

## THE WELSH LANGUAGE IN A NINETEENTH-CENTURY AUSTRALIAN GOLD TOWN

Ffurfia Ballarat a rhai o'r maesdrefi, megis Sebastopol, fath o Dywysogaeth fechan Gymreig. Y Gymraeg a siaradir, a ysgrifenir, a bregethir, ac a genir yno, a rhoddir cerddoriaeth Gymreig, a chynelir cyfarfodydd llenyddol yno o bryd i bryd, lle y bydd y teulueodd mawr Cymreig, Jones, Davies, Thomas, Evans, Lloyd, a Williams, yn difyru eu hunain mewn modd a fuasai yn llawenhau yr hen feirdd gynt.<sup>1</sup>

Ballarat and some of its suburbs, such as Sebastopol, form a sort of small Welsh Principality. There, Welsh is spoken, written, preached and sung, Welsh music is performed, and from time to time Welsh literary meetings are held where the great Welsh families, Jones, Davies, Thomas, Evans, Lloyd and Williams, amuse themselves in a way which would please the bards of old.

Alan Conway described the Welsh in the United States as constituting 'little more than a corporal's guard', and this statement is equally true of the Australian colonies of the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> This was due not only to the small size of the Welsh population, which did not register as more than one million until the 1841 census, but also to the rate of emigration from Wales, which was significantly lower than that in either England, Scotland or Ireland.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, although relatively few people from

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<sup>1</sup> *Y Gwladgarwr*, 14 January 1865. For an account of the formation and development of the Ballarat area, see W. Bate, *Lucky City: The First Generation at Ballarat 1851–1901* (Melbourne, 1978). Many of the quotations that follow are from sources in the Welsh language. All translations are my own and I have endeavoured to adhere, as closely as possible, to the original meaning which has resulted in the use of some stilted and clumsy English.

<sup>2</sup> A. Conway, 'Welsh Emigration to the United States', *Perspectives in American History*, 7 (1973), 178.

<sup>3</sup> The reasons behind this phenomenon are still very much open to debate. See, for example, Dudley Baines, *Migration in a Mature Economy – Emigration and Internal Migration in England and Wales, 1861–1900* (Cambridge, 1985) and Brinley Thomas, 'Wales and the Atlantic Economy', in idem (ed.), *The Welsh Economy Studies in Expansion* (Cardiff, 1962).

Wales emigrated during the nineteenth century, by the mid-decades of that century the Welsh presence in Australia was made more visible by being largely concentrated into relatively few areas.<sup>4</sup> Besides the existence of small groups of Welsh people in the major cities, immigrants from Wales tended, initially at least, to congregate in the various mining centres; the copper mines of Burra Burra, Kapunda and Wallaroo in South Australia, the coal mining districts of Newcastle in New South Wales and at Ipswich in Queensland and, most notably, the gold bearing regions of Victoria.<sup>5</sup> Within Victoria, by the 1860s the Welsh, although found throughout the gold-bearing districts and in numbers within the boroughs of Melbourne, remained at their greatest strength, both numerically and proportionally, in the settlements which had emerged following the gold rushes. These included, Castlemaine, Clunes, Sandhurst, Stawell, Maldon and, ultimately, Ballarat and the neighbouring township of Sebastopol.<sup>6</sup>

Both contemporary observers and modern historians have drawn attention to the Ballarat/Sebastopol area as a centre of Welsh culture in nineteenth-century Australia

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<sup>4</sup> Census Reports for the Colony of Victoria, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne and B. R. Mitchell, *British Historical Statistics* (Cambridge, 1988) and James Jupp and Barry York, *Birthplaces of the Australian People: Colonial and Commonwealth Census, 1828–1991* (Canberra, 1995).

<sup>5</sup> The second half of the nineteenth century saw Welsh immigrants similarly concentrated in industrial areas in the United States; primarily those associated with mining and metallurgical industries. It was the state of Pennsylvania which exerted the greatest pull on Welsh immigrants most notably the coal fields around Scranton and Wilkes-Barre and the steel town of Pittsburgh. See W. D. Jones, *Wales in America, Scranton and the Welsh 1860–1920* (Cardiff, 1993).

<sup>6</sup> Census Reports for the Colony of Victoria.

This presence had been noted in Wales itself. As early as 1859, the Welsh periodical, *Seren Cymru*, stated that in Ballarat and its neighbourhood a third of the colony's 6,000 Welsh were to be found: *Seren Cymru*, 16 April 1859.

and here the Welsh were certainly to be found in sufficient numbers to enable the emergence of a discernible ethnolinguistic community.<sup>7</sup> The Australian Welsh-language newspapers, *Yr Australydd* and *Yr Ymwelydd*, during the years of their existence, 1866–76, were replete with reports of Welsh community activity in Ballarat and Sebastopol and clearly indicate that community's strength.<sup>8</sup> The April 1868 issue

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<sup>7</sup> See *Address of the President, Dr D. J. Thomas at the Eisteddfod Held at the Theatre in Ballarat on the 25 December, 1867* (Melbourne, n.d.); Myfi Williams, *Cymry Australia* (Llandybie, 1983); Lewis Lloyd, *Australians from Wales* (Gwynedd, 1988); A. F. Hughes, 'Welsh', in J. Jupp (ed.), *The Australian People: An Encyclopaedia of the Nation, its People and their Origins* (Sydney, 1988), pp. 840–5; A. F. Hughes, 'Welsh Migrants in Australia: Language Maintenance and Cultural Transmission' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Adelaide, 1994); W. D. Jones, "From a country called Wales": the Welsh in Australia Symposium', *Australian Folklore*, 13 (1998); idem, 'Welsh identities in Ballarat, Australia, during the late nineteenth century', ante, 20 (2) (2000); idem, 'Cymry "Gwlad yr Aur": ymfudwyr Cymreig yn Ballarat, Awstralia, yn ail hanner y bedwaredd ganrif ar bymtheg', *Llafur, Cylchgrawn Hanes Llafur Cymru, Journal of Welsh Labour History*, 8 (2) (2001); idem, 'Welsh identities in colonial Ballarat', *Journal of Australian Studies* (June 2001); idem and Aled Jones, 'The Welsh world and the British Empire, c. 1851–1939: en exploration', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 31 (2) (2003).

<sup>8</sup> *Yr Australydd*, Welsh language newspaper published in Ballarat and Melbourne, Victoria, July 1866 – February 1871, April 1871 – September 1872, *Yr Ymwelydd*, Welsh language newspaper published in Melbourne, Victoria October 1874 – December 1876 held at Victoria State Library, Melbourne, Australia and the National Library of Wales. The Welsh press, as it existed in Victoria during the 1860s and 1870s, casts considerable light on several aspects of the migrant experience. The initial predominance of Victoria, more especially the gold field settlements, and ultimately Ballarat and Sebastopol, in the reports of immigrant activity, clearly indicates the areas of greatest Welsh concentration at that time. In addition, the press provides, whether in articles, correspondence or reports of religious and social events, a wealth of

of *Yr Australydd*, for example, contains reports of events which had taken place during the previous month and describes a meeting of the Ballarat Welsh Independent Church, the Ballarat Welsh Bible Society and the St David's Day celebrations held at the town's Craig's Royal Hotel. In Sebastopol, March had witnessed the Calvinistic Methodist Church's Band of Hope trip to Ballarat Gardens, two literary meetings involving singing and recitation, the Welsh Independent Church's Sunday School trip to Ballarat Gardens, the Welsh Baptist prayer meeting and tea party, a lecture on 'Milton' and a meeting of the Cymdeithas y Beiblau a Thraethodau Crefyddol (The Bible and Religious Tracts Society).<sup>9</sup> The Welsh presence did not go unnoticed in the town's English language publications. The *Ballarat Star*, for example, reported on the Victorian Welsh Eisteddfod, which drew competitors from across the colony, held at the Theatre Royal and the Mechanics' Institute, Ballarat, on Christmas Day and Boxing Day 1867. The paper noted that of the twenty-five prizewinners, including choirs, whose place of residence was mentioned, no fewer than twenty-two were from Ballarat and Sebastopol.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the editorial in the April 1871 issue of *Yr Australydd* could boldly state of Ballarat: 'there are many hundreds of our fellow countrymen residing in this town and its environs. Although they are not in the majority, they are, in every sense, strong enough to be of influence in the place.'<sup>11</sup>

The extent to which the language was spoken amongst the Welsh immigrants in Ballarat and Sebastopol during the second half of the last century is open to a certain amount of conjecture. Nevertheless, British census reports and contemporary estimates

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information concerning community activity, language and culture retention and the vitality of cultural institutions.

<sup>9</sup> *Yr Australydd*, April 1868.

<sup>10</sup> *Ballarat Star*, 27 December 1867.

<sup>11</sup> *Yr Australydd*, April 1871.

of language use in Wales, coupled with an analysis of date and place of birth and time of arrival of Welsh immigrants in the colony, enable reasonable assumptions to be made. Drawing on these sources along with a variety of qualitative evidence, including the two Welsh-language periodicals, the aim of this article is to assess the level to which the language was used, retained and intergenerationally transmitted by the Welsh immigrant community that existed in the Ballarat/Sebastopol district in the latter half of the nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup>

The first official British census which included a question on language was held in 1891 and revealed that 54.4 per cent of those living in Wales, which included thousands of English and Irish, spoke Welsh, with some 56 per cent of those being monoglots.<sup>13</sup> Establishing the extent to which the language was spoken in Wales prior to 1891 has been the subject of numerous studies. Thomas Darlington, in 1894, asserted that in 1801 approximately 80 per cent of those living in Wales spoke the language, with the remaining 20 per cent confined to south Pembrokeshire, the Gower peninsula and along the border with England.<sup>14</sup> In 1879 George Ravenstein, surveying birth registrars, clergymen, schoolmasters, innkeepers and others likely to be intimately acquainted with the linguistic condition of their neighbourhood, estimated that by the

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<sup>12</sup> This question, as it applied to the Welsh in the United States and in Patagonia, Argentina is addressed by W. D. Jones and Robert Owen Jones respectively in Geraint H. Jenkins (ed.), *Language and Community in the Nineteenth Century. A Social History of the Welsh Language* (Cardiff, 1998).

<sup>13</sup> For an overall statistical survey of the language in nineteenth century Wales see D. Jones, *Statistical Evidence Relating to the Welsh Language 1801–1911* (Cardiff, 1988). For an excellent study of all issues relating to the Welsh language in nineteenth-century Wales, see Geraint H. Jenkins (ed.), *The Welsh Language and its Social Domains 1801–1911* (Cardiff, 2000).

early 1870s the language was spoken by some 71.2 per cent of the population.<sup>15</sup> More recently, drawing on information concerning, for example, language use in church sermons, attempts have been made to identify the major linguistic divides and the assumed position of the languages of Wales at 1750, 1850 and 1900.<sup>16</sup> While appreciating that, in the absence of aggregate statistics, studies of this nature cannot be regarded as definitive, it appears that, with the exception of the longstanding areas of anglicization in the far south west, it was the south-eastern corner of Wales, along with pockets on the southern coast, that were the first to succumb to the English language. Drawing on information contained within colonial death certificates, it is possible to establish the place of birth by county in Wales of each Welsh-born immigrant, for whom the information was available, who died in Ballarat and Sebastopol between the years 1853, when records were first kept, and 1891.<sup>17</sup> Of the 378 Welsh-born individuals whose county of birth was listed, the majority, 58.3 per cent, came from the

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<sup>14</sup> Thomas Darlington quoted in J. Rhys and D. B. Jones, *The Welsh People* (London, 1900), pp. 548–9.

<sup>15</sup> E. G. Ravenstein, ‘On the Celtic languages in the British isles, a statistical survey’, *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 42 (1879), 579–636.

<sup>16</sup> See W. T. R. Pryce, ‘Welsh and English in Wales 1750–1971: a spatial analysis based on the linguistic affiliation of parochial communities’, *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 28 (1978).

<sup>17</sup> Death certificates for Ballarat, 1853–91, Sebastopol, 1866–91. Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. It is to be noted that the population of Wales was highly mobile at this time, with large numbers moving from the more rural north and west to the rapidly industrializing south-east. It is certain, therefore, that very many individuals listed as born in Glamorgan and Monmouthshire would have had parents from other areas of Wales and even those born elsewhere in the country would have considered those two counties as their place of origin and listed themselves accordingly.

counties of Glamorgan and Monmouth in the industrialized south-east.<sup>18</sup> If, by 1850, a large part of the county of Monmouth and the coastal lowlands of Glamorgan had switched to English, what does this suggest concerning the linguistic background of Welsh immigrants in Victoria in the second half of the century? Does this mean that many of the Welsh drawn to Ballarat/Sebastopol were amongst the most anglicized in Wales?

Writing in the 1970s, E. G. Lewis drew a sharp distinction between the two linguistic areas of the county of Glamorgan. By his estimation, in 1850 even the most anglicized areas of Glamorgan were 65 per cent Welsh-speaking, with much of the upper valley areas remaining at over 90 per cent.<sup>19</sup> In the case of the Welsh in colonial Australia, the only available indicator of ethnolinguistic background is surname, but even this tenuous evidence suggests that the immigrants drawn to Ballarat and Sebastopol, including those from Glamorgan and Monmouth, were primarily ethnically Welsh.<sup>20</sup> Again, drawing on information contained on death certificates, Table I shows the incidence of non-Welsh surnames among all Welsh-born males who died in Ballarat/Sebastopol, 1853–1891, related to their county of origin.

Table I

<sup>18</sup> This preponderance was, no doubt, related to the fact that these were by far the two most heavily populated counties of Wales. Furthermore, the concentration of the coal mining industry in Glamorgan and Monmouth would also have made these counties candidates to supply miners to the burgeoning gold fields in and around Ballarat and Sebastopol. Sebastopol alone records a percentage of 78.6 as having come from Glamorgan and Monmouthshire, which can be linked to the greater dependency on mining in the township.

<sup>19</sup> E. G. Lewis, ‘Migration and the decline of the Welsh language’, in J. Fishman (ed.), *Advances in the Sociology of Language* (The Hague, 1978), pp. 263–352.

<sup>20</sup> For an explanation of the origin of surnames in Wales, see T. J. Morgan and P. Morgan, *Welsh Surnames* (Cardiff, 1985).

Incidence of Non-Welsh Surnames Amongst Welsh-Born Males by Place of Birth, Ballarat/Sebastopol, 1853–91			
Glamorgan	Monmouth	Rest of Wales	Total Individuals
20.0%	15.4%	5.7%	300%

This reveals that although the incidence of male immigrants with non-Welsh surnames from Glamorgan and Monmouthshire was between two and four times higher than in the rest of Wales, such individuals constituted less than one fifth of all male immigrants from the two counties. Furthermore, every one of the thirteen individuals with a non-Welsh surname, whose place of birth within Glamorgan could be identified, was from the coastal towns and lowland areas of Cardiff, the Vale, Pyle, and Swansea; the districts identified as being first to succumb to anglicization. This suggests that immigrants from Glamorgan and Monmouthshire in Ballarat/Sebastopol comprised two linguistic groups and, although impossible to ascertain, it is likely that the large majority were from the areas of the counties still Welsh in speech.

It is possible to obtain further information alluding to the linguistic background of the Welsh community in the district. Again, making use of death certificates, the date of birth of every Welsh-born individual who died in Ballarat/Sebastopol, between 1853 and 1891, was recorded. As indicated in Table II, of the 407 individuals for whom information could be obtained, the overwhelming majority were born prior to the middle of the century, with over 78 per cent born before 1840.<sup>21</sup>

Table II Date of Birth of Welsh-Born Migrants in Ballarat/Sebastopol, 1853–91								
	1700s	1800s	1810s	1820s	1830s	1840s	1850s	1860s
Percent	2.2	8.3	13.0	27.5	27.8	13.3	6.6	1.2
Number	9	34	53	112	113	54	27	5

Calculating the date of arrival of immigrants from the death certificates was also

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<sup>21</sup> Short life expectancy and a high child mortality rate eliminate any concerns regarding a bias towards those born earlier in the century.

instructive. Table III reveals that the vast majority, over 95 per cent, of Welsh immigrants, for whom information was obtainable, who died in the city and township between the years 1853 and 1891 had arrived in the Australian colonies after 1850.

Table III Date of Arrival in the Colonies of Welsh-Born Migrants in Ballarat/Sebastopol, 1853–91							
	1820s	1830s	1840s	1850s	1860s	1870s	1880s
Percent	0.2	0.2	3.4	64.8	26.6	4.4	0.2
Number	1	1	14	265	109	18	1

Moreover, as indicated by Table IV, the great mass of migrants from Wales in the Ballarat/Sebastopol area had arrived over the age of twenty, with around 42 per cent over the age of thirty.

Table IV Age on Arrival in the Colonies of Welsh-Born Migrants in Ballarat/Sebastopol, 1853–91								
	0–9	10–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60–69	70–
Percent	6.6	7.6	43.6	24.0	11.3	4.7	1.5	0.7
Number	27	31	178	98	46	19	6	3

Whatever else this says about the nature of Welsh migration at this time, it is clear that most Welsh immigrants in the area had been born prior to 1840, had spent their formative years in Wales and had arrived in the district from a largely Welsh-speaking Wales as adults in the 1850s and 60s.<sup>22</sup> It would, of course, be foolish to oversimplify language division in Wales and the linguistic make up of the Welsh immigrant group in the Ballarat/Sebastopol area. Nevertheless, the picture emerges of the great bulk of Welsh migrants, including those from Glamorgan and Monmouth, as having come from Welsh-speaking areas, and that those individuals who did not share the same linguistic and cultural traditions of the rest of their national group were geographically

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<sup>22</sup> The differences in the totals of individuals are due to the fact that a number of the certificates did not include complete information concerning place of birth, age at death

confined in Wales and made up a small proportion of the Welsh-born in Ballarat/Sebastopol.

In addition to its proportional strength, the language also enjoyed a status far higher than the other Celtic tongues; Irish and Scottish Gaelic.<sup>23</sup> The translation of the Bible, the codification of the language, the revival of the eisteddfod, the emergence of debating societies, the rise of nonconformity and the success of the circulating schools initiated by Griffith Jones (1683–1761), saw Welsh, by the mid-nineteenth century, established as the language of literacy and debate, and fulfilling all the requirements of modern living.<sup>24</sup> Speakers of Welsh were not confined to rural occupations or locations, but were also the inhabitants of mass urban communities and accounted for every strata

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and length of residence in Australia, from which the findings contained in the tables have been drawn.

<sup>23</sup> Geraint Evans writes of Gaelic in Ireland and Scotland: ‘For the most part it was not the language of education or, for many, even the language of the church, and among Gaelic speakers literacy tended to mean literacy in English. For the Welsh, however, this was not the case. Religion was Non-Conformist and vernacular, and literacy, which was widespread by the eighteenth century, was built around a Christianity which was almost totally Welsh-speaking. That is why, when we come to survey the material in Celtic languages relating to Australia, there appears to be far more in Welsh than in Irish or Scottish Gaelic, even though Australians from Wales were far outnumbered by Australians from Ireland and Scotland.’ G. Evans, ‘Welsh publishing in Australia’, *Biblionews and Australian Notes and Queries* (December 1993), 99.

The relevance of Welsh as a literary language is revealed in supplements to the trade advertisements in *Yr Australydd* which included a list of books in Welsh offered for sale by Benjamin S. Evans of Queen Street, Cobblers, Sebastopol. His advertisement for August 1870 contained forty-one separate titles, and in December of the same year thirty-eight, mostly different, titles are listed. For further details of this phenomenon see, Philip Henry Jones, ‘Printing and publishing in the Welsh language’, and Huw Walters, ‘The Welsh language and the periodical press’, in Jenkins (ed.), *The Welsh Language*.

<sup>24</sup> See Jenkins (ed.), *The Welsh Language*.

of rural and industrial society, with the exception of the great land-owning and capitalist classes. The great majority of those born in Wales who arrived in the Australian colonies in the second half of the nineteenth century had Welsh as their first, and frequently only, language, having come from a Wales which had yet to experience the effects of wide scale anglicization, and that language, far from being confined to a few simple registers, answered the demands of every aspect of contemporary society.

From the outset, the relevance of the language to the Welsh in Victoria was evident in the efforts made to ensure the appointment of a Welsh speaker as immigration agent for Wales. An article on immigration, which appeared in the *Ballarat Star*, described a public meeting chaired by one Theophilus Williams on 23 February 1857 at the Welsh Chapel at the Gravel Pits, Ballarat. The concern of this meeting was the desirability of having Wales as a separate district with its own sub-agent. The assembled resolved that the sub-agent for Wales should be ‘a Welshman, thoroughly acquainted with its language and customs, and for some time residing in this colony’. To this end they resolved to petition the Legislative Assembly, wherein only J. B. Humffray had ‘any Welsh blood in his veins’.<sup>25</sup> The same newspaper gave a report of another public meeting, again concerning government immigration schemes, held two days later, on 25 February, at the Welsh Chapel at Sebastopol Hill. A Mr J. Hughes, in the chair, stated that:

He did not consider that the Welsh should sacrifice their comforts and reduce themselves to poverty to preserve their language, but when he considered that seven tenths of the Welsh could do nothing with any other language, and in hundreds of districts very few could speak English, he therefore thought the

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<sup>25</sup> *Ballarat Star*, 26 February 1857. John Basson Humffray was one of the members representing Ballarat in the Victoria House of Assembly.

prayer of the petition very reasonable and just, that a Welshman be sent to Wales.<sup>26</sup>

The eventual emergence of Welsh-speaking agents representing each colony diffused the ire raised by this particular issue, but the episode clearly evinces the indispensability of the language.<sup>27</sup>

The concerns of the petitioners were not without foundation, as monolingualism was widespread amongst the Welsh flocking to the colonies. Certainly, some of the leaders of Welsh life in Australia were, at the outset, virtually monoglot. The biography of William Meirion Evans, a major religious figure in Victoria and the driving force behind *Yr Australydd* and *Yr Ymwelydd*, has him in Aponinga in South Australia in the early 1850s. This, apparently, was an unruly place but, ‘owing to his deficient English’, he could not remonstrate with the residents for their ‘godless living’.<sup>28</sup> Some ten years later, in 1863, after six years in the United States, he returned to Australia but ‘his utter lack of ability to speak fluently in the English language’ prevented him from comforting his fellow passengers who suffered during the voyage. He was, by his own admission, still ‘quite unable to speak the [English] language’, although, with the aid of a dictionary, he could understand the chief thought of books.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 28 February 1857.

<sup>27</sup> Lesley Walker discusses the role of immigration agents in Wales in “‘Two Jobs for Every Man’: the emigration decision from Wales to New South Wales, 1850–1900”, *Australian Studies*, 3 (2) (Winter 1998), 107–10.

<sup>28</sup> *Biography of W. M. Evans*, p. 24. English translation of his biography held at the Welsh Church Archive, Melbourne, Australia and the N[ational] L[ibrary of] W[ales], FACS 680.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

In this Evans was certainly not alone amongst Welsh religious leaders. In the General News section of *Yr Australydd* for June 1872, we find a report of the visit by the

The extent of monolingualism is again revealed by Robert Lewis, the successful businessman, politician and sometime Mayor of Ballarat, who, in 1862, wrote concerning the dearth of Welsh-speaking preachers, ‘If a preacher would come out I would give one pound per month for the sake of those that can’t understand English preaching.’<sup>30</sup> Indeed, Lewis himself was upbraided and subsequently defended for his imperfect English. A letter in the defence of his candidature for colonial office, which appeared in the *Ballarat Star* in early 1864, asked: ‘What is really Mr Lewis’ defect? It is this, Sir, only this – that he cannot get rid of the Welsh idioms in speaking English.’<sup>31</sup> If this was the case amongst the educated Welsh, monolingualism amongst the general population, especially in the Welsh strongholds on the gold fields, was, no doubt,

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Reverend John Lloyd of Wallaroo, South Australia, to Kapunda, where he preached to a congregation of the Primitive Methodists. He stated that he was happy to be present and that his favourite work was to assist in every good cause, but that he was too ‘short of English to address them as they wished’, and he was ‘sorry to hear that many of his compatriots in this neighbourhood were in the same difficulty as himself, in that they did not understand enough English to enjoy religious services in that medium’

<sup>30</sup> Letter to Philip Williams from Ballarat 24 May 1862. Robert Lewis Papers, NLA MS 2452.

<sup>31</sup> *Ballarat Star*, 3 February 1864. Similar examples are legion. For example, the famous Welsh Swagman, Joseph Jenkins, who had kept his diary in English for the purpose of becoming literate in that language, could write in Maldon as late as 1885, after sixteen years in the colony: ‘I will never become proficient in speaking English here, because half the time I converse in Welsh.’ His entry for May 1892 reads, ‘Two Welsh friends paid me a visit on Sunday. We had a long chat, conversing in Welsh. Indeed, my English speech has not improved since I left Wales.’ Joseph Jenkins, *Diary of a Welsh Swagman, 1869–189*, abridged and notated by William Evans (Sydney, 1975), pp. 141, 197.

widespread.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, the very fact that the only publications for the Welsh in the colonies were, throughout their history, published almost entirely in the Welsh language is a clear indication that the correspondent Ysbryd was correct when he wrote of *Yr Australydd* in 1869, ‘many of its readers are unable to read and understand English.’<sup>33</sup>

If Welsh was the first or only language of many who congregated in the Ballarat/Sebastopol area, it is also clear that this was not an entirely acceptable state of affairs. The *Ballarat Star* reported that, at the conclusion of a meeting of the Ballarat Literary Society, held at the Welsh Chapel at Sebastopol Hill in March 1857, ‘Mr Hughes, in moving a vote of thanks to Mr Williams for his interesting lecture, remarked that, as some were not able to write and read English, it was intended to form a class this

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<sup>32</sup> Lesley Walker gives several examples of the widespread use of Welsh amongst the migrants of New South Wales at this time. Lesley Walker, ‘Community and change in identity and language: Welsh migration and settlement in the Newcastle coal-mining district of New South Wales 1850–1914’ (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Sydney, 2003), 169–72.

<sup>33</sup> *Yr Australydd*, August 1869. Literacy levels amongst Welsh immigrants are, unfortunately, impossible to establish. In Victoria, the Central Register of prisoners, for example, while indicating that almost all Welsh prisoners were literate, rarely indicated the language of that literacy. There are exceptions, however, and the space for comments to the question ‘Read and Write’ on the prison record of Welshman William Thompson, who was convicted of larceny at Melbourne Police Court, 23 March 1872, contains the words, ‘Yes, Welch’. Public Record Office, Victoria, Laverton, Melbourne. Central Register of Prisoners, VPRS 515, Unit 15, No. 9857, p. 157. From the records for assisted immigrants for New South Wales, 1850–90, Lesley Walker notes that of all migrants from a Welsh county 59 per cent could read and write and that if the under fifteenes were removed from the equation the figure rose to 76 per cent. Walker does point out, however, that these records do not specify the language of literacy. Walker, ‘Community and change’, 71.

winter to teach the English language, and writing, etc.’.<sup>34</sup> In a letter from Ballarat, dated 25 May 1859, to a Mrs J. Jones of Aberystwyth, David Lloyd Thomas, while encouraging emigration from Wales to Australia, urged that all those considering the move, ‘make every effort to learn English . . . because through that language every thing is discussed’.<sup>35</sup> Robert Lewis’s speech in Welsh at the Ballarat Eisteddfod of 1863 also indicated that many were fully aware of the necessity of acquiring the English language. On the first day of the eisteddfod, Lewis, acting as president, ‘begged to be allowed to address the audience in English’, and while the second day heard him address those assembled in Welsh and urge his countrymen in the colony not to ‘forget the language of Wales’, he stressed that parents ‘should by all means have their children taught the English language, for it was the language of the British nation, of their adopted country, of science, and of advancement’ and that ‘Every Cymro [Welshman] ought to become proficient in the English language, because of the inestimable advantage which will accrue from that’.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to the threat posed to Welsh by the necessity of acquiring English, the overwhelming impression gained of language usage from reports of immigrant community activities is one in which Welsh was becoming increasingly marginalized and usurped by English. The pages of the press in Victoria, both Welsh and English, are replete with examples of the abandonment of Welsh in public, even in situations where the language could have expected to have been dominant. Were the Welsh consciously displacing the language from the activities of their own community?

As early as 1866 all seventeen pieces performed in a concert by the Sebastopol

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<sup>34</sup> *Miner and Weekly Star*, 20 March 1857. See also *Ballarat Star*, 13 March 1857.

<sup>35</sup> NLW MS 3291 E.

<sup>36</sup> *Ballarat Star* Wednesday, 30 December 1863.

Welsh Choir were in English.<sup>37</sup> The concert, at the Mechanics' Institute, Ballarat, had been held in order to raise funds for the new Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Chapel in Sebastopol, and it is therefore likely that the audience would have been primarily, if not exclusively, Welsh.<sup>38</sup> A report in *Yr Australydd* of a meeting for singing, speeches, recitals and readings held at Ballarat's Armstrong Street United Welsh Protestant Church in February 1871, noted the overwhelmingly English content of the programme. In addition to the proceedings being conducted entirely in English, of the twenty-two songs, recitations and speeches, only two were performed in the Welsh language. Indeed, the recital of the only Welsh piece, 'Amser' (Time), by one Miss Jane Jones, caused the chairman to rise and state that he regretted the lack of Welsh in the proceedings and hoped there would be more next time.<sup>39</sup> This pattern was repeated and reported throughout the colony; of the twenty-one songs and recitations performed by the Welsh children of the Band of Hope, Eaglehawk in January 1875, only three were in Welsh;<sup>40</sup> the annual meeting of the Welsh Baptists in Maldon, in October 1875, was conducted entirely in English, and of the thirteen songs performed, which included 'The Bonny Hills of Scotland', only one was in the language of what must have been the vast majority of the participants.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> *Yr Australydd*, December 1866.

<sup>38</sup> Although the ethnic composition of audiences is impossible to ascertain, evidence exists that suggests that such functions were, at least during the early years, predominantly patronized by Welsh people. The *Ballarat Star* noted that the hall used for another concert by the Sebastopol Welsh Choir, held at the end of 1863 to raise funds for the decidedly less Welsh cause of the Institute itself, was 'filled, and mainly with a Welsh audience'. *Ballarat Star*, 11 December 1863.

<sup>39</sup> *Yr Australydd*, April 1871.

<sup>40</sup> *Yr Ymwelydd*, February 1875.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, December 1875.

That conflict over existed over which language was used in public is evinced by the report in the *Ballarat Star* of a soiree held on St David's Day 1872, at the Alfred Hall, Ballarat. There were some 150 to 200 present for tea, with Joseph Jones, Member of the Legislative Assembly, acting as president and a choir of fifty from Sebastopol. Addresses were given in Welsh by Mr Morris, Mayor of Sebastopol, in English by Theophilus Williams, and a Mr Abel Rees, an engine-driver, spoke on 'Our Native Land' in a mixture of the two. The reporters noted that when Theophilus Williams rose to speak on 'The Immortal Memory of St David' he 'was assailed in Welsh with what was translated to us to mean a request to speak in Welsh. But he did not comply'.<sup>42</sup> A more comprehensive account of the same celebration, which appeared in *Yr Australydd*, also revealed the tightening grip of English. According to the report, some of the speeches were decidedly nationalistic in tone with Joseph Jones's speech on 'Celtic Literature' at one point referring to the 'contemptible behaviour of the English towards some of those under their authority'.<sup>43</sup> Despite their content, the report's conclusion indicated that these speeches had, in fact, been delivered in English; 'Next the meeting was addressed in Welsh by Mr. John Morris the Mayor of Sebastopol. It is a testament to the strength of the old language that this speaker raised more of a head of steam than those before him.'<sup>44</sup> The above examples raise a number of issues regarding the process of linguistic change within the Welsh community at that time. How, considering the linguistic background of Welsh immigrants, could English have gained the upper hand so rapidly? Were forces at work which transcended those usually associated with acculturation and assimilation? These questions can only be addressed with reference to developments in contemporary Wales that had had profound effects on the status of

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<sup>42</sup> *Ballarat Star*, 2 March 1872.

<sup>43</sup> *Yr Australydd*, April 1872.

the language.

The decades 1830 and 1840 were a time of great social upheaval in Wales and this unrest brought the state of education in Wales to the attention of the establishment, as social reformers of the time considered education as a means of dealing with social ills. On 10 March 1846, William Williams, the Member of Parliament for Coventry, requested in the House of Commons that a Royal Commission be established to overlook the state of education in Wales. The assumption was that a relationship existed between socio-economic unrest, manifest in the Merthyr Rising of 1831, the Chartist march on Newport in 1839 and ongoing rural disturbances, and an ignorance of the English language.<sup>45</sup> Williams asserted: ‘the people of that country labour under a peculiar difficulty from the existence of an ancient language.’<sup>46</sup> The report of the subsequent Royal Commission, which appeared in 1847, and was subsequently dubbed by the Welsh the ‘Treason of the Blue Books’, declared:

The Welsh language is a vast drawback to Wales and a manifold barrier to the moral progress and commercial prosperity of the people. Because of their language the mass of the Welsh people are inferior to the English in every branch of practical knowledge and skill . . . his language keeps him [the Welshman] under the hatches being one in which he can neither acquire nor communicate the necessary information. It is the language of old fashioned agriculture, of theology and of

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> One commentator put it simply when he stated: ‘A band of efficient schoolmasters is kept up at a much less expense than a body of police or soldiery.’ Quoted in Janet Davies, *The Welsh Language* (Cardiff, 1993), p. 41. For an informative, if brief, discussion on the relationship between social unrest and Welsh ‘peculiarities’, see Ivor Wilkes, *South Wales and the Rising of 1839* (London and Sydney, 1984), pp. 229–43.

<sup>46</sup> Quoted in Robert Owen Jones, ‘The sociolinguistics of Welsh’, in Martin Ball and James Fife (eds), *The Celtic Languages* (London, 1993), p. 547.

simple rustic life, while all the world about him is English . . .

He is left to live in an underworld of his own and the march of society goes completely over his head!<sup>47</sup>

The Blue Books stated that the Welsh were ‘never found at the top of the social scale’ and divorced from the benefits of progress, defined in terms of material wealth, by their adherence to the Welsh language. An immediate effect of the report was to sharpen the belief in the minds of ordinary people that the only way for Welsh people to get on in the world was through the medium of English.<sup>48</sup> The years following the publication of the report saw several severe blows dealt to the status of the language, but the immediate furore which ensued was mainly concerned with negative comments regarding the morality of the Welsh. Indeed, it would be fair to say that many Welsh people at the time were in general agreement with the Commissioners concerning the language.

The negative attitudes towards the language that existed in Wales at this time were also to be encountered amongst the Welsh in colonial Australia.<sup>49</sup> A letter from Yspryd Talhairn to the *Ballarat Star* in 1864, concerning the forthcoming eisteddfod, included the following:

On viewing the excitement, and the great interest felt in upholding institutions for fostering the Welsh language I am totally at a loss to know what good can be derived therefrom.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 547.

<sup>48</sup> For a comprehensive discussion of this episode and its consequences see, Gwyneth Tyson Roberts, *The Language of the Blue Books. The Perfect Instrument of Empire* (Cardiff, 1998).

<sup>49</sup> See Ieuan Gwynedd Jones, *Mid Victorian Wales. The Observers and the Observed* (Cardiff, 1992), and H. T. Edwards, ‘Y Gymraeg yn y bedwaredd ganrif ar bymtheg’, in G. Jenkins (ed.), *Cof Genedl II. Ysgrifau ar Hanes Cymru* (Llandysul, 1987), pp. 119–52.

In a pecuniary sense we are actual losers in playing at this game. The stupidity of clinging so much to our mother tongue disqualify a vast number from fulfilling trustworthy situations . . . In the name of reason, then, I ask, why not walk out of this clannish ignorance which is so pernicious to our interest as a people.<sup>50</sup>

In 1865, another letter to the *Ballarat Star* suggested that such views were widely held. Although of uncertain nationality, the writer, T. S. J., stated, again with regard to the eisteddfod, 'I cannot conceive what good is derived from such gatherings' and that he was 'sorry to witness the want of ability, many have to express themselves in the English language. In our courts of justice instances are continually laid bare of this ignorance, and the want of a method whereby they (Welsh people) may express themselves properly.' The feelings of the correspondent towards the language were summed up when he wrote, 'The monoglot Welshman, however great his attainments in Welsh lore, has only a vague and superficial knowledge of things in general, after all', and he continued by stating: 'It is a great absurdity in people to cultivate what must of itself be a pecuniary loss to them.'<sup>51</sup> These individuals, therefore, urged the abandonment of the language for commercial reasons and others, while arguing for the retention of Welsh, were keen to see it confined to religious matters. At the Ballarat Eisteddfod in December 1865 the *Ballarat Star* reported that the Reverend J. Farr, minister of the United Welsh Protestant Church in Ballarat, urged his countrymen to 'cleave to the Welsh language on Sabbath days . . . but when Monday morning came he counselled them to speak English, for this reason, that it was the language of commerce, and of the most enterprising nation on the face of the earth'.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> *Ballarat Star*, 22 January 1864.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 30 December 1865.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 27 December 1865.

The language in Victoria had many supporters, however, who also found a voice in the pages of the press. Tegid, referring to the Welsh-born in Victoria in a letter to *Yr Australydd* in 1868, expressed his disbelief ‘that three of the six thousand are prepared to cast into oblivion their language, the beloved glade in which they played as children’.<sup>53</sup> The correspondent, Hen Lag, was somewhat more strident when he wrote attacking the type of Welshman, usually referred to as ‘Dic Sion Dafydd’, who purposefully abandoned his language: ‘Many of this worthless issue are often encountered in this country; nothing but English comes from their hair-brained heads although they can speak Welsh to a far higher standard.’<sup>54</sup> These concerns were not confined to isolated individuals. The general news section of *Yr Australydd* contained a report of the Ballarat St David’s Day celebrations held on the first of March 1871 which stated:

the old language was too much put to one side – this was a Welsh meeting, it was Welsh people who were called together and the great majority of those attending were pure Welsh. It is a great failing in meetings such as this to constantly tax our ears and wound our hearts with English. It would be very discourteous to drag the Welsh language into meetings of the English or meetings of a civil nature in an English-speaking country, but to drag English and only English into Welsh national meetings is just as discourteous and pointless.<sup>55</sup>

Despite these protestations, it is clear that, by the 1870s, English was increasingly used in gatherings of the Welsh community. It was, of course, only reasonable for public meetings, which would naturally have involved other ethnic groups, to have been conducted through English, and that even native Welsh speakers would use some

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<sup>53</sup> *Yr Australydd*, July 1868.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, April 1871.

English when addressing cultural events patronized overwhelmingly by their fellow countrymen. It is surprising, however, that the pages of the Welsh press reveal numerous instances where those with a very poor command of English attempted to use that language to the exclusion of their mother tongue in domains where Welsh would have been expected to predominate. It can be argued that amongst many Welsh immigrants there existed not only a powerful desire to assimilate linguistically but also an underlying inferiority complex concerning their native language. An article in *Yr Australydd* in January 1872, decried the practice which saw Welsh people with an imperfect command of English choosing to use that language in meetings, and, referring to those who did so, stated:

We are perfectly sure that were their ears the ears of their audience they would blush. What is this ultra English craving which has taken over our Welsh meetings? If English is to be heard at all it should spoken by those who can address a meeting to a standard which honours both themselves and their nation.<sup>56</sup>

In June of 1872, an article appeared in *Yr Australydd* under the title ‘Siared Cymraeg a Saesonaeag’ (Speaking Welsh and English), which further addressed the tendencies outlined above:

It is true that the Welshman in everyday conversation with his English neighbours must, by necessity, speak their language as best he can. However, when speaking for the sake of speaking and making a public exhibition of himself through that language the martyrdom and strangulation of the English language is unforgivable ... it is those who most disregard and neglect their mother tongue ... who are the most clumsy and barbaric in their speaking of English.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., January 1872.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., June 1872.

The article continued with a savage condemnation of those who were abandoning Welsh for a language they hardly knew and poured scorn on those who, when addressed in Welsh, were likely to respond with sentences such as, ‘I no like toc him Wels, I like betterest toc him Inglis nor Wels’.<sup>58</sup> It is clear, therefore, that Welsh was being increasingly squeezed out of its natural domains in the social and cultural life of the Welsh community and that this phenomenon involved not only the natural process of acculturation but also a deliberate effort on the part of some Welsh people to discard their language in favour of English.

Whatever the linguistic situation and prevailing attitudes amongst first generation Welsh immigrants, the future of the language was ultimately dependent upon intergenerational transmission and here again, forces beyond those associated with the natural process of acculturation were in operation. An address given by Robert Miles, originally from Merthyr, to the Sebastopol Sunday Schools Meeting, 5 July 1868, illustrates the concerns of some in the Welsh community. Reproduced in *Yr Australydd* under the title ‘Plant y Cymry a’r Iaith Saesonaeg’ (The Children of the Welsh and the English Language), Miles stated:

It is shocking that the children of the faithful old nation . . .  
have now become so contradictory in their behaviour, that not  
only do they not strive to keep the language through teaching it  
to their children but they make every effort to banish it from  
the world...

Miles could see no purpose in parents raising their children in English only and felt the practice was attributable to the belief held by some that, ‘their children are able to do better in that language in things spiritual as well as secular’ and that, ‘before it is possible for their children to become men of importance they must be taught to speak

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

and think in that language'. Furthermore, while he was aware that the cosmopolitan nature of the Australian population demanded fluency in English, he was equally sure that Welsh was not lacking as a medium, and he advocated bilingualism: 'Well then, let us teach both to them, so that they can associate with the monoglot Welsh as well as the two classes of English people, the illiterate and the learned.'<sup>59</sup>

The position of the language amongst the children of Welsh immigrants again became a public issue following a report of the 13 February 1870 visit by Lewis Jones and John A. Jones to the School of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists of Carmel Church, Sebastopol. The inspectors, after praising the children's singing, stated:

as we have been used to regarding the Welsh of Sebastopol as 'red blooded Welsh,' determined to keep the language alive by teaching it to their children and grandchildren, we were disappointed to hear that the singing was in English and that English was the language usually used in several classes amongst the children.<sup>60</sup>

The inspectors, while disappointed, were not, however, moved to condemnation. Nor did they suggest methods to rectify the situation:

We do not condemn the practice of using English with those children who only understand that language; on the contrary, we would wish to encourage its use instead of a language which is understood by many of the children as much as is Greek.<sup>61</sup>

These comments suggest that many children of Welsh immigrants were unfamiliar with Welsh; that their parents had not passed the language on. This is reinforced by the correspondent Meirionfab who wrote in response to the comments made by Lewis and

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., September 1868.

<sup>60</sup> *Yr Australydd*, May 1870.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

Jones agreeing that the children should receive Sunday School instruction in a language they understood:

What is the duty of parents, the churches and Sunday School teachers regarding the future in light of the fact that it is English that is spoken by the majority of the children of Welsh people in our midst? . . . Who is to blame for this . . . ? The parents, the churches or the Sunday School?

If the children are to learn Welsh at all well, we would logically suppose that the work would begin and continue tirelessly and ceaselessly at the hearth. It is quite obvious that this has not been and is not being done, and the inevitable conclusion is that the children are going to speak English and English alone.<sup>62</sup>

What this suggests, therefore, is that English was increasingly used in Sunday Schools, even in the Welsh stronghold of Sebastopol, due, primarily, to the fact that it was the language with which the children of Welsh immigrants had the greatest familiarity. Further evidence exists which suggests that the efforts made by some Welsh parents in assuring their children went untainted by the language frequently produced unfortunate results. An article that appeared in the June 1872 issue of *Yr Australydd* noted that:

We already know of many large Welsh families who have not a language but a variety of English languages of their own making; and these are entirely attributable to the imperfect English spoken to children by their parents . . . It would be as reasonable to expect children in some Welsh families to learn correct English from the Gypsy babblings of their parents as it would for them to learn to eat gruel with a knitting needle or to peel potatoes with an iron.

The writer gave the example of a couple who had managed, after some time employed on a farm near Melbourne, to pick up enough English to satisfy the communication

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., July 1870.

needs of their employer. Following this, they obtained land in a remote region and raised ten children in what they regarded as English. When each of the children attended the Day School the teachers were unable to understand their mixture of English, Welsh and words of no discernible derivation. The language of these children included sentences such as, ‘Os you go out, I shat him door’, ‘You no see injian stem a machine thrashing’ and ‘Him na me was no got croes y paddock cyn we find ita nyth.’

<sup>63</sup> It is possible, therefore, to identify two poles of opinion; those parents who were striving to transmit the language, along with other facets of Welsh cultural identity, intergenerationally, and those actively ensuring that their children had no Welsh whatsoever, even if this resulted in their children conversing in an incomprehensible dialect.<sup>64</sup>

While parental influence was a major factor in language transference, the more fundamental consideration of the actual parentage of children born in Ballarat and Sebastopol is also illustrative. Drawing on information contained within colonial Birth Certificates a sample of children born in Ballarat to Welsh parents was taken for the years 1860, 1870 and 1880. For Sebastopol, as births were recorded separately from Ballarat from October 1865 onwards, the years 1866, 1873 and 1880 provided the sample.<sup>65</sup> An analysis of this information reveals the parentage of children born in the area during the period and enables inferences to be made regarding the likelihood of intergenerational language transference. For the period as a whole, 1860–80, of the 177 children born in Ballarat with at least one Welsh parent only 40.7 per cent had both

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., June 1872.

<sup>64</sup> Walker addresses this issue as it applied to the Welsh in the Newcastle coal-mining district of New South Wales. ‘Community and change’, 188–92.

<sup>65</sup> Birth Certificates for Ballarat, 1853–91, Sebastopol, 1866–91. Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

parents Welsh. Table V further indicates the weakening of intergenerational ethnicity by showing that the proportion of children born in Ballarat with two Welsh parents was in decline over the period.

Table V Percentage of Children Born in Ballarat of Welsh Parentage			
	1860	1870	1880
Both parents Welsh	57.1	33.3	27.8
Father only	28.6	46.1	47.2
Mother only	14.3	20.5	25.0
Total births	63	78	36

The situation in Sebastopol was, however, somewhat different. Of the 135 children born in Sebastopol with at least one Welsh parent, 68.1 per cent had both parents Welsh. Moreover, the proportion of children born in Sebastopol with both parents Welsh was on the increase (Table VI), although the collapse in the township's population in the mid-1870s following severe flooding of the local mines, largely negated any positive effect this might have had on the maintenance of a Welsh ethnolinguistic identity in the area as a whole.<sup>66</sup>

Table VI Percentage of Children Born in Sebastopol of Welsh Parentage			
	1866	1873	1880
Both parents Welsh	64.2	69.6	83.3
Father only	22.4	25.0	8.3
Mother only	13.4	5.4	8.3
Total births	67	56	12

These figures indicate that by the 1870s, children born into the Welsh community in Ballarat/Sebastopol with both parents Welsh were declining in both proportion and number, a factor which would have undermined the potential of language and culture transmission to the second generation.

That some parents had made a conscious effort to ensure that their children spoke

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<sup>66</sup> See E. D. Jenkins and A. J. Jenkins, *The Golden Chain: A History of Sebastopol with Special Reference to Gold Mining* (Maryborough, Victoria, 1980).

Welsh is, however, undeniable, and the language certainly survived beyond the first generation in areas of Welsh concentration such as Sebastopol.<sup>67</sup> Conversely, sufficient evidence exists to suggest that other Welsh people went to considerable lengths to ensure their children were not in any way tainted by their native tongue. This phenomenon, allied to the natural process of linguistic assimilation, saw the inevitable doom of Welsh as the language of the hearth in most Welsh households, even in the stronghold of Ballarat/Sebastopol. The situation in Victoria by the mid-1880s was summed up by one G. R. Jones, who wrote in a letter to Wales from Maryborough in September in 1886: ‘Nearly all the young people grow up without learning the Welsh language, hence the Welsh causes being so few and so small.’<sup>68</sup>

The declining fortunes of Welsh and the increasing strength of English amongst the Welsh community became apparent in a number of ways. The speed with which Welsh people gained proficiency in English is impossible to ascertain, but it appears that immersion in English ensured competence amongst the majority in a relatively short space of time. By the mid-1860s, the former monoglot, William Meirion Evans, for example, could be found preaching ‘very acceptably’ in English at La Trobe Street Welsh Church, Melbourne.<sup>69</sup> By 1876, moreover, it had become clear to the editors of *Yr Ymwelydd*, including Evans, that a publication produced solely in the Welsh language was no longer viable and the minute book of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists of Victoria, whose members were responsible for the production of the publication,

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<sup>67</sup> There are elderly individuals in Sebastopol today who, while having no Welsh themselves, can remember the language being spoken in the township during their youth in the early decades of the last century. My thanks to Arthur J. Jenkins for his reminiscences.

<sup>68</sup> Calvinistic Methodist Archives: NLW, CM 15793.

<sup>69</sup> *Biography of W. M. Evans*, p. 142.

indicates that its editors had become resigned to the inevitable. Minute IV of the denomination's Assembly, held in Sebastopol in November 1876, states: 'After the Reverend W. M. Evans gave a report on the present situation and the future outlook of *Yr Ymwelydd* . . . it was decided that the committee would add an English section.' Minute V continues: 'After discussing the best course of action if the publication came to an end as a Welsh medium; whether it would be better to turn it into an English publication was considered.'<sup>70</sup> The following Assembly, by which time the publication had ceased to exist, acknowledged its demise and alluded to the possibility of a weekly publication. Nothing came of this and no further references were made to a Welsh-language periodical in subsequent meetings.<sup>71</sup>

By the 1880s most cultural and social gatherings of the Welsh community in Ballarat/Sebastopol were being conducted in English and, although little documentary evidence exists concerning the internal dealings of Welsh institutions, that which does suggests a change in language occurred around 1890. The existing official correspondence of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists of Victoria, the only Welsh denomination to have left a large and significant body of documents, shows a clear linguistic shift. For the years prior to 1880, fifteen of fifteen of the denomination's extant letters which referred to business or financial matters were in Welsh; in the 1880s, seven were in Welsh and eight in English; and in the 1890s, only three were in

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<sup>70</sup> Report of the twenty-seventh Assembly of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists, Sebastopol 25, 26 and 27 November 1876, The Assembly Proceedings of the Calvinistic Methodists, or Welsh Presbyterians. Welsh Church Archive, Melbourne, p. 132.

<sup>71</sup> Report of the twenty-eighth Assembly of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists, Williamstown, 30 and 31 March and 1 April 1877, The Assembly Proceedings of the Calvinistic Methodists, or Welsh Presbyterians. Welsh Church Archive, Melbourne, p. 139.

Welsh and six in English.<sup>72</sup> The official records of the Calvinistic Methodists of Victoria were kept in Welsh up until 1891 and the minutes of the annual Assembly were taken in English from 1894.<sup>73</sup> The switch to English in the official dealings of the Calvinistic Methodists in the Ballarat District occurred around the same time. The report of their 4 April 1885 meeting stated that: ‘the annual report of the Assembly be printed in Welsh and in English.’<sup>74</sup> The records of Sebastopol’s Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Church, which listed monthly contributions, were kept in Welsh from 1866 until 1891, when details were recorded by the same hand in English. The quarterly accounts and annual financial report likewise changed language, but not handwriting, in 1887. The register of church members changed from Welsh to English in 1893.<sup>75</sup>

Although the picture of the strength and status of the Welsh language in Victoria in the 1860s, 70s and 80s is far from clear, the general tendency was one of decline due, primarily, to the necessity of adopting the language of the wider community. While this caused an amount of breast-beating, it was an entirely natural phenomenon, to be expected in the absence of exclusively Welsh areas of settlement. What stands out, however, are indications which suggest that some members of the Welsh immigrant group were not merely experiencing the natural process of linguistic assimilation but endeavouring to go beyond the requirement of obtaining a command of the lingua franca. A section of the Welsh population was actively abandoning the primary badge of their nationality, even to the point where they denied their ability to converse in

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<sup>72</sup> Welsh Church Archive, Melbourne.

<sup>73</sup> The Association Assembly Proceedings of the Calvinistic Methodists, or Welsh Presbyterians. Welsh Church Archive, Melbourne.

<sup>74</sup> Report of the Meeting of the Calvinistic Methodists, Ballarat District. 4 April 1885. Welsh Church Archive, Melbourne.

<sup>75</sup> Archive of Carmel Welsh Church, Sebastopol.

Welsh and preferred to raise their children in some unintelligible bastardized English. The response of some in the Welsh community to the general trend, as revealed in the pages of the Welsh press, ranged from regret that the language was in decline to an almost rabid condemnation of those perceived as responsible. Within the Welsh community, therefore, there appeared to exist on the one hand those for whom the maintenance of Welsh national identity, epitomized by the language, was of overwhelming significance, and on the other those who were striving with unnatural vigour to abandon all and every vestige of their Welshness. Between these two extremes lay the majority view. A great deal of goodwill existed towards the Welsh language but this goodwill was tempered by an unwillingness to make language preservation a priority and, ultimately, an acceptance of the inevitable. This, perhaps, is the most accurate assessment that can be made regarding the feelings of the majority of the Welsh immigrants in the colony at this time, and the comments made in an article by Ap Buddug in 1875 perhaps best expressed these feelings:

Many things lead us to believe that but a short time remains for the Welsh language in this country, and the fact that we have at present preaching in various places, and for now a Welsh publication does not mean that they will continue for long, at least not unless greater efforts are made on behalf of our national existence. The children are growing up to be English and there are but few Welsh people coming from the Old Country to settle among us. Furthermore, there is reason to fear that the national sentiment is gradually disappearing from the bosoms of many of the old settlers and, therefore, it seems that as long as men see no *profit* in it there will be no point in being Welsh.<sup>76</sup>

ROBERT LLEWELLYN TYLER

University of Wales, Newport

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<sup>76</sup> *Yr Ymwelydd*, June 1875.