

Watching the White Wheat and That Hole Below the Nose: The English Ballads of a Late-Nineteenth Century Welsh Jobbing-Printer

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At the International Ballad Conference at Swansea in 1996, I delivered a paper outlining the ballad-printing activities of a small jobbing-printer in the village of Troed-y-rhiw in the valleys of south-east Wales, some three miles south of the town of Merthyr Tudful, an industrial centre of major international significance during the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The printing office was situated in the village's main street and was part of the varied commercial activities of the family of Daniel Jones, an entrepreneur from rural west Wales who in 1853 had moved to that burgeoning mining village to open business there as a general trader.

Ballad-sheet production at the Jones family's printing office seems to have been in its heyday in the late 1870s and early 1880s, and is consequently a fairly late manifestation of such activity, since ballad-sheet printing gradually petered out in Wales toward the end of the nineteenth century, coming more or less to a full-stop around the time of the First World War. Rather unexpectedly, perhaps, given the increasing anglicization of south-east Wales during the latter years of the nineteenth century, most of the ballad sheets printed by this family of jobbing printers seem to have been in the Welsh language. However, a handful of English-language items have survived, and I should like to take advantage of the opportunity afforded by one of the themes proposed for the Hildersheim Ballad Conference, namely 'Migration of Ballads across Language Barriers', to elaborate on these. As the paper I delivered at the Swansea Ballad Conference is included in the volume, *Ballads in Wales* (1999), edited by Mary-Ann Constantine, it will not be necessary here to retrace the ground covered in that paper to any great degree.^[1] However, some of its salient points need to be noted as background to the present discussion.

From the late eighteenth century onward, the valleys of south-east Wales experienced rapid industrialization, as first iron works and then coal mining developed in the area on a large scale. This industrialization resulted in a massive growth of population in the

south-east, with settlements of all shapes and sizes spawning around the coal mines that were being sunk in ever increasing numbers as the nineteenth century progressed. During that century the population of south-east Wales grew from a little over 100,000 in 1800 to some 400,000 in 1850 to over a million by 1900; and in tandem with this population explosion came an explosion in ballad-sheet printing, as both ballad singers and printers alike seized the commercial opportunities afforded by those large and relatively affluent industrial conurbations, with their seemingly insatiable appetite for popular entertainment of all kinds. Merthyr Tudful was no exception. Its meteoric growth from the late eighteenth century onward had made it a veritable mecca for ballad singers of all descriptions and, consequently, thousands upon thousands of ballad sheets poured from the town's numerous printing presses during the nineteenth century, especially during the middle years of that century.

Some broadsides 'proper' (i.e. single sheets printed on one side of the paper) were produced in Wales during the nineteenth century. In addition, in the early years of the century, some ballad sheets took the form of small eight-page pamphlets, reflecting the normal format for ballad sheets in eighteenth-century Wales. However, ballad sheets in nineteenth-century Wales were, by and large, small four-page leaflets containing one or two, or sometimes three, songs — popular lyric songs of all descriptions, and not just narrative ballads.

Most of the material on the ballad leaflets printed in Wales during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries — the two great centuries of popular, commercial ballad-sheet printing in Wales — was in the Welsh language. This is not surprising in the case of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century since, until the middle of the nineteenth century, Welsh would have been the normal community language in most parts of Wales, and indeed the only language of a large proportion of the population in the industrial south-east as well as in the more rural north and west. However, the process of anglicization accelerated rapidly in industrial south-east Wales in the second half of the nineteenth century, especially from around 1870. For example, it is estimated that in 1871 about 70% of the population of the county of Glamorgan (where both Troed-y-rhiw and Merthyr Tudful were situated) was either monoglot Welsh speaking or bilingual, with only 30% monoglot-English speakers. By 1891, however, the monoglot-Welsh and bilingual element in the county's population had dropped to just under 50%, so that in the space of twenty years — as a result of immigration, the growth of English-medium state education, the inferior status of the Welsh language, and a general increase in anglicizing influences — the fairly substantial minority of monoglot-English speakers in 1871 had become a small majority by 1891.

One would have expected this anglicization to have been reflected in ballad-sheet content, with more and more English-language material, both original English songs and translations from Welsh, being included. However, this does not seem to have been the

case. Although there is some increase in the number of English-only or bilingual ballad sheets produced in Wales during the second half of the nineteenth century, there is little evidence of any significant ‘migration of ballads across language barriers’. Rather, the ballad sheet seems to have remained almost entirely within the domain of the declining Welsh-medium popular culture, failing to become a significant mode of expression of the expanding English-medium popular culture of the mining valleys of south-east Wales during the late nineteenth century.

The ballad sheets produced by the Jones family at Troed-y-rhiw reflect this pattern. Despite the fact that the Welsh language was in significant decline in the area during the heyday of the press’s ballad-printing activities in the second half of the 1870s and the early 1880s, of the 45 or so different ballad sheets that have survived from that press from that period, only six contain English-language songs. Of these, five also include Welsh-language material, and even the single ballad printed on the sixth sheet, although at first sight English, actually contains a macaronic element in its latter verses. In its ballad-sheet production, therefore, the Troed-y-rhiw press seems to have made little effort to cater for the substantial and growing monoglot-English element in the population. In striking contrast, the only two surviving issues of a newspaper produced by that same press in the same period, *The Taff Vale Gazette* for the last week of August and the first week of September 1881, are almost entirely in English, the sum total of the Welsh-language content being one letter and a bilingual advertisement.

Perhaps the most vivid example of this lack of effort on the part of the Troed-y-rhiw press to reach the monoglot-English element in the community through the medium of the ballad sheet may be seen in the ‘pit disaster’ ballad sheets it printed. Ballads occasioned by five such mining disasters are to be found among the extant ballad sheets printed at Troed-y-rhiw. Four of these tell of explosions in nearby valleys in the South Wales Coalfield — at Dinas (1879) and Pen-y-graig (1880) in the Rhondda Valley and at Aber-carn (1878) and Risca (1880) in the Ebwy Valley — while the fifth has as its subject an English pit disaster at Lycett in Staffordshire in 1880. In the case of the four ballads on local Welsh disasters, the names of those killed are listed on the ballad sheet, and one can gather from the surnames that a significant percentage of these were of non-Welsh extraction. There would have been a degree of linguistic assimilation of such immigrants, of course; but it is reasonable to assume that a fair proportion of the fatalities and their families were probably not fluent Welsh speakers. Yet the fact that the Troed-y-rhiw press seems not to have printed English-language versions of these pit-disaster ballads, not even that of the Staffordshire disaster in the English Midlands, clearly indicates that no major effort was being made on its part to reach the non-Welsh-speaking sector of the populace by means of the ballad sheet. In other words, ballad literature does not seem to have been a vital part of the popular culture of the expanding English element in the community; and in this, as has already been suggested, the Troed-y-rhiw press conforms to the general tendency for ballad sheets in

nineteenth-century Wales to be a Welsh-language domain with little migration over the language barrier into English, even in the latter and increasingly anglicized years of that century. A spent force by the end of the nineteenth century, even in the bastions of Welsh-medium cultural life in the more rural north and west of the country, the ballad did not have the vitality to jump the language divide to any significant degree.

This does not mean to say, of course, that there was no migration whatsoever, as the presence of the handful of English-language items on the Troed-y-rhiw ballad sheets clearly demonstrates; and it is to these items we now turn:

1) *Why did she leave him because he was poor?*

‘Why did she leave him because he was poor?’ is the only example of an English-language song included on one of the four-page Troed-y-rhiw ballad sheets with no Welsh-language counterpart on the same sheet. I know nothing of this item apart from the fact that it was republished in 1937 in a volume edited by William Henderson entitled *Victorian Street Ballads: A Selection of Popular Ballads Sold in the Street in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Country Life, 1937). The ballad tells of the sorrow which falls to the part of both Ellen and her childhood sweetheart, Edward, after she rejects his hand and marries for wealth rather than love. The general ethos of the song is sentimental, Victorian and very English, with the picture of ‘the old church on the bright village green’, for example, being totally foreign to both the scattered rural communities and the bustling industrial conurbations of nineteenth-century Nonconformist-dominated Wales. Does the inclusion of this rather incongruous item on a Troed-y-rhiw ballad sheet reflect, perhaps, a rare attempt to appeal to the tastes of the immigrant English sector of the community?

2) *The Little Straw-Thatched Cot*

Two other items appear on the same ballad-sheet as ‘Why did she leave him because he was poor?’, namely the Welsh original of a song entitled ‘Y Bwthyn Bach To Gwellt’, together with its English translation, ‘The Little Straw-Thatched Cot’. This was a well-known tear-jerking song in Victorian Wales, whose popularity is attested in the present context by the fact that both its Welsh and English versions were also included (with one or two minor variants in the English text) on another of the Troed-y-rhiw ballad sheets, this time accompanied by a light-hearted Welsh-language song on the importance of money, entitled ‘Y Pres’ (= ‘The Money’).

The author of both the music and the original Welsh words of ‘The Little Straw-Thatched Cot’ was Thomas Lloyd (1841-1909), a folk poet and musician commonly known by his bardic name, ‘Crych Elen’, who was brought up in the parish of Dolwyddelan in the slate-quarrying region of north-west Wales. He apparently based the song on the experiences of a cousin, Thomas Parry (1843-1936), who was orphaned by the age of three and subsequently reared by his grandmother in a little cottage. Tradition has it that the song was first transcribed onto a piece of slate at the quarry where Thomas Lloyd

was working at the time. Both the words and music were published by the author in sheet form in 1878. They soon became very popular, and the words (which include a refrain) are to be found on many ballad sheets from presses throughout the country.

Poverty drove Thomas Lloyd to sell the copyright of the song in the 1880s to Isaac Jones, a printer and publisher based at Treherbert in the Rhondda Valley; but although it is obvious from notices on other of their ballad sheets that the Troed-y-rhiw printers were very aware of copyright matters, there is no mention of the author's name, let alone the copyright owner, on the two occasions this song was included on their ballad sheets. (Incidentally, it is worth noting in the present context that copyright notices on the Troed-y-rhiw ballad sheets — 'All rights reserved', 'Copyright', etc. — are almost invariably in English, the official legal language in Wales at that time, even when the contents of the ballad sheet are otherwise all in Welsh.)

Thomas Lloyd emigrated to the United States of America, where a fine gravestone is to be seen on his grave in Fair View Cemetery, Slatington, Pennsylvania — although he almost did not have a grave at all. He had died a pauper's death in the poorhouse at Allentown, Pennsylvania, and his body would have been sold for medical research for seven dollars if a fellow-Welshman who was a quarry-owner in Slatington had not heard of this and felt that the author of 'The Little Straw-Thatched Cot' deserved a decent burial.^[2]

The English translation of the song is by one William Barrow, whose bardic name, 'Pererin Arfon', suggests that he came from Caernarfonshire in north-west Wales, and whose name is to be found on a number of ballad sheets of the period, not only as a translator of material from Welsh into English and vice versa, but also as the author of original Welsh lyrics.

3) *That Hole Below the Nose*

One of the Troed-y-rhiw ballad sheets contains a humorous Welsh song entitled 'Y Twll Bach Dan y Trwyn', followed by an English version entitled 'That Hole Below the Nose'. The song is comprised of six verses with a refrain, and although it appears on a number of ballad sheets of the period, I have failed to trace the authorship of either the Welsh or English versions. It belongs to a fairly prominent category amongst the ballads printed at Troed-y-rhiw which have women as the butt of their humour. In discussion at the Hildersheim Ballad Conference, Roger de V. Renwick labelled the song 'pure music hall', and it is certainly far from being 'politically correct' by today's standards! The opening verse sets the scene:

The day I married Peggy,
I thought to live content,
And to have victuals plenty,
And always pay my rent;

A smart and tidy female,
As you may well suppose,
But now she's fond of feeding
That hole below the nose.

The subsequent verses elaborate on Peggy's insatiable thirst for strong drink of all descriptions. Her time and money are spent in the local public houses, often in the company of 'Dick the lodger', while her husband is forced on Sundays 'to turn a cook,/ And get her dinner ready,/ Or have an angry look'. The song ends with a word of warning to all young men bent on marriage:

Be cautious, all you young men,
When you do want a wife;
If you wish to live contented,
And lead a happy life,
Put not your trust in women
If drink they will propose,
Nor those that's fond of feeding
That hole below the nose.

4) *Watching the White Wheat*

One of the best-known of Welsh folk-songs, 'Bugeilio'r Gwenith Gwyn', followed by an English translation, 'Watching the White Wheat', comprises another of the Troed-y-rhiw ballad sheets. Collected from oral tradition in the 1830s and first published in Maria Jane Williams's collection, *Ancient National Airs of Gwent and Morganwg* (1844), this love-song has been linked to the popular, but rather dubious, tradition of a rich heiress, Ann Thomas (1704-27) — the so-called 'Maid of Cefn Ydfa', from the parish of Llangynwyd in central Glamorgan — being forced to marry against her will and dying of heartbreak for her true love, the somewhat nebulous poet, Wil Hopcyn (1700-41), to whom the song is attributed. Such a tradition is a common motif in folk literature, of course, with more than one example to be found in Glamorgan folklore alone. However, the song itself makes no explicit reference to the tale. The first verse begins with the following metaphor:

A simple, youthful swain am I,
Who love at fancy's pleasure;
I fondly watch the blooming wheat,
And others reap the treasure...

The lad in the song has indeed lost the love of his life; but as can be seen from the last verse, the remainder of the song is not about his lover being kept from him against her will, but rather a protestation of his deep, undying love and an appeal for her to put him out of his misery by choosing him:

While hair adorns my aching brow,
This heart will beat sincerely;
While ocean rolls its briny flow,
So long I'll love thee dearly.
Oh! tell the secret, tell,
And under seal discover,
If it be I, or who is blest,
As thy pure heart's best lover.

The history of the Welsh text of this song is very complicated. It is probably a medley of folk stanzas from a number of sources, 'improved' by Taliesin Williams (1787-1847) and wed to a verse composed by his father, 'Iolo Morganwg' (Edward Williams, 1747-1826), that wayward genius, who — under the influence of the love of his native Glamorgan, not to mention laudanum — rewrote the history of Welsh scholarship and literature with Glamorgan very much centre stage.

The English translation printed on the Troed-y-rhiw ballad sheet is by Mrs Mary Catherine Pendril Llewelyn (1811-74). In 1841, she moved with her husband, Richard (1813-91), to the parish of Llangynwyd on his appointment as vicar, an office he was to hold until his death. Both Mary Pendril Llewelyn and her husband were natives of the Vale of Glamorgan, both were well-educated (he had an Oxford degree), and both took a great interest in the traditions and folklore of the area. The alleged lovers, Wil Hopcyn and Ann Thomas, were both buried at Llangynwyd, and although there were oral traditions in circulation prior to 1845, it seems that it is in a letter dated 6 October 1845 from Richard and Mary Pendril Llewelyn to the editor of the weekly newspaper, *The Cambrian*, that the tale of the 'Maid of Cefn Ydfa' first appeared in print. This was also the first time for the story and the song 'Watching the White Wheat' to be linked in black and white, since the Welsh text of the song as it had appeared in *Ancient National Airs of Gwent and Morganwg* (1844), together with Mrs Pendril Llewelyn's newly-translated English version, were also published with the letter.

Both Welsh and English versions were subsequently published in sheet form in the spring of 1846, as can be seen from the following advertisement which appeared in a number of issues of *The Cambrian* in late February and early March 1846:

POPULAR WELSH BALLAD.

"The Maid of Ceven Ydva."

This much-enquired for BALLAD, Translated from the original Welsh (which is also Printed with it) of W. Hopkin, and adapted to an Ancient Welsh Melody, by Mrs. PENDRELL LLEWELYN, dedicated to Lady Mackworth, is now Published by Z. T. Purday, 45, High Holborn, London, and to be had of all Music and Booksellers in the Principality; or by post free, by sending 2s. in stamps, as above.

That 'ANCIENT WELSH MELODY', which was not included on the Troed-y-rhiw ballad sheet, has remained popular ever since. It is said to be related to the English tune, 'Death and the Lady', and the tune of the German song, 'Ein Mädchen wollt zum Tanze gehn'.^[3]

5) Gelert, Llewelyn's Dog

Another popular international folktale lies behind the Welsh and English poems, entitled 'Gelert, Ci Llywelyn'/'Gelert, Llewelyn'[s] Dog', which form the contents of another of the Troed-y-rhiw ballad sheets. In its Welsh manifestation, this tale tells how the medieval Welsh prince, Llywelyn the Great (1173-1240), killed his faithful hound, Gelert, mistakenly thinking it had killed his baby son, whereas the dog had in fact killed the wolf who had been about to attack the baby. In its present form, the tale can be traced back to the late eighteenth century, when the landlord of an inn in the village of Beddgelert in the Snowdonia region of north-west Wales combined the popular international folk motif with a local onomastic tale which explained the name 'Beddgelert' as meaning 'the grave of Gelert' (Welsh *bedd* = 'grave').^[4]

The Welsh-language song on the Troed-y-rhiw sheet, 'Gelert, Ci Llywelyn', occurs quite frequently on ballad sheets of the period and was originally the seventh section of *Llewelyn, A Dramatic Cantata*, a work composed for the National Eisteddfod of Wales held at Swansea in 1863, and published in London in the following year by Addison & Lucas of Regent Street. The cantata's music (dedicated to the Prince of Wales) was composed by Queen Victoria's harpist, John Thomas ('Pencerdd Gwalia'; 1826-1913), with Welsh words by the popular Welsh lyricist, John Jones ('Talhaiarn'; 1810-69) and parallel English words by Thomas Oliphant, Honorary Secretary to the Madrigal Society. However, the English lyrics, 'Gelert, Llewelyn'[s] Dog', which follow Talhaiarn's Welsh words on the Troed-y-rhiw ballad sheet, are not those of Thomas Oliphant, but are rather a selection of sixteen of the twenty-four verses of an earlier English ballad on the subject written by a relation of Diana, Princess of Wales — the Honourable William Robert Spencer (1769-1834). This ballad, first published in 1800 as a four-page leaflet entitled *A Beth-Gêlert or the Grave of the Greyhound*, was written in August 1800 while the author was staying in north Wales and was an important milestone in both the development and popularisation of the Gelert legend.

6) Song of Praise to the Subscribers of Relief for South Wales

The remaining English-language item which has survived from the heyday of the Troed-y-rhiw press's ballad production is a six-verse poem whose full title reads, 'Song of Praise to the Subscribers of Relief for South Wales By a Collier who has a Wife and seven Children'. Each verse contains six lines, the last two of each being described as a 'chorus', although the wording of the chorus differs in each verse. It is printed on one side of one of the relatively few broadsides 'proper' produced by the press, the other side of that sheet being blank. It is interesting to note that a fair proportion of the press's

broadsides ‘proper’ relate to situations such as strikes and mining disasters where there was need to raise funds, and it is reasonable to assume — as suggested by Roger de V. Renwick at the Hildersheim Ballad Conference — that such broadsides, which would have been cheaper to produce than the normal four-page leaflets, played a part in those fund-raising activities.

The song on this broadside stems from a period of industrial depression in the South Wales Coalfield in 1877-78 when the outspoken and philanthropic Rector of Merthyr Tudful, John Griffith (1818?-85), together with the former MP for Merthyr, Lord Aberdare (H. A. Bruce, 1815-95), organised a distress fund and soup kitchens to aid the starving families of the area. The poem tells of the plight of the miners and their families and the way the soup kitchens had saved them from starvation, and sings the praises of those willing to come to their aid, especially ‘the Rector of Merthyr and Lord Aberdare’. No author’s name is given, other than the attribution to the anonymous ‘Collier who has a Wife and seven Children’ in the title; but the fact that the word ‘Copyright’ is printed at the end of the song probably indicates that it was written by a local poet especially for publication by the Troed-y-rhiw printers.

Despite being predominantly in English, as has already been suggested, it is not strictly correct to term this item an English-language song, as the penultimate chorus is in Welsh and the last verse and chorus are macaronic. Not unexpectedly in the case of a bilingual community, a macaronic element is present on a number of the press’s ballad sheets, when for example an occasional English term or phrase in common usage is included in a Welsh-language poem or when a piece of reported speech is conveyed in its original English. Indeed, in one of the songs published by the press — a popular song by ‘the last of the “great” [Welsh] balladists’, Abel Jones (‘Bardd Crwst’; 1829-1901), which pours contempt on those Welsh-speakers who forsake their native language for broken English — the macaronic element is an essential part of the satire. However the last verse and chorus of the song under consideration here are different in that the poet switches languages mid-sentence for no obvious reason, making the diction as unintelligible to the non-Welsh speaker as the last couplet of the previous verse:

Ni theimlwn byth newyn tra pery’r cawl peas,
And when the time comes that subscriptions must cease,
Wrth y glo and the furnace *ni weithiwn bob* one,
Gan cofio yr holl seison who helped the poor man.

CHORUS

Forget them, no never, no never I hope,
Thra plant bach’n cofio ‘the kitchen pea soup.’

Here are the same lines with the Welsh sections translated into English and italicised:

*We will never feel hungry while the pea soup lasts,
And when the time comes that subscriptions must cease,
At the coal and the furnace we'll work, every one,
Remembering all the English who helped the poor man.*

CHORUS

Forget them, no never, no never I hope,
While young children remember 'the kitchen pea soup.'

It is rather easier to explain the Welsh-language chorus at the end of the previous verse, since it is an expression of thanks, in reported speech, in what was still at the time the everyday language of a large proportion of that community:

When orders come in for the Iron and Coal,
And trade is revived, finding work for us all;
We'll sing with new hearts to the praise of the pair,
The Rector of Merthyr and Lord Aberdare.

CHORUS

*'Am ddanfon mor hael a chasglu ar frys,
I'n cadw rhag newyn drwy roddi cawl peas.'*

[= 'For sending so generously and collecting in haste,
To keep us from famine by providing pea soup.']

Those, then, are the six English-language items which have survived on bilingual ballad-sheets from the heyday of the Troed-y-rhiw press's ballad production in the second half of the 1870s and the early 1880s; and although they represent but a small proportion of that press's ballad output, it is interesting to note that their range of subject matter reflects that of the press's Welsh-language ballads to a large degree.

Ballad printing at Troed-y-rhiw seems to have ceased to all intents and purposes with the death in 1883 of William Jones, one of the two sons of Daniel Jones involved in the printing aspect of what was a very wide-ranging family business, and which included grocery, stationery and ironmongery as its main elements. William Jones appears to have been the more interested of the two brothers in ballad production and in printing in general, and it may be that he was also more devoted to the Welsh language and its culture than his brother. Certainly the fact that a number of the press's Welsh-medium ballads strike a patriotic note, coupled with the fact that such a high percentage of its ballad output was in Welsh, may perhaps indicate a commitment to Welsh language and culture over and above the call of commerce.

William's brother, J. D. Jones, continued with the jobbing printing into the 1890s and the early 1900s, but apparently on a much smaller scale. I have traced only three items which bear his imprint. One is the programme for an *eisteddfod*, a competitive cultural festival, held in April 1910 under the auspices of one of the village's Nonconformist

chapels, in which the majority of competitions were clearly still being held through the medium of Welsh. Another is the annual report of that same chapel for 1916. The third item is a broadside entitled 'A Song to the Stone-Breakers'. Its three verses and chorus are printed on one side of the sheet, with the other side left blank. The song was written by an inhabitant of the village, one Thomas Richards, and was occasioned by a six-month lock-out in 1898 when colliers were employed at a stone-yard in Troed-y-rhiw as a means of relief and paid one shilling a day for their labour. The local newspaper, *The Merthyr Express*, in its edition of 18 June 1898 includes a report on a large protest meeting held at the Troed-y-rhiw stone-yard on Saturday, 11 June, organised for the most part by local members of the Independent Labour Party; at that meeting, it is stated, Thomas Richards of Troed-y-rhiw sang 'A Song to the Stone-Breakers', which he had written himself. Intriguingly, the novelist Jack Jones (1884-1970), in his autobiography, *Unfinished Journey* (1937), tells how he, as a young striking miner in Merthyr in 1898, whose only earnings were what he received for 'a day a week stone-breaking for the council', went with his mother and brother to neighbouring valleys on 'begging expeditions', taking with them

supplies of 'ballads', as the song-sheets pleading for justice for the miners were called. The song-sheets mam got on credit terms. 'Thruppence a dozen to sell again,' the wholesaler said. Mam said: 'Right, give the boys a couple of dozen apiece — pay you when we come for the next lot.'

Might these, perhaps, have been copies of the Troed-y-rhiw broadside? The tune named on the Troed-y-rhiw broadside is the popular 76.76.D. melody, 'Gwnewch Bopeth yn Gymraeg' [= 'Do Everything in Welsh'], which is rather ironic in that this is the only surviving ballad sheet printed by that press whose content is totally English!

The strike of 1898 was an important turning-point in industrial relations in the area and led directly to the formation of the South Wales Miners' Federation in October 1898. It is also indicative of the far-reaching social changes that were afoot in the valleys of south-east Wales during the 1890s and the early 1900s, with the older Liberal Nonconformist radicalism gradually giving way to a more militant unionism, more socialist and international in outlook, and fuelled by a marked increase of immigrants from England and the growing inability of the valley communities to absorb them culturally and linguistically. Those years witnessed the increasingly marginalization of the Welsh language and its culture in the mining valley communities, as it became over-associated with the older Liberal Nonconformity. Indeed, one may consider the three items from the Troed-y-rhiw press that have survived from the 1890s and 1900s as symbolic of the polarisation that was on the increase during that period. By the First World War, the outlook was grim for the Welsh language in the valleys of south-east Wales, and was to remain increasingly so until the 1960s and the beginnings of the gradual revival in its fortunes which has characterised the latter years of the twentieth

century. Ballad-singing was to play an important role in that revival — but that is another story![\[5\]](#)

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Notes

[1] [A fuller discussion of the activities of the Troed-y-rhiw printers is to be found in my Welsh-language article, ‘Golwg ar Rai o Gerddi a Baledi Cymraeg Troed-y-rhiw’, in Hywel Teifi Edwards (ed.), *Cyfres y Cymoedd: Merthyr a Thaf* (Llandysul: Gwasg Gomer, 2001).]

[2] On Thomas Lloyd and his song, see Huw Williams, *Canu'r Bobol* (Denbigh: Gwasg Gee, 1978), pp. 183-5.

[3] On the song and the story of the Maid of Cefn Ydfa, see Maria Jane Williams, *Ancient National Airs of Gwent and Morganwg*, ed. Daniel Huws (Welsh Folk-Song Society, 1988), and G. J. Williams, ‘Wil Hopcyn and the Maid of Cefn Ydfa’, in *Glamorgan Historian*, vol. 6, ed. Stewart Williams (Cowbridge: D. Brown & Sons, 1969).

[4] On the development of the tale, see Graham C. G. Thomas, ‘Beddgelert: Y Chwedl Wreiddiol’, *Llên Cymru*, 17:1-2 (1992), pp. 5-10.

[5] [I discuss part of that story in my article, ‘Painting the World Green: Dafydd Iwan and the Welsh Protest Ballad’, *Folk Music Journal*, 8:5 (2005), pp. 594-618.]

