

Learning Activity Progression Step 4

This resource provides learning activities for your students using People's Collection Wales. It is one of a series of nine relating to Patagonia for Progression Step 4.

Establishment of the Welsh Settlement in Patagonia

The Voyage of the Mimosa, 1865

The Native Patagonians and the Welsh Settlers

Early days in Patagonia

'Crossing the Patagonian plains': from the Camwy Valley to Cwm Hyfryd

Dark times – Floods and Emigration

Early Schools in the Welsh Settlement - Patagonia

History of the Welsh Language in Patagonia

Chapels and Churches in Patagonia



Early schools in the Welsh Settlement



By Culturenet Cymru

Introduction

'We already believed in the need for Welsh schools; but our belief is far stronger now.' The Reverend Michael D. Jones, following his visit to the Settlement in 1882.

Tasks and learning objectives

1. Official language
2. Adoptive country
3. Camwy Intermediate Education Society
4. R. J. Berwyn's Textbook
5. The first book to be published
6. Proverbs
7. Welsh education in Patagonia today

[Download the Collection of images and worksheets for this activity from People's Collection Wales](#)

Early schools in the Welsh Settlement

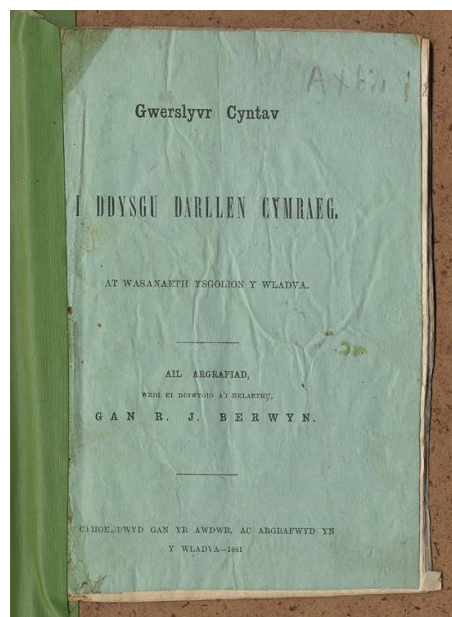
'We already believed in the need for Welsh schools; but our belief is far stronger now.' The Reverend Michael D. Jones, following his visit to the Settlement in 1882.

Soon after the first settlers had made their new home on the banks of the River Chupat, they constructed a wooden building to accommodate the first school in Patagonia. The Rev. Lewis Humphreys, originally from Ganllwyd, was appointed as schoolmaster. Children of all ages attended the school, where they could receive their education through the medium of Welsh. However, for a few years, the situation at the school was somewhat unsettled. Lewis Humphreys returned to Wales in 1867 due to ill health, and the Rev. Robert Meirion Williams took charge of the school. Shortly afterwards, Williams also gave up his post because of illness. Following these initial difficulties, the school was re-opened in 1868 under the direction of Richard Jones Berwyn, who taught the children of the Settlement for many years.



Pupils of Rawson School, Patagonia, 1880

Despite the lack of resources and facilities, the settlers were eager for their children to receive a good education. At first, the children sat on simple wooden benches, writing with chalk on pieces of slate. There were no text books other than the Welsh Bible. Identifying the need for more suitable teaching material, R. J. Berwyn wrote text books that were tailor-made for the educational needs of the children of Patagonia. 'Gwerslyvr Cyntav i ddysgu darllen Cymraeg at wasanaeth ysgolion y Wladva' (First textbook to teach the reading of Welsh in the schools of the Welsh Settlement) was first published in 1878 and an extended second edition was published in 1881. The book included sections on vocabulary, verses and proverbs, stories, and a list of Welsh children's names. This was the first Welsh book to be published in Patagonia.



'Gwerslyvr Cyntav i ddysgu darllen Cymraeg at wasanaeth ysgolion y Wladva' by R. J. Berwyn (Second edition, 1881) [front cover, image 1 of 23]

Following the election of the Welsh Settlement's school board in the late 1870s, work began on the construction of a new school at Trerawson. In fact, by the beginning of the 1880s, there were four day schools in the Camwy Valley: Trerawson, Y Drofa Fawr, Y Gaiman and a school that was held at Glyn Du Chapel. It was at this time that the Argentine government began to take an interest in education at the Settlement. In 1878, the Government appointed R. J. Powel (Elaig), a Welshman who had been raised in London, as national teacher in the Camwy Valley. Many of the settlers vigorously opposed this move. They were angered by the Government's interference in their children's education, their fear being that Spanish would replace Welsh as the main language in schools. Indeed, within three years of the publication of Berwyn's textbook to teach the reading of Welsh in schools, Elaig published 'Gwerslyvr i Gymro ddysgu Hispaenaeg: wedi ei baratoi at wasanaeth ysgolion y Wladva (Textbook for a Welshman to learn Spanish: prepared for the schools of the Welsh Settlement). The Welsh settlers also feared that Elaig, who was a Roman Catholic, would have a harmful influence on the religious education of their children.

By the end of the 1880s, some degree of Spanish was taught at seven schools in the Camwy Valley. Rawson School was turned into a national school and Spanish became the official medium of education. The Government gradually increased its influence on small schools by contributing towards teachers' salaries. As well as encouraging children to learn Spanish, the Argentine authorities were eager to see the Welsh children learning more about the history and culture of their adoptive country. The Government therefore welcomed the publication in 1891 of a new booklet entitled 'Gwerslyvr i Blant Ysgolion y Wladva, Hanes y Weriniaeth Arianin' (Textbook for the Schoolchildren of the Welsh Settlement, the History of the Argentine Republic), which was written by one of the Settlement's teachers, W. H. Hughes (Caeron). By 1893 there were ten schools in Patagonia: five national schools and five independent Welsh schools. Despite being state sponsored, two of the national schools (Y Gaiman a Bryngwyn) used Welsh as the medium of education and taught Spanish as a subject.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the Argentine government had tightened its grip on education in Patagonia. In 1896, legislation was introduced to ensure that Spanish was the medium of education in all national primary schools. In the short term, this policy proved unsuccessful, primarily because of opposition from parents and the fact that so many of the teachers were Welsh-speaking.

The Camwy Intermediate Education Society was established in 1904 in an attempt to oppose these developments. Its aim was to establish an intermediate school that would provide Welsh-medium education for children over 14 years of age. One of the leaders of this organization was the author and teacher Eluned Morgan.

In January 1906, David Rhys Jones, a native from Cwmystwyth in Cardiganshire, was appointed as the first schoolmaster of the new intermediate school. Initially, the school was held in a temporary building, but as the number of the pupils increased, it was felt that a more suitable location was needed. On the 20th December 1906, a ceremony was held to lay the foundation stone of the new building in the Gaiman, and a few months later, the Welsh Settlement Intermediate School was officially opened.

The establishment of the Intermediate School was an important milestone in the history of Patagonia. In this school a whole generation of Welsh-Patagonians had a unique opportunity to receive their secondary education through the medium of Welsh - an opportunity that was unavailable in Wales at that time. However, in 1924, the Argentine government opened the Republic Intermediate School at Trelew, which was attended by a number of children of Welsh descent. In the early 1950s, the Intermediate Welsh School in Gaiman was forced to close due to a decline in the number of pupils. However, as the centenary of the establishment of the Welsh Settlement approached, there was a sudden surge in the demand for Welsh-medium education. The school was reopened in 1963 under the supervision of the headmistress, Luned Vychan Roberts de Gonzáles.

Source

R. Bryn Williams, *Y Wladfa* (Caerdydd, 1962)

Task 1. Official language

What was the official language of schools in Wales in the 1870s?

Task 2. Adoptive country

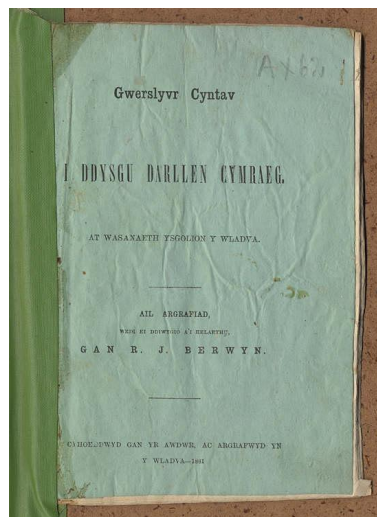
Is it important to learn about the history and culture of one's adoptive country? Discuss.

Complete the worksheet 'History and Culture in an adoptive country'

Task 3. Camwy Intermediate Education Society

What was the aim of the Camwy Intermediate Education Society?

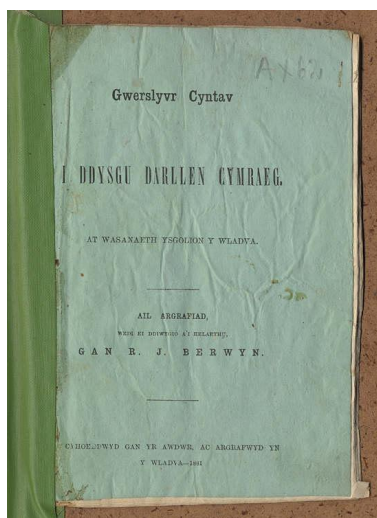
Task 4. J. Berwyn's Textbook



'Gwerslyvr Cyntav i ddysgu darllen Cymraeg at wasanaeth ysgolion y Wladva' by R. J. Berwyn (Second edition, 1881)

What was the main attraction of the R. J. Berwyn's Textbook?

Task 5. The first book to be published



'Gwerslyvr Cyntav i ddysgu darllen Cymraeg at wasanaeth ysgolion y Wladva' by R. J. Berwyn (Second edition, 1881)

Why, in your opinion, was this the first book to be published in the Settlement?

Task 6. Proverbs

Go to page 25 and choose four proverbs.

'Gwerslyvr Cyntav i ddysgu darllen Cymraeg at wasanaeth ysgolion y Wladva' by R. J. Berwyn (Second edition, 1881)

Draw four cartoons to explain the meaning of the four proverbs.

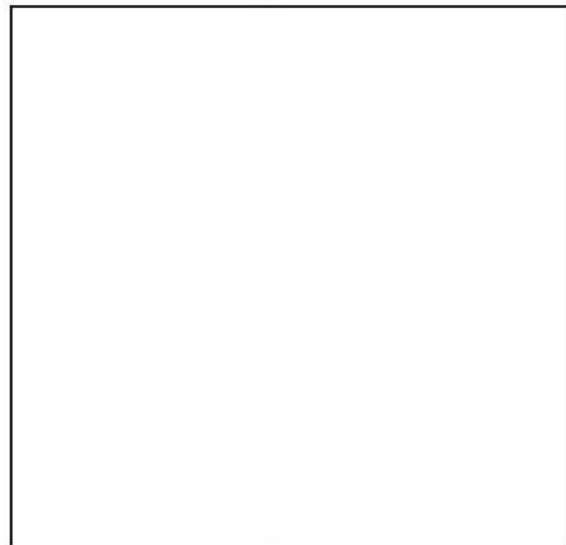
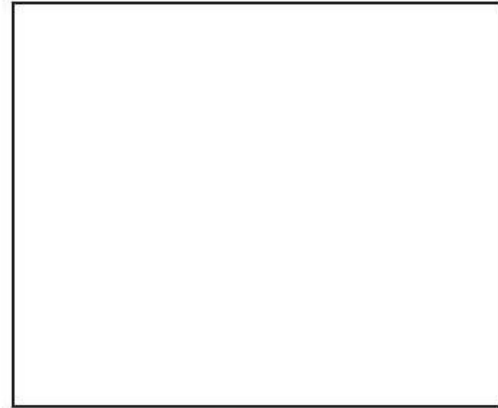
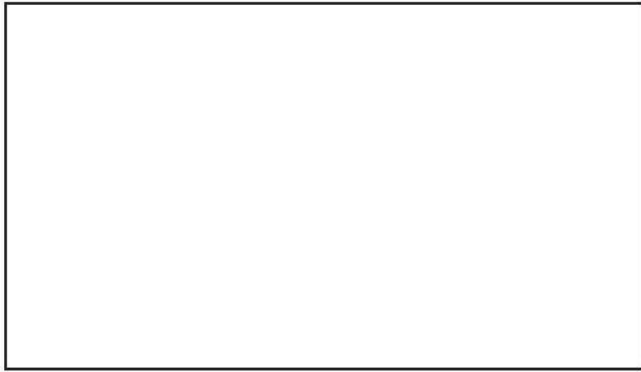
Complete the worksheet 'Proverbs'

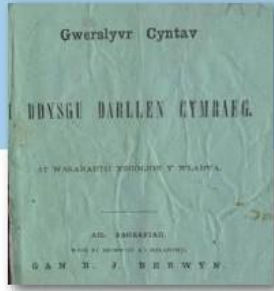
Task 7. Welsh education in Patagonia today

What is the situation of Welsh education in Patagonia today? Browse through the other websites to find the answer.

History and Culture in an Adoptive Country

Is it important to learn about the history and culture of one's adoptive country? Why?





Proverbs

Gwerslyvr Cyntav

--

--

--

--

--

--

--

--