An Old Irish Trick : Attitudes to Catholicism and the Irish in 19thC. South Wales

G J Lewis

AN ACT To Prevent Popish Priests From coming into this KINGDOM.

DUBLIN: Printed by Andrew Crook, Printer to ... Queen's most Excellent Majesty ... the Blind-Key, MDCCIII.

Illustrations mostly from 'Punch'

'AN OLD IRISH TRICK' ? - ATTITUDES TOWARDS CATHOLICISM AND THE IRISH IN NINETEENTH CENTURY SOUTH WALES

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September 1994

<u>Introduction</u>

This booklet is an amended version of a short dissertation submitted in part-requirement for the degree of MA in Historical Studies to the Humanities Department of Oxford Brookes University.

The booklet is not a narrative account of Irish and Welsh relations in the nineteenth century but rather an attempt to consider *attitudes* displayed in Wales towards Catholicism and the phenomena of Irish migration. Invariably, the constraints of examining such a topic within some 20,000 words distorts the story and more time and effort in research would doubtless lead to a more balanced and comprehensive narrative.

I wish to express my thanks to the staff of Oxford Brookes for their help and professionalism and also acknowledge the help of Mr Bill Walsh, once of Wexford and now of Taibach, West Glamorgan for his valuable insights and encouragement.

G J Lewis

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Conventions

The terms Catholic and Roman Catholic should be regarded as interchangeable.

The word 'Church' should be taken to signify the Catholic Church as distinct from the Established Church.

Geographical localities are identified as they existed at the time in question rather than by any subsequent changes e.g. the South Wales counties of Glamorgan and Monmouthshire as opposed to the existing West, Mid and South Glamorgans and Gwent.

In deference to the plague of those named Jones, Evans, Thomas or similar who have found cause to write upon the history of Wales the Harvard reference system has been amended to reflect a more immediate identification of the author.

Chapter One

Introduction

Introduction

To think of Wales and religion in the nineteenth century is to think of Dissent. The Nonconformist chapel, along with choirs, the cloth cap and a propensity to radical politics, is an essential constituent of, a now past, industrial South Wales. In matters spiritual our image of nineteenth century Wales is predominantly Protestant and Evangelical, its religious mores the antithesis of Catholicism: Bishop Hedley, the Catholic Bishop of Cardiff, thought in 1885 that the conversion of Wales to Catholicism 'was as unlikely as that of Turkey' (Mathews, 1980:11). From the fundamental religious division supposedly there developed two extremes, one which was Welsh and Evangelically Protestant with a culture of work, self-improvement and sobriety, a people whose free-thinking proceeded unfettered by the mediation of priesthood; at the other side that which was Irish and Catholic - the undisciplined, feckless, drunken pupils of a politically motivated, evil and anti-British clergy. To the Irish Catholic, Wales was a foreign and hostile country.

But while Nonconformity uniquely caught the temper and soul of a significant portion of the Welsh nation it was still just one strand in the complex tapestry of Welsh society - a society which was being subjected to the explosive forces of industrialization. Dissent existed alongside a - much historically neglected - religious tokenism, indifference and agnosticism, alongside continuing adherence to the Established Church and a number of developing religious groups which included Roman Catholicism. For all of the anti-Papist rhetoric the environment was such that - no matter how grudgingly watched - that Catholicism did grow and became an established feature of society.

Against this complex background the objective of this dissertation is to consider the *attitudes* displayed towards the Irish and Catholicism in industrial South Wales in the nineteenth century. The area is problematic in that while a given attitude may be inferred from an observed pattern of behaviour or the expression of opinions, by necessity such inference is both a question of judgement and dependent upon that which is observable and - for the historian - retrievable. In working terms an attitude might be seen as a relatively enduring tendency to perceive, feel or behave towards certain people or events in a particular manner. While a given attitude may be

inferred from an observed pattern of behavioral acts a 'declared' attitude is not an accurate predictor of actions. There is a discrepancy between what people say that they would do and how they actually behave. Perception of attitudes is indicated by 'what happened' and in the turmoil of industrializing South Wales and its diverse and essentially migrant populations 'happenings' were aplenty. Twin dangers exist in that the historian's eye is inevitably drawn to what is proactive, dramatic and spectacular - large-scale migration, the anti-Irish riot, the condemnation of squalid living conditions - at the expense of the, often unrecorded, mundane and everyday. Obversely, the efforts of social historians to establish a 'typography of migration' may lead to the exchange of the prejudice-ridden stereotypes of the contemporary debate with paler, less pejorative but no less stereotypical characterizations of a community with little regard to the individual status and differences of its members.

There is no simple tale to relate. Early Industrial South Wales came under the spell of Liberalism and Non-conformity only slowly over time and with significant pockets of resistance and indifference. A native Welsh Catholic might harbour as little or as much regard for his Irish co-religionist as would a Welsh Anglican or Nonconformist. 'The Irish' were but one of many groups settling to a new and uncertain life in the industrializing valleys. Each community had its own complex interlayers of status, loyalties and internal jealousies - often related to the differing industries which dominated particular localities. 'Religion' itself is a notoriously flexible label changing its weight of meaning between the individual described, the individual describing and the historian striving to construct 'a reality' - indeed, the importance of religion to the working classes in the nineteenth century has been the subject of considerable qualification (Inglis, 1963) and the interchangeability of the terms 'Irish' and 'Catholic' is by no means unchallenged (Connolly in Swift and Gilley, 1985). Of all stereotypes that of nationality is perhaps the most uncertain of all -and 'difficult to show below the level of middle-class commentary' (Gilley in Holmes, 1978:81) - but nonetheless 'nationality' as a motif of identity within the varied communities of South Wales retained a power well into the twentieth century being gradually mellowed by the common experiences of industrialization and the emergence of political movements drawing their identity from class.

The Irish (and, indeed, the Welsh) were far from forming a cohesive 'community', the Irish immigrants themselves were divided:

> 'between those who tried to replant their Irish culture in Britain, those who created a hybrid immigrant culture and those who did their best to 'forget' that they were Irish.' (Swift and Gilley, 1989:33)

While the Irish migrants had much in common - and the general hostility of the indigenous peoples was a strong binding factor - there was often marked division; in Johnson's phrase 'the Irish are a fair-minded people; they never speak well of one another.' (quoted in Gilley in Holmes, 1978:84). The Irish nation was far from homogeneous and 'the economic processes which disrupted Irish life in the nineteenth century varied greatly from region to region' (Fitzpatrick, 1979:127). Regional loyalties and disputes might travel across the Irish Sea to be reconstituted afresh with additions and embellishments - the tortuous course of Irish 'domestic' politics and the struggle for home rule fuelled antagonisms within the migrant population as well as between the Irish and Welsh. Some migrants might regard Wales as their permanent home, others a temporary stop on their progress to elsewhere in Great Britain or the New World, others might have the intention of 'onetime returning home' - each perspective prompting a different relationship with their surroundings. As the Irish communities matured they displayed their own internal class rivalries between those still firmly classed as 'workers' and those aspiring to the rewards of capital.

Faced with the scale of the task in hand, the complexities of the issue, and with but a limited awareness of the varied insights available from a range of theoretical models relating to the sociology of migration and racial conflict I am conscious that this dissertation will be, at best, a most tentative and transient analysis artificially 'spread' across divisions of industry, politics, religion and time - a set of attitudes is not exchanged in the walk between work and pub or chapel - 'attitudes' may well change and develop over time but do not do so to an easily retrievable pattern and defy the neat categorization implicit in retrospective analysis. It is not the objective of this dissertation to relate the history of the Irish in Wales *per se* however, in the consideration of attitudes reference must be made to events and to some

extent the 'validity' of attitudes tested against our understanding of the world as it existed; thus 'I have forced myself to *make up my mind* [author's italics] and to tell the story as I think it happened' (Gwyn Alfred Williams, 1988:15) against a narrative framework reflecting the mores of the indigent and migrant populations as they can be reconstructed, the pattern of Irish migration into Wales geographically and over time, and the perceived relationship between the 'two communities' as it developed across the nineteenth century.

<u>Existing Literature, Previous Research and Problems of Evidence</u>

Despite its prominent 'flagging' by Marx and Engels the story of the Irish in Britain was slow to develop, perhaps unsurprisingly in the light of the 'rival' focuses of Irish domestic politics and society and the potentially more dramatic exodus to North America. Almost as if in response to Jackson's (1963:xii) plea that the story be told of:

> 'the day to day experiences of ordinary families making their adjustments to particular new environments - streets, towns and districts - each of which makes its own demands of the newcomer and each of which has been uniquely affected by the presence of the immigrant'

a series of local studies has been collated by Swift and Gilley (1985 and 1989) upon the Irish in Victorian Britain providing a solid platform for future investigation. However, the local nature of such studies inevitably means that some areas and aspects of the migration are treated more extensively than others. The story of the Irish in Wales has developed lately - Parry observing just a decade ago that 'the history of the Irish [in Wales] has been left largely to the historical novelist' (Parry, 1983:20) - but the explosion in local history studies has resulted in a number of postgraduate dissertations on the Irish in Wales - particularly the work of O'Leary (1988, 1989 and 1991) and Price (1992). Curtis (1968 and 1971) dived deeply into the attitudinal pool with his examination of Irish racial stereotypes as perceived by the English press, studies which drew a reply from Gilley (in Holmes, 1978) which while making no defence of the racial extremism so abundantly identified placed Curtis's evidence in a wider setting. Potentially, a review of Welsh-Irish 'inter-Celtic' relations might illuminate

'social' as opposed to a 'racial' prejudice and contribute to the debate. Norman (1968) and Wolffe (1991) have considered the relationship between Catholicism and wider British society in the nineteenth century from the standpoint of Protestant inspired opposition but the slow process of tolerance and indifference appears to be largely neglected.

As examination of differing faiths tends to emphasise their points of conflict so focus upon the Irish as a constituent group of a wider society inevitably tends to emphasise that which made them different from their neighbours. Generally, the literature on the issue of commonality and integration into the host community is weak partly because of the inherent difficulties of studying 'ethnic fade' or because 'ethnically defined studies of the Irish tend, by definition, to ignore those leaving the Irish milieu' (Herson in Swift and Gilley, 1989:87).

The history of the modern Catholic Church in Britain has also been somewhat patchily served. The subject seems to be rarely written upon by those who are genuinely 'historically objective' and some of the work is close to 'apologist testimonial' - promoting the merits of those in the Catholic hierarchy and condemning those 'in error' against them. Such texts are invariably 'institutional and priest-centred' and tend to reflect the well documented, if somewhat Byzantine, concerns of English upper-class Catholicism. So far it would appear that historians have respected the contemporary division between the anonymous working-class Irish Catholic and the upper and middle-class 'convert to Rome' and tended to treat their respective development as separate issues.

The situation in Wales mirrors that of the remainder of the United Kingdom; Attwater's (1935) general history of the Catholic Church in Wales tends to the polemical and seems sometimes intent on refighting Reformation battles; individual Catholic parishes have produced short local histories often making heavy use of recycled primary evidence and tending to 'the improving' in tone. The focus of such studies tends to concentrate on 'the church' as an institution apart from the surrounding society and economy - and in many instances distinct from its congregation.

In particular a series of unpublished Master of Education dissertations located at the University

of Wales College of Cardiff centring on the development of Catholic schooling in South Wales has proved most valuable. As the struggle between the respective school societies of the Established and Nonconformist Churches revealed, the establishment of a school was so much more than the mere erection of a building. While all denominations came to be united in the believe that the working classes should receive a Christian education all believed that the version available should be *theirs*. The capacity to offer 'formal education' was a prime indicator of a community's rise to maturity in terms of its organization, resources and 'standing' in the wider world and indicative of its capacity to advance its ideals to the next generation. The 'occasion' of a new school invariably proved revealing in the response it drew from others - almost akin to the sociologist Malinowski's 'breach of etiquette' in ethnographic research in provoking an insightful response - particularly in the time of elected 'School Boards' following the 1870 Education Act.

As already indicated primary evidence of an attitude often exists at one remove - relative to an action or observable outcome: however, evidence of some attitudes may be well concealed. The undramatic but nevertheless critical attitude of 'qualified religious toleration' is rarely the subject of overt comment but its existence was essential for a reconstructed Catholic Church in Britain. Documentary evidence of the *institutional growth* of the Catholic Church in Wales speaks of the context in which such growth can occur. This must be balanced against the overt references made to inter-church relationships where it is generally in the context of a dispute.

While in the area of 'attitudes' contemporary newspaper 'comment' might appear to come into its own there still remains the problem of to the extent such comments reflected the wider opinion of the community. Much of the violent language directed against 'the scourge of Papism' came to be a matter of ritual; a form of words which might take on greater or lesser weight of prejudice depending on the social and economic pressures facing its audience - this applies particularly to the 'Irish Joke' the repetition of which might be inspired by malice, perhaps by affection, perhaps indifferently or as a totem of racial superiority. Indicators of attitudes towards particular groups might be gathered by modern researchers by questionnaire or the ethnographical survey of evidence such as humour, 'ballads' and 'scuttle-

butt': such transitory evidence is largely unavailable to the historian and he must concern himself with that which is recorded which inevitably tends to reflect the concern of 'controlling agencies'. Evidence relative to public health and the poor law may be far from objective and was often gathered to address the particular agenda of the individual author. In that this work is about attitudes such subjectivity is, of course, 'part of the story'.

Chapter Two

Catholicism, Wales and Ireland: the Starting Point

Catholicism and Wales

While the Henrician Reformation was received with no great enthusiasm by the people of Wales and while Catholicism retained pockets of adherents after the sixteenth century - mostly amongst, or focused on, the gentry - in south-east Wales and in the north-east around Denbigh and Flint, the bulk of the Welsh population seemed to simply 'slip out' of Catholicism. The practices of the 'Old Faith' largely passed into folk-memory. Early attempts to restore Catholicism to Wales foundered on the differences of the English and Welsh Catholics in Rome (Attwater, 1935). While the Recusants in Wales possess a proud and active history their relevance to the majority of the Welsh people is dubious:

> 'Under Elizabeth the battle for Welsh hearts and minds was fought and won: Welsh bishops of the Established Church appeared in Welsh dioceses for the first time in a hundred years and waged a successful spiritual war against an equally potent and equally humanist generation of Welsh Catholic intellectuals'(Gwyn Alfred Williams, 1985:125).

The Irish Rebellion of 1641 put the people of west and south Wales in a state of alarm being 'within eight hours sayle' of Ireland (Lindley, 1972:155) and across Protestant Britain there was a commonly held conviction that the remaining native Catholics would join with the Irish rebels in the massacre of 'heretics'. In the English Civil War Wales was predominantly Royalist, but a Catholic revival under the sponsorship of the Earl of Worcester in Welsh Herefordshire was less notable for its own success than its provocation of a Puritan response and in driving the moderates of the Royalist Party in Wales to a compromise with a Presbyterian Parliament; an alliance which was further strengthened by the Catholic dalliances of the later Stuarts.

Those few Catholics remaining indigenous to Wales were, from 1688 to 1840, often somewhat notionally under the spiritual care of the vicar apostolic of the Western District, one of the four vicariates of a church almost in 'internal-exile' into which England and Wales was divided. Apart from rural Monmouthshire between 1723 and 1736 two priests serviced the entire South Wales area. In 1744 a Jesuit mission was established working out of Bristol for a large Welsh Mission stretching from Cardiff to Milford Haven, a Jesuit priest

from Bristol visited the 'patch' four times a year. Dom Charles Walmersley (1722-97), the first Vicar Apostolic to the Western District, reported to Rome in 1773 that there were 750 Roman Catholics and 9 missionaries or priests in the whole of Wales (Attwater, 1935:32).

Almost half the Catholic population was centred on Monmouthshire alongside the rivers Wye and Usk at Brecon, Abergavenny, Monmouth and Usk. The small Catholic congregations were drawn from rural areas and essentially introspective. Father David Gregory of Abergavenny recognized the need to take Catholicism to the Welsh by his publication in 1764 of 'The Short Catechism' (*Catechism Byre)* and a exposition of 'contemporary papal thinking' (*Cail yr Athrawiath Gatholig*) but, for the most part, the Welsh Catholics were content with a compromise of quietly following their faith within the limits allowed by the gradually less punitive legal proscriptions. Socially and politically they mirrored the attitudes of their Protestant peers and desired to blend into the rural background. The very desire for 'quietness' is indicative of their awareness of potential anti-Catholicism and in this respect the indigenous Catholic population were fortunate to be 'backwatered' as the Established Church was confronted by the challenge of Dissent and the pace of religious, commercial and industrial development was set elsewhere in Wales than the old market centres of Denbigh and Monmouthshire.

Dissent took a firm hold in rural Wales in the course of the eighteenth century. As Wales came to industrialization it was Nonconformity which the rural Welshman took with him to his new home in the South Wales valleys and it was Dissent which grew - in often difficult ground - to be the dominant religious influence. As Dissent and Anglicanism had fought their battle for the religious allegiance of Wales they developed a common antagonism to the Church of Rome. Catholicism became intractably identified in the Welsh mind with the forces of reaction and, preeminently, as the religion of the Irish, thus establishing a:

> 'decisive breach between Welsh and Irish, who had in early years shared so similar a history. The pathological hatred of Catholicism, both in itself and in the tyranny it was taken to embody, rooted itself in Welsh Anglicanism and in the Dissent which later displaced it. The Irish, perceived as quasi-permanent threat from Counter-

> Reformation Europe, were a human vehicle for this menace. Two Celtic peoples, with very different experiences of self-development under English control, ended as mutually hostile nations, confronting each other across every conceivable divide.' (Gwyn Alfred Williams, 1985:126)

The 'mutuality' of the hostility is often understated; politically, the Irish had little cause to love things 'English'. The volumes of anti-Catholic sentiment contained in publications such as *Y Cronicl* and, later, *Y Diwygiwr* is matched by an equally assured and venomous condemnation of all things Protestant from Continental publications and the private writings of Irish and British Catholics.

The Irish also became, literally, a joke. Irish-jokes or 'Irish bulls' - a bull being a self-contradictory proposition or 'an expression containing a manifest contradiction in terms of involving a ludicrous inconsistency unperceived by the speaker' (Curtis, 1984:34) - appeared in book form often under the name 'Joe Miller', a name signifying comics in general. The Joe Miller book of *'Teagueland Jests and Bog Witticisms'*, published in 1749, was prefaced with the words:

> 'The bulls and witticisms that too frequently drop from Irish mouths have made them the discourse and entertainment of all sorts of companies. Nothing more recommends Teague and his countrymen than their natural stupidity' (Quoted Campbell, 1977).

The 'stage Irishman' became an accepted figure as a token of that which was boisterous and slow-witted. The phenomena of a humour centring on a nation or group 'more stupid than the others' is close to universal if not necessarily inspired and is reflected in Ireland by regional differentiation. Recent analyses have tended to identify such humour as a demeaning, devaluing and dehumanizing tool intended to bolster one racial or social group's perception of its superiority over another -such analysis has a pedigree extending back to the daughter and father team of Maria and Richard Lovell Edgeworth's 1802 *Essay on Irish Bulls*.

Specifically in Wales at least two expressions reflected a critical perception of the Irish - *Dyna hen das Gwydded* 'That's an old Irish Trick' or of a disunited and quarrelsome family 'They live like Irish people' - *Mae nhw yn byw fel*

Gwyddelod. It would not, however, appear that the Welsh were markedly different from the English in their consumption of Irish humour, although one can speculate that a parallel Welsh-English and English-Welsh interplay may have provided a slightly different perspective. The socio-psychological meaning of such humour is beyond the scope of this project - my suspicion is that such humour mirrored rivalries and differentiation but was also an inevitable part of a defence mechanism against the challenges of industrialization, and while in some instances such humour may have been indicative of a malignancy in most it was unthinking and peripheral to the mainstream collective consciousness.

What was certainly no laughing matter was the distrust between the Irish and Welsh people occasioned by the identification of Catholicism as the religion of Britain's enemies and the distrust with which 'Papism' was regarded was periodically exacerbated by each fresh episode of the 'Irish troubles' and the complex pattern of European conflict.

If the Welsh Catholics managed to occupy something of a middle position and avoid the grosser excesses of anti-Catholic sentiment it was largely by virtue of their 'irrelevance' - their low numbers, scattered locations and deliberate 'low profile'. The Welsh Catholics seemed to have little identification with their Irish co-religionists, separated as they were by a class divide and widely differing cultures. What the indigenous Catholics had by way of political rights had been secured by acquiesence and conformity. What remained of the Catholic peerage was broadly apolitical and their lead was followed by most of the Catholic gentry. The tentative recognition of their status made them reluctant to risk antagonizing authority by assuming the lead in the struggle for full emancipation. Even after the Catholic Relief Bill of 1829 they were slow to take advantage of the new fields of influence available to them and when they did it was often to emerge as 'clones' of their Protestant counterparts anxious to demonstrate on every occasion their unbounded loyalty to the Queen and Constitution. They were often anti-Irish and anti-Jesuit - i.e against an active movement aimed at the wholesale conversion of the country to Catholicism and predominantly wished 'to let matters be'.

Early Irish Migration

Both Irish vagrancy and seasonal migration in connection with harvesting had been a feature of English and Welsh society since at least the twelfth century (Kerr, 371:1942). The Irish 'vagrant' - itself a pejorative expression - featured in a long series of laws, ordinances, and proclamations and enjoyed a corresponding generally evil reputation amongst all classes. A rise in the number of such travellers was often associated with the recurrent scarcity of food in Ireland (Redford, 1926:132). For instance in the 'dearth of cattle and corn' between 1628 and 1633 there were bitter complaints concerning the number of Irish emanating from the South and West, including South Wales. There was apparently a regular traffic of emigrant ships from Ireland to western and north-western England and to Wales, and the nuisance - for this was how it was perceived by the native authorities - led to the organization of an elaborate system of poor removal through seven specified ports, one of which was Milford Haven.

In addition to the vagrant stream, seasonal migration of Irish (and also Scottish and Welsh) harvesters into England was pronounced and the availability of such labour was an essential constituent of the agricultural cycle of certain areas. By the mid-eighteenth century a semi-permanent Irish 'colony' was 'well established in north Cardiganshire where they worked the lead mines near Aberystwyth' (Parry, 1983:20). The majority of those engaged in such seasonal migration came with the firm intention of returning home at the conclusion of the harvest or available work and are thus not 'true' migrants - those with the desire to permanently move from one area to another.

Before the nineteenth century comparatively few Irish had made a definite settlement in England and Wales. In London, it is true, there had been serious anti-Irish riots in 1736; significantly - in the light of future developments in South Wales - these were said to be due to the Irish:

> 'not only working at hay and corn harvest as has been usual, but letting themselves out to all sort of labour considerably cheaper than the English labourers have: and numbers of them being employed by the weavers upon the like terms.' (Quoted Redford, 1926:134)

In the decade before 1800 Ireland suffered a

series of bad harvests and subsistence migration so caused together with mobility associated with the rebellion and troubles of 1798 strengthened the existing movement from Ireland to Britain - Merthyr's 'first' Irishman, Lawrence Hughes, being identified as such a migrant (Masson, 1975:22). A (somewhat intermittent) Catholic 'mission' was established at Swansea in 1791, largely in response to the needs of a small Irish community.

From the 1820s the pace of Irish migration quickened and its nature changed; this was in part fostered by changes in agricultural practice and tenure within Ireland which forced more to look for their labour away from the land and by agricultural changes in England which limited opportunities for their seasonal employment. The potato crop failed in 1821 and 1822 in large areas of Ireland and severe famine prompted entry to Britain mainly through Holyhead/Liverpool or Wales and the West. Partial crop failure - and associated subsistence migration *within* Ireland - was recurrent throughout the 1820s and 30s (Cullen, 1972). Perversely, in the light of such hardship, population was increasing and sufficient opportunities for industrial employment did not exist within Ireland. For many, the choice was migration or slow starvation.

Those migrants with sufficient substance might make the United States their destination but the poorest of those who moved under the impetus of hunger during the 1820s continued their journey by crossing the channel to Wales and England. Considerable trade was conducted across the Irish Sea, grain and cattle were exported (notwithstanding potato crop failure) and coal from Wales and manufactures from Britain imported and so passage was easy to find - some ship's captains allegedly carrying passengers free on the expectation of payment from the poor law authorities for the returning vagrants so generated or, supposedly, in place of ballast with 'the captain's find[ing] it cheaper to ship and unship this living ballast than one of lime or shingles' (Paine, 1856 quoted Lewis, 1979:16). Whether the observations were true or not they were in wide currency and indicative of a 'dehumanizing' of the Irish migrant.

While South Wales was not the prime target for Irish migration, with the bulk of the migrant flow aiming for London or English rural and industrial centres, increasing numbers were turning aside to take advantage of the opportunities for employment presented by the industrial valleys. Catholic

missions were established at Cardiff, Newport and Merthyr in the mid-1820s to meet the religious needs of the settlers. By now, employers seeking labour were employing agents in Ireland to sponsor labour migration; in 1826 Father Richards of Abergavenny made a note of the arrival of 99 [predominantly male] migrants under the heading 'Irish Catholics lately engaged to come over to the new Bute Iron Works' (Masson, 1975:26). The majority of Irish migrants, however, found 'their own way over', often employing the network of extended family, friends, or those from the same village who had arrived earlier for assistance - food, housing, direction towards employment - in the process.

The majority of the migrants had little to offer other than their unskilled labour but there was a requirement for 'sweat' in abundance. As Wales's Industrial Revolution gathered pace the explosion of civil engineering projects - such as the building of the Bute Dock in Cardiff in the 1820s and the large floating dock at Newport through the 1830's and afterwards the railways and many industrial buildings required throughout the region - presented opportunities for the Irish for employment. The relationship between the two Western Celtic peoples now passed from that of a suspicion distanced and yet heightened by the separation of the Irish Sea to a more immediate and intimate communion awash with opportunities for conflict and understanding.

Reception

South Wales was a social crucible in the first half of the nineteenth century. The energy and frenzy of the industrial development was mirrored in the chaos and turmoil of the mushrooming, close-to-shanty, towns which developed around the skirts of the new industries: towns like Dickens' *Coketown*:

> 'of brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it; but ... [they were] towns of unnatural red and black like the painted face of a savage. [Towns] ... of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves for ever and ever, and never got uncoiled' (Hard Times, 1854).

From 1801 to 1851 the population of Glamorgan increased by 223 per cent and Monmouthshire by 244 per cent compared to a national average for Britain of 93 per cent. This growth, for the most

part, was concentrated in the north-eastern sectors of both counties, centred on the towns of Merthyr Tydfil and Tredegar and their related lines of communication, particularly with the ports of Newport and Cardiff; for example, the population of the previously rural parish of Aberystruth in Monmouthshire grew from 805 to 14,383 between 1800 to 1850 (Davies, 1965:6). Tens of thousands of migrants, predominantly from rural Wales, many from the adjacent counties of England, and fewer from Scotland and Ireland were drawn to the industrializing valleys by the opportunities presented in and by the iron and coal industries.

Behind the neat images of the inns, cottages and shops of contemporary prints were erected the squalid rows of housing which were condemned by public health reformers a generation later:

> 'street after street of low, confined tenements, with roads unformed, without foot-paths, undrained, presenting a mass of mud and filth, and destitute of the slightest provision for carrying off the refuse of a teeming population; narrow, close courts and crowded alleys, crammed into a space so nicely economised, that an entrance would seem to be begrudged ... arrangements of decency disregarded - light and ventilation uncared for -a supply of water unprovided.'(William Kay: 'Report on the Sanitary Condition of Merthyr Tydfil to the local Board of Health' Merthyr 1854:69)

As migrants flocked to the new industries, houses and tenements were crammed full - in this respect the Irish were, at first, no different from the native Welsh. Nor was their 'pattern of settlement' as newcomers concentrating in one area in any way exceptional - it was already a feature of both Irish and Welsh settlement in London, and, for example, of Welsh settlement in the English border towns:

> 'Regional and local affinities also helped the migrant find his feet in town, from the seventeenth century, if not before, inns and other drinking establishments in towns commonly had regional connections ' (Clark, 1979: 273).

From the 1820s there were sizeable Irish communities at 'Aberdare, Abersychan, Barry Dock, Bridgend, Blaenavon, Brynmawr, Cwmbran, Dowlais, Cardiff, Neath, Newport and Pontypool' (Parry, 1983:20). Such settlements were concentrated in

the poorer sections of the towns - for instance, in Cardiff around the existing Hayes and Bute Street (Emm, 1984:22) and invariably in time became the site of the first Catholic chapels to be erected. It seems that notwithstanding the determination of Bishop Collinwood, the western primate for the 1820s, to meet the religious needs of the new arrivals his enthusiasm was not universally shared by priests already in Wales who in their quiet rural parishes had little in common with the migrants; Father Patrick Portal complaining of Merthyr in 1826: 'This mission is one of the most severe and disagreeable I have ever heard of' (Attwater, 1935:69). Twenty years later the Catholic magazine *The Tablet* spoke for the indigenous Welsh Catholic in its assessment of the Irish:

> 'The fact is that there are two classes of Irish labouring people who differ about as widely as light and darkness - There are many who are industrious, methodical, thrifty and generous in the highest degree. But ask anyone to show you where 'the Irish' live. He will take you to a miserable cul-de-sac, which you are afraid of penetrating, and which, bad as it is physically, bears a moral character even worse. There are times when no policeman who is careful of his life dare show himself within that enclosure' (*The Tablet* 24 January 1846 quoted by Gilley in Swift and Gilley 1989:176).

The response of the Welsh Catholics to large-scale Irish migration did not differ markedly, in practical terms, from that of their Protestant counterparts. Simply, the surviving pockets of Welsh Catholicism were outside of the areas of Irish settlement. Where they did touch - for instance, the Abergavenny mission had some Welsh adherents in what was 'rural' Merthyr the 'devout' amongst the Irish might establish contact (the first Irish children baptized in Merthyr had godparents with Welsh names). Mostly, however, the two communities did not touch one upon the other - partly through geography, the differing social status of the two groups of co-religionists and, not least, the fact that the Catholicism of many of the Irish was not always translated into automatic church attendance and religious participation. When Welsh and Irish Catholic were brought into contact by 'institutional' processes when a British church hierarchy was created (a hierarchy drawing its motivation from an English and European ethos which would regard the Irish and, if to a lesser extent, the Welsh Catholic

mores as, literally, provincial) they still preserved many social and cultural distinctions - some which remain today - and it is difficult to speak of a true marriage between the two groups until the twentieth century.

The language of the Irish was Gaelic, and few spoke English on their arrival (Emm, 1984:5). The majority of the immigrants to South Wales, reflecting the composition of the immigration as a whole after the 1820s, were rural labourers and dispossessed small-holders from areas in which the land was the only means of life - the applicability of their skills to the industrial Welsh economy was consequently limited. Life in rural Ireland was characterized by contemporaries as being backward and primitive even by the standards of the day. Notwithstanding a commonality of ethnic origin the Welsh and Irish were 'distinct to each other' - their respective origins being signalled to the world by perceptions of accent, dress, 'look' and habits. At the level of social interchange they constituted a readily identifiable minority.

Irish 'arrival' at a given Welsh location might happen by way of 'fall-out' on the way to another location or, as increasingly happened, in response to a specific opportunity for employment. As the Industrial Revolution spread to each corner of South Wales so did the Irish, most often retaining a 'nucleated' pattern of settlement as at Bridgend's Irish Court - and as in the larger conurbations - the status of the Irish was such that they received the lowest grade of housing - which they did little to improve:

> '[On Bridgend's Irish Court] ... At its entry is an open and very offensive dung heap. Here are eight houses with a crowded population and without either water or privies. The court is unpaved, and the lodgers taken in are of a very bad description. The Tennis-Court is also chiefly inhabited by Irish. Here are 17 houses without a privy, and the whole place, inside and outside, is in a filthy condition. In one house is a bone and rag depot. The rents are from 1s6d to 2s a week. The court is unpaved and contains dirty pigsties ...' (Quoted in Mathews, 1977:15)

Access to housing was primarily a function of income and, to a lesser extent, need. It might be argued that the prejudices of the native Welsh might dispose them against renting or selling to even 'a wealthy Irishmen' but prejudice rarely

withstands the temptation of greed. The bulk of Irish migrant labour was unskilled, and this with their immigrant status, ensured that they were at the bottom of the wages pile. The migrant flow consisted disproportionately of young adult males whose intention to 'permanently' settle might only be formulated after decades in their 'new country'. Thus what they could afford and, to a degree, what they wanted, was the cheapest accommodation available. Given the poor initial standard of the housing, the inevitable tendency to pack it to overflowing with the importation of a range of strange social mores - not least the attachment to a pig whatever the housing available - and the differentiation prompted by membership of a 'foreign culture' you soon had circumstances of an embryonic ghetto.

Industry

Foremost in crystallizing the hostility of the indigenous labourers was the threat the Irish represented to their wages as alternative and cheaper labour:

> 'The ordinary labour in Ireland got from sixpence to a shilling a day, in Great Britain he might earn as much as 12s. a week. The Irishman was thus able to accept much less than the wages current in England [and Wales], and yet be considerably better paid that he had been at home in Ireland' (Redford, 1926:162).

While the rural Welsh who constituted the bulk of South Wales's newly constituted population could make no claim to an easy and privileged background they had enjoyed a standard of living way beyond that experienced by their Irish cousins who come from conditions of degradation and near starvation and were quite ready to accept wages and conditions of work which were unacceptable to their native counterparts. The aspirations of the two peoples were correspondingly divergent. This clash of social standards had been clearly foreseen by the Committee of Emigration in 1827:

> 'Two different rates of wages and two different conditions of the labouring classes cannot permanently co-exist. One of two results appears to be inevitable: the Irish population must be raised towards the standard of the English or the English depressed towards that of the Irish.'(quoted in Redford, 1926:159)

The Irish were a cheap and ready source of labour which employers were not slow to exploit - it was, indeed, generally assumed that Irish labour was indispensable to the prosperity of both the manufacturers and the agriculture of Great Britain. The impact of Irish labour in keeping down wages is difficult to quantify. The modern consensus is that in the balance of the multiple factors affecting wages the scale of Irish migration was too small to effect the global British picture (Williamson, 1986). This analysis does not preclude a temporary and localized impact in keeping wages low. For our purposes, it is the contemporary perception which counts and this regarded the Irish as a retarding factor on wage levels.

Irish migrants were engaged at the Bute Iron Works in the autumn of 1825. It was an uneasy period: the iron trade was going through one of its periodical slumps, and wages were being reduced; there had been abortive strikes by the workers. The Irish were obviously seen as a threat, and the native response was a vicious one:

> '... the homes of the Irish were attacked, the occupants ejected, warning given that they had all better leave the country. When William Forman, the owner of the works, tried to read the Riot Act he, too, was assaulted. Only the arrival of the troops enabled the Irish to return to the works, although the ringleaders of the riot had been arrested. That the matter was of general concern is shown by the fact that several hundred men from Homfray's Tredegar works marched to assist in ejecting the Irish.'
> (Quoted in E. W. Evans 1961:22)

The attack was a signal for the expulsion of the Irish from the range of copperworks at Swansea. The Bute incident was perhaps the first of a number of anti-Irish riots which were to explode periodically in Wales throughout the Nineteenth Century and was followed by a similar incident, described by *The Merlin* on 10 May 1834 after attempts to use the Irish at the Pontypool Iron Works:

> 'A deadly feud had for some time existed at the Varteg Iron Works between the Welsh and Irish operatives, in consequence of the latter accepting less than the standard prices for their labour ... An alarming affray was the *natural consequence*, and the Irish were at last compelled to retreat from

the works.'[my italics]

The unrest spread to the collieries around Cardiff and similar expulsions took place, Violent riots took place at Cardiff in 1846, in Treherbert (the Rhondda) in 1858, after which it was 'said that very few Irishmen were to be found in any part of the valley for many years' (MS 4378 pp 86-7 National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth) - an observation which would seem to be supported by the failure of the Irish to establish themselves in the Rhondda in any significant numbers even as late as the 1901 census - in Tredegar in July 1882, shortly after the Phoenix Park murders (Parry, 1983) and there was widespread anti-Irish rioting across Glamorgan and North Monmouthshire as late as the first decade of the twentieth century (Gwyn Alfred Williams 1985:232). O'Leary (1991) identifies 19 major violent instances directed against the Irish between 1826 and 1882. Lest a false romance be associated with such spasmodic urban violence it should be remembered that they could and most often did involve the ransacking of houses, the burning and destruction of a lifetime's furniture and possessions and the most petty spitefulness which took no regard of the age or health of the victims.

The impact of such events is difficult to 'quantify' but could hardly be for the good in Welsh-Irish relations. They became part of the folk-lore of an area; they are remembered and passed on from one generation to another, with suitable embellishments, as cautionary tales, adventures or triumphs - remembered in one way by the Irish and quite another by the Welsh. Resort to 'riot' was a reasonably frequent means of social expression in the nineteenth century 'frontier towns' and might be occasioned by a multitude of happenings other than 'the Irish'- apart from disorder associated with purely 'domestic' and inter-Welsh conflict communal violence against English 'interlopers' was far from rare in north Wales in the period 1850 to 1870 and apparent in South Wales against Cornish miners in 1867, against Belgian miners in 1899, against Jews in 1911 (anti-Semitism was a feature of certain of the Nonconformist sects), against Spanish miners in 1912/1914, and against the 'coloured races' (Africans, Arabs, Chinese and other Asians) of the Cardiff Docks in 1919 (in which the Cardiff 'Irish' played their full part). While spectacular and vicious - and, indeed, hardly infrequent - such concentrated outbursts of Welsh xenophobia were far from the norm but should be regarded as revealing of underlying attitudes -

rather than uncharacteristic spasms - which were not exclusively focused on the Irish.

The 'unskilled' Irish had an important role in the initial construction of the industrial infrastructure but once established within the range of heavy industries it was the Welsh who tended to take the skilled jobs. Within iron, copper and coal it was the skilled 'aristocrats' who were in the vanguard of the struggle for better wages. The Irish were poor strike-breakers being able to provide basic labour to allow a determined owner to struggle on with production on a temporary basis but they were never a realistic alternative specialist work-force [as Welsh miners were sometimes to act in English coal disputes (Parry, 1983)] and were but an expedient to be discarded when the employer and employee returned to a coincident view of their interests. At times of economic depression the Irish were affected by unemployment disproportionately and frequently they were the first labourers to be discharged (O'Leary, 1991).

What the riots did underwrite was the proximity of physical violence, both as an 'unthinking' reaction to the frustration and troubles of existence and its use as a means to resolve disputes within the industrial areas, and a permanent division between the two peoples so ingrained as to be 'regarded almost as natural'. Father Caroll of Merthyr commenting on the anti-Irish prejudices of the native Welsh with 'much self-conceit as well as national pride amongst the natives, which enhances the slightest advantage' (Quoted Masson 1975:37) - an opinion of some worth considering his preparedness to criticise his Irish parishioners for their excesses. In the chaos and essentially competitive environment in which all in South Wales struggled for existence a jealous eye was kept by all on all - a perceived advance by a minority as distinct as the Irish would soon generate jealousy and a demand for the restoration of 'the differential' by the Welsh majority. The routine, day-to-day conflicts inevitable between individuals and families in a constricted milieu took on a more readily identifiable characterization if one of the disputants was Irish, the other Welsh.

The movement to trade unionization commenced as little more than a desire to protect the self-interests of a given body of workers. The *Tarw Scotch* or 'Scotch Cattle' operating at the Heads of the Valleys in the 1820s were a 'secret society' of skilled miners prepared to take direct

action in the form of assault and arson to preserve their interests. Skills were a jealously guarded asset and if to be shared were to be given first to children or 'substitute kin'; the 'Scotch Cattle' made the Irish of Merthyr one of their targets, and across a period of ten years there were a series of 'midnight visits' designed to remind the Irish of their subordinate position within the working class hierarchy (DJV Jones, 1971). A note -at least attributed to the *Tarw Scotch* - was sent to the Guests of Merthyr, owners of the local iron-works, in June 1834 causing Lady Charlotte Guest to note in her diary: 'There came a letter this morning, threatening to 'Scotch Cattle' Dowlais House ... unless all the Irish were discharged from the works' (quoted O'Leary, 1991:29). The narrow jealousy of self-interest is particularly illustrated by an 1834 Scotch Cattle attack at Blaen Rhymni upon the house of the Irish mason John Corbet 'resentment at this Irishman's relative prosperity ... [being] ... the direct result of his position as a skilled worker' (O'Leary, 1991:30).

Migration, especially that 'forced' by economic pressures, often leads to an enhanced and nostalgic nationalism in the face of pressures from the new environment. This was no less true for the migrant rural Welsh as of the Irish, arguably, more so in that the Welsh migrant would be 'affronted' by changes in his own land - the 'overlay' of English masters and an increasingly Anglicized administration - and in occupying a 'higher place' on the economic ladder than the Irish the Welsh would have both a greater capacity to 'institutionalize' such sentiment and be able to 'off-set' the challenge to their culture by emphasizing their 'superiority' over the migrant Irish. Elements of the Welsh population were already concerned to preserve and propagate their culture and language - a sentiment which in part underlay the activity of the Scotch Cattle, for the most part Welsh-speaking Welshmen such as 'Will Aberhonddu' and 'Shoni Coal Tar'. One of the largest of the 'Valley's' friendly societies, the 'True Ivorites', held as one of its aims 'to uphold the Welsh language' and forbade the use of English in the lodges (Evidence on Employment of Children 1842:509 No28, quoted Masson, 1975:10) and the names of other friendly societies such as 'Druids' and *Cymdeithas Unol y Blaenau* revealed their ethnic loyalties. The working people of Merthyr, said one of the town's shopkeepers were 'strongly against, not only the English language being taught, but against the English also' (Evidence on Employment of Children 1842:507,

quoted Masson, 1975:11) and Welsh was the dominant language of the work place.

In the formation of groups to defend a common-interest 'commonality' of culture (in its widest sense) is critical in allowing initial focus and binding. Elsewhere in Britain weavers from the 'more developed' parts of Ireland came to join with early radical movements. In South Wales it would appear that the first wave of Irish migrants lived so close to the margin of economic survival that there was neither energy or inclination to partake in the first manifestations of Welsh-located Radicalism - although in the Merthyr Riots of 1831 'a strong body of Irish labourers carrying bludgeons' joined in the general disturbance' (Masson, 92:1975). Such participation seems to represent the limit of 'joint' Irish-Welsh political effort for some decades as the pace - or at least the perception of - Irish migration quickened in the 1840s.

Chapter Three

The Great Famine

The Famine Immigrants

As already indicated 'attitudes' are not susceptible to a neat and parcelled consideration across divisions of society or time. The events of, and the Welsh responses to, 'The Great Famine' need to be placed firmly in the context of pre-established, and still developing, relationship. However, in that the phrase 'The Great Famine' came of itself to be a ready historical shorthand to the Irish - embodying oppression, misery and migration - likewise to the people of England and Wales the 'famine migration' crystallized their perceptions of beggared masses bringing to Britain poverty, disease and a threat to native labour, religion and culture.

The scale of pre-Great Famine migration and the impact of wave of migration which came upon the potato failure of the mid-forties is illustrated in the table below (the percentage figures relate to the approximate percentage the Irish population constituted of the registration district):

	1841	1851
Wales	8,276	20,738
Cardiff	1,000 (9%)	3,317 (7%)
Merthyr	1,400 (3-4%)	3,646 (5-6%)
Newport	1,607 (6%)	2,737 (6%)
Swansea	400 (2%)	1,369 (2%)
Glamorgan	3,174 (4%)	9,737 (4%)

The figures are significant in two respects considering the importance which popular history ascribes to the 'famine influx' of the 1840s. Firstly, that those who emigrated as a consequence of the Great Famine were following in a well-marked path to South Wales. Secondly, that notwithstanding the increased scale of migration from Ireland the receiving community was growing at such a rate that the 'Irish share' of the population remained constant.

By 1840 the pattern of Irish settlement in South Wales was well established: the Irish were separated from the Welsh as much by the matter of social status as of the fact of their occupying a distinct and easily identifiable sector of the towns - such as Greenhill in Swansea, the

'Rookery' in Dowlais and the Charles Street/Newtown area of Cardiff. The tendency of migrants to focus on such areas worsened the social problems of the towns - which were anyway losing the battle between inadequate accommodation and fast-growing populations - and, in turn, generated further criticism of the migrant Irish. The pattern of settlement in South Wales in the 1840s is well represented by an observation made the following decade:

> 'Perhaps there are few towns in England, with the large population of Cardiff divided as to classes, offering few attractions for a residence, except as connected with the trading industry; it has a very small proportion of gentry, while the great and increasing demand for labourers, causes a constant flux of that class: and, is too frequently the case beyond its requirements; while its propinquity to Ireland, and the facility of transit, constantly pours into the town a large number of mendicant Irish' (Paine, 1856:12).

From the beginning of 1847, newspapers in South Wales filled their local news columns with reports on the immigrants and local reaction to them, while also printing news from Ireland itself - animal imagery was an often used device in reference to the 'droves' or 'swarms' of the destitute leaving Ireland. Police courts across the district dealt with 'emaciated' or 'gaunt and half-famished' Irish men charged with stealing food' (*Monmouthshire Merlin* 17 February 1847).

As news of the famine and terrible conditions in Ireland emerged the initial reaction across South Wales was predominantly sympathetic. Public meetings and subscriptions to help the famine victims were organized in Cardiff, Merthyr and Newport in February 1847, a concert in aid of Ireland was organized by the 'prominent' of Swansea. The Welsh dockers of Newport found a group of Irish stowaways too weak to leave their ship and took them to their homes (Masson, 1985:60). The extract from a *Cambrian* editorial typifies an initial response which combines a desire to help with a somewhat constrained responsibility and capacity for self-congratulation:

> 'Distress in Ireland - We are happy to learn that so many of the ladies of Swansea are acting on the suggestions embodied in the remarks which appeared in our paper a

> fortnight since - in exerting themselves with so much zeal and energy in making up coarse clothing to enable the perishing thousands in the Sister Isle to protect themselves from the severity and inclemency of the winter' (*Cambrian* 12 February 1847)

The attitudes in Wales towards the famine victims seems to have soon hardened:

> 'All paupers arriving from Ireland in any port in England and Wales should immediately be sent back by the parochial authorities ... The authorities neglect a paramount duty in omitting to do so directly any Irish person [who] requires relief at the expense of any parish'(*Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian* 13 March 1847).

Such 'hardening' was in part a consequence of the sheer numbers of Irish migrants arriving in South Wales. The south Welsh response was determined as much by those migrating through the district as those 'intending to settle' - large numbers not revealed by census. During 1848, 12,505 Irish people found temporary shelter at the Newport Workhouse (source *Merlin* 5 May 1849), compared with 8,000 from elsewhere - if these were all new migrants this annual 'throughput' was equivalent to two-thirds of the previous number of south Wales 'settled' Irish.

Some in South Wales were not slow to exploit the potential of Ireland's misery. Some immigrants themselves reported that they had been attracted by placards in Cork which stated that they would be met at Cardiff Docks and employed at high wages. The placards had been posted by ship's captains themselves intent on generating passenger trade at 2s.6d. Attempts by the Boards of Guardians of Newport and Cardiff to prosecute captains or ships owners for carrying passengers without licence were mostly unsuccessful. Passengers were dropped from the ships at remote spots along the coast from Pembrokeshire to Newport, often regardless of the condition they were in. The captain of one ship was said to have forced two women with children ashore outside Newport in the middle of the night: the women 'simply lay down to die' but were found by two men who carried them home (*Merlin* 5 May 1847). Ships entering Cardiff discharged passengers in the mud flats off Penarth, where one man, too weak to walk ashore, almost drowned. Those who died en route in these illegal passenger carriers might be perfunctorily buried in a shallow mud grave or

consigned to the depths in weighted sacks.

Such duplicity and exploitation was facilitated by South Wales's well-established potential as a place of employment and aided by the circulation of 'genuine' handbills promising work on the railways or in the iron works, and in market days in County Cork the 'bellman' publicized work and high wages in South Wales. Its potential as a place of employment - and the continuing desire of some among the employing classes to continue to recruit Irish labour combined with other factors in magnifying the perception of South Wales as a target for famine immigration. The Welsh ports, particularly Newport, were used by migrants planning to go on to London or the Midlands. It was maintained at the time of the famine influx that those who entered Britain through the Welsh ports were in a more desperate condition than those who entered through Liverpool. Indeed said, Boase in his Report (Poor Removal p476 No6482) of 1848:

> 'the contrast between the Irish immigrants at Liverpool and in Wales is most striking; the former, by their account, come from distant parts of Ireland, walking from Mayo or Drogheda, and from Rosscommon and Sligo to Dublin, to take ship, which none but the able-bodied could do. And they really are, judging from those I have seen, chiefly lusty young men, willing to work, and unencumbered by women or children. But on the contrary, those landing in Wales are nearly all helpless and burdensome to the community'.

Much evidence was quoted, in this and in later investigations, for the increased proportion of women and children, and of the old an enfeebled among the immigrants in South Wales, and also for the fact that they 'had been got rid of as burdens, or possible burdens, upon society at home.' The passage money for many having been paid by arrangement between ships' captains and influential gentlemen.

The South Welsh ports seemed to hold themselves as 'suffering' particularly in that migrant families would willingly separate for a time, the women and children staying where they could be sure of a bed and some food at the workhouse, and the men travelling to the industrial valleys in search of work. By contemporary 'institutional' standards such a device was itself held exploitative of charity and an abuse of the poor law machinery. That the

plight of the Irish migrants was overstated and that the earlier migrants were both a corrupting influence and undeserving and also doing little to help their countrymen is the sentiment underlying a *Cambrian* report upon a police visit to the Irish quarter of Swansea:

> 'Two active officers of our police force found amidst the greatest filth and uncivilization, there was in almost every house a profusion of roast and boiled beef, pork, mutton and every description of meat, and abundance of peas and other vegetables ... There were likewise card playing and other amusements carried on in nearly every house ... while they send their own and borrowed children about the town and country to beg'(*Cambrian*, 23 April 1847).

The attitude of native industrial classes - while less susceptible to reconstruction - seems to be broadly similar to that represented by the middle-class press. The Commission of Inquiry into 'Education' (it is tempting to add, 'and Society') in Wales (1847) reporting that the prevailing sentiment in the mining villages was that if the government wanted to help the workmen, it had better 'tackle their masters' and stop the Irish coming in (DJV Jones, 1971:246); this indicating the 'middle position' of the Irish migrant - resented by the labouring classes but if not for themselves welcomed by the entrepreneur at least perceived useful as a means of keeping wages lower.

<u>The Irish and Disease</u>

The acute housing shortage in South Wales between 1840 and 1861 encouraged speculative building without any concern for the future welfare of the occupants. In 1849 the Cardiff Town Surveyor reported that 'houses of the lower class ... are now commonly let before even the first stone is laid.' These houses were built 'without any regard to level or uniformity'. (Board of Health Report quoted Hickey, 1959:69) so that it was almost impossible to construct decent roads and pavements between them; in streets that had been paved the floors of the houses were often below the level of the paving with imaginable flooding problems. It was to such housing that the migrant Irish flocked as lodgers, to be accommodated in almost unimaginable conditions. From the public health reports of Swansea, Merthyr, Cardiff and Newport case after case was cited similar to that of the house of Michael

Harrington where 54 persons, men women and children, who lived, ate and slept in one room measuring 16′ x 17′. Cases of 'hot-bedding' and bed-sharing abound. Police inspections suggest an average of 25-30 inhabitants residing in each house of Cardiff's Stanley Street, some with as many as 60 inhabitants. In addition to those deemed inhabitants can be added casual lodgers who came 'only' to sleep at night, mostly on the ground.

In the light of such conditions it is not surprising that the link between the Irish, the famine migration and cholera and typhus was axiomatic:

> 'the worst of these straggling accessions to the local population is [the Irish], that they too generally consist of the most wretched members of the society from which they have, as it were, been cast forth - generally, in a starving condition, after already afflicted with disease, or carrying the seeds of it about with them'(*Report to the General Board of Health on the town of Cardiff*, 1850: 13).

Across the years 1846-9 there were epidemics of typhus and cholera throughout South Wales. The main weight of the blame for those outbreaks was laid at the door of the Irish; the medical officer of the Cardiff Union stated that the main cause of the increase in typhus was the 'immense invasion of Irish destitute labourers, navigators and others, who had been brought over to this town by public works' ... the majority of cases of fever ... 'may be said to have been imported direct from Skibbereen and Clonakilty'. (Cardiff Board of Health Report 1847:44)

The Irish were hit hard by typhus in 1847 - it was generally known as 'the Irish fever', in Merthyr it took the parish priest, Father Caroll, and deaths and 'escape' migration of the more established Irish prompted employers to worry about a labour shortage - events repeated by the cholera epidemic of 1849. In 1853 the infant mortality rate for Cardiff was one in three (one in five in London, one in eight in the country districts), additionally the distribution of such losses was weighted heavily towards the Irish districts. Not only was the outbreaks of disease linked with the Irish but largely held to be their *fault*, a consequence of living conditions which they 'volunteered' to accept - sometimes their poverty and squalor being attributed to their

hoarding of money to finance their return to Ireland. In investigating a cholera epidemic 'A Government Commissioner' (probably T W Ramell) found the Irish of Merthyr:

> '... laborious, patient and lighthearted. On the other hand, I have found them here filthy, sensual, crafty, quarellsome and brutish in their habits. Their houses are unfurnished, foul and stinking: their children uncared for - barefoot, ragged, unwashed and uneducated. And this, not from necessity, but from natural habits' *Morning Chronicle* 15 April 1850 .

One response to such perversity was 'medical enforcement', police and medical officers would 'raid' lodging houses and confine those found to isolation hospitals. In Merthyr separate isolation hospitals were built for the Welsh and the Irish, the 'Irish' hospital supposedly having a harsher regime. What was developing at this time was the projection of a difference between the Welsh and Irish as they *choose* to live:

> 'The neighbourhoods in which the work people reside are generally clean and free from dampness, and their habitations are suitable and commodious; but there are some striking exceptions ... the principle places of resort for 'tramps and stragglers'. In the cottages in these places there may be three or four families in a house, and 15 to 20 to a sleeping-room. There may be 50 houses of this crowded description. The families are mostly Irish'. [Report on the Employment of Women and Children p 637 No.96]

The 1847 Board of Health reports are more balanced and less praiseworthy of the 'Welsh' but critically preserved the distinction between the differing neighbourhoods. Increasingly the Irish were presented as a menace to order, health, stability and social progress; the Irish threatened somehow to absorb the native working class - who, for the purposes of contrast, are invariably presented as rational, industrious, respectful, clean and healthy. While conditions in Merthyr remained 'hard' for all races now a distinction can be made between a Welsh household average size of 5/6 and its Irish counterpart of 8/9 - sometimes with two households in one house. In 1851 12% of the heads of Irish households in Merthyr were women, mostly widowed, sometimes deserted and either running a lodging house or a matriarch with working sons.

In the numerous official reports some observers are actively hostile to the Irish; some, while noting their poor living standards, more sympathetic in tone. But all the officials who made statements to the Commissions relegate the Irish to a social standing below that of the native working class and consider them as a group apart. They were, if not new, an alien and destructive factor in the social structure of Wales. The attitude implied in this is expressed very vividly in some of the newspaper comment at the time. The *Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian*, for instance, in the 1840s, often took pains to point out to its readers that most of the social evils in the town resulted from the influx of immigrants and could not be eradicated until the habits of the Irish had been changed and their immigration checked.

There was presumed to be a definite tie between the spread of sickness and Irish immorality - not merely for their sexual adventures but their mores towards work and saving:

> 'The sexes live and occupy the same rooms indiscrim-inately, hence early marriage and illegitimate births. Accustomed from a tender age to all kinds of privations, with no regard to comfort and decency, such people are little restrained by a sense of providence. A marriage of improvidence is with them the rule - a marriage of providence the exception. Their own constitutions, sapped by constant exposure to the vitiated atmosphere of their own crowded hovels, the weakly offspring, exposed to every influence such an atmosphere can engender, with little parental care, has feeble tenacity of life; the germs of scrofula develop their existence in the forms of strophe, mesenteric disease, hydrocephalus and convulsions, or, if it passes on for a short time beyond this period, the stunted, ricketty [sic] form of the Irish mendicant, testifies the hard battle it had to fight, ere consumption closes its miserable existence'(Merthyr Board of Health Report, 1850:3)

Worst of all, these people were held i

to good advice and incapable of helping themselves: in Bridgend's Irish Court windows were permanently sealed to keep out the cold rather than dispel the fetid atmosphere and the 'night tubs' discharged into the open court rather than disposed of more thoughtfully. Such actions were held to be almost a racial characteristic:

> 'I have argued with these poor creatures on the gross want of decency and propriety in living in this uncivilized way. They do not appear aware of doing wrong: they consider it but as a natural consequence of having to pay so much for rent - this preventing them having greater accommodation: and they seem astonished you should imply evil consequences resulting from such a mode of living' *Report of the Medical Officer of Health 1861* quoted Hickey 1959:84).

In that the documentary evidence does not reach below the level of 'Gilley's middle-class commentary' it is difficult to identify a specific 'working-class' reaction to the Irish and disease. However, in that the indigenous workers were - next to the Irish - most likely to be hardest hit by the recurrent outbreaks of disease it might be speculated that they were the most resentful of the Irish presence and in the almost permanent inter-racial strive in the new towns the charge of 'disease bringer' added a deeper dimension:

> 'The antipathy which the Welsh entertain against the Irish was notably increased at this time, from a belief that the latter, whose habits are as filthy as those of the Welsh are cleanly, imported the disease to Merthyr' *Morning Chronicle* 15 April 1850.

The Irish offered a ready target to those seeking revenge for personal tragedy and such a scenario provides us with an insight into the potential for a real hatred rather than mere ethnic rivalry.

Chapter 4

In the 'Classical Age'

The Irish and *'Y Gwerin'*

The description 'The Classical Age' for the Wales of the latter half of the nineteenth century is meant to mean no more than that in this period the dominant characteristics associated with the South Welsh industrial society came to establish their ascendency; Nonconformity, the desire for respectability amongst turmoil (not least indicated through the struggle for education), a propensity to radicalism and resort to collectivism in the face of organized capital.

It is difficult to apply the term 'settled' to South Wales at any stage in the nineteenth century. Throughout, the life of the labouring classes was grindingly hard, consumption endemic, the death rates unacceptably high - and hunger and violence, in the form of brawls, industrial accident or suicide, never far away. It was from this unpromising soil that by the 1840s there began to emerge *Y Gwerin* - loosely translated as 'the people' but meaning much more - the people 'who were the most upright, God-fearing, radical, moral, philosophical, cultured and open in the world' (Neil Evans, 1991:5): the people who *were* the 'culture' of South Wales with both a capital and small 'c'. They were a people *of* South Wales, created from the native migrant groups by the experience and environment of industrialization. While recent work has challenged the definition of a Welsh culture in the singular (Neil Evans, 1991) the *Gwerin*, the people of nonconformity, of *eisteddfodau*, of radicalism, constitute the model society associated with the last half of nineteenth-century South Wales, their influence extended beyond the chapel bench into pub and workplace and provided a framework of reference by which the mores and standards of others within the Valleys was judged.

The emergence of a middle class in industrial Wales (and much more importantly of those of the skilled workforce who part reflected their mores) allowed for the union of notions of Protestantism with 'progress' and 'respectability':

> 'It was also a commonplace that Catholic countries were bad at trade and commerce: an indication to most Englishmen [and those in Wales] that God's blessing was withheld and that the Roman church was restricting human potential. Again, Ireland was seen to prove the thesis' (Norman, 1968:18).

What Nonconformist congregations lacked in

material goods they could make up for by a moral superiority, particulary over the dissolute Irish. Perhaps the real sin of the Irish was the casual attitude they evidenced towards a desire for wealth and respectability. Central to the image of the dissolute Irish was their recourse to alcohol. Drink and drunkenness soon became problems in the industrial communities. The predominant cause of drunkenness in South Wales was the wretchedness created by the industrial environment. Intemperance caused poverty, but poverty also caused intemperance and throughout the nineteenth century the areas of greatest drunkenness in Britain tended to be the large coalfield areas. Industrialization and urbanization had created many difficulties for the people who lived and laboured in the new areas; industrialization produced regular cycles of unemployment - which hit the Irish hardest - making sobriety less attractive; the nature of the work in the industrial communities - heavy, monotonous and dangerous - was a factor in the equation that linked drink to the environment. Irish migrant labourers were predominantly young and free from the restraints of their old rural communities; and there was the absence of other forms of relaxation. The publican was one of the earliest 'trades' to emerge from the migrant mass - public houses evolving from lodging house 'shibeens' or 'wobble shops' and by their names such as 'The Shamrock' and 'The Exile of Erin' revealing their ethnic origins and the nature of their clientele.

In newspaper accounts 'Paddy' might be presented as an amusing clown, credited with a humour and generosity which was the obverse of his unpredictable, childish and primitive nature. A distinct genre of newspaper reporting developed complete with alleged verbatim 'Begorrahs', 'B'jaysus' and 'Yurr 'onners'. A propensity to wild behaviour was 'in the blood', in 1877 a Cardiff magistrate referring to the appalling drunkenness amongst the Irish dock-labourers claimed 'they are not all bad fellows, but they have all the peculiarities of their forefathers' (Quoted by Gilley in Swift and Gilley, 1989:167).

The indigent Welsh were not, of course, beyond the temptations of demon drink and petty crime but it would seem that the Irish occupied a disproportionate share of the police court's time. Contemporary police statistics distinguished between Welsh, English and Irish. While constituting some 6% of the Merthyr area population between 1851 and 1852 the Irish formed 31% of those charged with 'felony and

misdemeanour', 49% of those charged with assaults on police (often drink related), and 50% of juveniles facing theft charges and this seems a representative picture of the situation across South Wales at the half-century point. What is difficult to isolate retrospectively is the extent such figures reflect greater criminal behaviour amongst the Irish and their distortion by a police 'focus' on the migrants as a source of trouble - while similar behaviour might have gone unnoticed amongst the indigenous population.

Drink featured as the occasion of a number of violent incidents which were then taken up by the wider community. Rioting at Ebbw Vale, Cendl and Brynmawr in the summer of 1853 was the result of an Irishman stabbing a Welshman in a drunken brawl - similar murders sparked disturbances in Swansea in 1842 and 1848 and Cardiff in 1848 - in which there seems little distinction between the merits of either parties involved but invariably it was the Irish 'held to blame'. For the reporter of *Y Diwygiwr* the Ebbw Vale incident was underpinned by a variety of other grievances:

> 'It is certain that the Irish are to be greatly blamed for many things. They undermine wages in many areas through working below price. They can well afford that; because some dozen of them live helter-skelter in some hole of a house, and they send their wives and children about begging, and they will live on the worst fare, and if someone dares say a word to them it is surprising if they do not stab a knife between his ribs'(*Y Diwygiwr* August 1863:257).

Here the issue of wages is tied into a series of objections to the Irishman's way of life: the nature of his accommodation, the illicit financial contributions of women and children to a family economy are condemned from a critical platform built on idealized notions of respectability which allowed an unbroken causal thread to reach from levity, through drink to the dagger - increasingly teetotalism gathered adherents amongst the leaders of Nonconformity and insobriety came to embody much that was held evil. The religion of the Irish was such that it permitted such self-indulgence and wildness with the prospect of ready absolution through the confessional. Their religion was held to be suitable - at best - for children.

In Wales the religious debate was distorted by the ongoing rivalry between Dissent and a rejuvenated Anglicanism which dominated the Welsh ecclesiastical scene. In part this was the simple consequence of a struggle for primacy between two 'main contenders' and in part because the evils of Catholicism could be largely 'taken as read' as an integral part of the Protestant agenda. In the Nonconformist and Anglican press attacks on Catholicism might be less frequent than inter-Protestant squabbles but when they did appear - as in the instance below following a prolonged controversy between an Anglican clergyman and a Catholic priest - they made up for this with their vituperation:

> 'We now leave the subject, again expressing pleasure that whilst Roman Catholicism is endeavouring to raise its hydra head, the Church of England possesses men who will go forth fearlessly to encounter the monster, and prevent the moral and spiritual desolation which would be caused by its pestilential breath' (*The Cambrian* 16 April 1825).

The mid-century saw a resurgence of popular Protestantism in the wake of the Tractarian controversy and the 'provocation' of the establishment of a restored Catholic hierarchy which went some way to restore the focus of Protestant energies upon the old 'falsehoods' such as the veneration of the Virgin and saints, the primacy of St Peter and the See of Rome, popular miracles and so on, which seemed to most Protestants derisory and to others wicked. When a British Schools Society inspector asked the children of a central Cardiff school 'What two people in Europe are there who are not Christians ? ' The first two replies he received were 'French, Irish' then 'Turks, Jews' (Affley 1970:6). Ireland's was not a religion of a civilized age and in the last half of the nineteenth century the emergence of Darwinism encouraged a racial explanation of the obvious Irish inferiority and resort to a false religion.

John Wolffe's (1991) review of anti-Catholic Protestant pressure groups in nineteenth century in Britain indicates their limited establishment in Wales - possibly a consequence of the struggle between Dissent and Anglicanism. The Reformation Society established a 'mission' in Swansea which did not prosper and the MP for Glamorgan for the 1840s was a parliamentary supporter of the Protestant Association. As Wolffe acknowledges the

absence of inter-Protestant anti-Catholic movements in Wales needs further investigation. Elsewhere in Britain anti-Catholicism often gained greatest support from the Primitive Calvinism which found much favour in South Wales. Where Protestant Irishmen and Welshmen were thrown together in industrial Lancashire the Welsh became enthusiastic members of the Orange Lodge. Possibly, the identification of Dissent with a particular form of Welshness focused attention onto the building of a 'positive' separate culture in the face of an 'English' religious and national challenge - there was little energy to concentrate on a formal rejection of Catholicism.

On the streets of South Wales the prime villain in the plot of Catholicism was, of course, the priest; cunning, manipulative, money-grasping, false, whose claim to celibacy was no more than a licence for unrestricted sexual activity amongst his flock, no more than a conjurer his very centrality in the scheme of the Catholic religion was a form of idolatry. If this was not enough, in South Wales the chances were that the Catholic priest was also foreign - although those from Italy who ministered in Cardiff and Newport seem to have gained the respect of their Protestant peers more easily than their Irish counterparts. Doubtless many instances existed of more or less friendly contact between the respective clergies and between the emerging social agencies and Catholic priests - for instance, in 1849 a Father Kavanagh of Swansea received a public address signed by local magistrates and clergymen and a purse of some 50 guineas in recognition of his work during the cholera epidemic. The Catholic clergy were not drawn from the same social class as their migrant congregation and might develop their own social niche in South Wales, Father Caroll of Merthyr and Father Signini of Cardiff were respected by the local police forces as a calming and mediating influence upon their flocks; in the 1860s in Cardiff considerable progress was made in planning an inter-denominational poor school which received support at a local level - but the tone of public debate between the representatives of the 'two' religions is almost universally combative.

Attitudes to Catholicism were much more ambiguous than a review of the contemporary media might suggest - while it continued to be scorned by the Protestant press it was receiving greater 'tolerance' and recognition by the state in such matters as military chaplains, prison visiting, schools and welfare provision. As the 1851 census

revealed - with less than half the population of South Wales admitting to attending a Sunday place of worship - the district was far from conventionally religious. Protestantism still, however, remained 'as the intellectual and moral language of the body politic' (Norman, 1968:18). While to large elements of the working classes the practice of religion was often more notional than actual (and this seems to apply to many of the South Wales Irish Catholics) religious 'adherence' and its potency as a token or excitement to rivalry remained long after conventional piety died. Religious questions, of theological, devotional and ecclesiastical writing and of Church organization at home and overseas remained primary matters of concern to the political classes.

The coming of the Sisters of the Institute of Charity to Cardiff provoked an episode of middle-class opposition. The *Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian* (23 February 1856) reported a meeting at which it was proposed to form an 'Anti-Nunnery Movement' and the ladies present were urged to draw up a petition to Queen Victoria to abolish convents. Accordingly, a petition against 'Conventual Institutions' was drawn up and signed by 3,522 of Cardiff's female population. It was sent to the Protestant Association and laid before the Queen by Sir George Grey. The reply was brief and to the point. Victoria thanked the ladies for their petition and added with irony and perhaps uncharacteristic humour that she was not aware that there were any 'Ladies' of Cardiff, and refused their petition' (*Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian* 27 September 1856).

The attitude of Lady Charlotte Guest typifies the attitude toward Catholicism amongst the propertied classes. Her husband's agent in Dowlais was married to a Spanish Catholic, and in 1851 he arranged to entertain the newly appointed bishop of Newport and Menevia. Both she and her husband regarded the visit of the bishop as a personal insult and a possible cause of trouble. She wrote in her diary for 18 January 1851:

> 'I felt I could not meet this man, here on my own ground, my children's birthplace, and my own home of so many year's standing, where every movement of ours is observed, and looked for, and commented on, and where in the present state of excited feeling on the Roman Catholic aggression any seeming favouring of the assumption on our part might do much harm' (Quoted in L W Evans, 1971:96).

Bishop Brown diplomatically cut short his visit (and in fairness, Lady Charlotte was as likely to take a similar stance with any Anglican clergyman who fell short of her evangelical standards).

The rural, indigenous Catholic population made only minor contributions to the establishment of an infra-structure for their Irish co-religionists - and when they did so it was usually in a fashion which preserved their 'apartness' from the migrant population. Apart from ensuring recurrent manifestations of anti-Catholic sentiment in the press and amongst the south Welsh Protestant establishment the Oxford movement left Wales comparatively untouched. Being restricted primarily in its influence to the upper-middle and upper classes its 'target population' was restricted in Wales. Newman, in particular, seems to have little practical perception of meeting the needs of the migrant masses and, in effect, for most of the nineteenth century the British Catholic church was divided into the 'English and rich' on the one hand, and the 'Irish and poor' on the other. The conversion of the Butes - the major estate and thus coal-owning family of south Wales - and of families such as the Morgans (Lord Tredegar), Vaughns and Nicolls brought benefits to the institutional Catholic church in the donation of funds and land for church buildings and the sponsorship of significant projects such as religious communities and schools in due course.

One consequence of the aristocratic conversions was their tendency to moderate the more extreme declarations of general anti-Catholicism and divert criticism to specific points - while not possible to substantiate within the limitations of this project the Bute financial support of the *Western Mail* in the last quarter of the century is likely to have moderated the more extreme tones of anti-Catholicism. The 'aided' advances of Catholicism drew qualified praise (and doubtless some rueful jealousy) as in Bridgend:

> 'Roman Catholics - the Catholic friends begin to come out in this neighbourhood. The priest and Illtyd Nicholl Esq are building a new chapel with a schoolroom to adjoin. We feel glad to see the children who were in other days strolling around the streets in rags, now cleanly clad and enjoying the benefit of being educated. The Messrs Nicholl have distributed clothing, which in former years the members of this family used to distribute among the children of the National School. Time work wonders'(*The Cambrian* 6 April 1855).

The 'defection' of several prominent South Wales families while having benefits for the 'institutional' establishment of the Catholic church and in specific instances in promoting Irish migration to their estates (as when Lady Dunraven married a member of the Nicolls family) for the most part mattered little to the migrant Irish masses.

The Irish and Radicalism

If the Irish and Catholics received no welcome from the middle and upper classes they might have hoped to have thrown their lot in with those at the 'lower end' of the industrial social scale as they moved towards political emancipation. Simply, the scale of the resentment generated by the Irish as a source of 'cheaper-labour' and their reputation as 'strike-breakers' ensured that any such hope was still-born. Karl Marx's characterization that the Irish were regarded by the British working class much as the blacks were regarded by the poor whites of the American South has much in it - where an individual's status and esteem is low he is as likely to look with contempt upon those he perceives even lower as to stretch out the hand of friendship. The 'Welsh underclass' - for our purposes those who lived in conditions approximate to those of the Irish migrants - conducted a daily dialogue with the Irish mostly of hostile indifference but occasionally dramatized by fights and knifings. The move towards organized labour and radical politics emanated from the more skilled and literate amongst the working classes - a definition which, in the first 60 years of the nineteenth century, almost automatically debarred the Irish migrant.

The Chartist movement found some of its strength in Wales from proto-nationalist sources and drew most of its support from the skilled working classes. The previous consensus that the Irish were not prominent in Valleys' Chartism has been challenged by O'Leary (1989) who details the Irish participation in its development and the events of 1839. What seems to be certain is that the majority of the Irish were not drawn to active support of the Chartist cause and that the Church was against the Charter as at Merthyr where Father Caroll exhorted his flock to ignore the radical movement - although it is uncertain whether this was a consequence or a cause of a dispute between himself and two of the few Irish migrant Chartists who sought to extend their ideas of democracy into the running of the local church. Whatever the

level of Irish participation it seems to have secured them little credit amongst the radical Welsh and any fellow-feeling that might have existed drowned in the antipathy provoked by the famine migrants.

The same (establishment) Welsh press which condemned the Irish so unreservedly found cause - however temporarily - to praise the Irish of Newport as the Chartist uprising flared:

> 'The object of the [Chartist] conspiracy ... was nothing less than the subversion of the government ... this revolution was to be accomplished [by] the sacking of small towns and the plunder (if not the massacre) of their inhabitants ... arising out of these deplorable occurrences there happens to be one matter of an extremely gratifying nature ...
> What has been the conduct [of the Irish] in Monmouthshire ? ...
>
> All along the Irish residents have kept completely aloof from the Chartists, and although their lives were threatened the Irishmen refused to have any connection whatever with the insurgents. On the contrary a number of them came forward on the morning of the outbreak to protect the property of their employers; and (as an Irish paper says) 'the salvation of Monmouth and the adjoining towns is attributable to the excellent conduct of our own brave and truly loyal countrymen' (*The Merlin* 23 November 1839).

The suspicion must be that rather than being fundamentally against Chartism the Irish resistance - or more typically indifference - was inspired by the previously well established marginalization of the Irish community. Now, a chance to repay the native Welsh for their hostility, the fact that the Irish in Wales, escaping from extreme poverty, had a vested interest in preserving their perilous economic opportunities as represented by the property of their employers combined with the chance to earn a few shillings for some different work as upholders of the law may have all contributed to such occasions as when 'One hundred of the Irish who had come into the town of Cardiff were sworn in as special constables' (*The Merlin* 14 December 1839). With the Chartist crisis past, the Welsh press quickly returned the Irish to the disreputable category.

A contributory cause to the indifference which the Irish showed to Welsh radical politics may have been the alternative outlet provided by Fenianism. The vast majority of the migrant Catholics had a general sympathy to the aims of land reform and self-determination, and if they were likely to voice political opinions it would be in such terms before moving on to British 'domestic' issues. However, active membership of organizations such as the Irish Republican Brotherhood, while not unknown, was rare in the Valleys and only a small proportion of the migrant Irish were prepared to openly support the Fenians. In 1867, at the instigation of the Catholic clergy, large meetings were held in Cardiff and Merthyr as a protest against the excesses of Fenianism. This did not, of course, prevent the characterization of all Irish as supporters of extremism - akin to a sentiment sometimes expressed today in relation to PIRA atrocities - and some within Welsh society seized this as an excuse for riot, as in Tredegar in 1882. A contemporary 'pub-ballad' ran:

> 'Tramp, tramp, tramp the boys are marching
> who comes knocking at the door ?
> Tis the Fenians with their flags
> but we'll tear them all to rags
> and they'll never come to Dowlais any more.'
>
> (Quoted Parry, 1983:20)

The Tredegar riot emerged from a context of outrage over the Phoenix Park murders linked with wild rumours that an Irishman had poisoned a Welshman's beer, and that the Irish population in nearby Aberdare had poisoned the local reservoir and that preparations were underway for a general massacre of Welsh people. The day that the riots began had been a Saturday, pay day in the local ironworks, and market day. Drink had added fuel to current hostility and prejudice. In fact, the immediate cause had been a fracas over an Irishman who had joined the Salvation Army, an organization disliked intensely by the Irish, and when the man was spotted by some Irish girls he was harassed and set upon and a street brawl developed into a full-scale riot (the initial episode indicating that the Irish were not immune from the temptations to 'bully' while in the ascendent position). But the true cause was, once more, the recurrent theme of the Irish taking 'Welsh' jobs as iron gave way to steel as a staple industry of the area.

The socialist movement which was to dominate 'political' South Wales drew its strength in particular from two sources -neither of which was 'naturally' associated with the Irish migrant. The Nonconformists gradually - and in some cases only partially, with congregations splitting - transferred their political allegiance from the Liberal Party to the emerging worker's movement - their was little scope here for Irish involvement. The other source was a practical and pragmatic trade unionism, which was strongest amongst the skilled men of the area and spread gradually to embrace the less skilled in heavy industry and transportation. The majority of the Irish remained unskilled and in the employ of sub-contractors - often Irish themselves - thus outside the embryo health and welfare schemes born of the efforts of the workforce and sometimes the cooperation of the employer which helped develop the movement towards socialism. Those who sought to improve welfare conditions for themselves and their own formed societies such as the 'Hibernians', which of course maintained a distinct identity from the Welsh formations. Such a formation found praise (in the perhaps honeymoon period of famine reporting):

> '[Of the Irish working on Bute Dock] In case of sickness or accident, they always succoured each other, with a generous promptitude that would have done honour to any class; and they at length made it a bye-law among themselves that every man should pay threepence weekly out of his wages, into a general fund for relieving the sick, and burying the dead among their countrymen' (*Merlin* 13 February 1847)

But the critical factor in slowing Irish unionization was their general low status and differentiation from the indigenous work-force. However, the individual Irishmen did play a part in the development of the labour movement as they integrated themselves into the skilled-workforce. Examples of such integration are far from rare and 'skills' relative to coal-cutting and iron and steel-making give the term a wider constituency than that associated with traditional craft skills. Some of the second- and third-generation 'migrant Irish' came to occupy valued positions in industry through skills and talent and as they built up contacts in a stabilizing community, albeit if they had a hurdle of prejudice to overcome. By the 1870s they had sufficiently succeeded that 'onward' Irish migration of 'the better sort' to America and Australia caused alarm

to the steelworks employers (perhaps, such migration was for some a judgement on the quality of their 'welcome' in Wales). The political interests and mores of this Irish minority were the same as their Welsh counterparts and ever so slowly a common political bond developed between the two and perhaps for the first time signs of integration can be discerned - a process which was helped by the reputation of Cardinal Manning as an 'honest-broker' in a number of trade disputes in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. As the wider 'New Unionism' spread to the 'lower' tiers of labour the Irish were admitted to its ranks in the course of the 1880s (eventually, the South Wales Miner's Union, 'The Fed', was to become a firm advocate of Irish independence). In the sphere of parliamentary politics the ability of Gladstonian Liberalism to assert a remarkable hegemony over Welsh life created an atmosphere conducive to the support of Home Rule and while Fenianism remained 'out of court' Ireland's right to a greater say in its government became more widely recognized. The socialism which replaced liberalism in the political affections of South Wales was in part international and pan-European in its inspiration and aspirations and this presented at least a theoretical challenge to the narrow divisions of ethnicity.

Most significantly, important as religion remained in South Wales the process of its marginalization as a social factor had now begun. The 'Revivals' of the closing decades of the century identified materialist indifference and apathy as the prime challenges to Christianity in the Valleys - a challenge implicitly recognized by the Catholic bishops in their alarm over the number of young adults turning away from their received faith mostly to a spiritual no-man's land rather than to another denomination. So-called 'mixed marriages' between those of Welsh and Irish stock helped to reduce differences over time. Aided by the (albeit 'second best') payments for their labour, as the 'Irish' population entered its second and third generation of being Welsh-born the more obvious points of social distinction such as accent, language, material possessions and dress mellowed considerably. 'Ethnic fade' was not a process restricted to the Irish and the increasing Anglicanization of the Valleys presented an alternative 'enemy' to the Welsh nationalist and potentially promoted a new and more indifferent (if not quite cosmopolitan) 'Britishness', entry to which the Irish might aspire while retaining elements of their own identity. While in the larger South Welsh towns

pockets of distinctly 'Irish' settlement remained well into the twentieth century many of the Irish - particulary those with skills and those who had profited in the process of migration - broke away from their original 'ghettoes' and lived distributed amongst the native population to imbibe a common culture.

Schools and Schooling

In the outburst of 'energy' which went such a long way to allow Dissent to establish its ascendency over the Established Church as the prime religion of the Valleys the area of schooling was perhaps of paramount importance. The status of Nonconformists as 'the people' and the importance of education was reinforced by the furore generated by the anti-Welsh bias of an Education Report of 1847 - *Brad y Lyyfrau Gleison* [The Treason of the Blue Books] - which developed into a pan-Wales movement firmly proclaiming the legitimacy of 'Welshness' in the new Britain and promoting the essential partnership of Nonconformity, self-improvement and a embryo-radical Welsh liberalism. Perversely, the English 'Treason', to a degree, rebounded upon the Irish:

> 'The [Welsh] response to the allegations was one of indignation, especially in the denominational press. The incident gave birth to a new genre of social commentary which depicted a chaste and law-abiding people standing four-square against the forces of immorality and sin. For these commentators the existence of deviance from the prescribed behavioral norms was problematic. The most convenient way of accounting for criminality and lax morals was to point to the presence or influence of immigrants particularly in the industrialized areas' (O'Leary, 1991:35).

All the churches recognized the role of schooling in passing on doctrine and values to the next generation - and the Catholic Church was no exception. As the Church established an infrastructure of priests and parishes to meet the needs of the migrant Irish across the coalfields the provision of a Catholic school followed that of a church upon the agenda and the Catholic school became an established feature of each 'migrant' pocket.

The process of establishing such schools brought the Catholics into contact with the indigenous community on a number of levels and

provoked a range of responses. The struggle of the Nonconformists to establish schools which were 'free' from the religious influences of the Established Church in one way was of benefit to the Catholic cause in that it helped generate the expectation that no state system of education could be considered acceptable if it failed to provide for the education of all Christian denominations - and in this respect the rights of the Catholics were expounded by the British and Foreign Schools Society at a 'parliamentary level'. This even-handedness did not necessarily extend to the local roots of the movement where 'non-denominational' might well be a label for an essentially sectarian organization. Increasingly, if very slowly, the merit of 'schooling' as an improving social feature was recognized and some in South Wales gave stinting praise to the Catholic efforts in this area:

> '[Upon the opening of a church-school opened in Bridgend] ... It is a pleasure to witness the children of our Irish neighbours enjoying the privilege of being educated. They now stand on a par with other people and these long established residents are respected by the English and Welsh' (*The Cambrian* 12 October 1855).

Of course, old prejudices were not so easily swept aside - in June 1869 the Canton (Cardiff) school was opened on the advice of the parish priest 'quietly, and [with] not with too many children' (Emm, 1984:57) and without the publicity of an official opening, indicating remaining residual opposition to its presence in the area - but from the mid-century the Catholics were admitted, no matter how reluctantly, to the list of agencies with a 'stake in education'.

The question of providing a school for the 'troublesome' Irish was raised in Cardiff in 1846 as a potential municipal venture, a public meeting to discuss the issue ran smoothly enough until the question of religious teaching cropped up. Referring implicity to both the social inferiority of the Irish and their propensity to hierarchical control, one speaker pointed out that the main object was to :

> 'afford religious and moral instruction to the children of the Irish who swarm in large numbers amongst us; and it is notorious that they are not permitted to read that version of the Scripture commonly in use with us. The Rev Mr Millea, the resident Catholic priest,

> it was said was favourable to the plan - but it was also said that in all matters of this kind he was obliged to conform to the directions of his superior' (*Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian* 4 April 1846).

In the absence of an organized and sizeable middle-class the key role in developing a system of education for Catholics in Wales devolved to the clergy. Increasingly 'the priest' became a representative totem of South Welsh perceptions of Catholicism after the 1860s - replacing the destitute migrant in the public mind. On the one hand, at the popular level the Catholic communities reliance upon the clergy as governors, guides and protectors helped preserve their differentiation from the native community while on the other hand the very organizing skills and actions of the clergy were propelling the Catholic community into 'negotiation' with the local political communities and thus significantly altering perceptions and 'working practice'. The Catholic clergy stood firmly for denominational schooling, arguing that the 'ethos' of religion should imbibe each subject taught. They were opposed to Catholic children attending 'state schools' where even the simple reading of the Bible without note or comment from a Protestant Authorized Version - was held to challenge the 'true faith'.

The creation of a Catholic system of education generated mixed emotions among the local populace. On one level the provision of education to the poor was to be encouraged in the interests of stability - Sir John Guest paid for a teacher at the Dowlais Catholic School in 1857 regardless of his religious reservations. Of course, the stance of the RC clergy in asserting the 'integrity' of their faith provoked ritual condemnations - the failure of the Cardiff 'Ragged School' was attributed to 'the exercise of an influence which has caused nearly all of that class [i.e poor Catholics] to withdraw from the school, rather than allow them to receive even a secular education from Protestant teachers' (The First Annual Report of the Cardiff Ragged and Industrial School - reprinted in the *Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian* 15 March 1856). The influence - I suspect consisting as much of apathy and the absence of any 'school culture' - was attributed to the Catholic priesthood. To claim that 'sectarian' schooling ultimately prolongs religious and community divisions is, of course, true; but it would be anachronistic to transfer that charge to the nineteenth century - the 'religiously

motivated' were overwhelmingly of the opinion that their version of the truth *should be* taught and defended, ecumenism was not a nineteenth century concept.

While the inadequacy of the existing educational provision was generally acknowledged such perception did not lead to an end to sectarian disputes; old rivalries between Anglicans and Dissenters emerged in the debate leading to and stemming from the 1870 Forster Education Act. The newly-invented, rate-aided 'board' schools, allowed to provide only undenominational religious teaching, were intended to supplement, not to replace, existing voluntary schools but effectively denominational schools were placed 'in competition' with the new board schools, to which the Catholics were implacably opposed. To the Nonconformist community the Forster provision was an underwriting of their status as the cultural champions of Wales and they intended to discharge their responsibilities with vigour.

The Catholics found themselves allied with the Established Church in seeking to preserve the cause of denominational schooling. The election of School Board members - particularly in Cardiff - represents the first instance of an organized 'Catholic' ticket (allied with the local Anglicans) organized to protect the interests of the voluntary schools. The fact that Catholics could vote and stand in this election - albeit within the framework of a 'rateable' franchise - says much for the improving social status of the Catholic community and of a practical toleration, although it was still the very 'concentration' of the Catholic vote in particular wards which allowed its effective mobilization. The debate was ferocious in Wales and all of the old prejudices were dragged out by both sides - the Nonconformists now combining allegations of a 'Hilabrandian' arrogance emanating from a invigorated papacy and an increasingly confident British Catholic church with accusations of an Anglican High Church plot to 'sell out' to Rome.

The elections of the school boards did not end friction. The Nonconformist local school boards sought to use their power to limit the growth of denominational schools and the refusal of the Swansea board to recognize the Catholic school at Dan-y-Craig became a classic case typifying the conflict throughout England and Wales. Broadly, by 1883 there were 90 Catholic children of school age in the Dan-y-Craig area, 55 of whom had found

places in the only available school, the board school. In January 1884 the local Catholic parish began building its own school despite advice from the Education Department that they needed the consent of the board. The Swansea school board promptly started building for the extra 35 children itself. The Catholics finished their school first and it was certified efficient by HMIs, but the board absolutely refused to recognize it. The Education Department tried for nearly four years to persuade them to change their minds. In return the board members were quite frank about their strong Nonconformist disproval of Catholicism and all its works. In the end they gave in, unprepared to face the endless trouble of trying to compel the Catholic children to attend the board schools.

While the Dan-y-Craig saga was an extreme example it found echoes throughout South Wales as in Cardiff when an application for a grant from the Education Department in May 1876, provoked the requirement to ensure that the new school would not interfere with the work of Board schools in the area. Until this was done no grant was forthcoming, but within the limits of such qualified assistance Catholic schools gradually established their place within the wider educational system. Contacts developed between school inspectors, teacher-training agencies, clergy and teachers and more slowly with neighbouring schools. The movement towards universal schooling, together with developments in the administration of Public Health and the Poor Law, helped to bring into existence a class of professional administrators who increasingly drew their identity from the task in hand rather than political or denominational loyalties. The municipal authorities developed powers as a response to social problems and the scale of such problems would not admit the domination of denominational prejudices and gradually dealings with Catholic agencies became accepted as inevitable - as with the 1870 establishment of Nazareth House in Cardiff as a Catholic ragged/industrial school with each attendee bringing a weekly 'capitation grant' from the municipal authorities.

In 1877 at 'the other end' of the social scale to the Nazareth House children were those of the 'improving' Catholic classes - third and fourth generation Irish who had prospered in Wales - and a private fee-paying school for girls 'of the gentler sort' was established by a religious order in Cardiff; a school which while undeniably

Catholic in ethos leant heavily to the propagation of middle-class rather than 'merely' religious values. A private school for boys was to follow and in the 1920s grammar schools were established to mirror local state provision. By the litmus of education if the Irish had not necessarily 'arrived' they were travellers on the same journey as the native Welsh.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Conclusion

If the story of the nineteenth century relationship between the migrant Irish and native Welsh populations has no clear and happy ending it might be claimed that as the century closed the worst excesses of prejudice had passed. Across the century the relationship was characterized as one of opposites, dominated by hostility and ready prejudice. The characterization strikes hard against the picture of a supposedly open Welsh people - inspired by the forces of community in adversity, a practical and active Christianity and ultimately international socialism - who were made generous rather than bitter by the harsh circumstances of industrialization. Attitudes to the Irish and Catholicism varied in South Wales across the nineteenth century from period to period, location to location and individual to individual - indeed, in the extreme might differ within the same individual within the space of an hour; but for the most part the image of antagonism between the two Celtic peoples is sustainable although needing to be subject to considerable qualification.

Reaction to a growing Irish immigration in the earliest decades of the nineteenth century was built upon a post-Reformation legacy which itself followed upon a medieval foundation which saw Ireland as backward and uncivilized, those of its inhabitants who ventured to mainland Britain - often through the impetus of deprivation - were characterized as vagrants and risked associated penalties and forcible return to Ireland. When England and Wales became Protestant - and Wales firmly and evangelically so - national prejudices received a supposedly spiritual overlay and sentiment between the two peoples hardened into an intense and mutual bitterness.

The extent to which the abundant documentary condemnation of Papism (and thus implicitly and sometimes explicitly the Irish) which was common in literate (and almost by definition thus religiously inclined) eighteenth and then nineteenth century Welsh circles translated into opinions in popular currency throughout all levels of Welsh society is impossible to quantify (indeed, the problem of assessing the 'weight' which can be attached to a given piece of documentary evidence is close to intractable), but certainly it seems likely to have reflected widespread Welsh opinion and little, if no, evidence survives of contra-feeling.

Firm speculation as to attitudes might be drawn from the social phenomena which were recorded as Irish seasonal migration and short-term migration in support of both agriculture and industry developed a more permanent character in response to the demands for labour generated by the first stages of industrialization. The population of industrial South Wales was growing exponentially; rugged and primitive valley communities sprang from a previously rural nowhere. The volume of Irish migration into South Wales was small (constituting no more 3% of the total) and considerably less than the numbers drawn to the Valleys from England; the Irish were, however, an easily distinct class. By dress, language, accents and habits the Irish were a people apart; the poverty they experienced in their homeland made the Irish ripe to accept lower wages and relish housing conditions held inferior by the natives peoples. A vicious circle of 'caste' established itself with the presumed inferior social status of the Irish reinforced by their concentration into the most squalid of the available housing and the over-crowding and associated degradation caused by follow-on migration declaring to the general population the justice of placing the Irish at the bottom of the social pecking order.

Part-motivated by regional agricultural distress and the attraction of major civil engineering projects - such as the building of Cardiff Docks - the volume of Irish migration to South Wales increased in the 1820s but still was of the order of 3% of the whole. Such migration was positively encouraged by Welsh entrepreneurs and 'recruiting' tours were made to Ireland. The Irish were expected, and prepared, to work for the lowest wages and perceived by both the industrialist and the Welsh labouring classes as tending to lower wages. When work was in plentiful supply the Irish and Welsh sustained a separate if uneasy relationship - always with the Irish being accommodated in a district's poorest pockets and generally assuming the most poorly paid employment. In times of short-work it was the Irish who were discharged first, while at the same time by their potential status as an alternative labour source being seen by the Welsh workers as a threat to their continuing income. In the clashes between entrepreneur and native labour the Irish were sometimes employed as 'strike-breakers' - although they lacked the critical industrial skills to be truly efficient in this role - and became the object of both individual and collective attacks by Welsh workers. Such resentment of the Irish as 'wage-lowerers'

underwrote a series of attacks upon elements of the Irish population to the 1880s and was the dominant colouring of Welsh perception of the Irish migrant.

As the Welsh and Irish peoples came to closer contact, while religion still constituted an important factor in their differentiation it became subsumed in a totality of perception which drew its inspiration largely from social factors and habits. The differing religion of the Irish provided a ready 'supplementary' stick with which to beat the migrant Irish - despite the varying adherence to Catholicism found amongst the largely young and sometimes only notionally religious migrant population. As with many points of differentiation which the Irish migrant community perceived amongst itself such qualifications as 'variable faith' were not recognized by the indigent population who saw the Irish as uniformly Catholic - and for the most feckless, childish, often criminal and irresponsible.

The volume of Irish migration into South Wales increased as a result of the Great Famine but again remained in the region of 3-5% of inward migration to the South Welsh industrial areas. Welsh perception of its scale was heightened by those travelling to other areas of Britain and the extreme poverty of many of the migrants and 'media amplification'. Initial sympathy for the plight of the Irish was in some instances sustained and translated into acts of kindness but such generosity did not last either on an institutional level - with attempts to control or licence migration and removals applied to the indigent - or on a level of popular perception which continued to regard the Irish as predominantly wage-lowers and a source of nuisance. The famine itself came to be held as close to a self-inflicted calamity, its effects exaggerated for purposes of exploiting charity and, if admitted a catastrophe one which the Irish already established in Wales did nothing to help with.

The terms Irish and disease became close to interchangeable in the minds of the Welsh as cholera and typhus followed upon the famine migration - specifically the Irish were held *to blame* for the outbreaks of such disease and by extension Welsh deaths, a perception reinforced by contemporary administrative narrative which inevitably tends to reflect the concern of 'controlling agencies' and contrasts the irresponsible Irish with the native Welsh who were presented as models of cleanliness and sobriety. A

feature common to both official and newspaper reporting of the famine period was a tendency to animal imagery which helped relegate the Irish to an almost non-human perspective; at worst almost 'bacterial'

Around the mid-century there emerged an articulate and specifically Welsh and Dissenting voice which as a dominant minority of the industrial valleys moulded the cultural ethos of South Wales to at least World War One. Fervently Non-conformist, it challenged both a resurgent South Welsh Anglicanism and a Catholic faith becoming more openly manifest in Britain through 'official recognition' such as the appointment of Catholic priests as military and prison chaplains and the Church's own growth in confidence through the Oxford movement and revitalized hierarchy. As the nineteenth century drew on Catholics were, in reality, getting an increasing amount of tolerant consideration from a society whose government added legal recognition and sometimes legal benefits. 'No popery' agitations were backward looking manifestations of a tradition which increasingly lacked energy and positive support. In Wales there was a divergent focus in reaction to the forces of Anglicanization, in part manifest in a retrenchment of Welsh values and culture focused on Dissent. The Irish were regarded as a challenge to such Welshness, not least to that tenet of Nonconformity which identified the (very real) evils of drink in industrial South Wales. The stereotypical Irishman was prone to wild behaviour and drunkenness, a source of immorality, religiously misguided and of inferior status; at worst evil, and at best, merely childish. While many of the native South Welsh succumbed to the temptations of alcohol and were neither religiously active or active participants in the 'Chapel culture' Dissent predominantly coloured their perception of Catholicism. Even to the Welsh 'under-class' the Irish were a useful in presenting a 'subordinate grouping.'

The observation of the 1826 emigration committee (see above) to the effect that two classes of different status when put in proximity would assimilate in conditions one to another was slowly coming true. Social advances made by the Irish population and their gradual assimilation of the accent and habits of the industrial Welsh - aided by limited inter-marriage between the two communities - and a communality of interests in the face of a grinding capitalism brought the two communities together. The establishment of an infra-structure of Catholic parishes and schools

both contributed to and mirrored the development of a more mature Irish-Catholic community with its own institutions and aspirations close to those of the indigenous population. The creation of a separate Catholic education system - similar but apart to that of the state - typifies a new co-existence, mostly peaceful, increasingly less bitter and violent but still with the potential for sectarianism and hostility.

The Irish were only slowly admitted to the general circle of South Wales politics, appearing to be largely excluded from the range of radical movements of the mid-century and beyond the initial embrace of trade unionism. Aided by Gladstonian Liberalism's endorsement of Irish Home Rule and possibly by the emerging seeds of Welsh nationalism the migrant Irish received wider sympathy but it was the material advances and part-integration of a proportion of the migrant children and grandchildren - coincident with a fall in the number of 'new' migrants - which brought them to skilled positions within industry and hence admission to trade unions and, eventually, the labour movement.

It should not be assumed that the Welsh antipathy to the Irish on matters of religion and culture was a one way affair. Underwriting the Catholicism of the nineteenth century was the sentiment of its being the 'one truth faith'; all other supposed Christians were in fundamental error and this was the dominant position of both Catholic clergy and congregation in regarding other faiths - a Catholic prayer for the conversion of Wales remains in use today if increasingly less so in a period which at least aspires to a Christian unity. While not necessarily active supporters of Republicanism the Irish migrant and his descendants came broadly from this political mould and often Ireland and all things Irish assumed a rosier hue through the distance of time and the distortion of second and third generation inheritance. The Welsh-born 'Irishman', all the more patriotic through his Welsh antecedents remains in existence today. When the 'boot was on the other foot' the Irish would vaunt their dominant position - as to the congregation of a Welsh-speaking Anglican church established in the heart of Cardiff's 'Little Ireland'. Resistance to 'mixed-marriages' between Catholic and Protestant was, if anything, more energetic and long-standing amongst Catholic circles as Wales fell to a more general secularism. In the squabbles and petty meanness which was so often inseparable from more 'worthy'

causes of Irish-Welsh conflict the Irish were not innocents.

The most significant factor in reducing the degree of antipathy towards the Irish and their religion was the decreasing importance attached to religion generally but differentiation and conflict between the two communities did not end with the nineteenth century. While anti-Irish and anti-Catholic sentiment abated in both volume and in the severity of its physical manifestation it remains visible to this day. Religious processions at Easter and Whitsun or St Patrick's Day often drew a hostile response from the 'rival' communities. The existence of separate schools meant a permanent potential for clashes between adolescents and fuel rivalries continued into adulthood. While the dominance of Labour as the party of radical Wales did much to conceal surviving differences between Catholic and Protestant in the times of recession and desperate hunger which faced the industrial valleys in the 1920s and 1930s it might be speculated that each community first 'looked to its own' in sharing the limited resources. Examples of individual prejudice and bigotry continue, but they now do so on a level of personal inadequacy rather than an organized community response.

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