

#### 5.4 WALES (15C to the present)

Native Welsh resentment at English rule was not silenced by the punitive laws of the 15C, subsequent to the rebellion of Owain Glyndŵr, but rather the contrary. However, the anti-English prophecies of the poets foretelling the victory of the Welsh against their age-old foes the English seemed to have been fulfilled when Henry Tudor (a descendant of the prominent North-Welsh Tudyr family) took the English throne at Bosworth in 1485 (although his branch of the family no longer spoke Welsh). Under a centralising push aimed at other parts of the British domains of Henry VIII's, the 1536 act of union assimilated Wales to England politically and thereafter the Welsh were to remain politically quiescent until 20C.

Indeed, for nearly all the Welsh of the time, the incorporation of Wales into England was welcomed as a sign that Welshmen enjoyed equal civil status with the English which contrasted sharply with the ethnic penal laws of 15C. Furthermore, the division of much of Wales into well-nigh independent lordships had encouraged misdemeanours and brigandry. Equality of course was conditional on the use of the English language, but this demotion of the Welsh language in the juridical field weighed less than it would (in a later Wales where Welsh was under threat of extinction). Nevertheless, by the end of 16C some intellectuals were becoming worried at the way some Welshmen were abandoning Welsh for English (the progenitor of the later *Dic Siôn Dafydd* character) and an intellectual effort was begun to defend the language – if only culturally – by writing dictionaries, grammars and books. Welsh renaissance scholarship surfaced at the time in which the Protestant reformation was making headway in England. Despite some the general sluggishness of the Welsh in adopting new customs and signs that the Protestant religion was initially seen as “the English faith”, there never was an uprising for Catholic practices as was seen in northern England, Cornwall and later Ireland. An effective group of convinced Protestant reformers among the Welsh men of letters, notably William Salesbury, advanced the Protestant cause within Welsh society. In 1563 Elizabeth I passed an act of Parliament for the translation of the (Protestant) Bible into Welsh, this was begun by Salesbury who brought out the New Testament in 1567, but was only completed in a revised form in 1588 by William Morgan (subsequently made bishop). The translation of the Bible into Welsh with official support was to have far-reaching consequences for the future of Welsh. Acclaimed by every commentator as an admirable work of translation it provided a common literary language which did much for the esteem of the language (and it is not an exaggeration to connect the relative strength of Welsh amongst the contemporary Celtic languages with the fact that the written language was popularised by this act of tolerance in Elizabeth I's reign). Some Welsh Catholic counter-

reformers such as Morys Clynnog and Gruffudd Robert also published Welsh devotional and grammar books in 1560s Italy, but political circumstances were not to favour their aims.

John Penry, executed by Elizabeth in 1593 had been moved to become a dissenter as a result of the dearth of Welsh New Testaments printed in 1567, but he was based in central England and was hardly representative of the Welsh of his time. Up to 17C the Welsh conformed en masse to the Anglican Church, but it was the English Civil Wars of 1642–49 and especially the subsequent rule under the Puritan Oliver Cromwell 1649–60 which brought the Welsh into sustained contact with the dissenting Protestant tradition. Even before the victory of Cromwell and the Parliamentarians, dissenting Welsh preachers such as Walter Cradoc, Vavasor Powell and Morgan Llwyd moved in on a Wales which had been preponderantly royalist in its sympathies and began a process of conversion which was to have far-reaching consequences. The 1650s were to see dissenters enjoying state support with appointments as clergymen and as itinerant preachers (this was the period in which the old dissenters – Independents, Baptists, Presbyterians, Quakers – first appeared on the Welsh scene). The restoration of royalty in the person of Charles II in 1660 seems to have been welcomed by the majority of the Welsh population. It was now the turn of the dissenters to be discriminated against, if they held to their views they lost their positions in the Church, and though Nonconformist gatherings were sometimes tolerated they were subject to discrimination and persecution (hardest hit of all, the Welsh Quakers disappeared from Wales and migrated in sizable numbers to the British colonies in America, even establishing a short-lived Welsh colony in Pennsylvania in the 1680s and forming in 1700 a third of Pennsylvania's population of 20,000). In 1676 it is calculated that the Welsh population comprised only 5% Nonconformists, but they enjoyed the sympathy of a growing number of Anglican clergymen who had much in common with the evangelical emphasis and puritan outlook of the dissenters. In 1674 the Welsh Trust, founded in London, initially had as its aim to spread the gospel and the English language, but Stephen Hughes managed to persuade the Welsh Trust to work in Welsh which allowed for an explosion of Welsh publications between 1670–1700 (some 139 books). Catholics in 1676 comprised a mere 1% of the Welsh population, concentrated for the most part in Monmouthshire where they were afforded protection by the influential Raglan family. A Jesuit centre at Cwm in the Welsh part of Herefordshire existed between 1622–81 and when it was closed four of its priests were executed. Catholicism waned never to recover in this its last Welsh redoubt after the end of the Stuart dynasty made the return of official Catholicism improbable. There had been attempts to grant toleration to Nonconformists and Catholics under Charles II and James II, but the Catholic sympathies of these monarchs were resisted by the English Parliament, and indeed were to cause the downfall of James II in the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688. Under the Protestant William II, the Act of Toleration of 1688 permitted many Nonconformist preachers to register

their places of worship, provided they swore an oath of loyalty. It is from the 1690s that the first Nonconformist chapels (meeting-houses) date. Notwithstanding this improvement that did away with outright persecution, Nonconformists were still not allowed state office of any kind and were to remain disadvantaged citizens well into 19C.

The Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SPCK), founded in 1698, became the most important publisher of Anglican devotional literature in 18C. In Wales, Griffith Jones, the rector of Llanddowror, Carmarthenshire, became an enthusiastic member and in 1731 began his system of circulating schools whereby the reading of Welsh was learnt by what has been estimated as 200,000 persons before his death in 1761 (preoccupied with the modernisation of her adopted country, the Empress Catherine the Great of Russia commissioned a report on Jones's circulating schools in 1764, and they were again suggested as a model for the developing world by UNESCO in 1955). These schools were crucial in making the Welsh of 18C a population literate in their own language with a deep knowledge of the Christian scriptures. Enthusiastic about spreading the word of God, Jones preached in the open air and though he was censured by his bishop for this, in this way he managed to become forerunner of the Welsh Methodist Revival. The 1730s saw the beginning of the Welsh Methodist Revival. The revival was an evangelical movement within the Anglican Church which grew exponentially after the 1735 spiritual conversion of Howell Harris of Talgarth, Breconshire (the other names associated with the revival being Daniel Rowland and William Williams). In distinction to the English Methodists who followed John Wesley and who were later to establish branches in Wales, often in the wake of the industrial revolution, the Welsh Methodists were Calvinists and until their secession from the Anglican Church in 1811, they were to establish an almost parallel organisation with its own hierarchy organised in societies (*seiadau*) and its own chapels (meeting houses). The old dissenters had been strongest in South Wales and that is where the Methodist Revival had begun, but it was not long spreading to North Wales where it would almost monopolise Nonconformity. Griffith Jones's circulating schools were to continue after his death, but it is Thomas Charles, associated with Bala who after 1784 launched the Methodists' own circulating schools, but in 1787 he established the first Sunday school, which soon spread amongst the Calvinistic Methodists and all the other Welsh Nonconformist denominations. Charles did much to distribute Welsh Bibles amongst the population (it is to him that the young Mary Jones walked 25 miles in 1800 to acquire a Bible) and he also published an important biblical dictionary in 1805–11. The 18C Calvinistic Methodist Revival (as well as the appearance of the Wesleyan Methodists and the Unitarians), enthused old dissenting denominations such as the Independents (Congregationalists) and the Baptists, and the early 19C saw such a growth of Nonconformity that by the mid century the Welsh had become that "Nonconformist Nation" of late 19C. The

growth of Nonconformism was important in at least three ways: (1) its use of Welsh as a written as well as an oral medium helped Welsh people's national self-esteem; (2) despite being non-political its Wales-wide organisation nurtured Welsh self-awareness; and (3) it demonstrated practically how democratic organisations could work, which in an emancipating era when democratic organised movements were coming to the fore was to be vital in allowing the Welsh to adapt to the new industrial world. During 19C Welsh books and periodicals were published in hitherto unseen quantities, there was a labour newspaper *Tarian y Gweithiwr* ('The Worker's Shield') in the 1870s and a Welsh encyclopedia *Y Gwyddionadur Cymreig* published in 1854–79. The wide spread of literacy in Welsh-speaking society in 19C and all the beneficial spin-offs which that entailed puts Wales in stark contrast to the other Celtic countries, most especially Ireland and Brittany.

Another crucial feature of Welsh history was the increasing industrialisation of the south-east (most especially the counties of Glamorganshire, eastern Monmouthshire and western Carmarthenshire). It is iron-smelting which had been important initially in 18C and the smelteries spread along a narrow corridor of land extending from Llanelli in Carmarthenshire to Llanelli in Breconshire (corresponding in part to "the head of the valleys") so that by 1830 the iron-smelting town of Merthyr Tydfil was the biggest town in Wales. Here in 1831 the mostly Welsh-speaking industrial class rose against the masters but were put down by Scottish troops. By mid 19C, the emphasis had moved on towards coal and the South Wales valleys saw an exponential growth of population as people streamed to the new colliery towns which mushroomed all over the south. Initially the newly arrived population was mostly Welsh, but from the 1860s onwards as many were attracted from the adjoining western counties of England and the societal bilingualism which ensued along with the state's anti-Welsh policies ensured that a language shift occurred, starting in the eastern valleys but spreading westward decade by decade from valley to valley (thus, for example, there was a language shift to English in the Rhondda in 1920s, in the Neath valley in 1930s and in the Tawe valley in 1940s). Nevertheless, the percentage of Welsh speakers in Wales was still nearly 50% in 1901, but for most of 20C the language receded (37% in 1931, 29% in 1951, 21% in 1971, 19% in 1991) [Aitchison & Carter 2000: 42, 51, 90]. In 1901 Wales, of course, was a linguistically divided country with a Welsh-speaking west and an anglicised and anglicising east. The western counties which hovered around 90% in 1901 dropped to around 60% in 1991, due to immigration from England. The industrial south-east which had been considerably anglicised during 19C saw a more drastic decline of Welsh, Glamorganshire went from 43% in 1901 to 10% in 1991 [Aitchison & Carter 2000: 42, 90]. In spite of the division being more recent, Wales is linguistically divided – as much as Brittany or Scotland – between *Y Fro Gymraeg* ('the Welsh-speaking heartland') and anglicised Wales. The industrial area of south-east Wales –

known as ‘the Valleys’ – is different from both Welsh-speaking and anglicised Wales: here the memory of Welsh having recently been the language is made tangible by the fact that many people have at least a grandparent that spoke Welsh and concrete in the heavy Welsh-sounding accent. For the city people of Cardiff and Newport the people of the Valleys are still ‘Taffs’ (the pejorative English nickname for the Welsh, derived from the common Welsh personal-name *Dafydd*).

The Welsh cultural buoyancy of 19C was slow in developing a political identity. One of the first recognisable nationalists was the preacher Michael D. Jones, who was instrumental in inspiring the attempt at a Welsh colony free from English domination in Patagonia, Argentina. The story of Welsh Patagonia, first settled in 1865, is a fascinating one of a Welsh society founding a society in arid deserts and vertiginous Andean mountains, living alongside native Tehuelche Amerindians, and struggling for autonomy against Argentinian centralisation. For a period until the 1880s there was a largely self-governing Welsh political entity of 4,000 people, each person over 18 eligible to vote, education and all official business was in Welsh. Fearing Britain would use the Welsh colony as a pretext for seizing the southern tip of America, the Argentinian government never recognised it as a state and by 1896 with Spanish and Italian immigrants overtaking the Welsh settlers, Welsh was replaced by Spanish as the medium of educational instruction (immigration from Wales ceased completely after 1914 but to this a number of the older inhabitants have preserved Welsh alongside Spanish).

Whilst the Patagonian experiment was in full swing, the Welsh were opting for the Liberal party in struggling against their landlords. In 1868, in the first election that can be considered as representative they gave victory to the Liberals against the Conservatives (who represented the landlords). Up till 1918 Wales remained a staunchly Liberal country, unlike England which lurched back and forth between Liberalism and Conservatism. Welsh Liberalism was wedded to Nonconformity, and causes such as the tithes (the Welsh tithe war of the 1880s) and the disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Wales (achieved in 1920) were important points of contention as was the Welsh land war against. However, slowly but surely an element of nationalism crept into politics, the journalist Emrys ap Iwan was a lone voice in the 1880s, but his incisive criticism hit home among some Welsh-speaking Liberals. There had been, for a brief spell in the early 1890s, a wing of the Liberals called *Cymru Fydd* (‘Future Wales’), who advocated ‘home rule’ for Wales but this failed in a Wales which was content to support non-Conservative British parties, originally the Liberals, and increasingly the Labour movement. Success within Britain and the British Empire seemed enough for many. Despite the fact that Lloyd George, a Welsh speaker, and an ex-leader of the *Cymru Fydd* movement had become prime-minister in 1916, the jolt that was the 1914–18 war led some to question as never before

the logic of defending Wales through Britain-wide political parties. This discontent led to the formation of two nationalistic groups in 1924 which coalesced in 1925 as Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru (the Welsh National Party). Under its leader Saunders Lewis, Plaid Cymru, as it was later called, remained a small and ineffective political force into the 1960s, but its abandonment of a Welsh monolingual policy in 1930 and its less elitist image under Gwynfor Evans after 1945 prepared the ground for success. The genie came out of the bottle in 1966 when Gwynfor Evans was elected Member of Parliament in the Carmarthenshire by-election. Thereafter, in the next thirty years – despite some reversals – Plaid Cymru became the strongest political force in Welsh Wales. The devolution referendum of 1979 which saw many of the Labour politicians oppose was lost, but the intervening period of conservative rule under Margaret Thatcher and the Conservatives, made the benefits of devolution obvious to many Labour supporters so that the second devolution referendum of 1997 was won with a whisker of a majority through the support of Welsh Wales and the industrial valleys of South Wales.

The first para-terrorist bombs were placed in protest at the drowning of the Tryweryn valley in North Wales in 1962. The highly visible paramilitary Free Wales Army (FWA) made itself known from 1964 but was not much involved in placing bombs which were the actions of more shadowy figures who were later arrested (or killed as were the two who were about to place a bomb on Prince Charles's royal train route to his crowning as Prince of Wales in Caernarfon in 1969). In 1979, following the defeat of the devolution referendum a campaign of burning holiday homes owned by English people was begun, the campaign was carried out in the name of Meibion Glyndŵr ('The Sons of Glyndŵr') in allusion to the medieval Welsh prince who had fought for freedom (mysterious communiqués were sent, signed Rhys Gethin, who had been the original Glyndŵr's faithful lieutenant). The holiday home burnings died down in the late 1980s but recurred in the mid 1990s.

The year 1962 saw the foundation of Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg ('The Welsh Language Society') by Welsh students in Aberystwyth. Inspired by Saunders Lewis's pamphlet and radio broadcast *Tynged yr Iaith* ('The Fate of the Language') of that year and by Gandhi's non-violent resistance, they made it their business to complain about the lack of official provision for Welsh speakers. In the mid 1960s all official signs were in English only, Welsh place-names were signposted under their English versions, official forms for tax, vehicles, licences, car registration etc were in English only. Cymdeithas yr Iaith chose to campaign on particular issues and over the years extended their demands for Welsh education, radio and television. In 1970 a tendency called Adfer under Emyr Llywelyn argued for concentrating on the Welsh heartlands rather than dissipate the energy of the Welsh minority on Wales as a whole, this was a delicate issue and Adfer was expelled from Cymdeithas yr Iaith after which it slowly withered. Nevertheless Adfer

had pointed to the societal problems involved in halting the decline of Welsh and *Cymdeithas yr Iaith* slowly matured into a pressure group campaigning for housing and for job appointments that did not disadvantage Welsh speakers. *Cymdeithas yr Iaith* itself had lost its spark by the 1990s, mainly because its protests seemed to constitute a rite of passage that repeated the form if not the content of the popular protests of the 1960s and 1970s. It is true that once concessions had been made, official discrimination against Welsh was no longer as blatant as they had been, indeed some Welsh people co-opted into government schemes to support Welsh publicly stated that there was no longer any need to protest. A new organisation Cymuned '(Community)' came into being in 2001 and it seems to herald a new more methodical approach to protesting for the Welsh language.

Welsh-medium education has developed tremendously since 1945. Following the establishment of the first private Welsh-medium primary school in Aberystwyth in 1939, the first official Welsh-medium primary school was established in Llanelli in 1947 and these had grown to 41 by 1970. The first Welsh-medium secondary school was that of Glan-clwyd near Saint Asaph which opened in 1956, followed by others so that there existed 14 such schools by 1990. Outside Welsh departments where Welsh is usually the medium of teaching and some theological departments, teaching through Welsh has been expanded to include a restricted number of subjects since the 1960s (but only at the universities of Aberystwyth, of Bangor and Trinity College, Carmarthen). Most of the Welsh-medium schools were located in anglicised urban areas whilst strong Welsh-speaking areas tended to teach most subjects in English, though Welsh was otherwise used quite a lot informally and in school assemblies.

Welsh television developed in the 1960s (indeed a Welsh television company *Television Wales* had been set up in 1962 only to fold the following year) and Welsh programmes were broadcast on the state and commercial channels, but they were few and far between. Welsh radio had already been given a channel *Radio Cymru* in 1977 that proved itself very successful and the growing clamour for a Welsh television channel finally led the Conservative government to give Wales *Sianel Pedwar Cymru* (S4C) in 1982. The channel quickly found a niche, broadcasting some 5 hours daily in Welsh at peak times, and its resources has made it the envy of all the other Celtic nations (it is reported that S4C has ten times the financial resources of its Irish equivalent TG4). Recently S4C has bought into a satellite multiplex and now has *S4C Digidol* which broadcasts even more Welsh hours daily throughout the world.

The Welsh world has changed dramatically since the 1960s, Welsh-speaking areas are now almost half-English through immigration of English speakers. Rather than the protest that seemed characteristic of students up till the end of the 1970s it seems that young Welsh speakers are

availing themselves to the opportunity careers created by the greater official respect for Welsh, in schools, Welsh television and the newly-established Welsh Assembly in Cardiff.

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### Web Resources

- 'Cymuned'. At < <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cymuned> >
- 'Cymuned'. At < [http://cymuned.net/blogsaesneg/?page\\_id=21](http://cymuned.net/blogsaesneg/?page_id=21) >
- 'Welsh Language Society'. At < [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Welsh\\_Language\\_Society](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Welsh_Language_Society) >
- 'Welsh Language Society'.  
At < [http://cymdeithas.org/2004/05/31/what\\_is\\_cymdeithas\\_yr\\_iaith.html](http://cymdeithas.org/2004/05/31/what_is_cymdeithas_yr_iaith.html) >
- 'Welsh nationalism'. At < [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Welsh\\_nationalism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Welsh_nationalism) >

## 5.5 CORNWALL (11C to the present)

Following upon the Norman French conquest of England in late 11C, Cornwall was initially bestowed on a Breton lord, Briant son of the Count of Penthièvre, who through rebellion lost his lands in 1075. Replaced by the Norman, Robert Count of Mortain and then his son, Cornwall was awarded in 1135 by King Stephen to Briant's nephew, Alan, Earl of Richmond, though his capture in 1141 in the English civil war between Stephen and Matilda and subsequent return to Brittany, led Stephen to award Cornwall to Reginald de Dunstanville, an illegitimate son of Henry I. Reginald's conciliated himself with Matilda, and under her son Henry II was to rule Cornwall until 1175. Cornwall had by this time become an earldom as an institution and was subsequently to be closely associated to the English royal family. One can only wonder whether ethnic proximity played a part in naming Bretons as earls of Cornwall and whether this had a part to play in the transmission of tales of Arthur, and of Tristan and Isolde, who were connected with both

Brittany and Cornwall. Earl Richard in 13C had a castle built at Tintagel, presumably on the strength of Arthurian traditions and his enjoyment of the title of Holy Roman Emperor in 1257–72, although largely honorary, might also have had something to do with the spread of Arthurian tales in Germany. It is in 1337 that Edward III instituted Cornwall as a duchy with the duty of providing revenue for the heir to the English throne (continued in the present monarch's heir's titles being the Duke of Cornwall as well as the Prince of Wales, itself created in 1307). Many centuries later the Duchy became a series of estates, but even as late as the 1850s the Duchy's lawyers argued that Cornwall had like Wales been a separate kingdom and had every prerogative which the Crown enjoyed elsewhere in Britain. Another medieval institution (or linked institutions) particular to Cornwall was the Stannaries which regulated the important tin-mining industry. The Stannary system had evolved from ancient customary rights accorded miners (as in other parts of England and Europe) but contrary to other areas of 'free mining' it evolved in Cornwall to acquire an almost territorial independence following its charter in 1201. The privileges accorded tin miners can be compared to the status of burgesses in chartered boroughs except that the nature of mining and exploration gave them these particular rights all over Cornwall. Piracy from Cornish ports against all shipping – whether Breton, Spanish, French, German or English – also occurred in late medieval times when the eastern Cornish ports and the 'Cinque Ports' of south-eastern England were waging a private war. A Breton fleet raided Fowey in 1457. More peaceful intercourse is however attested both directly in the documentation, in family names such as Tangye, Harvey, Britton, and more indirectly in the existence of some examples of Breton Gothic ecclesiastical architecture. As late as 1537, some Cornish pilgrims attended a saint's day at Tréguier in Brittany.

The status of Cornwall was thus particular within the medieval kingdom of England and this particularity rested upon the regularly commented ethnic difference between Cornish and the English. But there are signs that anglicisation was occurring during the later Middle Ages, John de Trevisa (†1402, probably from east Cornwall), a scholar educated at Oxford who was an early apologist and enthusiast for the use of English rather than French or Latin, was also very touchy about Cornwall not being accounted part of England. Despite an undoubted westwardly retreat in later medieval times, the Cornish (or Welsh as they still sometimes called as late as 14C) still spoke their language over rather more than the western half of the peninsula up to 16C. The collegiate church of Glasney (fd.1265) near Falmouth was from late 14C a centre of a literary Middle Cornish tradition which produced lengthy miracle plays that were to be played in the open air. One of these plays, *Beunans Meriasek* ('The Life of Saint Meriasek') composed about 1500 seems to have carried a subversive undertone since the local saint quarrels with a wicked king

named Tewdar (which can only have been understood as a reference to Henry *Tudor*) who had just recently brutally crushed a Cornish rebellion.

The Cornish rebellion of 1497 which began in the western parishes under Michael Joseph an Gof, a local blacksmith, was a serious affair. It spread throughout Cornwall attracting many of the gentry. Cornish grievances seem to have been largely economic and precipitated by the heavy taxation demanded by Henry VII for a war to punish the Scots who were supporting the pretender to the English throne, Perkin Warbeck. The Cornish army crossed the Tamar river and advanced as far as Blackheath on the outskirts of London where they were roundly defeated. Inspired by the Cornishmen's readiness to rebellion, Perkin Warbeck, landed in Cornwall later that same year raised another Cornish army which moved east as far as Somerset before things went awry and Warbeck abandoned his army and was captured by Henry VII's troops. This had constituted the most dangerous threat to Henry VII during his reign yet after having executed the leaders he was sparing of the rebellion's followers because of their "rustic simplicity" and opted to fine the rebels and a Charter of Pardon was proclaimed in 1508. This charter confirmed the power of the Stannary Parliament to disallow any legislation by the King or the Duke that was prejudicial to Cornish miners. Another issue was soon to stoke the ire of the Cornish, the separation of England from the Catholic Church. In 1539 there was talk of establishing a Cornish diocese but this came to nought and in 1548 after Henry VIII's death, there was a Protestant push under Edward VI which threatened interference with the devotional images kept in churches (in Cornwall a commissioner trying to enforce this law in Helston was killed by an angry mob but this insurrection was immediately put down). The Act of Uniformity of 1549 brought about the English-language *Book of Common Prayer* led to disturbances all over Cornwall and a Cornish army marched across the Tamar and besieged Exeter (it should be pointed out that they were joined by Devon tinnners). Their demands were for the return of the old liturgy and the inappropriateness of an English service for a country in which many did not speak the language. The siege was broken by the King's troops under Lord Grey and a bloody retribution was meted out to the rebels including many clergymen. The enforcement of an English Protestant settlement greatly disadvantaged the Cornish language and no attempt was made to provide devotional material in Cornish. However, it would seem that Catholicism and the Cornish language were associated. In Queen Mary's reign a certain John Tregear translated the *Homilies* of Bishop Bonner of London (the manuscript which was a poor translation was only rediscovered in 1949), the principal connoisseur of the language was in 1590 said to be a Catholic priest in Saint Columb Major and another Catholic priest, Richard Pendrea, preached in Cornish before King Phillip of Spain in 1600. Furthermore, the incorporation of Brittany into France during 16C and the enmity and distrust between England and France made the once easy contacts with Brittany more difficult than ever (it must be

remembered that Cornish and Breton were largely mutually comprehensible during all this period, at least one authority arguing that Cornish can be viewed as a dialect of Breton).

By mid 16C England was on a collision course with Spain and its empire, Cornish privateers took a leading part in the sea war that was not interrupted even when there was an official peace between the two countries. The situation worsened in the last decades of the century (the Spanish Armada of 1588, Spanish occupation of Brittany in 1590 as part of the French religious wars) and a Spanish raid and set fire to the ports of Mousehole, Newlyn and Penzance in 1595. The position of Cornwall was rapidly changing from being at ‘the ends of the ends of the earth’ to paraphrase a 14C description, it now became a strategic staging post for the New World and the burgeoning port of Falmouth became the main maritime centre.

The opening of the English Civil Wars in 1642 saw Cornwall a staunchly royalist bastion (all the more so because it was dominated by the Duchy), in 1644 a Parliamentary army of 7,000 was reduced to 1,000 men in the ‘Cornish mousetrap’ but in 1646 the royalist forces surrendered to Parliament (though the Scilly islands survived as a base for royalist privateers until 1651). The Parliamentarians under Cromwell enforced strict puritanism depriving clerics from their livings, the Stannary Parliament was abolished and the high representation of members of Parliamentary deputies was reduced from forty-four to twelve. There was a rebellion in 1648, again in the Lizard peninsula, but it was contained locally. The restoration of the monarchy in 1660 did away with all the developments of the interregnum and Cornwall settled down peacefully. The peace was only broken when Jonathan Trelawny, a Cornish royalist bishop refused to ratify Catholic King James II’s 1687 declaration of indulgence (toleration) to Catholics and Protestant Dissenters, as a result of which he was imprisoned in the Tower of London, but the case against him and the other six bishops failed as they were acquitted by the jury and this began the run of events that led to ‘the Glorious Revolution’ which deposed James II. Due to the composition in 1820 of ‘Trelawny’ by R. S. Hawker – which became a popular unofficial Cornish ‘national’ anthem, with Cornish rugby supporters known as ‘Trelawny’s army’ – Bishop Trelawny’s conservative stand has been romantically linked (‘Here’s twenty thousand Cornishmen will know the reason why’) to Cornish resistance to central authority.

It is in 17C that Cornish collapsed as a spoken language over much of west Cornwall, by 1700 it was spoken only in the extremities of Lizard and West Penwith. By all accounts transmission of the language to children had ceased in the 1710s, so that those who spoke the language in late 18C were indeed the last native speakers. Since late 18C it has been asserted that an old woman Dolly Pentreath of Mousehole, who died in 1777, was the last speaker (a memorial being erected to her on this account by the celebrated linguist Louis-Lucien Bonaparte in 1860), though undoubtedly others were still able to speak the language after her death (namely William Bodinar

of the same village who died in 1794). By 1800 the language was to all intents and purposes finished. The imminent disappearance of Cornish was to attract intellectual attention of a number of local Cornishmen such as the Boson family, Thomas Tonkin and William Gwavas. These men set about to collect as much as they could of the disappearing language and their work was supplemented by a visit of the Welsh Oxford scholar Edward Lhuyd and his assistants in 1700. The language survived in words preserved in the English dialect of west Cornwall of 20C which also displayed a peculiar intonation. But from 19C onwards Cornish as a living language was but a faint memory.

Despite the loss of Cornish, the industrialisation of western Cornwall in 18C and the establishment of nonconformist Wesleyan Methodism as the dominant religion reconfirmed Cornwall's distinct identity from the rest of south-western England by the early 1800s. Except in antiquarian circles, consciousness of a non-English identity was vague but began permeating larger layers of society, especially after the publishing of *Netherton's Cornish Almanac* from Truro in the 1850s wherein the Cornish language was given a prominent place. With growing political democratisation in late 19C, speakers at public meetings invariably addressed the audience as Cornishmen and Bernard Deacon (2003) talks of "an almost subterranean sense of Cornwall being 'not of England'."

The industrial development of Cornish society veered it not only to Nonconformism, but also to Liberalism, and by the 1880s the Liberal party was the British political party that accepted 'home rule' for Ireland, a policy that inspired the Welsh Liberals of Cymru Fydd but found no echo of substance in Cornwall. Indeed, Cornwall's existence as a country was not recognised in any way. Officially Cornwall was a *county* not a *country*, and the 1901 Pan-Celtic congress held in Dublin postponed a decision to accept Cornwall as a member country because of serious doubts as to whether it was any longer Celtic. It took the revivalist Henry Jenner's Cornish-language address to convince the next Pan-Celtic congress of Caernarfon (1904) that Cornwall was Celtic. The language movement which began with the setting up of Cowethas Kelto-Kernuak ('The Celtic-Cornish Society') under Jenner before 1914 purposely steered clear of politics and this was also the view of Robert Morton Nance the leading revivalist of the inter-war period. The revivalist movement was antiquarian and nostalgic of a romanticised pre-industrial past as can be readily imagined of the bardic Gorsyth Kernow established in 1928 on the pattern of the Welsh and Breton druidic assemblies. On the bardic ceremony of 1933, Jack Clemo commented: "I know of no ceremony or function which makes one forget so completely the present world muddle." It is only with the growing regional feeling following the end of the 1914–18 war that enabled a disgruntled younger generation of Cornish exiles in London involved in the revivalist movement to establish in 1932 the first nationalist grouping Tyr ha Tavas ('Land and Language'). Though

mainly cultural in orientation, Tyr ha Tavas as a pressure group began impinging on political issues such as ‘Cornwall for the Cornish’ and in 1940 John Legonna, a member, refused to enlist in the armed forces unless Cornwall were granted self-government. Tyr ha Tavas lost its momentum and was replaced for a while by the Young Cornwall Movement founded by Cornish students in Oxford in 1943 which itself did not develop much. In 1951, following the 1950 visit of the Celtic Congress to Truro, Helena Charles, an Oxford graduate, established Mebyon Kernow (‘Sons of Cornwall’). Mebyon Kernow (MK) which was part pressure-group part political party was to prove long-lasting grew slowly and by the later 1960s was establishing branches all over Cornwall and beginning to elect local councillors. The confusion as to whether it was a pressure-group or a political party grew and led to the split in 1969 of the Cornish National Party (CNP) by members who wanted MK to proclaim itself opposed to the Liberal and other British parties. This first CNP faded within a few years with its members returning to the fold of MK which had fought its first parliamentary election in 1970 in the Falmouth-Camborne constituency. In 1975 a second CNP split was initiated which contested elections until 1985, but its radicalism, including a greenshirt youth section, did not curry favour amongst the Cornish body politic. The more radical Cornish nationalism was monopolised by the 1974 revival of the medieval Cornish Duchy’s Stannary Parliament following a pay dispute in china-clay works. In 1977 the Plaid Cymru parliamentary deputy Dafydd Wigley in Parliament asked the Attorney General for England and Wales if the enactments of the Charter of Pardon of 1508 had been rescinded to which he received the reply that a stannator’s right to veto Westminster legislation had never been formally withdrawn. The Stannary Parliament joined the Cornish nationalist ranks as an alternative constitutional authority for Cornwall and developed into a radical pressure group which excelled in attention-grabbing examples of direct action most noticeably during its challenge of the unpopular poll tax of 1991. MK developed into a stronger party and despite not always contesting parliamentary elections nevertheless in 1993 fielded a candidate in every district constituency for the first time. In the 2001 election the two MK constituency candidates achieved just over 2% of the votes. Saint Piran’s flag – which was still seen as Mebyon Kernow’s flag in the 1970s – had been universally adopted and was even flown by Cornwall County Council.

Pictures showing the formation of a Free Cornish Army in 1974 turned out to be a farce by students of Plymouth Polytechnic, but in 1980 a bomb exploded at Saint Austell courthouse and a shadowy group called An Gof 1980 (named after the leader of the 1497 Cornish rebellion) claimed responsibility. An Gof 1980 also sent threatening phone-calls to members of MK whom they accused of being “Trotskyists” before disappearing after 1981 save for periodical reappearances by – probably – unconnected people who intended to cause a sensation. Apart from

being in many places a depressed post-industrial society, Cornwall whose charms as a holiday resort has attracted visitors in their thousands suffers from one of the highest percentages of second-home ownerships (and thus inflated house prices) in Britain. Seemingly reformed in 2007, An Gof began a campaign of defacing English flags (favoured by England football fans) as well as sending threatening letters to English celebrity chefs Rick Stein and Jamie Oliver whom they blamed for attracting tourists (or emmets ‘ants’ as they are disparagingly called in Cornish-English) to Cornwall.

Coupled with the official English county status of Cornwall and the non-existence of the ‘native’ language it is hardly surprising that Cornish was not officially recognised. Nevertheless, with the general acceptance of rights for minority national languages, Cornish began in the late 1990s to be accepted by the British government on a similar footing to Welsh, Scottish Gaelic and Irish. In 1999 the Office of National Statistics accepted Cornish as a distinct ethnic group and in 2003 the government gave its blessing to Cornish to be treated as an official minority language. The establishment of Cornwall Against the English Rose (CATER) in 1987 had set about defacing the rose symbol on ‘English’ Heritage signs a campaign which intensified in the late 1990s. In 2000 the Cornish Stannary Parliament ‘confiscated’ English heritage signs and held them safely hidden as “evidence of English cultural aggression in Cornwall”.

In 1933 Tyr ha Tavas first asked that Cornish be made an optional subject in the schools of the county and the first attempt to teach children were made by E. G. R. Hooper in a private school in Camborne. Such Cornish lessons were the object of television interest in the early 1960s but were still only allowed outside normal school hours. By 2000 some twelve primary schools taught Cornish and three secondary schools. One of MK’s first campaigns was to campaign for a Cornish university which – despite the setting up of the Institute of Cornish Studies in 1970 under Exeter University at Redruth – is only now being realised for the Combined Universities in Cornwall at the Tremough campus near Falmouth which opened in 2004. R. Morton Nance (1873–1959) had established the revived form of Cornish in the 1920s (Unified Cornish) and its establishment had been strengthened by the setting up in 1967 of the Cornish Language Board (CLB) chiefly concerned in organising examinations previously held on behalf of the Gorseth of the Cornish bards. Unfortunately the adoption of a new orthography by the CLB in 1987 (Kemmyn) led to acrimonious dissension and a splitting of the Cornish revivalists along orthographical schools supported by the following organisations: Teere ha Tavas (fd.1988) for Late/Modern Cornish and Agan Tavas (fd.1990) to defend Unified Cornish (with an adaptation of Unified Cornish devised by Nicholas Williams in 1995). Adult language classes which numbered some 38 by 2000 were divided between: 18 (Kemmyn), 11 (Late/Modern), 9 (Unified).

The first radio broadcast was in 1935 but was rather a one-off. Contemporary a local radio plays a 15-minute Cornish/bilingual programme each week but there are no television broadcasts in Cornish (though some non-professional programmes have been filmed on a private initiative).

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## 5.6 WESTERN BRITTANY (18C to the present)

From the time of the French Revolution of 1789 onwards, Brittany ceased to possess any formal political distinctness from the rest of France, but was divided like the rest of the French state into départements (roughly comparable to counties). The bond between the Breton language and the pre-revolutionary world was palpable well into 20C when the still usual equivalents in Breton to *La Fête Nationale* (14th of July national day) was *Gouel ar Republik* ('The Republic's day'), distance was measured in *leo* ('league') and not in *kilometre*, money denomination was still *lur* (F. *livre* 'pound') and not *franc*, a parish was a still *parroz* and not a *commune*, and the smallest urban settlement – even if it was smaller than a parish centre – was a *kêr* 'town' if it had been an

administrative centre during the royalist period preceding the revolution. The Catholicism of western Brittany was shielded from the irreligious and profane French publications of 18C by the lack of comprehension of that language by the Breton monoglot nature of the vast majority of the western Breton population of the time. Little wonder that French revolutionaries and progressives could state that “superstition speaks Breton” (*la superstition parle ... bas-breton*).

For a very short period Breton was used in public notices, but soon, under all the subsequent French constitutions of 19C (the republic, the empire, the kingdom etc) Breton was proscribed from enjoying any official recognition. The departmental prefects – the representatives of the central government – did not hide their willingness to “destroy the Breton language” and teachers were reminded that they should “kill the Breton language”. And since the population adhered overwhelmingly to the Catholic Church, the only instruction it received in written Breton was the most basic preparation to pass the catechism at the age of fourteen. The propagandistic maxim “Breton and the [Catholic] Faith are siblings in Brittany” (*Ar brezoneg hag ar feiz zo breur ha c’hoar e Breiz*) was not a good augury for a Church which was on the whole content to control a subservient and submissive flock. Some Protestant missions from Wales from the 1820s onwards “to save their lost countrymen” only managed to convert peripheral poor communities of fishermen or miners. In France as well as in the frenchified Breton towns, the Breton language gained the reputation of being a hand-maid for conservatism.

Despite all the disadvantages, there were signs that modern ideas and fashions were being applied to Breton. In his 1839 *Barzaz Breiz*, a young Breton nobleman Hersart de la Villemarqué, published embellished romanticised versions of folk-songs he had collected and for the first time ever gave Breton a little of the literary cachet accorded Macpherson’s Ossianic poems in Scotland. Literary societies were set up and tentative meetings with Welsh scholars and antiquarians led in 1870 to the first organised petition asking for Breton to be taught in the otherwise French-only education system. The convulsion of French national chauvinism that followed the 1871 defeat of France by Prussia made concessions to other languages within France less likely and the 1880 education law instituted a compulsory and free schooling in every locality in Brittany. Soon frenchification advanced apace as every Breton was forced to learn French only and if they spoke Breton was punished by the wearing of a symbol (often a wooden clog hung around the neck). This was the time of the penetration of the railways into Brittany and of general conscription into the army and

The acceleration of frenchification in this period catalysed the appearance of individuals prepared to defend Breton. In 1898, the Union Régionaliste Bretonne (URB) was founded, the first Breton political party or pressure group. Between 1902–05, along with severe measures including the appropriation of religious houses from the Catholic Church, the French government

decided to forbid the Catholic Church to use Breton in their schools, for the catechism and even for preaching (the separation of Church and State in 1905 saw the end of this difficult period for Breton in the Church). In 1911 the URB split into nationalist and federalist parties (though their activities were curtailed by the breakout of World War I in 1914).

The post-war period saw the establishment of a succession of regionalist-cum-nationalist Breton parties which coalesced around the influential periodical *Breiz-Atao* ('Brittany forever') founded in 1919. By 1931 a split between a federalist wing and an uncompromising nationalist wing of the Parti Autonomiste Breton saw the establishment of the Parti Nationale Breton (PNB). The PNB proved the strongest successor and moved quickly in a fascist direction and into conspiratorial politics supported by elements of the German military. In 1932, an extreme wing initiated the first bombings against monuments for the Breton cause, and associated organisations pressurised for Breton education and for Breton publishing. In 1940 the PNB leaders returned "in the lorries of the German" and attempted to establish a satellite Nazi Breton state, but the strategic weight which the rump French government of Vichy still possessed (southern France, the French navy and worldwide colonies) led the Germans to replace the leadership of the PNB by more accommodating personalities. Nevertheless the Germans kept the extremist faction of the PNB in reserve and after the war began going against Germany this faction under their leader founded a Breton brigade Bezen Perrot (named after a nationalist priest Perrot assassinated by the resistance in 1943). The participation of reprisals by Breton nationalists against the resistance and the general population during the German occupation, made any Breton political movement after 1945 unsustainable for at least ten years and unsuccessful for at least a generation. The first sign of Breton regionalist-cum-nationalist success was not registered until the late 1960s since when the Union Démocratique Bretonne (UDB) has represented the most successful Breton political party, though in fact with very little real success. The period 1945–65 was the period of language shift in which the generational transmissal of Breton ceased and French replaced Breton as the language of rural Brittany, the last stronghold. The series of bombings carried out by the secretive FLB-ARB against public offices and monuments since 1966 did not have much resonance among the Breton population (the most spectacular event being the toppling in 1972 of the television transmitter serving western Brittany, which deprived people of their television programmes for months on end). The killing of an innocent woman in Quévert in 2000 – attributed to the organisation – caused a wave of revulsion which seems to have led to the end of the campaign.

The late 1960s saw a relaxation of French centralisation and a burgeoning liberal attitude by a French population tired of the imperialistic excesses of the Algerian war of Independence. Alternative cultures were attractive and a new generation discovered the forbidden original culture of Brittany. A cultural revival was now in full swing behind folk and folk-rock artists

such as Alan Stivell, Glenmor, Diaouled ar Menez or traditional singers such as Ar C'hoarezed Goadeg (*Les Soeurs Goadec*), Ar Vreudeur Morvan (*Les Frères Morvan*) and Yann-Fanch Kemener, to name but a few. During the 1970s a fest-noz (Breton traditional dance) scene flourished and colonised new and greater venues, becoming a mass phenomenon, as typical of Brittany as the pub traditional music session is in Ireland. Breton as an optional subject outside school hours allowed initially under the Germans but reprised in 1951, was followed in 1971 by its admission as an optional subject in secondary schools and in the university. However, the progress was so slow that in 1977 the first of the independent Diwan Breton-medium schools was established with Diwan progressing against many odds to establish a Breton-medium secondary school (1988). A defacing campaign against French-only signs initiated in 1984 by the direct action Stourm ar Brezhoneg led from the mid 1980s onwards to local councils adding bilingual signs which have since become general in Brittany.

There is no doubt that Breton is nowadays much more respected and fashionable than it ever was, however, the gains of the revival pale almost into insignificance compared to the damage done to Breton in the century preceding 1970. There seems little doubt that the increasing movement of individuals since the 1960s, to places such as Ireland, but especially to Wales, and the ensuing twinning initiatives between towns and villages in these countries, has inspired many hitherto culturally-unaware Bretons to be proud of their language and of the need to nurture it (ironically inasmuch as their visits were often prompted by a desire to acquire that other imperialistic tongue ... English!). Nevertheless, French is now securely established in western Brittany and the majority of the population, much like everywhere, is busy getting on with their lives without Breton.

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