

Owain Glyn Dŵr Lecture:

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Title: The survival of culture under foreign rule: Wales and Australia. By Isabel Ellender

I pay respects to the traditional owners of the land on which we meet.

Thanks to Dilys for having the confidence in me to invite me to deliver this presentation to celebrate what Owain Glyn Dŵr did for us Cymry. I thank you all for having the interest to come and hear what I have to say. I had no idea about how little I knew of my own heritage when I started thinking about my talk and I have so enjoyed my foray into it.

Introduction.

So, today's talk is an essay: it is my adventure into distant times and tracing the journeys and experiences of my ancestors and those of Indigenous Australians. It struck me many years ago that they are in many ways parallel paths. How could this be, I wondered? What forces have led the Welsh and Indigenous Australians to the present frustration of striving for so long to achieve something that seems just out of reach?

I'm going to take you on a journey through time and point out some of the factors and forces which I believe, have influenced who we are as Cymry or as Indigenous Australians. I'm also going to look at the relationships these ethnic groups had/have with the conquerors who have exerted such enormous impacts on our respective cultures. Far bigger brains than I have yet to lead the way to the self-determination we seek. But we are here still! So we have part of the answer!

Cymru

The tundra that was Wales more than 250 million years ago was first occupied by hunters with a stone technology. But it was not until after the last Ice Age 10 000 years ago that people established a definable society, spoke a Celtic language, followed Druidic religion, had agriculture by 4000 years ago and quarries, mines and industries associated with metals like copper, lead and iron, and conducted a brisk coastal trade with Europe by 2600 years ago.

The Romans (50AD – 383AD)

1,900 years ago, the Cymry were fending off their first invasion – that of the Romans. They retreated to mountain forts, but inexorably the powerful Romans exerted control - by diplomacy or by conquest. The Welsh in turn took advantage of the Romans by feeding the needs of their army with their iron and agricultural products. They built their market towns around the Roman forts and there were prosperous times. Arguably, the Roman occupation from 43AD to the 4thC brought peace and prosperity, and left a big legacy in Wales.

The Romans brought coinage, pottery, roads, marketing systems, and new ideas like Christianity. Some historians put the beginning of Wales in 383AD and Magnus Maximus its father. Though Cymru had not yet come into being as a name, the Roman, Maximus (or Maccsen, as the Cymry call him) opened the way for independent organisations in Wales to develop before he took his army away and left Wales to the Dark Ages and Irish raiders.

Medieval Wales: After the Romans [5-11thC]

The departure of the Romans was both a disaster and an opportunity for Wales. Coinage, pottery and marketing systems withered, but trade continued with Europe and well beyond. The Welsh settled into a rural agricultural economy of scattered farmsteads with small population centres based on royal courts. Wales developed its main kingdom dynasties and its characteristic Welsh language with incorporated Latin words.

Saxons, Normans and Vikings

The 5th C saw kings and princes set up in their small kingdoms and local traditions flourished. This was the era of King Arthur. But the Welsh again had to defend themselves against

1. The powerful Saxons (6th C),
2. Viking raids (9,10th C) and
3. The Normans around 11th C.

It was a time when the Teutonic east, the Brythonic west and the Gaelic north of Britain crystallised their respective cultures. The Saxon king Offa built his 240 km long dyke between England and Wales to keep at bay the angry men of Wales who wanted back their rich lowland fields in the east. The Welsh princedoms formed big alliances of families in which there was local peace even if there were internecine rifts among the princes. Unfortunately, these divisions were a weakness against strong unified outsiders.

Hywel Dda of Deheubarth who, as king, created the long-lasting, evolving Laws of Wales in 950AD came close to creating a Welsh unity and identity in his single kingdom. His commonsensical and far-seeing folk law emphasised reconciliation of kin groups, gave rights to women, and rights in land ownership. From this time the Welsh language was written and Welsh literature was born. Although the English king had become overlord of Wales even without a treaty, Hywel kept the peace with the English by good relations.

Normans of 11th C

It was the Normans of the 11th C who developed the Welsh Marches. The Marches were initially Norman lordships that formed a buffer zone between the English kingdom and the Welsh rulers. The Marcher lords were exceptionally powerful, semi-independent and with authority to keep the Welsh at bay so that the fertile regions of Wales could be colonised by English, Norman and Flemish peasants. A dense settlement of peasants is always a more effective way of consolidating conquest than a thin layer of gentry, comments historian, John Davies. It was a politically strategic and a long-lived legacy upheld by the subsequent English kings.

The Normans brought a quarter of Wales under their power with support from England. They used religious reforms and monasticism to control the Welsh and subsume the Welsh church under Canterbury. The Welsh did not help their cause by having numerous regional leaders, kings and princes. Rarely was there an overall leader such as Owain Gwynedd or Owain Glyn Dŵr. The 2 edged sword was the status given to the local kingdoms in return for their allegiance to the English king. But, as the historian Giraldus Cambrensis observed in the 12th C, *'if they would be inseparable, they would be insuperable.'*

Indigenous Welsh

The Welsh were still considered by the English, and indeed Europeans, as wild barbarians and untamable! They were seen as anarchic in attitude to law, lacked understanding of centralised power and depended on pastoralism for their diet. But among the Welsh there was a conscious shift to become Cymry rather than Brythons – a consciousness of being Cymreig.

The *Cymry* saw themselves as a distinct people living in a distinct, defined territory, and claimed common ancestry. This was their concept of nationhood, racial, cultural, & social identity, with aspirations of political unity under a single prince.

In the 13thC another conquest of the Cymry resulted from the defeat of the obstreperous Prince of Wales, Llywelyn ap Gruffydd, by Edward the First in 1282. Edward 1 reinforced the depleted Marcher Lords and ruled all of Wales as a colonial system of supervising English sheriffs, English law and crippling taxes. Wales fell back into a fractured state and deeper subordination to the English kingdom, though now there was greater awareness of a common enemy.

An unintended positive of the Edwardian legacy was the string of castles he built. Caernarfon castle, fashioned on Constantinople, has been referred to by Thomas Pennant as *'the magnificent badge of our subjugation'*.

That such massive fortifications to secure Wales is a tribute to the tenacity of the Welsh! Little could Edward have foreseen their enormous attraction and money-spinning advantage 7 centuries later!

Owain Glyn Dŵr [1354-1413 approx]

Another great hero rose from the economic collapse and intellectual fatigue that following the destruction of a quarter of the Welsh population by the Black Death in 1349- 50 which not unexpectedly hit the peasants hardest. Owain Glyn Dŵr was a baron/squire, wealthy and well educated, and groomed to be a leader. A comet in 1402 was an omen as was his raising of the dragon flag at no less than Caernarfon castle, the ostentatious symbol of Edward's rule! He exhorted all Welshmen to join him in

'releasing the Welsh from bondage'.

Glyndŵr was made Prince of Wales at the Welsh parliament in Machynlleth 2 years later, – the allegorical climax of Welsh history.

The English parliament hastily passed the Penal Laws in 1402 which among other things, prohibited the Welsh from gathering in groups, gaining office, carrying arms and living in the fortified towns! The poet, Ieuan Deulwyn, reminded the Welsh -

“Chwi a ellwch a’ch allwydd, rhoi clo ar Sais rhag cael swydd.”
[You can with your key, lock the English out of office.]

The Act of Union in 1536 was a dismal year for Wales. English colonisation was consolidated by the so-called Act of Union passed by the English parliament without any Welsh representation: Wales and the Marches were incorporated into England for the next 234 years (1770). Unlike the equality afforded Scotland and Ireland in their Acts of Union, there was only token and minimal administrative responsibility given to the Welsh gentry as parliamentary representation etc. It eliminated any legal distinction between Wales and England and enforced English as the official language. Monoglot Welsh were greatly disadvantaged and the Welsh gentry would within 200 years be monoglot English and distanced from their Welsh culture. At the time, the squire William Vaughan of Cardiganshire, pandering to the English elite said:

“I rejoice that the memorial of Offa’s Dyke is extinguished with love and charity; that our green leeks, somewhat offensive to your dainty nostril, are now tempered with your fragrant roses.” (Bradwr!)

The Council of Wales formalised primogeniture and encouraged the gentry to build up their estates. They sent their sons to fee-paying schools and universities in France and England, and adopted the ways of the English aristocracy. The power of the gentry and their huge estates, some more than 20 000 acres, were an insidious subjugating force. They kept land ownership from the middle and lower classes who, if they were lucky, worked for a paternalistic lord. The estates developed into economic machines that supplied local and export beef, lamb, wool etc.

Two important spurs for the written Welsh language in the 16thC were the appearance of the first books from the relatively new printing press and the translation of the Bible into Welsh. The Little Bible found its way into ordinary homes and hence, Welsh was initially overlooked by English officialdom if it remained in the sacred sphere and did not encroach into the secular sphere of courts, schools, and the mansions of the gentry.

The civil war of 1603-49 reduced the king’s power, left Wales still as a dark corner, but further empowered the big landowners who bought common and Crown lands to enlarge their estates that then passed down whole through generations. It was the Welsh ruling class who became the parliamentary representatives. Many abandoned Welsh names, Welsh traditions and customs, Welsh poetry and music. Some thought Welsh culture could be expunging from their history and identity.

It was the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion in London, that brought a rebirth of interest in Welsh language and society. It promoted Welsh plurality, popular literature and importantly, called for economic and scientific ventures that would benefit Wales.

An exciting new entity to come out of this was the eisteddfod. The expansion of popular culture and literature in the second half of the 18th C saw Wales become one of the few European countries to acquire a literate majority, a cultured peasantry. However, Welsh language was also seen as a weapon of reaction: schools in which Welsh was the medium flourished at the time that Non-conformist preachers appealed to the disgruntled Welsh. Sermons were *philosophical* rather than *evangelical*, and clergy delivered and promoted education, literacy and publication.

The Industrial Revolution [18th century -]

At the dawning of industrialisation, north Wales was still run by the big estates and was highly dependent on cattle, grain and timber. The technological developments of the agrarian revolution barely touched the North and held back progress. It was the estate gentry who, by diverting profits from farming their estates, had the means to organise themselves into companies to develop the slate industry. Meanwhile, their tenant farmers lived in mud-walled, chimney-less, thatched cottages warmed by dry dung. Already wealthy estates with land augmented their from the extinguishment of common lands took no heed of protest from those who gathered wood, timber and peat and grazed their sheep there.

In south Wales, the landowning gentry under whose land metals or coal was found made enormous profits. Industrialisation there required a shift of labour from rural agrarian poverty to man the mines, quarries, mills and furnaces. But the fragility of human existence would persist as men took on the brutal conditions of the mining workplace where they were expected to slave in filthy and dangerous conditions, and live in crowded and disease-ridden communities. This was an inflammable society in a period of religious, social economic foment and terrible industrial unrest as the many workers sought better conditions and pay in the face of huge global demand for metals. Working class leaders in the coalfields harangued workers with the message that it was the failings of the poor that allowed the rich to retain authority, and only self-improvement would bring the working class the power they sought. Many paid the price of transportation to van Diemens Land.

Welsh intellectuals recognised in the Welsh a cultural and linguistic distinctiveness as well as a readiness to riot! English observers asserted that it was this distinctiveness that hindered the law and the Established church from civilising the Welsh! This attitude also fed the rampant racism of the time that accused the undisciplined Welsh and Irish of being from a stock inferior to the Teutonic English. Hadn't the upper class Welsh gentry risen above their fellows by integrating into English ways? But the wildness of the Welsh could be tamed by a good English education! Teachers were cheaper than keeping a body of police and soldiers to hold down insurrections. It is true that education in 19th C Wales *was* backward and the consequences of that were an under representation of the poorer classes in professions, a lack of critical scholarship and development of ideas about Welshness.

The treachery of the *blue books* report (1847).

One cannot talk about the huge misunderstanding (or was it misrepresentation of Welsh culture), without considering the reasons and execution of the commission into Welsh education – in particular, how Welsh children were to acquire the English language.

The treachery of the blue covered report (thereafter dubbed *The Blue Books*) referred to the readiness of Welsh clergy to slander their Nonconformist compatriots and the perceived sexual laxity of the Welsh where poor families slept in the one room they possessed. Most Welsh children were educated at Sunday schools, and poverty and rurality prevented many from attending any school. Two out of 3 spoke only Welsh. The English commissioners who wrote the report spoke no Welsh! Yet they attempted to interview Welsh-speaking school children. Not surprising then that their report to parliament was critical, scathing, and insultingly misrepresentative. After all, Wales was integrated into England and parliament was very aware that education in Wales needed upgrading. But the panacea for raising educational standards – indeed, to raise the Welsh people into civilisation was schooling in English, said the commissioners. Welsh leaders were incensed!

Moving into the modern world [19th – 20th centuries].

The government was at least compelled to improve working conditions in the industrial south by taking women and children out of mines and tackling the causes of frequent cholera epidemics. But these measures to move the Welsh into modernity took another 80 years even though Wales supplied most of the world with coal, metals and slate. Landowners, by now mostly non-Welsh, made fortunes on the resources under their land, but they were not nurturing of the local communities.

It was the growing scholarly interest in Welsh traditions would lead to a cultural rebirth among the populace and would lead to mass nationalism. This process has started with the *eisteddfodau*, Welsh publications, a national library and museum, and strenuous efforts to open a national university by 1914.

Sadly, some intellectuals smugly blamed the victims: Michael Daniel Jones, an emigrant to the United States, called on the Welsh to challenge their subjugation by poverty and industrial labour. The Welsh, he said, had become servile because of the English control of their land, industries, commerce, law and schools. He called for an independent political party and nationalism. Welsh scholars who had had to study at Oxford and

Cambridge, stressed individualism rather than communities and avoidance of anything that hindered progress, such as the Welsh language.

Lack of political input was another matter that held up Welsh participation in social progress. Only the landed gentlemen who owned 90% of Wales, could afford to be the political representatives and school their children beyond age 13 - even 23 years after the Blue Books Commission. In the mid 19th C only 13% of Welsh inhabitants had the vote. Those who farmed the land were largely non-voting tenants. Democracy (one adult=one vote), had to wait til 1950!

Up to WW1, Welsh speakers declined (50% to 43%) and those who could speak English increased (85% to 92%). In WW1, soldiers on parade or in their billets were forbidden to speak Welsh. Nevertheless, Welsh people who did not speak Welsh angrily assert they were Welsh. The decline of the chapels took the Welsh language with it.

So who were the Welsh of the first half of the 20th C?

Scots could define themselves as people subject to the formal Law of Scotland and who live within the historic boundaries of Scotland.

John Davies includes in his definition of Welshness as manifested in South Wales

- A proclivity to political radicalism
- Communal solidarity
- Singing and Rugby
- Voluble and welcoming temperament
- Lack of obsession with class divisions

Even in 1921, the perception of the Welsh as 'a curse' and 'obstreperous' was reflected in the BBC's refusal to create any Welsh language programme because that would provide air time to extremists!

By 1930s, Britain was divided into the rich central and south, and the rest including Wales slipped into neglect and decline. The old industrial areas suffered greater than 20% unemployment, malnutrition, TB and mental illness. The Portal report of 1934 recommended that 39 000 of able bodied men from the coalfields be transferred to the English midlands or SE. In north Wales, the death rate exceeded the birth rate with bad implications for the passing on of language and culture.

Wales could have become one of the founder nations of Europe – a much wider concept than being just a component of Britain. But, said Saunders Lewis, civilization must have a local name and here it was Wales. Furthermore, he said civilization is threatened when people are without property, traditions, and responsibilities, and are then prey to corrupt economic and political influences. And why had 40 000 Welshmen had to die in WW1 defending England, asked Lewis. Burning the Pen y Berth bombing school served to ignite the Nationalists and the young. But Westminster still suppressed the Welsh by denying any benefits of devolution and the Council of Wales merely advised government. Government responded to the unemployment resulting from decline in need for slate, coal etc, in the 1960s and 70s with assigned Development Areas such as the Trawsfynydd atomic power station! (*Diolch yn fawr!*) Yet household income was still 10% lower than for Britain as a whole.

Invasion of the well-to-do English.

From the 1960s, modern transportation in Wales supported the tourism industry but also the migration of English people buying and restoring the relatively cheap and cute country farmhouses. This represented yet another English colonisation which again changed the ethnic character of communities. By 1980s, thousands of English migrants entered Wales each year and the Welsh were moving out.

The outcome of this latest English colonisation was decline in cultural events and the Welsh language, but also the destruction of architectural heritage with the ad lib restoration of farmhouses and cottages. In Welsh schools, English emigrant children outnumbered the native Welsh.

Influences from within Wales -

These brought depression *and* positive changes. They included the establishment of Welsh schools, Welsh road signs, Plaid Cymru, the Trefechan bridge blockade and the Tryweryn protests. The Welsh cause benefited from

the militancy of the 1960s and Welshness beamed out through books, radio & TV, drama, pop and even archaeology.

The reliance on the extractive industries waned. Wales was given a capital city – Cardiff (1963), a Secretary of State (1964), with a budget and later a Welsh Assembly. Although this gave a good measure of independence and opportunity to generate infrastructure and organisations, the assignment of responsibility was shallow as illustrated by Westminster over-riding all Welsh objections to the flooding of Trewern to supply water for Liverpool. Devolution still had too many dissenters (76% against in the Referendum). It was they who raised the issues of the cost of the Assembly, over-government, the threat to British unity, and that it was not in the interests of non-Welsh speakers in Wales. The internecine squabbling of the 1980s was in words, though the common enemy was still the English as those with burnt-out summer cottages in rural Wales were to find out.

So Wales was still divided politically into 3 –

- ❑ British Wales (East and south coasts)
- ❑ Welsh Wales (southern coalfields)
- ❑ Cymru Cymraeg (Gwynedd and Dyfed)

And four political parties fought there for supremacy! In modern Wales more men work in banks than in coalpits. Radicalism and socialism in Wales have been subdued. The interrupted steps to self-government have halted. They began in earnest 200 years ago when Welsh political leaders like Thomas Edward Ellis called in 1886 for self-government encompassing nationality, history, literature, social values and political institutions.

The efforts by the Welsh to restore not just our language and culture but our very existence have been numerous. Some have faded or failed. But it has to be recognised that we are still here (*Dan ni yma o hyd!*) The Welsh language survives. Efforts by many over the ages have ensured that. And geographical identity is more important than ever today.

Australia

Australia as an occupied country has only been invaded once, and that was in 1788 with the coming of the First Fleet into what became Sydney. Extending back in time for some 63 000 years, the only foreigners any ancient Australians might have come across were the members of a distant tribe. True, for perhaps thousands of years the north coast of Australia had seen interchange with people to the north. Sailors brought the dingo some 4000 years ago, and the last 300 years saw exchanged voyages, wives and language with Maccassan fishermen from Indonesia. But the Macassans only came to fish, do a little trade, and go home. They left little but tamarind trees, iron boiling pots, and some words.

Coastal people in western and eastern Australia and in Tasmania would have seen strange boats and the odd white man who ventured briefly onto the shore during the centuries of European maritime exploration. But for most of its inhabited history, Australia was a remote location, unmapped, unknown by the world, with an ocean barrier between it and most of the world. Through glacial and interglacial, Aboriginal communities developed their societies, technologies, 250 languages, and consolidated their distinct countries in peace from intruders, and were unaware of the social turmoil gripping many parts of the rest of the world.

The British invasion of Australia began as small self-contained ventures. Abel Tasman in 1642 had dismissed Tasmania as too close to the rim of the Earth and too cold to grow spices. Cook's assessment of New Holland and its occupants in 1770 was that the Aborigines appeared compliant and there was good land for farming. Although he had observed the Aboriginal people, Cook, by raising the British flag in what became Sydney, disobeyed his orders from the Admiralty which stated:

"You are with the consent of the natives to take possession of convenient positions in the country in the name of the King of England; or, if you find the country uninhabited, take possession for His Majesty by setting up Proper Marks and Inscriptions, as first discoverers and possessors."

The first British authorities could not recognise in Aboriginal society any obvious centralised executive and therefore deemed it 'uncivilised'. Thus, no war was declared. Rather, at the stroke of a pen, Aboriginal people were made subjects of the British Crown and the eastern seaboard a possession of England. Thus was Australia conquered - without the prior occupants of the land having any idea. Little did Aboriginal people know that by a

single act in which they played no part, they came under British law and were required to live by those laws. Later resistance by Aboriginal groups was declared a criminal act of rebellion and punishable.

New introductions.

Smallpox came via the First Fleet in 1788. The vulnerable Aboriginal population succumbed to its first exposure within that year and a great many died in the Sydney region and along the Aboriginal lines of communication far and wide. It wiped out 30-60% of the original population. Introduced diseases like these continued to decimate the Aboriginal population over the next 40 years.

The Killing Times.

Some commentators have labelled the directives and approaches of the first 50 years of the invasion as acts of genocide. The efforts of the military, government and squatters were aimed at elimination rather than just subduing the Aboriginal population. Once they realised the strangers were not going away, any polite tolerance or hospitality was outlived and Aboriginal men stepped up their resistance to white invasion. So wherever the British commandeered land to establish settlement and agriculture, they almost invariably met with resistance. But the Aboriginal resistance was no force against guns, numbers and soldiers.

However, their guerrilla warfare tactics caused the colonial authorities to introduce martial law in the whole of Tasmania and the Bathurst region. This aimed to curtail Aboriginal movements with curfews and banned congregations – just like the Penal Laws of Owain Glyn Dŵr's time in 1402 which prohibited the Welsh from gathering, gaining office, carrying arms and living in fortified towns!

In the 1830s, whole communities were massacred in retaliation for stealing sheep and 'rushing' the cattle and to dissuade others. In many parts, especially Tasmania, resistance to the theft of land blocked the expansion of pastoralism until the Governor offered reward for every Aborigine brought in dead or alive, and military intervention forced submission. The military, the Border Police and Native Police all served to protect the squatters and eliminate Aboriginal resistance. Fighting and massacres took hundreds of Aboriginal men, women and children and accounted for 5-25% of the population on the mainland and 70% in Tasmania.

Violence continued right up to the mid 19thC and in remoter parts til the 20th C. One of the last *recorded* massacres (in which police arrested, chained, killed and burned the bodies of a number of men and women), occurred in 1926 in the Kimberley.

Gradually, the southeast was subdued by the military, lawless local vendettas of pastoralists, and Christianisation - an ironic process of '*civilising the natives.*'

Acquiring the land.

From the 1830s, free settlers flowed in increasing numbers on the news of fortunes to be made. In those early years acquiring land was a matter of choosing an area, marking it off and putting out sheep or cattle. Within a year of white settlement of what became Melbourne, 25 000 sheep had arrived here. Men already rich and powerful in Britain took up vast acres in the best agricultural lands and began the lucrative Australian wool trade. Shepherds had to keep good watch to make sure Aborigines did not hunt down their animals. When a shepherd got speared there was no law to prevent squatters gathering up their muskets, getting together to hunt down perpetrators and their families. So grew a squattocracy, a part of which became the established elite, the landed gentry. John Batman's attempt to acquire 600 000 acres (25 sq kms) by an illegal treaty with an Aboriginal hunting party is small fry compared to the 20th C *legal* Vestey cattle baron properties amounting to 27 million acres (110, 250 sq kms) in the Northern Territory and Western Australia!

Convicts provided a workforce in those early years so the Aboriginal people had neither a social or geographical place, nor a visibility in the fulminations of the new society. Later, those Aborigines who survived the violent years lived in squalid camps on the cattle stations up north which soon got to rely heavily on the horsemanship of Aboriginal men.

The outcome of colonisation for Indigenous communities was the taking of land for farming, desecration of sacred sites, meetings/ceremonies curtailed, denied access to food-collecting grounds and water, starvation/malnutrition, greed/meanness of owning big herds and flocks without sharing, abuse of women, and introduced diseases

But the Indigenous people did not die out and the government from the 19thC began to perceive ‘an Aboriginal problem’: it began a long series of experimental policies which continues to this day.

1. Protection/segregation
2. Assimilation/integration
3. Self-determination

1. Protectionism/segregation

In the 18th century there was a curiosity about the ‘Noble Savage’ who was assumed to be the childlike stage that Europeans went through ages ago. Early anthropologists collected thousands of Aboriginal skulls to measure and preserve. But the 19th C saw a policy of protectionism based on the Social Darwinism premise of winners and losers: the strong will prevail and the weak will be eliminated. Australia’s Aborigines were headed for extinction.

So, the Board for the Protection of Aborigines, set up in 1861 had 2 main thrusts: to gather, supervise and protect the remaining communities on reserves and missions, and to teach Christianity and English ways to replace heathen spiritual and cultural beliefs (recall the Blue Books of Wales about the same time?) The Aboriginal Protection Board had incredible power. In overseeing so-called ‘full-bloods’ on missions it could for example

- take control and custody of any child
- order a child to be apprenticed to any master or be removed to an institution
- remove any Aboriginal person from his/her employment
- collect an Aboriginal person’s wages and keep it in trust
- issued loans of blankets, clothing, and rations.

In practice, people of pure Aboriginal descent were collected onto missions and reserves. These protected the Aboriginal remnant from the settlers, provided a village-like atmosphere and kept ‘*dirty, unhealthy, disorderly*’ Aborigines from towns. It was expected that the Aboriginal people would soon die out and the missions would ‘*soften the dying pillow.*’ Individuals of mixed blood were expected to make their own lives outside the missions - to ‘*live like white fellas*’. Some could be trained to be labourers and domestics. Over time they would become Europeanised as their Aboriginal blood was bred out:

‘it was a pity to have children who are almost white brought up on a Black’s reserve.’

Up to 1921, individuals of mixed ancestry could be charged with trespass if they tried to visit families on the mission, their previous home! Many became members of the stolen generations!

In Tasmania, survivors of colonisation were gathered up in the 1830s and herded onto Flinders Island. Even in 1920-54 – central Australian desert reserves were established as church missions to protect, confine and control. This system of control by missionaries and governments lasted in most states for a hundred years!

2. Assimilation/integration (1940 -)

The Policy of assimilation means –

‘..... in practical terms that, in the course of time, it is expected that all persons of Aboriginal birth or mixed blood in Australia will live like white Australians.’

Federal Minister, NT

‘Aborigines must be ‘clean, clad and courteous’.

In return, social security would be paid .

‘ if the Director General was satisfied with ‘the character and the standard of intelligence and social development of the native.’

Benefits were not payable if

‘the native was not considered sufficiently advanced’. Child endowment was not paid for a ‘nomadic child’.

The policy brought better physical conditions for some but attacked Aboriginal culture.

Even in 1959 the patronising and racist attitude persisted:

'An Aboriginal native of Australia who follows a mode of life that is, in the opinion of the Director General, nomadic or primitive is not entitled to a pension, allowance, endowment or benefit under the Act'.

Neglect was judged by the presence of poverty, mobility, and having few possessions.

Integrationist approach [1960s]

In 1962, the last legal obstacles to the right of Aboriginal people to vote were removed. In 1967 a successful referendum permitted Aboriginal people to be counted in census

Gough Whitlam provided a glimmer of hope when he committed his government in 1975 to –

'restore to the Aboriginal people of Australia their lost power of self-determination in economic, social and political affairs....'

'We will legislate to outlaw all forms of discrimination and will allocate greatly increased resources to overcome the handicaps under which Aborigines now labourWe will not rest until they have taken up as a distinct and honoured component of the Australian society, the position to which their rights as the first Australians entitles them.'

At this time in Cape York Aboriginal people lived and worked on cattle stations for rations and meagre, sub-standard wages. When equal pay was introduced, the stations did not keep them on. So, communities moved away from their traditional land to the fringe camps on the edges of towns and onto social security. They moved from having work to *not* having work. By being moved off their traditional lands they unwittingly *extinguished their native title* to that land.

The Stolen Generations.

Laws and policies all over Australia permitted authorities to remove Aboriginal children from their parents because it was deemed that they were not being properly brought up or looked after. These children were put in orphanages or fostered out to white families. For example, in 1980 in Western Australia, 57% of children in care were Indigenous. In 1989, 44% were Indigenous children. The majority lost all contact with their Aboriginal families. The legacy of the Stolen Generations is a loss of culture, language, identity, psychiatric illness, alcoholism, suicide, violence, inability to form social relationships, and lack of parenting skills. In 1995 Indigenous children were still 12 times more likely than non-Indigenous children to be removed from their families.

3. Self-determination (1990s -)

The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1991) found *'appallingly inadequate education'*, low self-esteem, and debilitation resulting from years of assimilationist policies as well as a lack of training. In the 1990s some new initiatives introduced such as the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation and the Native Title Act. In 1992, the Supreme Court of Australia recognised Cook's mistake in not recognising the prior existence of Indigenous land ownership, overturned the law of Terra Nullius in the historic Mabo decision.

Aboriginal concerns today.

Identity and Aboriginality

In the 2002 census, more than half a million Indigenous Australians were identified, - that's 2.4% of general population. In Victoria, the Indigenous population is 0.5%, with more than 72% of those living in urban areas.

So, in the 21st century, what do Indigenous people want out of government policies? Australian Indigenous leaders such as Indigenous lawyer, Noel Pearson, are calling for basic human rights for Indigenous people derived from international law and the Constitution to make decisions about matters that affect them. They also want to become independent of the welfare system, inalienable title to lands, and significantly improved health, education and employment.

Language, power and education.

At the time of first contact some 250 languages were spoken in Australia, 36 in Victoria. Now there are only about 34 languages spoken in all of Australia. As we Welsh know, to lose your language is to lose huge chunks of your culture, your knowledge, your mythology, your identity, and this is disempowering.

Not having an education is also disempowering. Too many Indigenous Australians endure a cycle of poor education and disempowerment. It was not until 1972, that the right of school principals to refuse Aboriginal children from attending school was withdrawn. Even in 1994, the Australian Bureau of Statistics recorded only 26% of Indigenous people had basic vocational qualification and only 6% had bachelor degrees. In 1996, 60% still left school before age 17 years.

But Western type education for Indigenous Australians has been an entirely unhappy experience. Missionaries used education (and Christianity) unashamedly to '*civilise the natives*' and '*rescue them from their heathen ways.*' Western education has left Indigenous people utterly ill-equipped to deal with modern Western society. Progress through primary to secondary to tertiary, training or the workforce is still not the norm for Indigenous students.

Keeping Indigenous Australians poor and subjected.

Being on welfare contributes to the continuing low economic status of Indigenous people. A historical legacy of exclusion from mainstream education and employment feeds this cycle. Welfare dependence now spans 3 generations. This subjugation has resulted in only half as many Indigenous Australians owning their home as mainstream in 1999. Indigenous unemployment is getting worse: in 2000, it was 17.6%, and a year later, 23% or 6x the national average. Not surprisingly, Indigenous Australians are under-represented in management and professions, and over-represented among unemployed, semi-skilled and unskilled.

Indigenous people and the law

Events in history have impacted cruelly on the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Many Indigenous Australians feel a sense of injustice. They are angry about their dispossession from their land and they are angry about their loss of freedom. For far too many, institutionalisation is the consequence of life choices being made by missions, churches and government.

Indigenous people are over represented in the criminal justice system. An Indigenous Australian is 27x more likely to be in police custody and 14 x more likely to be in prison. If non-Indigenous prisoners died at the same rate as Indigenous prisoners, 7400 would have died not 400 that did.

This injured society has resulted from a relatively short but brutal history of dispossession, repression, current socio-economic conditions, and continuing race relations and racism.

Discussion and Conclusions

I would like to end by drawing together some observations about conquest, and the way a conqueror keeps minority groups subservient. I make a case for

- rule by feeding social division,
- maintenance of a cycle of poverty,
- the use education and religion for political purposes,
- assigning identity.

1. Conquest

Australia was the last corner of the inhabited earth to be conquered. While the rest of the world shuffled and reshuffled, Indigenous Australians had got on with their lives and worked out how best to live with Australian environments. For the Welsh on the other hand, a number of conquests brought good and bad experiences. Conquest and colonisation have meant sudden accelerations of cultural change but also a loss of choice and autonomy for both peoples. The state established centralised power and the big question for both peoples has been how to retain identity under its systems.

Arguably, the state is a very successful system for organisation of large populations and their needs, but they are corruptible and influenced by wealth and power. The state in both Australia and Britain has used methods to subdue. It has altered identity by attempts to assimilate Welsh and Indigenous Australians into become Anglicised and mainstreamed. It has contributed to the obliteration of language and culture. It used dispersion and relocation of people: witness the Stolen Generation in Australia and the British Portal report of 1934 that recommended 39 000 able bodied men be transferred from the depressed southern coalmines of Wales to English workplaces. About a year ago here in Australia, Aboriginal Affairs minister Amanda Vanstone wanted to remove people from what she called the 'fossilised cultures and cultural museums' of remote homeland communities to form greater masses in towns.

It is sobering that even 35 years ago the Australian Supreme Court disallowed a Land Rights claim on the basis that Indigenous people had not had a recognisable government. And only in 1992 did the High Court overturn *Terra Nullius* because it recognised that Indigenous Australians did indeed originally have land ownership.

An interesting little snippet appeared in the Australian the other weekend which resonated in my head. An American expert on terrorism (Robert Pape) has analysed the motives of 460 suicide bombers in the last 2 decades. They were not, he said, religious fanatics or Islamist Fundamentalists! They were making political statements! They wanted occupying forces to get out of their countries! (Iraq, Afghanistan, Ceylon...)

I well recall a boy at school, Rhys, of Derwin Bach, who took some gelignite that his father used to blast rocks from the fields to clear them for the plough and extend pasture. Rhys's aim was to explode a hole in the Treweryn dam. I'm not sure what his chances were of success but he was making a strong political protest! Rhys was not a raging leftist but rather, he was pursuing a secular strategic, political goal, and making a strong and singular protest against the exploitation of Wales by a foreign power. Rhys's explosive statement is echoed I think in the protest of the many suicides of incarcerated Indigenous men in Australia. I suspect that there is not so much their fear of being enclosed by 4 walls as their sense of exploitation, subjection and disenfranchisement by being jailed. They use their last remaining power to escape submission.

The importance of country!

Home country is particularly and staunchly embedded in all people whose roots are being torn up, whose identity is being redefined, and whose culture is being suppressed by the conqueror. I think we can see this in both the Welsh and Indigenous Australians.

'Country' can be defined by the oppressor in terms of modern nationalistic terms. Similarly "a people". This modern model is based on the linear perspective which sees Wales as an embryonic England or a sovereign state, perhaps. Indigenous Australians were seen as embryonic Europeans – what Europeans used to be like ages ago before they invented the wheel, agriculture and cities. To perpetuate the division into components (whether princedoms or countries) of Wales or Indigenous Australia, was useful to the conqueror because it legitimised overlordship and became self- prophecy. These inferior people needed care, didn't they?

2. Divide and rule -

In both cases of Wales and Indigenous Australia, suppression of the conquered, both intentional and unintentional, has subjugated people and their culture. In the case of the Welsh, suppression was aimed at bringing a rebellious people to heel. In the conquest of Indigenous Australia, the aim was to acquire the land by eliminating those who apparently did not own or use it by genocide or breeding out. The conquest of Australia was never accompanied by a treaty as in North America and New Zealand because the dispersed population could not present a great resistance or unified demands. The indigenous peoples of Wales and Australia have never presented a united front against a strong invader.

In Wales there is still division and perhaps inertia. Indigenous Australia has always been a continent of countries that have refused to be melded into a single voice. These models of diversity have been no competition against a united and strong opponent.

3. Poverty

In order to feed the voracious needs of Europe, the Welsh working classes and Indigenous Australians on meagre wages or rations have been kept on the poverty treadmill. A most effective way of controlling a group of people for the long term is to keep them in poverty and dependency. This has clearly been the outcome if not the intended strategy in both Wales and Indigenous Australia. One can be charitable towards the conqueror and declare that it was a case of 'out of sight, out of mind'. Wales has always been a remote part of Britain which could be barricaded off by Offa's Dyke, the Welsh Marches, or latterly, the change of focus to the affluent southeast.

But it can hardly be argued that Welsh *men* in particular, haven't been in influential positions for several hundreds of years! So why haven't they delivered on Welsh causes such as self-rule? For the Welsh gentry from Norman times onwards, the aim was acquisition of land, education, wealth and status. Too few looked after the interests of their tenant farmers let alone the bigger issues for Wales. This was especially the case for the landowners under whose land coal was found in the 18th and 19th Centuries.

In Australia, the small population of Aboriginal peoples, decimated by disease and war could be with every good intention, locked away out of sight in missions and reserves or left to roam the barren centre. Today, chronic unemployment dogs Indigenous communities in urban and remote settings alike. Far too many Indigenous Australians live off what Noel Pearson calls negative welfare – which keeps people powerless, unmotivated and depressed. Pearson and other leaders are pushing for enterprises instigated and run by Indigenous people.

4. Religion

Christianity brought advantages and disadvantages to Indigenous Australians and Welsh people alike. Religion has served to subdue and regulate. The Normans used religion to control the Welsh and subsume the Welsh church. Later, chapel and church became very important cultural and educational foci for the Welsh. They were a haven in which to express Welsh culture for many centuries.

But in the 20th and 21st centuries the chapels emptied. Welsh culture moved on to find different ways of expression, and schools took over the task of education.

Early in the 19th century Aboriginal people were gathered into missions and reserves, taught to put aside their own religions and culture, and to learn the more civilised ways of living. The missions worked on several planes: they were a safe place for the race to die out, a place to provide the most basic education, and a place to learn a new culture in order to form a vital working class.

For many Indigenous Australians and Welsh, church, chapel and mission have been a source of security and safety. More than a few old Aboriginal people, deeply Christian, relate strongly to the mission on which they were brought up.

5. Education and language

Education (or perhaps the lack of it), has to be one of the most insidious ways of controlling people. As we have seen in the history of Wales and Indigenous Australia, formal, sophisticated education was slow in becoming available to those who couldn't pay for it. Though that is not to say that previously children were not educated about how to live in their respective worlds.

Education today is about equipping individuals with skills to make their way in a very different world to that of even 200 years ago. Sadly, even today, far too many Indigenous Australians are channelled into vocational training instead of university because their potential is neither recognised or allowed for. But education has too often been at the cost of removing language and culture and to reprogram children into the ways of the conqueror.

What should we now make of the use by the conqueror of ethnic symbols of the primitive drawn from music, art and designs?

6. Identity

Identity is a difficult concept to grasp because it can be assigned by the individual to him/herself or assigned by outsiders such as friend or foe, government, or social group etc. Primordialist analysts believe identity is fixed by physical appearance, language, country etc. This was probably the perspective of those who conquered Wales and Australia. It made the whole process of conquest desirable and acceptable if those conquered could be pulled up into the more developed and civilised state of the conqueror.

The pretext on which Australia was conquered was that of Terra Nullius which stipulated that in the absence of agriculture and centralised government there could be no land ownership. Such primitive people were doomed to extinction and meanwhile, the land could be put to great use.

The more recent Constructionists say that identity is something that is flexible, can be chosen and can be assigned. So 'outsiders' and governments have been able to assign identity for political ends. For the individual, identity is something personal, psychological and cultural. For many Indigenous Australians, it revolves around kin, country and knowledge.

By moving away from such fundamental elements you get less like your original identity and more like the identity of those you move towards: hence the measure of success of the assimilation processes. Those of us

who have moved away from original kin, country and knowledge, often live with the ‘broken clock’ of diasporas – the construction of culture outside of culture.

For the conqueror, ‘*traditional*’ is the opposite to ‘*modern*’: it is inefficient, archaic and a mindless repetition of the way previous generations have always ‘done it.’ Whereas the Welsh saw themselves as a distinct people living in a distinct, defined territory, and claimed common ancestry. The Welsh identity assigned by 19thC English labelled them as lawless, uncivilised, undisciplined, and derived from a stock inferior to the Teutonic English.

‘*Why cant they be like us?*’

This racist perspective was exactly what could be observed in Australia at that time. Its self-fulfilling prophecy was the absence of 19thC Welsh and Indigenous Australians in the professions and among rulers. For Indigenous Australians this is still evident.

Nothing stays the same, culture evolves

So what might be solutions to meaningful identities under foreign rule?? We must remember that culture is an evolving process. Our culture is changed even from what our parents knew let alone what culture meant to a person living in Owain Glyn Dŵr’s day or for someone standing on the shore of Botany Bay in 1788.

For the Welsh and Indigenous Australians, the state has brought some advantages. After all, Hywel Dda was a state builder who brought most of Wales into a single kingdom for a period. But both the Welsh and Indigenous Australians will need to influence our respective states as a united front for what we want: together we stand! The state, at least in theory, acts to balance the many interests for the sake of all. Therefore, for minority interest groups there are advantages to be gained in seeking alliances and coalitions.

Those who understand the ways of the state and work within it can improve the lot of their people. Noel Pearson is a good example in Australia. The test for Pearson (which so many of the Welsh elite of the 19th century failed) will be to gather allies, work within the state, to bring about change of attitude.

One cannot accuse the Welsh of lying down and not fighting! The Plaid, activists, writers and Saunders Lewis’ strident voice have called on the Welsh to throw aside their ‘*inferiority and remove the mark and shame of conquest.*’ We have been a thorn in the English side, ‘*a curse,*’ and ‘*obstreperous.*’ Westminster even used Welsh radicalism as an excuse for not granting Wales its national freedom!

Have we made too much of an impact or not enough?

In spite of what the Welsh and Indigenous Australians have been through under foreign rule it obviously takes far more to eliminate an ethnic group. I think the successful attempts by small ethnic groups throughout the world who have asserted their identity and independence are a sign that not only does the human race have a wide spectrum of expression, but that there is enormous ethnic strength that has successfully asserted itself even in the face of powerful states. Giraldus Gambrensis said of the Welsh back in the 12th C

“if they would be inseparable they would be insuperable”.

The Welsh kings and princes of the 10th C in order to enlarge their kingdoms, cleverly intermarried rather than fight each other, but few turned out to be leaders like Owain Glyn Dŵr.

Together we stand, divided we fall.

After all, we are still here!

Da’n ni yma o hyd!

Diolch yn fawr.