

Rugby and Revivalism: Sport and Religion in Edwardian Wales

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At the turn of the twentieth century two great forces gripped Wales, a nation grappling to assert itself and discover its modern identity. A powerful rugby team captured the nation's imagination just as an unprecedented religious revival swept the land. The conflicts between these social trends would prove a battle for the heart and soul of Welsh people.

I

Many parts of Britain experienced great social and industrial change during the nineteenth century, and Wales was no exception to this trend. A largely rural society was transformed as great industries in coal, iron and steel sprung up across South Wales. Export trade led to the growth and relative prosperity of coastal towns, and the population in urban centres such as these grew in tandem as Welsh agricultural workers joined men from south-west England and further afield in pursuit of higher wages. Wales was a bustling, restless society facing both demographic and cultural change from without and within. Despite, or perhaps because of, such pressures, a reinvention of 'Welshness' is evident during the century's closing years. Holt has noted that 'alongside religious revival, trade unionism and vigorous choral and educational traditions, rugby came to play a central role in the building of national identity'.^[1] However, these varied developments sometimes promoted contradictory values and ideals.

By 1880, Nonconformity was the main religious affiliation of both the lower and middle classes in Wales. Its ministers in particular were often at loggerheads with the sporting establishments that the Welsh were beginning to enjoy – often disagreeing with notions of rational recreation espoused by contemporary paternalists within the Anglican church and attendant public schools. The Anglican church, deeply distrusted in Nonconformist Wales and considered by some an alien influence, had been influential in importing games such as rugby football into Wales. The Anglican college of St David's in Lampeter spearheaded this, and later the church helped to found many junior teams such as Dowlais St Illtyd's and Penydarren

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Church Juniors in Merthyr Tydfil. In Llanelli and Swansea during the 1880s and 1890s teams included St David's Stars, St John's and St Paul's United and St John's Rovers. There were also three future Anglican ministers in the first-ever Welsh XV of 1881.[2] However, the Anglican church had actually patronized popular recreation for centuries: the doctrine of Muscular Christianity may have added a respectable sheen, but the more puritanical Nonconformist church remained sceptical about the moralizing influence of rugby football.

This scepticism was in part justified by the game's populist appeal across South Wales. Once the working classes' interest had been captivated, the sport, as G Williams so succinctly puts it, 'did not curb violence and disorderly behaviour: it incited them'[3] The middle classes may have been responsible for codifying the game, but there was a long tradition of ball games in Wales – for example, George Owen's 1603 *Description of Penbrokeshire* details a physical game called 'Cnappan'. [4] This tradition, combined with rugby's capacity to allow men of all sizes to participate, probably had great influence on its initial appeal to the workers. Teams were formed in small villages across South Wales, and as Crynant RFC's historian notes of the club's founding days: 'In those days the village was so small that every able bodied man was called upon to help the team.' [5] Williams also notes that rugby 'block built identity upwards from the level of works, club and street teams, themselves the formalization of gangs and similar "abbeys of youth" with long standing traditions of sociability behind them'. [6] It was a short step to reviving old rivalries and community spirit via new sports with rivalries, often featuring choice language and violence. Further, sport was often no antidote to drinking. Public houses soon adapted their services to provide meeting places, changing and bathing facilities and of course refreshments. It became increasingly apparent that rugby would be less a reforming influence and more a continuation of those festive wakes of old as the entertainment surrounding the game became as important as the result itself. If the Nonconformist ministry had initially held back a little to test the effects the game had on the Welsh people, the all-too-apparent fondness of the working class for vulgar recreation was enough to ignite a barrage of criticism.

Sometimes the consequences were remarkable. In Llangennech, Philip Phillips, the minister of Salem Chapel, delivered a scathing attack on the game disguised as a sermon in 1885. 'Kick?' he is quoted as saying. 'If I took a good mule down to the field he'd kick them out of existence. Men were not meant to compete with donkeys.' Remarkably, the next day saw a violent storm which blew the rugby shed and its contents onto the field – an event taken as confirmation that the Revd Phillips's views were shared in higher quarters: no rugby was played in the village for another six years.[7] In 1890 there was more bitter conflict, demonstrated in Ystradgynlais where opposition to the formation of a rugby club was strong enough to warrant a public debate, and bloody-minded enough to ignore the house's verdict, the defeated moralists removing the village's goal posts to the local police station. Stories such as these exemplify the level of mistrust held by many towards the game. However, the Ystradgynlais players' response is equally representative of Welsh enthusiasm for the

sport: they cut down posts from a nearby forest and continued their fixtures.[8] The game went on, not just in Ystradgynlais but all over South Wales, where rugby's unique popular appeal was helping to establish a sense of place and purpose in a rapidly changing society. As *The South Wales Daily News* put it in 1891: 'Football in South Wales has steadily gained favour over the years. ... Until it has now become the one great pastime of the people.' [9] However, the game's clashes with Nonconformity had scarcely weakened the chapel's powerful position in Welsh consciousness. The restructuring of Welsh identity would still appear to be more influenced from this quarter than from anything else.

At a grass-roots level, the strength and influence of Sunday schooling within Wales was particularly strong, especially given the large adult audience within this system.[10] Furthermore, in rural districts this meant that practically the whole community belonged to the Sunday school, reinforcing a sense of identity and belonging. Religion even had a geographical manifestation across Wales – the map is littered with Biblical place names. Despite the growing numbers of people born outside Wales, the bulk of the population felt some affinity to the more 'traditional' side of Welsh culture,[11] and alongside the industrial society's forward-moving, cosmopolitan image, there was another side to Wales which wished for a return to simple, former values. Many would have agreed with the Revd W.D. Rowlands's later description of Wales at the end of the nineteenth century: 'Abounding worldliness, the idolatrous worship of Mammon, self indulgence, love of sport, were well nigh destroying the best and highest life of the church.' [12]

If such beliefs can be labelled retrogressive, or conservative, they certainly were not confined to the old. A recurring theme in the build-up to the revivalism that in 1904 would sweep Wales for the second time in 50 years was that young people in the chapels were searching for 'extra' spirituality – something more dynamic, more engaging. 'The young people were going on Sunday morning at 9:30 to pray, but we were desirous of something else – something extraordinary',[13] remembered one contemporary. When revivalism again broke out in Loughor late in 1904, ordinariness was most definitely absent from the proceedings. Led not by a priest but by a young, handsome collier named Evan Roberts, the new revivalism was to spread throughout Wales and Welsh-speaking Merseyside, affecting the way of life – both in work and leisure – of entire communities. The directions in which it pointed for the future were complex, and questions must be asked of assumptions regarding the conservatism or otherwise of the movement. Possibly the revival can be interpreted as the manifestation of conflict between two cultures. Certainly, however, in further promoting religion as a defining force within Welsh identity, the movement's ideologies and ideals interfered greatly with the practice and pleasure of the 'great pastime of the people'. Their relationship has often been oversimplified, but the hostility is continually palpable in accounts of the movement's progress. G. Williams and D. Smith have contributed to an understanding of this rivalry, noting the closure of clubs such as Ynysbwl, Morriston, Penygroes, Crynant, Ammanford and

Loughor.[14] The true extent of such closures, however, has not been adequately explored. Further, Williams's suggestion that the revival 'did not kill off rugby football, but it almost did so'[15] has not been sufficiently qualified.

II

Where did the Welsh religious revival of 1904–05 begin? This question is complicated by contemporaries' refusal to attach a secular timescale to that which was considered beyond human conceptualization. The man credited with instigating the movement in autumn 1904, Evan Roberts, confirmed this association with the divine and infinite when he denied his personal role: 'We do not know how the revival originated ... nobody knows how: nothing but the day of judgement will reveal it.' [16] What cannot be disputed is that by late 1904, fervour was spreading relentlessly across South Wales. Contemporaries describe remarkable scenes as village after village became embroiled: 'A church, with an estimated seating capacity of a thousand people, crammed to suffocation on weekends with souls crying for mercy' was one description, while following Roberts's visit to Aberdare in late 1904, 'weekday evening services, often attended by no more than ten people ... were suddenly full – and of mainly young people'. [17] Services were not only packed, but frequently ran well into the early hours of the morning, and as had been predicted in Biblical prophecy, a great number and cross-section of the population became involved. Metaphorically, the Holy Spirit was seen to be descending not on individuals, but on Wales as a whole. [18] Remarkable scenes – shouting, weeping, spontaneous singing – were reported as newspapers began taking an interest in proceedings. At a service in Bethany, Ammanford, 'some of the young ladies appeared to have lost control of their feelings, and one clung tenaciously to one of the ministers, with her arms around his neck'. [19]

This was, predictably, perceived by revivalists as confirmation of the movement's power and purpose. However, the initial appeal of vibrant, energetic prayer as opposed to traditional, staid Nonconformist worship does not require much explanation. Charles Fort, writing on the revival in 1931, argued that 'There's no understanding the huge emotional revolts against sin, without considering all the fun there is in them. They are monotony breakers. Drab, little personalities have a chance to scream themselves vivid.' [20] Even without touching on the ideological antagonism between recreation and the revival, it is apparent that the movement held an appeal and excitement that was, ironically, comparable to the fervour of a carnival or sporting occasion. Considering that young people otherwise lived a restricted, often hard life, the intrinsic appeal of the spiritual and the aesthetic is quite understandable. The community spirit generated was also noteworthy, as was the fact that these meetings were initially held fairly constantly. The energy and time required to sustain such devotion left little space for other activities.

Young people, however, soon became enthusiastic proponents of the movement. It was energetic and exciting, and the divine presence presumed to be surrounding their

actions almost divested them of responsibility. The Revd W.D. Rowlands commented on reports of the 'extravagances of young converts' in January 1905 by putting things into context: 'Let us not begrudge them this extra excitement in their realization of the possession of the highest life possible, while we allow the unrestrained and extravagant excitement of the football field and the coursing matches go uncondemned.' [21] He need not have worried. These 'unrestrained and extravagant' recreations would lose considerable popularity during the height of the revival. As noted earlier, antagonism between religion and leisure was hardly new. Yet the forms this conflict took in Wales during this period were starker and more complex than ever before.

In order to fully explore these intricacies it is necessary to understand the nature of the doctrines espoused by leading revivalists, particularly Evan Roberts himself. He constructed four articles of faith, or 'conditions of revival' – suggesting that the spiritual ideal could not be achieved without considering these articles' message. In considering the denunciation of leisure it is the second article which is most pertinent: 'Secondly, is there anything in your life which is doubtful – anything you cannot decide whether it is good or evil? Away with it. There must not be a trace of a cloud between you and God ... [but] prompt, implicit, unquestioning obedience at whatever cost.' [22] Evan Roberts never railed against recreations in the manner of his nineteenth-century Nonconformist predecessors. Perhaps he had no desire to do so; but more likely this doctrine rendered it unnecessary to imply an activity's detrimental qualities in order to discourage participation. Mere neutrality, superficiality and distraction from spiritual pursuits were sufficient conditions for denunciation. It was all-encompassing: 'Many will feel that there is a distinction to be drawn between giving up infidel literature and membership cards at drinking clubs [to be burnt] ... on the one hand ... and, on the other, making a sacrificial fire of tobacco pipes and football properties', wrote one contemporary observer. 'But here the doctrine of doubtful things applies: what may have been itself lawful was to be abandoned if it became impedient, if it stood in the way of full surrender and whole hearted consecration.' [23]

Furthermore, Roberts implied that human nature was rooted in sin and carnal desire which could never be relinquished without surrendering one's will to God: the 'implicit, unquestioning obedience' necessary to achieve Christian purity. Throughout the revival, one of the most frequently sung hymns reinforced this message:

*I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou shouldst lead me on,
I loved to choose and see my path, but now lead Thou me on!
I loved the garish day, and spite of fears
Pride ruled my will. Remember not past years.* [24]

A change in personality could signify the Holy Spirit's presence. The most *visible* indication a person could give of conversion was therefore renunciation of previous 'un-Christian' habits. In some respects this involved turning away from relatively recent social developments such as rugby. Therefore complex social pressures affected

every convert's decision to 'turn for Christ'. Again, admirers of the revival would insist that relinquishing futile pastimes was confirmation of divine influence at work in the Principality, and of great benefit to general society. H.E. Lewis conjures up the 'revulsion of feeling provoked by the thought of wasted time, of duties neglected, of non Christian companions' as the rugby-playing convert 'threw costume and ball into the fire'.^[25] This 'bottom up' approach to rejection of sport and leisure is further supported by B.P. Jones. 'There is an allegation in the rugby history, *Fields of Praise*,' he notes,

that the revival singled out rugby as a rival deserving of condemnation. In over six hundred pages of revival reports and press cuttings, there is no talk of a revivalist leader or preacher sermonising against sports. ... Instead it is the converts' prayers and testimonies which are sprinkled with angry words against the blasphemies and cursings, the drunkenness, and the immoral ideas which they had picked up while watching matches.^[26]

D. Matthews asserts that 'this right about face ... was not the result of thunderous denunciations by some preacher. It was the undemocratic voice of the Holy Spirit quietly influencing daily contact.' ^[27] Here 'undemocratic' was no doubt meant as a positive adjective, but it reveals the inhibition of choice that the revival imposed in the closed communities of the South Wales valleys. Given Evan Roberts insistence that it was better to offend one's friends than to offend God, it is ironic that peer pressure often led to conversion. Those who did not have drinking, gambling or adultery to renounce turned to 'renouncing' other 'doubtful things' – driving a motor car, being involved in light entertainment or, indeed, playing rugby.

III

A striking feature of the 1904–05 revival in Wales was the readiness with which pleasurable pursuits were abandoned. Certainly, notorious drinkers and gamblers were prime targets for reform. However, light entertainment, sporting fixtures and even intellectual pursuits were giving way to spiritual exercise. As the Revd R.I. Davies noted, 'Prayer meetings supplant social guilds; gospel addresses are more popular than scientific lectures; literary contests of the Welsh Eisteddfodic character are postponed, that nothing of an alien nature shall seem to intervene or thwart the Divine influence at work in the midst of the people.' ^[28]

Rugby football was badly affected, with several village teams disbanded because their members had all been converted. Other teams found their choice of players, number of opponents and gate receipts severely limited as more and more rugby enthusiasts became embroiled in prayer. Supporters now ostentatiously tore up season tickets, burned jerseys and footballs, and preached against the game's sinful associations. Newspapers announced that this was a common occurrence across the country. Indeed, it had sufficient impact to bring the revival to the attention of Welsh rugby historians, notably Williams, who goes some way in explaining the

circumstances surrounding this phenomenon – describing the revival’s antagonism as ‘a final, defiant gesture against the dying of the light, the anguished cry of a people recently uprooted from its rural verities and thrown into a industrial melting pot’.[29]

Small Welsh frontier towns may have been highly susceptible to movements of great emotion and feeling at the time. This, however, does not really explain how recreational traditions were subdued. The revival’s impact is perhaps surprising in the case of rugby, which was already established as a cornerstone of Welsh culture and communal identity by 1904. Indeed, the game would arguably continue to serve this purpose until the present day. Was rugby so solidly established in Wales that this was a mere blip, particular to certain places during times of unprecedented religious fervour? Or was the game fortunate to survive the revivalist onslaught?

The Edwardian press had built much popularity by reporting on sporting fixtures, and the Welsh newspapers were no exception. In small districts where the main news was often insubstantial, the fortunes of local teams attracted great public interest. Revivalism, when it broke out, aroused press interest also: the dramatic scenes occurring on one’s doorstep, as it were, offering great potential to fill column space. The insights within the reports themselves vary in quality, but in their coverage of both sport and the revival the papers highlighted the contemporary dichotomy. By December 1904, the *South Wales Daily Post* was reporting on ‘The Influence of Revival on Football’, noting that ‘Caerphilly v. Treorchy had a gate of 54 spectators on Saturday. ... Rees, captain of the Ogmere Vale club, has retired his position, a consequence of the revival. ... The New Tredegar Fifteen has disbanded. Forchriw failed to raise a team on Saturday.’ [30] The same fate befell clubs in Loughor, Ynysybwl, Morriston, Penygroes, Crynant, Kenfig Hill, Ammanford and Dowlais. Success did not always mean that the team was protected from this fate. The Felinfoel team, finalists in the previous year’s South Wales Challenge Cup, disbanded in November 1904.[31] Many other teams found themselves disorganized: in the Merthyr district, Deri and Maesycwmer were compelled to abandon fixtures due to the revival’s interference in October that year.[32] A game arranged to be played at Towyn was cancelled on 10 December 1904, ‘one of the teams stating that they were about to burn their football, and advising the other team to do likewise’.[33] Those teams that continued to play suffered from a lack of spectators.[34]

Many players and spectators may have been won over by the revival early on due to the movement’s dynamism, a feature particularly attractive to young people. Evan Roberts’s citing of prophecy enabled individuals to assume ‘an authoritative position based upon their new-found status as prophets acting under the command of God’.[35] This had a dual effect. Young people were foremost captivated by the doctrine which allowed them to be demonstrative and to exercise unprecedented influence and control over environments where they were not previously fully represented. This is epitomized in D. Matthew’s account of scenes at Mount Seion Chapel, Trecynon:

The sober, sedate Calvinistic congregation that gathered in Mount Seion that morning received a shock. They looked askance when they saw their minister’s

place occupied by a young man, accompanied by such youthful maidens. Instead of announcing the customary hymn for the commencement of the service, one of the young women burst forth in a spiritual song expressing her new experience, tears streaming down her cheeks. The whole congregation gasped! ... What did this mean? was the question on every lip.[36]

What it meant was that young men and women no longer felt bored and marginalized during Nonconformist services. The young often played the most prominent and tireless role in preaching to the unconverted, and here the secondary effect of Roberts's doctrine can be perceived. There are many accounts of youthful 'crusades' towards the local public houses and playing fields, to encourage or demand conversions from those devoting time to godless pursuits.[37] In the Rhondda, direct efforts were being made to convert footballers and drunkards[38] and in January 1905 'some excitement' was expected to ensue when revivalists intended to sabotage a rugby fixture between Dafen and Mynyddbach.[39] In some cases, a degree of humour and understanding seems to have been displayed: in Cefn, Merthyr Tydfil, one revivalist attending a prayer meeting outside the rugby field shouted for the forwards to 'come forward for Christ, the half backs not to be backward, and the whole team to scrummage against sin'.[40] Dubious Christian spirit was displayed elsewhere, however: Llangennech FC were 'attacked' by revivalists, the goal posts being thrown into a river next to the field.[41] The resistance that could be offered to such actions was equally extreme, converts sometimes being cursed to the face and spat upon.[42] A certain Mr Webb of Gorseinon was threatened with violence after he named five workmates as being in particular need of prayer.[43] At the New Inn in Llanelli, revivalists offering up prayers for the drinkers were flippantly offered beer, while a girl came out and danced a provocative Irish jig. Revivalists who ignored these jibes were subsequently soaked – possibly by the contents of chamber pots thrown from a window.[44] Nonetheless, through these little crusades, much publicity was assured and pressure was placed on those who continued to indulge in pleasurable activities – pressures that could have considerable influence in small, enclosed communities.

It is notable that a considerable proportion of those initially attracted to the revival were female. There are several reasons for this, not least the fact that Evan Roberts himself was judged an incredibly handsome and charismatic young man. There were reports of young women 'hooting' the revivalist when he arrived to speak.[45] He was often surrounded by a group of attractive women, one as young as 15, entitled the 'Lady Evangelists'. Their prominent role in the proceedings, despite contemporary beliefs about women's marginal place in society, was enough to ensure many other female conversions. This was redoubled by the rejection of traditional leadership for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, breaking many social taboos.[46] As contemporaries realized, 'There appears to be a return to the period of matriarchate. The oft recurring allusion to the mother seems a vital factor in the breaking down of many a hardened and impertinent sinner.' [47] Women often criticized husbands

who spent wages and free time the pub or playing field. It is not surprising that a recurring theme in the writings of observers such as 'Awstin' in the *Western Mail* featured pleas from female family members for men to be rescued from sin.[48] The benefits of a sober, pious husband could quickly be perceived within the community. One woman announced to an entire chapel that 'she had been married for forty two years, and it was the day following the conversion of her husband that for the first time she received the whole of her husband's wages'.[49]

The press was quick to note the external impact of these trends, notably the quietness of the streets at night, the emptiness of public houses and the lack of general disturbances.[50] 'A County Magistrate', writing to the *Daily Mail*, attempted some qualification, arguing that 'this improvement is due to the education of the rising generation and very little to do with sensational revivalism'.[51] The Christmas of 1904 had been remarkably quiet, though, and many cited the revival's influence as the chief cause.[52] Many social and cultural activities suffered as the community surrounding the public house fell apart. This no doubt had further impact on the many rugby clubs that used them as headquarters and meeting places.

The cult of confession and renunciation that fuelled prayer meetings also reinforced antagonism towards sport and leisure. There were powerful peer influences at work, especially if it was the most notorious (in the case of a drunkard or gambler) or the most talented and famous (in the case of sportsmen) who initially confessed. For instance, in Treorchy 'some of the worst characters in the place' were praying alongside prominent sportsmen including the ex-captain of the local team.[53] Many examples exist of others following the lead once well known locals had declared 'for Christ'. Unsurprisingly, considering the doctrinal emphasis on changing one's character completely, dramatic conversions were favoured. Consciously or otherwise, individuals may have craved the brief moment of fame and attention such a confession provided. Dramatically, one man held up a piece of paper in his chapel with 'GAMBLER' written on it, announcing that 'Judas received thirty pieces of silver. I backed the winner of the Derby and received thirty one. God help me, I have done with it.' [54] Often, the convert's sins had not even included petty indulgences such as drinking or gambling. However, confessions were nonetheless to be made, and activities previously regarded as quite moral were confessed to in equally dramatic terms. At Moriah, in Loughor, a convert told how he 'used to be known by the devil as Ben Davies, the Aberavon fullback',[55] which was echoed by Jenkin Thomas of Kenfig Hill: 'I used to play full back for the Devil but now I am forward for God.' [56] Prize-fighters, footballers, amateur actors, card players and shopkeepers who had held beer licences all renounced their past ways.[57] Even the Welsh custom of Eisteddfodic competition – singing, reciting and other recreations perfectly within the 'rational' mould – was considered controversial, and several such events were cancelled.[58]

This decline in leisure pursuits was often described in terms reflecting nineteenth-century criticisms of pleasurable recreation. The *London Daily News* was of the opinion that football was being abandoned because it 'is tainted with foul language

and drinking, so that the convert abandons it for fear of being tainted by its associates'.[59] If this was so, why not form teams within the chapel to play other chapels? Why not endeavour to reform the game's image so that it became the epitome of positive, healthy physical exercise? Clearly this journalist misunderstood, indeed oversimplified, the situation. The Welsh people were well aware that 'The Bible nowhere sets its ban on innocent amusements'[60] and that even revivalist leaders did not preach against football.[61] If there had been long-standing populist animosity against any supposedly immoral aspects of the game, they would surely have surfaced previously: the revival message was not explicitly opposed to sport, and it did not provide any ammunition to those who wished to prove that sports were immoral. Indeed, many Welsh people still considered physical recreation beneficial, and the majority probably did not associate their vibrant sporting culture with sin. Furthermore, no one could claim that Eisteddfodau were rife with immoral behaviour, and yet they too lost popularity. In Treherbert, even the perfectly respectable temperance meetings were abandoned, the members instead holding prayer meetings.[62]

Implicitly, however, the message of the revival convinced the most zealous Welsh converts that a time of great import had come in their lives – that any distraction or doubt should be relinquished. As the zeal magnified, peer and familial pressures were making great impact. People began spending their time at prayer meetings instead of enjoying former pastimes, as epitomized by the 'Christian Reformers', a new society set up in Aberdare, who pledged to deny themselves any pleasures that would lessen their personal service to God. There were extreme views being espoused, of this there is no doubt. Complaining of a relatively innocuous charity whist drive at Neath Lawn Tennis Club, one animated correspondent to the *South Wales Daily Post* demanded: 'What is the good of delights which again and again prove themselves absolutely illusory?' [63] However, although many 'converts' repeated such views, an underlying ambivalence can nonetheless be detected.

D. Matthews, probably unintentionally, summed up the mood exactly:

One does not gloat over the fact that healthy physical exercise becomes deranged when its domain is intruded. Sports, or at least physical exercises, are as essential to the body as the Christian means of grace are to the spirit. ... But when revival is abroad, men and women may be pardoned if they become unusually engrossed in pursuit of the latter, since the majority of people give it so little consideration in ordinary terms.[64]

Certainly, the suggestion is that the people should spend free time on God rather than on themselves. However, there is also implication that the most extreme manifestations of such a doctrine, the likes of which were recorded all over Wales in the winter of 1904/05, would only be temporary – would *have* to be temporary. The short-term effects of the revival on rugby and other pursuits were clear to see. However, the revival did not last forever, and the long-term effects also require consideration.

The decline of the revival and the waning of its influence were arguably closely linked to its bold assumption of unquestioning devotion from the populace.

However, just as Evan Roberts had remind the people of Wales that man could not live on bread alone, so this dynamic society would ultimately reject the assertion that life rested on complete, unquestioning devotion to the spirit. The nation in general would not reject Nonconformist doctrine, but neither would it submit to the strict template that the revival imposed. As Wales struggled to re-gather a sense of definite identity following the turbulence caused by Roberts's message, sport, specifically rugby union, would form a crucial part of this reassertion.

IV

As with the decline of many radical movements, religious or otherwise, factors both internal and external played a part in the decline of Welsh revivalism. Externally, apparent extremism of any kind is more often criticized than praised – whether the complexities of the movement are understood or not. Similarly, although followers of such movements are often initially overcome with the excitement, self-belief and sheer novelty value afforded by their involvement, leadership, skill and luck are required in order to sustain such interest and commitment.

Certainly, the revival suffered external criticism even in its early stages. In 1904, the *St James Gazette* mocked Evan Roberts's accounts of a vision in which he saw Christ smite down the Devil, yea, in his own back garden.[65] The vibrant, energetic prayer meetings characteristic of that year led *Truth* magazine to ask: 'What good can a conversion be worth that is led up to by mob shouting, singing, and groaning, with a man on a platform dancing in ecstasy? ... Emotional religion of this sort produces the same effect on the brain as strong drink.' [66] Such concerns were exacerbated by striking cases of 'religious mania' across the principality. In one case, a young Cardiff man went to pubs and stores confessing and apologizing for things he was never guilty of. A mourner was removed to Denbigh Asylum after delaying a funeral by 20 minutes, and, on another occasion, calling on a lady and telling her it was Judgement Day.[67] While modern clinical opinion might cite revivalism as a catalyst to already troubled minds, contemporarily the direct link between the hysteria of revival meetings and subsequent 'mania' was considered quite apparent. Despite those who defended the movement with some progressive and positive arguments, the revival's self-image – and its appearance to outside observers – was tarnished.

Evan Roberts became a key target of those criticizing the revival, who saw great contradictions in a leader-like figure espousing humility and a rejection of 'self'. *The Examiner*, the organ of the English Congregationalists, quoted the Biblical warning: 'Do not sound a trumpet before thee as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and the streets, that they may have the glory of men.' It feared that Roberts might 'forget himself on the current of popularity'. [68] Publicly, however, Roberts often denied his own role in proceedings. He rebuked his congregations for letting him come between them and God, and requested that they refrain from mentioning his name lest it come into rivalry with the name of Christ. Nonetheless, 'Marthen' in the *Carmarthen Journal*, noted that 'No likeness of him [Roberts] which I have seen would ever

convince me that he was a person who wished to humble himself in the sight of man.’[69] ‘A smug, self satisfied looking youth’ was one *Truth* contributor’s opinion of the revivalist, and these images are not without substance. A handsome, proud figure, Roberts often wore boldly coloured handkerchiefs and flowers at his breast as opposed to the traditional attire of familiar sermonizers, the Nonconformist ministers. With his collection of pretty ‘Lady Evangelists,’ he encouraged the transmission of his image across Wales and the wider world via photographs, newspapers and penny postcards. He even allowed his waxwork to be made and displayed by a Cardiff exhibition.[70]

The newspapers initially lapped up the story potential of the revival’s popularity and contributed greatly to the movement’s growth. Unwittingly or otherwise, Roberts returned the favour via interviews and photo shoots – a surprisingly modern method of media dissemination in contemporary Wales. Copyists soon began to appear, mimicking Roberts’s demeanour and style, or travelling from chapel to chapel repeating the same stories and confessions.[71] Critics picked up on this clamour for self-righteous fame in a movement which was supposed to have no corporeal figurehead – and soon the cracks were beginning to show. ‘Everyone knows that our “dailies” exaggerate proceedings’, wrote a correspondent to the *Llanelli Mercury* in March 1905. ‘Evan Roberts has been the means of making them, and they have made Evan Roberts.’[72] Furthermore, coverage was palpably centred more on Roberts than on the revival’s general progress, leading critics to argue that it had ‘come to be popularly regarded as sacrilege to utter a word of criticism of Mister Roberts’ language or his methods. Can anything be more awfully dangerous than such semi-idolatry?’[73] Comments such as these mark the realization that while the casting off of ‘self’ was a revivalist ideal, it was impossibly utopian in a physical and increasingly material world.

Further evidence that ‘self’ was a greater factor than converts wished to believe was provided by a relatively new discipline: psychology. Roberts’s sermons may have been impressively constructed for a collier – and other speakers who rose up in chapels across Wales and spoke publicly for the first time used similar eloquent phrases – but they often closely mimicked the style and structure of Biblical tracts. This is not to suggest that the entire congregation *consciously* involved itself in fantasies of prophetic powers. On the contrary, the development of psychological insight into the *unconscious* allowed critics to argue that Nonconformity, which had long been present in Welsh culture, had built a stock of ‘buried’ imagery which was drawn upon during the awakening. This undermined the revival’s credibility greatly, for it suggested that inspiration came from the individual – from ‘the self’ – rather than from God.[74]

Such criticism reached boiling point in one letter published by the *Western Mail* on Tuesday 31 January 1905. Written by the Revd Peter Price of Dowlais, the correspondence and controversy it engendered was unprecedented in discussing the movement’s credibility. Price recognized two revivals occurring in Wales. He noted with pleasure what he perceived to be the positive effects on public order and temperance, and the Principality’s spiritual image. However, he wrote off the

publicity, posturing and hysteria surrounding Roberts as 'a sham revival, a mockery, a blasphemous travesty of the real thing'.[75]

From then on Evan Roberts's position went into decline. The evangelist's refusal to reply to Peter Price's comments would have implied dignity if the criticisms had been crude, but this was a well structured argument which Roberts's silence suggested he could not counter.[76] Also, Roberts had long suffered from strange shifts in mood and sudden 'illnesses' which forced him into seclusion. Slowly the press's depiction of such actions shifted from suggestions of divine inspiration to complaints about bizarre behaviour. Following these accusations, Roberts seemed to become increasingly desperate to secure conversions, which were becoming increasingly difficult to inspire. His self-proclaimed development of 'telepathic power' won him little further support. Meetings were halted in order to confront and expose members of the audience, Roberts often storming out if the desired 'fire' was not hot enough.[77]

Perhaps unsurprisingly, such actions offended those devout Christians who were once Roberts's supporters. 'Countryman' revealed concern in that during the Last Supper, even the 'beloved disciple' could not identify the betrayer, 'whereas Evan Roberts, who cannot claim such contiguity to Jesus, is able to detect the "betrayer" in a congregation of two thousand people!' [78] However, contiguity to Jesus *was* something that Roberts claimed, which was 'clearly the most blasphemous thing' that a contemporary, A. Clarke, had ever seen: 'No man . . . hath seen God at anytime, the only Begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him! And yet, we have Mr Evan Roberts practically claiming a co-equity with the only Begotten Son!' [79]

'Marthen' shared his scepticism in the columns of the *Carmarthen Journal*. [80] This intellectual and theological onslaught allowed others to air their criticisms, and soon controversy was reigning regarding embezzlement of revival funds and, interestingly enough, whether Evan Roberts was exercising powers of hypnotic persuasion over the Welsh populace.[81] This amounted to conclusions that Roberts's public work was over – his last mission, to Liverpool, exacerbating in many ways the image of a frenzied and sometimes frightening extremist.[82] Shortly afterwards, he retired from the movement, the papers discreetly attributing this to nervous strain.[83]

As Hayward notes, 'Had the Welsh revival been limited to Roberts's mission it would have been easy to write off the awakening as simply the rise and disgrace of a charismatic preacher'. [84] However, despite press focus on Roberts, the revival had nonetheless remained a movement with mass influence on everyday life. Its effects on leisure were largely an effect of this widespread adoption of revival ideals. There were certainly optimistic voices in 1905 that spoke of hope that 'men and women who have publicly pledged themselves to a new life, with the Bible as a guide, should hold to their faith. . . . The whole life of the district will show great change.' [85] Even as Roberts's personal influence declined, the hope continued that the spiritual lifestyle advocated by the revivalist would be permanent.[86]

However, there were problems within these assumptions. Foremost, the casting away of 'self' had been important to both the embarkation upon a new life and the weakening of social norms that allowed women and young people to exert such influence in the community. Now 'self' was revealed as influencing actions as much as ever (albeit in novel and subtle ways), this strand of influence was considerably weakened. In exploring criticisms of revival services, one can detect a realization that embarking upon the new life could involve as much coercion as conversion. Those who loved Christ were often asked to stand, or come forward, during such services, exposing those left behind. Although revivalists may have meant well and realized that 'you cannot force goodness on people' in a small community, it was noted that 'If a person believes that he is not already converted, he feels an impulse to be one with those that are.' [87]

This lack of true understanding regarding the revival's message and its demands became more pronounced as the movement wore on, and by early 1905 a few contemporaries were shrewdly aware of this. 'At present [men] find social intercourse and mental enjoyment in prayer meetings,' noted one Mr Stead in the *Merthyr Express* that February. However, 'no man can live on prayer meetings forever. What can be done to supply for those young fellows a substitute, with counter attractions, for the public house they have so long been accustomed to frequent?' Discussions for this purpose were reportedly held in several parts of South Wales. A meeting in Mountain Ash in April was organized for these ends, and a large conference was also held in Pontypridd.[88] There were suggestions of using revival funds for converting chapels or school buildings into evening social institutions, providing perhaps games, a piano, journals and respectable literature. Many converts asked for pleasant, temperate surroundings to be provided where they could 'meet good people by the fire without the drink.' [89] Such intentions were admirable. However, these suggestions were ignorant of the revival's denunciation of worldly goods and 'doubtful things'. In the Mountain Ash meeting, one elderly gentleman argued that 'converts ought to be satisfied with prayer meetings and Bible readings', and was backed by Mr W. Jenkins, who argued that 'If the converts were truly religious, they would find everything they needed in the service of Christ'. The Pontypridd conference reached similar conclusions.[90]

Little was done to meet the needs of the converts, in particular the young. Therefore, although 'Many family, community and work relationships were profoundly altered ... generally, sport and amusement and culture ran back into the usual channels, as did social life.' [91] Ultimately, many chapel leaders were reluctant to allow the revival doctrine to be diluted by the provision of recreation, even respectable literary or musical distractions. Those who strove to do so simply could not muster the manpower or the expense to meet the needs of 'converts' in the long term. In truth, these individuals were hardly converted in that they retained a (natural?) desire for recreation and social intercourse outside the chapel walls. This young, outgoing society demanded a range of entertainment and stimulation; therefore although the revival may have affected relatively superficial ways of thinking

about culture, the ultimate provision of diverse and pleasurable escapism was increasingly outside the scope of the chapel once the revival 'fire' had cooled.

As revivalism declined, institutions with which it had clashed often found themselves in the ascendant. Coincidentally, or otherwise, 1905 would be one of Welsh rugby's most successful years. The revival's potential to wipe out rugby became a moot point as the international team achieved a Triple Crown in the early months of the year. This was coupled with the remarkable success of Welsh clubs such as Swansea, and the famous international victory over New Zealand in December. Where revivalism had recently been pre-eminent, it was the turn of sport, once again, to become a leading factor in the definition of a nation's cultural – and perhaps spiritual – identity.

V

More detailed histories of Welsh rugby have promoted the game's image as both catalyst in and manifestation of increased national self-confidence, cultural creativity, material prosperity and national awareness. Welsh rugby owed its early development to English immigrants, which was sometimes overlooked by Edwardian racial theorists intent on proving the virtues of the Celtic character. Nonetheless, by the beginning of the twentieth century Welsh success on the field (as well as in industrial production) was most often regarded as a result of combination between all peoples within a mixed, diverse society.[92]

The revival of 1904–05 could have been a powerful rival to this image of dynamic nationhood had it attained further influence – indeed, it could be identified as a 'defiant gesture against the dying of the light' in Wales.[93] Certainly, the surrender of personal will to the divine and the break with the past implicit in the denial of 'self' had great short-term cultural significance, as described in the preceding sections. Revival sympathizers expressed and supported Evan Roberts's hope to *re-make* Wales, presumably in the divine image.[94] However, as described in previous chapters, the revival's influence on culture would not stretch into the long term. As Evan Roberts's influence waned, the Welsh sought other outlets for expression – outlets which had arguably been present all along, although recently buried under revival interest; or even those outlets which had come into conflict with the religious movement.

Even if the revival *was* a gesture against the 'dying of the light', this should not imply that it was an invariably conservative movement. In some respects it was opposed to the vices it saw inherent in industrialized Wales. Morally and spiritually it held nostalgic views, and 'modern trends' were among those things denounced as 'doubtful' by converts. Also, although some wished to see the movement spread abroad, there was a palpable sense of introverted nationalism amongst many revivalists. It is understandable that the meetings were for the most part conducted in Welsh, but requests for a hostile suppression of the English tongue and 'the alien element' in the congregation reveal an extremism echoed in Roberts's own frequent refusal to preach in English – ostensibly under instruction from a suspiciously partisan Holy Spirit.[95]

Conversely, though, the revival can be seen as progressive – a vibrant, exciting and largely youth-oriented movement. Writing in 1909, D. Hughes identified some of the appeal offered by the movement to the younger section of society as ‘informality, diversity, exaltation and prayer’[96] and a contemporary noted that these trends informed staid Nonconformist ministers that they ‘must divest themselves of ostentatious conservatism in all its forms’.[97] Indeed, there is much evidence that many older and established chapel members were concerned over by the apparent informality and chaos, the prominent role of young people – especially women – and the emotional intensity generated in revival meetings. This hysteria could reach worrying levels, causing, for example, young people to lock themselves in church for hours on end without supervision. Damage to church property was even caused by those nominally under the influence of the Holy Spirit.[98]

When revivalism ran wild in this way, it is little wonder that many began reconsidering the supposed sin inherent in rational, relatively controlled pursuits. A Canadian visitor was noted to remark in December 1904: ‘If your revival is going to stop your football and cricket games, your athletic pastimes, and so on, then God help your boys, I say.’ [99] Even in Wales, there had always been those who emphasized the positive nature of games such as rugby. A letter in the *Merthyr Express* espoused the virtues of Wishborne Institute, Dowlais, in providing continued athletic recreation.[100] In the debates over whether leisure provision should be provided for converts, some expressed the desire for Christians to attend games such as rugby and elevate the tone of proceedings.[101] A redefinition of faith was emerging which once again allowed recreation’s combination with (perhaps token) spirituality. This would be exemplified by the hymn-singing of Welsh rugby crowds during the forthcoming season, but even in the chapels some held the view that play and prayer could be complementary. One observer’s favourite meetings were apparently those ‘where there were thirty young men in football knickers nearly always present’.[102] This redefinition, combined with the revival’s failure to provide even ‘respectable’ distractions for converts, led many converts back to their old love. As T. Lewis wryly remarks, ‘before long the only conversions local rugby players became interested in, were the ones that sent the ball straight and true between the uprights’.[103]

Rugby still captured the imagination, therefore, even of those who had been in the midst of revival ‘fire’ just months earlier. Furthermore, there is evidence that in some places its popularity was not seriously compromised. As Newport, Cardiff and Swansea prepared for important fixtures during the revival’s height in December 1904, ‘Forward’ of the *Western Mail* nonetheless described the ‘endless, sometimes senseless’ conversations being enjoyed by many men over the forthcoming games. When Swansea were to play at Cardiff that November, despite poor weather, ‘there was a vast crowd stretching from the fire brigade station to the Angel Hotel, while the thousands who paraded Queen Street made the scene one that was reminiscent of an ‘international day’.[104] Indeed, it would be the international rugby of 1905 that served to exemplify this trend best. The connotations of success on the sporting stage would notably bring out features of cultural identity affiliated to a modern image of Wales.

Public interest in the first game – at home against England – was high. ‘Forward’ anticipated the announcement of the English team with relish: ‘One can imagine with what eagerness that edition will be waited and watched for by the thousands of devotees all over South Wales.’ [105] Reports on match day reveal that the game’s popularity on a national level had not waned as significantly as might be expected by the closure of so many local clubs: ‘At two o’clock there was plenty of room in the stand’, wrote one correspondent. ‘People began talking about the revival, but they were quite wrong for in a few minutes later people poured in, in an irresistible stream.’ [106] Although another journalist assumed that the revival would affect attendance, ‘there was no evidence of this in the vast throng that occupied the stands all round the field’.[107] Wales won 25–0, at the time the largest margin ever recorded in Welsh fixtures against England. This understandably fired the press further into devoting reams of column space to the next game, against Scotland in Edinburgh. Public interest and local rivalry was further increased by anxiety over injury and controversies over changes to the team that had defeated the English. Victory in Edinburgh meant a fixture against the Irish with both teams competing for the Triple Crown. Interest was at fever pitch. Almost a month before the game, notices were posted in newspapers informing the public that all reserved accommodation had been taken up in the stands – in fact, it had been applied for three times over. Ultimately an extra stand with room for 6,000 would have to be erected.[108]

The press reported and promoted partisan rivalries, which focused interest and discussion on the game within individual Welsh communities. The most heated debate, though, was whether the experienced but aged Gwyn Nicholls of Cardiff or the younger Gordon, a Swansea man, would play at centre, a decision that was not made until 1.25 p.m. on match day, after two ballots. A large crowd gathered outside the Welsh Union’s meeting place at the Royal Hotel in Swansea, and when the verdict was announced that Nicholls would play, the reaction was hostile. Nonetheless, Nicholls apparently proved his selectors right, in containing his threatening opposite number throughout the match and contributing to the Welsh victory that secured the Triple Crown.[109] The *Western Mail* saw that public interest was high, and commissioned a spectacular photo-engraving of the Welsh team for its Monday edition two weeks later.

Many who had been touched by the revival probably continued their interest and support of the game despite endeavouring to give up ‘doubtful things’. It is also possible that many were reintroduced to ‘vulgar’ popular culture through the sport and the massive public interest engendered as the Welsh team went from strength to strength. A letter in the *South Wales Press* following the Scotland game told the remarkable story of one young convert who had not missed an international for 15 years, making the gruelling journey from South Wales while soberly keeping his spirits high via the pleasures of singing and cold tea. The correspondent initially met the fellow as he searched for a café – although ‘on previous visits to Scotland he had satisfied himself with such provender as public houses might afford, he now looked on “pubs” as nets spread by Satan’. However, meeting the righteous young man again in the ground, our correspondent recalls a marked change in countenance

when Scotland took the lead. 'The Welshmen forgot all about their revivals, and their language savoured of this world. ... Then Wales scored the equalizing try, and when I looked down on my revivalist friend he was gripping a huge black bottle labelled somebody's "Special".' The last this Scotsman saw of the man, he was slurring: 'You're all right in Scotland, if you only had the spirit of religion. ... But your three-quarter play isn't worth a damn.' [110]

Exactly how accurate or representative this story was is debatable, but even if most revivalists were not weak-willed enough to fall from grace in the course of an afternoon, a season of sporting success seemed to have an affect on the nation's character, and the anecdote provides the perfect allegory. This was also exemplified in the singing at various games over the home nations campaign. At the England match, revival hymns such as 'Throw Out the Lifeline,' and 'Diolch Iddo' were distinctly heard; even this early in the campaign, however, it was reported that as they were sung, 'speedily, "Just Like the Ivy" and "Sosban Fach" ascended [and] the most popular [song] of all was "Farewell, Farewell, My Own True Love"'. [111] At the Scotland match a month later, the singing was praised for its passion, but one reporter noted that the 'men who had come from the land of the revival ... [were] carrying with them more of the music than the "fire" of that revival'. [112] After the fixture against Ireland in March, it was noted that revival hymns were not sung nearly so much as they had been in the opening game of the campaign. [113]

The faith, confidence and excitement engendered in the Principality were all too apparent in the interest of press and public described above. Certainly, if rugby's position as part of the emerging national character was ever in doubt in the minds of the Welsh, this season reasserted its claims to be an essential component. However, if any concerns remained, before the year was out they would be all but obliterated by one of the most remarkable sporting occasions the country had ever seen: the defeat of the touring New Zealand side on 16 December 1905.

The game that was to be termed 'the match of the century' [114] had little difficulty in attracting attention in the proceeding weeks. The New Zealanders on tour had generated an equal mixture of astonishment and excitement wherever they went, producing world-class performances that left quality British sides looking hapless. Having defeated the other home nations, Wales was to be the final test, and within the Principality, even those 'who at ordinary times take little, if any, interest in the game found themselves discussing with as much interest as anyone else the doings of the wearers of the silver fern'. [115] Massive cheering crowds greeted the New Zealanders as they arrived by train on the Thursday before the game, a journalist expressing the hope that 'these cheers will be heard again on Saturday in the unfortunate event of New Zealand winning. No suggestion need be made that the crowd will cheer the Welshmen if they win. There will be lots of it.' As match day loomed, dozens of special trains were organized, and by these means alone over 25,000 supporters were to descend on Cardiff to seek admission to the game. Others resorted to walking up to 30 miles on foot. Offices and industries paid their men on

the Friday night instead of the Saturday as was normal, and many closed to allow the workforce a chance to witness the game.[116]

Victory against the all-conquering tourists was to be by a slim margin – a try to nil – but nonetheless, victory was achieved, and with the interest of the nation poised as described above, the effects were significant. Newspapers noted well the impact on the entire country, remarking that ‘in the national life of Wales, there is no blinking the fact that [rugby football] exercises a remarkable fascination upon all classes of people’.[117] The *Llanelli and County Guardian* report similarly celebrated the diversity of this fledgling industrial nation: ‘On Saturday, all roads led to Cardiff. The tinplater from “Sosban Fach”; the collier from the Rhondda; the “something at the docks” from Cardiff; the labourer from the country; the commercial man from the office. All sorts and conditions of men.’ [118]

Crucially, despite the disparate composition of the crowd in Cardiff that day, national solidarity was scarcely ever more palpable. Before the match this mood was set by one newspaper’s suggestion that the Welsh counter the intimidating Maori war chant with the popular song ‘Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau’. Indeed, as the players took the field the colonials’ war cry was ‘drowned in the mighty sound that burst forth from the throats of forty thousand Celts singing “Land of my Fathers”’.[119] Match reports suggest that the unbeaten New Zealanders looked uncharacteristically nervous during the opening period, and an English international commented afterwards that in Cardiff there was ‘something that carries an invading fifteen off its balance. ... a Celtic electricity in the air’[120] – a factor echoed in stirring terms by a contemporary journalist:

On the field one felt as if a gigantic battery had been set in motion, for a feeling which cannot quite be described came over us as the minutes flew along. I recall putting my hand on the shoulder of a big strong man sitting in front of me, and also hastily withdrawing. He was trembling to an extent as to make one feel alarmed.[121]

These scenes surely cemented in the minds of those present the passion of this small Welsh nation, and the role that individuals could (ideally) play in channelling its energy for the future. This is epitomized in further discussion of ‘electricity’ surrounding the match on the following Monday by a newspaper correspondent – whose ironic *nom-de-plume* was ‘Lucifer’. ‘It became not merely a contest between the thirty men in the arena,’ he noted,

but between the whole forty or fifty thousand persons, from out of whose eyes their very souls seemed to pour ... it is not outside the realms of possibility that the physical efforts expended by the throng in the emulation of the chief actions assisted them on to that unthought of achievement. ... It is a deduction too, which will afford a great personal delight to everyone, as it does to the writer, that they can share some small degree in having directly contributed to the glory of old Gwalia.[122]

Such accounts – of an electricity coursing through the national consciousness and of exposing the soul in passion for one's cause – serve only to remind us of reports in the papers just over 12 months previously, that 'at any moment an electrical current may set free a revival wave' in Wales.[123]

However, although the crowd's mood has been called a 'a semi-religious, almost fanatical invocation of fervour',[124] this must not mislead the historian into drawing false parallels with the revival. Certainly, some comparisons can be made – the excitement and passion were similar heightened expressions of cultural affirmation. Nonetheless, both the nationalism and the sense of Welsh identity characterized by such sporting occasions were markedly different in important respects. There were suggestions of Welsh racial superiority in some contemporary comments on the nation's sporting success,[125] but contemporarily such theories lacked the sinister connotations they might have for modern observers. In general, nationalism within the Welsh rugby community was of an inclusive and cooperative nature, as exemplified by celebrations of diversity within the rugby crowd, and furthermore this nationalism was a signifier of identity within the British and imperial frameworks. After the 1905 game, it was noted that the whole of Britain was watching – 'trusting Wales to redeem the national [i.e. British] honour'.[126] This was a far cry from the introverted nationalism of the revival movement; it certainly did not imply separation or isolation. Indeed, Home Rule campaigner Lloyd George had found the 'morbid footballism' of the Welsh detrimental to stirring any interest in his politics.[127] Yet the *South Wales News* noted that in Wales, 'Football is one of the factors that symbolizes individuality in national existence'.[128] Rugby complemented the new identity, forged through the establishment of national institutions such as a museum, university and Eisteddfod. Furthermore, the belief that Welsh identity could be celebrated colourfully as well as solemnly was exemplified by events such as the International Pageant at Cardiff in 1909 and the Investiture of the Prince of Wales in Caernarfon in 1911. Rugby offered similar effects without the patronizing 'bread and circuses' ideology – it was a democratic pageant of the people.

Through its democratic and inclusive image, rugby therefore represented a whole array of features that contemporaries wishing to boost 'modern' Wales could draw upon. What is more, in these respects it represented social freedom and the right of participation and choice for all in leisure. It was hoped by many that such ideals would infiltrate wider society – and in this respect the game's influence offers a stark contrast to the strict lifestyle advocated by revivalists. It is often forgotten, in these days of cliché and caricature regarding rugby and the Welsh, what pressures the game faced in order to establish itself as a positive national symbol in a society that has often been culturally degraded. In surviving the challenges presented during its maturation – of which revivalism was perhaps most potent – the game staked its claim within Welsh hearts. This endurance no doubt contributed to its surviving the twentieth century, through depressions and frustrations, to remain a pre-eminent source of Welsh pride, self-awareness and self-confidence today.

Notes

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- [2] G. Williams, *1905 and All That* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1991) pp.75–6.
- [3] *Ibid.*, pp.73–4
- [4] David Smith and Gareth Williams, *Fields of Praise* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1980).
- [5] D. Alexander, *Stars on a Saturday Afternoon* [Crynant RFC club history], (Crynant: Crynant RFC, 1991).
- [6] Williams, *1905 and All That*, p.74.
- [7] *Bois y Llan* [Llangennech RFC club history], (Llanelli: Llangennech RFC, 1985).
- [8] Smith and Williams, *Fields of Praise*, p. 8.
- [9] Quoted in Smith and Williams, *Fields of Praise*, p.??
- [10] H.E. Lewis, *With Christ Among the Miners* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1906).
- [11] Smith and Williams, *Fields of Praise*, p.120.
- [12] Rev W.D. Rowlands, 'The Revival at Llanelli – Minister's Impressions,' *Llanelli Mercury*, 22 Dec. 1904.
- [13] B.P. Jones, *Voices from the Welsh Revival* (Bridgend: Evangelical Press of Wales, 1996).
- [14] Smith and Williams, *Fields of Praise*, p.127.
- [15] Williams, *1905 and All That*, p.76.
- [16] Lewis, *With Christ Among the Miners*, p.10.
- [17] D. Matthews, *I Saw the Welsh Revival* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1944).
- [18] R. Hayward, 'From the Millennial..
- [19] *Carmarthen Journal*, 18 Nov. 1904.
- [20] Sidebar on Wales by Bob Richards in Xan Phillips, 'Rolling in the Aisles', *Fortean Times*, 77 (Oct. 1994).
- [21] *Llanelli Mercury*, 26 Jan. 1905.
- [22] Address by Evan Roberts, quoted in D. Matthews, *I Saw the Welsh Revival*.
- [23] Lewis, *With Christ Among the Miners*.
- [24] Matthews, *I Saw the Welsh Revival*.
- [25] Lewis, *With Christ Among the Miners*.
- [26] Jones, *Voices from the Welsh Revival*.
- [27] Matthews, *I Saw the Welsh Revival*.
- [28] Revd R.I. Davies, 'Religious Revivals' a course of Sunday morning sermons preached at Christ Church, Llandudno, 15 Jan. – 19Feb. 1905, archived at National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth.
- [29] Williams, *1905 and All That*, p.77.
- [30] *South Wales Daily Post*, 12 Dec. 1904.
- [31] *South Wales Daily Post*, 29 Nov. 1904.
- [32] *Merthyr Express*, 10 Dec. 1904.
- [33] *Western Mail*, 12 Dec. 1904.
- [34] *South Wales Daily Post*, 12 Dec. 1904; also *Cambrian Daily Leader*, 11 Feb. 1905.
- [35] R. Hayward, 'From the Millennial', in Taithe and Thornton, *Prophecy* (Stroud: Sutton, 1997).
- [36] Matthews, *I Saw the Welsh Revival*.
- [37] For example, Jones, *Voices from the Welsh Revival* and Taithe and Thornton, *Prophecy*.
- [38] Examples in *Western Mail* during Dec. 1904.
- [39] *South Wales Daily Post*, 12 Jan. 1905.
- [40] *Merthyr Express*, 31 Dec. 1904.
- [41] *South Wales Daily Post*, 13 Dec. 1904.
- [42] Examples in Matthews, *I Saw the Welsh Revival*.
- [43] Cassette 102, Evangelical Library of Wales, Bridgend.

- [44] *Llanelli Mercury*, 8 Dec. 1904.
- [45] *South Wales Daily Post*, 1 Jan. 1905.
- [46] Hayward, 'From the Millennial', pp.169–70; also see Lewis, *With Christ Among the Miners*.
- [47] Davies, 'Religious Revivals'.
- [48] For example, see *Western Mail*, 3 Dec. 1904.
- [49] *South Wales Daily Post*, 28 Dec. 1904.
- [50] For examples see *Western Mail*, 15 Nov. 1904, 5 Dec. 1904, 4 Apr. 1905; *Carmarthen Journal*, 25 Nov. 1904; also Lewis, *With Christ Among the Miners*.
- [51] As quoted in *South Wales Daily Post*, 12 Jan. 1905
- [52] *Merthyr Express*, 31 Dec. 1904.
- [53] *Western Mail*, 30 Nov. 1904.
- [54] *Western Mail*, 11 Feb. 1905.
- [55] *South Wales Daily Post*, 28 Dec. 1904.
- [56] For examples, see *Western Mail*, 30 Jan. 1905 and 09 Dec. 1905, *South Wales Daily Post*, 31 Jan. 1905 and 01 Feb. 1905, *Carmarthen Journal*, 24 Feb. 1905; also Jones, *Voices from the Welsh Revival*.
- [57] For examples, see *Merthyr Express*, 10 Dec. 1904 and 21 Jan. 1905; *Llanelli Mercury* 8 Dec. 1904 and 29 Dec. 1904, *Western Mail*, 09 Feb. 1905.
- [58] Quoted in *South Wales Daily Post*, 12 Dec. 1904.
- [59] Quoted in *South Wales Daily Post*, 12 Dec. 1904.
- [60] As argued in *South Wales Daily Post*, 13 Dec. 1904.
- [61] *Western Mail*, 30 Nov. 1904.
- [62] *Merthyr Express*, 31 Dec. 1904.
- [63] Matthews, *I Saw the Welsh Revival*.
- [64] Quoted in *Llanelli Mercury*, 24 Nov. 1904
- [65] Quoted in *Western Mail*, 9 Dec. 1904.
- [66] For example, *Western Mail*, 9 Dec. 1904, *Merthyr Express*, 3 Dec. 1904, *South Wales Daily Post*, 11 Jan. 1905 and 29 Nov. 1904.
- [67] Quoted in *Carmarthen Journal*, 17 March 1905.
- [68] *Carmarthen Journal*, 17 March 1905.
- [69] *Carmarthen Journal*, 17 May 1905.
- [70] An illustration of this tendency can be detected in repeated stories of a Turkish man who cropped up and spoke in various Chapels around South Wales – e.g. *Western Mail*, 22 Nov. 1904 and 26 Nov. 1904.
- [71] *Llanelli Mercury*, 2 March 1905.
- [72] *South Wales Press*, 16 Feb. 1905.
- [73] Further discussed in Hayward, 'From the Millennial'.
- [74] *Western Mail*, 31 Jan. 1905.
- [75] *Western Mail*, 2 Feb. 1905.
- [76] See for example *Llanelli Mercury* 2 March 1905; *Western Mail*, 8 Feb. 1905, 11 Feb. 1905, 23 Jan. 1905 and 10 April 1905.
- [77] *Carmarthen Journal*, 16 Feb. 1905.
- [78] *Western Mail*, 4 Feb. 1905.
- [79] *Carmarthen Journal*, 3 March 1905.
- [80] *Western Mail*, 15 Feb. 1905 and *Merthyr Express*, 15 April 1905.
- [81] For reports suggesting this, see *South Wales Daily Post*, 17 March 1905.
- [82] Hayward, 'From the Millennial', p.169; also 'Revival Delusions', *Cambrian News*, 24 Feb. 1905; 'Revival Manifestations', *Cambrian News*, 3 March 1905.
- [83] Hayward, 'From the Millennial', p.169.
- [84] *Cambrian Daily Leader*, 18 Jan. 1905.

- [85] See for example the letter from 'Omega', *Llanelli Mercury*, 2 March 1905.
- [86] For example, *Cambrian Daily Leader*, 30 Jan. 1905; *Western Mail*, 3 Dec. 1904, and especially *South Wales Daily Post*, 25 Jan. 1905.
- [87] *Merthyr Express*, 18 Feb. 1905.
- [88] *Merthyr Express*, 8 April 1905.
- [89] *Merthyr Express*, 21 Jan. 1905.
- [90] *Merthyr Express*, 8 April 1905.
- [91] Jones, *Voices from the Welsh Revival*, p.224.
- [92] Smith and Williams *Fields of Praise*; also Williams, *1905 and All That*, pp.77, 80, 82.
- [93] Williams, *1905 and All That*, p.76.
- [94] *Cambrian Daily Leader*, 28 Jan. 1905.
- [95] See especially *Western Mail*, 24 Jan. 1905 and *South Wales Daily Post*, 13 Jan. 1905, for requests to keep proceedings 'Welsh'; also *Western Mail*, 17 Jan. 1905, for an example of Evan Roberts's refusal to speak in English.
- [96] *Yr Efynglydd* [religious periodical], May 1909, pp.76–7.
- [97] *Y Glorian* [religious periodical], 7 Jan. 1905.
- [98] See *Merthyr Express*, 4 March 1905; also *South Wales Daily Post*, 12 Jan. 1905.
- [99] *Merthyr Express*, 17 Dec. 1904.
- [100] Ibid.
- [101] *Merthyr Express*, 8 April 1905.
- [102] Ibid.
- [103] T. Lewis, *The Mules* (Kenfig Hill: Kenfig Hill RFC, 1973)
- [104] *Western Mail*, 26 Jan. 1904.
- [105] *Western Mail*, 7 Jan. 1905.
- [106] *South Wales Daily Post*, 14 Jan. 1905.
- [107] *Llanelli Mercury*, 19 Jan. 1905.
- [108] *Cambrian Daily Leader*, 17 Feb. 1905; also *Cambrian Daily Leader*, 10 March 1905.
- [109] *Cambrian Daily Leader*, 11 March 1905; also see J. Billot, *History of Welsh International Rugby* (Ferndale: Ron Jones Publications, 1970)
- [110] *South Wales Press*, 16 April 1905.
- [111] *South Wales Daily Post*, 14 Jan. 1905; also *Llanelli Mercury*, 19 Jan. 1905.
- [112] *Western Mail*, 6 Feb. 1905.
- [113] *Cambrian Daily Leader*, 11 March 1905.
- [114] *South Wales Press*, 11 Dec. 1905.
- [115] *Cambrian Daily Leader*, 14 Dec. 1905.
- [116] *Western Mail*, 13 Dec. 1905.
- [117] *Western Mail*, 18 Dec. 1905.
- [118] *Llanelli and County Guardian*, 21 Dec. 1905.
- [119] *Western Mail*, 15 Nov. 1905; also *Llanelli and County Guardian*, 21 Dec. 1905.
- [120] A. Richards, *A Touch of Glory – One Hundred Years of Welsh Rugby* (London: Michael Joseph, 1980).
- [121] *Cambrian Daily Leader*, 18 Dec. 1905.
- [122] Ibid.
- [123] See the *Western Mail*'s article on the general mood in South Wales, 3 Dec. 1904.
- [124] Richards, *A Touch of Glory*.
- [125] Williams, *1905 and All That*, p.72; also see p.78.
- [126] *Llanelli and County Guardian*, 21 Dec. 1905.
- [127] Williams, *1905 and All That*, p.78.
- [128] *South Wales Daily Post*, 8 Feb. 1909.