wyn Roberts the sentiment and tradition lie within the love of his country; "Like most of North Wales, my constituency is full of poetry, and occasionally the poetry is peppered with politics..."³⁵³ This quote is highly demonstrable of his love for Wales, delivered in his

³⁵⁰ Ivor Crewe & Donald D. Searing, 'Ideological Change in the British Conservative Party,'; in *The American Political Science Review*, 82.2 (1988) pp.361-384, p.361

³⁵¹ Paul Davies MS, 'We will revolutionise access to our history and culture – and in every part of Wales,' 7 August 2020, Welsh Conservatives Blog.

³⁵² A.W 'The Meaning of Conservatism,' in *The Economist*, 13 August 2018

³⁵³ Hansard, HC Deb 9 July 1970 vol. 803 cc860-988 c.890

maiden speech on the 9th July 1970.³⁵⁴ It alludes to the romantic Wales idealised by Gwyn Williams.

The final one is also the issue of the paradoxical and ideological Wyn Roberts, as on the one hand we have Wyn Roberts who advanced the nation with legislation and the creation of policies which would benefit Wales in some ways. At the same time there is the issue of Wyn Roberts being a member of parliament, the same parliament that can often be seen voting for or playing a part in the decimation of Wales. This can be seen in the South Wales Valleys with the closure of the mines, but for Wyn Roberts it can also be seen in his constituency during the construction of the A55. Modernisation came forth but there was also a measure of conservation, another facet of Conservatism, modernisation vs conservation. Often referred to when Harold Macmillan destroyed the Euston Arch. Roberts it seems had little issue with the closure of old roads, pubs, and other local landmarks, but at the same time did everything he could to preserve the cultural heritage of Conwy with the construction of the Conwy tunnel.

Roberts' views of Wales ascribe more to the Liberalism prominent in his youth. Such Liberalism potentially recognised Wales as its own independent political entity, long before any other party did. This is not the only similarity for Liberalism and Conservatism, for both are described as political moralities.³⁵⁵ A newspaper from 1926 provides a summary for both the Conservative and Labour party in Wales for this period is available. For the Conservatives,

“Welsh Conservatism... has always been a paradox... An anti-nationalist conservatism is an anomaly found only among peoples spiritually conquered.”³⁵⁶

Such were the problems in the 1920s however, that the Conservative party had to face this issue for the duration of the twentieth century. This was arguably the case for Wales that they had been conquered. Though it certainly was not paradoxical, Conservatism has always thrived in Wales in one form or another and has always had to act first to retain its Welsh dimension. This Welsh Conservatism in the latter half of the twentieth century is best seen

³⁵⁴ Hansard, HC Deb 9 July 1970 vol. 803 cc860-988 c.890

³⁵⁵ John Kekes, ‘What is Conservatism,’ *Philosophy*, 72.281 (1997) pp.351-374 p.352

³⁵⁶ D.J. Williams, ‘The New Welsh Nationalism,’ in *The Manchester Guardian*, 6 January 1926

through the eyes of those who practiced it. Wyn Roberts is a notable example, though he is not alone.

As none of the Conservative ‘ideologies or traditions completely ascribe to Roberts beyond the one-nation branch, it is imperative to go back further to the Liberal Wales of his childhood. Such liberal traditions had long had routes in Wales. Although, by the point of Roberts’ birth the Liberalism of South Wales had been supplanted by Labour but survived in rural areas till the 1960s,³⁵⁷ as of 2017 the Liberals had no MPs in Wales.³⁵⁸ It was one of these ‘rural areas’ which would eventually become Plaid dominated which Wyn Roberts hailed from. Gladstonian liberalism left a deep mark on the Wales, this is especially notable in Wales since Gladstone was one of the first in British politics to recognise Wales as a notable country politically.³⁵⁹

In addition of Gladstonian thought within Wales, David Lloyd-George (the ‘Welsh Wizard, ’)³⁶⁰ is likely to have had a far more profound effect on Roberts as a child. Wyn Roberts certainly comes across more as a traditional nineteenth century Liberal like David Lloyd George, for he is proud of his language and culture but also deeply immersed in Britishness. There are plenty of notable examples of this from Wyn Roberts’ childhood. David Lloyd George was the only Prime Minister to have ever spoken Welsh as a first language whilst in office,³⁶¹ and by the point of Wyn Roberts being born, was still quite active in local politics. Wyn Roberts had seen David Lloyd George speaking at the National Eisteddfod in Caernarfon.³⁶² This is something that arguably could make him a profound figure in Roberts’ earlier years, after all, Wyn Roberts is described as coming from a ‘vaguely liberal background.’ Also, Megan Lloyd George had visited the Roberts household

³⁵⁷ Kenneth O. Morgan, ‘The New Liberalism and the Challenge of Labour: The Welsh Experience, 1885-1929, in Kenneth D. Brown, (ed.) *Essays in Anti-Labour History: Responses to the Rise of Labour in Britain*, (London, 1974) pp.159-182

³⁵⁸ Martin Shipton, ‘The end of Liberalism in Wales as party loses Ceredigion seat,’ in *Western Mail*, 9 June 2017

³⁵⁹ Russell Deacon, *The Welsh Liberals: The history of the Liberal and Liberal Democrats in Wales* (2014)

³⁶⁰ Russell Deacon, ‘David Lloyd George: the Welshman who won World War I,’ in *The Conversation*, 5 November 2018

³⁶¹ Eryl Crump, ‘David Lloyd George became Prime Minister a hundred years ago,’ in *Daily Post*, 4 December 2016

³⁶² Lord Roberts of Conwy, *Right from the Start*, p.6

for a charity, in Llansadwrn.³⁶³ Furthermore, the Anglican church in the village of Llansadwrn had been disestablished by the Welsh Church Act 1914³⁶⁴ by prominent Non-conformist Liberals such as Lloyd George.³⁶⁵ Wyn Roberts was of the Methodist Church, with his father as the Methodist minister. Roberts was inherently aware of the issues of Lloyd George as stated in his diaries, quoting him on Major, “Like Lloyd George, Major hit where it hurts.”³⁶⁶ Major being on grant schools, Lloyd George on church disestablishment. David Lloyd George was a prominent liberal from Wyn Roberts’s area and era in childhood, a liberalism of much different form to Gladstone requiring a greater role of the state, not dissimilar to the Attlee government.³⁶⁷

Similarly, though the Liberals were once the first party in Wales, it has fallen behind. It, too, has a critical biography of one of its finest exemplars in Donald McCormick,³⁶⁸ and his biography of Lloyd George. Kenneth O. Morgan has also done as such for Lloyd George.³⁶⁹ The Liberal party had undergone a transformation winning a landslide³⁷⁰ in 1906 to downturn³⁷¹ as it was a spent force politically by the time of Wyn Roberts’ birth in 1930. In 1924 it held only 7 Welsh seats, labour had taken the South, but the North (including Anglesey) still voted Liberal. However, across the 1930s the Liberal Party still had social impetus. Lloyd George’s children are a stellar example of the collapse of the Liberal party, his daughter Megan was a Labour MP, his son Gwilym became a Conservative MP and an

³⁶³ Lord Roberts of Conwy, *Right from the Start*, p.5

³⁶⁴ Welsh Church Act 1914, available on, <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo5/4-5/91/contents> (Last accessed 13 March 2018)

³⁶⁵ Glanmor Williams, *The Welsh Church from Reformation to Disestablishment, 1603-1920*, (Cardiff, 2007)

³⁶⁶ Wyn Roberts Diaries, 30th January 1996, vol.18

³⁶⁷ J. Graham Jones, *David Lloyd George and Welsh Liberalism*, Welsh Political Archive, National Library of Wales, (Aberystwyth, 2010)

³⁶⁸ Donald McCormick, *The Mask of Merlin: a critical Biography of David Lloyd George*, (2018)

³⁶⁹ Kenneth O. Morgan, *David Lloyd George, Welsh Radical as World Statesman*, (London, 1982) also; Kenneth O. Morgan, ‘7 December 1916: Asquith, Lloyd George and the Crisis of Liberalism,’ in *Parliamentary History*, 36.3 (2017) pp.361-371

³⁷⁰ Russell Deacon, ‘A New history of Wales: 1906 – The Liberals Golden Year or the end of an Era? How great was the electoral landslide?’ in *Western Mail*, 28 March 2013, Also; Stephen Goodwin, ‘Rocky Road marks long decline of Liberalism: A famous Gladstone speech will be celebrated on Snowdon Tomorrow.’ In *The Independent*, 12 September 1992.

³⁷¹ Kenneth O. Morgan, ‘The new Liberal party from dawn to downfall 1906-1924,’ in *Memory (s), identity (s), marginality (ies) in the contemporary western world*, 7, (2011)

eventual home secretary.³⁷² Ironically both reflect the general Welsh voting trends with Megan sitting in Carmarthen, close to the Labour Valleys, Gwilym sat as MP for Pembroke. Gwilym reflects the voting trend of Welsh Liberals who turned to the Conservative party. Wyn Roberts may have simply followed this Liberal trend which had long been a tradition in Wales.

For Wyn Roberts his Conservatism could be an evolution of this early liberal influence, surrounding his rural home. This is also in line with how the sons of religious figures tended to go into media in Wales, media became a new religion. However, Roberts' pragmatism ultimately made the choice as a young man with a family to support, Conwy needed an MP, and the Conservative Party needed a candidate.

The thought of a Welsh Conservative today is nothing new; David Melding AM, Kay Swinborne MEP, David Jones MP, the new Welsh Conservative leader Paul Davies exist to name just a few. In 1970 however, the concept was vague, Wyn Roberts was the only Welsh speaking MP of the age to reach cabinet level, to retain said position throughout the Thatcher years and by 1990s become known to some as the "grand old man" of Welsh Conservatism,³⁷³ and possibly British Conservatism more generally. The main question however, remains why out of all the choices did Wyn Roberts go to the Conservative Party?

For Wyn Roberts his choice of political party is explicable not by any grand theories of Conservatism or from examination of his political thought but rather the simplicities of Conservatism.³⁷⁴ More as a political tradition, evolved from his families 'Lloyd George Liberal'³⁷⁵ tradition. Though, the Liberal party was not a completely spent force, though they were possibly not of this Lloyd George tradition.³⁷⁶ It did emerge again as a viable threat, more so than Plaid Cymru in the 1960s as Gwynfor Evans won his seat, the once popular

³⁷² J. Graham Jones, 'A Breach in the Family: Megan and Gwilym Lloyd George,' in *Journal of Liberal Democrat History*, 25 (1999-2000) pp.34-39

³⁷³ Vaughan Roderick, briefing, 'Welsh Devolution,' *BBC Wales*, 1997, available on <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/special/politics97/devolution/wales/briefing/yesno.shtml> (Last accessed 14 February 2019)

³⁷⁴ A.W 'The Meaning of Conservatism,' in *The Economist*, 13 August 2018

³⁷⁵ David Craik, 'Lord Roberts of Conwy,' in *The Independent*, 20 December 2013.

³⁷⁶ Lord Roy Jenkins, 'The British Liberal Tradition: From Gladstone Through to Young Churchill, Asquith, and Lloyd George – Is Blair Their Heir?' Fourth Annual Senator Keith Davey Lecture, (Toronto, 2001) pp.11-38

Liberal party held 2 seats in Wales.³⁷⁷ The trend was reversed as of 2017, when the Liberal Democrats held no seats in Wales.³⁷⁸ This was not an unusual trend within Wales, for many people of old Lloyd George liberal tradition transitioned to the Conservative Party in the 1930s and 1940s.

For Plaid Cymru, Wyn Roberts felt that Wales has not the resources or the endorsements for self-governance. Similarly, he accepted that any changes to Wales would have to come from the top, or from Westminster not from within Wales. Notably this opinion is similarly shared by Aneurin Bevan that change had to come from above, or from Westminster and parliament.³⁷⁹ Similarly, at the time and as is known, Plaid Cymru had only just gained its first MPs in the latter half of the 1960s, it had only just established itself within Westminster politics.³⁸⁰ Roberts also considered the Plaid position to be a ‘non-starter’³⁸¹ though given the date of 1970, Plaid’s political position was far from certain with only recent electoral gains and an uncertain position within Wales. He could not have known it would grow to be a political force worthy of reckoning. Indeed, certain members of Plaid eventually considered Wyn Roberts to be a cultural autonomist.³⁸² Roberts was a cultural/unionist nationalist, he was supportive of Welsh culture but held no doubt that Wales had not the economic resources for self-governance.

Although Roberts originally grew up around a place Lloyd George liberal thought,³⁸³ it was simply his independent and pragmatic mind during the 1950s and 1960s that dictated his politics. Being a cultural nationalist allowed him the flexibility of choice denied to followers of the Plaid variant. It was mainly his career with TWW that made the choice of political party. Wyn Roberts is affectionately remembered in a fair few of his obituaries, they strike

³⁷⁷ As of the 1964 general election.

³⁷⁸ Martin Shipton, ‘The end of Liberalism in Wales as party loses Ceredigion seat,’ in *Western Mail*, 9 June 2017.

³⁷⁹ Nye Davies, ‘Aneurin Bevan and the Claim of Wales,’ Paper presented at *NAASWCH, North American Association for the Study of Welsh Culture and History*, 2018, Bangor University.

³⁸⁰ Lord Roberts of Conwy, *Right from the Start*, p.76

³⁸¹ Lord Roberts of Conwy, *Right from the Start*,

³⁸² Howard Elcock et al. *Remaking the Union: Devolution and British Politics in the 1990s*, (London, 2005) p.143

³⁸³ David Craik, ‘Lord Roberts of Conwy,’ in *The Independent*, 20 December 2013.

him as being a rather pragmatic man.³⁸⁴ His career at TWW certainly stands as proof of this. An opportunity to try to preserve the Welsh language in an era where it was known to be in a sharp level of decline.³⁸⁵ His traveling both prior to and during his career with TWW certainly are considerable as preparation for traveling he did as an MP. Perhaps the pragmatism that he gained during a career in both television and journalism combines with his love of Wales and desire to protect the language allowed him to set aside the dogmas of the age and providence to serve his country in the way that Roberts thought it would work.

It is not incontestable that being both a Welshman and a Conservative MP, though not incompatible, did make life as an MP more difficult than it need have been. Some of the party's destructive policies in Wales saw to this, Thatcherism, and the closure of the South Wales mines as an obvious example. Being torn between love of country and destructiveness for anybody would be difficult. This was an issue that Wyn Roberts was familiar with during the 1990s, with his choices between the Conservative party and Wales becoming more difficult.

So why did Wyn Roberts decide to go with the Conservative Party? Simply, in the spatial context of the time, 1969-70, for Labour, it was a time of increasing trade union powers. The Welsh industries supported by such, were in stagnation and heavily reliant on traditional industries and society such as mining. It was Roberts's belief that modernisation was desperately needed, hence his constant travelling as a part of the initiatives to bring in much needed foreign investment into Wales. The 'white heat of technology'³⁸⁶ promised under Harold Wilson had reached some of the remote regions of Wales. The era was characterised by simpler things such as television. As Wyn Roberts was a figure was a prominent figure in Welsh television, it was liable that he kept abreast of such cultural shifts.

For Plaid Cymru, the radical brand of nationalism Roberts considered to be unelectable. His view as a Blue Dragon, was unionist with centralist control from Westminster and against devolution, though not against the idea of independent Welsh culture. As his view was that

³⁸⁴ 'Lord Roberts of Conwy – Obituary,' in *Daily Telegraph*, 17 December 2013; 'Obituary: Lord Roberts of Conwy,' in *BBC News*, 14 December 2013. John Biffen, 'Lord Roberts of Conwy,' in *The Guardian*, 16 December 2013.

³⁸⁵ The census data backs up this, in 1951 it stood at, compared to 1971 when it stood at, .

³⁸⁶ Harold Wilson, 'Labour's plan for Science,' Labour Party Conference, Scarborough, 1969.

Wales could never economically support itself apart from the Union. As a cultural nationalist this fitted with Conservative views, possibly gathered during his flirting with the elite British institutions. It is also something with what occurred with the Scottish Conservatives, who supported a cultural nationalism in a unionist form.³⁸⁷ A similar case is the recent autonomist movement in Catalonia with the idea Catalonian independence from Spain.³⁸⁸

Though this chapter has argued that his Conservatism was possibly evolved from Liberalism, the reason as to why he did not go with the Liberal Party at the time is simply that the party was in a dire state. Wyn Roberts does not provide any reasons within his memoir as to why he did not go to the Liberals, in fact in the chapter where he discusses his change to politics, he barely mentions the Liberals at all.³⁸⁹ By the time Wyn Roberts chose to stand for parliament the Liberal Party was not the same beast that it was in the 1930s and 1940s, it was a spent force politically. A lot of its supporters flocked to the Conservative Party, a trend it seems that Wyn Roberts followed.

The timing of his exit from HTV, and the vacancy of the Conwy constituency and a Welsh speaking Conservative meant that what was a highly marginal seat and had been for 20 years was Roberts for the taking. On top of this, was the Selective Employment Tax³⁹⁰ of the Labour government under Harold Wilson, which had upset many inn and hotel owners in the Conwy areas, making life financially much harder for people who owed such selective employment and tourism to their respective livelihoods. Therefore, the Conservative Party certainly had the best chance of winning the Conwy seat and would hold it for the next 27 years with Wyn Roberts at the helm.

³⁸⁷ Robin Mann & S. Fenton, *Nation, Class and Resentment: The Politics of National identity in England. Scotland and Wales*, (London, 2017)

³⁸⁸ 'Catalonia's bid for independence from Spain explained,' in *BBC News*, 31 January 2018.

³⁸⁹ Lord Roberts of Conwy, 'The Switch,' in *Right from the Start*, (Cardiff, 2006) pp.74-78

³⁹⁰ Jim Tomlinson, 'Economic Policy' in Andrew S. Crines & Kevin Hickson, *Harold Wilson: The Unprincipled Prime Minister?: Reappraising Harold Wilson*, (London, 2016) p.10. Tax itself introduced by Selective Employment Payments Act 1966.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1966/32/enacted> (Last Accessed 29 January 2019)

Wyn Roberts and his Political Influences.

Finally, there are the people who served as potential political influences on Wyn Roberts. As has been noted thus far during his early years and his career in journalism, Roberts had already encountered many such influences. During his early years there were both David and Meghan Lloyd George who he had met at different times, people who were both quintessentially Welsh and who undoubtedly had an influence on him. Roberts had also met and interviewed many politicians during his TWW years, Harold Macmillan being one such person. It is probable that such interviews are what drew Roberts toward the Conservative Party.

However, there is an issue which Wyn Roberts had to deal with when it came to his working relationships in politics. It is the main issue that Wyn Roberts had to contend with, with most people and policy areas. It is one that also seemed to be an issue that may have affected his political influences, as he noted in his diary on his appointment to the front bench in 1974 that.

‘Nick Edwards has overtaken me in the office stakes. He is more English than I am and more to be trusted on that account... I would be a reasonable complement to him in the office.’³⁹¹

As early as the 1970s the issue of Wyn Roberts being both Welsh and Conservative seemed to cause certain frictions at the Welsh Office. Though this might simply be a light-hearted quip by Wyn Roberts, it is an issue that would become rather prevalent the higher up the political ladder that Roberts climbed. It was also an issue that from time to time would be a problem with his political influences. Though Roberts also notes that he would be a reasonable complement to him at the Welsh Office, he is talking about the strength of character of Nick Edwards though it also seems he could be suggesting that his Welshness would a complement to Nick Edwards Englishness.

For the first Prime Minister that Wyn Roberts served under was Edward Heath, between 1970-74 Roberts describes him as a man after his own heart.³⁹² There was no bad blood

³⁹¹ Wyn Roberts Diary, 30 July 1974, vol. 4

³⁹² Lord Roberts of Conwy, *Right from the Start*, (Cardiff, 2006) p.86

between them and Wyn Roberts largely agreed with much of what he did. It was under Ted Heath that Wyn Roberts had the initial idea of keeping such a diary. There is not much that can be gleaned here for Roberts was only a junior minister at the time, the issues of him being a Welshman were also not the best of a problem compared to what they were under Thatcher. Edward Heath was one of Roberts' first political influences when he was in politics, but one that arguably had a large impact on his career. Ted Heath being a man with who Wyn Roberts agreed, which may also be another factor which drew Wyn Roberts towards the Conservative Party. He was also a man who saw the need for a Welshman to lead Wales, and appointed Peter Thomas as the Secretary of State for Wales in 1970. Though in the end Roberts would come to view Ted Heath as more of a broken man who did little to communicate effectively by the end of his parliamentary term, as he notes in his memoir '...I felt Ted Heath's inadequacy as a communicator.'³⁹³

It was the second Prime Minister Roberts worked under that he spent much of his political career under, Margaret Thatcher. Roberts noted in his diary his thoughts of her leadership style.

'Only Margaret could take the long-term view. She could become a World Statesman, (but) if she did, she would also have to take the short-term view as well.'³⁹⁴

In November 1974 Roberts noted that Thatcher had put in leadership bid for the Conservative Party, he did not expect her to win.³⁹⁵ By the January of 1975 a complete reversal of fortunes meant Thatcher was surely if surprisingly going to win, with Roberts noting that she attracted more Anti-Ted votes than he thought possible.³⁹⁶ If Roberts was surprised at Thatcher winning the leadership contest, he was certainly concerned with the 1979 general election. Roberts' opinion of her was that,

"Margaret is too strident, too aggressive. She is a demolition expert but lacks imagination and the warmth that springs from it."³⁹⁷

³⁹³ Lord Roberts of Conwy, *Right from the Start*, (Cardiff, 2006) p.98

³⁹⁴ Wyn Roberts Diary, 16 February 1981, vol. 11

³⁹⁵ Wyn Roberts Diary, November 1974, Vol.5

³⁹⁶ Wyn Roberts Diary, 22 January 1975, Vol.5

³⁹⁷ Wyn Roberts Diary, 17 April 1979, Vol.9

This forms Wyn Roberts' first views of her as potential PM. For Thatcher, she was known to be derisive and argumentative with practically everyone she clapped eyes with. As is the opinion of Geoffrey Howe on Thatcher, that, 'She expects you, if you hold different views very strongly, to argue your corner.'³⁹⁸

However, as also noted by Roberts in his diary on the subject.

'A lot of people think that I am a wet, whereas in fact I am as dry as dust, Only the dry approach can begin to lead as a country to a future for us to live in.'³⁹⁹

Wets were opposed to some of Thatcher's policies often being those who considered themselves as 'one nation Tories, dries were Thatcherite supporters. At the point of 1981, it is contestable that Roberts identified with Thatcherism believing it to be a nation builder, and as several chapters of this thesis demonstrate Roberts' approach to Wales was, in ways, like that of Thatcherite approach in England. As the Thatcher government went on Wyn Roberts may have warmed to her, about the party conference in 1985 Roberts notes,

'She was wearing her egg and tomato blue dress again! I shall call it Maggie's battledress from now on.'⁴⁰⁰

However, as Roberts notes he was a 'dry' and not a wet at the time labelling himself as one of her supporters. Eventually however, Her opinion on Welsh Voters was made clear in one of Robert's encounters with her,⁴⁰¹ that the English who moved in were the only Tory voters in Wales. This remains untrue to the present day. Though for Wales itself, Thatcher does not notice the country much. In her autobiography Wales is referenced only once, and that is in relation to the extension of the right to buy.⁴⁰² Though her relationship has always been tempestuous with regards to Wales. Duncan Tanner once referred to her as a founding father

³⁹⁸ Patricia Murray, *Margaret Thatcher: A Profile*, (London, 1980) p.161

³⁹⁹ Wyn Roberts Diary, 16 February 1981, vol. 11

⁴⁰⁰ Wyn Roberts Diary, 4 June 1985, vol.13

⁴⁰¹ See Chapter: 2.

⁴⁰² Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, (London, 1993) p.602

of Devolution for the destructivity of her policies in Wales.⁴⁰³ Though with what Thatcherism destroyed in Wales, it potentially gave back usually thanks to the efforts of Wyn Roberts. This can be seen in his efforts to improve the prospects of the language, the state of the roads and to modernise the economy via the substantial use of inward investment.

Certainly, Wyn Roberts opinion of her years later suggests that whilst he may not have agreed with some aspects of Thatcher, she certainly had his respect.

“...we shall not see her like again. As the first women prime minister her statue deserves its place on the empty plinth in the member’s lobby.”⁴⁰⁴

Wyn Roberts however, was not ‘one of us’ in the sense of a Thatcherite Conservative, being a Welshman saw to that. Such ambivalence can be seen during the eclipse of Welsh devolution when Lord Gresford seemingly questioned his loyalty to patriotism or to the party.⁴⁰⁵ Wyn Roberts loyalty was certainly to that of his patriotism rather than his party, especially in the 1990s.

The final Prime Minister Roberts worked under was John Major, it was under him that most of Roberts memorable achievements occurred. This was due to him not being considered an outsider as he was under the Thatcher governments. As according to his diary, though the Welsh Office team supported David Hunt, Roberts was minded to support John Major in the 1990 leadership contest,⁴⁰⁶ but supported Hunt out of loyalty for Wales, as Hunt was Secretary of State.

His diaries state as much, though he believed that it was Major who was more likely to win the leadership bid. The relationship between Major and Roberts rested on more cordial roots, much like with Ted Heath. As such ‘Does Wyn think it’s important’ is something Major was

⁴⁰³ David Williamson, ‘How will Wales remember the Iron Lady Margaret Thatcher,’ *Wales Online*, 9 April 2013.

⁴⁰⁴ Lord Roberts of Conwy, *Right from the Start*, p.251

⁴⁰⁵ Hansard HL Deb, 21 April 1998, vol.588 c1048

⁴⁰⁶ Wyn Roberts Diary, 26 November 1990, Vol.14

known to quip on occasions, usually referring to Welsh policy and Wales generally.⁴⁰⁷ In a speech to the Welsh party members Major stated,

“After the lunch today, Wyn is taking me – by virtue of some roads for which he will undoubtedly ask for more money! – to the sight of the new arts and leisure complex at Llandudno.”⁴⁰⁸

The jovial use of language suggests that by this point Wyn is considered in high regard, especially by Major. As for his support in the 1995 leadership campaign, given that one of the candidates was John Redwood who had made quite an impression as the Secretary of state for Wales, why Roberts might have put his support behind John Major needs little explanation.

Finally, alongside the Prime Ministers Wyn Roberts served under, other notable influences also come his fellow Welsh MPs. It is undeniable that in parliament a lot of influence comes not from the reading but through the people that have been met. This is certainly the case for Roberts as is documented in his diaries. From the government of Ted Heath, Wyn Roberts neighbouring MPs included Goronwy Roberts⁴⁰⁹ of Caernarfon, Cledwyn Hughes⁴¹⁰ of Anglesey and Geraint Morgan⁴¹¹ the absent Conservative MP for Denbigh as his parliamentary attendance was minimal.⁴¹² All three were undeniably Welsh, though both Goronwy Roberts and Cledwyn Hughes were both MPs for the Labour party. This does not mean that Wyn Roberts had nothing to learn from them, as he was keen to have good relations with all his neighbouring Welsh MPs.

Geraint Morgan, however, was another Welsh Conservative MP, thoroughly in Balsom’s British Wales.⁴¹³ He does warrant examination as done by Blaxland,⁴¹⁴ not that much could

⁴⁰⁷ Johnathan Snicker, ‘Strategies of Autonomist agents in Wales,’ in H. Elcock & M Keating (ed.) *Remaking the Union: Devolution and British Politics in the 1990s*, (London, 1998) pp.140-57

⁴⁰⁸ ‘John Major Speech to Welsh Party Members,’ John Major Archive, 4 September 1992.

⁴⁰⁹ Goronwy Roberts, Labour MP for Caernarfon, 1950 to 1974.

⁴¹⁰ Cledwyn Hughes, Labour MP for Anglesey, 1951 to 1979.

⁴¹¹ Geraint Morgan, Conservative MP for Denbigh, 1959 to 1983.

⁴¹² It is stated as absent as his parliamentary attendance record is abysmal, Geraint Morgan’s preference was for the local politics with his constituents in Denbigh.

⁴¹³ Dennis Balsom,

⁴¹⁴ Sam Blaxland, ‘Denbigh Constituency’s First and Final MP: a Study of Geraint Morgan,’ in *Denbighshire Historical Society Transactions*, 65 (2017) pp.87-99

be said about him in parliament given his history of not attending parliament. Though he was also a frequent defender of the Welsh language and was also one of the first Welsh Conservative MPs to argue against the S4C U-Turn.⁴¹⁵

Also included in Roberts contemporary Welsh influences are the Welsh secretaries of state: Nicholas Edwards, David Hunt, and Peter Walker, however they are examined at the end of this thesis,⁴¹⁶ as they play a significant role in the specific aspects of the downfall of the Conservative Party in Wales and the end of the Blue Dragon in Wales. What made Wyn Roberts so efficacious for Wales is despite being a member of the Conservative Party, he was a figure who was universally popular amongst all Welsh parties. As this part of the thesis has demonstrated he got along with his contemporary MPs, the Prime Ministers, and Secretary of States for Wales. All his neighbouring MPs were ones of the wartime generation that Wyn Roberts largely agreed with and got along with well. As will be seen in the following chapters at times Wyn Roberts garnered support from all sections of Welsh politics. Plaid Cymru MPs would often support him due to the shared like of Welsh culture, Roberts could often find support from them towards various Welsh policies. He would also get dismay from them as they often hoped that he would become the Secretary of State for Wales after Nicholas Edwards in 1987, this never happened as he was Welsh.⁴¹⁷

Conclusion. The Blue Dragon?

This chapter has demonstrated a few of Wyn Roberts' thoughts, he is dubbed the Blue Dragon; as Wyn Roberts was not only a member of the Conservative Party in Wales, but he was also a Welsh Conservative. It is a rather subtle distinction but one that is more important because of it. His very presence existed as a form of Welsh Conservatism within the Welsh Conservatives. This chapter has constructed a theoretical framework which could be used to identify most Welsh speaking Conservatives, from identifying the core identity and ideologies underpinning Wyn Roberts, or a Blue Dragon. It is an identity that Wyn Roberts had to fight for in the party.

⁴¹⁵ See Chapter: 2.

⁴¹⁶ See Chapter: 5.

⁴¹⁷ See Chapter: 5.

In Wyn Roberts first identity he is not too dissimilar from a historian, this comes from history being one of his earliest forms of educational training. This strain of thought can be seen at a few points throughout his life, the most notable being his analysis of historians at the end of the century. Included in this though is an examination of some of the aspects of his childhood, in which he came to learn of the separatism between English and Welsh cultures, but also of how they are not too dissimilar. Historically the potential division between the Welsh speaking Roberts and English elitism is certain. Wyn Roberts' love of Wales was always paramount, as was the Liberalism surrounding his childhood. But Roberts' time in the English elite institutions of Harrow and Oxford, that was his earliest dalliance with relatively Conservative institutions. It was also this historical understanding that gave him his earlier appreciation for Welsh culture. It also demonstrates a strain of Conservative thought.

Wyn Robert's second identity is that of a Cultural Nationalist, this is often demonstrated in the later chapters of this thesis,⁴¹⁸ as Wyn Roberts frequently made use of his Welsh roots, but always believed that Wales was better off within the union due to economic factors. Wyn Roberts demonstrated a lot of thinking as a cultural nationalist, during his career at TWW. At TWW Wyn Roberts was always prioritising Welsh culture and the Welsh language; this is something that will come up later in this thesis. He made use of cultural icons such as Gwyn Thomas when it came to making documentaries for Wales and was highly practical in using television as a way of trying to preserve the Welsh language.

For Wyn Roberts as a Conservative politician, his choice was an evolution of the Lloyd George Liberal tradition of his childhood. This was a route that many Liberal supporters of the age took when the Liberals merged with the Conservative Party. It offered him a natural home according to his views, but it is one that would prove to be unique since there were not many who could identify as Welsh Conservatives. His political views put him at odds with both Plaid Cymru and the Labour Party, a move which Wyn Roberts' friends thought unusual at the time.⁴¹⁹ This can be explained when you consider that Wyn Roberts was a Cultural Nationalist and all for Wales. Labour always had the reputation of being the Welsh party, whereas Plaid Cymru's brand of nationalism was not too dissimilar to Wyn Roberts views.⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁸ See Chapter 4.

⁴¹⁹ Lord Roberts of Conwy, *Right from the Start*, (Cardiff, 2006) p.70

⁴²⁰ More of this thinking can be seen in Chapter 4.

He often took after certain Conservative principles, a political morality that evolved from earlier liberal traditions, but does not fit into any classical Conservative ideologies.

Finally, this chapter has had a brief examination of a few of Wyn Robert's relationships with his fellow contemporary politicians because his relationship with them is key to understanding why he grew so disillusioned with the Conservative Party in the 1990s.⁴²¹ It is placed here in this chapter for context of understanding the beginning of the Blue Dragon in Wales.

The next chapter of this thesis will move on to start examining Wyn Roberts solely as a politician within the House of Commons. Compared with this chapter this is a time jump from the 1960s & 1970s to the 1980s, it is mainly concerned with the time that he was in the Welsh Office. It will examine his role in Conservative Welsh language policy, starting with his insider view of the furore over the Welsh Fourth Channel and how this ignited a decade of Welsh language protest, against the Conservative Party. It will then examine his role in attempting to end such protests with both the Education Reform Act of 1988 and ultimately his Welsh Language Act of 1993. It also partially examines the notion of both Welsh and Conservatives, though the two are not necessarily contradictory in terminology. It is in the context of time and even today still regarded as highly unusual within Wales.

⁴²¹ See: Chapter 5.

Chapter 2: Wyn Roberts: a saviour of the Welsh Language?

‘Champion of (the) Welsh language...’⁴²² is a quote stated in *The Times* obituary for Wyn Roberts, this quote is demonstrative of what Roberts did for the Welsh language in the latter half of the twentieth century. Wyn Roberts protected the language in a way that not many people thought of in the Conservative Party. By using well thought out solutions to issues as they arose, the problems as outlined by Roberts were numerous.

‘My simple and practical answer was to give priority to the Welsh-language place name in those counties like Gwynedd where Welsh speakers formed the majority...But this was only one aspect of the language problem. It extended to education, broadcasting, housing, and other facets of Welsh life.’⁴²³

It was from the earlier eras of his life that Wyn Roberts was an advocate of the Welsh language, it being Roberts first language. As examined in the previous chapter Roberts earlier career with TWW, to the House of Lords, there exists a record of Roberts attempting and legislating for the survival of the Welsh Language. Roberts was involved as a broadcaster on programmes to teach the Welsh language to the nation, these being both *Camau Cyntaf* and *Croeso Christine*.⁴²⁴ He had dealt before with the broadcasting aspect of the language and would do so again with S4C. At the same time, he would also deal with language problems surrounding housing, by the late 1980s he would also be involved with Welsh language education. Wyn Roberts was also a Member of the Bardic Gorsedd whilst working for TWW, the symbolism of this being a person or persons who have made a distinguished contribution to either the Welsh nation, language, or its culture,⁴²⁵ this also furthers the importance of Wyn Roberts as a cultural figure, as well as political in Wales.

As this chapter shall argue Wyn Roberts was at the forefront of language policy, being targeted as a Welsh Conservative and subject to protest from all corners. It shall examine the

⁴²² David Rankin, ‘Champion of Welsh Language Lord Roberts of Conwy dies,’ in *The Times*, 14 December 2013.

⁴²³ Lord Roberts of Conwy, *Right from the Start*, p.128

⁴²⁴ See Chapter 1.

⁴²⁵ ‘What is the Gorsedd?’ on BBC, available on <http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/eisteddfod2008/sites/guide/history/pages/gorsedd.shtml> (Last accessed 25 April 2019)

language policies Roberts was involved in and how he succeeded despite protests. Specifically, it will examine his involvement in the Welsh fourth channel and the subsequent creation of S4C and how he contributed significantly to the survival of the Welsh language. It will also examine the creation of S4C, how the U-turn meant that the language campaigners had an emboldened future, and subsequent policy featuring the Conservative Party at the fore came at a cost, to be met with either derision or suspicion from the Welsh bodies of Plaid Cymru and Cymdeithas, the Welsh Language Society. In following of the earlier efforts of Wyn Roberts, he also had responsibility for the bilingual language education provision for Wales contained within the 1988 Education Act. His final impetus for the language came in the form of the Welsh Language Act of 1993, often called, or quoted to be his greatest achievement.⁴²⁶ Such language preservation acts are still being used today, such as with the Welsh language measure of 2011.

As a main result of this and his interactions with Cymdeithas, the Welsh Language Society Roberts became one of, if not the main target for Welsh language activism, being a frequent protest target for Welsh language protestors. Either at his own constituency office or at the Eisteddfod from the Welsh Language Society. Protest also came in Parliament from Plaid Cymru with frequent criticisms that any legislation did not go far enough to preserving the Welsh Language. Although the measures were not extreme enough for the protestors, Roberts' view was that extreme measures, such as enforced bilingualism, would ultimately be of a detrimental effect to the language.

The main reason for being a primary target of this activism, is that, simply, Wyn Roberts was a Welsh Conservative with both similar and diametrical views to that of the language activists. Both Wyn Roberts and The Welsh Language Society shared the same aim, which was the preservation of the language, they were just opposed as to how this could be achieved. Roberts' way was inherently Conservative, a slow and considered change, whereas diametrically opposed to this were the WLS who wanted fast-paced change and imposition of the language in Wales.

⁴²⁶ David Craik, 'Lord Roberts of Conwy: Politician,' in *The Independent*, 20 December 2013

The Conservative party may have been best placed to answer some language issues given it had spent years examining the Welsh language issue and its own relationship with Wales.⁴²⁷ The party also had Roberts as an anachronism within the party for the period. His efforts to preserve and foster the language question stretched far before his period as a Conservative MP, back to the heyday of Welsh Language broadcasting in Wales itself. Though his time at TWW cements Roberts as an earlier figure ingrained into Welsh culture, other efforts of Roberts at the time included efforts of Welsh language preservation. The issue of the Welsh language is prevalent to the argument of the existence of a Blue Dragon strain of Conservatism in the party. Since language is an issue heavily involved in the identity of a nation.⁴²⁸ This chapter will examine the acts through the decades which Roberts was involved in to demonstrate his importance as a Welsh language pioneer and how this made him a target of Welsh language demonstrations. Simply as a Blue Dragon his approach to language preservation was persuasion, instead of the enforcement preferred by language activists. Roberts's contributions to the language in both the television sector and within politics, heavily reinforced notions of separatism between the notions Britishness and Welshness.⁴²⁹ His involvement in language affairs, as well as education reinforces the separate identity enjoyed in Wales. Though not in the way some sectors in Wales may have wanted. Roberts increases the autonomy of certain Welsh sectors, with language policy, but his views maintained that Wales was still within the economic union of the UK, if a nation upon which policy enforced a different identity.

‘If the Ideology of language maintenance is essentially left-wing, as it has been in Wales, then language maintenance becomes an indicator of left-wing allegiance...’⁴³⁰

⁴²⁷ David Melding, ‘Have we been Anti-Welsh? An Essay on the Conservative Party and the Welsh Nation,’ (2005)

⁴²⁸ Bethan Harries, Bridget Byrne & Kitty Lymperopoulou, ‘Who identifies as Welsh? National identities and ethnicity in Wales,’ CoDE briefing series, *The Dynamics of Diversity, evidence from the 2011 Census*, (Manchester, 2014)

⁴²⁹ Daniel John Evans, ‘Welshness in ‘British Wales’: negotiating national identity at the margins,’ in *Nations and Nationalism*, 25.1 (2018) pp. 167-190

⁴³⁰ D.E. Ager, *Motivation in Language planning and Language Policy*, (Clevedon, 2001) p.33

As argued by D.E. Ager with reference on Welsh Language policy, the genre contains much in the way of works.⁴³¹ However, as a subject of vast interpretations also holds many lacunas, including the issue of the Conservative Government's attempts to preserve Welsh as a language of the UK. A notable exception is Andrew Edwards et al,⁴³² who have examined the Welsh Language policy of the Conservative Governments throughout the 1980s and to the 1990s, though on a party level. In this they acknowledge Wyn Roberts role in setting Welsh policy for the Conservatives, and how he was keen not to inflame either side when it came to Welsh language education.⁴³³ However, as they are examining language policy and not Wyn Roberts himself, they were not prepared to acknowledge that the reason for this was that Wyn Roberts had dealt with a largely similar issue decades before whilst working for TWW.⁴³⁴ This demonstrates where this thesis has started to add to the growing corpus of works on the Conservative Party in Wales, by fully examining the role of Wyn Roberts.

It can be concluded that it is far from the case in Wales that language maintenance was a fully left leaning affair in Wales. Examination of Wyn Robert's life reveals his empathy and attempts to foster and preserve the Welsh Language far prior to the Heath and Thatcher Governments. The attempts to preserve the Welsh language form a natural part of Conservatism, the reverence of a national past in a country, and use of the national culture. Making use of Welsh language and culture, is something Wyn Roberts utilised throughout his career. Nowhere is this more prominent than his defence of the language or in his role abroad.⁴³⁵ It certainly cements him as a character who was both Welsh and Conservative.

In an unusual defence of the Conservatives, Simon Brooks argues that nineteenth century Conservatives played a key part in language preservation, and thus challenges the dominance of the Liberal Party narrative in Wales.⁴³⁶ It would then naturally follow that preservation of the language forms a key impetus behind the Conservative Party in Wales and for the Blue

⁴³¹ Patrick Carlin, 'Welsh Language Policy: A Long Twentieth Century,' in Masahide Ishihara & Eilichi Hoshino & Yoko Fujita, *Self-determinable Development of Small Islands*, (2016) pp.287-300

⁴³² Andrew Edwards & Duncan Tanner & Patrick Carlin, 'The Conservative Governments and the Development of Welsh Language Policy in the 1980s and 1990s,' in *The Historical Journal*, 54.2 (2011) pp.529-551

⁴³³ Ibid. p.545

⁴³⁴ See Chapter 1.

⁴³⁵ See Chapter 4.

⁴³⁶ Simon Brooks, *Why Wales Never Was: The Failure of Welsh Nationalism*, (Cardiff, 2015)

Dragon. Simply, without a cultural dimension formulated on Welshness, there can be no Blue Dragon Conservatism.

As for the Welsh Language act of 1993, despite being created and implemented under a Conservative government, there is a scarcity of sources which directly credit them with this. The same goes for S4C created in 1982. Wyn Roberts naturally has been credited with this by his peers in obituaries⁴³⁷ often singling it out as his ‘Greatest achievement.’⁴³⁸ If it was his greatest achievement, how exactly did Wyn Roberts go about this? After all, the greatest of achievements are often followed with the greatest of criticisms, this was something which was not new to Wyn Roberts in the form of Welsh Language protests.

Wyn Roberts as a Welsh Conservative target of protest?

‘Sir Wyn has pursued a persistent and dogged path on this issue. Often he has been subjected to what has appeared to be totally non-constructive criticism from those who understandably but impatiently seek the ideas rather than the possible.’⁴³⁹

It was unusual in the 1980s to be a member of the Conservative Party and to avoid any form of protest, be it from activism or extremism. Perhaps the most notable case being the IRA and the Brighton bombing.⁴⁴⁰ However, the less noted cases from the era come from Welsh rather than Irish nationalists. In being a vocal proponent of the Welsh language, but also a Conservative, Wyn Roberts was a key target of many criticisms, protests, and bombs. All these came from various elements of language activists, such as the WLS. Alongside being the target of Welsh language activists, Roberts was on occasion a target within his own party and the House of Commons. Criticism came from the fact that he was both Welsh and Conservative. The final element that Wyn Roberts was targeted by was from an extremist element, being the target of a postal bomb potentially from a member of Meibion Glyndwr. This led to the only conviction ever achieved against the group.

⁴³⁷ David Craik, ‘Lord Roberts of Conwy: Politician,’ in *The Independent*, 20 December 2013

⁴³⁸ ‘David Cameron leads tribute to Lord Roberts of Conwy,’ in *BBC News*, 14 December 2013, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-25378694> (Last Accessed 1 January 2020)

⁴³⁹ Hansard, HL Deb. 19 January 1993 vol.541 c844

⁴⁴⁰ ‘Margaret Thatcher: Lord Roberts’ memories of bomb defiance,’ in *BBC News*, 8 April 2013

The issue once again was down to a particular issue for Wyn Roberts, he was a Welsh Conservative. In a debate of the Government of Wales Bill (1998) in the House of Lords. Roberts was confronted by the Liberal Democrat, Lord Thomas of Gresford.

“We on the benches do not believe for one moment that is the true voice of the noble Lord Roberts of Conwy. No doubt the problem of balancing patriotism and party prevents him from saying something along the lines we have put forward.”⁴⁴¹

Though a defence of Roberts in this debate came from Viscount St Davids, in the same argument but with a positive spin.

“(Roberts)...is undoubtedly Welsh; he is also undoubtedly a Conservative.”⁴⁴²

The crux of Roberts problem was laid bare, some clearly consider the matter of Welsh speaking and being Conservative to be quite contradictory. By any measure it is irrefutable that there exists a certain sense of damage done by the Conservatives physically in Wales. Though the matter of the language is a record that is defensible for the Conservative Party.

Furthermore, it would become one of his greatest if most underutilised advantages. For being a Welsh speaking member of the Conservative party made him a vital asset to the party's subsequent attempts over the years to be rid of the English image. Also being a Welsh speaker, it was Wyn Roberts who held responsibility for dealing with the Welsh Language Society thus making him a known and accessible target. Finally, it is contestable that being a Welsh speaker was a recognised as an advantage to the extent that Roberts was the one politician who survived decades of Conservative reshuffles, if not becoming the Secretary of State for Wales. Even though, from some cases it did matter that Roberts was not the Secretary of State, this can be seen with trade missions Roberts undertook where not being the secretary did not hinder Roberts' success, nor his focus on Wales. If not a target of protests in the Commons, Roberts became a target of protest from the Welsh Language Society.

⁴⁴¹ Hansard, HL Deb. 21 April 1998, vol. c1064

⁴⁴² Hansard, HL Deb. 21 April 1998, vol. c1099

‘We are about to do battle by all accounts with the Welsh Language Society again. They want a body to promote Welsh Language education.’⁴⁴³

To add to the protest and backlash Roberts faced from all areas in the House of Commons, for much of the same period as a representative of both Welsh Office and the face of Welsh language legislation, the Welsh Language Society conducted a campaign of direct action against any Welsh Conservative. Roberts noted in his diary, ‘one cannot forget that Cymdeithas is a very politically motivated, anti-Thatcherite group.’⁴⁴⁴ Elwyn Jones, Geraint Morgan, David Hunt, Nicholas Edwards, and Peter Walker all received some form of protest by the WLS. The WLS in this era served as a political pressure group, it acted also as a Nationalist platform which targeted several members of Parliament. The WLS also targeted members of the moderate Welsh Language Board, which was set up as a body not affiliated with Conservatism to deal with issues of the language. This alone is a reason as to why it was subject to protest.

Wyn Roberts was a keen target of such protestors. If not protesting, the use of vandalism was also rife one such case comes from within Roberts own constituency it was the Telecom House in Llandudno, which was vandalised on 22 March 1988.⁴⁴⁵ The problem the protestors presented according to Wyn Roberts in his diary was that, the WLS were pushing for ill thought solutions with immediate results via the use of activism.⁴⁴⁶ There were similarities between both Wyn Roberts and the WLS in that they both had a desire to preserve and foster the Welsh Language, their differences made Roberts an attractive target to protest against. However, he was not the only one, anyone who could come under defining characteristics of the Blue Dragon⁴⁴⁷ could be a target of such protest.

As Alun Davies, one of Wyn Roberts contemporaries, states, (quoted by Wyn Roberts).

⁴⁴³ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 13, 18 July 1985

⁴⁴⁴ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 13, 5 August 1988

⁴⁴⁵ ‘Picture of vandalism, Telecom House, Llandudno,’ in Conwy Archives, Llandudno. CP395/3/782

⁴⁴⁶ Wyn Roberts Diary. vol. 13, 12 October 1986

⁴⁴⁷ See Chapter 1.

‘You the Welsh Office are the medium for protest, it will be interesting to see what they do when you are not there at the Eisteddfod to be protested against.’⁴⁴⁸

Being a body that was run by Welsh Conservatism, it is easy to see why the Welsh Office was a medium for protest as it embodied the other end of the political spectrum. After all, as is argued by Richard Wyn Jones et al., anti-Conservatism is seemingly something that has become part of the constellation of Welsh National Identity.⁴⁴⁹ The Welsh Office would therefore stand as a target given its position as the head conservative institution in Wales. What is less simple is why target Wyn Roberts? Though he was part of the other end of the spectrum, he was also one person who had for decades actively pursued an agenda of Welsh language reform and preservation was a target of protest. Roberts was targeted every year at the National Eisteddfod, though there were also attempts to target Roberts directly.⁴⁵⁰ This included but was not limited too; protestors turning up at his constituency office, though Roberts claims that neither could speak Welsh well, another involving a court case when Roberts’ car hit a protestor. A more extreme form of protest included the attempted use of postal bombs, not just to Roberts but also to Nicholas Edwards.

As Roberts notes in his diary; that,

Since (the) S4C debacle, I have always ensured that the WLS have never achieved their ends.⁴⁵¹

Cymdeithas or the WLS had been emboldened to act against Conservative language policy since the S4C U-turn, Roberts always acted to ensure that WLS could not achieve such aims again. As Dylan Phillips argues, ‘protest and civil disobedience have remained key weapons for Cymdeithas in its campaign for the language throughout the last forty odd years.’⁴⁵² These

⁴⁴⁸ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 13, 19 April 1986

⁴⁴⁹ Richard Wyn Jones, Roger Scully & David Tristan, ‘Why do the Conservatives always do (even) worse in Wales?’ In *British Elections & Parties Review*. 12.1 pp.229-245 p.243

⁴⁵⁰ Images of WLS protests can be found on, <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/gallery/7025338>

⁴⁵¹ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 13, 5 August 1988

⁴⁵² Dylan Phillips, ‘The Dragon Roars: The emergence of civil disobedience in Welsh language politics,’ (2000) Centre for Advance Welsh and Celtic Studies, University of California Celtic Conference. Also, Dylan Phillips, ‘The History of the Welsh Language

are key weapons which would be used against the Conservatives. And ones that would ultimately fail.

These attempts of Roberts earned him the attention of the WLS across the 1980s, at any Eisteddfod visited by Roberts the WLS tended to turn up to protest. Many of these protests were minor, in a two-hour meeting with parents who wanted Welsh Medium Education in schools, Roberts received heckling from WLS members present in the audience.⁴⁵³ Further issues arose with the creation of a Welsh Joint Education Committee, 'More problems with WLS who are attacking the WJEC and... on our efforts to test a WJEC body to come along... on Welsh Medium Education.' Many protests also occurred during the consultation in the run up to a new Welsh Language Bill.⁴⁵⁴ The Welsh Language Society were usually behind them, though the 1993 act was not exclusive as they also protested against a proposed Welsh Language Act in 2010, they claimed it would not compel either the public or private sector to provide bilingual services.⁴⁵⁵ As is identified further on in this chapter, the Welsh Language Bill was Wyn Roberts' policy, not the Welsh Language Act that the language activists dreamt of. These protests are interesting as they serve as a conflict between differing forms of patriotism toward the Welsh Language, the one that won out championed by the Welsh Conservatives compared to one preferred by the Welsh Language Society.

Most of the national Eisteddfods also had a notable example of a WLS protest,⁴⁵⁶ most of Roberts' diaries for the 1980s mention some form of WLS protest. Three members were arrested at the 1982 Eisteddfod,⁴⁵⁷ and in 1983 as an example the Welsh Language Society carried out by all accounts were a well-disciplined and thought out protest at the Eisteddfod, Roberts too noted that they well-disciplined and attained the publicity that they were aiming for.⁴⁵⁸ There are instances of more militant action for one of Roberts' Bangor surgeries for members of the public was invaded by protestors,⁴⁵⁹ this occurred in 1984 fresh after the

Society 1962 – 1998, in Geraint Jenkins & Mari A. Williams, *Let's do our best for the Ancient Tongue: The Welsh Language in the twentieth century*, (Cardiff, 2000)

⁴⁵³ 'Statement by PUSS for Wales, Wyn Roberts M.P.' 22 April 1986, Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 13

⁴⁵⁴ Wyn Roberts Diary. vol. 13, 12 October 1986

⁴⁵⁵ 'Protest over planned new Welsh Language Act,' in *Daily Post*, 19 June 2010

⁴⁵⁶ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 13, 7 August 1985

⁴⁵⁷ Tim Jones, 'Arrests at Eisteddfod,' in *The Times*, 4 August 1982

⁴⁵⁸ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 12, 14 August 1983

⁴⁵⁹ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 12, 17 December 1984

issues surrounding S4C. Roberts' concerns over Welsh language policy were realised, for he more than any other Welsh Conservative, became the target of protests from members of Cymdeithas, the Welsh Language Society.

Roberts was also subject to the more extreme protest measures which resulted in some cases in a court appearance. A first example of this is a member of WLS a Stephen Webb being hit by Roberts' chauffeured car at the Polytechnic of Wales,⁴⁶⁰ and subsequently sustaining injury. Other language activists had blocked Roberts' car in which he eventually escaped.⁴⁶¹ This eventually led to Stephen Webb suing the Welsh Office and the driver Alan Thomas for the sum of £10,000. Stephen Webb was the then South Wales organiser for the Welsh Language Society,⁴⁶² he and the other witnesses chose in court to give their evidence in Welsh via interpreter.⁴⁶³ If one was defending the principle of the language, it could be assumed that they would speak it for the publicity it provided not use a translator. The injury of Stephen Webb led to a further protest and blockade outside of a meeting of the Welsh Joint Education Committee in 1986.⁴⁶⁴

Roberts was rather reticent to appear as a witness against some of the defendants in the case of Stephen Webb. His fear was that an appearance by such a high-profile witness would serve only as an instigator for a repeat performance of protest from WLS.⁴⁶⁵ This would also serve to give them more unwarranted publicity, an issue that Roberts had been trying to stop since the use of such pressure raising tactics appeared was proposed as a success with the creation of S4C.

At the same time Roberts also attacked the WLS claiming that there is, "No conflict between increasing prosperity and affluence and the promotion of the Welsh Language."⁴⁶⁶ This sums

⁴⁶⁰ 'Statement by PUSS for Wales, Wyn Roberts M.P.' 22 April 1986, Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 13

⁴⁶¹ Adrian Howells, 'Judge told of fear for Sir Wyn's safety,' in *Western Mail*, 8 October 1992

⁴⁶² "'Rescuer' denies panic at demo,' in *The Guardian*, 7 October 1992.

⁴⁶³ 'Welsh protester gets damages,' in *The Guardian*, 10 October 1992

⁴⁶⁴ 'Nigel Stephenson, 'Blockade after protestor injured,' in *Daily Post*, 22 April 1986, in 'Welsh Language,' papers of Ivor Wynne Jones, in Conwy Archives, Llandudno, CX288/2/1/169

⁴⁶⁵ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 12, 13 January 1985

⁴⁶⁶ 'Attack on the Language Activists,' in *Western Mail*, 11 August 1988

up Roberts' view of the Conservatives in Wales, as well as increasing affluence via several forms of inward investment, there was also room for the language. This was essential as Roberts had often used the identity of Wales as a unique marketing tool.⁴⁶⁷ Both Wyn Roberts and the Welsh Office became targets of the language protestors, simply because both offices were Welsh Conservatives. Although such behaviour was not unusual for activists when it came to Conservatives, it is significant to attack one of a few politicians who would actively seek the advice of and work with The Welsh Language Society. A problem that was put by the Welsh Language Society's 1972 manifesto is.

“We gladly concede that no Government can legislate a language into life.”⁴⁶⁸

This was something which Wyn Roberts certainly tried to do, whilst a subject of activism. As a Welsh Conservative he became subject to extremism. The most significant form of Welsh activism, in this era was the use of bombs. Though other sorts of terrorism were not unheard of. The targeting of individuals with second homes by Meibion Glyndwr, a direct arson campaign group, is an example of this. Another is the bomb placed in the home of Nicholas Edwards.⁴⁶⁹ Wyn Roberts was not immune from this, the discovery of a letter bomb addressed to Wyn Roberts was found at the Gwynedd Postal sorting office in Bangor. A firebomb attempt via video cassette, it was suggested that the Meibion Glyndwr had moved on from burning homes to attempting to burn people.⁴⁷⁰ It seems to the nationalists of the populace that being both a Conservative and a Welsh speaker was an impossible mix. Interestingly it is probable that these events aided to shape Thatcher's view of Welsh nationalism. Irish nationalism had been responsible for the death of some her ministers,⁴⁷¹ if Welsh nationalism was to follow suit it could be a credible threat far closer to home.

⁴⁶⁷ See Chapter 4.

⁴⁶⁸ Welsh Language Society Manifesto, 1972; also, Nicholas Crickhowell, *Westminster, Wales and Water*, (Cardiff, 1997) p.64

⁴⁶⁹ '25 years later... why have we not caught the cottage burners?' in *Daily Post*, 9 December 2004; also 'Demonstrations' in Nicholas Crickhowell, 'Westminster, Wales and Water,' (Cardiff, 1999) pp.22-33

⁴⁷⁰ 'Court told of Welsh fire-bomb attempt,' in *The Guardian*, 15 January 1993

⁴⁷¹ Airey Neave in 1979 and Ian Gow in 1990, as two examples. Also, the Brighton Hotel Bombing in 1984, Wyn Roberts' account of events is available on, 'Thatcher defied bomb, says Lord Roberts,' in BBC News, 8 April 2013.

In the case of a letter bomb to Wyn Roberts, he was not the only Welsh Conservative targeted; a bomb discovered was also addressed to Elwyn Jones, a Conservative agent based in North Wales, who had been Roberts' agent. This was not the only time Elwyn Jones had been targeted, he frequently clashed with Welsh Language activists.⁴⁷² This is surprising given that Elwyn Jones, though an ardent Thatcherite,⁴⁷³ garnered respect from most areas of Welsh politics and parties. Roberts described him as a Welshman through and through.⁴⁷⁴ It was his radical ideas that often brought him into conflict with the Welsh Language Society, it also brought him unwanted attention from certain groups. Also, here it is the case that there are three Welsh Conservatives who are targeted by Meibion Glyndwr, making them the more desirable targets of language activism. Specifically, Welsh speaking Conservatives seem to be the desirable targets of the WLS. Alongside Conservatives two other targets were included, both were members of the North Wales Police. Detective Inspector Maldwyn Roberts was the man who led a special unit for investigating the activities of Meibion Glyndwr. The final target was Chief Superintendent Gwyn Williams,⁴⁷⁵ the head of North Wales Police.

These intended victims of letter bombs included people who were either directly involved with the case against Meibion Glyndwr or people who were in direct ideological conflict with them. The fact that Welsh Conservatives were targeted by a group renowned for burning holiday homes suggests that as Conservatives they were not considered to be Welsh. The party had an image issue, to some of the populace, so did Welsh Conservatives. This was the only case in which a member of Meibion Glyndwr was ever prosecuted and sent to prison. One Sion Roberts was eventually jailed for 12 years in 1993,⁴⁷⁶ a sentence which some supporters and critics called far too harsh. The defence's argument was that both MI5 and the police had planted the explosives.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷² 'Tributes to proud Welsh patriot,' in *Daily Post*, 17 April 2003

⁴⁷³ D. Elwyn Jones papers (Conservative Party), NLW, Aberystwyth, NLW ex.1991; GB 0210 DELJON, see also, D. Elwyn Jones, *Y rebel Mwyaf*, (Caernarfon, 1991)

⁴⁷⁴ 'Former Tory agent dies,' in *BBC News*, 16 April 2003

⁴⁷⁵ 'For three months Anglesey seemed to be swarming with MI5 agents looking for what evidence suggests were small fry,' in *The Guardian*, 10 March 1993

⁴⁷⁶ Richard Norton-Taylor, 'Letter-bomber jailed for 12 years,' in *The Guardian*, 27 March 1993

⁴⁷⁷ Richard Norton-Taylor, 'Verdicts awaited on 'Bomb plot'' in *The Guardian*, 8 March 1993

Fundamentally, Wyn Roberts and the Welsh Conservatives in general but also Cymdeithas, the Welsh Language Society both had a stalwart desire to protect and foster what made both unique. Both possessed a strong Welsh dimension, and a desire to protect and foster the language. However, Cymdeithas wanted to ensure Welsh was not only protected in law but also actively enforced. The Welsh Conservatives had a very different idea, to protect the cultural dimension, which is to say language preservation, but not at the expense of other cultures or languages such as English. This made the task of Wyn Roberts' attempts to improve the status of the language harder, he was not only under attack from the English side but also from elements of the Welsh side he was attempting to improve. Why did Roberts serve as such a vocal target for language activists, it stems from his role as a Welsh Conservative in Welsh Language television. This is not to say that Wyn Roberts became a target for everyone, 'Merched y Wawr' or the 'Daughters of the Dawn,' a Welsh voluntary organisation not unlike the WI approached Wyn Roberts with a petition for a new Welsh Language Act, for this they had Wyn Robert's support.



Figure 10: Picture of Wyn Roberts holding the petition for a new Welsh Language Act with members of Merched y Wawr.

Wyn Roberts was not willing to grant support to any group who were determined to use campaigns of civil disobedience to get their way. As he notes.

‘...those who tried to advance the language with violence and destruction achieved nothing – except to turn the people and the government against the cause they sought to promote.’⁴⁷⁸

In the case of both the Welsh Language Society and Meibion Glyndwr, campaigns of civil disobedience were rife throughout the 1980s. There are two probable reasons as to why this escalated in the 1980s. First, is the disappointing no vote in the 1979 Devolution referendum or, at least, disappointing from their perspective. The second is much simpler, that it was the Conservative Party in power during this period, protests have been rife against Welsh Conservatives MPs and AMs for much of the last 40 years since S4C.⁴⁷⁹

Igniting the protest.

1970-82- Welsh Language Television: Sianed Pedwar Cymru.

The ignition of such levels of protest against Wyn Roberts, Welsh Conservatives and the Conservative party stems from the furore over creation of S4C or as it was known by policy throughout the 1970s, the Welsh Fourth Channel was (due to budget constraints; given 1970s Britain being a time of high inflation and rampant Trade Unionism, constant general elections, and governmental changes) a long time in the making. As the debate over this was beginning, Roberts started to keep his diaries chronicling the whole affair.

However, one of the first mentions of a fourth television channel involving Wyn Roberts comes from Hansard in 1971, Roberts was asked in parliament.⁴⁸⁰

“Is my Right Hon friend aware that there is a strong demand in Wales for an all-Welsh television service?”⁴⁸¹

This strong demand continued throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s, culminating in the creation of Sianed Pedwar Cymru in 1982. The Conservative Party pledged to introduce this,

⁴⁷⁸ Welsh Office News, ‘Cymorth yn Unig I Ni Ddylid ei gyhoeddi Gweinidog I Annercch Rhieni Tros Addysg Gymraeg,’ in ‘Welsh Language,’ papers of Ivor Wynne Jones, in Conwy Archives, Llandudno, CX288/2/1/169

⁴⁷⁹ ‘Language activists ransack AM’s office,’ in *Wales Online*, 7 March 2011.

⁴⁸⁰ Hansard, HC Deb. 8 December 1971, vol. 827 cc1270-2

⁴⁸¹ Hansard, HC Deb. 19 July 1972, vol. 841 cc605-6 col. 606

however they reneged on the decision, igniting protests that would plague Wyn Roberts for the next decade. This quote also demonstrates much of the train of thought for most of the Hansard records throughout the 1970s. Wyn Roberts also argues that such a channel would be beneficial also to first language English families who were keen to learn.

This is an issue which Roberts was best to handle, ultimately, Wyn Roberts was aware of the issues of Welsh language television with the failures of TWW, when it lost the franchise to HTV (Harlech), and the problems that came with the use of bilingual television within Wales.⁴⁸² West England objected to Welsh programmes airing whilst some sectors of Wales objected to English TV airing at the time when they should have received Welsh. Calls for the Fourth TV channel became more prominent in Parliament by 1973.⁴⁸³ A Welsh language speaking channel plan had been formulated by the Independent Broadcasting Authority, IBA, also mentioned by Wyn Roberts in House of Commons.⁴⁸⁴ A letter to the editor of *The Observer* by Dafydd Williams then general secretary of Plaid Cymru recommended that the Welsh Fourth Channel be entirely in Welsh.⁴⁸⁵ Further demands for an all Welsh channel were made a month later.⁴⁸⁶ This was at a time where there was general civil disobedience across Wales over the lack of Welsh language media, BBC Radio Cymru had been established by the 1970s leading to an increased demand for a television service that aired Welsh at available times, as opposed to earlier Welsh programmes which were broadcast typically off peak or at night on either the BBC or ITV. There were attempts to establish a Welsh fourth channel in 1976, though budget constraints made it near unfeasible.⁴⁸⁷ Similar recommendations were also made by both the Crawford Committee, and the subsequent Crawford Report.⁴⁸⁸ The Annan Committee in 1977 recommended the immediate establishment of the fourth channel in Wales immediately, as soon as the necessary funds became available,⁴⁸⁹ just one of the Annan Reports' recommendations.⁴⁹⁰ These budget issues

⁴⁸² See Chapter: Television Wales and West.

⁴⁸³ Hansard, HC Deb. 2 April 1973, vol. 854 cc.1-3

⁴⁸⁴ Hansard, HC Deb. 3 May 1973. Vol. 855 cc.1515-602

⁴⁸⁵ 'Letters: A channel for Wales,' in *The Observer*, 16 September 1973

⁴⁸⁶ 'Welsh TV channel demand,' in *The Guardian*, 2 October 1973

⁴⁸⁷ Hansard, HC Deb. 10 May 1976. Vol. 911 cc.14-6

⁴⁸⁸ Crawford Committee on Broadcasting Coverage: Report, November 1974. National Archives, CAB 198/13

⁴⁸⁹ Hansard, HC Deb. 23 May 1977. Vol. 932 cc.1018-1019

⁴⁹⁰ Annan Report, from the Annan Committee on the Future of Broadcasting. HMSO (1974)

plagued many of the ideas of the 1970s, it is an issue that was prevalent in the upgrading of the A55.⁴⁹¹

Further to these committee reports, as late as 1978 Wyn Roberts was still inquiring as to why the Annan Report still hadn't been implemented.⁴⁹² The same year still sees purported issues regarding the financing over the fourth channel in Wales.⁴⁹³ It is a fair argument to say that the Labour government delayed a lot on the implementation of the fourth channel in Wales, to the point of procrastination. Such was the delay that near the time of its application, when there the autumn of 1982 was proposed as a starting point for the fourth channel.⁴⁹⁴ In the *Western Mail* it was reported that, "Backing wanes among councils on one-channel Welsh TV."⁴⁹⁵ Similarly, there were the onerous concerns of Willie Whitelaw and the home office of the fourth channel in Wales,⁴⁹⁶ the rectified plan would have seen Welsh Television continue dually on both the BBC and ITV channels.⁴⁹⁷

Ironic, given that Wyn Roberts had provided a way in which the government could implement the fourth channel in the *Campaign Guide Supplement 1978*, with a severely limited cost to the public purse. For HTV and BBC to provide programmes to the Fourth Channel and cover the cost whilst the IBA could cover the operating costs of the channel.⁴⁹⁸ Eventually the Conservative Party, for the General election of 1979, made the fourth channel in Wales a manifesto commitment.⁴⁹⁹ The original plans were financially unviable, perhaps therefore the Conservatives changed plans. The same issue can be seen causing delays to the creation of the A55.⁵⁰⁰ Roberts providing this alternative meant it was a manifesto promise the Conservatives surely could keep. However, as the Commons debate of 24 June 1980 demonstrates this was not to be, much was revealed about the nature of this fourth channel in

⁴⁹¹ See Chapter 3.

⁴⁹² Hansard, HC Deb. 6 April 1978. Vol. 947 cc.661-747 C.679

⁴⁹³ Hansard, HC Deb. 26 July 1978 vol.954 cc.155-88

⁴⁹⁴ Hansard, HC Deb. 6 March 1979 vol.963 cc.1101-68

⁴⁹⁵ "Backing wanes among councils on one-channel Welsh TV." In *Western Mail*, 6 February 1980

⁴⁹⁶ Hansard, HC Deb. 18 February 1980 vol.979 cc.48-168 c.52

⁴⁹⁷ Nicholas Crickhowell, *Westminster, Wales and Water*, (Cardiff,1999) pp.18-9

⁴⁹⁸ Campaign Guide Supplement 1978, Thatcher Foundation Archive, 110797 p.197

⁴⁹⁹ Conservative Party General Election Manifesto 1979, Thatcher Foundation Archive, 110858

⁵⁰⁰ See Chapter 3.

Wales.⁵⁰¹ The amendment was to have Welsh Language broadcasting split between two existing channels BBC and ITV. Wyn Roberts is shown to not be a supporter of the amended plan; it was such duality that in part prompted the downfall of TWW due to bilingual issues within Wales. Such duality could only serve to poke the Red Dragon within Wales, at the expense of the Blue Dragon, and that it did. It was this amended plan that prompted the response of Gwynfor Evans, also a coup de grace to the plans of Willie Whitelaw, who after the landslide election reneged the Welsh Fourth Channel plan in favour of having Welsh language TV split between existing channels. These issues over the Welsh language and of Welsh TV went on into the 1980s with the advent of the Thatcher government. It was an issue that upset many in Wales since members of the populace had been wanting a channel for over a decade, since the collapse of TWW Wales had little in the way of Welsh language television.



Figure 11: Original logo of S4C from 1982 till 1987.

“My Lords, my noble friend Lord Roberts of Conwy is of course right, and he naturally feels strongly about S4C because, after all, he started it.”⁵⁰²

This is a rather extraordinary claim made by Baroness Rawlings,⁵⁰³ a former MEP for the Conservative Party and Lords’ colleague of Wyn Roberts, in a Lord’s debate on S4C funding coming some thirty years after the establishment of S4C. Coming from 2010 it shows how just one of Wyn Roberts potential legacies influenced his peers and his juniors in politics. As another example the day Wyn Roberts died Janet Finch Saunders,⁵⁰⁴ the then Assembly Member for Aberconwy, referred to him as a ‘true Welsh political hero,’⁵⁰⁵ a notable figure that the Welsh Conservatives have never had. Such a view is significant as it goes against the forms of creation myths that surround S4C in 1982, such as, Did Gwynfor Evans really force a government U-Turn through his hunger strike threat in 1980? His threat to fast to the death

⁵⁰¹ Hansard, HC Deb. 24 June 1980 vol.987 cc.327-99

⁵⁰² Hansard, HL Deb. 28 October 2010 vol. 721 c.1313

⁵⁰³ Baroness Rawlings, Conservative, MEP, later House of Lords, 5 October 1994- present.

⁵⁰⁴ Janet Finch Saunders, Member of the Senedd for Aberconwy, 6 May 2011-present.

⁵⁰⁵ Quoted from Janet Finch Saunders twitter account, 14 December 2013.

for the sake of a Welsh language channel, never actually materialised on account of a cross party group who lobbied for a Welsh Fourth Channel, Wyn Roberts was one of this Welsh Conservative MPs. In turn this goes with the creation of ‘Welsh political heroes’ mentioned in the introduction of this thesis. It is without doubt that Gwynfor Evans as a Welsh political hero had an effect, but it seems that it is plausible that this may be significantly overplayed as one of the reasons for the creation of S4C. The efforts of Wyn Roberts in the matters of S4C have been ignored by history.

This is also part of Wyn Roberts’ views, the actions of the Welsh Language Society were in his view destructive, Roberts favoured a more conservative pragmatic and constructive outlook vis-a-vis Welsh language policy. Though he is not generally regarded as the progenitor of S4C Roberts did have a role to play in its construction. This is a genuine gap in the historiography, the role that certain Welsh Conservatives played in the formulation of S4C.

The fact is that this was something that the Conservatives U-Turned on and decided not to commit to, which led to the famed hunger strike threat of Gwynfor Evans. The role of Wyn Roberts in this is oft understated; the efficacy and popularity of S4C should not be understated, given the claim of each Welsh political party to have a role in its creation. Plaid thanks to the efforts of Gwynfor; the Conservatives as the party in power, and Labour as a response to the decisions of the Conservatives, the Liberals too took advantage of the situation.⁵⁰⁶ It is oft credited to the dramatic threat of a hunger strike of Gwynfor Evans, for forcing a U-Turn in the Thatcher Government itself indicative of a leader who had once claimed not to U-Turn. The IRA hunger strikes had resulted in the deaths of Irish prisoners, which caused concern in the government.⁵⁰⁷ S4C had proved Thatcher’s famous quote wrong.

“To that favourite media catch phrase, the U-Turn, I have one thing to say. U-Turn if you want to, the lady’s not for turning.”⁵⁰⁸

⁵⁰⁶ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 10, 11 September 1980

⁵⁰⁷ “Northern Ireland: No.10 record of conversation,” 23 October 1980, National Archives, Kew, PREM19/282 f183; also, Margaret Thatcher Foundation, 120460.

⁵⁰⁸ Margaret Thatcher, Speech to Conservative Party Conference, 10 October 1980, Margaret Thatcher Foundation [104431](#)

The government did indeed U-Turn, and such a U-turn ignited protests from language activists which would plague Wyn Roberts' language policies for the next decade. It is clear from his diaries that Roberts followed the general mood of the time, Gwynfor Evans was not at all taken seriously by Wyn Roberts at first, he even branded him the "...gladiator from Llangadog..."⁵⁰⁹ and accused him of being a man who suffered from a sort of Martyr Complex, only that his followers of the time, though supportive of the cause were not willing to fast to the death.⁵¹⁰ This paints Evans against in contrast to his apparent mild mannered persona, almost painting him in the image of Bobby Sands, an Irish Nationalist and prisoner who eventually did die from a hunger strike in 1981.

Cabinet papers on the other hand, show the marked effect Gwynfor Evans had on both Westminster and Downing Street. Fears of igniting or 'inflaming Welsh nationalism'⁵¹¹, were rife with chances of creating further issues within and from Wales.⁵¹² At the same time Irish Nationalism was already inflamed, and the last thing a Conservative government requires is threats to Unionism. The Conservative party's cultural homogeneity was challenged from within with the Welsh dimension, it did not want the same threat to the union which arguably it would have with the Irish problems. To Gwynfor Evans the problem was like his warning about TV years earlier, Evans worried of a deleterious effect,⁵¹³ damage that English Television could have on Welsh speaking children.⁵¹⁴ Though this was an effect that television could have on adults as well, English television did not help the confidence of Welsh speakers.

As of August, the government was still worried about Gwynfor Evans' hunger strike threat, as is demonstrable from the cabinet minutes.⁵¹⁵ However, the entire affair is laid out in Wyn

⁵⁰⁹ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 10, 19 June 1980

⁵¹⁰ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 10, 11 September 1980

⁵¹¹ 'Record of a meeting held at 10 Downing Street, at 1445 hours' Monday 15 September 1980, PREM 19/395 f63, accessed from Thatcher Foundation Archives.

⁵¹² 'Dafydd Wigley MP letter to Margaret Thatcher,' 29 July 1980, PREM 19/395 f85, accessed from Thatcher foundation Archive

⁵¹³ Gwynfor Evans, *Rhagom I Ryddid, (Onwards to Freedom)*, (Bangor, 1964) p.115, see also, *Byw neu farw?: y frwyr dros yr iaith a'r Sianel deledu gymraeg, (Life or death? : the struggle for the language and a Welsh TV channel)*, (1980)

⁵¹⁴ 'Welsh Office letter to No. 10,' 29 July 1980, PREM 19/395 f78, accessed from Thatcher Foundation Archive

⁵¹⁵ Minutes of Full Cabinet, 7 August 1980, CAB 128/68, accessed from Thatcher Foundation Archive.

Roberts's diaries which document the debacle in its entirety. As of the June of 1980⁵¹⁶ he notes the effect that the threat was continuing to have on Whitehall. Labour took advantage of the situation, with Barbara Castle addressing demonstrators at the Dragon hotel,⁵¹⁷ with her infamous quip of 'Welsh Conservatives,' being a contradiction of phrase.

Wyn Roberts met some of the protestors, throughout both July and August, who opposed the first U-turn on the fourth channel. This included one of his neighbours, Tomi Glyn Ucha, who had refused to pay the television license fee in solidarity with the Plaid Cymru MPs.⁵¹⁸ Wyn Roberts could have had several concerns; first was the effect that the U-turn would have on the popularity of the party and by further definition, the effect on votes since in 1980 the Conservative Party had not got far in terms of popularity. Second, as has been evidenced already any further Conservative Welsh policy would be viewed with suspicion. Third, as a Welsh politician who consulted and met with his constituents, such a perceived betrayal was felt deeply on a personal level. It was not just Wyn Roberts who felt this, a few Welsh Conservative MPs in the period were against the governmental U-turn.⁵¹⁹

It was by the end of August according to the diaries which Roberts had started to show concern with the ever-looming threat of Evans' strike.⁵²⁰ Though this would not come to fruition as the defeat of the government came from Lord Belstead's warning that the Broadcasting Bill would be defeated in the House of Lords.⁵²¹ As time drew closer to the start date the government, or rather Willie Whitelaw's, resolve crumbled.

It was possibly Wyn Roberts talk with Willie Whitelaw, then Home Secretary,⁵²² the night of 11 September 1980 which ultimately could have brought Whitelaw's decision to U-Turn once again, and to go with the original plan to create S4C.⁵²³ This was ultimately announced in the

⁵¹⁶ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 10, 29 June 1980

⁵¹⁷ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 10, 20 July 1980

⁵¹⁸ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 10, 2 August 1980

⁵¹⁹ 'How Margaret Thatcher performed u-turn over S4C after Gwynfor Evans' hunger strike threat,' *WalesOnline*, 30 December 2011

⁵²⁰ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 10, 30 August 1980

⁵²¹ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 10, 23 September 1980

⁵²² William Whitelaw, Shadow Home Secretary, 11 April 1976-4 May 1979, Home Secretary till 11 June 1983. Also, Deputy Leader of the Conservative Party 11 April 1976- 7 August 1991.

⁵²³ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 10, 11 September 1980

cabinet session of the 18 September 1980.⁵²⁴ Whilst Gwynfor Evans holds a position in the creation of S4C, several Welsh Conservative ministers also played a role.

Several Welsh Conservatives rebelled against Whitelaw's decision. At first, Wyn Roberts was hesitant, it was Geraint Morgan who was a first lone voice against the government's decision.⁵²⁵ Nicholas Edwards also argued for a change for a single channel on the grounds of lack of support from Welsh Conservative MPs,⁵²⁶ as a response Willie Whitelaw tried to get Nicholas Edwards to take blame for the broken promise.⁵²⁷ It was a case in the Conservative Party of English vs, Welsh MPs over S4C, Whitelaw wanted two channels, Wyn Roberts and other Blue Dragons argued for just the one. This is an important point as it challenges the idea that Conservatives were a culturally homogenous party, it gives further impetus to the idea of the Blue Dragon as a different strain of thought, a Welsh dimension within the Conservative Party. It is an element that held more power within Wales than first thought, as they have had an influence on a policy prevalent to Wales.

The role of the Welsh Conservatives in persuading both Willie Whitelaw and Margaret Thatcher for the necessity of S4C being a single language channel was unparalleled. Though Gwynfor Evans undoubtedly influenced Westminster it was the prospect of defeat in the House of Lords that forced a government U-Turn. The division in the Conservative Party here is evidence that the Blue Dragons, such as Wyn Roberts, held more of a place in the party than first thought, though through struggle they were able to sway party decision over Welsh policy, something that they would be able to do with increasing frequency as the Thatcher Governments went on. It is with little wonder here then that the Secretaries of State for Wales were English, as Wales was seemingly turning into a rebel nation on both sides of the political spectrum. Such division in the party further suggests that an autonomous Welsh sect did exist in the form of the Blue Dragon.

⁵²⁴ 'Minutes of Cabinet Meeting,' 18 September 1980, CAB 128/68, accessed from Thatcher Foundation Archive

⁵²⁵ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 10, 27 July 1980

⁵²⁶ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 10, 11 September 1980, vol.10

⁵²⁷ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 10, 11 September 1980, vol.10

For Wyn Roberts along with other Welsh Conservative ministers,⁵²⁸ it was a matter a consciousness of betraying a manifesto promise that pushed the policy through Parliament.⁵²⁹ It also stood uneasy for Roberts personally as an individual with such a reverence for the language. The Blue Dragon places an emphasis on the individual culture of a nation, therefore the government reneging on its manifesto promise was not only publicly damaging but personally insulting to such individuals who view Welshness and the Welsh language as a part of their own identity.

However, the ultimate effect of S4C U-turn, as feared by Roberts, was the erosion of public confidence in the Conservative government. It also led to an increase in the autonomy of the Welsh office, intentional or otherwise as the opinions of Welsh office ministers were taken into consideration more often regarding Welsh affairs.⁵³⁰ For Roberts a knock-on effect was another decade of having to deal with the protests of Cymdeithas, the Welsh Language Society, who acted on any legislation to do with the preservation of the language. It is apparent that WLS did not see Wyn Roberts as a saviour of the Welsh language, rather an instrument to knock and enact at their pleasure. It was in effect central government policy versus the civil disobedience espoused by Saunders Lewis as a way of saving the language.⁵³¹ One has an actual effect on policy, the other forms the more popular view of historians.

The single Welsh language channel was passed by parliament in the Broadcasting Act of 1980, and the subsequent 1981 amendment.⁵³² It eventually launched on 1 November 1982 along with *Channel 4* in Scotland, Ireland, and England. With its annual budget being provided by both the BBC and the Government, at £85 million a year. It consisted of at least 30% or so of Welsh language programmes with the rest consisting of English language programmes from Channel 4,⁵³³ until enough Welsh language programmes had been filled. Unlike Television Wales and West, Sianel Pedwar Cymru has survived for several decades, and to the present day exists as the only Welsh television channel in the UK. This includes

⁵²⁸ Nicholas Crickhowell, as an example.

⁵²⁹ Hansard HL Deb. 31 January 2013, vol.557 c

⁵³⁰ Dylan Griffiths, 'The Welsh Office and Welsh Autonomy,' in *Public Administration*, 77.4 (1999) pp.793-807

⁵³¹ Saunders Lewis, *The Fate of the Language*, 1962, in this Lewis called for a campaign of civil disobedience.

⁵³² Broadcasting Act 1981, available on <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/68> (Last Accessed 23 August 2018)

⁵³³ 'Enter the dragon,' in *Television Business International*, Issue 2 (2006) p.1

continuous; Ofcom reforms,⁵³⁴ budget issues, language issues and more recently the internet. Wyn Roberts was there for a large part of S4C its culmination, creation and for a substantial part of its lifetime, even being branded as its ‘Guardian Angel’⁵³⁵ by Huw Jones, the chairman of the S4C Authority. This claim is interesting, as it further enforces Roberts’s role in the creation and even the subsequent development of S4C. It is of similar impetus to the claim of Baroness Rawlings at the beginning of this section

Roberts was also present during the passage of the Broadcasting Act 1990,⁵³⁶ which secured the financial future of S4C. In 1996 his hope was the government would grant S4C the same powers being offered to the BBC regarding digitisation.⁵³⁷ He noted on the lack of regional TV services however, that

‘It must be obvious to the house that I distrust the metropolitan outlook and the domination that it spells, the coterie that shares it and the dominance that it has over our press and media, Life in the United Kingdom is the poorer because of it.’⁵³⁸

Roberts was concerned that the powers granted to the BBC should be granted to regional broadcasters such as S4C to allow them to effectively compete. As late as 2010 Wyn Roberts was still protecting the interest of S4C hoping that, considering any changes brought about by Public Bodies Bill,⁵³⁹ S4C would remain independent,⁵⁴⁰ it certainly seems to be the case that Wyn Roberts was acting as S4C’s guardian angel. The question has been asked as to why the UK government and not the Welsh one still has responsibility for S4C,⁵⁴¹ one lesson from TWW would be that trying to cater for a regional divide can prove fatal to a TV channel at

⁵³⁴ Dan Milmo. ‘Media business: S4C tries to head off Ofcom reforms,’ in *The Guardian*, 19 April 2005

⁵³⁵ ‘PM leads tributes to Lord Roberts,’ in *London Evening Standard*, Sunday 15 December 2013

⁵³⁶ Broadcasting Act 1990, available on, <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/42/section/58>, (Last accessed 13 May 2020)

⁵³⁷ Hansard, HC deb. 15 February 1996, vol. 271 c1190

⁵³⁸ Hansard, HC deb. 15 February 1996, vol. 271 c1189

⁵³⁹ Public Bodies Act 2011, available on, <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/24/contents>, (Last accessed 13 May 2020)

⁵⁴⁰ Hansard, HL Deb. 28 October 2010 vol. 721 c.1313, also; Hansard, HL Deb. 5 October 2011 vol.730 c.1128

⁵⁴¹ ‘After 35 years of S4C, shouldn’t Wales have responsibility for the Welsh language channel?’ in *The Conversation*, 1 November 2017

the same time so could control from London. It is likely the case that after the fiasco the party did not want to give WLS more ammunition.

Though S4C it is not without its share of problems, especially in recent times with the matter of digitisation of the television services; a smaller share of audiences,⁵⁴² and with the general cuts to all services that have been enacted by the austerity measures of the Cameron and May Conservative governments. Through it all S4C has still managed to linger on with funding as far as 2017,⁵⁴³ and further secured funding up until 2022 by the government and the BBC license fee.⁵⁴⁴ with ambitious plans for the future.⁵⁴⁵ S4C faces further problems with the advent of online services,⁵⁴⁶ and the youth viewing figure dropping further still.⁵⁴⁷ S4C survives due to its unique link with Welsh culture,⁵⁴⁸ opposite to the paragon of TWW which struggled throughout its lifetime with catering for not one but two different nations, also with three distinct audiences. Another problem for S4C has included a lapse of coverage, with areas of North Wales not being within range of S4C's broadcasting range. Reports of this come from as late as 1995,⁵⁴⁹ This too was a common problem for TWW in North Wales. It is perhaps the strongest argument for Welsh language TV that it has a hand in nation building, S4C has never been devolved to the Welsh government and in so doing does remain vulnerable. It is also notable to point out that it no longer has Wyn Roberts its 'guardian angel.'

Despite such complaints S4C has survived to become a living embodiment of the Welsh national consciousness, one that was fought for by many people. Gwynfor Evan's hunger strike undoubtedly had an effect that brought about a Conservative U-Turn. S4C was however, the result of 'Constructive exemplars' in the Conservative Party who fought for it such as Wyn Roberts. The sociological effect of Roberts attempts to preserve the language is

⁵⁴² Maggie brown, 'Media: Opinion: Wales needs S4C – but it needs debate too,' in *The Guardian*, 2 August 2010

⁵⁴³ 'S4C secures funding to 2017,' in *Broadcast*, 25 October 2011

⁵⁴⁴ Max Goldbart, 'BBC rejects S4C government funding drop,' in *Broadcast*, 29 March 2018

⁵⁴⁵ Report by Ian Jones, 'S4C: looking to the Future' Cardiff, 4 November 2015, also; Hannah Gannagé-Stewart, 'S4C unveils vision for future,' in *Broadcast*, 6 November 2015

⁵⁴⁶ Peter White, 'S4C must reinvent itself for the Netflix generation,' in *Broadcast*, 4 August 2017; also, Report, 'Outside the Box: The Future of S4C,' by *Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee*, (2017)

⁵⁴⁷ 'Making the case for Wales,' in *Broadcast*, 16 November 2010

⁵⁴⁸ Hansard, HC Deb, 7 May 2014, vol. 580

⁵⁴⁹ Hansard, HC Deb, 21 June 1995, vol.262 cc.311-8

unrivalled, though as a Conservative his efforts for the better part are unmentioned. As was written by Roberts in his diary, a complaint about the government's handling of the Welsh fourth channel and S4C; that,

‘I have never forgiven Willie Whitelaw for giving this impression... I must now assert the position that government do not react to provocations of this kind, neither do MP's.’⁵⁵⁰

It could be this that made Wyn Roberts a central target of the civil disobedience campaign of the Welsh Language Society. The view was that the language activists had ‘succeeded’ in forcing a government U-Turn on a language policy, whereas they had not. It was a view that would give Roberts’ grief for the next decade, two prominent issues developed out of this. First, the issue created was that any language legislation put in place by anything or anyone who had Conservative traditions would be met with suspicion. The S4C issue, and the U-turn by the Government created problems that would plague Welsh Conservative language policy for the rest of the Conservative Governments of both Thatcher and John Major. Second, the problems created included the general belief that such militant action against MPs and the government could yield significant and beneficial results in the name of the Welsh language preservation. Such action would happen the run up to 1988, and subsequent Welsh language provision in the passage of both the Education Reform (Wales) Act 1988, and the Welsh Language act of 1993. However, the Government would not cave in again this was the case against both Irish and Welsh Nationalists. Finally, as Wyn Roberts was a central proponent to both pieces of legislation, he also became one of the central targets of language activism.

With the fight for the establishment of a Welsh language television channel in S4C, a Welsh dimension in television was secure after the collapse of TWW. The next part of Wyn Roberts involvement in the establishment of the future of the language, came in securing the Welsh dimension within both education and in law. The Conservative betrayal as seen by some quarters, made the next part of legislation near impossible to produce and was viewed with highest suspicion simply because its introduction came under a Conservative Government, and because some felt the legislation did not do enough to ensure the future of the language.

⁵⁵⁰ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 15, 30 November 1991

Such legislation made both the Welsh Office and Welsh Conservative ministers key targets of language activists.

Solving the protests?

1986-1994, A Welsh Dimension in Law.

‘Shakespeare didn’t give them what they wanted; he gave them what they never dreamed of.’

A self-quote of Wyn Roberts in Huw Thomas et al. on exactly what he did for education in Wales,⁵⁵¹ to an extent reflects Roberts own belief over the status of the language. In this Roberts believes that he gave the ‘Welsh activists what they never dreamed of.’ It would be more apt to argue that Wyn Roberts possibly gave the activists what they feared which was a language policy that was deeply rooted in the Conservative ideal of individual choice. Welsh would never be enforced for fear of upsetting the moderates of Welsh society, learning the language became a personal choice. Wyn Roberts was essential in language policy and was willing to accept all proposals when it came to the language. In 1982 after the hostility created by S4C towards further language policy, the government still made a push towards more Welsh language provisions. It was noted.

‘New ideas are essential. I invite practical suggestions which will be of direct benefit to the Welsh language. Often, it is the simplest ideas which bear fruit. Effectiveness is not reflected in size and cost – it is the effort and application which are important if ideas are to be translated into practical realities. I therefore challenge supporters of the Welsh language to let me have their ideas – I am not offering a prize – the ultimate winner will be the Welsh language.’⁵⁵²

⁵⁵¹ Huw S. Thomas, ‘The Articulation of Power,’ in Huw S. Thomas and Colin Williams, *Parents, Personalities and Power: Welsh-medium Schools in South-east Wales*, (Cardiff, 2013) pp.139-167 p.147-151

⁵⁵² Welsh Office News, ‘Minister invites fresh ideas on Welsh language support,’ 15 September 1982. In ‘Welsh Language,’ papers of Ivor Wynne Jones, in Conwy Archives, Llandudno, CX288/2/1/169

This marks a radical change of policy from Central Government, they appear to be much more sensitive to the Welsh language issue and are actively encouraging people to come forth with ideas to do so. This is in stark contrast to the wishes of the WLS, who the government were unwilling to engage with. Similarly, another Welsh Office news bulletin shows Wyn Roberts' engagement with several Welsh language organisations across 1986-1987.⁵⁵³ After this small-scale involvement with organisations, Conservative policy changed towards trying to ensure the status of the Welsh language legally.

Wyn Roberts' provisions in both the Education Act and Welsh Language Act aimed to increase the support of moderates for language at the expense of support for or from the extreme elements of language preservation. Both acts serve as important points in Welsh language policy. Bilingualism in education is arguably of more impetus since it was the first nation-wide policy on teaching the language. Whereas the language act built upon years of legislation from the previous Welsh language Act 1967 however, it did instigate bilingualism across the public sector in Wales forever changing the working environment in many organisations. Similarly, the Education Reform (Wales) Act 1988 came at the cost of Thatcher's working relationship with Roberts. Welsh Office officials and the Welsh Conservatives, or the Blue Dragons wished for a more pragmatic approach to avoid the S4C problem, which had already caused Nationalist upset. The act across the UK had established a new national curriculum and OFSTED. The lack of educational reform since would suggest the act was successful in doing what it was intended to do. Similarly, these two acts helped to solve many of the issues behind the protests of the Welsh Language Society.

In Wales the extra issue was whether Welsh should become a Core subject in all Welsh schools, as put by Roberts in response to Thatcher's concerns.

'The Welsh language issue is complex and emotive.'⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁵³ Welsh Office News, 'Minister's talks with Welsh language organisations.' 17th February 1986 in 'Welsh Language,' papers of Ivor Wynne Jones, in Conwy Archives, Llandudno, CX288/2/1/169

⁵⁵⁴ Letter to Margaret Thatcher from Wyn Roberts, 'Education Reform Bill Publicity,' 17 November 1987, PREM19-2123

A further the issue was the fact that a Conservative government oversaw changing the educational structure in Wales. In the seven years since S4C Roberts had been responsible for a plethora of affairs. The Welsh language was always an emotive affair, even at times of severe financial constraints in the early 1980s. However, this did not hinder Robert's efforts to secure the status of the language with the acquisition of £2 1/2 million grant for the Welsh language.^{555 556} This was secured by Roberts for the promotion of the Welsh Language in 1981, it was not the first and it certainly was not the last grant Roberts secured.

The Welsh Language Society had a campaign for bilingual education in 1983,⁵⁵⁷ which was addressed by the 1988 Education Reform Act. A similar issue occurred with the passage of the Welsh Language Act in 1993, since any conservative attempt to deal with the emotive language issue was met with utmost suspicion since the S4C U-turn. The next big affair after S4C for the Welsh language came from the passage of the Educational Reform (Wales) Act of 1988. The issue arose of how to avoid the criticism that the party would receive but also to improve the language, the answer lay with the creation of the Welsh Language Board.

Education Reform (Wales) Act 1988.

A direct result of the Educational Reform (Wales) Act 1988 was the creation of the Welsh Language Board to deal with matters pertaining to Welsh Language legislation, though this was not its only remit as it oversaw public bodies as well. Though officially set up in 1993 under the provisions of the Welsh Language Act,⁵⁵⁸ the Welsh Language Board existed as far back as 1988, as an advisory body on the recommendation of Wyn Roberts. Its purpose was to preside over issues to do with the promotion of the language, it started with an average budget of £400,000 for the year 1993-94,⁵⁵⁹ whilst it was an advisory board. It eventually came to have an annual grant of £13mn, under the Welsh Language Act 1993. It was also in charge of language grants worth £581,000 within its first months as an official body.⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁵ '2 ½ million aid for Welsh despite 'constraint'' in *Daily Telegraph*, 2 March 1981

⁵⁵⁶ Ivor Wynne Jones, 'Grant of £2mn for Welsh Language,' in *Liverpool Daily Post*, 2 March 1981

⁵⁵⁷ Tim Jones, 'The Welsh Not in Reverse,' in *The Times*, 15 April 1983

⁵⁵⁸ Welsh Language Act 1993, c.38 pt.1 s.1, available on <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1993/38/contents> (Last Accessed 6 February 2019); also, Hansard HC Deb, 11 February 1993, vol. 218 c724w

⁵⁵⁹ Hansard, HC Deb. 26 October 1993, vol. 230 c578w

⁵⁶⁰ Hansard, HC Deb. 27 June 1994, vol. 245 c539

The Education Reform Act also saw the creation of Welsh Medium Education Committee to directly deal with matters pertaining to the educational aspects of the language. The Welsh Joint Exam Committee, WJEC, agreed to Robert's plans for the creation of the Welsh Medium Education Committee.⁵⁶¹ Even though, it took Wyn Roberts over a year to argue for the necessity for such a board. It opened with new offices in Cardiff which were burgled by members of the Welsh Language Society within a year. The WLB set up sub committees to promote and develop the Welsh language, rather than to actively increase the number of Welsh speakers in Wales, hence the 1991 census results. The board was abolished and replaced in the provisions of the Welsh Language measure 2011, which created the role of a Welsh Language Commissioner.

The wish to set up a new Welsh Language Board, came from the given political background. From the activists came issues with the WLS and an arson campaign against second homes, all in the name of the language. Pressure also came from the 'moderates' who wished to improve the status of the language via the instigation of a new Welsh Language Act.⁵⁶² A clear proposal was first made for the setting up of Welsh Language Board to Roberts as noted in his diary.⁵⁶³ The Welsh Language Board⁵⁶⁴ was launched in 1988 which coincided with a drive on Welsh in schools⁵⁶⁵ and the act is considered a language milestone.⁵⁶⁶ However, an issue arose from this, it was Welsh Conservative policy, which now had added scrutiny thank to the issues arising from S4C. Wyn Roberts was not the only person to realise the necessity of the WLB, Richard Luce also recognised the need for such a board that was separate from the Welsh Office,⁵⁶⁷ since it was the main target of protest. The Welsh Language Board in a way was designed to depoliticise the language issue, it would be Conservative policy but not directly related to the party. Its enactment was typically conservative it was slow and considered it was launched and then officially launched and served to make the language less of sensationalist issue. If any of the protest that Roberts was subject to, as mentioned earlier on, this failed.

⁵⁶¹ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 13, 14 December 1986

⁵⁶² Welsh Office, 'Letter to Richard Luce MP from Wyn Roberts,' 13 June 1988, Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 13

⁵⁶³ Wyn Roberts Diaries, vol. 13, 9 July 1988

⁵⁶⁴ WLB 'Language Revitalisation: the role of the Welsh Language Board, in *Language revitalisation: policy and planning in Wales*, (Cardiff, 2000) pp.83-115

⁵⁶⁵ 'New Drive on Welsh in School,' in *Daily Post*, 20 July 1988

⁵⁶⁶ 'Language Milestone,' in *Daily Post*, 21 July 1988

⁵⁶⁷ 'Letter to Wyn Roberts from Richard Luce MP, 23 June 1988, Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 13

Within its first year to 1989 it had already issued voluntary guideline concerning the use of Welsh in both the Private and the Public sector.⁵⁶⁸ After its early success with a favourable public reception to its launch, the board was immediately given clearance to deal with the Welsh Language Society given the Welsh Office as a medium for protest the board could deal with such groups independently. Whereas Roberts had interest only in constructive proposals,⁵⁶⁹ rather than the then current destructive action taken by WLS. In a first report the body recommended a new strategy for the future of the Welsh language, which stressed the need for a new Welsh Language Act.⁵⁷⁰ In 1991⁵⁷¹ the advisory Welsh Language Board published another report recommending the need for a new Welsh language act.⁵⁷²

However, Wyn Roberts as of this point did not immediately see the need for one. This conflict over the Welsh Language continued well into the 1990s and into the John Major government. The eventual passage of the Welsh Language Act of 1993 though giving Welsh an equal footing with English in law, arguably did quell tensions with Welsh groups such as Meibion Glyndwr since the arson campaign came to an end. The Welsh Language Society, however, were not satisfied. In 1991 the Welsh Language Board made a draft of a proposed new Welsh Language Bill for the consideration of the Government.⁵⁷³ Wyn Roberts had his doubts, though he still met with the WLB who had support for a new Welsh Language Bill. However, as a separate body for the promotion of language, unlike Wyn Roberts the board had no idea what it took to get a bill through Government departments,⁵⁷⁴ let alone through Parliament. The significance of this is that the board could press for a new bill all they wanted, Roberts could not get it through Parliament without support.

This was problematic for most independent bodies in the 1980s, the Welsh Language board had been designed to be independent from the Conservatives, as any proposal tied to

⁵⁶⁸ Hansard, HC Deb, 6 November 1989, vol. 159 c442w

⁵⁶⁹ Clive Betts, 'Language board is cleared to deal with Cymdeithas,' in *Western Mail*, August 1988

⁵⁷⁰ Hansard, HC Deb, 15 February 1990, vol.167 c362w

⁵⁷¹ Ron Davies Papers, 'Welsh Language Board, 1991-1996,' NLW, Aberystwyth, GB 0210 RONIES 72

⁵⁷² Welsh Language Board, 'Recommendations for a new Welsh Language Act,' February 1991

⁵⁷³ Hansard, HC Deb. 18 February 1991, vol. 186 cc38-9w

⁵⁷⁴ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 15, 23 May 1991

Conservatism regarding the language was usually met with much criticism. This can be seen after the implementation of the WLA when Dafydd Ellis Thomas a member of Plaid Cymru was appointed as the first chairman in 1994 lasting until 1999. The WLA set up a WLB to promote the use of Welsh, the board was later abolished in an act that was welcomed by WLS. The same year as the creation of the advisory Welsh Language Board saw the creation of the Education Reform (Wales) Act.

As for the Education Reform (Wales) Act of 1988, for Welsh language education again little exists in the historiography, for example John Evans et al.⁵⁷⁵ examine the general effect of the Education Reform act in relation to physical health rather than Welsh language development, another exception is Edwards et al. Huw Thomas considers the 1988 Education act in relation to Welsh schools in Southeast Wales⁵⁷⁶ and examines the Welsh language policy of the Conservatives in Wales. Similarly, Richard Daugherty et al.⁵⁷⁷ examine education policy in the post devolution era. Megan Jones⁵⁷⁸ also examines Welsh as a subject in schools. Regarded as a most important step since the 1944 Education Act, the provisions placed into the Wales variant of this act by Wyn Roberts allowed for Bilingual education for Wales and the making of Welsh a core subject in Welsh speaking schools. This, however, came at the cost of Roberts goodwill with Thatcher, Roberts clashed with Thatcher over this.⁵⁷⁹ It was Thatcher's concern that, the provisions for Welsh in the curriculum could fuel the Welsh Nationalists, a genuine concern of the period given the actions of both Welsh and Irish Nationalists. This was the period of the campaigns of Meibion Glyndwr, the Welsh Language Society and the IRA, so it can be seen why Thatcher would have had such valid concerns.

⁵⁷⁵ John Evans, Dawn Penney & Amanda Bryant, 'Improving the Quality of Physical education? The Education Reform Act, 1988, and Physical Education in England and Wales, in *Quest*, 45.3 pp.321-338

⁵⁷⁶ Huw S. Thomas, 'The Articulation of Power,' in Huw S. Thomas and Colin Williams, *Parents, Personalities and Power: Welsh-medium Schools in South-east Wales*, (Cardiff, 2013) pp.139-167 p.147-151

⁵⁷⁷ Richard Daugherty and Prydwen Elfed-Owens, 'A National Curriculum for Wales: A case study of Education Policy-Making in the era of Administrative Devolution,' in *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 51.3 (2003) pp.233-253

⁵⁷⁸ Megan Jones, 'Welsh-medium education and Welsh as a subject,' Research Briefing 16-048, National Assembly for Wales: Research Service, (Cardiff, 2016)

⁵⁷⁹ Argument dating from the 26 November 1987, which reveals much of Thatcher's opinions around Conservatives and Wales.

Though given the response of the Welsh Language Society to the Welsh language Act of 1993, Thatcher's fears were unfounded since neither act enforced Welsh to the point that Nationalist societies would feel compelled to act any more than they had already done so. Wyn Roberts wished to avoid the text of the act giving Welsh an unbalanced emphasis, stemming from a similarity to how the Welsh Language Act of 1967 gave English an unbalanced bias when it came to which language should be used within Wales.

Though there were concerns of a drop in standards in Welsh schools these issues were avoided by the main opposition from the upper echelons of the Conservative party itself. Throughout the course of 1987 the issues were over what should go into the act. In a letter between Mr Wilson and GW Monger it is first written in the margins that Welsh is to be a core subject, with further questions raised over the need for such a policy statement.⁵⁸⁰ Even Wyn Roberts was unsure about making Welsh a core subject for fear of upsetting English speakers. Further to this Thatcher herself expressed great concern. Her view was that the choice of language should be a matter for parent⁵⁸¹ and not the state. Her concern is that it would act as a deterrent from people considering moving to Wales, possibly further inflaming the issues created by Meibion Glyndwr. In contrast to this view for Roberts the proposals of the bill were in line with the views expressed during the consultation period in the run up to its passage through parliament. Roberts was best placed to be able to answer the language question,⁵⁸² given his status as a Blue Dragon. There are several instances of Thatcher's concerns being expressed ranging about all Welsh language provisions of the bill,⁵⁸³ to 'total dissatisfaction with the bill (1988 WE) as a whole.'⁵⁸⁴

Eventually the government legislation included Welsh in the National Curriculum, with invitations of LEM views on how the National Curriculum provision on Welsh in schools

⁵⁸⁰ Letter to Mr Wilson from G.W Monger. 'Education Reform Bill Publicity,' PREM19-2123

⁵⁸¹ Welsh Office, Letter to Ceri Thomas from David Norgrove, 'Education Reform Bill Publicity,' 20 November 1987, PREM10-2123

⁵⁸² Letter to Margaret Thatcher from David Norgrove, 'Education Reform Bill: Publicity,' PREM19-2123

⁵⁸³ Welsh Office, Letter to Ceri Thomas from David Norgrove, 'Education Reform Bill Publicity,' 20 November 1987, PREM10-2123

⁵⁸⁴ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 13, 22 November 1987

should be applied to schools in their areas.⁵⁸⁵ The National Curriculum Council for Wales was set up and though Welsh language schools did exist, 20% bilinguals would now receive Welsh as a part of the core curriculum,⁵⁸⁶ the outstanding 80% had the option to learn Welsh but it was not considered a core subject.

For schools in Wales especially for the Welsh language issue, the activists would never be happy. The Bill was about treating English and Welsh on a basis of equality.⁵⁸⁷ The activists view opts for full Welsh rather than equality, thus the unhappiness over the act. Wyn Roberts' opted for persuasion and not coercion,⁵⁸⁸ given his view that coercion could help to end the Welsh language. Roberts' solution was to add an option which would allow for schools which catered for Anglicised areas of Wales to be able to drop Welsh from the main curriculum.⁵⁸⁹ Whereas in Welsh areas or Welsh schools the language was to be treated as a Core subject. Still Thatcher demonstrated much concern over making Welsh a core subject.

The proposals stemming from the draft bill were in line with parental views expressed during the consultation period on the bill. Yet still Thatcher wanted more urgent consideration on the bill.⁵⁹⁰ This interference is ironic when none knew the political problems of the language question better than Wyn Roberts. Many other measures were taken to allay Thatcher's fears,⁵⁹¹ that any language provision in law would only serve to inflame the Welsh Nationalists further than they already acted after S4C. The main question that Thatcher had was put during a BBC interview with Rob Orchard.⁵⁹²

'If the people love and cherish the Welsh Language, why do you need compulsion?'

⁵⁸⁵ Welsh Office News, 'Welsh in Schools: Minister of State comments on National Curriculum,' 5 November 1987, NLW, WR Diaries.

⁵⁸⁶ Welsh Office News, 'Welsh in Schools: Minister of State comments on National Curriculum,' 5 November 1987, NLW, WR Diaries.

⁵⁸⁷ Hansard HC Deb, 15 July 1993 vol.228 cc1185-98 c1195

⁵⁸⁸ 'Doing better in Schools,' in *Daily Post*, 21 November 1987

⁵⁸⁹ Chris Walker and Steve Brauner, 'Opt-out' plan in new reform package, Welsh 'can be dropped by schools,' in *Daily post*, 21 November 1987

⁵⁹⁰ Welsh Office, 'Letter to Ceri Thomas from David Norgrove,' 20 November 1987, NLW, WR Diaries.

⁵⁹¹ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 13, 25 November 1987

⁵⁹² Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 13, 9 July 1988

Roberts might have felt the need for such compulsion due to the Blue Books mentality prevalent amongst the people of Wales. Welsh speakers had a dangerously low self-esteem in speaking their own language, coupled with a lack of confidence in its use. It is also possible that a lack of positive publicity generated from the activities of language activists did not aid the image of the language.

In the intermission between two diary entries for the 25 and 27 November is when Wyn Roberts had a row with the Thatcher, over the Welsh language provision and the cause of the Nationalists. In this showdown with Thatcher there is no clear winner, with the exception that Roberts got his amendments to the Bill. Thatcher was concerned that Nationalists would exploit the definition of Welsh speaking schools to further their cause, that the definition could be used even in schools with all English-speaking pupils. This was a fear that Roberts did not share. This, however, came at the cost of any goodwill with Thatcher as Roberts noted in his diary.

I have continued to suffer following the encounter with the PM. My good relations with her are clearly at an end. What worries me is that if she can be so nervous on this issue, how can she be right on so many others?⁵⁹³

This further demonstrates the efficacy of the Blue Dragon notion. As a Conservative Wyn Roberts rejected good relations with the PM, his efforts clearly were for the preservation of Welsh. What is interesting here, is that Wyn Roberts rejects good relations with Margaret Thatcher in favour of the preservation of Welsh Language education. This may have also cost Roberts his first chance to be Secretary of State for Wales. Furthermore, Roberts attacked Labour's position or lack thereof on the language noting at the time that; '...they do not have a supportive policy the one must assume that they are reconciled to the slow death of the language.'⁵⁹⁴ This is due to Labour being a main party in Wales, it is assumed they supported the language, thus no policy was needed, whereas the Conservatives did have a policy. The Blue Dragon's defence of Welsh clashes with both Labour and the Conservatives.

⁵⁹³ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 13, 27 November 1987

⁵⁹⁴ Welsh Office, Press Release, 'Welsh Office Minister attacks Labour's lack of Policy on Welsh Language,' 17 December 1987, NLW, WR Diaries

The position in the end is that Welsh became a core subject only in Welsh speaking schools but a foundation subject in English Speaking schools. The bill gave definition to Welsh speaking since more than half of the Welsh subjects are actively being taught through the medium of Welsh.⁵⁹⁵ Though areas of Wales suffered disappointment in that the Welsh language did not become a core subject in all schools. Roberts argued that the critics were out of touch with realities, and that the bill was already challenging:⁵⁹⁶ As he further notes.

Were we to legislate to make Welsh a core subject throughout Wales I am convinced that we would have a similar experience to the Irish who tried to impose Gaelic and had to abandon it in 1974.⁵⁹⁷

Roberts went on to help ensure the Education Reform bill had a smooth passage through the House of Lords.⁵⁹⁸ Naturally as with any bill, it was subject to minor amendments,⁵⁹⁹ although its conclusion came,⁶⁰⁰ the reforms did have a turbulent passage through Parliament.⁶⁰¹ A 1992 Welsh school inspectors report found no cause for concern over bilingualism in Welsh schools as Roberts commented.

This is a most helpful report which will enable us to improve further the evaluation . . . I am pleased that the Inspectorate found no evidence that standards had declined in recent years, but we are not complacent.⁶⁰²

Further results of this were that Welsh was and now is a core subject in Wales,⁶⁰³ a new standard which had never been implemented into law in Wales. In addition to this, Welsh was now being taught in 8 out of 10 primary schools' also in 9 out of 10 secondary schools across

⁵⁹⁵ Welsh Office, Press Release, 'Welsh Office Minister attacks Labour's lack of Policy on Welsh Language,' 17 December 1987, NLW, WR Diaries

⁵⁹⁶ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 13, 31 January 1988

⁵⁹⁷ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 13, 21 January 1988

⁵⁹⁸ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 13, 20 February 1988

⁵⁹⁹ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 13, 8 May 1988

⁶⁰⁰ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 13, 29 May 1988

⁶⁰¹ David Cornock, 'Man in the Hot Seat,' in *Western Mail*, 22 April 1988

⁶⁰² Stephen Bates, 'Welsh school inspectors buck English criticism of GCSE,' in *The Guardian*, 26 September 1992.

⁶⁰³ 'The National Curriculum in Wales – A Policy Statement,' National Archives PREM19-2123

Wales.⁶⁰⁴ The official census of 1991 did not show the same encouraging results as this and suggests that the Conservatives 1980s decade of official language protection had at best kept a similar number of language speakers across Wales, rather than increasing the number of speakers. However, 10 years after this as of the school year 2000/1 the total number of Welsh pupils stood at 210,396 of this 38,007 were taught through the medium of Welsh. By the academic year 2010-11, Welsh schools contained 203,907 pupils, of these 43,432 were taught through the medium of Welsh.⁶⁰⁵ There was a certain rise in the number of people being taught in Welsh. This can be explained since as of 1988 also saw the creation of the Welsh Language Board, to oversee matters relating to language. However, with no Wyn Roberts, there was a much less likely chance of bilingual education being enshrined into law, and a less likely chance that any of these students would have been taught through the medium of Welsh.

Wyn Roberts' Welsh Language Act 1993.⁶⁰⁶

Beyond Andrew Edwards' work on the language policy is Gareth Butler,⁶⁰⁷ who has assessed Plaid Cymru's response to the enactment of the Welsh Language Act. Similarly, Catrin Huws⁶⁰⁸ has examined the success of the Welsh language act, arguing that it is effective as an act in law, but still has only enjoyed a measure of success. Johnathon Snicker,⁶⁰⁹ discusses the Education act 1988 and the Welsh Language Act 1993, he implies Wyn Roberts involvement was important, but not quite how important his role in Welsh language development was. As Snicker does not consider Roberts' earlier role with Television Wales and West. As earlier discussed in this thesis there is the issue of television historiography, it is not such the case of a lacuna when it comes to the Welsh Fourth channel, S4C.

⁶⁰⁴ Hansard, HC Deb, 20 January 1992, vol. 202 c11

⁶⁰⁵ Data obtained from, 'Schools in Wales,' (2010)

⁶⁰⁶ Welsh Language Act 1993, available on

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1993/38/contents> (Last Accessed 6 February 2019)

⁶⁰⁷ Gareth Butler, "*Tenpence for the language*": *Plaid Cymru's response to the Welsh Language Act 1993*, (Cardiff, 1993)

⁶⁰⁸ Catrin Fflur Huws, 'The Welsh language Act 1993 – A Measure of Success? In *Language Policy*, 5.2 (2006) pp.141-160

⁶⁰⁹ Johnathon Snicker, 'Strategies of Autonomist Agencies in Wales,' in Howard Elcock & Michael Keating, *Remaking the Union: Devolution and British Politics in the 1990s*, (London, 1998) pp.141-157

This thesis demonstrates the importance of the Welsh Language Act 1993, not just to Welsh history, but also as an important development in Conservative history. An examination of the language act reveals how obviously Wyn Roberts was responsible for the variation of the act, no number of claims that the government gave in to language activists can get round this.

“I am determined to have a piece of legislation which can stand the test of time... I must get my bill through if it’s the last thing I do.”⁶¹⁰

This opinion eventually changed to Wyn Roberts then claiming that the bill, “...will stand the test of time.’ Despite numerous protests and campaigns, the bill has stood for 30 years. Wyn Roberts in his diary chronicles the passage of the Welsh Language Act 1993. It was a long process lasting from roughly 1988 to 1993, during which Roberts got the bill through in the face opposition. If one notes the use of language, Roberts calls it ‘my bill’ and an examination of the finer points of the bill reveals that the Welsh Language Act 1993 was without doubt Roberts’ bill. This act achieved what the 1967 Welsh Language Act⁶¹¹ failed to do in establishing the Welsh Language on an equal footing with English in the public sector, without the supremacy for English in the 1967 language act. The act designed to enshrine the use of Welsh in the public sector into law, did not however, solve the main issue with the language, as put by Roberts in his diary.

...the nub of the Welsh language issue is that those who try for ‘Deddf yr Iaith’ believe that it is preservation can be ensured by law. If so, they have more faith in the law than I have... legislation parse will action very little.’⁶¹²

This serves as a nice answer to Thatcher’s question, ‘why do you need compulsion?’⁶¹³ It could be argued that Roberts is in a way critiquing the blue books mentality prevalent amongst certain areas of Wales. Welsh was a nice language to learn though one that was viewed as pointless. Why learn a language, after all, that at the time was not going to serve you in everyday life? This is in part what Roberts’ bill tried to solve by putting Welsh into

⁶¹⁰ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 16, 22 June 1993

⁶¹¹ Welsh Language Act 1967, available on <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1967/66/enacted> (Last accessed 25 April 2019)

⁶¹² Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 14, 19 October 1989

⁶¹³ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 13, 9 July 1988

use in public life. This bill went in contravention to what was put in the WLS manifesto of 1972, and in agreement with Roberts, that no amount of legislation could breathe new life into a language, only the actions and responsibility of the people who used it could do that. This issue was further referenced in a newspaper article about the language.

‘A very historic day for Wales, Sir Wyn said the Government had created the right framework for the language to flourish. "The Government can only do so much," he said. "Ultimately whether the bill will succeed will depend on the extent to which Welsh-speakers choose to take advantage of the improvements it provides...’⁶¹⁴

The bill therefore represents a challenge to the Welsh-speaking community. I am confident that this is a challenge they will meet.’⁶¹⁵

This is precisely an issue that the act tried to aid, in making Welsh speaking rife in the public sector, thus giving an impetus for it to be learnt. What the article does not tell is how hard it was for Roberts to get the bill through parliament. As the Arch Druid Emrys Roberts claimed, at the 1988 Llanwrst Eisteddfod, that.

‘... The government is spitting on the Welsh language and the Welsh Nation by refusing to pass a new language act.’⁶¹⁶ The Arch Druid could not account for the passage of an act through Parliament.

Attacked in Parliament for slowness of the act, Labour had also pledged to a new WL bill, though as refuted by Roberts Labour would have no idea what would go into the bill.⁶¹⁷ Roberts at first saw no need for a new WL Bill, the WLB dealt with matters to do with the language. Therefore, the passage of the bill took so long because there were so many vested parties all of whom had differing ideas of what the bill should include. Both the Welsh Language Society and Plaid Cymru were not on board, as the WL Bill did not impose bilingualism as statutory across Wales. Both the Welsh Conservatives and members of the Labour Party were against this for fear it would kill the language.⁶¹⁸ A similar event had

⁶¹⁴ ‘Bill offers Welsh equality, in *The Guardian*, 19 December 1992

⁶¹⁵ ‘Bill offers Welsh equality, in *The Guardian*, 19 December 1992

⁶¹⁶ ‘Note of optimism at Newport Eisteddfod,’ in *The Times*, 30 July 1988

⁶¹⁷ Hansard, HC Deb, 17 February 1992, vol.204 c11

⁶¹⁸ Wyn Roberts Diary, 1 July 1993, vol.

occurred in Ireland in 1972, where the law enforced behind learning of Gaelic to a certain extent, this nearly killed the language.

Throughout 1989 there is the first mention of a proposed new Welsh language bill,⁶¹⁹ prior to 1991 though, Roberts was not ultimately convinced of the need for a new Welsh Language Act. It was in high demand amongst members of the Welsh Language Society and Plaid Cymru, the only argument that Roberts accepted in 1990 is that a WLA would be a natural continuation of Welsh language legislation since it was already the law for education.⁶²⁰ By 1991 Roberts agreed with the Welsh Language Board proposals and ended up being more favourable than he thought he would towards them. The proposal was for a new WLA,⁶²¹ however, a draft version of this WL Bill leaked, and the Welsh Language Society did not consider it to be enough.⁶²²

There was further pressure for a Welsh Language Bill by⁶²³ the WLS, both David Hunt as another Welsh Conservative who did not immediately recognise the need for a new bill,⁶²⁴ and Wyn Roberts were under enormous pressure for a WLA. It was thought that having a victory with S4C and Welsh TV that there were those who believe the WLA could be gained by similar means.⁶²⁵ The problem was Roberts was determined not to cave into pressure but did see the need to curb what he perceived as the excesses of the WLS. Roberts concern at the time with the Welsh language issue is that what could be given for the Welsh may also be given for others ethnic minorities who could claim similar rights.⁶²⁶ In terms of Welsh on TV, in 1970 on the BBC broadcast more hours in Arabic than it did in Welsh, by this Arabic minorities had more claim to rights than the Welsh minorities did. However, Roberts does not elaborate upon which ethnic groups, the issues with Irish nationalism which was an issue that stems from the early Thatcher years, especially with Irish prisoners. Roberts was cautious of providing further fuel for other groups, though being of a pragmatic nature Roberts did eventually extend an olive branch to the WLS, as Roberts stated on Welsh question time.

⁶¹⁹ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 14, 18 October 1989

⁶²⁰ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 14, 9 August 1990

⁶²¹ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 15, 5 March 1991

⁶²² Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 14, 28 November 1989

⁶²³ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 15, 3 June 1991

⁶²⁴ D. Elwyn Jones, *Y Rebel Mwyaf*, (Caernarfon, 1991) p. 248

⁶²⁵ 'Letter to Alan Clarke,' 27 July 1990, Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 14

⁶²⁶ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 15, 23 May 1991

If WLS is prepared to pursue its aims by means of constructive dialogue and is prepared to totally renounce illegal action, then for my part, I will be only too ready to deal with the society on the sure basis as I deal with other organisations concerned with Welsh Language.⁶²⁷

The Conservatives wanted to increase sympathy for Welsh speakers at a time of decline, an issue was that the WLS protests were damaging the cause of the language, in 1991 a £76mn investment grant for the language, was secured by Roberts to further support the survival of the language.⁶²⁸ Also, Wyn Roberts' appeared on a special Welsh language issue of Question Time in the December of 1991, this was not without merit as Roberts made an offer to the WLS to meet and speak to them, on condition that they drop the campaign of direct action and civil disobedience.⁶²⁹ This was not the first time such an offer had been made directly to the WLS, an invitation had been issued in 1988. However, Peter Walker rejected the offer by WLS on account of their law-breaking activities.⁶³⁰ This was over the desire of the WLS for the WJEC to be its own body rather than a consultative council.⁶³¹

This historic meeting took place in the December of 1991,⁶³² and by the beginning of 1992, Wyn Roberts met with the WLS, after they agreed to drop the civil disobedience campaign both agreed to the need for a new Welsh Language Act. Roberts on account that it would be a natural continuation of Welsh language legislation after the Education Act, WLS who wanted an act to make Welsh the official language of Wales. Speaking on this meeting in a press release Roberts noted.

⁶²⁷ 'Codi Gwestiwn,' Welsh Question Time, 29 November 1991, Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 15

⁶²⁸ 'Minister under fire over Language Act,' in *Daily Post*, 3 December 1991

⁶²⁹ 'Ministers pledge to language Society,' in *Daily Post*, 30 November 1991

⁶³⁰ Welsh Office News, 'Walker tells Language Society: Drop illegal action or no talks.' 26th January 1988, In 'Welsh Language,' papers of Ivor Wynne Jones, in Conwy Archives, Llandudno, CX288/2/1/169

⁶³¹ 'Letter from Welsh Language Society,' 9th January 1988, 'Welsh Language,' papers of Ivor Wynne Jones, in Conwy Archives, Llandudno, CX288/2/1/169

⁶³² Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 15, 18 December 1991

‘I have listened to the Society’s proposals this morning and it is apparent that there is some common ground between us, we both want to preserve the Welsh Language and Culture.’⁶³³



Figure 12: Wyn Roberts meeting the members of the Welsh Language Society.

This meeting marked a near end to over ten years’ worth of direct challenges by Cymdeithas to Conservative policy, challenges which were spurred on and created after the S4C U-turn, though it would not last. It took years of destructive action to get nowhere, by challenging politicians such as Wyn Roberts via the use of protest to get him to change his language policy. It was mere months after constructive dialogue, that by February of 1992, that government approval for Welsh language bill had been passed.⁶³⁴ Roberts was determined that protests would yield no results and it is the case that they did not beyond publicity for the cause. Though after the general election in 1992 the WLS did resume the campaign of direct action for the cause of the language. However, the efficacy of it was blunted as Wyn Roberts had by this point presented his new Welsh Language Bill to parliament. Roberts by this point, perilously close to retirement, noted in his diary that,

‘I would like to carry on for a year or so to see a Welsh Language Bill on the statute books.’⁶³⁵

This became his 1992 general election promise as it was what the majority wanted, he got to carry it out.⁶³⁶ Though the introductory version of the bill was not universally liked, upon the announcement of another iteration of the bill in December 1992 it was unveiled to a barrage

⁶³³ Welsh Office News, ‘Minister of State meets the Welsh Language Society,’ 9 January 1992

⁶³⁴ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 15, 27 February 1992

⁶³⁵ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 15, 12 April 1992

⁶³⁶ ‘Here to Stay!’ in *North Wales Weekly News*, 16 April 1992

of criticism from all corners.⁶³⁷ It was not considered to do enough by any quarter, no enforced bilingualism that the Welsh Language Society wanted or any such policy which would suit any parties involved. The discontent over the bill in some form can be found from across 1992, as noted by Roberts for the Queens speech of 1992.

(The) Queen's Speech mercifully referred to a WL Bill as currently conceived, the bill will satisfy very few. It is regarded as a symbol of the fact that the South (Westminster) listens and is prepared to act. We shall try to give it some 'body.'⁶³⁸

Roberts' opinion was simply that the bill would be ridiculed simply because of what it stood for, legislation from Westminster over a matter concerning the Welsh. The WL bill was further described as 'toothless and useless' before it was even in draft. It was not the draft that the Welsh Language Board had prepared since, in Roberts words, the members would have walked if the board had to support the current iteration; or rather Roberts' version of the bill.⁶³⁹ Furthermore, writing in July 1992 Roberts further notes on the bill.

The WL bill will please no one although it may well be a foundation for the future. I am tempted to see it through but there is the limit of my ambition. I would really like to retire from the fray.⁶⁴⁰

The issue of retirement is one mentioned throughout the penultimate years of Roberts diary, only the Welsh Language Bill stood in his way. This issue crops up in the diary entries several times, the issue of getting the WL act on to the statute book and his feeling that it was only himself who could get it through parliament.⁶⁴¹ He felt that he was the only one who was uniquely qualified to do so.⁶⁴² The same issue is also referenced again on the 10th November.⁶⁴³ The Bill got through the standing committee just before Christmas. In the diary

⁶³⁷ Tom Bodden, 'Storm of protest as government unveils a new Language Bill,' in *Daily Post*, 19 December 1992

⁶³⁸ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 16, 7 May 1992

⁶³⁹ Patrick Fletcher, 'New uprising over Welsh Language Bill,' in *Daily Post*, 19 December 1992

⁶⁴⁰ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 16, 31 July 1992

⁶⁴¹ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 16, 18 August 1992

⁶⁴² Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 16, 5 November 1992

⁶⁴³ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 16, 10 November 1992

entry for the 16th December Roberts notes that,⁶⁴⁴ ‘those unhappy with the WLA never will be happy with it.’⁶⁴⁵ Part of the issue is that it was simply a bill introduced by the Conservative Party, the other issue was the nature of the opposition who wanted an act that enforced bilingualism. The final version of the bill would be a very blue dragonsque one, one which considers the unique nature of the Welsh language but not one that would give it precedence over English as Wales was and is still within the union. This was not the first attempt to produce an WLA, but it was the only one which was successful. Gwilym Prys-Davies,⁶⁴⁶ who had previously worked to present a new Welsh Language Act in the 1980s,⁶⁴⁷ also made extensive notes on the Welsh Language Act of 1993.⁶⁴⁸ The leader of Plaid Cymru, Dafydd Wigley had also attempted to introduce his own Welsh Language Bill, though to no avail.⁶⁴⁹ At this time Roberts was still determined that protest would not yield any change in government policy, a relic from the S4C issue.

After all the issues faced to get a workable act to parliament the WLS did not offer support believing the bill did not go far enough, they wanted it to enforce the language,⁶⁵⁰ an idea which Wyn Roberts believed would damage further attempts to aid the language. That and enforced bilingualism had already been tried to a detrimental effect on the language by the government of Ireland. A WLS campaigner described the bill as ‘(a) disappointing result after 10 years of campaigning,’ The issue remained that there was still no human right to be able to use the language. Another issue which upset supporters was that the bill had no effect on private companies, only the public sector, and even then in certain cases.⁶⁵¹ Roberts concerns at this period were aimed at the Conservative Party’s reputation, since the emotive language issue always held sway with party popularity in Wales.⁶⁵²

⁶⁴⁴ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 16, 15 December 1992

⁶⁴⁵ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 16, 17 December 1992

⁶⁴⁶ Lord Gwilym Prys Davies, 1982-2017.

⁶⁴⁷ Gwilym Prys-Davies Papers, ‘Private Members Welsh Language Bill, 1982-85,’ NLW, Aberystwyth, GB 0210 GPDAVS 2/7

⁶⁴⁸ Gwilym Prys-Davies Papers, ‘Welsh Language Act 1993,’ NLW, Aberystwyth, GB 0210 GPDAVS 2/9

⁶⁴⁹ Hansard, HC Deb. 15 January 1988, vol. 125 c426w

⁶⁵⁰ Paul Stakes, ‘Welsh Language to be granted full legal status,’ in *The Daily Telegraph*, 19 December 1992

⁶⁵¹ Clive Betts, ‘Voluntary Welsh code defended,’ in *Western Mail*, 19 December 1992

⁶⁵² Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 16, 22 December 1992

This was also in the middle of a general election campaign that none expected the party to win. Thus, Roberts' desire was to at least get the act on to the statute book in case the party lost the 1992 general election. Once the Conservative Party had won, the next task for Roberts was trying to pass the act through the House of Commons, though he still faced opposition. Roberts was determined to get a bill through however, the bill he was trying to sell was very much one with a Blue Dragon interpretation of the bill. It did not enforce bilingualism in Wales, with Roberts aware of the detrimental effect that such a policy had in Ireland in 1972. Wyn Roberts had the support of Labour, though it was still not a simple task.⁶⁵³ However given Labour's distinct lack of Welsh Language policy the main supporters Roberts needed were both; Plaid Cymru who also considered support for the WLA, though dropped support for it at several stages during its long passage through the Commons. Also, the support of the Welsh Language Society who could not aid in the passage of the bill but could support the content of it.

After passing through the House of Commons,⁶⁵⁴ and a second reading. The WLA passed with what Roberts describes as 'no vivisection,'⁶⁵⁵ or rather no significant amendments needed. Though, there was the task of the standing committee stage, as a condition of Labour's support for its passage through the commons.⁶⁵⁶ Writing on this at the time of the standing committee, Roberts noted that; 'I must get my bill if it is the last thing I do, which it may well be.'⁶⁵⁷ Though it did not end up being the last thing Roberts did in Parliament the Bill was progressing well but slowly. The supporters that Roberts had acquired for the WLA in his words were that Labour Party members were bored and Plaid Cymru was looking for a meal out of a snack in terms of the number of amendments that they want.⁶⁵⁸ progress must be made before the bill is lost.⁶⁵⁹ The slowness of the bill meant that there was still a threat to the bill due to a lack of support over the summer of 1993.⁶⁶⁰ The Welsh Language Act however, eventually passed in November 1993, after obtaining royal assent on 21 October 1993. For much of January 1993, Roberts' diary concerns the passage of the bill through the

⁶⁵³ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 16, 21 April 1993

⁶⁵⁴ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 16, 18 May 1993

⁶⁵⁵ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 16, 27 May 1993

⁶⁵⁶ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 16, 20 June 1993

⁶⁵⁷ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 16, 20 June 1993

⁶⁵⁸ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 16, 24 June 1993

⁶⁵⁹ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 16, 27 June 1993

⁶⁶⁰ 'Eisteddfod supplement,' in *Daily Post*, 3 August 1993

House of Lords. Though Roberts expressed concerns over the early 1993 iteration of the WL bill, he did not openly express them for three reasons. First, he did not feel inclined to make any concessions under pressure, due to limited respect for those who had criticised it and therefore contribute to the view that it is a substandard bill with little to offer the Welsh speaking populace.⁶⁶¹ Second, Roberts fears were around the beneficiaries of the bill; he had concerns over whether the Welsh would rise to the challenges presented by the bill. Third, the non-Welsh-speaking populace of Wales also had to be protected from the extremism of some Welsh speakers.⁶⁶² After the Commons both Robin Ferrers⁶⁶³ and Nicholas Edwards steered the act through the Lords.

The final version of the Welsh language Act was very much Wyn Robert's bill noting upon its passage in his diary that, (he) is proud of it as a piece of legislation that can and will withstand the barrage of criticism.⁶⁶⁴ The act got through Parliament in November 1993⁶⁶⁵ and Welsh language versions of this act were subsequently placed into the house library in 1994,⁶⁶⁶ in the same year the act was implemented by the end of 1994.⁶⁶⁷ Wyn Roberts was congratulated for his persistence in getting the bill done,⁶⁶⁸ despite criticism and derision from most quarters. It would be a somewhat vain hope that the bill would mean the end of the language issue politically and legally.⁶⁶⁹ It took as little as 12 years for calls to have yet another new Welsh Language Act, the Welsh Language Act Campaign Group called Roberts' act, 'bankrupt of any real worth.'⁶⁷⁰

Though wanting to retire and at times sceptical of his bill Roberts finally noted in his diary on the Welsh Language Act that, 'This is such an act that, I am not aware of any faults.'⁶⁷¹ However some faults did exist, a first such fault was the privatisation policies of Thatcherism

⁶⁶¹ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 16, 31 January 1993

⁶⁶² Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 16, 31 January 1993

⁶⁶³ Home Office 'Letter to Wyn Roberts from Robin Ferrers,' 26 February 1993, Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 16

⁶⁶⁴ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 16, 4 July 1993

⁶⁶⁵ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 17, 23 November 1993

⁶⁶⁶ Hansard, HC Deb. 17 January 1994, vol. 235 c399w

⁶⁶⁷ Hansard, HC Deb. 27 June 1994, vol. 245 c433w

⁶⁶⁸ Hansard, HL Deb, 25 February 1993, vol.543 cc342-55

⁶⁶⁹ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 16, 29 June 1993

⁶⁷⁰ Welsh Language Act Campaign Group, 'New Welsh Language Act – A Real Opportunity! Proposals for a New Welsh Language Act, (Aberystwyth, 2005)

⁶⁷¹ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 17, 23 November 1993

which blunted the effect of the act to some degree, as the bill could not be routinely enforced on the private sector to the same extent as it could in the public sector. Thus, giving cause to activists who felt that the act did not provide sufficient protection for the language.

The act could have been passed as a measure by the Conservatives to help improve their electability at a time when Devolution was hot on the agenda, though it is undeniable that Roberts had a large hand in both its passage and its construction. Though not up to the standard wished for by the WLS. It is an act that is pragmatic and practical, such that could only be achieved by Wyn Roberts. However, involvement in an issue such as the preservation of a language, particularly when in a party that is perceived to have an Anti-Welsh image, came at a cost.

Whatever the result it is undeniable that over the course of 30 years Roberts was involved to a great extent in various ways to improve and bolster the cause of the Welsh language. After the passage of the act, it would also have been the perfect time for Roberts to retire, on a high which many politicians did not get to do. For Roberts however, as the go to Conservative for Welsh language issues would also make him a target from many quarters, in both the House of Commons and from the language protestors. Though Roberts was initially hesitant of the need for a new WLA in the late 1980s, it very much became Roberts' WLA. What it did was in line with Roberts views and did nothing to please the WLS for Plaid Cymru. It is certainly a Conservative act since in the same period other acts had been introduced with the aim of improving the status of the language, such as Gwilym Prys Davies who had attempted to pass one nearly a decade earlier with little success. The ultimate effect of these acts was an attempt to solve the Welsh language protests. However, this was largely unsuccessful due to several different factions disliking the act. It was not to last as the protests started again soon after the acts passing, with the language society calling for a new act only 12 years later. This time round the protests were met with little sympathy as the Welsh language Act 1993 had been passed.

Conclusion: Superstition towards later policy?

The Welsh Language Act of 1993 is described as ‘(Wyn Roberts) his greatest achievement’⁶⁷² in several of his obituaries. Wyn Roberts had also described the act as a foundation for the future, implying that he expected it to be built on in years to come. Similarly, the Conservatives at least in this period seem to be immersed in cultural protection for the Welsh language to a much greater degree than the Welsh Labour party was under Kinnock. Furthermore, the number of practical measures put in place by the party physically achieved more for the language than any symbolic gesture could.

Wyn Roberts was at the epicentre of most Welsh language activism, usually as the target of protest or as the man pushing for the enhancement of the language. Be it in his role as a minister, or at the Eisteddfod. Wyn Roberts was pivotal to the preservation of the Welsh language and arguably saved it in a time of decline. As is evidenced in this chapter, Roberts was target to such protest throughout Wales from the period immediately after the establishment of S4C, however, it was only when such protests and direct action were abandoned or halted that the creation of a Welsh Language Act pressed ahead. It is ironic that Roberts became the target of such protests given it was his actions that meant the passing of bilingual education and of equal status of the language passed into law.

This is despite the argument that it was protest by the WLS and other Welsh language activists who brought about the salvation of the Welsh Language. In his diary Roberts notes the ‘psychoanalytical effect’⁶⁷³ generated by Gwynfor Evans’ threat of a hunger strike, lost for the Conservatives the favour of the Welsh, and created a superstition towards future policy. This was of little hinderance to the enactment of policies for the preservation of the Welsh Language, Wyn Roberts was after all, learned on the issue of the Welsh Language. Ultimately all it did was embolden the Welsh Conservatives not to act under pressure towards any Welsh policy.

The Welsh Language Act of 1993 was ultimately a very C/conservative act. On the one hand it was a Blue Dragon policy, it leaned into its Welsh roots by preserving the language as a form of culture. On the other hand, it did so with reverence to the four-nations aspect of the

⁶⁷² ‘Welsh language proved barrier to top job’ *Wales Online*, 21 February 2019.

⁶⁷³ Wyn Roberts Diaries, 13 September 1980, vol. 10

UK, with no emphasis on Welsh or English as a greater language. It was an act which had respect for both Wales and the Union. This is evidenced by the fact that not many Welsh groups considered that act to go far enough to protect the language. This is demonstrable of the perception of Wyn Roberts Welshness, for the Welsh Language Society Roberts was never going to be a Welsh language patriot, however for the Conservatives he clearly was a key figure in dealing with the Welsh dimension.

Furthermore, the Welsh Conservatives themselves had won a stellar victory, independence for themselves. The ‘blue dragons’ or the Welsh Conservatives were the only other voice besides the House of Lords, who supported the claim for a single Welsh only TV channel as opposed to Whitelaw’s amendment of Welsh language programmes across two channels. The defeat of such a bill meant that the voices of the Welsh Conservatives were now taken with a degree of humility, the reward was the expansion of the Welsh office exponentially to the point where Wyn Roberts quipped that ‘Wales has never been united except under the Welsh Office.’

Ultimately, we need to understand why Wyn Roberts is considered as a pillar of Welsh Conservatism and as a true Welsh Conservative. In a period far before the Conservative Party attempted its campaigns, particularly post devolution, to rid itself of its English image in favour of a discovery of its own Welsh Identity,⁶⁷⁴ something which the Conservatives have been incredibly voracious for, if troublesome for them to achieve. Similarly, thanks in part to Wyn Roberts the future of independent Welsh television has never seemed more certain, at the time of writing the current S4C funding arrangements are secure for as far as 2022. This would never have happened if not for the early efforts of Wyn Roberts in Welsh television. Whilst the Conservative Party suffered a humiliation and a loss of confidence in Wales over the volte-face over the Welsh fourth channel. Wales had won numerous victories. For Plaid Cymru and the Welsh Language Society had at long last achieved a goal of a Welsh language channel in S4C and a triumphant Gwynfor Evans to thank. For Labour and the Liberal party had the humiliation of the Conservative party as a consolation prize. Such was the Wyn

⁶⁷⁴Johnathon Bradbury & Rhys Andrews, ‘State Devolution and National Identity: Continuity and Change in the Politics of Welshness and Britishness in Wales, in *Parliamentary Affairs*, 63.1 (2010) pp.229-249; Sophie Williams, ‘The Politics of Welshness: A Response to Bradbury and Andrews,’ in *Parliamentary Affairs*, 71.2 (2018) pp.305-323 For a further analysis of the rise of the Conservatives in Wales see, Jonathon Bradbury, ‘Wales: Still a Labour Stronghold but Under Threat? In *Parliamentary Affairs*, 68.1, (2015) pp.101-116

Roberts's role in this that by the point of the 1990s John Major often quipped 'Does Wyn think it's important?' on matters related to Welsh affairs.

The next chapter of this thesis explores the creation of the A55 across North Wales, with reference to the 'Collcon' region of the A55. This region ran straight through Roberts constituency of Conwy and considers Wyn Roberts role in both campaigning for the upgrading of the A55 to his eventual role as the minister responsible for roads at the Welsh Office. Wyn Roberts' involvement in roads of Wales is one that goes back to his childhood roots, with a personal knowledge of how long it took to cross Wales before the creation of the A55. He was aware of the problems and became deeply involved in the planning of the A55, this is something that as will be seen in Chapter 4 he made use of to bring investment directly to Wales.

Chapter Three: A55: The Road of Opportunity⁶⁷⁵?

“...he built more roads than the Romans...”⁶⁷⁶

This is a fitting epitaph to Wyn Roberts which was bestowed on him by his Welsh Office rival, the Labour MP Barry Jones,⁶⁷⁷ one of the men who was also responsible for the A55 improvement scheme during his period of office in the 1960s. However, Barry Jones later admitted that this was a compliment which was sincerely intended,⁶⁷⁸ such was Wyn Roberts’s contribution to the planning and campaigning for the A55 throughout the 1970s to the 1990s. This came with a few issues, namely at times there is a clash for Roberts between his patriotism for Wales and his desire for economic development, but also at times this went hand in hand. The A55 is the main bypass through North Wales between Wrexham and Holyhead, it exists as the main economic artery connecting North Wales to the North of England.

Similarly, the modernisation of the roads arguably came at a cost for the Conservative Party, much happened to destroy the existing local heritage in the name of economic modernisation. Many historic places with much meaning to the locality went in favour of a road, this came to a head in the debate over what should happen to preserve the world heritage site at Conwy. It was estimated that it could cost in the region of £160mn to improve the A55 at Conwy.⁶⁷⁹ The document Roads in Wales 1989⁶⁸⁰ estimated that the Conwy tunnel could cost up to £164mn, a whole £20mn more than a bridge across the Conwy estuary was estimated to cost. This destruction historically did not earn the Conservatives any favour in the 1980s, this was the case for the party in the 1990s. A lack of concern towards local identity lost the party a

⁶⁷⁵ ‘A55 North Wales Coast Road: ‘The Road of Opportunity’ report; review of economic benefits,’ The National Archives, Kew. BD 40/261 (Several reports were produced which usually mention the term ‘Road of Opportunity’ throughout the 1980s/90s.). Main document launched December 1989, Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 14, 5 December 1989. Opportunity remains a word of which is mentioned by several sources.

⁶⁷⁶ ‘David Cameron leads tributes to Lord Roberts of Conwy, 83’

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales25378694> (Last accessed 20 October 2018)

⁶⁷⁷ Barry Jones MP, later Baron Jones. Shadow Secretary of State for Wales, 9 January 1989 – 18 July 1992. MP for East Flintshire 1970 - 1983, Alyn and Deeside 1983-2001.

⁶⁷⁸ Eryl Crump, ‘A55 hailed a ‘great highway, warts and all’ by former minister,’ in *Daily Post*, 17 January 2016

⁶⁷⁹ Hansard, HC Deb. 11 January 1988, vol 125 c23w

⁶⁸⁰ ‘Roads in Wales 1989,’ Welsh Office, in Parliamentary Archives.

considerable number of votes.⁶⁸¹ The notion of landscape and change across the Twentieth century has a history of being a contentious issue in Wales, Tryweryn is the best example of this. Whilst none of the structures removed to make way for the A55 had the same impact upon Welshness as Tryweryn, they did have an impact upon local identity. These were issues that Wyn Roberts had always been keen to avoid given the furore over the Welsh Fourth channel,⁶⁸² it was a fine balance between patriotism and the desire for modernisation.

Wyn Roberts as minister for roads at the Welsh Office,⁶⁸³ was responsible for many roads across Wales.⁶⁸⁴ Due to the vastness of material, cost and time that has gone into the creation of the A55, this chapter will focus primarily on the segments which Wyn Roberts was involved with, chiefly on the areas concerning Colwyn Bay through to Conwy and the creation of the Conwy Tunnel and its subsequent by-products. More specifically, to the area which is referred to by the moniker ‘Collcon.’⁶⁸⁵ The A55 has been chosen as it is the most prominent example of all the roads which were upgraded during the period. Going through not only Roberts’ constituency of Conwy but also being a road in which he took much interest. Similarly, the problems faced during the building of this portion of the A55 were extensive to say the least. These included the Conwy estuary and the tunnel through it, rock tunnels in Penmaenbach and Pen Y Clip, promenade reconstruction in Colwyn Bay and Penmaenmawr, and finally negating mines in the Holywell region.⁶⁸⁶

The first section of this chapter will examine roads in Conservatism and Wyn Roberts’ role concerning the A55. As a prominent north Walian who has undoubtedly driven up it at many junctures in his later life, it brings a personal understanding as to why Roberts chased a better roads policy. For a biographical focus, an average person spends three years of their life on roads. It also gets behind Roberts’ thinking as well, for if roads are nation builders as contended by Weber,⁶⁸⁷ then the isolated communities of Wales could not contend in national

⁶⁸¹ See Chapter 5.

⁶⁸² See Chapter 2.

⁶⁸³ Wyn Roberts was the minister in charge of roads from 1985 onwards for the Welsh office.

⁶⁸⁴ Including but not limited to; M4, A5, A40, A44, A48, A55, A449, A458, A465, A470, A477, A479, A483, A487, A489, A494, A550, A4042, A4060, A4076, A4232, A4080. Source, Hansard HC Deb. 3 March 1986, vol.93 c24w

⁶⁸⁵ Juxtapose of place names along proposed route, Colwyn Bay and Conwy.

⁶⁸⁶ Wyn Roberts, ‘Foreword,’ in *The Journal of the Institution of Highways and Transportation and the Highways and Traffic Technicians Association*, 11.35 (1988) p.3

⁶⁸⁷ Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, p.220

politics until better roads had been built. Roads were wanted by the isolated communities of Wales, a notion which coming from such a community, Wyn Roberts was in touch with. The A55 is a big area of Wyn Roberts political career. As a part of Conservatism roads are a vital in driving improvements in the economy. The same can be said for Welsh Conservatism in that focus on roads policy made a way for the localities in Wales to be more accessible thus making Wales more viable, too as a place for inward investment from abroad.⁶⁸⁸ The historiographical implication is certain as Welsh Conservatism is still vastly understudied. To the best of known knowledge no one has previously studied the roads of Wales from such an angle by examining a particular person involved.

Second, will concern itself primarily with the planning of the A55 and the background concerns of the 1950s to the 1970s. Also, as it is an issue which Roberts eventually became vested in as a part of his general election campaign in 1974, Roberts chose the A55 as an election focus as it was an issue that deeply concerned his constituents. Finally, the upgrading of the A55 around the areas of the 'Collcon route' this being between Colwyn Bay, Conwy, Llanfairfechan and Penmaenmawr. It too will pertain some focus on the construction of the Conwy Tunnel as an issue which Robert's not only was intensely interested in, but an issue which he was eventually responsible for as of 1985 with his change of responsibility in the Welsh Office as a minister for Home & Health to Roads and Education.

For something as convenient and with use beyond measure, roads have an intricate and complex history. However, studies of any roads are scarce even though roads form much of a hidden history of a country.⁶⁸⁹ A first 'historical' work did attempt to compile a history of roads, if only an introductory attempt (Jacobson acknowledges this in Preface).⁶⁹⁰ As for Wales the case, once again, is one of a near lacuna in the historiography. Such works do exist, such as Elizabeth Crittall⁶⁹¹ on the roads of Wiltshire. Geoffrey Hindley's⁶⁹² history of the roads maintains a focus on the roads of England, though it is informative and academic

⁶⁸⁸ See Chapter: Wyn Roberts in a Global Wales.

⁶⁸⁹ Joe Moran, *On Roads: a Hidden History*, (London, 2010)

⁶⁹⁰ Herbert Reinhold Jacobson, 'A History of Roads from Ancient Times to the Motor Age,' *Master's Thesis, Georgia School of Technology*, (1940)

⁶⁹¹ Elizabeth Crittall (ed.), 'Roads,' in *A History of the County of Wiltshire: Volume 4*, (1959) pp.254-271

⁶⁹² Geoffrey Hindley, *A History of Roads*, (London, 1972)

is also dated. Mike Parker's⁶⁹³ work is most ambitious, claiming roads are the "cathedrals of the modern world."⁶⁹⁴ Similarly, Eugen Weber studied the effect of roads, concluding them to be great nation builders in relation to France.⁶⁹⁵ With the notable exception of Martin Johnes' work, on the M4 in South Wales,⁶⁹⁶ Wales is seldom mentioned. Given the status of the M4 being the economic pipeline of South Wales it forms an obvious road to study as it most likely would have existed even if it was not cost effective. As Johnes argues.

'...the M4 has been central to the development and life of post-war Wales. It enables the economy of South Wales to function and has shaped that economy's geographical development. It has become engrained in the physical and mental landscape and the time before it, a time of tailbacks and long journeys, a time not actually that long ago, has been forgotten. Indeed, a south Wales without the M4 is now unimaginable.'⁶⁹⁷

The same is true of the A55 in the north, Wyn Roberts knew from first-hand experience the issues traveling in North Wales before the road was built. The A55 joined the isolated regions of Anglesey with the cities in the of North England. The main impetus behind the A55 was to link Ireland with England forming a part of Euro-Route 22, this is part of an economic model for Wales, to link the isolated areas with the cities. Though the main arterial roads in Wales are always East-West reflecting the historical economic development in the region, the A55 follows the train route. This in contrast to the desires of Plaid Cymru who would like to see a bypass between North-South Wales. In addition of Johnes is Robin Mann et al⁶⁹⁸ who do examine the A55, though this is in a joint study on the localities in North Wales.

Studies relating directly to the A55 there are scarcely any, works available tend to be specific, with engineering journals covering the large-scale projects such as the Conwy Tunnel.

⁶⁹³ Mike Parker, *Mapping the Roads: Building Modern Britain*, (London, 2016)

⁶⁹⁴ Ibid. p.2

⁶⁹⁵ Eugen Weber, 'Roads, Roads and still more Roads,' in *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernisation of Rural France, 1870-1914*, (Stanford, 1976) p.196-220

⁶⁹⁶ Martin Johnes, 'M4 to Wales – and prosper!' A history of a motorway,' in *Historical Research*, 82. 237, (2014)

⁶⁹⁷ Martin Johnes, 'M4 to Wales – and prosper!' A history of a motorway,' in *Historical Research*, 82. 237, (2014) p.1

⁶⁹⁸ Robin Mann & Alexandra Plows, 'East, west and the bit in the middle: localities in north Wales,' in Martin Johnes, Scott Orford and Victoria Macfarlane, *People, Places and Policy: Knowing Contemporary Wales Through New Localities*, (Abingdon, 2016)

Examples of these engineering works for the A55 are Hawker & Stevens,⁶⁹⁹ and R. L. Wilson.⁷⁰⁰ These works do also extend to other aspects of the A55 such as the Pen-Y-Clip Tunnel, see Hilmy et al,⁷⁰¹ an engineering-based journal which focuses on the building of the tunnel. The main structure on the A55 that has received much attention from engineering journals is the Conwy tunnel; Stone & McFadden,⁷⁰² D. Nichol,⁷⁰³ McFadzean,⁷⁰⁴ Fitch & Stone, are all examples of this.⁷⁰⁵ (Copies of some of these journal articles are available in the Conwy Archives, Llandudno CX325.) It is easy to see why it had such a dominance in the engineering journals of the age. Given at the time of its construction, the Conwy Tunnel was the largest construction project of its kind until the creation of the Channel Tunnel in the 1990s. What is more unusual is given its effects on the landscape, why has the tunnel escaped the attention of historians? At the time of construction various Government departments-initiated studies to examine different areas for impact of the A55. One way in which the A55 is examined is environmental studies, such as the Welsh Office publication by M.D Heller et al.⁷⁰⁶ This was not the only impact of the A55 that was researched. At the time of the A55 construction, the tourist board investigated the tourism development potential in Wales.⁷⁰⁷ A final one is a report from Clwyd County Council, on the regional impact of road

⁶⁹⁹ B. Hawker & H. Stevens, *The Motorway Achievement. Building the Network: Wales*, (Chichester, 2010)

⁷⁰⁰ R.L. Wilson, 'The A55 N Wales Coast Road,' in *Journal of the Geological Society of London*, 139.2 (1982) p.225

⁷⁰¹ A.M. Hilmy & D.J. Hindle & J. Scholey & J. Cockett, 'The Pen-y-Clip tunnel,' in *Tunnels and Tunneling*, 28.1 (1996) pp.37-9

⁷⁰² Peter Stone & John Mcfadden, 'Design & Construction of Conwy's 710m immersed tube tunnel,' in *Tunnels and Tunnelling*, 25.3 (1993) pp.43-4

⁷⁰³ D. Nichol, 'Geo-Engineering along the A55 North Wales Coast Road,' in *Quarterly Journal of Engineering Geology and Hydrogeology*, 34.1 (2001) pp.51-64

⁷⁰⁴ J.F. McFadzean, 'Construction of the Conwy Crossings,' in *Highways and Transportation*, 35 (1988) p.18

⁷⁰⁵ J.R. Fitch & P.A. Stone, 'A55 North Wales Coast Road: the Conwy crossing,' in *Permanent Way Institution Journal*, 107.1 (1989) pp.66-76

⁷⁰⁶ M. D Heller & P. L. Allen, 'Environmental Impact Monitoring of the A55 Conwy Estuary Tunnel Scheme,' Welsh Office, 1995. Also, Giles Dominic Merritt, 'An Appraisal of Modern-Day Roadside Tree Planting in the United Kingdom with Specific reference to the A55,' United Kingdom, 1994.

⁷⁰⁷ Wales Tourist Board, Research and Planning Department, 'Hotel Development Potential in the A55, M4 and Heads of the Valleys Strategic Road Corridors,' 1989

improvement.⁷⁰⁸ This is not a complete list as many more such reports exist⁷⁰⁹ which historians could make substantive use of. This is another place in which this thesis will aid in adding to original historiography, by examining the efforts of Wyn Roberts and the creation of the Conwy Tunnel.

It is easy to understand why the focus is engineering based, even though this can be a valuable source in a historical analysis. The main literature for roads is Joe Moran's book,⁷¹⁰ in which he examines the history of roads in the UK but also provides an answer to an unasked question which is, why examine the roads in a work on Wyn Roberts? As Moran states.

“Most of us contemplate roads only when we're in motion, and we simply want them to be smooth, unvarying and amenable to distracted driving.”⁷¹¹

People spend the much of their time on roads, with an average of three years in a lifetime being spent on the road.⁷¹² Therefore, it seems that much of the life story of a person is henceforth missed. Wyn Roberts is certainly not an exception, as the Welsh Minister for roads, but as a local to North Wales Roberts knew all too well the problems for people who had to commute via the older A55 route through Conwy and Llandudno Junction. The prolific traffic on the road, combined with the heights of summer tourism made traversing North Wales hectic for the locals. Such stories of roads, however, are apparent in everyday life and provide a unique aspect into the everyday lives of people from across the Twentieth Century. Nicholas Crickhowell mused that, it used to take him seven hours to get from St. David's to London, including regularly having to load the car on the sleeper (overnight) train.⁷¹³ Following the construction of the M4, this journey could be done by car in two hours.

⁷⁰⁸ Clwyd (Wales). Department of Architecture, Planning, and Estates, 'The A55 Trunk Road Improvement: An Opportunity for Clwyd,' Clwyd County Council Report, 1987.

⁷⁰⁹ K. C. Brady, D. A. Barratt, P. J. Selley, 'The Design, Construction and Instrumentation of the Pen-y-Clip Section of the A55, North Wales Coast Road,' Transport Research Laboratory, 1994.

⁷¹⁰ Joe Moran, *On Roads: a Hidden History*, (London, 2010)

⁷¹¹ Ibid. p.9

⁷¹² 'Britons spend more time driving than socialising,' in *The Telegraph*, 27 November 2018

⁷¹³ Lord Crickhowell, 'The Conservative Party and Wales,' National Library of Wales, (2006)

Though Eugen Weber contends that roads helped cement unity in France,⁷¹⁴ this is not quite the case for Wales. Wyn Roberts was in a unique position to help Wales as a Nation since the addition of roads could help with economic restructuring in Wales. This modernised the Welsh economy, especially into one focused on the service sector and tourism. Roberts' thinking was a Wales that was best entwined in the UK and not independent but that the use of roads could give Wales a heightened sense of national pride and unity. This supposed unity in Wales, however, came in the form of either; protest the routes of certain roads, with the A55 being a stellar example, or the feeling that the English were invading and threatening the local identities which had prevailed for centuries.

Roads in Welsh Conservatism?

Since the 1930s there have been a few attempts to upgrade or improve the A55 in North Wales, however, a lot of these upgrades to the A55 were superficial and were designed to alleviate long term problems in the short term. A first serious policy for the roads in Wales came from the Conservative Party in 1959 with *Work for Wales*,⁷¹⁵ spending on roads was and is a vital part of Conservatism. It was however, with Harold Wilson's Labour government of 1964-1970 that any real and strong attempt to upgrade the road network in Wales. This was as a part of economic restructuring⁷¹⁶ since roads act as vital economic links. Though spending in Wales could also be a response to the "alarming" victories of Plaid Cymru in the 1966 general election,⁷¹⁷ the intention being to invest in other areas of Wales to quell the perceived Nationalist threat from the start. Though money was first prioritised for spending on the M4 in the South of Wales, the A55 became the main artery through North Wales.

⁷¹⁴ Eugen Weber, 'Roads, Roads and still more Roads,' in *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernisation of Rural France, 1870-1914*, (Stanford, 1976) p.20

⁷¹⁵ Tom Hooson, *Work for Wales: Gwaith I Gymru*, (1959)

⁷¹⁶ David Rose et al. 'Economic Restructuring: The British Experience, in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol.475, (Deindustrialisation: Restructuring the Economy), (1984) pp.137-157 p.138

⁷¹⁷ Plaid Cymru had been successful in marketing Labour's policies as anti-Welsh. See, Duncan Tanner, 'Facing the Challenge: Labour and Politics, 1970-2000,' in Duncan Tanner & Chris Williams & Deian Hopkin, *The Labour Party in Wales, 1900-2000*, (Cardiff, 2000)

However, it would be another decade of planning before major construction projects such as the tunnel at Penmaenbach, the bypassing of the Collcon region which took several years of planning and objections raised by the public to negotiate. The “crown jewel” of the A55 improvements was the Conwy Tunnel at the time the largest and only project of its kind, it ran right under the river Conwy and straight through Wyn Robert’s constituency.

Most major road constructions across Wales, and indeed the UK occurred under the Thatcher government in the 1980s, since Thatcherism advocated a pro-roads stance in the UK,⁷¹⁸ *Roads in Wales: The 1990s and beyond*, had some 160 responses from councils with £500mn on plans for the A55.⁷¹⁹ However, under John Major’s governments the policies of road expansion mainly the ‘roads for prosperity,’ were largely abandoned by 1996,⁷²⁰ this was down to the number of protests that some road projects produced. Though the A55 was improved there are further calls for it to be improved further still in the 2010s,⁷²¹ it is also something which the Conservatives are still pressing for.⁷²²

As previously stated, roads were a part of the never-ending goal of affluence across the 1950s and 60s, as a part of one-nation Conservatism prevalent in the era. For Thatcherism and the Thatcher Governments a focus on roads continued this trend of affluence. For Welsh Conservatism in Wales the use of roads carried a much more specific focus with a specific aim of catering for the growing tourism sector in Wales but also due to the increased use of Foreign Direct investment into Wales across the 1980s and 1990s.

With the new factories came the need for better access into and across Wales, but in doing so these new roads cut across old identities to become new ones. Similarly, a North Wales with the traffic problems it used to have of queues for miles through the towns is near unthinkable

⁷¹⁸ Roads for Prosperity, Department of Transport, (London, 1989) HMSO CM 693

⁷¹⁹ Hansard, HC Deb, 20 March 1989, vol. 149 c714

⁷²⁰ Geoffrey Leon, ‘Tories ditch the ‘car economy,’ in *The Independent*, 21 January 1996. p.21

⁷²¹ Andrew Forgrave, ‘Upgrades to ‘overstressed’ A55 key to levelling up North Wales with rest of Britain says UK Government,’ in *Daily Post*, 29 November 2021.

⁷²² ‘Welsh Conservatives to deliver A55 and rail upgrades to get the North Wales economy moving,’ 27 April 2021, available on <https://www.conservatives.wales/news/welsh-conservatives-deliver-a55-and-rail-upgrades-get-north-wales-economy-moving> (Last Accessed 1st February 2022)

today, the traffic remains but it is not prevalent throughout the towns that the old route used to take.

The white paper 'Roads for Prosperity 1989'⁷²³ set out an ambitious new plan for after 1989 there were attempts to exponentially increase the number of motorways throughout Britain. In addition to this, several papers were published, many with a specific aim of improving the road network throughout Wales. Though for Wales this started decades earlier, the report Roads in Wales 1978,⁷²⁴ set out the Conservative aim for road building throughout Wales. The follow up report Roads in Wales 1980 makes provision for the A55 in that of improved traffic and pedestrian safety to a reduction in both air and visual pollution.⁷²⁵ The report was published subsequently at the discretion of the Secretary of State for Wales. This was followed up by consecutive reports biennially, with Roads in Wales 1983 and Roads in Wales 1985.⁷²⁶

As is noted in his diaries, Wyn Roberts had a hand in editing the documents relating to the A55, a notable one is the entry is on the 'A55 - Road to Opportunity' document, Roberts notes that, he hopes the native Welsh have a chance before 'progress' engulfs them.⁷²⁷ Welsh Conservatism advocates roadbuilding, it seems the Welsh Conservative had issues balancing patriotism and modernisation in Wales. The Blue Dragon shines through here, it seems that Wyn Roberts was concerned for the people of Wales once again, it is his hope that the Welsh can make use of the road. In the sense of building factories or making the most of inward investment before such progress engulfs them. Wyn Roberts does not elaborate on what exactly his fears are, but it can be assumed that he had some fear for the local communities that could be destroyed by tourism or opening such once isolated communities to the world. This is another issue of a clash of conservative principles, there is a clash for Wyn Roberts, between the Blue Dragon who wanted to see modernisation for the country he loved and the Blue Dragon who wished to see Wales preserved. As can be seen in this chapter the clash between modernisation and conservation is a line that Wyn Roberts would have to walk. The

⁷²³ Roads for Prosperity, Department of Transport, (London, 1989) HMSO CM 693

⁷²⁴ 'Roads in Wales 1978,' Welsh Office, in Parliamentary Archives.

HC/CL/JO/10/1459/1151

⁷²⁵ 'Roads in Wales 1980' Welsh Office, in Parliamentary Archives.

⁷²⁶ 'Roads in Wales 1985,' Welsh Office, in Parliamentary Archives, HC/CL/JO/10/1885/216

⁷²⁷ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 14, 27 November 1989

modernisation can be seen in the improvement of the roads network, whilst the conservation can be seen with the creation of the Conwy Tunnel.

To further quote Joe Moran, about the subject of roads, “when it comes to roads, it’s hard to separate the facts from the folk memory.”⁷²⁸ The case for the A55 is not exception to this. If the view of an official document pertaining to the A55 were taken, it would almost certainly contain the word ‘opportunity.’⁷²⁹ Ask anyone who resides in North Wales or has had a holiday there, who has driven down the A55, a much differing view is taken with language ranging from shambles, narrow ill-fitting road, victim, to name a few.⁷³⁰ Roads are the preserve of everyone, used, and unnoticed. That is until they become a nuisance, the A55 is certainly not a stranger to this. It is near impossible to traverse the length of the A55 between Holyhead to Chester without running into routine maintenance, emergency roadworks or traffic accidents. As noted by Janet Finch-Saunders when enquiring about the A55 for the year February 2017-February 2018, there were 55 occasions in which sections of the A55 were closed for more than an hour.⁷³¹ It is instances such as this that the name of ‘highway of despair’ comes to the fore as opposed to road of opportunity.

Wyn Roberts was one of these North Wales locals, as he notes in his diary.

“Having used the road regularly for the last 35 years. I have seen the enormous improvements carried out on it... Traveling between the North and South Wales and back again has been the story of my life.”⁷³²

Growing up in Llansadwrn, in one of the most remote regions of Wales on the Isle of Anglesey, being in a relatively isolated community was nothing new to Wyn Roberts, neither was the issue of roads in Wales. Across these 35 years he went from having a 7-hour commute to a 2-hour commute across the country. Living on Anglesey in the 1930s, it is not

⁷²⁸ Joe Moran, *On Roads: a Hidden History*, (London, 2010) p.4

⁷²⁹ A55 North Wales Coast Road: 'The Road of Opportunity' report; review of economic benefits,' The National Archives, Kew. BD 40/261

⁷³⁰ Eryl Crump, 'What YOU have to say about the A55,' in *Daily Post*, 1 January 2016.

⁷³¹ Janet Finch-Saunders, 'North Wales motorists pay the price as A55 closures reach 2720 hours in a year,' available on <https://www.janetfinchsaunders.org.uk/news/north-wales-motorists-pay-price-a55-closures-reach-2720-hours-year> (Last accessed 16 July 2019)

⁷³² 'On my way to being a reality,' in *Western Mail*, 6 August 1990, Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 14

difficult to imagine that transport via roads to anywhere else within Wales was difficult. The only route off Anglesey at the time was the A5 across the Menai Bridge, then through several villages and towns though not traffic heavy at this era of time it still took at least 5 hours to reach the border with England.⁷³³ The A55's construction only commenced in the 1930s. During Wyn Robert's childhood it was by his own admission that before Harrow the furthest he had ever travelled was a day trip to Liverpool. This was however by train.⁷³⁴ The journey by train, though quicker, was hardly an ideal solution to the road's situation in Wales. The haunting 'Beeching Axe' of the 1960s Conservative government did nothing to help alleviate this issue.⁷³⁵

The problem of the roads is more notable during Roberts first career with Television West and West, for traveling done by someone who worked in either television or broadcasting the awareness of the problems of roads in Wales was paramount. It comes as no surprise then when the issue of the A55 became a focus of Wyn Roberts' 1974 general election campaign in Conwy.⁷³⁶ As an MP who took notice of his constituent's concerns, the public response to the A55 was momentous to say the least. The A55 was an issue that could easily influence an election, and one that Wyn Roberts was familiar with due to his childhood, it is little wonder he took up the A55 as an election issue.

The story of the A55 for Roberts continued with his time as an MP for the Conwy constituency. For much of the A55, the segments of each part of the road were usually opened by Wyn Roberts. Llandulas to Brompton Avenue in December 1984 and then Llandulas to Glan Conwy in July 1985⁷³⁷ then the Holywell Bypass, October 1986.⁷³⁸ These remain just a few of the sections of the A55 which were opened by Roberts. Furthermore,

⁷³³ Robin Richards, *Two Bridges over Menai*, (Llanwrst, 2004)

⁷³⁴ Lord Roberts of Conwy, *Right from the Start*, p.12

⁷³⁵ See, Charles Loft, *Last Trains: Dr Beeching and the Death of Rural England*, (London, 2013) also; Alejandro Quiroz Flores & Paul Whiteley, 'The "Beeching Axe" and electoral support in Britain,' in *European Review of Economic History*, 22.3 (2018) pp.361-379

⁷³⁶ Eryl Crump, 'A brief history of the A55, North Wales' most notorious road,' in *Daily post*, 29 December 2015

⁷³⁷ Eunice Roberts & Helen Morley, *The Spirit of Colwyn Bay: 2: The 20th Century in Photographs*, (Ashbourne, 2003) p.54

⁷³⁸ 'A55 Holywell Bypass, opening by Wyn Roberts, MP, 31st October 1986,' *Welsh Office*.

David Jones MP remarked that, every 3-4 miles along the A55 that you would pass a plaque with Wyn Roberts name on it.⁷³⁹



Figure 13: A55 Improvement Scheme plaque for Abergwyngregyn.⁷⁴⁰

There is a form of Banal Nationalism here, an everyday representation of a nation or a nation's identity.⁷⁴¹ This is an important point for Wyn Roberts, though it is typically examined with road-signs,⁷⁴² it is a Blue Dragon form of banal Nationalism. The same can be applied to having a name on a plaque, it meant that people would know what you had done for decades to come. Though typically a Welsh Conservative would clash with extreme forms of Nationalism,⁷⁴³ the use of plaques promotes a form of civic pride from the recipient. One that demonstrates that Roberts was in touch with public opinion, but also used banal nationalism to demonstrate what he did for his country. This did not just happen with roads, another notable example of this comes from the Welsh Mountain Zoo in Colwyn Bay, where Roberts opened a centre in 1993. This Banal Nationalism serves as a less obvious flagging of national identity, one of which is perfect for Wyn Roberts. It is also one which serves to demonstrate how his position may have been treated in the history of Welsh identity, not as a Welsh person of importance but merely as a ribbon cutter.

⁷³⁹ David Williamson, 'Meet David Jones – the new Welsh Secretary,' on *Wales Online*, 8 September 2012, available on <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/meet-david-jones---new-2023721> (Last accessed 10 November 2018)

⁷⁴⁰ Picture taken on 13 September 2019.

⁷⁴¹ Michael Billig, *Banal nationalism*, (London, 1995)

⁷⁴² Rhys Jones & Peter Merriman, 'Hot, banal and everyday nationalism: Bilingual road signs in Wales,' in *Political Geography*, 28.3, (2009) pp.163-74

⁷⁴³ See Chapter 2.



Figure 14: Plaque of Wyn Roberts, Welsh Mountain Zoo⁷⁴⁴

Wyn Robert's involvement with the roads of Wales comes far after the original start date of 1966, though much of the impetus behind the A55 upgrades from the 1980s is attributable to him. For whom can be named as the creator of said roads, the Secretary of State for Wales John Redwood seems to take the credit for the "Southern M4; Northern A55 and the A40 to the M4."⁷⁴⁵ He became minister at a time when the A55, bar Anglesey, was complete. The M4 along with the A55 had both been planned and completed by 1993, if anyone were to take responsibility for the planning of these roads it would be Lord Crickhowell not John Redwood.

The 1970s saw Wyn Roberts concern himself in parliament with the road improvements in Wales, this too is similar for much of the 1980s and the 1990s though officially Wyn Roberts only became responsible for the roads of Wales from 1985.⁷⁴⁶ The issue of the Welsh roads became the forefront of Robert's 1974 election campaign for the seat of Conwy, stating that "There is one local issue I must make my position clear. It is the new A55,"⁷⁴⁷ (examined further on in this chapter).

⁷⁴⁴ Picture taken on 21 September 2019.

⁷⁴⁵ John Redwood, *Singing the Blues: 30 Years of Tory Civil War*, (London, 2004)

⁷⁴⁶ Michael Senior, *The Crossing of the Conwy and its role in the story of North Wales*, (Llanwrst, 1991) p.7

⁷⁴⁷ Eryl Crump, 'A brief history of the A55, North Wales' most notorious road,' in *Daily post*, 29 December 2015

The building of roads, such as the Welsh cases of both the M4 and the A55, are momentous projects. It is simply unfeasible to consider crediting one person with being the originator, only to consider that of the numerous involved some people could take credit. The A55 for example existed as a road before it was dualled and upgraded, the idea for upgrading the area around Colwyn and Conwy were first examined by John Morris as the Secretary of State for Wales in 1968.⁷⁴⁸ The plan for a tunnel under the river Conwy was enacted by Nicholas Crickhowell during his tenure as Welsh secretary.

For the actual opening and upgrading of the roads Wyn Roberts was the frontman, named on most of the plaques for each section of the A55 being opened, he too is pictured with the Queen upon the tunnel's opening in 1991. It was during this time of openings that the planning for the Conwy Tunnel took place with the eventual contract that was awarded and then signed at the Castle hotel by Roberts in 1986. This construction project originally destined to be completed in only 4 ½ years was ahead of schedule, though magnificently over the original budget at the point of the contract being signed.

As Lord Roberts of Conwy after retirement from the House of Commons in 1997 it is easy to imagine a certain pride Roberts may have felt for having helped improve the roads so much. That it has been "a blessing for North Wales."⁷⁴⁹ However, Roberts views also match those of the rest of the populace, "One wishes that maintenance would be carried out quickly and effectively without unnecessary and costly delays to motorists."⁷⁵⁰ Though such concerns with roads are not unusual, the M4 is a prominent example of this with a relief road currently being planned, and desperately needed.⁷⁵¹ Most motorways in Britain contain this within their histories. Throughout the vast majority of Wyn Roberts life, the A55 has been the main road

⁷⁴⁸ Sir John Morris MP, later Lord Morris of Aberavon. Was the Secretary of State for Wales from 5 March 1974 – 4 May 1979, under both Harold Wilson and Jim Callaghan. Also, Wales' longest serving MP from 1959 till 2001 for the Aberavon constituency.

⁷⁴⁹ David Powell, 'The A55... road of opportunity or highway to hell,' in *Daily Post*, 20 April 2013

⁷⁵⁰ David Powell, 'The A55... road of opportunity or highway to hell,' in *Daily Post*, 20 April 2013

⁷⁵¹ As of October 2018, this is a fierce issue within the politics of South Wales and has been for several years. December 2018 saw a debate in the Senedd about the idea of a relief road, with concerns that it would be much needed with the expected traffic increase with the scrapping of the M4 tolls.

through North Wales. Wyn Roberts campaigned for it; was pivotal in helping to upgrade it, and possibly most importantly in this instance was one of the many thousands who, commuted along it.

The 1960s to 1970s.

Planning the A55.

For the local Welsh the journeys home from a day of work became not only quicker but unbearable at times due to the A55's notoriety as put by David Powell the 'highway to hell.'⁷⁵² Roadworks, lorries to and from Holyhead as part of Euro-route 22, and heavy traffic resulting from the increased tourism in the summer months but too attributable to the sheer volume of traffic coming from increased car usage with each passing decade. The despair that can be caused by the A55 is nothing modern, whilst the complaints since its completion are beyond countless. It has been causing controversy since before it was built. The proposed route caused outcry from many residents of North Wales. To the extent that Ednyfed Hudson Davies⁷⁵³ hired a cinema, owing to the volumes of people, to consult constituents over the best route for A55 bypass of the Colwyn Bay route.⁷⁵⁴

Though, the starting point for discussion in the upgrading of the A55 originated in the 1930, the starting point for the A55 upgrades came from the Conservative government in 1959. Specifically, a Conservative policy document, *Work for Wales: Gwaith I Gymru*.⁷⁵⁵ This document advocated for the expansion of roads in Wales with a focus on specific routes such as the M4 in the south, creating an economic pipeline through Bristol. Also, the A55 in the north linking to the cities of North England. Roads were a sign of affluence and social mobility,⁷⁵⁶ and a sign of rising prosperity in Britain.⁷⁵⁷

⁷⁵² David Powell, 'The A55... road of opportunity or highway to hell,' in *Daily Post*, 20 April 2013

⁷⁵³ MP for Conway prior to being ousted by Wyn Roberts in the 1970 general election.

⁷⁵⁴ 'Ednyfed Hudson Davies,' in *The Daily Telegraph*, 15 January 2018

⁷⁵⁵ Tom Hooson, *Work for Wales: Gwaith I Gymru*, (1959)

⁷⁵⁶ Dominic Sandbrook, *Never Had it So Good: A History of Britain from Suez to the Beatles*, (London, 2005) pp.92-3

⁷⁵⁷ 'Conservative Party Manifesto: *The Next Five Years*, 1959,' Oxford, Bodleian Library, Conservative Party Archive, PUB 155/9

Attempts to improve the bottleneck through Conwy, existed prior to this such as the building of the Conwy Road Bridge⁷⁵⁸ further down the river Conwy from Telford's Bridge.⁷⁵⁹ Arguably the effect was quite minimal. However, the establishment of the Welsh Office in 1964, this allowed for a department which focused exclusively on Wales is when road improvements and the complaints were taken seriously. To the point that the government started to improve the roads in Wales. Starting with what would become 30 years' worth of improvements to transform the A55 into a dual carriageway. The economic impact of such a road is undeniable, transforming the tourism industry across Gwynedd and Arfon almost overnight. Though the moniker 'road to opportunity' as quipped by Wyn Roberts, and branded about by several politicians over the decades, provided a further opportunity. However, this was to be an opportunity for the North Wales Economy to be damaged, as employers now had the ability to manage North Wales from England. Several choosing to use Chester or Wrexham as a base, after the A55 reached Bangor. The Royal Mail did just this, as the sorting office for North Wales moved out of Bangor and is now located in Chester, to reduce costs.

Under Harold Wilson, the Labour government produced two reports. 'Wales: The Way Ahead,' was a Welsh Office paper published in 1967,⁷⁶⁰ with more than 50 miles of road improvements planned. Even though in the next report "The Task Ahead" cast a gloomy outlook on the efficacy of this in Wales.⁷⁶¹ The fears of the Wilson administration over the newfound political efficacy of Plaid Cymru, were realised when Gwynfor Evans challenged the paper in parliament too.⁷⁶²

The 'Collcon report' of 1968 had concluded that traffic had reached unbearable levels across North Wales. Therefore, it proposed new routes into Northwest Wales, which would ease this burden, even if copies of the report were vague and hard to obtain in 1969.⁷⁶³ However, as only £880,000 in 1970 to 1971 and £1.6mn in 1971 to 1972 was spent on roads in Wales,⁷⁶⁴

⁷⁵⁸ R. Halsem et al. *Buildings of Wales: Gwynedd*, (Cardiff, 2009) pp.317-8

⁷⁵⁹ Conwy Suspension Bridge originally carried the A55 prior to the construction of the new bridge in 1958.

⁷⁶⁰ Welsh Economic Plan – Wales: The Way Ahead, The National Archives, Kew. EW 7/639

⁷⁶¹ Wales: The Task Ahead. 1969

⁷⁶² Hansard, HC Deb, 6 March 1969, vol. 779 cc.647-8

⁷⁶³ Hansard, HC Deb. 6 March 1969, vol. 779 cc.648-9

⁷⁶⁴ Hansard, HC Deb, 10 July 1972, vol. 840 cc.1171-2

Evans' concerns over regional disparities seem to be realised. Though the expenditures still surpassed what was being spent on roads in both England and Scotland, in this period.⁷⁶⁵ The need for a solution in North Wales was required. Though this period saw more being spent on the creation of the M4 through South Wales. This area though did see several problems with the existing road, the A48 going through Swansea, Newport, and Cardiff.⁷⁶⁶ The old route of the A55 suffered similar issues going through town centres, such as those of Colwyn Bay, and Conwy.⁷⁶⁷

It was under John Morris that the routes for the A55 were revealed. As a part of 'Collcon' a new route through Colwyn and Conwy was advised with several routes suggested. The result from this however, came in the form of near a decade of protests and complaints, Committees and action groups formed by residents fearful for homes, local councils, and councillors alike. The A55 became a local issue due to the destruction and communities who would have the burden of the road passing by or through their communities. Many were working class communities who felt local concerns were being ignored by Westminster.

In 1971 a petition was delivered to the Welsh Office which contained some 14,000 signatures in protest to the then Welsh Secretary of State, Peter Thomas⁷⁶⁸ over his decision⁷⁶⁹ over which coastal route⁷⁷⁰ to use and which would contain a Deganwy Bridge. These kinds of complaints continued into the next year of 1972. Colwyn Town council were aghast at the route and provided a different plan which would be nowhere near as disruptive or destructive to the town. There was some relent as Peter Thomas was willing to accept financial imbursement to homeowners in Colwyn who would be greatly inconvenienced by the creation of such a road.⁷⁷¹ Measures such as this, however, did not stop several objection groups being formed against the A55, 1972 saw the formation of the Colwyn Bay Collcon

⁷⁶⁵ Hansard, HC Deb, 29 April 1974, vol. 872 c395w

⁷⁶⁶ Martin Johnes, 'Welsh History Month: The M4 in South Wales,' on *Wales Online*, 9 April 2012

⁷⁶⁷ R. Travers and Morgan, 'North Wales Coast Road (A55): Conwy Estuary Tunnel: General Report,' Welsh Office, March 1980, p.8 Conwy Archives, Llandudno.

⁷⁶⁸ Peter Thomas MP, Secretary of State for Wales, 19 June 1970 – 5 March 1974. MP for Conwy between 1951-1966 then returned to office in 1970 for Hendon South.

⁷⁶⁹ Hansard, HC Deb. 26 May 1972, vol. 837 cc547-8w

⁷⁷⁰ Hansard, HC Deb. 31 July 1972, vol. 842 c4w

⁷⁷¹ Hansard, HC Deb. 2 July 1971, vol. 820 c227w

Action Committee.⁷⁷² Also, the Llanfairfechan By-Pass Action Group,⁷⁷³ formed in 1972 with objections of Secretary of States proposed A55 route. The Llanfairfechan group met again in 1985 to challenge a 40-mile detour due to rock fall in Pen-Y-Clip tunnel. They also met for final time when it disbanded in November 1989, for its lack of efficacy over the roads in Wales. Also, the concerns of residents by 1989 either been subverted and avoided or had come to fruition despite protests.

Similarly, the Conwy Expressway Action Group⁷⁷⁴ and the North Wales Expressway Action Group,⁷⁷⁵ also put forth new route ideas, citing numerous reasons for each one. The Colwyn Bay Civic Society formed in 1972⁷⁷⁶ though with no brief over the A55 the timing of its formation along with several other action groups is less than coincidental. Further objections came from the Council for the Protection of Rural Wales.⁷⁷⁷ Similarly, in 1973 the controversy over the Deganwy Bridge was not a new venture. Conwy Council had voted against the preferred route by an impressive margin of 14 votes. Too the council had suggested a tunnel as the only way to save the Conwy estuary from being devastated by a new bridge. The notion of a tunnel was then backed by the councillors of Aberconwy Borough Council with 23-5 voting in favour of a tunnel. Aberconwy Council also provided a report with alternative routes for the A55 through the borough.⁷⁷⁸ The idea gained momentum gaining the support of Dame Sylvia Crowe⁷⁷⁹ who backed the plan for a tunnel in 1975.⁷⁸⁰ The complaints by this point had become so numerous that a public inquiry was announced into the route of the A55 through the 'Collcon region.' This inquiry, one that would become the most expensive and longest running in the country for the twentieth century. 1974 saw much waiting for the public enquiry into new routes for the A55.⁷⁸¹ At the time, Sir John

⁷⁷² Action group to protest the A55 route through the Borough of Colwyn.

⁷⁷³ 'Records of the Llanfairfechan By-pass Action Group,' Conwy Archives, Llandudno. CX117

⁷⁷⁴ Action group to protest the A55 route through Conwy.

⁷⁷⁵ Protest group against the whole of the A55.

⁷⁷⁶ CBCS, <http://www.colwynbaycivicsociety.co.uk/what-we-do/> (Last Accessed 16 December 2018)

⁷⁷⁷ Further records for the Council for the Protection of Rural Wales, Local branch, Pembrokeshire Archives, GB 213 HDSO/43, DSO 67, National Library of Wales.

⁷⁷⁸ Aberconwy Borough Council, 'Report on Alternatives to the Welsh Office Proposals within the Borough of Aberconwy,' (May 1975) Conwy Archives, Llandudno. CO2/9/13/16

⁷⁷⁹ Dame Sylvia Crowe is a former president of the Institute of Landscape Architects.

⁷⁸⁰ 'Tunnel plan backed,' in *The Guardian*, 10 July 1975

⁷⁸¹ Hansard, HC Deb. 27 June 1974, vol. 875 c.548w

Morris was handed an 816-page report on the choice of route with no less than 45 alternate routes suggested. Along with this came some 636 objection letters over the route itself all detailing, some with great clarity others outlining the concerns of residents, who offered numerous reasons as to why the A55 route should be changed.⁷⁸² All these action groups demonstrate that the A55 was quite an emotive issue to the residents of North Wales, the public exhibitions are demonstrable as such for they attracted many thousands across the consultation period.⁷⁸³

In early 1975, there was still no set date for the public inquiry,⁷⁸⁴ however, with the eventual announcement 1975/6 saw what the longest public inquiry in the history of the United Kingdom it was also, the most expensive. With ideas of a new route through the; Conwy, Penmaenmawr, Colwyn Bay and Llanfairfechan coastal regions. Afterwards there was a long wait with no date set for new route as of August 1976,⁷⁸⁵ the same was true a whole year later as of November 1977, there was still no announcement of the new A55 route.⁷⁸⁶ Wyn Roberts spent much of his time inquiring to Barry Jones MP as to the new A55 route.⁷⁸⁷ The main issue was a lack of funding, in October 1977 Roberts was talking of loans to speed up the building of the A55 (as it would eventually be as Euro-route 22), no funding was available,⁷⁸⁸ this is mainly due to other spending priorities in the 1970s. If not funding issues that delayed the A55, it was also local issues, such as when the potential routes were announced nobody seemed to be a fan and everyone from action groups to local councils all had their own ideas and alternative routes put to central government. From a central government perspective, whichever route the road took was a necessity in pursuit of social and economic modernisation. It comes with little surprise that the planning and execution of the A55 would become a decade long affair.

It is with little surprise then that the issue of roads in Wales became an election promise of Wyn Roberts in February 1974 re-election campaign for Conway. It was an emotive issue, for

⁷⁸² Most of these inquiry letters, reports and council complaints are available in the Conwy Archives, Llandudno.

⁷⁸³ Hansard, HC Deb. 29 July 1974, vol. 878 c5w

⁷⁸⁴ Hansard, HC Deb. 20 January 1975, vol. 884 c258w

⁷⁸⁵ Hansard, HC Deb. 5 August 1976, vol. 916 c970

⁷⁸⁶ Hansard, HC Deb. 26 October 1977, vol. 936 c789

⁷⁸⁷ Hansard, HC Deb. 9 November 1977, vol. 938 c.136w

⁷⁸⁸ Hansard, HC Deb. 31 October 1979, vol. 972 c.534w

the people of North Wales, the local councils and even up to the Marquis of Anglesey.⁷⁸⁹ As evidenced right from the start the plans for the A55 had issues over; the costs, Land disputes, and complaints from the residents. It was a ripe issue for Roberts to stand on and one that would go on to last for the whole of the time that Wyn Roberts was in government and after. It shows Roberts as an MP who stood for what concerned the residents of his constituency, there are several examples of Wyn Roberts addressing constituents' concerns over the A55.

Officially, Wyn Roberts did not take the lead charge on roads in Wales until 1985, he admits as much himself.⁷⁹⁰ He did promise as part of his 1974 re-election campaign for the Conwy Constituency that he would make clear the issue of the A55 Roberts certainly did. The parliamentary records of *Hansard* demonstrate as much, there are several entries across the 1970s which reveal Roberts pursuing the roads issue either for an inquiry date or for information into different aspects of construction. Throughout the majority of the 1970s Roberts was pivotal in the encouragement of road improvements across North Wales, specifically regarding the A55. Similarly, the relative isolationism of certain rural communities meant that most could not contend in national politics or compete on the same level. Wyn Roberts grew up in Llansadwrn on Anglesey in the 1930s so knew first-hand the need for better infrastructure across the whole of Wales, not just in his constituency.

The 1970s then, sees very little action in terms of upgrading the A55 under the Labour Governments. Though this is attributable to the issues of the period, though mainly economic problems the excessive planning periods did nothing to help matters. It was under the impetus of the Thatcher government in which progress on the A55 was finally underway. There is a too a common factor between the progress of roads and Welsh language, both made the most substantial progress under the Thatcher governments. This is attributable to the actions of Blue Dragons such as Wyn Roberts. This inaction continued up until the arrival of the Conservative government. By 1979 the River Conwy, in Wyn Roberts' constituency, came up for review, with investigations into the feasibility of crossing routes, with the eventual announcement.⁷⁹¹ Financing the roads was an issue, there was much talk of private finance

⁷⁸⁹ 'Letter from the Marquis of Anglesey, Conwy Archives, Llandudno. CX225

⁷⁹⁰ Wyn Roberts, 'Foreword,' in Michael Senior, *The Crossing of the Conwy, and its role in the story of North Wales*, (Llanwrst, 1991) p.7

⁷⁹¹ Hansard, HC Deb. 23 June 1979, vol. 961 c.120w, also, Hansard, HC Deb. 2 July 1979, vol. 969 c.437w

for trunk roads.⁷⁹² This was an idea which was implemented for the construction of the Severn bridge which carries the M4. The A55 has avoided such measures due to its status as Euro route 22 and the European funding which comes with it. That and given the unpopularity of the road and it being the only fast way in and out of North Wales, the implementation of tolls would almost certainly have been the death knell for many occupations across North Wales.

The 1980s, the Road of Opportunity?

Progress of the A55.

The moment the Conservatives were in government; roads were a priority in the case for Wales to energise the stagnant Welsh economy, from 1980 there was an urgency in the House of Commons from Wyn Roberts, showing his desire to commence with the A55 improvements as soon as possible. Roberts had long been aware of the frustrations and issues of the roads in Wales and had spent much of the 1970s inquiring as to what exactly would and was being done about it. Wyn Roberts would then spend much of the 1980s doing something towards the roads in Wales in particular, the A55.

There are several examples across the 1980s of improvements to the A55 alone. In 1981, £120mn had been allocated to no fewer than 3 schemes on roads in Wales,⁷⁹³ this was for various schemes whilst awaiting the R. Travers and Morgan report into the viability for a tunnel under the River Conwy.⁷⁹⁴ Eventually it was announced that the tunnel would form the new part of road in July 1980.⁷⁹⁵ By 1985 the construction of several parts of the A55 were underway with the newly appointed minister for roads at the Welsh office, Wyn Roberts, opening several sections across the ‘Collcon’ region, with the contract for the Conwy Tunnel being awarded in 1986. As of 1987, £300mn had been spent on the A55 with some 27 miles of road under construction.⁷⁹⁶ For 1988, over £1bn had been spent on roads in Wales with £270mn provided for local authorities as a road improvement grant.⁷⁹⁷ Though the A55 saw

⁷⁹² P.L. Gregson ‘Private Finance for Trunk road construction,’ Cabinet Office, 10 March 1982. in Thatcher Foundation Archives, PREM 19/935 f4

⁷⁹³ Hansard, HC Deb. 18 February 1980, vol .979 c.9

⁷⁹⁴ Hansard, HC Deb. 18 February 1980, vol .979 c.8

⁷⁹⁵ Nick Davies, ‘Tunnel chosen for the Conwy crossing,’ in *The Guardian*, 29 July 1980

⁷⁹⁶ Hansard HC Deb. 60 July 1987, vol. 199 c.5

⁷⁹⁷ Hansard, HC Deb. 27 June 1988, vol. 136 c.4

193 accidents,⁷⁹⁸ along with accusations of penny-pinching policies regarding the construction of the A55. The total cost of the A55 rose to a further £2.6bn in 1995, along with £468mn of transport grant,⁷⁹⁹ this hardly seems to be a ‘penny-pinching’ policy, but it was one that Wyn Roberts put a lot of effort into.

Similarly, the 1980s construction of the A55 saw some of the more innovative solutions to the creation of the A55. The areas around the Colcon route certainly produced some problems for the building the A55. Chiefly the concerns were the river Conwy, the hills in and around Penmaenmawr and Llanfairfechan, and the bypassing of both the towns of Colwyn and Conwy the latter in Roberts constituency created issues which had to be overcome. One such issue occurred with the Penmaenbach Tunnels it almost did not happen, due to the vast cost involved to build the tunnel with further costly delays on top of this. It was Wyn Roberts concern that such a problem would fall foul the Conservatives achievements in Wales, the physical damage of the roads in Wales did not help the Conservatives’ image problem. This can be seen with the Pen-Y-Clip Tunnel in Penmaenmawr, some 930 meters long, it opened in October 1992. Its existence is thanks to Wyn Roberts who tirelessly pursued it. Though these achievements did not endear the Conservatives to the Welsh populace nor the north Wales locals, the image problem though came at a time when John Redwood’s Welsh certainly did not help these matters on a National scale.⁸⁰⁰ It was local level issues such as this that aided in the collapse of the Conservative party in Wales.

Bypassing Colwyn Bay took some planning, with some £230 million spent over three schemes in 1987, alone with the Conwy crossing, Penmaenbach-Dwygyfylchi, and the Penmaenmawr bypass.⁸⁰¹ A solution to the decades long problems that plagued the preferred routes though the region. The original road through the Conwy town also a part of the original A55, the single file lanes and one-way systems through an old castle town were the cause of several traffic issues. Also, it was hindered by an increased heavy traffic flow in the summer months due to fledgling tourism industry in the summer a consequence of economic restructuring under several administrations. Too though because of the construction of

⁷⁹⁸ Hansard, HC Deb. 17 July 1989, vol. 157 c.11

⁷⁹⁹ Hansard, HC Deb. 13 March 1995, vol. 256 cc.543-4

⁸⁰⁰ See Chapter, Wyn Roberts perspective on the fall of the Welsh Conservatives.

⁸⁰¹ Hansard, HC Deb. 9 July 1987, vol. 119 c.215w

improved segments of the A55 from Chester to the east of Conwy, this caused increased traffic flows of approximately 50% in Conwy town. Such was a problem caused by the long planning of the crossing of the Conwy. The daily travel times of 61 minutes would come down to approximately 5 minutes with the creation of a new tunnel.⁸⁰² But with the innovation and implementation of these solutions, came implications.

Heritage of the A55?

History destroyed?

For where there is progress there too is destruction, for much of the creation of the A55 and the planning of the Conwy Tunnel the Welsh Office claimed to protect as much of the environment as possible.⁸⁰³ The decision by Nicholas Edwards to go with a tunnel rather than the bridge is demonstrable as such to bypass Conwy town. Though the protection of the local heritage and buildings of North Wales, is another matter, especially in the both the 'Colcon' region and west of Conwy with both Penmaenmawr and Llanfairfechan. The period of 1983-6 saw what could be considered a delay in the process between the Royal assent being granted in March 1983 to the start of construction in 1986. What happened was the destruction of a large portion of North Wales's local heritage, to accommodate the new history of the A55, more specifically the Conwy Tunnel. This three-year period saw an extensive use of an unpopular policy known as a Compulsory Purchase Order, or a CPO. A legal order for the compulsory purchase of land without the previous owners' consent. All of this happened in northern bounds of Wyn Roberts constituency.

The use of such orders to destroy local landmarks almost certainly did not help the Conservative's image in Wales at a local level. Though this was possibly seen above as a necessary sacrifice for the greater economic good of North Wales. Such local destruction can never be taken well by the local populace, it is akin to the damage caused to various Welsh communities when the coal mines were closed. Though such there were attempts to mitigate such destruction with the decision to build a tunnel rather than another bridge, with both RSPB Conwy and the Conwy Marina being by-products of its creation. Unlike the M4

⁸⁰² 'North Wales Coast Road (A55): Conwy Estuary Tunnel General Report,' March 1980. R. Travers Morgan & Partners / Welsh Office. Conwy Archives, Llandudno. CX325 p.40

⁸⁰³ 'A55 Conwy crossing contract awarded,' Welsh Office Press Release, 24 September 1980. Conwy Archives, Llandudno. CX325 p.2

though, any properties which were henceforth destroyed as the A55 upgrades largely post-date the 1973 Land Compensation Act⁸⁰⁴ so compensation could be claimed. There is animosity over the A55 as naturally older structures such as roads and buildings were bought sometimes using Compulsory Purchase Orders and the subsequently destroyed.

In Llanfairfechan the A55 was built over some older roads such as Ffordd Las (Las Road).⁸⁰⁵ Also a few cottages were destroyed, such as with the Crossing Cottages, located on Station Road.⁸⁰⁶ Furthermore if not outright destroyed, damage occurred, a legal challenge was launched over the damage to several other cottages from the 7 years of road improvement works. This also set a precedent for several other claims of compensation over damage due to the road improvements.⁸⁰⁷ Otherwise claims have included a victorious one to the value of £400, as the property in question had depreciated in value due to lack of access and physical damage.⁸⁰⁸ Such concerns would also later become a problem for the Anglesey segment of the A55 over agricultural claims.

Much the same occurred in Penmaenmawr, the historic Ship Public House was demolished as well.⁸⁰⁹ Once a thriving community business it was purchased via a Compulsory Purchase Order in 1985. It is the same for many once local features across Roberts' constituency; the Goat Inn, Penmaenmawr,⁸¹⁰ The Iron Bridge;⁸¹¹ Sam Parry's bridge,⁸¹² the Francis Garage in Colwyn Bay,⁸¹³ and the Llandudno Junction flyover in 1987.⁸¹⁴ In addition to the local landmarks, were the houses that were subject to CPOs and subsequently destroyed, some 40

⁸⁰⁴ Land Compensation Act 1973, available on,

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1973/26/> (Last accessed 6 November 2018)

⁸⁰⁵ Photo of the 'Ffordd Las' is available in the Conwy Archives, Llandudno. CP395/13/51

⁸⁰⁶ Photo of the 'Crossings Cottages' is available in Conwy Archives, Llandudno. CP395/13/45

⁸⁰⁷ "Compulsory purchase and compensation – recent lands tribunal decisions," in *Journal of Property Valuation and Investment*, 16.2 (1998)

⁸⁰⁸ The Law Commission, 'Towards a Compulsory Purchase Code: (1) Compensation,' Report presented to Parliament, (December 2003) p.132. *Clift v Welsh Office* (1999) 1 WLR 796.

⁸⁰⁹ Photo of 'Ship Public House' available in Conwy Archives, Llandudno. CP395/10/82, also CP395/10/75

⁸¹⁰ Photo of 'the Goat Inn' in Conwy Archives Llandudno, CP395/10/74

⁸¹¹ Photo of the 'Iron Bridge' in Conwy Archives, Llandudno, CP395/10/53

⁸¹² Photo of 'Sam Parry's Bridge' in Conwy Archives, Llandudno, CP395/7/65

⁸¹³ Photo of 'Francis Garage' in Conwy Archives, Llandudno, CP75/7/4

⁸¹⁴ Photo of 'Llandudno Junction flyover' in Conwy Archives, Llandudno, CP395/6/54

or so alone in Penmaenmawr.⁸¹⁵ It is estimated that several of these houses dated back to the middle of the nineteenth century. The A55 project eventually became so extensive that Balfour Beatty built a headquarters due to the size of the construction.⁸¹⁶

In addition to demolition, the early phase of road improvements in the 1980s, was mired by financial errors and legal challenges, surrounding the Hawarden and Bangor bypasses. Construction had started by this point on the Llandulas to Glan Conwy segment.⁸¹⁷ The A55 section between Penmaenmawr and Bangor is still causing controversy in 2022, with promised upgrades being implemented by the Welsh Labour government. It is contestable that such improvements to roads in Wales would remain a Welsh Conservative government priority.⁸¹⁸ However, this could go against the green targets for climate change that have been set by the Government. This destruction also serves as another area in which future historical research could be undertaken, regarding landscape history.

Similarly, October 1993 saw the additional opening of the Pen-Y-Clip tunnel in Penmaenmawr as noted in Roberts' diary.⁸¹⁹ However, recent events overshadowed this, such as John Redwood's failure to sing the anthem, along with the destruction and removal of the local heritage did not help the image of the Conservatives in Wales. Such marginalisation of communities, especially ones which had voted Wyn Roberts in, would come at a later cost for it was these local issues which would doom the Conservative Party in Wales. Though this Conservative decline was not just ascendant in Wales, for the 1990s, but across Britain.⁸²⁰ The preservation of the past is an inherently Conservative thing to do, but the destruction of this local heritage is a largely practical measure at a local level as a part of National event. Possibly, as the National Party sees Britain as largely one entity therefore Welshness would be seen as irrelevant. There is one expensive development which would suggest that this was not the case, or at the very least that Wyn Roberts and other Welsh Conservatives held more sway than anybody would admit, this is the Conwy Tunnel.

⁸¹⁵ This is in Penmaenmawr, the actual figure for the whole of the 'Collcon' region is not available.

⁸¹⁶ Photo of Headquarters for A55 construction in Conwy Archives, Llandudno, CP395/10/6

⁸¹⁷ Hansard, HC Deb. 22 January 1981, vol. 997 cc440-516

⁸¹⁸ Conservative Party General Election Manifesto 2017, 'Forward, Together: Our Plan for a Stronger Wales, a Stronger Britain and a Prosperous Future.'

⁸¹⁹ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 15, 17 October 1993

⁸²⁰ For example, see, David Jeffrey, 'The Strange death of Tory Liverpool: Conservative electoral decline in Liverpool, 1945-1996,' in *British Politics*, 12.3 (2017) pp.386-407



Figure 15: Photo of the western entrance of the Conwy Tunnel.⁸²¹

The bypassing of Conwy River by the time of its inception was not necessarily an innovation. A plan existed for such a bypass as far back as 1955.⁸²² The plan for a tunnel itself was finally announced after some ten years of debate over how exactly to bypass the river and solve the decades long issue of the traffic through Conwy. The secretary of state at the time Nicholas Crickhowell, on 28 July 1980, made the announcement of a tunnel under the Conwy River.⁸²³

In a Welsh Office press release, Wyn Roberts had this to say on the issue,

“The long preparation period is over, and it is now a case of getting on with the job so the economic and social benefits which this major investment will bring can be realised as quickly as possible.”⁸²⁴

The economic benefits of this would come from both increased tourism into the region, but mainly from the considerable use of inward investment that would follow. The social benefits however, meant increased dilution of the local identities prevalent throughout Northwest Wales.

⁸²¹ Photo taken on 20 November 2018, Conwy Marina.

⁸²² Hansard, HL Deb. 29 November 1955, vol.194

⁸²³ ‘Secretary of State announces a Tunnel crossing of the Conwy Estuary,’ Welsh Office Press Release, 28 July 1980. Conwy Archives, Llandudno. CX325

⁸²⁴ ‘Press Release, Welsh Office. A55 Crossing Contract Awarded,’ 24 September 1986, Conwy Archives, Llandudno. CX325 p.4

After what was a long and tenuous public inquiry, from 1975-6 and many years in the making the Conwy Tunnel Bill passed the final House of Lords reading, the act allowed for:

“An Act to authorise the Secretary of State to acquire certain land and construct and carry out certain works, and to confer on him certain other powers, for or in connection with the construction, maintenance and improvement of a tunnel which he is authorised under the Highways Act 1980 to construct across the Conwy Estuary as part of a special road; and for connected purposes.”⁸²⁵

The Conwy Tunnel Bill 1983 passed uncommonly quickly, receiving overwhelming total party support from all parties involved.⁸²⁶ The bill passed through Lords in 1983, Roberts was present for its 2nd reading,⁸²⁷ when roads still were not Wyn Roberts’ ministerial responsibility, the bill received Royal Assent on 28 March 1983.⁸²⁸ After, as earlier described, the destruction of local heritage the 1986 contract was signed at the grand hotel in Llandudno,⁸²⁹ between Wyn Roberts and Travers and Morgan,⁸³⁰ the main contractors for the tunnel. After 5 years; 1090 meters, or 1200 yards, later and the solution to the Conwy town traffic problem was in existence, a main worry for Roberts’ constituents had been solved.

On reflection in 1991 Wyn Roberts stated that,

“The tunnel represents a triumph for sensitivity and awareness of the unique character of the built heritage of the castle and its natural setting on the west bank of the Conwy estuary...”⁸³¹

⁸²⁵ Conwy Tunnel (Supplementary Powers) Act 1983, available on, <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1983/7> (Last accessed 20 October 2018)

⁸²⁶ Institute of Civil Engineers, *Immersed Tunnel Techniques: Proceedings of the Conference*, Manchester, 11-13 April 1989, (London, 1990) p.139

⁸²⁷ Wyn Roberts Diaries, 15 February 1983, Vol.12

⁸²⁸ Hansard, HL Deb. 28 March 1983, vol. 440 c1248; HC Deb. 28 March 1983, vol.40 c110

⁸²⁹ ‘A55 Conwy crossing contract awarded,’ Welsh Office Press Release, 24 September 1980. Conwy Archives, Llandudno. CX325

⁸³⁰ ‘North Wales Coast Road (A55): Conwy Estuary Tunnel General Report,’ March 1980. R. Travers Morgan & Partners / Welsh Office. Conwy Archives, Llandudno. CX325

⁸³¹ Sir Wyn Roberts, ‘Foreword,’ in Michael Senior, *The Crossing of the Conwy, and its role in the story of North Wales*, (Llanwrst, 1991)

This presents an unusual twist with a successful attempt to preserve a heritage site, when compared to what was destroyed to make way for the creation of the A55. A sense that the English were invading coupled with the newfound lack of isolation between regions with traditional rivalries did nothing to help improve the local feeling towards the road.

Though the protection of the Conwy Heritage Site did come at the extra estimated cost of £20mn.⁸³² As of 1996, roughly half of the money spent on the A55, was spent on acceptable routes for the A55 to bypass problems imposed by the Welsh landscape. Several examples of this exist in 'Collcon' region of the A55. Such were the environmental and practical concerns of the local council and populace of North Wales.⁸³³

Upon the completion of the tunnel described on the 25 anniversary of its completion as an “engineering marvel and a community “lifeline.””⁸³⁴ The tunnel also went on to win an award for Civil engineering.⁸³⁵ Upon its completion Wyn Roberts walked through the Conwy tunnel⁸³⁶ from the eastern entrance in Llandudno Junction to emerge on the western side in Conwy. Describing it as “...like walking through six submarines separated by connecting doors.”⁸³⁷ David Hunt then asked Roberts to preside over the opening of the Conwy Tunnel,⁸³⁸

Of the momentous occasion Roberts stated:

“In my capacity as Minister of State, I have attended ceremonies and functions of great National importance, but I think that this ranks as one of the most memorable

⁸³² The actual cost was some £44mn extra.

⁸³³ ‘The A55 benefits North Wales,’ in *Construction News*, 6 June 1996.

⁸³⁴ Peter Shuttleworth, ‘25 years since the Queen opened the Conwy road tunnels,’ *BBC News*, 30 October 2016

⁸³⁵ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 15, 14 October 1992

⁸³⁶ Wendy Jones, ‘Minister takes underwater walk into history,’ *Western Mail*, 22 May 1990
Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 14

⁸³⁷ David Powell, ‘Looking back at the building of the Conwy Tunnel,’ in *Daily Post*, 17 August 2013

⁸³⁸ Letter from David Hunt to Wyn Roberts, ‘Official Opening of Conwy tunnel,’ 18 July 1991, Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 15

and one that I shall treasure in the years to come. It is, of course, the more special because of the close links I have as your constituency Member of Parliament.”⁸³⁹

The opening ceremony for the Conwy tunnel, which was now ready for vehicular transport to pass through, occurred in October 1991. The tunnel itself was opened by HM Queen Elizabeth II along with Wyn Roberts and a 5,000 strong audience in attendance. The day itself started with Roberts meeting the queen at Llandudno train station possibly to avoid accusations of extravagance due to the Royal families declining popularity, it also included a tour of Conwy Castle as part of the proceedings. In his diary Roberts noted that the opening of the tunnel passed without incidence with the Queen on good form.⁸⁴⁰ This was an event which created a great deal of civic pride, with much to be celebrated, the heritage site of Conwy Castle had been protected. Yet another bridge would not affect the local identity of Conwy, instead the Conwy tunnel became an accepted part of it. The tunnel after all was a first of its kind throughout Britain and having the Queen opening it promoted a sense of Britishness. For Wyn Roberts this meant an increase in the civic pride in the locality that he served, further cementing him as an MP who listened to his constituent’s concerns.



⁸³⁹ Michael Senior, *The Crossing of the Conwy and its role in the story of North Wales*, (Llanwrst, 1991) p.106

⁸⁴⁰ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 15, 29 October 1991

Figure 16: Picture of the opening ceremony for the Conwy Tunnel.⁸⁴¹

The effect and impact of the Conwy tunnel demonstrates several ways in which a study of roads can help to exemplify a hidden history. The economic impact is certain, as is the social impetus. The connecting of North Wales to the north of England,⁸⁴² from cities such as Manchester, Liverpool and Chester, tourists could come to Wales with ease. Alternatively, businesses could now be effectively managed from England, mainly Chester. Though the tunnel was not without its problems the £102mn original price tag ended up costing some £144mn. It was also met with problems in its first few months of use, such as a problem of faulty heat and gas sensors⁸⁴³ within the tunnels. However, its impact upon the landscape is possibly even more efficacious than first possibly thought. It was an impact which Wyn Roberts was keen to examine, however, the impacts were only the visible issue to deal with regarding the A55, it was the reactions to the A55 which required immediate attention.

Wyn Roberts also offered to chair an inquiry, for Peter Walker, into the efficacy of the A55 and to what prospects it could offer the North Wales region, after the completion of the bypass between Chester and Bangor.⁸⁴⁴ The proceeding months after this offer to Walker by Roberts, were spent by Roberts visiting different local authorities across North Wales with a simple intent, to prepare for what would follow when the A55 had been completed. Mass development being an example, this was expected as the M4 had been a guiding example in this scenario. Similarly, a claim made by Brian Hawker, that, 'Every authority in North Wales cooperated to build the A55 because the inwards investment benefits for industry, tourism and commuting were so enormous.'⁸⁴⁵ As to why this inquiry was even necessary Roberts felt the A55 needed to be taken full advantage of and he set out to make sure that it was.

⁸⁴¹ Picture courtesy of the Conwy Archive, Conwy. 20th July 2021.

⁸⁴² Hansard HC Deb. 29 January 1992, vol. 534 c.1323

⁸⁴³ Hansard HC Deb. 14 November 1991, vol. 198 c.640w

⁸⁴⁴ Wyn Roberts diary, vol. 14, 21 November 1988

⁸⁴⁵ Peter Shuttleworth, '25 years since the Queen opened the Conwy road tunnels,' *BBC News*, 30 October 2016

Alongside Robert's travels to Local Authorities, a report titled 'delivering the goods?'⁸⁴⁶ It set out the benefits of the A55. Benefits could be seen as early as May 1991 when the road had not been finished, especially on the tourism industry.⁸⁴⁷ Destinations in the rural regions of Y Fro Gymraeg, chiefly the Llyn Peninsula and Anglesey have seen the benefit of this. Local businesses benefitted from quicker delivery times and more customers, Wilsons of Holyhead, and Cymru County Chickens of Llangefni were just two examples of businesses that have benefitted from the A55.⁸⁴⁸

Another business that has benefitted vastly from the A55 is the local newspaper the *Daily Post*, the animosity created by locals over the problems of the A55 could, arguably, have aided with the circulation of the paper. This is especially true in 2021 with the A55 still generating headlines for the *Post*, be it by accident, roadworks or the latest set of road improvements being announced.

To the then Secretary of State Peter Walker the social benefit of the A55 lies in improved accessibility to North Wales.⁸⁴⁹ Though there too is an argument for the social problems of the A55, as communities that once had an isolated and strong sense of their own identity were truly opened to the rest of the UK, others were alienated as a result. The vastly increased tourism opportunities were not without issues, for much of the housing stock for especially in Gwynedd was bought by English tourists as second or holiday home, the responses of Meibion Glyndwr are testament to this. It is a trend that was still an issue, for as much as 40% of houses bought in Gwynedd for the year financial year 2017/18 were as second homes.⁸⁵⁰ As of 2022 there was talk of a 300% council tax rate for second homes in both Anglesey and Gwynedd.⁸⁵¹

⁸⁴⁶ 'Delivering the goods? The Economic Impact of A55 Expressway Improvements,' in Conwy Archives, Llandudno, CX346/19

⁸⁴⁷ Hansard HC Deb. 7 May 1991, vol. 190 c435w

⁸⁴⁸ 'Delivering the goods? The Economic Impact of A55 Expressway Improvements,' in Conwy Archives, Llandudno, CX346/19 pp.2-4

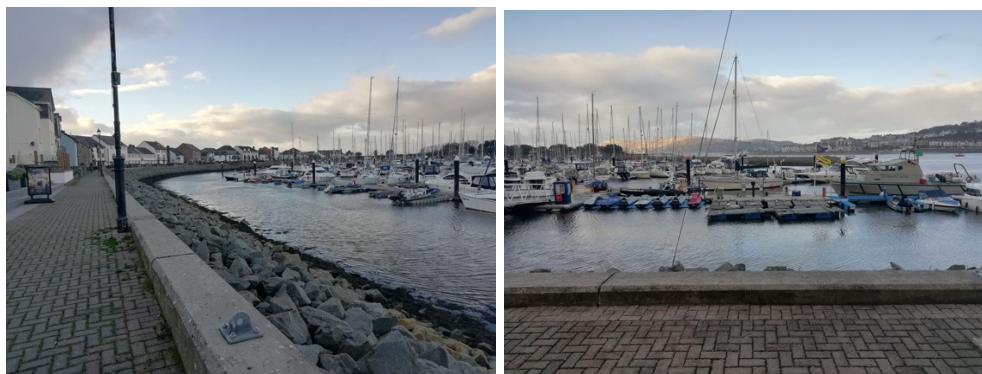
⁸⁴⁹ Hansard HC Deb. 17 July 1989, vol. 157 c8

⁸⁵⁰ Gareth Wyn-Williams, 'Almost 40% of houses sold in Gwynedd were second homes,' in *Daily Post*, 3 November 2018.

⁸⁵¹ 'Second homes in Wales could face 300% council tax hikes,' *BBC News*, 2 March 2022. (Last Accessed 26 April 2022)

The issue of second homes is prevalent across much of Anglesey. The coastal village of Rhosneigr situated on the Southwest coast is a prime example, in August a bustling metropolis of locals, tourists and regular holiday makers alike, come December the similarities to a ghost town are quite apparent. Though as to how quickly the increased tourism opportunities were acted upon is questionable. Road signs to point out local tourist attractions were non-existent even on the M4, though as of 1987 tourist attractions were invited to apply for signs if they had a high enough visitor quota.⁸⁵² This stands at 25,000 visitors for the A55, with the local attraction footing the bill.⁸⁵³

To the rest of the populace of North Wales the A55 has produced quite some mixed views. Originally being branded the ‘road of opportunity’ the A55 has become a victim much of its own success. To the extent that it takes only one crash or for one of the six council boundaries that the road travels through to place a single cone for roadworks for the whole road to come to a near standstill. As for the lorries that use the A55, in 2007 there was a case for a truck-stop against local opposition, after a lorry theft.⁸⁵⁴ It is easy to be certain of the economic effects of the A55, the social effects however, are harder to be certain of given the behaviour of the populace and the expectations of the politicians. Though one such study on the social effects of roads has been done in Canada.⁸⁵⁵ Two of the certain economic benefits in the Conwy areas was the creation of the Conwy Marina and of RSPB Glan Conwy, as a physical by-product of the creation of the Conwy tunnel.



⁸⁵² Hansard, HC Deb. 19 January 1987 vol 108 c419w

⁸⁵³ Hansard, HC Deb. 23 May 1988 vol 134 c43w

⁸⁵⁴ David Harris, ‘Haulage associations and unions back A55 truckstop,’ in *Commercial Motor*, 206.5257 (2007)

⁸⁵⁵ Mark Stevenson, ‘Social Impact of Major Roads,’ 20th World Road Congress, Montreal, Quebec, September 1995.

Figures 17 & 18: Photos of the Conwy Marina.⁸⁵⁶

A picture of the basin, as it was originally available at the Conwy Archives.⁸⁵⁷

The casting point of the blocks of the Conwy tunnel, formed from a flooded bit of land was after its purpose, a perfect place for the docking of boats so, in 1992, was opened as the Conwy Marina. There were two thoughts as to what should be done about the casting basin whether it should be filled in, at a vast expense and against the will of Wyn Roberts, or whether it should be turned into a Marina, with the aim of establishing further tourism links for North Wales.

The onsite construction area of the Conwy Tunnel eventually became the Conwy Marina. The idea for the creation of a Marina was not original, the Sports Council for Wales in a report titled “The Strategy for Water Recreation,”⁸⁵⁸ had originally suggested the need for Marinas across Wales with Conwy also suggested as an area for the location of one.⁸⁵⁹ Though this notion predates the idea of the Conwy tunnel so has no bearing on the outcome.

The Marina would also be an area with strong housing possibilities, either private or social housing. The local opposition to the creation of the Marina, however, was fierce with concerns that the houses would be auctioned off as holiday homes. An advert placed in the papers in 1995 seems to verify this concern “...Conwy with its magnificent new Marina...New holiday homes available...”⁸⁶⁰ This classifieds advert appears several times in both *The Observer*, and *The Guardian* throughout 1995. The local council and councillors had their own objections however, the vote to turn the basin into the Marina by Aberconwy Borough Council passed by a margin of one.⁸⁶¹ An earlier vote by the council had appalled Roberts as the council decided to turn down the Marina application and also refusal of a nature reserve in a 1988 vote.⁸⁶² It was Wyn Roberts’ determination for economic

⁸⁵⁶ Photo of the Conwy Marina, taken on 20 November 2018.

⁸⁵⁷ Photo of man-made basin at Conwy Morfa, available in, Conwy Archives, Llandudno. CP395/2/21

⁸⁵⁸ Sport Council for Wales, *The Strategy for Water Recreation*, (1973).

⁸⁵⁹ ‘Marinas urged for Wales,’ in *The Guardian*, 18 September 1973.

⁸⁶⁰ ‘Classified Ad 13,’ *The Observer*, 4 June 1995, 16 April 1995. Just two dates the advert appeared in the paper.

⁸⁶¹ David Powell, ‘Looking back at the building of the Conwy Tunnel,’ in *Daily Post*, 17 August 2013

⁸⁶² Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 14, 19 December 1988

modernisation that the Marina came to be, not wanting to accept a costly venture of filling the basin when there could be vast economic gain to local traders in Conwy and the surrounding region. In sharp contrast to his earlier years of campaigning around the A55 as an issue of local concern, Roberts seemingly has overridden the wishes of the local people in pushing for the creation of the Marina. A clash between his patriotism for his country and desire for economic development in Wales, much the same occurs in Roberts designs for the Welsh language.⁸⁶³

By the 1990s the town of Conwy had long had the traffic problem which had plagued it for decades, opening a new development such as the Marina to tourism was one way in which life could be brought back to the town. Roberts will outlasted out that of the protestors, to the extent that he personally pulled the switch which flooded the casting basin at Conwy Morfa.⁸⁶⁴ Though this was not without facing the protestors,⁸⁶⁵ these being the action groups and RSPB, both being wholly against the creation of a Marina, with the latter arguing that it would take land away from the local wildlife.⁸⁶⁶ By January of 1990 the developers were considering the plan for a nature reserve,⁸⁶⁷ by March of 1990 the decision to create a reserve was firmly established.⁸⁶⁸

Another tourism win from the creation of the tunnel for North Wales was the new RSPB nature reserve in Glan Conwy. Since the creation of the tunnel was obviously not without its waste, some 3 million tonnes of it. In a Welsh Office press release in 1980, the issue of what to do with the reclaimed land was discussed.

“The land encloses a tidal area which will be reclaimed as material excavated from the tunnel trench is deposited behind the bund. This area, covering about 32 hectares, may become available to provide scope for environmental facilities in the future.”⁸⁶⁹

⁸⁶³ See Chapter: a saviour of the Welsh Language?

⁸⁶⁴ ‘Floodgates open on tunnel protestors,’ in *Daily Post*, 1 September 1989; ‘E-way flooding gets under way,’ in *North Wales Weekly News*, 31 August 1989.

⁸⁶⁵ ‘Minister faces basin marina protest,’ in *Western Mail*, 31 August 1989

⁸⁶⁶ ‘Bird group join fight to halt Marina,’ in *Western Mail*, 14 September 1990.

⁸⁶⁷ ‘Marina developers float plan for reserve,’ in *Western Mail*, 5 January 1990.

⁸⁶⁸ ‘Letter to Peter Hall Esquire from Graham Williams, Reserve manager for RSPB,’ 13 March 1990, Conwy Archives, Llandudno. CO2/9/13/51.

⁸⁶⁹ ‘A55 Conwy crossing contract awarded,’ Welsh Office Press Release, 24 September 1980. Conwy Archives, Llandudno. CX325 pp.1-2

The sand and silt that was removed from the estuary, amounted to some 3 million tonnes. It was pumped up approximately 1 ½ miles of tubing to Glan Conwy, by Costain-Tarmac. The silt was good enough for birds. Working together a combination of the RSPB, the Crown Estate, the tunnel contractors, and the local council all worked to turn the silt into freshwater and saltwater lagoons. Eventually opened in 1995, the reserve now plays host to 220 different bird species with 273 different plant species identified. The RSPB is one of the winners from the creation of the Conwy tunnel. This does go to show that for any heritage that the A55 may have destroyed, it certainly was used to create areas which the Welsh could make significant use of.

Conclusion.

There is a certain future for the study of roads in North Wales, with an at least 60-year clear history of creation, upgrades, and adaptations to the A55 coastal route. Wyn Roberts' role is certain, not just as a ribbon cutter, but as a North Walian who understood the issues behind it and as the politician who helped to campaign for it to the Minister who effectively oversaw it.

As of Monday 29th October 2019, Philip Hammond announced the North Wales Growth deal with a plan to further spend and improve upon the road. Though there were rumours of a purported £330mn to be spent on this the final figure came to be a mere fraction of this. Some £120mn. For the frustrated drivers of the A55 however, the future still seems bleak, with the local councils that maintain the road, doing just that at rates deemed far to frequent by the North Wales populace. As to why so much was allowed to be spent on such a road, a near staggering £800mn, is subject to further debate. The road itself was desperately needed to reduce traffic for example imagine some 30,000 vehicles still going through or around the walls of Conwy Town. If it was unmaintainable at 1960s levels it can only be left to the imagination exactly what Conwy Towns traffic would be like today. As of 2022 there has been improvements to the sections of road liable to flooding in Abergwyngregyn, with several altered plans to improve and upgrade sections of the road.

The probable answer is that so much was eventually spent on the A55 as it forms a part of Euro-route, 22 the Irish Sea to the Baltics. There is scepticism over the amount of money going into the A55, as to whether such levels were accepted for a Welsh road given its

desperate need or as it was part of the Euro route 22 and the key link for Irish lorries, which have almost certainly flooded the road over the last 2 decades. The vision was a 'road of opportunity,' the word opportunity for example has appeared in multiple different documents used in various phrases. The opportunities were an impressive improvement on the journey time into Wales, though not without several decades' worth of construction. The North Wales economy has vastly increased thanks to the opportunities provided by the A55, however the A55 became the 'highway of despair' due to its own success.

For Wyn Roberts was still convinced that the creation of the A55 expressway was right. "The A55 has been an enormous blessing to North Wales." When asked why, "It has given a new lease of life to many of our resorts and brought them much nearer the big conurbations. It is also a wonderful road to drive along. I'm very proud of it." Despite the troubles that have blighted the route with its construction over the Penmaenbach tunnel, with a possible delay that may have been kept quiet for fear of ridicule over the ambitions of the A55 being squandered.

The A55 is full of stories, stories of English invaders, mass squabbles over the funding provided, buildings etc. Hatred from the peoples who must use it every day, hence the moniker 'highway of despair.' This chapter is not even a beginning to how many histories this one road may contain, for they are beyond counting. There are two histories which this thesis has attempted to examine which is Wyn Roberts story of roads and what the road meant for the Conservatives. The first is a history of pride, the latter is a conclusion on two fronts that the Conservatives have attempted to improve the situation in Wales, but a reliance on some part funding from Europe making the A55 a part of the official Euro route 22, made tourism in Northwest Wales a major industry at the expense of some and to the advantage of other North Walians.

As to the legacy of the Conservatives in Wales, the suspicion surrounding the farcical implementation of the Welsh fourth channel between 1980-1982 was still paramount, North Wales still had minimal coverage and problems receiving S4C as late as 1995. The physical damage and ignoring of the objections of locals over the A55 did nothing to help this image. The beneficial aspect could have been seen over time but has been lost due to the public feeling over the A55 as the 'highway of despair.'

There is a paradigm in the destruction caused by the A55. Whereas the destruction historically at places such as Tryweryn being the drowning of a village to create a water reservoir for Liverpool and the creation of a nuclear power plant at Trawsfynydd.

Both these to the Welsh Nationalists serve as acts of English invasion/aggression which in the national consciousness play out very well for the Nationalist cause. Where Welsh television and such larger scale acts of destruction works well for the Nationalists. However, there is a difference. Both these cases caused an immediate response from Welsh Nationalists. The A55 did not inflame Nationalist passion at the time, it has caused a slow burning response. Given the rise in the number of people who can now access North Wales, this has led to a rise in the number of second homes. This serves to give a far more inflammatory response from the Welsh Nationalists than the actual creation of the A55 ever did. As it has been discussed at various points in this thesis, Wyn Roberts did all he could to avoid inflaming Nationalists within Wales, he could never have accounted for the rise in the number of second homes.

Whereas in the case for the smaller scale destruction caused by the creation of the A55, to local heritage places, serves a larger purpose in the larger Conservative ambition of car ownership being one of the greatest signs of affluence. However, this is vice versa on a larger scale as the Conservatives then were concerned with spending more than a further £20mn on the protection of the World Heritage site around Conwy with the creation of the Conwy tunnel. This would however be of significant damage to the local tourism trade, so the expense is justified given the increased tourism meant for a greater economic benefit. However, the protection of Conwy came at a cost with the Marina, something which was pushed through by Wyn Roberts at the expense and against the wishes of the locals fearing further English invasion. However, back to the smaller scale destruction of local heritage this did not help the Conservative image in Wales or the phenomena of Welsh Conservatism.

The intention of the roads of Wales, particularly the A55, was to create opportunity. It created stronger economic links with England, and Ireland for that matter, whilst improving both the local economies to a degree. The exact amount is incalculable though several estimates are in the range of billions. Socially, the A55 bypasses a population of approximately 130,000 locals,⁸⁷⁰ for the 1990s, who do not have to suffer the traffic through the town centres. In places such as Colwyn and Conwy. The A55 serves somewhat as a catalyst, the Governments

⁸⁷⁰ Data gathered from both the 1991 and 2001 census records for North West Wales.

of the later Twentieth Century spent billions on the A55, branding it a road of opportunity. The public embraced every opportunity to complain during the 1970s over construction routes and eventually over construction itself in the 1980s.

The roads policies of the Conservatives at the time also demonstrate the rapid decline in their own popularity. Thatcherism viewing roads as a part of an affluent society, had always had the goal of building them, as had previous Conservative governments.⁸⁷¹ As is evidenced by the 1989 Roads for Prosperity,⁸⁷² promised some £6bn in funding and a further 2,700 miles of new roads. Though due to budget issues and a protest from Friends of the Earth, it was eventually scaled back. Nine years later under the Blair administrations' response to the mass road building was the 1998 white paper, A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone.⁸⁷³ This ended the mass road building in the UK, focusing on public transport which had been left Fragmented, lacking investment, and attracting fewer passengers."⁸⁷⁴ The A55 was one of few roads which escaped the Blair governments own 'Beeching Axe.'

This assessment agrees with the view of Roberts, during a debate in the House of Lords at the end of the millennia, he states,

“We never found an adequate answer to costly congestion and well-justified genuine industrial and commercial needs that did not involve major road improvements or substantial new building... it is undeniable that new roads bring prosperity in their train. I fear the worst if we do not build new roads to meet genuine needs.”⁸⁷⁵

The notion was to improve roads and provide opportunity, not just in Wales but throughout the United Kingdom. The A55 was a road of opportunity, where the opportunity it provided appears to have been thoroughly squandered.

The next chapter of this thesis is the natural continuation, as Wales gained the arteries and infrastructure it sorely needed. Access to Wales was easier compared to mere decades before

⁸⁷¹ Dominic Sandbrook, *Never Had It So Good: A History of Britain from Suez to the Beatles*, (London, 2006) pp.211-2

⁸⁷² Roads for Prosperity, 1989 White Paper. NA, Kew

⁸⁷³ A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone, 1998 White Paper

⁸⁷⁴ Hansard, HL Deb. 20 July 1998 vol 592 c.605

⁸⁷⁵ Hansard, HL Deb. 28 November 1999, vol 607 c.385

and so became a prime place to build factories to provide employment for areas which had suffered from the collapse of the older Welsh industries, mining being a key example. Wyn Roberts played a key role in this, leading several delegations overseas to attract inward investment to Wales, though this term meant any form of investment. Wales had invested in its roads now it needed people to invest in it.

Chapter Four: Wyn Roberts in a Global Wales.

“I visited Japan and met the president of Hoya: I am still wearing the Hoya lenses that I acquired before I met him. I also visited North America and Europe to procure jobs for Wales.”⁸⁷⁶

As noted by Wyn Roberts in a Commons debate on inward investment into Wales, during his tenure as a minister Roberts would conduct several of these visits abroad. They would prove to be pivotal in the modernisation of the economy. Perhaps the most notable feature of these visits was how Wyn Roberts went about utilising Welsh culture abroad to advertise Wales, most of his visits demonstrate Wyn Robert’s Cultural Nationalism in some form.

Over the course of the 1980s Wales often attracted approximately 20% of all foreign funding for a country with only 5% of the total UK populace at the time. Substantial use of foreign funds had been responsible for part funding the creation of the A55,⁸⁷⁷ this is just one policy that Wales made use of foreign funding for. Wyn Roberts’ involvement with an updated road infrastructure in Wales now leads to the next logical step, which was to modernise the markets of Wales to make use of the updated infrastructure.

Central to the acquisition of foreign investments were overseas visits conducted by UK Ministers of State, such foreign visits formed either a ‘political performance’⁸⁷⁸ or for the promotion of a business interest.⁸⁷⁹ The first plays out as a ‘state visit,’ the second as an ‘official visit,’ the official visits were about the promotion of business interests on the international stage, or to raise capital investment. It has been argued that inward investment had a potentially deleterious effect on the economic future of Wales,⁸⁸⁰ however, the case for Wales was and is one of partial success. Conducted often by Secretaries of State, such official

⁸⁷⁶ Hansard HC Deb. 27 February 1997, vol.291 c477

⁸⁷⁷ See Chapter 3.

⁸⁷⁸ Simone Derix, ‘Facing and “Emotional Crunch:” State Visits as Political Performances During the Cold War,’ in *German Politics & Society*, 25.2 (2007) Special Issue: Western Integration, German Unification, and the Cold War: The Ardenaur Era in Perspective, pp.117-139 p.117-8

⁸⁷⁹ Johanna Catani, *State visits as a form of intercultural communication*, (Master’s Thesis) University of Finland, Institute of Communication Sciences, (1999) p.10

⁸⁸⁰ Max Munday, *Japanese Manufacturing in Wales*, (Cardiff, 1990) p.137

visits for Wales were fulfilled by Nicholas Edwards, Peter Walker, and David Hunt. However, the efforts also included junior ministers in the Welsh Office, such as Wyn Roberts. It was the junior Welsh Office ministers who were also crucial to attracting foreign investment for Wales. Utilising such visits to raise substantial investment for Wales, usually organised by Wales Investment Location (WINvest), the investment arm of the Welsh Development Agency a Labour Quango established on 1 January 1976.⁸⁸¹ Roberts visits tended to make substantial use of Welshness, whereas other ministers were often stopped by the need to advertise the whole of the UK.

For Wyn Roberts the use of ‘official visits’ came with the promotion of business interests and foreign investment, but usually had a significant cultural element to them. Both became vital for Wales’s economic recovery, one for the economic funds, and the other as transforming Wales as a place in which to do business. Though it is debatable as to the success of some visits, such as with Wyn Roberts visit to Taiwan, which is explored later in this chapter, these most importantly show the importance of Roberts within Wales. First, his role was as both an economic moderniser with the vast amounts that were gained in some cases by a single visit from Wyn Roberts. Second, Roberts’ presence also promoted Wales and Welsh culture on the global stage. Third, his engagement with Welsh groups, societies, and people across different sections of the globe highlights him as an individual who cares deeply about his Welsh roots. Finally, in getting Wales to become an associate member of a transnational regional trading bloc known as the Four Motors of Europe. This heavily demonstrates the notion of using Wales in a Europe of the Regions context, profiling the distinctness of Wales as a place to do business with, instead of one that could do business within the UK. Though the documents of the Welsh Office demonstrate the economic benefits of Roberts’ visits, the use of his diary reveals more significant cultural elements of his visits. Similarly, most places which Roberts led exploratory trade missions to are places which Wales still trades with today.⁸⁸² Each visit was typically multipurpose in nature, with the significance varied and dependent on which purpose they served.

⁸⁸¹ Commission of the European Communities, ‘UK Regional Development Programme 1986-90,’ (1987)

⁸⁸² See, <https://tradeandinvest.wales/germany>; (Last accessed 21 April 2020) This includes a list of areas which Wales trades with, which is markedly like the list of exploratory missions Wyn Roberts undertook.

As for the study of such visits, the reason is much the same as roads.⁸⁸³ Global relations, after all, are not just the remit of central political figures, such as Thatcher or her Cabinet colleagues. For a politician like Wyn Roberts such visits offer much the same timewise, such official visits are a part not usually offered in a study, unless the person of study is a leader of state such as Thatcher.⁸⁸⁴ The effect of such visits especially spatially is much the same as roads, new factories covered the Welsh landscape whilst at the same time providing new employment opportunities via inward investment. The Welsh Office was able to take advantage of its increased independence in this matter as in other affairs.

This chapter will focus on visits which were undertaken by Wyn Roberts, and the impact of such on Wales. Such foreign visits were not unfamiliar territory to Wyn Roberts, who prior to going into politics had expertise with such visits for TWW. With travels to America, Spain, and Russia to name a few places to make subsequent documentaries, *The Growing People* in Russia is typical of this.⁸⁸⁵ As evidenced from Roberts's diaries from the 1980s and 1990s, Roberts conducted such visits to Germany,⁸⁸⁶ Japan,⁸⁸⁷ America,⁸⁸⁸ to name just a few places which Roberts led either a trade delegation or went singlehandedly to promote Wales on the international stage. Focus will be on the places which put the most money into Wales and on the results of each visit for Wales, this usually meant much inward investment gained for Wales, though also prompted displays of Welsh culture on the international stage.

The result of Inward Investment by 1987 was that with the jobs created, improvements in Wales were noticeable in the new industries as early as 1983.⁸⁸⁹ By 1984 some 40,000 people were employed by 240 overseas companies in Wales,⁸⁹⁰ far in excess of what the coal or steel industries employed as of 1986.⁸⁹¹ As of 1983, 24 % of all inwards investment into the United Kingdom went to Wales.⁸⁹² Wales offered an emphatic welcome to hundreds of

⁸⁸³ See Chapter 3.

⁸⁸⁴ See Charles Moore, 'To Moscow,' in *Margaret Thatcher The Authorised Biography: Volume Two: Everything she wants*, (Milton Keynes, 2015) pp.614-634

⁸⁸⁵ See Chapter 1.

⁸⁸⁶ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol.13, 27 September – 1 October 1987.

⁸⁸⁷ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol.13, 1 October 1988

⁸⁸⁸ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol.14, 15-22 September 1990.

⁸⁸⁹ 'Welsh Jobs success,' in *The Guardian*, 13 December 1983

⁸⁹⁰ Iola Smith, 'A hi-tech welcome in the hillsides,' in *The Observer*, 2 November 1986

⁸⁹¹ Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics 1974-1996, Industry. pp.87-104

⁸⁹² Paul Hoyland, 'Welsh are the winners,' in *The Guardian*, 19 July 1984

foreign industries,⁸⁹³ and the foreign companies gladly accepted. Foreign Investment came from America, 30,000 employed by American companies. Europe, 10,000 employed by European countries.⁸⁹⁴ Similarly, by May 1986; 22 Scandinavian companies, 36 West German companies, and 100 American companies⁸⁹⁵ all had a form of base or factory located in Wales.

Come 1992 the number of people employed by a foreign owned company had reached 70,000 people or an approximate of 30% of the entirety of the manufacturing sector in Wales.⁸⁹⁶ Whilst there existed a strong political support for such economic modernisation, it should be noted that it was largely down to the efforts of people, such as Wyn Roberts, that Wales attracted as much as it did in inward investment and on the global scale. Welsh office ministers, such as Wyn Roberts were crucial in conducting official visits to draw investment to Wales. This is near unprecedented in Wales, the push to draw in foreign funding had never been higher before Thatcherism, it cannot be understated how crucial the role of these visits was in the modernisation of the Welsh economy. It went from reliance on an outdated faction based on mining, to an economy fit for a global Wales one with many foreign partners with highly transnational tendencies.

There is little in way of historiography on the notion or role of foreign visits within politics. For the period of the 1980s, Simone Derix highlights the role of state visits as ‘political performances’ during the Cold war.⁸⁹⁷ This was usually the case between Thatcher, Reagan, and Gorbachev in both the 1984 and 1987 visits respectively. It was also the case for Wales with cultural displays abroad such as the Welsh opera in Tokyo, Japan in 1991⁸⁹⁸ or a Japanese Opera in Swansea in October 1992.⁸⁹⁹ Frieder Günther contends, a media perception

⁸⁹³ Iola Smith, ‘A hi-tech welcome in the hillsides,’ in *The Observer*, 2 November 1986

⁸⁹⁴ Iola Smith, ‘Where there’s a welcome for the world,’ in *The Observer*, 21 February 1988

⁸⁹⁵ ‘Welsh Development Agency,’ in *The Times Digital Archive*, 13 May 1986, p.8 (Last accessed 28 June 2019)

⁸⁹⁶ Welsh Affairs Committee, ‘Inward Investment in Wales,’ Eighth Report Session 2011-12 HC, HMSO, London, 31 January 2012

⁸⁹⁷ Simone Derix, ‘Facing and “Emotional Crunch.” State Visits as Political Performances During the Cold War,’ in *German Politics & Society*, 25.2 (2007) Special Issue: Western Integration, German Unification and the Cold War: The Ardenaur Era in Perspective, pp.117-139 p.117-8

⁸⁹⁸ ‘How Inward Investment shaped Welsh Economy,’ in *BBC News*, 10 June 2013

⁸⁹⁹ ‘Programme for Japan Festival Wales, 1992, Papers of Ivor Wynne Jones, Conwy Archives, Conwy.

is usually important in understanding the role of such state visits.⁹⁰⁰ Though this might not be the case for Wyn Roberts, since he was only a Welsh Office Minister, Roberts visits tended to be official to advertise Wales on the global market and bring in investment, as opposed to the political performance of a State Visit. It is the case that Roberts would get less media attention, than either Thatcher as Prime Minister or one of the numerous Welsh secretaries. What media attention Roberts did get usually advertised Welsh office interests and goals of the visit than as a political performance. However, as Johanna Catani notes further that it is the role of certain visits to further business and interests and promote national interests.⁹⁰¹ In this case the role of certain visits aided to promote Welsh culture, and the Welsh in the Global Markets. In this there was a certain success. The Japanese families who settled in Wales had a certain enthusiasm for a Western way of life, in particular the Welsh way.⁹⁰² In addition to this Wales was marketed to the Japanese as an ideal place to go on a foreign holiday, Llandudno was marketed, a brochure advertising it in Japanese is available in the Conwy Archives.⁹⁰³

During the same period official visits were utilised to raise substantial foreign investment in Wales and for Wales. Visits were made to places such as America and Germany, and to places in the Far East such as Taiwan and Japan. The Welsh Conservatives or the Blue Dragon Wyn Roberts were particularly active in his attempts. Nicholas Edwards made several visits to Japan,⁹⁰⁴ and America as did Wyn Roberts who also made such visits across both Europe and Asia. Though there was near abundance of revenue and investment coming into Wales, still no guarantee existed as to lifelong job prospects. The populace in Wales were used to this as it was the case for the mining industry, though as Graham Day has argued it was economic desperation in Wales that forced such changes.⁹⁰⁵

⁹⁰⁰ Frieder Günther, 'Society of the "Economic Miracle" and the Non-European World. Material culture of State Visits during the presidency of Theodor Heuss,' in Harriet Rudolph (ed.) *Material culture in the Modern World from the 15th to the 20th Century*, (Berlin, 2016) pp.100-137 pp. 103-4

⁹⁰¹ Johanna Catani, *State visits as a form of Intercultural Communication*, (Master's Thesis) University of Finland, Institute of Communication Sciences, (1999) p.10

⁹⁰² Alan Road, 'An Oriental welcome in the hillsides,' in *The Observer*, 26 February 1989

⁹⁰³ 'Promotion of Wales. Llandudno holiday brochure in Japanese,' Papers of Ivor Wynne Jones, CX288/2/1/69, Conwy Archives, Conwy.

⁹⁰⁴ Nicholas Edwards letter to Margaret Thatcher, 'Inward Investment Missions,' May 1981. In National Archives, Kew, PREM19-0821 f56, also available in MTF Archives, 140822.

⁹⁰⁵ Graham Day, *Making Sense of Wales: A Sociological Perspective*, (Cardiff, 2002) p.198

The Blue Dragons such as Roberts may not necessarily have been ardent Thatcherite Dries but had the intellect to make use of her policies. The success of such visits is paramount with billions raised for Welsh industry, and substantial investment in Wales. Wyn Robert's visits typically had a Welsh dimension and a high level of success. Though in examining the Scottish and Welsh Dimensions, Stephen Young's⁹⁰⁶ conclusions contrast with the results of such inward investment between Scotland and Wales. Young's damning assessments for Wales were threefold. First, Wales was not considered a candidate for head offices or R&D plants by Japanese companies. Second, that WINvest was a critical weakness in Welsh marketing effort with excessive diffusion to local government.⁹⁰⁷ Finally, with so many people involved with a lack of coherence and personality conflicts hindering the Welsh image.⁹⁰⁸ None of these factors would go to explaining why the Welsh did as well as they did out of inward investment from Japan, or out of inward investment from any company as Wales came out on top.⁹⁰⁹ With the possible exception of the role of certain people.

The United Kingdom benefitted as much. Roger Strange⁹¹⁰ has studied the impact of the Japanese investment on the UK economy, in addition of this is Max Munday,⁹¹¹ who has studied the effects of such investment into Wales. However, the case may not have been so for Wales, though Wales was notable for Japanese investment, as 1987 alone saw nearly half of jobs attributable to inward investment with a Japanese company. Coincidentally this is the same year in which Wyn Roberts became a minister at the Welsh Office, because of this the number of foreign visits Roberts undertook increased dramatically. Further to this Stephen Hill and Max Munday⁹¹² traced the regional distribution of foreign investment, for Japan it is noted that the Welsh work ethic was important to Japanese employers. Roberts was also

⁹⁰⁶ Stephen Young, 'Scotland V Wales in the Inward Investment Game,' in *Quarterly Economic Commentary*, 14.3 (1989) pp.59-63

⁹⁰⁷ Henrik Halkier, *Institutions, Discourse, and Regional Development: The Scottish Development Agency and the Politics of Regional Development*, (Brussels, 2006) p.432

⁹⁰⁸ Stephen Young, 'Scotland V Wales in the Inward Investment Game,' p.60-1

⁹⁰⁹ Stephen Hill & Max Munday, 'Scotland v Wales in the inward investment game: Wales' triple crown?' in *Quarterly Economic Commentary*, 17.4. (1992) pp. 52-55.

⁹¹⁰ Roger Strange, *Japanese Manufacturing Investment in Europe: Its Impact on the UK Economy*, (London, 2002) p.118

⁹¹¹ Max Munday, *Japanese Manufacturing in Wales*, (Cardiff, 1990); Jonathon Morris & Max Munday & Barry Wilkinson, *Working for the Japanese: The Economic and Social Consequences of Japanese Investment in Wales*, (London, 2013)

⁹¹² Stephen Hill and Max Munday, *The regional Distribution of Foreign Manufacturing Investment in the UK*, (Basingstoke, 1994) p.47

certainly an example of this, it was also noticed in Arthur Little's WINvest report, on the Japanese experience in Wales.⁹¹³ As such, it was also utilised in a series of WDA newspaper advertisements,⁹¹⁴ which explained why the Japanese were so interested with Wales throughout 1986.⁹¹⁵ Of equal import for Wales were Trade missions for the stimulation of orders for the Welsh economy. Usually for the aid of small to medium businesses, whereas an investment mission is typically for the targeted investment opportunities for Wales from large multinational companies.

As for the agencies of this period the literature overlooks the role they play in the economy of Wales, Leon Gooberman has examined the role of the Welsh office.⁹¹⁶ John Ball, however, has questioned the efficacy and efficiency of the Welsh Development agency in applying these businesses. The WDA maintained more focus on employment figures than anything else.⁹¹⁷ Though Japanese investment is still prevalent in Wales today; it is under threat mainly due to Wales no longer being the gateway to Europe that it once was.⁹¹⁸ Furthermore questions have also been raised over the future of FDI⁹¹⁹ in the UK. Where this thesis comes in is examining the role of individuals such as Wyn Roberts who often played an active part in attracting such inward investment, it is an area of historiography which is completely overlooked. As visits conducted by ministers often involved cultural exchanges of major significance for Wales, but also often led to direct investment into Wales as one outcome of them.

⁹¹³ Arthur Little, *A report on the Japanese Experience in Wales*, (Cardiff, 1986) WINVEST, Welsh Development Agency.

⁹¹⁴WDA, 'I want to know about Wales,' in *The Times Digital Archive*, 8 April 1986, p.11 (Last accessed 28 June 2019)

⁹¹⁵ 'Welsh Development Agency,' in *The Times Digital Archive*, 20 May 1986, p.3, (Last accessed 28 June 2019); Also, Stephen Aris, 'Ah, so welcome in the valleys,' in *The Times Digital Archive*, 26 August 1986. p.8, (Last accessed 28 June 2019)

⁹¹⁶ Leon Gooberman, 'Recession and Recovery: The Welsh Office and job creation in the 1980s,' in *Llafur*, 11.3, (2014) pp.115-127; also, Leon Gooberman and Trevor Boyns, 'Public venture capital in a regional economy: The Welsh Development Agency 1976-1994' in *Enterprise and Society*, 20.4, (2019) pp.97-1006

⁹¹⁷ John Ball, 'Development agency questionable on inward investment,' in *IWA*, 22 April 2015

⁹¹⁸ Kenichi Ohmae, 'Where will Japanese Companies Go in a Post-Brexit World?' in *Strategy & Business*, 16 November 2016.

⁹¹⁹ Nigel Driffiel & Jim Lowe & Sandra Lancheros & Yama Temouri, 'How attractive is the UK for future manufacturing foreign direct investment?' (2013) Future of Manufacturing Project Evidence Paper 7, Foresight, Government Office for Science.

Role of WINvest.

WINvest is the WDA's sales team... (their) job is to sell Wales to the UK and to the rest of the world.⁹²⁰

Wales Investment Location, WINvest, was established 1 April 1983, it started life as a Quango designed to centralise Welsh efforts to encourage new companies to locate new factories in Wales, and to drive up inward investment. Though WINvest made a very positive start to its operations,⁹²¹ in 1984, with an allocated funding of 1.8-2 million a year between 1986-1989.⁹²² It was typically WINvest that would set up the foreign visits which ministers such as Wyn Roberts would undertake on their country's behalf. As to how successful WINvest was by 1990, 150 companies from Europe, 140 companies from North America, and 40 companies from Japan,⁹²³ had invested in Wales. Such companies became a vital part of the Welsh economy, with 1984 seeing 42,000 employed by foreign owned companies.⁹²⁴ Across the 1980s Wales attracted approximately 20% of all UK inward investment, for what was at the time no more than 6% of the total population. The same happened in Scotland which also attracted a high proportion of funding for population, but this was not to the same calibre as Wales did. Though arguably it was not as successful as it seems, as reportedly more foreign companies were vested in visiting Wales as opposed to number who invested. In its first year as an agency WINvest arranged for some 186 company visits in Wales, with only 16 new overseas projects.⁹²⁵ Similarly, 246 factory visits occurred in 1987, along with a further 241 in 1988.⁹²⁶ Of those, 100 companies from America and 70 from Europe alone had invested in Wales before WINvest was set up to coordinate investment efforts.⁹²⁷ WINvest was reorganised into Welsh Development International as of 1990.⁹²⁸

⁹²⁰ Welsh Affairs Committee, 'Inward Investment into Wales and its Interaction with Regional and EEC Policies,' First Report Session 1988-89, HC86-I, HMSO, London, 14 December 1988 p.39

⁹²¹ Hansard HC Deb. 5 March 1984, vol. 55 c591

⁹²² Hansard HC Deb. 14 June 1988, vol. 135 cc83-4w

⁹²³ Hansard HC Deb. 28 November 1991, c1096

⁹²⁴ Hansard HC Deb. 16 July 1984, vol.64 cc11-2

⁹²⁵ Hansard HC Deb. 28 February 1984 vol.55 c198

⁹²⁶ Hansard HC Deb. 17 April 1989, vol.151 c17w

⁹²⁷ Hansard HC Deb, 3 July 1984, vol. 63 c81w

⁹²⁸ Henrik Halkier, *Institutions, Discourse, and Regional Development: The Scottish Development Agency and the Politics of Regional Development*, (Brussels, 2006) p.432

The Welsh Office too made use of such visits to raise substantial investment for Wales, usually headed by WINvest, a Quango offshoot of the Welsh Development Agency⁹²⁹ established by the act of the same name in 1975.⁹³⁰ The same happened in Scotland with its own counterpart the Scotland Development Agency.⁹³¹ The aim of both was to encourage development and investment into the UK. Specifically, their roles were to attract investment into the regions they represented. The success of the Welsh Development Agency was paramount in the 1980s and 1990s. As of its conception Wyn Roberts was satisfied with the progress made by the WDA.⁹³² It invested in Wales at staggering rates with 1981 alone seeing 444 new factory units built.⁹³³ Such was the success on 27 January 1988 the *Western Mail* carried the headlines “Industry shakes off Blues,”⁹³⁴ an optimistic headline for the *Western Mail*, occasionally known to be a remarkably unoptimistic paper. However, the Welsh Development Agency closed in 2006,⁹³⁵ and with it came a reduced Welsh visibility in the global market.⁹³⁶ The replacement came in the form of International Business Wales.⁹³⁷ Along with this there were no Blue Dragons such as Wyn Roberts undertaking as many inward investment or trade missions on behalf of the Welsh Office.

The role of agencies such as WINvest were an attempt to modernise the Welsh economy, the problem was put by Wyn Roberts in the House of Commons.

“(for)...too long we have been dangerously over-dependent on Government support for an ailing public sector.”⁹³⁸

⁹²⁹ Welsh Development Agency archived website, https://web.archive.org/web/20050216034819/http://www.wda.co.uk/index.cfm/wda_home/index/en2 (Last Accessed 9 May 2019)

⁹³⁰ Welsh Development Agency Act 1975, available on, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1975/70/contents> (Last accessed 9 May 2019)

⁹³¹ Scottish Development Agency Act 1975, available on, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1975/69/contents> (Last accessed 9 May 2019)

⁹³² Hansard HC Deb. 11 February 1980, vol.978 c409w

⁹³³ Hansard HC Deb. 24 March 1981, vol.1 c286w

⁹³⁴ ‘Industry Shakes Off Blues,’ in *Western Mail*, 27 January 1988.

⁹³⁵ Gareth Jones, ‘Questions over Quango replacement,’ in *BBC News*, 1 April 2006

⁹³⁶ Report of the Welsh Affairs Committee, *Inward Investment in Wales*, 31 January 2012

⁹³⁷ Welsh Affairs Committee, *Inward Investment in Wales: eighth report of session 2010-12* vol.2 p.192

⁹³⁸ Hansard HC Deb. 4 February 1980 vol.978 c167

This also clarifies the view of the Conservatives on the Welsh economy one that was industrial based. This was further confounded by the change in Welsh industry that is best summed by Nicholas Edwards, of “a considerable switch and transfer in the nature of employment with a growth in numbers among the self-employed and an increase in the numbers in the service sector.”⁹³⁹ A change to self-employment and vastly increased Tourism sector. Along with this came the de-industrialisation and decline of the manufacturing industry, this was in line with the general trend across the UK.⁹⁴⁰ In 1970, 20.57% of UK GDP⁹⁴¹ came from manufacturing, 20 years later in 1990 this had fallen to 15.18% of the GDP.⁹⁴²

Globalisation was key to the policies of Thatcherism, and certain was and is its impact upon Wales, if often viewed in negative manner.⁹⁴³ However, much of what the Conservative Party did in Wales was viewed as such after the S4C U-Turn.⁹⁴⁴ Globalisation allowed for Wales to compete for inward investment from foreign countries, it was also a solution to the financial issues in Wales. Making substantial use of foreign funding was not unusual for the Thatcher government. As much was done with European funding, for Wales physically this was in the creation of the A55 as Euro-route 22.⁹⁴⁵ Such inward investment raised some, £9.5bn in the 2nd and 3rd quarters of 1987 for UK,⁹⁴⁶ also some £11.2bn in 1988 from inward investment across the UK.⁹⁴⁷ Wales in particular benefitted from inward investment,⁹⁴⁸ the success of this prompted a rare mention of Wales from Thatcher, that, “Local telephone directories now

⁹³⁹ ‘Welsh Jobs success,’ in *The Guardian*, 13 December 1983

⁹⁴⁰ Ron Martin & Peter Townroe, ‘Changing Trends and Pressures in Regional Development,’ in Ron Martin & Peter Townroe, *Regional Development in the 1990s: The British Isles in Transition*, (London, 2013) pp.13-24, p.14

⁹⁴¹ Gross Domestic Product.

⁹⁴² Data obtained from Office for National Statistics. (ONS)

⁹⁴³ Welsh Affairs Committee, ‘Globalisation and its impact on Wales: Oral and written evidence,’ Second Report of Session 2008-9, vol.2, HC184-II, HMSO, London, 27 January 2009

⁹⁴⁴ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol.10, 11 September 1980; Lord Roberts of Cony, *Right from the Start: The Memoirs of Sir Wyn Roberts*, (Cardiff, 2006) p.138

⁹⁴⁵ See Chapter 3.

⁹⁴⁶ ‘Mr Major’s Written Parliamentary Answer on Inward Investment,’ 10 March 1988, John Major Archive.

⁹⁴⁷ ‘Mr Major’s Written Parliamentary Answer on Inward Investment,’ 21 March 1989, John Major Archive.

⁹⁴⁸ Margaret Thatcher, Speech to Welsh Conservative Party Conference, Porthcawl’ 23 June 1984, Margaret Thatcher Archives, 105711

read like a ‘Who’s Who’ of internationally world famous companies...”⁹⁴⁹ as stated in her speech to the Welsh Conservative Party conference. Unusual considering Thatcher did not usually mention Wales. Much of this success is attributable to foreign visits across the 1980s and 1990s, and the Ministers who advertised Wales. In one scenario it was reported that people turned up to a European trade event simply because Wyn Roberts was the speaker.

The European Regions.

“I have arrived from Germany after a short inward investment mission, which was quite successful.”⁹⁵⁰

As Wyn Roberts noted in his diary, upon returning from one of his first land inward investment mission to Europe on behalf of Wales, the first region targeted by the Welsh Office from 1985 onwards. Wyn Roberts visited across the length and breadth of western Europe, from the Southern regions of Spain and Italy up to Northern Europe with Sweden and Finland. Usually travelling in the company of Dr. Gwyn Jones the then director of the Welsh Development Agency.⁹⁵¹ Specifically, Germany was targeted as a place for investment missions, which utilised Wyn Roberts’ other linguistic talents, as well as being a Welsh speaker Roberts also spoke German fluently. In West Germany the labour cost was and is vast⁹⁵² but so is the amount of outward investment, amounting to some £14,200mn in 1987.⁹⁵³ West Germany was also a market which was prevalent in England.⁹⁵⁴ Surprisingly though, Germany was a market of which the Welsh Office was, as of 1985, not attracting any investment from nor was the Welsh Office or WINvest actively planning to send any investment missions to. It was potentially Wyn Roberts who opened trade links between Wales and West Germany.

⁹⁴⁹ Margaret Thatcher, ‘Speech to the Welsh CBI,’ Mold, Clwyd. 26 September 1990, Margaret Thatcher Archives, 108206.

⁹⁵⁰ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol.13, 31 May 1985

⁹⁵¹ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 14, October 1989

⁹⁵² J.H. ‘Money coming in...’ in *The Times Digital Archive*, 2 March 1987, p.2

⁹⁵³ J.H. ‘...Money going out.’ in *The Times Digital Archive*, 2 March 1987, p.2

⁹⁵⁴ John Lawless, ‘West Germans backing investment in Britain,’ in *The Times Digital Archive*, 23 July 1983, p.14,

In 1985 Wyn Roberts realised that this was a market which Wales was not actively investing in.⁹⁵⁵ At the time, it was unknown what links with Germany would or could be developed or what it could lead to specifically for Wales, though it was known for other areas of the UK which were actively attracting inward investment from Germany. As a result, these visits were primarily exploratory visits looking for individual companies to invest into Wales, though in some cases resulted in limited media coverage or economic gain. The main result of Roberts' multiple visits across Germany are most significant as they led to Wales's participation in the Four Motors of Europe. All the evidence is indicative for Roberts as being singlehandedly responsible for Wales joining the Four Motors, though others were also influential in setting Wales as a member. There are few sources beyond Roberts' diaries which corroborate Roberts events in this.

Wyn Roberts led a first exploratory mission for Wales to Munich, between 28-31 May 1985.⁹⁵⁶ Germany was a major investor into Britain but not one that was prevalent in Wales. Similarly, exploratory missions were also sent across Western Europe, usually when Roberts was signing agreements relating to the Four Motors. This first visit to Munich in Germany was a resounding success. During this visit Roberts visited several companies, many of whom subsequently expanded into Wales in one manner or another, usually in the form of building a Welsh factory base. Wyn Robert's first visit to a German company was to see Staedtler, manufacturers of various writing implement. The visit went well and because of his visit Staedtler now had a factory in Pontyclun, near Cardiff. The relations started in 1985 meant that Roberts was invited back to open a German factory in 1989, the opening ceremony in Nuremberg of the new Staedtler Headquarters. Roberts took a particular interest in the foreign subsidiaries of this company,⁹⁵⁷ though no figures are available as to how much this investment translated into money the investment into a factory created 100 jobs for South Wales, though this was not to last as the Ponyclun factory eventually closed in 2007, with the 100 jobs being lost.⁹⁵⁸

⁹⁵⁵ Wyn Roberts Diaries, vol. 13, WRD, WPA, National Library, Aberystwyth.

⁹⁵⁶ 'Programme for Mr Wyn Roberts, PUSS for Wales,' in Wyn Roberts Diary, Vol.13

⁹⁵⁷ Welsh Office News, 'Minister of State at German Factory Opening,' 2 June 1989, Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 14

⁹⁵⁸ 'A hundred jobs to go at factory,' in *Wales Online*, 14 June 2007

Another notable company which Roberts visited was Ina/bearings a subsidiary of Schaeffler. Roberts claimed he had opened eyes to fresh possibilities as noted in his diary he was well received by Ina Bearings.⁹⁵⁹ The parent company already had significant investment in Wales with a plant in Llanelli, opened in 1957, with the promise of more investment in Wales due to the efforts of Roberts.⁹⁶⁰ Though this is a case of the new global Wales market supplying jobs that did not last, as this factory closed down at the end of 2019.⁹⁶¹ This is a problem that would eventually blight jobs created by inward investment from foreign companies.

This visit made the German media with an article, which detailed Roberts visit to Staedtler. This outlined the initial success of the Inward investment drive into Wales from Germany, as Roberts commented for the article, “We are pleased that so many German firms (have) settled in Wales.”⁹⁶² That it made the German media dovetails with the fact that this was an exploratory visit to Germany, with a hard sell for investment into Wales. There is also no immediate use of Welsh culture, though there is a focus on Wales as a region. The fact that each of Wyn Roberts visits into Germany, focus not as a visit to the country but contain a specific focus on the regions within Germany suggests that the eagerness to sell Wales as a region was prevalent from the start of Wyn Roberts’ foreign visits. After the initial success of Wyn Roberts’ exploratory visit to Munich in 1985 he was then asked to lead another investment mission for Wales this time to Dusseldorf, Germany in 1986.

For this visit it was the aim to target German companies who were known to want to invest abroad, known from data that had been gathered by WINvest, but otherwise were unsure as to where their money should be invested. Unlike latter visits to world regions, it was not the case of using Wales to access Europe since the money was to come from Europe. It was for finding a cheaper place to manufacture goods. This visit also focuses on a region of Germany, though one that did not offer as much success as Roberts previous visit to Munich. The first visit to Munich was such a success that Roberts went again on another exploratory visit, this time in May 1986, to Dusseldorf. As Roberts notes, ‘Back in London after a land inward investment mission tour of Germany.’⁹⁶³

⁹⁵⁹ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol.13, 31 May 1985

⁹⁶⁰ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol.13, 31 May 1985

⁹⁶¹ Brian Meechan, ‘Schaeffler’s Llanelli car components plant set to close,’ in *BBC News*, 24 January 2019

⁹⁶² ‘Hoher Besuch bei Staedtler,’ Friday 3 May 1985

⁹⁶³ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol.13, 28 May 1986

The companies visited by Roberts included the Sprick cycle factory, who wanted a plant in Pontypool.⁹⁶⁴ This company visit however, was met with failure as Sprick later went bankrupt a few months after Wyn Roberts visit, making investment in a Welsh base impossible. Sprick cycles later returned as a new company on 1999 however, this was not long after the initial highs of the Welsh inward investment drive, so it was never again targeted as a potential candidate for investment. By this point Wyn Roberts had retired and the Welsh Conservatives had no say within Wales. The final company which Roberts got was the valuable Klockner Pentapack, a packaging company, which wished to expand with a plant in New Tredegar.⁹⁶⁵ This was a success as Klockner Pentapack did expand into Wales with a 75,000 sq. ft factory which was near completion in 1990.⁹⁶⁶

Roberts undertook another such investment mission which occurred in August 1986.⁹⁶⁷ The paramount successes of this visit led to Wyn Roberts undertaking another investment visit this time to Stuttgart, Germany in 1987. This is arguably the most important of all foreign visits undertaken by Wyn Roberts as it led to Wales's involvement as an associate member of the Four Motors of Europe.

For the third visit examined made by Roberts to Germany, this time he went to Stuttgart from 27 September to 1 October 1987. This was by far Roberts most important and most successful visit. This is where Wyn Roberts was first introduced to the newly emerging idea of the Four Motors region of Europe. A transnational and interregional economic agreement which gave smaller and medium sized Welsh businesses a route into the newly emerging European marketplaces.

For the actual visit itself Roberts visited three companies, all with advanced expansion plans for bases in Wales. Gillet expanded into Tredegar, and Alfred Teves in the Ebbw Vales. Rehau Plastics expanded with two plants into both Blaenau Ffestiniog and Amlwch,

⁹⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶⁶ Hansard HC Deb, 7 December 1989, vol.163 cc353w also; David Owens, 'The story of when the world's most famous photographer David Bailey captured the valleys life in the 1980s,' in *Wales Online*, 1 November 2018, picture no 12.

⁹⁶⁷ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol.13, 11 August 1986

Anglesey.⁹⁶⁸ Roberts also visited 3 further companies which at the time of his visit in 1987 were actively planning to build or expand operations into Wales. Freudenberg Gruppe actively considering expansion into South Wales, whilst Storopach already established in Kent had plans for Welsh expansion. Finally, Heraeus a precious metals company with profit margins in the billions had plans and eventually established near Imnys at Newport,⁹⁶⁹ a factory which is still open in the current era.

German owned companies in Wales employed 4,000 as of 1991, interestingly this was far more than those who were employed in the dwindling Welsh mining industry by 1991. This does not mean to say that mining died completely in Wales as of 2001 mines employed 3,100,⁹⁷⁰ as of 2017 the number was as high as 1,800.⁹⁷¹ It is hard to consider this view positively, as of all the jobs created by foreign investment filled in approximately half of the jobs lost from the mining industry lost over previous decades since the 1960s. Even with companies such as Bosch, with the largest ever investment at some £102mn for a plant located in Wales,⁹⁷² could not fill this gap. Another issue that arose was the different skillsets involved in these Welsh industries, the old way was reliant heavily on a mining industry compared to the new and very varied industries that had arrived in Wales.

Wyn Roberts undertook several other visits to Germany between 1987 and 1994, though the importance of these is limited when compared to this visit to Stuttgart. These are only three significant visits which Roberts made as a Minister. Further visits to Germany included to both Berlin and Dusseldorf in March 1989,⁹⁷³ and a further visit to Dresden in 1990.⁹⁷⁴

As well as the company visits Wyn Roberts visited Dr Leibing, the then head of the Economic Ministry of the Land Government of Stuttgart. Since the local elections in Stuttgart, Wyn Roberts was the first minister to visit from the UK on a land Inward

⁹⁶⁸ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 13, 2 October 1987

⁹⁶⁹ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 13, 2 October 1987

⁹⁷⁰ 'Workplace employment by industry and area,' (2001) StatsWales <https://statswales.gov.wales/v/GEQa> (Last accessed 10 July 2019)

⁹⁷¹ 'Workplace employment by industry and area,' (2017) StatsWales <https://statswales.gov.wales/v/GEQZ> (Last accessed 10 July 2019)

⁹⁷² 'Germans invest £250mn in Wales,' in *The Times Digital Archive*, 13 May 1991, p.28, (Last accessed 28 June 2019)

⁹⁷³ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 14, 9 March 1989

⁹⁷⁴ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 14, 12 June 1990

Investment mission. The discussions included the possibility of a relationship for technological research, and trading between Wales and Stuttgart and the development or interregional links in the Europe. In response the Welsh Office welcomed the German ambassador to the UK, for talks about the Baden-Wurttemberg connection started by Roberts.⁹⁷⁵ In 1987 only Rhone Alps in France was involved along with Baden Wurttemberg.⁹⁷⁶ Much of Roberts' diaries was devoted to ideas of how this relationship could be taken forward with Wales. It was a question he was still asking as of 1990 to Peter Walker.⁹⁷⁷ The end result of this visit came with Wales being a part of the Europe of the regions, with Wales as a region linking itself with other affluent regions of countries within the European union.

The Four Motors of Europe.

“We have already developed an active programme of inter-regional links with the ‘Four Motors’ group of the most economically powerful regions in the (European) community.”⁹⁷⁸

The Four Motors region is a transnational⁹⁷⁹ and integrated network of industrialised regions of Europe,⁹⁸⁰ this made it a natural target and ally of the Welsh inward investment drive in the 1980s. The agreement expanded to include both Wales and Canada, as associate members by the 1990s. The inclusion of Wales into the Four Motors is down primarily to the efforts of Wyn Roberts, to connect Wales to the heart of Europe. It was a result of a visit conducted by Wyn Roberts to Stuttgart in 1987, and his meeting with Dr Leibing the Economics Minister of Baden-Wurttemberg. Robert's idea was supported by both the Welsh Office and the Secretary Peter Walker who not long after visited Stuttgart, whilst Roberts and Dr Leibing drafted an agreement for Wales. David Hunt also supported Roberts's vision,⁹⁸¹ though

⁹⁷⁵ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 14, 5 April 1990

⁹⁷⁶ Wyn Roberts MP, Minister of State for Wales, speech to the Conservative Area Council, Metropole Hotel, Llandrindod Wells, 21 November 1987. Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 13

⁹⁷⁷ Wyn Roberts memo to Peter Walker, Welsh Office, 9 January 1990, Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 14

⁹⁷⁸ David Hunt, ‘The Welsh dragon's roar of revival,’ in *The Observer*, 31 May 1992

⁹⁷⁹ Sander Happaerts & Karoline Van den Brande & Hans Bruyninckx, ‘Subnational governments in transnational networks for sustainable development,’ in *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics*, 11.4, (2011) pp.321-339

⁹⁸⁰ ‘Four Motors for Europe,’ on <http://www.4motors.eu/presentation-3/> (Last accessed, 14 June 2019)

⁹⁸¹ Lord Roberts of Conwy, *Right from the Start*, p.243

arguably as most of the framework was in place by the time Hunt became the Welsh Secretary to go against would have been counterproductive.

Economically, as of 2018 it has access to a regional market of 1.249 billion euros.⁹⁸²

However, it is difficult to accurately calculate how much difference economically being an associate member of this made to Wales. It is the same case for one of the original four.⁹⁸³

Socially however, Wales was only designated 'associate status,'⁹⁸⁴ the same is true of Canada or any other region not one of the original four. An "intra-European, high-tech cartel," form of co-operation.⁹⁸⁵ It was a sale of Welshness that was enthusiastically supported by most Welsh Conservatives. Peter Walker was an enthusiastic supporter of the initiative, whilst Roberts drafted the support of Baden-Württemberg. Walker's successor, David Hunt also supported the idea of developing relations with the 'Four Motors' regions for Wales.

The Four regions' capitals are, Stuttgart, Milan, Lyon, and Barcelona,⁹⁸⁶ the areas are Baden-Württemberg, Lombardy, Rhône-alps, Catalonia. All areas with a distinctive regional identity. The 'Four Motors' came together in 1989, these were all areas which had several things in common. They were all highly industrialised but also all had a distinct regional identity different to the respective capitals or in some cases the entire countries.⁹⁸⁷ Catalonia is a chief example of this independent regional identity. Especially given the Catalanian Government's attempt at independence from the Spanish government in Barcelona, with its own declaration of independence in 2017.⁹⁸⁸

Wyn Roberts, after initially learning of the Four Motors in 1987, was then responsible for signing the respective agreements. In March 1991, Roberts was in Milan and for the Welsh

⁹⁸² 'Four Motors for Europe,' on <http://www.4motors.eu/presentation-3/> (Last accessed, 14 June 2019)

⁹⁸³ John Loughlin, "Europe of the Regions" and the Federalisation of Europe,' in *Publius*, 26.4, Federalism and the European Union, (1996) pp.141-162, p.158

⁹⁸⁴ David Wolfe, 'Networking among regions: Ontario and the four motors of Europe, in *European Planning Studies*, 8.3 (2000) pp.267-284 p.282

⁹⁸⁵ Christopher Harvie, *The Rise of Regional Europe*, (London, 1994) p.65

⁹⁸⁶ William Drozdiak, 'Revving up Europe's 'Four Motors,' in *The Washington Post*, 27 March 1994.

⁹⁸⁷ Susana Borrás, 'The "Four Motors for Europe" and its promotion of R&D Linkages: beyond geographical contiguity in interregional agreements,' in *Regional Politics and Policy*, 3 (1993) pp.163-176

⁹⁸⁸ Government of Catalan, 'Catalan Declaration of Independence,' 10 October 2017

international development into another prosperous European region,⁹⁸⁹ signed a letter of intent between Wales and Lombardy. This visit also included a meeting with the Milan Chamber of Commerce and a meeting with Dr Giuseppe Giovenzana President of the Lombardy regional government, who Roberts invited to Wales.⁹⁹⁰ In October 1991, Roberts signed a similar agreement⁹⁹¹ in Barcelona with Jordi Pujol.⁹⁹² As is noted in a Welsh Office news bulletin ‘...both regions have much in common with their own distinctive language and culture, and both have been especially successful in attracting substantial Inward investment.’⁹⁹³ This was further reflected in the original agreement, the languages of which were another world first being in no fewer than three languages; English, Welsh and Catalan. It also showcases the strength of each region as a part of their own economic identity, with increasing emphasis that regional areas cooperating could potentially garner further investment for themselves as opposed for the country.

By the May of 1992 further formal agreements had been signed with Catalonia and Baden-Wurttemberg.⁹⁹⁴ A further agreement was signed on 21 February 1994 between Wales and Lombardy.⁹⁹⁵ At the same time Roberts was also enthusiastic for getting Canada involved, with the Wales-Ontario Agreement. Whilst in Ontario Roberts was treated to the same standard as representatives of the four full members.⁹⁹⁶ This demonstrates the efficacy of Wales on the international stage. This was done whilst also handling practical concerns, as Roberts also lead a 24-person strong trade delegation to Catalonia.⁹⁹⁷

Wyn Roberts also claimed that the relationship with the Four Motors also renewed interest in Wales as a place in which business can be done.⁹⁹⁸ In addition to this that, (the) ‘Four motors

⁹⁸⁹ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol.15, 27 March 1991.

⁹⁹⁰ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 14, 27 March 1991

⁹⁹¹ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 14, 20 October 1991

⁹⁹² Jordi Pujol, president of the Government of Catalonia from 28 April 1980 till 17 December 2003

⁹⁹³ ‘Minister Strengthens links between Wales and Catalonia,’ *Welsh Office News*, 15 October 1991, Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 14

⁹⁹⁴ David Hunt, ‘The Welsh dragon’s roar of revival,’ in *The Observer*, 31 May 1992

⁹⁹⁵ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol.17, 21 February 1994.

⁹⁹⁶ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol.17, 22 September 1993.

⁹⁹⁷ ‘Visit to Barcelona by the Minister of State from the Welsh Office,’ *Welsh Office News*, 17 October 1991, Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 15

⁹⁹⁸ Hansard, HoC Deb. 1 March 1993, vol.220 c108

regions... have a vital role to play in the fields of overseas trade.’⁹⁹⁹ So did the visits involved, Roberts once again led a trade mission consisting of 10 companies to Lombardy resulting in £5.3 million worth of orders for Welsh companies thanks to the Trade mission.¹⁰⁰⁰ He also opened a factory in Milan¹⁰⁰¹ in Rezzemo for Serpal Control Tech. Also Visit to Milan, produced 5mn worth of orders.¹⁰⁰² Wyn Roberts’ further visit to Canada was the natural continuation of his earlier visits to Europe regarding the Four Motors. The purpose was for the signing of the Wales Ontario agreement as no less than 9 Ontario companies employed some 3,000 people in Wales,¹⁰⁰³ because of some of Roberts trade missions. This brought Ontario into the Four Motors as another associate member, with which Wales had a direct transnational trading link with. The regions of Europe were stretching out to form their own global trade links, Wales reached out with them.

Wales understandably had much in common with these regions and fledgling globalised industry and a distinctive regional identity within the United Kingdom. Hence Wyn Roberts’ desire and interest in getting Wales to join, which he expressed during his visit to Stuttgart 1987.¹⁰⁰⁴ This Europe of the regions, was in a way what Plaid Cymru wanted, they saw Europe as a potential escape route from the union. The same also occurred in 2016 with the SNP also viewing the Scottish region joining Europe as a way out of the Union. Roberts, however, placed an emphasis on Welshness as a region in which could do business within Europe but as a Blue Dragon also placed emphasis at least on an economic union for Wales in the UK. The joining of the Four Motors was a powerful statement of Welsh identity within the framework of Europe. With each relationship being not only individual but also distinctive.¹⁰⁰⁵ The old way after all had a traditional economic identity that was heavily reliant on the haemorrhaging mining industry, Roberts saw that Wales could come to hold a new global economic identity via the concept of a ‘Europe of the regions’ that placed

⁹⁹⁹ ‘Minister Strengthens links between Wales and Catalonia,’ *Welsh Office News*, 15 October 1991, Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 14

¹⁰⁰⁰ ‘Firms cash in on Italians Job,’ in *Daily Post*, 21 November 1991, Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 16

¹⁰⁰¹ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 16, 21 November 1992

¹⁰⁰² Hansard, HC Deb, 14 December 1992, vol 216, c,11

¹⁰⁰³ Welsh Office News, ‘Wales and Ontario State business agreement,’ 6 October 1992, Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 16

¹⁰⁰⁴ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 13, 27 September – 1 October 1987.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Welsh Affairs Committee, Fourth Report. Wales in Europe. Volume I, Report, together with the proceedings of the Committee. House of Commons, 25 October 1995. pp.12-18

emphasis on the regions within Europe.¹⁰⁰⁶ Similarly, Jordi Pujol gave a speech on the future of the role of regionalism in Europe by 1992.¹⁰⁰⁷ As later visits in the World Regions will demonstrate Roberts in a way used the identity of Wales as a region to bolster the country. He had added it as a European trading region with the Four Motors, the same could be done across the world.

It was down to the efforts of the Wyn Roberts that Wales had a much-increased visibility on both the European and global markets, small Welsh businesses could now access these markets.¹⁰⁰⁸ To the extent that in 1994, substantial links had been formed with Europe, three out of the four regions in the Four Motors had received the substantial links with Wales. More so than the capital of each country; Baden Wurttemberg had some 25 links, Lombardy had 7, Catalonia had 5. Only the Rhone-Alpes region fell behind the capital of Paris with 1 link compared to 3 in Wales.¹⁰⁰⁹ By 1995 though not a full member Wales was regularly invited to attend the annual Four Motors initiatives and events.¹⁰¹⁰ Similarly, Wales played host to the regions on occasion, Roberts' Diary, pertains to the possibility of a first Four Motors meeting in Cardiff.¹⁰¹¹ The same year also saw some £200 million invested into Wales from the Four Motors within the region of 3,500 jobs created.¹⁰¹² Similarly, the idea was often mentioned in proceedings of the Welsh Committee whilst discussing Welsh affairs.¹⁰¹³ As of 2018 the Four Motors region celebrated its 30th anniversary.¹⁰¹⁴

¹⁰⁰⁶ Anwen Elias, 'Introduction: Whatever Happened to the Europe of the Regions? Revisiting the Regional Dimension of European Politics,' in *Regional and Federal Studies*, 18.5 (2008) pp.483-92, also; Eve Hepburn, 'The Rise and Fall of a 'Europe of the Regions,' in *Regional and Federal Studies*, 18.5 (2008) pp.537-55, Celia Applegate, 'A Europe of Regions: A Reflection on the Historiography of Sub-National places in Modern Times,' in *The American History Review*, 104.4 (1999) pp.1157-82

¹⁰⁰⁷ 'Speech given by Jordi Pujol, President of Catalonia,' US Council of Foreign Relations, New York, 8 February 1990

¹⁰⁰⁸ Hansard, HC Deb. 8 December 1995, vol.215, c604w

¹⁰⁰⁹ Hansard, HC Deb. 10 March 1994, vol.239, c364w

¹⁰¹⁰ Hansard, HC Deb. 11 January 1995, vol.252, c137w

¹⁰¹¹ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol.17, 6 December 1993.

¹⁰¹² Welsh Affairs Committee, Fourth Report. Wales in Europe. Volume I, Report, together with the proceedings of the Committee. House of Commons, 25 October 1995. pp.12-18

¹⁰¹³ Welsh Affairs Committee, Fourth Report. Wales in Europe. Volume II. Minutes of Evidence and Appendices, House of Commons, 25 October 1995.

¹⁰¹⁴ '30 years of Four Motors – Four regions for a strong Europe,' 20 July 2018, available on <http://www.4motors.eu/en/detailansicht/30-years-of-four-motors-four-regions-for-a-strong-europe> (Last accessed 10 July 2018)

It is also noted in the year of 1993 that the growth between Wales and the Four Motors Region was organic and astonishing, though the relations between Wales and Ontario did not grow at the same extent.¹⁰¹⁵ This also shows the influence of the Welsh office, small but with responsibility for Nation-wide policies. Also responsible for cultural engagements, Roberts' engagement overseas with different areas of Welsh culture demonstrates this.

Though Roberts' idea of a World Regions was not generally verbally put Don Rickard, who Roberts credits with having a large part in the creation of the Four Motors, encouraged him to pursue it. After witnessing the organic growth between Wales and the Four Motors,¹⁰¹⁶ Roberts then helped to put Wales on the global stage, as he notes in his diary.

“Don Rickard... played a prominent part in developing the Four Motors, as I found at Dresden. I told him of my world regions idea, and he encouraged me to develop it.”¹⁰¹⁷

Robert's idea was to establish Wales as a prominent player in the leading regions of the World as well as in Europe, this would eventually include America and Asia. Crucially it is a very modern idea for a Welsh Identity, one that makes use of Welsh identity that adapts and is global rather than one which was dependent on mining, which had been in decline for decades. However, before it reached full fruition Roberts was busy dealing with both the Welsh Language Act of 1993 and the Local Government (Wales) Bill of 1994, and eventually retired from the House of Commons before the idea could be fully implemented. Similarly, there are factors beyond Roberts's control which meant that this idea did not flourish for much more than a decade, the main two being the removal of the WDA and the ageing state of the party.

¹⁰¹⁵ Letter to Don Rickard, 'Wales and the Four Motors regions,' Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 18

¹⁰¹⁶ Letter to Don Rickard, 'Wales and the Four Motors regions,' Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 18

¹⁰¹⁷ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol.17, 23 September 1993.

The World Regions.

‘Building bridges between Wales and the World’¹⁰¹⁸

After the initial success of investment from Europe, and the eventual establishment of the Four Motors transnational trading bloc. Wyn Roberts went continental, working towards his idea of the ‘World regions,’ to bring both investment and trading links to Wales from across the world. First, this meant targeting the traditional places such as America, where links existed but typically brought in high levels of investment for Wales. Second, Roberts also targeted the emerging markets of Asia, such as Taiwan, Singapore, and Japan, this was done to establish further trade links for Wales across the globe. In this Roberts makes significant use of cultural diplomacy, engaging with Welsh cultures that had settled in the host country of each visit to promote Welshness. This is significant, though Wales had targeted America as a place for which it could do business before, Huw T. Edwards as head of the Welsh Tourist Board in the 1950s and 1960s also put a lot of emphasis on visiting America and engaging with American-Welsh culture. This engagement with such cultures was not necessarily unique to Wyn Roberts but does form a crucial aspect of the Blue Dragon.

The Welsh Office targeted America as a place where trade was important but by no means unique on both sides since America and the UK had long been trading with one and another. Wyn Roberts’ diaries offer detailed insights into his visits to North America. An area which historically, usually offered bigger investments into the UK, which in turn could translate into larger and direct investments into Wales. It was typically to England where investment went, it was also an area which became a target of the overall Welsh investment drive. These efforts to raise inward investment for Britain were noticed in an article for *Mass High Tech* by Ellen Corliss,¹⁰¹⁹ who noted in 1989 that the English were coming for US investment, the article neglects to mention that the Welsh were also on their way for substantial US investment.

¹⁰¹⁸ Sir Wyn Roberts, ‘Building bridges between Wales and the World,’ 1993

¹⁰¹⁹ Ellen T. Corliss, ‘The British Are Coming – for U.S Investment,’ in *Mass High Tech*, 8.4 (December 1989) p.1-16

The first visit to America which was undertaken by Wyn Roberts occurred mainly in the states of New York and Michigan, between 29 August to 8 September of 1987.¹⁰²⁰ As can be evidenced from the diaries, most of the companies that Roberts visited expanded into and subsequently built new factories into Wales, providing jobs ranging from the 10s to the 1000s. The key example of this is the US company Chevron,¹⁰²¹ who eventually took over the Pembroke Refinery in 2000, meaning it was a company who invested in Wales and stayed in Wales beyond the 1990s decline.

The specific aim of most countries was using Wales as a gateway to the European markets, the same occurred with many Japanese investments. This was the policy of many American countries seeking European bases, thus making them a prime target for a visit by Wyn Roberts. As he noted in his diary for this visit, that; ‘Since my arrival I have visited 6 states and 11 major companies,’ and (the) ‘Sheer size of companies took me by surprise, the expansionist policy is good for Wales...’¹⁰²², bigger companies meant larger economic investment for Wales.

The 6 states Roberts visited in America were included New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Michigan, Nebraska, and Minnesota. The companies Roberts visited, included companies with profits in the billions, these were A.M Fueling, Dow Chemicals, Berry Warner, UMI Corp, Advance Machine Company, 3M, which built a base near Llanelli.¹⁰²³ In this case no figures are available as to how much this visit raised in sterling for Wales, there can be little doubt though, as there is evidence of each company having a Welsh base, that the investment totalled into the millions because of Roberts visit. There remains no media coverage of this visit either however, the main significance of this visit was mainly cultural rather than economic.

This was also a case of Roberts engaging with a form of Welsh culture in America as he often took the time to engage in Welsh cultural activities, with an invitation to a Welsh cultural

¹⁰²⁰ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 13, 29 August – 8 September 1987.

¹⁰²¹ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 14, 16 September 1990.

¹⁰²² Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 13, 7 September 1987

¹⁰²³ Welsh Office- US Embassy, from Colin Thomas PS, 28 July 1987, Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 13

gathering, the annual Gymanfa Ganu,¹⁰²⁴ a festival which celebrates Welshness. The fact that North America has such a gathering shows the efficacy of Welshness on the global stage, and engagement from Welshman such as Wyn Roberts demonstrates the authenticity of such a gathering. It also demonstrates the adaptability of Welsh identity. Furthermore, even after his visits to the region, Wyn Roberts continued to keep in touch with the organisers and continued his support for the event. In a newsletter for the 1994 Gymanfa Ganu, Wyn Roberts stated.

‘I was particularly interested to see that the programme of events for this year’s Gymanfa Ganu will, for the first time, include an Eisteddfod. I congratulate the organisers for their imagination in bringing together these two essential and characteristic elements of Welsh culture.’¹⁰²⁵

This was an occasion in which Wyn Roberts has managed to engage and expand the idea of Welsh identity abroad. Not only that but he made use of this occasion to advertise Wales abroad, specifically the success of Wales in the modern markets. The same newsletter has an advert promoting Wales by the Welsh Development Agency. The Gymanfa Ganu demonstrates the power of the Welsh past, with the Americans looking back to their Welsh ancestry.

¹⁰²⁴ Welsh Office- US Embassy, from Colin Thomas PS, 28 July 1987, Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 13

¹⁰²⁵ Message from Sir Wyn Roberts MP, Minister of State for Wales, in ‘Croeso 1994 National Gymanfa Ganu,’ p.4 Available on the Peoples Collection of Wales.



Figure 19: Wyn Roberts (centre right) attending the Gymanfa Ganu in Bellevue, Washington State, North America 1993.

The second visit by Wyn Roberts to the American continent, included a repeat visit to New York, but also to both Canada and the West Coast of the US between the 15 to the 25 September of 1990. The cities he visited included Toronto in Canada and, Chicago, New York, and San Francisco in the US.¹⁰²⁶ This visit like his previous one to the US was to make use of existing trade links to bring investment direct to Wales. Across the locations which were visited by Roberts, he had many successes with 12 company visits.

However, compared to his previous visit to America, the figures of how much some of the companies invested into Wales bases is available either in how many jobs were created or how much was invested. As an example, CBS Rec International, expanded with a £2.9mn investment into a Bridgend Plant. Also, the YIDE Corporation expanded with a new factory in Brynmawr, which saw the creation 50 new jobs in South Wales. Similarly, John Labatt Limited offered a £14mn investment into Deeside, Flintshire with prospects of 300 jobs to be

¹⁰²⁶ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 14, 16 September 1990.

created in North Wales. Another company, which remains unnamed, offered a £15mn investment with prospect of 700 jobs being created at a factory base in South Wales.¹⁰²⁷

Perhaps however, the most significant company of this trip was Chevron, which invested in a factory in Milford Haven, a £53 million investment for Wales, by far one of the largest investments offered by America into Wales. Further companies included Revlan Incorporated, and Leith Video International. Finally, the Black Clawson Company who had at the time already had a new facility in Newport, further expanded their operations in Wales. Finally, during the visit a further 10 companies expressed an interest in investment projects to expand into Wales,¹⁰²⁸ to have access to the emerging European markets. Unusually, these visits do not have much in the way of media coverage, though given the business nature of these visits this is to be expected.

The final visit to the American continent, again included visits to both the US and Canadian cities of Seattle and Vancouver respectively, between 11-23 September 1993. The Toronto part of this visit was about bringing Canada into the Four Motors fold, with the Wales-Ontario agreement. With the first mentions Robert's idea of World Regions, 1980s about the European regions, so the natural continuation was for the 'World regions.' Common ideas and interests with aim to assist each other for the common good.¹⁰²⁹ Here will primarily focus on the Seattle angle of this visit.

Unusually for Roberts, this visit was recipient to an unusual amount of media coverage in comparison to his previous visits to the American continent. With two radio interviews of valuable interest and publicity, talks of a 1995 visit.¹⁰³⁰ As billed by Roberts this visit was a 'Unique opportunity for Wales to build up its relations... in leading regions of the World.'¹⁰³¹ It was unique for a Four Motors agreement, by doing this Roberts is selling the idea of Wales as a separate identity to the rest of the UK. Also, during the visits to sign these agreement

¹⁰²⁷ 'North American Visit by Minister of State,' Welsh Office memo, 15-25 September 1990, Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 14

¹⁰²⁸ 'North American Visit by Minister of State,' Welsh Office memo, 15-25 September 1990, Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 14

¹⁰²⁹ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 17, 23 September 1993

¹⁰³⁰ Memo, 'Visit to Vancouver by Minister of State, 15-19 September 1993' Welsh Office, 29 September 1993

¹⁰³¹ Emyr Williams, 'Trade mission strikes gold in US as company celebrates new orders,' in *Daily Post*, 27 September 1993

Roberts was usually setting up trading links. During this visit he managed to visit several companies as part of an investment trip.

As to the companies visited these included New Bridge Networks which was already established in Newport with further plans for UK expansion. INCO had established in Wales in 1928 though planned for further expansion into Wales due to costs of setting up laboratories in Canada.¹⁰³² This is like what eventually happened in Wales, with many companies choosing Eastern Europe over the increasing costs in Wales, roughly from 1997 onwards. Finally, Metal Recovery Ltd. had planned for expansion and were actively considering a plant in Llanelli.

This visit also includes other cases of Roberts interacting with members of the Welsh community, with a visit to a Welsh association with a history stretching back a century.¹⁰³³ He also attended the birthday of Mary Rosenberg of Seattle a Welsh woman celebrating her 100th birthday.¹⁰³⁴ Roberts' engagement with these Welsh cultures in America almost acts as a legitimising factor, that they are recognised by being a born Welsh. Similarly, the fact that these cultures existed in several places where Roberts took a foreign visit demonstrates the longevity and adaptability of Welsh identity to a certain degree. It was this in part that Roberts was trying to sell as part of a new global Welsh Identity.

Though the American visits did generally offer larger investments than those of Europe, none of these visits surpassed the £102 million investment by just one company from Europe. The final continent in the world region that was targeted by the investment drive and visited by Roberts was Asia, specifically Japan which had long been a target of the whole UK investment drive. It soon became target of the Welsh investment drive. Wyn Roberts was a part of this and played a key role in establishing new trade links with Asia, just as he had done with the Four Motors of Europe.

¹⁰³² Minute to Secretary of State from Minister of State, Wyn Roberts, 'Export Mission to Seattle, Vancouver & Toronto,' 11-23 September 1993. Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 17

¹⁰³³ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 17, 14 September 1993

¹⁰³⁴ 'Mary Rosenberg of Seattle celebrates her 10th with MP Sir Wyn Roberts,' *Y Drych*, November 1993, Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 17

To Asia

‘...according to the Japanese Wales is the centre of Europe.’¹⁰³⁵

This is a rather bold claim made by the Welsh Development Agency, though not one entirely without merit. Japanese investment into Europe during the 1980s was extensive amounting to billions of pounds. This was partially a result of growing internationalisation of the Japanese economy, otherwise as a part of the UK inward investment drive, inevitably it became part of the Welsh investment drive. Another WDA advert gives a reason for Japanese investment into Wales carrying the claim, from the director of Sony Mr Tokita¹⁰³⁶ that, Wales simply had the right approach for the Japanese. It is important to note that Japan had long been investing in Wales by the 1980s, Takiron had been in Wales for 20 years by 1992.¹⁰³⁷

Nicholas Edwards had visited Japan in 1984, in an exploratory visit set up by WINvest.¹⁰³⁸ As Edwards stated, “the presence of a Secretary of State on overseas visits opened doors that would otherwise have remained closed...”¹⁰³⁹ This is almost certainly the case as it can also be identified from Edwards letter to Thatcher detailing his success on such a visit to Japan.¹⁰⁴⁰ There is also evidence that Wyn Roberts presence was capable of this, on such a visit in Europe it is noted that people turned up to a Welsh Office trade event simply because Wyn Roberts was also in attendance as the main speaker, this occurred in 1991 when Wyn Roberts led one of his numerous trade delegations abroad. The fact that Wyn Robert was capable of this without ever attaining the rank of Secretary of State, is testament simply to his efficacy at advertising Wales to the world and drawing in substantial investment. Roberts arguably, could open doors that remained closed to the Secretary of State. The fact that he was able to host and be hosted by the Japanese Royal Family is a testament to this. In

¹⁰³⁵ ‘Welsh Development Agency,’ in *The Times Digital Archive*, 22 October 1985, p.6, (Last accessed 28 June 2019)

¹⁰³⁶ ‘Welsh Development Agency,’ in *The Times Digital Archive*, 22 October 1985, p.6, (Last accessed 28 June 2019)

¹⁰³⁷ Welsh Office Press Release, ‘First Japanese Company to Invest in Wales Celebrates ‘Momentous decision’ 20 years on,’ 1st October 1992, in Papers of Ivor Wynne Jones, Conwy Archives, Conwy.

¹⁰³⁸ Hansard, HC Deb, 5 March 1984, vol. 55 c591

¹⁰³⁹ Nicholas Crickhowell, *Westminster, Wales and Water*, (Cardiff, 1999) p.36

¹⁰⁴⁰ Nicholas Edwards letter to Margaret Thatcher, ‘Inward Investment Missions,’ May 1981. In National Archives, Kew, PREM19-0821 f56, also available MTF Archives, 140822.

addition to this Roberts also played the role of host in the 'Japan Festival Wales' in Cardiff, May 1991, which served to further strengthen the links between Japan and Wales.¹⁰⁴¹

However, many of the substantial successes for inward investment, lay with the visit of a Minister of State.¹⁰⁴² Roberts had much success in foreign affairs as a Minister of State, in the role as both a communicator and ambassador for Wales. Simultaneously, in the role as Secretary of State and as a UK Minister, Nicholas Edwards was also responsible for conducting these WINvest missions. However, as the Welsh Secretary and a Minister, Edwards had the responsibility of advertising the whole of the UK as opposed to a specific focus on Wales and Welsh interests.¹⁰⁴³ Though Edwards stressed his responsibility for Wales, as is notable in a telegram to Thatcher.¹⁰⁴⁴ The 'Britain means Business,' drive headed by Nicholas Edwards and Norman Tebbit is an example of this, it brought together all the regional investment agencies in a huge investment drive into the whole of the UK.¹⁰⁴⁵

However, the specific focus on one country within the union was something which Roberts could potentially achieve with not being as high profile a minister as his counterparts, such as Edwards. Though this was not always the case as, Wyn Roberts was still a UK minister so had the same issue of representing the whole of the UK when asked. This was an issue that arose during his visit to Chunghwa in Taiwan in 1994, when discussion of Scotland meant Roberts had to advertise for a different member of the union,¹⁰⁴⁶ as a personal preference of Chunghwa's director.

An examination of any foreign visit which has Roberts at the helm and the focus is typically specific to the promotion Welsh interests, and as a place in which foreign companies could invest, Robert's visits served also for the promotion of Welsh culture. Similarly, as Secretary of State for Wales, Nicholas Edwards stated he could do business with the Keidanren, the

¹⁰⁴¹ 'The Japan Festival – Wales 1991,' in Papers of Ivor Wynne Jones, Conwy Archives, Conwy.

¹⁰⁴² Nicholas Edward's visit to Japan is an example of such a success.

¹⁰⁴³ Nicholas Edwards letter to Margaret Thatcher, 'Inward Investment Missions,' May 1981. In National Archives, Kew, PREM19-0821 f56, also available MTF Archives, 140822.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Telegram no 4, 'Visit by the Secretary of State for Wales to Japan,' 9 March 1981, National Archives, Kew, PREM19-0821

¹⁰⁴⁵ Jonathon Davis, 'Foreign investors given government promise on free choice of regions,' in *The Times Digital Archive*, 27 March 1985, p.2, (Last accessed 28 June 2019)

¹⁰⁴⁶ See visit to Taiwan.

Japanese Business Federation,¹⁰⁴⁷ so could Thatcher as Prime Minister.¹⁰⁴⁸ At the same time Roberts was at the Welsh Office also conducting such official visits to the same countries. Roberts' association was as high as the office of the Japanese Royal family, a connection he utilised to bring inward investment straight to Wales. Roberts's efforts were in line with the Conservative Party manifesto, which promised renewed efforts to modernise the Welsh economy.¹⁰⁴⁹

Wyn Roberts was senior enough to receive a visit to his constituency by the Japanese prince Naruhito, as of May 2019 the current Emperor of Japan.¹⁰⁵⁰ Naruhito was known to travel in and to be fond of the UK.¹⁰⁵¹ Whilst at Oxford he was an active participant, even presenting a trophy to the winner of the rowing in 1985.¹⁰⁵² Furthermore Naruhito was made a fellow of his Alta mater Merton College, Oxford in 1989.¹⁰⁵³ His role as a Royal also extended to conducting visits to companies with Japanese officials,¹⁰⁵⁴ to further promote Japanese business interests abroad. Wyn Roberts along with his wife Enid, and the Marquess of Anglesey, entertained Prince Naruhito, and several Japanese delegates,¹⁰⁵⁵ at the Hotel Seventy Degrees¹⁰⁵⁶ in Colwyn Bay, (once a proud establishment it was recently knocked down and replaced with flats.)¹⁰⁵⁷ during Naruhito's holiday to Snowdon on Saturday 27 July 1985. Furthermore, the Prince had been sighted several times around North Wales, the Daily

¹⁰⁴⁷ Keidanren, Japanese Business Association, <https://www.keidanren.or.jp/en/> (Last accessed 12 June 2019)

¹⁰⁴⁸ Margaret Thatcher, 'Speech to the Keidanren,' Tokyo Station, 20 September 1989. Margaret Thatcher Foundation, 107767

¹⁰⁴⁹ Conservative Party General Election Manifesto 1987.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Marthe De Ferrer, 'Name of Japan's new imperial era is announced,' in *Daily Post*, 1 April 2019

¹⁰⁵¹ Suzanne Greaves, 'The Times review of 1985... a year of calamity & hope,' in *The Times Digital Archive*, 30 December 1985, p.6, (Last accessed 28 June 2019)

¹⁰⁵² Jim Railton, 'Rowing,' in *The Times Digital Archive*, 30 March 1985, p.23, (Last accessed 28 June 2019)

¹⁰⁵³ 'University News,' in *The Times Digital Archive*, 26 July 1989, p.18, (Last accessed 28 June 2019)

¹⁰⁵⁴ 'News in brief,' in *The Times Digital Archive*, 3 April 1985, p.16, (Last accessed 28 June 2019)

¹⁰⁵⁵ 'Court Circular,' in *The Times Digital Archive*, 29 July 1985, p.12, (Last Accessed 28 June 2019)

¹⁰⁵⁶ 'Hotel 70 Degrees,' in *BBC News*, 24 October 2008

¹⁰⁵⁷ 'Hotel 70 Degrees' faces the end,' in *BBC News*, 30 July 2006, also; the Colwyn Bay Civic Society; Eunice Roberts & Helen Morely, *The Spirit of Colwyn Bay: vols 1&2: The 20th Century in Photographs*, (Cardiff, 2015)

Post reported that Naruhito had stopped in the Queen's Head in Glanwydden near Llandudno for a pint.¹⁰⁵⁸

Naruhito sent Wyn Roberts a copy of his Oxford thesis¹⁰⁵⁹ months later, though this was not published until 1989. This was down to either his further study at Gakushûin University in 1988 or the declining health of his grandfather the then Emperor of Japan.¹⁰⁶⁰ He also released a memoir of his time at Oxford University and expressed a wish to bring Japan and the United Kingdom closer together.¹⁰⁶¹ Roberts and Naruhito met again during Roberts' inward investment mission to Japan three years later in 1988. With a cultural significance of going through a Japanese tea ceremony, an important Japanese tradition, and an orderly way of greeting guests.

These relations would later go on to aid Roberts during his investment trip to Japan. It is significant that Roberts had such royal relations. First it aids as a legitimising factor, thus, giving Roberts increased credibility with Japanese companies and allowing him to competently compete with other European and United Kingdom countries in the Inward Investment game for Wales. Second, though such visits involving Royalty usually have a propagandist effect or a legitimising factor, (the 1994 Royal visit to Russia by Queen Elizabeth II is demonstrable of such.) the fact that Naruhito visited him suggests a confidence in Wales that existed right at the top of Japanese society. This legitimising factor is important for Wales since it was still trying to develop foreign relations for itself, rather than relying on links developed for the UK. Nor was it the first time that Japanese royals had visited Wales, Hirohito had visited on his European tour in the 1920s and was pictured with the Lloyd George and his family.¹⁰⁶²

Wyn Roberts visits to Asian countries had the specific aim of utilising Wales as a gateway for these emerging markets to enter Europe, any economic benefit of trade delegations receiving

¹⁰⁵⁸ 'Japanese Prince has a beer at the local,' in *Daily Post*, 1 August 1985

¹⁰⁵⁹ Prince Naruhito, *A Study of Navigation and Traffic on the Upper Thames in the 18th Century*, (Merton College, Oxford University, 1989)

¹⁰⁶⁰ Herbert Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, (New York, 2000)

¹⁰⁶¹ Prince Naruhito, Crown Prince of Japan, (English Translation by Hugh Cortazzi), *The Thames and I: A Memoir of Two Years at Oxford*, (London, 2006)

¹⁰⁶² 'Lloyd George, Dame Margaret and Megan with Japanese Emperor Hirohito,' Slide. Conwy Archives, Conwy. CP175/330, D.M. Richards Photograph Collection.

an order can be conceived as a bonus. Japan was the natural starting point for Wales as the trade links existed, Roberts would go on to establish links across Asia these links are still prevalent in Wales today. The amount raised by each of these visits is insubstantial when compared to the amounts invested from both Europe and America, However, these were exploratory visits rather than visits reliant on existing relations which could explain the relatively smaller amounts of money being invested. The visits to; Bahrain, Taiwan, Singapore, and Malaysia were for the creation of relations as opposed to the bringing in of investment to Wales. Relations already existed with Europe and America which could be built upon, which would explain the generally heavier amounts of money being invested into Wales from these regions. The Asian visits were a part of Wyn Robert's vision of a World Regions, and there is evidence that Roberts was successful in forming relations in each country he visited for the betterment of Wales via FDI.

‘All Japanese investment in Wales is marked by thorough planning and long-term objectives.’¹⁰⁶³

As stated by David Hunt in a Welsh Office press release, there was an impressive influx of Japanese companies into Wales, some can be attributed as a response to a visit by a Minister of State such as Wyn Roberts. It was not just Japan that Roberts visited, it was several countries across Asia, all of whom were looking for European expansion. For most of these Asian visits the idea was not necessarily to expand investment, but to establish further global links for Wales as a place in which to invest. Links already existed between the UK and Japan, hence the bold quote from the WDA over Japan. It is with little surprise that Japan attracted such high-profile visits as of April 1989, 33 Japanese companies which in turn employed approximately 10,000 people. Along with a £400mn investment. Just 11 of these Japanese companies employed 5,000 and in an unusual twist for the time as of April 1989 over half the workforce was female.

By the 1990s it was not just Japan that was subject to the Welsh investment drive. Roberts and other Welsh Conservatives had undertaken a reasonable number of foreign visits by this point that, all established links with Wales which to some degree led to investment in Wales.

¹⁰⁶³ Welsh Office Press Release, ‘First Japanese Company to Invest in Wales Celebrates ‘Momentous decision’ 20 years on,’ 1st October 1992, in Papers of Ivor Wynne Jones, Conwy Archives, Conwy.

This meant that new links were required with emerging markets. First, Roberts went on a trade mission to both Kuwait and Bahrain in 1991. Second, this was followed by two visits to Singapore in 1993. Third, a visit at the behest of the Welsh development Agency Roberts went on an unofficial visit Taiwan as official recognition could damage any potential relations with China. The final visit examined concerns Roberts' inward investment mission to Malaysia.

Of these visits to Asia, any displays of Welsh culture are lacking however, as the Welsh Office was trying to break into different areas of the Asian markets it is expected that there would be minimal Welsh societies or cultural displays to engage with. However, there is a notable exception with the St David's societies in both Singapore and Malaysia. America also has a long history of Welsh culture and settlements,¹⁰⁶⁴ in comparison with Asia.

“Wales indeed would not be what it is today if Japanese investment had not come here.”¹⁰⁶⁵

As Hugh Cortazzi a former British ambassador for Japan noted. For the first visit made by Roberts he went to Japan between October 1 to 8 October of 1988. Unlike the other visits to Asian regions this was an Inward Investment visit, in which a lot was achieved for Wales.¹⁰⁶⁶ It led to both inward investments coming directly to Wales and the furthering of Wales on the Global market. Wyn Roberts was received by several large Japanese companies which included Sharp, and Makushita Electronic Industries, there is evidence after this visit that Sharp did invest in a Welsh factory.

During this visit Roberts met with several Japanese companies, which led to substantial investment in Wales. For example, the company Star Micronics invested £1.5mn in a new factory in Tredegar¹⁰⁶⁷ in 1987.¹⁰⁶⁸ Similarly, the same also occurred with the Medical

¹⁰⁶⁴ ‘The Welsh in North America,’ *BBC News*, 15 August 2008, available on. https://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/history/sites/themes/society/migration_northamerica.shtml (Last Accessed 14 April 2020)

¹⁰⁶⁵ Hugh Cortazzi, ‘Japan’s British investments,’ in *The Japan Times*, 4 August 2013.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol.13, 8 October 1988

¹⁰⁶⁷ ‘Japanese to build plant,’ in *The Times Digital Archive*, 20 November 1987, p.31 (Last accessed 28 June 2019)

¹⁰⁶⁸ Welsh Office News, ‘Wales gets Japanese Printer Plant,’ 19th November 1987, Welsh Office. Papers of Ivor Wynne Jones CX288/21/1/173, Conwy Archives, Conwy.

technology company, the Hoya Corporation which expanded into Wales with a new factory. Though the locale is not specified it did lead to the creation of a further 380 jobs in Wales.¹⁰⁶⁹ Yet another company also invested into Wales, Matsushita Electronics Components invested in a new factory in Baglan Bay, Port Talbot,¹⁰⁷⁰ it is uncertain whether this company was one which Wyn Roberts managed to encourage. The fact that they invested goes to show the overall efficacy of Wales in this period for attaining inward investment.

The final company which Roberts visited was Veno Fine Chemicals¹⁰⁷¹ who did invest into Wales, though in what capacity it is unstated. The economic benefits of this visit are not traceable, what is important is the symbolism of it. Japan had long traded with the UK, but Roberts managed to cultivate specific Welsh links with Japan. This Japanese visit also resulted in an exchange and engagement of cultures. Roberts went through a Japanese tea ceremony, and he also reciprocated the visit by Crown Prince Naruhito to Colwyn Bay in 1985 by visiting Japanese Royal family.

Finally, Roberts arranged for Governor Hiramatsu to visit Wales, which he did in the autumn of 1991, on an official visit to Cardiff. With this visit and Roberts visit to Japan, there are notable transnational tendencies with the focus on Wales as a nation doing business with Japan instead of the whole of the UK. This is a theme with many of Roberts' visits, a focus on Wales as a nation and on Welsh identity and culture rather than just a member of the UK.

It was not just Japan that was the focus of the Welsh Offices' focus of the Asian Regions, the next visit to the Asian regions occurred as a visit to both Kuwait and Bahrain between 5th to 13th November 1991. As a trade mission on behalf of the Welsh Office, Roberts was accompanied by 15 Welsh companies keen to establish links abroad, and to gain orders for each respective business.¹⁰⁷² Roberts had keen hopes for Kuwait as mentioned in his diary,

¹⁰⁶⁹ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 13, 8 October 1988

¹⁰⁷⁰ Welsh Office News. 'Secretary of State Welcomes Matsushita Investment,' 19 February 1988, Welsh Office. Papers of Ivor Wynne Jones CX288/21/1/173, Conwy Archives, Conwy.

¹⁰⁷¹ Telegram from UK Ambassador, Japan, 'Visit to West Japan by Minister Wyn Roberts MP, Welsh Office,' 13 October 1988, Wyn Roberts Diary, vol.13

¹⁰⁷² 'Telegram no. 956, to Welsh Office, 'Visit of Minister of State for Wales, 4-7 November and Welsh Trade Mission, 5-12 November 1991,' Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 15

“Trade wise Kuwait has much potential. They are broad minded, keen on education and self-reliance now that they have seen what can happen when they try to sit on their assets and fail to recognise a potential enemy.”¹⁰⁷³

This visit is well represented in the media, it made the *Daily Post*,¹⁰⁷⁴ but also made the newspapers in the Gulf as well.¹⁰⁷⁵ It is symbolic in itself that this visit made the Welsh media for it demonstrates the efficacy of Wyn Roberts on the global stage and that the global Wales was starting to come to fruition. Wyn Roberts was there as a representative of the British Government, as he was already on a trade mission in Kuwait. Having watched the extinguishing of the last gulf oil fire,¹⁰⁷⁶ Roberts had this to say on the subject, that, “Some 10,000 people were mobilised for the effort, they had to contend with unexploded bombs, burning oil and blurry smoke.”¹⁰⁷⁷ This also made for excellent PR for the British government considering the then recent Gulf War, another event which weighed heavily in Robert’s diaries. During the visit Roberts met with the Crown Prince, for a chat about boosting trade links between both regions and the UK. Roberts also went to the National Museum and attended the races at Bahrain Equine and Horse Racing Club in Sakhir.¹⁰⁷⁸

In the second part of this trade mission, Roberts led a Welsh delegation to Bahrain. In this leg of the visit 26 Welsh firms were represented by Roberts and the Welsh Office a further 10 Welsh firms had their own exhibition stands. The visit was a relative success compared to the amounts earned from big companies investing into Wales, this visit was for either small or medium sized businesses based in Wales. Initially, orders worth £150,000 were secured with good prospects of a further £800,000 worth of orders for the companies represented by the Welsh Office, a relatively small figure for a visit led by Roberts however, there was hope of further trade to come from the region.¹⁰⁷⁹

¹⁰⁷³ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 15, 6 November 1991

¹⁰⁷⁴ ‘Minister on Kuwait Visit,’ in *Daily Post*, 5 November 1991, Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 15

¹⁰⁷⁵ ‘Key talks held to boost trade ties with UK,’ in *Gulf Daily News*, 10 November 1991, Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 15

¹⁰⁷⁶ ‘Sir Wyn to watch the fires go out,’ in *South Wales Argus*, 6 November 1991, Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 15

¹⁰⁷⁷ David Wickerman ‘Fires go out, but Wyn sees huge task ahead,’ in *Western Mail*, 7 November 1991, Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 15

¹⁰⁷⁸ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 15, 9 November 1991

¹⁰⁷⁹ Hansard, HC Deb. 20 January 1992, vol. 202 c5

For the next visit to the Asian continent Roberts was asked to go with the then Welsh Development Agency chairman to Taiwan between the 4th and 7th of January 1993 to try and attract the lucrative Chunghwa/Tatung company to Wales.¹⁰⁸⁰ This was not however, an official visit as there was a fear of upsetting the Chinese if the visit was official. Consequently, the visit had no publicity or media attention also to avoid upsetting China. Taiwan was an upcoming economy with the potential to invest into foreign markets as Taiwan companies had started to do so with huge investment on an increasing scale, to mainland China, 3,000 such investments had already occurred by the point of Roberts visit.¹⁰⁸¹

Though there was not much interest in the emerging European markets, opportunities remained for the Welsh investors to get involved.¹⁰⁸² This was an area which Roberts tried to push, however, it was not one he was successful in for Wales. The owner, Dr Lin, had a personal preference for Scotland and once mentioned Roberts, as a minister he had to advertise Scotland as well as Wales. This was the case as Chunghwa eventually invested £260mn into Scotland with the creation of 3,300 jobs in Mossend, Lanarkshire in 1995.¹⁰⁸³

This visit was a failure for Wales, but not a complete failure, as Roberts did manage to help secure a £260mn investment for Scotland. He completed his overall responsibility as a Minister from the UK. Also, for an unofficial visit, the amount invested outweighs most from Roberts official trade missions or inward investment missions on behalf of Wales. Similarly, as of 1996, of 12 Taiwanese companies had settled in the UK, only 100 people were employed in Wales by Ringtel Electronics in Cwmbran the first major investor into Wales, though not one that was facilitated by a visit from Roberts.¹⁰⁸⁴ Only 60 people were employed in Scotland by a Taiwan investment, 100 in Wales. An investment from Chunghwa could take either Scotland or Wales to the top regions for Taiwan investment far above the 2,010 employed in England. Though Scotland was successful in attracting this investment

¹⁰⁸⁰ Welsh Office, 'Minister of States' Inward Investment Mission to Taiwan and Singapore,' January 1993

¹⁰⁸¹ Telegraph no. 008 Welsh Office, 'Visit to Singapore by Minister of State,' January 1993, Wyn Roberts Diary. vol. 16

¹⁰⁸² Telegraph no. 008 Welsh Office, 'Visit to Singapore by Minister of State,' January 1993, Wyn Roberts Diary. vol. 16

¹⁰⁸³ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 18, 1 October 1995

¹⁰⁸⁴ Hansard, HC Deb, 18 May 1995, vol. 260 c376w

from Taiwan,¹⁰⁸⁵ it was via a trading link that was established through the Welsh Office. Similarly, trading links with Taiwan still exist with several different ministers visiting since Wyn Roberts in 1993.¹⁰⁸⁶

The final visits made by Wyn Roberts to the Asian continent were to Singapore, for two different visits, and to Malaysia for a single visit, in 1993. All three of these trade missions are crucial examples of Roberts' World regions idea in action and led by Roberts himself. In the Malaysian visit, Roberts led another Welsh Office trade delegation with 14 Company representatives from small to medium sized Welsh business. These businesses succeeded in winning orders worth more than £1mn.¹⁰⁸⁷ A relatively small figure for a trade mission led by Wyn Roberts when considering the number of company representatives who went with him. However, for a visit made by Roberts it is unusually well represented in the Malaysian media, making both the UK and Malaysian press.¹⁰⁸⁸ This visit is however, also a prime example of Roberts establishing new trade links for Wales.

As for the visits Roberts undertook to Singapore, they were both similar to the Malaysian visit in that, they were low key and resulted in an approximate amount of £1mn worth of orders for Wales.¹⁰⁸⁹ His first visit was unedifying with a starting with a breakfast with the export mission, followed by an interview at the Singapore Broadcasting Corporation, expressing Wales interest in doing business with the region. This was reinforced by a lunch with expectant businessmen who were planning their own visit to the United Kingdom. It seems that both Wales and Singapore had a mutual interest in establishing a trade link, to the extent that mere months later Roberts went on another visit to the region.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Hansard, HC Deb. 8 May 1996, vol. 277 cc151-2w

¹⁰⁸⁶ Gray Sergeant, 'Supporting Taiwan: A Calling for Global Britain,' Asia Studies Centre, Henry Jackson Society, 2021.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Welsh Office News, 'Welsh export mission wins £1mn orders,' 28 August 1993

¹⁰⁸⁸ 'British Minister for two-day visit to Malaysia,' *New Straits Times*, 20 August 1993 also; "Welsh team looking for joint ventures,' *New Straits Times*, 21 August 1993, 'Team helps to use Malaysia as springboard into Asia,' *The Star*, 25 August 1993, Bahana Kzanen, 'Wales seen as gateway to Europe,' *Business Times*, 24 August 1993.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Neil Jones, 'Trading Mission succeeds in getting valuable orders,' in *Western Mail*, 27 August 1993

Robert's second visit to Singapore started on 19 August 1993,¹⁰⁹⁰ and achieved more than his first visit in establishing trading links. Roberts visited a Peter Richard of the company Lovells and Phil Lake of Lakeside security. As well as this, during a visit to Malacca, he met with Rafidah Assiz, the Singapore Government's Minister for International Trade. As Roberts noted, 'Wales had the potential to offer companies opportunities for foreign investments into Europe.'¹⁰⁹¹ It was this message Roberts hoped he could convey to Assiz and a newspaper article which appeared in the *New Straits Times* suggests that Roberts was successful.¹⁰⁹² It also reinforces the eagerness of Singapore to access the European markets, they did this via Wales through Wyn Roberts. In comparison with visits to both America and to Europe, Roberts visits to Asia tended to include some form of engagement with the media, which is to be expected given the exploratory nature of these visits as trade missions rather than investment missions.

There is a significant use of cultural diplomacy as well, with Roberts engaging with both the St Davids Society of Singapore,¹⁰⁹³ with an evening of Welsh folk music. The Welsh community in Singapore have been active since 1912, the society since 1948.¹⁰⁹⁴ Similarly, Roberts also met with members of the Kuala Lumpur St David's society in Malaysia,¹⁰⁹⁵ which had run for at least 65 years, at a commission dinner. The bodies promoting Wales abroad did not have to be state run, private bodies could also help to sell their origin countries abroad. It helped Wales on the world stage if the hosts could glimpse exactly what they were buying into.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 17, 19 August 1993

¹⁰⁹¹ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 17, 23 August 1993

¹⁰⁹² Kula Shunmuyan, 'Wales set to become our gateway to Europe,' in *New Straits Times*, 24 August 1993

¹⁰⁹³ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 17, 21 August 1993

¹⁰⁹⁴ <https://www.stdavidssingapore.org/ourstory>, (Last accessed 23 April 2020)

¹⁰⁹⁵ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 17, 23 August 1993

Conclusion

Wyn Roberts in a Global Wales?

Roberts visits usually have a specific Welsh dimension to them. First, the often-substantial foreign investment for Wales by representing the country abroad. Second, leading Welsh trade delegations at the behest of the Welsh Office or WINvest to foreign countries to sell Welsh firms abroad. Third, the establishment of Wales into a regional, trans-national trading pact with areas of Europe. Finally, and most importantly, was the engagement with different Welsh cultures and societies abroad. There are several instances in these visits of Wyn Roberts interacting and actively engaging with Welsh societies and cultures from across the Globe. Examples of this include Welsh culture with the St David's societies in both Singapore and Malaysia.¹⁰⁹⁶ There are several instances of this occurring during American and Canadian visits. In Seattle Roberts interacted with members of the Welsh community, including attending the birthday of a member of the Welsh community there who had reached the age of 100. He attended an evening of Welsh folk music, whilst in America. A significance of these areas already having some form of Welsh culture is that an awareness of the Welsh culture in the foreign country could aid Roberts in selling Wales abroad.

We have here an individual who has travelled extensively across the World bringing inward investment direct to Wales and opened Wales to markets across the globe. Rather than make use of such visits for the showmanship, to the scale that Thatcher did Robert's visits varied from either being media heavy to low key affairs, vague promises made often turned into large inter-regional, transnational European trading arrangements. His engagement with foreign countries raises the Welsh profile on the international stage. However, given his engagement with Welsh societies and cultures in both America and Asia it is arguable that Wales already had a place on the global stage culturally. If such was the case, Wyn Roberts significantly added to this.

Some visits led to record foreign direct investment into Wales, some visits such as Roberts' visit to Taiwan yielded no tangible results for Wales but did for other areas of the UK. This fulfilled Robert's brief as a minister to advertise the UK rather than just Wales. Such failures

¹⁰⁹⁶ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 17, 25 August 1993

included Robert's visit to Taiwan, to see Tatung in 1995,¹⁰⁹⁷ though they eventually chose Lanarkshire in Scotland. Also, a case of personal preference as the owner had Scottish links which dictated the result. Though this was arguably not a huge loss since by 1994, Wales had long since seen its economy transform from industrial to one that could compete on the Global scale. Wales had also won in terms of UK inward investment, since as a region it consistently gained the most investment.

New jobs replaced old jobs with no direct future in them. Between the years 1979 to 1990 some 675 new manufacturing plants opened with 44,500 people employed.¹⁰⁹⁸ With investors contemplating further investment into the Northwest regions of Wales. However, these figures are limiting considering that this figure was not even half the jobs lost from the older Welsh industries such as mining. As Roberts notes in Hansard it is not possible to track different industries transactions to different areas of the UK,¹⁰⁹⁹ via the Inward Investment. Examining the role of individual visits does partially allow for this, given his personal role Roberts knew exactly which companies were investing, usually how much and more unusually exactly where they had set up factories across Wales. Wyn Roberts was prominent in forging a modern Welsh identity, one that had moved from a stagnant reliance on mining to one that could viably compete in the Global markets. Furthermore, this provides a different narrative to the one that is normally heard in Wales, regarding the Conservatives and the Welsh economy in the 1980s. It was not wholly as negative as some would believe, and there were constructive and viable attempts to invest in Wales. Alas, the kind of jobs that the Government brought in were private sector and thus subject to the precarity of market forces.

Such visits often have a positive impact on exports and business. Similarly, there are disadvantages, in 1981, two different Ford plants painted quite the picture. In the German Ford plant, 7,762 workers produced 1200 fords a day. In comparison, the English Ford plant, 10,040 workers managed to produce only 800 cars a day.¹¹⁰⁰ Finally, Eastern European countries by the latter half of the 1990s offered a cheaper and more viable alternative to many Western countries, Wales included. Arguably, by the end of the 1990s, Wales also did not

¹⁰⁹⁷ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol.18,

¹⁰⁹⁸ Press release, Wyn Roberts MP for Conwy, and Minister for State at Welsh Office, Llandudno Conservatives, Sandringham Hotel, West Shore, June 5 1990, Wyn Roberts Diary, vol.14

¹⁰⁹⁹ Hansard HC Deb. 30 June 1982, vol.6 cc316-8w

¹¹⁰⁰ 'A Tale of Two Ford Plants,' in *The New York Times*, 13 October 1981.

have the extensive efforts of such Blue Dragons aiding in the substantial foreign investment drive, be it as Minister or Secretary of State. It was fighting for survival.¹¹⁰¹

Successive Governments did not have the Blue Dragons heading the investment drive. Especially Wyn Roberts and his earlier success in getting Wales to become an associate member of the Four Motors region of Europe. Both Wyn Roberts and Nicholas Edwards actively practiced the idea of Globalisation in Wales so that it could compete on the global market almost as an independent region. However, they also defended the idea of a nation state, especially in Roberts' case as a cultural nationalist. Wales could have a new Welsh identity, one utilising its ancient roots and culture on the international stage, and one that was unique, a part of the UK and global.

The next chapter will examine Wyn Roberts and his involvement with the Conservative Party in the 1990s. As the closing paragraphs of this chapter have revealed, the Global economy of Wales was down by the end of the 1990s. The same goes for the Conservative Party as a whole, who after 18 years in government were old and tired and in need of new blood. This meant an even larger crisis for Welsh Conservatism, of which by the end of the 1990s Wyn Roberts was the sole survivor.

¹¹⁰¹ See Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: The Crisis of a Welsh Conservative.

‘I am a forlorn creation on the political stage – almost sick in mind and body. My diary is as disappointing as a chronicle from the Dark Ages, too cryptic by far and neither sharply written nor particularly poignant or complete. But it is my story of 20 years in parliament and of the rise and fall of the Conservative Party in government and of my participation in the process.’¹¹⁰²

These words were written by Roberts at the end of his era in the House of Commons, they reflect the problems within the party and foreshadow the growing dissatisfaction of Wyn Roberts. A dissatisfaction that could cost the party one of the few genuine Welsh links and identities that they possessed. His disillusionment followed the general feeling towards the Conservative party amongst the people in Wales.

The 1990s were not an easy decade for the Conservative Party, ideological issues, sleaze, and Political scandals were physically dogging the Party at every level. This also included a Welsh dimension, with the Welsh Office caught up in certain scandals, perhaps best remembered of these is when Rod Richards, the MP for Clwyd Northwest, had an affair in 1996 with his assistant causing controversy for the Welsh Office.¹¹⁰³ This scandal of Rod Richards, the heir apparent at the Welsh Office, meant he had to step down leaving an apparent lack of Welsh leadership in Wales, this also forced Roberts out of his semi-retirement to deal with the aftermath. Wyn Roberts was not immune and had his own sleaze of sorts in 1993, ending up having to quit as director of the company Professional Secretarial Services. After issues relating to MP’s cash scandals. Though this was not an entirely unusual set up for a politician, it did lead to Roberts having to issue a denial of breaking parliamentary rules.¹¹⁰⁴

¹¹⁰² Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 18, 15th May 1996.

¹¹⁰³ Paul Routledge, ‘Tory MP in sleaze allegation,’ in *The Independent*, 2 June 1996

¹¹⁰⁴ ‘Sir Wyn denies breaking rules,’ in *Daily Post*, 19 July 1993, also; ‘Sir Wyn denies report,’ in *Western Mail*, 19 July 1993, Greg Hadfield & Simon Reeve, ‘Minister who broke rules quits as director,’ in *The Sunday Times*, 18 July 1993

The Conservative party virtually collapsed in the 1990s, with the whole of the UK being affected, the worst was in Wales with the party winning only 165 seats in 1997, with a total of 0 Welsh seats.¹¹⁰⁵ The reasons behind the collapse of the Scottish Tories has been examined. However, as with the lacunae within the historiography the Conservatives in Wales, no scholars have considered the Welsh dimension of this collapse. Indeed, comment and analysis remain fairly lacking on the collapse in Wales, with no source providing an insider perspective. Exceedingly few have ever attempted to examine this for Wales, let alone the viewpoint of one person. For Wales, a lot of the local issues caused by the Local Government Wales Act 1994 can explain the immediate fall. Local democracy after all underwent several reforms in the decades Wyn Roberts was an MP.¹¹⁰⁶

Geoffrey Wheatcroft¹¹⁰⁷ argues that the causes for the party's collapse were sleazes, internal strife, Europe, and a fundamental lack of ideology. These causes might drive the party to extinction as much the same happened to the Liberal Party.¹¹⁰⁸ However, none of these issues would explain the collapse of the Conservative Party in Wales. Europe has always been an issue, Scandals and sleazes brought many of the party members into disrepute, this also had an effect in Wales, but they were not exactly uncommon occurrences in politics. There was also a specific Welsh dimension to the issues plaguing the Conservatives and Conservatism in Wales. Certainly, the party suffered from quite the image problem being perceived as an English party in Wales.¹¹⁰⁹ An anti-Devolution stance, the use of QUANGOS such as the Welsh Development Agency and Development Board for Rural Wales had aided in this.

As to how the party specifically lost its favour with the Welsh supporters, to the extent that it lost over 2,000 local government councillors to the Local election of 1995 and all the party's MPs to the general election of 1997. It is not as simple as stating the party was simply Anti-Welsh, after all the sceptical views of the party on devolution were in line with the public

¹¹⁰⁵ 1997 General Election results summary, on <http://www.ukpolitical.info/1997.htm> (Last accessed 28 September 2020)

¹¹⁰⁶ Stephen Baily & Mark Elliot, 'Taking Local Government Seriously: Democracy, Autonomy and the Constitution,' in *The Cambridge Law Journal*, 68.2 (2009) pp.436-472

¹¹⁰⁷ Geoffrey Wheatcroft, *The Strange Death of Tory England*, (London, 2005)

¹¹⁰⁸ J.A. Thompson, 'The Historians and the decline of the British Liberal Party,' in *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 22.1 (1990) pp.65-83

¹¹⁰⁹ See Richard Wyn Jones & Roger Sculley & Dafydd Trystan, 'Why do the Conservatives always do (Even) worse in Wales?' in *British Elections & Parties Review*, 12.1 (2002) pp.229-245 p.237

view on devolution. Since then, the party has recovered the number of MPs it has in Wales to 14 as of the 2019 general election,¹¹¹⁰ such is the protean nature of Welsh Conservatism. Andrew Gamble,¹¹¹¹ has argued for the rebirth of the party in England, but that it could be beyond recovery in a peripheral area such as Wales.

An examination of Roberts' diaries reveals what he has to say about the state of the Conservative Party in the 1990s and highlights new reasons as to why the party became so unpopular in Wales. Wyn Roberts, for most of the 1990s, grew increasingly disillusioned with the party. His loyalty to the sense of what Conservatism was to him and to the cultural identity of Wales no longer translated into direct loyalty for the party. The members of the party had changed and Wyn Roberts was an older style of Conservative who had not. What made Wyn Roberts a Blue Dragon, was no longer prevalent in the central Conservative Party. This presented a dilemma for the Conservative Party, as one of the few genuine links to a Welsh Identity they possessed was disillusioned with the party. As this chapter will demonstrate it was a series of issues which cost the party the efforts of Roberts.

As with everything that the Conservative Party did, there is an unexplored Welsh dimension to the fall of the Conservative Party, consisting of largely local issues rather than national issues. These lost the Party the support they had from the Welsh populace. Wyn Roberts not only held a front seat for this, but also acted as an antithesis to what the party was becoming. He was largely beginning to stand alone, and to despair of what was happening to the party. European policy had damaged the main party, Quangos and sleaze had an impact on both Wyn Roberts and Wales, local issues further damaged the reputation of the party in Wales for example local government changes which affected the delicate local identities prevalent in Wales. Wyn Roberts acted as a crucial Welsh dimension to each increasingly English Secretary of State, at the same time he had to deal with the disappointment of never reaching this position himself. Nicholas Crickhowell and Peter Walker both had Welshness with them, but in the 1990s both David Hunt and John Redwood were English and relied heavily on Wyn Roberts. This represented a general shift at the time with all areas of Welsh Conservatism were in retreat, it seemingly started from the very top of the Welsh Office.

¹¹¹⁰ UK general election results 2019, on *BBC News*, available on <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election/2019/results/wales> (Last Accessed 3 March 2020)

¹¹¹¹ Andrew Gamble, 'The strange rebirth of Tory England,' in *Observatoire de la société Britannique*, 4 (2007) pp.15-34

However, as this chapter will prove, there was also a Local Government issue which ultimately led to the dismal electoral performance of the Welsh Conservatives in the Local Government elections of 1995. Administrative changes, the poll tax, and the Local Government of Wales Bill 1994, brought in by an English Welsh Secretary alienated the grassroots of the party and the locals of Wales in a self-assassination of three stages. The issues of Conservatism were ever obvious in Wales, and it was certainly the three stages of local level alienation which can explain some of the misfortunes of the party in Wales.

This shows the adaptability of the form of Welsh Conservatism dubbed Blue Dragon, since at the end of a decade of annihilation from within and without the party, Sir Wyn Roberts survived it all to become Lord Roberts of Conwy in the House of Lords in 1997, one of a few Welsh Conservative representatives left throughout Wales. The Conservative party was also ideologically spent since Thatcherism had been implemented across the UK. The same goes for a worn out Wyn Roberts who had achieved what he set out to do with the passage of the Welsh Language Act 1993.

The issues of sleaze and Europe are ideas which capture the broader spectrum of politics and journalism. They tend to have a more dramatic element to them, that captures the imagination well beyond that which is created by the affairs of Welsh Local Government. This chapter will ultimately argue that it was local issues including local government reform that ended the party in Wales in the 1990s. It was also the near abandonment of the party's Welsh identity which made them lose in Wales. Conservatism partially collapsed in Wales during the 1990s due to the same reasons which detached Wyn Roberts from the party, as he notes:

“The Tory Party must look after the heartlands – naturally- and that means it must abandon peripheral areas like Wales.”¹¹¹²

According to Wyn Roberts, Wales was seemingly abandoned to a fate, that specifically caused the collapse of the Conservative party at the Welsh level

¹¹¹² Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 17, 15 June 1994

Wyn Roberts and European Politics in the 1990s.

Wyn Roberts first notes of Europe come from his first parliamentary session, where upon he wrote that,

‘Our European involvement is the last fling of a defunct empire.’¹¹¹³

Early on the issue of Europe was not one which concerned the party at large, nor was it one that concerned Wyn Roberts. By the 1990s it was an issue that proved to be deeply divisive within the Conservative Party, but not one that had any large impact upon the party in Wales.

The European issue is a realm that is largely left to political scientists, as Richard Wyn Jones et al. argues there was ‘... a growing awareness of the potential of regional government within the European context...’¹¹¹⁴ when it comes to the ideas behind devolution in Wales. As is demonstrable in the last chapter, this was something that Wyn Roberts was acutely aware of as he often made use of Welsh culture when attracting inward investment from Europe.

However, it is the divisions over Europe which remains the most contested issue for the Conservatives, it is an issue which still deeply divides the party to the present day.¹¹¹⁵ It was a relevant issue for the party in the 1990s especially after the rejection of the European Exchange Rate Mechanism in 1992, which arguably lost the party its reputation for economic competence. Ross Mckibbin¹¹¹⁶ argues that long term tensions within the party ideology and the political system caused Thatcherism to collapse also, the recession of 1990-3 and not joining the ERM. Europe was key to understanding many of the decisions within the Conservative party of this period, such as the election of John Major as leader.¹¹¹⁷ John

¹¹¹³ Lord Roberts of Conwy, *Right from the Start*, (Cardiff, 2006) p.91

¹¹¹⁴ Richard Wyn Jones & Bethan Lewis, ‘The Welsh Devolution Referendum,’ in *Politics*, 19.1 (1999) pp.37-46 p.39

¹¹¹⁵ John Garry, ‘The British Conservative Party: Divisions Over European Policy,’ in *West European Politics*, 18, (1995), pp. 170-89; also, Steve Ludlam, ‘The spectre Haunting Conservatism,’ in Steve Ludlam & M. J. Smith, *Contemporary British Conservatism*, (London, 1996)

¹¹¹⁶ Ross Mckibbin, ‘Why the Tories Lost,’ in *London Review of Books*, 19.13 (1997)

¹¹¹⁷ Philip Cowley & John Garry, ‘The British Conservative Party and Europe: The Choosing of John Major,’ in *British Journal of Political Science*, 28.3 (1998) pp.473-499 pp.479-80

Turner¹¹¹⁸ too argues that Europe was key to the schism within the Party that caused the 1997 defeat.¹¹¹⁹

However, it was domestic European policy which would prove destructive for the Conservatives though the Welsh Conservatives were generally pro-Europe and could have survived the problem brought forth by EU policy. Its fate was still highly interwoven with that of the central party which did not adapt well to the EU. The issue of Europe also partly explains the 2019 general election success of the party in Wales as the country had voted for Brexit and the Conservative Party would deliver it. It was also relevant to Wales in the period. As a country it received billions in European funding. It was endorsed as a political system by Plaid who believed an independent Wales could flourish under Europe, that is if the Welsh cultural psyche did not clash with the growing federalism dominating Europe. This still does not explain how the party largely failed in the 1990s in Wales.

Though it is largely the accepted view that John Major's administration was a failure,¹¹²⁰ it was not as bad as it first seemed for though he did not accomplish anything noteworthy he did not do anything bad either. Historical revisionism has come to challenge this popular view of the Major administration noting that it was not as bad as is portrayed in the popular mindset. As is mentioned by Martin Holmes, John Major's failure was over Europe, the issue which did help to end the dominance of the Conservative Party in 1997. Which was the first of the issues of the Conservative Party division on Europe. Although this was not the first big issue to affect the party in the 1990s, it was the one that had the largest effect on the party members. The key issues in the party were mainly over Maastricht and the joining of the Euro currency, two of Major's policies which were firmly defeated.

¹¹¹⁸ John Turner, *The Tories and Europe*, (Manchester, 2000); Nicholas J. Crowson, *The Conservative Party and European Integration since 1945: At the Heart of Europe?* (London, 2006), C. Stevens, 'Thatcherism, Majorism and the Collapse of Tory Statecraft,' in *Contemporary British History*, 16.1 (2002) pp.119-150, Arthur Aughey, *The Conservative Party and the nation: Union, England, and Europe*, (Manchester, 2018),

¹¹¹⁹ Howard Elcock & Michael Keating, *Remaking the Union: Devolution and British Politics in the 1990s*, (London, 1998)

¹¹²⁰ Kevin Hickson & Ben Williams, *John Major. An Unsuccessful Prime Minister? Reappraising John Major*, (Hull, 2017); also, Martin Holmes, 'John Major and Europe: The Failure of a Policy,' in Martin Holmes, *European Integration: Scopes and Limits*, (London, 2001) pp.27-51

The effect on Europe on Wales is interesting, for it went from voting yes to stay in the EEC in 1975 to voting leave in the 2016 referendum.¹¹²¹ It seems the same fractures that the Conservative party held were also apparent in Wales too. For Wyn Roberts the idea of a union of nations he would not have been against, he did, after all, always support Welsh interests and culture within the United Kingdom. However as noted in the previous chapter Wyn Roberts made use of the Europe of Regions idea and such a federalist grouping of the EU would have posed a threat to this.

The issues of Europe are referenced in Roberts' diary, as he states.

‘(The) Party is in a dreadful state as we have a beating in the Euro poll tomorrow but in a typically Tory way.’¹¹²²

The issues with Europe stem from under Thatcherism, Wyn Roberts felt a need to be cautious about EU integration. As he states in his diary,

‘My own feeling? You are doomed and have been since Mrs T was ousted. I fear for the Labour Party too. This division on (the) EU (is) so deep that it will surface when they are in office.’¹¹²³

This is an interesting quote from Wyn Roberts, at times he felt that the issue of Europe was one which would not only prove divisive for the Conservatives but also for Labour. The Labour party also had a split in 1980s.¹¹²⁴ This quote also comes from 1995, well into the Major government at a time when the issues of Europe were all too prevalent. Finally, Roberts makes use of the word ‘you’ in a peculiar reference to the Conservative Party. This really enforces quite how detached he was starting to feel from the party in this period. This reflects the larger mood of the populace of Wales towards the party at the time.

¹¹²¹ Moya Jones, ‘Wales and the Brexit Vote,’ in *French Journal of British Studies*, XXII-2 (2017)

¹¹²² David Cornick, ‘PMs tough stance on EU supported by Minister,’ in *Western Mail*, 10 June 1989

¹¹²³ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 18, 27 June 1995

¹¹²⁴ Julie Smith, ‘The European dividing line in party politics,’ in *International Affairs*, 88.6 Forty years on: the UK and Europe, (2012) pp.1277-1295

In the Conservative Party the internal division over Europe came to a head under Maastricht. Though it has always been an issue, with it being one of the reasons for Margaret Thatcher's downfall.¹¹²⁵ A crucial issue over Europe, was that it had support from certain Welsh Nationalists, an issue which Roberts was fearful of. The idea of an independent Wales as a member of Europe, was an idea which could potentially remove the economic issues presented as an idea against Welsh independence. An idea that has a lot of bases when considering how much European grants had improved Wales, the A55 as euro-route 22 for example.¹¹²⁶ The height of the issues in the party was the division caused by the Maastricht Treaty. For the background of the period, at a nationwide level the Conservative Party was ideologically but not literally ripped apart by the issue of Europe, with a Eurosceptic wing arguably led by then Welsh Secretary John Redwood and a pro-European wing led by Ken Clarke.¹¹²⁷ An ideological rift in a party ill-equipped to deal with such, at a time of disillusionment with the party from the public. Maastricht was the treaty which founded the EU as it is known today, signed in 1992 and in effect as of 1st November 1993, it caused consternation within the party. The Maastricht rebels were another prominent split in the party over Europe, a group of Conservative MPs whose Euroscepticism opposed further EU integration.

Wyn Roberts personally felt that Maastricht was 'a treaty too far' Roberts was for the Europe of regions; Maastricht is essentially to Europe what the constitution is to America, it is the ratifying treaty of the European Union. This threatened the notion of a Europe of regions based on fostering the cultural differences and regions between Nations. The Maastricht rebels represented a rather heated form of Conservative and English Nationalism, this was something that Wyn Roberts could never support being the type of cultural Welshman that he was. Especially considering the amount of EEC money in Wales. Maastricht it seems made Wyn Roberts start to feel rather detached and isolated from the party at large as he seemed to be caught in the crossfire between both Welsh and English Nationalism. He hung on through Maastricht as the timing coincided with getting the Welsh Language Act through Parliament in the period of 1992-1993. He was dealing with the Nationalists who wanted more

¹¹²⁵ Robin Oakley, 'Hunt begins for clues to a Tory EC revolt,' 12 November 1991, in *The Times Digital Archive*, (Accessed 29 September 2020)

¹¹²⁶ See Chapter 3.

¹¹²⁷ First-hand account of this divide can be found in 'Un Poco Loco,' in Ken Clarke, *Kind of Blue: A Political Memoir*, (London, 2016) pp.362-376

provisions for the Welsh Language and the Nationalists who did not support further EU integration.

This does not mean to say that Wyn Roberts supported the idea of the EEC. Cultural Nationalism was inherent in the Blue Dragon, Wyn Roberts has made extensive use of regional identity in forging trading links directly with regions in Europe.¹¹²⁸ There was also a direct threat to Wales, since Roberts had spent a decade forging regional trading links directly with Wales. The threat was that the treaties forged under the EU would be in the name of the United Kingdom, which typically supports the Southeast, Roberts links were in the name of Wales. It is not impossible that this is a reason why foreign funding in Wales started to fall at the end of the 1990s, with a defeated Welsh Conservatism no longer campaigning for direct funding into Wales.

Roberts generally found this time in politics to be a fairly depressing political situation, in spite of whatever concerns he may have had he still had concerns that Maastricht could be defeated.¹¹²⁹ In addition to this he also felt that the Conservative party was in a poor state, with disloyalty rife throughout the party.¹¹³⁰ It would be easy to say that Wyn Roberts did not have much time to deal with Maastricht as at a similar time he was dealing with the passage of the Welsh Language Act through Parliament. However, as is claimed by Rhodri Morgan.

‘Regardless of what front-bench job anyone was doing, the Maastricht treaty was looming over everything.’¹¹³¹

Wyn Roberts did have a few thoughts on Maastricht as is detailed in his diary, he thought that it would be to the John Major government exactly what devolution was to the Callaghan Government.¹¹³² The issue of devolution, or the ideology attached to it helped to end the Callaghan government. The same could have been said about the issue of Maastricht in 1992 for Major as it was a similar ideological issue which directly affected the party. Wyn Roberts was concerned that it was a treaty too far in European integration, after all someone who had

¹¹²⁸ See Chapter 4.

¹¹²⁹ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 16, 3 November 1992

¹¹³⁰ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 16, 10 November 1992

¹¹³¹ Rhodri Morgan, *Rhodri: A Political Life in Wales and Westminster*, (Cardiff, 2017) p.98

¹¹³² Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 16, 22 December 1992

spent so long cultivating Wales in a 'Europe of the region's' way would be uncertain of such a form of Federalism.

John Major,¹¹³³ faced the Maastricht rebels, and according to cabinet documents, he was utterly ecstatic when he defeated the Maastricht rebels.¹¹³⁴ Though Major won, there was a long wait for the 3rd reading.¹¹³⁵ During his delay the rebels did win a victory,¹¹³⁶ when they succeeded in delaying the Treaty. Furthermore, Major was delighted when the bill got passed through Parliament,¹¹³⁷ a struggle Wyn Roberts knew only too well. The split within the party is an issue which Roberts wrote about in his diary; he stated.

There is a grave danger that the UK will be 'marginalised' if either side wins. Both the CP and the LP are deeply divided. Both leaders are pro-EU, but the LP are better placed because they attach great importance to the condition of the domestic economy, which must be strong if we are to succeed in Europe. The recession overlays all economies and there is a heavy question mark to the cases and timing of any recovery.¹¹³⁸

It is interesting that Wyn Roberts concedes that the Labour Party are in a better position to lead, this is not surprising given the state of the party. There is little doubt that the Maastricht¹¹³⁹ treaty would radically change the British Government. For Wyn Roberts this was an issue which affected both his sense of patriotism for his Welshness and Britishness, for Robert's sense was always that Wales would be reliant on Westminster for economic reasons. Anything which had a profound effect on the British Government would affect the Welsh as well.

¹¹³³ Philip Nicholas, 'Major goes face to face with Tory rebels over Maastricht,' 28 October 1992, in *The Times Digital Archive*, (Accessed 29 September 2020)

¹¹³⁴ Owen Bowcott, 'John Major had a 'full gloat' after defeating rebels on Maastricht,' in *The Guardian*, 24 July 2018

¹¹³⁵ Peter Riddell, 'Winter of Tory discontent,' 6 November 1992, in *The Times Digital Archive*, (Accessed 29 September 2020)

¹¹³⁶ Philip Webster, 'Major humiliated as rebels inflicts Maastricht defeat,' 9 March 1993, in *The Time Digital Archive*, (Accessed 29 September 2020)

¹¹³⁷ Interview, 'Mr Major's Comments on the Maastricht Treaty, 19 May 1993, John Major Archive.

¹¹³⁸ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 16, 27 September 1992

¹¹³⁹ Jill Sherman, 'Maastricht rebels to vote against bill,' 8 May 1992, in *The Times Digital Archive*, (Accessed 29 September 2020)

There is also a specific Welsh dimension to the treaty, as a deal between the Welsh Conservatives and Plaid Cymru saw the Nationalist Party supporting the bill in return for representation on the Committee of regions. Though Wyn Roberts concerns were that his variation of the Welsh Language Act would be used as a bargaining chip of sorts or either attacked or modified with Nationalist demands to get Plaid's support for the Maastricht treaty.

The Blue Dragon supported the cultural union, but also seemed at home with the notion of Welsh Europeans as a way of placing greater emphasis on Welsh culture. This was something he had always championed, the idea of a Europe of regions as discussed in the previous chapter, an area of regions which placed emphasis on Welshness. A Europe which became a superstate of a form did not necessarily allow for such regional identity to help in trade and could ultimately prove highly damaging to Wales. It could also prove to be damaging to Wyn Roberts as a Welshman but also as a British citizen who would see an impact upon British Sovereignty, he was after all a member of the wartime generation.

Though Europe did affect Wyn Roberts and Wales, the next issue is one that had a much more direct effect on Wales. This second issue of Quangos and sleaze was one that also cause Roberts much concern as is reflected in his diary. However, it was administrative changes in Wales that cost the party popularity, in the Thatcher administration. This, in part, what was responsible for the destruction of the Tories in Wales, in addition to the usage of Quangos, and an increasing image of sleaze in the party.

Wyn Roberts on Sleaze and Quangos.

The next disruptive issue that concerned Wyn Roberts with was opposition to existence and use of Quangos throughout the 1980s and 1990s, and Conservative Party sleaze in the 1990s. Sleaze being a word that developed in the 1990s as part of popular anti-government rhetoric. The moment there was little to no Conservative opposition in Wales, the decision was taken by Ron Davies¹¹⁴⁰ to start cutting them. The damage caused by general mismanagement and allegations of Nepotism in Quangos greatly impacted any form of Welsh identity which the party could still cling too, though this can also be attributed to the decreasing number of

¹¹⁴⁰ Labour First Minister for Wales in 1997.

Conservatives in Wales in this period. For Wyn Roberts, his fears were the damage that could be done to various bodies which in his view had aided Wales in one way or another. Fears which came true in 2004 when the WDA was dissolved, and its powers transferred to the Welsh assembly.

A Quango is generally an agency which has had power transferred to it by a government to oversee an area of policy. The Welsh Development Agency, as the name suggests, was to oversee development of Wales. These agencies were never that popular and in 2004 Rhodri Morgan, the new Welsh First Minister, launched what is known as the bonfire of Quangos.¹¹⁴¹ Arguably as a form of taking control of Wales, with issues being addressed by the new Assembly rather than Quangos which answered to Westminster. Although it has been argued that this was a quick move to solve Morgan's popularity issues. The Cardiff Bay Development Corporation as an example was one such considered Quango which handed over its responsibilities to the Welsh Local Authorities in 2000. Although many Quangos were set up under Labour, such as the Welsh Development Agency. Even Plaid Cymru's leader Adam Price has previously referred to the bonfire as a mistake.¹¹⁴² Price called for a new system to replace the Labour one installed after the culling of the Quangos during the 2000s. Though even then he was critical of the lack of public accountability in the new Welsh system.¹¹⁴³ This also demonstrates a specific Welsh dimension, as Roberts notes in his diary.¹¹⁴⁴

“The scope for dishonesty is vast! The ultimate consequences for Wales are serious. Both the Welsh Development Agency and the Development Board for Rural Wales will be discredited...”¹¹⁴⁵

Robert's fears were that sleaze would damage these agencies which, in his view, had done much for Wales. When it comes to issues with Quangos the first thing to be seen in Wyn Roberts's response is his concern over what the consequences would be for Wales. This is

¹¹⁴¹ ‘Bonfire of the Quangos,’ in *BBC News*, 1997

¹¹⁴² Adam Price, ‘Bonfire of Quangos a mistake says Plaid's Adam Price,’ in *ITV News*, 23 March 2016

¹¹⁴³ Hansard, HC Deb. 26 February 2003, vol. 399 c124w

¹¹⁴⁴ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 17.

¹¹⁴⁵ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 17, 25 October 1993.

despite the growing concern for the ‘Quango state,’ within Wales,¹¹⁴⁶ this would suggest that though Roberts was growing detached from the party in the 1990s he was still willing to work with elements for the benefit of Wales. The reason why they would both be discredited is never further elaborated upon, however, at the time the WDA was caught up in issues involving both indulgent funding and management arrangements by those appointed to run them.¹¹⁴⁷ It had been caught up in several financial incidents and practices, Gwyn Jones was appointed head of the agency after meeting Peter Walker at a private meeting at a Conservative Party fundraiser in 1988.¹¹⁴⁸ Given the amount of scandal at the time and the amount of work Wyn Roberts did with the WDA in attracting foreign funding for Wales, it could be claimed that his fears were over what damage could be done to this. After all, whatever the opinion of it as a Quango, it cannot be denied that the WDA was immensely successful at bringing inward investment. This is most likely what Wyn Roberts was concerned about, considering how Gwynfor Evan’s hunger strike over-shadowed Conservative policies throughout the 1980s. The scandals could overshadow the successes of the Welsh Development Agency.

However, as of 2015 there were still 33 of these Quangos left within Wales,¹¹⁴⁹ then the damage that Wyn Roberts is alluding to may simply be press hysteria. After all, if Quangos were so hated that they are responsible for the collapse of the party in Wales then why would a large proportion of them still exist? Even though the Labour Government in Wales would have them to thank for removing Conservative opposition, surely, they would have removed them before they did damage to the Labour Party. For Wyn Roberts this meant the WDA as he had done a lot of work alongside it, questions were raised in Parliament over the appointment of Conservatives to Quangos, with the ratio being 5:1 compared to other parties.¹¹⁵⁰ This was alongside a complaint that the new Chairman of the WDA had Conservative links, such nepotism, or sleaze as it could be seen, proved damaging to the party.

¹¹⁴⁶ Richard Wyn Jones, *Wales Says Yes: Devolution and the 2011 Welsh Referendum*, (Cardiff, 2012)

¹¹⁴⁷ Hansard, HC Deb. 19 October 1993, vol. 230 c148

¹¹⁴⁸ Chris Blackhurst, ‘Agency funded by taxpayers but run as a private fiefdom,’ in *The Independent*, 6 July 1993.

¹¹⁴⁹ David Powell, ‘Conwy politicians query Welsh Government Quangos in a time of austerity,’ in *Daily Post*, 5 March 2015

¹¹⁵⁰ Hansard HoC Deb. 14 February 1994, c.647

The Welsh dimension in the downfall of the Welsh Conservatives was not entirely sown using Quangos, these were a National issue that affected all nations of the UK. It was rather the negative perception of them which fed the rhetoric of Conservative mismanagement of Wales, for Wyn Roberts the concern came, not, from Quangos but from the issues that arose around his colleagues.

This is the other issue affecting Tory performance in the UK that Wyn Roberts was concerned about was the allegations of sleaze that the Party faced, the Welsh Office too had its share of sleaze. Especially in the form of Rod Richards and the affair with his assistant. Alongside this was, as Roberts put it down to, a new type and generation of Tory of which Rod Richards was arguably one. It was not just in his diary that Wyn Roberts was vocal on the new generation, in 2013 in an article for the *Daily Post*, Roberts claimed,

‘... the old boys who had experienced the war and so forth, who were the backbone of the party in the 70s. All these had gone by the 90s, and I missed them, and a new breed had arrived, Thatcher’s children, if you like, but they were not good children by a long chalk.

What happened was that this selfishness had gone too far, and those who were going places in the party were selfish creatures, ambitious but without much depth. The whole thing had become a bit of a caricature.’¹¹⁵¹

This is a significant quote for a few reasons, first is that of identity, the type of politician Roberts was of the war time generation one that had long started to retire and be replaced by one that Roberts clearly had disdain for. This disdain extended to how he felt the new generation did things; the likes of Rod Richards is an example but surely not the only one. Roberts had viewed those who were selfish and those who were going to be selfish. It is not necessarily the case that they were selfish per se, it is as Roberts viewed it, ‘they were class, rather than nation conscious...’¹¹⁵² more interested in self than Nation. Wyn Roberts, as this

¹¹⁵¹ ‘Lord Roberts slams ‘selfish’ politicians,’ in *Daily Post*, 20 April 2013

¹¹⁵² Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 15, 28 April 1991. Also, at various points in the diaries he expresses disdain for the younger generation, views that were also voiced in the press, ‘Lord Roberts slams ‘selfish’ politicians,’ in *Daily Post*, 20 April 2013

thesis has proved, was always conscious of Wales and of his identity as a Welshman, thus any politician who does not adhere to a nation conscious type. Whether it be the British or Welsh nation, would end up being labelled as selfish by Roberts.

Second, it is notable how Wyn Roberts' diaries have changed. The 1990s entries have a much more nostalgic tone. Wyn Roberts is perceiving what is a clear change in the British political culture, a change in Party, and a change in Politician it is a change that he does not agree with. This passage begins to demonstrate the change in the tone of the dairies leading to the rather didactic entry at the beginning of this chapter.

Finally, his tone towards the new generation marks a shift in the Conservatism of the party itself. When Roberts joined the party, it was the Conservatism prevalent in the wartime generation, now as he says it was 'Thatcher's children' a breed he evidently was not keen on. Wyn Roberts had an identity crisis on many levels, his Welshness, his Britishness and it seems his Conservativeness.

The views of Roberts reflect the party at large as a whole during the 1990s. As the Conservative Party itself was in a dire state, John Major's back to basics¹¹⁵³ campaign was announced at the 1993 CP conference. Intended to herald a return to traditional values, it opened a wide schism in the party when it came to scandal and sleaze. Scandals were another reason that made Wyn Roberts dismayed with the party, especially the number involving Welsh Conservatives. Writing from 1994 a mere 2 years before his diaries ended, he put.

'There have been too many scandals, I have lost count, but Tim Yeo and his two 'bastards' have led this field, followed by David Ashley.'¹¹⁵⁴

Wyn Roberts was clearly fearing for the future, as the number of scandals is beyond counting for Tory MPs. Tim Yeo is often considered as the first casualty of the back-to-basics campaign.¹¹⁵⁵ Though Roberts makes use of quite strong language in this quote it is more

¹¹⁵³ 'Mr Major's Comments on Back to Basics,' interview held on 29 January 1994, John Major Archive,

¹¹⁵⁴ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 17, 11 January 1994

¹¹⁵⁵ Wynn Davies, 'The Yeo Resignation: Minister falls foul of 'back to basics' policy,' in *The Independent*, 5 January 1994

than likely given the parlance of his generation, that he was in fact simply referring to the children Yeo had sired outside of marriage. Yeo was not alone, with the resignation of Harley Booth after affair with a 22-year-old assistant.¹¹⁵⁶ Also there was the scandal of David Tredinnick in 1994 where he was forced to resign as a PPS over a cash for questions scandal¹¹⁵⁷ because of which the media were able to report on sleaze all the way to the top of the party.

There are also cases of Wales specific scandals, particularly the one of Rod Richards, revered as the most hated man in Wales, a title he apparently relished.¹¹⁵⁸ As a MP for Clwyd West North Wales, he fell afoul of the timing between Major's 'back to basics' campaign; the press made more than a meal out of with a field day.¹¹⁵⁹ Rod Richards also painted a very different view of a Welsh Conservative when compared to the picture of his neighbour Wyn Roberts. His behaviour was akin to that of the new generation of Tories for who Roberts held disdain. Though sleaze damaged the image of the Conservative party greatly, most that had occurred amongst the English MPs. The case of Rod Richards was one with a Welsh Dimension that reinforced the view of being an Anglo-centric party, a scandalous Welsh MP who revelled in being, almost anti-Welsh did not help the party image. Even less so at a time when John Redwood was the Secretary of State for Wales.

It is unusual, given the party's belief that it was born to govern, that Wyn Roberts was increasingly disillusioned with the party in the 1990s, though not unsurprising as Roberts had stated the party started to abandon Wales to its fate. Wyn Roberts was left to fight an increasingly lonely battle in North Wales, however he was not entirely unoptimistic, as is reflected in his views on the 1992 general election, that.

‘The Government will still win the next election, despite the Government’s current unpopularity.’¹¹⁶⁰

¹¹⁵⁶ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 17, 13 February 1994

¹¹⁵⁷ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 17, 12 July 1994

¹¹⁵⁸ ‘Rod Richards Obituary,’ 16 July 2019, in *The Times Digital Archive*, (Last Accessed 15 December 2020)

¹¹⁵⁹ Paul Routledge, ‘Tory MP in sleaze allegation,’ in *The Independent*, (1 June 1996)

¹¹⁶⁰ Conservative Party News, ‘Extract of Speech by Wyn Roberts to Annual General Meeting of the Conwy Conservative Association,’ 16 March 1990, Wyn Roberts Diary, vol.

Stated in 1990, this seemed unlikely at the time. At the same time Wyn Roberts was pondering resignation and had considerable concern for having someone to replace him who understood Wales as he did. He hoped that none of the newcomers, such as Nicholas Bennett, would replace him as Roberts states, ‘he (who) has no clue.’¹¹⁶¹ In spite of being in Parliament for 22 years at this point Wyn Roberts is still concerned for Wales, and desperately wishes for someone like him to replace him. However, the new generation was not like Wyn Roberts, and he knew it. For much of the diary for 1992, Roberts was still concerned about the hopeless prospects for the Tories, the polls predicted that they were still not winning.¹¹⁶² Roberts believed that the media were pushing John Major into the 1992 election, Roberts wished to save the country from the possibility of a Labour government.¹¹⁶³

However, Roberts’ other thoughts on the 1992 general election appear to contradict this, in a letter to John Major, Roberts wrote.

‘I am increasingly inclined not to sit at the next election.,. I do not know what we shall be standing for, there is no vision to inspire and precious few principles which command respect. Thatcherism may be an approach, but it is not a philosophy it was all about living within our means and balancing the books.’¹¹⁶⁴

It can be seen here that Wyn Roberts is starting to grow disillusioned with Thatcherism, and even appears to be trying to distance himself from the legacy of it. Roberts feels that there is no vision left, though the party itself still had many goals across the 1990s, as Wyn Roberts was one of few still left from the 1970s it is likely that the vision held by the central party in the 1990s did not match those of Roberts. What attracted him to the party in the first place was no longer prevalent within the party. The diaries contain numerous entries on his intention to stand down, he only carried on for the sake of the Welsh Language Act 1993 with the intention of a graceful retirement after the act. However, this was not to be, for it was the Local Government Wales Act 1994 that would be the final act that he was involved with, this was what mainly killed the Conservatives in Wales.

¹¹⁶¹ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 15, 19 January 1992

¹¹⁶² Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 15, 6 February 1992

¹¹⁶³ Welsh Office, ‘Letter to John Major from Wyn Roberts,’ 13 February 1992

¹¹⁶⁴ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 14, 9 April 1989

In spite of predictions that he would be beaten by the Liberal Democrats' Roger Roberts in the 1992 general election,¹¹⁶⁵ Wyn Roberts won by 995 votes in Conwy, a very narrow win compared to his previous general elections, and far from the 6,073 majority he held in 1979 or the 4,268 in 1983.¹¹⁶⁶ It is reckoned that Wyn Roberts won simply due to his record in North Wales,¹¹⁶⁷ though it was still his lowest majority since the general elections of the 1970s.¹¹⁶⁸ This alerted Roberts to the dangers of having a defeatist attitude,¹¹⁶⁹ and kept him alert for the next parliamentary session he also recognised the potential threat from Tony Blair, since the Conservative Party was in desperate need of new vision, there was an idea of getting rid of Major,¹¹⁷⁰ though this would not help.

Getting rid of the scandalous elements of the party would aid the problems created by Quangos and the negative perception created by them across Wales, however, they were only reinforced by the sheer number of Tory MPs caught in some form of scandal. Wyn Roberts was aware of this and deeply concerned at what the impact could be on Wales. It suggests that maybe his ultimate loyalty lay with Wales and not the Party itself. From his view the WDA had done much for Wales, but it was the behaviour of his Conservative colleagues that undermined this, the scandals had levelled what little faith he had in the new generation of MPs in the party and started his detachment from the party itself.

Destruction at the Local Level.

The issues that have been discussed so far were ones that affected the Party's image in Wales, however, many Welsh specific issues were that of politics at a local level. Simon Brooks argues that it was the Conservatives' failure to establish a Welsh identity which led to the eventual electoral failure in Wales.¹¹⁷¹ The party did in fact have an established Welsh identity, it was the alienation of Wyn Roberts which caused damage to the Party's Welsh

¹¹⁶⁵ David Rose, 'Election 1992,' in *Daily Post*, 6 April 1992

¹¹⁶⁶ Arnold James & John Thomas, *Wales at Westminster a History of Parliamentary representation in Wales 1800-1970*, (Llandysul, 1981)

¹¹⁶⁷ Ian Lang, 'Sir Wyn's record gives him an edge,' in *Daily Post*, 6 April 1992

¹¹⁶⁸ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 15, 11 April 1992

¹¹⁶⁹ 'Dangers of Defeatism: The Tories have to regain their nerve,' in *The Times*, 13 March 1995

¹¹⁷⁰ Robert Worcester, 'Ditching leader will not improve election chances,' in *Sunday Times*, 26 June 1995

¹¹⁷¹ Simon Brooks, 'Wales Today Lecture: Conservatism and the New Wales' (1999) pp.42

identity. Along with this was the local destruction in three stages which affected the party's popularity at the grassroots beyond what was transpiring at a national level. First, a change in how the party took subscriptions in the 1980s. An abandonment of door-to-door fee collections removed vital support in favour of a computer system which sent mail when renewal of fees was due, local politics for the Tories in Wales had a vibrant history running on the word of mouth. This meant that people who were both Welsh and Conservative such as Wyn Roberts who had long had a strong commitment to Welsh culture at the grassroots were alienated, further causing a party with a lack of Welsh identity to appear as English. Second, was the Community Charge or Poll Tax, which though it did not affect Wales to the extent people imagined it was still the second stage in the Party's assassination at the grassroots. Finally, the enactment of the Local Government Wales Act 1994¹¹⁷² was the final straw for many, ending in the disastrous local government election in 1995 where the Conservative Party lost most of all Welsh Conservative Councillors. This coupled with a vastly reduced network at the grassroots stymied the party at the 1997 general election leading to the loss of every single Welsh seat in parliament. It was possible that it was not Thatcherism which killed the party in Wales, indeed some of the policies, such as roads and inward investment were highly beneficial to Wales. Rather it was the policies enacted under the governance of John Major, especially David Hunt's local government act of 1994 that finally doomed the party in Wales. These local issues in Wales were largely ignored by the main party as it was busy dealing with the issues that have thus far been discussed in this chapter.

Wyn Roberts had a front row seat for many of these local issues, many of which he was powerless to stop. He had previously warned of the need to build up the party in Wales once again from the grassroots, alas it was a battle that he was losing when dealing with constant damage being inflicted upon Wales by the Central Party. It was local campaigning that helped to win the devolution referendum of 1997, with members of 'Yes for Wales' out and about campaigning for it.¹¹⁷³

¹¹⁷² Local Government (Wales) Act, available on, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1994/19/contents> (Last accessed 3 September 2020)

¹¹⁷³ Leighton Andrews, 'Too important to be left to the politicians: the Yes for Wales Story,' in Barry Jones & Denis Balsom, *The Road to the National Assembly for Wales*, (Cardiff, 2000) pp.50-69 p.64

The issue of local government was one that had long been an issue of contention for central government, throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Steve Leach,¹¹⁷⁴ has examined this war of sorts between local and central Government, though not in relation to any Welsh dimension.

Thatcher herself had issues with local government whilst serving as a minister in Edward Heath's cabinet.¹¹⁷⁵ The same issues were prevalent during her 11 years in government,¹¹⁷⁶ with the Poll tax being the issue which she over stretched on and one that had a hand in her downfall. The issues between local government and central were various an example is over the implementation of the Right to Buy, central government wanted the money to go into building further social housing, local governments tended to use the money to pay off other things. An example of this comes from the A55 chapter, Aberconwy council wanted to fill in the casting basin of the tunnel whereas Roberts wanted to build the Marina to make the most of the land.

As part of John Major's 1991 back to basics campaign, he decided to target Local Government. This was down to John Major's intense dislike of Labour run councils,¹¹⁷⁷ especially with Lambeth council which Major considered to have become further corrupt since he left it in 1976. Therefore, in the 1995 Conservative local Government conference Major stated.

‘(That)...it's time to set a structure for Local Government that will last. We need to define its responsibilities once and for all.’¹¹⁷⁸

¹¹⁷⁴ Steve Leach, ‘That national parties and local government,’ in *The changing role of local politics in Britain*, (Bristol, 2006) pp. 15-44

¹¹⁷⁵ Simon Hannah, ‘Why a Poll Tax?’ in *Can't Pay, Won't Pay: The Fight to Stop the Poll Tax*, (London, 2020) pp.11-29 p.14

¹¹⁷⁶ Tony Travers, ‘Local Government: Margaret Thatcher's 11-year war,’ in *The Guardian*, 9 April 2013

¹¹⁷⁷ ‘Mr Major's Speech to the Conservative Local Government Conference,’ on 2 March 1991, John Major Archive

¹¹⁷⁸ ‘Mr Major's Speech to the Conservative Local Government Conference,’ on 27 February 1993, John Major Archive

This was not the only speech John Major made about local government,¹¹⁷⁹ it was one of several.¹¹⁸⁰ All these speeches had one thing in common which was a desire to sort out local government, as an issue which had plagued both Thatcher and Major. Though local government is still an issue which is examined by central government to the current day in Wales.¹¹⁸¹ The Conservative Party was constantly at war with local government, this simply is what killed it in Wales. There were numerous issues between both central and local government; first was over the implementation of the Right to Buy and, how councils enacted it, what they did with the money raised when compared to what Central Government wanted them to do with it. Second, was the Poll Tax which increased hostilities once again,¹¹⁸² third, was the local government reform removed most electoral support for the party altogether.

Although previous Conservative administrations had disastrous local government relations and reorganisation, in both 1959-1964 and 1970-1974 As with any Government policies, the issues affecting Local Government reform undoubtedly had a Welsh dimension to it. What did not aid the Welsh Conservatives in this period was the lack a grassroots support for the Party, an issue which Wyn Roberts immediately recognised after everything that went wrong in the election of 1992 except for the actual result. This would lead up the worst performance of the century in 1997.¹¹⁸³ However, the performance of the party in the local government election in this period paints a truer picture of the party in the 1990s. In 1993, the party had 84,909 votes but no council control,¹¹⁸⁴ in 1995 the party had 75,448 votes and no council control in Wales.¹¹⁸⁵ In 2017 the Conservatives had 182,250 votes and had majority control of one Welsh council,¹¹⁸⁶ with coalition control of other councils. this included Wyn Roberts

¹¹⁷⁹ 'Mr Major's Speech to the Conservative Local Government Conference,' on 26 February 1994, John Major Archive

¹¹⁸⁰ 'Mr Major's Speech to Conservative Central Council,' on 26 March 1994, John Major Archive

¹¹⁸¹ Research Briefing. 'Public service reform in post-devolution Wales: a timeline of local government developments,' (2018) National Assembly for Wales, Senedd Research.

¹¹⁸² Douglas Broom, 'Tory council leaders attack Heseltine over poll tax review,' in *The Times Digital Archive*, 4 January 1991, p.18

¹¹⁸³ Lukas Audickas & Richard Cracknell & Philip Loft, 'UK Election Statistics: 1918-2019: A Century of Elections,' 27 February 2020, House of Commons Library, Briefing Paper No. CBP7529.

¹¹⁸⁴ Colin Rallings & Michael Thrasher, 'Local Elections Handbook 1993,' *Local Government Chronicle Elections Centre*, University of Plymouth (2004)

¹¹⁸⁵ Colin Rallings & Michael Thrasher, 'Local Elections Handbook 1995,' *Local Government Chronicle Elections Centre*, University of Plymouth (2004)

¹¹⁸⁶ 'Wales' local election 2017 results,' on *BBC News*, 4 May 2017

constituency with Conwy council. This was before the party went on to win 14 seats in the 2019 general election. Adequate local performance has a direct impact on national performance. As Sam Blaxland has identified the Young Conservatives associations had all but gone by the 1980s, Women's clubs had joined them by the 1990s,¹¹⁸⁷ another factor which further alienated the grassroots party members.

Wyn Roberts also recognised the need to build the Party up at the grassroots,¹¹⁸⁸ since Wales always was more for the local government model, of politics on a local level. Also always opted for smaller change which Labour, Liberal and Plaid were able to take advantage of. This issue identified by Roberts leads directly into the first local issue affecting Wales, mainly modernisation. The modern electronic approach that was implemented to collect the party subscriptions in Wales, alienated the older generations of Conservative Party members who were reliant upon door-to-door collection by members of the local party organisation. A door-to-door collection or meeting was now only likely to occur during campaigns for general elections whereas membership fees when collected either monthly or yearly meant far higher meetings between party members and the general populace. In addition to this was the lack of recruitment within Wales, this was an issue which Roberts noted as early as 1993 in his diaries on the Conservatives in Wales, that.

The Tory Party has lost a great opportunity in Wales over the years we have been in office. We should have been more proselytizing in our approach and made converts to strengthen the party' membership and organisation...¹¹⁸⁹

This was especially true for the case of Wales. It led to a loss of touch with the typical supporters, especially older supporters less likely to adapt to such new forms of technology, which felt highly impersonal. This is reflected both in the Conservative Party membership numbers, of which plummeted in the local party in Wales the Conservative Party does not keep actual central membership figures only estimates, however the actual membership numbers belonged specifically to the local Conservative Association.¹¹⁹⁰ An example of this

¹¹⁸⁷ Sam Blaxland, 'The Conservative Party in Wales,' Unpublished PhD Thesis, Swansea University, (2017)

¹¹⁸⁸ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 16, 7 June 1992

¹¹⁸⁹ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol.17, 1 December 1993.

¹¹⁹⁰ Richard Keen & Lukas Audickas, 'Membership of UK political parties,' HoC Briefing Paper No/ SN05125, 5 August 2016

is from the Conwy Conservative Association, however, due to the nature of record keeping in the Welsh party in this era, the true figures are lost. This quote from his diary also reflects once again how in touch Wyn Roberts was with the mindset of the populace in terms of both cultural Welshness and the Conservative mindset of his traditional supporters. The detachment of the Welsh populace mirrored the detachment felt by Wyn Roberts towards the Conservative Party in this period.

If one examines the membership figures in Britain, across the 1980s there were around 1,000,000 Conservative Party members this was down to roughly around 400,000 or so by the General Election of 1997. The 1990s saw a huge drop in the number of grassroots members of the party a trend that continued into the 2010s which saw Party membership figures at 100,000-150,000.¹¹⁹¹ Though this is a part of the general trend, as this was all down from 3mn party members in the 1950s. Added to the issues such as this was the fact that Conservatives were constantly at war with Local Government over the enactment of policy. The best example of this is evidenced over housing policy.

As well as the dwindling party support at the grassroots in Wales was the second local issue; the contentious Community charge or Poll tax as it is commonly referred too. Although it was originally planned to be enacted in Wales first,¹¹⁹² it was launched, too much disgust, in Scotland in 1989 and then England and Wales in 1990. This, as an issue, has long been studied by political scientists and historians alike, there is no new historiographical value to be added beyond pointing out that this did not damage the Conservative party in Wales as much as is perceived.

Though the Poll Tax had an effect it was not an effect that severely damaged the vote share in the 1992 election.¹¹⁹³ John Major had managed to win back enough of the vote to win, though the party had lost 80 seats, this was only a minimal loss of 2 seats for the Conservative Party

¹¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹¹⁹² David Cornock, 'Poll tax: Earlier launch in Wales was considered,' in *BBC News*, 30 December 2014

¹¹⁹³ Colin Rallings and Michael Thrasher, 'The Impact of the Community Charge on Electoral Behaviour: The 1990 Local Elections in England and Wales,' in *Parliamentary Affairs*, 44.2, (1991) pp.172-184

in Wales.¹¹⁹⁴ Many called it the downfall of Thatcher, though some argue that this was due to Europe rather than the Poll Tax.

Though it was hated, and opposition came from both members of public and from most areas of local government.¹¹⁹⁵ There is surprisingly little evidence to suggest that the poll tax was as big an issue within Wales, any more so than the poll tax was in England. Though it was proposed that the Community Charge should be introduced earlier in Wales, it did not happen.¹¹⁹⁶ It does, however, perhaps reveal what the Thatcher Government thought about Wales, as no more than a policy testing ground. In fact, David Hunt once argued that Welsh Local authorities always were better than the English ones when it came to realistic spending levels.¹¹⁹⁷ Alarm was such that in a 1989 poll it showed a 10% dip for the Conservative party and showed Labour near the lead for the first time in a decade.¹¹⁹⁸

There is a plethora of works devoted to the study of the Poll Tax, such as Peter Smith.¹¹⁹⁹ The Poll Tax alienated the grassroots of Wales once again, there is little evidence that the effect of the tax produced a dramatic effect in Wales compared to that of England with the Trafalgar Square protests. The Poll Tax stood as another level of decimation to the grassroots in Wales, it could even be seen as another symbol of the growing detachment of central Conservatism from the localities. It had a minimal effect or any drastic impetus on the next elections in Wales in 1992, though did cause concern about electoral impact from councillors and MPs.¹²⁰⁰ It was reform to the local government structure in Wales that brought a fresh face of ill will towards the Conservatives in Wales.

¹¹⁹⁴ 'The 1992 General Election, on *BBC News*, 10 April 1992

¹¹⁹⁵ Charles Jackson, 'Love it or loathe it, few will escape the poll tax,' in *The Times Digital Archive*, 25 February 1989, p.28

¹¹⁹⁶ David Cornock, 'Poll tax: Earlier launch in Wales was considered,' on *BBC News*, 30 December 2014

¹¹⁹⁷ David Hunt minute to Margaret Thatcher, Local Finance 1991/92 Wales, in *National Archives*, Kew, PREM19/3067 f116

¹¹⁹⁸ Robin Oakley, 'Tory alarm as Kinnock shows poll lead,' in *The Times Digital Archive*, 27 February 1989, p.2; Martin Fletcher, 'Confidence jolt for Tories,' in *The Times Digital Archive*, 20 March 1989, p.1

¹¹⁹⁹ Peter Smith, 'Lessons from the British Poll Tax Disaster,' in *National Tax Journal*, 44.4, (1991) pp.421-436

¹²⁰⁰ Judy Hirst, 'Council Tax,' in *The Guardian*, 29 March 1993

Finally, the last local issue which is also the issue most prevalent to Wyn Roberts' view is the enactment of the Local Government Wales Act of 1994, this according to Wyn Roberts diaries was the issue which killed the party within Wales. This act has been studied by the political scientists, Paul Griffiths¹²⁰¹ who argues that such changes in Wales were a reaction to ones in England. Russell Deacon has also studied this act arguing that although all parties had unitary authorities in their respective 1992 manifestos.¹²⁰² Though Deacon contests that only the Conservative party could have introduced such an act in Wales given the party's far fewer vested interests within Wales.¹²⁰³ However, both study it in relation to its effect on Wales, not its effect on the Party which introduced it.

This act was launched to much disapproval in Wales, it was a semi successful attempt to introduce a new structure of government. However, the direct effect on Wales of Local Government reform, was seen as a direct attack on the very physical boundaries of Welsh identities. Communities that may have already seen change due to the Conservative Governments, were now having their very identity targeted as well. In practicality these changes of the act alienated the distinct and historic local identities within Wales, such identities which had already seen alienation or destruction at the hands of other Conservative Policies. With the 23 new unitary authorities that would therefore become operable from 1995,¹²⁰⁴ dropping to 22 upon the launch of the new system from the 1 April 1996. The issue for Wales was that old counties such as Clwyd disappeared to make way for new counties such as Wrexham and Flintshire but neither did the act herald a return to the old counties, the new Denbighshire is not the same as the historical Denbighshire. Such an act had a catastrophic effect on the Conservative's performance in the local government elections, an area in which they were already struggling.

In the run up to 1992 general election, the Conservatives were only one poll point ahead.¹²⁰⁵ As Roberts noted in his diary about one of the Ribble Valley by-elections of 1991, it was a significant one as it was a casualty of the Poll Tax in Wales.

¹²⁰¹ Paul Griffiths, 'Legislating for Wales - Local government (Wales) act 1994,' in *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 2.2. (1996) pp.63-78

¹²⁰² Russell Deacon, 'Identifying the origins of Welsh local government reform,' in *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 3.3 (1997) pp.104-112 p.110

¹²⁰³ Ibid. p.111

¹²⁰⁴ Hansard, HC Deb. 19 October 1992, vol. 212 c188

¹²⁰⁵ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 15, 14 January 1992

I am very miserable about our party in Government. The Ribble Valley by election result was truly devastating and they say it was all to do with the Poll Tax. The country may be weary of us, in spite of our new leader. If I were JM (John Major) I would have a night of long knives sometime this summer and hope to re-establish the Government with a new face for the General Election in 1992.¹²⁰⁶ The party also made little headway at the Neath by election either.¹²⁰⁷

This is by far one of the more intrinsic entries in Wyn Roberts diary, if not certainly one of the more extreme ones. He pins his hopes on a reshuffle to get through the next general Election whilst also by his own admission stating that the country was weary of the party. Though the party did survive the 1992 general election, it was Local Government reform that removed the Conservatives from all offices of power in Wales.

This act was announced to the House of Commons by David Hunt, a result of the white paper 'Local Government in Wales: A Charter for the Future' launched on 1 March 1993, the bill received Royal assent on 5 July 1994, and it was enacted on 1 April 1996. This was after Peter Thomas the first Conservative Secretary of State for Wales, introduced the two-tier structure in the Local Government Wales Act 1972.¹²⁰⁸ The Conservatives were best placed to do so, as only the Conservative and Liberal parties had a set policy on Local government reform. It is contestable that central party held little concern for the distinctness of regional identities in Wales, but Wyn Roberts did.

For Roberts it was also a test for the Welsh language act 1993, as it would be one of the first bills that had to be published in both languages, as it was a policy that affected Wales.

The bill was a result of a review of local government in Wales,¹²⁰⁹ which received representations both in favour of and against Local Government reform.¹²¹⁰

Touch Ross management Consultants consulted on the financial implications of the new system,¹²¹¹ and estimated that it would cost between £100-150mn. David Hunt further

¹²⁰⁶ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 15, 11 March 1991

¹²⁰⁷ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 15, 16 April 1991

¹²⁰⁸ Hansard, HC Deb. 17 June 1991, vol. 193 c.32

¹²⁰⁹ Hansard, HC Deb. 21 January 1991, vol. 184 c67w

¹²¹⁰ Hansard, HC Deb. 29 April 1991, vol. 190 c57w

¹²¹¹ Hansard, HC Deb. 22 January 1993, vol. 217 c446w

claimed that such reorganisation was welcomed in Wales, since there existed no strong arguments against it,¹²¹² alas there did exist many complaints against it.

In David Hunt's 1991 white paper *The Structure of Local Government in Wales*,¹²¹³ it argues that local boundaries should reflect and strengthen community loyalties, this it did not do. If anything, it did the exact opposite. Speaking further on the subject in the House of Commons David Hunt stated.

...in the south Wales valleys, I want as far as possible to take account of the intense local loyalties that are such a feature of the area. Taking account of demographic and other factors, however, I also consider it necessary for some of the present district councils in the valleys to come together to form new unitary authorities.¹²¹⁴

It was first described as being a "...distinctive, innovative, and efficient local government system."¹²¹⁵ though it was immediately met with anger by Alex Carlisle of the Welsh Liberal Democrats over the potential removal of Montgomeryshire, alongside Carlisle was Elfyn Llwyd of Plaid Cymru. The proposed new system alienated new local links, links of which only a Welshman, such as Wyn Roberts, would have any sensitivity or sympathy for. It also alienated some of the older historical links in Wales, and the failure to resurrect any of them did not help the now dire, Conservative case.

Over the course of 1993 David Hunt had received many concerns and representations asking for different villages and towns to be moved from one proposed new authority to another. This was to protect and preserve centuries old regional Welsh identities, areas such as, Pembrokeshire, Cardiganshire, and Carmarthenshire that all had distinct regional identities which would not survive or flourish under the new local government system.¹²¹⁶

The act removed or replaced the very physical bounds of certain local Welsh identities, some of which had been in place for over 700 years, as was the case with Meirionnydd, though it is

¹²¹² Hansard, HC Deb. 1 March 1993, vol. 220 c22-3

¹²¹³ David Hunt, 'The Structure of Local Government in Wales,' Welsh Office, 1991

¹²¹⁴ Hansard, HC Deb. 3 March 1992, vol. 220 c161

¹²¹⁵ Roberts Morgan, 'Old Welsh counties make a comeback in council shakeup,' 2 March 1993, in *The Times Digital Archive*, (Accessed 30 September 2020)

¹²¹⁶ Hansard, HC Deb. 14 December, vol. 550 c1269

still in Gwynedd it is not the same as the historical one.¹²¹⁷ There was further damage to community links; local, communal, and geographical. The Welsh people who lived in the Conwy Valley were now ground out of sight in the new Colwyn Borough.¹²¹⁸ All this preceded the local government elections of 1995. These kinds of issues also rubbed against the tenet of the Blue Dragon as a cultural nationalist of preserving and revering the historic Welsh past. Though wishing to preserve Welsh culture was important to Plaid as a party, it was also important to the Blue dragon. As the Conservatives actively chose to damage this, it shows any lessons that it learnt about the Welsh Dimension were lost to the party.

The outcome of the Local Government reform was that it was strongly opposed by 32 out of the 38 MPs for Wales. Though not all councils offered up any objections, Colwyn Bay council were fine with changes, though this could be since the rural wards were to be preserved and unchanged in the new system of local governance.¹²¹⁹ Councils that did not object were in a minority. Any changes that party members wanted and could be interpreted as another sign of the English alienating the local Welsh. Most importantly it demonstrated how easily Whitehall interest could easily trounce the wants and wishes of most Welsh MPs, causing boundary issues with several Welsh counties.

Wyn Roberts's view on this act in his diary is that it killed Conservatism, specifically in Wales.¹²²⁰ Though Wyn Roberts' optimism of the party was severely knocked in the 1990s. His notes on the Local Government bill in Wales, were negative, his fears were that both the party and Wales would suffer for the new system, and these were fears that would very quickly be realised.

As Roberts' notes it would be the.

'Death knell of the Conservatives in Wales, (and) a mistake of David Hunt.'¹²²¹

¹²¹⁷ Hansard, HC Deb. 1 March 1993, vol. 220 c28

¹²¹⁸ Hansard, HC Deb. 1 March 1993, vol. 220 c28

¹²¹⁹ Hansard, HC Deb. 15 March 1994, vol. 239 c820

¹²²⁰ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 17, 14 April 1994

¹²²¹ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 17, 14 April 1994

Once again, we have powerful words here from Wyn Roberts, the same kind of writing that he makes use of in much of his diary for the 1990s when it comes to discussing the Conservative Party. Coming from 1994 this is a fervent warning from Roberts that this would end the Conservatives in Wales. Wyn Roberts predictions were more prophetic than anything, in 1994 he wrote about how horrifically the party did in Welsh local government elections.¹²²² Though this in comparison to 1995 was nowhere near as destructive to the Conservative party, there are however several instances of issues for the party at by elections reported in Roberts' diary. In the months after the Local Government Wales Act was enacted the Welsh Conservatives were defeated in the by elections of, Breconshire, Radnorshire, and Montgomeryshire alone. After this Sir Wyn Roberts had very little enthusiasm for a bill, though by this point his fear was not for the party but fear of exactly what damage this would cause to Wales. Roberts laid the blame directly at the feet of David Hunt.¹²²³ Another direct result of the bill was to hasten the Wyn Roberts's retirement.

Wyn Roberts' wished to retire after the Local Government bill,¹²²⁴ he cited reasons for retirement on philosophical grounds, and felt that Wales had been virtually abandoned by the Conservative Party.¹²²⁵ The Party's philosophy no longer resembled Wyn Robert's philosophy on what Conservatism was. It no longer had the membership to keep on supporting areas which it had never traditionally been strong in either. The reason for the collapse in Wales is that the English party seemingly abandoned the Welsh dimension and left the Welsh part to its fate. What was damaging in the bill was that it targeted the very physical bounds of Welsh Identity.

A final issue and possibly the most devastating thing, beyond Local Government reform, that the party did was the alienation of Wyn Roberts, as he said himself as of 1993, he would only do favours for David Hunt as his boss and for no one else. This is yet another point that reinforces quite how disillusioned Roberts was with the central Party, this could help explain why the Party was no longer successful in Wales. At the same time the Party could afford to alienate other Welsh Tory MPs, such as Geraint Morgan and Anthony Meyer, however, when they started to alienate Wyn Roberts that was when they lost Wales. As is stated by Roberts

¹²²² Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 17, 16 May 1994

¹²²³ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 17, 21 April 1994

¹²²⁴ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 17, 10 June 1994

¹²²⁵ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 17, 16 June 1994

in an article for the *Western Mail*, in just 1988 his views on the party were much more optimistic than the diary entries of the 1990s.

‘The Conservative Party is in the vanguard of political thinking in Wales. Its political opponents are characterised by an abysmal lack of new thought about the future of the principality.’¹²²⁶

This reflects his public thinking on the party in Wales, just a few years before the 1990s. However, just a few years later Wyn Roberts’ private thoughts in his diary paint a very different picture on the Conservative Party in the 1990s. Roberts maintains a unique cynicism of almost everything the party does, especially of its choices of Welsh secretary. The diary started to chronicle the Conservative revolution planned under Ted Heath, became the obituary of an aged type of Conservatism no longer prevalent in Wales.

What in part helped to alienate the older generation was the new generation of Tories who have risen through the party ranks, noting in his diary, that.

‘There is a new generation coming up in the Tory Party and I am not enamoured by it. They are more class than Nation conscious and we must always be conscious of that dimension if we are to rule.’¹²²⁷

Simply none who would fit into the caste of the Blue Dragon, the one nation Tories, they had retired and been replaced by the Thatcherite generation. A generation who did not value Wales as a different cultural and increasingly independent political entity. As a Blue Dragon, Wyn Roberts always seemed to favour a form of cultural nationalism, throughout this thesis he always made use of or did what was best for the Welsh dimension. His implication here is that the new generation were not interested in culture but more for themselves. He notes that the cultural dimension is one that people must be ‘conscious of ... if we are to rule’, the Party members lost sight of this and no longer ruled. It is also yet another almost prophetic diary entry by Roberts.

¹²²⁶ Wyn Roberts, ‘Conservative Party,’ in *Western Mail*, 22 September 1988

¹²²⁷ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 15, 28 April 1991

As Roberts has also noted he only does favours to David Hunt,¹²²⁸ though this as a working relationship would eventually come under strain with Hunt's ill thought Local Government reform. The fact that he only did things for David Hunt would further suggest how little he liked the new party members. This forms a part of Wyn Roberts's general views with the state of the Party. He further reflects'

'I am glad I am not standing again because I have little respect for the younger generation of politicians... There are no grandees, no gravitas, no leadership of ideas or principles. There is little faith left in privatisation as a cure for anybody.'¹²²⁹

Simply, there were no Wyn Roberts, or Welsh Conservatives left. The most curious act of this passage is the last sentence, where he has become detached from the party itself. It appears he has become rather detached from the Thatcherite legacy too. Wyn Roberts across the 1990s seemingly anticipated the failings of the party in both Wales, but also nationally. In a way, Wyn Roberts anticipated the failings of the Conservatives in Wales, but also nationally throughout the 1990s. Though considering Roberts survived 1997 when he entered the House of Lords it is safe to say that the Conservative party though not necessarily Conservatism suffered a significant failure in Wales.

Wyn Roberts, the Blue Dragon, not the Secretary of State.

The final issue for Sir Wyn Roberts when it came to the Conservative Party in Wales was the English secretaries of state for Wales, and his failure to make it to the position himself. As can be evidenced Roberts showed a certain amount of fear for what would happen to Wales whenever a new Welsh secretary entered the office. The issue according to Wyn Roberts was that.

'When it comes to Wales, we must have a single parliamentary political leader; the Welsh psyche requires it... we must preserve party unity in Wales.'¹²³⁰

¹²²⁸ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 15, 28 April 1991

¹²²⁹ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 18, 15 November 1992

¹²³⁰ Letter to Margaret Thatcher from Wyn Roberts, 11 December 1986, Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 13

This was the response of Roberts after the resignation of Nicholas Edwards as the Secretary of State for Wales. It was at this point that Wyn Roberts held hope that he could become this parliamentary leader to preserve the Conservative unity in Wales. Not appointing Roberts was damaging to the already fragile party image within Wales. The issue was the direct lack of a 'Welsh' Welsh Secretary, to go with a lack of clear 'Welsh' leadership within the Welsh Conservatives. Wyn Roberts would have been the ideal candidate but was a victim of his age. Both too junior under Heath and close to retirement under Major, when he was at the right age under Thatcher, he was simply too Welsh for the position. As noted, "I have no realizable ambition as far as Wales is concerned and I must get out."¹²³¹ For Roberts in his diary his resignation decision was down to a lack of aim in Wales, simply Roberts had achieved everything that he set out to do for Wales. Inward investment: the Four Motors, the Welsh Language Act 1993 had passed into law as had the Education Act 1980, improved roads across Wales. Though by standing down and retiring post 1997, Roberts became an increasingly rare breed, one of few Welsh Conservatives entering the House of Lords. Roberts Welsh Conservative colleagues had unceremoniously lost their seats to either Labour or Plaid Cymru. Wyn Roberts had survived for he was now the Lord Roberts of Conwy, this however, did not solve the leadership issue for Wales.

Though the mentions thus far are the four Thatcherite and Major, Welsh Secretaries of State which Roberts served under. It was six if the Heath Government is included. Under the Heath Government, Roberts served under his first Welsh Secretary, Peter Thomas, it is easy to understand why Roberts did not obtain the Welsh Secretary position, under Heath. Roberts was only a junior member of parliament, a USS to Peter Thomas, only at the beginning of a parliamentary career. Heath had made a wise move putting both Wyn Roberts and Peter Thomas, two Welsh Tories, into such a young office as a sign of confidence in Wales. This was a part of decentralisation generally since the Conservatives did need to branch out in this period. Since they had started to examine the ambivalent Welsh Dimension of British politics. The Conservative's needed to branch out in Wales, as evidenced by the attempts to identify what made them anti-Welsh.¹²³² Roberts could potentially have been made the next Secretary of State for Wales in place of William Hague in 1995 had it not been for his decision to retire in 1994. However, for the Conservatives in Westminster, it is contestable

¹²³¹ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 16, 1 December 1993.

¹²³² David Melding, 'Have we been anti-Welsh?' in *Will Britain Survive beyond 2020?* IWA (Cardiff, 2009)

that they did not appoint a truly ‘Welsh’ Secretary until 2016. This mattered little compared to Heath who put the Welsh in the Welsh Office. Wales however, had its new Welsh leader with Ron Davies at the helm in the Senedd as of 1997. This is ironic when considered that they had a suitable candidate for the position of Secretary of State since the 1970s, a Welshman who was both Conservative and Welsh. Instead of trying to examine what made them anti-Welsh they simply could have utilised the assets that made them Welsh.

Arguably, at this point Roberts still believed in overall power from Westminster, having a Secretary of State for Wales was a sign of confidence in the Welsh having some form of leadership. One that was possibly seen as enough as devolution did not pose as great a threat as it once did under the early years of Thatcherism since it was voted against. This turned from a no vote in 1979 to a yes vote in 1997. One argument for such a turn could be the Welsh Secretaries that got progressively more English as the Thatcher and Major years went by. As for the position itself, it was newly established in 1964. As an office it had limited powers at this point. Arguably, it also was a blasé office originally created by a fearful Labour government to quench the rising Nationalists of Plaid Cymru, as by this point Plaid Cymru had started to win seats in the House of Commons. Though it is obvious as to why Roberts was not the Welsh Secretary, simply he was in too junior a position, it was not until the Thatcher government that the powers and role of the Welsh Office were exponentially expanded, as were the number of Quango’s across Wales.¹²³³ Under the Thatcher government it became quite the political force, with a much-increased number of responsibilities across Wales.

Similarly, under Thatcher it is also harder to gauge why the position never went to Roberts. Possibly by being this Blue Dragon, a Welsh speaking Tory and not a Thatcher loyalist, it was much better to be unseen and unheard, working behind the scenes at the Welsh Office. Second, another possibility is that since the position also was used as a career booster for politicians to reach cabinet.¹²³⁴ This was most likely the case for John Redwood when he

¹²³³ Similarly, as of 1994 approx. 34% of all Welsh expenditure was handled via Quangos. Hansard, HL Deb, 19 January 1994, vol. 551 c612.

¹²³⁴ There is no definitive evidence of this, except for John Redwood being appointed the Secretary of State for Wales.

occupied the Welsh Secretary position, since he launched a leadership bid against Major in 1995.¹²³⁵

Third, since the voters were also seemingly rejecting ‘Welsh’ leaders throughout the 1970s and 1980s. With the likes of Neil Kinnock, James Callaghan, and Michael Foot, all of them were Welsh, or sitting in Welsh seats falling to this. Not giving Wyn Roberts the post of Secretary of State could very well have saved one of the few genuine Conservatives with a Welsh Dimension from being caught up in this rejecting trend. Though these votes may specifically be against Labour figures it is uncertain given the lack of Welsh Conservative leadership. For Nicholas Edwards, his efficacy meant he kept the position from his appointment till his retirement, some eight years.

Nicholas Edwards, who would eventually become Lord Crickhowell. Described becoming the Secretary for Wales as “...to be thrown in at the deep end.”¹²³⁶ Though Edwards was later described by Thatcher as “...the best Secretary of State for Wales that we’ve ever had.”¹²³⁷ It would be more apt to state that Wyn Roberts was the best Secretary of State for Wales we’ve never had. Nicholas Edwards had a point since as someone with few Welsh antecedents when compared to Wyn Roberts the job of Welsh Secretary was that much harder for it.

The second Welsh secretary Roberts served under was Peter Walker after the general election of 1987 though Peter Walker was seen as being demoted, he grew into the role well.¹²³⁸ Though Wyn Roberts did have considerable concern for who would replace Nicholas Edwards. Writing in 1986, Wyn Roberts expressed his concerns to the chief whip of the party John Wakeham. Roberts’ feeling was that fielding an English candidate even one with traits of Welsh antecedents would not put the Conservatives in a good pre 1987 election position.¹²³⁹ Though the fears of Wyn Roberts proved to be unfounded since the Conservatives won so many seats in Wales. Wyn Roberts was initially very optimistic about the 1987 General Election upon being adopted for the candidacy in 1987, he notes.

¹²³⁵ *The Conservative Party – From Thatcher to Cameron*,

¹²³⁶ Nicholas Crickhowell, *Westminster, Wales and Water*, (Cardiff, 1999) p.15

¹²³⁷ Margaret Thatcher, ‘Speech to Conservative Rally in Newport,’ Thatcher Archive, 106843.

¹²³⁸ ‘Walker denies Welsh posting is demotion,’ in *The Independent*, 15 June 1987

¹²³⁹ Letter to Chief Whip John Wakeham from Wyn Roberts, 17 December 1986, Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 13

‘I walked out of my adoption meeting, showered with good wishes... I slid across the bonnet of a passing car and miraculously landed on my feet at the terrified driver’s window. ‘Is the car alright’ I asked the potential voter. He nodded wildly, convinced he was confronted by a madman.’¹²⁴⁰

Roberts initial euphoria was soon to be replaced by concern over who would become the new Welsh Secretary ‘If I am not asked to serve in the top job, I am not keen to continue my present role.’¹²⁴¹ Not keen was an accurate assumption, writing a year later, ‘I am depressed physically and spiritually by the prospect of another parliamentary session....’¹²⁴² Roberts made use of the word depressed, in particular he mentioned that he is spiritually depressed. It could be the case that given he was always concerned for the identity of the Welsh his depression comes from the prospect of who would lead Wales. In addition to this quote, Roberts fears for Wales continued to build, over who would lead after Nicholas Edwards.

‘Sadly, I feel that the days of Tory revolution in Wales are over...’ unless good leadership is found.’¹²⁴³

It has been covered in this chapter thus far that Wyn Roberts, across the 1990s, started to become very detached at times from Conservatism and the central Conservative Party. These quotes come from 1988 and 1987 respectively. Roberts was started to get concerned, very concerned at who was to be Nicholas Edward’s replacement at the Welsh Office. Though these are far from the tone of the diary entries of the 1990s they do mark a starting point of which Wyn Roberts started to feel detached from party.

It was not just in his diaries that Roberts concerns were aired, in a telephone conversation with Nigel Wicks, the Principal Private Secretary to the Prime Minister, it was stated by Wicks that ‘the natives (Welsh) are getting restless at the thought of an outsider.’¹²⁴⁴ This demonstrates any potential cracks that were starting to appear in the Conservative part vis a

¹²⁴⁰ Wyn Roberts, *House Magazine*, 361.12, January 1987, Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 13

¹²⁴¹ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 13, 10 May 1987

¹²⁴² Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 14, 20 November 1988

¹²⁴³ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 13, 1 February 1987

¹²⁴⁴ Record of telephone conversation with Nigel Wicks at No. 10. 11 June 1987, Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 13

vis the Welsh. The ‘natives’ descriptor pits the Welsh as having a tribe like mentality that is hostile to any outsider who would dare to approach. This is not the case; it is not much to ask for a countryman to lead.

Though it held a fragment of truth as Roberts not keen on any outsiders getting cabinet teeth on Wales, he was not consulted, and neither was Nicholas Edwards. Though both of the seemed happy enough with the prospect of Peter Walker.¹²⁴⁵ Similarly the issue of an Englishman serving as a Welsh Secretary also made the local press, *The Liverpool Daily Post* reported such concerns of an English secretary of state for Wales.¹²⁴⁶ Perhaps most interestingly of all is that not just the Welsh Conservatives, but all the Welsh political parties viewed Wyn Roberts as a natural successor for the position of Welsh secretary, both Dafydd Wigley and Barry Jones also thought this.¹²⁴⁷ This almost served as a form of cross-party appeal of Welsh politicians who held the simple wish for Wales to be governed by a Welshman not yet another Englishman.

There are three potential reasons as to why Wyn Roberts did not make it as Welsh secretary. First, in a pragmatic note Roberts was still a Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Welsh Office, it would have been highly unusual for one to jump past becoming a full minister of state straight into position as the new Welsh Secretary. Second, it could have been simply due to Wyn Roberts being Welsh, and not one of us in the Thatcherite sense. It also the case that if all the Welsh parties including Plaid viewed Wyn Roberts as well as Dafydd Wigley and Barry Jones viewed him as the natural successor to the position. Perhaps Thatcher wished to avoid appeasing ‘Nationalists’ after S4C. Finally, the election occurred at a similar time to when Roberts came to blows with Thatcher over Welsh in the schools’ curriculum.¹²⁴⁸ This caused bad relations with Thatcher, which could also serve as a catalyst as to why Roberts did not become the Welsh Secretary in 1987. The legacy of Peter Walker is not one that caused any harm to Wales, the same cannot be said for the third Welsh secretary that Roberts served under, David Hunt or even the fourth in the form of John Redwood. Both of whom served Wales from English seats.¹²⁴⁹

¹²⁴⁵ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 13, 11 June 1987

¹²⁴⁶ ‘English MP may be Welsh Secretary,’ in *Liverpool Daily Post*, 11 June 1987

¹²⁴⁷ Dafydd Wigley and Barry Jones, in *North Wales Chronicle*, 22 June 1987

¹²⁴⁸ See Chapter 3: The saviour of the Welsh language?

¹²⁴⁹ ‘THREE Previous Tory Secretaries of State for Wales... AND THEIR English Constituencies,’ in *Wales Online*, 27 March 2013

Roberts' earlier fears of Wales not having an English leader in 1987 were well founded, it came in the form of David Hunt, a man with few Welsh antecedents, who served Wales from an English seat. His policies which would destroy the Welsh dimension of the party and its reputation in Wales when he was appointed in 1990.

'The David Hunt era has begun. He will grow into his office, and it should give him lustre and if he is big enough, he will add lustre to it.'¹²⁵⁰

Written by Wyn Roberts at the start of his tenure under the third Welsh Secretary of the Thatcher governments. By this point however, it was starting to become obvious that Wyn Roberts loyalty very much lay with Wales, it was Roberts's intention to see Hunt into his position and leave, though the Welsh Language Act put this on hold.

'I shall see David Hunt safely in the saddle, but I see no reason to fight the next election, which will turn to a devolution issue here in Wales. My experience of British political life is that there is no room for a Welshman at the very top. We are expected to keep the peace and (be) perpetually divided as the Welsh are and always have been. As strong as my instincts are to protect and promote their interests as best as I can, I shall certainly not betray these interests and if I am crossed in their promotion, I shall leave the government with as good grace as I can.'¹²⁵¹

Powerful words from Roberts once again, 'no room for a Welshman at the very top.' It could be assumed that at first this is merely Roberts's reaction to not being made the Welsh Secretary. It is so much more; it is a direct stab to Wyn Roberts he continues doing what he can for the Welsh despite knowing he would never reach the top. Though he eventually did return to fight the next election in 1992, this was for the sake of the Welsh for he was convinced of the need for a new Welsh Language Act.¹²⁵² With this there seems to be little distinction between the Welsh Conservatives and all the other Welsh factions who were responsible for a large portion of protesting the main party policies. It seems that the Welsh cost Roberts the top job, but he was still determined to act for them. This time around there is

¹²⁵⁰ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 14, 16 May 1990

¹²⁵¹ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 14, 5 May 1990

¹²⁵² See Chapter 2.

no mention of the same disappointment over Roberts missing out on office of Welsh Secretary again. It was not issue of skipping out being a minister, Roberts seems to have more interest in retirement than interest in the position. It was purely about protecting Welsh interest and the start of Wyn Roberts detachment from the Conservative Party.

After the 1992 election, it is notable that Roberts shows a disapproval of David Hunt; writing in his diary he notes that ‘David needs me because his judgement is not very sound.’¹²⁵³

Roberts was concerned over the potential fall out of Hunt’s whitepaper which proposed long needed changes to the layout of local government in Wales. Similarly, Roberts also noted that.

‘Poor David Hunt is proving himself a lightweight and does not carry much respect among his colleagues.’¹²⁵⁴

David Hunt was seemingly inept at the task of Welsh Secretary but what lost him the respect of his colleagues is uncertain. Only that out of all the Welsh secretaries Roberts served under at the Welsh Office his disdain for David Hunt seems to outshine all the others, including the infamous John Redwood. One example is David Hunt’s failure to get more powers for the Welsh Office including devolved policing for Wales, with the backing of the Cabinet no less.¹²⁵⁵ There was also Hunt’s failure of sorts to block attempted financial cuts towards Wales over Regional Selective Assistance.¹²⁵⁶ The mere fact that Roberts refers to him as a lightweight could just be a part of his increasing disdain for the party or just goes to show the damage that the English Secretary of State was doing to Wales, damage that would simply be further exacerbated by his successor. Not long into his tenure, by May of 1993 there was already much talk of his successor, which was rife throughout parliament.¹²⁵⁷ His appointment to Employment Secretary was described as a move up from Welsh Secretary, this shows exactly what some of the English felt about the position.¹²⁵⁸

¹²⁵³ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 15, 13 April 1992

¹²⁵⁴ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 16, 31 July 1992

¹²⁵⁵ ‘Devolution: I was up against a machine, David Hunt says,’ on *BBC News*, 15 March 2017

¹²⁵⁶ David Williamson, ‘The furious row over funding for Wales at the heart of the UK Government,’ on *Wales Online*, 28 December 2018

¹²⁵⁷ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 16, 18 May 1993

¹²⁵⁸ Sheila Gunn, ‘The irresistible rise of the lawyer from Llanelli,’ 28 May 1993, in *The Time Digital Archive*, (Accessed 30 September 2020)

Though both Peter Walker and David Hunt both followed the policies set by Edwards. John Redwood's tenure embarked on a radically different policy, which deeply damaged the image of the Conservatives in Wales. Peter Walker, a noted one-nation Tory was arguably politically exiled to the Welsh Office from energy, for his advocacy of a more liberal form of Conservatism,¹²⁵⁹ he too was notable for his critique of Thatcherism, in his book.¹²⁶⁰ David Hunt, carried on the policies of his predecessor, such as membership of the Four Motors, though was still English. Although he once had the loyalty of Roberts, such was made clear in the 1990 Conservative leadership campaign.¹²⁶¹ John Redwood, certainly bore the brunt for not being Welsh, Roberts personal distaste of him was clear. Redwood was a loose cannon who on more than one occasion damaged the Conservative's image in Wales. One that Roberts had spent years cultivating carefully, especially after the trouble over the creation of S4C.¹²⁶²

It is easy to blame John Redwood for the mess left in Wales, as someone who was overtly English however, the damage was partially and certainly the fault of David Hunt. This does not mean that Redwood did not cause damage, he certainly had an image problem within Wales. John Redwood was not a Welshman and clearly one of the career politicians who utilised the office as a steppingstone. Not even bothering to learn the correct pronunciation of the Welsh National Anthem, *Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau*.¹²⁶³ He changed from the policies of his predecessors, instigating a radically different policy to the previous Welsh Secretaries. Wyn Roberts found him distasteful, describing him in hindsight as a man lacking common sense.¹²⁶⁴ A significance of this is the populace wanted a Welsh Secretary like Wyn Roberts who was in touch with his Welsh ethos. Each passing secretary got further away from this until John Redwood who existed as the antithesis of this.

¹²⁵⁹ Peter Hetherington, 'Walker flourishes in political 'exile', in *The Guardian*, 28 October 1987

¹²⁶⁰ Peter Walker, *Trust the People: The Collected Essays and Speeches of Peter Walker*, (London, 1987)

¹²⁶¹ Wyn Roberts Diary, 26 November 1990, Vol.14

¹²⁶² Lord Roberts of Conwy, *Right from the Start; The Memoir of Sir Wyn Roberts*, (Cardiff, 2006) p.137

¹²⁶³ John Redwood, 1993, ITV Archive, National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth. Footage of this is available, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GzBq0n8dxFQ> (Last Accessed 29 January 2019)

¹²⁶⁴ 'Welsh language proved a barrier to top job,' in *Western Mail*, 21 February 2006.

Though compared to Roberts' reaction at the time to both Walker and Hunt, his reaction to John Redwood at first was rather tame. Writing in the diary that.

‘John Redwood I am sure will serve Wales as well as he can, he has a sound mind.’¹²⁶⁵

A sound mind does not necessarily make up for a lack of common sense, a rather obvious example of this is John Redwood's attempt to sing the Welsh national anthem despite having no formal language training. Furthermore, in a memo said he looked forward to working with Redwood,¹²⁶⁶ though this warm welcome towards John Redwood was not to last, indeed his appointment as Welsh Secretary was certainly not taken well by others. To Dafydd Wigley he considered the appointment of Redwood as both ‘ominous and ill considered’¹²⁶⁷ and feared the damage he could do to Wales, that he was there simply to strip public funding in Wales. Liberal Democrat Alex Carlisle further described as ‘a humiliating insult to the people of Wales.’¹²⁶⁸ It was not just politicians who, did not handle his appointment well, the *Western Mail* described his appointment as the beginning of the end for the Tories in Wales.¹²⁶⁹ *The Sun* described it as a betrayal of the Welsh, though through technicality this was not the first time.¹²⁷⁰ *The Financial Times* further described him as an English patriot.¹²⁷¹ Though it is known for its acerbic writing style it an interesting facet that *The Sun* is describing John Redwood's appointment as a betrayal of the Welsh, especially given its own antecedents as a newspaper.¹²⁷² Though this could be put down to the usual journalistic flair, it is still fascinating as it demonstrates just how intrinsic John Redwood's appointment as the Secretary of State for Wales was considered at the time.

¹²⁶⁵ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 16, 27 May 1993

¹²⁶⁶ Welsh Office, memo to Wyn Roberts from John Redwood, ‘look forward to working with you,’ June 1993

¹²⁶⁷ Sheila Gunn, MPs criticise Redwood as an English Thatcherite,’ 28 May 1993, in *The Times Digital Archive*, (Accessed 30 September 2020)

¹²⁶⁸ Sheila Gunn, MPs criticise Redwood as an English Thatcherite,’ 28 May 1993, in *The Times Digital Archive*, (Accessed 30 September 2020)

¹²⁶⁹ ‘Beginning of the end?’ in *Western Mail*, 1 June 1993

¹²⁷⁰ ‘New boy Redwood in ‘Betrayal’ Row,’ in *The Sun*, 1 June 1993

¹²⁷¹ Ralph Atkins, ‘An English patriot takes on Welsh role,’ in *Financial Times*, 1 June 1993

¹²⁷² Johnathon Leader Maynard, ‘Nasty piece of work The Sun’s nationalism is doing England great harm,’ in *The Conversation*, 1 July 2014

Wyn Roberts also spent much time advising Redwood on Welsh affairs, otherwise he was left to his own devices. Redwood's appointment granted Roberts further freedom to deal with Welsh affairs in the Welsh Office. Roberts also advised Redwood not to attend the 1993 Eisteddfod, which would be his first, due to the possibility of protest.¹²⁷³ This was an issue of which Roberts had much familiarity over the Welsh language protests held by the Welsh Language Society. It is possible that Wyn Roberts did not wish to further inflame the language campaigners, who were not only upset over the appointment of Redwood but also over Roberts' version of the Welsh Language Act which was currently passing through Parliament. The use of a form of consensus approach demonstrates both a loyalty to party but also to the Welsh language. Redwood eventually lost the position of Welsh Secretary to William Hague, as a part of John Majors' revenge of sorts on the Maastricht rebels that had plagued him for so many years.¹²⁷⁴

This thesis does not examine any new selections made for a Welsh Secretary of State, after John Redwood had become the Welsh Secretary, principally because the Conservatives lost the 1997 election, and Wyn Roberts had entered the House of Lords. Wyn Roberts felt that William Hague would make a better Welsh secretary than Redwood did, however by this point the damage done by both Hunt and Redwood was too severe for the party to recover in Wales before the 1997 general election. Also, Wyn Roberts had stepped back by this point in preparation for his impending retirement, so was not there to provide his guidance. It is also, the own opinion of Roberts that, he was denied the position because he spoke Welsh.¹²⁷⁵ It seems ridiculous to not appoint such an obvious advantage to the Conservatives, to the post. Especially at a time when the Conservative Party was doing its utmost not to portray themselves as anti-Welsh.¹²⁷⁶ Though it could be purely tactical decision, in that, the Welsh speaker was best dealing with Welsh affairs rather than dabbling in the politics.

Similarly, as stated under Heath the Welsh office was a fledgling, a Welsh Tory at the helm was necessary for the office to be seen a success, not as another possible expedient of Englishness over Welshness. The opposite holds true for the Welsh office under Thatcher and

¹²⁷³ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. 16, 5 August 1993

¹²⁷⁴ Nicholas Wood, 'Right rues 'worst day since Thatcher was forced out', 6 July 1996, in *The Times Digital Archive*, (Accessed 30 September 2020)

¹²⁷⁵ 'I never got the top job... I spoke Welsh,' in *Daily Post*, 22 February 2006.

¹²⁷⁶ The Welsh Dimension Report, CPA, Bodleian Library, Oxford. CRD 4/15/4/2

Major, with greater power the office become increasingly anglicised. Not wanting Wales to see any sign or chance of self-autonomy. Having such an obvious Welshman as Wyn Roberts, a 'Blue Dragon' in the position would have done this. Contestably it may have also helped keep the popularity of the Conservatives going within Wales for a longer era than 1997.¹²⁷⁷ The problems of the English Welsh-secretaries were only one issue to engulf the party in this period.

It can be argued that the English secretaries was an issue that pertained directly to the Welsh, even Scotland had their own Scottish Secretary who typically served from a Scottish seat. The destruction at a local level, explains exactly what irreparably damaged the Welsh Dimension of the Conservative Party. These were issues that were extensively covered by Wyn Roberts in his dairies. Over both David Hunt and John Redwood, Roberts is overly emotional in his writing on both subjects, on something that directly interacts with Welsh identity he is even more so. The worst damage that was afflicted on the Conservative Party in the 1990s, was the alienation of Wyn Roberts costing them what little Welsh dimension they truly possessed.

Conclusion.

Wyn Roberts admits in his memoir that; in the mid 1990s.

‘My diaries at this time were terrible in deploring the state of the Conservative Party’¹²⁷⁸

Perhaps what is more deplorable was not so much the state of the Party, but rather that state the Party left Wyn Roberts in by 1997. This chapter has demonstrated he was detached or a ‘forlorn creation’ as he notes in the opening quote of this chapter. This detachment of Wyn Roberts reflected the disillusion of the people of Wales in the 1990s over Conservatism. This ultimately led to the erosion of ‘Blue Dragon’ values within the Conservatives and Conservatism within the party itself. Wyn Roberts had succeeded with the passage of the

¹²⁷⁷ Russell Deacon, *The Governance of Wales: The Welsh Office and the Policy Process 1964-1999*, (Cardiff, 2002); also ‘On the trail of the dragon, 27 March 1997, in *The Times Digital Archive*, (Accessed 30 September 2020)

¹²⁷⁸ Lord Roberts of Conwy, *Right from the Start: The Memoirs of Lord Roberts of Conwy*, (Cardiff, 2006) p.

Welsh Language Act 1993,¹²⁷⁹ and there was nothing left that Roberts could do for the Welsh.

The party itself had quite the ideological problems to contend with. As a party the Conservatives owed more to tradition than ideology, and the Major years saw a partial abandonment of Thatcherism, the closest which the party had or has ever been to a political ideology. It is a similar problem at the time of writing, Brexit, the European issue, and the contesting of ideologies which is damaging the party again. With the same effects in the local election results for May 2019.¹²⁸⁰ As is admitted by Alistair Cooke,

“John Major led the party from 1990-7, a period of considerable internal distress and difficulty at the parliamentary level. But that did not prevent continuing change in important areas of national life.”¹²⁸¹

This bold claim from the party, it itself has the point of admitting to ‘considerable internal distress’ and is also arguably the case for the party in Wales. This is reflected in 1997 when the party held no seats at all in Wales, it still held a reasonable share of the vote in Wales some 19.6% of the vote to a 73.6% electoral turnout.¹²⁸² The party was in terms of electoral share still second in Wales. The same can be said of the local government elections of 1995, the party had 8.1% of the vote some 75,448 voters in Wales.¹²⁸³ Also it is contestable that given the Aberconwy and Colwyn council, and Denbighshire (once home to Geraint Morgan), had no overall control compared to 14 Labour controlled authorities.¹²⁸⁴ Coincidentally, these authorities both coincide with similar constituency boundaries of longstanding Welsh Conservative MPs. Otherwise, they both exist near or within Balsom’s

¹²⁷⁹ See Chapter, The Saviour of the Welsh Language.

¹²⁸⁰ S. Herbert & J. Maidment & J. Hardy, ‘Local elections 2019: Tories lose more than 1,200 seats in worst performance since 1995,’ in *Daily Telegraph*, 3 May 2019.

¹²⁸¹ Alistair Cooke, *A Party of Change: A Brief History of the Conservatives*, Conservative Research Department, 2008.

¹²⁸² General Election Statistics 1997, on *BBC News*, available on <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/special/politics97/news/05/0505/stats.shtml> (Last Accessed 7 June 2019)

¹²⁸³ Michael White, ‘Tories buried in a landslide, more than 2,000 seats lost as Labour reaps record poll and Lib-Dem’s surge,’ in *The Guardian*, 5 May 1995: & Rob Clements, ‘Local elections of 4 May 1995,’ House of Commons Library, Research Paper no. 95/59

¹²⁸⁴ Rob Clements, ‘Local elections of 4 May 1995,’ HoC Library, Research Paper, 95/59

British Wales boundaries.¹²⁸⁵ Electoral support remained for the Conservatives in Wales, ironically so did a Welsh Conservative in Lord Roberts of Conwy. By standing down from the Welsh Office in 1994 and returning to the backbenches Roberts avoided much of the criticism aimed at the Conservatives and returned in 1997 to the House of Lords as Lord Roberts of Conwy.

The National level issues of Europe, and Quangos all had some effect on the party in Wales, but similarly affected the party at a National level. The issue of the Secretary of States had a much more direct effect on the party within Wales and succeeded in helping to alienate Wyn Roberts to a certain extent as he was denied the top job within the Welsh Office. Alas it was the local issues which finally though not irrevocably destroyed the party within Wales, with the alienation of Sir Wyn Roberts the final nail in the coffin for the Conservative Party in Wales.

Most of the things that Wyn Roberts agreed with had gone from the party, the main party had all but abandoned Wales since it was the periphery. There were few Welsh Conservatives left, the party itself was a spent force politically after 18 years in power. Little leadership translated to a significantly larger problem in Wales, a place where little faith ever existed in privatisation policy. As for Wyn Roberts, he was clearly disillusioned with policy and harboured a deep nostalgia for a time long gone. It was after all the end of his main political career, something he had alluded to across his diaries from 1987-1994, added to this his disappointment to gain the top job as Secretary of State and it can be seen why this is the case. However, this was not the end of the Conservatives in Wales by the 1999 Welsh Assembly elections they had made a recovery of sorts after Nick Bourne's attempts at Welshifying the Conservative Party, the Welsh Dimension remained but the Blue Dragon was gone.

Simply, Wyn Roberts was tired with Government by the point of the 1992 general election, his diary contains entries up to 5 years' prior which detailed his desire to retire at one point or another, some of which are covered in the last chapter. The state of Wyn Roberts in 1993 reflects much on the state of the party, he had also set out to achieve what he intended to do, as had most of his generation of politicians. Wyn Roberts was not at all optimistic about the

¹²⁸⁵ Dennis Balsom, 'Three Wales Model,' (Llandysul, 1985)

state of the party, and Roberts views extend to the National level issues which were haunting the party as well. As is demonstrable most of these had some Welsh Dimension to them which greatly concerned Roberts to differing degrees. All of these in his view were seemingly symptoms of a party that had been in power for too long, not issues that would end the party in Wales.

Finally, as this thesis has argued, by the end of the 1990s everything that went into defining or making the Blue Dragon, had either been achieved or lost. The roads network had either been upgraded or had been stopped due to environmental protest. Roberts had achieved everything he set out to do and more with regards to education and language. The idea for a global Wales had been achieved but was already dying due to a lack of investment and drive and cheaper labour from Eastern Europe. The only thing that remained was a new generation of Conservatives not even any Welsh Tories, ones who to have any success in Wales would have to learn the Welsh Dimension all over again. The final question that could be asked is whether Sir Wyn Roberts went down with the party in the 1990s.

Conclusion: Wyn Roberts the Blue Dragon?

‘I thought I should chronicle the progress of the quiet revolution... Mr Heath and the Conservative Party are pledged to carry out.’¹²⁸⁶

‘We are totally lacking vision... worn out and irrelevant by the electorate... we lack the will to fight back.’¹²⁸⁷

The first didactic entry in Wyn Roberts diary from 1970 was one of a reserved hope of what the Conservative Party could achieve. One of the final entries in the eighteenth volume of his diary in 1996 screams of a lack of hope for the party, the electorate and of the Welsh Conservatives. The diary also addressed how this change in opinion came to be for Wyn Roberts. Even though his diaries ultimately end in disillusion about the state of the Conservative Party, as this thesis has demonstrated, Roberts is a mostly unsung ‘hero’ of the party in Wales. Whilst, of course, it is technically correct that Wales is unlikely to be deemed a Conservative Party heartland, it is a nation with conservative and Conservative traditions. There was (and is) a post-1945 Welsh Conservatism, which existed, thrived, faded, and resurrected, most of it during Wyn Roberts’s career. The ‘Blue Dragon’ is part of the political identities of modern Wales, and this form of Conservatism was epitomised by Wyn Roberts.

The role of Conservatism and the Conservative Party in the history of Wales remains one that is inherently understudied in Welsh historiography, and this thesis has demonstrated how focusing on an individual politician can enrich understanding of the party’s position in Wales and enhances comprehension of the power of ‘British’ Wales in the Welsh past.

Originally this project was formed simply to study the Conservative party in twentieth-century Wales, but it swiftly evolved to examine the understudied life of Sir Wyn Roberts as a lens through which to examine the Conservative party’s interaction with Welsh nationhood, particularly in north Wales. To see the world of politics through the eyes of Wyn Roberts, perhaps the most significant Welsh Conservative of his generation, offers a very

¹²⁸⁶ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol.1, 4 November 1970

¹²⁸⁷ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol.18, 17 April 1996

different view into the world of Welsh and Westminster politics to what is traditionally conveyed in Welsh political historiography. Though he could be construed as one of the party elites, Roberts was in touch with the grassroots of the party, and inherently aware of minute changes in Wales, including the Welsh-speaking heartlands, that could affect the party. Additionally, he used his proximity to the levers of power to orchestrate legislative and policy changes which chimed with his own sense of Welshness, one that took the survival of the Welsh language seriously and underlined the notion that economic and entrepreneurial success were integral to the survival of Welsh culture.

The year 2020 marked 50 years since Wyn Roberts became the Welsh Conservative MP for the Conway constituency (Conwy as of 1982).¹²⁸⁸ He existed as a rare find for the Conservative party, an MP who spoke first-language Welsh, and only one other existed in the same period in Geraint Morgan MP for Denbigh. This thesis has argued that Wyn Roberts was an essential yet largely unwritten figure in the history of Wales but also the British Conservative Party.. To misquote Christopher Wren,

‘If you seek his legacy, look at North Wales (or simply Wales),’¹²⁸⁹

This would be no understatement on what Wyn Roberts achieved for Wales, in a period – mainly the 1980s and 1990s – where the impact of the Conservatives in Wales tends to traditionally be painted in terms of socio-economic travesties such as the demise of the coal-mining industry and debilitating unemployment. Like any legacy Roberts’s legacy is not wholeheartedly ‘positive’ or ‘negative’, but it is essential in the history of Wales and adds a fresh perspective on the repercussions of the Thatcher and Major governments for a sense of Welshness. This work is the first to make extensive use of the diaries of Wyn Roberts for a first-hand examination of the Conservative party in Wales in the 1980s and 1990s, and the introduction presented several distinct research questions about Wyn Roberts and his possible brand of Conservatism.

1. Who was Lord Roberts of Conway and what was his contribution to the Welsh nation?

¹²⁸⁸ Boundary changes occurred in 1982, it didn’t change the constituency geographically just the name.

¹²⁸⁹ Christopher Wren’s gravestone states, ‘If you seek his monument – look around you.’

2. What findings are unearthed about Roberts's views and ideas in his extensive diaries?
3. Was there a specific form of Welsh Conservatism in the latter half of the twentieth century, The Blue Dragon, that can be shaped around elements of Roberts's identity and career?
4. What were the contributions of Welsh Conservatism to the Welsh nation?

The first question is one that is superficially straightforward to answer but also possibly the hardest. Simply he was Sir Wyn Roberts MP or Lord Roberts of Conwy, what is not so simple is who was he and what was his mentality? A Liberal 'transfer' who found a home in the Conservative Party, or a true Welsh Conservative figure who genuinely cared for Wales? During his time in politics, it becomes obvious that Sir Wyn Roberts was truly both Welsh and Conservative, proving Barbara Castle wrong about the two being contradictory.¹²⁹⁰

The second question becomes harder still for it is improbable to list all of Robert's achievements for Wales, from his pioneering work with TWW to the development of the, A55, simply as there was so many of them. Four chapters are dedicated to a theme around which Wyn Roberts was pivotal for developing within Wales. Chapter two for example asks the question at the beginning *Wyn Roberts: A saviour of the Welsh Language?* It discusses Roberts's decades long and numerous contributions to Welsh language preservation, notwithstanding his career at TWW, it discusses his involvement in both S4C and the legislation that he was involved with in both the Education Reform Act 1988 and the Welsh Language Act 1993. It concludes that the 1993 act was Roberts' version, and whilst it did little to quell the protests of language activists it did take the steam out of the argument by enshrining a firm place for the Welsh language in the public sector of Wales.

As for the third research question each chapter has utilised extensive extracts from Wyn Roberts's diaries, which cover some 30 years in politics, which clearly illuminate that there was a unique strand of Welsh Conservatism, dubbed in this thesis as the Blue Dragon and which can be summarised as follows:

¹²⁹⁰ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol. October 1980

‘A strand of Conservatism or a Conservative that identifies with the independent and unique culture of Wales, typically Welsh and Welsh speaker. A cultural nationalist who believes Wales is best off staying in the union but makes use of regionalism and Welsh identity to bolster the country.’

There was a specific strain of Welsh Conservatism that existed in figures such as Wyn Roberts, who became potent individuals in the Welsh Office, a government branch often neglected by Thatcher, but thus providing its ministers with a moderate degree of freedom.¹²⁹¹ This only acts to give more credence to the importance of Wyn Roberts as a figure in Welsh history. The Welsh Office ministers practiced Thatcherism but with a genuine Welsh dimension to it. In all policy areas that involved Wyn Roberts, he was keen to press on the Welsh dimension, and although this did not necessarily ‘save’ the Welsh economy it did carve a distinct form of Welsh nationalism, a Conservative Welsh nationalism, which can be juxtaposed with mainstream Welsh nationalism that tended to view the Conservatives as the alien ‘others’ at odds with their aims. Whilst the anti-Tory Nationalism practiced by Cymdeithas yr Iaith, the Welsh Language Society objected to any Welsh Conservative Policy based on it originating with the Conservatives, this often has obscured the fact that there was a distinct Welsh Conservatism in operation for much of the period under consideration in this study.

Finally, whilst it’s often easy to list examples of Conservatives ‘wrongs’ in Wales, by adopting the Welsh Conservative prism it is also possible to see contributions to the advancement of elements of Welsh nationhood. By diversifying the focus on Welsh political ‘heroes’ to include a key Welsh Conservative, this thesis highlights how a ‘Blue Dragon’ Welshness does exist. This has enhanced the much-understudied realm of the history of Welsh Conservatism, building on the foundations set by leading Welsh Conservative historian Sam Blaxland who examined party structures in Wales¹²⁹²

¹²⁹¹ Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, (London, 1999) various Welsh terms are on mentioned once. In Charles Moore’s’ three-part authorised biography Wales is referenced less than 10 times. Charles Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: the Authorised Biography; vol. I*, (London, 2013), *vol. II*, (London, 2016), *vol. III*, (London, 2019)

¹²⁹² Sam Blaxland, ‘The Organisation of the Conservative Party 1945-90,’ PhD Thesis, Swansea University, 2016

Discoveries.

As discussed in the Introduction there has been a tendency to invoke certain politicians as a form of Welsh political hero, Aneurin Bevan is one such example. This has examined the life of Wyn Roberts, a dominant figure in Welsh Conservatism, at a time when modern Welsh Conservatism has only recently started to be examined in the last twenty years. The thesis has not sought to make a mythological political hero out of Roberts but has argued and demonstrated that the two terms in 'Welsh Conservative' are not as contradictory as Barbara Castle made them out to be.¹²⁹³ The first chapter by taking a broad sweep of Roberts's influences. It ascertains that there was a split within the Conservative party dubbed Blue Dragon/ Blue Flag, not dissimilar to the perceived Red Flag/Red Dragon split within the Labour party of the period. Wyn Roberts served the Blue Dragon angle, being both prominently Welsh and Conservative, with his cultural nationalism embedding the notion of a Welsh nation with a distinct identity, albeit one that politically remained within the British union.

Building on the foundations of Chapter 1, the remaining chapters concentrate on core themes from Roberts's career. A prime example of this is in Chapter 2 on Welsh language policy in the period covered in this thesis, 1970-1997. Much is known about various facets of language politics in this period; however, the particulars have not yet been examined in relation to Wyn Roberts, who should be branded as being responsible for much of it. Regarding Welsh language television Roberts was closely involved in it from the 1950s, from his career with TWW to the establishment of S4C. In this it is suggested that the role of Welsh Conservatives in the establishment of S4C has been underplayed within Welsh history: instead of being viewed as the party who tried to prevent a Welsh language channel, individual Conservatives such as Roberts were pivotal in getting S4C established. It is not just Gwynfor Evans who should be venerated for an individual contribution to this process. Wyn Roberts's role in establishing bilingual education in Wales cost him the goodwill of Thatcher and proved that Roberts was willing to put Wales above anything else regarding this issue. Similarly, the Welsh Language Act 1993, was Roberts's version of the act. Although it satisfied so few Welsh language activists, the Act elevated the status of the Welsh language. Many Cymdeithas yr Iaith protests targeted Roberts during the 1980s especially, but this chapter

¹²⁹³ Wyn Roberts Diary, vol.10, October 1980

contends that this sense of drama can obscure Roberts's genuine sentiments and actions for the language.

Third, an examination of roads is an area of modern history which receives little attention, even less within Wales, Martin Johnes is a notable exception with his work on the M4 in south Wales.¹²⁹⁴ This thesis further demonstrates the scope of exploring Welsh road infrastructure in terms of identity and belonging, but this time with the focus on north Wales. Many additional themes could be developed in future regarding the A55, such as the marginalisation of the working classes, economic integration with the UK, and regional differences and nationalism. An in-depth examination of the creation of an area of the A55 has a strong Blue Dragon tinge, since Roberts was the minister for roads at the Welsh Office from 1985 and had campaigned for it from the time of the 1974 general elections. This did little to reverse the image of the Conservatives as the party of destruction, though did help to drastically improve the Welsh economy. This chapter has already generated one brief paper on the legacy of the landscape around the A55.

Fourth, was Roberts' approach to Foreign Policy, and how much Welshness was used by the Conservative government to sell Wales abroad: he was a conduit for a 'Global Wales'. Having a minister such as Roberts meant they had a specialist knowledge on the subject. As for Wyn Roberts's involvement with official visits, this led him to lead Wales into the newly forming Four Motors of Europe, meaning that Wales had access to a market worth £1.2bn as of 2019. Similarly, the relations which were formed by Roberts during his visits still exist to this day, Germany, Malaysia, Singapore, Kuwait, Bahrain are all places where Roberts promoted the Welsh brand, they are also all places which Wales still has friendly foreign relations with in the form of Trade Missions and,¹²⁹⁵ educational links. It is known that the use of such official or state visits can really help to bolster existing regimes or be used simply as a political performance,¹²⁹⁶ And Wyn Roberts made significant use of the cultural

¹²⁹⁴ Martin Johnes, 'M4 to Wales - and prosper! A history of a motorway,' in *Historical Research*, 87. 237. (2014)

¹²⁹⁵ See <https://tradeandinvest.wales/trade-missions>, (Last accessed 1 June 2020)

¹²⁹⁶ Simone Derix, 'Facing an "Emotional Crunch": State Visits as political Performances During the Cold War, in *German Politics and Society*, 25.2 (83) SPECIAL ISSUE: Western Integration, German Unification and the Cold War: The Ardenaur Era in Perspective, (2007) pp.117-139, p.117-8

elements of Welshness to market Wales abroad. These types of visits and entertaining are often disregarded in historiography but can be useful signifiers of identity.

Finally, this thesis has provided new aspects on the Welsh Dimension of the collapse of the Conservative Party leading up to 1997. Wales and the Blue Dragons were on the periphery of the party by the 1990s, hammered by the legacy of Thatcherism in parts of Wales such as the Valleys and mired in the scandals infusing the British Conservative Party. This happened with Roberts' distaste of the new generation of Conservative MPs in the 1990s, that he did not much care for and who had little regard for the values of those who came before. Arguably too, as a Blue Dragon Wyn Roberts was a rare breed of Conservative, but the repeated attacks from Westminster at the local level in Wales, which led to the fall of the party on Wales, seemed also to be an attack on the Welshness of Wyn Roberts, mitigating against the emergence of new Blue Dragons during the 1990s. However, recently the Conservatives attained 14 seats in Wales the 2019 general election,¹²⁹⁷ with this high suggesting in part that the current generation of Conservatives have relearned the meaning of the Welsh dimension so beloved by Wyn Roberts.

Limitations.

Though there are many significant findings in this thesis, it is important to note some of the limitations which have cropped up during the researching and writing. A first limitation of this study is that there were other Blue Dragons who identified as both Welsh and Conservative. Politicians such as Geraint Morgan, and several other junior ministers could also fit into the descriptors as a Blue Dragon during the same period as Roberts. Whilst it is possibly a limitation to focus only on one person as in this study, the Blue Dragon template provides an opportunity to examine other Welsh Conservatives from a similar perspective.

Second, is the limited range of primary sources available finding sources on any aspect of Conservatism in or the Welsh Conservative Party in Wales is difficult. Unlike the Labour Party and Plaid Cymru who have defined archives in the National Library of Wales, Conservative collections are more haphazard and disparate. This is due to a varied mixture of problems including incomplete record keeping, the destruction of said sources, or a lack of

¹²⁹⁷ Ruth Mosalski & Will Hayword, 'All the constituency results for Wales in the general Election 2019,' in *Wales Online*, 13 December 2019

deposited records due to the nature of Conservatism in Wales and the absence of momentum in forming a Welsh archive for the party. This is where the diaries of Wyn Roberts come into their own as a most valuable source detailing near every act that was done under the Conservative governments in Roberts' years in the House of Commons between 1970-1997. This is the first academic work to make such a large-scale use of Wyn Roberts diaries, and there are few sources which can be utilised for comparison.

Third, is the creation of a theoretical framework, the notion of the Blue Dragon is taken from a similar ideological split within the Labour party, aptly if not subtly named the Red Dragon/Red Flag split. As has been stated there is only a finite amount of academic works which deal with the issues of either Welsh Conservatism or a Welsh Conservatives, and to develop the Blue Dragon paradigm would also involve exploring Conservative unionism in Wales (or the Blue Flag), which was beyond the scope of this study. In answering the research questions, the analysis used has generated several more questions that could also be answered in future studies.

Further research is certainly possible, at first, on the life of Wyn Roberts. The he chapters within only cover his most wide-ranging policies, though they were not the only policy areas that Roberts was involved in. Each chapter of has examined a particular theme, be it Roads, Global Wales, or the Welsh language, and each one is in the process of being turned into an article for publication. This work itself can be expanded to explore Roberts's position on some of the defining Thatcherite policies of the 1980s, such as the Miners' Strike, and privatisation. Indeed, the wealth of topics that could be covered can be deduced from chapters that had to be cut from this thesis due to lack of space: these include ones on, Health, Housing, Tourism, and on the heritage sector. Roberts was, for example, involved in the creation of CADW to preserve Wales's historic environment, a measure in tune with his conservatism and his Welshness. Additionally, since the Welsh economy was transformed in this period, from an industrial one to a global one, it also became even more dependent on tourism. Roberts was involved with the Welsh Tourist Board, which in 1987 saw 12mn tourists in Wales which generated £600mn for the Welsh Economy. Tourism in an area of

Welsh history that is generally understudied, though remains an important part of modern identity, and one that dovetails effectively with the Blue Dragon approach.¹²⁹⁸

There is also a foundation here on which to diversify into a more popular biography of Wyn Roberts which could reach a broader audience. The notion of the Blue Dragon could also be further developed to include other prominent Welsh Conservatives of the generation, Nicholas Crickhowell, or Geraint Morgan to name just a few.

Research Output.

There have been several potential impacts from the research conducted thus far. Several miniature publications which examine certain aspects covered so far include two short articles for the *1884* journal published in house at Bangor University. The first of these examines the development of the A55 in North Wales, and the many legacies of such a road on the nation and was published in the third issue of the journal. The second article discusses the notion of the Blue Dragon within Wales and the Conservative party and will be available in the fourth issue of *1884*. These are just two aspects which could be considered, and each chapter has a theme which could be further explored in relation to the Conservative Party in Wales and Welsh historiography.

In addition to the numerous smaller publications for *1884*, the framework of this has been applied regarding the biographical aspects to create an audio biography of the first Welsh Conservative Secretary of State at the Welsh Office Peter Thomas or Lord Thomas of Gwydir for the Welsh Political Icons series now available as a podcast.¹²⁹⁹ This has since been made available in both audio and print on the Conservative News Site Gwydir,¹³⁰⁰ Peter Thomas' namesake as the Lord Thomas of Gwydir. This twenty-minute biography simply explored the life of Peter Thomas and assessed his impact upon Wales. This is yet another area which could be a future avenue of research as was discussed in the introduction, there is an abject

¹²⁹⁸ Susan Pitchford & Jafar Jafari, *Identity Tourism: Imaging and Imagining the Nation*, (Bingley, 2008)

¹²⁹⁹ Available on ListenNotes, Welsh Political Icons page, https://www.listennotes.com/podcasts/welsh-political-icons-welsh-political-icons-elFdpI_tqOW/ (Last accessed 29 November 2021)

¹³⁰⁰ Matthew Day, 'Lord Thomas of Gwydir: A Welsh Political Icon', Available on, <https://gwydir.wales/2020/10/24/baron-thomas-of-gwydir-a-welsh-political-icon/> (Last accessed 5 January 2021)

lack of biographies on Welsh Conservatives and is there a better starting point than the first Conservative Secretary of State for Wales, who can also be dissected from a Blue Dragon aspect. Furthermore, a second piece has also been written for Welsh Political Icons, on the Welsh Secretary of State for Wales between 2016-2019 Alun Cairns,¹³⁰¹ which in time could become another future avenue for research.

Furthermore, the issue of Welsh Conservatism remains so understudied within Wales, one of the reasons for this is the direct lack of any body to research, promote and discuss the value of such a topic within Wales. In the introduction of this thesis, it is mentioned that even the Liberal Party had more Welsh political heroes attributable to it despite it consistently being either third or fourth in Welsh national and local elections. The same holds true for the research of it, for even a Welsh Liberal Historical Society exists to promote research into and on the Liberal Party in Wales which is understandable given it used to retain status as the first party in Wales in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Therefore, the author has been involved in helping to establish a Welsh Conservative Historical Society to ascertain why the party has been so overlooked in the history of Wales, and to promote research into the history of the party in Wales. Direct implications of this are, first that the research conducted was utilised in an academic roundtable event in January 2021 on why the party and Welsh Conservatism has been so overlooked in the historiography of Wales.¹³⁰²

In fact, the Blue Dragon in the future can be applied to the current generation of Welsh Conservatives, since 2019 saw the party return 14 seats within Wales. For the first time ever, this election returned not one but three Welsh Conservative women, these included Sarah Atherton in Wrexham, Virginia Crosbie for Ynys Mon, and Fay Jones¹³⁰³ of Brecon and Radnorshire. Since women's history is an area often understudied in conjunction with Conservative history, it is only logical that future works which examine Welsh Conservatism include an examination of these women MPs. However, their statuses as Blue Dragons would be highly contestable given that they are not the same generation as Wyn Roberts, and their Welsh roots are not as certain. However, the role of Conservative women of his period can

¹³⁰¹ Matthew Day, 'Alun Cairns,' Welsh Political Icons, 18th June 2021.

¹³⁰² Sam Blaxland (chair), Matthew Day, David Melding AM, 'Our Forgotten Story' Virtual Academic Roundtable, Welsh Conservative Historical Society, 28th January 2021

¹³⁰³ Fay Jones is the daughter of Gwilym Jones, another Welsh Conservative MP at the Welsh Office between 1983-97.

also be considered, such as the role of Roberts's wife Enid Roberts, since political wives were usually instrumental in the local re-election campaigns. Given it being a historical lacuna, the complete and utter lack of biographies which deal with Welsh Conservatives, this type of research highlights there are many other people who are integral to the making of modern Wales, and this author in future is interested in developing a study of Conservative women in north Wales who overlap with the Blue Dragon imagery, such as Beata Brookes, who's papers are held in the National Library of Wales.

As has been demonstrated in this thesis, Wyn Roberts was involved in nearly every aspect of Welsh policymaking during his political career. His impetus is especially demonstrable in north Wales, which was his birthplace, the location of his constituency and host to the A55, a road in which the development was a key priority to him. Though in the final years of his diary Wyn Roberts was less than optimistic about the state of the party nationally in Britain, one thing is certain is that the future study of Welsh Conservatism has never looked clearer. Any historical research which deals with post-1970 Wales in the realm of politics, language, or media that does not include the role and impetus of Wyn Roberts, Welsh Conservatism or, indeed the Blue Dragon, is potentially incomplete and poorer for it.

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