



## Tour Operator Jeremy Wood: The Welsh Language in Patagonia

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Mae Jeremy Wood wedi bod yn darparu teithiau yn yr iaith (*Welsh Patagonia*) ym Mhatagonia ers 2006, ac mae e arbinngwr ar yr ardal a'r iaith. Yma, mae'n rhannu'r stori o'r iaith...

Jeremy Wood has been providing Welsh-language tours (*Welsh Patagonia*) in Patagonia since 2006, and is a expert on the area and the language. Here, he shares the story of the language...

Pan laniodd y Mimosa ym Mae Newydd (yn agos at ble y lleolir Porth Madryn heddiw) ar Orffennaf y 26ain 1865, Cymraeg oedd iaith gyffredin yr ymfudwyr, ac roedd hwnnw'n Gymraeg pur, dilwgr- yn gymysg cyfoethog o dafodieithoedd y de a'r gogledd, ac yn rhydd o ddyylanwad llygredig yr iaith fain. Mae'r un yn wir heddiw. Er bod ambell i air Sbaeneg- yn hytrach na Saesneg- wedi ymdreiddio i sgwrs bob

When the Mimosa dropped anchor in New Bay (close to where the town of Porth Madryn now lies) on July 26, 1865, the lingua franca of the 150 or so settlers on board was Welsh: pure, unadulterated Welsh, equal in origin from north and south, with no English pollutants. The same is true today. The language is still unsullied by English (although slightly tarnished by Spanish) and now spoken

dydd, mae Cymraeg Y Wladfa yn parhau i fod yr un mor loyw a chyfoethog ac ydoedd ganrif a hanner nôl.

Mae'r iaith wedi gwynebu sawl her ers y dyddiau cynnar, ac oni bai am gymorth amserol o ffynhonnell annisgywl, mae'n debygol y buasai Cymraeg Y Wladfa wedi ymuno â Chernyweg a Manaweg ar reestr yr ieithoedd Celtaidd hynny ydoedd unwaith mor gyffredin, ond sydd bellach wedi dirywio'n arw yn eu niferoedd.

Gwahoddwyd y Cymry draw gan lywodraeth yr Ariannin i wladychu darn o dir anghysbell, a oedd yn anhysbys i'r mwyafri o Ewropeaid ar y pryd, ac yn destun braw i'r Archentwyr, a oedd yn gyfarwydd â chwedlau am frodorion ffyrnig yr ardal. Roedd ynt er eu pennau eu hunain. Doedd neb erioed wedi ymgartrefu yno o'r blaen, a 'chydig iawn oedd wedi ymweld â'r lle, ar wahân i ambell i long, helwyr gwartheg ac Indiaid crwydrol. Dan anogaeth Llywodraeth yr Ariannin, llwyddodd y criw yma o lowyr, llafurwyr, clergwyr a chlercod i drefnu eu cymunedau yn broffesiynol, i'r fath raddfa'r bod ganddynt eu cyfundrefn gyfreithiol eu hunain. Wrth adeiladau'r capeli, gosodwyd sylfaen gadarn ar gyfer y Cymru Newydd, un wedi ei seilio ar addysg seciwlwr, gyda rhyddid crefyddol ac ieithyddol, ymhell o ymyrraeth landlordiaid barus a gweledyddion o brif ddinas estron.

Dyna oedd y gobaith, oleiaf.

Dim ond ychydig iawn o siaradwyr Sbaeneg oedd i'w cael ymmsg y Cymry yn ystod y dyddiau cynnar, gyda'r iaith yn cael ei siarad gydag ymwelwyr, i fasnacha gyda'r Indiaid neu wrth ymweld yn achlysurol â Buenos Aires, ryw 1000 o filltiroedd i'r gogledd. Cymry oedd yr unig bobl sefydledig mewn ardal sy'n fwy na Ffrainc, a Chymraeg oedd yr unig iaith. (Mae'n werth nodi ei bod hi'n debygol bod y Cymry wedi defnyddio math o Gymraeg Beiblaidd, sef iaith y capel, ymmsg ei gilydd er mwyn goresgyn y gwahaniaeth sylweddol rhwng Cymraeg tafodieithol y de a'r gogledd).

Wrth ddfoli'r tir a thyfu cynnrych amaethyddol o safon byd, bu'n rhaid i'r Cymry gyfathrebu fwyfwy gyda'r byd allanol. Roedd mwy o fewnfudwyr di-Gymreig yn cyrraedd i weithio ar ffermydd y Cymry llwyddiannus, neu weithiau i roi cynnig ar fod yn arloeswyr, ond Cymraeg oedd y brif iaith, ac fe barhaodd i fod yn brif iaith i'r Wladfa dros flynyddoedd maith. Cymraeg oedd iaith yr aelwyd, yr ysgol a'r capel, ac roedd hyd yn oed rhai o'r brodorion yn ei siarad er mwyn masnacha a thrafod gwaith.

Yn raddol, daeth goruchafiaeth yr iaith Gymraeg yn y Wladfa dan fygythiad. Roedd plant mewnfudwyr yn sgrwsio yn Sbaeneg; sefydlwyd ysgolion newydd, di-gymraeg; roedd y ffermwyr Cymreig yn wynebu cystadleuaeth o rannau eraill o'r Ariannin am gynnrych a doedd y ddeddf Archentaidd a oedd yn mynnu bod tir yn cael ei rannu'n gyfartal ar farwolaeth y tad ddim yn addas i'r Cymry a'u teuluoedd mawr - erbyn y trydedd genhedlaeth, buasai'r tir wedi ei rannu i'r fath raddfa nad oedd bellach yn dwyn digon o elw, gan orfodi siaradwyr Cymraeg i fynd i chwilio am waith yn y trefi. Roedd y raddfa mewnfudo hefyd yn

with accents more akin to Caernarfon than Carmarthen (towns in the north and south of Wales respectively, with similar sounding names, but with dramatically different Welsh).

In the intervening years, however, the language went through one crisis after another and, without the timely help from an unlikely source, South American Welsh could well have disappeared and joined Cornish and Manx in the roll-call of once common, but now almost deceased, Celtic tongues.

The Welsh had been invited by the Argentine Government to settle a land that few Europeans had ever seen and into which few Argentineans dared go for fear of being slaughtered by merciless natives. But they were there on their own. No one had ever settled in this remote place and it had only ever been visited by the odd passing ship, cattle hunters and nomadic Indians. With encouragement from the Argentine government who, at the time, had no desire to join the Welsh in such inhospitable regions, this band of colliers, labourers, clergymen and clerks organised their communities professionally, even to the extent of devising their own courts system. The construction of chapels, which doubled as schools, gave them the foundations, through religion and secular education, upon which their "New Wales" could be built. Those memories from Wales of religious suppression, language intolerance, absentee landlords and interference from politicians in remote capitals were to be a thing of the past. Or so they thought...

There were few Spanish speakers in the early days, the language only being necessary for dealing with the occasional visitor, for trading with the indigenous people and for the odd foray up to Buenos Aires, a thousand miles to the north. The only settled people in an area bigger than France were Welsh. And the only language they used was Welsh. (However, it is worth pointing out that, at first, there was a huge gulf between the colloquial Welsh spoken by immigrants from South Wales and that spoken by settlers from North Wales. It is likely that they would have had to revert to "Biblical Welsh", the language of the chapel, to have any common form of communication.)

As they tamed the land and succeeded in producing world-class agricultural produce, they had cause to interact more with the "outside world". More immigrants were arriving with no Welsh blood, sometimes to work for successful Welsh farms and businesses and sometimes to try their luck as pioneers. But the Welsh language was still dominant and it continued to be the main language for conducting the business of the colony for many years. Welsh was the language of the home, the school and the place of worship. Even some of the indigenous people of the region used the language to communicate with their new trading partners and employers.

But, gradually, the dominance of the Welsh language came under pressure. Children of immigrants conversed in Spanish; new schools were being established where no Welsh was spoken; the original settlers started to die off; Welsh farmers started to see competition from other parts of Argentina for its produce; the Argentine law, equivalent to the Welsh system of gavelkind, where property was split equally between surviving children on the death of the father, ill-suited the Welsh with their enormous families: land which had been adequately large enough to farm in the first

gymharol araf (dim ond 1000 o Gymry gyrhaeddodd yn ystod y 30 mlynedd a ddilynodd glaniad y Mimosa), ac felly yn hytrach na chael eu gorfodi i briodi cefnder neu gyfnither (a oedd yn dabw yn ôl y Beibl), priododd sawl un y tu allan i'r gymuned Gymreig. Roedd plant a'i magwyd mewn perthynas cymysg, felly, yn tyfu fyny'n ddwyieithog ar y gore. Mewn achosion eithafol, roedd plant uniaith Sbaeneg yn cael trfferth cyfathrebu gyda'u teidiau a'u neiniau uniaith Gymraeg.

Ynghyd â chael ei wanhan gan yr achosion uchod, roedd agwedd y llywodraeth ganol hefyd yn peri gofid. Wedi i'r hen gyfundrefnau gael eu disodli'n dilyn chwyldroadau ledled Ewrop, roedd llywodraeth yr Ariannin yn awyddus iawn i atal rhywbeth tebyg rhag digwydd ar eu stepen drws (er bod y stepen ddrws dros 1,300 o filltiroedd i ffwrdd yn yr achos yma!). Er addewidion cynharach i'r gwrthwyneb, roedd y llywodraeth am greu un math o ddinesydd Archentaidd a oedd yn ffyddlon i'r faner, ac a oedd yn siarad Sbaeneg fel iaith gyntaf. Roedd yn rhaid i blant y Dosbarth Cyntaf fod yn rhugl yn y "iaith Genedlaethol". Torrwyd yr addewid o gyfundrefn gyfreithiol annibynnol i'r Cymry, danfonwyd llu o glercian a gweinyddwyr i sicrhau uffuddhad, ac, yn ddiwedd arni oll, mynnwyd y bod rhaid dysgu pob pwnc yn yr ysgol drwy gyfrwng y Sbaeneg. Yn 1890, cafodd ysgolion cynradd Cymraeg (ychydig iawn o ysgolion uwchradd oedd yn bodoli ar y pryd) eu gwahardd.

Ateb y Cymry oedd ymdrechu'n galetach i ddysgu Cymraeg yn yr ysgolion Sul, ac i gadw'u ffydd yn y digwyddiadau diwylliannol. Mae Eisteddfod y Wladfa yn dal i fynd o nerth i nerth, ac yn cael ei chynnal pob mis Hydref (yn ystod y Gwanwyn, gyda'r rhaglen yn cael ei chyhoeddi'n gynharach yn ystod yr hydref blaenorol, gan roi cyfle i bawb ymarfer yn ystod misoedd hir y gaeaf). Er gwaethaf y deddfau newydd a'r gwaharddiadau, fe sefydlwyd yr Ysgol Ganolraddol yn y Gaiman yn 1906 - hon oedd yr unig ysgol uwchradd yn Ne'r Ariannin (ac fe barhaodd i fod yr unig un hyd at 1925). Roedd yn debyg iawn i ysgol ramadeg i blant 12 oed ac i fyny, ac roedd yn ysgol dairieithog, gan ddysgu gwyddoniaeth drwy gyfrwng y Saesneg, hanes, daearyddiaeth a mathemateg drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg (er bod geometreg yn cael ei ddysgu drwy'r Saesneg, am ryw reswm). Roedd galwad mawr am ei graddedigion ym Mueno Aires, er y ffaith nad oedd yr ysgol wedi cael ei chydnabod yn swyddogol, ac felly methu a gwobrwo'i disgylion gyda Thystysgrif Gadael Genedlaethol. Er bod y disgylion oll yn siarad Saesneg a Chymraeg, Sbaeneg oedd yr iaith gyffredin rhwng plant o wahanol gefndiroedd.

Yn 1914 cyrhaeddodd y criw olaf o ymfudwyr o Gymru i Batagonia, a gyda'r ddolen yma'n torri, roedd yn anochel y buasai addysg Gymraeg yn y Wladfa'n cael ei foddi mewn diliw o ysgolion Sbaeneg swyddogol. Caewyd drysau'r Ysgol Ganolraddol yn 1950 oherwydd diffyg cefnogaeth, a gelynfaeth agored o gyfeiriad yr awdurdodau (cafodd ei hailagor yn ddiweddarach fel Coleg Camwy, ac mae'n dal i fodoli heddiw).

Roedd un o golofnau eraill yr iaith Gymraeg, sef y Capeli, hefyd mewn trfferth. Llwyddasant i ddal eu tir fel canolfannau pwysig i'r iaith hyd nes ddiwedd y 40au, ond gyda chynulleidfa oedd yn heneiddio a sylw'r aelodau iau yn cael ei ddenu gan ddigwyddiadau eraill, gwanhawyd craidd y gefnogaeth. Gyda diffyg ymrwymiad ymysg y bobl ifanc,

generation became chopped up into pocket-handkerchief sized pieces for the third generation, thereby forcing Welsh speakers off the farms and into the towns. The relatively low speed of Welsh immigration (30 years after the colony was formed, only 1,000 additional immigrants had arrived) led many, because of the Biblical taboo of marrying a cousin, to a marriage with a "Latino" meaning that, at best, the children were brought up bilingually. This sometimes led to extreme cases, where monoglot (Spanish speaking) grandchildren couldn't communicate with their monoglot (Welsh speaking) grandparents.

As well as being diluted due to the above causes, the language was further threatened by central government. Despite earlier promises to the contrary, the Argentine government, rattled by the successes of some nationalist movements in Europe overthrowing the old order, was keen to ensure that the same thing didn't happen on its own doorstep (despite the fact that this "doorstep" was 1,300 miles away!). The country, quite naturally, wanted to create a single type of Argentinean citizen whose loyalties were to the flag and whose first language had to be Spanish. Children in Grade 1 had to be fluent in the "National Language". It flexed its muscles by reneging on promises for some degree of judicial self-administration, it sent down armies of clerks and administrators to impose its will and, the last straw, it insisted that Spanish be the medium for teaching all subjects in schools. In 1890, Welsh-only primary schools (there were very few secondary schools) were banned.

The Welsh antidote was to redouble its efforts to teach Welsh in the Sunday schools and to keep faith with other cultural activities. The Eisteddfod of Chubut, going strong today, is not held in October (our Spring) for nothing. The programme is published in the autumn and the long winter months used to perfect competition entries. The Community still had choice, however, and they defiantly established Ysgol Ganolraddol in Gaiman in 1906 as the first secondary school in Southern Argentina (and it remained the only one until 1925). It was like a grammar school for 12 year olds and upwards. It was trilingual, teaching science in English, history, geography and maths in Welsh (although geometry, for some reason, was taught in English). Its graduates were much in demand in Buenos Aires, despite the fact that the school was not authorised to grant a Leaving Certificate with national recognition. Although the pupils all spoke English and Welsh, the language between children of different ethnic backgrounds was Spanish.

It was inevitable, especially following the arrival of the last immigrants from Wales in 1914 and, hence, the breaking of a regular link between Wales and Patagonia, that Welsh language teaching would be overwhelmed by a tidal wave of government-approved Spanish schools. The Ysgol Ganolraddol closed in 1950 through both lack of support and continued hostility from the authorities (although it reopened at a later date under the name Coleg Camwy ("Camwy" being the Welsh word for the River Chubut) and still exists today).

The other bastion of the Welsh language, the Chapels, held their ground as Welsh speaking enclaves until the late 40s, but their support gradually dwindled in line with the ageing of their congregations and in the face of competition from other activities for the attention of the younger members. When combined with the

plymiodd nifer y siaradwyr gan gael effaith ddifrifol ar iaith, diwylliant a chrefydd y Wladfa. Roedd niferoedd y capelwyr Cymraeg eu hiaith eisoes wedi lleihau gan dwf gwasanaethau Sbaeneg, a oedd yn ganlyniad i'r anawsterau ariannol ac ymarferol mewn denu gweinidogion o Gymru. Cafwyd ergyd arall gan 'Sgism Fawr' y 60au, pan ddaeth y Capeli Cymreig yn darged i Eglwys Efengylaidd Fethodistaidd yr Ariannin, a oedd edrych i gymryd drosodd, gan addo cyflenwad cyson o weinidogion yn gyfnewid am weithredai eiddo'r Capeli.

Gyda'r angen i uno fel cymdeithas yn gryfach nag erioed, fe holtwyd y gymuned Gymraeg gan y cynnig o "Weinidogion am Gapeli". Roedd rhai yn gweld cyfle i gadw'r Capeli ar agor a'r cymunedau o'u cwmpas yn fyw, tra bod eraill eraill yn gweld brad a goresgyniad diwylliannol. Yn y pendraw, dim ond un Capel a groesodd y ffrwd ddiadlam, ac o fewn dim roedd wedi mabwysiadu Sbaeneg fel iaith y pulpud.

Dioddefodd y gwyliau Cymreig traddodiadol hefyd: yn ystod y 40au cynnar, rhoddwyd y gorau i ddatlhu Dydd Gŵyl Dewi, rhywbeth a oedd wedi bod yn draddodiad yn y Wladfa ers yr 1890au. Dim ond dair gwaith y cynhaliwyd Eisteddfod y Wladfa yn ystod y 30au, gydag wyth gŵyl arall cyn canmlwyddiant glaniad y Mimosa yn 1965. Buenos Aires oedd ar y brig, a heb gymorth allanol buasai tranc yr iaith Gymraeg yn y Wladfa'n anochel.

The Centenary in 1965 of the arrival of the Mimosa had loomed large on the horizon for many years, especially among the die-hards in Patagonia, their cousins now settled in Wales and those in Wales who had little connection with or knowledge of Patagonia, but who were very willing, sometimes insistent, to do their bit to help the language survive. All had plenty of time to mount a determined campaign to help the Welsh language and Welsh culture in Patagonia to survive and grow.

Fe atgyfodwyd Eisteddfod y Wladfa (yn ddwyieithog) gyda balchder newydd, ac fe'i cefnogwyd gan lywodraeth Archentaidd ychydig mwy goleuedig. Yng Nghymru, roedd cymdeithas Cymru Ariannin yn brysyr gyda chynlluniau. Rhyngddynt oll, trefnasant i grïw o gynrychiolwyr o'r prif sefydliadau diwylliannol yng Nghymru (yr Eisteddfod Genedlaethol, yr Urdd, corfforaethau crefyddol, prifysgolion, amgueddfeydd, amaethyddiaeth ac yn y blaen) i ymweld a Phatagonia er mwyn iddynt ddod a thipyn o dân Cymreig draw gyda nhw. Trefnodd y Cyngor Prydeinig i grŵp o Batagoniaid ifanc fynd draw i Gymru, gyda chyn Archdderwydd Y Wladfa, Geraint Edmunds, a hanesydd ifanc, Elvey MacDonald, yn eu plith. Cynigwyd ysgoloriaeth "ail gyfle" gan Goleg Harlech i un myfyriwr hun bob blwyddyn, cynhyrchwyd ffilmiau (er nad ydynt bellach yn bodoli), cyhoeddwyd llyfrau a dechreuodd ffrwd fain o dwristiaid ymweld â Phatagonia, gan gynnwys Dafydd Wigley, a ymwelodd yn fachgen ifanc gyda'i dad. Yn araf deg, roedd tân yr aelwyd Gymraeg yn ail-gydio.

Trwy ymdrechion i gryfhau'r cysylltiadau rhwng Cymru a'r Wladfa o'r newydd, a balchder newydd yn yr iaith, fe arafodd y dirywiad, er ei fod yn dal i barhau'n hirdymor. Roedd cynulleidfaeodd y Capeli'n parhau i leihau, ac o ganlyniad doedd llawer o'r genhedlaeth iau ddim yn dysgu'r iaith. Doedd llywodraethau mirwrol y 70au a'r 80au ddim yn hoff iawn o unrhywbeth y tu hwnt i'r cyffredin chwaith, a buasai wedi bod yn hawdd iddynt fod yn ddrwgdybus o'r iaith Gymraeg. Roedd pobl

reduction in a commitment to Welsh by the young, the dwindling quickly became a spiral, adversely affecting language, culture and religion. Chapel attendance by Welsh speakers had already been reduced because of an increase in the number of Spanish language services, caused by the great cost and difficulty of attracting and importing Welsh speaking pastors, and were further hit by the "great schism" of the mid-60s, where ill-attended Welsh chapels became fair game for takeover by the Evangelical Methodist Church of Argentina.

They promised a permanent supply of Welsh-speaking ministers in exchange for the title deeds to chapels. "Pastors for Premises" was what they offered and the community was divided: some saw it as a linguistic and cultural invasion/betrayal and others saw it as the only way of keeping chapels open and the communities around them alive. At the very time when the community most needed unity, it became divided. Eventually, only one chapel "Crossed the Rubicon", and it soon adopted Spanish for its services.

Two of the traditional Welsh festivals also suffered: St David's Day, annually celebrated since the 1890s, became plain old March 1st from the early 40s. The Eisteddfod, held annually from the early 1900s, was held only 3 times in the 1930s and only eight times in the 28 years leading up to the centenary of the arrival of the Mimosa in 1965. Buenos Aires was winning and, without outside help, the language would have surely died.

The Centenary in 1965 of the arrival of the Mimosa had loomed large on the horizon for many years, especially among the die-hards in Patagonia, their cousins now settled in Wales and those in Wales who had little connection with or knowledge of Patagonia, but who were very willing, sometimes insistent, to do their bit to help the language survive. All had plenty of time to mount a determined campaign to help the Welsh language and Welsh culture in Patagonia to survive and grow.

On the Patagonian side, the Eisteddfod was revived with renewed pride (although now in two languages) and was supported by a more enlightened Argentinean government, whilst in Wales, Cymdeithas Cymru Ariannin was active in developing plans. Between them all, they arranged for a group of representatives from Welsh cultural institutions (the National Eisteddfod, the Urdd, religious bodies, universities, museums, farming and so on) to visit Patagonia and inject a bit of Welsh zip. And a group of six young Welsh Patagonians (including a previous Chief Druid in Patagonia, Geraint Edmunds, and a budding historian, Elvey MacDonald) visited Wales, courtesy of the British Council. Later, Coleg Harlech offered a "second chance" scholarship to one mature Patagonian student per year, films were made (although none survive), books were published and a fair sprinkling of tourists visited Patagonia, including a very young Dafydd Wigley, whose father came with the Welsh institutions. The embers were fanned and some warmth emerged.

The renewed contact and interest from Wales, coupled with a resurgence of pride in the language in Patagonia was a spur that slowed down the decline, but the decline continued. Chapel attendance was steadily falling, which meant that many of the younger generation weren't being taught Welsh. The military governments of the 70s didn't take to anything unusual, and the Welsh language could easily have been looked upon as subversive.

yn sgwrsio'n Sbaeneg ar y stryd, ac yn cadw'r Gymraeg ar gyfer yr aelwyd yn unig, bron fel rhyw fath o gyfrinach. Doedd "Prydeindod" y cymunedau Cymreig ddim yn bodoli i'r fath raddfa rhagor chwaith – er bod sawl wedi mynd i ymladd yn y Rhyfel Mawr. Erbyn Rhyfel y Falklands, doedd gwreiddiau Prydeinig, na Chymreig, ddim yn rhywbeth o fod yn agored amdano. Yn 1974, dim ond un capel ym Mhatagonia, sef Bethel yn y Gaiman, oedd yn defnyddio'r Gymraeg yn ei gwasanaethau, ac roedd y capel hefyd yn cynnal ysgol feithrin i 12 o blant. Dim ond ychydig iawn o arbenigedd mewn dysgu Cymraeg oedd gan y cymunedau, ac roedd ynt yn hapus bryd hynny, fel heddiw, i adael pethau redeg eu cwrs yn hytrach na chymryd mesurau i wella'r sefyllfa.



Er hyn, parhaodd yr Eisteddfod yn flynyddol; gwnaethpwyd ymdrech i ddefnyddio mwy o'r Gymraeg ym mhapur bro'r Wladfa, sef Y Drafod, ac, yn arwyddocaol, dychwelodd yr Ariannin i fod yn ddemocratiaeth unwaith yn rhagor, yn dilyn rhyfel trychinebus yn Ne'r Iwerydd. Rhoddwyd mwy o ryddid i leiafrifoedd fod yn chwifrydig am eu diwylliannau, eu hanes a'u cyndeidai, ac roedd y genhedaeth ifanc yn ysu i gael gwybod mwy am eu gwreiddiau. Roedd y bobl ifanc a oedd wedi clywed eu neiniau a'u teidiau, ond nid eu rhieni, yn sgwrsio'n Gymraeg eisai gwybod mwy. Roedd y galw'n cynyddu.

Yn ystod yr '80au hwyr, dechreuodd y Cyngor Prydeinig dalu costau hedfan athrawon o Gymru i Batagonia, ac roedd cymunedau yn nwyrain Y Wladfa hefyd yn talu costau byw. Yn yr Andes, roedd y teulu Green yn flaengar dros ben yn hyrwyddo'r iaith. Roedd pethe'n symud yn eu blaenau, ac roedd rhieni Cymreig y Wladfa nawr yn medru dysgu Cymraeg eu hunain, a'i ddysgu i'w plant. Ond doedd angerdd y bobl leol ddim yn ddigon. Roedd angen cymorth allanol, a phan gyraeddodd fe ddaeth o ffynhonnell gwbl annisgwyl.

Roedd Rod Richards (Aelod Seneddol adain dde o Gymru – mae'r

People spoke to each other in the street in Spanish and kept Welsh almost a secret in the home. There wasn't the same degree of "Britishness" which infused the communities in earlier years - quite a few went to fight in the Great War but, by the time of the Falklands conflict, British, and, hence, Welsh, roots were not something to be openly proud about. In 1974, there was only one chapel in Patagonia, Bethel in Gaiman, where Welsh was used in religious services, and it supported a nursery school of only 12 children. The community had very little expertise in teaching Welsh and they were happier then, like today, to let things take their course rather than to take serious remedial action.

But the Eisteddfod continued annually; Y Drafod, the community newspaper gradually became more Welsh in its content and, significantly, the country returned to democratic rule in 1983 following the disastrous war in the South Atlantic. New-found freedom encouraged minority groups to become more curious about their history and forebears. The reaction to democracy awakened young spirits to know more about their roots: family units are very tight in Patagonia and multiple generations live with or near to each other. Young people would hear their grandparents speaking Welsh, but not their parents. They wanted to know more. A demand was building.

In the late '80s, the British Council started to fund the airfares of teachers from Wales, and communities in the east of Patagonia paid the teachers' local living expenses. In the Andes, the Green family were particularly active in the promotion of the language. Things were ticking along and Patagonian Welsh parents now had a way of learning Welsh themselves and teaching it to their children. But local passion wasn't enough. Help was needed from the outside and, when it arrived, it came from an unexpected source.

Rod Richards (a right-wing, Conservative Member of Parliament;

rhan fwyaf o'r adain chwith) yn is-ysgrifennydd yn yr hen Swyddfa Gymreig, pan ofynnwyd iddo ym mis Mawrth 1996 "pa gamau yr oedd yn ei gymryd er mwyn hybu diddordeb yn niwylliant a chenedl Cymru ymysg yr alltudiaeth Gymreig."

Fe atebodd: "Rydym yn ystyried pa gymorth y gallwn ei ddarparu ar gyfer dysgu Cymraeg i bobl ifanc yn y Wladfa". Ac felly y bu.

Roedd Richards, a oedd yn Aelod Seneddol Ceidwadol ac yn gyn bennaeth ar y Ceidwadwyr Cymreig, wedi ymweld â'r Wladfa yn 1995 (Hansard: (Hansard yw cofnod swyddogol y Senedd Brydeinig) "Bydd Rod Richards yn arwain grŵp o wyr busnes i'r Ariannin rhwng Mai 13 a Mai 17. Mae'n ystyried ymweld â Phatagonia fel rhan o'i daith, gyda'r gobaith o wellhau'r berthynas fasnacha rhwng y Deyrnas Unedig ac yr Ariannin yn gyffredinol). Teimloedd y dylai Cymru ymdrechu'n galetach i sicrhau dyfodol yr iaith Gymraeg yn y Wladfa. Gofynnwyd i Brifysgol Abertawe edrych ymhellach fewn i'r mater, ac fe gynhyrchwyd adroddiad gan Yr Athro Robert Owen-Jones, gyda'r diben o hyfforddi digon o athrawon Cymraeg i wneud y cynllun yn hunangynhaliol.

Hansardeto: "Fe gyhoeddwyd ym mis Awst 1996 y bysai'r Swyddfa Gymreig yn cyfrannu tuag at gynllun ar y cyd gyda'r Cyngor Prydeinig i gryfhau'r dolenni ieithyddol a diwylliannol sy'n bodoli rhwng Cymru a Phatagonia. Cychwynnwyd y cynllun ym mis Ebrill 1997, gyda'r bwriad o'i barhau am dair blynedd, yn seiliedig ar ddatblygiad boddhaol wedi'r flwyddyn gyntaf."

Pan gychwynnodd y cynllun yn 1997, sefydlwyd cyllideb o £35,000 er mwyn talu costau athrawon i ddod i fyw ac i weithio yn y Wladfa.

Er gwaethaf chwyddiant ym Mhrydain, a chwyddiant serthach yn yr Ariannin, ni fu newid yn y ffigwr yma hyd nes 2006, pan gafodd ei godi i £47,000 y flwyddyn. Cafodd ei godi o £7,000 y flwyddyn unwaith eto yn 2009. Yn ystod 2015, blwyddyn arwyddocaol a phwysig o ran ategu ymrwymiad Llywodraeth Cymru i'r iaith Gymraeg yn y Wladfa, ni chafodd y cynllun ei adnewyddu tan yn hwyr iawn yn y flwyddyn. Dim ond am flwyddyn yr adnewyddwyd y cynllun bryd hynny, a hynny gyda'r noddfa wedi ei leihau'n sylweddol mewn termau real, gan nad oedd y llywodraeth yn cydnabod bod chwyddiant o dros 40% y flwyddyn i'w gael yn yr Ariannin. I fwrr rhagor o amheuaeth ar ymrwymiad Llywodraeth Cymru tuag at y Gymraeg yn y Wladfa, rhododd Prif Weinidog Cymru arraith drwy gyfrwng y Saesneg yn ystod un o ddatliadau pwysicaf Y Wladfa, sef canmlwyddiant Gŵyl y Glaniad ar yr 28ain o Orffennaf. Afraid dweud, roedd siaradwyr Cymraeg y Wladfa wedi eu syfrdanu.

Ac felly mae'r ffrwd fain o arian yn dal i ddiferu, gyda'r cynllun yn cael ei adnewyddu'n flynyddol, ac, er honiadau i'r gwrrthwyneb gan wleidyddion yng Nghymru, gyda noddiant sydd yn lleihau mewn termau real flwyddyn ar ôl blwyddyn. Pwy a wyr beth fydd sgîl effeithiau Brexit?

Mae [Welsh Patagonia](#) yn gwmni teithio sydd wedi ei sefydlu yn Esquel ym Mhatagonia. Mae'r cwmni'n arbenigo mewn gwibdeithiau personoledig o gwmpas y Wladfa Gymreig i ymwelwyr sydd a gyda hwy ddiddordeb mewn hanes Y Wladfa, ynghyd a'i thirwedd drawiadol, ei daeareg, paleontoleg a'i bywyd gwylt. Perchnogion y cwmni yw Jeremy Wood, sy'n arbenigwr byd ac yn awdur ar Y Wladfa, a'i wraig Cristina, sydd yn ddisgynydd i rhai o'r Cymry cyntaf i gyrraedd Patagonia. Mae eu mab Tomos, sydd yn 7 oed, dan hyfforddiant i fod yn dywysydd!

[Welsh Patagonia](#) is a travel company based in Esquel in Patagonia and specialising in personalised tours of Welsh Patagonia for visitors with an interest in both the history of the Welsh in Patagonia, as well as its dramatic scenery, geology, palaeontology, natural wonders and wildlife.

most Welsh politicians are left-wing) was Under-Secretary at the old Welsh Office when, in March 1996, he was asked "what steps he is taking to promote interest in the culture and nation of Wales amongst the Welsh diaspora".

He replied "We are considering what assistance might now be provided for the teaching of Welsh to young people in the Welsh community in Patagonia". And so it all started.

Richards, a Conservative Member of the London Parliament and former leader of the Welsh Conservatives, had visited Patagonia in 1995 (Hansard: (Hansard is the official record of the proceedings in the British Parliament) "Rod Richards will lead a group of business men to Argentina from 13 to 17 May 1995. He is considering going to Patagonia as part of the visit, which will aim to improve trading relations between the United Kingdom and Argentina in general.") and felt that Wales could do more to help protect and grow the use of the Welsh language in Patagonia. Swansea University was asked to look into the issue and a report was produced by Professor Robert Owen-Jones recommending an investment in government-funded Welsh teaching in Patagonia, with the eventual aim of training enough Welsh teachers to make the scheme self-sufficient.

Hansard: "It was announced in August 1996 that the Welsh Office would contribute towards a joint project with the British Council to help strengthen the language and cultural links between Wales and Patagonia. The project, which was intended to be of three years' duration, subject to satisfactory progress in the first year, commenced in April 1997."

When the scheme started in 1997, an annual budget of £35,000 was established to pay the expenses of Welsh teachers to come and live in Patagonia.

This figure remains unchanged, despite inflation in Britain and even greater inflation in Argentina, until 2006, when it was raised to £47,000 per annum. In 2009, it was raised by a further £7,000 per annum. In 2015, probably the most important year for the Welsh Government to reinforce its commitment to the Welsh language, the project wasn't renewed until well into the year and it was only renewed for a single year, with the funding radically decreased because it did not recognise inflation of 40%+ in Argentina. To add a further doubt about the Welsh Government's commitment to the Welsh language in Patagonia, the First Minister, one of many from Wales who had a paid trip to Patagonia that year, stood up at the most important event in the Welsh Patagonian calendar, the Gŵyl y Glaniad celebration on 28 July, and made his speech in English. Needless to say, the Welsh-speaking Patagonians present were more than bemused.

And so the drip feeding continues, with the project being renewed annually and, despite protestations to the contrary by politicians in Wales, the programme's funding has actually been reduced in real terms every year. Who knows what effect Brexit will have?

The company is owned by Jeremy Wood, a well known international expert and author about the Welsh in Patagonia, and his wife Cristina, whose great grandparents emigrated from South Wales to Patagonia in the early 1870s, where their descendants have lived ever since. Their son Tomos, aged 7, is in training to become a guide!

