

The Lives of the London Welsh in the Mid-Eighteenth Century: Evidence from the Old Bailey

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In a previous article published in the *Transactions* in 2011, I examined some aspects of the criminal activity of the London-Welsh in the mid-eighteenth century. Using data from the records of the Old Bailey, my study revealed that thirty-six Welsh persons were tried for crimes of felony in the City of London and the county of Middlesex in the years between 1730 and 1780.¹ This new study will continue to look at the thirty-six Welsh persons, but will concentrate on specific aspects of their lives. In particular, the study will enquire: where did the defendants come from and in which areas of London did they settle? What were the defendants' ages? Were London-Welsh defendants professional or fulltime criminals? And to what extent did poverty contribute to the reason why the London-Welsh committed, or were accused to have committed, their crimes?

It is important to note to begin with that information about place, age, and social and occupational status are patchy. With regard to age, for example, for the majority of the eighteenth century defendants were not asked to reveal their age or such information was not recorded. This situation only changed in the last quarter of the century when, in 1776, the American War brought an end to transportation of convicts to the American colonies which, in turn, filled the jails with accused offenders and convicts. A new method of punishment was needed – either a spell of hard labour in the hulks or a period in the county jail or house of correction. It has been suggested that enquiring about age was an aid used by judges to sentence convicted offenders. To begin with, only the ages of those found guilty were recorded, but from 1782 to 1787 the ages of all those tried at court were recorded.² Therefore, for our period, there is no systematic or fully satisfactory guide regarding the ages of defendants. Nevertheless, by searching through the records of the *Old Bailey Session Papers (OBSP)* and the *Ordinary of Newgate's Accounts*,³ one can start to gather information, albeit sporadically, regarding place, age and occupation statuses of London-Welsh offenders.

- 1 Tegid Rhys Williams, 'Crime, the Welsh and the Old Bailey: The Criminality of the Welsh in London, 1730–1780', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 17 (2011), 61–79. This study is based on the electronic database *Proceedings of the Old Bailey Online* <<http://www.oldbaileyonline.org>> [accessed 15 August 2010].
- 2 J. M. Beattie, *Crime and the courts in England, 1660–1800* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 243–4; P. King, *Crime, justice and discretion in England, 1740–1820* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 169–70.
- 3 *The Ordinary of Newgate's Accounts* was a sister publication of the Old Bailey Proceedings. The *Accounts* contain biographies of the prisoners executed at Tyburn, which was regularly published during the century following the inception of the Old Bailey Proceedings. See Clive Emsley, Tim Hitchcock and Robert Shoemaker, 'The Proceedings – Ordinary of Newgate's Accounts', *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* <<http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/static/Ordinary-accounts.jsp>> [accessed 15 October 2012]; P. Linebaugh, 'The Ordinary of Newgate and his Account' in *Crime in England 1550–1800*, ed. by J. S. Cockburn (London: Methuen, 1977), pp. 246–69.

In fact, accurate data on the proportion of London's population that were migrants are also rather patchy. One contemporary noted in 1757 that it was 'very probable that two thirds of the grown persons at any time in London come from distant parts'.⁴ Although London consistently attracted migrants in very large numbers, our knowledge of migration patterns is incomplete. However, one study argues that the pattern of migration of Indentured Servants to London between 1683 and 1775 mirrors London migration pattern as a whole. It is suggested that Indentured Servants came from a range of social backgrounds and are therefore considered to be representative of migrants generally. Of 7,666 Indentured Servants bound in London from 1683 to 1775, 48% came from London; 11.3% and 11% came from the Home Counties and the Midlands; 9.2% and 9.1% came from the South and West, and the Northern Counties; 4% came from the Eastern Counties; while 1% came from Wales and 6.5% came from other areas.⁵ It is interesting to see that in relation to crime and migration, Peter King has noted that,

Given the relative vulnerability of migrants it is not surprising, perhaps, that the majority of the offenders appearing before the Old Bailey in 1791–1793 were not born in the Metropolis. Migrants made up 58 per cent of the accused, and 56 per cent of the female accused.⁶

The reason why the Welsh moved to London has been discussed elsewhere,⁷ but from where did they come? The evidence of the OBSP regarding where the Welsh defendants were born, or from where they came, is rather meagre. Nevertheless, of the thirty-six persons, it is possible to locate where sixteen came from (table 1). With regard to the other defendants, where it is not possible to locate exactly where they came from, the evidence largely states that they were born or came from Wales or were described as being Welsh. Two of the defendants came from London but were of Welsh descent. George Basset was born in the parish of St. James's, Clerkenwell in London, but we know he came from a Welsh family because he attended the London-Welsh Charity School, as did John Thomas.⁸ The school was founded in 1718 to educate, clothe and apprentice the sons of poor Welsh parents

4 George Burrington, *An Answer to Dr William Brackenridge's Letter concerning the Number of Inhabitants within the London Bills of Mortality* (London, 1757). Historical research seems to give fairly similar figures. See for example John Landers, *Death and the Metropolis: Studies in the Demographic History of London, 1670–1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 47; P. King, 'Female Offenders, Work and Life-Cycle Change in Late Eighteenth-Century London', *Continuity and Change*, 11.1, (1996), p. 72.

5 J. Wareing, 'Migration to London and Transatlantic Emigration of Indentured Servants, 1683–1775', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 7 (1981), 356–78.

6 King, 'Female Offenders, Work and Life-Cycle Change', p. 72.

7 Williams, 'Crime, the Welsh and the Old Bailey', 63; Emrys Jones, 'The Age of Societies', in *The Welsh in London, 1500–2000*, ed. by Emrys Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), pp. 54–5.

8 Old Bailey Session Papers (hereafter OBSP), 8th April 1752, George Basset (t17520408–43) and Ordinary's Account, 27th April 1752; OBSP, 6th December 1780, John Thomas, (t17801206–23).

living in London and Westminster and without a settlement.⁹ If the evidence of table 1 is to be taken as a real reflection of where the Welsh defendants came from, it is possible to conclude that the majority of defendants came from the eastern counties of Wales. However, as the sample only includes sixteen defendants, the conclusion can only be made tentatively.

Table 1: County/Location of origin of the Welsh who appeared at the Old Bailey and type of crime committed, 1730–1830

Location	Number
Anglesey	0
Brecknockshire	1
Caernarfonshire	0
Cardiganshire	0
Carmarthenshire	0
Denbighshire	4
Flintshire	3
Glamorgan	0
Merioneth	0
Monmouth	4
Montgomeryshire	1
Pembrokeshire	1
Radnorshire	0
London	2

Furthermore, the ability or inability of the Welsh defendants to speak Welsh and/or English does not help us to narrow down where they came from. The evidence suggests that the London-Welsh defendants were able to speak English to some degree or other. There were a few who noted that they could not, or had difficulty with English,¹⁰ but the records show that they were able to communicate effectively in the language. It is interesting to see, then, that by the end of the eighteenth century as much as 90% of the inhabitants of Wales were able to speak Welsh and possibly as much as 70% were still monolingual.¹¹ However, some parts of Wales were becoming much more anglicized. The areas to the west of Wales, such as the counties of Anglesey, Caernarfon, Merioneth, Cardigan, and Carmarthen were

9 Sarah Lloyd, 'Agents in their Own Concerns? Charity and the Economy of Makeshifts in Eighteenth-Century Britain', in *The Poor in England, 1700–1850: An Economy of Makeshifts*, ed. by Steven King and Alannah Tomkins (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 100–36.

10 OBSP, 26th February 1746, Jane Evans (t17460226–17); 26th October 1752, Elizabeth Rowland (t17521026–47); 20th October 1779, Jane Williams (t17791020–23); 12th January 1780, Jane Williams (t17800112–23).

11 Geraint H. Jenkins, Richard Suggett, Eryn M. White, 'The Welsh Language in Early Modern Wales', in *The Welsh Language before the Industrial Revolution*, ed. by Geraint H. Jenkins (Cardiff: Cardiff University Press, 1997), pp. 47–8.

better able to hold on to the Welsh language. On the other hand, there seems to have been a narrow band of bilingualism running the whole length of the border between Wales and England in the east.¹²

At first glance then, there does seem to be some evidence to support a view that the Welsh defendants came from the eastern counties of Wales. This evidence is based on the correlation that all of the London-Welsh defendants could speak English and that the majority of inhabitants in Wales who could speak English came from the eastern counties. However, this correlation seems to paint too simple a picture. Although there was an obvious east-west divide regarding the ability of the inhabitants of Wales to speak English, this is a simplistic view of the geography of the Welsh and English languages in eighteenth-century Wales. Some regions were much more complex and there were pockets of Englishness in many parts of Wales. It is further weakened when factors such as seasonal migration are considered. Seasonal harvesters, drovers, soldiers, and sailors spent time in England, and must have acquired some knowledge of English along the way.¹³ Furthermore, and significantly, it has been noted that the first priority for migrants to London was to come to terms with the new language rather than concerning themselves with the preservation of their mother tongue. Emrys Jones noted, ‘A break with their own culture is a necessary condition of succeeding in a new life in a new country... there were more pressing needs than preserving the language.’¹⁴

There were other significant factors as well. Most of the migrants, it seems, migrated alone. This meant that, unlike other migrant communities such as the Jewish and Irish, Welsh migrants did not cluster together. Possibly the reason for this was that there was no basis to create a Welsh community in exile because of the relatively limited numbers. Consequently, the incentive and need to learn English were even greater, which made the possibility of preserving the Welsh language less likely.¹⁵ Furthermore, many of the London-Welsh defendants were long-term migrants, that is, they had been in London for several months or a few years.¹⁶ This must have been a powerful incentive for them to learn English, especially if they came for economic or commercial reasons. It seems that most Welsh migrants were unmarried and travelled alone. Consequently, many migrants married outside the Welsh community into non-Welsh-speaking families which inevitably resulted in the use of English as the language of the household, further reducing the potential number of Welsh-speaking homes.¹⁷ Therefore, it is not possible to say with any conviction where the majority of London-Welsh defendants came from. Of those we do know about, the evidence suggests that they came from the eastern counties of Wales, but this suggestion

12 Ibid., pp. 50–60; Emrys Jones, ‘The Welsh Language in England c. 1800–1914’, in *Language and Community in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Geraint H. Jenkins (Cardiff: Cardiff University Press, 1998), pp. 232–3; Geraint H. Jenkins, *The Foundation of Modern Wales, 1682–1780* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 397–9.

13 Jenkins, Suggett, White, ‘The Welsh Language in Early Modern Wales’, p. 53.

14 Jones, ‘The Welsh Language in England’, pp. 232–3.

15 Ibid., p. 236.

16 Williams, ‘Crime, the Welsh and the Old Bailey’, pp. 74–5.

17 Jones, ‘The Welsh Language in England’, pp. 232–3.

can only be made cautiously.

If the OBSP do not state the locations where most of the London-Welsh defendants came from, do they leave clues as to where in London they settled? As previously noted, studies looking at the settlement patterns of the London-Welsh in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have concluded that the Welsh did not cluster and create close-knit communities – unlike other migrants groups, such as the Irish, who could be found clustered together in St Giles in the Fields and Seven Dials,¹⁸ and the Huguenots, who made Soho in the west and Spitalfields in the east their own.¹⁹ It seems, therefore, that the Welsh were able to mix thoroughly and were absorbed into London life. They felt no need for mutual support, which is often characteristic of ethnic and migrants groups. The Welsh were a socially assimilated community.²⁰

Of the thirty-six Welsh defendants, it is possible to locate where in London twenty-two settled. This evidence suggests that the vast majority of London-Welsh defendants were scattered all across London and its urban environs, namely the City of London, Westminster, and the urban hinterlands of Middlesex (table 2).

Table 2: Areas in which London-Welsh Defendants Settled, 1730–80

Area of London	London-Welsh Defendants
City of London	3
Westminster	7
Middlesex (total)	12
Urban	8
Rural	4
Urban Surrey	1
Southwark	1

However, a few defendants were found further out of London, in areas which were at that time considered rural or at least semi-rural. For example, John Carr lived at Finchley, while George Price lived in Isleworth – west of London in the county of Middlesex.²¹ It is important to note that many of the defendants were mobile, living and moving from one place to another, primarily to acquire work. But for the purpose of this study, only their residence as defendants is considered. Two defendants are recorded as having two different addresses. George Bassett is noted to have been born in and come from St James's, Clerkenwell, Middlesex,

18 Clive Emsley, Tim Hitchcock and Robert Shoemaker, 'Communities – Irish London', *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* <<http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/static/Irish.jsp>> [accessed 15 October 2012]. By the early nineteenth century Irish migrants could be found living in all parts of the capital with the exception of the City.

19 Jerry White, *London in the Eighteenth Century* (London: The Bodley Head, 2012), pp. 137–8.

20 Jones, 'The Welsh Language in England', p. 248.

21 OBSP, 5th April 1741, John Carr, (t17410405–7) and Ordinary's Account, 4th May 1741; OBSP, 13th January 1738, George Price (t17380113–10) and Ordinary's Account, 8th March 1738.

but living in St Martin's le Grand in the City of London. Edward Phipps is noted to have been living in two places – a house between Mother Red Cap and Mother Black Cap (Camden Town), in Middlesex, and at Monmouth Street, Westminster, where his brother kept a clothes shop.²² Only two of the London-Welsh defendants lived south of the river. They were James Belford who lived at Blackman Street in Southwark, and John Parry of Vauxhall, then an urban region of Surrey.

The fact that only two came from south of the river seems at first a little surprising. However, that area in the mid-eighteenth century was still developing and population levels were not astonishingly high, especially when compared to population levels north of the river. South of the Thames, London grew much more slowly. Development initially started at the southern end of London Bridge. However, the region (particularly Southwark) could not grow quickly owing to the lack of additional bridges across the river and the relatively marshy ground. But growth soon came with the opening of Westminster Bridge in 1750 and Blackfriars Bridge in 1769. The pace of development accelerated, but even by 1800 the population of Southwark, at around 66,000 was only about 7% of the metropolis as a whole.²³ This may explain why only two Welsh defendants lived south of the river, that is, low population levels may reflect a low number of Welsh migrants settling in the area, and therefore, a low number of criminal defendants. Of course it is possible that, for whatever reason, the Welsh purposely did not settle south of the river. Many of the Welsh migrated for economic reasons, and it is possible that they thought that they would have a better chance of securing work (or did secure work) in the more populous areas north of the river.

It must also be considered that the jurisdiction of the Old Bailey did not extend to the urban parishes of Surrey or Southwark. Crimes committed in the urban parishes of Surrey came under the jurisdiction of the Surrey Assizes. Southwark was a little more complex. Once a year, a separate borough sessions was conducted by the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of the City for Bridge Ward Without where minor crimes including assault and petty larceny were tried. When the City's Recorder was present, trials for capital offences could also take place. However, in practice, the vast majority of criminal prosecutions arising from Southwark were tried at the Surrey Sessions.²⁴ This meant that if any London-Welsh migrant committed a crime south of the river, whether or not he or she lived in that area, his or her crimes would not be heard at the Old Bailey. Significantly, then, looking at the settlement patterns of the London-Welsh defendants, all the evidence suggests that the defendants were similar to other London-Welsh migrants. That is, they did not cluster and create close-knit communities as other migrant groups did, but rather settled all around London

22 OBSP, 8th April 1752, George Bassett, (t17520408–43) and Ordinary's Account, 27th April 1752; OBSP, 6th July 1774, Edward Phipps, (t17740706–31). Both locations have been included in table 2.

23 Tim Hitchcock, Sharon Howard and Robert Shoemaker, 'Southwark', *London Lives, 1690–1800* <<http://www.londonlives.org/static/SouthwarkLocalGovernment.jsp>> [accessed 15 October 2012].

24 Ibid. For work on crime in urban Surrey and Southwark, see Beattie, *Crime and the Courts in England*.

and its environs.

Of the thirty-six London-Welsh defendants tried at the Old Bailey, the ages of fifteen defendants can be noted with certainty. As can be seen in table 3, around eighty per cent of Welsh defendants, where their ages have been recorded, were thirty years of age or younger.²⁵ This is not at all surprising when the population history of London in the eighteenth century is considered. London in this period grew from around 630,000 in 1715 to 1,096,784 in 1801. The pattern of growth was not balanced, and it was not down to a single factor. However, a gradual decline in child mortality combined with immigration from other areas of Britain, as well as from Europe and the rest of the world, were key factors. Significantly, the city was marked by its youth. A high number of London's inhabitants were relatively young recent migrants. Estimates of London's population from the mid-eighteenth to early nineteenth century indicate a population structure which was weighted heavily towards the younger adult ages. And although the median age of London's population appears to have been several years above other estimates for England as a whole – an average of 30.4 years in comparison to 24.5 years from 1730 to 1779 – it has been suggested that the ages of those migrating into London were largely concentrated among the teens and twenties, while there is likely to have been a net outflow of those above the age of forty.²⁶ Consequently, throughout the eighteenth century the population of London was dominated by the young, and so too was the population of accused and convicted criminals.²⁷

25 Four other defendants can be assumed to be in this age bracket. Although their ages are not recorded, one is said to be a 'little boy', two are described as 'boy', and the other is noted to be a 'young adult'. See, OBSP, 6th December 1780, John Thomas, (t17801206–23); 27th February 1734, William Davies, (t17340227–31); 9th September 1742, William Edwards, (t17420909–2); 16th October 1776, William Davis, (t17761016–8). P. Griffiths, *Youth and Authority. Formative Experience in England 1560–1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 25, notes that 93% of those labelled 'boy' were under the age of 17. There is some evidence that the accused, when asked their age in court, either approximated it, did not accurately know it, or deliberately distorted it. Younger prisoners tended to avoid giving their age as twenty-one while some older ones rounded their ages, or had them rounded by the court. However, this seems to have been a minority practice and most of the accused were consistent and accurate within one to two years in stating their age. See King, *Crime, Justice and Discretion in England*, p. 170; Linebaugh, 'The Ordinary of Newgate and his Account', p. 262.

26 Landers, *Death and the Metropolis*, pp. 180–3.

27 Clive Emsley, Tim Hitchcock and Robert Shoemaker, 'London History - A Population History of London', *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* <<http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/static/Population-history-of-london.jsp>> [accessed 15 October 2012]. See also E. A. Wrigley, 'A Simple Model of London's Importance in Changing English Society and Economy, 1650–1750', *Past & Present*, 37 (1967), 44–70; Roger A. P. Finlay and Beatrice Robina Shearer, 'Population Growth and Suburban Expansion', in *London 1500–1700: The Making of the Metropolis*, ed. by A. L. Beier and R. Finlay (London: Prentice Hall Press, 1986), pp. 37–59; Landers, *Death and the Metropolis*.

Table 3: Age Grouping of London-Welsh Defendants Tried at the Old Bailey, 1730–80

Age Grouping	Total	Percentage of known age (Sample: 15)	Percentage of total (Sample: 36)
7 to 15	0	0	0
16 to 20	1	6.6	2.7
21 to 25	3	20.0	8.3
26 to 30	8	53.3	22.2
31 to 40	2	13.3	5.5
41 to 50	1	6.6	2.7
51 to 60	0	0	0
61 to 70	0	0	0
71 or over	0	0	0
Age Unknown	21		58.3

When the age group of the London-Welsh defendants is compared to the ages of accused criminals in other areas, although the general pattern is similar, differences are evident. These differences can be seen when the ages of the London-Welsh defendants are compared to the ages of the accused in the Home Circuit Assizes in the 1780s.²⁸ On the Home Circuit, more than two-thirds of those indicted for property offences were under the age of 30 in comparison to the four-fifths of London-Welsh defendants. Generally then, the majority of London-Welsh and Home Circuit accused came from the younger age groups, but, in percentages, there were more London-Welsh defendants in this age group in comparison to Home Circuit defendants. However, the peak age range for the Home Circuit defendants centred on the late teens and early twenties with nearly half of all male offenders aged between 18 and 25. This is somewhat in contrast to the London-Welsh defendants, with their ages centring on the early twenties and especially the late twenties. Over half of London-Welsh defendants were aged between twenty-six and thirty (53%). When the age structure of London-Welsh defendants is compared to London's migrant population as a whole, there are similarities. When analysing the age structure of migrant and non-migrant offenders in 1790s London, male and female teenagers are much less well represented amongst migrants than amongst the London-born, and the age structure of migrant offenders not only peaks later but also peaks at a lower level.²⁹ These differences can clearly be seen in table 4. For example, from 1791 to 1805, around 76% of London-born offenders were aged seven to thirty, compared to about 56% of those from the rest of England,

28 King, *Crime, Justice and Discretion in England*, pp. 170–2. See also Beattie, *Crime and the Courts in England*, pp. 244–8.

29 King, 'Female Offenders, Work and Life-cycle', p. 73; Peter King, *Ethnicity, Crime and Justice in England 1700–1825*, 'Annex' and 'Full Research Report', ESRC End of Award Report, (21 August 2009) <<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-000-22-2696/read>> [accessed 20 October 2011].

Table 4: Percentages in each Age Grouping by Place of Birth Old Bailey Accused 1791–1805

Age	Place Of Birth										All
	London	Rest of Eng	Ireland	Scotland	Wales	Germany	Rest of Eur	Rest of World	Unknown		
7 to 15	8.6	2.0	2.3	0.4	1.6	0.0	0.0	1.3	7.3	4.6	
16 to 20	27.0	12.4	9.2	7.6	12.7	6.0	7.6	14.3	16.4	17.7	
21 to 25	24.1	20.5	20.5	18.6	17.5	18.0	16.9	28.6	20.9	21.9	
26 to 30	16.0	21.4	22.3	22.0	17.5	11.0	21.2	29.2	17.5	19.3	
31 to 40	15.6	24.0	26.6	30.7	27.0	30.0	18.6	16.9	18.1	21.0	
41 to 50	5.2	11.5	10.3	11.4	13.2	17.0	18.6	5.2	14.1	9.0	
51 to 60	2.6	5.6	5.6	6.4	6.9	11.0	12.7	2.6	5.1	4.5	
61 to 70	0.8	2.2	2.5	2.3	2.1	7.0	3.4	0.0	0.0	1.7	
71 or over	0.2	0.2	0.6	0.8	1.6	0.0	0.8	1.9	0.6	0.3	
Age Known	4513	4788	1183	264	189	100	118	154	177	11486	
Age Unknown	31	31	5	5	0	1	3	3	362	441	
Total Sample	4544	4819	1188	269	189	101	121	157	539	11927	

Source: Peter King, *Ethnicity, Crime and Justice in England 1700–1825*, ‘Annex’, ESRC End of Award Report, (21 August 2009)

<<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-000-22-2696/read>> [accessed October 2011] (p. 32).

54% from Ireland, and 49% from Scotland and Wales.³⁰ These differences probably reflect migration trends and patterns. That is, it seems that relatively few migrants came to London at a very early age, such as in their early teens. It seems that, although still young people, they migrated to the capital rather later in life, many migrating probably in their late teens and, particularly in the case of the London-Welsh defendants, in their twenties.³¹

Did age have an impact on the type of crime committed? As our sample only contains fifteen defendants, it is difficult to get a clear picture of the link between age structures and types of crime committed. However, a few tentative suggestions can be made. In relation to violent theft, of the five highway robbers who had their ages recorded, most tended to be in their mid to late twenties; however, one was aged twenty-two,³² while John Parry, accused of robbery, was twenty-seven.³³ The ages of coiners and forgers seem to be older. David Roberts, accused of coining, was aged thirty-eight.³⁴ Of the forgers, John Parkes was aged forty-five, while

30 King, *Ethnicity, Crime and Justice in England 1700–1825*, ‘Annex’, p. 32.

31 King, ‘Female Offenders, Work and Life-cycle’, p. 73.

32 OBSP, 10th May 1733, John Davis, (t17330510–9) and Ordinary’s Account, 28th May 1733; OBSP, 16th January 1734, James Belford (t17340116–25) and Ordinary’s Account, 11th February 1734; OBSP, 5th April 1741 John Carr, (t17410405–7) and Ordinary’s Account, 4th May 1741; OBSP, 2nd July 1746, George Thomas, (t17460702–22) and Ordinary’s Account, 1st August 1746; OBSP, 25th April 1770, William Lewis, (t17700425–41) and Ordinary’s Account, 19th April 1770.

33 OBSP, 24th April 1754, John Parry, (t17540424–52) and Ordinary’s Account, 5th June 1754.

34 OSBP, 18th July 1739, David Roberts, (t17390718–17) and Ordinary’s Account, 3rd August 1739.

Thomas Perry and Thomas Jones were both aged thirty.³⁵ However, other crimes do not have such a clear correlation with age. Benjamin Thomas and George Basset, both accused of burglary, were aged thirty-two and twenty-one respectively, while Robert Lloyd and Edward Phipps, both accused of theft from a specified place, were aged twenty-seven and sixteen.³⁶ George Price is the only person who was accused of murder and had his age recorded, and he was aged twenty-three.

How do the ages of London-Welsh defendants compare with other defendants? London-Welsh highway robbers and burglars tended to be older than those accused of the same crimes at the Home Circuit Assizes in the 1780s. Generally, burglary or breaking and entering included a high proportion of teenaged offenders, while highway robbers reached a peak in their early twenties, presumably due to the physical demands needed to commit such crimes. The ages of fraudsters, forgers and coiners at the Home Circuit Assizes seem to correlate with the London-Welsh defendants, that is, only fifteen per cent were under twenty-five. It seems these offenders were closer to the age range of the commercial tradesmen among whom they operated, while those accused of murder, sexual offences, and other non-property crime at the Home Circuit Assizes tended to be older. The peak ages for murderers were in the later twenties.³⁷ As mentioned above, these differences probably reflect the migration pattern of London-Welsh migrants.

Significantly, all fifteen defendants were male. Unfortunately, because of a lack of evidence, the age structure of London-Welsh females cannot be analysed. However, previous studies have shown that the age structure of female migrants in London broadly follows those of males. Peter King has noted that the age structure of those accused of property crime at the Old Bailey rose sharply during the teenage years, peaking in the late teens and early twenties. This general pattern, which was fairly similar to that found among those indicted at the Home Circuit Assizes in the mid 1780s, was followed by male and female offenders alike. Nevertheless, there do seem to be some differences. It seems that female age structure rose later and to a less pronounced peak. Furthermore, the percentage of male offenders in each age group fell very rapidly, declining by about half between the ages of twenty and twenty-seven; the equivalent change amongst females was much slower.³⁸

Although we must be careful when we analyse the ages of London-Welsh

³⁵ OBSP, 24th February 1748, John Parkes, (t17480224–40) and Ordinary's Account, 18th March 1748; OBSP, 25th April 1750, Thomas Perry, (t17500425–20) and Ordinary's Account, 16th May 1750; OBSP, 2nd May 1753, Thomas Jones, (t17530502–53) and Ordinary's Account, 28th May 1753.

³⁶ OBSP, 26th May 1748, Benjamin Thomas, (t17480526–21) and Ordinary's Account, 22nd June 1748; OBSP, 8th April 1752, George Basset, (t17520408–43) and Ordinary's Account, 27th April 1752; OBSP, 24th February 1742, Robert Lloyd, (t17420224–19) and Ordinary's Account, 7th April 1742; OBSP, 6th July 1774, Edward Phipps, (t17740706–31).

³⁷ King, *Crime, Justice and Discretion in England*, p. 172.

³⁸ King, 'Female Offenders, Work and Life-Cycle Change', p. 64. Only one London-Welsh female has her age broadly noted in the Old Bailey records. She was Catherine Howel, who was 'was indicted for stealing one Piece of Foreign Gold Coin, called a Moidore, three Pieces of Gold, called Half-Guineas, and forty Shillings in Silver, out of the Dwelling-house of Thomas Clarke, on the 20th of January'. Her age was said to be '... not above forty years of age'. OBSP, 26 February 1746, Catherine Howel, (t17460226–26) and Ordinary's Account, 4 April 1746.

defendants, as our sample does not include the ages of every Welsh defendant and it is therefore difficult to get an exact picture, it seems that the general trends suggest that the age structures of London-Welsh defendants broadly follow those of other migrant subgroups, in that the majority of defendants were in the younger age bracket (under thirty). The differences in the peak ages probably reflect the migration history of the London-Welsh and generally correlate with other migrant subgroups.

Having thus discussed the age structure of London-Welsh defendants, what can be said about their occupational and social status? This has been discussed elsewhere, but to summarize briefly, the social background of the London-Welsh defendants reflects their urban environment. As London was a mercantile and financial centre, there is an obvious lack of farming and general labouring occupations appearing at the Old Bailey. However, other occupations such as servants and maids appeared much more often in the records, and there were scores of them in the busy and bustling city. Furthermore, there were many craft and trade defendants. Trade persons and artisans were more numerous in London in comparison to rural areas because the service they offered was more in demand in the huge and expanding city.³⁹ But the question that really needs to be answered is: how prevalent was criminal activity among the London-Welsh defendants? Was committing a crime something of a last resort or was it a more systematic option? That is, is there any evidence that crime was seen as a full-time or at least part-time occupation for some of the London-Welsh defendants? Certainly, contemporary attitudes in the mid-eighteenth century reveal a sense of heightened anxiety about crime, and a feeling that the city was infested with organized and professional criminals. Newspapers, broadsheets, popular entertainments, and pamphlet literature were full of crime.⁴⁰ A particularly central theme for commentators on crime was the prevalence of criminal gangs. Elite commentary believed London to be a city teeming with organized gangs of criminals flourishing in a world of robbery, gambling, whoring, vice and idleness. There was also a persistent concern regarding the relationship between poverty and crime, with the activities of the poor increasingly coming into the orbit of the criminal justice system.⁴¹

For historians of poverty, petty theft has been seen as part of the so-called ‘economy of makeshifts’. For historians of crime, particularly in London, Peter Linebaugh’s argument that crime was a fundamental part of the lives of the working poor has been influential.⁴² In a recent article, Heather Shore notes: ‘Prostitution,

39 Williams, ‘Crime, the Welsh and the Old Bailey’, pp. 64–5.

40 For a discussion on contemporary literature, see I. A. Bell, *Literature and Crime in Augustan England* (London: Routledge, 1991); P. Rogers, *Literature and Popular Culture in Eighteenth Century England* (Brighton: Harvester, 1985).

41 Heather Shore, ‘Crime, Criminal Networks and the Survival Strategies of the Poor in Early Eighteenth-Century London’, in *The Poor in England, 1700–1850: An Economy of Makeshifts*, ed. by Steven King and Alannah Tomkins (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 147.

42 Bob Shoemaker, ‘Crime and the Parish: Survival Strategies of the Poor in 18th-Century London’, *Plebeian Lives and the Making of Modern London, 1690–1800*, ESRC Research Grant Project (10 November 2010), p. 1. <<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-000-23-1217/read>> [accessed 01 September 2012].

begging and vagrancy, petty theft, receiving, shoplifting and employee theft were all activities to which the poor might resort in times of increased hardship, or as a way of supplementing a limited income.⁴³ However, the evidence of the OBSP shows little connection between crime and poverty among the majority of London-Welsh defendants.⁴⁴ Only five defendants described themselves, or were described, as ‘poor’ or suffering from ‘poverty’.⁴⁵ Previous studies have also shown that the connection between poverty and crime can be tenuous. Jerry White states that it was rarely absolute necessity that drove most thieves to steal. They stole not to live but rather ‘to enter more fully into the age of plenty that was all around them and which, as the century grew older, became ever more abundant’.⁴⁶ Bob Shoemaker has noted that,

... attempts to demonstrate that poverty was a major cause of the thefts prosecuted at the Old Bailey have largely failed, despite the facts that between 40–60% of London’s population can be included among the poor in the 18th century, and over 80% of those tried at the Old Bailey between 1690 and 1800 were accused of some form of theft.⁴⁷

Significantly, Shoemaker also notes that the fluctuations in levels of prosecutions in relation to patterns of war and peace in the eighteenth century are rather more complex than has been suggested. The assumption that mass unemployment, caused by demobilization of military and naval manpower, led to increases in

43 Shore, ‘Crime, Criminal Networks and the Survival Strategies of the Poor’, p. 150.

44 One exception to this is Jane Evans who was accused of grand larceny in 1746. The record states that when Evans was caught for her crime and taken before a Justice, ‘the Justice ask’d her if she had nothing else to live upon but this; she answer’d, she had two Children, and was oblig’d to follow this Employment to maintain them’. OBSP, 26th February 1746, Jane Evans (t17460226–17).

45 OBSP, 13th January 1738, George Price (t17380113–10) and Ordinary’s Account, 8th March 1738; OBSP, 26th February 1746, Jane Evans (t17460226–17); 24th February 1748, John Parkes (t17480224–40) and Ordinary’s Account, 18th March 1748; OBSP, 26th October 1752, Elizabeth Rowland (t17521026–47); 20th October 1779, Jane Williams (t17791020–23). For a discussion looking at the relationship between poverty and crime, see King, *Crime, Justice and Discretion in England*, pp. 216–7. The names of all the London-Welsh defendants have been cross-referenced with the parochial records of three London parishes – St Botolph Aldgate, St Clement Danes, and St Dionis Backchurch – as well as manuscript sessions papers from the London, Middlesex, and Westminster sessions, and the records of Bridewell, the house of correction for the City of London. The results seem to suggest that there is little relationship between criminal justice and poor relief among the London-Welsh defendants. Based on searches conducted using metaphone name-matching in order to look for cases where the same individual appears in two different document types within five years of each other, it is possible to say with some confidence that London-Welsh defendants at the old Bailey do not appear in the other records. Although the same name appeared in some instances, there was enough evidence to suggest that they were obviously not the same person, or at least, one could not be fully confident that they were the same person. Tim Hitchcock, Robert Shoemaker, Sharon Howard and Jamie McLaughlin, et al., *London Lives, 1690–1800* (www.londonlives.org, version 1.1, 24 April 2012).

46 White, *London in the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 398–9.

47 Shoemaker, ‘Crime and the Parish’, p. 1.

poverty and hence to an increase in criminal activity is not as fool-proof as it used to be. Recent understanding of the discretionary nature of the judicial system, supplemented by recent developments demonstrating how powerful the Press was in shaping fears about crime, have changed historians' speculations that the increase in crime following the end of most wars should be viewed as prosecution waves, rather than crime waves.⁴⁸ The failure to demonstrate a connection between poverty and crime can also been seen outside London. Peter King, for example, notes that those people in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Essex who were experiencing the most acute poverty or distress were not necessarily the most likely to be prosecuted; rather, it was young and mobile men who constituted the most criminal threat to the judiciary.⁴⁹ And even in mid-eighteenth century Caernarvonshire, there seems to be no constant link between crime and poverty.⁵⁰ The reason for this is somewhat difficult to understand, though some explanations can be given. It has been suggested that, 'In one sense poverty defined crime in the eighteenth century.'⁵¹ If this statement is true, it is possible that a claim of poverty actually acknowledged a person's guilt, and even though in some instances juries and judges showed mercy to the poor, it was certainly not always the case. Another reason could be to do with the way the poor were categorized into two cultures of poverty, namely the supported poor and the independent poor. It has been suggested by Robert Shoemaker that:

Those deemed worthy of poor relief, and who chose to apply for it, received support from the parish, and if they committed minor crimes (including thefts), they may have been sanctioned within the poor relief system (by triggering a settlement exam, or via a commitment to a workhouse). Of course if they were accused of committing a serious crime they would still end up in the Old Bailey. But it appears that the supported poor were rarely accused of serious property crimes, perhaps because they were well enough provided for by the parish... On the other hand, those who were not deemed worthy of, or eligible for, parochial relief, and those who did not bother to apply, got caught up in the criminal justice system if they were suspected of committing crimes. And once apprehended for one crime, their reputation as a deviant led them to be suspected of further crimes, and subjected to further arrests and trials.⁵²

⁴⁸ Ibid. For further discussion on this matter see Clive Emsley, *Crime and Society in England, 1750–1900* (Harlow: Longman, 2010), pp. 34–5; King, 'Crime, Justice and Discretion in England', pp. 156–7; P. King, 'War as a Judicial Resource. Press Gangs and Prosecution Rates 1740–1830', in *Law, Crime and English Society, 1660–1840*, ed. by N. Landau (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 97–116; P. King, 'Newspaper Reporting and Attitudes to Crime and Justice in Late Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century London', *Continuity and Change*, 22.1 (2007), p. 83; Esther Snell, 'Discourses on Criminality in the Kentish Mercury', *Continuity and Change*, 22.1 (2007), 13–47.

⁴⁹ King, 'Crime, Justice and Discretion in England', p. 217.

⁵⁰ Tegid Rhys Williams, 'Crime, Punishment and County Administration: Caernarfonshire, 1730–1780', unpublished MA thesis, Bangor University, 2010, pp. 49–67.

⁵¹ King, 'Crime, Justice and Discretion in England', p. 216.

⁵² Shoemaker, 'Crime and the Parish', p. 5.

Shoemaker concludes that while poor relief and criminal justice were not entirely unconnected from each other, the poor tended to experience one or the other, but not both. However, this does not mean that poverty was not the cause of crime. Those who obtained relief were less likely to commit crimes, but when they did in order to survive they were dealt with outside the criminal courts.⁵³

If poverty was not always a direct cause of crime, is it possible to prove that among the London-Welsh defendants there were some who committed crime as an occupation? From the evidence of the *OBSP*, there seems only to be a small number of defendants who were committing crime as a lifestyle choice. It seems that nine out of the thirty-six Welsh defendants were prolific criminals; that is, they had already committed several crimes before being accused of the crime for which they were on trial.⁵⁴ However, other studies have shown that, although there were those who committed crime as a profession (often part of criminal gangs), a ‘criminal class’ did not exist in reality.⁵⁵ Peter King, for example, notes that thefts indicted in Essex at both the Quarter Sessions and the Assizes suggest that most indicted crimes were not committed by ‘professionals’ but rather they were opportunistic acts.⁵⁶ And even in early modern London, it has been noted that ‘the typical law-breaker, whether thief or prostitute, was essentially opportunistic in his or her approach and modest in his or her criminal ambitions’.⁵⁷ The evidence for the nine London-Welsh defendants has largely come from the *Ordinary of Newgate’s Accounts* which was a sister publication of the *OBSP*, containing biographies of the prisoners executed at Tyburn.⁵⁸ The *Accounts* usually outlined a convict’s descent down the slippery slope of immorality from minor delinquencies, such as idleness and profaning the Sabbath, into a life of crime. This format is also similar for the London-Welsh defendants. For example, John Davis was indicted five times in 1733 for highway robbery. The *Account* states:

53 Ibid., p. 9.

54 OBSP, 10th May 1733, John Davis (t17330510–9) and Ordinary’s Account, 28th May 1733; OBSP, 18th July 1739, David Roberts (t17390718–17) and Ordinary’s Account, 3rd August 1739; OBSP, 5th April 1741, John Carr (t17410405–7) and Ordinary’s Account, 4th May 1741; OBSP, 26th February 1746, Jane Evans (t17460226–17); 2nd July 1746, George Thomas (t17460702–22) and Ordinary’s Account, 1st August 1746; OBSP, 24th February 1748, John Parkes (t17480224–40) and Ordinary’s Account, 18th March 1748; OBSP, 8th April 1752, George Bassett (t17520408–43) and Ordinary’s Account, 27th April 1752; OBSP, 2nd May 1753, Thomas Jones (t17530502–53) and Ordinary’s Account, 28th May 1753; OBSP, 24th April 1754, John Parry (t17540424–52) and Ordinary’s Account, 5th June 1754.

55 J. A. Sharpe, *Crime in Early Modern England, 1550–1750* (Harlow: Longman, 1999), ch. 5; Emsley, *Crime and Society in England*, ch. 7.

56 King, *Crime, Justice and Discretion in England*, p. 213.

57 Sharpe, *Crime in Early Modern England*, p. 169.

58 The biographies were shaped to give them an instructive moral, that is, the *Accounts* had the explicit moral purpose of teaching readers the wages of sin. Research conducted by Peter Linebaugh indicates that most of the details in the *Accounts*, many of which could only have been provided by the convicts themselves, are reliable. These include their place and date of birth, occupation, religion, and account of crimes committed. See Emsley, Hitchcock, Shoemaker, ‘The Proceedings – Ordinary of Newgate’s Accounts’; Linebaugh, ‘The Ordinary of Newgate and his Account’, pp. 246–69.

John Davis, about 28 Years of Age, born in Pembrokeshire, of honest Parents, who gave him good Education at School, in Reading, Writing and Arithmetick, to prepare him for Business; and had him instructed in Christian Principles. When of Age, he was put to a Blacksmith and Horse-Farrier, and serv'd out his Time honestly, and with Approbation of his Master. He apply'd to his Trade for some Time, and then he came to Town, and did not want Employment, having been very diligent and careful in his Work, and indefatigable in plying thereto, both by Night and Day, or whensoever he was call'd to work... He wearied of his Business, either that it was too hard for him (as he pretended) or that he lov'd to be Idle and to pass an indolent Life, thinking, that by much less Labour, though expos'd to much greater danger of his Life at all Times, he might raise contributions on the High-way, and live much more easily and plentifully... Though in the preceeding part of his Life, he had been Honest in abstaining from Theft and Robbery, yet he own'd that he was vicious in several other respects, such as Drinking two often to excess, keeping of idle Company, Gaming, too great a lover of Ease and Idleness, an aversion to constant Business or Employment, Sabbath breaking, and not giving due regard to the advices and instructions of Parents and other Friends; all which and many more are vices commonly incident to these abandon'd and wicked People. He confess'd also, that he was guilty of some other Robberies and several wicked Actions, in consideration whereof, he suffer'd most justly according to Law. He appear'd very discontented, and did not perform religious Duties, with such freedom and cheerfulness, as he ought to have done.⁵⁹

Others, on the other hand, were deemed to have been wicked from an early age, even though they were given every chance to succeed in life. With reference to Thomas Jones, who was indicted for forgery in 1753, the *Accounts* notes:

Thomas Jones, otherwise Ruffle Jones, was about 30 Years of Age, and says he was born in Monmouthshire in Wales. He was brought up in his younger Days very well, and had some Pains taken in his Education; but his natural Disposition prevailed over all Endeavours his Parents used to make him a good Man, and even in his Infancy he was a great Plague to those who deserved better Things at his Hands; and instead of learning to do well, it seems to have been his Study thro' Life to do all the Mischief and Wrong that the Devil could instigate him to... His natural Temper seemed such as was resolved to do nothing which he ought to do, and he was known at Newgate long enough before this last unhappy Time, to give every one to see what must be his Fate in the End; nor is any one that knew him thro'

59 OBSP, 10th May 1733, John Davis (t17330510-9) and Ordinary's Account, 28th May 1733.

his whole Life, surprized at it, it was what every one seemed to say they expected would one Day be the Case.⁶⁰

John Parkes, indicted for forgery in 1748, was forced into criminality, albeit due to his own doing:

One Reason of my following this shameful wicked Practice was my being indebted to my Friend at the Seven Dials, who threatned hard to arrest me, for a Score run up at his Alehouse: and here let me warn all People, especially such who work for their Bread, never to run into Alehouse-People's Debts.⁶¹

However, it must be emphasized that despite the contemporary stereotype of the career criminal, and the above evidence of the London-Welsh defendants who were noted to be prolific criminals, Heather Shore notes that most offenders ‘... had some sort of employment or occupation, however menial.’⁶² This statement rings true in the lives of the majority of London-Welsh defendants; that is to say, they were recorded as having been in employment when accused of committing their crime. Career criminality, whether full- or part-time, was an option that some decided to take, but the majority did not.

What can be said regarding the lives of London-Welsh defendants in the mid-eighteenth century? As with aspects of the London-Welsh criminal activity, the lives of the Welsh in London were generally no different to any other person, barring a few, although significant, differences. Firstly, it can generally be said that, as a largely migrant group, the Welsh defendants who had their own culture, customs and traditions (such as the Welsh language) followed the same pattern as other Welsh migrants; namely, they were willing to settle individually and assimilate themselves geographically and socially across London. This is in contrast to some other migrant groups who decided to cluster together in various regions of London. The ages of the London-Welsh accused at the Old Bailey were generally higher than London-born defendants. This probably reflects the migration history of the London-Welsh and is not unique, as London-born defendants were generally younger than other migrants’ subgroups. It seems also, as with the majority of defendants at the Old Bailey, that there is little connection between crime and poverty among the majority of London-Welsh defendants. Furthermore, it seems that the number of defendants who were committing crimes as a lifestyle choice were in a minority. Career criminality, whether full- or part-time, was an option that only some decided to take.

Jerry White asked the question: who were the men and women who committed offences in eighteenth-century London? His answer states that, generally, most had backgrounds similar to any other Londoner ‘making their way in the giant

60 OBSP, 2nd May 1753, Thomas Jones (t17530502–53) and Ordinary’s Account, 28th May 1753.

61 OBSP, 24th February 1748, John Parkes (t17480224–40) and Ordinary’s Account, 18th March 1748.

62 Shore, ‘Crime, Criminal Networks and the Survival Strategies of the Poor’, p. 150.

city'.⁶³ White's answer can also be said to be true of London-Welsh defendants. In reality, they were just as similar to the vast majority of defendants who appeared at the Old Bailey in the mid-eighteenth century. And, as White states, '... in the various accounts of those criminal lives soon to be ended at Tyburn it is their very ordinariness that strikes the reader'.⁶⁴ The London-Welsh defendants were largely as ordinary as the next defendant who appeared at the Old Bailey. However, every defendant had his or her unique ordinariness. They all had similar backgrounds and led comparable daily lives, but not the exact same ones. Each individual had his or her own individual story. And it is those individual lives and stories which tell us much about a specific migrant subgroup in mid-eighteenth century London.

63 White, *London in the Eighteenth Century*', p. 397.

64 Ibid.