

When I submitted my dissertation proposal, I was not completely happy with the title. I had intended to revisit it at some point with a view to changing it to something more meaningful. When I tried to do this, it highlighted several issues which originated from the way that I had stated the research question. Firstly, the comparison between the experiences of the people who were evicted from Mynydd Epynt in 1939, to people from outside of Wales who suffered the same fate was too broad ¹. It would need a level of research outside the scope of the dissertation, and it is doubtful that it would yield a result commensurate with the effort required. Therefore, the scope needed to be reduced and clearly defined. The second part of the research question should ask what was the cultural and linguistic impact of the evictions on the Epynt community and was there an injustice done to the people similar to what happened at Capel Celyn in 1965, thus making it an event of historic national importance to Wales ². In the initial meeting with my dissertation supervisor, we discussed these points helping me better define the scope of the first part of the research question, and to be able to articulate what I was trying to say in the second part of the question. The revised research question is, 'Were the people of Mynydd Epynt treated fairly when compared to a sample of their English contemporaries and what was the cultural and linguistic impact of the evictions'. The new working title of the dissertation is, *Mynydd Epynt as an Event of Historic Welsh National Importance: A Re-evaluation of the 1939 Clearance*.

The meeting also helped me to clearly see that different research methodologies will be needed to meet the two distinct types of inputs required to answer the research question and write the dissertation. Quantitative methods can be used for the first part of the question to compare topics such as notice period given to residents, compensation offered, assistance provided with relocation etc. To provide a representative sample of similar World War II evictions for comparison with Epynt, the following villages have been identified:

- Imber, Wiltshire ³
- Lulworth, Dorset
- Tyneham, Dorset ⁴
- The combined villages of West Tofts, Sturston, Langford, Stanford, Buckenham Tofts and Tottington, Norfolk ⁵

A combination of both Quantitative and Qualitative methods will be used for the second part of the research question. It is well documented that the area was populated by a predominantly Welsh-speaking community who actively engaged in social, religious and cultural events in the Welsh language. These records will be used to collate quantitative data. Qualitative methods, which require prior ethics approval by University of Wales Trinity St Davids, will be used to confirm the quantitative

¹ Herbert, Hughes, 'An Uprooted Community: A History of Epynt', (Y Lofa Cyf., 1997), pp.85-109

² Wyn, Thomas, 'Tryweryn: A New Dawn?', (Y Lofa, 2023), pp. 16-47

³ Rex, Sawyer, 'Little Imber on the Down', (Hobnut Press, 2001), p. 105

⁴ Patrick, Wright, 'The Village That Died for England', (Faber & Faber, 1995), pp. 243-271

⁵ Conal, O'Donnell, 'Breckland Exodus-The Forced Evacuation of the Norfolk Battle Area 1942 -Part 1' BBC Home, 15 October 2014
<<https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/62/a3258362.shtml>> [accessed 27 November 2025]

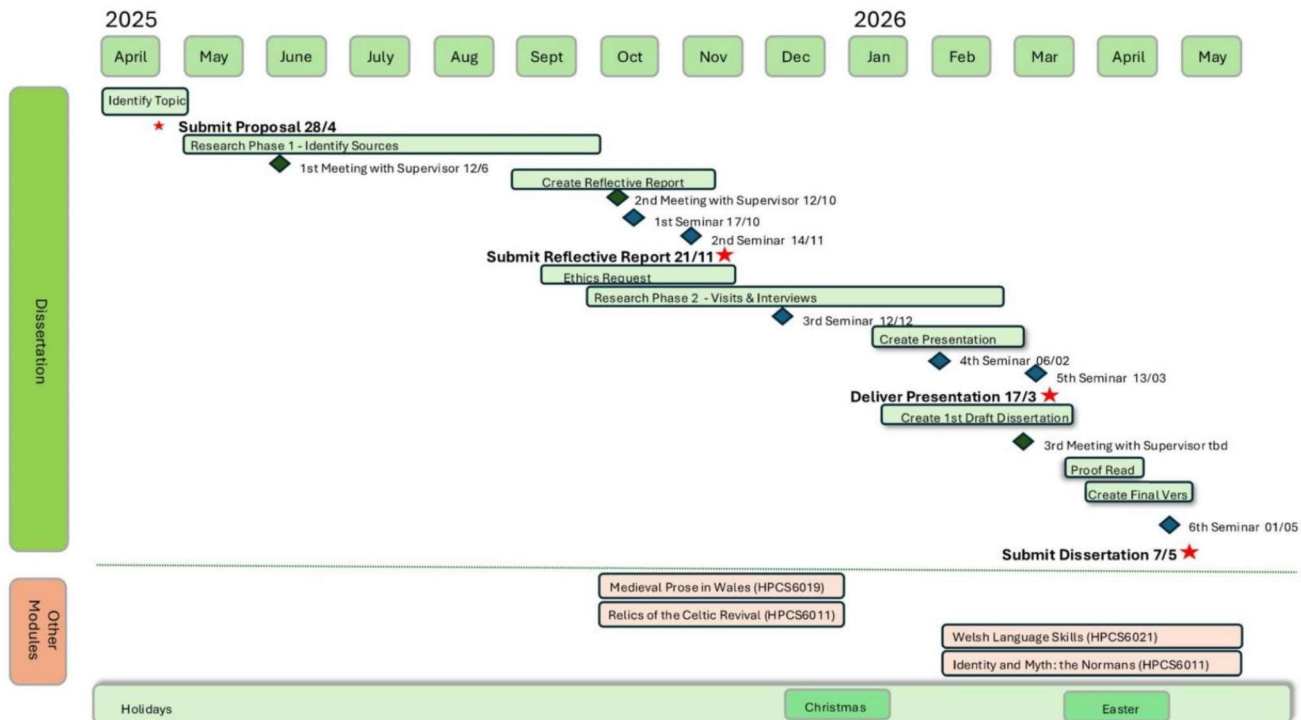
research findings and to collate information regarding the cultural and linguistic impact that leaving Mynydd Epynt had on those evicted and their descendants. This will most likely take the form of questionnaires and face-to-face interviews, all of which will be strictly governed by the University Ethics policy.

As I stated in the original proposal, there is a limited amount of published literature that documents the events surrounding the clearance at Epynt. Whilst some is a good secondary source of information, it is often written by people directly or indirectly linked to the communities and therefore needs to be treated with care, and all facts cross-checked where possible due to the possibility of bias. This also is the same situation for the other villages listed for comparison above. Likewise, there is little or no scholarship which speaks directly to the evictions, but some communities are mentioned in articles and dissertations related to World War II, the UK Defence Estate or local/national politics which provides additional referenced material. Primary sources are more difficult to locate but I have been able to find some relevant recorded interviews of people who lived on Epynt as children; newspaper articles; memoirs both online and in print. Archival records are more difficult to access for geographical reasons and can be unhelpfully catalogued as 'a box' or a 'packet' of related material. Given that such documents were created and stored under war-time conditions, it is only to be expected that they may be incomplete.

Despite the disparate nature of the sources, I have been able to come to some preliminary conclusions which appear indicates similar patterns in the way that the evictions were carried out across all the communities included in the scope of this dissertation. They were all given a very short notice period to leave their properties and there is a common story told by those who were displaced that they believed that they would be able to return to their homes when the war ended. This may have been wishful thinking but in the case of one village there seem to be some proof they received an undertaking from the MoD that this would be the case. It is too early in my research to say if there was a comparable level of compensation paid across all the communities, but it is evident that the UK Government very quickly put in place war-time legislation which enabled them to rapidly push through land purchases and evictions once they had identified sites suitable for the everchanging MoD requirements.

On reflection, I can say that I now know a lot more about World War II MoD evictions, and the way in which they were carried out, than I knew when I first submitted the dissertation proposal. This knowledge had come from my own extensive research and the desire to know if the people of Epynt were treated fairly or not. I am not yet at the point where I can draw any conclusions. This journey has been made more personal because I had the opportunity in the summer to join with the families descended from the evictees as they commemorated the 85th anniversary of the Epynt clearance. The sense of sadness that they carry from losing their heritage is still very raw. If I can, in some small way, help those people by undertaking this research I will be very proud of what I have achieved.

Dissertation Timeline



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