Indexing *Yr Eurgrawn Wesleyaidd*

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An account of work in progress on indexing an important Welsh-language monthly religious magazine which ran throughout almost the whole of the 19th and 20th centuries.

The appearance of the first issue of *Yr Eurgrawn Wesleyaidd* (*The Wesleyan Magazine*) in January 1809 was a clear indication that the Wesleyan Methodists had begun to establish themselves in Welsh-speaking Wales. John Wesley’s visits to Wales in the 18th century had been severely limited in their impact by the fact that he could not speak the language of the overwhelming majority of the population. In 1800, however, Thomas Coke, himself a native of Brecon, persuaded the Methodist Conference to send Welsh-speaking missionaries to Wales, partly as a response to the influence of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist movement, which began in 1735 and which in 1811 was to become a denomination in its own right. By 1809 the Wesleyan Methodists (referred to hereafter simply as Wesleyans) had sufficiently established themselves to launch a monthly periodical.

*Yr Eurgrawn Wesleyaidd* was at first closely modelled on the English-language magazine founded by John Wesley in 1778 as *The Arminian Magazine* (Madden, 1982), though, after Wesley’s lifetime, the title was changed in 1798 to *The Methodist Magazine* and in 1822 to *The Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*. In 1933, following the creation of the present Methodist Church from the union of the various British Methodist bodies that traced their origins back to Wesley, the Welsh magazine dropped the word ‘Wesleyaidd’ from its title and became known simply as *Yr Eurgrawn*, though the change did not involve any diminution of its specifically Methodist identity. It is referred to by this shorter name throughout the rest of this article.

Nobody could have foreseen when it was launched what a long and illustrious life the magazine would have. It is, indeed, a remarkable success story. It ran without interruption as a monthly from 1809 until 1961. It then became a quarterly until declining sales forced it to close in 1983. Throughout the whole of its history the contents were entirely in the Welsh language. Its concerns were primarily Welsh, though it also included information about British Methodism and about missionary work overseas. More information about the magazine is given in Madden (2003) and full bibliographical information may be found in Walters (1993).

**Issues and problems**

My present research interest is Welsh Nonconformity generally and Welsh Methodism specifically. Nonconformity, of course, has been a major force in Welsh life. The story of Methodism in Wales from the 18th century onwards is complicated by the existence of two parallel traditions – the Calvinistic and Wesleyan Methodists. For anyone working in this field *Yr Eurgrawn* is a major source of information. Happily for me, a complete set of the volumes – as, indeed, of other major Welsh religious periodicals – is readily available on the open shelves in the National Library of Wales. What follows is a description of my work on indexing this long-running magazine.

The greatest problems facing anyone using *Yr Eurgrawn* are its sheer bulk and the deficiencies of the internal indexing. To take the question of size first: during its long run as a monthly between 1809 and 1961, some 1836 issues appeared, each including a great variety of content. Although the size of the issues varied at different periods, the majority of the annual volumes contain between 400 and 500 pages, and some are even larger. To these must be added the quarterly issues published between 1962 and 1983.

Many of the 175 annual volumes include contents lists or primitive indexes. Although these can be helpful, there are obvious problems in using them. In particular, they vary markedly in scope and method of compilation, they never cover more than a single year, and some volumes do not have any form of list or index. It did not take much experience of working with *Yr Eurgrawn* to realize that one of the most useful services one could perform to researchers would be to provide one or more cumulative indexes to the contents.

After some thought I decided to undertake the work alongside my ongoing research, readily admitting that the first beneficiary will be myself, since such indexing will provide an invaluable tool for my own research. Nevertheless, the work should certainly benefit other researchers using *Yr Eurgrawn*. Such users are likely to include particularly ecclesiastical historians, family historians and literary historians.

My first intention was to produce a single cumulated index to the whole contents of *Yr Eurgrawn*. The advantages of single indexes do not need rehearsing in the pages of *The Indexer*. However, the more I thought about it, the more convinced I became that, given the size of the magazine, what is required is a series of separate indexes to specific aspects of the periodical’s contents. As Geraldine Beare noted, commenting on her own index to the *Strand Magazine*:

Some hold that an index should be one and indivisible; for a back-of-book index, especially a small one, that is probably best. For an index to a run of magazines it is easier and more sensible...
to split the information... One can then go immediately to the section wanted, particularly as each section is almost a book in itself. (Beare, 1984: 9)

Since what I am doing is purely a labour of love I am not dictated to by the demands of any publisher or editor. The converse of this is that there is no certainty that the index will be published. My hope is that it can appear as a series of supplements to Bathafarn, the journal devoted to the history of Methodism in Wales. Should I fail to find a publisher I shall deposit a copy of the whole in the National Library of Wales and copy it on demand to other interested libraries or individuals. I shall also consider making it available on the Web.

Indexing in the Welsh language

The index will, of course, be entirely in Welsh. It is appropriate here to draw attention to two features of the Welsh language that distinguish it from English and affect the task of the indexer. The first is that Welsh has a different alphabetical order, partly because some English letters do not occur in Welsh and partly because some pairs of letters are treated as individual letters in Welsh. The Welsh alphabet runs like this:

a, b, c, ch, d, dd, e, f, ff, g, ng, h, i, l, ll, m, n, o, p, ph, r, rh, s, t, th, u, w, y

The English letters j, k, q, v, x, z do not occur in the Welsh language, though of course they may be found in anglicized words and names: an obvious example is the surname 'Jones'. The effects of this different alphabetical order are most apparent to English eyes in the ordering of place names. For example, the Welsh for 'a father' is fy nhad; 'a mother' is mam, but 'the mother' is y fam; 'his mother' is ei fam, but 'her mother' is ei mam; Wales is Cymru but 'in Wales' is yng Nghymru and 'to Wales' is i Gymru. Mutation is, incidentally, one of the main difficulties facing learners of Welsh; use of a dictionary is fraught with problems when the beginnings of words are liable to frequent change. So far as the indexer is concerned, it is obviously essential that mutated words are indexed consistently under the root form. This is, of course, particularly significant in subject indexing, since the same word can appear with several different opening letters in the course of a single paragraph of text. One aspect of mutation that occurs in indexing a periodical is the citation of references to other periodical titles. Since feminine nouns mutate after the definite article y (or before a vowel), a word such asDrysorfa ("treasury") becomes y Drysorfa ("the treasury") when preceded by the article. Y Drysorfa was, in fact, the title of a Calvinistic Methodist monthly magazine that ran from 1831 to 1968. It is accepted practice in such cases to index the title as Drysorfa, Y, even though the entry is actually under the mutated form. A detailed discussion of the effects of mutation on personal names may be found in Moore (1990).

Content

Clearly, the first stage in approaching the enterprise was to decide on the various elements that need to be indexed. It is most helpful if these are discussed separately.

Ministers

Many ministers have one or more biographies in Yr Eurgrawn. It was, for example, usual to include a biographical article when a minister was appointed president of the Welsh Wesleyan Assembly. Since this was an annual appointment, the lives of many ministers are recorded in this way during their lifetime. Some other notable ministers would have biographies published during their lives and would also be the subject of historical articles long after their deaths. Some ministers would be asked to contribute their own autobiographical reminiscences in the magazine. Many, though by no means all, ministers would at least receive an obituary shortly after their death.

In addition to Welsh Wesleyan ministers Yr Eurgrawn includes biographies of a large number of Methodist ministers with no Welsh connection and ministers of other denominations, including both Welsh and non-Welsh figures. It goes without saying that every single minister who is the subject of a biographical article is a man, though that would not be the case had Yr Eurgrawn continued to the present day.

It was clear that the index should include biographical and autobiographical articles. However, there were other decisions to be made. Some ministers were also authors and their works were discussed and reviewed. Many had poems written in their honour during their lifetimes and after their deaths. I have included all these since they contribute to the sum of our knowledge about the minister and how he was viewed.

Here is an example of an uncomplicated entry:

**Jones, John (C) 'Vulcan' 1825–89** (1890: 61–6, 303; 1895: 5–12)

(John Felix); pregeth angerddol 1890: 54–60 (Ishmael Evans); barddoniaeth am j j 1890: 212 ("Hywyn"), 297 ("Collmelyn")

The minister's name was John Jones. Wesleyan ministers with the same name living at the same time were officially distinguished from each other by letters, hence the (C). There were many of these in Wales; there was even a John Jones (G). 'Vulcan' was his adopted pseudonym or bardic name, a very common Welsh practice (see Moore, 1990). The first entries are for biographical articles; however, there were other decisions to be made. Some ministers were also authors and their works were discussed and reviewed. Many had poems written in their honour during their lifetimes and after their deaths. I have included all these since they contribute to the sum of our knowledge about the minister and how he was viewed.


fel gwniédig 1980: 71–6 (I. Elfyn Ellis);


fel pregethwr 1980: 62–8 (J. Henry Griffiths), 120–2 (Tudor Davies)

This entry begins with general biographical articles, followed by a list of reviews (adolygiadau) of Tegla’s books, and articles about him specifically as a minister (gwniédig), as a writer (llenor), and as a preacher (pregethwr). An asterisk indicates that the article includes a portrait of Tegla.

My normal practice is to run on subheadings, but in the case of longer entries such as this I start each on a new line to make the structure of the entry easier to follow.

Laypeople

Yr Eurgrawn is a rich source of information about laypeople, especially in the 19th century. These included a large number of women. Articles about laypeople are often quite lengthy and are often accompanied by pictures of them and sometimes of their homes. Clearly, this information could well be of interest to family historians.

The index is fairly simple since very few laypeople have more than one biographical entry in the magazine, and that is usually an obituary. Sometimes the person is the subject of a poem or poems, which are listed on the same pattern as for ministers. I give the following details: name, and reference, as:

Jones, Mrs Hannah (Pritchard) (g. Prestatyn 2.7.1809; m. Gronant 23.3.1893) 1894: 34–5 (T. G. Pugh)


The article about Moses Jones has a portrait. The poem about him is signed by the poet with both his real and bardic names.

Chapels and circuits

Methodist chapels are traditionally grouped in ‘circuits’ and ministers are appointed not to a specific chapel but to a circuit. Yr Eurgrawn includes many histories of chapels and circuits, as well as broader histories of Methodism within specific areas of Wales and, indeed, in those places in England, such as London (Llundain), Manchester (Manceinion), and Liverpool (Lerpwl), where Welsh Wesleyan causes were established. There is a comprehensive list of Welsh Wesleyan chapels in Edwards (1980).

Welsh place-names can be a source of difficulty; for a useful discussion of the whole subject see Moore (1986). Obviously, the Welsh form is used, as it is in Yr Eurgrawn itself: thus, Abertawe not Swansea; Aberteifi not Cardigan; Caerdydd not Cardiff. In cases of variant spellings I follow the recommendations in A gazetteer of Welsh place-names (Davies, 1967).

More of a problem – particularly in the period up to 1877, after which they tended to be placed in the newly founded Welsh Wesleyan newspaper Y Gwylioniadd (The Watchman) – are the descriptions of events such as the openings of chapels, preaching meetings, business meetings, and so on. These are obviously of historical interest and must be included. However, most are essentially news items and need to be differentiated from the more formal historical articles, though some – particularly those describing the opening of extended or rebuilt chapels – include a historical survey. I have decided to list all reports and histories of a chapel or circuit in a single chronological sequence but to differentiate specifically historical articles by italics. So, in the entry for Abergele the historical survey by Lot Hughes appears as 1860: 100–2 (Lot Hughes).

Hymns

As would be expected, there are many hymns in Yr Eurgrawn. These include both original Welsh hymns and translations and adaptations from other languages. Original hymns are indexed under the author, followed by first line and reference, as:

Davies, Tudor Fy Nuo w a folaf i 1947: 18

Translations and adaptations are entered under the translator or adaptor and also under the original author. So D. Tecwyn Evans’s translation of Charles Wesley’s ‘Captain of Israel’s host, and guide’ will appear as:

Evens, David Tecwyn Capten Ilu Israel, a Llyw (Charles Wesley, Captain of Israel’s host, and guide) 1946: 301

Welsh, Charles Captain of Israel’s host, and guide (cyf. D. Tecwyn Evans) 1946: 301

Poetry

Many Welsh Wesleyan ministers and laypeople have been poets, often nurtured through the eisteddfod tradition and having bardic names. The range of subjects is immense, though, as one would expect in a denominational magazine, common subjects are events in the life of the church and the death of friends, whether ministers or laypeople. Poems about ministers or laypeople are noted in the indexes devoted to them but are also listed here. Entry is under the real name with a cross-reference from the bardic name if that is used. Where I cannot trace the real name I enter under the bardic name. The title or first line of each poem is given:
During its long life Yr Eurgrawn gave space to discussions on an enormous range of subjects in addition to the writings about people and places noted above. Some subjects, such as relations with other denominations, the education of ministers, or the state of the Welsh language, recur frequently. But many are discussed for only a short time and then never alluded to again; some occur only once, never to be revived.

The final part of the jigsaw is the author index. Essentially this is a simple list of page numbers for each author. However, in the case of prolific contributors – and some were very prolific indeed – entries are subdivided into broad groupings to reflect the range of the author’s interests.

Apart from a few outstanding questions of identity, which it has not yet been possible to resolve, the index to ministers is now complete. I am now working on the indexes to laypeople, chapels and circuits, and subjects. I hope that, even if I cannot manage the longevity of Yr Eurgrawn, I shall at least have sufficient time to complete the whole project!

References

Lionel Madden retired as Librarian of the National Library of Wales in 1998. He is currently Chair of the Welsh Books Council and of Capel: The Welsh Chapels Heritage Society. He has published extensively in the field of 19th-century literature and the periodical press.