

The Origins and Development of Welsh Associational Life in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia*

Richard C. Allen, PhD

At noon on 1 March 1798, sixty-four citizens of Philadelphia gathered at the house of William Ogden to launch a Welsh Society. The Welsh Society of Philadelphia has had a continuous history to the present day and a long-lasting association with Welsh-Americana, particularly in its promotion of Welsh cultural activities and the annual St David's Day festival.¹ This was one of many similar Welsh societies which sprang up in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Britain, America and elsewhere.² This study scrutinizes the development of the Welsh Society of Philadelphia and its predecessor, the Society of the Sons of Ancient Britons c.1729, with particular attention paid to its early membership and the social and political influence of members in

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¹ Haverford College, Haverford, Pennsylvania. Magill Library Special Collections (hereafter HC), MS 1186, Box 1. Unpaginated minute book of the Records of the Welsh Society of Philadelphia (4 June 1798–1 March 1839); copy of the original Association, 1 March 1798. See the Appendix for the first Constitution.

² For example, see Prys Morgan, *The Eighteenth Century Renaissance* (Llandybïe: Christopher Davies, 1981), pp. 54–62; R. T. Jenkins and Helen M. Rammage, *The History of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion 1751–1951* (London: The Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, 1951). For wider discussions of British associational life from the late sixteenth century onwards see Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580–1800: The Origins of an Associational World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), pp. 75, 252, 259, 297–9; Heather Hughes, "'How the Welsh became White in South Africa': Immigration, Identity and Economic Transformation from the 1860s to the 1930s", *Trans. Hon. Soc. Cymm.*, n.s. 7 (2001), 112–27; Bill Jones, 'Desiring and Maintaining a Welsh Australia: The Cambrian Society of Victoria in the 1830s and 1940s', *Australia Studies*, 19.1 (Summer 2004), 113–46; Joan Allen and Richard C. Allen, "'Competing Identities": Irish and Welsh Migration and the North-East of England', in *Regional Identities in North-East England 1300–2000*, ed. by A. J. Pollard and A. G. Green (Woodford: Boydell and Brewer, 2007), pp. 133–60. For details of associational life in Philadelphia in the eighteenth century see Daniel R. Gilbert, 'Patterns of Organization and Membership in Colonial Philadelphia Club Life, 1725–1755' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1952), pp. 156–7; Jessica Roney, "'First Movers in Every Useful Undertaking": Formal Voluntary Associations in Philadelphia, 1725–1775' (unpublished doctoral thesis, John Hopkins University, 2008), particularly p. 254.

Philadelphia – the spiritual home of Welsh exiles in America. Part of its remit was a commitment to provide moral support, financial assistance and practical relief for Welsh exiles who might otherwise struggle in a foreign land without help.

The migratory patterns of the Welsh as indentured servants on plantations in the Caribbean, as well as traders who settled on the east coast of America, can be traced back to the mid-seventeenth century,³ but it was the emigration of hundreds of Welsh people, particularly members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) escaping persecution from the 1680s onwards, that led to the establishment of identifiable Welsh settlements in Pennsylvania.⁴ In May 1681 an agreement was signed in London between William Penn and the British Quakers which enabled them to purchase shares in his newly acquired holding of 600,000 square miles. Twelve influential Welsh Quakers took an interest in the project and consequently seven Welsh companies were established. They purchased 62½ square miles (40,000 acres) in Pennsylvania and persuaded others to invest, thus setting in train the first great wave of Welsh emigration.⁵

The ‘Welsh Tract’ was to be a ‘Welsh barony’ and ‘a Holy Christian Community’, with the right of self-government. This is not, however, the place to critique the explanation for Welsh Quaker emigration, or indeed the failure to realize the plan for a self-governing Welsh settlement.⁶ It is sufficient to note

³ Between 1654 and 1685 the Port Books of Bristol record that approximately 4000 Welsh people, mainly from south Wales, set sail for the plantations in Barbados as indentured labourers and servants. Others left Wales in search of riches and adventure, notably Howell Powell of Brecon who emigrated to Virginia in 1642 and Lewis Morris of Tintern who initially settled in Barbados before joining his Quaker co-religionists in Pennsylvania. See D. H. Sacks, *The Widening Gate: Bristol and the Atlantic Economy, 1540–1700* (Berkeley and Oxford: University of California Press, 1991); David Hussey, *Coastal and River Trade in Pre-Industrial England: Bristol and its Region, 1680–1730* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000); Samuel S. Smith, *Lewis Morris. Anglo-American Statesman, ca.1613–1691* (Atlantic Highland, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1983).

⁴ On 4 March 1681, in response to a £16,000 debt owed to his father by Parliament, Penn had been granted a charter at Westminster to colonize the former Dutch Colonies. For details, see T. M. Rees, *A History of the Quakers in Wales and their Emigration to North America* (Carmarthen: W. Spurrell & Son, 1925), p. 179.

⁵ Further details of the Welsh land companies are provided in T. A. Glenn, *Merion in the Welsh Tract* (Norristown: Herald Press, 1896), p. 21; C. S. Browning, *The Welsh Settlement of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: W. J. Campbell, 1912).

⁶ For details, see Richard C. Allen, “‘In Search of a New Jerusalem’. A Preliminary Investigation into Welsh Quaker Emigration to North America c.1660–1750’, *Quaker Studies*, 9.1 (September 2004), 31–53; Richard C. Allen, *Quaker Communities in Early Modern Wales: From Resistance to Respectability* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), ch. 7; Richard C. Allen, ‘The Making of a Holy Christian Community: Welsh Quaker Emigrants to Pennsylvania, c.1680–1750’, in *Cultural Conquests, 1500–2000*, ed. by Tim Kirk and Luda Klusáková (Prague: Philosophica et Historica, Studia Historica, 2009), pp. 45–61.

that between 1682 and 1700 at least 2,000 Welsh emigrants 'braved the horrible Atlantic crossings to create their pioneer settlements in a new world'.⁷ They settled along the Schuylkill River and throughout the new barony to which they allocated Welsh place-names, most notably Bryn Mawr, Radnor, Haverford, Upper and Lower Merion, and Tredyffrin. The terms of the barony were ratified in 1687, but the dream of an independent colony that would preserve the cultural and linguistic distinctiveness of the Welsh was not to last.⁸ Indeed, two years earlier the barony had been politically and geographically subdivided into Philadelphia and Chester Counties, and by 1690 the rights that had been granted to the Welsh townships of Haverford, Merion, and Radnor were transferred by the Provincial Government to more orthodox township authorities.⁹

Further townships in the Welsh Tract were added in due course and populated by new settlers from England, Ireland, the Netherlands, and Germany who quickly established their own township authorities. The Welsh bitterly resented this loss of power and status, especially as this ran counter to the agreements they had signed with Penn.¹⁰ They wrote several letters of complaint and in 1697, after the collapse of the Susquehanna Land Company, Penn, the Governor of the Colony, was called 'diwyneb' ('faceless'/'two-faced') for breaking his promise to provide the Welsh with dedicated land in Philadelphia.¹¹ There were nevertheless some positive developments. Between 1697 and 1698 a further 7820 acres in Pennsylvania were purchased for £508 by two Welsh Quakers, William ap John and Thomas ap Evan. They subsequently sold the land on for £6 10s. per 100 acres which, in turn, prompted the settlement of thirty Welsh families in the Gwynedd township, Montgomery County.¹² This area rapidly developed and by 1741 it had become a particularly affluent part of the colony. The Welsh also settled into other parts of Pennsylvania, notably in Berks and Bucks Counties, and to a lesser extent into Lancaster County. Thus the Welsh were in evidence all along the Susquehanna River. As the colony expanded

⁷ G. A. Williams, *When Was Wales?* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p. 136. This was out of an estimated total of 23,000 emigrants. See David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 421. Further details of British emigration are also provided in Eric Richards, *Britannia's Children: Emigration from England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland since 1600* (London and New York: Hambledon, 2004).

⁸ Allen, 'The Making of a Holy Christian Community'.

⁹ Fischer, *Albion's Seed*, p. 591.

¹⁰ Details of the squabbles that developed among the leaders of Pennsylvania in the late seventeenth century are recounted in Glenn, *Merion in the Welsh Tract*, pp. 47–52; R. C. Simmons, *The American Colonies: From Settlement to Independence* (New York: D. McKay, 1976), p. 143; E. T. Ashton, *The Welsh in the United States* (Hove: Caldra House, 1984), pp. 47–8, 51; B. Levy, *Quakers and the American Family* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), ch. 5; Allen, 'In Search of a New Jerusalem', 39–40.

¹¹ Rees, *History of the Quakers in Wales*, pp. 181–3.

¹² Howard M. Jenkins, 'The Welsh Settlement at Gwynedd', *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* (PMHB), 8 (1884), 175–6.

areas such as Merion that were once described as 'a wilderness' became 'a fruitful field'.¹³ By the turn of the eighteenth century over two thousand houses had been erected in Philadelphia alone, and many Welsh emigrants occupied executive posts in the province.¹⁴

In the late seventeenth century the Welsh language was the primary means of communication. Penn and leading Welsh Quakers had agreed in May 1681 that in these Welsh settlements 'all causes, quarrels, crimes and disputes might be tried and wholly determined by officers, magistrates and juries of our own language'.¹⁵ As a result they established discernible Welsh Quaker and Welsh-speaking enclaves. The retention of the Welsh language and customs, and the lasting affection for Wales, demonstrates the resolve of some of the settlers to defend their Welsh heritage and retain their national identity in Pennsylvania. The letters of emigrants to relatives and former neighbours in Wales provide insights into these early experiences and induced others to join them in the new colony. The publication in 1721 of Ellis Pugh's *Annerch i'r Cymru* ('Greetings to the Welsh') – the first Welsh-language text published in America – would also suggest that the Welsh emigrant community were still clearly attached to their language.¹⁶ Although John Jones was born and raised in Pennsylvania he viewed the colony as a 'distant and foreign land'. In 1725 he wrote a letter to Hugh Jones in Wales about Welsh place-names and exclaimed, 'It affords me great delight even to think of them [. . .] I long to see them.'¹⁷ Boyd Schlenker has reservations about whether the linguistic purity of the first settlers of the Welsh Tract was maintained, and whether Penn ever truly intended these parts of Pennsylvania to be exclusively Welsh. He notes that even in the early Welsh settlements there were some who had learned English as a second language, or wrote in English, and there were bilingual meetings in the Welsh Tract to accommodate those who did not speak

¹³ Anon., 'John Roberts of Merion', *PMHB*, 19 (1895), 262–3.

¹⁴ For example, see Jenkins, 'The Welsh Settlement at Gwynedd', 182–3; G. H. Jenkins, 'From Ysgeifiog to Pennsylvania: The Rise of Thomas Wynne, Quaker Barber-Surgeon', *Flintshire Historical Society Journal*, 28 (1977–8), 39–61.

¹⁵ See also W. F. Dunaway, 'Early Welsh Settlers of Pennsylvania', *Pennsylvania History*, 12 (1945), 252–3.

¹⁶ Ellis Pugh, *Annerch i'r Cymru, iw galw oddiwrth y llawer o bethau at yr un peth angenrheidiol er mwyn cadwedigaeth eu heneidiau* (Philadelphia: Andrew Bradford, 1721). An English version was nevertheless provided six years later. See Ellis Pugh, *A Salutation to the Britons: to call them from the many things, to the one thing needful for the saving of their souls: Especially, to the poor unlearned tradesmen, plowmen and shepherds, those that are of a low degree like myself [. . .] Translated from the British language by Rowland Ellis, revised and corrected by David Lloyd* (Philadelphia: S. Keimer, 1727).

¹⁷ The translated version is provided in 'John Jones to Hugh Jones, c.1725', in *Narratives of Pennsylvania, West New Jersey and Delaware, 1630–1707*, ed. by A. C. Myers (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912; rept. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1967), pp. 454–55. A Welsh copy was published in *PMHB*, 14 (1890), 227–31.

Welsh.¹⁸ Yet evidence suggests that the survival of language varied from one township to another. For example, in 1702 an English visitor to the Gwynedd township required the services of an interpreter.¹⁹

During the early decades of the eighteenth century, emigration from Wales slowed and had virtually dried up by the second quarter of the century. From being an influential minority group in the late seventeenth century, the Welsh became simply one of many ethnic communities in Pennsylvania. Indeed, by the end of the eighteenth century the Welsh population which had constituted one-third of the colony was now less than five per cent (12,000) of a total population of 250,000.²⁰ Naturally, with such a great influx of other immigrants the identity of the Welsh settlers, their language, and their culture was increasingly marginalized. Later migration streams made it difficult for the Welsh to sustain their language, and English became prioritized. Most Welsh settlers accepted that for practical reasons they should acquire new linguistic skills.²¹ Language was, however, central to the survival of other cultural signifiers and some were determined to defend their Welsh heritage. On 25 February 1729, the *Pennsylvania Gazette* announced that 'several Gentlemen and other Persons of Reputation, of the honourable stock of ancient *Bretons*, design to erect themselves into a Society, to meet together annually on the first day of March, or St David's Day'.²² Interested parties were invited to hear a sermon preached 'in the antient *British Language*', and a psalm played on the organ; members would then 'partake of a handsome Collation', at the Queen's Head owned by Robert Davis at King Street, Philadelphia,

¹⁸ B. S. Schlenther, "'The English is Swallowing up Their Language': Welsh Ethnic Ambivalence in Colonial Pennsylvania and the Experience of David Evans", *PMHB*, 114 (1990), 202–4.

¹⁹ Rees, *History of the Quakers in Wales*, p. 181. The predominance of Welsh speakers in Radnor township in c.1707 meant that Anglicans also had to preach to their congregations in Welsh. See A.H. Dodd, 'The Background of the Welsh Quaker Migration to Pennsylvania', *Journal of the Merioneth Historical and Record Society*, 3.2 (1958), 111–27 (p. 124).

²⁰ Statistics have been drawn from <http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/ppet/welsh/page2.asp?secid=31> (accessed 25 May 2009). For a history of the colony see *Pennsylvania: A History of the Commonwealth*, ed. by Randall M. Miller and William Pencak (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press; Harrisburg, Pa.: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 2002).

²¹ For the decline of the Welsh language, especially in nineteenth-century Pennsylvania, see W. D. Jones, 'The Welsh Language and Welsh Identity in a Pennsylvanian Community', in *Language and Community in the Nineteenth Century: A Social History of the Welsh Language*, ed. by G. H. Jenkins (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), pp. 261–86; Aled Jones and Bill Jones, *Welsh Reflections: Y Drych and America, 1851–2001* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 2001), ch. 5.

²² *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 25 February 1729. See also Horatio Gates Jones, *Welsh Society Charter and Bye Laws* (Philadelphia: William Mann, 1880), p. 3 (also available in Historical Society of Pennsylvania, MS 1454, Series VIII, Cadwallader Collection, Box 22, Folder 4, 'Morris Family').

which would include a sermon, songs, and ale. It was to be a 'ticket only' affair.²³

On 1 March 1729 the Society of the Sons of Ancient Britons, one of the oldest benevolent societies in America, was duly inaugurated. As the *Pennsylvania Gazette* reported:

Many Gentlemen and others of the ancient Bretons met, and walk'd in a regular Order with Leeks in their Hats to the Church, where was preach'd in the old British language [. . .] an excellent Sermon [. . .]. From thence they return'd [. . .] to the *Queen's Head*, where an handsome Dinner [was prepared]. After which the following Healths were drank [. . .] The King and the Church; Queen Caroline; the Prince and Royal Family; prosperity to the ancient Bretons and this Province; the Proprietor's health, and his honour, Governor Gordon's, and many other healths.²⁴

The Society aimed to promote 'Love and Friendship' and similar gatherings were held in various parts of England, in the American colonies, and in other Welsh settlements across the globe.²⁵ In 1730 members met at the Sign of the Crown in Market Street, Philadelphia and the 1731 celebrations, for which tickets were sold at five shillings per head, were held at Owen Owen's Indian King in Market Street.²⁶ The *Pennsylvania Gazette* observed that the event was a great success with drinking and cannonfire as the order of the day, and the proceedings were closed with a ball at the home of Captain Hopkins. For much of the eighteenth century annual meetings were held and members enjoyed 'Musick, Mirth and Friendship'.²⁷ In 1741, however, their merrymaking had unfortunate consequences. The revellers inadvertently killed Thomas Scott, mate of the Liverpool-registered *Phoenix*, when one of the cannons, 'overcharg'd with Powder, and besides imprudently ramm'd with rough Stones, which were to be shot at a Cask on the Ice, burst in Pieces'. Scott suffered a fractured skull and died a few hours later.²⁸

The activities of this Society were consistent with the associational life of the London Welsh and the founding, in 1715, of 'the most Honourable and

²³ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 25 February 1729.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 1 March 1729.

²⁵ Very few records survive but some information can be found in Jones, *Welsh Society Charter*, pp. 5–6, and citing *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 1st of Third Month 1729.

²⁶ *American Weekly Mercury*, 528 (Tuesday, 10 February–Thursday, 19 February 1729/30); 530 (3 March 1730); *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 16 February 1731; Jones, *Welsh Society Charter*, p. 6.

²⁷ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 4 March 1731.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 5 March 1741.

Loyal Society of Ancient Britons' whereby Welsh exiles sought to recreate something of the cultural life of their homeland, albeit an imagined Welsh heritage.²⁹ In 1718 the London society established a charity school in Grays Inn which provided an education along with clothing and lodging for eighty boys and twenty-five girls of Welsh parentage.³⁰ As the *Pennsylvania Gazette* observed, the Society of the Sons of Ancient Britons was

erected in Imitation of a useful Society in London, who annually meet on the same Day, and is encourag'd there by Persons of the first Rank; their late Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales contributing largely to its Support and Reputation.³¹

The London-based Society of Ancient Britons, its successor the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion (1751),³² and other Welsh-American societies, were part of a 'Celtic Revival' which extended across much of Europe.³³ Like its British counterpart, the Philadelphia-based society expressed its loyalty to Britain and to the monarchy, but why did they do this? Prys Morgan has suggested that the Welsh sought 'a proper recognition of their part in British history' rather than to 'separate themselves from Britain'. He contends that the Welsh cultural renaissance of the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries was predicated on a decline in Welsh traditionalism, but conversely an increasing 'interest in things Welsh'. Moreover, in the passing of 'Merrie Wales', the Welsh became self-conscious of themselves as a separate people and intent on preserving a distinctive Welshness. This, he argued, ushered in

a new generation [. . .] passionately devoted to rescue, restore and revive what they could of the old. As the new generation appeared, so many features of novelty, freshness and

²⁹ For further details of this cultural shift see Prys Morgan, 'From a Death to a View; the Hunt for the Welsh Past in the Romantic Period', in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 43–100; S. Smiles, *The Image of Antiquity: Ancient Britain and the Romantic Imagination* (London: Yale University Press, 1994); Colin Kidd, *British Identities Before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World, 1600–1800* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 75, 252, 259, 297–99.

³⁰ For details, see *London Gazette*, 12 February 1714/15; Jenkins and Rammage, *History of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, p. 14.

³¹ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 25 February 1729.

³² Emrys Jones and Dewi Watkin Powell, 'The Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion 1751–2001', *Trans. Hon. Soc. Cymm.*, n.s. 9 (2003), 4–28; Jones, 'I: A Concise History of the Society 1751–1951', pp. 5–16 (p. 5).

³³ For example, the Cymmrodorion intended to promote 'friendship and good understanding among the people of Wales residing in the City of London'. See Jenkins and Rammage, *History of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, p. 74.

resourcefulness appeared in Wales which would in effect make the revival quite unlike any other episode in the Welsh past.³⁴

Clearly, the Philadelphian Welsh were of the same mind. They wanted to understand their past, or at least to recover some of it. Others would suggest that this sort of associational activity often reflected 'a mechanism of conformity not dissent' in the host country, as well as 'a device by which separate identity might be articulated for whatever purpose, whenever necessary'.³⁵ This is reflected in a speech by James Jones Levick, a much later Philadelphian-Welshman, who stated in his 1890 address to the Welsh Society on behalf of 'The Ancient Britons': 'Every one of us likes to be associated with the oldest families and I know no older [. . .] no better families than were the ancient Britons, your ancestors and mine.' He acknowledged the benefits of being Welsh:

It is true that the Egyptians are an ancient people, but I am personally acquainted with no gentlemen of Egyptian ancestry who takes an active part in the civil government, or in the public charities of Philadelphia, whereas in both these particulars the descendants of the ancient Britons are most conspicuous. You need but look around this table to have the truth of this statement confirmed. And so it has been since the early days of this colony.

Pointing out the pre-eminent colonial positions held by Welshmen and their claims to be descended from ancient British stock, Levick asked, 'Who were those ancient Britons?':

By this term we mean the different tribes, clans or nations inhabiting Britain before the time of the Roman invasion, and their descendants. Before the Roman invasion? Yes, for centuries before! Why, my Welsh brethren, we had a written history four centuries before Caesar was born [. . .]. It was a right royal race that Brutus [. . .] brought with him and landed, he and his sons, on the shores of that little island.³⁶

Modern historians are more cautious in their comments about the Welsh, particularly exiles and the attachment to their cultural identity. Schlenther has

³⁴ Morgan, *Eighteenth Century Renaissance*, p. 39.

³⁵ P. Payton, *The Cornish Overseas* (Fowey: Cornwall Editions, 1999), p. 383, and cited in Jones, 'Desiring and Maintaining a Welsh Australia', p. 115.

³⁶ Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, MS 2703F, 'Crynwyr Cymru ac UDA' – enclosed James Jones Levick, 'The Ancient Britons spoken at the Annual Dinner of the Welsh Society of Philadelphia [. . .] March 1st 1890', pp. 1–3.

argued that while the first Welsh-American society exhibited a 'modest burst of cultural self-consciousness', this 'pointed to the essential weakness of the Welsh language and culture in Pennsylvania, rather than to their increasing strength'.³⁷ By the middle of the eighteenth century the ability to speak English enabled the Welsh to fraternize with a wider mixture of ethnic groups and became the preferred method of communication. Yet these early Welsh societies, both the London-based and Pennsylvanian examples, provided much more than simply a cultural identity for the Welsh exile. They were, as Bill Jones has observed for later Welsh societies, promoting 'their nationality's presence and its perceived contribution to their adoptive country's development'.³⁸ As will be shown, these Welsh societies offered practical and financial assistance to poor Welsh migrants and thereby played a significant part in the history of emigration to the American colonies.

It is unclear when the Society of the Sons of Ancient Britons ceased to function as an effective cultural and benevolent body, but it may be that the War of Independence interrupted some of their activities. After all, the executive were close to the heart of government. Evidence suggests that a St David's Society continued to meet before and during the revolution.³⁹ By 1798, the Welsh in Philadelphia were once again eager to establish a society that would serve their cultural and philanthropic interests. In 1802, the Welsh Society was legally endorsed by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, and had an elaborate organization with a constitution, charter, rules, and bye-laws. Its committee structure was complex and included the usual officers, two counsellors, two physicians, and seven stewards to organize the quarterly meetings and the St David's Day dinner. It was agreed that twenty-one members ought to form the quorum for quarterly meetings and a two-thirds majority had the 'power to expel a member for disorderly behaviour'.⁴⁰ These formalities underline the Society's elitist ethos and indicate the extent to which they saw themselves as a respectable and influential sector of Philadelphian society. Those who sought membership had to secure nomination and election by ballot. In addition, some honorary members were admitted, as in the case of Thomas Barton Zantzinger whose election in January 1800 indicates the extent to which the Welsh had integrated with the Dutch-German communities, or Enos Bronson, the editor of the anti-Federalist *Gazette of the United States*, who was a leading member between 1804⁴¹ and 1820.⁴² In

³⁷ Schlenther, 'The English is Swallowing their Language', p. 225. See also Sally Schwartz, '*A Mixed Multitude*': *The Struggle for Toleration in Colonial Pennsylvania* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1987), p. 293.

³⁸ Jones, 'Desiring and Maintaining a Welsh Australia', pp. 116–17.

³⁹ See a testimony to Richard Price in HC, MS 1186, Box 1, quarterly meeting, 2 September 1822.

⁴⁰ HC, MS 1186, Box 1, Special Meeting, 4 February 1799, 'Rules and Regulations'.

⁴¹ He was proposed by Griffith Evans. See HC, MS 1186, Box 1, quarterly meeting, 4 June 1804.

⁴² *Ibid.*, quarterly meeting, 5 June 1820.

March 1807, Bronson was the chair of the Society (*pro tem.*) despite being from Connecticut and having no discernible Welsh connections.⁴³ His membership probably turned upon his close business ties with other members of the Society, particularly Thomas Biddle and Thomas Chauncey.

The Society was financed by annual subscriptions and fines were imposed for non-attendance. In June 1801, the clerk recorded that there were several ‘delinquents’ in arrears. It was noted that if they did not pay by the next meeting they would ‘be reported as disorderly and a question of Expulsion’ would be considered.⁴⁴ Society minutes suggest that all their efforts to recoup these arrears were ‘ineffectual’ and the committee called for new members to recover some of the ‘very heavy debts due to the Society’.⁴⁵ Although a number of members persistently defaulted in paying their dues the Society nevertheless accrued sizeable revenues. Their coffers were further boosted in 1809 when the Society received its first bequest from John Keble who donated just over three thousand dollars, bringing the total receipts of that year to nine thousand dollars.⁴⁶ The Society invested their funds judiciously, spreading their assets in a number of banks and shares. In 1820, the Society’s funds were dispersed as illustrated:

Stock of the Bank of North America [3 shares]	\$1,800
Ditto of United States [six per cent]	\$4,129.72
Water Loan of the City	\$1,500
And there is in his hands the sum of	\$20.34
Total	<u>\$7,450.06</u>

This did not include the nine hundred dollars owed to the Society in unpaid subscriptions,⁴⁷ which included, among others, the subscription of Enos Bronson. The following June, Bronson’s long illness forced his resignation and members exonerated him from the debt.⁴⁸ Further investments and additional bequests increased the Society’s wealth, but the misappropriation of \$10,000 in 1869 must have left a significant hole in the Society’s accounts.⁴⁹

⁴³ Ibid., quarterly meeting, 1 March 1807.

⁴⁴ Ibid., copy of the original Association, 1 June 1801.

⁴⁵ Ibid., annual meeting, 1 March 1821.

⁴⁶ Ibid., quarterly meeting, 4 September 1809.

⁴⁷ Ibid., annual meeting, 1 March 1820.

⁴⁸ Ibid., quarterly meeting, 5 June 1820.

⁴⁹ Jones, *Welsh Society Charter*, p. 11.

The Society's organization was elaborate and careful. In some respects, members drew upon a model with which they were already familiar, namely the Quaker business meetings.⁵⁰ Yet here the stewards had a key role in organizing and co-ordinating social functions. In 1799, for example, they arranged 'a suitable dinner provided by William Ogden at his House on the first of March, and that a roast (a kid) be the first dish at the head of the Table'. They ensured that all wines were of a good quality and that liquor was provided only to those with the necessary ticket.⁵¹ Up to thirty non-Welsh 'guests' could be invited to the annual dinner, including officers of the St George,⁵² St Andrew,⁵³ St Herman⁵⁴ and Hibernian Societies.⁵⁵ Despite the good relations between these various societies, the committee was highly selective about how their funds were spent. In 1811, members met to consider an appeal by the St David's Society to help fund a burial ground for the Welsh and their descendants in Philadelphia. After some discussion the Society declined to help stating, 'The funds of this Society should not be placed at the disposal of any other Institution. But are to be devoted, under the direction of our own members, to the humane and charitable purposes for which we associated.'⁵⁶ Nevertheless, the St David's Society succeeded in establishing their burial ground when William Hamilton donated part of his estate for the purpose.⁵⁷ Ironically, when the last trustee died in 1834, the burial ground was

⁵⁰ For details of the Quaker impact on Pennsylvania and on associational life in Philadelphia see J. W. Frost, *A Perfect Freedom: Religious Liberty in Pennsylvania* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993); Barry Levy, *Quakers and the American Family: British Settlement in the Delaware Valley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Roney, 'First Movers in Every Useful Undertaking', pp. 51-2.

⁵¹ HC, MS 1186, Box 1, special meeting, 4 February 1799.

⁵² This group first met on 23 April 1772 at Patrick Byrne's tavern, Front Street; the first president was the Rev. Richard Peters. For details see Society of the Sons of St George, *List of the members of the Society of the Sons of St George, established at Philadelphia /revised and corrected the 23rd of April, 1802* (Philadelphia: James Humphreys, 1802); Anon., *An Historical Sketch of the Origin and Progress of the Society of the Sons of St George* (Philadelphia: W. W. Bates, 1872); Society of the Sons of St George, *History of the Society of the Sons of St George, Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: T. C. Knauff, 1923); Roney, 'First Movers in Every Useful Undertaking', pp. 335, 377-78.

⁵³ See Scots Thistle Society of Philadelphia, *Constitution of the Scots Thistle Society of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: John Bioren, 1799); Roney, 'First Movers in Every Useful Undertaking', pp. 49-50, 53, 100-1, 175-77, 189, 272-73, 276-77, 359-60.

⁵⁴ See HC, MS 1186, Box 1, quarterly meeting, 7 December 1807. See also Roney, 'First Movers in Every Useful Undertaking', pp. 101, 370. See also B. Pfleger, *Ethnicity Matters: A History of the German Society of Pennsylvania* (Washington DC: German Historical Institute, 2006).

⁵⁵ John H. Campbell, *History of the Friendly Sons of St Patrick and of the Hibernian Society for the Relief of Emigrants from Ireland: March 17, 1771-March 17, 1892* (Philadelphia: Hibernian Society, 1892); Roney, 'First Movers in Every Useful Undertaking', pp. 44, 377.

⁵⁶ HC, MS 1186, Box 1, quarterly meeting, 3 June 1811, original emphasis.

⁵⁷ Jones, *Welsh Society Charter*, p. 13.

conveyed to the Welsh Society.⁵⁸ More striking was the fact that the growth in the number of Welsh emigrants during the nineteenth century forced them to sell off the old burial ground and purchase the much larger Mount Moriah cemetery.

The Welsh Society was composed of well-to-do merchants, religious leaders, attorneys, and other professionals. They invested enormous amounts of time and energy to the service of the Society. Typically, Richard Price (1736–1822), who had been a member of the St David's Society before and after the Revolution, was 'actively instrumental' in the organization of the new Welsh Society in the late 1790s. He was one of the first stewards – an office he held to his death – and was 'distinguished by activity and fidelity in the discharge of his duties, and by ardent devotion to the objects and interests of the Institution'. Moreover,

the kindness of his affection, the mildness and serenity of his temper, and the cheerfulness which marked his social hilarity to the last period of a protracted life, will long be in remembrance and the anniversary of the Society will not return without the recollection of its having been cheered, for so many revolutions, by the heartfelt joy which it always awakened in the breast of Mr Price.⁵⁹

Collectively and individually they anchored the Welsh community at the heart of respectable Philadelphia society and the influence of key members was felt at all levels of the political and judicial system. Among them were Clement Biddle (1740–1814), a Quaker merchant, who in 1776, along with his brother Owen (1737–1799),⁶⁰ abandoned pacifism and was actively involved in the war against the British.⁶¹ He joined the 'Free Quakers', organized the 'Quaker Blues' – a company of volunteers in 1775 – and became known as the 'Quaker soldier'. As a colonel in George Washington's army he took part in various campaigns, most notably the battles at Princeton, Germantown, Trenton, Brandywine and Valley Forge. Politically adroit, he was instrumental in drafting the revolutionary State Constitution (1776) and framing the Federal Constitution (1787). President Washington also appointed him as Marshall of Pennsylvania. Morgan John Rhees (1760–1804), another prominent member,

⁵⁸ HC, MS 1186, Box 1, quarterly meeting, 1 September 1834; 28 February 1835 includes the rules governing the 'Welsh Burying ground'.

⁵⁹ Ibid., quarterly meeting, 2 September 1822.

⁶⁰ They were the sons of John and Sarah (Owen) Biddle. For additional details see Library of the Society of Friends, London, unpublished Dictionary of Quaker Biography (Biddle, Clement; Biddle, Owen); Henry D. Biddle, *A Sketch of Owen Biddle [. . .] a list of his descendants* (Philadelphia, privately published, 1892).

⁶¹ On 25 October 1765, in response to the Stamp Act, they signed up to the 'non-importation resolutions'.

was a Baptist minister from Glamorgan who had been deeply influenced by French revolutionary ideas to the extent that he established 'The Welsh Treasury', a body which attacked the immorality of the church and state. Like so many of his fellow dissenters he was forced to seek a more enlightened refuge in America. In 1798, he purchased a large tract of land for his followers in Pennsylvania which he called Cambria and named his capital 'Beulah'.⁶² Robert Wharton (1757–1834) was a member of a merchant family who originally came from Westmoreland in England. He was elected mayor of Philadelphia fifteen times between 1798 and 1824, and elected Brigadier-General of the State militia. He was President of the renowned Fox-Hunting Club of Gloucester, New Jersey, a position he held until 1818; President of the Schuylkill Fishing Company between 1812 and 1828; and a founding member and Vice-President of the Washington Benevolent Society. In 1796, as a Philadelphia alderman, he helped to contain a riot among sailors in the city and two years later was effective in helping to disperse the Walnut Street prison rioters.⁶³

Many early members of the Society were involved in the American Revolution at the highest levels, but curiously there is hardly any mention of their military rank or role during this momentous period in the Society's minutes. The first President of the Society was Samuel Meredith (1741–1817) who, at first glance, seems to have been a prosperous merchant and property speculator. Yet on further investigation this son of a Welsh Quaker from Radnorshire turns out to be a close confidant of George Washington and had, along with others, financially supported the war effort from 1776. Meredith became a general in the Continental Army during the War of Independence and fought at Trenton and Brandywine. He was twice a member of the Pennsylvania Colonial Assembly as well as a Member of the Continental Congress between 1786 and 1788. More significantly, Meredith was the first United States Treasurer under the new Constitution, a position he held from 11 September 1789 until his resignation on 31 October 1801.⁶⁴

The Society was to be a model for 'true patriotism' as these men accepted that they were 'Citizens of the World and the Nation',⁶⁵ but with a special tie to their Welsh ancestry. This was despite those events which had forced them to sever links with the British state. Although the Society formally honoured

⁶² G. A. Williams, *The Search for Beulah Land: The Welsh and the Atlantic Revolution* (London: Croom Helm, 1979); H. M. Davies, "'Very Different Springs of Uneasiness': Emigration from Wales to the United States of America During the 1790s", *Welsh History Review*, 15 (1991), 373–6.

⁶³ For details of Robert Wharton see E. D. Baltzell, *Philadelphia Gentlemen: The Making of a National Upper Class* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979), pp. 87–8.

⁶⁴ See *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), vol. 6 (entry: Meredith, Samuel).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

a saint and the previous body had largely been a Protestant organisation,⁶⁶ the new Welsh Society insisted that 'the religious or political opinions of a candidate shall not influence his election'.⁶⁷ There were many eminent Philadelphians, businessmen, judges, and attorneys, whose Welsh origins were questionable but who were still admitted to the membership.⁶⁸ For instance, George Clymer (1739–1813) was a member of the Philadelphia Committee of Safety in 1773 and signed the Declaration of Independence. He was elected to the Continental Congress and remained in Philadelphia during Sir Henry Clinton's occupation.⁶⁹ He was twice elected to the Pennsylvania legislature (1780 and 1784) and in 1787 represented the state at the Constitutional Convention before his election to the United States Congress two years later. He was later the President of Philadelphia Bank and Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.⁷⁰ Thus, as Horatio Gates Jones acknowledged, the mercantile, legal and clerical, and medical professions were all represented in the Society 'by names "familiar as household words"'.⁷¹

It is interesting to consider why men of this calibre involved themselves in Welsh associational life, but most obviously for the Welsh, Pennsylvania, and particularly Philadelphia, was their second home. The long history of emigration, along with positions of influence in the colony, had instilled a sense of comradeship and an acceptance that an association of the Welsh in Philadelphia could continue to promote 'love and friendship'. In a meeting in 1824, the committee called on members to 'duly appreciate the objects for which they associated [and] remember that social and continual intercourse is a strong tie to hold them together',⁷² while a later president, Horatio Gates Jones, is said to have been 'an enthusiastic lover of Wales, the home of his fathers'. This patriotism was, to him at least, 'a religious sentiment'.⁷³ It would appear that the later Society was 'the direct, lineal, continuous successor of the Sons of the Ancient Britons'.⁷⁴ This new formulation of the Society embraced the aims of its precursor and evinced similar charitable objectives:

⁶⁶ The Ancient Britons derived much of its support from St David's Church in Radnor.

⁶⁷ HC, MS 1186, 'Constitution', rule 3; see Appendix.

⁶⁸ See also Burton Alva Konkle, 'Enos Bronson, 1774–1823', *PMHB*, 57 (1933), 355–8.

⁶⁹ His prominent position in the Continental Congress made him the target for reprisals. After the Battle of Brandywine in 1777 the British troops destroyed his family residence in Chester County.

⁷⁰ For a useful study of Clymer, see Jerry Grundfest, 'George Clymer, Philadelphia Revolutionary, 1739–1813' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Columbia, 1973).

⁷¹ Jones, *Welsh Society Charter*, p. 10.

⁷² HC, MS 1186, Box 1, annual meeting, 1 March 1824. This sentiment was repeated the following March when the clerk impressed upon members the necessity of increasing membership. *Ibid.*, annual meeting, 1 March 1825.

⁷³ He was President of the Society and a Pennsylvania State senator between 1875 and 1882.

⁷⁴ Jones, *Welsh Society Charter*, pp. 9–10.

To revive and increase social intercourse and mutual attachments are objects worthy the greatest Characters, when combined with benevolent Intentions, the attachment is still more desirable and the cement becomes more cohesive.⁷⁵

High on the list of stated priorities was the belief that the Society ought to provide charitable assistance to the needy.⁷⁶ Charity, the Society recognized, began at home, but should also be dispensed to the 'remotest parts of the Earth'. This is fully articulated in the preamble to the Constitution of 4 February 1799 which stated:

'Ye know the Heart of a Stranger' it is as susceptible of Impressions as the sensitive plant, on his first arrival in a new Country it is of great Importance to himself and the community that he form favourable Ideas of its Inhabitants, and be attached to his situation; that his Love of Country may center in that spot where his Person and Property are protected and where Liberty and Hospitality have made their residence. We shall therefore discharge one of the first Duties enjoined on us as Men, by taking our Emigrant brother by the Hand instructing him in what he is ignorant of and providing for his Immediate necessities.⁷⁷

There have been many studies of Welsh migration to America, including Pennsylvania, notably Bill Jones's study of Scranton which provides insights into causation, settlement patterns and occupational profile.⁷⁸ Welsh migrants invariably required assistance, financial and/or psychological, to enable them to make a new home in America. In the case of John Jones, formerly of Montgomeryshire, he appealed to the Society in June 1828 to help him secure work as an assistant apothecary.⁷⁹ Any poor Welsh person could draw upon the Society's benevolence, particularly those who were vulnerable such as the

⁷⁵ HC, MS 1186, Box 1, 'The First Constitution and Rules adopted by the Welch Society' (see Appendix).

⁷⁶ Ibid., preamble to the Constitution; Jones, *Welsh Society Charter*, p. 9. See also Priscilla Ferguson Clement, *Welfare and the Poor in the Nineteenth-Century City: Philadelphia, 1800–1854* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1985).

⁷⁷ HC, MS 1186, Box 1, 'The First Constitution and Rules adopted by the Welch Society'.

⁷⁸ For details of nineteenth-century Welsh emigration see William D. Jones, *Wales in America: Scranton and the Welsh 1860–1920* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press; Scranton, Pa.: University of Scranton Press, 1993), and his "'Raising the Wind": Emigrating from Wales to the USA in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries', Canolfan Uwchefrydiau Cymry America, Prifysgol Caerdydd (The Cardiff Centre for Welsh American Studies, Cardiff University), Annual Public Lecture, 2003. Published on-line in 2004, see <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/welsh/resources/RaisingTheWind.pdf> [accessed 17 May 2009].

⁷⁹ HC, MS 1186, Box 1, quarterly meeting, 2 June 1828.

sick, elderly, widowed or orphaned. On arrival at Newcastle, Pennsylvania, or in Philadelphia itself, those who were sick or required some financial support were identified and offered assistance. The first reference in the Society's minutes appears on 1 September 1800:

The Ship *Thomas* at New castle with nearly two hundred persons – all of whom have paid their passage [. . .] but in consequence of their arrival additional expence was incurred to assist them on their way to the City, and towards their support until suitable situations were obtained.

Records show that almost all of the passengers were settled independently, apart from Elizabeth Owen whose husband had died a few days after their arrival. Elizabeth, who had five children and was heavily pregnant with her sixth child, remained in the care of the Society. At the same time the Society satisfied themselves that the thirty passengers on board the *Lavinia* which docked at Philadelphia did not require their assistance.⁸⁰ The following December, it was noted that Elizabeth Owen had been housed and provided for, but the family of Lewis Miles were in dire straits. Lewis, his wife and seven children, had become so sick 'as to create great alarm in the neighbourhood'.⁸¹ Consequently, the family were housed by the Society at the Lazaretto in Delaware County. Built in 1799, this was the first quarantine station for the Port of Philadelphia. The care of sick migrants was an on-going concern, for as the clerk observed, their ill-health was due 'in a great measure [. . .] to the length and severity of their passage'.⁸²

A year later, in December 1801, the Society elected Jacob Broome of Wilmington as an honorary member. They presented him with a certificate 'for his humane attention to the Welsh emigrants who arrived at Wilmington in the ship *Liberty*'. Equally, the Society gave Dr Thomas C. James a silver plate and \$150 for his services 'to the unfortunate sick Emigrants at the City Hospital on the Banks of the Schuylkill'.⁸³ Beyond the perils of trans-Atlantic crossings, migrants were ill-equipped to deal with the Pennsylvanian climate. In December 1803, Joshua Sylvanus was 'afflicted with lunacy in

⁸⁰ Ibid., quarterly meeting, 1 September 1800.

⁸¹ Ibid., quarterly meeting, 1 December 1800.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid., quarterly meeting, 7 December 1801. For details of the establishment of hospitals in Philadelphia c.1751 onwards see Thomas G. Morton and Frank Woodbury, *The History of the Pennsylvania Hospital 1751–1895* (Philadelphia: Times Printing House, 1895); Francis R. Packard and Florence M. Greim, *Some Account of the Pennsylvania Hospital from 1751 to 1938*, 2nd edn (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Hospital, 1957); Gary B. Nash, 'Poverty and Poor Relief in Pre-Revolutionary Philadelphia', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, 33.1 (January 1976), 7–8.

consequence of a stroke from the sun' and was taken to hospital. He died two days later and the Society paid his hospital fees of \$5.05.⁸⁴

In the early decades of the nineteenth century emigration continued unabated and so did the demands on the Society.⁸⁵ Assistance with travel, accommodation, medical expenses including hospitalization, employment, and funeral costs were all met under the Society's benevolent remit. The disbursements were substantial, especially in 1820 when \$538.58 was expended in helping more than seventy people. William P. Williams was singled out for particular praise for giving a home to 'forty-one, aged and youth' at various times.⁸⁶ Recipients included David Jeffreys who was given financial support to travel to Pittsburgh. He secured suitable employment, repaid the Society the costs of his relocation expenses and, subsequently, in March 1822 the committee assisted the passage of his family from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh into 'the arms of an anxious husband and father'. That same month the committee gave Thomas Watkins and his four daughters twenty dollars to help them travel to Edensburg in Cambria County to join their family.⁸⁷ It was this level of support that in 1823 paid for a physician and medicines for the Jennings family, and the hospital costs of both Joseph Jenkins and his pregnant wife.⁸⁸ The Rogers of Montgomeryshire were typical of those whose ill-health placed them in a vulnerable position. When members visited his home in 1828 they found the family in 'great distress', suffering from sickness, without any medical treatment and 'scarcely strength in either to assist the others to a glass of water'. It was largely thanks to the Society's financial support that they recovered from their illnesses.⁸⁹ The Society was frequently called upon to defray the costs of funerals, including the purchase of a coffin, funeral clothes and burial. In December 1821, the committee who had taken responsibility for the elderly David Davies made all the provisions for his funeral after his death.⁹⁰

Women were often the main beneficiaries of the Society's relief, particularly when they were widowed or bereaved. In September 1826, the Society gave ten dollars to Elizabeth Lewis, a widow with four children whose husband had died on the journey west from Philadelphia, and helped her secure

⁸⁴ HC, MS 1186, Box 1, quarterly meeting, 5 December 1803.

⁸⁵ For examples, see Monique Bourque, 'Populating the Poorhouse: A Reassessment of Poor Relief in the Antebellum Delaware Valley', *Pennsylvania History. A Journal of Mid-Atlantic History*, 70.3 (Summer 2003), 235–67.

⁸⁶ HC, MS 1186, Box 1, annual meeting, 1 March 1820.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, annual meeting, 1 March 1822.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, quarterly meeting, 1 September 1823. The family lived two miles outside Philadelphia on the Ridge Road.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, quarterly meeting, 1 December 1828.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, quarterly meeting, 3 December 1821.

employment as a nurse. Until she established herself, the committee continued to provide financial support.⁹¹ The sum of ten dollars was advanced to another widow, Ann Comey, formerly of Llanfihangel Genau'r-glyn. Her husband had left home in a small open boat to travel a regular journey of fifteen miles, but was presumed drowned. Although her cousin in Pittsburgh was willing to provide for her and her family, Mrs Comey had no funds. After some deliberation the stewards agreed to cover these costs.⁹² Women migrants not only applied to the Society for food, shelter, and medical treatment but also for protection, especially in legal matters about which they had limited knowledge. The Society had the necessary expertise to secure the release of Bridget Williams from prison in 1820 and recover her wages and clothing. By expending ten dollars and fifty cents they 'saved her from [the] further molestation' of her employer.⁹³

Emigration to Philadelphia was, however, not always the best solution. In 1821, William Prosser received twenty dollars to help him to return to Wales.⁹⁴ Equally, those who had secured passage to New York were assisted on their way to Pittsburgh to avoid them becoming a burden by remaining in either New York or Philadelphia where linguistic difficulties would have made it difficult to secure employment. In all, \$145 was expended and this included food and medicines.⁹⁵ All claims for assistance were carefully assessed. If the claimant was infirm or employment was not available, he/she would be assisted in kind to minimize the burden on the Society. Recipients had to satisfy the conditions outlined under the Society's constitution, notably that assistance was normally restricted to those residing within the boundaries of Philadelphia. In December 1822, John Evans, 'a distressed Welshman' from Baltimore whose wife had died of yellow fever, appealed to the Society after travelling to Philadelphia. A bout of illness forced him to return to his family of seven children, but the Society was unable to cover the costs.⁹⁶ The Society also became increasingly concerned that there was a misapprehension in Wales that they would provide financial assistance for onward travel to Pittsburgh or into Ohio. They wrote to various clergymen and dignitaries in Wales explaining the conditions of relief in order to 'prevent persons emigrating to this country from coming here under the false impression that they can [rely] totally on the Society'.⁹⁷ In March 1824, it was noted that the letter had been widely circulated to various newspapers,⁹⁸ and members agreed that they could do no more than show the emigrants 'the best and

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, quarterly meeting, 4 September 1826; annual meeting, 1 March 1827.

⁹² *Ibid.*, quarterly meeting, 1 September 1828.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, quarterly meeting, 5 June 1820; annual meeting, 1 March 1821.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, quarterly meeting, 3 September 1821.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, quarterly meeting, 1 September 1823.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, quarterly meeting, 2 December 1822.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, quarterly meeting, 1 December 1823.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, annual meeting, 1 March 1824.

cheapest methods of proceeding to their destinations'.⁹⁹ The misrepresentation of the Society's charitable remit, however, continued. In June 1829, Hannah Lewis and her daughter arrived from Swansea with a letter from her sister who had settled in Lawrenceburg, Indiana, providing the following advice:

If possible enter a vessel to Philadelphia, if you are scarce of money and as there is provision made at Philad to help the Welsh people to any part of the United States, you must enquire for some Welsh family and they will tell you what to do, as there is money there to help the Welsh people on their way.

Clearly the committee were anxious to dispel these rumours. They sent a strongly-worded letter to Lewis's sister counselling that she was ill-advised to 'give such information to her connections in Wales, observing that such misrepresentations would have a tendency to mislead a number of persons to come over, only to be disappointed'.¹⁰⁰ By the mid-1830s, the Society faced similar demands for assistance. Members were warned to be on their guard against those who applied for help, especially those who falsely claimed to be Welsh.¹⁰¹

This analysis of Welsh associational life has advanced some insights into the long history of emigration to Pennsylvania, and how the Welsh strove to retain their cultural identity. These efforts brought together a dynamic group of the wealthiest and most influential sections of Philadelphia society. Cultural networking was crucial to the successful establishment of businesses and professional careers in this fast-growing commercial city. At first sight, the declining use of the Welsh language would seem to suggest that the settlers were prepared to relinquish their heritage and culture in order to assimilate into Pennsylvania life. And yet, it could be argued, this actually spurred Welsh migrants into proactive mode and led to the creation of a cluster of Welsh associations.¹⁰² As Philadelphians they were under some pressure to demonstrate an unequivocal loyalty to their city, defending it as well as contributing to its growth and prosperity.

The benevolent objectives that lay at the heart of both the Society of the Sons of Ancient Britons and the Welsh Society of Philadelphia served to unify otherwise scattered individuals and bring the Welsh community together. They also offered a refuge and cultural home to those who travelled to Philadelphia thereafter. The Society managed its affairs judiciously and soon

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, quarterly meeting, 7 September 1824.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, quarterly meeting, 1 June 1829.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, annual meeting, 1 March 1836.

¹⁰² Welsh migration in the nineteenth century offered new opportunities to privilege the Welsh language and heritage. These are recounted in Jones, 'The Welsh Language and Welsh Identity in a Pennsylvanian Community', *op. cit.*

accrued a healthy surplus revenue. In dispensing charity, members were able to assist their fellow Welsh migrants and it is clear from the Society's records that this endeavour sprang from generous impulses. Nonetheless, this level of conspicuous philanthropy also served to profile the Society's status and respectability. After all, the presence of too many indigent Welsh migrants in what was perceived to be the cradle of government was undesirable, and any suggestion that the Welsh were disreputable citizens had to be avoided at all costs. Restrictions were put in place to ensure that demand did not exceed resources, but in the main those genuinely in need were rarely refused assistance. Influenced by higher ideals to serve others, the members readily believed in 'the golden chain of Fellowship' and sought to provide advice and relief to their compatriots whenever and wherever they needed it.¹⁰³

APPENDIX

The First Constitution and Rules adopted by the Welsh Society of Philadelphia (c.1798)

To Welchmen and their Descendants within the United States of America

The Spirit of Migration from Wales, till of late years having partly subsided; the Friendship and Fraternization which usually existed between the ancient Britons and this Country became thereby less fervent than at former periods

To revive and increase social Intercourse and mutual attachments are objects worthy the greatest Characters; when combined with benevolent Intentions, the attainment is still more desirable and the cement becomes more cohesive

To be good Citizens of the World and the Nation we live in, yet to have Special Fellowship with the Descendants of our Ancestors, is perfectly consistent with true Patriotism and universal Philanthropy. That Charity which begins at Home diffuses its Influence to the remotest parts of the Earth.

"Ye know the Heart of a Stranger" it is as susceptible of Impressions as the sensitive plant, on his first arrival in a new Country it is of great importance to himself and the community that he form favourable Ideas of its Inhabitants, and be attached to his situation; that his Love of Country may center in that spot where his Person and Property are protected and where Liberty and Hospitality have made their residence. We shall therefore discharge one of the first Duties enjoined on us as Men, by taking our Emigrant brother by the

¹⁰³ HC, MS 1186, Box 1, preamble to the first Constitution. The first rule was to have 'a seal emblematic of its charitable designs'.

Hand instructing him in what he is ignorant of and providing for his Immediate necessities.

Influenced by such motives – that the golden chain of Fellowship may be brightend & that their compatriots may receive advice & Relief the Subscribers have adopted the following

CONSTITUTION

- 1st. The Institution shall be called ‘The Welsh Society for the advice and assistance of Emigrants from Wales’ and shall have a Seal emblematic of its charitable designs.
 2. Every Member of the Society shall pay an annual subscription of one dollar and upon signing the Constitution and paying four dollars shall receive his Certificate of Membership. Any Person known to be of Welch descent and proposed as a candidate by a Member shall be balloted for at the next meeting and if the votes of two thirds of the membership shall appear in the Affirmative such candidate shall be declared duly elected. Previous to the next meeting after the election of any member he shall sign the Constitution and pay into the hands of the Treasurer four dollars when he shall receive a Certificate of his admission and the Seal of the Society signed by the President and attested by the Secretary. Honorary Members shall be admitted by the same rules.
 3. The Religious or Political opinions of a candidate shall not Influence his election; nor controversies on those subjects be introduced whilst the President is in the chair, under the Penalty of five dollars for the use of the Society.
 4. The Society shall meet on the first Monday in June, September and December at a place appointed, to enact the necessary Laws. Twenty one Members shall form a quorum two thirds of whom shall have the power to expel a member for disorderly behaviour. And on the first day of March annually convene to elect by ballot a President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, Register, two Counsellors, two Physicians and Seven Stewards, the whole to form an acting Committee to transact and execute all the affairs of the Establishment.
 5. The President, (or in his absence the Vice President) shall take the chair and preserve order at all the meetings – put all questions to vote which shall be decided by a majority, sign the Laws and see them executed and on particular occasions at the request of two thirds of the Committee shall call extra Conventions.
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The Treasurer shall take charge of all Property and give such Security as the Society requires, render a just statement of his accounts at the annual meetings, pay all orders signed by the Chairman of the Committee or (in case of imminent distress) by any two of its members provided the sum do not exceed five dollars.

The Secretary shall keep fair records of all Transactions of the Society and Committee give notice of &c.

The Register shall record all applications for advice or employment and advertise in certain cases for suitable situations.

In all difficult cases opinions of the Counsellors shall be taken, but no suit shall be commenced unless agreed to by a majority of the Committee present.

The Physicians shall at the request of the Committee visit the Sick and administer to their Relief; or if the case be urgent on application to them by any two of its members.

The Stewards also shall pay particular attention to the Sick and distressed and cooperate with the other officers in their respective duties.

6. The Committee shall meet once every Month to receive applications and deliberate on the report of its officers and sub committees, seven members shall form a quorum.
7. In case of the absence of any of the officers temporary ones may be elected; and every absentee whether officer or member residing in the City or suburbs shall forfeir the sum of twenty five cents for every omission except at the annual Meeting he shall [pay] one dollar.

No alteration or amendment shall be made on the above Constitution without the consent of two thirds of the members which Improvement shall be proposed three months prior to its discussion.
