

## Learning Activity Key Stage 3

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 KS3.

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



**Dark times - floods and emigration**



**By Culturenet Cymru**

## Introduction

*'For evident reasons they are anxious to leave Chubut in a body and to settle down ...together as far as possible.'* Report on the Welsh Settlement by the Reverend David Powell Richards

### Tasks and learning objectives

1. Dam the river
2. Irrigation system
3. Position of the dam
4. Newspaper advertisement
5. Change over time
6. Cartoon of the week

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

## Dark times - floods and emigration

'For evident reasons they are anxious to leave Chubut in a body and to settle down ...together as far as possible.' Report on the Welsh Settlement by the Reverend David Powell Richards

At the end of the nineteenth century, many of the settlers became dissatisfied with life in the Camwy Valley. Since the late 1880s, there had been a significant decline in the number of emigrants from Wales and an increase in the immigration of people from other cultural backgrounds. The settlers also resented the Argentine authorities' interference with the affairs of the Settlement. In the field of education, for example, legislation was introduced in 1896 to ensure that Spanish was the medium of teaching in all national primary schools. Eugenio Tello was appointed as Governor of Chubut in 1895. Tello was unpopular with the settlers partly because of his Catholic faith, but primarily because he forced the young men of the Settlement to carry out military service on Sundays. After receiving complaints from the Welsh settlers, the Government in Buenos Aires granted permission to the authorities in the Camwy Valley to change the day on which military drills were held, but Tello refused to take action.



Cartoon regarding the migration of a number of Welsh people from Patagonia to Canada, 1901-2

Governor O'Donnell, who was appointed in 1898, was even more unpopular than his predecessor. He also refused to change the day of the military drills, and was openly hostile to the Welsh language and customs. It was only when President Roca visited the Settlement in 1898 that the Welsh were finally permitted to drill on whichever day they wished. By then, however, two representatives of the Settlement had left for Britain to voice their concerns to the government in London. When the authorities in the Camwy Valley heard of this political move, they responded heavy-handedly by imprisoning some of the Settlement's men. The matter was resolved when the Argentine government sent two men to the Settlement to compile an official report on the disturbance. Although Governor O'Donnell was dismissed for his behaviour, this event proved particularly damaging to the relationship between the Settlement and the Argentine authorities at the turn of the twentieth century.

## Dark times - floods and emigration

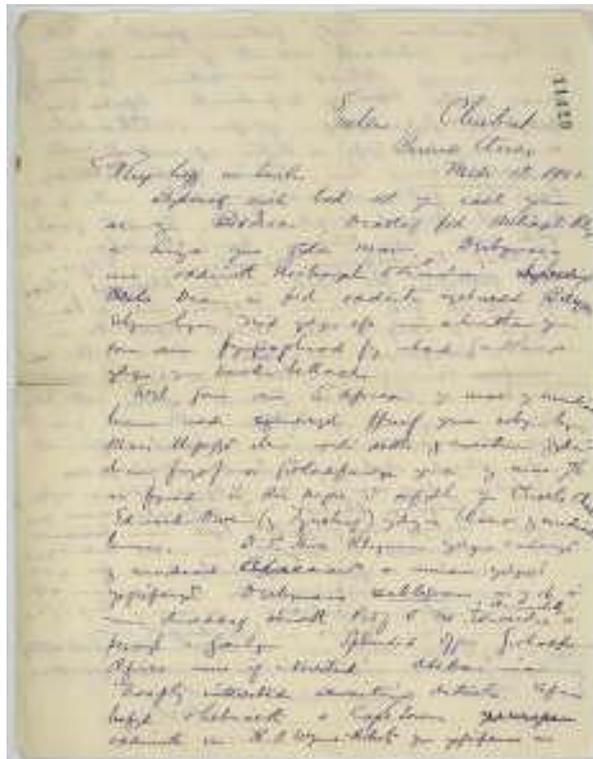
To cap it all, the Camwy Valley was struck in 1899 by the worst floods since the arrival of the first Welsh settlers in 1865. According to contemporary reports, it rained in the Camwy Valley for more than three weeks, which caused the level of the river to rise at a rate of fifteen inches every twelve hours. Homes and property were damaged and settlers escaped to higher ground for safety. No lives were lost, but the flood destroyed over a hundred houses, eight chapels, five schoolhouses and three post offices. Thousands of dollars were raised in Buenos Aires in order to provide aid for the settlers, but when the Camwy River burst its banks on three further occasions, many of them felt that they had no future on Patagonian soil.



*Welsh Patagonians in the port of Liverpool on board the steamship 'Numidian' en route to Canada  
(photocopy of photo)*

The large-scale emigration from the Settlement began after two settlers migrated to Canada soon after the floods. They tried to persuade other settlers to join them and a representative of the Canadian government travelled to the Camwy Valley to make an offer of land. Late in 1901, a small group left the Settlement and made the journey to Canada at their own expense. Others wished to do the same, but the majority of them were too poor to emigrate. A special fund was created in Britain to raise money to support them and donations were received from the Prince of Wales, Joseph Chamberlain, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and several Welsh Members of Parliament. The money raised was sufficient to pay for the passage of 230 settlers from Patagonia to Canada. The steamship 'Orissa' departed from Porth Madryn on 15 May 1902 and travelled to Liverpool. After staying in Liverpool for a couple of days, 208 Welsh settlers began the second part of their journey to Canada aboard the steamship 'Numidian'.

Some of the Welsh settlers in Patagonia also discussed the possibility of emigrating to South Africa. The chairman of this movement was D. S. Jones, Rhumney, and Llwyd ap Iwan was its secretary. In a letter written to his brother-in-law, Professor Thomas Rhys, on 12 September 1902, Llwyd ap Iwan noted that he had received the following words in a telegram from Professor O. M. Edwards of Llanuwchllyn: 'Splendid offer Gwladfa Africa wire if interested'. He replied: 'Deeply interested awaiting details.' Llwyd explained in his letter that the settlers were eager to inspect the land and the country's resources before reaching a decision. As many of them felt that emigrating to the Settlement had been a 'mistake' in the first place, and that several of those who had emigrated to Canada recently were disappointed with their new situation, he stated that extreme caution would be taken before reaching a decision with regards to South Africa.



[Letter from Llwyd ap Iwan to his brother-in-law, Professor Thomas Rhys, 12 September 1902 \[page 1, image 1 of 2\]](#)

The Welsh settlers endured one of the most difficult periods in the Settlement's history following the floods in 1899. But despite a widespread desire to leave the Settlement and settle in another country, most of them chose to stay in Patagonia. Their descendents continue to live there today and the Welsh language and customs play an important part in the lives of some of them.

### Sources

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

# Dark times - floods and emigration

## Task 1. Dam the river

Why was there a need to dam the river? What was the importance of the dam?

## Task 2. Irrigation system

What was it like to work on the irrigation system? What difficulties did the builders encounter?

## Task 3. Position of the dam

Using the item ['Llyfr Cwmni Dyvrhaol y Camwy' 1885-6 \[image 2 of 61\]](#), create a diagram showing the position of the dam and the irrigation system in the Camwy Valley.

## Task 4. Newspaper advertisement

Write a newspaper advertisement to persuade local businessmen to invest in the venture

## Task 5. Change over time

Make a note of the things that would change over time as a result of the irrigation system and list the things that would remain the same.

*Record your answers on worksheet – The Impact of Irrigation.*

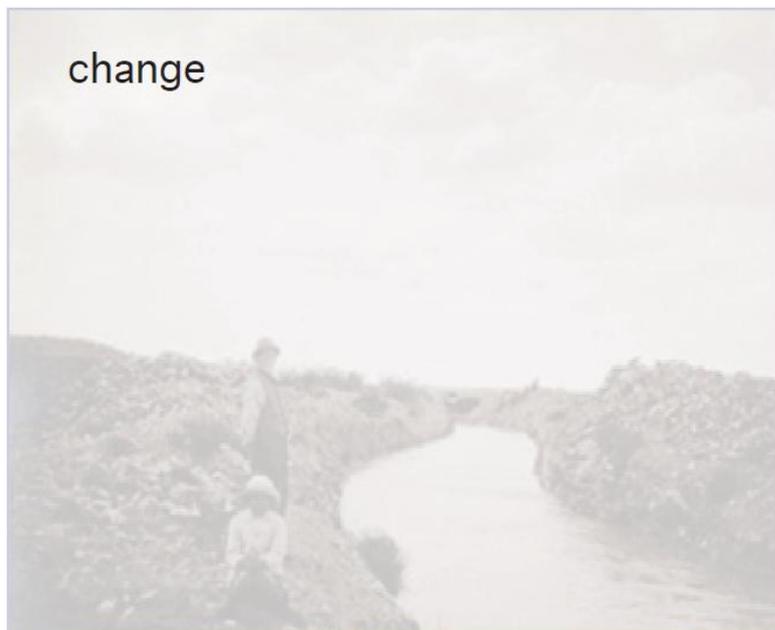
## Task 6. 'Cartoon of the Week'

What is the cartoonist trying to portray through 'Cartoon of the Week'?

Create a cartoon that conveys the same message with a different image.

*Draw your cartoon on worksheet – Cartoon of the Week*

# The Impact of Irrigation



# Leaving for Canada

What is the cartoonist trying to convey through the 'Cartoon of the Week'?



## Cartoon of the Week

Create a cartoon that conveys the same message with a different image.

