‘Walking Wales’

Exploring the experiences of people who walk the Wales Coast Path

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Abstract

At the heart of the thesis is the issue of mobility and how the Wales Coast Path has enabled mobility along the entirety of the Welsh coastline. The creation of the Wales Coast Path has afforded an opportunity unlike any other; to explore what it means for walkers to be able to walk the coastline of an entire nation. This thesis focuses on the physical act of walking the Wales Coast Path. Investigating ways in which experiences of the Wales Coast Path are understood, felt and sensed through the bodily actions and performances of walking. The thesis draws upon the data collected whilst walking with, interviewing and experiencing 41 walks along the Wales Coast Path. It shows that using a 'walking and talking' method has accessed data which would otherwise have been left untapped, and that this choice of methodology enables the researcher to access the knowledge of people-in-places where meaning is accessed and produced. The thesis acknowledges that knowledge is born through immediate experience and people gain understanding from their lived everyday involvement in the world, through activities such as walking. It shows that sometimes, it is necessary to see, hear, smell, experience or feel a place in order to communicate it to others and to make sense of it. The thesis considers what it means for walkers to be able to walk the entire coast of Wales and what this accomplishment means to their identities, as walkers, and how it influenced their Welsh identities. The research explores how being able to walk the coast of Wales facilitates a sense of cultural attachment and belonging to Wales; to others who walk the Wales Coast Path; and to Welsh identity. The thesis discusses the more-than-human aspects of walking the Wales Coast Path, focusing on an overriding theme which has affected the experiences of the walkers on the Wales Coast Path arguably more than any other. That is, the influence held over the walkers by the Wales Coast Path sign and the range of emotions and sensations generated through its encounter or lack of encounter. The sign is discussed as relational. It is shown how it has been imperative to people's experiences and how it doesn't have a fixed influence but changes in accordance with a particular moment in time on the Wales Coast Path.

Declaration and Statements

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed .. [redacted] ..... (candidate)

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Statement 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used, the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote(s).

Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

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Diolch i chi gyd am eich cymorth â chefnogaeth ddi-baid. Yn ystod y cyfnodau heriol, pan roedd y daith yn anodd gwnaeth un gerdd cynnig cysur mawr. Felly dw i'n mynd i rannu'r gerdd gyda chi, ac os dych chi byth yn teimlo'n ddi-hwyl, boed wrth weithio ar eich doethuriaeth neu yn gyffredinol gobeithio bydd y geiriau hyn yn cynnig rhywfaint o gysur.

Er maint sydd yn dy gwmwl tew,
O law a rhew a rhyndod,
Fe ddaw eto haul ar fryn,
Nid ydyw hyn ond cawod.
(Anhysbys)

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Walking Wales: Discovering the Shape of a Nation

As we walked into Port Eynon, which was to be our stop for lunch, we passed an old lady sitting on a wall outside the public toilets. She asked Ben where we had just walked from and he told her that we had come from Oxwich Bay and were on our way to Rhossili. The old lady replied, "oh how good you are to have walked that far, well done." Ben returned to the group, who had been waiting for a few members to return from the toilet, and repeated what the old lady had said. They all laughed straight away, as if they knew exactly what the others were thinking, and they shared an inside joke. Rachel then remarked "ha ha walked far, how funny, she doesn't know that we have actually walked the whole WCP and this is nothing to us." (Field Diary 1: Oxwich to Rhossili 04.05.14)

1.1: The Wales Coast Path - A Background

When it was completed in 2012 it was dubbed as Wales' newest attraction and the Wales Coast Path invited us to explore coastal Wales, meet its locals and enjoy the scenery and fresh air (Atkinson, 2012) (Image 1.1).

Image 1.1: Wales Coast Path Logo (Wales Coast Path, 2012a)

For most people a coastal walk simply means a stroll along a sandy beach, along a steep cliff, a concrete promenade of a seaside town, or a wander between two picturesque coastal villages. Yet in Wales you can now carry on walking, with no reason for stopping until you discover the shape of a nation. For on the 5th May

2012 the Wales Coast Path was officially opened, an 870-mile path which stretches along the whole of the Welsh coastline, from Chepstow in the south to Queensferry in the north. A world first, Wales is now the only nation in the world with a continuous path around its coast. This monumental accomplishment has inevitably drawn the eyes of the world with Lonely Planet (Baxter, 2011) hailing Wales as the best region on earth to visit in 2012, declaring "how better to truly appreciate the shape – and soul – of a nation?"

The Wales Coast Path was completed through the partnership of the Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales (formerly the Countryside Council for Wales), the 16 coastal local authorities (Table 1.1) that the path runs through as well as the Pembrokeshire Coast and Snowdonia National Parks.

The 16 Coastal Local Authorities
1. Bridgend
2. Cardiff
3. Carmarthenshire
4. Ceredigion
5. Conwy
6. Denbighshire
7. Flintshire
8. Gwynedd
9. Isle of Anglesey
10. Powys
11. Monmouthshire
12. Neath Port Talbot
13. Newport
14. Pembrokeshire
15. Swansea
16. The Vale of Glamorgan

Table 1.1: The 16 Coastal Local Authorities (Wales Coast Path, 2012b)

It was co-ordinated by Natural Resources Wales and delivered on the ground by the coastal local authorities. The success of the already established paths in Wales spurred the Welsh Government onwards to link these into a single path spanning the entire coast of Wales. Most notably the Gower, the Pembrokeshire (Image 1.2) and Anglesey Coastal Paths all contribute significantly to the economy of Wales. Ultimately the aim is to link the Offa's Dyke Path (which loosely follows the border with England) with the Wales Coast Path to complete a Cambrian circumnavigation, a 1,030-mile continuous walking route around the whole of Wales. An extreme challenge which will further promote Wales' uniqueness, as Wales will be the only nation in the world with a continuous path encircling a whole nation.

Image 1.2: Fieldwork walk 5: Whitesands Bay to Trefin 17.07.14 [Researcher's photograph 17.07.14]

These paths have demonstrated that they require relatively small funds to build and maintain, and the money invested into these paths is far outweighed by the money spent by the people walking them. It is noted that for every £1 invested into these paths £57 of local spending will be generated (Williamson, 2012). The Wales Coast Path is expected to attract 100,000 extra visitors to Wales annually (Misstrear, 2012). The Welsh Environment minister, John Griffiths, emphasised the importance of the Wales Coast Path to the Welsh economy stating "we will be the first country to have a continuous path around our coast. This is great news for coastal

businesses, great news for Welsh tourism and great news for our economy as a whole" (John Griffiths, 2012 cited in Morris, 2012).

Walking has already proven to be a popular activity with visitors. The Countryside Council for Wales (now Natural Resources Wales) declared that in 2009 more than half of the visitors to Wales took part in some kind of leisure walking (Clark, 2012). This ranges from a leisurely walk around a historic town or a hike across Wales' mountains. In 2009 for approximately 1.5 million people, 17 per cent of all visitors, walking was a main activity (Clark, 2012). Ramblers Cymru estimate that £562 million was generated solely by walking according to 2009 figures (McCrum, 2012).

The Welsh Government in conjunction with the coastal local authorities gives £2 million per year towards the Wales Coast Path. The European Social Development Fund has also shown support for this endeavour by allocating £4 million to be given over four years (Wales Coast Path, 2012b). Natural Resources Wales co-ordinated the delivery of this ambitious project and it is delivered on the ground by the local authorities through which the Path passes (Countryside Council for Wales, 2012). The 16 local authorities and also both National Parks involved have been amalgamated to create a path with eight geographical regions (Wales Coast Path, 2012c) (Table 1.2).

Region	**Coastal Local Authorities /National Parks**
1. North Wales Coast and the Dee Estuary	• Flintshire County Council • Denbighshire County Council • Conwy County Borough Council
2. Isle of Anglesey	• Isle of Anglesey County Council
3. Menai, Llŷn and Meirionnydd	• Gwynedd Council • Snowdonia National Park Authority

4. Ceredigion	• Ceredigion County Council • Powys County Council
5. Pembrokeshire	• Pembrokeshire County Council • Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority
6. Carmarthenshire	• Carmarthenshire County Council
7. Gower and Swansea Bay	• City and County of Swansea • Neath and Port Talbot County Borough Council
8. South Wales Coast and Severn Estuary	• Bridgend County Council • Vale of Glamorgan Council • Cardiff Council • Newport City Council • Monmouthshire County Council

Table 1.2: Wales Coast Path Regions and Coastal Local Authorities (Wales Coast Path, 2012c)

The Welsh Government has focused its attention on coastal Wales since 2007 by investing into improving public access to the coast through its Coastal Access Improvement Programme (CAIP) where 50 miles / 80.6 kilometres of new public access was created. Steps towards creating a Wales Coast Path were taken in 2005, when the Welsh Assembly asked Natural Resources Wales to investigate how it could be executed successfully. Research was made and work started in 2007, initially with the target of delivering the completed path and give an economic boost to a 2km-wide coastal zone (funded by the Welsh Government under the Coastal Access Improvement Programme). In 2009, EU funds were obtained

through the Welsh European Funding Office which would fund the development of approximately 87% of the Wales Coast Path called 'convergence areas'. Subsequently 2012 became the Wales Coast Path's completion date. Improvements to the quality and alignment of the new Wales Coast Path continued throughout 2012 and 2013 to ensure that the path followed the Welsh coastline as close as it was safe and practical. In time the aim is to the extend the Wales Coast Path inward, creating more circular coastal routes linking the Path to more towns and villages inland.

The Lonely Planet's Best in Travel 2012 (Baxter, 2011) was the first to give the Wales Coast Path global recognition. The Lonely Planet positioned Wales as the foremost region in the world to visit in 2012 solely due to the development of the Wales Coast Path. Wales is in fine company with regions such as Northern Kenya, Borneo, La Ryta Maya in Central America as well as Queenstown and New Zealand's Southern Lakes, also selected as 'Best in Travel'. Lonely Planet's Best in Travel 2012 succeeds in drawing attention to largely unknown aspects of Welsh culture. Baxter (2011) notes how the minority Welsh language is on the up, with visitors certain to see street signs, experience Welsh TV and radio broadcasts as well as hearing the language spoken on the street.

Since this declaration other global publications have followed suit. National Geographic magazine has rated parts of the Wales Coast Path, drawing particular attention to the Pembrokeshire Coast Path, as the best place to travel in spring 2012 (Wales Online, 2012a). National Geographic magazine is one of the most widely respected and read publications in the world. It is circulated worldwide in 34 different languages giving the Wales Coast Path a worldwide audience. Pembrokeshire Coast Path is praised as a 'top rated' coastal destination by National Geographic (2012), with the magazine praising the "castle clad cliffs that line its coast" (National Geographic, 2012). National Geographic (2012) praises the Wales Coast Path for being unspoiled and authentic, declaring it a marvellous example of coastal protection in areas with a very established tourist industry. International media coverage of the Wales Coast Path has also been generated in many

newspapers such as the Chicago Tribune and New York Times (Wales Coast Path, 2012d).

Clark (2012) states that the majority of long distance walking trails throughout Britain are carefully planned and constructed in order to stay clear of things deemed to be unsightly such as urbanisation and industrialisation. On the other hand, the Wales Coast Path is unique as it has been characterized and steered by nature rather than a planner's idea of wanting to censor what the walker sees of the countryside. The Wales Coast Path therefore offers a "warts and all" view of Wales where the walker will have to take the "rough with the smooth" (Clark, 2012: 38). Clark (2012) sees only the benefits of this, stating that walkers will be rewarded with a deeper and truer insight into the character and history of Wales, a welcomed alternative from walking the well-trodden artificial paths in other national parks. The Wales Coast Path invites the world to revel in the splendour, history and beauty of the Welsh coast, and bids the Welsh population to explore their nation.

1.2: The Wales Coast Path – The Initial Outcomes

Just over a year after the Wales Coast Path was officially opened, Natural Resources Wales commissioned Resources for Change and Asken Ltd to prepare an end of project report on the achievements of the path and the Coastal Access Improvement Programme. The aims of the study were stated as being "to report on how the Wales Coast Path project delivered against any changes in focus and variance against the targets, the lessons learnt, and any other outcomes such as best practice models and any additional outputs "(Natural Resources Wales, 2014: 1).

In September 2013 the work on the project report began which as well as measuring achievements also included a qualitative reflection which would inform future work on the Wales Coast Path. The end of project report acknowledged how the Wales Coast Path had begun to contribute to policy objectives in the areas of tourism development, economic development, access and recreation development,

and health. It was acknowledged that the creation of the Wales Coast Path was a large-undertaking, and as well as the significant benefits (discussed below), its ambitions and development will continue long after the official opening in 2012. The end of project report states that the Wales Coast Path will be in continuous development and evaluation to ensure the best experience for its users.

The report firstly discusses how to identify the users of the Wales Coast Path. Monitoring data indicated that the term 'visitors' rather than 'tourists' would be an effective way to describe Wales Coast Path users as more than half of them travelled from home for their walk on the path. The proportion of users who were holiday makers varied according to location. Holiday makers were much more important in some areas than others. For example, just 8% of users between Cardiff and Monmouthshire were holiday makers, whilst on stretches of the path between Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire, this rose to 57%.

The report highlights that the most popular type of accommodation used by visitors to the Wales Coast Path were caravans and campsites (41%), followed by self-catering accommodation (21%). Whereas at the time the report was written 12% of Wales Coast Path users stayed with friends and families, 9% in a hotel and a mere 2% in hostels or bunkhouses. Anecdotal evidence from local authority officers indicated a growth in interest in the Wales Coast Path from visitors, as suggested by increasing numbers of user enquiries directly to the local authority, as well as with tourist information centres.

The report draws attention to the noticeable positive impact the Wales Coast Path made on the Welsh economy which was estimated as a net injection of £23.6m. The economic impacts of the Wales Coast Path take place largely away from the coast itself and the impact was mostly noticeable in the accommodation sector (£5.1m gross value added) and service sector such as restaurants, bar and cafes (£2.3m gross value added). The greatest economic impact was felt in the accommodation and restaurant sector also.

The establishment of the Wales Coast Path has already contributed to access and recreation policy imperatives, extended access to coastal areas, and created around 80km of new linear access. This new access also conforms to the Least Restrictive Access principles, opening up opportunities for all for access and recreation on the Wales Coast Path. The end of project report emphasises the importance of on-going improvements on the Wales Coast Path. This is to ensure that the Wales Coast Path remains a high quality user experience. Improvements will include priorities to the Least Restrictive Access which will ensure a wide range of users are able to take advantage of the Path.

The report suggests that the promotion of the route (both in whole and in parts) as a desirable place to walk has had an effect on boosting user numbers. Such promotion activities include the information shared on the Wales Coast Path website, press releases and media coverage. The report states that between October 2012 and September 2013, 152,887 visited the Wales Coast Path website. The website contains useful facts which can help users of the Wales Coast Path by providing in-depth information, from detailed maps and a distance table to accommodation, transport and sightseeing information; as well as useful information such as tide times and safety advice. The media coverage was also evaluated and between December 2011 and June 2012, of the 833 items that mentioned the Wales Coast Path, only 6 were negative in their evaluation. As mentioned above, the Lonely Planet Best of Guide (Baxter, 2011) included the Wales Coast Path in the top ten places to visit. This created a significant surge of interest in the Wales Coast Path.

The end of project report states that the focus will now change from focusing on the establishment of the Wales Coast Path to a focus on-going improvement, maintenance, promotion and management. This includes creating new sections of the Wales Coast Path which would improve path links and provide opportunities for local and circular walks. Improving the condition of existing sections of the Wales Coast Path is also an area of on-going focus which will open up the opportunity for a wider range of different users to satisfyingly experience the Path. The report

states that there was no specific target for the Coastal Access Improvement Programme and Wales Coast Path to contribute to any health objectives therefore the report has no specific findings which links using the Wales Coast Path with the health and well-being of the Welsh population. The report states that this omission is being resolved and in 2014 Natural Resources Wales commissioned targeted research to evaluate the health benefits gained from using the Wales Coast Path. The report states that the relationship between using the Wales Coast Path and physical and mental health benefits should be correctly understood.

The end of project report states that the challenge is to maintain the Wales Coast Path and make the most of the opportunities afforded by its creation. In a vulnerable economic climate, it's important to make sure information is available to validate the value the Wales Coast Path offers in order to create an incentive for investment. The end of project report states that future objectives must be feasible and realistic within the available resources in order to achieve the best outcomes. The report concludes by stating that the Wales Coast Path has indeed exceeded expectations but goals must be put into place to ensure its prolonged success and positive contribution to Wales.

1.3: The Wales Coast Path – User Analysis

From the official opening in May 2012 to June 2013 2.8 million visitors visited the Wales Coast Path. Between 2014 and 2016 a visitor survey was conducted by Beaufort Research and 1,483 interviews along 56 sites were carried out within this time on people +16 who were using the Wales Coast Path on foot, cycling, horse-riding or using small motorised vehicles (e.g. disability scooters). The survey is called the Wales Coast Path Visitor Survey 2015 and profiles the Wales Coast Path visitors and their awareness and usage are explored (Natural Resources Wales, 2016).

The report highlighted that out of the sample interviewed 59% resided in Wales. The proportion of Welsh visitors to the Wales Coast Path varied depending on the

area. For example, in the south east areas of the path 92% of visitors lived in Wales with only 7% visiting from England. Contrastingly, in Anglesey 54% of the visitors lived in England. The report states that Welsh visitors to the path tended to live close to the area of the Wales Coast Path they visited. The visitor survey showed that awareness levels of the Wales Coast Path now being a continuous path around the coastline had significantly increased by 8% since 2011-2013 (38% to 46% in 2015). Even so, the slight majority of respondents were unaware of the unification of the Wales Coast Path (54%). A quarter of respondents weren't aware that the Wales Coast Path was joined but thought it would be in future (25%). Around one in ten were doubtful that the Path would ever be wholly linked (9%). Awareness of the completion of the Wales Coast Path and the possibility of walking the country's whole coastline was highest amongst people using the Pembrokeshire section (61%). Awareness was lowest amongst the users of the south coast section of the Wales Coast Path (34%).

Most of the respondents interviewed for the survey were walking along the Wales Coast Path when approached to take part in the research. Walkers accounted for 93% of the interviewee sample. Cyclists accounted for less than one in ten of the Wales Coast Path users interviewed (6%), and a mere 2% of the people interviewed used other forms of transport such as horse-riding, motorized vehicles and assisted or disability vehicle.

Most of the people who were approached to take part in the survey were day trippers or staying visitors who were visiting the Wales Coast Path as part of a longer holiday. At the time of the research the majority of the interviewees were repeat visitors of the Wales Coast Path (93%) whereas first-time visitors accounted for only 7%. The repeat visitors were regular visitors of the Wales Coast Path with 64% using it once a month or more often. 60% of the respondents were using the Wales Coast Path as part of a leisure trip from home, whereas 38% were visiting as part of a longer break or holiday in Wales. A small proportion of Wales Coast Path users (2% and 1% respectively) mentioned using it get to or from their usual place of work, or for non-routine work trip reasons. The average distance the

respondents covered on the Wales Coats Path was 2.9 miles. The longest distances recorded amongst respondents using the north coast section of the Wales Coast Path was calculated to a mean of 4.3 miles. Users of the Anglesey section of the Wales Coast Path experienced the lowest distance at a mean of 1.69 miles. The report made no engagement with long distance walkers and therefore made no reference to those who walk the whole Wales Coast Path and the mileage they covered. An updated visitor survey should make an effort to engage with these walkers on the Wales Coast Path.

1.4: Studying Mobility on the Wales Coast Path

This research examines what it means for walkers to be able to walk the coastline of an entire nation. It focuses on the physical act of walking the Wales Coast Path. Investigating ways in which experiences of the Wales Coast Path are understood, felt and sensed through the bodily actions and performances of walking. It also considers what it means for walkers to be able to walk the entire coast of Wales and what this accomplishment means to their identity.

It has been stated that it is in the midst of walking that people think about being in the world and find grounds for an experiential exploration of what it is to become and belong (Wylie, 2002, 2005, 2007). Solnit (2001) suggests that we are now a sedentary population and we are disconnected to the land, to others and to our own bodies. This research therefore explores whether walking the Wales Coast Path could be a way of establishing a connection between people who walk the path. Legat (2008) reflects on how walking establishes the relationship between all those who use a specific local. By walking the same route, which others have followed, people are linked to that place and to the others who also use, or have used, the same route. Solnit (2001: 68) acknowledges “[t]o walk the same way is to reiterate something deep; to move though the same space the same way is a means of becoming the same person, thinking the same thoughts.”

An increase on the focus on movement according to Jensen (2009) makes us re-consider familiar sites of belonging and identity. This thesis considers how Welsh identity and a feeling of belonging or connection to Wales is an important consequence of being able to walk the entire coastline. It investigates if walking the Wales Coast Path could give people a different sense of what it is be Welsh or have a sense of place or belonging to Wales.

Evidence suggests that we are living in a world where walking is no longer a celebrated pursuit by the masses. Even walking to school, which was once a great induction to being independent in the world, is no longer a common experience (safety concerns for children are a major contribution to this). People are now disconnected with the world, nature, culture and with their fellow citizens. Solnit (2001) acknowledges that television, home computers, home and mobile phones, as well as the Internet have privatised everyday lives. A privatisation that the suburbs began and cars facilitated. Solnit (2001) continues by stating these aforementioned elements facilitate the withdrawal from, rather than a fight, against the diminishing of public space and social conditions. This is also acknowledged by Olwig (2008: 89) who states "[l]iving in our cities, barricaded behind our computer screens, we readily lose touch with the quadrupeds that once taught us to heft to the land as landscape and to one another as a community of fellowship."

Walking is deemed to be essential to social relations (Ingold and Vergunst, 2008) therefore walking the Wales Coast Path could re-connect people with the world and with others. The importance of walking in connecting with others is expressed by Ingold and Vergunst (2008: 1) who state that "walking is a profoundly social activity: that in their timings, rhythms and inflections, the feet respond as much as does the voice to the presence and activity of others. Social relations, we maintain, are not enacted *in situ* but are paced out along the ground."

Walking the Wales Coast Path could re-connect people to Wales, facilitating a feeling of belonging to a nation and culture which could have been lost due to the

disconnection caused by this stillness of foot. Olwig (2008) stresses the historical link between movement and feelings of belonging to the land. Following an early route or path carved out by our ancestors, a pursuit now lost in our stationary lives living in new build communities; connect us to our nation, especially if we follow a course created in the exploration of the land. “Historically, I suggest, the feeling of belonging to the land through movement is as old as the activity of hunters and gatherers in tracking game and finding edible materials along habitual paths woven by the inhabitants of a familiar habitat, or in the exploration of a new one” (Olwig, 2008: 84).

Walking the Wales Coast Path could therefore attach people to a community, amplifying feelings of Welsh identity and belonging. Legat (2008: 35) states “[w]alking, then, validates the reality of the past in the present and in so doing, continually re-establishes the relationship between place, story and all the beings who use the locale, creating situations in which one can grow intellectually while travelling trails under the guidance of predecessors who have both followed and left footprints.” Tilley (1994, cited in Ingold, 2004: 333) states that through walking lives and landscapes become intertwined. Lives are woven into the landscape, and the landscape becomes attached to lives.

This thesis specifically addresses the materialities and sensibilities entailed by the physical act of walking. The more-than-representational challenges geographers to look beyond simply representations and towards performance and practice, “where the flesh of our bodies meet the pavement of the world” (Carolan, 2008: 409). It is a style of engagement with the world that focuses on the taking place of practices, focusing in what humans and non-humans do. It is physical performances, in this case walking, that matter. This is also expressed by Lorimer (2005, 83) who states “open encounters in the realm of practice that matter most.” The more-than-representational is a style of thinking which values practice (Thrift, 2000).

The thesis examines the benefits of engaging with participants on the Wales Coast Path in order to access their knowledge in the place where meaning is accessed and

produced. It shows first-hand how using walking as a methodological practice helped to engage with emplaced knowledge, that is, knowledge gathered from walkers' direct engagement with the Wales Coast Path. It will consider how interviewing and participating on the walks, alongside the walkers, can prompt meanings and connections to the surrounding environment. By prioritising knowledge born of immediate experience it privileged the understandings of people that derived from their lived, everyday involvement in the world and provoked memories and sensations on the Wales Coast Path which might otherwise have been left untapped (Adey, 2010).

The thesis examines the more-than-human aspects of walking the Wales Coast Path, focusing on an overriding theme which has affected the experiences of the walkers on the Wales Coast Path arguably more than any other. That is, the influence held over the walkers by the Wales Coast Path sign and the range of emotions and sensations generated through its encounter or lack of encounter. The thesis seeks to explore how the non-human and human subject are assembled and that even a material object like the Wales Coast Path sign can be a vital element in the analysis of social life. It also links the experiential and material dimensions of social life and experience.

1.5: Research Objectives

1) To explore the more-than-human on the Wales Coast Path and how material objects influence walkers' experiences.

2) To explore how a walker's identity is negotiated whilst walking the Wales Coast Path.

3) To explore how walking the entire coast of Wales facilitates a sense of cultural pilgrimage and feelings of attachment and commitment to Wales.

4) To contribute to a greater empirical understanding of the more-than-representational experiences of walkers and the benefits of engaging with participants on the Wales Coast Path in order to access their knowledge in the place where meaning is accessed and produced.

1.6: Thesis Overview

The first chapters (chapters 1, 2 and 3) will set out my approach to the study of people's experiences on the Wales Coast Path and what it means for people to walk the coastline of an entire nation. Following this introduction, Chapter 2 analyses the way walking has previously been critiqued. It acknowledges the mobilities turn in Human Geography and argues that the experiences of people on the Wales Coast Path must be understood as a complex assemblage of body, material and environment relations. It will argue that engagement with the Wales Coastal Path explores a new way of discovering space whilst facilitating feelings of belonging to Wales, to communities along the coastal path and to other walkers. It is an assemblage of the human and non-human agencies that interact and connect people, place and community. It advocates the need to think relationally about the Wales Coast Path in order to take into account the mass of human and non-human agencies and interactions that generate and facilitate experiences. This steers the research to consider the number of 'things' or pieces of 'things' that are gathered into a single context, it is a process where meaning is created through the connection of heterogeneous elements. Chaper 3 then covers the methodology framework underpinning the research, discussing the choices made and the challenges of conducting 'walking and talking' interviews on the Wales Coast Path.

Chapter 4 explores in-depth the more-than-human aspects of walking the Wales Coast Path, focusing on an overriding theme which has affected the experiences of the walkers on the Wales Coast Path arguably more than any other. That is, the influence held over the walkers by the Wales Coast Path sign and the range of emotions and sensations generated through its encounter or lack of encounter. Through detailed field diary entries and participant quotes it demonstrates that the

Wales Coast Path sign isn't merely a meaningless inanimate object but a vital 'cog' in the experiences of walkers on the Wales Coast Path. It acknowledges that the Wales Coast Path sign's power isn't a static and permanent condition. Its power and influence are an effect that is performed by other actors.

Chapter 5 identifies that walking the Wales Coast Path is a practice laden with techniques and rules, scores, competition, training; correct postures and movements. Coastal path walking mileage achieved, time, speed, physical ability and style all contribute to form the 'proper' walker. The walker's identity is moulded on the ground, negotiated in the walker's direct physical engagement with the Path.

Chapter 6 reflects about 'Welshness' on the Wales Coast Path. It considers how the Wales Coast path offers a way for walkers to connect or re-connect with their Welsh identities and sense of belonging to Wales. It shows how many walkers could never have envisioned the profound physical and emotional effect walking the Wales Coast Path would have on their sense of identity and connection to Wales. Walkers cemented their Welsh identity through the physical and mental challenges and consequences of walking the Wales Coast Path. It discusses how the physicality and mental challenges of walking the Wales Coast Path had a direct influence of the Welsh identities of the walkers. It discusses how many of the walkers saw walking the whole Wales Coastal Path as a rite of passage to their Welsh identities, or a performance that is necessary in the formation of national identity.

The final part of the thesis, chapter 7, concludes by drawing together the arguments made in the empirical chapters and discusses their implications to the wider academic debates. It revisits the research objectives and discusses the contributions made by the research to the academic literature. It concludes by suggesting some directions to further the research on the findings gathered in this thesis.

Chapter 2:

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

2.1: Introduction

This chapter will address the literature through the key geographical themes which I explore in my research. The following discussions will highlight that the research lies within post-structuralist theory. It will prioritize the materiality of space and the way Murdoch (2006: 2) notes "humans are embedded within spatialized materialities." Discussions will also consider walking as a spatially situated form of interaction which comprises of many different kinds of relations running through and around a given spatial location, in this case the Wales Coast Path. This research will acknowledge that walking the Wales Coast Path is permeated with different heterogeneous relations, which are a combination of the social and natural, human and non-human which determine experiences whilst walking the Wales Coast Path. A focus on these heterogeneous relations will bring natural and social entities within specific spatial formations (Thrift, 1996). This explores the interconnections between people (those who walk the Wales Coast Path), places (the Wales Coast Path itself) and 'things' to demonstrate how they must all be examined in relation to one another and not in isolation, whilst also examining the spatial consequences of these interactions. Thrift (1996, 1999, 2004a, 2004b) has been an especially prevalent exponent of a deeper re-conceptualisation of space, calling for a conceptualisation that acknowledges space as a "socially produced set of manifolds" (Crang and Thrift, 2000:2), rather than a motionless or lifeless container of action.

Human geography now accepts that humans are not merely concerned with meaningful action but also embodied action and therefore "act within 'spaces of embodiment' and react to other embodied entities" (Murdoch, 2006: 17). Action is therefore spread across heterogeneous relationships and as a result space is no longer merely a container but is completely active in social practice. Post-structuralist geography acknowledges that spaces and places should not be seen as

closed and absolute, but as open, engaging with other spaces and places. They are therefore multiplicities (Murdoch, 2006) made of differing spatial practices, identifications and forms of belonging. Post-structuralist geography states that the 'performer', that is the social agent, and the context for the performance, that is the space or place, should not be seen as separate, as both are entangled in what Murdoch (2006: 18) calls the "heterogeneous process of spatial 'becoming'."

The traditional theorising of societies and nations as fixed, rooted and bounded notions, which act as the locus of identity are now being questioned by social theorists (Urry, 2007; Cresswell, 2010). Rather, social life and identity are now being seen as produced and re-produced in the movement of people, things and ideas, not located in territories with fixed borders. Cresswell (2010), states that mobility is now a primary feature of modern or post modern life. This chapter will focus on the concern for movement, which although is not new to social science, the relatively recent focus on 'mobilities' offers a new paradigm in the social sciences (Sheller and Urry, 2006). A 'mobilities' perspective considers the practice and politics of movement, as well as the cultures, emotions and meanings ascribed to movements (Cresswell, 2006; Urry, 2007; Adey, 2010). The 'mobilities' paradigm does not completely dismiss the importance of territories and places (Sheller and Urry, 2006); rather it defies any distinction between people and places, instead it sees a complex rationality between people and places. Sheller and Urry (2006: 214) state that places "are not so much fixed as implicated within complex networks by which hosts, guests, buildings, objects, machines are contingently brought together to produce certain performances in certain places at certain times."

2.2: Walking: An Overview

Walking has been the focus of increased academic inquiry within Geography during the past decade with works such as Edensor (2001, 2010), Wylie (2002; 2005), Macnaghten and Urry (2001) all focusing on the physical act of walking and its implications. Rather than just a way of getting from A to B and a functional mode of transport, walking is examined as an embodied event, pedestrianism is seen as

practice (Lee and Ingold, 2006) and walkers are even seen as research participants. Walking has generated interest because it is now argued that when walking the mind and the body work together; thinking therefore becomes a physical act. This breaks down the divide between thinking and action and the mind and the body. This is echoed by Lorimer (2011) who states that walking is a social practice which has become the focus of increasing academic inquiry most notably amongst cultural geographers and social anthropologists. No longer is walking merely seen as something purely for locomotive purposes but is seen as a practice (Lee and Ingold, 2006). Moreover, the lived realities of walking are understood as reflecting changing social norms (Edensor, 2000), expressing cultural meaning (Lorimer and Lund 2008) as well as having corporeal and material consequences (Michael, 2000). According to Olwig (2008) there is now a cultural interpretive frame attached to walking which is in stark contrast to schools of thought which only saw walking as a destination oriented activity, regarded merely as a functional mode of transport.

The history of walking has already been documented extensively (Edensor, 2001; Solnit, 2001; Ingold, 2004). Historical accounts of walking have depicted it as a precarious activity, which during medieval times was limited to safe areas away from areas deemed dangerous and gruelling. More detailed accounts of walking come to light in the eighteenth century, which once again declare that throughout most of the eighteenth century walking was very much out of favour (Solnit, 2001). During this time road conditions were dreadful, the affluent therefore chose to travel by means of coach, horse and carriage or on horseback. Roads were also rife with highwaymen, who travelled and stole whilst on horseback, and footpads, who specialized in pedestrian victims. Everyone who travelled on foot was consequently deemed suspicious and viewed with distrust. As it was only the affluent who could afford to travel in safety, using horses and carriages, walking also became a sign of the poor and vagrant, who were also deemed to be uneducated and ill-bread. Jarvis (1997, cited in Ingold, 2004: 322) states “[w]alking was for the poor, the criminal, the young, and above all the ignorant.” Travelling on foot became so undesirable by the eighteenth century that during his walk across England Moritz (1782, cited in Solnit, 2001: 81) stated that “[a] traveller on foot in this country seems to be

considered as a sort of wild man, or an out of the way-being, who is stared at, pitied, suspected, and shunned by everyone that meets him."

By the end of the eighteenth century accounts of walking had transformed. Romantic philosophers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Gros, 2015) were pivotal in embracing the cultural, aesthetic and moral value of nature. He emphasised that the best way to embrace nature was to walk right through it. This coincided with Romanticism, a movement which demanded an authentic source of aesthetic experience, an experience which would elicit strong emotions. Awe, horror, terror and fear were emotions to be celebrated. These emotions would have been experienced through confronting magnificent nature and its untamed and picturesque qualities. As it was previously such an unsavoury pursuit walking itself would have generated fear and terror as it was formerly a perilous activity. Furthermore, by the late eighteenth century there was a great improvement in the roads in terms of safety and quality. Walking was therefore becoming a more acceptable mode of travel.

In addition to Rousseau (Gros, 2015) intellectuals such as William Wordsworth (2008) and Henry David Thoreau (1862) were walking solely for pleasure and like Rousseau (Gros, 2015) were wholeheartedly embracing nature through walking. Thoreau (1862) implored people to walk further than the confines of malls and gardens, for nature was something to be explored over great distances on foot in order to discover its surprises and wonder. Walking over vast distances was championed by Wordsworth (2008), covering fifteen to twenty miles a day he found solace and inspiration through walking. Even though previously people did have to walk out of necessity, mainly the poor and vagrant, this golden era encouraged people to walk solely for pleasure and experience, a new phenomenon which produced a thriving culture of walking by the start of the nineteenth century.

Geographical accounts of walking have mainly focused on specific conceptions of walking, such as walking as a product of place, as an ordinary every day practice and also as a self-centred practice (Lorimer, 2011). Firstly, walking can be

understood as a cultural activity made meaningful by the physical and material qualities of place. Additionally, some walks are shaped through collective observance of regional customs and traditions which are tied in with the 'lay of the land' (Lorimer, 2011: 20). It is here that walking is seen as a practice which is arranged around the particular features of the landscape. That is, walks are characterized by certain routes which take in the appropriate landscape, such as coastal paths, hilltops, beacons, cairns or monuments. It is the viewpoints which are the defining feature of such walks.

Lorimer (2011) draws attention to the 'in vogue' walking festivals, organized in a particular place in order to renew people's bond with that place, with the community and to fellow walkers. This resonates with Solnit (2001) who argues that the world is no longer human in scale. The world now revolves around machines, cars, technology and the Internet for example which all enable us to live without engaging with space, places, with others, or with our bodies. People are now disembodied, disconnected with the world around them as well as their own bodies. It could be argued therefore that people no longer experience the fundamental things that are the primary sensations of living such as moving, touching, experiencing the weather and climate, breathlessness, being in nature and feeling their surroundings for example. This is also acknowledged by Olwig (2008: 89) who states "[l]iving in our cities, barricaded behind our computer screens, we readily lose touch with the quadrupeds that once taught us to heft to the land as landscape and to one another as a community of fellowship" (Olwig, 2008: 89). Ingold (2004) states that modern society has already been mapped out; it has been carefully constructed and built. People no longer contribute to the development of the world through movement "[t]o inhabit the modern city is to dwell in an environment that is already built" (Ingold, 2004: 329). Disembodied people merely skim the surface of the world and there are no longer traces of our existence. People are reduced to stepping machines only and no longer weave paths along the world. Modern society is now groundless due to the decline in pedestrian experience. When the earth is defaced by feet, such as green spaces purposefully build in towns and cities, it is seen as a threat to established order.

People may only tread along surfaces that will not be marked by their presence. “Green spaces are for looking at, not walking on; reserved for visual contemplation rather than for exploration on foot” (Ingold, 2004: 329). The walking festivals are therefore seen as a practice which re-claims places lost arguably by this stillness of foot.

Lorimer (2011) explains that during organized walks in specific places, walkers in their collective movement stake territorial and symbolical claims to that place. Walking the Wales Coast Path could therefore be seen as a practice which re-connects people to place, to particular communities and to fellow walkers. Lorimer (2011) refers to the site specific geographies whereby long paths enable people to walk vast distances through different places, such as coastal paths and open mountain landscapes. Here these natural infrastructures shape the route of the walker thus the place defines the walk, articulating the route for the walker, determining how much distance is covered and when the walking route stops. Finally, a pilgrimage is another kind of walk shaped by place. These walks are guided or influenced by the common observance of religion. Candy (2004, cited in Lorimer 2011, 21) states that pilgrimage walks are undertaken to “encounter places that inspire fears, associations, memories or fervour.” A pilgrimage walk is not undertaken merely to achieve great distance on foot, but is a practice which allows the walker to truly acknowledge self and religion, through walking in a sacred place.

The everydayness of walking has also been of interest within geography. That is, it is the habitual and daily nature of walking which has gained attention. Although possibly shorter in distance than the walks facilitated by the natural arrangement of places, enabling the walker to cover great distances, and more task centred, rather than the arranged walks previously discussed, daily walking practises are no less social. That is walking to work, to school, to the local shop, or even taking the dog for a walk. Here it is argued that regular walking routes can create a sense of ‘dwelling in motion’ (Sheller and Urry, 2006) or ‘mobile homeliness’ (Edensor, 2010). This goes against the notion that places with a lot of mobility become placeless. It argues that on the contrary the accumulation of repetitive events; that

is, seeing the same things, experiencing the same terrain, using familiar bodily routines, even seeing the same people, could give a mobilised sense of place and attachment to place. The everydayness of walking has been especially prevalent in rhythm-analysis which configures the moving or people or 'things' as assemblages. This refers to the trans-personal flows of movement, social relations and embodied associations which align when walking (Anderson, 2004: Lee and Vergunst, 2008).

Finally, the self-centred walker has been examined as walking has been considered as a practice which offers an embodied space where one can find a space between self and world. According to Lorimer (2011) this sways considerations towards matters such as being and belonging. This refers to how walking, being on the move, facilitates a quest for greater harmony. It is the rhythms and feelings produced during the act of walking that leads to a sense of contentedness or wholeness. Lorimer (2011) states that all kinds of virtues are produced when walking. Most commonly these result in feelings of happiness and also emotional balance. These active emotional geographies are key to walking studies. Wylie (2002, 2005, 2007) states that it is in the midst of walking one is able to think about being in the world, finding an experiential exploration of what it is to become and belong. This turn inwards, to self, seeks to access the walkers' intimacies of encounter rather than the symbolic or social meaning of walking acts. Wylie (2002, 2005) refers to this as a post-phenomenological approach. Here, it is whilst walking, self and landscape are always emergent "constantly shifting through repertoires of the unbidden, of affective and kinaesthetic contact, and then dissipating just as easily" (Lorimer, 2011: 23). Becoming therefore happens on foot. This kind of study, which place self, or indeed other selves, centre stage are sensitive to sensory and appreciative relationship with the environment. According to Lorimer (2011; 24) "to walk is to feel oneself engaged in sustaining conversation with landscapes and to seek guidance from the natural word." This kind of attention towards walking is seen to understand it as a practice which produces intense feelings of liberation and a stronger connection with the basic elements of life, and facilitates a slowing in the otherwise chaotic pace of life (Solnit, 2001; Lorimer and Lund, 2008; Olwig, 2008). As well as the feelings made accessible during a walk the capacities and

limits of physical experience that give texture to a walk must be considered (Lorimer, 2011). This also draws attention to human biology and social difference (Macpherson, 2008, 2010). That is, it must be considered when thinking about walking that not everyone will have an equal relationship with mobility, and walking does not come naturally to all. At the same time walking is not embodied the same way by all. According to Lorimer (2011: 24) [w]alking with a disability, such as visual impairment, creates differing conditions of experience, and produces different kinds of competency, and abilities to visualise surroundings." According to Edensor (2001: 101), "[i]n walking of all kinds, the body can never mechanically pass seamlessly through rural space informed by discursive norms and practical techniques. The interruptions of stomach cramps and hunger, headaches, blisters, ankle strains, limbs that go to sleep, muscle fatigue, mosquito bites and a host of other bodily sensations may foreground an overwhelming awareness of the body that can dominate consciousness." Robinson (1998: 4) states that theories about the relationship between the body and space ought to neglect neither the material character of space nor the sensual properties of the body. In other words, the material, spatial, sensual and temporal contingencies of any walk mean that the "walker is in experience, feels and thinks in his movements through space and time." This draws attention to our relationship with the land, which is considered as embodied. Gibson (1979) states that in the environment we do not encounter a set of objective things that may or may not be visually perceived, but rather we encounter different surfaces and different objects, relative to the human organism, and these provide affordances. Affordances are both objective and subjective, both part of the environment and part of the organism. According to Costall (1995: 475) they stem from the reciprocity between the environment and the organism deriving from how people are kinaesethically active within their world.

This discussion on the geographical interest with walking highlights that walking should not be considered as merely a locomotive purpose and a way of getting back and forth between two particular points. Rather, walking can also be considered as something that has a will all of its own, which creates purposes that come to light during the experience of being on foot. This gives the opportunity to study action

and experiences and according to Lorimer (2001: 27) allows us to be "sensitive to the transience and the durability of experience." It also enables us to consider the spaciousness of walking, allowing to access meanings that are lived, experienced and mobile. This turn inwards, enables us to study how companionship and community can form through embodied sociality in different settings and across different types of terrain. To conclude therefore the practice of walking should not be thought as thoughtless or formless, rather it should be considered as "a practical accomplishment formed through a flow of activity" (Lorimer, 2011: 28). There is now a push in geographical debate towards a grounded consideration of walking as a social practice especially focusing attention on embodied presence. This advocates that walking is also largely about atmospherics, that is place making and experiences are made amongst the forces of weather, the materiality of places to even swings of mood and memories.

2.3: Mobilities - A New Paradigm

According to Sheller and Urry (2006: 208) "issues of 'mobility' are centre stage." Walking has been described as having real mobility (Lee and Ingold, 2006). That is, it allows people to really discover all the little things around them, to really feel and experience their surroundings. This aligns with the new mobilities paradigm (Sheller and Urry, 2006) that draws attention back to movement and practices such as walking. The new mobilities paradigm also advocates tracing the spatial movements of humans as well as the study of the physical means for movement and travel, those infrastructures in place to allow mobility such as the Wales Coast Path. I suggest that mobility is a key aspect of this research as the Wales Coast Path is a new infrastructure which enables mobility along the entirety of coastal Wales; offering a new link uniting Wales geographically. It is one of the new places which Sheller and Urry (2006: 207) proclaim "enhance the mobility of some peoples and places."

It is also interesting to acknowledge that the Wales Coast Path allows mobility along the whole 'shape of a nation'. This could therefore create a sense of 'dwelling in

motion' (Sheller and Urry, 2006) or 'mobile homeliness' (Edensor, 2010). This goes against the notion that places with a lot of mobility become placeless. It argues that on the contrary the accumulation of repetitive events; that is, seeing the same things, experiencing the same terrain, using familiar bodily routines, even seeing the same people, could give a mobilised sense of place. The Wales Coast Path is an infrastructure that allows people to walk across a more extended space. According to Edensor (2010: 70) "[a] mobile sense of place can be produced through longer immersion by the walking body across a more extended space." It is essential however to acknowledge how the body can be impacted by the specific affordance of place (Edensor, 2010).

The mobilities turn in the social sciences was prompted by the awareness of the historic and current significance of movement on individuals and society. It is an awareness which has continually been grasping for attention with Crowe (1938) and Bunge (1966) both historical proponents of a mobile human geography (Cresswell and Merriman, 2011). Yet even though the call for a new mobilities paradigm has been repeated in the past it is now in the midst of the twenty first century that this new paradigm has really leaped up and demanded attention. Arguably it is because we are now experiencing more movement than ever before, the world truly "seems to be on the move" (Sheller and Urry, 2006: 207). This new mobilities turn has been propelled by increasing mobility and also new forms of mobility where different patterns of movement are created when bodies combine with an array of information. Sheller and Urry (2006: 207: italics in original) especially accentuate the tremendous mobility witnessed in the world today by stating in great detail "[a]ll the world seems to be on the move. Asylum seekers, international students, terrorists, members of diasporas, holidaymakers, business people, sports stars, refugees, backpackers, commuters, the early retired, young mobile professionals, prostitutes, armed forces – these and many fill the world's airports, buses, ships, trains. The scale of this travelling is immense. Internationally there are over 700 million legal passenger arrivals each year (compared with 25 million in 1950) with a predicted 1 billion by 2010; there are 4 million air passengers each day; 31 million refugees are displaced from their homes; and there is one car for every 8.6 people

… Many different bodies are on the move … and this movement shows relatively little sign of *substantially* abating in the longer term."

According to Cresswell (2010: 551) the new mobilities paradigm acknowledges how mobilities lie "at the centre of constellations of power, the creation of identities and the microgeographies of everyday life." Veering away from the 'static' traditions within the social science therefore which according to Sheller and Urry (2006: 208) "largely ignored or trivialized the importance of the systematic movement of people for work and family life, for leisure and pleasure, and for politics and protest." This new paradigm dissipates the boundaries between the contradictory orientations of both sedentarism and deterritorialization in social science (Sheller and Urry, 2006). Sedentarism advocates that meaning is assigned to place through stability, or dwelling (Heidegger, 2002) where roots are made when static and which is the "basic essence of being" (Heidegger, 2002: 362). This notion professes that people are static entities tied to specific places through staying content in the same location. Here distance, movement and mobility are seen as abnormal and are means of placelessness.

Contrastingly, deterritorialization (Deleuze and Guattari, 1972) diminished the importance of place thus taking away the control from established lands and places, lessening the link between culture and place. This coincides with theories of 'liquid modernity' (Bauman, 2000), which directs research from static structures towards systems of movement which comprise of people, information and machines. Therefore modernity shifts from being stagnant, still and heavy to something which is liquid, fluid and light. Here movement is vital, and the speed in which people, images, money, and information for example move is of utmost importance in a frenetic globalized world (Bauman, 2000). The new mobilities turn does not offer a new 'grand narrative' as Sheller and Urry (2006) state which suggests a new totalising description of the world. Rather, it is a suggestion to look at both the liquid and static which could both comprise of forces that produce, drive or constrain movement. For example whilst analysing global networks Sassen (2002: 2) states that "capabilities for enormous geographical dispersal and mobility" cannot

be achieved without “pronounced territorial concentrations of resources necessary of the management and servicing of that dispersal and mobility.” That is, the forms of detachment associated with ‘liquid modernity’ (Bauman, 2000) are always facilitated or attached to highly embedded and immobile structures (Sheller and Urry, 2006). Sheller (2004) explains that there are some very immobile platforms as well as systems of immobile material worlds. These platforms can be things such as, transmitters, roads, garages, docks, airports or in this case coastal paths, which are all fixed entities, and are often fixed on an extensive physical scale that “enable the fluidities of liquid modernity” (Sheller and Urry, 2006: 210). Mobility is therefore always located and is enabled through the materiality of places. I have drawn on the notions put forth by the mobility paradigm as they are applicable to the Wales Coast Path.

The Wales Coast Path is both a very mobile space, an infrastructure facilitating mobility along coastal Wales and also has extremely fixed platforms such as look out points, heritage sights, cafes, and the materiality of the path itself which can halter movement which all give a relational understanding of place. This is supported by Sheller and Urry (2006) who state that mobility is about the complex relationality of places and persons connected through performances such as walking. Hannam, et al. (2006) and Crang (2002) advocate the need to consider ‘moorings’ and mobilities together. They explain that cars need infrastructures to park and re-fuel, boats need ports and aeroplanes need airports for example. As previously stated the mobile and immobile are closely intertwined. Likewise, people need infrastructures and spaces to rest in order to carry on with their mobility and movement. The Wales Coast Path is an infrastructure that enables mobility along the entirety of the Welsh coastline. It is an infrastructure which has its own “grammar which can direct or limit mobility” (Cresswell and Merriman, 2011; 7). Yet spaces are not merely a context, they are also produced by the act of moving. For example, streets, parks, cities and even the Wales Coast Path are created through ‘place ballets’ (Seamon, 1980). That is, it is those mobility practices, such as walking the Wales Coast Path, which could co-produce places, spaces and landscapes. Places and landscape are therefore constantly performed and practiced

through movement “and enfolding of a myriad of people and things” (Cresswell and Merriman, 2011: 7). This study focuses on the way people and things move on the Wales Coast Path and the cultural implications of the way people move and experience the Wales Coast Path, those embodied experiences of mobility.

Cresswell and Merriman (2011) urge geography to embrace mobility. They continue by stating that mobility is practiced “and practices are often conflated with movement” (Cresswell and Merriman, 2011: 5). In many recent geographical approaches therefore there has been a noticeable shift from representational readings of objects, spaces and landscapes towards an engagement with an action or performance such as walking. This draws attention away from representation in order to engage with bodily sensation and the busyness of everyday lives. Popke (2009: 81) assessed that human geography is “currently abuzz with passion, performance and affect, infused with a sense of playfulness and a spirit of optimism and experimentation.” This is the notion of the importance of the non-representational which is deemed as the theory of mobile practices by Thrift (1996: 258) which he states is an “almost/not quite ontology which is gathering momentum around the key tope of mobility” (Thrift, 1996: 258).

This study aligns with the attention given to performance and practice of mobilities which has been significant in work on the geographies of mobilities and lies behind the philosophical agendas which according to Cresswell and Merriman (2011: 5) are “driving much of the new mobilities paradigm” which aligns with the post-structuralist sensitivity towards practice and movement. It is those mobile and embodied practises, such as walking, that are considered as central to how we experience the world. According to Cresswell and Merriman (2011: 5), it is our mobilities which creates spaces and also stories, “spatial stories.” According to Jensen (2009) humans interact bodily in time-space relations whereby both stasis and flow are both modes of experience and it is this mobile sense-making, experiencing and meaningful engagement with the environment that “makes mobility” (Jensen, 2009: 140).

2.4: Being-in-the World - The Case for Embodiment

This research focuses on the physical act of walking the Wales Coast Path. It investigates ways in which experiences of the Wales Coast Path are understood, felt and sensed through the bodily actions and performances of walking. Embodiment is therefore a key aspect of exploration drawing attention to embodied existence and sensation (Edensor, 2001). As the interest in considering walking as a cultural practice has increased so has the interest in seeing it as an embodied event, thus acknowledging the embodied nature of people's "experiences in, and of, the physical world", taking interest in the embodied character of human experience (Macnaghten and Urry, 2001: 1). It draws attention to how walking and being embodied in a particular space or place can, according to Giddens (1991), facilitate reflexivity about the body, identity and self. The embodied body is seen as a bundle of senses, it is lived and experienced as "sensuous, sensitive, agentive and expressive in relation to the world" (Crouch, 2001: 62). Embodiment therefore is at the core of our experience, of the geographies we inhabit. As embodied creatures we live our lives through feeling, sensing and thinking through the body. A main thrust of its argument is concerned with the way an embodied understanding of human relations has the ability to shake up and move beyond the more familiar representational course.

The attention towards embodiment within human geography developed through recognition that "we cannot extract a representation of the world because we are slap bang in the middle of it, co-constructing it with numerous human and non-human others for numerous ends" (Thrift, 1999: 296-297). This argues that there are limits to what is known and what can be known through representations alone due to our embodiment in space and time (Murdoch, 2006). This study therefore lies within the identification of the importance of embodiment and the variety of relations that connect humans to spaces as well as to other humans, thus acknowledging that knowledge is situated (Thrift, 1999). Thrift (1996) states that knowledge is always contextualised, located in space, especially in an embodied material space, such as the Wales Coast Path. Understandings of the world are

therefore relational as embodied bodies are involved with a myriad of interactions and encounters, such as those experienced on the Wales Coast Path. This therefore emphasizes the practice and flow of everyday life, and that effects are created through encounters rather than codings and symbols which have been knowingly planned (Murdoch, 2006). The subject is therefore embodied and woven closely into the material of space. Thrift (2004a) advocates the work of Gilles Deleuze as helpful to the work of human geographers as he moves beyond the text engaging with embodied practices and the object world. According to Thrift (2004a) in Gilles Deleuze's work he states that social practice is understood as a relational structure rather than localised in the individual. Thrift (2004a: 88) continues by stating that a Deleuzian view see places and spaces as "territories of becoming that produce new potentials." This is possible through the openness of space and place and the way spatial as well as social relations combine and interconnect. Space, social identity and belonging are all therefore practiced and performed. Human geographers have therefore become interested in the events and practices, such as in this case walking the Wales Coast Path, which offer new ways of interpreting the world through embodied actions such as those created through walking.

Embodiment refers to the engagement of the body in the world, setting oneself consciously in the world which gives a potential unmediated relationship with it (Lewis, 2001). According to Adler (1989, cited in Edensor, 2001: 81) walking can be conceived as a "vantage point from which to grasp and understand life and to transmit identity." Adler (1989, cited in Edensor, 2001: 82) continues by stating walking together shares tenets of performance "which serve as a medium for bestowing meaning on the self and the social, natural or metaphysical realities through the spaces it moves." Desmond (1994: 34) states that the embodied walking body communicates meaning through gestures and rhythms which represent ethnic, class, racial, and sub-cultural allegiances which "are signalled, formed and negotiated through movement." Seamon (1979) effectively describes what he denotes as 'place ballets', which he states are the patterns of movement created through movement throughout space. Edensor (2001: 82) continues by stating that walking expresses a relationship between place and pedestrian, "a

relationship which is a complex imbrication of the material organization and shape of the landscape, its symbolic meaning, and the ongoing sensual perception and experience of moving through space." Therefore, as well as producing distinctive forms of embodied practices walking also (re)produces and (re) interprets space and place.

To conclude therefore geographers now acknowledge that as well as meaningful actions, humans are also caught up in embodied actions. According to Murdoch (2006: 15) "humans act within 'spaces of embodiment' and react to other embodied entities." Being embodied results in action being distributed across heterogeneous relations. Space therefore isn't a container of action but is an active presence in social practices such as walking.

2.5: The Wales Coast Path - A Relational Space

"What is the common place?
It is the ever-becoming place" (Pred, 1984: 292).

Massey (1991: 280) states that "[i]f it is now recognised that people have multiple identities then the same point can be made in relation to places." This helped to undermine the taken for granted notions that spatial structures were enduring, thus imposing strict patterns of "spatial ordering throughout given societies" (Murdoch, 2006: 14). A traditional human geographical approach towards space has been one which is rigid and static. Tuan (1977: 179) states that space "is essentially a static concept. If we see the world as in process, constantly changing, we would not be able to develop any sense of place." Similarly, Relph (1976: 45) states that space has the "persistent sameness and unity which allows [it] to be differentiated from others." According to Harvey (1996: 294) the process of place-making involves the "carving out of permanences." That is, place is identified here as something that does not change, the sense of place, identity or character is stable and unchanging.

However, in recent years human geography has witnessed a growing interest in thinking about space relationally (Jones, 2009: 5). Jones (2009: 5) further states that "[a]ccording to its advocates, relational thinking challenges human geography by insisting on an open-ended, mobile, networked, and actor-centred geographic becoming." This relational thinking encourages us to think that the world is not something that is fixed. Rather it is something in the making. Place is not something that is a given, on the other hand it is something that is forever forming and in progress and according to Dovey (2010: 3) "all places are in a state of continuous change." Gustafson (2001) claims that as people are increasingly mobile their everyday experiences and social relations are even more displaced from physical locations. As a result, social theorists are increasingly sceptical about the importance of the traditional conceptions of space. A relational notion of space is also advocated by Anderson (2012) who explains that geographical theorisations now consider space as mobile and in process. Place is now open to emergence and conditionality.

Massey (1993, 1998, 2005) has especially been an advocate of a relational way of thinking about space. She states that space is a product of interrelations, and is a sphere of multiplicity. In her work she states that space is a 'meeting place' where relations interweave and intersect. Space is never closed and fixed, that is, space is always in the process of becoming as different connections may be made at any point in time. Space is therefore not a container of entities or processes (Murdoch, 2006), rather it is made by different entities or processes which come together to form relations. Therefore, space is made up of relations, and space is therefore relational.

Anderson (2012: 571) states "[i]t has become crucial to adapt and reformulate notions of space and place so they remain appropriate and insightful for the context of the (post)modern world." This approach opts therefore to focus on the relations and interactions that continually form the world and how, according to Rouse (1996), categories which were once isolated are now bound in networks of 'relational complexities'. This view proclaims that place is not something that is

given, it is imminent, forever forming and in process. Dovey (2010: 3) explains “all places are in a state of constant change.” This perspective deems that place is not fixed, static and stable. Place at any moment, emerges in time and space, emerging from the web of flows and connections meeting at particular points. Massey (2006: 92) describes place therefore as “a constellation of ongoing trajectories” and each component of that trajectory such as trade flows, humans, policy and weather contribute to the story of the constellation. Sheller and Urry (2006) state that our stories, practices and activities are not outside of place or played out on place, on the other hand they meet and move together to form place, however provisionally. Sheller and Urry (2006: 214) effectively explain that “ [p]laces are presumed to be relatively fixed, given, and separate from those visiting. ... Rather, there is a complex, rationality of places and persons connected through performances. ... Activities are not separate from places. ... Indeed, places ... depend in part upon what is practised within them.” Anderson (2012) also successfully clarifies that relational places are made up of living things, material objects as well as natural processes. Which coincide with the practices, emotions and cognitive responses that produce and are produced by connection on heterogeneous ‘things’. From this perspective therefore places, such as the Wales Coast Path, are according to Anderson (2012: 574) “constituted by and themselves are, coming togethers that are by definition relational.” Anderson (2012: 12) explains that places enjoy a relational agency and have effects that are beyond the simple aggregation of the sum of their parts. They also incur relational risk, that is, they can affect the broader network, thus relational sensibilities, that is, the emotions generated within humans because they are part of the relation. What places are like are therefore dependent on these practices and the relational affect/effects they produce. Anderson (2012: 574-575) states “ [p]laces are thus no longer definitive and fixed (we no longer see static towns, buildings, countries, or parks) but actor-centred and practice-centred becomings – we have skied hillsides, walked streets, taught seminars, slept doorways etc. Places can be plural and provisional; place is no longer sedentary and stable but evolving and emergent.” The Wales Coast Path can therefore be considered as evolving and emergent, defined by the heterogeneous relational comings together when people walk along it.

2.6: The Wales Coast Path - An Assemblage

A relational consideration draws attention to think of place and the experiences on the Wales Coast Path as an assemblage. An assemblage is something that is formed through the coming together of many different heterogeneous parts. Simply put, it is how each component part relates, intersects and connects that forms a particular place. Parts in an assemblage do not come together necessarily or by design and do not have an essential permanence thus making their connection insoluble. It is their aggregation that keeps their individual unitary coherence intact, yet they also form a larger whole through connection with others. This perspective deems places as assembled, that is, places are connected together by the coming together of different elements. As places become assembled, their connecting elements can be identified, removed or even become part of something else. It is through their assembly they come together to form place itself. Dovey (2010: 16) suitably states that "[i]n the most general sense an 'assemblage' is a whole 'whose properties emerge from the interactions between parts' (Delanda 2006: 5). ...The parts of an assemblage are contingent rather than necessary, they are aggregated...; as in a 'machine' they can be taken out and used in other assemblages." Phillips (2006) states that the notion of assemblage has gained academic popularity. It is now seen as a key way of conceptualizing relational place.

The notion of assemblage is inspired by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and, according to Delanda (2006: 3), is "[a] theory of assemblages, and of the processes that create and stabilize the historical identity. This theory was meant to apply to a wide variety of wholes constructed from heterogeneous parts. Entities ranging from atoms and molecules to biological organisms, species and ecosystems may be usefully treated as assemblages." For Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 257) a body (whether, human, animal, social, chemical) has no truth or meaning until it exists through its external connections and affects and state "[w]e know nothing about a body until we know what it can do, in other words, what its affects are, how they can or cannot enter into composition with other affects, with the affects of another body."

Dovey (2010:17) has effectively related the notion of assemblage to geographical imagination arguing for a "conception of place as a territorialized assemblage." He goes further by successfully explaining how a street is an assemblage. Dovey (2010) professes that a street is so much more than merely a 'thing' and is not an assembly of disconnected things. Rather it is the buildings, cars, trees, pavements, goods, people, signs etc. that all come together to become a street. He goes even further by explaining that most importantly it is the connection between these things that can make a street a place or assemblage. The relations of buildings, the flows of life, people, traffic, the roadway, goods, as well as the interconnections of public to private space that form a street, thus distinguishing it from other place assemblages such as a park, mall or marketplaces for example. Dovey (2010: 16) further states "[w]ithin this assemblage the sidewalk is nothing more than a further assemblage of connections between things and practices. The assemblage is also dynamic – trees and people grow and die, buildings are constructed and demolished. It is the flows of life, traffic, goods and money that give the street its intensity and its sense of place. All places are assemblages."

For Dovey (2010) therefore places can be assemblages as they are formed by the coming together of random component parts, and it is how these components connect and relate that form particular places. Places as assemblage aren't merely constituted by 'things' but also by practices, such as the movement of people, along the Wales Coast Path for example, the building of houses or the "flows of life" (Anderson, 2012: 579). Due to this, the consequences of these places are therefore also comprised by the experiences of those involved in such practices, "the meanings they bring to these places, and the intensities of the affect produced by their interactions with the other connecting parts" (Anderson, 2012: 579). Dovey (2010: 24) effectively explains "change any of these and [the street] would still be a place, but not the same place."

The assemblage approach therefore presents a new set of metaphors for the social world such as a patchwork, mosaic, heterogeneity and fluidity. An assemblage can be simply explained as something that is composed of heterogeneous elements or

objects that enter into relations with one another. These objects are not necessarily the same kind or type, you can have physical objects, events, happenings, and also signs or even utterances or expressions. This differs from the Hegelian organic totality because the relations in an assemblage aren't logically fixed. On the other hand, an assemblage approach states that the same component can play different roles in other different assemblages. That is, each assemblage is an emergent entity which can combine with other assemblages to create even larger assemblages. Assemblages and the parts that make up a certain assemblage are characterized by reciprocal relations as well as externality. For example, a small market town may amalgamate into regional or national markets; even so each individual town may also be involved in many other assemblages, thus taking up a different role in each.

2.7: Engaging with the Non-Representational on the Wales Coast Path

The turn inward and the notion previously discussed of being in the world merits an investigation into the materialities and sensibilities entailed by the physical act of walking. This steers attention towards an investigation into the non-representational. The non-representational challenges geographers to look beyond simply representations and towards performance and practice, "where the flesh of our bodies meet the pavement of the world" (Carolan, 2008: 409). This way of thinking offsets the cultural turn in human geography which was seen to prioritise textual accounts of the immediate world and had an overreliance on representational modes of analysis that barely do justice to the "raw immediacy of experience" (Nayak and Jeffrey, 2011:284). Latham and Conradson (2003, cited in Nayak and Jeffrey, 2011) argue that human geography is dominated by the politics of representation, thus privileging it over practice and feeling. Accordingly Lorimer (2005: 84) suggests that these representations seek to fix and stabilise social life in a way that "renders inert all that ought to be most lively."

On the contrary non-representational theory is a style of engagement with the world that focuses on the taking place of practices, focusing on what humans and non-humans do, advocating that much of the experience gained in the world is

simply felt and therefore beyond representation. It is physical performances, in this case walking, that matter. This is also expressed by Lorimer (2005, 83) who states it is “open encounters in the realm of practice that matter most.” The non-representational is a style of thinking which values practice (Thrift, 2000). This is a shift away from the conceptual basis of current cultural geography which has taken representation as its central focus (Thrift, 1999). Nash (2000) agrees and states much can be gained from the turn away from ‘text’ and representations towards performance and practices. In his discussion on the countryside Carolan (2008) states that mind is body, thinking is sensuous, consciousness is corporeal, our understanding of space is a lived process, “to ignore how understandings of the countryside are embodied is to cut from our analysis a major (indeed main) source of understanding” (Carolan, 2008: 409). According to Carolan (2008) knowledge of the countryside is more than mere discursive constructs. He argues that greater attention needs to be paid to issues of embodiment as “we do not think about the countryside as brains-in-a-vat but rather as bodies-in-the-wood” (Carolan, 2008: 419).

Thrift’s (1996; 1999) work on performativity and bodily practices described as non-representational theory, or the theory of practice, became the crux of this turn away from representations. He attaches this term to a set of philosophical work which places an emphasis on how space and time emerge through embodied practice. It was inspired by Michael de Certeau, Foucault’s attention to the technologies of being, the emphasis of nonhuman agency and relational assemblages in actor network theory, and the languages of heterogeneous fragments, flows, assemblages and linkages of Deleuze and Guattari (1987). Thrift (1996, 1997, 1999) outlines the tenets of non-representational theory and suggests it is not “a project concerned with representations and meaning, but with the performative “presentations”, “showings” and “manifestations” of everyday life” (Thrift, 1996: 10). It is concerned with the practices through which we become ‘subjects’ decentred, affective, but embodied, relational, expressive and involved with others and objects in a world continually in process. Instead of theoretically representing the world, non-representational theory is concerned with the ways

subjects know the world without knowing it, the “inarticulate understanding, or practical intelligibility of an unformulated practical grasp of the world” (Thrift, 1996: 10). The notion of ordinary people is key here as the politics of non-representational theory are of “appreciating, and valorising, the skills and knowledges they get from being embodied beings, skills and knowledges which have been so consistently devalorised by contemplative forms of life, thus underlining that their stake on the world is just as great as the stake of those who are paid to comment upon it” (Thrift, 1997 cited in Nash, 2000: 655). Non-representational theory moves away from a concern with representation, especially text since, it is argued, text only inadequately commemorated ordinary lives since it valued what is written or spoken over multi-sensual practices and experiences.

It is important to note that the term non-representational is not anti representation and does not deny that representations are significant (Macpherson, 2010). Rather it makes us acknowledge that representation is not mimetic but a form of presentation. Non-representational emerged primarily as a caution about the overvaluation of the “representational referential dimensions of life following [geography’s] cultural turn” (Gregory. et al. 2009: 503). Lorimer (2005) has therefore suggested the term ‘more-than-representational’ as preferable for describing diverse work in geography that currently seeks to better understand “our self-evidently more-than-human, more-than-textual, multisensual worlds” (Lorimer 2005: 83). Lorimer (2005: 84) states “focus falls on how life takes shape and gains expression in shared experiences, everyday routines, fleeting encounters, embodied movements, precognitive triggers, practical skills, affective intensities, enduring urges, unexceptional interactions and sensuous dispositions…which escape from the established academic habit of striving to uncover meanings and values that apparently await our discovery, interpretation, judgment and ultimately representation.”

Carolan (2008) also expresses concern about using the term non-representational. He states that the term is problematic as it suggests that what is of analytic concern ultimately dies the moment it is written or talked about. Like Lorimer (2005) he also

advocates that the world of embodied experience is better explained as being more-than-representational. Carolan (2008: 412) states "[i]t is not that we cannot represent sensuous, corporeal, lived experience but that the moment we do we immediately lose something. Representations tell only a part of the story, yet they still have a story to tell, however incomplete."

Macpherson (2010) states that Thrift's non-representational theory has been elaborated and reworked by a range of writers in the discipline of geography who have taken inspiration from a whole raft of work based around metaphors of performance to outline, and expand upon, an agenda for non-representational ways of thinking and research. What might broadly be referred to as 'non-representational approaches' have also been utilized to engage with topics as diverse as race, music, dance therapy, gardening and the one which is most significant to this study, walking (Wylie, 2002; 2005). Macpherson (2010) states that the more-than-representational requires us to make a fundamental shift in how we think through the concept and materiality of the body, for attention is drawn to what a body can do and the process of embodiment. That is how the body takes shape through its interactions with other objects, bodies and landscapes. Our physical body and sensations are understood to be on the move, interconnected with other bodies and contexts. This means our sense of embodiment is dependent on how our body is put to use. The body in these accounts becomes hard to fix because, as Latour (2004: 206) writes "… to have a body is to learn to be affected, meaning ''effectuated'', moved, put into motion by other entities, humans or non-humans." Therefore, in this formulation of embodiment there is no essential singular body, rather bodies and their differences come about through their interactions with the world: past, present and anticipated. Within this context the body can be understood as an '… interface that becomes more and more describable as it learns to be affected by more and more elements' (Latour 2004: 207).

This means that our actions and conscious thoughts in any given environment maybe the result of pre-conscious thought shaped by the technologies and objects

available; and the contexts and cues of a particular landscape. So objects available and physical landscape contexts are implicated in what the body is and what the body is likely to do in any given moment. Such observations are clarified when placed in empirical context. For example, anthropologist Ingold (2004) writes a historical account of how, with the development of the technology of the shoe, people have been afforded differing movements through the landscape. Furthermore, work on the contemporary body highlights how the body continues to be constantly in formation, coming into being with its local environment and technologies rather than simply being or persisting (Haraway, 1991). These ideas of the body as constantly in becoming, process or formation have important implications for how we might think about and categorize different bodies. Instead of thinking about bodies as relatively static or stable entities it is possible to think of them as performances that occur in conjunction with particular objects or contexts.

The shift from representation to performance and the non-representation does not necessarily mean a complete disengagement from representation as the phrase 'non-representational' suggests. Rather the representational and performed can be seen as implicated in what Nayak and Jeffrey (2011: 284) deem to be a "dialectic relationship feeding off and through one another." This is also supported by Dewsbury, et al. (2002: 438) who state that instead of being seen as on opposite ends of the spectrum, it is better to consider how representation and non-representation fold into one another. This is especially prevalent when considering the interrelation between feelings, affect and the non-representational and how they are bound to certain representational forms (Nayak and Jeffrey, 2011). The use of interviews, participant observation, written and photographic diaries and ethnography for example offer the 're'-presentation of embodied or "wordly activities" (Nayak and Jeffrey, 2011: 288).

Although the social sciences seem to be abuzz with the tenets of non-representational theory (Popke, 2009) reservations towards it cannot be ignored. Non-representational theory appears to have over extended its focus on the pre-cognitive field of action and becoming. Originally, non-representational theory was

originated to counteract the overemphasised importance of the representational, which was deemed as all consuming. Yet it can be argued that non-representational's overriding emphasis on performance and the pre-cognitive has in turn re-established the dualism it first attempted to overcome. According to Adey (2010) scholars have "questioned whether it draws an implicit line between thought and action and between the social and the unanalysable world of the precognitive or prereflective." Cresswell (2006), states that mobility has almost always been governed by representations, therefore it is impossible to escape from power. Whilst using the performance of dance as an example Cresswell (2006) explains that to describe dance as purely non-representational risks separating out relations between action and thought, between presentation and representation. Cresswell (2006: 73) therefore suggests that "human mobility is simultaneously representational taking practical representation as practice and practice as representation." Whilst also discussing dance McCormack (2002) states that bodily mobile practices aren't beyond thinking or representational thought, rather they involve different sorts of understanding of thinking and feeling which are implicated with one another. Practices such as dance therefore use various combinations of thought, action, feeling and expression. Ingold (2004: 331) suggests a similar notion when discussing walking and states that "cognition should not be set off from locomotion, along the lines of a division between head and heels." Lorimer and Lund (2008) also proclaim that walking is both thought and un-thought. Adey (2010:149) suggests therefore that mobility is both non-representational and representational. He states that mobilities are often represented and are often given meaning, but at the same time there are elements (the non-representational) that are almost impossible to represent, that escape without meaning and "can occur without thought." Rather than advocate the binaries between the representational and non-representational and choose one side or the other, this research encourages looking beyond such dualities, whilst considering the importance of more-than-representational as well as representational. Both can be equally important in the assemblage of place, and when assembled together can create a coherent unit, in this case, for the duration of a walk on the Wales Coast Path.

2.8: The Affective Turn

An interest in affect has fashioned the affective turn within the social sciences and humanities that now consider affect as a theoretical tool with which to explore experiences, such as bodily experiences, which veers away from the prevailing paradigm of representation. This emerged due to what was deemed as the neglected significance of movements in relation to cultural formation and interactions with both the real and virtual worlds. The importance of affect is that the affective and non-conscious resonances with the source of a message is more significant than the message that it consciously received.

According to Massumi (2002: 2) affects and mobilities are inseparable as the "mobile body feels as it moves and moves as it feels." Massumi (2002: 1-2) continues by stating that the moving body "convokes a qualitative difference … it beckons a feeling." According to Thrift (2004a: 59) "there is no stable definition of affect", rather it is a dialogic experience mixed within a network of both human and non-human actors which facilitates feeling, sensation and tactile forms of understanding. Nayak and Jeffrey (2011) simply state that affect can be explained as the non-conscious bodily experience of sensation. Affects therefore are felt rather than mediated through language. This differs from emotion which can be deemed as conscious and already has preconditions, that is, people already consciously know which emotion they should be feeling when certain situations arise.

The term affect especially came to prominence in the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987). In their work they explain that an 'affect' does not mean a personal feeling, rather it denotes the ability to be affected. It is an intensity which relates to the change from one experiential state of the body to another, this suggests that there is an increase or reduction in the body's ability to act. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) explain that an affect is unstructured and unformed, that is, it is not pre-supposed and can be achieved in a range of embodied activities. An affect(ted) body is so because it has encountered another affected body, whether that is another body, in

both the physical and mental sense, such as an object, a rhythm or feeling. Nayak and Jeffrey (2011) effectively demonstrate the unstructured nature of an affect through their analysis of a free form jazz musician. They explain that a walk on musician may connect with the vibe, feel and texture of an unstructured live performance as it takes place thus complementing the musical ensemble taking place. Free form jazz is not pre-planned and rehearsed but "comes together in-the-moment as different creative energies and capacities cohere" (Nayak and Jeffrey, 2011: 289). The melodies are not practiced and pre-planned but come together in, what Nayak and Jeffrey (2011: 289) state, an "imminent state of becoming." That is, all of the possibilities for affect hang in the air as possible potentialities and are only realized through the embodied playing of the musicians attuned to that moment. This kind of jazz is not a structured form of playing but rather is an assemblage of rhythms, flows, feelings, unspoken ideas and embodied motor skills.

According to Crouch (2003: 1952) therefore through musical performance, embodied knowledge is practiced where "ideas and doing work together." Affects do not therefore come into existence in isolation within a single individual but, as previously stated, is assembled through a relationship between bodies, sounds, movements, encounters and objects. Furthermore, affects are not limited to an individual body or subject but are composed through "worldly interactions" (Nayak and Jeffrey, 2011: 289). For live musicians therefore the experience of a live event is affective through the intangible and intersubjective coalition of forces such as the adrenalin of playing live, perspiration, inspiration, the audience participation and reaction, movement and dance and the throbbing beat of the music. It is in this immediacy of these kinds of performances that affects erupt and exceed bodily capacities, thus enacting on other bodies, objects and 'things', taking on a "trans-human quality" (Nayak and Jeffrey, 2011: 290). Affects are therefore not limited to merely human subjects but can be distributed further and are constantly reconstructed due to the wonders of performance. The agencies of both human and non-human bodies in the creation of affect are effectively demonstrated by the atmosphere generated at a music gig. Agencies including bodies, guitars and even screams from the crowd, or vocals from the singers, all spontaneously come

together to enhance or diminish experience. Affects can also spill out and be collectively experienced and enhanced through shared participation. According to Adey (2010: 166), “emotions and affects rise and surge between bodies. Bodies are extended out into more-than-personal bond and associations as people move with each other.” Adey (2010) states that by moving together affects link up individuals to an unconscious collective, thus creating an innate sense of belonging, sociality and respect.

2.9: A Sense of Place and Belonging on the Wales Coast Path

According to Tuan (1977) the differentiation between place and space happens when people get to know a space and endow it with value, for example getting to know Wales, and areas along coastal Wales through walking the ‘shape of a nation’ along the Wales Coast Path. According to Cresswell (2004) a place is a space which people have made meaningful and are spaces that people are attached to in some way. For Agnew (1987, cited in Cresswell, 2004) a sense of place means the emotional and subjective attachment people have to place. Datel and Dingemans (1984) state that a sense of place refers to a complex bundle of symbols, meanings and qualities that an individual or group associates (both consciously and un-consciously) with a specific locality or region. A sense of place can be created and re-created through a myriad of interacting factors which could be situational, personal, social, historical, political or environmental for example. A sense of place not only refers to a physical reality but also represents the belief of the spirit of a locale, the living force that makes “undifferentiated space become a place as we get to know it better and endow it with value” (Tuan, 1977: 6). The spirit, or soul, of a locale refers to the celebrated distinct, unique and moving characteristics of place. The spirit of a place can be experienced in the invisible fabric of culture such as memories, beliefs and histories as well as in the physical features of place such as monuments, the sea, rivers, woods and particular views for example. Finally, the spirit of a place can be in its interpersonal characteristics such as the friends, familiar groups, family or even kindred spirits, fellow walkers for example, who also share that place.

It is vital to consider how walking the Wales Coast Path can create a strong sense of place and feelings of attachment to areas along the path, to communities, to others who walk the path and finally to Wales. Solnit (2001) suggests that we are now a sedentary population and we are now disconnected to the land, to others and to our own bodies. Walking the Wales Coast Path could therefore be a way of establishing a connection between people who walk the path and to communities along the path creating a strong sense of place. Legat (2008) reflects on how walking establishes the relationship between all those who use a specific locale. By walking the same route, which others have followed for generations, people are linked to that place and to the others who also use, or have used, the same route. Walking the Wales Coast Path could therefore attach people to a community, amplifying feelings of identity and belonging. Legat (2008: 35) states "[w]alking, then, validates the reality of the past in the present and in so doing, continually re-establishes the relationship between place, story and all the beings who use the locale, creating situations in which one can grow intellectually while travelling trails under the guidance of predecessors who have both followed and left footprints." This is also emphasised by Solnit (2001: 68) who acknowledges "[t]o walk the same way is to reiterate something deep; to move though the same space the same way is a means of becoming the same person, thinking the same thoughts." This suggests that as people move with each other bodies are extended out into more-than-personal bonds and associations amongst each other. Walking is deemed to be essential to social relations (Ingold and Vergunst, 2008) therefore walking the Wales Coast Path could re-connect people with the world and with others. The importance of walking in connecting with others is expressed by Ingold and Vergunst (2008: 1: italics in original) who state that "walking is a profoundly social activity: that in their timings, rhythms and inflections, the feet respond as much as does the voice to the presence and activity of others. Social relations, we maintain, are not enacted *in situ* but are paced out along the ground."

Walking the Wales Coast Path could re-connect people to Wales, facilitating a feeling of belonging to a nation and culture which could have been lost due to the disconnection caused by this stillness of foot. Olwig (2008) stresses the historical

link between movement and feelings of belonging to the land. Following an early route or path carved out by our ancestors, a pursuit now lost in our stationary lives living in new build communities; connect us to our nation, especially if we follow a course created in the exploration of the land. “Historically, I suggest, the feeling of belonging to the land through movement is as old as the activity of hunters and gatherers in tracking game and finding edible materials along habitual paths woven by the inhabitants of a familiar habitat, or in the exploration of a new one” (Olwig, 2008: 84). Tilley (1994, cited in Ingold, 2004: 333) states that through walking, lives and landscapes become intertwined. Lives are woven into the landscape, and the landscape becomes attached to lives.

Feelings of belonging and a strong sense of place can be applied wider than the Welsh or Wales context exclusively. That is, belonging is more than being born somewhere and can therefore be asked of a broad audience. Belonging can be when someone feels an integral piece of the fabric which constitutes the community no matter what their nationality. This is highlighted effectively by Cohen (1982: 21) who says “belonging is where people can feel they are an essential piece of the marvellously complicated fabric which constitutes the community, that one is a recipient of its proudly distinctive and consciously preserved culture – a repository of its traditions and values a performer of its hallowed skills, an expert in its idioms and idiosyncrasies.” This links with the previous notions discussed of ‘dwelling in motion’ (Sheller and Urry, 2006) and ‘mobile homeliness’ (Edensor, 2010). That is, that the accumulation of repetitive events (such as those created through walking) could give a mobilised sense of place and sense of belonging to those who don’t necessarily consider themselves Welsh. Walking the Wales Coast Path regularly and walking familiar routes facilitate a sense of belonging, and sense of place, no matter what an individual’s nationality. Adey (2010) suggests that regular mobility can facilitate feelings of solidarity, feelings of belonging to a group, that is, a connection to those around as well a sense of belonging. Adey (2010) continues by stating than an emotional influence created by being embodied in a specific location, such as the Wales Coast Path, helps to create a sense of belonging to communities. Although, it is hard to escape

mentioning belonging within the Wales context here. The nature of the path itself has changed; it is now officially recognised as the Wales Coast Path. Signs along the Path remind people that they are walking on a Welsh national trail, and make people aware of it. This could affect people's sense of place on the Path by acknowledging that it is part of a national all Wales trail.

Ardonin (2006) states that researchers often approach senses of place from a distinct disciplinary perspective, for example psychology focuses on personal identity (Proshansky, Fabian and Kaminoff, 1983; Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996), sociology examines social processes and the characteristics of place (Gustafson, 2001; Mueller Worster and Abrams, 2005). The cultural symbols of place have been examined in anthropology (Feld and Basso, 1996; Low, 2000). Environmental studies stress the importance of firsthand experience with nature which is deemed to create a place-based sense of connection and compassion (Kellert, 2005). Geography's engagement with a sense of place varies from rootedness, up-rootedness and how lived experiences create place (Heidegger, 1956, 2002; Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1977). Most recently human geography has drawn attention to the sense of place created through being in motion (Sheller and Urry, 2006; Edensor, 2010). That is, through mobile practices such as walking, a sense of place emerges by seeing the same things and experiencing the same surroundings. According to Edensor (2010: 70) "[a] mobile sense of place can be produced through longer immersion by the walking body across a more extended space." Whilst discussing daily walks by Londoners Edensor (2010) further states that regular endeavours produce a mobile sense of place. Even seeing the same serial features such as houses or shops create a sense of spatial belonging. Additionally, regular daily rituals such as buying a newspaper according to Edensor (2010: 70) even "enfold social relations into the daily ritual." Such familiar daily routes and routines and passing familiar fixtures therefore could facilitate a comforting mobile homeliness. Similarly, Sheller and Urry (2006) refer to this as dwelling in motion, whereby place is experienced through the familiar practices, seeing and experiencing familiar fixtures. This mobile homeliness allows for an experiential uncovering of a sense of place. It is where the accumulation of repetitive events aligns body with place

(Labelle, 2008 cited in Edensor, 2010: 70). This “mobile belonging” (Edensor, 2010) veers away from the notion that places with a lot of mobility and movement become placeless (Cresswell, 2006).

According to Merriman (2005: 154) this notion that mobility equates to placelessness overlooks “the complex habitations, practices of dwelling, embodied relations, material presences, placings and hybrid subjectivities associated through movement through spaces.” This resonated with Relph’s (1976) earlier notion of existential insideness, which creates deep feelings of at home-ness. According to Adey (2010:166), “emotions and affects rise and surge between bodies. Bodies are extended out into more-than-personal bond and associations as people move with each other.” Adey (2010) continues by stating that affects and emotions feedback as they leap between people, thus tying people even closer together. McNeill (1995) suggests that people moving together in time has provided the affective glue which bonds cultures and societies collectively. Rhythmic movement helped to crease senses of belonging within communities, creating a very powerful social bond and intense fellow of feeling (McNeill, 1995). Brennan (2003: 70) states that rather than communicating symbolically or discursively, being mobile in time is “critical in both establishing and enhancing a sense of collective purpose and a common understanding.” According to Adey (2010: 168) these kinds of bonds and fellowships don’t have to happen by moving in time rather just simply “moving with.” Walking together is communally constituted (Edensor, 2001). The walk is an occasion for sociability and companionship. Different social groups will experience quite differently the bodily opportunities and bodily constraints that woods and forests provide. Even so, different social groups will engage and perform their bodies in different ways.

Each of the disciplines mentioned above recognize different factors which create a strong connection to a sense of place. However, according to Ardoin (2006: 114) little has been done to “rigorously tackle place as a holistic, multidimensional concept.” Ardonin (2006) has therefore highlighted that a sense of place is a relational occurrence which consist of four consistent dimensions. These

dimensions according to Ardonin (2006) are the biophysical environment, the personal and psychological element, the social and cultural connection and finally the political economic setting. This multidimensional view resonates with Puren, Coetzee and Roos (2010: 859) who state that "it implies a shift from the traditional rational scientific method where space in mainly described in fixed, concrete, absolute, three dimensional and in physical terms. It is suggested that space can be seen as fluid, abstract, multi-dimensional, relational and socially constructed phenomena." A sense of place is therefore characterised by porous boundaries and inter-connections rather than fixed identities and borders (Massey, 1993). Human-environment interactions therefore involve continuous relational and dynamic interaction between human emotions, cognitions, behaviour as well as the environment (Puren, Coetzee and Roos, 2010). Game and Metcalfe (2011) draw on the work of Gaston Bachelard when discussing the sense of place for people who exercise on Australia's Bondi Beach. Here they state that a sense of place comes from lived experience; that is, being embodied in that space, and not from the individual subject. The roots of a sense of place therefore does not come from what people bring to a place, but rather from the relations generated in space, they state that connections with place emerge "through participation in or inhabitation of the world" (Game and Metcalf, 2011: 43). They continue by stating that in relations with lived spaces, boundaries between outside and inside, self and object are suspended. Rather, it becomes fluid and relational and a sense of place derives from the assemblages of different heterogeneous elements. In Game and Metcalf's (2011: 49) study of Bondi Beach they explore the relational sense of fitting in for the regular visitors to the beach. They explain that daily beach practices allowed their research participants to experience "a relation form of being" in a space. From daily practices carried out on Bondi Beach, participants reported a sense of belonging which encompassed an intimate connection to the natural landscape as well as openness to social interactions. As this experience of exercising on Bondi Beach is shared, it can form the basis for cooperation and a common sense of purpose on a community scale (Kearns and Collins, 2012).

Jensen (2009) concurs and states that place can be understood relationally thus re-conceptualising how identities and a sense of belonging are understood. Jensen (2009) further states that a relational approach also re-conceptualises how mobility and infrastructures, such as the Wales Coast Path, are sites of meaningful interaction and cultural production. Jensen argues that the meaning and sense of place is constituted by movement as much as the morphological properties of place. Jensen (2009: 143) highlights the relational characteristics of place by stating "there is no nested or fixed sense of place but rather geographies of material, emotional and imaginary sorts created through networks of connectivity that transcend place as an enclave." Even so, this does not mean to ignore the importance of fixed place, such as those along the Wales Coast Path. Settlement and place are still important as people do put down roots, yet it must be accepted that at the same time "identities are developed through the networked geography of places" (Savage, et al. 2005: 207).

2.10: The Wales Coast Path - A 'Welshscape'

Here the concept of nationalism will refer to the feelings of belonging to a nation, as well as a political ideology that the national unit exists and should be allowed to exist. Researching walking the Wales Coast Path and a sense of place agrees with Billig's (1995) notion of 'Banal Nationalism'. That is the "subtle and informal ways in which nationalism is produced" (Jones and Desforge, 2003: 271). This draws attention to the importance of the everyday processes, the mundane, the subtle, such as walking, that can re-create feelings of Welsh identity and a sense of belonging to Wales. According to Jones and Merriman (2009) much has been made of banal processes that reproduce nationalism in recent years. Billig (1995: 93) states that "nationhood is ... near the surface of contemporary life." Billig's (1995) aim is to draw attention to the mundane and unnoticed ways in which nationalism is reproduced.

Wales as a nation has been given coherence by its unique outline, highlighted by the Wales Coast Path. Bishop (1998) similarly, in his account of people driving

around the coast of Australia, states how following the coast is an inspection and narrative of the nation. Similarly to the Wales Coast Path, the grand tour of following the Australian coastline was seen as an instrument for "incorporating remote and fragmented regions, both their landscape and cultures into a more coherent vision of Australia" (Bishop, 1998: 146). The Wales Coast Path highlights the shape of Wales, allowing people to truly walk the shape of a nation, this is the official stance of the path therefore is an official vision of nation building. It defines Wales as a specific region, giving it greater spatial recognition as a region and more of an independent stance from the rest of the UK, highlighting a definite border to the region. This defining of the shape of Wales has come at an appropriate time as slowly over the last decade Wales has gained more political control as the Welsh Assembly has been granted more decision making powers for Wales. The creation of the Wales Coast Path could be seen as giving more territorial identity which goes hand in hand with this increasing political power. The Wales Coast Path has also realized the Welsh Assembly's vision of uniting Wales' different territories under one scheme an all Wales path, that share the same recognizable symbol; the same languages, both Welsh and English; the same cultural vision; and consistent themes in leaflets etc. The bilingual nature of the path, that is bilingual signs, information leaflets as well as hearing Welsh spoken on the path, and in communities along the path, further defines it as a Welsh path or a Welsh space ('Welshscape').

Likewise to the Wales Coast Path, according to Bishop the around Australia journey was integral to the process of re-imagining Australia as a nation. Bishop (1998) states that the growth in car ownership and road infrastructures post World War ll made it tangible for Australians to journey around the coast of the country. Similarly, the new Wales Coast Path has made it physically possible for people to walk around the whole coast of Wales. Bishop (1998) states that following the coast of Australia, physically tracing the outline, "confirms the boundary, and re-establishes a sacred coherence with it." Bishop (1998:150) states that by "threading places together like a necklace, the around Australia journey attempts to transform discontinuity into continuity, to produce an idealised coherence of a nation." Bishop (1998), states that closure and a sense of completion became important to

the integrity of this journey. This resonates with researching walking the Wales Coast Path, it merits considering the different experiences, between those who complete the whole coastal path and those who merely walk short sections of it. Does the sense of closure and send of completion result in a different kind or even greater, connection to Wales? Much like the tracing of the Australian coast which according to Bishop (1998: 152) became a solid geographical and political fact, tracing the coast of Wales could indeed reproduce Welsh national identity by giving greater spatial recognition to Wales as a nation; the nation being confirmed by its shape. Returning to Solnit's (2001) notion that we are currently in an era where we are disconnected from the land, to others and to others tracing the shape of Wales could facilitate what Bishop (1998: 154) recognises that tracing the coast Australia was "prompted by a deepening national insecurity about the ownership of the land they had always assumed was theirs without question, they were now having to embark upon expeditions or re-conquest and re-colonization. They were suddenly staking out a birth right that was suddenly under threat." Bishop (1998: 155) acknowledges the tracing the coastline of Australia to be a reassertion of possession or a last pilgrimage."

Similar, in his discussion on the proposed infrastructure of the Alice Springs to Darwin railway, and the way issues of national identity have been negotiated through its formation, Bishop (2000:49) states that it is a "'steel backbone', not just down the Australian continent but through Australian national identity", whilst also referring to comments which describe it as a great piece of nation building infrastructure. Even so, he reflects on the hostility of the proposed rail infrastructure with the Northern Territories often displaying antipathy or even hostility toward the proposed rail line. This is something to consider in the case of the Wales Coast Path, considering therefore if already established areas of the path, such as the Pembrokeshire Coast Path, are drowning in their new national status.

According to Bishop (2000) this new rail infrastructure was deemed as something that would remind South Australia, a region viewed as being a peripheral Australian

region, that it was an important part of “this great nation” (Bishop, 2000: 54) which could “mix in with the best of them” (Bishop, 2000: 54). The infrastructure was viewed as something that would unite the whole country “sharing strengths and weaknesses to encourage prosperity and security across the entire nation” (Bishop, 2000: 55). It was deemed as a nationally valuable “transformational initiative” (Bishop, 2000: 55), not just for the northern or southern territories of Australia but for the nation as a whole. Similarly, the Wales Coast Path has seemingly united all of coastal Wales in one initiative, a world first, a path spanning the coast of an entire nation. Although Bishop (2000) acknowledges that the stress put on the national context could possibly facilitate the effacement of alternative stories of the nation, those that were founded on people’s local experience of place. This is applicable to the Wales Coast Path, prompting to consider therefore if the new all Wales nature of the Path changes people’s local experiences whilst walking the path.

According to Desmond (1994: 34) through walking social identities are “signalled, formed and negotiated through bodily movement.” In his discussion on walking in the countryside Edensor (2001) proclaims that the way people walk and also move with others expresses a connection amongst each other. Focusing on issues of Welsh identity and a feeling of belonging to Wales has been a debated topic whilst presenting my work to my peers. People have argued that concentrating on ‘Welsh’ issues are unnecessary. It has been suggested that it won’t only be ‘Welsh’ people who walk the Path. Additionally, it has been argued that if it wasn’t called the Wales Coast Path then the ‘Welsh’ issue would be redundant. Finally, another criticism has been that most people won’t walk the whole 870 miles of the Wales Coast Path and therefore won’t experience it as a ‘Wales’ Coast Path.

Williams and Smith (1983) suggest that nationalism and a feeling of belonging to a place is a fight for the control of the land. Historical nationalist programmes have fought for the protection of Welsh land as Welsh identity was seen as something that was tied to the land (Gruffudd, 1995). I suggest therefore that the Wales Coast Path protects Welsh land giving Wales back the control of the land therefore

highlighting the need to consider issues specifically related to Wales and Welshness in this research. Olwig (2008) stresses the historical link between movement and feelings of belonging to the land. Following an early route or path carved out by our ancestors, a pursuit now lost in our stationary lives living in new build communities; connect us to our nation, especially if we follow a course created in the exploration of the land. In their study of walkers in the woods Macnaghten and Urry (2001: 166) refer to a sense of nationalism when embodied whilst walking in the woods. For example, in America the discovery of the Big Trees of California was seen as an "American godsend, the revelation of the uniqueness of America and of the particular chosen character of the American people." Similarly, Macnaghten and Urry (2001: 174) discuss how, through their fieldwork with walkers in woods, a sense of Englishness was encountered by walkers embodied in woodland areas, their research participants state "[i]t's one of the joys of the change of seasons, so that when you go for a walk you don't really see the same things every time. If you go for a walk every month or something then you see different things, there's different fauna and vegetation comes up during the year, whereas if you go through the towns you'll find that everything virtually stays the same apart from the light coming down from above. It's the actual changing of the woodland and the environment that makes it so English, it continually changes, rather than just one monotonous view if you go through built up or urban areas." Macnaughten and Urry (2001) continue by stating that this supposed Englishness may partly explain why inner city Asian youth are not attracted to woods. This is relevant to studying the Wales Coast Path, considering therefore that a strong Welsh sense of place may deter those who don't consider themselves as Welsh from thoroughly engaging and experiencing the path.

This link between sense of place and feelings of belonging to Wales offers a new angle to Geography. As previously mentioned, in the past representations as well as social constructions have been the main focus. This research however considers how a sense of place and feelings of belonging can also emerge through movement and being physically embodied in a specific location, as well as representations.

It is important to consider that when the Wales Coast Path was created its status changed. It became a bigger entity (a path spanning along an entire region). It officially became recognised as something of Wales'. Therefore, it could change people's experiences of it. Joining the Wales Coast Path from an adjoining path, not designated as the Wales Coast Path, could make people aware that they are now on a national trail. The Welsh dimension of the path is vital as it can also be an important part of the experiences of an outsider, a foreign tourist for example. Welshness can apply here in a different way. Walking the Wales Coast Path could give people a different sense of what it is be Welsh or have a sense of place or belonging to Wales. It will be interesting to see how Wales is identified by outsiders, for example foreign tourists, whilst walking the Wales Coast path. This could possibly facilitate an investigation into how walking the Wales Coast Path facilitates in the changing of the imaginative geographies of Wales. It is hard to escape mentioning belonging within the Wales context here. The nature of the path itself has changed; it is now officially recognised as the Wales Coast Path. Signs along the path remind people that they are walking on a Welsh national trail, and make people aware of it. This could affect people's sense of place on the path by acknowledging that it is part of a national all Wales trail.

This discussion suggests therefore that walking the Wales Coast Path could be an experiential exploration of what it is to feel a belonging to Wales. I am always drawn to thinking about a poem by T.H.Parry Williams called Hon (1949) *(This)* when considering this (discussed in chapter 6). He begins by saying why should he care for Wales? It's only by chance he lives in this particular place. It is merely a piece of land of no significance to anyone. Yet he goes for a walk. He sees Snowdon and the surrounding mountains and the lake and the river and notices the bareness of the land (characteristic of that area). It is whilst walking he says he can feel Wales' claws grabbing his chest and can't escape from this, the feeling of a connection to his country, his homeland, and his nationality.

The notions of 'dwelling in motion' (Edensor, 2010) and a 'mobile homeliness' (Sheller and Urry, 2006) can also pose an answer to the argument that not all

people will walk the 870 miles of the path and therefore not experience the Wales Coast Path. Walking familiar areas of the Wales Coast Path, seeing the same things and experiencing the same things can give people a mobile sense of place and belonging. This coincides with Jones and Desforges' (2003) notion that a local sense of place and identity are vital in the context of the reproduction of Welsh identity. This argues that it is still possible to research the Wales Coast Path even if people only walk certain parts of it. Jones and Desforges (2003) further state that it is at the local level that people make sense of their relationship to the nation. This coincides with Billig's (1995) notion of 'Banal Nationalism' mentioned previously. Billig (1995) suggests that the local level is vital to nationalism and to a sense of place. Those normal, day to day, activities, such as walking parts of the Wales Coast Path (which is a normal process for many) is vital to the local reproduction of Welsh identity. This is also explained by Cohen (1982) who says that people become aware of their culture and celebrate differences, not through complicated ceremonies, but through day to day processes. Finally, whilst walking the Wales Coast Path, even if just walking familiar local routes, one cannot escape from the national context. Signs along the coast designate the Wales Coast Path and make it apparent when one is walking on it. Therefore when people realise they have started to walk on a national path, this awareness could change their experience or sense of place on the Wales Coast Path.

According to Kearns and Collins (2012) in their study on feelings for the coast in North East New Zealand they state that a strong emotional connection to a place transcend the particularity of cultural backgrounds. Connection on the Wales Coast Path therefore is something can be considered wider than solely the 'Welsh' context. Kearns and Collins' (2012) research focused on the feelings evoked in coastal New Zealand. In particular they concentrate on the how emotional connections with the coastal environment can be a resource motivation for place-protective action. They acknowledge that, notwithstanding an array of origins and birthplaces, many of their participants shared an acute sense of place on the New Zealand coast with its beaches evoking a strong sense of place and powerful feelings such as awe, exhilaration and reverence. This sense of place, despite of

one's origin, is a by-product of collective action in a particular place. Kearns and Collins (2012: 952) state "emotions are brought and mobilised by the experience of collective action." I propose therefore that the Welsh Coast Path could be deemed a 'welshscape', thus re-establishing Welsh identity and feelings of belonging to Wales.

2.11: Additional Focus - Language

This research emphasises the need to draw attention to the Welsh language whist considering the physical act of walking the Wales Coast Path. The connection between language and the walking which is a research issue largely unexplored. It is within Welsh identity the issue of language can be addressed. I began to address this issue as a credible research theme when volunteering with a Welsh language group (chapter 3). Welsh learners come along to walking trips arranged by the group in the community. When walking they stated that they felt a greater connection to the Welsh language than when sitting in a classroom. It has been suggested by the linguist Fishman (1991) that minority languages will only survive if they are community languages rather than limited to linguistically isolated families. Language communities must be created to bridge the gap between the family, home and the community. He states that too much stress is put on the use of the Welsh language in the government and media for example which does not transfer to the community level. I suggest therefore that (as mentioned previously) if walking is a way of connecting communities and re-connects people to others it could re-connect people to language bringing it therefore into the community context. Additionally, walking could connect people to the Welsh language as being embodied whilst physically walking the Wales Coast Path could connect people to language through the use of Welsh place names, or even engaging with official documents (information leaflets etc) about the path which are all produced bilingually. The official documents about the Wales Coast Path are all bilingual, therefore the language of the path is both Welsh and English. The Welsh language is an interesting theme to explore and a new angle on the exploration on language, and how a connection to it can be facilitated by walking the Wales Coast Path.

2.12: Conclusion - The Next 'Step'

The experiences of people on the Wales Coast Path can therefore be understood as a complex assemblage of body, material and environment relations. That is, the experiences on the Wales Coast Path can be understood through interactions between the body, where the walking is practiced. Engagement with the Wales Coastal Path explores a new way of discovering space whilst facilitating feelings of belonging to Wales, to communities along the coastal path and to other walkers. It is an assemblage of the human and non-human agencies that interact and connect people, place and community. A feeling of belonging to Wales could therefore be an assemblage between the material organisation of the path, the shape of landscape, symbolic meanings, sensual perceptions and the experience of moving.

The key geographical themes explored here advocates an assemblage approach to the research. This advocates the need to think relationally about the Wales Coast Path in order to take into account the mass of human and non-human agencies and interactions that generate and facilitate experiences. This steers the research to consider the number of 'things' or pieces of 'things' that are gathered into a single context, it is a process where meaning is created through the connection of heterogeneous elements. Welshness or a sense of place on the Wales Coast Path can therefore be considered as a jumbling together of discrete parts or pieces that are capable of producing any number of effects.

Chapter 3: Methodology

> *As the walk progressed I felt the others in the group become increasingly more comfortable with me. It became apparent that by proving myself as a walker, rather than trying to make silly jokes, as I had previously done that morning, would be the way to form a connection with the others. This was completely obvious when Rachel said "Amy! I didn't think you would be able to keep up and would be behind us all but you ARE a walker!" (Field Diary 1: Oxwich to Rhossili 04.05.14)*

3.1: Defining a research focus

The focus of this study as well as the methodological focus started to emerge from two sources. Firstly, my previous work volunteering with a local Welsh language group called 'Pwerdy Cwmaman', which was set up to promote the use of the Welsh language in my local community, the Amman Valley, Carmarthenshire. As a tool for promoting the use of the Welsh language, and also to connect Welsh learners to the Welsh language, a walking group was set up to take people out into the community to get completely immersed in the area's history, landscape and for Welsh learners to hear Welsh spoken outside of the classroom. The walking group was used as a tool to connect people to place and subsequently to the Welsh language.

It is through these walks that I began to contemplate the notion that it was important to consider people's experiences in place and that it is within sensations, movement and experience that people develop a 'physically sensed way of being' (Thrift, 1997: 148). For example, I garnered that it was difficult for Welsh language learners to completely connect with the Welsh language whilst statically bound to studying from books in the depths of a lifeless community centre classroom, they needed to live it. It was through taking them out walking in the local community that they truly developed a connection to place and then by default to the language. Listening to old coal mining tales under the shadow of the imposing Pen Tyrcan mountain, with the wind in their faces, exploring the valley on foot facilitated a sense of connection to the local community which was generated through walking in a particular place.

Walking around the local community not only affected people who were new to the area and attempting to learn Welsh but also fluent Welsh speakers who were born and brought up in the area. I take myself as an example. I was born and brought up in the Amman Valley and I am a first language Welsh speaker. The walking groups were also a way for me to connect to Wales whilst facilitating a sense of pride in my country and Welshness. One walking trip took us out of the village's residential area and up into the countryside and the mountains which lie at the very close periphery. It was an area unexplored by many including myself and my family. Walking and experiencing an area of the valley, which would have been uncharted territory for most gave me a greater sense of ownership of the area. Experiencing the beautiful countryside, and its spectacular views, with the wind in my face, and the exhilaration of the exercise afforded by the walk facilitated a sense of pride in myself for experiencing the walk and also in the local area and Wales. It was during the participation in such walks that it dawned on me therefore that if a walk on such a small intimate and local scale could generate such strong feelings and sense of belonging then it would be fascinating to see how an epic walk like walking the Wales Coast Path, which is an ever greater physical and mental undertaking, could facilitate these feelings and connections towards Wales and how the consequence of such a walk could affect the walkers.

The second source that defined the course of this research, also greatly defining the methodological practices, was a pilot walk I carried out at the very beginning of my fieldwork journey. After reaching out to people on the 'All Wales Coast Path' Facebook page (see section 3.2) I was invited to attend a walk to celebrate the Wales Coast Path's second anniversary on the 4th of May 2014. The walkers I accompanied were all people who had previously walked the whole of the Wales Coast Path. This gave me an unbridled insight into a world untapped by geographical literature as no other research has previously had the opportunity of researching what it means to be able to walk around the coast of an entire nation. It was an opportunity to walk with a group of people who had all achieved one thing. They had all walked around the entire Wales Coast Path. The walk introduced me to research themes which the literature had not. It enabled me to observe the

dynamic of a group of people who had walked the whole of the Wales Coast Path and observe their interactions with me, each other and their surroundings. It highlighted the richness of the data gathered by walking and experiencing the journey with my research participants.

From that first fieldwork walk on that sunny May day back in 2014 themes, which would ultimately become very important themes in my thesis (which are discussed in greater detail in chapters 4, 5), emerged which almost certainly came into fruition because I had decided to join walkers on their Wales Coast Path journeys. Firstly, my positionality as a walker came to light. Before starting my PhD I had always considered myself a 'walker'. I was brought up on the Welsh coast and always walked along its shores. Although as soon as I embarked on my first fieldwork walk I quickly realised my walker credentials where greatly lacking. I realised that the mileage I had covered was insignificant compared to the other walkers I was with and I hadn't seen and experienced as much of Wales as I had previously thought, and couldn't join in with any tales and experiences of walking woe, elation and impressive achievements. I realised that the walking boots I was wearing were too small for great distances, and the rucksack, water bottles etc. were all wrong for the job at hand. At the beginning of the walk I felt left out. I was left to hold the camera for any initial group photos as the following quote shows:

> *Amy you can hold the cameras and take the pictures as you haven't walked the Wales Coast Path (Amanda, 42: Brighton)*

This was a 14 mile walk from Oxwich Bay to Rhossili on the Gower peninsula. About half way through the walk one of the participants turned to me and stated:

> *Amy! I didn't think you would be able to keep up and would be behind us all but you ARE a walker. (Rachel, 35: Brazil)*

As a researcher I was worried at the beginning of my fieldwork journey that my positionality as a Welsh speaker and my strong Welsh identity would be the only issue with positionality I would have to negotiate. Yet this first fieldwork walk

highlighted that my abilities as a walker was the main issue for my participants and that proving myself as a walker would be the main way to create a rapport between myself and the participants. During this first fieldwork walk, after around 7 miles of walking, and after proving myself as a walker I was then allowed to be included in the group photographs. The walkers were chatty and open about their experiences and started to see me as a member of their exclusive group, if I promised to walk the whole Wales Coast Path that is.

The next theme that came to light during my first fieldwork walk was the issue of being a proper walker. This was exemplified by the walkers identifying themselves in an exclusive group of Wales Coast Path walkers, calling themselves, 'Giants of the Wales Coast path', 'The Perimeters', 'End to Enders', and 'Wales Coast Path Conquerors'. Whilst walking with the participants their identity as 'proper' walkers was exemplified by their reaction to others, whether it was laughing at people sitting in their cars eating chips along the coast, commenting on the inappropriate clothing of a passer-by, such as jeans or wrong footwear, with one walker coming up to me and whilst pointing to a person on the path wearing flip flops said:

> *Not a proper walker. (Geoff, 39: Bethesda)*

Another theme identified on my first fieldwork walk was the importance of the Wales Coast Path sign to the walkers and how its presence or lack thereof greatly affected the experience of the walkers. It was during this first fieldwork walk that I was first drawn to the importance of the Wales Coast Path sign as more than merely a practical thing to give directions or to designate a stretch of the path as the national trail. During this walk from Oxwich to Rhossili one participant literally ran up to a particular sign and whilst hugging it said:

> *Oh I felt such exhilaration when I'd see that little blue and yellow sign. Awwww look at it there. I was so relieved when I'd see the Wales Coast Path sign if I got lost and had to find my way back to the path, or felt such such such reassurance if I was uncertain I was heading in the right direction*

and then would see the sign. Look I have even colour coordinated my nail varnish in homage to the sign. (Claire, 32: Bridgend)

This prompted a conversation amongst the other participants about the importance of the sign to them and another participant stated:

You know what I'm like about sticking to the path. So when I would see the sign if I was unsure where I was or lost I would be just ah (sigh) just so happy. Especially if it was one of those really hard days it would give me in a way hope that I was on the right track. (Danielle, 43: Bristol)

I then realised that this sign of which I considered to be of no significance and didn't even give a second thought to before, held a great deal of influence over walkers. At a particular moment in time during the walkers' experiences it acted as a vehicle for hope and reassurance when times were hard during the walk. Walkers looked towards it for hope and reassurance and were at the mercy of the sign until it grants it to them.

3.2: In search of participants

The search for participants was a varied and immersive process. I firstly began my search for research participants online. After a few general searches I quickly realised that through Facebook there was a vibrant and active community online amongst the people who were in the process of, or had already, walked the Wales Coast Path. I asked to join a Facebook group called the 'All Wales Coast Path', which had 115 members, and submitted a post outlining my research, calling for participants and giving my contact details. I was welcomed without question to the group and subsequently was invited to join a walk celebrating the Wales Coast Path's second birthday on the 4th May 2014 (see section 3.1). This walk introduced me to the key players of the Wales Coast Path community including the first man and woman to complete the whole Wales Coast Path. These people were key players because, at that time, the people who attended the anniversary walk on the 4th May 2014 were amongst the few who had completed the whole of the Wales Coast Path and became important figures in signposting me to others who were walking the Wales Coast Path. This was possible because, being the first to

complete the Wales Coast Path, they held a certain authority (explored in chapter 5) and were the source of council, guidance and inspiration for new walkers of the Path who would get in touch with them for advice. Introducing myself to Wales Coast Path walkers on the 'All Wales Coast Path' Facebook page and submitting a call for participants was a very successful gateway into finding research participants. Contacting the Facebook page was also a success as the walkers were eager to share their journeys and experiences walking the whole Wales Coast Path.

As well as using Facebook I created a Twitter account dedicated solely to my research. It proved another great platform to engage with walkers who were walking the Wales Coast Path as most documented their journeys, spoke of their experiences or shared their pictures whilst walking on their Twitter accounts. It was fairly simple to find people who were discussing and sharing their journeys on the Wales Coast Path by searching relevant hashtags such as #walescoastpath #llwybrarfordircymru #walkingwales #cerddedcymru #walescpastpathgiants #WCP. When I found a walker walking the coastal path, Twitter provided an easy platform to contact them directly enabling me to ask them to be a part of the research. As my followers on twitter accumulated I shared regular posts outlining my research and calling for participants to keep my research current and in the forefront of people's minds.

Twitter also proved to be a great platform to get help from others to spread the word about my research. For example; I would 'tweet' organisations like the Wales Coast Path (both their English and Welsh accounts), Countryside Council for Wales (now Natural Resources Wales), Visit Wales and the Pembrokeshire Coastal Path to 're-tweet' information about my research to their followers. I also 'tweeted' well known television personalities and well known individuals who were connected to the Wales Coast Path, and walking in general, such as Derek Brockway from the Weatherman Walking TV series, and Iolo Williams a Welsh wildlife and outdoor presenter on S4C, again to 're-tweet' information about my research to their followers.

After cementing my decision to conduct walking interviews on the Wales Coast Path (see section 3.3) I started to vary my approach at finding research participants and focused on reaching a wider audience than the one I had found online. I started spending days at coastal visitor centres such as the visitor centres at St Davids and Tenby. This was an excellent way of accessing those who were walking the Wales Coast Path, creating that initial face to face engagement with people. It was a very personal approach and allowed me to explain my research in depth and create a rapport and familiarity with the walkers before the walk itself. In the comfort of a visitor centre I was able, with ease, to get research participants to fill in my consent forms (see appendix 1) before the walk and share contact details. The visitor centre at St Davids allowed me to have my own room at the back of the centre where I could take potential research participants. Having that personal face to face engagement and sharing our enthusiasm about the Wales Coast Path aided in the participants agreeing to me joining them on their walks. That initial meeting and engagement made follow up contact much easier.

As well as spending time at visitor centres, I also produced an information poster and leaflet (see appendix 2 and 3). These were distributed at many different locations throughout coastal south, east and mid Wales and were distributed at coastal locations in north Wales when I was up in north west Wales and north east Wales for fieldwork. These locations included local shops, community halls, supermarkets, post offices and visitor centres. The poster contained a few quick soundbites about the research and also had my email and Twitter details. A leaflet allowed me to present a little more information about the research and also contained the same contact details as the poster. The leaflets were also distributed by hand to people whilst I spent time at different visitor centres. At the locations that were willing to display a poster, I also left a number of the leaflets at the counters to draw people's attention to my research. I carried a number of leaflets with me on each fieldwork walk. If a research participant mentioned they knew of another walker walking the Wales Coast Path or knew of someone who might have an interest in my research, the leaflet proved to be an excellent information sharing tool to gain more interest amongst potential research participants.

As I was interested in issues of identity and language on the Wales Coast Path, and as the issue of language became apparent during my fieldwork walks (chapter 6), I wanted to walk with a Welsh speaking audience in order to explore if there was a different experience between Welsh and non-Welsh speakers on the path. Therefore, every post I would share on the social media platforms mentioned above would be bilingual. This would show people that the research could be conducted in Welsh or English. A friend completing a Welsh PhD at Swansea University informed me that the Welsh magazine 'Golwg' often looked for ordinary people to share stories in their 'Pobl a Diwylliant' (People and Culture) column. I contacted the editor and asked if they would accept a piece about my research. They were happy for me to write a piece about my research and my column called 'Awyr Iach a Golygfeydd Godidog' (Fresh Air and Glorious Views) was published on the 15th May 2014. The column gave a brief description of my research focus and invited people to contact me if they wished to be a part of the research (see appendix 4). The column did reach a wide audience and I was subsequently contacted by numerous Welsh speaking individuals and walking groups who invited me to join their walks.

Through my different and varied attempts at engaging with participants, and after establishing myself within the Wales Coast Path Walking community, and making many connections within the community, people started to become aware of my research through word of mouth. Walkers therefore reached out to me eager to be a part of the research and share their walking stories and experiences. I was also contacted to present my research at walking group talks and social events. I was invited to talk at many walking club group meetings such as one at Cardiff University. Such an opportunity arose at the National Eisteddfod in Llanelli in 2014. I was invited to give a talk about my research at the 'Clŵb Mynydda Cymru' (Wales Mountaineering Club) session at the National Eisteddfod. This walking group is a predominantly Welsh speaking group which gave me access to many Welsh speaking participants. In fact, after my presentation at the National Eisteddfod in Llanelli I joined this group's walk from the Eisteddfod 'maes' (field) to Kidwelly along the Wales Coast Path on the 7th August 2014. This was my first walk with Welsh language speakers.

As well as targeting individuals who were walking the Wales Coast Path I also targeted walking groups. I did an extensive online search and collated the information on all the walking groups I could find in Wales. From the information gained online I also prioritised walking with the walking groups who were focusing on walking the Wales Coast Path. This was easily done as most walking groups in Wales had a detailed website detailing the previous walks and upcoming walks and outlined the aims and objectives of the group. Focusing firstly with the walking groups who according to their website were obviously walking the Wales Coast Path I then emailed each walking group outlining my research whilst also asking to join walks. Contacting walking groups offered a different perspective to the challenge of walking the Wales Coast Path and gave an insight into people's experiences of completing the Wales Coast Path in stages. Walking groups were an established group of people who would walk mostly every weekend for pleasure and to socialise. Their completion of the Wales Coast Path was therefore done in stages, mostly completing sections most weekends where possible. These differences experiences are explored in depth in chapter 5.

As previously stated there was a very vibrant online community amongst Wales Coast Path Walkers. As well as an active social media community, with walkers using Facebook predominantly to keep in touch, some walkers would also share their walking journeys through online blogs, especially those walking to raise money for charities. At the beginning of my fieldwork phase I did an extensive online search for online walking blogs written and shared by people who were walking the Wales Coast Path. I was signposted to my first blog by a member of the 'All Wales Coast Path' Facebook group, who mentioned they were aware of someone walking the Wales Coast Path for charity. I contacted every blog I could find, outlined my searcher and asked if I could take part on a convenient day for them.

3.3: The Importance of 'Walking and Talking'

What did walking the Wales Coast Path mean to Steve, who moved away from Wales when he was a young boy and longed to re-connect to his homeland? Why did the Wales Coast Path sign command such an overwhelming influence over Claire who ran to kiss the sign in a jovial act when it appeared during a walk? Why did first language Welsh speakers like to overtly exude their identity on the Wales Coast Path? These are questions and observations prompted by findings which came to light whilst walking alongside the participants on the Wales Coast Path.

It is through my background theoretical research for my literature review (chapter 2), as well as the considerations and observations gleaned from my volunteering work and my very first fieldwork walk (see section 3.1), that I decided to steer my research into a direction whereby I would walk alongside my research participants; experiencing their walks on the Wales Coast Path alongside them, discussing their experiences and observing their performances whilst immersed in the place under investigation. Making sense therefore of what it means to walk the entire coast of a nation. The theoretical and empirical themes that I was introduced to at the very beginning of my research called for a method that permitted a "more place-sensitive methodological toolbox" (Holgersson, 2017: 72) and going on 'walk alongs' (Kusenbach, 2003) presented the opportunity to forgo the traditional way of interviewing to walk along with the participants. It also called for a place based account of practices, thus posing a challenge to a-mobile practices (Middleton, 2011).

The theoretical review (chapter 2) drew my attention towards embodiment and the case of participating alongside the participants, recording their experiential engagement with the path as it happened. Researching the embodied experiences of walkers as they walked the Wales Coast Path therefore called for a methodology that prioritised the knowledge born of immediate experiences, privileging the understandings of people that derive from their lived, everyday involvement in the world. It called for a methodology that could consider that the world can be seen

and thought about, but can also be sensed in other ways. It suggested that it is necessary to see, hear, smell, experience or feel a place in order to communicate it to others and to make sense of it. It is considered therefore that walking offers a more intimate way to engage with the landscape that can offer a privileged insight into both place and self (Wylie, 2002).

Using a mobile methodology offered an opportunity of placing movement at the centre of the analysis (Adey, 2010; Cresswell and Merriman, 2011; Jensen, 2009). Mobility and mobile methods have attracted significant academic attention within the social sciences and human geography in recent years. According to Cresswell (2006) mobility is defined in terms of meaningful movement, that is, physical motion, such as walking, which is invested with meaning. Cresswell (2006) proposes three aspects of mobility to assist in the study of mobility within geography. The first is movement, physical movement as the raw material of mobility (e.g walking as a physical activity). The second is representation whereby interpretation and representation imbues motion with meanings. Finally, practice, whereby mobilities are practiced and embodied. This emphasises the experienced, sensual and non-representational nature of the activities. This research considers walking as a mobility that defines the participants and the places. It is in its movements (walking a specific route, using certain performances), representations (cultural contexts, beliefs) and its practice (embodied activity, corporeal performances) that walking the Wales Coast Path defines both the participants and the spaces involved.

The interweaving of both the representational and non-representational, focusing on both the experiential and observable, advocates a methodological approach which engages with participants in the mobile activity under study. According to Anderson (2004) there is a growing acknowledgement on the role that place plays in forming and influencing human identity. According to Anderson (2004) this acknowledgement comes in part from the existential accounts of being in the world (Heidegger, 1988 cited in Anderson, 2004: 255) as well as the geographical adventures in the dialect between people and places (Davidson, 2003 cited in Anderson, 2004: 255). This means that identity influences and is influenced by its

inhabited material spaces. Casey (2001) effectively explains this by stating that "(t)he relationship between self and place is not just one of reciprocal influence … but also, more radically, of constitutive coingredience; each is essential to the being of the other. In effect, there is no place without self and no self without place."

Hand in hand with the theoretical review, my volunteering for a local Welsh language group and my participation in an anniversary walk organised to celebrate the Wales Coast Path's second anniversary (section 3.1) further advocated the need to conduct the research on the path itself, walking alongside the research participants. My volunteering work drew attention to the stronger connections Welsh language learners and new residents to the area had to place, to the community and to the Welsh language when participating in walking groups throughout the valley. They felt more connected to their new community when immersed in their surroundings. Experiencing and exploring the area, that even people who have been born and brought up in haven't experienced, gave them a sense of ownership and connection to the place they now lived. This resonates with (O'Neill and Roberts, 2020: 215) who state "walking is an act of place making and how we interpret our surroundings and our position within it."

The second anniversary Wales Coast Path walk (section 3.1), which was to become my first pilot walk, further showed the importance of walking alongside the walkers as it immediately drew attention to research themes previously not considered before walking along the participants on the Wales Coast Path. Important and interesting research themes which would have not come to light had the research not been conducted on the Wales Coast Path itself. The first of which was the issue of what it was to be a 'proper walker' (chapter 5). When I started my research I had not walked a significant enough amount of the Wales Coast Path and was judged accordingly. I wasn't included in any initial group photographs at the beginning of this first walk and was seen as an anomaly amongst the other Wales Coast Path walkers. This proved a re-occurring theme through every fieldwork walk. Each walk would begin with being asked questions about how much I had walked and if I

intended to walk the whole Wales Coast Path, as the following field diary entry shows:

> *I was asked numerous times during the day of how much of the coastal path I had already walked, a question echoing throughout my research so far. I replied, full of pride, that I had walked just over 100 miles so far during my research, and then waited for the murmurs of admiration like I had already received from family and friends. Yet, these walkers did not bat an eyelid by how much I had walked and merely nodded half-heartedly as if they were expecting a lot more. My pride was battered a little but I should have realised that walking 10 to 15 miles in a day is nothing to these walking groups and that I would have to clock up a lot more miles and experiences on the coastal path to hold my own with these walkers.* (Field diary 19: Newport Pembrokeshire circular 21.09.14)

Similarly, Holgersson (2017) during her research into power relations and minority populations in urban centres, which applied walking as a method, states that her participants asked her so many more questions during her research than usually received in an 'ordinary' research interviewing situation. She states that her participants, akin to the Wales Coast Path walkers in the above field diary, were empowered by getting to show them 'their area'. Likewise, Clark (2017) states that it was the young people who were the experts during his research on young people's experiences in deprived urban areas undergoing regeneration. During his research, whereby he walked along with groups of young people in urban centres, the young people had the authority on their local area which prompted effective discussions.

Walking alongside the research participants also afforded the opportunity to observe how the walkers reacted to others whilst walking the Wales Coast Path and how they saw themselves in relation to others during the walk (chapter 5). This ultimately became an important theme during the fieldwork. During the fieldwork there were many occasions whereby the research participants made remarks about other people on the path which drew attention to the issue of what constitutes a proper walker, as the following field diary demonstrates, and would have been lost if not researching alongside the participant:

> *Steve and I walked on for another 15 minutes and were met by another couple of walkers. We engaged in a brief hello and very quick chat as we bypassed each other and continued walking. Contrastingly these walkers looked completely different from the previous walkers we had come across. They generally just looked scruffier and out of breath and sweaty which is exactly what we looked like in the baking Pembrokeshire July sun. Their clothes were mismatched, an array of different colours and makes, and looked worn. We said our goodbyes and again continued walking. We were walking in a single file on this section of the coastal path as the path narrowly meandered through agricultural fields to our right with the steep cliffs as our barrier to the left. Immediately after this encounter with these walkers I felt a tap on my left shoulder. I turned around to see what Steve wanted and excitedly he uttered 'that's more like it. (Field Diary 5: Whitesands Bay to Trefin 17.07.14)*

Walking alongside participants has been described as the 'talking and walking approach', 'walk and talk approach' or 'walk alongs' and prioritises the knowledge born of immediate experiences, thus privileging the understandings of people that derive from their lived, everyday involvement in the world. This approach enables both the investigation of the representational and non-representational as previously mentioned, thus allowing the researcher to trace the material and non-material. It acknowledges that the world can be seen and thought about, but can also be sensed in to other ways (hear, smell, touch, feel). Sometimes some things can be lost in the production of knowledge if research participants are taken away from the location understudy; small details of place experience can be lost. Engaging with the participant in a mobile activity can provoke memories or sensations otherwise untapped (Adey, 2010). This method is beneficial as it can trace both the material and non-material such as the 'things', signs, buildings as physical environment as well as sense, thoughts and feeling which determine experience for different people.

The literature review (chapter 2) considers an Actor Network approach, discussing the importance of the 'non human' to walkers' experiences on the Wales Coast Path. Yet without walking alongside research participants knowing which 'non-human' things would affect the walkers' experiences would have been a guess. On that second anniversary Wales Coast Path walk (section 3.1) it became clear that

one thing would affect the walkers' experiences more than any other, and would be an astounding influence on all of the fieldwork walks. That was the Wales Coast Path sign (chapter 4). Before going on that very first walk the sign wasn't considered as something that would pose as a great influence on walkers and without walking alongside the walkers its significance would have been overlooked. As the fieldwork progressed it became obvious that the Wales Coast Path sign was an overriding influence on the experience on the walkers as the following field diary entry demonstrates:

> *We had taken a wrong turn somewhere, and instead of walking through Pembrey Forest we found ourselves on Cefn Sidan beach. We then had to tackle what felt like the never ending beach of Cefn Sidan, boarded with impenetrable sand dunes, and at 8 miles long presented us with a sandy path as far as the eye could see with nothing but sand on the horizon. To the untrained walker a long walk on a beautiful beach might sound idyllic but on a scorching sunny August day like this it was excruciating. Wearing our full walking regalia, heavy boots, thick socks, walking trousers and carrying backpacks kitted out with all our needs for the 12 mile walk meant every step on the soft dry sand felt like ten, and the hazy horizon never felt any closer. I yearned to see the sign which would lead us from this never ending sandy treadmill. The group also felt the same. We had now separated into a disparate group with everyone tackling this challenge at their own pace. The chatty camaraderie that we shared for the first couple of miles had disappeared; we were silent in our shared exertion. The silence was broken when a member of the group drew attention to the fact that we hadn't seen the sign for ages and questioned the walk leader about his knowledge on when we would finally see a sign that would lead us away from this forlorn part of our journey. What can only be described as a joyful yelp was heard from the walk leader. He had finally spotted a Wales Coast Path sign emerging from behind a sand dune. Like a flock of birds all instantly changing direction at the same time the group instantaneously moved towards the sign. The dynamic of the group changed immediately, the group were chatty once again and the air was filled with laughter. In my mind it must have been a case of if they didn't laugh they would cry with delight at seeing the sign. The walk leader was honoured with a round of applause and numerous pats on the back for finding the sign. Normally tackling a sand dune in my walking kit would be unbearable but this time I felt like I was being drawn like a magnet to the sign. (Field Diary 7: Llanelli to Kidwelly 07.08.14)*

Middleton (2011) states that the value of mobile methods, such as walking and talking, appreciates what happens between point A and B and informs our understanding of people's experiences as they move through a specific place. She states that what happens on route therefore shouldn't be side-lined or ignored. Consideration towards the importance of the Wales Coast Path sign wasn't given until it became obvious during the fieldwork walks that it held an extraordinary important influence over the Wales Coast Path walkers and their experiences on the path. Clark (2017: 90), whilst discussing his research on young people's experiences in deprived urban areas, states that "the walks revealed the relatively familiar places of comfort and security." This is highlighted in the field diary extract above. The walkers' joyous reaction to the sign showed that it gave them comfort and a sense of security on the walk to Kidwelly. Having lost the sign on Cefn Sidan beach the camaraderie on the walk was marred by silence and a sense of forlornness. Yet, when it suddenly appeared on top of a sand dune, the comfort it afforded, completely changed the walkers' experience and overall mood.

Thrift (2008) argues that, when given a chance to use our various senses we start to *notice* the "event-ness of the world" and the *small details* that make up the everyday lives and place experience of our research participants (Thrift 2008: 12: italics in original). When producing knowledge about place in a 'standard' interview setting, respondents are asked to recall memories and imaginations of places without visual, audible, olfactory or tactile stimuli. As a result, some small details, or 'layers' of place or experience may be lost to the production of knowledge. Therefore, geographers have begun to explore 'new' research methods (e.g. walks, photography, videography) that take a respondent 'into the field' and in so doing complement (or replace) the interview. During a walk along in 2011, to research the gentrification of a reused old industrial area, Holgersson's (2017) participant spoke about subjects that mattered to him as they walked through a particular area. Walking through that area prompted pangs of meaning and thoughts about his first job which Holgersson (2017) debates would not have been recalled had they not been walking together in that particular area.

It was important to engage with participants whist walking the Wales Coast Path as the body (experiences etc.) becomes emergent through its interweaving with the world. This suggests therefore that the major advantage of the walking interview is its capacity to access people's attitudes and knowledge about the surrounding environment. It is considered that walking offers a more intimate way to engage with the landscape that can offer a privileged insight into both place and self (Wylie, 2002).

Anderson (2004) states that participating alongside the research participants in a mobile activity overcomes the traditional interviewer/interviewee power relations, forging something that is uniquely collaborative. Thoughts, pangs of memory and emotive connections can come to us through conversations, prompted not only by questions, but also through the interconnections between the individual and the place itself. Engaging with the participants in the place under investigation has the potential therefore to access the knowledge of people in place where meaning is accessed and produced. Walking can therefore be used as a methodological practice which helps the researcher to engage with emplaced knowledge. It is suggested therefore that interviewing participants whilst walking generates richer data because participants are prompted by meanings and connections to the surrounding environment. It therefore seems intuitively sensible for researchers to ask participants about the places they are interested in while they are in that place. Middleton (2011) draws attention to Anderson's (2004) work on the places of protest created by environmentalists and draws attention to the fact that place can be an active trigger to knowledge production. Middleton (2011) further states that a mobile methodology produces different data than would be generated if carrying out the research away from the place under investigation and away from the practices under examination.

3.4: Ethical Considerations and Safety on the Wales Coast Path

Before starting to conduct any fieldwork an in-depth university ethical form was completed which looked into every aspect of the ethics behind the research and

the safety of both participants and researcher. Contact made before a walk, by email, Facebook or Twitter messages, phone calls and texts, and face to face contact at the visitor's centres were beneficial as it enabled a familiarity between researcher and participant before the day of the walk. The initial contact before the walk itself finalised the walk details such as starting and ending points and times, distance and route which enabled me to research the walk thoroughly before it took place. It meant the correct provisions, such as food and drinks could be arranged. Knowing the location, distance and being able to check the weather forecast beforehand, meant that the correct walking gear was taken and used on the walk such as waterproof trousers, seal skin socks, waterproof paper and pens, a torch, sun lotion, a mobile phone power-bank or a baseball hat. Most of the walks were 6 miles or more, with the longest walk totalling 20 miles in one day therefore thorough preparation was the key.

Having a detailed account of the walk beforehand allowed me to let my parents know who I would be walking with and the route details of the walk. For safety reasons they would take me to the starting point of the walk and would meet me at the end. By taking me to the starting point of the walk they would meet the research participant/s before the walk started. They would therefore know exactly who I was walking with. As an added safety measure I would track my walk using the app 'Map my Walk'. This app allowed my family to track my whereabouts during a walk. I would also take back up power devices to make sure my mobile phone worked at all times. I also kept in regular contact over text to let my family know of my whereabouts and how the walk was progressing.

Research participants were treated with respect. I completed every walk with them, when at times it was hard and arduous. Their walking routine was also respected. I stopped for a break when they wanted a break and forgoed lunch if the research participants wanted to continue on with the walk without any details as the following field diary demonstrates.

> *After walking a couple of miles out of Whitesands Bay and heading towards Abereiddi we started to talk about the kinds of food and drink we bring on long walks such as this. I entertained Steve with tales of the snacks and differing sandwich fillings I bring to make lunch less monotonous each time. After letting me ramble on he stated that he never stops for lunch. He carries a packet of cola cube sweets and eats those whilst on the move. Stopping for lunch only hampers his progress when he has a time and distance goal to reach during a day's walk on the Wales Coast Path. I was suddenly alarmed at the prospect of walking 13 miles with no food breaks. (Field Diary 5: Whitesands Bay to Trefin 17.07.2014)*

I also respected the speed the research participant/s wanted to walk in order to make the walk as seamless as possible and to show respect to the research participant who allowed me to join their walks.

> *I walk 5mph. So I hope you can keep up. We will have 20 miles to walk, maybe even a little more if we walk straight into the centre of Swansea. I usually do a mile every 20 minutes or there abouts. (Andrew, 55: London).*

The above field work diary and quote show how important it was for me to be physically fit during the fieldwork for safety reasons and to make sure the walk wasn't hindered by issues with my fitness. It was important for safety to be physically fit as to not injure myself or others on the Wales Coast Path. Additionally, it was important to be physically fit during the fieldwork as to not be in a vulnerable position with the research participant/s. Finally, it was important to be at the height of my fitness during the fieldwork walks as poor fitness would have resulted in poor data collection. Struggling with breathing or being in pain would have proved a distraction from the ability to be able to collect the accurate data needed, to ask the right questions, and would have drawn attention away from the walk itself and the ability to notice everything taking place during the walk on the Wales Coast Path.

I showed respect towards my participants by never cancelling a walk. After the research participants kindly agreed to walk with me and share their journeys and experiences it would have been rude to cancel or not show up. Admittedly some days the weather was atrocious with very high winds and heavy rain, or it was very

hot and sunny which can make walking very difficult. On some occasions the route wasn't the most scenic or varied. Such as my 10th fieldwork walk from Swansea to Aberafan on the 14th August 2014 or walk 21 from Greenfield Dock to Queensferry, yet I never let my personal thoughts and feelings about the route hinder my participation in a walk, and honoured my commitments to the research participants.

The research participants were given a consent form to sign at the beginning of the walk (see appendix 1). This asked for their permission to document the walk and use any quotes from their transcripts and field diaries in the thesis. It also asked permission to share photographs which included the research participants, this included pictures I took of participants and photographs they shared with me. Every participant agreed to sign the consent form without any hesitation and were eager to share every aspect of their walk. Another testament to the closeness and mutual respect between walkers of the Wales Coast Path. The identity of the research participants was also ensured by giving the participants aliases when writing about them in field diaries and quoting them in the thesis or using photographs. A list was made to note the alias name alongside the real name of the participant in order to keep track. Faces in photographs used in the thesis have been pixilated to further ensure the anonymity of the research participants.

3.5: Carrying out the Fieldwork – A Trial by Error

Section 3.3 of this chapter discusses the theoretical and methodological reasons behind the benefits of walking alongside the research participants and participating in the walk with them. This section will discuss how the research was carried out, exactly what was done and how the data was recorded. It will also discuss the challenges faced with recording in an outdoor environment which proved somewhat challenging at the beginning.

As explained in section 3.2 I used many different ways to get in touch and meet research participants. These methods proved very successful and I took part in 41

fieldwork walks. Once contact was established, and the participants agreed for me to join them on their walks on the Wales Coast Path, I was able to go ahead and conduct some background research on the part of the Wales Coast Path we would be walking on together. I would therefore know exactly the route, geography and physicality of the walk, the start and end locations and would have an idea of the physical challenges. The initial contact made before the walk meant that a sense of familiarity and friendship was already established before I met with participants on the walk. With a walking group I would not be able to get in touch with all of the members beforehand, but establishing a contact with the walk leaders before the walk meant that they would tell the rest of the walking group beforehand that I would be joining. The walk leader would introduce me at the beginning of the walk which meant that my presence there was accepted and it made my immersion into the group easier.

At the beginning of each walk with I would ask the participants to fill in consent forms (discussed in section 3.4). With walking groups if I hadn't been introduced already to all of the walkers, I would introduce myself and explain what my research was about. The research and data collection (the logistics of which are discussed in greater detail below) started as soon as I met the individual or group I would be walking with. I would immediately be able to observe how the walkers reacted to me, to others in the group (if I was joining a walking group) and how they were dressed and what equipment they had. An initial conversation at the beginning on the walk would help me ascertain the walkers' aims and objectives for completing the Wales Coast Path and how much they had walked already. Conversations at the beginning of the walk would further build rapport between myself and the walkers. As discussed further in chapter 5, rapport between myself and the research participants was further facilitated by my ability as a walker, and proving to them that I was indeed a 'proper walker'.

The method of walking and talking, joining walkers on their walks, meant that I would walk alongside the participants, observing them on the walk and asking my research questions which developed from my research objectives (see chapter 1).

The nature of the fieldwork meant that I would be with the participants for as long as the walk would last. I would completely immerse myself in the walk with the participants and walk the whole journey with them. That is, I wouldn't leave as soon as I thought I had enough data. This would have been geographically impossible in many areas of the Path and might have altered the flow and natural progression of the walk and would have been disrespectful towards the walkers. During the fieldwork I would stop when the participants would stop and continue walking when the research participants wanted to continue walking all the while keeping my researcher hat on and recording any observations or quotes relevant to the research.

I was fortunate to join 41 walks during my fieldwork (appendix 5). This provided me with ample opportunity to gather a lot of data. This meant that I was able to use my first fieldwork walk as a pilot study to figure out, and weigh and measure, the best ways to carry out the fieldwork, engage with the participants and collect and record data. After finding my first research participants it was arranged that I would join my first fieldwork walk on 4th May 2014 (see section 3.1). This was a group walk from Oxwich to Rhossili on the Gower peninsula. I went prepared with all of the equipment needed to record our conversations. I had bought a Dictaphone, notebook and pen and camera.

Initially, my aim was to record the conversations of the fieldwork walk on my Dictaphone and transcribe the discussions guided by my research questions on the walk immediately after the walk itself. Background reading for my literature review (see chapter 2) had helped guide my research questions and how I expected the research to transpire. Yet this first pilot walk on the 4th May 2014 opened my eyes to data that would inform my research beyond that which I had first imagined (see section 3.1, 3.3 and chapters 4 and 5) and emphasized the benefit of carrying out my research on the Wales Coast Path (see section 3.3). This walk would also guide my decision on how to record my data whilst carrying out the rest of my fieldwork.

As stated above my aim was to join walkers on their walks on the Wales Coast Path and record our discussions on a Dictaphone. My first fieldwork walk, which I treated as a pilot, proved that this wasn't logistically possible and I needed to rethink my data collection strategy. There were many issues which helped me come to this conclusion on this first walk. To begin with the Wales Coast Path physically doesn't allow for a seamless recording of conversations on a Dictaphone. The path itself varies in width and steepness. Therefore, it is not always possible to stand alongside the research participants to hold the Dictaphone in a position whereby it will record everything when they are talking, important data therefore could be left unrecorded (Image 3.1).

Image 3.1: Fieldwork walk 1: Oxwich to Rhossili 04.05.14 [Research participant photograph 04.05.14]

Secondly, this first fieldwork walk was with a group of walkers. The Dictaphone proved useless in a walking situation with many people. Walking is a social activity, made more so when the main thing the people have in common is the Wales Coast Path. The rapport amongst the walkers because they have the same interest meant they were chatty and eager to talk about the Wales Coast Path and their experience whilst walking it. During this first fieldwork walk as I posed a question to one walker, many others would join in to discuss their thoughts and experiences. Whilst walking on a narrow coastal path, it was impossible to record the conversation going on with many different voices joining in from many different positions on the Wales Coast Path as the following field diary entry shows:

> *We had finished the steep silent climb from the beach at Oxwich up the hundreds of steps. It was a hard climb and we were all silent in our shared attempt to conserve our energy and steady our breathing. It was a tough climb. After the climb we had to descend back down through Oxwich wood. The path didn't offer any chance to speak to the participants here as it was narrow, steep and overgrown. Once clear of the woods the path grew wide and flat and we manoeuvred into more sociable positions whereby we could now chat happily without having the restrictions of a very physically challenging single file walk. I was walking next to Sally at this point and we were talking about her experiences on the path. I tried to manoeuvre my Dictaphone to record what Sally was saying but suddenly the other walkers descended upon us and joined the conversation. I had Sally to my right, another walker to my left, a walker in front and a walker behind. It was impossible to record all voices. I decided my best chance to record the whole conversation was to write notes as I walked (Field Diary 1: Oxwich to Rhossili 04.05.14)*

Thirdly the weather and the elements posed a great deterrent to using a Dictaphone. Vannini and Vannini (2017) draw attention to the fact that walking methods literatures are teeming with warnings about the disadvantages of the weather when recording data using walking methods. They state that the weather is the "biggest con's to a method that is otherwise rich in pro's" (Vannini and Vannini, 2017: 185). Conducting such a physical fieldwork outdoors meant the weather and the elements affected what I was able to clearly record on the Dictaphone. The first fieldwork walk on the 4th May 2014 was on a sunny day, and at the time the wind was calm and unnoticeable. Whilst carrying out the fieldwork and attempting to record what was being said the weather didn't seem as if it would be a problem at the time. The main issue I was concerned with during the first fieldwork walk was the logistics of recording the participants and how the geography of the Wales Coast Path and the input of many different voices affected this (discussed above). Although when I tried to listen to the recording whilst having a break from walking that day, and again when home, the wind was obvious on the recording and was the overriding sound on the Dictaphone. Much of what has been recorded on the Dictaphone has been lost due to the wind. Vaninni and Vaninni (2017) state that the weather can cause serious data recording problems even in the summer months and exposes walking methodologies to its biggest challenge.

After this first fieldwork walk I went to a technology shop to discuss in greater detail using the Dictaphone outdoors. It was explained that to be able to record voices clearly in an environment like the Wales Coast Path I would realistically need a professional sound recording system, akin to the ones used when filming the news bulletins outdoors, which would be impossible for me to use considering the nature of my research. It would have been impossible for me to carry such large and heavy equipment during my fieldwork walks. After the first fieldwork walk I re-assessed my data recording technique and decided for continuity purposes to forgo the Dictaphone and record my data through writing whilst walking on the Wales Coast Path and writing in-depth and very detailed field diaries immediately after the walk had ended. Vannini and Vannini (2017) state that the weather is part and unavoidable part of walking methods and the researcher must adapt accordingly.

My data was therefore recorded through notes taken continually throughout the walk and in-depth field diaries written up almost immediately after the walk was completed. Holgersson (2017) also made the decision to record data by writing notes whilst walking during her 2006 walk along in Gothenburg where she asked people to take her to the places that were important and meant something to them. The decision was made directly after the results of the sound recording from the first walk (discussed above) to record data through note taking and field diary entries. The decision was made immediately to make sure there was continuity with all the fieldwork walks from then on (see image 3.2).

Image 3.2: Fieldwork walk 1: Oxwich to Rhossili 04.05.14 [Research participant photograph 04.05.14)

Rain also posed a great threat to using a Dictaphone, and it would have had to be put away immediately during heavy downpours which were frequent during my fieldwork especially in the winter months. The elements posed much less of a risk for recording data with pen and paper. I invested in really good water resistant paper and pens and was therefore able to keep on writing whatever the weather. Writing very detailed and in-depth field diaries almost immediately after the fieldwork was over meant the walk and its details were fresh in my mind. It was also a process whereby I could evaluate and assess every detail about the walk. Not just what was said, but how the participants acted or reacted and the other elements that affected experiences on the Wales Coast Path such as the Wales Coast Path sign (see chapter 4).

3.6: Conclusion

This chapter discusses the decision to walk alongside the participants as part of the research process. It explains how the methodological practices were guided by the theory engaged with in the literature review, by my time volunteering with a Welsh language group, and also by the very first fieldwork walk I took part in. It discusses that carrying out walking and talking interviews and walking along with the participants allowed an insight into experiences, influences and reactions, such as the importance of the Wales Coast Path sign, which would have otherwise been left untapped. It also discussed the benefits of using walking as a method of enquiry which makes a difference as it enables the researcher to gather different data than would normally have been generated (Middleton, 2011). The theoretical and empirical discussion suggest that walking interviews were the most advantageous choice of methodology. This is the 'talking whilst walking' approach advocated by Anderson (2004). This choice of methodology enables the researcher to access the knowledge of people-in-places where meaning is accessed and produced (Anderson, 2004). This method complies with the notion that knowledge is born through immediate experience and people gain understanding from their lived everyday involvement in the world, through activities such as walking.

This chapter also demonstrates the numerous and varied attempts made to find research participants and how these diverse attempts resulted in 41 data laden fieldwork walks (appendix 5) which successfully informed the thesis' empirical chapters (chapters 4, 5 and 6). The way the fieldwork was carried out was discussed and the data collection process as well as its downfalls were deliberated. It explained that the first pilot fieldwork walk highlighted that using a Dictaphone was disadvantageous for a walking and talking approach along the Wales Coastal Path. It could not record clear data against the elements. Additionally, the physicality of the Wales Coast Path meant we were not always able to walk and talk side by side which made recording impossible. A Dictaphone was also impractical when many walkers were speaking at the same time. A decision was therefore made to record all other fieldwork walks by writing up during the walk and completing very detailed field diaries after the walk was completed. The safety of both researcher and research participants was discussed and the measures to ensure safety for both were outlined.

The next three chapters will discuss the empirical findings which emerged from the fieldwork. The first empirical chapter will discuss the overwhelming power the Wales Coast Path sign had on the walkers and how it affected their experiences on their journeys along the Welsh coast. It will discuss the range of emotions and sensations generated through its encounter or lack of encounter. Through detailed field diary entries and participant quotes, it will demonstrate that the Wales Coast Path sign is a vital 'cog' in the experiences of walkers on the Wales Coast Path. The second empirical chapter will discuss that walking the Wales Coast Path is a practice laden with techniques and rules, scores, competition, training; correct postures and movements. It also discusses what walkers achieve, suffer and experience on the Wales Coast Path will ultimately decide if they are 'proper' walkers or not. The last empirical chapter will discuss issues of 'Welshness' on the Wales Coast Path. It considers how the Wales Coast Path offers a way for walkers to connect or re-connect with their Welsh identities and sense of belonging to Wales. It shows how many walkers could never have envisioned the profound physical and emotional effect walking the Wales Coast Path would have on their sense of identity and

connection to Wales. It discusses how many of the walkers saw walking the whole Wales Coastal Path as a rite of passage to their Welsh identities, or a performance that is necessary in the formation of national identity. All of the empirical chapters are imbued with themes that came into fruition because a 'walking and talking' methodology was applied to the research. Themes which would have been lost had the research been carried out away from the Wales Coast Path.

Chapter 4:

The Influence of the Wales Coast Path Sign

I'm not sure what I'm going to do with the rest of my life now
that I don't have to follow that sign any more. (Dafydd, 36: Dinas Powys)

4.1: Introduction

Chapter 3 examined the benefits of engaging with participants on the Wales Coast Path in order to access their knowledge in the place where meaning is accessed and produced. This chapter will show firsthand how using walking as a methodological practice helped to engage with emplaced knowledge, that is, knowledge gathered from walkers' direct engagement with the Wales Coast Path. It will show how interviewing and participating on the walks, alongside the walkers, prompted meanings and connections to the surrounding environment. By prioritising knowledge born of immediate experience it privileged the understandings of people that derived from their lived, everyday involvement in the world and provoked memories and sensations on the Wales Coast Path which might otherwise have been left untapped (Adey, 2010).

This chapter examines the more-than-human aspects of walking the Wales Coast Path, focusing on an overriding theme which has affected the experiences of the walkers on the Wales Coast Path arguably more than any other. That is, the influence held over the walkers by the Wales Coast Path sign and the range of emotions and sensations generated through its encounter or lack of encounter (Image 4.1). This chapter tells a story about how the relationship between the non-human and human subject are assembled and that even a material object like the Wales Coast Path sign can be a vital element in the analysis of social life. It also links the experiential and material dimensions of social life and experience. This therefore emphasizes a relational approach which considers the interactions between people (walkers) and things (the sign) as relational. Experiences on the Wales Coast Path are therefore defined and shaped by diverse relations. I hope to highlight this through a number of stories from my fieldwork which hopefully will show how the Wales Coast Path sign has been imperative to people's experiences

and how it doesn't have a fixed influence but changes in accordance with a particular moment in time.

A focus on the non-human is no longer considered to be marginal to geographical inquiry (Callon, 1986; Law, 2008; Murdoch, 1998) but can actively shape new geographies. What the more-than-human geography does is to conceptualise the host of relations that transcend human and non-human binaries. Prior research has mainly focused technological attention on the non-human in social life (Callon, 1986; Law, 1992, 1994; Murdoch, 1998; Whatmore, 2006) lacking a more cultural and performance focused empirical engagement. However, this chapter will show empirically how the non-human actant of the Wales Coast Path sign had been a vital feature in shaping people's walks along the Welsh coast. Furthermore, geographers are also increasingly engaging with the agencies of relational processes that consist of and generate material flows, rather than consider materialities as discrete entities (Jones, 2011: 2286). What a more-than-human approach does differently is to think of the diffuse relations that emerge when we view walking on the Wales Coast Path during the walk itself.

Image 4.1: Wales Coast Path Sign (Wales Coast Path, 2012a)

4.2: A Reassuring 'Sign'

Thrift (2008) argues that "when given a chance to use our various senses we start to notice the "event-ness of the world" and the *small details* that make up the everyday lives and place experience of our research participants" (Thrift 2008: 12: italics in original). When producing knowledge about place and experiences in a 'standard' interview setting, respondents are asked to recall memories and imaginations of places without visual, audible, olfactory or tactile stimuli. As a result, some small details, or 'layers' of place and experience may be lost to the production of knowledge. It was therefore important to engage with participants whist walking the Wales Coast Path as the body and people's experiences become emergent through an interweaving with the world.

This is highlighted in Image 4.2, depicting the first time it became obvious that the Wales Coast Path sign holds a great deal of influence over walkers. The following field diary vignette written to coincide with the image also accounts for this dramatic engagement with the Wales Coast Path sign.

> *We were all chatting away excitedly by now, people catching up on walking stories or quizzing me about my research which then lead to enthusiastic tales about their journeys on the path. After the hard slog up what felt like a thousand steps climbing upwards from Oxwich Bay it was a great relief to finally walk along a flat section on the path which gently skirted the water's edge with its gentle sea breeze willing us along our journey. We were at a steady walking rhythm which enabled us to chat unhindered by any precarious parts of the path and with Port Eynon, our lunch break stop, appearing in the distance I felt nothing could hinder this almost serene rhythm of walking, talking and appreciating the scenery and the reality of the walk. Suddenly Claire shrieked with excitement which abruptly disturbed the walking tempo. She excitedly ran up to a gate which was attached to a Wales Coast Path sign. She strangely kissed the gate, and in the blur of the moment I had no idea what was going on. The other walkers on the other hand seemed to understand Claire's reaction and didn't show any signs of being surprised by this dramatic act. She proceeded to explain that this was a location on the walk where she felt completely delirious with exhaustion, both physically and mentally. It was here by the sign she stopped to collect her thoughts, a permission granted by the sign, re-charging herself for the remaining journey. On seeing the sign here she felt reassured she was going the right way and it gave her the hub she needed*

to continue on that particular day's walking. This made me realise that it is this kind of engagement with the Path that can prompt people to recount unexpected experiences on the Wales Coast Path. (Field Diary 1: Oxwich to Rhossili 04.05.14)

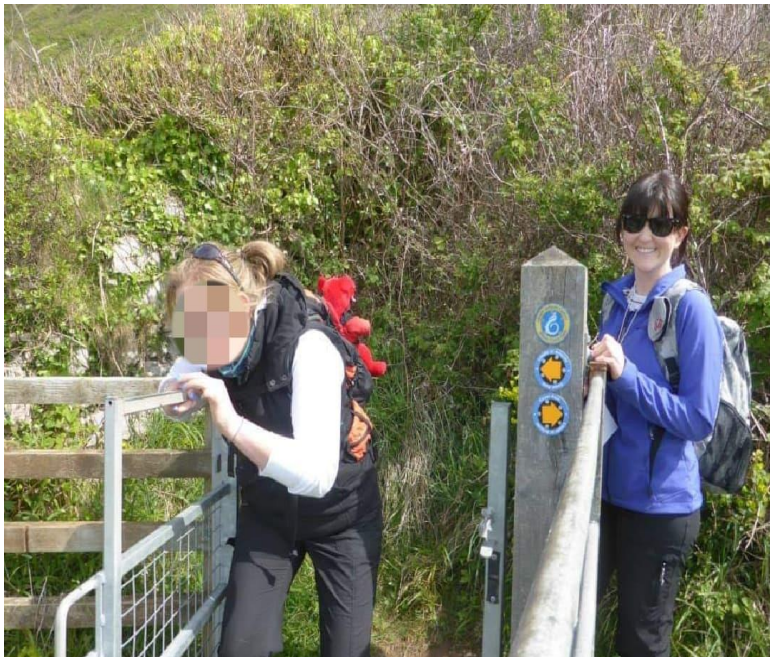

Image 4.2: Fieldwork walk 1: Oxwich to Rhossili 04.05.14 [Research participant photograph 04.05.14]

This shows therefore that the major advantage of the walking interview is its capacity to access people's attitudes and knowledge about the surrounding environment, proving that walking offers a more intimate way to engage with the landscape and offers a privileged insight into both place and self (Wylie, 2002).

Reactions to the Wales Coast Path like Claire's, and a variety of other different engagements with the Wales Coast Path, warrant an engagement in this chapter with the two conceptual streams of the Non-Representational (Thrift, 1996; 2008) and Actor Network Theory (Latour, 1993; Law; 1994). It will show how walking with the research participants has shown how words barely do justice to this raw immediacy of the encounters with the Wales Coast Path sign and aligns with what Nayak and Jeffrey (2011) state "offer at best a vapid translation of thick bodily encounters." That is, it is Claire's raw encounter of running toward the sign and kissing the gate that really draws attention thus highlighting the need to delve

deeper with questions, questions than can be answered but can't truly be expressed other than in the moment of performance. It was the sigh of relief on reaching the sign, the crazed running towards it and the hugging and kissing that does justice to what the Wales Coast Path sign really meant to Claire. Walking it seems, much like Nayak and Jeffrey's (2011) discussion on music "has to be heard to be understood. Merely writing about it, which is a discursive and differently mediated mode of representation always results in a lack" (Nayak and Jeffrey, 2011: 285). Similarly, walking then has to be experienced; walking the Wales Coast Path and experiencing the sign's agency has to be experienced to be understood by the participant and researcher. Engaging with the non-representational encourages us to what Back (2007) refers to as 'listening with the eye'. This invites us to go beyond words, what is just simply said, and attune ourselves to the wider art of listening and to consider that what is not said, such as Claire's reaction to the Wales Coast Path sign, is most personal and precious.

It will also attempt to overcome the subject-object divide and take seriously the role of non-humans in social life. It will direct attention to the significance of the non-human, in this case the Wales Coast Path sign, in social life, and how reality is enacted by a myriad of human and non-human relations. Walking the Wales Coast Path alongside the participants has sensitised the research towards what (Nimmo, 2011) calls "complex and multiple realities which might have otherwise have remained obscure." It considers that the social is not the glue holding societies together but according to Latour (2005) and Law (2007) is something made up of the human, non-human, animate and inanimate entities. This field diary vignette highlights the active role the Wales Coast Path sign has in affecting the experiences of walkers.

> *We had taken a wrong turn somewhere, and instead of walking through Pembrey Forest we found ourselves on Cefn Sidan beach. We then had to tackle what felt like the never ending beach of Cefn Sidan, boarded with impenetrable sand dunes, and at 8 miles long presented us with a sandy path as far as the eye could see with nothing but sand on the horizon. To the untrained walker a long walk on a beautiful beach might sound idyllic but on a scorching sunny August day like this it was excruciating. Wearing*

our full walking regalia, heavy boots, thick socks, walking trousers and carrying backpacks kitted out with all our needs for the 12 mile walk meant every step on the soft dry sand felt like ten, and the hazy horizon never felt any closer. I yearned to see the sign which would lead us from this never ending sandy treadmill. The group also felt the same. We had now separated into a disparate group with everyone tackling this challenge at their own pace. The chatty camaraderie that we shared for the first couple of miles had disappeared; we were silent in our shared exertion. The silence was broken when a member of the group drew attention to the fact that we hadn't seen the sign for ages and questioned the walk leader about his knowledge on when we would finally see a sign that would lead us away from this forlorn part of our journey. What can only be described as a joyful yelp was heard from the walk leader. He had finally spotted a Wales Coast Path sign emerging from behind a sand dune (image 4.3). Like a flock of birds all instantly changing direction at the same time the group instantaneously moved towards the sign. The dynamic of the group changed immediately, the group were chatty once again and the air was filled with laughter. In my mind it must have been a case of if they didn't laugh they would cry with delight at seeing the sign. The walk leader was honoured with a round of applause and numerous pats on the back for finding the sign. Normally tackling a sand dune in my walking kit would be unbearable but this time I felt like I was being drawn like a magnet to the sign. (Field Diary 7: Llanelli to Kidwelly 07.08.14)

Image 4.3: Fieldwork walk 7: Llanelli to Kidwelly 07.08.14 [Researcher's photograph 07.08.14]

The Wales Coast Path sign not only influences the route decision making of the walkers but also directly affects the motivation and dynamic of the walking group.

The sudden change in dynamic, from being a silent and segregated group to one full of vitality was directly attributed to finally seeing the sign. Walkers are also keenly aware of the significance of the sign. During this agonizing part of the walk along this sandy no-man's-land one walker stated that he was going to compose a Welsh 'cynghanedd', a basic sentence of sound arrangement of one line using alliteration and rhyme and starts, singing,

Lle mae'r llwybr Llew (where's the path Llew). (Gareth, 60: Pwllheli)

On seeing the sign and happily climbing the sand dune to stand alongside it, and whilst laughing, Llew stated,

Thank God, did you realise my face had turned grey. (Llew, 45: St Clears)

Jackson (2000) states that materialities themselves have specific spatialities and temporalities and have moved beyond the object fetishism marked with an earlier concern with the distribution of things. According to Callon and Law (1997: 168) "[o]ften in practice we bracket off non-human materials, assuming they have a status which differs from that of a human. So materials become resources or constraints; they are said to be passive; to be active only when they are mobilized by flesh and blood actors. But if the social is really materially heterogeneous then this asymmetry doesn't work very well. Yes, there are differences between conversations, texts, techniques and bodies. Of course. But why should we start out by assuming that some of these have no active role to play in social dynamics?" The above field diary vignette highlights the active role the Wales Coast Path sign has on the social dynamics of the walkers. It suggests that the non-human is no longer a submissive entity willing to be activated by the walker, but rather is the active entity in itself wholly authoritative in the walkers' experience here. In this particular network amongst the sand, the heat, the bodily constraints and the burden of walking gear it is the sign that offers an excitement and a sense of release from the affliction of the walk. It offers an opportunity for the group to regain the once unbridled sociality and makes it OK to talk again.

Walking the Wales Coast Path alongside participants has made the sign visible and recognized as always existing in relations with all kinds of extra social networks between humans and non-humans (Latour, 1993; Michael, 2000). Walkers' experiences on the Wales Coast Path don't consist exclusively of relations between human subjects. These experiences are always mediated and transformed and even enabled by the non-human, the Wales Coast Path sign. During the walks both humans and the sign, are inextricably mixed up together in heterogeneous assemblages. It acknowledges the profound and multiple significances of the Wales Coast Path sign to the walkers. Michael (2000: 1) states "[i]nstead of humans and nonhumans we are beginning to think of flows, movements, arrangements, relations. It is through such dynamics that the human (and the nonhuman) emerges." It is through a relation at a particular moment in time, at a particular section of the Path amid the heat, sandy conditions and level of exertion presented by the walk itself and the walking gear that the dynamic of the sign emerges as a vital cog in the experiences of the walkers.

4.3: Decision Making on the Wales Coat Path

The Wales Coast Path sign directly influences the decision making process on the Wales Coast Path. It has the agency to decide what the walkers see and where they go.

> *We now had Llansteffan beach at our backs as we continued on the path along the shoreline. Suddenly the leading group of walkers came to a sudden halt by a sign and we all huddled around to see what was up. This sign had been tampered with (Image 4.4), it had been defaced. It was enough of a deterrent to bring us to a dead halt. It came to light that a small holiday cottage stood before us. The Wales Coast Path sign says that walkers could have access to walk in front of the cottage yet it had been tampered with, seemingly by the owner of the cottage, to send walkers on an uphill diversion, rather than have them walk 50 yards past the place. After the initial anger from the group that the sign has been tampered with in such a way, we stood there for 10mintes discussing what to do. I was surprised that this would affect such a seasoned walking club, who didn't take immediate initiative. I was baffled how this change to the sign could create such uncertainty about what to do, especially over such a short distance. This uncertainty was enough to veer us off course and made us*

take the hilly detour which was accompanied by numerous gripes and opposing huffs and puffs. I doubt a simple 'do not enter' sign would have caused such hubbub and discussion. (Field Diary 12: St Clears to Llansteffan 16.08.14)

Image 4.4: Fieldwork walk 12: St Clears to Llansteffan 16.08.14 [Researcher's photograph 16.08.14

The lack of an obvious instruction by the Wales Coast Path sign here deterred the walkers from talking any initiative regarding which route to continue with. This change to the sign was firstly met with disapproval and comments such as,

Why should we do the diversion when the sign does say it's OK like, well it looks like it would have said that before being wrecked. (Barry, 55: Carmarthen)

Yet that little doubt, that crept in due to the sign not wholly being there, had enough agency to re-direct this walking group along an unnecessary detour around a steep hill. Agency has been an important issue in understanding the nature of the Wales Coast Path sign as an actant. The term actant will be used here to denote a non-human actor, or an object which has the capacity to cause effects (Latour 1999: 303). Agency, however, is not the psychological understanding of human

intentionality, capacity to act and make decisions, but that of a capacity to cause an 'effect', to make a difference to a state of affairs. If there is no visible effect, there is no agency (Callon 1986; Latour, 2005, 52-53).

The Wales Coast Path sign creates an environment of rules whereby walkers must follow to the step, steering walkers along the coast without question, keeping the walkers in place, in their proper place which one participant acknowledged,

> *It's like a sheepdog, herding people along the coast. (Dafydd, 28: Swansea)*

The Wales Coast Path sign is used as a focal point in order to engage with the more-than-human relations on the path as I explore the different ways in which different relations with the sign can affect the experiences of those walking the coast of Wales. In particular, this chapter will look at the changing socio-spatial relations of walkers and the Wales Coast Path sign. The Wales Coast Path sign can exert direct influence on the experience and decision making process whilst walking the Wales Coast Path. Poststructuralist geographers identify interactions between people and things as relations, as spatially situated interactions that are a result of "differing kinds of relations running through and around given spatial locations" (Murdoch, 2006: 2-3). The following field diary vignette highlights the decision making influence of the sign during a walk with Gareth.

> *Nant Gwrtheyrn was now in far view, huddled within the grey quarried cliffs of the Eifl, which is the highest point of the Wales Coast Path. We came to a fork in the Path and the two routes presented to us were in stark contrast. One cleared and flat path veered away from the cliff and skirted the border of a fenced field in a straight line, the other was overgrown, uneven and meandered towards the cliff edge. As we approached the imminent fork in the Path Gareth pointed at the Wales Coast Path sign, which pointed towards the overgrown and clearly less obvious route and just said without hesitation 'this way'. This section was a nuisance. The Path was so overgrown with long grass and nettles that we couldn't see where our feet were landing. The tall grass concealed the large stones which lay dormant until our feet stumbled over them, not an ideal path to follow when walking so close to the cliff face. Our walking was slow and*

staggered. Our conversation had stopped. (Field Diary 14: Tydweiliog to Morfa Nefyn 21.08.14)

The power relations between sign and participant here not only shows how the Wales Coast Path sign can determine the route taken by Gareth without question but also channels and constrains human actions. It made us walk unsteadily, focusing on the uneven ground below and unable to readily converse freely as we were previously. Rather than enjoy the views of Nant Gwrtheyrn as we had been, we were now forced to comply with the commands of the sign and stagger clumsily along this route, looking down at our feet, rather than take the unhindered and easy path. According to Gosten (2005: 193), "for an object to be socially powerful in a recognized manner, the form of the object lays down certain rules of use which influence the sensory and emotional impacts of the object." This is illustrated by this field diary vignette of reflections from a walk along the Dee Estuary. It shows how walkers succumb to the strict rule of use which makes us follow every sign without hesitation, channelling our effort, concentration and emotions.

We had just left the Dee River's shore when we suddenly lost track of any signs. It had turned out to be a very hot day and whilst sweltering in my walking gear I was in no mood to play hide and seek with the sign. I could feel my impatience building up inside as our walk ground to a sudden halt. I felt silly as the three of us stood aimlessly at the side of the busy road. What must we have looked like to passing cars, totally out of place and not knowing where to go next! We resorted to pulling out a map, which didn't help matters much, as relying on the signs meant we couldn't pin point on the map where we were exactly. After spending some more time wandering, what felt like in vain, Catherine noticed that the Wales Coast Path sign was no longer a sign placed on a lamppost, or on a gate but was now embedded into the ground and now the size of a two pound coin Image 4.5). I experienced a momentary sense of relief after wasting so much time feeling like a headless chicken not knowing where to turn next. Both Catherine and Tony were also now in good spirits and the walk had once again gathered momentum. My short lived relief soon turned to annoyance as we were now bound to looking at the ground searching for the next sign to make sure we were on the right track. I could sense the surroundings whizzing past and having no recollection of what we were passing. I only remember being forced to look down at a dire concrete pavement. Were we really this duty bound to the Wales Coast Path sign? (Field Diary 21: Greenfield Dock to Queensferry 26.09.14)

Image 4.5: Fieldwork walk 21: Greenfield Dock to Queensferry 26.09.14 [Researcher's photograph 26.09.14]

Gareth, Catherine and Tony all show here how the Wales Coast Path sign can affect their experiences of walking the Wales Coast Path and also highlights their desire to follow the sign without question. These accounts show how walkers seem to have an obligation to the Wales Coast Path sign. The following accounts shed light on the motive for this seemingly absolute duty to follow the sign without hesitation. Many walkers expressed being motivated by seeing the sign on their journeys. Claire summarises the impact of seeing the sign whilst walking the whole of the Wales Coast Path by stating,

> *Oh I felt such exhilaration when I'd see that little blue and yellow sign. Awwww look at it there. I was so relieved when I'd see the Wales Coast Path sign if I got lost and had to find my way back to the path, or felt such such such reassurance if I was uncertain I was heading in the right direction and then would see the sign. Look I have even colour coordinated my nail varnish in homage the sign (Image 4.6). (Claire, 32: Bridgend)*

Image 4.6: Field diary 1: Oxwich to Rhossili 04.05.14
[Research participant photograph 04.05.14]

Similarly, Jane also recounts her feelings of appreciation towards the sign during a long walk on the Wales Coast Path.

> *You know what I'm like about sticking to the path. So when I would see the sign if I was unsure where I was or lost I would be just ah (sigh) just so happy. Especially if it was one of those really hard days it would give me in a way hope that I was on the right track. (Jane, 39: Builth Wells)*

For Jane it wasn't the use of a map or seeing the sea alongside her which was the crutch, it was seeing the sign. Walkers become grateful to the sign. It facilitates human emotions and complies with Gosten (2005) who states that for an object to be powerful it must create an effect, it must create an impact. The following account sheds light as to why the sign has such impact on walkers.

> *It you know, kind of comforts you. 'Laughs', when it's like one of those hard days, it kind of gives you a pat on the back that's it's OK and to keep going. (Daniel, 32: Plymouth)*

The Wales Coast Path signs act as friends in need when tackling long days of tens of miles on the Welsh Coast.

Seeing the path gives you a comfort. Suppose it's like you aren't alone. (Peter, 56: Aberystwyth)

This gives an insight into why following the sign without question is an imperative thing for the walkers. In the network of walking the Wales Coast Path it acts as a comfort blanket, making the walkers feel secure on their journey. The majority of research participants have commented that there is something about the Wales Coast Path that makes people very conscientious about completing every single step and not veering off course at all. Continuity is a huge issue. As Harri stated,

I don't know what it is about the Wales Coast Path; it's not like the South East Coast Path where you can pretty much do what you want and not have to worry about sticking to the path. You feel like you have to complete every step here. It's like you will be judged or something if you don't do it all. (Harri, 39: Llanberis)

The sign plays its part here as well. Harri spoke of a detour around the estuary near Harlech which adds an extra 20 miles to the route. When he reached Minffordd, the beginning of the walk around the river, he noticed that there were a few Wales Coast Path signs together but all facing different directions. This gave him a great sense of relief as one of the signs was pointing away from the 20 mile detour and he commented:

Well the sign was pointing towards another direction (laughing) so it did give me permission to avoid that long detour around the Dwyryd River. The sign said I could do it so I don't feel guilty; it was OK to do it. (Harri, 39: Llanberis)

Walkers seem to have this fear of missing out on one sign, or even disobeying one sign. One participant even remarked:

Every time I walk passed a sign I feel that it knows and somewhere it is marked that I've passed it. Kind of like a James Bond thing (laughing) sounds completely crazy I know but in my mind it's logged somewhere that I have passed another sign. It totally takes over your life when you do something like this. (Rachel, 35: Brazil)

In a different moment in time the sign changes and connects in that particular moment in a network and gives encouragement to the walker. Here the sign acts as a supporter or a coach, encouraging the walker on their journey. One participant stated:

> *The Wales Coast Path sign gives such comfort when you see it, it kind of reassures you that you are on the right track and spurs you onwards, kind of like a second wind. (Katy, 40: Llanelli)*

Another participant explained:

> *When I pass a sign I feel it's like a cog…you know like a cog in a railway. It kind of pulls me forward, and every one I pass pulls me closer to the finish, it sounds really silly. You know like, umm it's hard to describe really it's like I pass it and it propels me forward which keeps me going until I pass the next one. (Janet, 50: Cardiff)*

Another participant creatively said:

> *Seeing the sign is kind of like being Hansel and Gretel. You know like the breadcrumbs. I feel the signs are like the breadcrumbs Hansel and Gretel follow, crazy I know. You see a sign and it encourages you to keep going knowing there will be another sign soon. So instead of following the breadcrumbs follow the signs. (Mari, 56: Carmarthen)*

An Actor Network approach assumes that nothing has reality or form from outside the enactments of those relations. After losing the sign somewhere around Saundersfoot harbour the walkers' reality at that moment in time was one of confusion and uncertainty.

> *We walked through Saundersfoot town centre and followed the sea along the harbour front. The walking pace slowed as the group were unsure of the correct way ahead. Do we follow the water's edge along the harbour? Or do we turn back on ourselves and follow the road out of Saundersfoot? Without meaning to sound derogatory the group reminded me of a group of lemmings, pacing back and forth, rucksacks bumping, to-ing and fro-ing from the harbour to the bottom of the hill unable to move from that location until the sign offered a way out. Surely losing sight of the sign couldn't possibly deter a group of seasoned walkers who collectively had a*

wealth of walking experience. Yet this was the case. After 'umming and ahhing' for a while the group decided to continue the journey along the main road out of Saundersfoot. We walked up the steep hill, the group scattered depending on their speed up the hill. On the top of the hill we collectively crossed the road, in single file, when suddenly the leader at that moment spotted the sign on the other side of the road. She stopped abruptly with all the other walkers stopping dead in their tracks. Laughter and some clapping were heard from the front of the group, an obvious sign of relief to finally find the sign. We all crossed the road in the single file order we were in and order once again ensued once we were reunited with the sign. The lemmings were set free, and whilst laughing and referring to the sign one of the walkers shouted to the person in front and said 'there it is, it was testing you. (Field Diary 37: Amroth to Tenby 08.12.14)

I then realised that this sign of which I considered to be of no significance and didn't even give a second thought to before, held a great deal of influence over walkers. At a particular moment in time during the walkers' experiences it acted as a vehicle for hope and reassurance when times were hard during the walk. Walkers look towards it for hope and reassurance and are at the mercy of the sign until it grants it to them. Dewsbury et al (2002) state that the non-representational points to the liveliness of representations and the performative manner in which they act as doings or manifestations of a particular kind. We must therefore consider representations not as a sign or text, or anything that needs symbolic decoding. The focus must be on the performative dimensions of the representation. The above vignette demonstrates this well. From the walkers shuffling uncertainly back and forth, the sound of rucksacks rubbing against each other as the walkers scuttle amongst each other whilst deciding which route to take. The outburst of laughter and clapping once the Wales Coast Path sign has been spotted. It is these performative dimensions that represent the agency the Wales Coast Path sign has on even the most experienced walkers. It can change a brief moment of uncertainly, confusion and disorder into one of jubilation whilst once again setting order amongst the group. Showing how the agency of the Wales Coast Path sign is engaged with in what Thrift (2003; 2010) calls the 'immediacy of the now'.

Walking with people on the coastal path and researching their experiential experiences has also alerted me to the power or influence the sign has in regards to

leading people along the coast of Wales and the trust people put into it. On numerous occasions the official Wales Coast path sign has lead people without question through an overgrown (Image 4.7) or a boggy path,

Image 4.7: Research participant photograph [shared during fieldwork walk 33: Port Eynon to Swansea 12.11.14]

or through a field of cows (Image 4.8), and people stick to the path religiously even though on many occasions they have moaned or remarked that there is an easier, quicker or safer route or another footpath they know of that would be more appropriate. On one occasion a participant commented,

> *I don't understand why the Wales Coast Path goes this way. (Craig, 45: Cardiff)*

and,

> *...but the path sign says this way. (Craig, 45: Cardiff)*

Image 4.8: Research participant photograph [shared during fieldwork walk 33: Port Eynon to Swansea 12.11.14]

Image 4.7 shows where following the path without question can lead you. Up to your knees in a barley field, desperately searching for the sign to lead you out. The same goes for Image 4.8. The sign has led myself and walkers through fields of cows which can be quite intimidating, especially if they start to run around you. Some people do just say 'to hell with it' and walk around these fields, but the majority do not.

The Wales Coast Path sign creates an environment where it is absolutely necessary to obey its rules as the following field diary vignette demonstrates. This field diary vignette recounts a walk in Carmarthenshire from Llansteffan to Carmarthen with a couple of participants who were on the last leg on their journey around the whole of the Welsh coast.

> *We were about to exit Green Castle Woods when I realised we were about to pass a wooden statue (Image 4.9) which was in a clearing approximately 50 yards away from the path. I had seen the statue on a previous non-fieldwork walk with a walking club and it was worth seeing as it represented Carmarthen's maritime past, and it would also have given us a good point of interest to stop, as this particular route is a very laborious inland one of mainly uniform fields away from the coast. It would have also*

given us a nice connection to the coast which was missing on this particular journey. I suggested that the statue was worth seeing yet to my utter surprise the other two walkers were very hesitant to veer from the course set for us by the sign. I was slightly irritated that I had given the walkers an opportunity to see something of interest, and only a few steps from our route, they were so bound to the sign and the route they did not feel able to appreciate anything in the wider vicinity. (Field Diary 27: Llansteffan to Carmarthen, 18.10.14)

Image 4.9: Fieldwork walk 27: Llansteffan to Carmarthen 18.10.14 [Researcher's photograph 18.10.14]

The walkers here comply with exactly what the Wales Coast Path sign wants and are led along the exact route the sign intended. When discussing an Actor Network approach Law and Callon (1989: 285) state"…we are not primarily concerned with mapping interactions between individuals…we are concerned to map the way in which they [actors] define and distribute roles, and mobilize or invent others to play these role." The sign does this here; it assembles the walkers to walk exactly the route it intends and makes the walkers play the role of a clique of followers almost, unable to break free from the path. The following field diary shows how in a

different moment in time and where the sign allows, the walkers are able to stop and take in some history (Image 4.10).

> *Oh how the times have now changed. After avoiding a unique sculpture in Green Castle Woods, which only a select number of walkers who venture out that far get to see, the walkers then decided to stop and take time to read a generic information board when we reached Carmarthen town centre (Image 4.10). This information board was unmistakably one that belonged to the Wales Coast Path with the sign placed right slap bang in the middle of it. I thought to myself, surely the walkers aren't stopping here to take in some history and information merely because the sign says they can. It must then have the agency to dictate where walkers stop to take in information and what they get to see? (Field Diary 27: Llansteffan to Carmarthen 18.10.14)*

Image 4.10: Fieldwork walk 27: Llansteffan to Carmarthen 18.10.14 [Researcher's photograph 18.1014]

As Anderson (2012: 574) explains relational places are "made up of material objects, living things, and natural processes, alongside the practices, cognitive responses, and emotions that are produced by this intersection". A relational approach is particularly apt in the study of the fluid ontology of the Wales Coast Path sign. A more-than-human turn marks a reconceptualisation of materiality and matter so the Wales Coast Path sign is no longer seen as empty but as something that has agency, it has the agency to structure the walk along the coast of Wales.

During a walk from Laugharne to Llansteffan there was a long stretch of road that the walking group and I had to cover in order to walk around the river Taf. This made the group very uneasy and angry that we were walking on the road with no pavement, and walking in single file changed the dynamic of the group from being a boisterous and fun one to uneasy and quiet. As soon as we saw a sign the whole dynamic once again swapped and we were back to the group we were at the beginning. One participant even began to sing;

> *The path had now joined a country road which felt never ending. Walking on a road is always an unpleasant experience. We were forced to walk in a single file which stopped any harmony between us all and stopped any chatting dead in its tracks. The only chatter was the occasional long drawn out shout of 'car' by whoever was in the front or back of the line. This kind of walking always feels like a chore, and something that has to be done and out of the way as quickly as possible. I never know who are more shocked, the walkers who come head to head with a fast approaching car, or the driver faced with a single file of walkers who look like deer caught in the headlights. The occasional moaning was heard about the pain of walking on a road, and the majority of the time spent in silence spoke a thousand words, the walkers today just didn't appreciate walking on this road. Suddenly we approached a Wales Coast Path sign and I was taken aback by the swift change in the dynamics of the group. The group were once again their boisterous selves and I could sense the hubbub in front and behind me with one man even singing 'Hip hop hooray to the sign. I'm glad we are going the bloody right way'. (Field Diary 22: Llansteffan Circular 28.09.14)*

This walk along the Wales Coast Path aligns with Latour's (1991) notion of delegation. Latour (2005) explains that delegation refers to the reciprocal relationship between the social and the technical. He states that in any situation in which technology is used it is used to delegate, or translate. We delegate to technologies the work of many humans. Technologies, in turn, delegate behaviour back onto the social. We act as we do, not by some idealistic notion of free choice, but because our actions are bounded by technologies that delegate how and what we can do within a sociotechnical network. The sign here delegates the unfortunate tarmacked dangerous route and in turn then dictated how the walkers act when they happily see the sign once again. Latour (1991; 1992) further states that "[d]elegation, then, is a particular instance of translation whereby the social and

the technical co-constitute each other – to read the social from the technical is similarly to read the technical from the social". For Latour delegation describes the reciprocal relationship between the social and the technical, the human and non-human. The walkers, their expectations of what the Wales Coast Path should be – not on a tarmac road, the dangers of walking on a road and the defeat of the sociability of the group and thus seeing the sign are reciprocal, and all co-constitute together at that particular moment in time to create the walkers' experience.

During a discussion with Sarah about the effect on seeing the Wales Coast Path sign during her time walking the whole coast of Wales she explained,

> *It was welcoming to see the signage. The signs showed we were on the right path and so gave us comfort, particularly on long walks. We also felt 'proud' of them, a kind of belonging and reminded us what we were following. (Sarah, 29: Aberystwyth)*

Here the sign is shown as part of a wider network, a network between those who have all walked the Wales Coast Path. Not all walkers would have felt the same pain, exertion, weather, highs and lows and would have been wearing and carrying different walking gear and supplies at different moments in time. The only thing that is guaranteed to be similar is the Wales Coast Path sign. Take the sign away from that network and there is nothing to show they have all done the same. The sign is the only constant thing between all of their experiences which they celebrate wholeheartedly, whether it be on mascots, t-shirts created to show they have walked the Wales Coast Path and even on celebratory cakes (Image 4.11).

Image 4.11: Fieldwork walk 1: Oxwich to Rhossili 04.05.14 [Research participant photograph 04.05.14]

When taking in to account the networks that form whilst walkers walk the Wales Coast Path we need not ask if some networks are more powerful than others. The focus should be on asking which associations are stronger. Any actor network then is the effect, or result, of the connections that constitute it. The sign has power because of the other heterogeneous things in the network. It has agency because of the physicality of walking a particular section, the mental and physical condition of the walkers, because of a noisy busy road or sand dunes or because of the heavy walking gear walkers carry. Power is merely an effect, is not already pre-determined. The sign has no pre-established power but is the strongest of the links in a particular network which therefore enable it to exert its power over the walkers. The walkers perform an action dictated by the sign which therefore shows it is the strongest element in that particular network. Latour (1986: 265) states "when you simply have power – in potentia – nothing happens and you are powerless; when you exert power – in actu – others are performing the action and not you…[power] as an effect, but never as a cause."

4.4: Dare to go Beyond the Status Quo

> *Ah my friend the sign, where have you bloody been until now? (David, 45: Llandeilo)*

The Wales Coast Path sign's agency isn't predictable and can vary away from its role as the guiding, calming influence previously discussed. Other walkers have reacted differently to the same relational process of walking the Wales Coast Path and following the sign. Thinking relationally a more-than-human account of walking the Wales Coast Path takes into account the significance of seeing the sign and how it shapes the experiences of the walkers. Seeing the sign is essential in maintaining a harmonious status quo on the walks as the following field diary vignette highlights.

> *I was still feeling fatigued after walking up and down the hundreds of steps that led us onto Oxwich beach. It was turning out to be an overcast and grey day which promised rain, although under my raincoat and walking jacket it felt humid and uncomfortable, yet the ominous looking clouds prevented me from taking them off. The long sandy beach of Oxwich didn't help as walking on sand makes every step feel like 10. Beyond the beach was a section I was dreading, the sand dunes. Walking on a flat beach is bad enough when wearing full walking regalia but walking up and down those soft sandy heaps just drained the little energy I felt I had at that point. We followed the sign up a very steep climb, so steep in fact we rested on the top for a drink and chocolate bar. We then followed another sign that led us back down amongst the sand dunes. It then felt like 'Groundhog Day', the signs we were following kept taking us around in circles, up the steep hill and back down to the water's edge. Over and over again! Why do we keep doing this to ourselves I thought to myself. We were both puzzled about what on earth we could do to break out from this escapeless Déjà Vu route we kept circling. Whilst finding ourselves at the water's edge once again David looked up and spotted the sign poking its blue, yellow and white face from behind a bush on the top on an enormous sand dune. Finally deciding to grace us with its presence! On seeing this sign I felt completely and utterly deflated. The signs had lead us to a dead end and we would have to tackle the huge dune to get back on track. At this moment in time, whist feeling utterly helpless thinking I would never be able to do it, I was ready to quit. Quit the walking and the PhD and never think of the Wales Coast Path again. This was the first time I had felt complete and utter despair whilst walking. (Field Diary 33: Port Eynon to Swansea 12.11.14)*

Our despair was a direct result of following the sign and equally a result of then not seeing it. This shows that the Wales Coast Path sign is not bounded or static but can be seen as mobile and in process, because its agency changes. It is open to conditionality and emergence. The sign's influence is forever forming and in progress depending on a particular moment in time. In this particular network of the walk taking into account the sand dunes, the hill, the humid weather and the lack of energy it caused feelings of anger and discontent. If the Wales Coast Path sign has not been an element in this particular network at this particular moment in time then this possibly would not have been a bad experience on this section on the path and we would have been able to freely pick our route and take our initiative over the best way to continue walking. This again resonates with Gosten's (2005) notion that objects must not be taken for granted as passive and people as active. The relationship between the human and non-human here is rebalanced with the sign taking charge and holds the power in this relationship. Telling us where to go and ultimately how we feel. It also aligns with Gell's (1998) ideas that form part of an emerging attempt to take the non-human world seriously in terms of how it affects human relations.

This again resonates with Latour's (1991) notion of delegation whereby the focal actor of the Wales Coast Path sign defines the identities and interests of the other actors that are consistent with its own interests and establishes itself as an obligatory passage point, rendering itself indispensible (Callon, 1986). The walkers must pass and re-join the sign in order to re-assert the status quo of the walk, and escape from the tyranny created by the sign's absence. The obligatory passage point refers to the situation that has to occur in order for all of the actors to satisfy the interests that have been attributed to them by the focal actor. The sign must be seen for the walkers to re-capture a sound piece of mind. If delegation is successful the sign as the principal actor "speaks for others but in its own language" (Callon, 1986; 26). According to Latour (1988) delegation means displacement and drift, it creates a link that didn't exist before and modifies elements. The sign's agency here drifts and comes to the fore when the walkers finally see it and reach it once again. Seeing and subsequently reaching the sign and being on the right track again

modifies the walkers' feeling of despair to one of being happy and content once again for being on the correct route once more.

The following vignette shows how in only a few mere moments the agency of the sign can change and create the almost complete opposite experience it had just done.

> *We had to navigate our way through a very overgrown sand dune, covered in nettles and thorns. There was obviously no clear path as we had long since veered off the Wales Coast Path, thanks to the signs. I struggled! I had to take many stops on the way up to catch my breath and stretch my back. I wouldn't dare look up at the sign for fear of it not appearing any closer. My eyelids felt heavy from sheer exhaustion and my whole body felt clammy. I was uncomfortable and fed up. We finally scaled the sand dune and reached the top and the sign. I experienced an extreme sense of elation, euphoria and exultation. Words can only give a glimpse into the way I was feeling at that moment. David gave an enormous sigh of relief whist having a huge grin on his face. We started chatting away once again which was a relief after spending the last 30 minutes of the journey silent in our confusion, desperation and physical deliriousness of scaling what was an unnecessary sand dune. On walking, and feeling completely content once again, I was stunned by my change of attitude. Reaching the sign had re-charged me with energy I thought was long lost. It made me feel the remainder of the journey was possible. (Field Diary 33: Port Eynon to Swansea 12.11.19)*

According to Bingham and Thrift (2000: 281) "ANT repopulates the world and concentrates on movement, on process, on the constant hum of the world as the different elements of it are brought into relations with one another, often in new styles and unconsidered combinations". Here the sign has created new modes of conduct and consciousness within situations that are merely minutes away from each other. The agency of the sign also proves highly significant in its absence. It is when walking and that interaction with the sign that the "the identity of actors, the possibility of interaction and the margins of manoeuvre are negotiated and delimited" (Callon 1986: 203). This is evident in the following field diary vignette,

> *The sea was now in view once again as we approached Sully. We arrived at a kind of path t-junction which we could either follow right towards the sea*

or left into a residential area. We couldn't see a sign. At the beginning of my research common sense would have told me to take the route towards the sea, but I know now to listen to the sign. We stood for a few minutes, crouching here and there for any clue as to where the sign would be. Gary eventually circled a short wooden pole and saw the sign hidden out of sight, not clearly visible from the direction from which we approached. He complained that the sign does this often, hiding from view and making walkers take time searching for it. This time the sign did permit us to take the path that paralleled the shoreline. (Field Diary 23: Barry Island to Cardiff 04.10.14)

The sign has proven to play a greater role in leading walkers along the coast than maps or more than following a clear path with one participant stating,

I did this whole walk without pulling out one map so I'm not going to start now. (Gareth, 45: Cardiff)

The following field diary vignette sheds light on the affective role of the Wales Coast Path sign when missing from the network on a walk towards the Menai Bridge and the transformation in the network when it finally reappears.

We then veered inland away from Dinas Dinlle to skirt around the barren Caernarfon airport. I'd realised that away from the road it was becoming one of those days where everything just seemed quiet. We were now away from the sea so could no longer hear the gentle rolling of the water against the shore, there was no wind so the foliage was still and went unnoticed. It was a Tuesday so passing other walkers was few and far between at this section which was unlikely to be walked unless purposefully walking the Wales Coast Path. The silence was at times deafening as it made me realise that I was walking alone with another walker I had only just met. I started to feel unnerved in the stillness and isolated nature the walk had become. Strangely I found myself scouring the ground and any visible poles or gates which appeared for a Wales Coast Path sign. Around the wetlands of Foryd Bay I found myself becoming agitated in my quest to spot a Wales Coast Path sign. At this particular moment in time my thoughts were consumed with seeing that little blue white and yellow sign which strangely I was convinced would comfort me in my sense of unease, I couldn't concentrate on anything else. As we started to leave the wetland behind us and join another country road towards Caernarfon, we spotted the Wales Coast Path sign perched on top of a small wooden stump coming out of the ground. I felt what can only be described as elation after seeing the sign. It gave me a tremendous sense of relief that we were on the right track and bizarrely seeing the sign made me feel safer and more at ease amongst the

> *secluded nature of the walk. I thought to myself, how on earth can one sign completely overthrow my sense of unease and trepidation I was feeling at that point? (Field Diary 2: Pantllyfni to Y Felinheli 13.05.14)*

On discussing the importance of the sign with my co-walker Mike he was very blasé about the importance of the walk to him as the following field diary vignette shows.

> *Mike on the other hand was very blasé about seeing and following the sign. To me he was putting on a macho display of not worrying about where he was going or following a specific route, just as long as he got to his destination he didn't worry about how he got there. Even so, this was all forgotten about when we stumbled across the sign at the end of the Foryd Bay wetlands. He seemed outwardly relieved on seeing the sign. After an onerous and silent single file walk through the wetlands his big sigh followed by laughter and the words 'ah see we are on the right track', was a telling sign that he was as glad to see the sign as I was. (Field Diary 2: Pantllyfli to Y Felinheli 13.05.14)*

This more-than-human approach to walking the Wales Coast Path presents a platform onto which people's engagement with the sign can be understood. The more-than-human emphasises relationalities that are specific to the walking the Wales Coast Path context and that are made apparent when viewing the walk from the walk itself. I've also seen it as a life saver. It has been my one and only focus when walking through the middle of many fields full of cows and even when walking by myself with only one other walker (and feeling uneasy at times) seeing the sign made me feel safer, like it was keeping a watch over me. During one walk to Queensferry the last leg of our journey was a walk through a field full of Limousin cows, and the huge Limousin bull was sitting right across the path. As we walked passed the bull the cows started to stir and move towards us, it was frightening. I suddenly spotted the sign on a small wooden pole sticking out of the ground alongside the Dee river and made a beeline for it. My only focus was that sign, and even though, looking back, a small wooden pole with a sign on it would not have stopped a stampede of cattle, at that moment in time it gave me something to focus on and once I was near it I felt safe and able to carry on without any worry (Image 4.12).

Image 4.12: Fieldwork walk 21: Greenfield Dock to Queensferry 26.09.14 [Researcher's photograph 26.09.14]

The last leg of our journey into Queensferry was a pleasant and surprising route of fields, surprising to experience such greenery in such an industrial section of the Wales Coast Path, right alongside the A55. Yet the three of us stopped dead in our tracks at the final field before we joined the Britannia Bridge to finally cross the Dee River into Queensferry which was filled with large limousin cows. One thing I have never been able to shake even after walking so much of the Wales Coast Path is my nervousness of walking through a field full of cows. The majority of the cows were sitting right on top on the path and the three of us were trying to decide the best way to navigate through the herd. I could sense that Mary and Pete were equally as nervous through their hesitance to begin the journey through the field and suggestions on what to do if the cows were aggressive. We started to walk through and the cows were agitated by our presence, shuffling about and mooing. My heart was beating so fast and I felt really vulnerable especially feeling less mobile than I would be without my heavy boots and backpack. I could feel myself looking for an escape route, over a hedge or into the river. At that moment in time I was genuinely frightened. There was no conversation between us, just the occasional 'over here' or 'come this way'. Suddenly the herd began to rise up and seemingly follow us, although I was too nervous to turn around and look, and a lot of mooing was heard. We were in a state of kerfuffle with dread. Mary looked up and spotted the Wales Coast Path sign alongside the shores of the Dee (Image 4.12). (Field Diary 21: Greenfield Dock to Queensferry 26.09.14)

She suggested,

Quick over there head to the sign. (Mary, 65: Llandudno)

We quickly made our way to the sign, with all three of us letting off loud puffs of panic and exertion. Seeing the sign felt like a godsend, encouraging us to veer away from the agitated herd. It was as if the sign was placed behind a protective electric fence, and not merely positioned defenceless at the water's edge. We arrived at the sign and we all gave out a sigh of relief. The cows had lost interest and we were now able to catch our breath. Pete embraced the sign with a few taps of the hand. (Field Diary 21: Greenfield Dock to Queensferry 26.09.14)

An Actor Network approach here considers both human and non-human elements equally as actors within a network. In other words, we should employ the same analytical and descriptive framework when faced with either a human, a text or a machine. The Wales Coast Path sign is seen as an actant in all forms of its role in a particular network because it is something "that acts or to which activity is granted by another…an actant can literally be anything provided it is granted to be the source of action" (Latour 1996: 373). The Wales Coast Path sign has meaning only in relation to other signs, such as the physicality of the walk, the weather, the type of ground walked on, the energy levels of the walk. Its identity is defined through its interactions with the other actors. The following field diary vignette shows how the assemblage of cars, a busy road, struggling to walk in full walking regalia have all gathered together in a network to give the sign its agency to transform place and thus the walk.

Walking the final stretches of the busy A483 road out of Swansea is so different and so far removed from what one would picture a coastal walk to be we might as well have been walking on the moon. It is a tributary road for the M4, a concrete abyss where the cars go whizzing past at 70miles an hour. We had our heads down in silence to get this section over with as soon as possible; talking would have been futile anyway amidst the constant roar of traffic. Occasional beeps from passing cars, perplexed by the sight of two walkers in unfamiliar territory, only heightened our sense of feeling out of place in this strange site. We continued towards the foot of the Briton Ferry Bridge where we once again spotted the Wales Coast Path sign (Image 4.13). Finally, making us feel we were once again in familiar territory. We were back in our world now; the sign made it OK for us to be there, it made our presence felt. (Field Diary 15: Aberafan to Swansea 24.08.14)

Image 4.13: Fieldwork walk 15: Aberafan to Swansea 24.08.14 [Researcher's photograph 24.08.14]

This highlights that an Actor Network is "reducible neither to an actor alone nor to a network…An actor-network is simultaneously an actor whose activity is networking heterogeneous elements and a network that is able to redefine and transform what it is made of" (Callon 1986: 93). This vignette shows that when the sign is taken out of the network it creates disorder, unfamiliarity and uncertainty. Yet when it is-reintroduced order is yet again set allowing the walk to continue and the status quo is again set allowing the walkers to continue hassle free. The following field diary vignette written after an agonising day's walking from Newport to Magor highlights the utter affect not seeing the sign can have.

> *When you don't see the sign for a while it plays on your mind, eating away at your subconscious until it's all you can think about and the walk becomes a game of hide and seek with it. Not seeing the sign weighs down on your shoulders and makes the walk strenuous, even unpleasant at times. You can no longer enjoy the company of fellow walkers, the views or the physicality of the walk itself, as your mind gets consumed by what feels like the only thing that matters, seeing the Wales Coast Path sign. (Field Diary 20: Newport to Magor 24.09.14)*

The agency of the sign is further explained by Dave during a very strenuous walk between Port Eynon and Swansea.

> *You get used to seeing the sign and in a way develop a sixth sense about where the sign should be. Not like now, it just really pisses me off when the sign isn't where you expect it to be, see it totally throws you off guard and you have to waste your bloody time looking for it. (Dave, 53: Wrexham)*

This shows how important this small material object is to people's experiences. Rather than pull out a map, or follow what looks like a path or even follow one's instinct the sign holds so much power over people that is makes people search for it and is a key player in the network of what it is to walk the Wales Coast Path.

The sign has such influence over walkers that is toys with them, playing hide and seek almost, willing walkers to find it and not take another step until the sign has the proper attention it demands (Image 4.14).

Image 4.14: Fieldwork walk 6: Laugharne to St Clears 02.08.14 [Researcher's photograph 02.08.14]

The following vignette shows the agency the sign has in getting walkers to do what it commands.

> *It was quite staggering to see the effort walkers put into following the sign and the sacrifices the walkers made to stick to following the sign religiously on this walk. After leaving a wooded section of this walk from Laugharne to*

St Clears the walking group suddenly came to an abrupt halt. I made my way to the front of the group to see why we had stopped. We were now in an open field and the sign was nowhere to be seen to lead us onwards in the right direction. I would have thought that seasoned walkers such as this walking group would have followed their instinct and followed the path already mapped through the grass by previous walkers. Yet this wasn't the case. After searching for any clues as to where the sign should be it was finally spotted behind an overgrown bush. A few members of the group went to great effort to clear the sign, using their hands and a few small Stanley knives, whilst the others waited patiently until the deed was done (Image 4.14). It wasn't until the sign was cleared from any shrubbery that the walk was allowed to continue. I was astounded that no other members of the group questioned this delay in the walk to merely clear the sign and were all on board with the importance of clearing the sign. (Field Diary 6: Laugharne to St Clears 02.08.14)

The relationality of the Wales Coast path is clearly demonstrated in the materiality of the sign itself. The image below shows an example of where the sign has been stolen (Image 4.15).

Image 4.15: Fieldwork walk 34: Pwllheli to Abersoch 14.11.14 [Researcher's photograph 14.11.14].

Many walkers have suggested that this is done by other walkers wanting to keep the sign as a souvenir to remind people of their walks. When walkers see a missing sign during their walk they get angry as it makes them hesitate that they going the

right way. On the other hand whoever has taken the sign includes it into another network where it is praised and admired and a reminder of their epic journey around the coast of Wales. Its agency has created enough of an impression for people to want to use the sign as their main tangible memorabilia from the walk. The sign even has enough influence to determine what people think and expect to experience in Wales. Many participants have spoken about the disappointment of the Wales Coast Path sign at the start/or end of the path, dependent on where you start, stating that,

> *The sign is so badly displayed by Chester that it isn't a good reflection on Wales. (Mari, 32: Newport)*

And;

> *It isn't a good welcome to Wales. What must people think? (Dafydd, 35: Neath)*

4.5: 'Sign'ing Off

When the walkers are taken away from walking the Wales Coast Path and all of the relations entwined in its network such as the physicality of walking, the exertion, the weather, the sea, walking gear and the company of other walkers only one thing lingers and is constant in the new network which is the Wales Coast Path sign. Its key role away from the actual physical act of walking the Welsh coast is demonstrated here when a participant talks about life after finishing the walk,

> *I'm not sure what I'm going to do with the rest of my life now that I don't have to follow that sign any more. (Steve, 42: Cardiff)*

The Wales Coast Path sign's influence is so dominant than rather than miss the scenery, the company of other walkers, or the adrenalin created by walking it is the sign's agency that will leave the greatest mark. This next account by a walker

explains how the sign will still play a constant presence in her life after finishing the whole of the Wales Coast Path.

> *When I finish the path I'm going to make a shrine to it, and display pictures or leaflets or things I have collected along the way, and I'm going to put the sign slap bang in the middle of the shrine (Kate, 47: Cardigan).*

The memories of the walk linger so does the agency and the influence of the Wales Coast Path sign (Image 4.16). Image 4.16 shows a replica of the Wales Coast Path sign created out of felt by a research participant. This marked her achievement of walking the whole of the Wales Coast Path. The Wales Coast Path sign played such an important role in her experiences during the walk that she celebrated her achievement through having the sign present in her home.

Image 4.16: Research participant photograph [Shared post fieldwork walk 18.01.16]

The sign has also been prevalent in my own experience of waking vast amounts of the Wales Coast Path during my fieldwork. The following vignette from a field work diary recounts the feelings of seeing the sign post fieldwork.

> *The fieldwork is over now. I miss the constant walking on the Wales Coast Path and the adrenalin of both the nervousness generated the night before a walk and the energized sensation felt after. As time has gone past and the walking ever more so is less prevalent in my mind I have realised that one thing that is able to stir my emotions and grasp at any walking memories is seeing the Wales Coast Path sign. I pass the sea almost every day on the way to the office and don't batter an eyelid, I spend numerous weekends down in Whitesand Bay Pembrokeshire and I am constantly walking on sections of the path, either for a walk during lunchtime or a conscious effort to walk along the coast, and I am sure I walk some parts without registering that I am on the Wales Coast Path at all. Yet I have become aware that these walks pass by unhindered and unstirred until a Wales Coast Path sign pops up. As soon as I see one my emotions are heightened. Sometimes it makes me feel proud of my walking achievements, especially if I am walking with someone and it prompts a conversation about how much of the coast I have walked and my walking stories both good and bad. Other times I can't look at it as it turns my stomach into knots as it prompts a nervousness about the work I have to do. Looking back at my old walking field notes I have even started to realise the effect seeing the sign had on me after finishing walks. After some extremely agonizing walks, both physically and mentally, such as those from Porthmadog to Pwllheli, Oxwich to Swansea and along the Severn Estuary and seeing the sign after, whether passing it in a car, seeing in books or leaflets on in posters advertising the Wales Coast Path or whilst walking, would rouse some pretty harsh feelings towards the walks and stir some memories which painted my experiences in a bad light. It reminded me how broken I felt after those walks and how after I didn't want to walk, see or even think about the Wales Coast Path ever again. (Post fieldwork personal diary)*

4.6: Conclusion

This chapter is characterized by an exclusive emphasis on empirical studies. It provides a research trajectory than reveals the complexities and contingencies that are far too often overlooked in accounts of the non-human world. It has demonstrated how important the sign has been to walkers who are or have walked the Wales Coast path and shows how the sign can fluctuate between different states depending on the relations that come together at a certain moment in time.

The sign has proven to be an important part of people's social network on the Wales Coast Path and through numerous heterogeneous assemblages can take on many different forms. It isn't merely a meaningless inanimate object but a vital 'cog' in the experiences of walkers on the Wales Coast Path. It acknowledges that the Wales Coast Path sign's power isn't static and a permanent condition. Its power and influence are an effect that is performed by other actors. According to Latour (1986: 268) "[p]ower is always the illusion people get when that are obeyed…people who are obeyed' discover what their power is really made of when they start to lose it. They realize, but too late, that it was 'made of' the wills of all the others." The Wales Coast Path sign's power comes from myriad different relations that appear in a network at a particular moment in time. Its power is an affect of the function of the network configuration. Whether that is a mistimed sand dune, the weather, the topography underfoot, a heavy backpack, a field of cows or it being a lonely isolated walk. These multitudes of relations hold themselves together aiding the sign in its agency. Yet they hold themselves together precariously. All it takes is one of these relations to fail and the whole walls of reality unravel. Yet ultimately the Wales Coast Path sign has made itself indispensible to the walkers. Its affect on walkers has transformed provisional relations, at a specific moment in time, into durable, seemingly irreversible ties.

Chapter 5

The Wales Coast Path: The End of Purposeless Walking

Walking is not a sport. Sport is a matter of techniques and rules, scores and competition, necessitating lengthy training; knowing the postures, learning the right movements. Then, a long time later, come improvisation and talent. Sport is keeping score: what's your ranking? Your time? Your place in the results? Always the same division between victor and vanquished that there is in a war – there is a kinship between war and sport, one that honours war and dishonours sport: respect for the adversary; hatred of the enemy. Sport also obviously means cultivation of endurance, of a taste for effort, for discipline. An ethic. A labour. But then again it is material: reviews, spectacles, a market. It is a performance. Sport gives rise to immense mediatic ceremonies, crowded with consumers of brands and images. Money invades empty souls, medical science to construct artificial bodies. Walking is not a sport. Putting one foot in front of the other is child's play. When walkers meet, there is no result, no time: the walker may say which way he has come, mention the best path for viewing the landscape, what can be seen from this or that promontory. Efforts have nevertheless been made to create a new market in accessories: revolutionary shoes, incredible socks, high-performance trousers...the sporting spirit is being surreptitiously introduced, you no longer walk but do a 'trek'. Pointed staffs are on sale to give walkers the appearance of improbable skiers. But none of that goes very far. It can't go far. Walking is the best way to go more slowly than any other method that has ever been found. To walk, you need to start with two legs. The rest is optional. If you want to go faster, then don't walk, do something else; drive, slide or fly. Don't walk. And when you are walking, there is only one sort of performance that counts: the brilliance of the sky, the splendour of the landscape. Walking is not a sport. (Gros, 2015: 1-2)

5.1: Introduction

The previous chapter considered the importance of the Wales Coast Path sign to walkers' experiences whilst walking the Path. It drew attention to the influence the sign holds over walkers and how it contributes to the experiences of the walkers, where they go, what they see and what they experience. It invited us to look beyond the human and non-human binaries (Callon, 1986; Law, 2008; Murdoch, 1998), and to consider the sign as an important cog in how walkers experience walking the Wales Coast Path. It also suggested that walking, as a methodological practice coincides with Moles' (2008) notion that it helps researchers to engage

more effectively with the emplaced knowledge of their participants. This chapter will seek to explore what constitutes the proper Wales Coast Path walker and examine if there is a proper way to walk. Through the use of field diaries, interview quotes and photographs taken by the research participants it will provide and in-depth account of how the research participants who walk the Wales Coast Path identify themselves as walkers and what they perceive to be the correct way to walk.

Literatures discussing walking have previously mostly drawn attention to the Romantic notions of walking recorded by the likes of Wordsworth (2008) and Thoreau (1862), short walks, walking for health and wellbeing (Gatrell, 2013; Miaux et al. 2010) and a new interest in psychogeography (Coverley, 2010) draws attention to the performance of walking around urban areas, and how walking enables people to absorb the surrounding cities. Psychogeography advocates a slower pace of walking, giving people a chance to fully absorb their surroundings and revel in the simplicity of urban living. Drawing back on the walking described by the likes of Wordsworth (2008) and Thoreau (1862) psychogeography calls for a slower pace of walking in order to fully absorb the details of the city, to drift. This chapter will take a turn away from these sedate and unhurried notions of waking and draw attention to the long distance challenge of walking the Wales Coast Path and how it has given rise to a more competitive, physical, faster, goal orientated and judgmental kind of walker and way of walking. Rather than look at how the landscape, environment and place is affected by walking the Wales Coast Path it will take a turn inward and look at how this kind of walking and the embodied engagement with the Wales Coast Path affects the identity of the walkers themselves. Walking the Wales Coast Path requires, in many cases, daily engagement and being immersed with walking the Path over weeks and months. This chapter will discuss how this prolonged engagement of walking the Path gives rise to a new kind of walking identity and has changed what being a ‘proper’ walker means.

Walking literatures are a lot about people and place (Anderson, 2004: Legat, 2008) and how people configure the world 'out there'. This chapter looks at how walking the Wales Coast Path contributes to walkers' identity and how they identify with others. It will show how the performance of walking the Wales Coast Path influences self and identity. In regards to the Wales Coast Path it considers how people walk, where they walk and when and how this can influence identity. This chapter will also consider how the physical sensation of moving through space becomes generative of a particular knowledge of identity and similarly to Wylie's (2005: 236) account of walking the South West Coast Path "[i]t aims to describe the configuration of the proper walker which becomes emergent within the performative milieu of coastal walking." The chapter aims to spotlight what constitutes the proper walker which arises from walking the Wales Coast Path, and contrasts the ideology of walking as a practice done for leisure and relaxation.

5.2: A Perceived Notion of Walking

In the introductory extract (Gros, 2015: 1-2) declares that the accurate way to walk requires no skill, no training and no appropriate fitness. There is no aptitude needed, no previous experience. One must only bring themselves and they have the freedom to go where they may. Gros (2015) only stipulates that the act of walking must be done at a slow pace. Nothing matters but appreciating the majesty of the surrounding landscape, and taking time to admire one's entire environment. This has echoes of David Henry Thoreau who in his 1851 lecture given at the Concord Lyceum states,

> *I have met with but one or two persons in the course of my life who understood the art of Walking, that is, of taking walks, who had a genius, so to speak, for sauntering; which word is beautifully derived "from idle people who roved about the country, in the middle ages, and asked charity, under pretence of going à la sainte terre" — to the holy land, till the children exclaimed, "There goes a sainte-terrer", a saunterer — a holy-lander. (Thoreau, 1862: 658)*

To Thoreau (1862) walking then is simply all about walking slowly, taking ones time and a practice which is freed from the constraints of being bound by daily life and

its customs. The freedom from one's daily life whilst walking the Wales Coast Path is heard in a participant called John's statement:

> *You kind of leave everything behind when out here. News doesn't matter, work doesn't matter. There isn't anything to face apart from the walk. Your daily routine becomes the norm, so you get up, have some brekkie, walk for 20 miles, have dinner, walk a bit more maybe to find a place to sleep then set the tent up, and it all happens exactly like that the next day. [Whilst laughing] I've got that cinema advert voice in my mind now, you know that one that says 'leave reality at home'. I 'spose the walk becomes the new reality and you just don't have the same pressures. (John, 45: Llanberis)*

John's walk around the whole coast of Wales seemingly enabled him to break free from the shackles of his daily life, routines and worries. Walking the Wales Coast Path freed John from the pressures of everyday life and allowed him to concentrate on the physical act of walking only. This resonates with Gros (2015: 82) who states that when walking all of the distractions of life cease to matter and "being in the presence of what absolutely endures detaches us from that ephemeral news for which we are usually agog." Yet all is not as it seems, as the following discussions show that although walkers bask in their beliefs that as walkers they are exempt from the grinds of daily life, and that the slow respiration of things "makes everyday huffing and puffing appear vain, unhealthy agitation" (Gros, 2015: 81), walking the Wales Coast Path presents new and unforeseen physicalities, rules, regulations, restrictions and customs which all contribute to a certain kind of walking identity. It also contrasts with Goss (2001: 1-2) as the "brilliance of the sky, the splendour of the landscape" are no longer the things that count.

5.3: The 'Proper' Walker - No Pain, No Gain

> *Are you a walker? (Anwen, 36: Cardiff)*
>
> *Do you walk? (Charlie, 45: Bangor)*

The above quotes by research participants have been synonymous with the fieldwork carried out on the Wales Coast Path. Out of a total of 41 walks, when first

speaking to the walker or walking group to arrange joining a particular walk, I was asked 36 times, over the phone and when arriving to join a walk, if I was a walker, or if I walked, and it seemed like the Wales Coast Path walkers have a clear idea of what it means to be a proper walker. What attributes and experiences must an individual therefore have to be able to say yes I walk and yes I am a walker? According to Wylie (2005: 239) "[a] range of recent cultural geographical studies have equally taken corporeal practices such as walking as exemplary instances of how senses of landscape and self are mutually configured." This suggests that to identify oneself as a proper walker one must physically experience the walk with their bodies. It is in these physical engagements with the Wales Coast Path therefore that walkers determine who and what the proper ways of walking are.

Dunlop (2013) suggests that the self is constructed through the embodied act of walking. A walker's identity is therefore constructed through what he or she physically experiences whilst walking. This offers an alternative understanding on how a walkers' identity is constructed. It stresses that the kinaesthetic experience of moving affect how we understand self and identity. It is how we move and what we experience that define our identities as walkers. Dunlop (2013) denotes "[k]inaesthetic movement to mean the sensation of movement." Noland (2009 cited in Dunlop, 2013: 68) states "that the sensory feedback of a body in space is integral to how we imagine and construct meaningful geographies."

Whilst discussing his experiences of walking the South West Coast Path Wylie (2005: 239) states "[w]alkers on the Path very often find themselves in such close visual, tactile and sonorous relation with the earth, the ground, mud, stinging vegetation." (Wylie, 2005: 239). This close tactile and sonorous relation is evident whilst walking the Wales Coast Path (Image 5.1) and is a relation walkers like to record via photographs and share with others.

Image 5.1: Research participant photograph [shared during fieldwork walk 5: Whitesands Bay to Trefin 17.07.14]

It is this physical and embodied relationship with walking the Wales Coast Path that walkers think sets them apart from others. Blisters, bruises, sore feet and what will be called, walking ailments, are what coastal path walkers think sets them apart as being proper walkers. The following field diary extract highlights the importance of having walking ailments in the construction of a 'proper' walker's identity:

> *I was asked again today if I had suffered any blisters on the path. I once again made my excuses and said I was really fortunate and it was down to having really good walking boots and wearing them in before going on any long walks. I felt redundant at not having any great affliction to talk about that prove the physicality I had endured whilst walking long sections of the Wales Coast Path. Even though I had suffered extreme mental exhaustion, doubt at my ability and even despair when walking long sections of the Path I had no physical evidence to show. The only thing that came close is the slight shin splint accentuated when walking for hours on flat hard surfaces like promenades or roads. Yes this would have to be my blister, my ode to the Path. (Field Diary 36: Llandudo to Rhyl 22.11.2014)*

This extract highlights the need to prove one's identity as a proper walker through having some physical affliction to demonstrate one's commitment to walking the

Path. The proper walker defines themselves thus due to their physical immersement with the Wales Coast Path and corresponds with Wylie (2005: 240) who states "[t]o be 'in' the landscape, but also up against it. To be dogged, put-upon, petulant, breathless. Partly, of course, this emerges via the tension of self-preservation. A tactile and tactical focus: when else are your feet, the ground, so visible. The rising mercury of involvement pushes upward a meniscus of subjectivity." Walkers therefore feel the need to be challenged, put out physically, be up against it physically to prove their prowess as walkers. The following field diary draws attention to the length walkers will go to endure pain and discomfort whilst completing the Wales Coast Path:

> *I was utterly gobsmacked when Carrie said Natalie was due a knee operation but postponed it until the walk was over. Her leg was tightly strapped yet she strode ahead of us with determined steps, and, in all honesty, it was hard to keep up. She was even carrying a heavy tent on her back and I wondered what more she could endure. Whilst Natalie was out of earshot Carrie said she was worried as Natalie had been on heavy pain medication, to combat her painful knee, and was starting to show signs of withdrawal. We were now in Port Talbot and the girls had 103 miles to go until they reached the end of the Wales Coast Path. I admired Natalie for her physical durability and her determination to complete the Path under such duress. (Field Diary 10: Swansea to Port Talbot 14.08.2014)*

This extract, though extreme, shows the length of physicality walkers will endure to complete the Wales Coast Path. It also shows than in a walking reality it is be applauded and admired, as the above field diary demonstrates, to suffer such hardships. When back in the reality of a daily sedentary life one would not be consigned to endure such pain and discomfort. When discussing his thoughts on the proper way to walk (Gros, 2015) states that walkers who are now embarking on excursions that last for days strangely are not happy despite of the discomforts they face during long walks but are happy because of it. Gros' (2015) conceptions are highlighted in the following field diary:

> *I have now walked extensive miles along the Wales Coast Path and my walking expectations of what I will and want to experience on the walk have changed dramatically from when I started the fieldwork. My first walks were marred with a nervousness about the physicality of the walk*

> *but now I revel when I am walking up a hill and my legs are under so much strain they feel ready to collapse, or when my back is aching under the weight of my rucksack. If a short walk, like today, has ended and I am neither out of breath, nor in some sort of physical pain or discomfort, the walk hardly feels worth it. I would even go as far as saying what was the point. (Field Diary 17: Caerfai to Whitesands Bay 03.09.2014)*

This is also highlighted in the following quote where when talking of the hardships of walking Ros states:

> *Well let's just say if it was easy what would be the point of it all. (Ros, 40: Cardiff).*

This once again resonates with Gros (2015) who states that walkers are happy and satisfied not because they have avoided any hardships but contrastingly are glad of the discomforts and hardships caused by walking. This is further highlighted by Wylie (2005: 240) who states "[p]ut this another way: an involved walking affect, a particular density of materialities and movements, precipitates a certain sense of self." That is, if one has not exerted the physical energy or exertion deemed appropriate for the walk one cannot fully realise their potential as a proper walker. When discussing his own experiences of walking the South West Coast Path Wylie (2005: 240) states "[a] folding together of self and landscape, which, through its knotting, draws both out once again; a double movement of contradiction and dilation in which a certain corporeal sensibility twists forth in ache, ennui and enervation" (Wylie 2005: 240). Walkers must experience all this from physically engaging with the landscape to fully experience the Wales Coast Path, as it is "[i]n the midst of things, in the tick of earths and bodies, the self is pressed up against the landscape, at one and the same time part of it, emergent from it and distinct from it, like a blister on a toe" (Wylie, 2005: 40). Emerging from the walk battered, bruised, shattered from the walk creates self, creates the proper walker (Image 5.2).

Image 5.2: Research participant photograph [shared during fieldwork walk 10: Swansea Bay to Aberafan 14.08.14]

Wylie (2005: 244) states that when the body develops a blister or the body suffers some physical ailment it can no longer experience the sublime. He states "[i]n other words, as a walker becomes chaffed, jarred and footsore, so the landscape no longer takes shape as a set of readily affording surfaces for purposive and smooth motion. Instead, the world contracts and the subject splits. The footsore body can no longer experience the sublime and there occurs a 'distanciation of the "self" from the body', and from the world. The consequences in that the painful, footsore body is externalized from the self, and shimmers into view as a problem to cope with." For the type of walkers that the Wales Coast Path creates and similar to Gross (2015) the blisters and other physical niggles aren't seen as a problem but a badge of honour. They are proof that the walker has truly experienced the Wales Coast Path. Blisters aren't a problem to cope with but something to be celebrated and even shown off (Image 5.3). Walkers bask in the glory of the 'footsore', and rather than seen as a problem they are considered markers of the proper walker. Rather that talking away the sublime (Wylie, 2005), the 'footsore' creates the sublime experience and creates the sublime walker.

Image 5.3: Research participant photograph [shared during fieldwork walk 23: Barry Island to Cardiff 04.10.14]

During the course of the fieldwork walkers have proudly shown off their blisters and enjoyed recounting the situations in which they occurred as the following quote demonstrates:

> *Before we start this walk I have to show you this picture of a blister I had at the beginning of my walk (image 5.3) (pulls out phone and shows a picture of a large painful looking blister). Isn't it a beauty? I got this at the beginning of my walk somewhere after Queensferry. I ended up walking through a very boggy field and my feet got absolutely soaked. I should have stopped and changed my socks but I didn't and this happened.* (Stuart, 42: Bridgend)

For Stuart the blister isn't a painful reminder of a bad day's walking on the Wales Coast Path, but rather a mark of his physical achievement. There were no musings on what could have been done to avoid this, or even regrets about the route taken through the boggy wet field. By stating that the blister is 'a beauty' it shows that the bigger the better. The bigger blister the bigger the walking achievement. Similarly, whilst speaking to Ros about her journey around the Wales Coast Path with her husband she stated:

> *Alun had these two huge blisters. Gosh you wouldn't believe they were so big so I told him he had to take pictures of them to show people at home what this has been like. I wish I had a picture of them on me for you to see, they were corkers. (Ros, 40: Cardiff)*

This embodied engagement whilst walking the Wales Coast Path and the physical outcomes determine how walkers see themselves and determine the success of their walk. According to Wylie (2005: 245) "[t]herein, landscape might be described in terms of the entwined materialities and sensibilities with which we act and sense" (Wylie 2005: 245). Walkers pass the landscape, they pass through it and equally emerge from it (Wylie, 2005). The walkers need to emerge from the engagement with the path with blisters and bruises in order to emerge and be identified as proper walkers. When the walkers emerge all blistered and bruised they are closer to the identity of the 'proper' walker. Blisters, bruises and all kinds of physical ailments function as an opportunity for walkers to prove their walking prowess and to show how they suffered during the Wales Coast Path walk. Walkers do not suffer in silence as they like to show everybody the physicality they have endured. Social media has especially been a great bragging platform for coastal path walkers as they post pictures of their bruises and blisters online to keep people updated with the physicality of the walk. It is proof of what they have experienced during the walk. It is to gain praise from others for their hardship. This presents a new form of walker that basks in the glory of their physical hardships. Their identities as hard core walkers are proven with what they experience on the ground.

Ingold and Vergunst (2008: 2) state that the social is actually rooted in the lived experienced and embodied engagement with the ground. It is through this engagement that identity emerges, "[h]owever to hold – as we do- that social life is walked is to make a far stronger claim, namely for the rooting of the social in the actual ground of lives experience, where the earth we tread interfaces with the air we breathe." According to Bourdieu (1998: 93-4), walking isn't merely a way of expressing already relayed through what he calls "an education in cultural precepts and proprieties." Walking is itself a way of thinking and of feeling.

5.4: Walking - A Part of Life

According to Macnaghten and Urry (2001: 2) being outdoors, and embodied within the landscape, encourages people to push the limits of their everyday lives and state "[s]uch fresh air drives the body to do things or go to extremes that singularly contrast with some aspects of everyday lives." This is shown in the following quote by Andy who speaks about how walking pushes him to achieve much more than he ever thought possible:

> *When walking like this, for days on end, you truly believe in yourself and believe in your body. I never thought I would be able to walk 20 or 25 in a day. Crazy! When you are out here you believe in yourself, I suppose I become more confident, but as soon as I'm back home I lose that confidence. Being out here makes you realise what you can do and achieve. (Andy, 25: Newport)*

Walking extensive parts of the Wales Coast Path becomes a central part of walkers' lives and identity. It is where they truly believe they should be and belong and according to Macnaghten and Urry (2001: 2) "[i]mportantly, though, some of these practices become so central to people's lives that they in turn become their 'everyday', that is, when and where people actually feel 'at home' on a wet hill-top, up a sheer rock-face, on a nudist beach, when wandering through a dense wood, and so on." This is highlighted in the following image (5.4) and quote by Simon, when he was asked about his identity as a walker:

> *Look at this picture of me. This is on top of the Eifl. It had been raining that day and it was so windy, it was howling that day, and I was shattered after reaching this point. This is what it's all about isn't it? Being out here in all weathers. Kind of pushing yourself* (Simon 55: London).

Image 5.4: Research participant photograph [shared during fieldwork walk 33: Port Eynon to Swansea 12.11.14]

Walkers are pushed to go against the norm. For example, to walk like Simon, in the wind, and enjoy it, and accept it becomes the norm for walkers. According to Macnaghten and Urry (2001: 2) "[o]n the one hand 'bodies in nature' are pushed to do very unusual things, to go to peripheral spaces, to place themselves in marginal situations, to exert themselves in exceptional ways, to undergo peal experiences, or to use a concentration of senses beyond the normal." (Macnaghten and Urry, 2001: 2). This is why coastal path walkers think they are the proper walkers, they protest that they exert more energy and go through more physical exertion than 'other' walkers who don't do half of what they do' as the following quote exemplifies:

> *People always tell me 'oh I'm a walker as well'. Yet they only walk to the shops and back or on a short stroll in the sun. It's nothing like we do.* (Nancy, 40: Llanelli)

5.5: The Walking Body

In his discussion on the climbing body Lewis (2001: 58) calls for a sensuous appreciation of the human body and the physical world. He states that the climbing body conveys the "'radical materiality' of human existence, and our overwhelmingly tactile engagement with the phenomenal world." This is the same

as walking the Wales Coast Path, it is the tactile engagement with the Wales Coast Path that defines the walkers' identities. Lewis (2001: 59) further states that to engage with the world tactically "is to situate oneself consciously in that world and to have a potentially unmediated relationship with it." The walkers of the Wales Coast Path have a direct contact with the Path for long periods of time, as far as months on end on the path. It is this that sets them apart from what Lewis (2001: 50) calls the 'metropolitan body' which is ambivalent about the body and sensuous knowledge. This is what sets the walkers' identity apart. Therefore, if one has not engaged tactilely enough with the Wales Coast Path their identities remain that of the metropolitan body and cannot be inducted into the exclusive group of proper walkers.

This is highlighted in my very first fieldwork walk on the Wales Coast Path. I had been asked to join a group of people who had already finished walking the whole 870 miles of the Path in one go, continually, day after day. They had already identified themselves as the Giants of the Wales Coast Path and the Perimeters and my obvious lack of experience on the Path at that time excluded me from this group as the following quote highlights:

> *This is Amy who is doing research on the Wales Coast Path….but she hasn't walked the Wales Coast Path.* (Rachel, 35: Brazil)

As the following field diary extract suggested I had not proved myself as a 'walking body' and my metropolitan body was viewed with distrust at first:

> *Now that the whole gang was complete they wanted a group picture. Once again it was stated that as I hadn't waked the whole Wales Coast Path I could take the picture and was asked "Amy will you take it as you haven't walked the Wales Coast Path yet?"* (Field diary 1: Oxwich to Rhossili 04.05.14)

At the beginning of this walk I was obviously excluded from the revelry of the walkers getting together and I was excluded from their first picture together (Image 5.5).

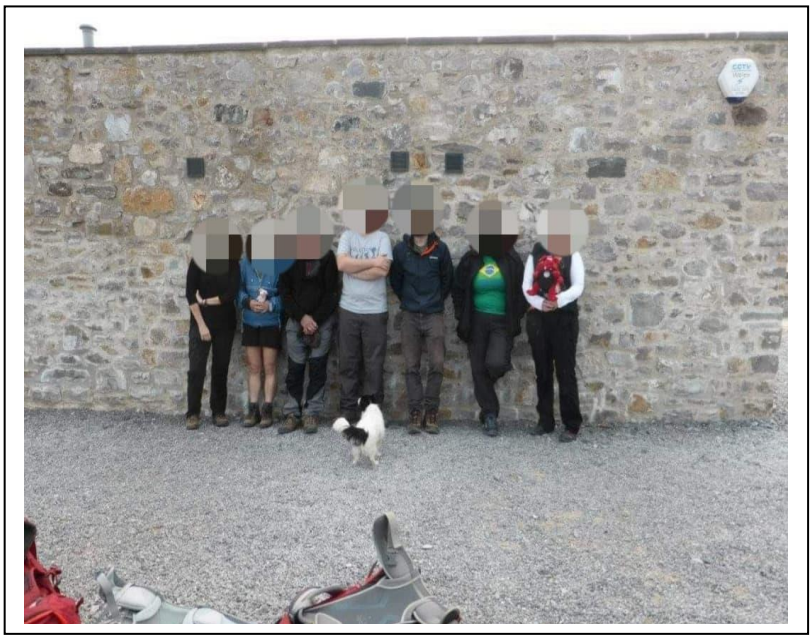

Image 5.5: Research participant photograph [shared during fieldwork walk 1: Port Oxwich to Rhossili 04.05.14]

It wasn't until I had proven my walking body that I was trusted and identified as a proper walker and Rachel stated:

> *Amy! I didn't think you would be able to keep up and would be behind us all but you ARE a walker. (Rachel, 35: Brazil)*

After my walking body was proven and my identity as a metropolitan walker was put to rest I was included in the next photograph (Image 5.6). My walking identity was proven by showing first hand my walking abilities.

Image 5.6: Research participant photograph [shared during fieldwork walk 1: Oxwich to Rhossili 04.05.14]

In discussing Simmel's (1997) ideas on the metropolitan life Lewis (2001:67) states "[l]ife becomes easy on the metropolis because no one is at the helm, making decisions. No physical effort is required for we are now being carried by the modern tide. Self-propulsion, self-determination, freedom even, have all been left behind or lost. Mental and physical exertion has been superseded by an all pervading passivity." Through walking the Path for long periods, and experiencing, walkers walk themselves away from the metropolitan body, and whilst out on the Path they are walking bodies, similar to Lewis' (2001) climbing bodies, and freed from the sedentary and bound metropolitan life. The contrasting walking and metropolitan bodies is highlighted in the field diary below. It exemplifies the different identities of the walking and metropolitan bodies and how when faced with contact with metropolitan bodies a walker reacts:

> *As we made our way back to Dunraven Bay we were surrounded by a sudden group of people, all exiting a wedding at the same time and making their way down to the beach. How funny I thought they looked, prancing along the coastal path in their heels and finery, not wanting to step too*

> *deeply into the grassy path. I wondered if they noticed us walking past in our walking regalia. I assumed they would be impressed thinking we had walked a great distance on the path. There's no reason they would, but walking such a great extent of the coastal path gives you a kind of air of importance on the path, it becomes YOUR domain. Donna charged up the small hill the wedding party were unsurely descending. I followed her intently as we brushed past the wedding guests. There was no stopping and chatting here, no moving aside for them to pass. It was like this was our territory and we were to have precedence on the path.* (Field Diary 3: Dunraven to Ogmore 06.06.14)

Continuing with Lewis' (2001: 74) discussion of the climbing body he suggests that after a prolonged engagement with climbing it inscribes itself onto the body of the climber through all of the bumps cuts and bruises accumulated over time and states "[o]ver time, the practice of rock climbing and the frequent and sometimes distinctive way the climber utilizes her body begins to take on an embodied form. Through the cuts and abrasions, the freezing cold and sun traps, the taut muscles and creaky joints, the practice of climbing inscribes itself upon the body..."This is similar to the coastal path walkers whose blisters and cuts enhance their identities as proper walkers, and inscribe their walking bodies. The following image shows the obligatory bandaged feet that many of the coastal path walkers experienced (Image 5.7)

Image 5.7: Research participant photograph [shared during fieldwork walk 15: Aberafan to Swansea 24.08.14]

Whilst continuing to discuss the similarities between Lewis' (2001) climbing body and that of the walking body Lewis (2001: 74) states "[a]fter inscribing with his body a new climb at Ramshaw Rocks in Staffordshire, a venue notorious for its coarse rock, Joe Brown 'lay gasping at the top with the blood pouring from the tattered strips of flesh which before has been the back of his hands" (Jones, 1997 cited in Lewis, 2001: 74). This shows that the climber and the environment inscribe each other. The identity of the walker is inscribed by the hardship suffered by the landscape, and if these sensations were not experienced one cannot fully realise their potential as a proper walker.

The climbing body has been discussed in great detail here as its embodied nature is similar to that of the long distance coastal walker. "The practice of rock climbing trains or cultivates the body towards a better configuration of climbing" (Lewis, 2001: 74). This is the same with long distance walkers, whose longevity on the path moulds a better walker. Marcel Mauss (1973 cited in Lewis, 2001: 74) states that "the techniques of the body most attuned to climbing are discovered and created through the very act of climbing itself." This is true of walking the coastal path whereby walking techniques are learned and developed the more the individual walks. This is highlighted in the following field diary:

> *The promise of walking the whole Wales Coast Path seemed to satisfy Mike who immediately then asked me for my walking tips. This left me rather flummoxed as even though I did consider myself a 'walker' before the fieldwork began, I realised that I was nowhere near as accomplished or as knowledgeable as the walkers I had started to interview. I therefore didn't have any major tips or advice I felt I could share which made me feel rather silly. I was wearing a baseball cap during the walk which Mike commented on as he also would also always wear a baseball cap during walks. This made me feel a little better as I was able to tell him that my tip would be to always wear a baseball cap whilst walking. I burn easily in the sun and always feel reassured when wearing a cap.* (Field Diary 2: Pontllyfni to Y Felinheli 06.06.14)

One becomes more of a walker, and is seen as more of a proper walker the more miles walked as the following field diary shows:

> *I was asked numerous times during the day about how much of the coastal path I had already walked, a question that I now feel echoing throughout my research so far. I replied, full of pride, that I had walked just over 100 miles so far during my research, and then waited for the murmurs of admiration I had already received from family and friends. Yet, these walkers did not bat an eyelid by how much I had walked and merely nodded half-heartedly as if they were expecting a lot more. My pride was battered a little but I should have realised that walking 10 to 15 miles in a day is nothing to these walking groups and that I would have to clock up a lot more miles and experiences on the coastal path to hold my own with these walkers.* (Field diary 19: Newport Pembrokeshire circular 21.09.14)

Walkers are only considered as such when the body and experiences are moulded, or miles have been gained over time and continuous walking. Whilst discussing Winthrop's experience of climbing Lewis (2001: 74) explains "Winthrop Young expressed his realization – that one is somehow miraculously endowed with a climbing body as a consequence of climbing – with unbridled joy: 'I remember wondering at my body – worn fingernails, the bruised knees, and the lump of climbing muscle that had begun to bunch above the arch of the foot, seeing it as beautiful in relation to this new purpose" (Lewis, 2001: 74). This is echoed in the following field diary:

> *I have come to the realisation that the whole summer of walking has, like today, been characterised by a sweaty back. Underneath my clothes this sweaty back is the consequence of the exertion caused by miles of walking in the baking sun. At first this was uncomfortable and an alien sensation, it was uncomfortable and I felt like a mess. By now though it is evidence that I have endured enough physical exertion on the path. It is now the norm and I am totally at ease with this sensation which away from the Path would not be acceptable. (Field Diary 4: Circular walk Whitesands Bay 16.07.14)*
>
> .

The body's sweaty back is gladly characterized here as a consequence of the physicality of walking the Wales Coast Path. Like Lewis' (2001) discussion on Winthrop this shows that the body is now endowed and able to cope with this consequence of walking and it had a purpose. It is a product of the physicality of walking the Path.

When discussing the challenges of long distance walking and the notions of achievement attached to it Edensor (2001: 93) states "[f]or instance, Wainwright affirms that completing the Pennine Way 'offers you the experience of a lifetime' but certainly not 'continuous entertainment'. Instead it is a 'tough, bruising walk and the compensations are few. You do it because you want to prove to yourself that you are man enough to do it. You do it to get it off your conscious. You do it because you count it as a personal achievement. Which it is, precisely." This is why the Wales Coastal Path is an exclusive group, and walkers call themselves Giants or Perimeters. The personal achievement mentioned above by Edensor (2001) facilitates an exclusive walking club which members are only accepted when they have proven their walking prowess. All others are exempt and are considered to be lacking the understanding as they have no physical experience and haven't suffered the same hardships as the following quote highlights:

> *You can't understand what it's like to walk it until you have actually experienced it. Daniel was lost and contacted me for advice. Another woman in the office was saying 'just tell him to turn back', but what they just don't understand is that every step is a progression, and the mental and physical affect of turning back can only be understood by someone who has experienced it. (Amanda, 35: Ogmore)*

5.6: The Exclusivity of Being a 'Proper' Walker

According to Gros (2015) the freedom in walking lies in not being anyone. He states that the walking body has no history, it is separate from opinion, tradition and history. He further states that "by walking, you escape from the very idea of identity, the temptation to be someone, to have a name and a history. Being someone is all very well for smart parties where everyone is telling their story, it's all very well for psychologists' consulting rooms. But isn't being someone also a social obligation which trails in its wake – for one has to be faithful to the self-portrait – a stupid and burdensome fiction." This research goes against Gros' (2015) notion that walking enables an individual to escape any kind of identity and contrastingly whilst walking a strong identity is created, you are given names such

as the Giants of the Wales Coast Path and the Perimeters and are inducted into an exclusive group of walkers within which everyone can compare and unite through tales of walking the Path as the following field diary shows:

> *We gathered along the cliff top with Saundersfoot and its long golden sands stretching out behind us. The usual rummaging around for the cameras began for our obligatory anniversary walk group picture. Rachel ushered the majority of us together. The two remaining members of our group had not walked much of the Wales Coast Path and were resigned to being our photographers. As we positioned ourselves for the photograph Rachel shouted in jest 'Giants only'. As we stood I waited for Rachel to oust me from the group for not being a 'proper' Giant of the Wales Coast Path, but this did not happen as I was now accepted as one of them, a certified Wales Coast Path walker. (Field Diary 37: Amroth to Tenby 8.12.14)*

A strong sense of exclusivity is shown in the following quote. When discussing the way some people just walk past on the Path and don't acknowledge the walkers or say hello Charlotte stated:

> *They just aren't Path people.* (Charlotte 40: Llandeilo)

This exclusivity, belonging and strong sense of walking identity in reality becomes so strong that it can even permeate normal life as the following field diary shows:

> *My walking achievements have now even spilled into my everyday life. After a 10 mile walk on the coastal path I then met my friends for dinner. When time came to order dessert we were told that there was just one slice of cheesecake left. I suggested that I should have it as I had just walked 10 miles that day. My friends all nodded and murmured with agreement as they were all impressed with my walking achievements. (Field Diary 37: Amroth to Tenby 8.12.14)*

According to Edensor (2001) "[t]hese idealized Spartan endeavours are evaluated as producing a superior physical condition and more intense bodily experiences to the over socialized, pampered, slothful bodies of everyday life" (Edensor, 2001: 93). This is why walkers are so judgemental of others who don't walk the way they do. This exclusivity is even projected onto to others as the following quote shows:

After walking so many miles along the Wales Coast Path, doing a three mile or a walk of similar distance is nothing to me. It is easy. It had made me aware of what the human body can achieve. To the others, who don't walk, even a short three mile walk seems almost unattainable. I was astounded when after mentioning to a friend that a fieldwork was 'oh just three miles' she replied 'don't just say oh just three miles, that's still loads'. I moaned after that my friend should walk more, and if she did she would realise how easy it is to walk merely three miles. (Field Diary 17: St Davids circular 03.09.14)

This exclusivity and strong sense of walking identity is so potent that it can even escape the confines of the Path and permeate into reality when away from the Path as the following field diary demonstrates:

I had made some Rocky Road cake bars for the Wales Coast Path Giants anniversary walk as it was a celebratory occasion. The group, including the partners and friends who came along to help with the logistics of transport, sat down in a pub in Tenby to have a drink and something to eat. I pulled the Rocky Road cake bars out of my rucksack and started to offer them around to everybody. To my surprise a lady who had come along just to drive her husband back and forth from the walk refused one. I insisted that she took one but she replied 'no I haven't walked today so I don't deserve one'. (Field Diary 37: Amroth to Tenby 08.12.14).

This exclusivity is nothing new and even Thoreau (1862: 658) was judgmental and acutely aware of his different identity as a walker as his following field diary shows:

We have felt that we almost alone hereabouts practised this noble art; though, to tell the truth, at least, if their own assertions are to be received, most of my townsmen would fain walk sometimes, as I do, but they cannot. No wealth can buy the requisite leisure, freedom, and independence, which are the capital in this profession. It comes only by the grace of God. It requires a direct dispensation from heaven to become a walker. You must be born into the family of the Walkers. Ambulator nascitur, non fit. Some of my townsmen, it is true, can remember, and have described to me some walks which they took ten years ago, in which they were so blessed as to lose themselves for half an hour in the woods, but I know very well that they have confined themselves to the highway ever since, whatever pretensions they may make to belong to this select class. No doubt, they were elevated for a moment as by the reminiscence of a previous state of existence, when even they were foresters and outlaws.

This exclusivity is also highlighted by the suffering of walkers on the Path and according to (Edensor, 2001: 93), "Wainwright concedes, 'make no mistake: you are going to suffer, you are going to get wet through, you are going to feel miserable: you are going to suffer, you wish you had never heard of the Pennine Way', yet he cautions 'if you start, don't give up, or you will be giving up at difficulties all your life."

Edensor (2001: 93) further states that the challenge is to overcome the "physical privations and discomforts such a walk promises" and is tests one's character. Such physical endurance is a victory over the over socialized self. Such conquests make for an incredibly judgmental walker as the following quote shows:

> *I just laugh at people sitting in their cars eating chips and just venturing a few steps to see the view.* (Abigail, 30: Llandeilo)

Whilst discussing long distance walking, more specifically the long distance Appalachian trail, Edensor (2001) states that the walkers' identities are set apart as they experience and overcome physical and mental challenges that are far greater than others who don't walk these distances could ever comprehend. He states "[i]n a more radical form of long distance walking those who have completed the 2,500-mile Appalachian trail not only must overcome physical and mental challenge but also the real dangers of wildlife, disease, hypothermia, assault by humans and severe weather" (Edensor, 2001: 93). The long distance trail of the Wales Coast Path also puts walkers in the firing line of many dangers which other people would not necessarily encounter as the following quote highlights:

> *I camped just off the Path a short way out of Rhyl and I would never do it again. I was trying to sleep and some man came to the door of the tent and asked if I wanted to have sex. I shouted for him to f**k off and stayed awake the rest of the night feeling sick to my stomach with worry. I was honestly shit scared.* (Donna, 41: Milton Keys)

According to Luxenberg (1997) these kind of perils transform the walkers who overcome them as pioneers, who have managed to succeed a specific test which was thrown at them.

5.7: The Two Modalities of Movement

Ingold (2010) draws attention to two modalities of movement which he calls wayfaring and transport (Ingold, 2010: 75-84). He suggests that the wayfarer is a person who when meandering through life negotiates or improvises his path and "his concern is to seek a way through: not to reach a specific destination or terminus but to keep going." On the other hand there is the transport mode of movement. Contrastingly, transport carries the passenger on a pre-panned, planar route "which is a lateral displacement rather than a linear progression, and connects a point of embarkation with a terminus. The passenger's concern is literally to get from A to B, ideally in as short a time as possible." The transport modality of movement of which Ingold (2010) speaks is reminiscent of the modality of movement experienced by Wales Coast Path walkers. The Wales Coast Path follows the coast of an entire nation and presents itself as a challenge for walkers. It has a start and a finish, a set amount of mileage, and a pre-planned walking route in-between. The main challenge is to get from A-B as quick as possible, as most people who walk the Wales Coast Path have to take holidays and or work leave and even a set amount if hours in the day to cover a set distance in to complete this long challenge. It therefore facilitates what Ingold (2010) deems to be a transport way of moving. The Wales Coast Path has a start and end point, from Queensferry to Chepstow, or from Chepstow to Queensferry, depending on the starting point. It also has a set number of miles, 870, which need to be completed. (The continuity of walking every step of the Wales Coast Path will be discussed in greater detail in section 5.6.2 which discusses the freedoms of walking).

For Ingold (2010) in contrast to the continual tactical manoeuvring of the wayfarer who is free to tactically decide his way through life, the passenger who travels in accordance with the transport mode of movement is bound to series of strategic

moves from location to location “rather like the ‘moves’, in draughts or chess, of a piece across the board” (Ingold, 2010: 84). Much like the Wales Coast Path walkers, walkers must be strategic where they walk, and how they walk, it’s like a jigsaw, making sure every piece is completed. This is highlighted in the following field diary entry whereby Steve had a certain time limit to complete a specific walk along the Pembrokeshire coast and had to be strategic how he used his time to reach his 13-mile goal within a specific time frame:

> *After walking a couple of miles out of Whitesands Bay and heading towards Abereiddi we started to talk about the kinds of food and drink we bring on long walks such as this. I entertained Steve with tales of the snacks and differing sandwich fillings I bring to make lunch less monotonous each time. After letting me ramble on he stated that he never stops for lunch. He carries a packet of cola cube sweets and eats those whilst on the move. Stopping for lunch only hampers his progress when he has a time and distance goal to reach during a day’s walk on the Wales Coast Path. I was suddenly alarmed at the prospect of walking 13 miles with no food breaks. (Field Diary 5: Whitesands Bay to Trefin 17.07.2014)*

For Steve therefore he is unable to amble on his walk along the Wales Coast Path as he is bound by time and distance goals. He must get from A to B, and cover a certain amount of distance over a set timescale.

According to Gros (2015: 9) long cross country wanderers taste the freedom of “pure renunciation”. He states than when walking for a long time, there comes a moment when the walker no longer knows how much times has passed or how long remains of the walk. He additionally states that the long distance walker hardly remembers where they are going, or why and “that is as meaningless as your history, or what the time is” (Gros, 2015: 9). In contrast time is of the essence to Wales Coast Path walkers, and this freedom is lost. As the Wales Coast Path presents a challenge, an 870-mile path of which every step has to be completed time and distance becomes the upmost of importance as shown in the following quote:

> *I walk 5mph. So I hope you can keep up. We will have 20 miles to walk, maybe even a little more if we walk straight into the centre of Swansea. I usually do a mile every 20 minutes or thereabouts. (Andrew, 55: London).*

Additionally, the following field diary shows how consumed walkers can be with time and distance thus limiting their freedom on the Path:

> *Beverley was late arriving at Neyland which meant on this December day our daylight hours were limited. My thoughts were therefore consumed along the way with how much distance was left to walk and how many miles we could walk in an hour in order to reach our destination before dark. Beverley was a fast walker so I was comforted by the fact that we could easily walk 3 miles an hour. (Field Diary 28: Neyland to Angle 24.10.14)*

5.8: Compromising Freedom

> *I like to walk at my ease, and to stop when I like. A wandering life is what I want. To walk through a beautiful country in fine weather, without being obliged to hurry, and with a pleasant prospect at the end, is of all kinds of life the one most suited to my taste.* (Rousseau, cited in Gros, 2015: 80)

For Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Gros, 2015) walking meant wandering aimlessly, at random with the freedom to act and choose along the walk as he wanted. He had the freedom of choice when he walked and was not bound by obligations or commitments. Contrastingly for Wales Coast Path walkers this kind of freedom is compromised as the following field diary highlights:

> *We moved along with haste for the last 800m of the walk into Porthmadog harbour. Our conversations were now few and far between as we hurried along to make sure we caught the bus back to Criccieth. There was no longer time to linger and look at the views or to pass judgement on which houses were holiday homes or not, the main topic of conversation during the latter part of the walk. The aim of the walk had changed completely and our only intention now was to reach the bus station on time. As we arrived in the harbour there was no time for long drawn out goodbyes and chatter akin to our introductions at the beginning of the walk. The members of the group, myself included, who had to catch the bus back to Criccieth dispersed and ran at differing paces towards the bus, which by now had parked in the bus bay. As we jumped on the bus in a fluster of*

> *sweaty faces and gasping for air I realised that the last part of the walk might as well have been done in a speeding car with non-descript scenery whizzing past. Due to the haste of needing to catch the bus the enjoyment of the scenery, taking to my fellow walkers and taking in my surroundings was lost.* (Field Diary 9: Criccieth to Porthmadog 12.08.14)

The walk here was hindered by the walkers' desire to reach Porthmadog in time to catch their transport home. By the end, the walk was hurried and the walkers were unable to finish that day's walk as pleasantly as it began. This highlights how commitments, such as catching transport, impede on walkers' experience and re-introduce the obligations which walkers believe they have left at home.

The Wales Coast Path presents a challenge for the walkers. It provokes a desire to fulfil the 870 miles, and the walkers are therefore bound to the continuity of the path as the following quote demonstrates. Here James discusses with his wife the consequences of not walking the whole 870 miles of the Wales Coast Path:

> *I suppose you just email the Wales Coast Path people to say you have completed it to get the certificate. (Whilst turning to his wife) You won't be able to get a certificate because you missed that section out in Carmarthen and will have to go back and do it.* (James, 45: Llandudno)

For James there is no freedom to pick and choose which sections of the Wales Coast Path to complete. There is but one option and that is to complete the whole 870 miles. This is also highlighted in the following quote by Edward who felt duty bound to complete every step of the Path:

> *I won't be able to get a certificate the same time as you (when speaking to his wife) I missed that section by Llangrannog because of my bad leg. I will have to go back and finish it before I can say I have done it all.* (Edward, 65: Doncaster)

For Wordsworth (Gros, 2015) the premise of walking was to get lost in thought, to let the mind wander and to not feel obliged to think of anything in particular. Although, this is impossible for Wales Coast Path walkers as they are always concentrating on the task at hand, that is, concentrating on the challenge of

walking the whole 870 miles. Walking, then, no longer becomes a means of escape, of freedom, but presents new constraints which walkers must adhere to. The constraint of completing every step as the following field diary shows:

> *We arrived at Barry train station ready for the day's walk. Although, our walk could not commence until Gary was completely sure we were starting exactly from the same spot he had finished the last time. He walked back and forth past the station as it was a few months since he last completed a section of the coastal path and he wanted to be entirely sure he started exactly where he had finished, as in his words 'to not miss one step'. (Field Diary 23: Barry to Cardiff Bay 04.10.14)*

This contrasts with previous walking accounts which fail to consider the demanding rules walkers put upon themselves. For writers such as Wordsworth (2008) a day's walking would mean setting off without a destination in mind. They relished in the spontaneity of getting lost and very rarely took the destination seriously. Due to the importance the walkers put on walking every step of the Wales Coast Path they can no longer lose themselves, get lost and even wander off wherever they please. Gaston Bachelard writes that "we do not have to be long in the woods to experience the always rather anxious impressions of "going deeper and deeper" into a limitless world" (1969 and 1994, cited in Wylie 2005: 237). In contrast the world for the Wales Coast Path walker does have limits. They do not have the prospect of venturing in to the limitless world due to the continuity needed of walking every step of the Path. The Wales Coast Path is not limitless as it has a distinct start and finish point. The nature of the challenge of walking the coastal path of an entire nation binds the walkers to this task only, and binds them to the task of completing the whole Path. The world that exists is no longer limitless but only consists of what's within the confines of the Path as the following quote demonstrates:

> *When I'm walking at like 5mph, which is the usual speed I like to walk, I don't really get a chance to stop and check places out. You know, towns and little villages, or places like Ynys Las, where was it the other day, ummmm, Criccieth. It would have been nice to take time and have a nice look at the place but I couldn't I just had to keep going and get to where I needed to be.* (Mike, 38: Salford)

The sense of freedom and a limitless world so often attached to waking therefore is lost for Mike. The challenge of walking as much of the Wales Coastal Path that day and having a dedicated destination means the nature of the path is bounded. It makes it impossible for him to stop and take in the surroundings of places that take his interest. This is also evident in the following quote:

> *Do you know what would be awesome? It would be really good if the Wales Coast Path could provide you with some kind of portable headphones and disk with the information of places you walk through. There isn't enough information on this walk, and you don't get the chance to stop and find out stuff yourself.* (David, 42: Bridgend)

For David therefore the nature of the walk means he is unable to wander where he pleases to gather information on anything that takes his interest. Information needs to be given to the Wales Coast Path walkers on a plate and easily accessible as they are unable to take time to find out anything for themselves. Whilst walking the South West Coastal Path Wylie (2005) describes the woodland and sea areas along the South West Coastal Path as infinite and simultaneously intimate, allowing walkers to be reflexive with their thoughts. In contrast the nature of the Wales Coast Path whereby the walkers are bound by distance and time restrictions means that thoughts are focused on one thing only and that is reaching a particular destination as the following field diary shows:

> *Walking the straight and unyielding Newport sea wall seemed like a never ending task, made more so by the fact that time was no longer on our side and we had to quicken our pace to make it back in time to Magor to catch our bus. We were now walking in a single file with our heads down concentrating on just getting back in time. The Newport sea wall was grassy but hard underfoot with the occasional crevice which increased the likelihood of tripping whilst walking at this speed, therefore we had to constantly look down to watch where we were going. The three of us had now reached a steady rhythm as we no longer had time to stop or slow down to chat or enjoy the walk and our surroundings. We had all now reached different walking rhythms as well which meant Andy was far out in front, whilst Ann and I trailed behind. We suddenly took a sharp left and joined a road which would lead us straight into Magor. Andy and Ann quickened their walking pace whilst I was struggling to keep up. I knew they were runners and if they did start running for the bus I would have had*

to tell them to leave me as I was running on empty and my energy was all but gone. The intention of having to reach the bus on time completely changed the character and enjoyment of the walk. When I arrived home I couldn't talk from exhaustion. (Field Diary 20: Newport to Magor 24.09.14)

Whilst discussing Bachelard, Wylie (2005, 238) states, "Bachelard theorizes that the immensity of a milieu such as a forest or an ocean is poetically entwined with forms of reflexive intimacy. In particular, it resonates with a 'daydreaming' state of preoccupation and self-reflection, a peculiar intense space of interiority itself experience as boundless." This sense of daydream and getting lost is a rarity for Wales Coast Path walkers as they have no time to reflect, or 'switch off', as they are constantly thinking of the Path, how many miles they have walked or how long they have left to go. As the Wales Coast Path walkers are bounded by time, destination and transport destinations taking time to self-reflect as Wylie (2005) mentions is hard. Wylie (2005), whilst reflecting on Bachelard as he walked the South West Coast Path, discusses the solitudes and vastness which emerges whilst walking. Wales Coast Path walking greatly contrasts this, there is no vastness as the walkers want to stick to the Path as continuity is a great issue for them. Wylie (2005: 238) sees his walk in the woods as endless, stating "[the woods] do seem endless, or at least appear as an environment in which motion and ground are untied from each other in some way, and you move without advancing forward, ruminatively, as on a treadmill." The Wales Coast Path is different, pulling people along as if on one of those moving walkways in an airport. Bachelard (Wylie, 2005) speaks of the lingering endlessness of the forests or oceans. This isn't the same with the Wales Coast Path. The specific route and way the Path guides walkers makes these spaces measurable and ephemeral. They only last as long as the Path says they last. Walkers do not feel able to fully encounter the limitless possibilities of their surroundings. This is evident in the following field diary:

After exiting the Cardiff barrage the Wales Coast Path guided us towards the middle of Cardiff Bay and we walked past the Norwegian church, the Doctor Who experience, the Senedd and then the Pierhead building. I was very conscious that my train was leaving in 20 minutes therefore whizzed

past the charming sights of the bay. There was no time for a prolonged goodbye and chat with Peter and Gary as my transport home was leaving imminently. Our goodbyes were done in motion as we hurriedly walked away to catch our transport home. I charged breathlessly up Lloyd George Avenue, arms swinging from side to side, my rucksack oscillating rhythmically against my back with every step. I occasionally worriedly glanced at my watch to check how much time I had to reach the train station. I arrived with merely a few moments to spare before the train left. I bolted onto the train and exhaustedly sat down. My face was a bright red colour, a mixture of being out in the sun all day and the exertion of the last twenty minutes of power walking. I wondered what my fellow passengers must have thought of my state, debilitated by the walking. I pulled a spare pair of light slip on shoes from my bag to change from my walking boots. This was a deliberate attempt to draw attention to the fact that I had been on a long walk and to show why I was in such a state. I then pulled out my Wales Coast Path guide book to further show people I had been walking on the coastal path and to highlight the reason for my current worn out condition. I wondered if any of the other people on the train were impressed by my exertions. (Field Diary 23: Barry to Cardiff Bay 04.10.14)

Long (cited in Jarvis, 1997) comments that the bodily movement of walking invokes a "'rhythmic relaxation' of both body and mind that 'frees the imagination." However, when the walk depicted in the above field diary is completely taken over by the pressure of catching transport the mind and body is singularly caught up in a stressful walk that binds and focuses the imagination on one task only, to walk as quickly as possible to the final destination of the walk. The freedom to relax both in body and mind is lost. The above field diary also coincides with Macnaghten and Urry (2001) who state that practices such as walking depend so much on various objects of 'mundane technology'. That is, if it wasn't for the impending departure of the train, this particular walk could have been much more relaxed, and the surroundings of Cardiff Bay would have been engaged with to a greater extent.

According to Wylie (2005) Bachelard speaks of the notion of "going deeper and deeper in to a limitless world". Not for the Wales Coast Path walker, there are no endless possibilities, as the route is already mapped out and the walkers are bound to every step as the following quote suggests:

You have to walk every step, or I suppose you can't say you've walked it all. (Catrin, 28: Carmarthen)

Wylie (2005) recounts the feeling of standing alone in the woods whilst walking the South West Coast Path, but Wales Coast Path walkers are never alone, the Path is always present, the other entity, showing the way and constantly reminding the walkers of the task at hand. The Wales Coast Path a constant presence. In his discussion of the Pennine Way Wainwright (1969: ix) believes it is a walk which will be subject to record breaking "[s]omebody, someday, will write to the papers to proclaim that he has walked the distance in 10 days. Then somebody else will better that, and so on. In due course, the record will be reckoned in split seconds. All this is wrong. The Pennine Way was never intended to be a race against time. No, to be enjoyed (and why else do it?) it should be done leisurely. There is much to explore, much to observe, much to learn." Contrastingly the importance the Wales Coast Path walkers put on continuity, and the pressure they put on themselves to finish the Path in a certain time means that the record breaking nature of the Path has already begun as the following quote shows:

All the walkers then started to compare how long it had taken them to complete the WCP, whilst laughing and giggling and showing their competitive side. This ranged from 40 days to 64 days. (Field Diary 1: Oxwich to Rossili)

This quote shows that walking the Wales Coast Path has lost the freedom of time. Walking this entire Path no longer possesses the freedom to do it leisurely and contrastingly to Gros (2015) when walkers meet there is a result and there is a time.

5.9: Walking Etiquette

We were all standing around in the Newport Pembrokeshire car park eager to begin our walk; we had to wait for the walk leader to lead us off into the right direction. I could see an elderly man fully equipped with his walking gear, complete with walking stick circling our walking group hesitantly as if he wanted to join us. I could see him finally speaking to the walk leader who welcomed him on the walk without question. We began our journey

and I found myself at the back of the group with the elderly man who had joined us, the two newest members lumped together. As we began to walk along and talk the rest of the walking group sped off in front of us. It made me feel a little on edge as I wanted to keep up with them, to speak to them to also prove that I could hold my own, walk wise, with them. The elderly man told me how surprised he was at the speed of the walking group as he struggled to keep up a similar pace. He explained he wasn't a regular walker and was in the area to visit friends and family and wanted to walk around the area in which he was brought up. It was obvious that although the group were welcoming to any person who wanted to join, no allowances would be made for the usual walking speed and rhythm of the group, new group members must comply with the established ways of the walking group. (Field Diary 19: Newport Circular 21.09.14)

As the above field diary entry shows, although walking is deemed to be a practice which frees people of any normal restraints and codes, walking has, in fact its own culture of codes and restraints which the walkers must adhere to. Here it was up to this gentleman to walk the speed and keep up with the walking group and not hold anybody back. The walking group would not change their speed for him. When joining a walk one must fall in with the established walkers of that group. According to Macnaghten and Urry (2001: 2), "[m]ore generally, many of these resistant practices are subject to civilizing processes, of self monitoring of the emotions, and this has made them definitive of good manners." When joining a walk therefore it is good manners to follow the walking group's pace. The 'civilizing process' of which Macnaghten and Urry (2001) speak of shows that when joining a walking group, instead of practising a sense of freedom which walkers say walking advocates, people are again bound to certain rules and restrictions which they believe walking frees from everyday life as the following field diary shows:

We stopped at the top of a steep climb coming out of Llansteffan. The walkers huddled together as more made their way to the top. It was just a matter of waiting until each individual walker made their way to the top. A few of the walkers had started to break away edging away from the huddled mass of walkers as if they were too impatient to stand around and wait, although they did not venture far from the walk leader. One walker turned to me and said 'I feel like we're in the Wednesday group' (referring to the group of elderly walkers that go for a short stroll every Wednesday). It seemed like there was an expectation that everybody on this particular walk would be able to keep up with the usual speed of the group. I was

glad I had I already reached the top of the steep climb and wasn't holding the group back. (Field Diary 24: Llanseffan to Carmarthen 11.10.14).

This field diary shows that there is an expectation for walkers to keep the pace when joining a walking group. Keeping up with the majority of the group means individual walkers aren't able to stop when they please for a refreshment break, to catch their breath or to admire the scenery and surroundings but can only do this when the group decide to stop.

The loss of freedom is also highlighted in walking's hierarchical nature. According to Edensor (2001: 97) these normal codes in the culture of walking groups ensures a collective form of bodily discipline and a collective compromise of freedom that walkers insist they have. Walking groups have a leader who has organized the walk. Who has, in most instances, been on a 'reccie' to check the route beforehand. Williams (1979, cited in Edensor, 2001: 91) states the walk leader "should be a person well experienced in mountain walking, energetic, determined, sympathetic, cheerful yet cool in adverse situations' and should also 'aim to obtain maximum interest from the scenery and environment." Every group walk participated in during this research had a 'leader'. The main doctrine of the group walks during this fieldwork was to never walk past the walk leader, and to also never stay behind the back marker. Both should be respected and the walking pace should be between these two vital figures. It was evident that the walk leader demanded respect. They had done the background work of checking the route and for gathering information on any interesting points along the walk as the following quote suggests:

See this? It really pisses me off when people pass the leader. Have they just gone on? (Whilst turning to speak to another member of the group) There is a reason why we stick behind the leader; Joanna has already done the walk and knows the way to go, or what lies ahead. (David, 52: Newport Pembrokeshire)

Walking with the group therefore takes away the freedom to explore the route individually and to decide when to stop and which speed to walk. Williams (1979, discussed in Edensor, 2001: 97) states "the leader is advised to choose the distance

and route, and devise progressively more difficult expeditions for novices and group should 'follow in crocodile style behind the leader [keeping] a few paces between each other to observe the ground immediately ahead and must not become strung out." This is demonstrated in the following image (5.8) whereby each member walks at a similar speed behind the walk leader.

Image 5.8: Field diary 27: Llansteffan to Carmarthen 18.10.14 [Researcher's photograph 18.10.14]

According to Macnaghten and Urry (2001: 2) "...bodies in nature are often subjected to extensive forms of regimentation, monitoring and disciplining." Therefore, walkers are not exempt from the rules which they believe blight their normal, non-walking life and whilst walking are thrust into another regime of discipline. They continue by stating that bodies are subject to contradictory opportunities of escape and also constraints. As well as the opportunities for freedom the modes of bodily surveillance regulation and monitoring ensures that walkers can equally be constrained. These constraints come in the form of tips to maximise one's chances of becoming a proper walker as the following quote shows:

> *Let me give you a tip. When walking down a slippery surface like today angle your feet at 10 o'clock and 2 o'clock. That way there is less stress on the knees, and less chance of slipping.* (Anwen, 58: Corwen)

According to Edensor (2001) serious walkers have many tips to ensure comfort and safety as the following field diary shows:

> *I had started to suffer from a bad back after walking, in particular my lower back which I put down to carrying stuff in my rucksack over long periods of time during the walks. I started to discuss this with Amanda who suggested I invest in a bag that had a buckle that secures the bag around my waist. This should evenly distribute the weight of my rucksack and hopefully help me to avoid a painful back in the future. (Field Diary 37: Amroth to Tenby 08.12.14)*

Contrastingly to Gros (2015), Edensor (2001) states that the walking body needs to be trained and conditioned to enable extreme walking. Therefore, there is a skill in walking, it isn't merely a matter of putting one foot in front of the other as Gros (2015) suggests. Williams (1979, cited in Edensor 2001) explains the tips and tricks that walkers use to facilitate a better walk and states "[t]he body should lean slightly forward to offset the weight of the rucksack. There is little movement of the arms and the hands are kept free. The legs are allowed to swing forward in a comfortable stride. High knee movements and over-striding are to be avoided as they are very fatiguing...the pace should be steady and rhythmical and the feet placed down with a deliberate step. As each stride is made the whole of the foot comes into contact with the ground, rolling from the heel to the sole."

Edensor (2001: 97) draws attention to Duerden 1978 who advises that the walker needs to achieve a steady pace, with regular, rhythmic strides, whose body weight should be moved forward, and the arms should be swinging smoothly with short swings. According to Edensor (2001: 97) "[t]he sure sign of a good walker is the manner in which he makes it look very easy, as if he could go on all day without tiring."

According to Mauss (1979: 100) a proper walker can be recognised immediately merely in the way the body walks, he stated **"**I think I can recognize a girl who has been raised in a convent. In general, she will walk with her fists closed. And I can still remember my third form teacher shouting at me: 'Idiot! Why do you walk

around the whole time with your hands flapping wide open?' Thus there exists an education in walking too."

This is highlighted in the following field diary:

> *We arrived at Coppet Hall beach which is now famed for the Coast Restaurant and therefore draws many visitors and tourists to this small corner of St Brides Bay. We emerged from a tunnelled section of the coastal path and walked behind Coast Restaurant and found ourselves in a large car park. One of the walkers drew attention to a crowd of people heading for a walk on the coastal path, shuffling along hesitantly, out of sync, walking at different speeds whilst stopping in different places. There was an air of disarray in their walking. He amusingly suggested that we must walk quickly as we wouldn't want to get mixed up and stuck behind this crowd of visitors. We gathered momentum in unison and speed and quickly skirted past what would have been a hindrance to us walkers if we would have found ourselves alongside these people. (Field Diary 37: Amroth to Tenby 08.12.14)*

By seeing the way this unstructured crowd of people shuffled undetermined along the path the Wales Coast Path walkers immediately recognised their difference and acknowledged their distinction. This shows therefore that the way people walk sets the 'proper' walkers apart and walkers associate and identify with others of a similar walking body as Ingold and Vergunst (2008: 1) state, **"**[o]ur principal contention is that walking is a profoundly social activity: that in their timings, rhythms and inflections, the feet respond as much as does the voice to the presence and activity of others. Social relations, we maintain, are not enacted in situ but are paced out along the ground."

5.10. Stylistic Identities

> *Kurt, who had no previous knowledge of the Wales Coast Path, was unprepared for this, albeit short, walk, and I wished he had better prepared himself for our time together on the coastal path. After walking around two miles from Whitesands Bay the rain set in and the gathering clouds meant we could no longer see the coastal path stretch out ahead of us. I was aware that Kurt did not have the proper waterproofs and I had to constantly check with him if he wanted to turn around, yet he was happy to*

> *continue with the light shower proof rain mac he had. I was also concerned that he was wearing jeans as they are the worst clothing to wear in wet weather. They are heavy and soak up and store water like a sponge. My concerns were reinforced when we came across two other walkers. As soon as we stopped to chat they remarked that Kurt had chosen the wrong clothes to walk in and whilst laughing remarked that his trousers would' never dry in this weather'. (Field Diary 18: Whitesands Bay circular 14.09.14)*

The above field diary extract shows that the way the body is clothed whilst walking communicates particular values and status positions. Kurt, who was unprepared for the walk, showed his walking inexperience by wearing the incorrect trousers. This communicated his amateur status as a walker and gave the other walkers the authorisation to pass judgement. According to Edensor (2001: 98) this status conscious decision made by walkers about their clothing and equipment is ironic as walkers claim to "not concern themselves with 'trivial' fashions or self-adornment." This is also evident in the following quote:

> *I have to tell you this story about this girl we saw over by Aberdaron. We were walking on the coastal path and we bumped into her, well she looked lost. She looked like she was in a fashion show. She had on this skirt and sandals not right for the path at all. We spoke to her for a while, told her where we had just come from and what she would come to if she continued walking that direction and off she went and we just looked at her go in amazement. (John, 60:* Criccieth)

This highlights the appropriate ways walkers deem people should look whilst walking the Wales Coast Path.

Edensor (2001: 98) reports that the stylistic identities of the walkers are catered for by the walking market which supplies walking accoutrements such as "tents and sleeping bags to clothes, and extend to a host of accessories." This is shown in the following field diary whereby advice was given about the best water bottle to buy:

> *Standing on top of the steep section gave me an opportunity to start talking to people. An opening for conversation was firstly given by Sarah who commented on my plastic water bottle. She advised me to invest in a 'proper' bottle. An aluminium one which would not only keep the water*

> *cool during the day but would also be lighter than a generic plastic bottle.* (Field Diary 1: Oxwich to Rhossili 04.05.14)

This highlights the cultural capital transmitted through these walking accoutrements. Sharing similar forms of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1979) with others, the same clothing and the same equipment for example creates a sense of collective identity and group position as the following quote shows:

> *Do you have all of the gear?* (Sally, 35: Burry Port)

This question was asked numerous times when contact was made to join a walk on the Wales Coast Path. If a walker lacks in these similar things, then he or she is exempt from this sense of collective identity and dismissed as the following quote demonstrates:

> *Do you know what I call that? Well I call that a liability.* (Gary: 55: Cardiff Bay)

Here Gary was referring to a walk he took part in on the Wales Coast Path. In his walking group there was a lady wearing flip flops. He was disgusted that she was walking wearing such inappropriate footwear. By not wearing the correct footwear this lady was subjected to being a hindrance to the walk and therefore was not identified as member of the group. She was exempt from being included within the collective identity of the other walkers as she did not have the correct shoes. Her social mobility to join the other walkers in their shared collective identity would have benefited from wearing the correct shoes and adhering to the correct walker style. Having the correct walking clothing and equipment is advantageous for the walker as it can propel them into a 'proper' walker status. This idea of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1979) is also shown in the following field diary. In this field diary the cultural capital of the 'proper' walker is shown in the contrast in clothing between the Wales Coast Path walkers and the tourists in Trearddur Bay. Being

kitted out in the correct walking gear elevated the walkers' cultural capital and made them feel superior to the 'regular' tourists who are gathering in the bay:

> *We were descending into beautiful Trearddur Bay where our walking tranquillity was marred by the onslaught of people, seemingly both local and tourists who had arrived for the sailing regatta. The area was awash with people all making their way to the waterfront or with their arms clambering up towards the ice cream van for a cold refreshment on this warm sunny day. This sudden disjuncture in our surroundings, from having the coastal path almost entirely to ourselves, to being surrounded by a busy crowd of people made me aware, for the first time that day, of how different I looked with my full walking gear. I also felt different from the other people visiting Trearddur Bay and wondered if they took notice of us in our walking clothes, and even if they were impressed that we had been on a long walk. I turned to a lady in the walking group and said jokingly that we looked out of place amongst the visiting crowds and holiday makers in their summer shorts, t-shirts and flip flops. Whilst gazing disapprovingly at the crowds flocking Trearddur Bay she said with disdain 'no they are out of place'. (Field Diary 8: Treaddur Bay Circular 09.08.14)*

The backpack is one item which has been pivotal in the 'proper' walker's identity (Edensor, 2001). It is a symbol of self-sufficiency (Jebb: 1996: 74) and "its bearer is proclaiming a message just as explicit as when clothes told of class distinctions." Having the correct backpack and by carrying the correct contents in that backpack a walker shows that he can travel without the help of anyone and is prepared for any eventuality. Furthermore, Jebb (1996: 74) states, "[t]he backpack is a badge of intent, a membership card to a confraternity" as the following quote shows:

> *When I'd see another walker with a smaller bag I would jump at the chance to speak to them to ask how they managed to pack so lightly. It was actually so nice to speak to other long distance walkers, same like-minded people, whilst walking the Wales Coast Path and you begin to spot them a mile off.* (Jenny, 40: Dorset)

The backpack is important as walkers are instantly able to identify a 'proper' walker just by the backpack. Larger and heavier packed backpacks signify that the walker has over packed and is inexperienced as to what is needed for a long walk; they have not walked enough to understand what is and isn't needed as the following quote demonstrates:

> *I can spot a walker just by the bag. When I see people lugging enormous bags I just find it crazy. You need to know what you really need and what you don't need. It's the inexperienced people that do this because they don't have a clue what to expect when they walk.* (Matt, 34: Caerphilly)

This coincides with Jebb (1996) as a smaller backpack signified self sufficiency and walking experience to a greater extent. The importance of packing the backpack as lightly as possible is shown in the following field diary where a group of walkers were avidly comparing tips on how to make their backpacks lighter:

> *...[t]his prompted a discussion amongst the group about ways they kept their rucksacks light when walking the Wales Coast Path, with each one sharing their 'tricks of the trade'. It also seems like a bonding exercise, sharing similar tips which further heightened the sense of connection between them. Such tips varied from:*
>
> 1. *Cutting the handle of a toothbrush, to even drilling holes in toothbrushes and brushes to make them lighter*
> 2. *Trimming excess off clothes, and cut off any unnecessary labels and tags*
> 3. *Buying titanium items such as pots, stoves, tent pegs as they will be lighter than any other kind of metal*
> 4. *Instead of carrying a pillow, stuff clothes into one of your other rucksacks, it makes a great pillow, and clothes will be dry and maybe even warm in the morning*
>
> *Shouts of agreement and laughter came from the group when they used the same weight saving tips. I could not join in this conversation, and felt foolish in my silence.* (Field Diary 1: Oxwich to Rhossili 04.05.14)

As an inexperienced walker over long distances I was unable to contribute to this conversation and felt exempt from this collective identity as a walker due to my inexperience of knowing exactly what to pack for a long day's walk. Although walkers stress the importance of having the correct clothing and equipment, that alone is not enough to guarantee them a 'proper' walker's status as the following field diary demonstrates:

> *We'd seen hardly any other walkers since leaving the popular Whitesands Bay behind us and it felt like we had the meandering coastal path all to ourselves. As we neared Abereiddi, a mecca for water sports and extreme sports enthusiasts, two walkers approached us and passed us with the usual walkers' salutation of a friendly acknowledgement and a brief chat about our respective routes. After we said our goodbyes and continued our*

journey Steve turned to me with dissatisfaction and proceeded to moan about the walkers' clothes. He seemed displeased that the walkers' clothes were clean and unworn, with no clear signs of wear and tear. They obviously had good walking gear, good boots, trousers, hats to keep the sun at bay and walking sticks, yet they looked brand new and their all cream ensemble looked very staged. He interpreted this as a sign of novicity and commented that they had 'all the gear' but no idea'. (Field Diary 5: Whitesands Bay to Trefin 17.07.14)

For Steve it was not enough that the said walkers were kitted out in correct walking attire. Much like the idea of the walking body (5.3.1) clothes and equipment must show a tactical engagement with the surroundings to prove the walkers' commitment as the following field diary shows:

Steve and I walked on for another 15 minutes and were met with another couple of walkers. We engaged in a brief hello and very quick chat as we bypassed each other and continued walking. Contrastingly these walkers looked completely different from the previous walkers we had come across. They generally just looked scruffier and out of breath and sweaty which is exactly what we looked like in the baking Pembrokeshire July sun. Their clothes were mismatched, an array of different colours and makes, and looked worn. We said so long and again continued walking. We were walking in a single file on this section of the coastal path as the path narrowly meandered through agricultural fields to our right with the steep cliffs as our barrier to the left. Immediately after this encounter with these walkers I felt a tap on my left shoulder. I turned around to see what Steve wanted and excitedly he uttered 'that's more like it. (Field Diary 5: Whitesands Bay to Trefin 17.07.14)

Therefore, the message here is twofold. The walkers must have the correct clothing to walk but the clothing must show signs of wear and tear to prove the walkers tactile engagement with the Path.

As well as a correct stylised identity, the Wales Coast Path walkers also have a clear idea of what a 'proper walker' should look like physically and aesthetically as the following quote suggests:

You don't look like a walker; you look too delicate. (Mair, 62: Carmarthen)

According to Thoreau (1862: 659) being outside develops a certain character, a roughness of character he states will "cause a thicker cuticle to grow over some of the finer qualities of our nature, as on the face and hands, or as severe manual labour robs the hands of some of their delicacy of touch. So staying in the house on the other hand may produce a softness and smoothness, not to say thinness of skin, accompanied by an increased sensibility to certain impressions."

This once again resonates with Simmel's (1997, cited in Lewis, 2001) ideas of the metropolitan body. It suggests that a delicate look represents a lack of embodied experience and a rupture from a physical engagement with the outdoors. Simmel (1997, cited in Lewis, 2001) suggests that the individuals housed inside the metropolitan body are desensitized or are unconcerned with the world around them. This is demonstrated in the following quote:

> *You don't look weathered enough to be a walker* (Julie, 38: Llanelli)

This suggests that the metropolitan life enslaves or even constrains the individual as a walker and to have the correct walkers' aesthetic one must have clear evidence of an engagement with the outdoors. For a 'proper' walker therefore a metropolitan body is deemed to have an easy life whereby no physical effort is required and according to Lewis (2001: 67) "mental and physical exertion has been superseded by an all pervading passivity."

When discussing his fondness of walking Thoreau (1862: 658) states:

> *I who cannot stay in my chamber for a single day without acquiring some rust, and when sometimes I have stolen forth for a walk at the eleventh hour of four o'clock in the afternoon, too late to redeem the day, when the shades of night were already beginning to be mingled with the day-light — have felt as if I had committed some sin to be atoned for, I confess that I am astonished at the power of endurance — to say nothing of the moral insensibility of my neighbours who confine themselves to shops and offices the whole day for weeks and months, aye and years almost together. I know not what manner of stuff they are of — sitting there now at three o'clock in the afternoon, as if it were three o'clock in the morning.*

The Wales Coast Path walkers interviewed were also very critical of a person's lack of walking abilities, physique and fitness as the following quote demonstrates:

> *I can eat anything I want because I walk (slaps stomach with hands). I never put on weight. Most of my friends have the beer bellies and are overweight, they just sit down all day, but like I said I can eat what I want. All of this walking keeps me trim (Garry 35: Brecon).*

For Edensor (2001: 95) this kind of reflexive monitoring and control over a walker's body *"seemingly contradicts these desires for sensual immersion and physical and mental freedom."* That is, although walkers profess to be free from any constraints, they become governed by the idea of a correct walker's physicality as the following quote suggests:

> *She doesn't look like a walker; she's a bit on the heavy side.* (June: 57: Ammanford)

This creates a form of physical capital (Edensor, 2001) whereby a sense of collective identity and group position is formed through similar physical attributes which becomes the embodiment of the walker's habitus (Bourdieu, 1977). For Edensor (2001: 96) the sensual experience of walking is dependent on the fitness of the walker. He states "[t]he body in nature is conceived as healthier and fitter and thus abler to sense and to feel, to be more aware of 'itself' and 'its' natural propensities" as the following quote demonstrates:

> *Well done Amy. I'm pleasantly surprised that you can keep up with me. Not many people can. You can come again (laughs). We haven't had to slow down and I haven't had to wait for you at all today, I'll be telling my friends* (Sean, 45: London)

This highlights the importance of the physical abilities of the walker in the construction of a 'proper' walker's identity, and as Bourdieu (1990: 190) states *"the body is in the social world, but the social world is also in the body."*

5.11: Conclusion

This chapter identifies that walking is a practice laden with techniques and rules, scores, competition, training; correct postures and movements. Coastal Path walking mileage achieved, time, speed, physical ability and style all contribute to form the 'proper' walker. The walker's identity is moulded on the ground, negotiated in the walker's direct physical engagement with the Path. According to Foucault, 1984: 369) "[i]t is not enough to say that the subject is constituted in a symbolic system... It is [also] constructed in real practices." By walking and looking a distinct way and through experiencing the physical and mental hardships of the Wales Coast Path the proper walker is constructed and defined. This chapter calls for the walking body to be considered as an existential ground for the production of identity "rather than only as a source of physical and metaphorical means for its expression" (**Csordas,** 1990: 5). Additionally, Sheets-Johnstone (1999 cited in Ingold and Vergunst: 2-3) acknowledges that the body is grounded in movement and states "[w]alking is not just what a body does; it is what a body is. And if the body is foundational to culture, then walking – or thinking in movement – 'is foundational to being a body."

The way we walk and what we experience therefore transforms walking identities and inducts people into a specific cultural group of walkers. Although walking is identified as freeing the body (Edensor, 2001) proper bodily techniques are advocated which the correct way of walking can be achieved.

Walking has previously been described (Wylie, 2005, Gros, 2015) as an activity which gives walkers the freedom to go where they may. Walking was about going slowly and freed people from the constraints of their everyday lives. On the other hand, this chapter argues that walking the Wales Coast Path introduces the loss of self-propulsion, self-determination and freedom as people want to follow the Path without missing out on a single step. Walking the Wales Coast Path has become automatic, walkers are not free to tactically decide the way along the walk, but are

rather bound to series of strategic moves from location to location “rather like the ‘moves’, in draughts or chess, of a piece across the board.” (Ingold, 2010: 84). For Thoreau (1862: 661) walking was all about freedom, he was critical of marked out paths and stated “[a]t present, in this vicinity, the best part of the land is not private property; the landscape is not owned, and the walker enjoys comparative freedom. But possibly the day will come when it will be partitioned off into so-called pleasure grounds, in which a few will take a narrow and exclusive pleasure only, — when fences shall be multiplied, and man traps and other engines invented to confine men to the public road; and walking over the surface of God’s earth, shall be construed to mean trespassing on some gentleman’s grounds. To enjoy a thing exclusively is commonly to exclude yourself from the true enjoyment of it. Let us improve our opportunities then before the evil days come.”

Chapter 6:

Looking for Wales

Ac mi glywaf grafangau Cymru'n dirdynnu fy mron.
Duw a'm gwaredo, ni allaf ddianc rhag hon.

[And I hear Wales' claws torturing my chest.
God help me, for I cannot escape from this.]
T.H. Parry Williams (1949)

6.1. Introduction

In 1949 T.H.Parry Williams wrote the poem 'Hon' [This] (see full poem in appendix 6). T.H. Parry Williams was born and brought up in Rhyd Ddu in Snowdonia but the poem depicts his indifference to being Welsh and living in Wales. The poem describes his lack of interest and concern with ideas of the nation and nationhood and his tiredness of hearing the Welsh people ramble on about such issues. He decides to take a walk amongst the grey imposing mountains of Snowdonia in order to escape his thoughts and these frivolous ideas of nationhood, which he finds so suffocating. Yet, whilst walking amongst the landscape in which he was brought up, he notices the bareness and severity of the mountains, a distinct characteristic of this area of North West Wales. He observes the Gwyrfai River, the Llyn y Gadair lake and the formidable cliffs which surround him. Suddenly whilst out walking in this distinct Snowdonia landscape he feels awash with emotion, he is overwhelmed with images and voices from his past and is so overcome with emotion he experiences a feeling of light-headedness.

It is in this moment, being in the world, out walking and experiencing this profound rush of emotion and connection to Wales, he realises that roots run deep and he cannot escape the deep-seated sense of belonging to Wales. Massumi (2002: 2) states that affect and movement are inextricable. We therefore are moved whilst walking, or affected during the physical performance of walking, but our feelings also make us move, they make us want to move, to walk, to experience such ardent emotions as T.H.Parry Williams (1949) experienced. The Wales Coast Path similarly

offers a way for walkers to connect or re-connect with their Welsh identities and sense of belonging to Wales. Similarly, many walkers could never have envisioned the profound physical and emotional effect walking the Wales Coast Path would have on their sense of identity and connection to Wales. The field diary below highlights such an intense experience whilst walking a section of the Wales Coastal Path near Llangrannog.

> *It was a cloudless, fresh summers evening and the clear blue sky was slowly transforming into dusk as we walked back on the coastal path towards Llangrannog. After walking up a small bank, we stood and stared for a while in silence at the sight before us. The clarity of the evening meant that we could see as far down as Mwnt's triangular hill, standing proudly at the water's edge, and looking north the whole Llyn Peninsula stretched out before us, cradling the Snowdonia mountain range, which imposingly occupied the landscape. One of the walkers remarked that we had been walking between the two arms of Wales and she was embracing us. As the sun set on the spectacular views and the cold fresh air brushed against our cheeks it was a moment of deep connection and oneness with Wales. There were no need for words and in our comfortable silence, I knew we all felt the same in our shared contemplation as we basked in our location, it stirred the soul. (Field Diary 25: Llangrannog circular 12.10.14)*

Adey (2010: 168) explains that moving "in accordance brings about senses and feelings of solidarity and belonging without verbal, communicative and symbolic forms of action." This is shown in the above field diary. There was no need for any verbal description or explanation between the walkers during our walk near Llangrannog. By walking together, we had all experienced the same overwhelming feelings that could not have been articulated effectively through words. This chapter will explore how the act of walking the Wales Coast Path had a profound effect on the identities of the walkers and their connection to Wales and feelings of national identity. It begins by considering the act of Walking the Wales Coast Path as a cultural pilgrimage and the deep connection the walkers had with Wales during and after walking and experiencing her whole coastline. This chapter also considers the different experiences of Welsh and non-Welsh speakers whilst walking the Wales Coast Path specifically concentrating on the use and feelings towards the Welsh language.

6.2: A Cultural Pilgrimage

> *One thinks of identity whenever one is not sure of where one belongs; that is, one is not sure how to place oneself among the evident variety of behavioural styles and patterns, and how to make sure that people around would accept this placement as right and proper, so that both sides would know how to go on in each other's presence. 'Identity' is a name given to the escape sought from that uncertainty. Hence 'identity', though ostensibly a noun, behaves like a verb, albeit a strange one to be sure: it appears only in the future tense. Though all too often hypostasized as an attribute of a material entity, identity has the ontological status of a project and a postulate. To say 'postulated identity' is to say one word too many, as neither there is nor can there be any other identity but a postulated one. Identity is a critical projection of what is demanded and/or sought upon what is; or, more exactly still, an oblique assertion of the inadequacy or incompleteness of the latter. Identity entered modern mind and practice dressed from the start as an individual task. It was up to the individual to find escape from uncertainty. (Bauman, 1996: 19)*

Here Bauman (1996) suggests that identity only becomes an issue when there is a question. A question about one's identity and place in the world. He describes it as an attempt to escape from uncertainty and is an issue when one becomes uncertain about where he or she belongs. This chapter will consider issues relating to identity which arose from walkers' experiences of walking the Wales Coast Path. It was the physical act of walking the Wales Coast Path that brought to attention this issue of identity. Walkers felt that walking the Wales Coast Path became a means whereby they were able to prove their identities and show their commitment to Wales. People who were uncertain about where they belonged (section 6.3) used the path as an active re-connection to Wales and their Welsh identities. The formation of the Wales Coast Path brought to the fore questions about how much of Wales should one have experienced to be able to identify as Welsh. The Wales Coast Path offered the chance for people to experience the "shape and soul of a nation" (Baxter, 2011) and when taken the opportunity to walk the entire length of a country's coastline they saw is as a means whereby they had proven their identities.

For Bauman (1996) identity is a journey, not a thing, a pilgrimage whereby one seeks a destination in the future where certainty may be found.

> Living one's life as pilgrimage is no longer the kind of ethical wisdom revealed to, or initiated by, the chosen and the righteous. Pilgrimage is what one does of necessity, to avoid being lost in a desert; to invest the walking with a purpose while wandering the land with no destination. Being a pilgrim, one can do more than walk - one can walk *to*. One can look back at the footprints left in the sand and see them as a road. One can reflect on the road past and see it as a progress towards, an advance, a coming closer to; one can make a distinction between 'behind' and 'ahead', and plot the 'road ahead' as a succession of footprints yet to pockmark the land without features. Destination, the set purpose of life's pilgrimage, gives form to the formless, makes a whole out of the fragmentary, lends continuity to the episodic. (Bauman: 1996, 21–22)

Whilst Bauman (1996) uses the term pilgrimage more or less metaphorically, it takes on a relatively literal sense in terms of the Wales Coast Path, which actively seems to lend itself to a sense of pilgrimage whereby walkers are invited to "discover the shape and soul of a nation" (Baxter, 2011)**.** Empirical evidence of a number of themes showing that this sense of pilgrimage and identity-seeking has become central to many walking the Wales Coast Path which can be considered in two principle ways.

Firstly, elements of walking which demonstrate commitment, by suffering and contending with everything the Wales Coast Path throws at you gives walkers a real sense of a journey/pilgrimage. Secondly, because it is ultimately an individual task, with walkers doing it for themselves. The empirical evidence highlights that walkers needed to prove themselves. They needed to walk the Wales Coast Path to prove something to themselves and to prove themselves to others. However, the empirical evidence shows that proving oneself is also typically measured against others, establishing one's place in a hierarchy of achievement and showing commitment to Wales. The following empirical evidence shows that measuring oneself against others and establishing one's place in an implicit hierarchy expresses itself in many ways. For example, section 6.4 discusses how walkers may not speak the Welsh language but have demonstrated beyond doubt their

Welshness having experienced so much of Wales and gained knowledge of the place and its essence.

This chapter will consider how the deep-rooted sense of connection to Wales described above transformed the physical act of walking the Wales Coast Path into a cultural pilgrimage for walkers. This outward physical journey has facilitated an inward journey affecting the walkers' perspective on their identities and their attachments to Wales. Rather than being a religious pilgrimage, which is imbued with religious meaning for the walkers, walking the Wales Coast Path was a physical and spiritual journey, with walkers visiting sights and experiencing landscapes of significant cultural importance. Walkers also experienced landscapes that are quintessentially Welsh such as stunning coastline, mountains, green fields and farmland as well as Welsh seaside and industrial towns which heightens the 'Welsh' experience of walking the Wales Coast path as the following quote demonstrates:

> *I walked past castles, fishing villages, holiday cottages, industry. So different, but these are all Wales, all in one country. This is Wales. (*Sam, 45: Newport)

This chapter considers walking the Wales Coast path as a pilgrimage because the fieldwork walks were full of meaning for the participants. It was a meaningful journey for the walkers whereby the self and landscape emerged and entwined. This chapter can also be positioned within the growing literature on secular as opposed to religious pilgrimage. Analysis of the empirical evidence revealed that the motivations of the participants resonated with the language used to describe pilgrimage, and for this reason, the study will locate itself in the field of pilgrimage research.

According to Slavin (2003: 11) the performance of this interweaving between self and landscape brings the pilgrim into the "present moment – to be present to the world as well as oneself." The central aspect of a pilgrimage therefore is the purposeful and embodied interaction with place. On the Wales Coast Path there are moments and encounters which facilitate an 'inner dialogue' (Maddrell, 2013: 70).

This chapter will consider how the movements and feelings that the walkers experience along this Path facilitate an act of becoming that draws together the physical movement, the embodied participants, the location, in addition to intentions and emotions.

All of the research participants walked the Wales Coast Path because it is now a national trail and a way to "discover the shape and soul of a nation" (Baxter, 2011) as the following quote explains,

> *As soon as I heard on the news that the Wales Coast Path was opened I knew I just had to do it. Walk around the perimeter, a chance to see my country in the best possible way.* (Jack, 21: Cardiff)

The empirical discussions below will also be permeated with Bauman's (1996) ideas that identity is only an issue when one doesn't know where he or she belongs. It will consider that walking the Wales Coast Path is a cultural pilgrimage for those seeking confirmation of their identity. Walking the Wales Coast Path could be seen as something of a necessity for walkers where they believe certainty will be found (Bauman, 1996).

6.3: An Active Re-connection

Walking the Wales Coat Path presented people with an opportunity to re-connect with Wales. The Wales Coast Path gave people the opportunity to walk around the country's whole coastline and invited people to discover the "shape and soul of a nation" (Baxter, 2011). For some of the research participants it presented an opportunity to re-connect with a country they felt a loss of association with and longed to re-connect with, as the following quote demonstrates:

> *My husband and I called walking the Wales Coast Path our bonding exercise. Not bonding with each other (laughs) but bonding with the place. Even though walking the Wales Coast Path is walking the edge of the country you kind of feel attached to it all. (Janet, 65: Bristol)*

I first met Steve on my 5th fieldwork walk. A 12 mile walk from Whitesands Bay to Trefin in Pembrokeshire. The north Pembrokeshire stretch of the Wales Coast Path is spectacular in its scenery and rich in history. The path meanders in a way that the coast stretches along for miles ahead and walkers can admire the breath-taking views ahead. The magnificent scenery that day was further emphasised by the sunny weather which made the sea appear bluer and the grass appear greener. Steve was in awe the whole walk and was obviously moved by the experience. When we first met he appeared to be a proud Welshman. His backpack was draped in a Welsh flag (see image 6.1) and the t-shirt he wore for the walk was bilingual.

Image 6.1: Fieldwork walk 5: Whitesands Bay to Trefin 17.07.14 [Researcher's photograph 17.07.14]

As the walk progressed, and as we spoke more, he opened up about his background. He explained that he had moved away from the Mumbles to England when he was younger, therefore, he never felt any great connection to Wales. In fact, he didn't feel a close connection to England either. Although he didn't feel a connection to Wales, Wales was the country he longed to forge a relationship with as the following field diary demonstrates:

> *Steve was born in Wales, in the Mumbles, but moved away to England when he was ten years old. He constantly referred to himself as an expat and though he felt proud of his Welsh roots, even giving his two sons the Welsh names of Dafydd and Dewi, he felt very insecure within his own Welsh identity. He was worried that he had lost his accent and that his*

knowledge of Wales was poor. (Field diary 5: Whitesands Bay to Trefin 17.07.2014)

During the walk it was clear that Steve was at odds with his identity. The above field diary extract shows that he saw himself as an expat, a Welshman living in England, but his lack of Welsh accent and poor knowledge of Wales geographically, historically and culturally meant that he felt unable to identify as Welsh. This parallels Bauman's (1996) discussion on identity and how issues of identity come to the fore when there is an uncertainty about one's place in the world. He was apprehensive about his identity and therefore grasped the opportunity to walk the Wales Coast Path with both hands in order to re-acquaint himself with Wales as the following field diary demonstrates:

At the beginning of our walk he was bursting with questions about the sights we passed on the path such as the 'Bitches' rapids that separate the St Davids mainland to Ramsey Island, or Arthur's Neolithic burying chamber and was determined to pronounce the Welsh version called 'Coetan Arthur'. He wanted to absorb as much of Wales as he could on his walk around the country. He stressed that walking the coastal path was his way of re-establishing a bond with Wales after being away for so long. (Field diary 5: Whitesands Bay to Trefin 17.07.2014)

Walking the Wales Coast Path offered a way for Steve to re-create that bond with Wales which he so longed for. The journey gave him a means whereby he was able to escape from his uncertainty about his identity (Bauman, 1996). Walking the whole of the Welsh coastline meant he was able to get to know Wales once again through experiencing everything her coastline had to offer, thus increasing his familiarity with Wales once again. He called his journey along the whole of the Wales Coast Path an active re-connection to Wales as the following quote expresses:

I'm an exile you see. I moved away from Swansea when I was five and never returned. When I heard about the creation of the Wales Coast Path I knew I had to walk it. This is an active re-connection for me. (Steve, 45: Northampton)

It was an active-reconnection for Steve as the more he walked along the Wales Coast Path the more he experienced Wales. Every active step he took along the

coastline re-affirmed his connection to Wales and was a further step away from his uncertainty (Bauman, 1996). Every step carried him closer to the re-connection he craved for. For Steve, every step was a step closer to experiencing and knowing more of Wales which facilitated his re-bonding with the country. The challenge of walking the whole Wales Coast Path re-established the bond with Wales which he yearned for. The opportunity to walk the Wales Coast Path gave Steve the opportunity to prove his Welsh identity to himself and also to others (explored in section 6.4). Gruffudd (1995), in his discussion of the creation of the A470 road from south to north Wales, states that it allowed people to travel though the cultural heartland and connect people to their lost heritage. Gruffudd (1995) also states that travelling the A470 road would connect people into nationhood. For Steve, walking the Wales Coast Path gave him the means whereby he was able to re-connect with his lost heritage and in doing so re-inaugurate him into his Welsh identity.

David was another expat who now lived in Canada. He was an avid walker and saw walking the Wales Coast Path as an opportunity to re-connect with his homeland. One of his main regrets since moving to Canada was the fact he hadn't explored enough of Wales. He discussed the 'hiraeth' (longing) he experienced since moving to Canada. The regret he felt for leaving Wales without first exploring and experiencing enough of the country meant he was unable to truly settle in Canada. He still felt he had unfinished business with Wales as the following field diary demonstrates:

> *"David had lived in Canada since 1967 but was born and raised in Borth near Aberystwyth and although no longer spoke Welsh often referred to himself as a 'Cymro' [Welshman]. Our walk began with tales of his life over in Canada but he stated that it is impossible for anybody who is born and raised in Wales to move to another country without experiencing 'hiraeth' and a longing for Wales. He regretted not having explored more of Wales before moving to Canada and said that people often neglect the things around them in their own backyard, and many things are taken for granted and therefore opportunities to explore and to experience are missed. The creation of the Wales Coast Path was a challenge David could not pass. It was an opportunity for him to explore the country he so longed for." (Field diary 12: St Clears to Llansteffan 16.08.2014)*

The creation of the Wales Coast Path offered an invitation for both Steve and David back to Wales to revisit their relationship with the country. Their longing for Wales had long affected their sense of identities whilst living in their new adoptive countries. Their lack of connection to Wales stemmed from the fact that they moved away before getting to know and experience Wales and therefore were unsure of where they belonged (Bauman, 1996). The Wales Coast Path gave them a second chance and an opportunity to immerse themselves wholly on the Wales Coast Path and consequently plunge themselves into experiencing Wales by walking every step of the coastline. They were able to re-connect with Wales whilst on the move. Every step brought them closer to experiencing everything along the Welsh coastline which facilitated an active-reconnection between themselves and Wales.

Angela was born in Wales, but was brought up in England. She harboured a great affection towards Wales and had recently moved back. She called Wales her adopted home as she had lived away in England for most of her life therefore no longer felt any true connection to the country.

> *I knew Wales and loved it, but this journey gave me a deeper relationship and a greater understanding of this beautiful country, this, the country of my birth and the country I have now adopted. I was born but not brought up here even so I still had family connections in Wales, I feel I now truly belong here. I decided to walk around Wales as this is the land of my heart, I couldn't imagine doing this [the walk] anywhere else. I had the best time of my life. (Angela, 40: Brecon)*

Her walk around the entire coast of Wales made her feel like she truly belonged back in Wales. Wales was the land in her heart therefore she needed a sense of connection that was missing in order for her to feel any sense of belonging back in Wales. The walk had given her the cultural pilgrimage she needed to re-connect with Wales. She had a purposeful and embodied interaction with place whereby she was able to re-connect with Wales during the journey.

6.4: Proof of Welsh Identity

Chapter 5 discusses a 'proper walker's' identity, and how experiencing the physical and mental challenges, hardships and consequences of walking the Wales Coast Path shaped walkers into believing they were 'proper walkers'. Such experiences have also shaped walkers' Welsh identities. Walkers believed they had proven their Welshness and cemented their Welsh identity through the physical and mental challenges and consequences of walking the Wales Coast Path.

> *"I'm as Welsh as him, I've walked this whole bloody path." (Stuart, 42: Bridgend)*

The physical and mental challenges of walking the Wales Coast Path therefore had a direct influence on the identities of the walkers. When faced with questions about their identities they were able to claim that it could not be doubted as they had proven their Welshness and commitment to Wales through walking her entire coastline, experiencing and overcoming every mental and physical challenge the Wales Coast Path threw at them. This attests to Closs Stephens' (2015) argument that we can think of nationality as something that is felt and experienced. Closs Stephens (2015: 2) argues that nationality is something that can be felt and is installed "in the soft tissues of affect, emotions, habits and posture." Walkers who walk the Wales Coast Path also show that nationality is also something than can be felt, but physically. Nationalistic feelings are experienced through the suffering, pain and exertion of energy walkers experiences on the path and influenced their feelings of identity. This attests to Closs Stephens' (2015) argument that national feelings are felt through bodies. Many of the walkers saw walking the whole Wales Coast Path as a rite of passage to their Welsh identities, or a performance that is necessary in the formation of national identity. Stuart explained:

> *Look at me, I'm full of blisters on my f***ing feet and I've burnt my face, I've done so much more than any other 'Welsh person' who sits on their a**e in front of the TV all day. I'll be going back to the office draped in the Welsh flag, not bad for a guy from the Midlands. I was always known as the Brummie in work but none of those Welshies have done what I've done. I've*

given my blood, sweat and tears to Wales on this walk." (Stuart, 42: Bridgend)

When faced with questions and doubts about their identities, Wales Coast Path walkers are able to use their experiences of walking the path to reinforce and strengthen their sense of identity. Stuart had lived and worked in Wales for twenty years, yet he was always viewed as an outsider. As the 'Brummie' (see quote above) in work his identity was constantly contested and he was labelled an outsider. His journey walking the whole Wales Coast Path gave him a means whereby he was able to challenge how others saw him. He disputed that through walking the whole Wales Coast Path he did something the other 'Welshies' (see quote above) hadn't done. It was a way for him to progress towards or advance towards his identity (Bauman, 1996). When walking the Wales Coast Path he truly proved his Welsh identity as he had given so much of himself to Wales. He suffered for his walk along the whole Wales Coast Path. He states he suffered physically during his journey and proved his identity through how much he suffered. His Welsh identity was strengthened by the fact that he has accomplished something others hadn't. The blood, sweat and tears he gave during his walk around Wales gave him the entitlement to have as much of a Welsh identity as the Welsh people he worked with, who hadn't experienced as much as he had on the Wales Coast Path. In her work on how nationalism operates effectively and atmospherically through discussions of the London 2012 Olympics, Closs Stephens (2015) states that the affective transmission between subjects, what they experience, align people with others and also against others. Walkers used their walk and their experiences to align their Welsh identities with others. They also used their experiences on the coast path to distance themselves from others who hadn't walked the Wales Coast Path and therefore couldn't claim as much of an ownership to Wales and their Welsh identities as Wales Coast Path walkers.

Steve was walking the Wales Coast Path as he was looking for a way to re-connect with Wales after moving away when he was a boy (see section 6.3). Walking the Wales Coast Path became an important way for him to re-establish his Welsh

identity and his relationship with Wales. He was walking the whole of the Welsh Coast to establish a bond with Wales which was missing in his life (see section 6.3). When walking a section of the Wales Coast Path on the Llŷn Peninsula he had an unfortunate experience where he was labelled an Englishman for not being able to speak Welsh. This affected him greatly and he was truly hurt by the comment as the following quote shows:

> *I walked into a pub on Llŷn and a guy started speaking to me in Welsh, I did have my bilingual coast path t-shirt on and the Welsh flag over my rucksack so I can understand why he did, but I had to say I didn't speak Welsh. Someone mumbled something about me being a 'Sais' [Englishman] which I understood. I was really pi**ed off and explained to the guy who I was speaking to what I was doing [walking the whole Wales Coast Path]. I thought damn them, I've achieved so much already and walked hundreds of miles so far, and really suffered for it, they really can't question my Welshness. (Steve, 45: Northampton)*

After the incident took place Steve made a case towards his Welsh identity. He explained to the person, who made the insinuation, that he was currently in the midst of an extreme challenge whereby the was walking the whole Wales Coast Path. Steve was confident in his justification for his identity. He had achieved so much during his walk; this was enough of a demonstration for him of his identity as a Welshman. By the time he reached the pub on the Llŷn Peninsula he had walked hundreds of miles and had suffered for it through experiencing the physical and mental difficulties associated with walking such long distances. He felt he had shown his commitment to Wales through walking along the whole of the Wales Coast Path. In their discussions on Welsh language students and monolingual Welsh students at Aberystwyth University Jones and Desforges (2003) state that monolingual students attempt to enact an identity that highlights their similarities to the Welsh language students. They state that monolingual students pointed out their similar academic interests to Welsh speakers. They too were interested in ideas of nationalism and devolution. For these students identifying as Welsh wasn't merely to do with language. It was harbouring similar feelings about Wales. Monolingual students rejected the notion that they were indistinguishable from English students. Similarly, Wales Coast Path walkers pointed out their Welsh

identities to Welsh speakers by showing they had a similar commitment to Wales by experiencing so much on their walks. For them, their walks showed that nationalistic feelings and Welsh identities aren't merely tied to language and speaking Welsh. It's also about embracing similar feelings about Wales which walkers felt they proved by walking the whole of the Wales Coast Path.

The following field diary extract further exemplifies how Steve was anxious to walk the Wales Coast Path as quickly as possible. In doing so he would reach the certainty in his identity quickly (Bauman, 1996). In finally completing the challenge of walking the whole path his identity could definitely no longer be questioned.

> *On this narrow stretch of the coastal path, I became accustomed to seeing Steve's figure walking ahead of me. A Welsh flag was draped tightly over his large rucksack (see figure 6.1). He also wore a bilingual Wales Coast Path t-shirt and constantly drew attention to the importance of giving the Welsh language a presence on the path. Walking the whole of the Welsh coast was a chance for him to prove his identity. His constant talk of being an exile after moving to England at a young age really emphasised the longing he had to re-connect with Wales and he really exuded a sense of desperation and urgency to finish the whole Wales Coast Path to firmly establish his Welsh identity. He would constantly refer to the challenge of walking this 870 mile journey as proof of his Welshness. (Field diary 5: Whitesands Bay to Trefin 17.07.2014)*

Proving their identity through their physical achievements on the path became a regular theme amongst the research participants as the following quote demonstrates:

> *I would say it's affected my Welshness, and I feel 'Welshier' (laughs) because I've experienced so much of Wales on this journey. I've been in pain, I've had the blisters, and I've sweated, I've just experienced every physical thing. But also, I've got to know Wales, I know where things are, places I mean, my knowledge of Wales has increased tenfold. I feel like I've got the upper hand in a way because I've seen and experienced so much of Wales, so much more than others. (Gareth, 32: Cardiff)*

Walkers felt they had given themselves to Wales by experiencing the physical consequences of undertaking such an enormous task. By giving so much of themselves to walking the whole of the Wales Coast Path they deemed they had demonstrated their commitment to Wales. What they experienced during the walk was enough to prove to others that their Welsh identity was no longer in question. This shows that nationalism shouldn't be thought of as something that should involve powerful and dangerous passions and extraordinary emotions (Closs Stephens, 2015). It can also attest to Billig's argument that nationalism is a background noise of emotions which erupts from time to time (Closs Stephens, 2015). Walking the Wales Coast Path and the slow build-up of experiences, knowledge and emotions is what helped to form the walkers' identities.

As well as the physical attributes and consequences of walking the Wales Coast Path, the blisters, aches and pains, sweat and tears, walkers also felt their identities were reinforced due to their achievements compared to others as the following quote demonstrates:

> *My mother was Welsh, from north Wales, but my father was English. Even though I'm half Welsh I was always made to feel, throughout school and stuff, that I wasn't truly Welsh. But I've walked 870 miles of the Wales Coast Path which is more than most people can say they've done. So people can't really question my Welshness anymore. (Claire, 32: Bridgend)*

During our walk Claire explained that she always felt something was amiss with her identity. Questions of identity stemmed from not knowing where she truly belonged (Bauman, 1996). She was singled out when younger because she had an English father. Walking the Wales Coats Path gave her the opportunity to outdo others by walking the entire Welsh coastline. She felt she now had the upper hand in the identity stakes as she had achieved something others had not. It gave her a quiet confidence in her identity and compared to others felt that her Welsh identity was no longer up for deliberation as the following quote demonstrates:

There is no question about my census, the Welshness box is ticked. (Claire, 32: Bridgend)

Many of the Wales Coast Path walkers felt that their identities were doubted by other Welsh people. They had experienced comments and had been subjected to other Welsh people's statements about their identities over the years. They had been subjected to comments by Welsh people who felt certain and comfortable in their own Welsh identities. These people felt they had the right to project their judgements onto other people and their identities. Claire lived in Wales, had a Welsh mother, yet many of the walkers felt that these attributes weren't enough to prove their Welsh identities to other Welsh people. Walking the Wales Coast Path therefore offered her a way of proving her commitment to Wales and to prove her Welsh identity once and for all. The following quote highlights a gripe from a walker about identity. She professed that some people are lucky enough be handed their identities on a plate, therefore they don't have to defend themselves against those who doubt and question their identities. For Hayley speaking with a Welsh accent gives people a free pass to being thought of having a Welsh identity.

*In Wales if you sound Welsh you are Welsh by merit but I've probably seen and experienced more of Wales than most of those with a Welsh accent**.** (Hayley, 39: St Davids)*

Walking the Wales Coast Path became a way people who didn't have quintessentially Welsh attributes, such as a Welsh accent or spoke Welsh, could prove their Welsh identities. Walking and experiencing the whole Wales Coast Path gave people a tangible connection to their identities which other people didn't have. During fieldwork walk 9 from Criccieth to Porthmadog I spoke at length to Catherine. This walk was with a walking group which Catherine had joined to feel a part of the local community. She had lived in Criccieth for almost twenty years but never felt she belonged. She felt she was identified as English and wasn't allowed to have her own Welsh identity. After the Wales Coast Path was completed the walking group decided to complete the path in stages. This gave Catherine the

opportunity to explore so much more of Wales. Through this new exploration and experience of Wales she was able say that she had earned her Welsh identity which could no longer be a questionable matter. She argued, that by walking the Whole Wales Coast Path, she had seen more of the country than a Welsh person who had been handed their identity without having to experience anything of the country as the following quote demonstrates:

> *Ok so obviously I'm not from Wales originally but I've lived here [Criccieth] for almost twenty years. The thing about Wales is you can't be British here, you can only be English. We've started to walk the path as a group and it really helps to validate a sense of belonging. The path has given the opportunity to get out there and experience more of the area and in doing so I feel that people shouldn't doubt my commitment to Wales. Surely the things I've experienced whilst walking and the miles given to Wales should be proof of my identity. I'm sure I've seen more of the country than the regular Welsh Joe Bloggs. The thing about Welsh people and Welsh language speakers is that they have their identity handed to them on a plate. But I've worked hard to show proof of my identity so it means so much more. What better way is there to show commitment that to walk hundreds of miles on the national trail? (Catherine, 55: Criccieth)*

Walking the Wales Coast Path gave people a means to prove their Welsh identities. For walkers who felt they weren't automatically assigned a Welsh identity, walking the country's coastline offered them a way to experience so much more of Wales, which, for them, demonstrated their commitment to Wales thus shaping and proving their Welsh identities. Walkers compared themselves to people who were automatically deemed Welsh due to their Welsh accents or their abilities to speak Welsh, yet felt they had proven themselves more to Wales through walking the Wales Coast Path as the following quote demonstrates:

> *I've walked the boundary of the whole of Wales, which is more than most Welsh speakers can say who don't leave their sofas. (John, 40: Aberystwyth)*

Walkers felt that the physical and mental challenges they faced whilst walking the whole coast of Wales proved their commitment to Wales and proved their Welsh identity. Physically experiencing the Welsh coast in its entirety meant that their

Welsh identities could no longer be questioned. For Merriman and Jones (2016: 604) national feelings and affects may appear impulsive but are "characterized by repetitions, rhythmic circulations, movement and affective ties." During this extensive immersement of the Wales Coast Path walkers were subjected to daily repetitions and affects facilitated by experiencing so much of Wales which in turn had great bearing on their national identities. Closs Stephens (2015: 3) states that feelings of national identity can "tremble between the happy and the ugly". For Wales Coast Path walkers' identities were also felt through the 'ugly' side of walking and the physical suffering they experiences during their walks.

6.5: Getting to Know Wales

> *I had such an affection for Wales but after 2 or 3 days of walking I realised that it was as foreign a land as anywhere and I didn't know as much as I thought. (Katy, 19: Colwyn Bay)*

Section 6.4 explores how a sense of Welsh identity is facilitated through the physical consequences of walking the whole Wales Coast Path. It demonstrates that walkers felt that through suffering during their walks, through blisters and aches and pains, they had proven their Welsh identities and commitment to Wales. Additionally, it explained how walkers were able to prove their Welsh identities by comparing what they had achieved with others. Walking the entire Welsh coastline made them feel better prepared to defend their Welsh identities. They felt able to validate their Welsh identities against others who were fortunate to be given Welsh identities without experiencing the realties and challenges of walking 870 miles around the country's coastline.

This section will explore how Welsh identities and a sense of connection to Wales were facilitated by how much walkers were exposed to Wales during their walks, thus increasing their knowledge about Wales. Walking the Wales Coast Path meant they got to know Wales better which had a significant effect on their sense of identities and closeness to Wales as the following quote demonstrates:

> *Wales has the truly enviable privilege of being the first country in the world to have a publicly accessible path around its entire coast. I had to walk it to get to know my own country. (Claire, 32: Bridgend)*

Section 6.3 explores how walking the Wales Coast Path was a pursuit that people who no longer lived in Wales could do to re-connect to the country and to their identities. Additionally, it gave people who lived in Wales an opportunity and the incentive to explore what they had on their doorsteps as the following quote shows:

> *Being a South Walian I had always ignored the coastline of north Wales in favour of the Gower and Pembrokeshire. I couldn't ignore it anymore. The Wales Coast Path allowed me to explore even more of my country. It is a walker's dream. Each day throwing up a different landscape to the next. (Gary, 30: Caerphilly)*

Gary was from Caerphilly and had only visited the popular tourist areas of south west coastal Wales. During our walk he stated that before the creation of the Wales Coast Path he visited well known touristy locations of coastal Wales located in the south west but never had the incentive to venture out further afield and explore different parts of Wales. When the Wales Coast Path was created it gave him the opportunity to explore even more of his own country. Whilst discussing the affect created by visiting heritage sights, Crang and Tolia-Kelly (2010) state that national parks are associated with the idea of a bond between people, land and nation. They discuss the Lake District and state that it embodies a national space for the enjoyment of the visitors. The creation of the Wales Coast Path summoned people onto the Welsh coast to explore more of the country. Like the Lake District discussed by Crang and Tolia-Kelly (2010) it embodies a national space which lured people to walk it, and it is why they walked it. Walkers walked the Wales Coast Path because it was an infrastructure which allowed them to explore Wales thus creating a bond between Wales and their identities. Before it was created people were entitled to visit the tourist areas only, and shared that experience with countless

other visitors. Jones and Merriman (2012: 939) state that national territories only have any cultural significance due to the success of the "group-making project associated with them." The Wales Coast Path possesses a cultural and identity forming power through the significance walkers put on walking the entire coastline. Walkers have successfully projected their identities through their achievements on the Wales Coast Path. The Wales Coast Path called on people to explore more of Wales, giving permission for people to wander outside of the confines of tourist hot spots, giving people the chance to see the country in the best possible way as the following quote highlights:

> *As soon as I heard on the news that the Wales Coast Path was opened I knew I just had to so it. Walk around the perimeter, a chance to see my country in the best possible way. (Tom, 25: Cardiff)*

Many people already thought they had a good knowledge of Wales. What walking the Wales Coast Path did was open people's eyes to parts of Wales they hadn't seen:

> *I've lived in Wales all this time and I've never seen Penarth Pier. (Tom, 25: Cardiff)*

It made people aware that they hadn't seen as much of Wales as they had previously thought. The new knowledge of Wales they gained through walking her entire coastline gave them a greater sense of connection to the country as the following quote explains:

> *Do you remember you asked me earlier on about feeling a sense of belonging because I have walked so much of the Wales Coast Path and I said no. Well actually, I've been thinking about it and I do. I realise how much I know about Wales when someone asked me about a place and I've walked there. You then realise how much you know about a place. It makes you feel like you have authority over Wales. (Dafydd, 36: Dinas Powys)*

Gruffudd (1995) in his discussion on nation-building states that the A470 created the 'hardening of Welsh space'. The creation of the Wales Coast Path was also the

creation of an infrastructure which created a Welsh space. Its creation gave the opportunity to experience Wales on foot and it made people eager to explore their own country. Section 6.7 explores people's relationship with the Welsh language whilst walking the Wales Coast Path. It explores how people who speak Welsh use the language to re-affirm its status on the Wales Coast Path. Walkers who didn't speak Welsh felt insecure about their identities for not speaking Welsh, a result of experiencing so much of the language on their journeys. Increasing one's knowledge about places along the Wales Coast Path by knowing correct place names and names of specific landscape features was a means whereby walkers could feel more connected to Wales as the following field diary demonstrates:

> *Today's group was a Welsh language walking group who walked the Wales Coast Path as an opportunity to get together to do an activity whilst speaking Welsh. We arrived at Porthclais harbour which is an area I felt I knew very well. One of the local people came to tell me that the tip of land at Porthclais harbour which jets out to sea is called 'Trwyn Cynddeiriog' or 'Penrhyn Cynddeiriog'. I had no idea that this section of land had a name and felt ashamed, after considering myself well informed on this section of the coastal path. I couldn't wait to pass this knowledge on to others I knew who visited this area regularly. Learning something new about an area facilitates closeness to it. (Field diary 30: Porthclais to St Davids Head 26.10.2014)*

Whilst on a fieldwork walk with a walking group from St Davids an interesting conversation occurred about the correct names of places and landscape features along the Wales Coast Path. It was interesting to witness the conversation unfold as the walkers were discussing people who mispronounce a name or a name of an area or landscape. People who didn't know the correct names of places and features along the Wales Coast Path were deemed as to have a lesser knowledge and understanding of the country. Walking the Wales Coast Path was seen as a means of getting to know the correct and true information about Wales which gave people a closer connection to Wales and to their own Welsh identities. Having a greater knowledge of the country by experiencing what was on the Wales Coast Path made walkers even more familiar with Wales which facilitated closeness, a

closeness others who hadn't walked the Wales Coat Path would never experience as the following field diary demonstrates:

> *We were all standing on the coastal path admiring the view over towards Whitesands Bay and St Davids head. We all huddled around the walk leader who reminded us that the Welsh name for St Davids Head is 'Penmaen Dewi'. This prompted a discussion amongst the walkers about the correct pronunciation of Welsh names along the coastal path. One of the walkers laughed whilst saying how people miss-pronounce 'Carn Llidi' and he had heard it called 'Cairn Lidli', amongst other names, many times. Another walker recalled how she had heard 'Porthselau' beach being mis-pronounced many times. The walking group agreed in unison that they had experienced the same and one of the walkers suggested that it was the English who could not pronounce the correct names. The majority of the walking group were not born in Wales and did not speak Welsh fluently or even have Welsh accents although they all lived here permanently and had done so for years. Yet it was apparent that knowledge of the correct Welsh names for places along the Coastal Path set them apart and confirmed their Welsh identity. (Field diary 17: St Davids circular 03.09.2014)*

Walking the Wales Coast Path opened people's eyes to what they could experience of Wales and introduced them to so much more of the country that they never anticipated they would see as the following quote explains:

> *You walk through such beautiful places on the Wales Coast Path and I just think to myself why have I never been here before. It really opened your eyes. (Sharon, 43: Newport)*

Sharon and Andy were walking around the whole of the Wales Coast Path in stages. They were walking the whole path as its creation tempted them to explore more of Wales. Sharon stated that before walking the Wales Coast Path she thought of Wales as a small and diminutive place. Yet, after starting to walk the entirety of the Welsh coastline, her eyes were opened to the diversity of the landscape. Walking the Wales Coast Path forced her to acknowledge that Wales was much larger and varied than she anticipated. It gave her a new understanding and knowledge of the

country that happened as a direct results of walking so much of the coastline and experiencing so much of Wales as the following field diary demonstrates:

> Sharon spoke about how walking the Wales Coast Path opened her eyes to the diversity of Wales. She spoke of the wonderful Anglesey coastline, the 'green deserts' which the Wales Coast Path meandered through in Carmarthenshire, and the bustling seaside cities and towns. She thought wales was a diminutive place without much variety. Walking the Wales Coast Path had opened her eyes to the diversity of the landscape and how much there was to experience. She states that walking the Wales Coast Path and walking the shape of the whole nation had given her a 'mappa mundi' of Wales and a greater knowledge of her country. (Field diary 20: Newport to Magor 24.09.2014)

Before the creation of the Wales Coast Path, people were bound to exploring areas of the coast that were already established tourist sites and popular destinations.. The creation of the Wales Coast Path gave people the opportunity to explore so much more of Wales than they were previously allowed to. It gave walkers a direct and unhindered route around the whole Wales Coastline which invited them to explore areas they previously would never have had the incentive or the opportunity to explore. The new knowledge gained from walking the length of the entire coastline facilitated an unparalleled connection and closeness to Wales. Whilst drawing attention to Henry and Berg's (2006) work, Jones and Merriman (2012) state that nations inhabit us as we inhabit the nation. Therefore, whilst immersed walking the Wales Coast Path, and experiencing Wales so intimately, walkers are literally physically inhabiting a nation. Through this prolonged inhabitation on the Wales Coast Path, Wales slowly inhabits the walker, creating a strong sense of national identity. The Wales Coast Path summoned people to walk along the whole Welsh coastline and in doing so introduced them to a new opportunity to get to know their country in a truly immersive way.

In their paper on nations, materialities and affects Merriman and Jones (2016) discuss the A470 road. They discuss how it became a mobility infrastructure that created national affects, emotions and feelings. The A470 runs from Cardiff in south east Wales and Glan Conwy at the northen tip of north Wales and provides the

most direct route by road to get from south Wales to north Wales. Merriman and Jones (2016: 610) state that the creation of the A470 road had a "connective and cohesive role within Wales". The creation of the Wales Coast Path also had a connective and unified role within Wales. Whereas the A470 road created a means whereby people could drive the length of the country much easier than they were able to previously, the Wales Coast Path presented people with an opportunity to walk the entirety of the Welsh coastline.

The creation of both the A470 road and the Wales Coast Path have similar beginnings. The A470 road was created by connecting a chain of existing single carriageways between Cardiff and Glan Conwy. The Wales Coast Path is also an infrastructure which was made possible through the connecting of existing paths along the Welsh Coastline (see chapter 1). Merriman and Jones (2016) state that the A470 road was a national symbol of unity connecting south and north Wales. Osbourne (cited in Merriman and Jones, 2016: 611) states that the A470 was a "road that could provide an affective and relational glue, 'bind the nation together' and provide a 'healthy, red blooded connection that made us whole, and gave us a landscape to take in with ease, instead of a mind-numbing journey to endure'." Similarly, the Wales Coast Path gave people the chance to explore and get to know their country. Walking the Wales Coast Path facilitated feelings of national identity, emotions and affect for those walkers who had the capacity to be affected by the experience. For Merriman and Jones (2016) the A470 road became symbolic of national unity due to the embodied performances of those who travelled along it. The changing character of the A470 introduced its travellers to the varied character of Wales, geographically, linguistically, economically and politically. Likewise, the Wales Coast Path allowed people to get to know Wales and experience her many different facets. Through walking the entire coastline of Wales the walkers were affected by what they saw and experienced thus having a profound effect on their identities and connection to Wales. Feelings of national identity became emergent through walkers' experiences and achievements on the Wales Coast Path. Jones and Merriman (2012: 939) state the need to appreciate how the embodied practices of different actors are involved in the "group-making project of the nation

and specifically, the production of a national space or territory." The embodied practices of the walkers along the Wales Coast Path have created a national space whereby identity is proven and contested. For the walkers, living in Wales isn't enough. For them walking the Wales Coast Path was the key to the formation of their national identities. This attests to Closs Stephens' (2015) work on the affective atmospheres of nationalism whereby she states that the nation and national identity are experienced and felt as much as seen.

6.6: Facilitating a Sense of Pride

Section 6.5 explores how the creation of the Wales Coast Path invited people to explore so much more of Wales than they were previously able to do. It introduced them to the prospect of being able to see and experience more of the country. Through this new means of exploration people were able to gain a greater knowledge of Wales and were able to get to know the country even better. Experiencing so much more of Wales and getting to know more of Wales facilitated a strong sense of pride in the Wales Coast Path walkers.

> *The Wales Coast Path is a fabulous thing for a country to have. (Sara, 35: Carmarthen)*

A sense of pride was an underlining theme throughout the research. Chapter 5 explores the pride walkers felt after walking each step of the Wales Coastal Path. They took pleasure in their blisters and walking ailments and spoke of what they had suffered physically on the path with pride. Section 6.3 and 6.4 also showed that walkers took pride in their Welsh identities. They were proud of their achievement of walking the whole Wales Coast Path and how it proved their Welsh identities. This section will discuss how walking the Wales Coast Path also facilitated a pride in how walkers saw Wales. Walking the Wales Coast Path made the walkers feel proud of Wales as the following quote demonstrates:

> *I'm really so proud that this small nation of ours is the first in the world to have a continual path around its coastline. It's pretty impressive, eh. (Richard, 50: Criccieth)*

Section 6.5 discussed how the Wales Coast Path enticed and finally gave people a means to explore the whole coast of Wales. When people did venture out and walk the Wales Coast Path they were proud of what they saw and experienced of Wales. It made them realise that Wales has as much to offer as any other country in the world as the following field diary explains:

> *We were walking away from Llangrannog up towards the Urdd Camp where we had parked our cars. Llangrannog is one of my favourite places in Wales. I mentioned this to one of the walkers and she replied that we are lucky to have the best beaches in Wales. Better than anywhere else in the world. She stated that she was shocked that more people don't walk the Wales Coast Path. She stated that walking the Wales Coast Path opened her eyes to how magnificent Wales was. She compared the beaches she had passed on the Wales Coast Path to beaches she had visited in California which didn't compare to the ones in Wales. She said that walking the Wales Coast Path had made her proud of Wales. Proud that the country had so much splendour waiting to be explored. She was proud of Wales for being the first country in the world to have a path which enables a walker to walk the entire coast of a nation. (Field diary 25: Llangrannog circular 12.10.2014)*

Walkers felt that the Wales Coast Path offered them something they didn't have to travel abroad for. They had an extraordinary opportunity to explore their own country, as the following quote demonstrates:

> *That's all I needed to do was step out of my front door and keep walking. People fly to the other side of the world, but I didn't have to leave my country, Wales. (Andy, 39: Newport)*

Their walks along the Wales Coast Path opened up walkers' eyes to what was around them in Wales. It reinforced to them the beauty of Wales as the following quote demonstrates:

> *You walk through such beautiful places on the Wales Coast Path and I just think to myself why have I never been here before. It really opens your eyes to what's on your doorstep. It made me feel proud of Wales, she's such an amazing country. (Luke, 42: Aberystwyth)*

I joined Luke on a walk when he was around half way through his journey around the whole Wales Coast Path. He wanted to walk the Wales Coast Path as it gave him an opportunity to truly immerse himself in Wales and he wanted to take the opportunity the path had given to walk the entire coast of Wales. As we walked and chatted it became obvious that Luke was in complete awe of Wales. He was from Aberystwyth and therefore grew up along the coast but it wasn't until he started to walk the Wales Coast Path that he realised the extent of how beautiful Wales is:

> *I didn't realise how beautiful my country is until I started doing this [walking the coastal path]. (Luke, 42: Aberystwyth)*

What became apparent during the fieldwork was that walkers who were walking the whole Wales Coast Path felt a great sense of pride towards Wales as a country. Yet, they did not only take pride in the quintessentially beautiful areas, the long sandy beaches, or the awe inspiring cliff side views, they also took pride in the areas along the Wales Coast Path that weren't necessarily beautiful or attractive. Wales undoubtedly has many breathtakingly beautiful areas, with some beaches even being voted as some of the most beautiful beaches in the world (Wickens, 2017)**,** yet walkers were able to also see the beauty in the areas that ordinarily wouldn't be very pleasing. Whilst walking from Newport to Magor Sharon opened up about her experiences of growing up in Newport. She views her upbringing in Newport in an unfavourable light as the following quote demonstrates:

> *I spent most of my younger life lamenting the misfortune of being born here. I loathed the steel industry and its grime, the concrete monstrosity of a town centre and the fast-flowing river which exposed banks of mud at every low tide. I hated Newport for what my younger self perceived as its complete lack of natural beauty**.** (Sharon, 43: Newport)*

Having the opportunity to walk the Wales Coast Path opened Sharon's eyes and gave her a completely different view of Newport. The Wales Coast Path invited her to explore Wales which also enabled her to re-explore the city in which she lived.

Her journey around Wales ultimately re-acquainted her with her city and she saw the area in a new light as the following quote highlights:

> *Oh yeah you see things from a completely different perspective, when walking past like the Newport Bridge and the Severn Bridge I even saw these as lovely, and had a completely different view of the places than I had done previously. (Sharon, 43: Newport)*

The Wales Coast Path gave walkers the opportunity to experience parts of Wales which people wouldn't think of going for a walk. Walking the Wales Coast Path took walkers to areas that wouldn't have been accessible before and only experienced from afar. The walks gave walkers a different perspective of their surroundings on the Wales Coast Path and being immersed on the path gave walkers a different perception of the areas the path introduced them to. This quote shows that the Wales Coast Path gave walkers a different perspective on their surroundings.

> *It gives you the opportunity to see new places and have a new perspective on places, however horrible. (Rachel, 35: Brazil).*

The Wales Coast Path gave people the opportunity to explore so much more of Wales than they were previously able to do. This made walkers feel more of an affinity with Wales, they felt they knew the country better, by increasing their knowledge about the country through their walks. As their knowledge of what lay along the Wales Coast Path improved so did their feelings of pride towards Wales. They were proud that Wales had a costal path that allowed people to walk her entire coastline. They were also proud of what they experienced of Wales during their walks. They were proud of her beaches and amazing scenery she revealed to walkers during their walks. Yet they were also proud of the undesirable areas of the path as well. Walking the Wales Coast Path facilitated such a great connection between Wales and her walkers that they even felt a connection with those unassuming areas which wouldn't have usually been considered as sites of any importance. Wales Coast Path walkers were able to see the good in all areas along the path as the following field diary demonstrates:

> *Llandudno was now far behind us. I was dreading the walk into Rhyl. I had never been before and had heard discouraging remarks about the place. The walkers felt the same and spoke about how they would be leaving as soon as we arrived. We were all surprised that the walk into Rhyl was very pleasant. We passed a 2 miles long sandy beach which was a pleasure to walk alongside. We walked into Rhyl itself over a new footbridge and the first impressions we were given of Rhyl were favourable. (Field diary 36: Llandudno to Rhyl 22.11.2014)*

The exposure to a different side of Rhyl that the Wales Coast Path allowed meant that we experienced a favourable area of the town. The Wales Coast Path was able to change the perception we had of Rhyl: we now looked at an area we previously deemed undesirable in a favourable light. The more exposure and immersement walkers had of Wales the more pride they felt towards her. By getting to know and experience so much of Wales and so much of the different areas of Wales walkers were able to see the good in all they experienced.

6.7: Negotiating the Welsh Language

> *I've always wanted to learn more of the language and walking the whole Wales Coast Path has added to that. (Sandra, 50: Pontypridd)*

The welsh language was a noticeable issue for the research participants throughout the fieldwork. The welsh language was a factor for both Welsh language speakers and non-Welsh language speakers but in two entirely different ways. For the walkers who didn't speak Welsh, walking the Wales Coast Path connected them to Wales and subsequently to the Welsh language. Experiencing so much of Wales made them feel guilty for not speaking the language. They felt exposed to Welsh culture during their walks which made them long to speak the Welsh language. Walking the Wales Coast Path for non-Welsh speakers gave them a sense that belonging and identifying with a nation involves speaking the language of that

nation. Their walks on the Wales Coast Path became a quest for an authentic experience of Wales and the Welsh language was a significant part of that quest.

Contrastingly, for Welsh language speakers, walking the Wales Coast Path exposed them to a different facet of culture. Rather than experiencing a flourishing Welsh culture, throughout their journeys on the path, they were faced with evidence of the decay of the Welsh language and Welsh communities along the Welsh coast. They therefore used the Welsh language whilst walking to re-assert the language's presence on the path and to remind others that they are walking in Wales. Their journeys on the Wales Coast Path became a means to affirm the Welsh language's status on the path.

6.7.1: A Non-Welsh Speaker's Perspective

Walking the Wales Coast path created a considerable impact on walkers' views and feelings towards the Welsh language. Firstly, walking the coast of Wales introduced people who are not from Wales to the Welsh language and made them aware of its existence. During their walks on the path they deemed it as an integral facet to what it is to be Welsh. One of the first research participants I spoke and walked with was a lady from Brazil. She was an avid walker and jumped at the chance of walking the whole Wales Coast Path almost as soon as it was completed. She wanted to seize the opportunity to experience a walk that allowed the walker to walk the entirety of a nation's coastline. Rachel was aware that the Welsh language was spoken in Wales. Walking the Wales Coast Path and experiencing the Welsh language first hand reiterated the importance to her of speaking the first language of a nation. She was exposed to Welsh whilst on her journey around Wales by hearing it spoken regularly. Hearing Welsh spoken didn't bother her as she deemed it as a natural component of walking the Wales Coast Path and being in Wales. To her hearing the Welsh language spoken was pleasing as it reaffirmed a sense of community to her. A Welsh language community that she saw alive and thriving and it gave her an authentic experience of Wales. Experiencing the Welsh language as a living component to people's everyday lives meant she deemed it strange that

if living in Wales, one wouldn't make the effort to learn the language as the following quote demonstrates:

> *I was aware of the Welsh language and also the misconception of every time a non Welsh speaker walks into a Welsh pub they switch languages. It never bothered me when people spoke Welsh. I did learn a few words and loved the word 'hiraeth'. This is what I feel about Wales now. I enjoyed hearing old ladies speaking Welsh in Barmouth. There was a sense of community... Just beautiful. One thing I saw, I think it was in Llanelli but not sure, was a church built by a guy who couldn't speak Welsh, mid 19th Century, so he could have the service in English. It occurred to me how can someone refuse to learn the language spoken by the locals when you live there? (Field diary 1: Oxwich to Rossili 04.05.2014)*

Jack, a research participant from England, was also made aware of the Welsh language whilst walking the Wales Coast Path. Contrastingly to Rachel, he was unaware of the fact that the Welsh language was genuinely a natural occurrence for first language Welsh speakers, and Welsh is the language they naturally speak to each other. Before walking the Wales Coast Path he had preconceived ideas that the Welsh language is something that Welsh speakers speak when they do not want non-Welsh speakers to know what they are speaking about. Yet walking the Wales Coast Path, and experiencing so much of Wales, opened his eyes to the authenticity of the Welsh language. The Wales Coast Path took him into Welsh speaking communities whereby he heard Welsh spoken as well as on the path. Being immersed on the path exposed him to a new reality where the Welsh language is a fundamental component of life in Wales for many. The awareness he experienced whilst walking the Wales Coast Path encouraged him to learn Welsh if he ever decided to move to Wales as the following quote demonstrates:

> *Before walking Wales I thought it would be a case of buying a holiday home and coming back to a roaring fire, that kind of thing (in reference to the Welsh national activism of the 60s and 70s – authors notes), especially in North West Wales. But actually whilst walking I realised that people don't just speak Welsh to be rude in front of us English, they speak it because it's what they do normally, everyday it's natural to them. I love north Pembrokeshire and it made me realise that if I did move to Wales I realise now that I would want to learn the language. (Jack 52: London)*

An awareness of the Welsh language, and experiencing it as an authentic part of life in Wales was a regular theme during the fieldwork for walkers who weren't from Wales. The nature of walking the Wales Coast Path (explored in chapter 5) meant that walkers would be walking for hours and would therefore be immersed for long periods of time on the path. This meant they were exposed to the Welsh language visually on signs and also heard Welsh spoken during their walks as the following quite demonstrates:

> *It's nice to hear the language spoken or even seeing it in signs or place names or house names. It shows that Wales had a different culture. (Rachel, 35: Brazil)*

These walkers were pleased to hear Welsh spoken whilst they walked the Wales Coast Path. Walkers welcomed hearing Welsh and seeing Welsh written on signs or place names as it gave them an authentic experience of Wales. The above quote demonstrates that experiencing the Welsh language whilst walking affirmed that they were experiencing a different country with a different culture that was very much alive. The Welsh language therefore was a key component to Wales' identity for walkers during their journeys along the Welsh Coast. Walking the Wales Coast Path gave these walkers an opportunity to witness what they considered, contrary to popular opinion, a thriving language as the following quote shows:

> *It was so nice to hear Welsh being spoken, I wasn't sure if it was something people only spoke to their grannies. (Jack, 52: London)*

For Wales Coast Path walkers, that aren't from Wales, walking the whole coast became a means of debunking myths about the Welsh language. Whilst walking they witnessed the Welsh language as a natural part of people's lives and something Welsh speakers do innately. It pleased walkers to hear the Welsh language spoken and see it visually on signs or house names as it gave them an experience of an authentic Wales. Experiencing the Welsh language for these walkers was significant as it emphasised that they were walking in Wales, a country

with a different culture, a culture they were pleased to experience in its entirety through experiencing the Welsh language on their journeys.

For those walkers of the Wales Coast Path, that weren't from Wales, experiencing the Welsh language on their walks was a positive experience. The fact that they didn't live in Wales meant that they were able to experience the language objectively. They were able to enjoy their walks as an authentic experience of Wales and her culture. They experienced the Welsh language with an ease by becoming aware during their walks that speaking Welsh is what Welsh speakers do naturally without malice. Speaking Welsh was something they could therefore consider if they ever found themselves moving to Wales. For non-Welsh speaking walkers who lived in Wales their experiences of the Welsh language were imbued with feeling of guilt and shame for not being able to speak Welsh as the following quote demonstrates:

> *When I met people on the path they expected you to speak Welsh and I was embarrassed that I couldn't. (Sam, 36: Haverfordwest)*

Walking the Wales Coast instilled in them a lack of Welshness for not being able to speak the language as the following quote also demonstrates:

> *I heard Welsh spoken all over the place when I walked the Wales Coast Path, from Loughour to Prestatyn. To be honest with you I felt silly that I couldn't converse in the Welsh language, especially as I am you know born and bred in Wales. I remember all these little old ladies yakking away in Welsh around me and one lady turned to me and said 'how long are you here for' and I thought I bloody live here. I felt like a wally that I couldn't formulate a reply. It made me feel that you can't truly belong and not speak Welsh. I just felt silly that I couldn't hold a conversation. (Gareth, 37 Bridgend)*

Gareth lives in Bridgend and was born and brought up in the area. Bridgend isn't a quintessential Welsh speaking area. Not having Welsh speaking parents and not attending a Welsh medium school meant that Gareth was far removed from any notable experiences of the Welsh language. He decided to walk the Wales Coast

Path to honour and remember his father, who was an influential figure when ideas of creating a Wales Coast Path were first being considered. Gareth's experience whilst walking the Wales Coast Path was permeated with hearing the Welsh language spoken 'all over the place' as he states above. Through walking the Wales Coast Path he was introduced to and immersed in different areas of Wales, other than the ones he was familiar with. Closs Stephens (2015: 2) states that nationality is mostly experienced as a feeling. This is facilitated by feelings of togetherness experiences at concert halls or at stadiums of the "forcible affect of sharing a language with others." Walking the Wales Coast Path and being immersed in a language they could not speak made non Welsh speaking walkers feel a lack in their Welshness. Being unable to speak Welsh therefore raises questions about identity, drawing attention to the uncertainty over identity (Bauman, 1996). Whilst walking Gareth heard Welsh spoken often and it ignited in him a feeling of lack for not being able to speak the language himself. This was felt more keenly for Gareth, than for the walkers who weren't from Wales, as he was born and brought up in Wales, and walking the Wales Coast Path introduced him to facet of Welsh culture that he felt he now lacked. Walking the Wales Coast Path and experiencing the Welsh language whilst on his journey around Wales drew attention to the missing link in his Welsh identity. The Wales Coast Path gave Gareth the opportunity to be subjected to a whole new side of Welsh culture that he wasn't accustom to and hadn't previously had the opportunity to experience. His walk around the whole coast of Wales and being overwhelmed by how much Welsh he heard spoken made him feel embarrassed for not speaking the language himself. This was further compounded by the fact that whilst speaking to people during his walk around Wales he was mistaken for a visitor to Wales rather than a Welshman. According to Blommaert and Verschueren (1998), language assumes the character of a clear identity maker. Therefore, by experiencing the language on the path and not being able to speak it raised questions of identity for non-Welsh speakers. Blommaert and Verschueren (1998: 359) further state that the absence of the feature of a distinct language casts doubts on the "legitimacy of claims to nationhood."

Walking the Wales Coast Path also facilitated a sense of regret in Linda. Whilst on her walking journey around Wales she heard Welsh spoken frequently. Her walk along the Welsh coast lead her into the path of Welsh speakers. Something that wouldn't have happened to her to such a great extent has it not been for walking the Wales Coast Path. She explained during her walk that she wasn't brought up in a Welsh speaking area and didn't make an effort to learn the language, therefore walking the Wales Coast Path introduced her to a side of the Welsh culture she was unaccustomed to. Much like Gareth, being exposed to Welsh on the Wales Coast Path made her aware that Welsh culture has the Welsh language which gives it a unique character and appeal.

> *I heard Welsh spoken in Anglesey and Barmouth and I loved it. It's important to hear it because it shows Wales' unique character it made me regret I didn't learn it properly. (Linda, 48: Porthcawl)*

Walkers felt exposed to the Welsh language whilst walking the Wales Coast Path. They suggested that to truly get the best experience of walking the path and experience Wales at her best it would have been advantageous to speak Welsh as the following quote illustrates:

> *I felt a bit left out that I didn't speak Welsh to be honest with you. I went through places with such lovely names and would love to understand the meanings behind them. It would have given me such a good feeling to be able to understand the language of my ancestors which I knew lived and worked in this area. (Abigail, 30: Aberystwyth)*

On her journey walking around Wales Abigail was exposed to a lot more of the Welsh language than she had been previously. She was inspired by walking through different areas, and seeing Welsh names as she walked along the coast. This facilitated a sense of lack in her for not speaking the Welsh language. Being immersed on the Welsh coastline and walking through different places with beautiful Welsh names made her regret not being a Welsh speaker. Witnessing different place names along the path made her aware of the Welsh language and it hit home that the Welsh culture is rooted in a language old and yet alive in many areas she walked through. She 'felt left out', as the above quote demonstrates, and

felt the need to speak Welsh to feel connected to communities past and present. Blommaert and Verschueren (1998) argue that it is only language that can be offered as a distinctive trait of a particular group. Not being able to speak Welsh therefore made walkers feel a lack in their identities. Abigail continued that her experiences on the path would have been better had she been a welsh speaker. Walking the Wales Coast Path made her realise that speaking a country's language gives you an unparalleled connection to place and communities as the following quote explains:

> *When you walk around the entire coast of Wales you get such a snapshot of the people, the history, heritage and legends. If I had been a Welsh speaker though I think it would have been better, I just think you are more connected to it all if you speak the language. (Abigail, 30: Aberystwyth)*

Walking the Wales Coast Path took walkers out of their familiar localities where the Welsh language didn't play a big part in their lives. However, walking the Wales Coast Path guided people out of their spaces of comfort and familiarity and gave them an actual reason and purpose to want and need to speak Welsh. Walking the Wales Coast Path facilitated a sense of embarrassment for not being able to speak the Welsh language as the following quote highlights:

> *It's embarrassing when you can't pronounce one of those Welsh place names that we monoglots struggle to get our tongues around. (Peter, 60: Pontypridd)*

The nature of walking the Wales Coast Path (see chapter 5) meant that people were immersed on the path for long periods of time, meaning they were exposed to Welsh place names and signs for long durations. Many places along the Wales Coast Path do not have English name counterparts therefore walkers felt obliged to pronounce the Welsh names properly. When walking with Peter he started speaking about pronouncing Welsh place names. He lived in Pontypridd and we discussed at length how people who live in Pontypridd pronounce it 'Ponteepeedd' rather than 'Pontypridd' as Welsh speakers do. This had never been an issue to him because everyone where he lived had the same pronunciation as him. He explained

that walking the Wales Coast Path took him out of the normalities on his doorstep and introduced him to new areas that pronounced place names according to the Welsh alphabet and a Welsh language accent as the following quote demonstrates:

> *They should give you a book or something before walking the path, kind of like a crash course so you can pronounce those dd's, ll's, ch's. It's embarrassing when you can't pronounce a place name.* (Peter, 60: Pontypridd)

Taken away from their normal lives, and typical locations, they were exposed to new Welsh names and unfamiliar pronunciations whereby walkers felt embarrassed by their lack of knowledge in their pronunciations as the following quotes highlight:

> *I'm embarrassed I can't pronounce place names. People should at least make an effort to learn the dd and ll sounds. (Abby, 32: Llandrindod Wells)*

And,

> *We could have done with a walkictionary. (Mark, 55: Llandovery)*

During a walk with Emma she expressed her desire to walk the Wales Coast Path was because it was a world first. Wales had become the first country in the world to have a costal path encompassing her coast and she wanted to experience the opportunity the path now afforded. Although, when thrust into the enormous task of walking the whole Welsh coastline, she was propelled into a world with unfamiliar place names and pronunciations which highlighted her lack of knowledge for the Welsh language and her pronunciations. This left her with feelings of embarrassment as the following quote highlights:

> *I was embarrassed I couldn't pronounce names such as Rhosneigr. (Emma, 45: Cardiff)*

Ultimately what the Wales Coast Path did to walkers was lure them out of their spaces of comfort and familiarity and presented them with a new reality whereby

they felt they needed a knowledge and understanding of the Welsh language and her pronunciations. Non-Welsh speaking walkers felt a distinct lack in their identities when they walked the Wales Coast Path, experiencing a lot of the Welsh language on the path made them judge their own identities, thus experiencing feelings of shame and embarrassment for not being able to speak the language or pronounce place names correctly.

6.7.2: A Welsh Speaker's Perspective

> *"Well I want to remind people that they are in Wales"* (Mair, 61: Dinas Mawddwy)

As the fieldwork progressed, the Welsh language was fast becoming an important theme in the research, for non-Welsh language speakers who were walking the Wales Coast Path (see section 6.7.1). Walking the Wales Coast Path gave walkers an opportunity to experience so much more of Wales than they had done previously. Walking long stretches of the Wales Coast Path, which was the norm as walkers needed to complete every step of the path (chapter 5), meant that walkers were immersed in their surroundings for long periods of time. This meant they experienced long periods of being exposed to feelings of guilt, lack and a sense of shame for not being able to speak the Welsh Language (see section 6.7.1). These feelings were facilitated by the fact that, for these participants, the walks were permeated with the Welsh language, whether in bilingual signs, heard spoken during the walks, or through being exposed to Welsh place names and names of landscape features, which they desperately wanted to understand and pronounce correctly.

The Welsh language also emerged as an issue for Welsh language speakers whilst walking the Wales Coast Path albeit in a very different way. Whereas non-Welsh speakers felt exposed to the Welsh language whilst walking the Wales Coast Path, contrastingly, Welsh language speakers were confronted with a sense of loss of

language. Their walks on the Wales Coast Path became a means to assert their identities as Welsh language speakers, giving the Welsh language a presence on the path to show other walkers that they were in Wales. Walking the Wales Coast Path took Welsh language speakers away from their day to day familiar communities and consequently exposed them to a new reality whereby they experienced situations where the Welsh language is dwindling within a changing society.

Walking the Wales Coast Path would take walkers through varying landscapes. Walks would meander along rugged and unpopulated coastal and countryside areas, but would also take walkers into coastal communities. It was within these coastal communities that a sense of a loss of language first became apparent during the fieldwork as the following field diary demonstrates:

> We left Porthmadog town centre and quickly arrived at Borth y Gest which we had to walk through before the path took us back to the open unpopulated coastline. Borth y Gest is a small and quaint Victorian hamlet along a small crescent shaped promenade looking out towards Tremadog Bay. I was walking with a lady who was walking the whole of the Wales Coast Path to raise money for the National Eisteddfod which was being held in her home county the following year. She was therefore a first language Welsh speaker. We were also joined by members of her family and friends who were walking with her that day in support. Everyone in the group were first language Welsh speakers. As we walked through Borth y Gest I could hear murmurs of disapproval about the English names which now hung from the house facades. Subsequently there were many comments made about how the hamlet was now a holiday home hub and that the area had lost its Welshness. (Field diary 13: Porthmadog to Pwllheli 19.08.2014)

The above field diary gives an account of a walk which started in Porthmadog, a predominantly Welsh speaking tourist town. Being a tourist town it's hard to escape association with Wales when walking along the streets. Welsh produce, Welsh gifts with words such as 'Cymru' and 'Cwtsh' adorn the shops, local Welsh companies such as Cadwaladers ice cream shop and a tourist information office all draw attention to Welsh culture. The Wales Coast Path draws walkers away from this Welsh hub out into the periphery which according to the reaction of the

walkers was distinctly less Welsh. The marked difference by the time we arrived at Borth y Gest was obvious to this Welsh speaking group who noticed the overabundance of English house names immediately. Being immersed in their surroundings, and having to follow the Wales Coast Path throughout Borth y Gest, meant that the walkers were bombarded with English house name after English house name for the entirety of our time walking this section of the path. This draws attention to the importance of a walking and talking approach (chapter 3). Had we not been walking together on the Wales Coast Path issues of language might not have arisen in a standard interview setting. Seeing the English house names stirred emotions from the group which would not have come to light had we not been immersed and walking through our surroundings. On this walk rather than facilitating feelings of being immersed in the Welsh language, as experienced by other non-Welsh speaking walkers, these walkers experienced a walk which highlighted the changing nature of the Welsh language and the decline in Welsh language communities. Walking the Wales Coast Path gave these walkers tangible evidence that the Welsh language is waning in coastal communities. This became a reoccurring pattern on all walks with Welsh language speakers as the following quote demonstrates:

> *When I'm walking the coastal path I think of the old communities and how it's changed. That's all you see now are holiday homes. When not naming their houses names like Sunnymead or things like that they try and give their houses Welsh names but sometimes they don't make sense. There was one I saw on the path the other day called Tir Calon (Heartland) but that doesn't make sense to me, I would have said Calondir. (Carol, 42: St Davids)*

The Wales Coast Path guided walkers out from their areas of familiarity, laying bare a new reality to Welsh language speaking walkers. A reality whereby Welsh communities and the Welsh language are under threat by newcomers moving into traditional Welsh speaking communities. The walkers witnessed this by seeing the changing house names in communities whilst walking through these areas on the Wales Coast Path. Merriman and Jones (2009) state that the campaign against English road sings in Wales during the late 1960s and 1970s was a fight against

what Welsh speakers saw as the Anglicisation of the Welsh language and of English influence in Wales. Similarly, Welsh language walkers saw the changing nature of house names as they walked the Wales Coast Path as evidence of the Anglicisation of communities along the Wales Coast Path. The road signs campaigns of the late 1960s and 1970s are seen as the most symbolic campaigns undertaken in the fight for the precedence of the Welsh language (Merriman and Jones, 2009), and resulted in the establishment of bilingual road signs in Wales. Welsh language signs were believed to restore a link between language and land, re-inscribing the nation's language and providing what Merriman and Jones (2009: 356) call "a highly effective means of defining the national territory." What Welsh language speakers experienced during their walks on the Wales Coast Path was evidence of the decline of Welsh territory and language.

Abersoch is a town nestled near the tip of the Llŷn Peninsula. Fieldwork walk number 34 took us on a walk from Pwllheli to Abersoch. I was walking with one participant who was walking the whole of the Wales Coast Path as he wanted to experience this new opportunity of being able to walk around the whole coast of Wales. We started in Pwllheli and made our way along the coastline on our 11 mile walk to Abersoch. This was a very pleasant walk in terms of scenery. The entire walk skirted the water's edge the whole way and we were greeted with breath-taking views of the Llŷn Peninsula which stretched out in front of us. The weather was just right. It was sunny, yet not too hot, and we had a nice breeze which was advantageous to us on our long journey. Dan was a fluent Welsh speaker yet rather than take in the splendour of the scenery he constantly spoke about the changing nature of the area which was quickly losing its Welsh language. He was constantly provoked in broaching the subject because the Wales Coast Path lead us through numerous seaside communities which were awash with large, lavish mobile homes. These grand mobile homes were fronted by fences which marked each territory. On most of the gates hung the names of the homes. We were confronted by names such as 'Cliff Cottage', 'Seaclusion' and Summer Cottage'. It stirred a sadness in Dan who felt that the Wales Coast Path confronted us with a message that there were no longer many Welsh speakers in the area. According to Blommaert and

Verschueren (1998), the lack of a clearly distinct language is the first indicator of cultural erosion. In their work on the identity and politics of places in Aotearoa / New Zealand, Berg and Kearns (1996) state that place-names are integral to the process by which people attach meaning to place. They state that place-names can evoke powerful emotions within individuals and groups. Kearns et al (1991) explain that in Auckland names such as Mission Bay, Parnell and Remeura evoke a different feeling that seeing names such as Mangere, Otahunu or Papatoetoe. The later signifying a Maori community. The first European names demonstrate the Europeanising of the landscape.

As the walk progressed we headed towards Llanbedrog beach which is a place firmly cemented in Welsh language lore as the well-known folk singer Dafydd Iwan sings about the area in his renowned song 'Mae'n Wlad i Mi' (the Welsh version of the Woodie Guthrie song 'This Land is your Land'). In the song Dafydd Iwan poetically sings 'mae'r môr yn wyrddlas ym Mae Llanbedrog' (the sea is turquoise in Llanbedrog Bay). Before the walk I was looking forward to seeing Llanbedrog Beach yet we walked through it under a cloud of disappointment as the walk was marred by Dan's disappointment at the changing culture and what he saw as the decline of the Welsh language as the following extract from my field diary demonstrates:

> *After passing what appeared to be a new hamlet of very lavish mobile holiday homes Dan's thoughts moved to contemplating about how the area was changing and that the Welsh language was losing its battle. He was in a great mood when we departed from Pwllheli but as we were confronted with home names such as Cliff Cottage and Seaclusion Dan's mood changed. This to Dan was evidence that these homes weren't owned by Welsh language speakers and he seemed disappointed that such a traditionally Welsh area was being overwhelmed by newcomers. The Wales Coast Path had shown us a part of Wales which filled Dan with sadness and rather than be awed by the beautiful scenery which we were surrounded with he spoke of the decline in in the area's Welsh language. We were heading towards Llanbedrog which is a place I, and many other Welsh speakers, have sung about countless times in Dafydd Iwan's song 'Mae'n Wlad i Mi', and which I thought would give Dan respite from his disappointment as it's a place rooted in Welsh culture because of the song. Yet we walked through it almost unnoticed and didn't even stay to admire*

the beach as Dan just wanted to continue onwards in his disheartened mood. (Field Dairy 34: Pwllheli to Abersoch 14.11.2014)

The path had taken us on a journey, which for Dan, drew attention to the changing nature of the area and how it was losing its Welsh language. Being immersed in the area through walking the Wales Coast Path hit home how much was actually changing in Welsh societies and how there is a shift in the areas which had always been predominately Welsh language speaking. Berg and Kearns (1995: 99) state that the naming of places is a key component "in the relationship between place and the politics of identity in contemporary societies." Dan was given a brief interval from his disappointment on this journey on our way out of Llanbedrog Beach. At the top of a hill, which we had to walk up to leave Llanbedrog, we came across a stone which has been painted with a Welsh Language Society symbol. This lifted his spirits momentarily but when we arrived at Abersoch we were confronted once again with an area saturated with English house and shop names as the following field diary demonstrates:

After walking the 11 mile journey we arrived at our destination, Abersoch. The Wales Coast Path had taken us away from Pwllheli, a very Welsh speaking area, where the Welsh language had an obvious visual presence in the local shop names. In Pwllheli we were immersed in an area with shops called 'Eluned Gift Shop', Y Maes', 'Oriel Pwlldefaid', Iechyd' and 'Pwyll Pistyll'. This familiarity made Dan comfortable and he was in a jolly mood at the beginning of our walk. The journey we had taken thereafter for Dan was a bombardment of signs that Welsh speaking communities were in decline and it made him sad. Our destination point offered no comfort to Dan. We reached Abersoch which was a wealthy community of English named homes and holiday homes and shops with names that were befitting to the area such as 'Coastal Culture', 'Joules', 'The Shack', and 'Breeze'. The walk's scenery didn't have a great effect on Dan and he wasn't able to truly enjoy the walk which instead on presenting him with the best of Wales was a realization that the area along this stretch of the Wales Coast Path was changing.' (Field Dairy 34: Pwllheli to Abersoch 14.11.2014)

Berg and Kearns (1995) argue that naming places reinforces claims of national ownership. Being subjected to a new reality whereby Welsh names are lost, walkers were therefore faced with a sense of loss of national ownership to areas along the Wales Coast Path. As well as seeing a decline in the Welsh language, through

changing house names along the Welsh coast, which no longer gave Welsh that visual presence that reminded people they are in Wales, Welsh language speaking walkers also faced not meeting many other Welsh speakers whilst walking the Wales Coast Path. Whereas non-Welsh language speakers' walks, to them, were imbued, with the Welsh language, with some even saying they heard Welsh spoken all of the place (see section 6.7.1), Welsh language speakers' experiences show a contrasting story as the following field diary shows:

> *We were descending into Llangrannog when we bumped into a group of four walkers. The usual Welsh greetings were given by the group I was walking with, something I had now come to expect from Welsh language walkers. To our surprise the other walkers responded in Welsh and we stood there for a few minutes excitingly chatting away. Sian turned to me and in her delight animatedly said that this never happens on the coastal path and meeting other Welsh speakers is very rare. (Field diary 11: Aberporth to Llangrannog 15.08.2014)*

Walking on the Wales Coast Path took Welsh language speakers outside of their normal lives where they are accustomed to hearing and speaking Welsh daily. When immersed in walking the Wales Coast Path for long periods of time they were not exposed to the amount of Welsh they were used to thus experiencing what they considered a sign of a declining Welsh language:

> *You don't hear or see much Welsh on the path. The Welsh people just don't know what's on their doorstep. (Gethin, 58: Pontarddulais**)***

Being immersed walking the path for hours a day meant that Welsh language walkers had no respite from hearing mainly English spoken on their journeys:

> *I make sure I say 'shwmae' [hello] or 'bore da' [good morning] or 'prynhawn da' [good afternoon] when I'm walking the path. I do it to gauge what someone's reaction will be, to see if I get a grunt back, and to know if it's worth stopping and talking. For Welsh speakers, walking the path shows another side to the coin. It's the Wales Coast Path but you won't pass many Welsh people or speakers. (Gethin, 58: Pontarddulais)*

Witnessing this cultural shift whilst walking the Wales Coast Path meant that Welsh speaking walkers used the Welsh language to exhibit their Welshness on the Wales

Coast Path and to remind other walkers that they are in Wales, and also to assert their cultural authority. They used the Welsh language as a tool to turn the Wales Coast Path into a space of Welshness and to give Welsh its presence back on the path. A theme which became apparent very quickly whilst walking with Welsh language speakers was their use of the language whilst walking the Wales Coast Path. When walking with Welsh language speakers, it became clear that they would greet any other walkers of passers-by on the path in Welsh and only in Welsh as the following field diary entry demonstrates:

> *We were walking on a very arduous part of the path on the very busy A497. We had left the coast a few miles back and walking along the noisy road on a very hard tarmac path was gruelling and a thankless task. The whole group stopped when a family of 6 asked our walk leader for directions. As we stopped I could hear the walk leader say loudly 'shwmae, shwmae' [hello]. The walkers could not speak Welsh so our walk leader gave them directions in English. As they thanked her she loudly repeated 'croeso, croeso' [you're welcome] a couple of times before walking away. (Field diary 13: Porthmadog to Pwllheli 19.08.2014)*

The walk described above was with a group of Welsh speakers, who only used Welsh when greeting other people on the path. They spoke Welsh first even before finding out if the other people on the Wales Coast Path were Welsh speakers or not. After finding out they were speaking to non-Welsh speakers they continued to use Welsh words throughout the conversation. Using the Welsh language whilst walking the Wales Coast Path gave Welsh speakers an opportunity to claim back the Welshness they supposed was lost and to counteract for the lack of the Welsh language they experienced on the path. It became apparent after taking part in numerous walks with Welsh language speakers that they used the language as a way of making sure other walkers knew they were in Wales as the following field diary shows:

> *We passed another walker whilst leaving Pwllcrochan. Siân greeted the non-Welsh speaking walker again with a resounding 'shwmae' (helo) and 'prynhawn da' (good afternoon). After chatting and sharing details of each other's walks Siân finished the conversation with 'mwynhewch eich wac' (enjoy your walk). As Siân and I continued on our walk towards Angle I*

> *asked her why she wanted to use so much Welsh in a conversation with English speakers on the Wales Coast Path. She seemed affronted by the question and told me in no uncertain terms that Welsh is the language of Wales, it is the language her children were brought up in. She continued by voicing her disappointment that there wasn't enough Welsh seen and heard whilst walking the Wales Coast Path. She wanted people to hear Welsh to know they were in Wales and that the path belonged to Wales. (Field diary 28: Neyland to Angle 24.10.2014)*

Whilst walking the Wales Coast Path, Welsh language speakers gave the language authority and made people aware that Welsh exists and is widely spoken in Wales. As well as doing this through speaking Welsh to others on the Path they also drew attention to Welsh place names and names of landscape features. They corrected people if these places and features were pronounced incorrectly and if English names were given instead of the Welsh names. This once again gave the Welsh language back its status back after Welsh language walkers witnessed its decline on the path. The next field diary entry shows how the Welsh language was given its status back by a Welsh speaking walker.

> *We stopped in the middle of a field after walking out of the village. We now had Trearddur Bay behind us and were facing a triangular mountain. The walking group was mixed in their ability to speak Welsh. As we stood to admire the views behind us the walk leader, and a Welsh speaker, walked up to some of the non-Welsh speaking walkers and said 'hey say what you call this mountain'. They replied that they call it Hollyhead Mountain. The walk leader laughed and said 'it's not called Hollyhead Mountain, it's called Mynydd Tŵr. (Field diary 8: Treaddur Bay circular 09.08.2014)*

By singling out and correcting English names of landscape features, Welsh language speakers found a means of re-establishing the Welsh language on the Wales Coast Path.

The Welsh language became an important subject for Welsh language speakers whilst walking the Wales Coast Path. Whilst walking they were confronted with the disheartening reality of a changing society whereby the Welsh language was dwindling and its presence wasn't felt on the Wales Coast Path. They counteracted for the lack of Welsh they saw and heard spoken on the path by giving back the

language its presence and authority. They did this by speaking Welsh to whoever they met whilst walking the Wales Coast Path, whether they spoke Welsh or not. They did this with great vigour in order to show other walkers that they were walking a national trail and that Wales has a language of its own which shouldn't be overlooked. Welsh place names and landscape feature names were emphasised and given authority over their English equivalents. Leib (2011) draws attention to how language is contested in north American licence plates. In his discussion on the politics of identity and nationalism in a bilingual country like Canada he states that the choice of place names and slogans on licence plates raised questions of identity, especially in a country with a historic divide between French and English (Leib, 2011). English only licence plates where a sign of the Anglicisation of French speaking areas of Canada. Therefore, officials in Prince Edward Island and Ontario now allow drivers to choose French language licence plates rather than the provinces' standard English language plates. Drivers can therefore offset the Anglicisation of their provinces by choosing a French language licence plate. Whereas French speaking Canadians were able to re-establishing their French speaking identities through choosing French language licence plates, walkers were able to offset the Anglicisation of house names along the path by speaking Welsh on the path, re-establishing the language's presence on the path.

According to Merriman and Jones (2009) the significance of the fight for Welsh language signs during the 1960s and 1970s was a means to offset the daily performance of Anglicisation in Wales. They state that Welsh language signs were a key element "in the everyday banal flagging of the Welsh language, acting as key technologies facilitating the performance of a Welsh-speaking, national linguistic community." (Merriman and Jones, 2009: 359). Welsh language speakers witnessed the slow re-appearance of the Anglicisation of Wales through their Walks on the Wales Coast Path. Whereas Welsh language road signs would re-establish particular standards of Welshness (Merriman and Jones, 2009) and re-inscribing the Welsh language in an Anglicised landcape, the loss of Welsh house names proved to do the opposite for Wales Coast Path walkers. According to Merriman and Jones (2009) Welsh language campaigners argued that the Welsh language must be

embedded in the everyday environment. Wales Coast Path walkers were unable to change the house names and English shop signs they saw. Therefore, their way of embedding the Welsh language back into the everyday environment was to give it a presence on the Wales Coast Path by speaking to all they passed whilst walking.

6.8: Conclusion

This chapter has explored how walking the Wales Coast Path raises questions about identity. It uses Bauman's (1996) standpoint that identity only becomes an issue when people aren't sure where they belong. Identity is an issue when people aren't sure where to place themselves in the world (Bauman, 1996). The empirical findings show that walking the Wales Coast Path became a means whereby those who were unsure where they belonged in the world could finally find their identities through walking the entire Wales Coast Path. Walking the Wales Coast Path was an escape from an uncertainty about their identity.

Walking the Wales Coast Path was also a practice walkers undertook which proved their identities to others. Where there were previously questions about the legitimacy of their Welsh identities, the walkers were able to defend their identities and commitment to Wales through what they gave to Wales during their walks and how much they got to know Wales through walking her entire coastline. According to Bauman (1996) a pilgrimage is what one does out of necessity to advance away from uncertainty. Walking the Wales Coast Path is therefore bound in the formation of national identity. Walking helped walkers to shape their sense of identity thus reinforcing their national identity. Jones and Merriman (2012) state that national identity is performed by members of a certain group. Walking the Wales Coast Path celebrates the walkers' national distinctiveness through what they experienced during their journeys around Wales. Walkers where able to reproduce national identity within everyday life (Edesnor 2002 cited in Jones and Merriman, 2012: 940). Walking the Wales Coast Path created what Jones and Merriman (2012) call a common frame of reference for members of the nation.

Identity can therefore be positioned within what people have experienced whilst walking the Wales Coast Path.

Jones and Merriman (2012) state that nonhuman actants such as signs can help to extend the material qualities of a nation. Welsh language speakers therefore felt a loss towards the qualities of the Welsh nation when they witness a lack of Welsh house names along the Wales Coast Path. They further state that signs and place names are significant objects within a Welsh territory therefore it greatly affected walkers when Welsh names weren't to be seen. Jones and Merriman (2012) draw attention to Davies (2007) who states that signs are a highly effective means of defining the national territory. The lack of Welsh language house names experienced on the Wales Coast Path therefore, for Welsh language speakers, points towards a loss of status of the Welsh territory to Anglicisation. Contrastingly, non-Welsh speakers experienced a different realisation whilst walking the Wales Coast Path. For them, Welsh was to be heard and seen frequently. Their exposure to the Welsh language made them feel a lack for not speaking it. Experiencing the Welsh language whilst walking the Wales Coast Path made them judge their sense of national identity. Bauman (1996) states that identity is an assertion of inadequacy. Non-Welsh speakers felt a sense of inadequacy in their identities for not being able to speak Welsh. The empirical evidence shows that the Wales Coast Path is a hierarchical space, whereby the Welsh language was given precedence. It was used by Welsh speakers to accentuate its existence when they were faced with their perceived demise of it. It facilitated profound effect on non-Welsh speakers who centred it as the main component to truly be Welsh.

Walking the Wales Coast Path can therefore be seen as a cultural pilgrimage whereby walkers could prove their commitment to Wales as well as their Welsh identities through walking every step of the Welsh coast and "shape of a nation" (Baxter, 2011). Through walking the Wales Coast Path, walkers could not only prove something to themselves but also to others. Their cultural pilgrimage and journey along the Wales Coast Path attested to their national identities. They were able to use their experiences and achievements of the Wales Coast Path as leverage

against others when their identities where in doubt. Bauman (1966) states that people can look back at footprints in the sand and see them as roads. The Wales Coast Path walkers were able to look back at the footprints made on their journeys along the Welsh coastline and consider them as an inroad towards the confirmation of their Welsh identities. The Wales Coast Path can therefore be considered a 'Welshscape' (discussed in chapter 2 and 7). It facilitates feelings of national identity and is a hierarchical space where the Welsh language takes precedent.

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Chapter 7:

Conclusion

This research offered an opportunity like no other; it allowed the investigation into what it means to a have a path which encompasses the coast of an entire nation allowing mobility along the whole of Coastal Wales. It stresses that the walking body is an effective tool through which we experience and negotiate identity. There is an intricate link between the identification process and the way we engage with the physical environment. According to Jensen (2009: 154) "the way we bodily engage with places through multiple ways of circulation in, out of and across them shape an important part of the practical engagement with the world that ultimately constructs our understanding."

By means of 'walking and talking' with the research participants, as they walked the Wales Coast Path, the experiences of the walkers have been followed in real time. The results offer an insight on both an empirical and conceptual level and are summarised in this chapter in relation to the research objectives summarised in chapter 1. The main contributions of this research will be discussed and will conclude with suggestions for the direction of future research.

7.1: Revisiting the Research Objectives

In this subsection, I return to the research objectives which emerged through my conversations, interactions and experiences with walkers on the Wales Coast Path, and through the engagement with the literature which shaped the direction of this research. I discuss the research findings relating to each objective and linking empirical evidence from the research to present a holistic picture of the experiences of Wales Coast Path walkers.

1) To explore the more-than-human on the Wales Coast Path and how material objects influence walkers' experiences.

The thesis examines the non-human agency of the Wales Coast Path sign and positions itself within the literatures that consider non-human 'things' as central to geographical enquiry (Callon, 1989; Law, 2008; Murdoch, 1998), that can actively shape new geographies. However, geographical enquiry has predominantly ignored a more cultural and performance based empirical engagement, in favour of a more technological focus. The Wales Coast Path sign is conceptualized as a vital actor in the experiences of walkers whilst walking the coast of Wales and demonstrates the multitude of effects it has on the walkers. The thesis supplements research grounded in ideas of the Non-Representational (Thrift, 1996; 2003) and Actor Network Theory (Latour, 1993; Law, 1994) by considering the Wales Coast Path sign a key performer in how the walkers engaged with the Path and the experiences they had because of it. After being placed along the Wales Coast Path the sign took on a life of its own determining the experience the walkers would have on their journeys. This thesis draws attention to the various patterns of influence the Wales Coast Path sign had on the walkers.

The Wales Coast Path sign is discussed as an object which gave the walkers much reassurance whilst they walked the Wales Coast Path. When walking for long periods of time in the absence of the sign walkers felt hesitant and unaided. Walkers' attitudes changed in the absence of the Wales Coast Path sign and they became unsure and agitated. When the Wales Coast Path sign was not present during a walk, walkers were always searching for it, willing for it to appear for stability to be restored. When the sign re-appeared during a walk, walkers experienced a sense of relief and a release from the uncertainty its lack of presence caused. When walking along the Wales Coast Path the sign gave walkers the reassurance they needed that they were walking the correct way and were following the correct route, in order to walk every step on the path, and walk the whole coast of Wales. The thesis demonstrates that non-human 'things' such as the Wales Coast Path sign aren't merely passive objects which need to be activated by

humans (Callon and Law, 1997). Rather, the Wales Coast Path sign itself is an active entity, with an authoritative influence on how walkers experience the Wales Coast Path.

The thesis draws attention to the influence the Wales Coast Path has on walkers' decision making process and considers it an actant which has the ability to cause and effect (Latour, 1999). The Wales Coast Path sign dictated where the walkers walked and what they saw on their journeys. The Wales Coast Path sign created an environment whereby walkers followed it without question or hesitation on their journeys. The Wales Coast Path sign led walkers onto uneven, overgrown paths when there were easier and more pleasurable alternatives to be taken, and took them to less scenic areas when other paths took them to more attractive or interesting areas. It didn't allow them to experience anything off its course. When walkers were presented with an opportunity to see and experience something away from the Wales Coast Path they were unable to do so if the sign didn't grant them the permission. The sign's agency created such an overbearing effect on the walkers that they relied on it and it alone during their journeys on the Wales Coast Path.

The walkers invested so much dependency on the Wales Coast Path sign that it became the object that consumed them during their walks. The reassurance the sign granted walkers meant that they didn't need to look elsewhere for guidance when walking. Maps were hardly ever used by the research participants during the fieldwork, with walkers investing their trust in the sign alone to guide them on their journeys. The embodied nature of walkers' experiences on the Wales Coast Path meant that the sign took precedence over all else, including maps. Crouch (2001) states that embodiment is at the core of our experiences. The embodied body is seen as a bundle of senses whereby people sense and think through the body. Being immersed on the Wales Coast Path, and the embodied nature of such an arduous and long task such as walking the whole Wales Coast Path, meant that the sign became the focal point for walkers which determined where they went and what they experienced. The plethora of emotions it generated in the walkers

highlighted the embodied nature of the walk and how the Wales Coast Path sign won its influence over walkers.

The Wales Coast Path sign's agency is strengthened by the walkers' need to walk every step of the Wales Coast Path. Walkers needed to walk every step and experience all the Wales Coast Path in order to prove themselves as proper walkers (chapter 5) and to prove their Welsh identities (chapter 6). The Wales Coast Path sign became the main waymaker for walkers and re-assured them that they were progressing towards their goal of walking every step of the Wales Coast Path and cementing their identities. Although called the Wales Coast Path, due to geographical restrictions such as estuaries, and issues such as private, farm and commercial land, walkers weren't physically able to merely walk along the coastline linearly from Queensferry to Chepstow. The Wales Coast Path meandered inland when it needed to evade estuaries, farm, private or commercial land, thus taking walkers away from the actual coastline. Walkers would have to walk along miles of country roads, along busy dual carriageways and through countless fields to avoid these route restrictions. Due to the geographical wavering of the Wales Coast Path the sea wasn't always present to walkers on their journeys. Countless journeys inland meant walkers turned their backs toward the sea and would be apart from it for long periods of time. Therefore, even though they were walking the Wales Coast Path, the sea didn't play an important part to the walkers' experiences on their journeys. Due to its inconsistent presence the walkers were unable to use the sea as a navigational tool or to aid them whilst walking the Wales Coast Path. It was unable to offer them any reassurance that they were still on the official Wales Coast Path and progressing towards their ultimate goal of walking every step. Consequently, the Wales Coast Path sign was able to become the navigational presence the walkers needed. It was the one constant during a walk which varied in landscape, surroundings, and the physical properties of the Wales Coast Path itself which fluctuated from tarmac paths, uneven rocky surfaces and sandy or grassy surfaces. It showed them they were walking on the Wales Coast Path and gave them the reassurance that they were on track to reach their goal of completing every step of their walk.

The Wales Coast Path sign had such an effect on walkers, that after the walk was completed, it was the sign that they would display proudly as a marker of their achievements. Walkers would bake cakes with the sign on them, display pictures of themselves with the sign and even create shrines to the sign. The sign was also stolen from the Wales Coast Path as souvenirs of walkers' experiences on their journeys. It is what created a lasting effect on them. This resonates with Closs Stephens (2015: 1) who in her discussion on the affective atmospheres of nationalism created by the London 2012 Olympics draws attention to how the buzz about the games meant that bottles containing "100 per cent Olympic Bottled Atmosphere started retailing on eBay for a buy it now price of £50."

The sign has proven to be an important part of people's social network on the Wales Coast Path and through numerous heterogeneous assemblages can take on many different forms. It isn't merely a meaningless inanimate object but a vital 'cog' in the experiences of walkers on the Wales Coast Path. The Wales Coast Path sign's power comes from a myriad of different relations that appear in a network at a particular moment in time. Its power is an effect of the function of the network configuration, whether that is a mistimed sand dune, the weather, the topography underfoot, a heavy backpack, a field of cows or it being a lonely isolated walk. These multitude of relations hold themselves together aiding the sign in its agency. Yet they hold themselves together precariously. All it takes is one of these relations to fail and the whole walls of reality unravel. Yet ultimately the Wales Coast Path sign has made itself indispensable to the walkers. Its effect on walkers has transformed provisional relations, at a specific moment in time, into durable, seemingly irreversible ties.

2) To explore how a walker's identity is negotiated whilst walking the Wales Coast Path.

Historical discussions on walking (Gros, 2015) discuss it as a practice which allows the walking body to experience freedom. Freedom from the restrictions placed on sporting bodies which are confined to instructions and guidelines (Gros, 2015).

Walking was previously considered as a leisurely activity which would get a walker from A to B at an easy pace, allowing walkers to stop when they wanted to and to explore at the pace that was most pleasing to them. Much attention has been given to the Romantic notions of walking recorded by Wordsworth (2008) and Thoreau (1862) which refer to a slower pace of walking, allowing the walker to absorb the surroundings at a comfortable and leisurely pace. Coverly (2010) uses these Romantic ideas of walking to advocate a need for a slow pace of walking to absorb every detail of a walk. A slow pace of walking would allow the walker the liberty to drift, to wander unhindered by any restrictions and confines. Contrastingly, this thesis shows that walking the Wales Coast Path is a practice laden with techniques and rules, scores, competition, training; correct postures and movements. This thesis turns away from sedate and unhurried notions of walking and draws attention to the consequences of walking the whole Wales Coast Path and how it has given rise to a more competitive, physical, faster, goal orientated and judgemental walker and way of walking.

Walkers' identities were constructed during their walks on the Wales Coast Path by how much they suffered during their walks. It is the suffering experienced during their walks on the Wales Coast Path that walkers felt set them apart from others and moulded their identities as 'proper walkers'. Dedication and commitment to walking the Wales Coast Path was shown by how much physical affliction they suffered. The empirical findings resonate with Wylie (2005: 240) who states that walking means "[t]o be 'in' the landscape, but also up against it. To be dogged, put-upon, petulant, breathless." The physical hardships suffered during walkers' journeys on the Wales Coast Path were applauded and admired. Tales of walking woes were given with aplomb and were used as evidence of walkers' commitment to walking the Wales Coast Path. Gros (2015) states that there is an increase in walking discursions that last for days. He states that walkers are pleased for the discomforts they experience during these long walks. Wales Coast Path walkers were not happy because they avoided any physical hardships, or walking ailments whilst walking, they were happy because of the suffering they experienced. The footsore became a badge of honour, proof that walkers truly experienced the

Wales Coast Path. Rather than seen as a problem, walkers basked in the glory of the footsore and other walking conditions, and they were considered marks of the proper walker. Wylie (2005) states that the footsore creates the sublime experience and creates the sublime walker.

This thesis discusses the exclusivity of being a proper walker. According to Gros (2014: 7) the freedom in walking lies in not being anyone. He states that the walking body has no history, it is also separate from opinion and tradition. Gros (2014) states that the freedom experienced by walking has been suggested as freeing from the idea of identity. This thesis goes against the notion that walking enables an individual to escape any kind of identity, contrastingly when walking a strong identity is created. Walkers who walked the entire Wales Coast Path were inducted into the hall of walking fame and given names such as Giants of the Wales Coast Path and the Perimeters. They were an exclusive group of walkers who could unite through tales and experiences of walking the Wales Coast Path. The exclusivity of Wales Coast Path walkers is also highlighted in the discussion above about the suffering endured whilst walking the Wales Coast Path. The stylistic identities of the walkers was also discussed. Wales Coast Path walkers judged others they met on the path according to the clothes they were wearing. Wearing the correct clothes and having the correct equipment needed to walk the Wales Coast Path set the walkers apart from others they didn't deem as proper walkers. Walkers judged other people on the path for their incorrect choice of clothing and equipment. This drew attention to the cultural capital transmitted through a walker's choice of clothing and equipment (Bordieu, 1979). Sharing the same clothes with others created a sense of collective identity amongst the Wales Coast Path walkers.

Attention is drawn to two modalities of movement, wayfaring and transport (Ingold, 2010). Ideas of the wayfarer align with the romantic notions of walking whereby people meander through life and are able to improvise the journey they take. A transport way of moving carries the passenger on a pre-planned, planar route whereby the passenger must get from A to B ideally in a short of time as

possible (Ingold, 2010). Walking the Wales Coast Path is compared to Ingold's (2010) ideas of a transport mode of movement. The Wales Coast Path follows the coast of an entire nation and presents itself as a challenge for walkers. It has a start and a finish, a set amount of mileage, and a pre-planned walking route in-between. The main challenge is to get from A-B and walk every section of the Wales Coast Path. The Wales Coast Path has a start and end point, from Queensferry to Chepstow, or from Chepstow to Queensferry, depending on the starting point. It also as a set number of miles, 870, which need to be completed. For Ingold (2010), in contrast to the continual tactical manoeuvring of the wayfarer who is free to tactically decide his way through life, the passenger, who travels in accordance with the transport mode of movement, is bound to a series of strategic moves from location to location "rather like the 'moves', in draughts or chess, of a piece across the board." (Ingold, 2010: 84). Wales Coast Path walkers were strategic in where they walked, and how they walked. Walkers were unable to veer off the route set out for them, in order to explore other things of interest, off the Wales Coast Path. The emphasis walkers put upon the need to walk every step of the path, to truly complete the Wales Coast Path, meant that they were unwilling to deviate from the route for fear of not completing every step of the Wales Coast Path. Walking the Wales Coast Path is therefore like a jigsaw, whereby walkers had to make sure every piece, or every step, was completed. Walking the Wales Coast Path therefore is considered as a practice that compromised the freedom of the walkers. Compromising the freedom of the walkers to wander and explore at will off the Wales Coast Path.

The thesis draws attention to how the embodied nature of walking the Wales Coast Path created a walker who was consumed with the mileage achieved, time, speed, physical ability and style which all contribute to form the 'proper' walker. The walker's identity is moulded on the ground, negotiated in the walker's direct physical engagement with the Wales Coast Path. It is this physical and embodied relationship with walking the Wales Coast Path that walkers think sets them apart from others. The thesis therefore takes a turn inward and looks at how the embodied nature of walking the Wales Coast Path affected the identity of the

walkers. Walking the Wales Coast Path is no longer about freedom, but it about the strict rules and regulations which must be abided to complete the walk in the correct manner and to prove oneself as a proper walker.

3) To explore how walking the entire coast of Wales facilitates a sense of cultural pilgrimage and feelings of attachment and commitment to Wales.

This thesis aligns itself with pilgrimage studies and considers the act of walking the Wales Coast Path as a cultural pilgrimage whereby walkers are able to find their identities. Identity is considered as a question which only becomes an issue when a person is uncertain about where he or she belongs (Bauman, 1996). Walking the Wales Coast Path is discussed as a means whereby walkers can re-connect to Wales and prove their Welsh identities to themselves and to others. Identity is considered a journey, a pilgrimage, whereby certainty of identity is achieved at the end of that journey.

The thesis demonstrates how walking the Wales Coast Path gave walkers, who no longer lived in Wales, an active re-connection to Wales. The walk around the coastline not only gave walkers the chance to explore the "shape and soul of a nation" (Baxter, 2011), but it presented an opportunity to re-connect with Wales, a country they had moved away from and felt a loss of connection and association with. Walking the whole Wales Coast Path gave the opportunity for those who were uncertain about their identities, and where they belonged, to re-acquaint themselves with Wales. The Wales Coast Path gave people an invitation to explore Wales, it also gave people a new unhindered way of exploring the country with was truly immersive and embodied. The sense of re-connection walkers experienced came from the fact that they had re-gained a familiarity with Wales. The Wales Coast Path enabled them to immerse themselves wholly and plunge themselves into experiencing every step of their journeys around Wales.

The thesis also demonstrates how walkers felt they had proved their Welshness and cemented their Welsh identities through the physical and mental challenges and

consequences of walking the Wales Coast Path. The physicality and mental challenges of walking the Wales Coast Path was shown to have a direct influence on the Welsh identities of the walkers. When faced with questions about their identities, walkers claimed it could not be doubted as they had proven their Welshness and commitment to Wales through walking the entire coastline, experiencing and overcoming every mental and physical challenge the Wales Coast Path threw at them. They persevered during their walks and continued to walk the Wales Coast Path even when faced with blisters and aches and pains. For these walkers, their identities and their connection to Wales was something that was physically sensed and felt through the physical consequences of undertaking such an arduous journey around Wales. Nationalistic feelings were shown to be something that could be felt through the body (Closs Stephens, 2015). Walkers saw walking the Wales Coast Path, and physically experiencing the walk as they did, as a rite of passage to their Welsh identities, or a performance which is necessary in the formation of national identity. Wales Coast Path walkers were able to use their journeys as testament of their identities when it was questioned by others. They were able to compare the challenge of walking the Wales Coast Path with what others had done to show their identities. Their Welsh identities where strengthened by accomplishing something others hadn't.

The walkers' Welsh identities and a sense of connection to Wales was facilitated by how much the Wales Coast Path exposed them to Wales during their walks. As their knowledge of Wales increased so did their sense of connection and identity. The Wales Coast Path gave people the incentive to explore more of Wales. Being able to walk the entire Wales Coast Path opened people's eyes to Wales and made them realise they didn't know as much about the country as they had previously thought. Therefore, being exposed to so much of Wales, and getting to know more about what can be found along the coastline, increased their awareness of Wales and consequently facilitated a stronger sense of connection. The Wales Coast Path created the 'hardening of Welsh space' (Gruffudd, 1995) and gave people the opportunity to explore Wales. Much like the A470 road (Merriman and Jones, 2016) the Wales Coast Path introduced walkers to the varied character of Wales

geographically, linguistically, economically and politically. Through walking the entire coastline of Wales the walkers were affected by what they saw and experienced thus having a profound effect on their identities and connection to Wales. Walking the Wales Coast path also instilled a sense of pride in the walkers. They were proud of themselves for their achievements which heightened their senses of national identity, but by experiencing so much of the country during their walks they also became profoundly proud of Wales. The Wales Coast Path gave walkers the opportunity to experience parts of Wales where people wouldn't necessarily think of going for a walk. Walking the Wales Coast Path took walkers to areas that wouldn't have been accessible before and only experiences from afar. Thus, walking the Wales Coast Path gave the walkers a different perspective on their surroundings.

This thesis argues that the Wales Coast Path is a site where the Welsh language is contested. For Wales Coast Path walkers, that aren't from Wales, walking the whole coast became a means of debunking myths about the Welsh language. Whilst walking they witnessed the Welsh language as a natural part of people's lives and something Welsh speakers do naturally. It pleased walkers to hear the Welsh language spoken and see it visually on signs or house names as it gave them an experience of an authentic Wales. Experiencing the Welsh language was significant as it emphasised that they were walking in Wales, a country with a different culture. For those walkers of the Wales Coast Path, that weren't from Wales, experiencing the Welsh language on their walks was a positive experience. The fact that they didn't live in Wales meant that they were able to experience the language objectively. They were able to enjoy their walks as an authentic experience of Wales and her culture. For non-Welsh speaking walkers who lived in Wales their experiences of the Welsh language were imbued with feelings of guilt and regret for not being able to speak Welsh. Walking the Wales Coast Path instilled in them a lack of Welshness for not being able to speak Welsh. During their walks they felt deeply exposed and immersed in the Welsh language by seeing it on house names and street signs, learning the Welsh names of landscape features and hearing it spoken on the Wales Coast Path as well as in its surrounding towns and villages.

Ultimately what the Wales Coast Path did to walkers was lure them out of their spaces of comfort and familiarity and presented them with a new reality whereby they felt they needed a knowledge and understanding of the Welsh language and her pronunciations. Non-Welsh speaking walkers felt a distinct lack in their identities when they walked the Wales Coast Path, experiencing a lot of the Welsh language on the path made them judge their own identities, thus experiencing feelings of shame and embarrassment for not being able to speak the language or pronounce place names correctly.

On the other hand, Welsh language speakers who walked the Wales Coast Path, instead of being immersed in the Welsh language were faced with experiencing a loss of language and were witness to the deterioration of Welsh culture. During their walks they were confronted with English house names which signified to them the loss of a Welsh speaking area and a changing society whereby the Welsh language was vanishing. Welsh speakers claimed they didn't hear Welsh spoken on the path which disappointed them. Welsh language speakers therefore used the Welsh language whilst walking the Wales Coast Path to re-establish the language's presence on it. It was a way to establish the language's authority on the Wales Coast Path and a way reminding people they are in Wales. They used their language prowess whilst walking to exert the language's dominance and to give it back the power they though it was losing.

This thesis considers the Wales Coast Path as a 'Welshscape'. It is a national infrastructure which invites people to discover the "shape and soul of a nation" (Baxter, 2011). It is also a site where national identity is performed and proven. It gives walkers an opportunity to re-connected with Wales and is a site whereby they can prove their commitment to Wales. It is a site where walkers can literally advance towards their Welsh identities (Bauman, 1996). Walkers believed they had proven their Welshness and cemented their Welsh identity through the physical challenges and consequences of walking the Wales Coast Path. The physicality of walking the Wales Coast Path therefore had a direct influence of the Welsh identities of the walkers. Many of the walkers saw walking the whole Wales Coastal

Path as a rite of passage to their Welsh identities, or a performance that is necessary in the formation of national identity. This 'Welshscape' is also a site of contention whereby the Welsh language is constantly contested. The Welsh language fluctuates from being a domineering force which creates feelings of lack in non-Welsh speakers on the Wales Coast Path to one which is barely felt and experienced for Welsh language speakers. The presence of the Welsh language on the path is only given any cultural significance due to the "group-making project associated with them" (Jones and Merriman, 2012: 939). The Welsh language fluctuates from being present and domineering to absent and submissive depending on the assemblage of heterogeneous elements that come together at a specific moment during a walk on the Wales Coast Path.

4) To contribute to a greater empirical understanding of the more-than-representational experiences of walkers and the benefits of engaging with participants on the Wales Coast Path in order to access their knowledge in the place where meaning is accessed and produced.

Walking has been the focus of increased academic inquiry within Geography during the past decade with works such as Edensor (2001, 2010), Wylie (2002; 2005), Macnaghten and Urry (2001) all focusing on the physical act of walking and its implications. Rather than just a way of getting from A to B and a functional mode of transport, walking is examined as an embodied event, pedestrianism is seen as a practice (Lee and Ingold, 2006) and walkers are even seen as research participants. Walking has generated interest because it is now argued that when walking the mind and the body work together; thinking therefore becomes a physical act.

A constant underlining presence within the themes of this thesis has been the embodied and in the moment experiences walkers faced whilst walking the Wales Coast Path. It is these embodied experiences that informed the main tenents of the empirical chapters (chapters 4, 5 and 6). Embodied experiences that only came to light through a walking and talking methodology. The agency of the sign was such an embodied issue, for the walkers in the midst of their walks on the Wales Coast

Path, that the extent of its influence wasn't considered before bearing witness to it during the walks. The facets of Assemblage were considered in the literature review (chapter 2), whereby walkers' experiences were discussed as being formed by numerous heterogeneous assemblages which could converge at any moment in time to create what the walkers experience on the Wales Coast Path. It was walking along with walkers, and witnessing first-hand how it shaped the walkers' experiences, that revealed the agency of the sign and how it was an overriding part in the Wales Coast Path assemblage which determined experience for the walkers.

The theme of being a proper walker also became clear during the fieldwork process. This was exemplified by the walkers identifying themselves in an exclusive group of Wales Coast Path walkers, calling themselves, 'Giants of the Wales Coast path', 'The Perimeters', 'End to Enders', and 'Wales Coast Path Conquerors'. Whilst walking with the participants their identity as 'proper' walkers was exemplified by their reaction to others, whether it was laughing at people sitting in their cars eating chips along the coast or commenting on the inappropriate clothing of a passer-by, such as jeans or wrong footwear. These reactions were prompted by what the walkers experienced whilst walking the Wales Coast Path and a direct deduction to what they experienced on the path at that moment in time.

It was during the fieldwork that the issue of the Welsh language really bourgeoned. Speaking Welsh on the Wales Coast Path, to re-establish Welsh as the main language of the path and Wales, wasn't something that was discussed amongst the walkers, it wasn't something they actively spoke about amongst themselves with the intention to counteract the loss of language they experienced whilst walking. Additionally, it was something that wasn't represented during the interviews whilst walking the Wales Coast Path, it was something that was done without the walkers' comprehension. It emerged from walkers' interweaving with the world and an unequivocal reaction to what they experienced during their immersement whilst walking the Wales Coast Path. It is a key theme which emerged as a consequence of walking alongside the research participants and experiencing the walks with them.

Thrift (2008: 12 italics in original) states “when given a chance to use our various senses we start to notice the “event-ness of the world” and the small details that make up the everyday lives and place experience of our research participants.” It was therefore important to engage with participants whilst they walked the Wales Coast Path as the body and people’s experiences become emergent through an interweaving with the world. Walking along and experiencing the walks with walkers prioritised the knowledge born of immediate experiences, thus privileging the understandings of people that derive from their lived, everyday involvement in the world.

This approach enables both the investigation of the representational and non-representational, thus allowing the researcher to trace the material and non-material. It acknowledges that that the world can be seen and thought about, but can also be sensed in to other ways (hear, smell, touch, feel). Sometimes some things can be lost in the production of knowledge if research participants are taken away from the location understudy; small details of place experience can be lost. Engaging with the participant in a mobile activity can provoke memories or sensations otherwise untapped (Adey, 2010). It suggests that sometimes, it is necessary to see, hear, smell, experience or feel a place in order to communicate it to others and to make sense of it. This method is beneficial as it can trace both the material and non-material such as the ‘things’, signs, buildings as physical environment as well as sense, thoughts and feeling which determine experience for different people.

7.2: Primary Contributions of the Thesis

As well as presenting a holistic analysis of walkers’ experiences on the Wales Coast Path illustrated in section 7.1, this thesis has contributed to various academic debates. This section sets out the primary contributions made by the thesis to the literatures on walking and discusses how walking can also be effectively used as a methodological tool. This thesis contributes to academic literature as it’s the only research of its kind which examines people’s experiences of walking around the

coast of an entire nation. The research is the first of its kind as Wales is currently the only country in the word to have developed a continuous path around its entire coastline (see chapter 1), allowing an unparalleled exploration of the "shape and soul of a nation" (Baxter, 2011). It allowed for the exploration of what it means for people to be able to walk along the coast of an entire nation.

Firstly, the main contribution of the thesis is the richness in the empirical findings, which highlight the benefits of a walking and talking approach, giving an unparalleled insight into what walkers experienced when walking the coast of an entire nation. This thesis specifically addresses the materialities and sensibilities entailed by the physical act of walking. The more-than-representational challenges geographers to look beyond simply representations and towards performance and practice, "where the flesh of our bodies meet the pavement of the world" (Carolan, 2008: 409). It is a style of engagement with the world that focuses on the taking place of practices, focusing on what humans and non-humans do. It is physical performances, in this case walking, that matter. This is also expressed by Lorimer (2005, 83) who states "open encounters in the realm of practice that matter most." The more-than-representational is a style of thinking which values practice (Thrift, 2000).

A constant underlining presence within the themes of this thesis has been the embodied and in the moment experiences walkers faced whilst walking the Wales Coast Path. It is these embodied experiences that informed the main tenents of the empirical chapters. Embodied experiences that only came to light through a walking and talking methodology and consequently generated the rich empirical findings.

Secondly, this thesis offers a new way of thinking about how national identity and Welshness is performed through the physical act of walking the Wales Coast Path. Welsh identity is theorised as something that is felt through the physical consequences of walking the Wales Coast Path and national identity is proven through what the walkers physically experienced during their journeys. This thesis contributes to academic debates on identity by considering the Wales Coast Path as

a (and offering the term) ‘Welshscape’. The thesis considers the Wales Coast Path as a new site where national identity is performed and proven. It gives walkers an opportunity to re-connect with Wales and is a site whereby they can prove their commitment to Wales. It is a site where walkers can literally advance towards their Welsh identities (Bauman, 1996). The Wales Coast Path is a ‘Welshscape’ as many of the walkers saw walking the whole Wales Coastal Path as a rite of passage to their Welsh identities, or a performance that is necessary in the formation of national identity. This thesis introduces the Wales Coast Path as a vital instrument in the navigation of Welsh identity.

Beyond the conceptual and methodological contributions, the strength of the empirical findings in the thesis also has implications for policy makers and for future Wales Coast Path development. The unfathomable agency of the Wales Coast Path sign highlights its importance to the experiences of the walkers. Future Wales Coast Path development could take the outcome of this research into account with regards to the placement and upkeep of Wales Coast Path signs. In order to ensure Wales Coast Path walkers have the best experience during their journeys, signs should be placed at regular and well noticeable intervals which would guide the walkers and encourage them along the path with ease. Considering the emphasis walkers gave to the importance of the sign, and the determination to walk every step of the Wales Coast Path without ever veering of course, mindful placement of the sign would further help the walkers to complete their goal of walking the entire Welsh coast.

Additionally, future Wales Coast Path development could take into account the emphasis placed on following every sign rather than following specific footpaths. For example, in light of this information, maintenance of the Wales Coast Path could focus on maintaining the sections of the path where the signs lead the walkers. The determination shown by walkers to walk every step of the Wales Coast Path means they will walk the way the sign leads them whatever the quality of the path. Chapter 4 discusses how walkers would walk on an uneven, overgrown path rather than choose a safer and easier route. Therefore, close attention given to the

maintenance of the sections of the Wales Coast Path where the sign leads the walkers would ensure an easier and safer journey. The End of Project Report (2014) (discussed in chapter 1) emphasises the importance of on-going improvements on the Wales Coast Path. This is to ensure that the Wales Coast Path remains a high quality user experience, therefore attention given to the sign should be an imperative issue.

Additionally, considering the importance walkers placed on the Wales Coast Path sign, rather than following a coastal route and placing any emphasis on seeing the sea, policy makers could develop the path inwards away from the coast with ease knowing it wouldn't affect the experiences of the walkers and their willingness to complete the whole of the Wales Coast Path. The End of Project Report (2014) (discussed in chapter 1) states that in time the aim is to the extend the Wales Coast Path inward, creating more circular coastal routes linking the path to more towns and villages inland. Additionally, another future aim is to link the Wales Coast Path to the existing Offa's Dyke path to create a path which encompasses the entire country. The Wales Coast Path walkers placed no importance on the sea and seeing and experiencing the sea and the name 'Wales Coast Path' didn't affect people's need to see more of the sea when the path took them inland. Therefore, developing more inland paths away from the sea wouldn't affect the walkers' willingness to walk them.

The thesis also has implications for the Welsh Tourist Industry and the way they could promote the Wales Coast Path outside as well as within Wales. The empirical findings show that walking the Wales Coast Path became a way for people who no longer lived in Wales to re-acquaint themselves with their Welsh identities and to re-connect with Wales. The Wales Coast Path could therefore be promoted outside of Wales as a means whereby people could re-connect with Wales, as well as being a place where people could explore the amazing coastline and everything it has to offer. Similarly, actively promoting walking the Wales Coast Path as a means to connect to Wales could be used within Wales to attract more Welsh resident to walk the entire Wales Coast Path. It could tap into people's need to find their

identities (Bauman, 1996), and used as an influencing tool to tempt people to walk the whole Wales Coast Path.

The thesis could also make a contribution to Welsh Language policies. The Welsh Government's Welsh Language Strategy, 'Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers', was published in July 2017 (The Welsh Government, 2017) and set out a target to create a million Welsh speakers by 2050. Another significant development during the reporting period was the work to finalise the new 'Cymraeg 2050' action plan which set the aims and objectives to achieve this goal and sets out how the Welsh Government will implement the proposals set out in the 'Welsh Language Strategy'. The Welsh Government states that the aim of achieving a million speakers means developing further the methods which are most likely to lead to the necessary increase.

The 'Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers, action plan 2019–2020' (The Welsh Government, 2019) identifies three themes that need to be focused on which are; increasing the number of Welsh speakers, increasing the use of Welsh and creating favourable conditions, infrastructure and context in order to increase the use of the Welsh language. The action plan concentrates mainly on promoting the use of the Welsh language in the home and increasing the use of the Welsh language through educational and work institutions. This thesis shows that walking could also offer a means to increase the number of Welsh speakers. The thesis shows that walking the Wales Coast Path offered a way for walkers to connect with Wales and subsequently the language. Getting to know so much more of Wales and feeling a connection to the country also meant walkers felt the need to speak the Welsh language in order to appreciate Wales fully and to reinforce their Welsh identities. This thesis shows that people need a tangible reason to want to speak Welsh. Walking the Wales Coast Path allowed people to see that Welsh is a living language for many and were made aware of the importance of the language through hearing it spoken whilst walking and seeing it on signs.

This thesis could directly contribute to the 'Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers, action plan 2019–2020', third theme of creating favourable conditions, infrastructure and context. Under this theme the Welsh Government aims to ensure that the Welsh language is an integral part of the efforts to enhance Wales' relationship with the wider world, and used to welcome and integrate people who move to Wales. Walking the Wales Coast Path has shown to be a practice whereby people who aren't from Wales originally are able to connect to Wales and to their own Welsh identities. It became a means whereby walkers felt they were able to integrate into Welsh society and prove their Welshness. Walking the Wales Coast Path could therefore also be included in future Welsh language policies as an embodied performance with aids in connecting people to Wales and subsequently the Welsh language.

7.3: Directions for Further Research

The thesis has sought to explore the experiences of walkers whilst walking the Wales Coast Path. The methodological approach of walking alongside the research participants underpins the whole thesis and empirical findings, which explore the embodied experiences of the walkers whilst immersed walking the Wales Coast Path. While the thesis drew attention to key themes that revealed themselves during the fieldwork, time and resource constraints prevent certain aspects from being explored. This section will briefly outline some suggestions for further research which also merit further study.

The embodied experiences of people who walk the whole Wales Coast Path, because it enables walkers to explore the whole coast of Wales, and what it means to their identities as walkers and their national identities has formed the primary focus of this research. Since the fieldwork was carried out the Welsh Government has engaged and promoted a strong 'Wellbeing' agenda. The 'Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015' stipulates seven wellbeing goals to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales (The Welsh Government, 2015). The seven wellbeing goals outlined are as follows:

- a prosperous Wales
- a resilient Wales
- a healthier Wales
- a more equal Wales
- a Wales of cohesive communities
- a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
- a globally responsible Wales

It would be interesting to extend the research to explore experiences of wellbeing whilst walking the Wales Coast Path and if the Wales Coast Path contributes significantly to the wellbeing of Wales. This could warrant an engagement with those who walk the Wales Coast Path for shorter more recreational walks rather than attempting the challenge of walking the whole coastline. It would be interesting to explore further if the empirical outcomes of this thesis contributes to the goal of a 'thriving Welsh language' and if walking the Wales Coast Path and experiencing similar things creates a 'Wales of cohesive communities'. This would be comparable to this thesis which shows that walking the Wales Coast Path created a cohesive group of walkers who were bound in a community because of what they experienced and achieved whilst walking the Wales Coast Path.

This thesis explores the experiences of walking the Wales Coast Path at a time when there is a growing trend in long distance walks in Wales. In 2019 the Cambrian Way was officially recognised as an official long distance path which runs from Cardiff Castle in the south to Conwy Castle in the north. This trail is 291 miles long and takes walkers through the highest, wildest and arguably most scenic parts of Wales. The Cambrian Way takes walkers over the Black, Brecon and Cambrian mountains as well as Cadair Idris and Snowdon. It takes walkers through the geographical heart of Wales. The Glyndŵr Way is another 135-mile long distance trail which loops between Knighton and Welshpool and passes through Machynlleth in the west. The walk is named after the 15th century Welsh Prince and folk hero Owain Glyndŵr whose parliament sat in Machynlleth. Glyndŵr's Way was given an official trail status in 2000 to mark the 600th anniversary of an ill-fated but

long running and culturally significant rebellion in 1400. Both the Cambrian Way and Glyndŵr's Way take walkers on a journey through the heart of Wales and through culturally significant sights, as well as significant landscape features such as Snowdon, the highest mountain in Wales. It would be interesting to compare and contrast walkers' experiences on these paths with the Wales Coast Path. It would be interesting to see if walking these trails has the same effect on the walkers' Welsh identities, if walkers are compelled to walk every step and if the signs command the same agency. It would be interesting to see if the themes explored in the empirical chapters of this thesis are exclusive to Wales Coast Path walkers or are shared with walkers of other long distance trails in Wales.

The fieldwork undertaken in this thesis was wholly immersive as I walked every step with the walkers and experienced so much of the Wales Coast Path myself. I walked a total of 41 walks which totalled to just over 400-miles, and almost half of the distance of the Wales Coast Path. It would be interesting to document the researcher's journey and consider how undertaking such a physically demanding, immersive and large scale fieldwork can affect the researcher long after the fieldwork has ended and what the implications are. Whilst walking with the research participants I walked in the same way the walkers wanted to walk (discussed in chapter 3) and experienced the Wales Coast Path the same way they did. This left a lingering mark on my identity as a walker as the following personal diary entry explains:

> *We had made plans that day to walk up Carn Llidi, an area I was very familiar with and looked forward to showing Elin. We started the walk, and not long into our journey, I felt agitated that Elin wanted to take regular stops to admire the beautiful Pembrokeshire coast views, and I felt bothered for having to wait for her every time she stopped. As we started the climb up Carn Llidi I propelled onwards and upwards, but Elin called me back. She wanted me to slow down and was perplexed as to why I was charging up Carn Llidi and not admiring my surroundings. She explained that she didn't want to rush the walk as she wanted to see and enjoy everything. In that moment I realised that, for me, the walk wasn't about admiring the scenery or about enjoying Elin's company, but rather was about completing the challenge of the walk as quickly and efficiently as possible without veering off course or wasting time. It occurred to me that*

during the course of the fieldwork I had transformed into one of the walker's I had walked with and researched. I wondered if the transformation would ever be reversible or would the effects of such an immersive fieldwork linger for a little while longer. (Post fieldwork personal diary: Whitesands Bay circular 12.03.2016)

Swansea University
Prifysgol Abertawe

Appendix 1: Participant consent form

Walking Wales:

Participant Consent Form

Principal Researcher: Amy Jones (4[redacted];[redacted])
✉ *Department of Geography, Swansea University, Swansea SA2 8PP*

Background: The project you're being asked to participate in aims to understand people's experiences of the Wales Coast Path. It focuses on walking as a physical activity; the feelings people have about the landscapes the path takes in; and what it means that the path spans the length of the Welsh coastline. The research seeks to document the experiences of a range of people – considering what it feels like to walk on particular stretches of the path, and how this relates to the fact that Wales as a whole is connected by the path. It is not concerned with people's knowledge of the path or how much of it they have walked: it focuses on people's own experiences and what the path means to them. *If you would prefer to communicate through the medium of Welsh please let the researcher know and your wishes will be accommodated.*

Please initial the statements in the boxes below to which you consent.

1. **I agree to take part in a walking interview with the researcher: I understand that the interview may be tape-recorded / photographed and additional notes taken.** ☐

2. **I understand that the information I provide will be transcribed for the purposes of the research and that any quotations used will be anonymized.** ☐

Your name: **Date:**

Telephone No:

Email: **Signature:**

All material relating to this research project will be stored securely at Swansea University.

Should you wish to confirm any details of this project, please contact:
Professor David B. Clarke: [redacted]
Dr Sergei Shubin: [redacted]

Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council

For Office Use Only: Participant No. ☐

Walking Wales
Cerdded Cymru

Swansea University
Prifysgol Abertawe

- **Do you walk the Wales Coast Path / or sections of it?**
- ***Ydych chi'n cerdded Llwybr Arfordir Cymru / neu rannau ohono?***

- **Would you like to share your expereinces of walking the Welsh coastline?**
- ***Hoffech chi rannu eich profiadau o gerdded arfordir Cymru?***

- **I would like to hear from you as part of my PhD research!**
- ***Hoffwn glywed oddi wrthych fel rhan o fy ymchwil PhD!***

Contact / Cysylltwch:

Amy Jones

Email / *Ebost:*

[redacted]

Twitter / *Trydar*:

[redacted]

ESRC Wales Doctoral Training Centre
Canolfan Hyfforddi Ddoethurol Cymru ESRC

Swansea University
Prifysgol Abertawe

CERDDED CYMRU
WALKING WALES

Amy Jones

Prifysgol Abertawe
Swansea University

Os hoffech chi gymryd rhan yn yr ymchwil hwn, cysylltwch â:
If you would like to take part in this research please contact:

Ebost / *Email*:
[redacted]

Trydar / *Twitter*:
[redacted]

Llwybr Arfordir Cymru
Wales Coast Path

"Peth gwych yw gallu cerdded ar hyd holl arfordir y wlad, i ddarganfod pob twll a chornel, pant ac aber. Sut gwell ffordd sydd i werthfawrogi yn wir ffurf ac enaid y genedl?"
(Lonely Planet Best in Travel 2012)

"What a wonderful thing: to walk the entire length of a country's coastline, to trace its every nook, cranny, cliff-face, indent and estuary. How better to truly appreciate the shape and soul of a nation?" (Lonely Planet Best in Travel 2012)

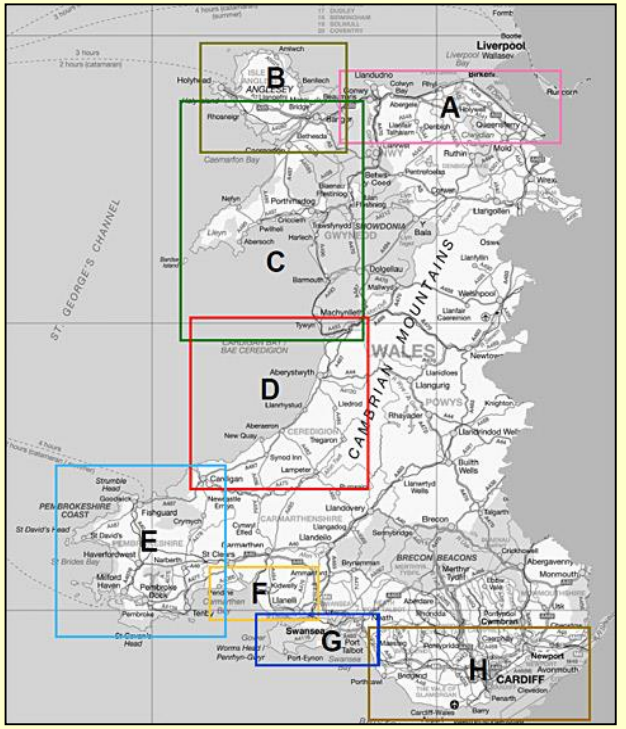
- Ydych chi'n cerdded Llwybr Arfordir Cymru / neu rannau ohono?
- *Do you walk the Wales Coast Path / or sections of it?*

- Hoffech chi rannu eich profiadau o gerdded arfordir Cymru?
- *Would you like to share your expereinces of walking the Welsh coastline?*

- Hoffwn glywed oddi wrthych fel rhan o fy ymchwil PhD!
- *I would like to hear from you as part of my PhD research!*

Archwilio'r Rhanbarthau
Explore by Region

A: Arfordir Gogledd Cymru & Aber Afon Dyfrdwy
North Wales & Dee Estuary
B: Ynys Môn
Isle of Anglesey
C: Menai, Llŷn & Meirionnydd
D: Ceredigion
E: Sir Benfro
Pembrokeshire
F: Sir Gaerfyrddin
Carmarthenshire
G: Gŵyr & Bae Abertawe
Gower & Swansea Bay
H: Arfordir De Cymru & Aber Afon Hafren
South Wales Coast & Severn Estuary



Cerdded Cymru

Walking Wales

- Mae'r ymchwil yn canolbwyntio ar y gweithgaredd corfforol o gerdded Llwybr Arfordir Cymru. Yn astudio sut mae profiadau pobl o'r Llwybr Arfordir Cymru yn ganlyniad i'r gweithgareddau corfforol a'r perfformiad o gerdded
- *The focus is on the physical act of walking the Wales Coast Path. Investigating ways in which experiences of the Wales Coast Path are understood, felt and sensed through the bodily actions and performances of walking*
- Mae'r ymchwil yn cydnabod bod cerdded Llwybr Arfordir Cymru wedi treiddio gyda gwahanol gysylltiadau heterogenaidd,sef cyfuniad o'r naturiol, cymdeithasol, dynol ac an-ddynol sydd yn penderfynu profiadau ar Lwybr Arfordir Cymru
- *This research will acknowledge that walking the Wales Coast Path is permeated with different heterogeneous relations, which are a combination of the social and natural, human and non-human which determine experiences whilst walking the Wales Coast Path*

Themau Ymchwil

Research Themes

Symudoledd
Mobility

- Sut mae profiadau pobl o'r Llwybr Arfordir Cymru yn ganlyniad i'r gweithgareddau corfforol a'r perfformiad o gerdded?
- *How are experiences of the Wales Coast Path understood, felt and sensed through the bodily actions and performances of walking?*

Symudiad
Movement

- A oes yna gwahanol fforddiant i symudiad sydd yn penderfynnu symudoledd i wahanol pobl?
- *Are there different affordances for movement which determine mobility for different people?*

Ymdeimlad o Le
Sense of Place

- A fydd cerdded Llwybr Arfordir Cymru yn hwyluso ymdeimlad o gysylltiad diwylliannol a theimladau o berthyn tuag at Gymru, cymunedau ar hyd ei arfordir ac i gerddwyr arall?
- *Does walking the Wales Coast Path facilitate a sense of cultural attachment and belonging to Wales, communities along the path or to other walkers?*

Hunaniaeth
Identity

- A fydd cerdded Llwybr Arfordir Cymru yn broses a fydd yn atgynhyrchu hunaniaeth Cymraeg?
- *Is walking the Wales Coast Path a process that will help reproduce Welsh identity?*

Methodoloeg

Methodology

Cyfweliadau cerdded – 'clebran tra'n cerdded'

Walking interviews – 'talking whilst walking'

- Mae'r dull yma yn cydnabod y wybodaeth a'r ystyron sydd yn cael eu creu tra bod pobl wedi eu lleoli yn gorfforol mewn lleoliad arbennig. Ceir cydnybyddiaeth bod gwybodaeth yn seiliedig ar brofiad uniongyrchol. Mae pobl yn creu dealldwriaeth trwy ymglymiad ffisegol yn y byd
- *This approach accesses the knowledge of people-in- places where meaning is accessed and produced. It acknowledges that knowledge is born through immediate experience, people gain understanding from their lived everyday involvement in the world*

Gall gweithio'n agos gyda chyfranogwyr tra'n cymryd rhan mewn gweithgaredd symudol hybu atgofion neu teimladau digyffwrdd

Engaging with the participant in a mobile activity can provoke memories or sensations otherwise untapped

N 'HALEN' YN CANU AM 'DD 'DAL YN BYWYD 'MA A TÂN'...

dd y peth yw stori'r wedi symud gatre ni ar ôl bod bant - lot o bobol ifanc yn l dyddie yma - a pa lig yw ei fywyd e. ı yn rhyw fath o goffa fe i ddim rhoi ddiolchgar am y ' fe'n cael wrth ei

wr o Bruce dyna lle mae'r ead a gobaith yma od, ond trwy ffilter ach llai bombastic! Iae'r gân yn ateb gân 'Y Cwm' gan Edrych ar yr ochr llai geiniog. Mae pawb am ledu gorwelion ld mewn ffordd ıd weithiau mae jest rtre'.

SUT FYDDECH CHI'N DISGRIFIO EICH CERDDORIAETH?

YNYR: Fi'n ofnadwy ar ateb y cwestiwn yma. Fi'n siŵr bydde itunes yn rhoi e mewn i *genre* rhywbeth fel *'alternative pop'*. Mae pob trac yn eitha' gwahanol felly mae sŵn eitha eclectig 'albym gynta' iddo fe.

Bydde rhai pobol yn rhoi e lawr i fand sydd heb 'ffeindio ei sŵn' eto, ond ni wedi ffeindio'n sŵn ac mae e'n lot o wahanol bethau! Hefyd, ti ddim ond yn cael un 'albym gynta' so man a man taflu popeth mewn iddo fe!

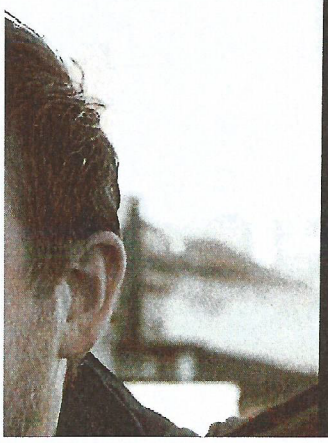
BETH YW'R CYNLLUN AM WEDDILL Y FLWYDDYN?

BETHAN: Yr her fawr yw dysgu shwd i 'ware'r caneuon nawr! Gan mai ni chwaraeodd mwyafrif yr offerynnau ar y recordiau, byddwn ni'n methu gwneud hyn yn fyw, so ni wrthi'n rhoi band hyfryd at ei gilydd nawr, sy'n gyffrous.

YNYR: Mae gyda ni werth albym o ganeuon wedi eu recordio felly'r plan yw rhyddhau hwnna cyn hir.

Ewch i **roguejones.bandcamp.com** i wrando ar 'Halen' a 'Little Pig of Tree' gan Rogue Jones.

John Evans



Mae nifer, gan gynnwys Plaid Cymru yn feirniadol o'r ffaith fod Byddin Prydain yn cael mynediad i ysgolion i chwilio am filwyr y dyfodol. Ond mae John Evans yn barnu bod angen trin y fyddin fel unrhyw gwmni arall.

"Mae'r fyddin yn gyflogwr enfawr yng Nghymru a gweddill Prydain, ac rydan ni'n byw mewn cyfnod pan mae'r cyfleoedd yn brin ac mae'r fyddin yn aml yn cael ei weld fel dewis da i bobol - rhaid

POBOL A DIWYLLIANT

Awyr iach a golygfeydd godidog

AR GYFER EI DOETHURIAETH YN ADRAN DDAEAR-YDDIAETH PRIFYSGOL ABERTAWE, MAE AMY JONES YN YSTYRIED A YW BODOLAETH LLWYBR ARFORDIR CYMRU YN ATGYFNERTHU HUNANIAETH GYMREIG...

Mae Llwybr Arfordir Cymru yn ein gwahodd i archwilio arfordir ein gwlad tra'n mwynhau'r awyr iach a golygfeydd godidog. I'r mwyafrif, mae wâc ar hyd yr arfordir yn meddwl mynd am dro ar draeth euraid, clogwyn serth, promenâd tref glan môr neu grwydro rhwng pentrefi prydferth arfordirol. Ond yng Nghymru gallwch barhau i gerdded heb reswm i stopio nes eich bod yn darganfod siâp y genedl.

Mae fy ngwaith ymchwil sy'n astudio'r llwybr, yn canolbwyntio ar y gweithgaredd o gerdded a hefyd yn astudio sut mae cerdded y llwybr yn siapio'r genedl, y llefydd a'r bobol ymglymedig, gan ddiffinio'r llefydd a'r bobol.

Rwy'n ymchwilio os bydd cerdded Llwybr Arfordir Cymru yn hwyluso ymdeimlad o gysylltiad diwylliannol a theimladau o berthyn tuag at Gymru a'r cymunedau ar hyd ei harfordir, a hefyd os bydd cerdded Llwybr Arfordir Cymru yn broses a fydd yn atgynhyrchu hunaniaeth Gymraeg. Mi fydd y gwaith ymchwil yn golygu cyfweliadau wrth i bobol gerdded ar hyd Llwybr Arfordir Cymru. Mae'r dull yma yn cydnabod y wybodaeth a'r ystyron sydd yn cael eu creu tra bod pobol wedi eu lleoli yn gorfforol mewn lleoliad arbennig.

Mae'n fraint cael astudio arfordir Cymru oherwydd tu allan i'r brifysgol rwy'n hoff iawn o gerdded a threulio amser ar lannau moroedd Cymru ac wrth fy modd yn canŵio ar hyd yr arfordir, yn enwedig yn Sir Benfro.

Pan mae tywydd nodweddiadol Cymru yn fy rhwystro rhag bod allan yn yr awyr agored mae fy niddordebau yn cynnwys ffilmiau a llyfrau ffantasi, ac rwy'n cyfaddef bod gen i obsesiwn gyda phopeth sy'n ymwneud â **Lord of the Rings**!

Fel daearyddwraig frwd mae'r byd yn fy hudo a dw i yn fy elfen yn teithio i wahanol wledydd. Dw i wedi teithio'r byd yn eang ac wedi byw yn Seland Newydd tra'n gweithio yn Te Papa, yr amgueddfa genedlaethol. Rwy'n obeithiol mai'r daith nesaf fydd y daith trên epig Traws-Siberia.

Er fy mod yn angerddol am deithio, mae Cymru wastad yn fy nenu yn ôl. Does unman yn debyg i adref, ac mae'r ymchwil yn fy ngalluogi i astudio testun hollol unigryw gan mai Cymru yw'r wlad gyntaf i fedru ymffrostio yn y ffaith bod ganddi lwybr di-dor yn ymestyn oddi amgylch ei holl arfordir.

[redacted]

ac.uk am ragor o wybodaeth am yr ymchwil

Appendix 5: List of fieldwork walks

	Location	Date	Distance (miles)
1	Oxwich to Rhossili	04/05/2014	14
2	Pontllyfni to Y Felinheli	13/05/2014	16
3	Ogmore circular	06/06/2014	10
4	Whitesands Bay circular	16/07/2014	4
5	Whitesands Bay to Trefin	17/07/2014	12.3
6	Laugharne to St Clears	02/08/2014	9
7	Llanelli to Kidwelly	07/08/2014	12
8	Trearddur Bay Circular	09/08/2014	12.4
9	Criccieth to Porthmadog	12/08/2014	6.65
10	Swansea to Aberavon	14/08/2014	10
11	Llangrannog to Aberporth	15/08/2014	5.87
12	St Clears to Llansteffan	16/08/2014	9
13	Porthmadog to Pwllheli	19/08/2014	17.3
14	Tydweiliog to Morfa Nefyn	21/08/2014	5
15	Aberavon to Swansea	24/08/2014	10
16	St Justinians circular	02/09/2014	5.78
17	St Davids circular	03/09/2014	5
18	Whitesands Bay circular	14/09/2014	6.02
19	Trefdraeth circular	21/09/2014	10
20	Newport to Magor	24/09/2014	19
21	Greenfield Dock to Queensferry	26/09/2014	12.5
22	Llansteffan circular	28/09/2014	12.6
23	Barry Island to Cardiff	04/10/2014	13.5
24	Llansteffan to Carmarthen	11/10/2014	9
25	Llangrannog circular	12/10/2014	6
26	Nolton Haven to Newgale	14/10/2014	3.5

27	Llansteffan to Carmarthen	18/10/2014	9
28	Neyland to Angle	24/10/2014	18
29	Broad Haven Circular	25/10/2014	5
30	Porth Clais to St Davids Head and back	26/10/2014	7
31	Lydstep to Freshwater East	02/11/2014	6
32	Rhossili to Port Eynon	11/11/2014	7
33	Port Eynon to Swansea	12/11/2014	20
34	Pwllheli to Abersoch	14/11/2014	11
35	Aberaeron to Tresaith	15/11/2014	18
36	Llandudno to Rhyl	22/11/2014	16
37	Amroth to Tenby	08/12/2014	7
38	Aberdyfi to Pennal	07/01/2015	8
39	Cardigan to Mwnt	21/01/2015	7
40	Ceibwr Bay to St Dogmaels	29/01/2015	7
41	Tenby to Freshwater East	31/01/2015	6
			408.42

Appendix 6: Hon by T.H. Parry-Williams

Beth yw'r ots gennyf i am Gymru? Damwain a hap
Yw fy mod yn ei libart yn byw. Nid yw hon ar fap

Yn ddim ond cilcyn o ddaear mewn cilfach gefn,
Ac yn dipyn o boendod i'r rhai sy'n credu mewn trefn.

A phwy sy'n trigo'n y fangre, dwedwch i mi.
Pwy ond gwehilion o boblach? Peidiwch, da chwi,

Â chlegar am uned a chenedl a gwlad o hyd;
Mae digon o'r rhain, heb Gymru, i'w cael yn y byd.

Rwyf wedi alaru ers talm ar glywed grŵn
Y Cymry bondigrybwyll, yn cadw sŵn.

Mi af am dro, i osgoi eu lleferydd a'u llên,
Yn ôl i'm cynefin gynt, a'm dychymyg yn drên.

A dyma fi yno. Diolch am fod ar goll
Ymhell o gyffro geiriau'r eithafwyr oll.

Dyma'r Wyddfa a'i chriw; dyma lymder a moelni'r tir;
Dyma'r llyn a'r afon a'r clogwyn; ac, ar fy ngwir,

Dacw'r tŷ lle'm ganed. Ond wele, rhwng llawr a ne'
Mae lleisiau a drychiolaethau ar hyd y lle.

Rwy'n dechrau simsanu braidd; ac meddaf i chwi,
Mae rhyw ysictod fel petai'n dod drosof i;

Ac mi glywaf grafangau Cymru'n dirdynnu fy mron.
Duw a'm gwaredo, ni allaf ddianc rhag hon.

Hon (English literal translation found online – see references)

What do I care of Wales? It is by accident and chance
That I am living here freely. She isn't on a map

And is nothing but a piece of land in a hidden creek,
And a bit of a nuisance to those who believe in order.

And who dwells in this place? tell me.
Who but the dregs of its people? Make sure you don't

Cackle about unities and nations and countries all the time:
There are enough of those without Wales, to have in this world.

I have surfeited for some time with all this groaning.
The Welsh, high and mighty, making their noise.

I go for a walk, to avoid their speeches and literature,
Back to familiarity, with my imagination amiss.

And now I am there. Thank you for being lost
And far from the excitement of their extremist words.

This is Snowdon and its crew; this is the sharpness and the baldness of the land;
This is the lake and the river and the cliff; and upon my word

This is the place of my birth. But look, between Earth and heaven
There are voices and spectres all over the place.

I'm starting to become unsteady now; and I'll say to you,
There is some weariness washing over me;

And I can hear Wales' claws torturing my breast.
God save me, for I cannot leave this place

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