

WALES AND THE MAKING OF BRITISH INDIA DURING THE LATE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

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Wales does not loom large in the histories that have been written about the making of British India. On the other side of the coin, British India does not feature prominently in the many volumes that have been written about Wales during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The reasons for this neglect are many and varied, but, suffice it to say, if the surface of late eighteenth-century is scratched only slightly then one finds plenty of evidence of ‘East Indian’ influences.¹ This essay scratches beneath that surface and offers many examples of how many Welshmen (and some others) made their fortunes in India and then returned to Wales where they established themselves as important figures in local societies and economies, especially in a swathe of territory running south west from Presteinge on the English border to Tenby on the west Wales coast.

Today the most obvious physical manifestation of the relationship between Wales and British India is Powis Castle, near Welshpool. During the 1780s the castle belonged to Edward Clive, Governor of Madras and son of Shropshire-born Robert the architect of the British conquest of Bengal between 1756 and 1765. It does, however, contain many of Clive of India’s belongings and treasures, and as such the castle bears ample testimony to the extent to which ambitious Britons were able to make money from the East India Company’s extension of its power and influence on the subcontinent during the second half of the eighteenth century. Of course, though, any transfer of wealth from India to Wales was dependent in the first instance upon the ability of ordinary Welshmen to get out to the subcontinent in order to make money. The number who found their way to India was indeed small, but those who did get there arrived by design not by accident, and the factors that determined their passages to the east were broadly similar to those that enabled passages to be made from other parts of Britain. Most of the Welsh who went to India were younger sons motivated by innate sense of adventure who were willing to take a risk in an unfamiliar and far-distant land; and most were driven by a desire to make a fortune that could set them up in comfort for the rest of their lives. But personal ambition alone was not enough to secure reward, because individuals seeking entry to the monopolistic East India Company needed influence to be exercised on their behalf, and in this context Andrew Mackillop has emphasised the importance of the networks of Welshmen that had long existed in London. In their essential characteristics, therefore, the aims and *modus operandi* of those from Wales were the exactly same as others from Britain, and it would be quite wrong to suggest that because comparatively few Welshmen served in Asia

1 On this see *Wales and the British Overseas Empire: Interactions and Influences, 1650-1830*, ed. by H. V. Bowen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), *passim*, especially the essay by Andrew MacKillop, ‘A “Reticent” People? The Welsh in India, c. 1700–1830’, pp. 143–67.

this was because they somehow acted in way that was fundamentally different from the English, Irish, or Scots. There was no unique or strikingly different career path for Welshmen, and they took their place within the general processes that facilitated the movement of all Britons to Asia. It is only because they were heavily outnumbered and often cannot be easily identified in the historical record that the activities and patterns of behaviour of those from Wales have been obscured by the presence of those who can be more easily analysed by the historian.

It has long been recognised that the Scots and Irish were especially adept at building long-lasting networks of connections and contacts that enabled individuals to obtain posts in the East India Company and then receive the support that was necessary for them to establish themselves within the Company's trading and imperial world. Little systematic work has ever been undertaken on the English employees of the East India Company, but countless individual examples indicate they too routinely made good use of family, social, political, and commercial contacts; and this often led to the creation of semi-permanent networks of connections that linked different provinces to London and then extended out from the metropolis into Asia. Of course, many British East Indian networks were not defined strictly along sub-national lines, and there can be little doubt that Welshmen were able to take advantage of what, on the face of it, might appear to have been 'English' webs of connection and patronage. As a result, traditions of East Indian service were established in some Welsh families, and, for example, over several generations the interconnected Elliot-Grant-Voyle families of Pembrokeshire sent many men to serve in the Company's armed forces and medical service; while the Carne family of Nash, Glamorgan, had a similarly long-lasting link with the Company.² Nonetheless, in certain circumstances some in Wales were themselves able to establish their own networks in order to support and promote the interests of those who wished to participate in the fierce competition that existed for appointment and promotion in the Company. But it should also be stressed that the process of network-building created webs of connections with the Indian empire that served to channel return flows of wealth, information, and people into particular localities, and this in large part explains the geographical distribution of East Indian economic, social, and cultural influences that manifested themselves across different parts of Wales.

In the decades after 1750 the part of Wales in which East Indian influence was most evident was the large area that today forms the county of Powys, comprising the former shires of Brecknock, Montgomery, and Radnor. Indeed the most important East Indian network connecting Wales to London and the Indian empire was centred upon Brecon, from where the influential Walter Wilkins used his connections within the Company to pave the way for local men hoping to find their way to India. Wilkins (1741–1828, MP for Radnor 1796–1828) had entered the Company's service as a Writer in Bengal in 1758 before rising to become the

2 Steve van Dulken, 'The Voyle Family of Pembrokeshire and India', *Journal of the Pembrokeshire Historical Society*, 6 (1994–95), 47–60; Philip Jenkins, *The Making of a Ruling Class: The Glamorgan Gentry, 1640–1790* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 150.

first Governor of Chittagong province and a Member of the Supreme Council of Bengal. Following his return home in 1772, he made good use of personal contacts within the Company's Court of Directors in London, and this enabled him to secure appointments for a number of young men drawn from across his local region. Wilkins thus developed his own East Indian network, and, as noted below, several former Company servants were later to be very prominent in and around the town of Brecon itself. But Wilkins also acted in association with members of the interconnected Clive and Herbert families who were endeavouring to establish a cross-border political power base, and he helped them create a larger web of East Indian connections that extended from Shropshire into mid-Wales as well as other English counties.³ As a result, it was soon acknowledged that Wilkins was capable of exercising considerable influence on behalf of his associates and protégés.⁴ Moreover, Wilkins's own personal longevity and assiduous renewal of contacts within the Company helped to ensure that he launched the Indian careers of more than one generation of local men. Thus, for example, he paved the way for Frederick Jones (1758–1834) of Pencerrig, Radnorshire to enter the Bombay army in 1778, and then twenty years later did exactly the same for Jones's nephew, Humphrey.

The men who enjoyed the favour and patronage of Wilkins also benefited from practical support from other prominent figures closely connected with Brecknockshire and Radnorshire, as became evident when they stayed in London before embarking on the Company ships that would take them to Asia. In this respect, the businessman and Breconshire landowner Evan Thomas (1702–90) of Parliament Street, and the politician, wit, and *bon viveur* Chase Price (1731–77, MP for Radnorshire 1768–77), were also key figures in the emerging mid-Wales East India network because they both entertained and generally looked after those from the region who were bound for India. Hence, in 1776 when Frederick Jones enjoyed a brief time in London before heading out to serve in the Company's army in India, he stayed with his cousin Rice James, and found himself regularly in the company of both Thomas and Price.⁵

Nothing better illustrates the workings of this important Welsh East Indian network than the experience of David Price (1762–1835) who was born near Brecon, at Merthyr Cynog.⁶ Price was eventually to acquire a very large fortune in India and on his retirement to Brecon he became a noted orientalist and translator of Persian manuscripts. But the early stages of his passage to India were very difficult indeed and only timely interventions from compatriots rescued him from

3 For the alliance between the Clive and Herbert families (which was later consolidated by marriage) and its effects upon Shropshire and Welsh politics, see Lewis Namier, *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III*, 2nd edn (London: Macmillan, 1965), pp. 235–98.

4 See, for example, George Herbert to John Herbert, from Calcutta, 1 April 1773; Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office, Chippenham 947/2145/2 (no foliation).

5 National Library of Wales, MS 23794C, 'Journal of Captain Frederick Jones (1758–1774)', fol. 37.

6 This paragraph is based upon, and the quotations therein are derived from NLW, MS 23575C, 'Major Price's [manuscript] autobiography', vol. 1, pp. 33–44. Price's manuscript autobiography later formed the basis of *The Memoirs of the Early Life and Service of a Field Officer on the Retained List of the Indian Army* (1839).

impending personal disaster. This situation arose because, in an act of desperation, Price had originally entered the Company's army in late 1780 in order to escape from Britain after a series of misjudgements and financial difficulties had brought an abrupt and premature end to his career as an aspiring scholar at Cambridge. In a state of some distress he signed on with the Company's army as an ordinary soldier, only then to experience a horrific confinement on the ship *Queen* which was waiting to depart for India. Help was at hand, however, when Price was brought before a sympathetic Welshman who was Chaplain to the Company's shipping at Gravesend. This un-named individual told Price that he was his 'countryman' before informing him that he was indebted to Price's father for his education. As a result, the Chaplain acted with Thomas Evans, who had recently been appointed as a surgeon in the Company's maritime service, to secure the release of Price from his 'present state of bondage and destitution'. The two saviours then moved swiftly to represent Price's case to the afore-mentioned Evan Thomas who, through his connection with Lord Weymouth, obtained for Price a cadetship in the Bombay army, a posting that was in the gift of William James, the Chairman of the East India Company.⁷ This rescue operation was successful, and Price was transferred to Evans's ship, *Essex*, which was commanded by the 'superannuated Arthur Morris'. To his great astonishment and 'unspeakable relief', Price found himself 'admitted to mess with the midshipmen, of whom I was gratified to discover that no less than four were natives of the principality; the second officer Mr [Henry] Smedley, who had commanded the Grand Trimmer, a privateer of considerable force, being a North Wales man'.⁸ The experiences of Price were certainly not typical for those from Wales who travelled to Asia but they do nevertheless underscore the point that the early East Indian careers of some could be advanced and supported by networks and connections established by Welshmen within the world of the East India Company.

Although domestic networks enabled some Welshmen to gain access to the East India Company, it is doubtful that any of these webs of connection and influence extended very far into Asia. The scattering of a small number of Welshmen across the ground in the east meant that it was simply not possible for individuals to maintain close contact with their compatriots in the way of the Scots and the Irish who were often clustered together in different branches of the Company's service in India and elsewhere. Instead, necessity determined that domestic Welsh East Indian networks folded into those established by others on the subcontinent, and this meant that most Welshmen endeavoured to advance themselves through associations and activities with men who came from elsewhere in Britain. Of course, it was possible for a well-established entrepreneur such as Thomas Parry (1768–1824), who was originally from near Welshpool, to base the long-term

7 James's origins are obscure, but it is likely that he was from Pembrokeshire and this might explain why he was able to provide Price with a much better position in the Company's army.

8 Smedley later went on to command the Company ship *Raymond* on five voyages to Asia. Company records do not indicate whether or not Morris was Welsh but in view of the number of Welshmen on board *Essex*, it is very likely that he was.

development of his firm upon the recruitment of family members from Wales,⁹ but circumstances usually dictated that most Welshmen in late-eighteenth-century India acted in isolation from one another, operating as individuals or in partnership with associates from other parts of Britain.

If some Welshmen were able to create East Indian networks, then so too a significant number of those who went to India were able to achieve their primary objective of making money. Needless to say, there were some who failed miserably and died in penury, but those Welshmen who made fortunes demonstrated an ability to make money in all branches of the East India Company's service, as well as in private trade. There was no one more successful than the afore-mentioned Thomas Parry who during the course of a long career combined official service with a very wide range of entrepreneurial activities conducted on his own account including shipping, marine insurance, agency work, 'country trading' around the Indian Ocean, manufacturing, and raw material procurement. Parry first arrived in Madras in 1788 and by 1793 he had already created a 'snug fortune', although he then had to weather several commercial storms before he was able firmly to establish the large firm which as 'Parry's of Madras' still remains one of the best-known companies in India.

Not all were able to match the long-term success of Parry, but different branches of the Company's service provide striking examples of Welshmen making the most of their opportunities and combining skill, acumen, and good fortune in order to accumulate considerable personal riches. As was the case with all Britons, there was no common pattern of wealth acquisition, and while some steadily accumulated wealth over a long period of time, others hit the jackpot when circumstances presented them with a windfall that could not have been anticipated. Into the latter category fell David Price, who lost a leg during the siege of Dharwar in 1791 and then became Judge Advocate and Persian translator of the Bombay army. It was Price's great good fortune to be present at the storming of Tipu Sultan's citadel at Seringapatam in 1799, after which he was appointed as the army's prize agent and charged with handling record amounts of booty. Being in the right place at the right time enabled Price to acquire the wealth that set him up in a considerable degree of comfort for the rest of his life.

Few were as fortunate as Price and most had to apply themselves to private enterprise, often combining foul means as well as fair as they pursued their own interests alongside those of the Company. This was the case, for example, with another army officer, George Herbert, who came from Park in Montgomeryshire and whose entry into the Company's military service was based upon a recommendation from Robert Clive.¹⁰ In 1771 Herbert became a brigade paymaster in the Bengal

9 For Parry's life and the long-term development of his firm, see G. H. Hodgson, *Thomas Parry: Free Merchant at Madras, 1768-1824* (Madras: Higginbothams, 1938); N. S. Ramaswami and S. Muthiah, *Parrys 200: A Saga of Resilience* (New Delhi: Affiliated East-West Press, 1988). Parry established the firm in 1788, and after 1809 he recruited his nephews David and Joseph Pugh who both served as partners.

10 The information on Herbert to be found in this paragraph and elsewhere in the essay is derived from a collection of his letters in Wiltshire and Swindon Archives, Chippenham, 947/2145/2 (no foliation).

army, a plum posting which presented him with the ‘certain prospect of making a very large fortune with honor and honesty and without the dreadful ideas of having oppressed or injured anyone, ideas which must render riches the most terrible curses’. Herbert claimed to have had £30,000 passing through his hands every month, and, whether or not he did actually manage to behave with ‘honor and honesty’, he certainly deployed some of these funds in a range of commercial activities, which enabled him to acquire a fortune ‘upwards of £80,000’ by April 1778.

Walter Wilkins gained a substantial fortune while serving in the civil branch of the Company’s Bengal administration between 1758 and 1772, and by the time he died in 1828 he was worth £250,000.¹¹ This meant that he was one of the richest men in Wales, and indeed he was one of the most significant wealth-holders in Britain as a whole. The surgeon Thomas Phillips (1760–1851), who had strong family connections with Radnorshire, enriched himself from the commercial activity he conducted while employed in the Company’s medical service between 1782 and 1817.¹² In the diplomatic sphere, Harford Jones from Presteigne, minister-plenipotentiary to Persia between 1807 and 1811, built a fortune based upon the private trade he conducted while stationed as a commercial agent at Basra (1783–94) and Baghdad (1798–1806). At Basra, Jones traded in a notably wide range of commodities including carpets, tobacco, and sugar, but he was especially interested in the buying and selling of manuscripts because they could be purchased so cheaply and thus ‘yield a handsome profit’, and he encouraged his friends to ‘command me freely’ if they desired a diamond ring.¹³ During a troubled and increasingly desperate time at Baghdad, Jones claimed to have acted ‘with scrupulous honesty’ when trading in only a parcel of jewels and one large consignment of coffee, but nonetheless he was able to calculate that his fortune amounted to almost £19,000 by the end of 1805.¹⁴ Finally, as Ken Jones has shown in great detail, John Lloyd from Llawrtyd in Breconshire was able steadily to accumulate a considerable fortune from a career in the Company’s maritime service as he rose through the ranks until, after commanding the Indiaman *Manship* on two voyages to Madras and Bengal,

11 William D. Rubinstein, *Who Were the Rich? A Biographical Directory of British Wealth-holders. Volume one: 1809–1839* (London: Social Affairs Unit, 2009), pp. 278–79.

12 D. T. W. Price, ‘Phillips, Thomas (1760–1851)’ in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22175>> [accessed 2 July 2009].

13 For good examples of Jones’s trading activities at Basra, see his un-foliated letter book of 1791–92, NLW, MS 4904E. The quotations are from his letters to Samuel Manesty, 24 June 1791, and Charles Watkins, 5 July 1791.

14 Jones’s complicated diplomatic and commercial activities at Baghdad can be reconstructed from his letter book covering the period 1804 to 1806, NLW, MS 4905E. The quotation and details of his fortune are taken from his letter to James Willis, 22 December 1805. Apart from diplomatic problems and differences of opinion, while at Baghdad Jones was troubled by poor health and allegations that he had misused the funds that the Company had allocated to him to establish the Residency. For a balanced assessment of Jones and his diplomatic activity see M. E. Yapp, *Strategies of British India. Britain, Iran, and Afghanistan, 1798–1850* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980).

he retired to Brecon in 1796.¹⁵

Of course, the climate, disease, alcohol, enemy actions, and general misfortune took a heavy toll on Britons in India, and several of the Welshmen who did make considerable amounts of money in India never returned to Wales. Most notably, Thomas Parry died suddenly from cholera when visiting Porto Novo in southern India in August 1824, although it is not evident that he ever intended to leave the subcontinent. One wealthy Welshman who certainly did wish to return to Britain as soon as possible was George Herbert. Unfortunately for him, however, he was to die in unexplained circumstances during his journey home. Together with Richard Griffith, a senior financial officer and opium contractor at Patna, Herbert resigned from the Company's service in early 1779,¹⁶ and both men were ordered to carry Company packets to London via the 'overland route' through Suez. Griffith duly arrived in London in the autumn of 1779 in possession of a fortune of between £60,000 and £90,000, although he was later to run into financial difficulties, after a failed investment in the Grand Canal Company in Ireland. He ended his days living in comparative obscurity at Holyhead where he served as Post Office Packet Agent.¹⁷ By contrast, the exact fate of George Herbert is unknown because, after setting out for Suez, he was not heard from again, and by 1782 John Herbert was being described as the 'sole executor to his late brother'.¹⁸ A substantial portion of George Herbert's East Indian fortune had already been remitted to Britain – £6,150 in 1774–75 and £16,050 two years later – and as a consolation for the loss of George these considerable assets were retained in the Herbert family when John inherited them. Through marriage, John Herbert had already acquired landed property near Machynlleth, and in a greatly strengthened financial position he then went on to become a leading figure in Montgomeryshire, serving as a JP and Deputy Lieutenant of the County.

It is evident that nearly all of the Welshmen who possessed an East Indian fortune aimed to return to home in order to establish themselves in landed society, and there was no migration of former Company servants from Wales to London and the Home Counties as there was from Ireland, Scotland, and provincial England. Most, it would seem, had ambitions that did not extend beyond exploiting the local opportunities for economic, social, and political advancement that presented themselves in Wales itself, and they chose to live and invest in an environment that was familiar to them. As a result, it is possible to identify a good number of landed properties that were bought and developed by Welsh former Company

- 15 Ken Jones, 'John Lloyd (1748–1818): An Adventurous Welshman, part 1', *Brycheiniog*, 33 (2001), 59–92; 'John Lloyd (1748–1818): An Adventurous Welshman', part II', *Brycheiniog*, 34 (2002), 67–108; 'John Lloyd: Personal Life and Private Trade, part III', *Brycheiniog*, 37 (2005), 45–80; 'John Lloyd part IV [sic]: Captain John Lloyd and Breconshire, 1796–1818', *Brycheiniog*, 39 (2007), 61–111.
- 16 The Bengal Council to the directors, 1 February 1779, *Fort William – India House Correspondence, vol. VIII (Public Series): 1777–81*, ed. by Hira Lal Gupta (New Delhi: Government of India, 1981), p. 445.
- 17 Of Welsh descent, Richard Griffith was born in Dublin in June 1752. For a detailed study of his career and business activity see J. R. Owen, 'A Nabob at Holyhead: Richard Griffith, Post Office Packet Agent, 1815–1820', *Maritime Wales*, 25 (2004), 27–55.
- 18 British Library, India Office Records [IOR], B/97, p. 533 (2 January 1782).

servants. And, unsurprisingly in view of the patterns of networks and recruitment into the Company sketched out earlier, most of these estates were located in a swathe of territory that extended south-westwards from the English border with Montgomeryshire and Radnorshire, through Brecknockshire, and across into Carmarthenshire and Pembrokehire.

Upon his return from Persia in 1811, Sir Harford Jones, who assumed the additional name Brydges in 1826, settled in Radnorshire at Boultibrooke on an estate straddling the England-Wales border where he developed his newly acquired property and devoted himself to oriental studies and civic duties. Not far away, near Glasbury, was Walter Wilkins's home, Maesellwch Castle. In 1804 the rebuilt 'castle' was described as 'by no means a good one' by a writer who also took a dim view of Wilkins himself, noting that he was a 'very constant resident but with less popularity than generally awaits the resident gentry'.¹⁹ To the south, close to Brecon, was the 893-acre Llanfranach estate of Wilkins's brother, Jeffreys (d. 1819), who had been a Company servant at Patna. Jeffreys Wilkins bought this land from the Anglo-Irish peer Viscount Ashbrook in July 1802, and he later built Maesderwen on it. Only a year earlier, Captain John Lloyd had paid Ashbrook £13,460 for the neighbouring estate of Abercynrig, although he never actually took up residence in the house of the same name.²⁰ A short distance away in Brecon itself, David Price conducted his oriental studies at the well-appointed Watton House, from where he produced a stream of works, the most notable of which was *Chronological Retrospect*.²¹ Operating at a rather less elevated level was Frederick Jones who similarly retired to Brecon. In addition to involvement in local politics and civic affairs, Jones wrote a brief account of the expeditions and sieges he had been involved in while serving at Bombay between 1778 and 1787. His volume was first published in Brecon in 1794, when presumably it was intended for local circulation to his family and acquaintances, but, reaching out to a wider audience, Jones also arranged for copies of the book to be sold by a London bookseller.²² Men such as Price and Jones had certainly accumulated substantial personal wealth in the service of the East India Company, but when they wrote about their experiences in India they were also adding to the local and national stocks of knowledge about Asia. In small ways, therefore, they were integrating Wales mentally and well as

19 Benjamin Heath Malkin, *The Scenery, Antiquities and Biography of South Wales From Materials Collected During Two Excursions in the Year 1803* (London: Longman and Rees: 1804), p. 272.

20 Jones, 'John Lloyd, Part IV', pp. 88–90.

21 David Price, *Chronological Retrospect; Or Memoirs of the Principal Events of Mahomedan History*, 3 vols (London: Booth, 1811–21)

22 Frederick Jones, *A Brief Account of the Tullaugaum Expedition from Bombay; and Likewise of the Sieges of Bassien, Arnoll, Callian, and Cananore, on the Western Side of India: During the Course of the War; Commenced the 21st November 1778, Extracted From the Journal of an Officer; Who Was Actually Employed on Those Several Services* (Brecknock: North, 1794). For edited extracts of Jones's diary which throw considerable light on his activities after his return to Wales see E. C. B. Oliver, ed., 'The Diary of Captain Frederick Jones (Part I: 1789–1799)', *Transactions of the Radnorshire Society*, 53, (1983), 28–56; '(Part II: 1800–1804)', *Transactions of the Radnorshire Society*, 54 (1984) pp. 41–57; '(Part III: 1805–1811)', *Transactions of the Radnorshire Society*, 56 (1986), 52–71.

economically into the rapidly expanding British Empire.

Twenty miles or so to the west of Brecon was the home of Captain David Williams (d. 1819), from a local family, who served in the Bengal army between 1769 and 1786, during which time he commanded a battalion of Indian sepoy's belonging to the Nawab of Awadh, a key ally of the Company. Williams, who was described by one of his correspondents as an 'old Indian delinquent',²³ used an East India fortune remitted in diamonds to purchase several parcels of land and property as he endeavoured to build up an estate around Henllys Fawr near Llandovery. Then on his return from India he became a figure of some considerable importance in local society, serving as a JP and colonel in the Carmarthenshire militia.²⁴ But Williams also had a highly controversial walk-on part in the most captivating national political drama played out during the late eighteenth century. This was because during the course of lengthy impeachment proceedings conducted in Parliament against Governor-General Warren Hastings it was alleged that in 1781 Williams, acting on orders passed down from the Nawab, had carried out the summary execution of a captured rebel leader, Mustafa Khan. As the Thirteenth Article of Impeachment against Hastings put it, Williams had committed a 'cruel and atrocious murder'.²⁵ This put Williams at the centre of public attention in 1790 when Hastings's enemies used the allegation as a stick with which to beat the former Governor-General and his administrative regime. In the end, the much-vilified Williams only escaped from the limelight when a motion for an inquiry into the whole murky episode was dropped, although this was not before he was obliged to publish a robust and detailed defence of his actions which included a denial that he had been personally responsible for killing Mustafa Khan.²⁶ Even then, the allegations against him continued to re-surface from time to time as the ultimately unsuccessful proceedings against Hastings dragged on until 1794.

Further to the south and south-west, former Company servants also sought to settle back into local society. Most notably, perhaps, the senior Company military officer Sir William Nott (1782–1845) retired to the place of his upbringing, Carmarthen, where shortly before his death he purchased the nearby Job's Well estate.²⁷ Near Llandeilo, the Aberglasney estate was bought for 10,000 guineas in 1803 by a retired Company surgeon Thomas Phillips (d. 1824) who had family connections in the locality.²⁸ During the late-eighteenth century the Upton estate

23 James Dunn to David Williams, November 1786, a loose letter in a small collection of Williams's papers to be found in NLW, Miscellaneous Records, 546.

24 For a letter book of Williams covering the period 1782–86 which contains details of some of his remittances from India and investment instructions to his father and attorneys see note 23.

25 For this episode see *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke* 6: *July 1789 – December 1791*, ed. by Alfred Cobban and Robert A. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), pp. 99–100.

26 David Williams, *Captain Williams's Narrative: in Which is Contained Particulars Relative to the Execution of Mustapha Cawn* (London: John Stockdale, 1790).

27 For an outline of Nott's career, see R. H. Vetch, 'Nott, Sir William (1782–1845)', rev. by James Lunt, *DNB* (Oxford, 2004) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/20372>> [accessed 2 July 2009].

28 This Thomas Phillips is not to be confused with the Thomas Phillips, a Company surgeon, noted below.

near Pembroke had been purchased by Captain John Tasker (d. 1800), who had 'acquired a competent fortune' in India and then 'retired to the place of his birth to enjoy it'.²⁹ From the Company's maritime service, John Jones (1751–1828) returned to his roots in Swansea, where in 1792 he purchased St Helen's House, using the profits he had accumulated from private trade conducted when he sailed to India and China as an officer and commander on board *East Indiamen*.³⁰

Less well travelled than John Jones in a geographical sense was Jacob Richards (1774–1834) but he is noteworthy because of the striking trajectory of his upward social mobility. Richards does not quite provide an archetypal example of rags to fabulous riches but, unlike most of those discussed so far, he came from a humble background and used East India service to transform his own economic and social status. This served to establish him among the social elite of Tenby, the increasingly fashionable Pembrokeshire bathing resort which acted as a magnet for those such as the Voyle family who served in India, as well others who made money in the intra-Asian private 'country trade'.³¹ Originally from Glamorgan, Richards was a labourer who was recruited into the East India Company's Bengal army in 1792 but within eleven years he had been promoted to sergeant major in the Artillery. Little is known about how exactly Richards made his money but he appears to have been especially adept in financial matters. Indeed, when he returned to Britain in 1805 he was sufficiently wealthy to establish himself as a gentleman in Tenby where he purchased property and became actively involved in civic affairs, serving as mayor five times between 1812 and 1831. At the time of his death in 1834 Richards's estate was valued at £17,000, and his two surviving sons were in the early stages of their careers as officers in the Company's army.³²

These were all men who returned to their roots after serving in the Company, but they were joined by others from across the border who also chose to channel all or part of their East India fortunes into Welsh land and property at a time when demographic changes were already causing widespread transfers to be made to incomers across Wales.³³ As such, East Indian wealth played a locally significant

29 Richard Fenton, *A Historical Tour Through Pembrokeshire ... to Which are Now Added the Notes Made for a Second Edition by Richard and John Fenton* (Brecknock: Davies and Co., 1903), p. 137. I am indebted to Professor David Howell for drawing this reference to my attention.

30 For a detailed study of Jones see H. V. Bowen, 'Welsh Commanders of East Indiamen: a Case-Study of John Jones (1751–1828)', *Maritime Wales* (forthcoming).

31 For the local activities of John Rees and others who traded in eastern seas see Douglas Fraser, 'Tenby's Legacy of the Opium Trade', *Pembrokeshire Life*, February 2007, pp. 12–16 and 'All the Tea in China', *Pembrokeshire Life*, December 2009, pp. 10–14.

32 For two letter books of Jacob Richards (covering the period 1807–34) see NLW, MSS 22870D and 22871D. I am greatly indebted to Mr Brian Price who brought these rich sources to my attention and then very generously supplied me with transcripts of the letter books. The information on Richards and his career is derived from Mr Price's transcripts and supporting notes which are based upon extensive archival research. It seems abundantly clear that there was considerable East Indian activity and investment in and around Tenby and it is to be hoped that a clear and detailed picture can be built up through further research.

33 For the broad changes that occurred to patterns of landownership in Wales see Geraint H. Jenkins, *The Foundations of Modern Wales, 1642–1780* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 264–66.

part in the re-structuring of Welsh landed society. Robert Clive led the cross-border incursion as he endeavoured to add to his Walcot estate in Shropshire in an attempt to create a cross-border *bloc* of land and political influence. In 1768 and 1769 he bought the Monmouthshire estate of Piercefield (from Valentine Morris junior who held extensive land and investments in Antigua) and several other smaller parcels of land in the Usk and Trellech area for sums amounting to almost £50,000. A change of electoral strategy led to him selling his territory to the Duke of Beaufort for £57,500 in 1772, although by that time he had also purchased the Heightly and Rockley estates in Montgomeryshire, the county which had now become the primary object of his political attention.³⁴

Others followed Clive's example, including the idiosyncratic John Zephaniah Holwell (1711–98) who had been temporary Governor of Bengal at the time of the 'Black Hole of Calcutta' episode of 1756. Holwell had a main residence in Middlesex but he was also a JP in Pembrokeshire and during the mid-1770s he invested heavily in the construction of the eccentric Castle Hall, Milford which he then sold a decade later. Ralph Leeke made a similar short-term foray into Wales. On his return to Shropshire from India in 1786, he procured the Crugion estate and the manor of Nether Gordder in Montgomeryshire for £16,000, and then sold them for a profit of £22,000 in 1813.³⁵ In 1817 Francis Fowke, the Company's controversial Resident at Benares between 1775 and 1786 who had amassed a fortune of over £70,000 from trade in opium and diamonds, began the building of a large house on the site of a medieval castle at Boughrood in Radnorshire, where he died in 1819.³⁶ No doubt it was Fowke who encouraged his brother-in-law and former assistant at Benares, John Benn (later Sir John Benn Walsh, 1759–1825), to invest part of his £80,000 fortune in Radnorshire. By 1821 Benn had acquired fifty-nine parcels of land, and this added greatly to the concentration of East Indian wealth in the county. Less wealthy English East Indians joined this often temporary movement into Welsh land and property, as was the case with William Crampton Green, a former major in the Bombay army who bought Kilvrough Manor near Swansea in 1806. Green lived at Kilvrough for only three years before he died, but the estate later passed into the hands of the Lyons family who themselves had very extensive East Indian connections.³⁷

An especially enduring mark was left on the Welsh landscape by William

34 P. D. G. Thomas, 'The Monmouthshire Election of 1771', *Historical Research*, 72 (1999), 45–46, 56; Melvin Humphreys, *The Crisis of Community: Montgomeryshire, 1680–1815* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996), p. 123.

35 Humphreys, *Crisis of Community*, p. 123.

36 Eileen and Harry Green, *The Fowkes of Boughrood Castle. A Study in Social Mobility* (Tenby: Eileen and Harry Green, 1973).

37 Margaret Walker, 'The Penrice and Lyons Families of Kilvrough, Part 1: The Penrice family', *Gower*, 56 (2005), 37–46.; idem, 'Part 2, The Lyons Family', *Gower*, 57 (2006), 34–48. I am indebted to Nigel Jenkins for drawing these articles to my attention.

Paxton (1744–1824).³⁸ Born in Edinburgh, Paxton served in the Royal Navy before entering the Company's ranks in 1774 when he was appointed Assay Master at Fort William in Bengal. Four years later he became the Master of the Calcutta Mint. At the same time, by acting in a private capacity Paxton used his entrepreneurial skills to set up one of the first commercial agency houses to be established in Calcutta, and this enabled him to offer a wide range of financial and shipping services to clients within the European community. The rapid growth of his business enabled Paxton to acquire a very large fortune, and when he returned to Britain in 1785 he established a branch of his company in London, which as Paxton, Cockerell, Trail & Co. became a bank as well as an East Indian agency house.

Paxton moved into Carmarthenshire when, seeking entry into Parliament, and having been introduced to the area by his old Bengal associate Captain David Williams of Henllys Fawr, he spent £40,000 on the Middleton Hall estate (today the National Botanic Garden of Wales), just outside Llanarthne. Paxton built a new mansion, laid out ornamental gardens and woodland, and created ponds that were serviced by an elaborate underground network of water pipes. His enthusiasm for improvement of the aquatic type led him to introduce piped water to Carmarthen when he served as mayor in 1802, and he later paid for the building of an expensive public bath-house in Tenby. Paxton sought local approval for political purposes and his efforts to gain entry to Parliament led him to undertake other more direct forms of electoral expenditure. This meant that during the fierce battle for the Carmarthen county seat in 1802 he spent the astonishing sum of £15,690, which included payments for 11,070 breakfasts, 36,901 dinners, 684 suppers, 25,275 gallons of ale, 11,068 bottles of spirits, 8,879 bottles of porter, 460 bottles of sherry, and 509 bottles of cider. Paxton's largesse undoubtedly caused many hangovers, as well as a welcome short-term boost in trade for local brewers, hoteliers, and tavern keepers, but although the electors of Carmarthen were quite happy to gorge themselves on free food and drink many of them remained deeply suspicious of the fabulously wealthy incomer. As a result, despite his prodigious outlay, Paxton was unable to secure the votes necessary to defeat Sir John Hamlyn Williams in the poll. Yet, not easily deterred, Paxton was soon able to occupy the Carmarthen Borough seat when John George Phillips vacated it in December 1803, and then during the election of 1806 he transferred his attentions back to the County seat, for which he was returned unopposed.

These intricate political manoeuvres eventually enabled Paxton to derive some short-term satisfaction from entry to Parliament, but he failed to build up a strong local power base because many electors remained hostile towards the 'upstart nabob' and 'Scotch herring' who was 'heedless of the interests of our native land'.³⁹ As a result, he was unceremoniously unseated during the general election

38 The following two paragraphs are based in large part on W. G. J. Kuiters, 'William Paxton (1744–1824): The History of an East Indian fortune', *Bengal Past and Present*, 111 (1992), 1–19. See also Willem G. Kuiters, 'William Paxton, 1744–1824: Merchant and Banker in Bengal and London' (unpublished master's thesis, University of Leiden, 1992). I am indebted to Dr Kuiters for supplying me with a copy of his dissertation.

39 See *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1790–1820*, ed. by R. G. Thorne, 5 vols (London: Secker and Warburg, 1986), IV, p. 736.

1807, and later attempts at a comeback ended in failure. But although Paxton enjoyed little success as a politician his spending did have a lasting impact on Carmarthenshire. At the time of his death, his fortune amounted to almost £300,000 and his 2,650-acre estate was dominated by 'Paxton's Tower', or 'Paxton's Folly' as it was known to the locals, a memorial erected in honour of Nelson who visited the area in 1802. The tower remains as a prominent landmark, and the National Botanic Garden of Wales is now located on the site of Paxton's former estate.

In many ways, the purchasing of land and the development of houses and estates in Wales by those returning from Asia conformed to a pattern of behaviour that has been identified by P. J. Marshall as having been common among holders of East Indian fortunes.⁴⁰ Many of those investing in Welsh property were thus recognisably 'nabobs', and were regarded by contemporaries as such, in the sense that they used their East Indian wealth to indulge in the comfort, leisure, and luxury associated with a landed lifestyle. But it is noteworthy that at least of some of the East Indians in Wales also sought to channel part of their funds into economic activity and 'improvement' of the type undertaken by William Paxton around Carmarthenshire.

Such investment was especially evident in and around Brecon. Here, Walter Wilkins was a founding partner of the (old) Brecon Bank in 1778, and a partner in Wilkins, (John) Lloyd, Powell & Co.⁴¹ Wilkins was joined as a partner in the Bank by his brother Jeffreys, probably from the outset, but certainly from 1792;⁴² and both of them later invested in the Hay Tram Road. Captain John Lloyd undertook a yet more diverse range of investments. Following an attempt to develop the Dinas lead mine during 1794, he (together with Jeffreys Wilkins) became one of the four shareholders of the Brecknock Boat and Canal Company, which monopolised trade on the local canal and owned a colliery at Clydach; and he took up share capital and provided loan finance in order to help fund the initial construction of the Brecknock to Abergavenny canal, and its subsequent onward extension to the Monmouthshire canal. In addition, Lloyd owned a fulling mill on the Honddu and (again with Jeffreys Wilkins) he became a founder investor in the local tramway known as the Watton 'railway'. In sum total, the interlocking investments of these three closely connected former East India Company servants were considerable, and there can be no doubting that they had a marked and enduring effect upon the financial, industrial, and transport infrastructure developed in and around Brecon.

The transformative local effect of East Indian wealth manifested itself in a rather different way in Llandovery where the former East India Company surgeon, Thomas Phillips (not to be confused with his namesake of Aberglasney), chose to invest part of his very substantial fortune. In 1847, when he was in his eighties, Phillips was the main mover behind the establishment and building of the Collegiate Institute, which today exists as the public school known as Llandovery College. But Phillips did much more, having dedicated his retirement to philanthropic activity, and with almost obsessive zeal he channelled his East Indian fortune into Welsh

40 P. J. Marshall, *East Indian Fortunes: The British in Bengal in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), pp. 214–56.

41 Margaret Dawes and C. N. Ward-Perkins, *Country Banks of England and Wales: Private Provincial Banks and Bankers, 1688-1953*, 2 vols (Canterbury: CIB, 2000), I, p. 83.

42 *Ibid.*

education and learning. He endowed scholarships and a Professorship at Saint David's College Lampeter; funded scholarships for Welsh boys to study at Oxford; and, above all, he purchased vast quantities of books and artefacts, many of them 'Oriental' in nature, which were supplied not only to the colleges at Lampeter and Llandovery but also to towns throughout Wales and beyond.⁴³

All of these purchases and improvements in Wales were funded by the investment of money made by individuals who, in one way or another, had participated directly in the process of commercial and imperial expansion in Asia: they went to the east, made money, and returned. The accumulation of riches in India catapulted Walter Wilkins and William Paxton into the ranks of the super-rich in Britain at a time when very few individuals in Wales held similar amounts of wealth. Other East Indians possessed lesser fortunes but were still marked out as men of unusual wealth and influence in the places where they settled. As such, contemporaries would have recognised that these high-profile local figures had derived very considerable financial benefit from the empire. Concealed from view, however, were individuals who had often never set foot outside Wales but indirectly derived profits from that the process of expansion. This was the case, for example, with those who invested in East India Company stock and were able to earn good rates of interest in the form of dividend payments which from 1793 onwards were secured on Indian land revenues and fixed at 10½ per cent a year.

The total amount of East India stock owned by investors living in Wales was never large, and a list of stockholders compiled in March 1836 indicates that it stood at only £79,633 (1.3 per cent of the total) spread across thirty-nine accounts.⁴⁴ Nonetheless, this form of investment in empire attracted funds from across Wales, from well-established bankers such as the Morris family of Carmarthen through to small investors who had no obvious links with the Company, such as the spinster Jane Hughes of Aberdovey who owned £195.8s. stock, the Reverend Owen Gethin Williams of Rhiwlas, Anglesey (£77.2s.5d.), and Elizabeth Williams, a widow of Croespyrn, Anglesey (£115.19s.1d.). These types of holdings are of interest because the existence of small East India investors across Wales reveals that by the mid-1830s the British investment market had become integrated to the point that individuals at some considerable distance from London were able to deploy capital in a leading gilt-edged fund such as India stock. And not all Welsh investors were 'passive' in the sense that they were content simply to collect annual dividends as a form of income. Some engaged in regular transactions, building up holdings of East India stock and then selling them at an opportune moment when a good price enabled them to make a profit. Hence by the early 1820s John Hunter of Llanidloes

- 43 D. T. W. Pryce, 'Thomas Phillips of Brunswick Square', in *The Founders' Library University of Wales, Lampeter, Bibliographical and Contextual studies: Essays in memory of Robin Rider: Trivium 29 and 30*, ed. by William Marx (Lampeter: Trivium, 1997), XXIX, pp. 169–76; Gwyn Walters, 'Books from the "Nabob": the Benefactions of Thomas Phillips at Lampeter and Llandovery', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 5 (1998 [1999]), 36–61.
- 44 BL, IOR, L/AG/14/5/248. For an overall profile of East Indian stockholders see Bowen, *Business of Empire: The East India Company and Imperial Britain, 1756-1833* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 84–118.

had built up a stock holding of over £5,000, which he then gradually sold off in small amounts;⁴⁵ while Edward Warren Jones of Llanina near Lampeter steadily accumulated stock throughout the 1820s so that by 1830 he owned £3,800.⁴⁶

The other group of people who made money from expansion in Asia were industrial entrepreneurs and some of their East Indian commercial activities contributed very significantly to the deep and long-lasting changes that were occurring within the Welsh economy. Small consignments of 'Welch flannel' woollen textiles were routinely dispatched to India by the East India Company, but the most notable group of businessmen to benefit from trade with Asia were the copper smelters and manufacturers of the Neath and Lower Swansea Valleys whose enterprises and fortunes were profoundly influenced by the increasingly strong demand for their products that emanated from Indian markets. The significant late-eighteenth-century growth of copper exports represented a great commercial success story for the East India Company at the very time it was under pressure to increase the overall volume and value of its trade, and this helped to ensure that Company orders exerted a powerful influence on a number of key firms. Indeed, it is possible to establish almost identical chronologies of growth, which indicates very strongly that the East India Company's expansion of its copper exports ran hand-in-hand with the early development of large-scale smelting in South Wales.

This mutually dependent relationship between the two processes was forged during the 1730s when the Company exported bulk cargoes of copper to Asia for the first time, and thereafter a sustained and increasingly diverse demand was felt in and around Swansea. With south Wales copper also being channelled simultaneously into the slave trade and the wider Atlantic economy, as outlined by Chris Evans in Chapter Two, it is evident that from the time the industry began to emerge as a large-scale concern it was to a very significant degree oriented towards markets in Britain's overseas empire. This process served very firmly to embed the region within the wider imperial economy during the second half of the eighteenth century, and it is quite erroneous to suggest that such integration only occurred during the nineteenth century as a consequence of the growth of the coal, iron, steel, and tinplate industries. Of course, the distribution of those major industries across South Wales eventually ensured a much wider range of economic connections between the region and the empire, but copper led the breakout of heavy Welsh goods into world-wide markets and this very profoundly affected the outlooks, attitudes, and mental horizons of those whose initiative, skills, and resources shaped the process of development.

The East India Company had long exported small consignments of copper pots and utensils to Asia but in October 1729 it decided to test the market more extensively in India by exporting bulk cargoes of copper to Bengal for the first time. In undertaking this experiment the Company turned to 'Richard Lockwood & Co.', which was paid £3,150 for copper plates a few months later.⁴⁷ Encouraged by the results of the experiment, the directors of the Company returned to Lockwood

45 BL, IOR, L/AG/14/5/37, pp. 283, 285, 289, 290.

46 *Ibid.*, pp. 332, 333, 335.

47 BL, IOR, L/AG/1/5/13, p. 85.

with further orders – 100 tons of copper plates at £105 a ton in 1730–31, 80 tons in 1731–32, 60 tons in 1733–34, and 82 tons in 1734–35 – and copper became firmly established as one of the Company's staple export commodities.⁴⁸ Lockwood was evidently very well connected at East India House, not only through his long involvement in the Levant and African trade but also because he was a leading figure in the politics and finance of the City of London, and this enabled him to win these important supply contracts only a couple of years after he had diversified his commercial interests by becoming a partner in Robert Morris's copper smelting works at Llangyfelach near Swansea. Established in 1727, Lockwood, Morris & Co. developed its works on the site of the first copper smelting enterprise in the Swansea Valley which had been founded by Dr John Lane ten years earlier. To a large extent, therefore, Lockwood's success in winning the East India Company order was vital for the early growth of the fledgling firm, and remaining in favour with those at East India House meant that exports to Asia always formed an important branch of its operations, which were extended when a new works was opened at nearby Fforest in 1746. Indeed, a strong relationship with the East India Company endured until Lockwood, Morris & Co. ceased trading during the 1790s, and in most years substantial consignments of copper were dispatched to London for onward shipment to India. As a result, between 1750 and 1790 Lockwood, Morris, & Co. supplied the East India Company with 4,449 tons of copper, and in return it was paid £488,438.⁴⁹

Lockwood, Morris, & Co. was the first copper-smelting company to exploit the opportunities arising from British commercial expansion in Asia, but others in the Lower Swansea and Neath Valleys were swift to follow, and some were also able to establish similar long-lasting relationships with the East India Company. Notably, firms in south Wales were well to the fore during the 1750s when the Company significantly increased its purchases of copper cake and brass and then began for the first time to procure evermore substantial quantities of 'manufactured' copper and the 'japanned' variety produced with a distinctive dark-sheen finish. This process of expansion and diversification helped to encourage the establishment of new works or the take-over of established enterprises in and around Swansea, and in most instances developments were led by incoming English entrepreneurs who brought capital and skills into the region from Bristol or London. In nearly all cases these firms had connections with the East India Company, and thus there was an increase in the number of commercial channels through which south Wales copper found its way to the East India Company. Most notable, perhaps, was the firm Joseph Percival & Co. which was re-formed as John Freeman & Co. in 1764, an organizational rearrangement which ensured that copper was supplied in significant quantities to the Company from the White Rock works throughout the second half of the century. In return, payments to the White Rock companies amounted to £670,367 between 1750 and 1800. From the Neath Abbey works the Mines Royal Company provided the Company with copper more or less continuously between 1755 and

48 Ibid., pp. 121–382.

49 These figures and the information that follow have been extracted from BL, IOR, L/AG/1/5/13, vols. 16–26.

1800, and it was paid £314,794. Other firms were less enduring but had important short-term relationships with the Company, as was notably the case with Chauncey Townsend & Co. (paid £135,434 between 1756 and 1764) and George Pengree & Co. (paid £194,281 between 1765 and 1785) both of which smelted at the Middle Bank works. A further surge in exports during the late-1770s brought yet more firms from the region into the Company's orbit, notably Sir Herbert Mackworth and the Gnoll Copper Co. (1777–87) which operated the Melincryddan works near Neath; and Fenton (or Chacewater) & Co. (1776–1785) which established the Rose works in 1780. By way of a supplement to this large-scale supply of copper to the East India Company, some of the smelters also found an outlet for their produce through sales of occasional bulk consignments to those who were engaged in licensed private trade with Asia.⁵⁰ And, no doubt, some copper smelted in Swansea would also have been shipped to the east by private traders who routinely engaged in a lively and often extensive illicit export trade that operated either directly or via ports in Europe.⁵¹

It has been estimated that by the 1780s between one-sixth and one-quarter of annual domestic copper output was being directed towards South Asia,⁵² and the East India Company's records indicate that a very large proportion of this supply to the Indian market emanated from the smelting works located in and around Swansea. Indeed, for much of the time the existence of cartel-type arrangements among the smelting firms ensured that, in addition to fixing prices, the south Wales works were able to exert considerable control over the supply of copper to the Company. This was especially so between 1750 and 1770 before fierce competition within the association of smelters ensured that some concessions were made to firms from Cornwall and the north-west of England who were able to secure a wider distribution of orders. But a near-monopoly of supply of copper from south Wales to the Company was restored during the late-1780s through the formidable efforts of the 'copper king', Thomas Williams, whose organisational integration of the industry led to Anglesey replacing Cornwall as the main source of the ores used by the Swansea smelters.⁵³ Williams, whose Parys Mine Company procured the Upper Bank works in Swansea in 1782, ruthlessly undercut rival smelters to such an extent that he was able to secure the vast majority of the orders made by the Company at a time when it was obliged by statute to export 1,500 tons of copper a year. In return, the Company made very considerable payments to Williams, and £1,132,164 exchanged hands in the ten years after 1788. These payments fed the

50 See, for example, the private supply of copper by the Mines Royal and Mackworth & Co. to commanders of East Indiamen in 1781, BL, IOR, H/22, pp. 147–8, 156–8, 169–71.

51 For the content, scale, and organisation of this smuggling trade see H. V. Bowen, 'Privilege and Profit: The Commanders of East Indiamen as Private Traders, Entrepreneurs, and Smugglers, 1760–1813', *International Journal of Maritime History*, 19, 2 (2007), 1–46.

52 J. R. Harris, *The Copper King: A Biography of Thomas Williams of Llanidan* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1964), p. 11. During the 1790s exports to Asia accounted for 60% of total exports of 'brass and plated goods' and 35% of total wrought copper exports; see 'Report of the Committee [of the House of Commons] Appointed to Enquire Into the State of the Copper Mines and Copper Trade of This Kingdom (7 May 1799)', Appendix 33, pp. 166–69.

53 For a detailed study of Williams, see Harris, *Copper King*.

sustained growth of Williams's concerns, at least until the supplies of Anglesey ore became depleted at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but the spin-off effects were also felt across an extended commodity chain by a large supporting cast of individuals who participated in a host of different ways in the mining, smelting, manufacture, rolling, cutting, and shipping of copper. Of course, these people did not become wealthy in the way of the industrial magnates but nonetheless, whether they realised it or not, their livelihoods were dependent to a considerable extent on the ebb and flow of East India Company commercial activity in Asia.

One must be careful not to exaggerate the localised effects of the growth of the copper industry on the port and town of Swansea, because the very nature of copper smelting was such that output and the size of the workforce were both modest by comparison with the later emerging ferrous metal industries of the region.⁵⁴ Nonetheless, copper smelting stimulated other industrial activity, notably coal mining, and the late-eighteenth-century effects of inter-connected expansion upon Swansea are reflected across a range of statistical indicators. Thus, to take just one example, the number of ships entering the harbour increased from 694 in 1768 to 2,590 in 1800, and the registered tonnage of these vessels rose from 30,361 to 154,264 during the same period.⁵⁵ And the spin-off effects were felt further field in Wales, especially in Anglesey where Thomas Williams's large-scale extraction of copper ore from Parys Mountain stimulated activity across different sectors of the local economy and led to a marked growth in the number of ships dedicated to the carrying of bulk consignments of ore to Swansea.⁵⁶

It is evident that the volume of demand from Asia exerted an important influence on a maturing heavy industry, but also of some significance to the developmental process was the *type* of copper required by the East India Company in order to meet the demand of purchasers in India. The Company repeatedly experimented with different varieties of copper in an attempt to identify what was best suited to Indian markets, and this meant that over the course of the half century after 1750 it extended its purchases beyond copper plates, cake, and brass. In addition to standard battery copper, consignments of manufactured copper sent to India contained a wide range of bars, rods, and ingots of differing shapes, sizes, and finishes. In particular, the production of imitation 'japan' copper required the application of specialist techniques in order to create the dark-sheen finish often favoured in Indian markets, and after a successful trial conducted in 1754 the volume of this commodity exported by the Company increased substantially from

54 For the place of copper smelting in the wider economic development of Swansea, see Louise Miskell, *'Intelligent Town': An Urban History of Swansea, 1780–1855* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006), pp. 70–98.

55 W. H. Jones, 'Appendix: Number and Registered Tonnage of Steam and Sailing Vessels Entering Swansea Harbour Each Year, Ending December 31, from 1768 to 1921', in *A History of the Port of Swansea* (Carmarthen, 1922).

56 For the growth in the number of Anglesey ships that accompanied the late eighteenth-century expansion of copper-mining operations on the island, see, Aled Eames, *Ships and Seamen of Anglesey, 1558–1918* (London: National Maritime Museum, 1981), pp. 184–92.

annual average of 66 tons during the 1760s to 191 tons during the 1780s.⁵⁷ But under the heading of 'general merchandise' in Company commerce ledgers is to be found evidence that Welsh copper manufacturers were also producing a range of finished products for export to South Asia. These were not generic items that could have been dispatched to any market, but instead were commodities manufactured to very exact specifications in line with instructions formulated by the Company on the basis of information sent to London from India. Notable here was the output of the Mackworth and Gnoll Copper Company which during the 1780s and early 1790s supplied a range of finished goods, including copper bottoms for salt boilers, copper pitch kettles, copper linings for stationary cases, copper plates for mill bedstones, and copper nails, as well as copper for casting brass ordnance.⁵⁸ Sales of this type to the East India Company did not occur on any great scale but they do demonstrate the early capacity of some firms to adapt productive processes to the special demands of different global markets. Indeed the successful and rapid penetration of Indian markets by the copper smelting firms of south-west Wales had a considerable long-term effect upon the maritime economy of Asia. As a detailed quantitative study demonstrates, from the 1760s the importation of copper into India from Britain eclipsed the long-established inward flow of that commodity from Japan, and this process of substitution supports the justifiable claim that 'it was British copper, not British cotton textiles, which acted as the harbinger of the Industrial Revolution to the world economy'.⁵⁹

British commercial and imperial expansion in India thus had a direct and sustained influence upon the growth of copper smelting, the industry which drove the early development of the south-west Wales economy, and in turn this had a considerable effect on the local environment and landscape. Such profound Asiatic influence was not so evident in the somewhat later growth of the ferrous metal industries, but key firms in the region were nonetheless keen to break into the Indian market during the late eighteenth century. Richard Crawshay, who owned the great Cyfarthfa ironworks at Merthyr, was deeply frustrated by his inability to secure any contracts to supply bulk consignments of bar iron to the Company until the very end of century. But, undeterred, he was able to fall back on supplying iron to private traders, and from the middle of the 1780s he was able to derive at least some benefit from the Company by occasionally selling it steel, iron shot, and iron guns.⁶⁰ These sales to the Company enabled Crawshay to gain a foothold inside East India House, which meant that he was in a good position to take advantage when the Company's regular sole supplier of iron, John Wilson & Co., faltered and fell by the wayside between 1799 and 1804. As a result, he was able to step into the breach and provide the Company with a significant proportion of the

57 'An Account of the Annual Quantity of Cake, Manufactured, and Japan Copper, With the Quantity of Brass Shipped by the Honourable East India Company for the East Indies, and the Prices Purchased at Per Ton, From the Year 1731–32 to 1791–92' (no place of publication, 1793).

58 See, for example, BL, IOR, L/AG/1/5/20, pp. 272, 342 and 22, p. 20; 23, p. 238.

59 Ryuto Shimada, *The Intra-Asian Trade in Japanese Copper by the Dutch East India Company During the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), p. 79.

60 See, for example, BL, H/22, pp. 80–1, 107–9; and BL, IOR, L/AG/1/5/22, pp. 274, 336, 441.

mixed consignments of 'English' and Swedish bar iron it required during the first two decades of the nineteenth century. In total, the volume of iron directed by Crawshay towards Asia through the East India Company was not especially large, but his company maintained a position as a key supplier until after the loss of its Indian trade monopoly the East India Company began to wind down its commercial operations during the mid-1820s, and at times it was joined by other Welsh firms such as Homfrays & Fennell, the Dowlais Iron Company, and Guest, Lewis & Co.

This essay has identified a range of connections that existed between Wales and the early British empire in India. Wales was perhaps at the outer reaches of the domestic world of the East India Company, but it was nonetheless shaped in important ways by the interlinked processes of imperial and commercial expansion that were occurring in South Asia. By piecing together scattered evidence it has been possible to create a more detailed picture of the East Indian influences that were at work within Wales as that expansion gathered pace after 1750. In particular, this still-emerging picture suggests that at any given moment significant direct and indirect economic effects were being felt in Wales, especially across mid and south-west Wales where the physical manifestations of inward flows of East Indian wealth were becoming more visible on the rural, urban, and industrial landscapes. Certain houses, gardens, estates, financial institutions, transport infrastructure, urban improvements, industrial concerns, and educational establishments all had their development shaped either wholly or to a considerable degree by investments made by individuals who had derived personal benefit from participation in the expansionist process. This attracted very little comment at the time because East Indian investment tended to be localised, and contemporaries would not have been able to identify connections between developments in Brecon, for example, and those of a very different nature that were occurring in the Lower Swansea Valley. But connections there undoubtedly were because what bound these developments together is that the individuals and firms that lay behind them all derived advantage from the opportunities offered by the East India Company, and as a consequence they reaped financial benefits in the form of salaries, dividends, perquisites, plunder, and commercial profits. As stressed at the outset, this is not to argue that East Indian influences were in any way central to the economic development of Wales as a whole, and indeed many of them were not even locally transformative, but they did feed into the various dynamic processes that underpinned improvement and as such their importance should not be underestimated. Moreover, these external influences should not be seen as operating in isolation, and they need to be interwoven with others, such as those emanating from the Atlantic world, for only then can a full assessment be made of the multifarious economic interactions that occurred between Wales and the wider world during the long eighteenth century.