

'Born Across the Water but Reared Under the Flag:' How the Experience of Serving in the Union Army Impacted Welsh-Americans' Sense of their Place within American Society

Aled Jones

Submitted to Swansea University in fulfilment of the requirements of the Degree of

Doctor of History

Swansea University

2023

Word Count: 96,849

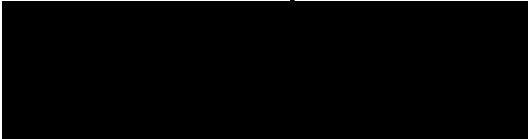
Summary

This thesis argues that as a result of military service during the American Civil War, Welsh volunteers' sense of belonging within American society increased. By drawing on under-explored written correspondence of Welsh soldiers, Welsh-American and Anglo-American newspapers, as well as a selection of military documents and records, this dissertation shows how the war was interpreted by Welsh immigrants as an opportunity to legitimate their status as American patriots. Consequently, this dissertation enables new ways of understanding Welsh-American identity as pro-active and responsive during the upheavals engendered by the war, becoming rooted in narratives of cultural legitimacy through military service. It explores the Welsh place in America at the onset of war and how Welsh immigrants viewed enlistment as an irrefutable demonstration of loyalty to their adopted country, citing themes of duty, patriotism, and anti-slavery. It analyses how daily life in the army inculcated a sense of collective belonging among Welsh recruits, contributing to the construction of a national identity. Moreover, this thesis outlines how Welsh soldiers consistently sought bonding opportunities with non-Welsh Americans, reacting to the challenges of military service in ways that reaffirmed their evolving, collectively determined identity as American people.

Declarations and statements

DECLARATION

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

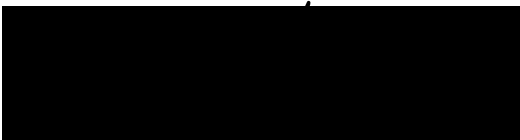
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STATEMENT 1

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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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the diligent work of Dr David Anderson and Dr Gerard Oram in supervising this project, without whom I would not have been able to accomplish this thesis. Unfathomable thanks to my wife Cheyanne McCracken for her patience with me over the past four years. Also, to my late father for showing me Zulu and Waterloo as a child, thus sparking my interest in history in the first place, and to my mother for encouraging my passion with unflinching and unwavering dedication, resilience, and support. Additional thanks to the organisers and attendees of the BrANCH Conference 2022 in Leicester and the BAAS-funded 'Pro and Anti-War Voices' 2023 Conference in Worcester for feedback on my papers, 'Cambrians in Combat: The Public Patriotism of Welsh Volunteers in the Union Army' and 'Born Across the Water but Reared under the Flag: Welsh Americans and Pro-War Voices of the American Civil War.' Further thanks to Catherine Bateson and Damian Shiels for sharing materials and insights, as well as the Madog Center for Welsh Studies, Wisconsin Historical Society, and State Historical Society of Iowa for sharing primary documents with me during Covid.

Introduction

I am one of the multitudes of “hyphenated” Americans, born across the water but reared under the flag. I am a Cambro-American, proud of both designations, and with an abundant heart, loyalty, and perhaps too much head pride in both.¹

Jenkin Lloyd Jones wrote these words in a diary he kept during his time as a Union combatant in the American Civil War. He enlisted as an artilleryman with the 6th Wisconsin Battery and saw much action during his years of service. Decades later, as a prominent Unitarian minister, he decided to publish his primary account of the war, providing an authentic glimpse into his feelings and experiences at the time. According to his diary, what was clear to him was that enlisting in the Union army as an immigrant Welshman had increased his sense of belonging as an American. He had not forgotten or neglected his native heritage and language, but he wrote in his diary that he considered himself as American as he was Welsh. His statement encapsulates the prevailing argument of this thesis, which is that Welsh immigrants who fought for the Union expressed themselves more strongly as American citizens than they did before the conflict. As was the case with other immigrant soldiers, military service did not mean that they stopped considering themselves to be Welshmen. Union armies were full of men who, like Jones, felt that they had two cultural identities both before and after the war, but with a near imperceptible and hard to quantify shift in emphasis towards ‘American-ness’ because of their experiences. Military service had a profound impact on Welsh-born and American-born Welshmen alike. Fighting for their adopted country functioned as a catalyst for the changing identity of men who, like Jones, were born across the water but reared under the flag.

¹ Jenkin Lloyd Jones, *An Artilleryman's Diary with the Sixth Wisconsin Battery During the Civil War*, (Madison: Wisconsin History Commission, 1894), p.3.

There are many debates on the war's origins, but this much is certain: When militia forces from North Carolina fired on Union-held Fort Sumter on 12 April, 1861, it ignited a conflict that would last four years, cost 620,000 lives, and completely alter the course of American history. Each side did not go to war as differing polities, for both northerners and southerners considered themselves legitimate Americans, viewing the other as the greatest threat to their socio-cultural values. In this great upheaval, thousands of Welsh-Americans played their part, those born in Wales as well as in America, engineering mass recruitment drives, serving in the North's armies, manning its ships, and working its factories, coal mines and farms. As a result of such efforts, Welsh immigrants who enlisted in the Union army progressed from a pre-war identity to something new. Some expressed themselves as more American than Welsh. Others felt they were Welsh and American equally. Some even rejected American society and returned to their ancestral homes in Wales. One thing is clear – participation in the Civil War radically affected Welsh-Americans' sense of belonging to the United States.

Until the past twenty years, the extent of Welsh involvement in the Civil War was overlooked by scholars. Ella Lonn, writing in the early 1950s, claimed that only a single company of Welsh speaking soldiers could be found in the Union armed forces, which was Company E of the 97th New York Regiment.² A few decades later, the estimated number of Welsh volunteers in the Union army was revealed as closer to between 6,000 and 10,000 men.³ The predominant reason why these volunteers remained unknown is because most of the available primary sources are in Welsh, although another contributing factor was due to the lack of inherently Welsh regiments or brigades. As William Burton observed in his influential work

² Ella Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1951), p.139.

³ Jerry Hunter, *Llwyd Cenhedloedd: Y Cymry a Rhyfel Cartref America*, (Llanrwst: Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, 2003), p.40

Melting Pot Soldiers, recruiting appeals were universally popular, so as a result, most hyphenated Americans joined non-ethnic units.⁴

Welsh recruits tended to enlist in small, local groups, so as a result many regiments from Pennsylvania, New York, Ohio, and Wisconsin contained a core of between ten and thirty Welshmen. Occasionally, enough enlisted from the same community to form a full company, such as Company F of the 22nd Wisconsin Volunteers, who named themselves the ‘Cambrian Guards.’ Also called the ‘Cambrian Guards’ were the men of Company F of the 133rd Pennsylvania Volunteers, partly for their Welsh origin and partly for their home in Cambria County. Moreover, the 50th and 118th Ohio each had a Welsh company, while the 56th Ohio had two companies comprised of Welshmen, Company C and E, each of which was led by Welsh officers. The men had volunteered for myriad reasons. Economic considerations were certainly popular, especially the prospect of an assured monthly income to send back to their families. Some men expressed a hatred of slavery as a prime motive, while others went simply for the defence of the North and the preservation of the Union. Moreover, the role of masculine duty was similarly fundamental, as contemporary Victorian social values called for men to defend their homes and their families. To an extent, Welsh-Americans had reacted to the war in an inherently Victorian manner, as did other northerners. Anne C. Rose has argued that Americans grasped the promise of the Civil War as a space for recasting ideals over profound issues.⁵ For Welsh volunteers, this human effort manifested itself in a determination to affirm their place in northern society through military service.

Jenkin’s reference to being reared under the flag hinted at a phenomenon that is often imperceptible in studying the Civil War as it deals with the unquantifiable human experience,

⁴ William L. Burton, *Melting Pot Soldiers: The Union’s Ethnic Regiments*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1988), p.51.

⁵ Anne C. Rose, *Victorian America and the Civil War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.5.

of how the conflict, or more specifically, how military service in defence of an adopted country influenced the evolution of immigrant culture and national identity. Before the war, much of the Welsh immigrant population had settled easily into northern American life, often thriving in multi-ethnic communities while retaining their distinct cultural language and traditions. This differed on a regional basis, for Welsh communities in different northern states experienced integration at different rates, but everywhere the use of the Welsh language marked them as unique. They conformed to the conviction that Benedict Anderson termed as the ‘lexicographic revolution’ where Europeans believed that languages were the personal property of specific groups, and that these groups, imagined as communities, were entitled to their autonomous place in a fraternity of equals.⁶ Consequently, it will be seen that those Welshmen who served in the Union army experienced a much greater rate of integration predicated on duty, patriotism and shared experience in uniform.

Through fighting in the Civil War, Welsh volunteers imagined, constructed, and maintained a new identity predicated on military service. Jerry Hunter has rightly pointed out in *Llwch Cenhedloedd* that in any analysis of Welsh identity in the United States, there must be a distinction made between the different groups of Welsh speakers in the country. Welsh immigrants of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and their descendants were firmly entrenched as insular cultural groups, whereas the Welsh population of the North in the mid-nineteenth century were considered as Welsh-Americans. He argued that the Welsh language was a useful ‘measuring stick’, for those Americans that spoke Welsh possessed an identity that was very different to the descendants of immigrants that no longer spoke the language.⁷ However, this assumption does not account for Welsh immigrants who did not speak their native language yet also served with distinction and pride in the Union army. As this thesis

⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, 1983), p.54.

⁷ Hunter, *Llwch Cenhedloedd*, p.22.

will demonstrate, there is much written primary material from Welsh soldiers in English, supplied to Anglo-American newspapers instead of the Welsh-American ones. Consequently, any exploration of how Welsh soldiers experienced the Civil War in relation to their sense of belonging as American people must take non-Welsh-speakers into account. Therefore, whenever the term ‘Welsh-American’ or ‘Welsh immigrant’ is used within this thesis, it is in reference to those inhabitants of the northern states that identified as Welsh, regardless of whether they had been born in America or in Wales.

Through concepts of duty and patriotism, Welsh volunteers bonded with non-Welsh volunteers in a new identity predicated on the military family. This did not mean that Welshmen abandoned their native language and culture for the norms of the Union army. On the contrary, these they retained proudly. Instead, due to shared experiences, many of them expressed their developing identities as American soldiers as equally important, if not more so, than their distinct ‘Welshness.’ Studying the development of American nationalism in the nineteenth century provides an ideal case study, for few nation-states or national identities are as artificially constructed, nor more successful in imbuing generation after generation of immigrants with a deep sense of national belonging.⁸

Anthony Smith’s work on nationhood has drawn attention to the idea that war is and has always been an essential factor in the evolution of national identity. Paired ethnic communities and nations have reinforced a sense of collective identity through the mobilisation of men, sustained enmities, and protracted warfare, while the myths of battle helped to forge a sense of ethnic or national unity.⁹ For Welsh volunteers in the Union Army, this was experienced as an increased loyalty to the North and an increased sense of belonging

⁸ Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *This Violent Empire: The Birth of an American National Identity*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), p.1.

⁹ Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism*, (London: Routledge, 1998), p.79.

to a wider national collective. It also meant practising new socio-cultural norms that were believed to be inherently ‘American’ due to their experiences of fighting for their country. Effectively, many of those who enlisted in the army came to label themselves as ‘Americans’ or ‘Welsh-Americans’ much more strongly than before the war, adhering to Anderson’s definition of ‘official nationalism’ – an anticipatory strategy adopted by groups that were threatened with marginalisation or exclusion from an emerging nationally-imagined community.¹⁰

Background – Welsh in America by 1861

This thesis asserts that military service impacted Welsh volunteers’ identity, for the most part resulting in an increased sense of belonging to north American society. This process was by no means universal, for the wartime experiences of Welsh soldiers was far from homogenous. Before the war, the Welsh had been firmly established as an immigrant body in the United States, but the rates of cultural integration varied between those who settled in towns and industrial communities and those who migrated to rural, farming settlements. Generally, those in towns experienced a greater extent of social integration due to the ethnic diversity of such communities, whereas Welsh in rural settlements were concentrated into more insular, monoglot groups and therefore remained distinct from the wider population. There was no major disparity in the background of Welsh recruits, although more did enlist in towns and cities than in rural settings. While accounting for regional differences, most Welshmen who

¹⁰ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p.61.

enlisted professed a greater sense of belonging to their adopted country than they had before the war.

While a minority of the overall population, it is incorrect to think of Welsh-Americans as an insignificant group. Alan Conway's seminal 1958 article noted that the number of immigrants arriving in the United States from Wales over the course of the nineteenth century was small in comparison with the number arriving from Ireland, Germany, and England. According to the 1860 Census of the United States, 45,763 citizens were listed as having been born in Wales.¹¹ The actual Welsh population was much higher, however, for the census did not count those that had been born in America, the product of second and third generation immigrants. Estimations range from 120,000-250,000 Welsh-Americans living in the North at the time of the Civil War.¹² Almost 90 per cent of the total number of foreign-born Welsh in the United States in 1860 were living in the northern states, with major concentrations in Pennsylvania, Ohio, New York, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Iowa; these states alone contained 84.4 per cent of the total number of Welsh immigrants in the United States and 95 per cent of all Welsh immigrants in the Northern states. In comparison, only 2.1 per cent of Welshmen in the United States were living in the states which were to form the Confederacy.¹³

Consequently, Welsh-American identity at the onset of war was firmly northern in character, hence why so many joined the Union army. It has been estimated that between 6,000 and 10,000 Welshmen volunteered to fight in Union regiments, compared to only a handful for the Confederacy.¹⁴ Consequently, given the disparity in numbers, this thesis will explore only

¹¹ Alan Conway, 'Welshmen in Union Armies', *Civil War History* 4 (1958), 143.

¹² Robert Roser, "Give them Cold Steel!": The Welsh in the Civil War', *Cambria* 2 (1998), 10.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Hunter has pointed out in *Llwch Cenhedloedd* that it is difficult to estimate numbers given a lack of Welsh-language material from southern soldiers, as most Welshmen in the South did not live in Welsh-speaking communities and had assimilated at a much greater rate, losing much of their language and cultural solidarity in the process. What was more common was to see individuals in the Confederate army of Welsh descent, but who did not speak Welsh nor identified strongly as such.

those Welshmen who fought for the Union. Those few that fought for the South should nevertheless be acknowledged. Their experiences are discussed in Eirug Davies' *Y Cymry a'u Helyntion yn Virginia*, which explores the impact the Welsh had on the Confederate states. After all, it should be remembered that the president of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis, was himself of Welsh stock: his grandfather, Evan Davis, migrated from Wales at the beginning of the eighteenth century, settling in Georgia. Furthermore, Jefferson Davis's wife, Varina Howell, was also of Welsh descent.¹⁵ Moreover, while incapable of matching the numbers of the northern armies, several men of Welsh descent fought with distinction for the Confederacy, namely Generals Samuel Jones and William E. Jones, as well as General John William Jones, who was killed in action at the Battle of Spotsylvania.¹⁶

As Conway described, the bulk of the Welsh-American population was concentrated in northern states, where Welsh place names dotted the countryside.¹⁷ Most had migrated for economic reasons, for the offer of land and farms, or the opportunity to prosper from the numerous coal and slate mines. Indeed, many Welshmen rose to own their own mines, something not possible in their native country. Most settlements were relatively small as they comprised fewer than 2,000 inhabitants who maintained a concrete will to preserve Old World values in the formation of their ethnic identity.¹⁸ The early Welsh communities spawned daughter communities as the population grew, and in each settlement, the status of the Welsh language was reflected in the local Welsh church.¹⁹ Religion played a fundamental role in Welsh-American identity, as generations of settlers had brought with them strongly

¹⁵ Eirug Davies, *Y Cymry a'u Helyntion yn Virginia: O'r dyddiau cynharaf hyd ddiwedd y Rhyfel Cartref*, (Aberystwyth: Cymdeithas Llyfrau Ceredigion, 2009), p.115.

¹⁶ Ibid, p.125.

¹⁷ Some notable examples include Cambria County in Pennsylvania, Gallia County in Ohio, Bangor in both Pennsylvania and Maine, Berwyn in Pennsylvania, Illinois and Nebraska, Bryn Mawr in California, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Pembroke and Swansea in Massachusetts, and Radnor in Ohio

¹⁸ Rhiannon Heledd Williams, 'Welsh Migration to America during the 19th Century' in (ed) Marie Ruiz, *International Migrations in the Victorian Era*, (Boston: Brill, 2018), p.113.

¹⁹ Cherilyn A. Walley, *The Welsh in Iowa*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009), p.73.

developed institutions of chapel organisation, self-governance and discipline that were well suited to structuring community life on the American frontier. By 1850 as many as 80 percent of the North American Welsh population claimed membership in a Nonconformist chapel, a figure which the Welsh embraced as proof of their religiosity.²⁰

In industrial towns and cities, the Welsh settled easily within multi-cultural communities. For instance, the *Alleghanian* noted that the population of Johnstown, Pennsylvania in February 1861 was ‘as heterogenous a mass as can be found in any town of like population in the county,’ comprising of Germans, Irish, and many Welsh.²¹ As well as religiosity, literacy abounded among the urban Welsh. William D. Jones, in his research on Welsh immigrants, refers to Scranton as the ‘Welsh Athens of America,’ with more than 50 recognised Welsh bards living in the city.²² Ronald Lewis has also explored the lives of Welsh immigrants in northern industrial communities, concurring with Jones’ observations about the centrality of literacy and religion to Welsh-American life.²³

The key cultural event in such communities was the Eisteddfod. This event, roughly translating to ‘sitting down together,’ continues to be a festival with several competitions, especially focused on music, poetry, and literature. Lewis argued that its popularity in the United States reinforced the construction of a Welsh-American identity built on respectability, religiosity, and intellectual attainment manifested in literary and musical sophistication. However, it was not exclusive to the Welsh; Lewis notes that it was so popular in Scranton that it became the city’s festival and subsequently would be open to all musical

²⁰ Anne Kelly Knowles, ‘Religious Identity as Ethnic Identity: The Welsh in Waukesha County’ in (eds) Robert C. Ostergren and Thomas R. Vale, *Wisconsin Land and Life*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), p.282.

²¹ ‘Johnstown - Continued’ in *The Alleghanian*, 21 February 1861

²² William D. Jones, *Wales in America: Scranton and the Welsh 1860-1920*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1993), p.88.

²³ Ronald L. Lewis, *Welsh Americans: A History of Assimilation in the Coalfields*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), p.141.

talent without regard to ethnic identity or language.²⁴ This opened the way for a process of simultaneous cultural reinforcement and American social integration. There were eisteddfods in most northern states, with one even being held in New York City in 1857.

In rural Ohio and Wisconsin, Welsh integration was slower. In the farming settlements of the mid-West, most Welsh communities were comparatively small. According to Rhiannon Heledd Williams, Welsh migrants to these areas tended to settle among their counterparts, forming clusters of communities often from the same area in Wales.²⁵ Cherilyn A. Walley's study of the Welsh in Iowa concludes that the inward-looking Welsh-speaking communities were often the product of chain migration based on kinship ties, clustering in areas where there were familiar groups and families. As a result, region-specific communities emerged, where the inhabitants were all from either the same area in Wales, or the same area in other states, such as Wisconsin.²⁶ William Van Vugt noted that the Welsh in Ohio integrated far slower into American culture than the English or Scots, due to their tendency to form inward-looking enclaves as well as their intense religiosity.²⁷

David Maldwyn Ellis has explored how the Welsh had settled in the agricultural settlements of Central New York. As in Wales, Ellis described Welsh life in New York as revolving around the church. This was hyper-localised and intimate in nature, with practically all the rural churches containing between 25-75 members.²⁸ What came to exist was a socio-cultural parallel of celebrating Welsh practices while gradually blending into wider American society. Oneida County became the intellectual centre for Welsh immigrants in America, as the Welsh press came to be centred in the towns of Utica and Remsen. Welsh Presbyterians established

²⁴ Lewis, *Welsh Americans*, p.152.

²⁵ Williams, 'Welsh Migration to America during the 19th Century', p.111.

²⁶ Walley, *The Welsh in Iowa*, p.66.

²⁷ William E. Van Vugt, *British Buckeyes: The English, Scots and Welsh in Ohio, 1700-1900*, (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2006), p.78.

²⁸ David Maldwyn Ellis, 'The Assimilation of the Welsh in Central New York', *New York History* 53 (1972), 317.

Y Cyfaill in 1838, then Welsh Congregationalists set up *Y Cenhadwr* in Remsen, followed by *Y Drych* which moved from New York City to Utica in 1861.²⁹

Regardless of whether they lived in insular, rural communities or diverse urban settlements, Welsh migrants integrated with relative ease into northern American society, although the rate differed. The *Emporia News* of Kansas declared that ‘No class of our people are more valuable as citizens than the Welsh. Those we have among us are sober, moral and industrious, and are doing much to improve the country.’³⁰ Furthermore, the *New York Herald* reported a meeting of Welsh citizens resident in New York, Brooklyn and Jersey City, noting that ‘Judge Kirkland, of Oneida county, and others made speeches in favour of the thrift, honesty and strong religious feeling of the Welsh people.’³¹ Robert Llywellyn Tyler has similarly noted that the Welsh frequently drew praise from their American contemporaries. He argues that Welsh religiosity was particularly admired, for it was not associated with the trappings of Catholicism and thus was more readily accepted into mainstream American life.³² This made integration easier, for there was notable anti-Catholic feeling among Welsh-Americans, which usually manifested itself as hatred of Irish immigrants.³³ These tensions were exacerbated by the Civil War.³⁴

To an extent, therefore, cultural amalgamation within the Union army was affected by pre-war regional differences. As was the norm for non-Welsh people, several Welsh volunteers professed to belong to the North, yet in practice this manifested as loyalty to their home community or state. This did not diminish their loyalty to the Union, but it did influence their

²⁹ Ellis, ‘The Assimilation of the Welsh in Central New York’, 327.

³⁰ *The Emporia News*, 10 October 1863

³¹ *The New York Herald*, 19 June 1862

³² Robert Llewellyn Tyler, *Wales and the American Dream*, (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), p.103.

³³ *Ibid*, p.104.

³⁴ For example, a disgruntled Welsh soldier wrote to the *Chicago Daily Tribune* on the 11th of July 1865 to complain that the Irish had ‘disgraced the Union with the manifestation of their treacherous designs.’ A week later, an Irishman wrote to the *Tribune* and responded thusly: ‘He writes like a true Welshman...they are the most conceited people in America.’

concepts of what constituted as ‘the North.’ In short, Welshmen often claimed to be Union patriots, yet in practice often considered themselves to be New Yorkers, Pennsylvanians, or Wisconsinites first and foremost. However, this was not how volunteers were depicted in the press. Welsh-American newspapers played an active role in cultivating an image of unanimous nationalism instead of reinforcing entrenched regional differences. For many, being recognised as dutiful Americans was not merely a result of military service: it was the goal as well.

Soldier Studies

Complementing its contributions to wider scholarship on the role played by Welsh immigrants in the conflict, this thesis also contributes to the academic field through its analysis of how ordinary men experienced and interpreted the war. Several early scholars of the Civil War focused on the ‘great men’ of the conflict, particularly the opposing presidents, Jefferson Davis and Abraham Lincoln, or Generals such as Grant, Sherman, Lee, and Stonewall Jackson. A subsequent popular development from the 1980s onwards was the emergence of a category of historians that were interested in the experiences of the ordinary men who fought in the war. This branch of Civil War scholarship may be classified as ‘soldier studies,’ and continues to be dedicated to embracing the ‘history from below’ approach by exploring the life and psychology of the individual soldier. In this manner, some historians have sought to understand why the average white northern citizen would sacrifice the relative safety of their civilian life to fight in the Civil War.

Some scholars attempted to examine the full range of Civil War soldiers’ experiences. Most notable among the earliest works on this are Bell Irvin Wiley’s *The Life of Johnny Reb: The*

Common Soldier of the Confederacy (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1943) and *The Life of Billy Yank: The Common Soldier of the Union*, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1952).

Following Wiley's seminal work, James I. Robertson Jr's *Soldiers Blue and Gray* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988) is similarly influential. Both authors offered a detailed analysis of what the day-to-day life of Civil War soldiers actually entailed, drawing on personal letters, diaries and memoirs of Confederate and Union troops to describe the routine of camp life, the nature of training, the diet and recreational activities of soldiers, as well as the prevalence of sickness, religion, homesickness and other such topics.

Reid Mitchell adopted a different methodology in his *Civil War Soldiers* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988) by investigating soldiers' letters and diaries to gauge the psychology of combatants: exploring their perceptions of themselves, their reasons for enlisting, their concepts of manhood as well as how they viewed the enemy. Next, in *The Vacant Chair: The Northern Soldier Leaves Home* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) he explored the degree to which patriotism was grounded in men's concepts of home and community, providing a fundamental insight into combat motivations as a result. Gerald Linderman wrote a detailed analysis of soldiers' perceptions of combat in *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War* (New York: Free Press, 1987), arguing that soldiers began the war with romanticised notions of war that were quickly dispelled and replaced with weariness and disillusionment. Of a similar vein are Randall C. Jimerson's *The Private Civil War: Popular Thought During the Sectional Conflict* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988) and Earl J. Hess's *Liberty, Virtue and Progress: Northerners and Their War for the Union* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1988) that emphasise the prevalence of political ideology and nationalism within the conscience of Civil War combatants, showing that soldiers on both sides were active participants in the political dimensions of the conflict.

Arguably the most influential work on soldier motivations came from James McPherson's *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), where he mined the letters and diaries of combatants for evidence concerning Union troops' motivations. Contrary to the earlier work of such historians as Linderman, McPherson attested that that a genuine conviction in the defence of Union, freedom and liberty was the primary motivations of the average Union soldier during the entirety of the war. McPherson has remained a prolific writer on soldiers' conceptions of freedom, liberty and nationalism, with other notable works including *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), *Drawn with the Sword: Reflections on the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), *Crossroads of Freedom: Antietam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) and more. A similarly notable publication on the ideological motivations of soldiers is Joseph Allan Frank's *With Ballot and Bayonet: The Political Socialization of American Civil War Soldiers*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998). Drawing on over a thousand letters and diaries, Frank argued that politics was central in motivating soldiers to fight, in developing unit cohesion as well as in keeping soldiers loyal to the cause throughout the conflict. Both historians conclude that overall, most soldiers were dedicated and loyal to their respective governments, being influenced by nationalism and political convictions.

More recently, in *What this Cruel War was Over: Soldiers, Slavery and the Civil War*, (New York: Knopf, 2007), Chandra Manning has explored how soldiers of both sides came to identify slavery as the central issue of the war, more so than abstract notions of freedom and liberty. As well as utilising a mix of letters and diaries, Manning took the innovative step of examining regimental newspapers to enrich her analysis, providing an elevated level of insight into how combatants understood the conflict.

An in-depth exploration of northern manhood within the army was offered by Lorien Foote in *The Gentlemen and the Roughs: Violence, Honor and Manhood in the Union Army*, (New York: New York University Press, 2010). Like Manning, Foote moved beyond the traditional reliance on letters, diaries and regimental accounts, using new sources like Union army court-martial records to show that soldiers' experiences of the Civil War were dominated by an internal struggle to reconcile different societal notions of masculinity. Foote followed this up with an analysis of how northern and southern soldiers struggled between civility and savagery in *Rites of Retaliation: Civilization, Soldiers and Campaigns in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2021).

Within the past decade, two significant works that have emerged are Aaron Sheehan-Dean *The Calculus of Violence: How Americans Fought the Civil War*, (London: Harvard University Press, 2018) and Peter S. Carmichael *The War for the Common Soldier: How Men Thought, Fought and Survived in Civil War Armies*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018). The former attested that the Civil War could have easily devolved into a bloodier conflict, and that the men of both North and South often chose restraint. The latter's book focused on how soldiers adapted to the challenges of army life from the perspective of class, race and manhood in a struggle between sentimentalism and pragmatism.

Each of the historians mentioned above has made a vital contribution in illuminating the nuances of the Civil War as a field of study. As such, this thesis aims to offer its own original contributions to this distinguished list of scholars by examining how Welsh soldiers interpreted the war through an emphasis on public perception. Apart from simply utilising under-explored Welsh-language correspondence, this thesis emulates the approaches of Foote and Manning in analysing non-traditional sources to compliment the wealth of soldiers' letters available. What makes the Welsh a vital case-study is that, contrary to many other

Union soldiers, much of their correspondence was published in the Welsh-language newspapers of North America, either being sent directly from the front-lines or were shared by soldiers' families for publication. Those historians who relied on private letters and diaries could afford to examine those sources at face value, whereas this thesis' use of letters published in newspapers considers not only their value as repositories of primary information, but also as a window into understanding how Welsh soldiers constructed a public image of national belonging.

What this means, therefore, is that Welsh soldiers in the Union army knew their written words had a high chance of being read not only by their intended recipients, but by a much wider audience. Therefore, it is more than likely that they deliberately crafted their correspondence to put forward a narrative of unanimous patriotism and devotion to duty. While an analysis of letters and diaries remains the best way to examine what Union soldiers experienced during the Civil War, studying newspaper sources offers an additional insight into how soldiers wanted to be seen and understood. The Welsh experienced the war in a similar way to other Union soldiers, but what was distinctive about them was the collective nature of their interpretations. Therefore, this thesis' contributions to the field does not simply come from its exploration of what Welsh soldiers experienced of fighting, killing, anti-slavery motivations, religion, manhood and so on, but of its focus on how those themes were depicted to reinforce the unanimous Welsh perspective that loyalty to the Union was paramount, and thus the only acceptable marker of Welsh-American identity.

This thesis will also provide a fresh impetus to the study of immigrants during the Civil War. There have been two main historiographical trends in recent decades concerning ethnic soldiers. The first trend is the attempt to chart the general experience of the foreign-born soldier and explore all the different ethnic contingents of the Union army. The second trend is the focus on specific ethnic groups or regiments, predominantly Irish and Germans.

Naturally, both have made their contributions and been subject to criticism. Of the former category, Ella Lonn's *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy* is an influential work. She was one of the first to uncover the extent of foreign-born enlistment and outlined the essential role played by immigrants in the Civil War.³⁵ Expanding on her foundational methodology, William Burton's *Melting Pot Soldiers*, focuses on the motivations and experiences of immigrant soldiers through analysis of dozens of ethnic regiments, mostly Irish and German, but also a Scandinavian unit and even Scottish recruits.³⁶ He suggested immigrants experienced the war in unique ways but were ultimately tied to the notion that military service was enough of a loyal sacrifice to earn themselves a legitimate place within northern society. Dean B. Mahin followed Burton's analytical model with the *Blessed Place of Freedom*, which includes a study of German and Irish troops, but also expands his scope to discover other, previously ignored European ethnic contingents, such as British, French, eastern European and Scandinavian recruits.³⁷

Martin Öfele's *True Sons of the Republic* similarly presents a multi-ethnic overview of the immigrant role in the Civil War, devoting much attention to smaller ethnic groups alongside Irish and German soldiers. His nuanced perspective indicated that military service reinforced both the American and the ethnic parts of an immigrant's identity.³⁸ However, both Mahin and Burton are guilty of treating English, Scottish and Welsh immigrants as a homogenous category, while Öfele's work concentrates on German-speaking soldiers. As such, this thesis intends to treat the Welsh as their own, non-homogenous case-study.

Many contemporary scholars have explored the experiences of Irish and German troops, observing different enlistment motivations as well as how ethnic and national identity was

³⁵ Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*

³⁶ Burton, *Melting Pot Soldiers*

³⁷ Dean B. Mahin, *The Blessed Place of Freedom: Europeans in Civil War America*, (Sterling: Brassey's, 2002)

³⁸ Martin Öfele, *True Sons of the Republic: European Immigrants in the Union Army*, (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2008)

experienced while in uniform. Recent scholars on Irish soldiers include Susannah Ural, Ryan Keating and Christian Samito, while German troops have been covered by William Kurtz, Christian B. Keller, and Alison C. Efford, and both English and Irish immigrants have been analysed in depth by David T. Gleeson.³⁹ Collectively, these scholars have uncovered much of the immigrant soldier's experience regarding broader themes of integration, ethnic identity, and nationalism, generally arguing that most fought for national belonging as did Welsh volunteers. Consequently, examining the experiences of Welsh troops offers a fresh perspective to a field dominated by research on Irish and German immigrants, while also expanding on recent approaches highlighting the lack of uniformity concerning motivations, patriotism, and ethnic identity within hyphenated American ranks. Given the size of the Irish and German contingents in the Union army, a wide range of opinions and experiences has been uncovered by historians. However, this thesis suggests that, while the Welsh experienced the war in a similar manner to other immigrant groups, what differed was how they maintained a unanimous image of collective patriotism and commitment to the war effort, using this as the basis of their wartime identity as northern Americans.

Welsh Volunteer Studies

³⁹ Notable works include: Susannah J. Ural, *The Harp and the Eagle: Irish-American Volunteers and the Union Army, 1861-1865*, (New York: NYU Press, 2006), Ryan W. Keating, *Shades of Green: Irish Regiments, American Soldiers & Loyal Communities in the Civil War Era*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), Christian G. Samito, *Becoming American Under Fire: Irish Americans, African Americans and the Politics of Citizenship during the Civil War Era*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 2009), William B. Kurtz, *Excommunicated From the Union: How the Civil War Created a Separate Catholic America*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), Christian B. Keller, *Chancellorsville and the Germans: Nativism, Ethnicity and Civil War Memory*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), Alison Clark Efford, *German Immigrants, Race and Citizenship in the Civil War Era*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), David T. Gleeson, 'Proving their Loyalty to the Republic: English Immigrants and the American Civil War' in (eds) D.T. Gleeson and Simon Lewis, *The Civil War as a Global Conflict: Transnational Meanings of the American Civil War*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2014).

Of the small number of historians who have examined the Welsh in the Civil War, none have spent enough time considering how military service inculcated within the Welsh a renewed sense of belonging to wider American society. Alan Conway was the first scholar to attempt to chronicle Welsh Union volunteers, publishing an article and a book in 1958 and 1961, respectively.⁴⁰ The bulk of his work is a selection of translated letters from Welsh soldiers that give an overview of the different facets of their Civil War experiences, such as combat, camp life, and religious devotion. Conway, who relied on a translator, used only a small collection of letters from the National Library of Wales Archive and some correspondence found from newspapers in Wales. Historian Jerry Hunter remains the most prominent scholar on the topic. He analysed the contents of Welsh-American newspapers and discovered a treasure trove of material. Subsequently, he published his findings firstly in a Welsh language book, *Llwch Cenhedloedd*, then in English in *Sons of Arthur, Children of Lincoln*. He acknowledged that the war impacted the wider context of Welsh-American identity, arguing that Welsh soldiers believed their military service was an irrefutable way of showing they were ‘good Americans.’⁴¹ While his research is invaluable, most of his efforts were in outlining the scale of Welsh involvement in the Civil War rather than in exploring the evolution of Welsh identity as attempted in this thesis.

Apart from Hunter, the only significant study dedicated to the Welsh in the American Civil War is the unpublished PhD of Robert Huw Griffiths. He similarly posited that the twin identities of Welsh and American became increasingly interwoven as a result of military service, although he focused more on the increasingly separated relationship between the Welsh in America and the Welsh in Wales.⁴² A short yet useful article by Robert Roser, titled

⁴⁰ Alan Conway, ‘Welshmen in the Union Armies’, *Civil War History* (1958), 143-174 and Alan Conway (ed.), *The Welsh in America: Letters from the Immigrants*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1961).

⁴¹ Hunter, *Llwch Cenhedloedd*, p.54.

⁴² Robert Huw Griffiths, ‘The Welsh in the American Civil War c.1840-1865’ (unpublished PhD Thesis, Cardiff University, 2004).

‘Give them the Cold Steel: The Welsh in the Civil War,’ stresses how the Welsh never formed cohesive regiments, and thus the story of the Welsh in the Civil War is often the individual stories of men rather than regiments and brigades.⁴³ Both recognise that the Welsh experienced a heightened sense of American nationalism, but where this thesis differs is to provide a more focused analysis of the different aspects of military service, and how these aspects proved to be unifying experiences for Welsh and non-Welsh soldiers. Furthermore, each chapter utilises several Anglo-American primary sources to ascertain an outside perspective of the Welsh, something that does not appear prominently in any of these scholars’ work.

Hunter is indisputably the most influential scholar on the Welsh in the American Civil War. He is primarily responsible for revealing the considerable extent of Welsh involvement in the Union army, as well as bringing their stories to a wide audience, having published two books as well as a documentary series on the subject. Hunter views the Civil War as an essential factor in the process of creating a distinct Welsh-American hyphenated identity. Before the conflict, he asserts that there was a two-way process happening in Welsh-speaking communities: immigrants from Wales and their children would become Welsh-Americans, but they also stamped their own Welshness on certain parts of the United States.⁴⁴ Moreover, he argues that the thriving Welsh press and rich supply of Welsh poets contributed to the larger project of constructing and maintaining a distinct Welsh-American identity. This was nurtured by the abundance of Eisteddfod festivals, the largest of which was held annually in Utica on the first of January.⁴⁵ Not only was this a breeding ground of poetic tradition and

⁴³ Roser, “Give them Cold Steel!”, 11.

⁴⁴ Hunter, *Llwch Cenhedloedd*, p.18.

⁴⁵ Hunter, *Llwch Cenhedloedd*, p.19.

Welsh-American fusion, but Hunter states that Eisteddfod festivals offered a potent way of publicly articulating that identity.⁴⁶

While his contributions to the field have been vital, this thesis will expand on his interpretation by exploring in further detail about how military service affected Welsh soldiers' national identity. Hunter insisted that most Welsh-speakers in the North experienced a duality of existence, of 'Welshness' and 'American-ness' in equal measure. However, his analysis leans more heavily in favour of highlighting the efforts of immigrants to retain their unique cultural heritage and identity, whereas this thesis shows that, in many cases, Welsh soldiers defined themselves as patriotic northern Americans first and foremost.

This will be accomplished by delving into the different aspects of military service, exploring what life in the army was like for Welsh volunteers, and how exposure to these new experiences impacted Welsh conceptions of national identity. Furthermore, while this thesis utilises much of the same source-base as Hunter did, he did not fully interrogate the seemingly self-serving nature of Welsh volunteer accounts. Most letters exhibit patriotic rhetoric and declarations of loyalty to the Union, without any sign of a contrary opinion. This will be addressed as an exploration into how Welsh volunteers were expected to display nationalism in their correspondence to friends and family. The perception of patriotism was maintained diligently by Welsh soldiers throughout the war, serving as a representation of their imagined collective identity as American citizens.

Drive for Legitimacy – Motivations for Enlistment

⁴⁶ Jerry Hunter, *Sons of Arthur, Children of Lincoln: Welsh Writing from the American Civil War*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), p.4.

The advent of the Civil War sparked a concerted drive for national acceptance among the Welsh. While their status as white protestants were never in doubt, many Welsh people sought recognition from non-Welsh people concerning their shared identity as American patriots instead of as immigrants. One such example of this drive for legitimacy was to claim Abraham Lincoln as a Welsh hero by stretching his tenuous Welsh descent. Through his mother it was believed that he could claim descent from medieval Welsh princes. His maternal grandmother was said to have come from Ysbyty Ifan on the Caernarfonshire-Denbighshire border.⁴⁷ Although it is doubtful whether Lincoln identified himself as part-Welsh, it is true that he made efforts to garner support among Welsh-speaking communities. Welsh-Americans were primarily Republican supporters, as seen most clearly by the example of David C. Davies, a book printer in Utica, who, in 1860, published 50,000 copies of a Welsh-language biography and speech by Lincoln for distribution among the Welsh-speaking population. He subsequently sent this letter to Lincoln himself:

Hon. Abraham Lincoln--

Dear Sir,--

I hope you will please to pardon me for intruding on your patience thus knowing well that I am one among thousands, nay, millions that pays homage to our next President. Enclosed you will find a copy of his Life and Speech (the one delivered at N.Y.)--in the Welsh Language. My motive in writing to you is to trouble you for the name of the Chairman of the State Rep. Com. I understand there are many Welsh people in the State of Illinois. The Welsh as a people must understand the issues of the Campaign

⁴⁷ Kenneth O. Morgan, *Revolution to Devolution: Reflections on Welsh Democracy*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014), p.55.

before they can freely and conscientiously vote. I have issued 50,000 copies and hope they will be of great service to the good cause. Hoping you will excuse my boldness,

I _____,

Yours obediently,

D. C. Davies.⁴⁸

This was one instance of how Welsh immigrants dictated to the wider population that they were not strangers but were tied to the historical fabric of the country. Much of this collective legitimacy was fostered earlier, during the American Revolution. Vivienne Sanders has pointed out that Welsh-Americans contributed to American independence at all levels of the military. Each settlement sent volunteers to fight against British rule, and there were many of Welsh stock in them. Indeed, a number of Washington's generals had Welsh ancestry.⁴⁹ As a result, many Welsh immigrants based their identity as Americans in the legacy of the War of Independence, the Constitution and the Founding Fathers. In fact, many Welshmen believed their citizenship was earned before the Revolution, owing to the popularity of the Madog Legend. Centuries before Columbus, it was believed by many that Madog ab Owain Gwynedd, a Welsh prince, had sailed to America in 1170 and his venture supposedly led to the creation of a Welsh-American colony and subsequent creation of a tribe of Welsh Indians.⁵⁰ Such was the prevalence of this belief among Welsh-American intellectuals that in 1866, a Welsh-language history of the American Civil War was written and published by the

⁴⁸ David C. Davis [sic] to Abraham Lincoln, August 14, 1860 (Sends campaign biography in Welsh) The Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress Series 1. General Correspondence. 1833-1916. <https://www.loc.gov/resource/mal.0352300/> (accessed 16 December 2023).

⁴⁹ Vivienne Sanders, *Wales, The Welsh and The Making of America*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2021), p.49.

⁵⁰ Some articles appeared in the Welsh press, especially the *Cenhadwr*, discussing the Welsh-sounding names of some native American rivers. Thomas Jefferson himself believed in the story, writing in a letter to Meriwether Lewis on 22nd January 1804 that he believed the Welsh Indians to be 'up the Missouri', even going so far as to instruct the Lewis and Clark Expedition to find the descendants of the Madog Welsh Indians.

editors of *Y Drych*, called *Hanes y Gwrthryfel Mawr yn y Talaethau Unedig*. Despite being intended as an account of the Civil War, much of the book tells the history of America's founding, in which the authors provided "proof" of Madog's legend: 'The historian, Catlin, who spent many years among the Indians...assures us that Madog and his companions reached the Western Continent.'⁵¹

Such affirmations of American identity received new impetus with the outbreak of the Civil War. Military service facilitated the evolution of Welsh-American identity through shared experience in a mobile, melting pot of nationalities. Most volunteered during a wave of popular nationalism, citing fervent devotion to defend the Union and their adopted country, but it was their daily experiences of living in the army that moulded them into soldiers. The fraternal bonds of military life, therefore, became one of the most influential factors in altering Welsh volunteers' sense of national belonging. Within the Union army, they experienced something that only fellow soldiers understood; they lived, fought, and died side by side, and as such, those martial bonds proved effective in creating a new identity founded on nationalism and military service.

Methodological Focus

⁵¹ John William Jones and Thomas B. Morris, *Hanes Y Gwrthryfel Mawr Yn Y Talaethau Unedig; Yn Nghyd A Byr Grybwyllion Am Y Prif Ddigwyddiadau O Ddarganfyddiad America Hyd Adferiad Heddwch Yn 1865*, (Utica, 1866), p.4.

In terms of methodological approach, this thesis has been influenced by the dynamics of identity theory as discussed by Manuel Castells in his book, *The Power of Identity*.

Particularly applicable to the Welsh volunteers discussed in this thesis is his argument that, for a given individual, or for a collective group, there may be a plurality of identities, which was a source of stress and contradiction in both self-representation and social action.⁵² In such terms, this thesis will discuss the evolution of Welsh volunteers' collective, imagined identity.

Castells identifies three main categories of identity that can be experienced by groups: The first is a legitimising identity, where a dominant institution in society rationalizes its supremacy. The second is resistance identity which builds trenches of resistance and survival on the basis of principles different from, or opposed to, those permeating the institutions of society. The third is a projecting identity, when social actors, on the basis of whatever cultural materials are available to them, build a new identity that redefines their position in society and, by so doing, seeks to transform the overall social structure.⁵³ During the war, the Welsh can be seen experiencing elements of all three: 'legitimising' with a demonstration of nationalism adhering to the ideals of the Constitution and Founding Fathers, 'resistance' both in opposition to southern slavery and the popularity of anti-war movements, and 'projection' by presenting as northern patriots more than as integrated immigrants.

Castell's framework is an effective reminder that identity should be considered as multi-faceted and often adapts or evolves depending on circumstances. In this respect, Welsh identity during the war should be treated as reactionary, responding to the varying facets of military life in a projection of national belonging. This analysis will show that, regardless of

⁵² Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity: The Information Age – Economy, Society and Culture*, Vol 2, 2nd edition (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), p.6.

⁵³ *Ibid*, p.8.

whether soldiers viewed themselves as more Welsh or as more American, duty to country was how they expressed their sense of self within wider American society. Bearing this in mind, this study does not aim to treat soldiers' accounts as accurate depictions of wartime experiences. A more interesting and innovative approach is to evaluate how soldiers used letter writing as a method of projecting an idealised collective identity as Union volunteers. Examining repeated themes and phrases concerning motivations, anti-slavery, fighting, killing, religion and manhood will indicate what Welsh-Americans considered to be the most important markers of national belonging. Moreover, such an approach will emphasise how a white, mostly Protestant ethnic group that had no real trouble with merging into wider American society nevertheless used the war as an opportunity to reinforce their roots as American people, not merely as foreign immigrants.

To acquire insight into this period, this study will draw extensively on the editorials, articles and soldiers' letters printed in the Welsh-American press during the Civil War years. The Welsh language media of North America flourished during the nineteenth century, with no less than four periodicals catering to its Welsh-speaking readership across the country. These were: *Y Drych* (The Mirror), *Y Seren Orllewinol*, (The Western Star), *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, (The American Missionary) and *Y Cyfaill o'r Hen Wlad yn America*, (The Friend from The Old Country in America).⁵⁴

These periodicals were devoted in their support for the war effort, diligently reporting any news of skirmishes, campaigns, and battles, as well as sharing the written correspondence of front-line soldiers. Such letters are, as Bill Jones has stated, our largest and arguably our most important source for shedding light on the mentalities, activities and attitudes of ordinary

⁵⁴ Due to the digitization of the National Library of Wales archival collection of historical newspapers, the repositories of these Welsh-American periodicals have been made readily available.

Welsh migrants.⁵⁵ The subjective nature of such personal documents are an asset to understanding how Welsh immigrants perceived national identity, as it enables us to see how the ‘Welsh’ and ‘American’ aspects of who they were fluctuated at different times. For example, it will be shown during subsequent chapters that some immigrants remained distinctly Welsh, yet fought with alacrity for their adopted country, while others who had been born American professed total devotion to the Union yet left the army as soon as they were legally able to. The nature of national identity during the Civil War was therefore complex and changing, so by utilising the primary material contained in Welsh-American newspapers, we can see how Welshmen expressed their loyalties in different ways. Furthermore, this study will draw on key material from newspapers in Wales. Several Welsh papers followed the war, and printed letters from soldiers. *The Gwladgarwr*, (The Patriot) and *Baner ac Amserau Cymru* (Banner and Times of Wales) prove useful in this regard.

Taken together, these newspapers contain many pages of first-hand Welsh language accounts from soldiers in a variety of different regiments, from those serving in the Army of the Potomac fighting against Lee in Virginia, to others in Sherman’s and Grant’s forces in the West. Letters were either sent to friends and relatives, with the knowledge that they would be subsequently circulated in the papers, or letters were written directly to the editors with the intention of publication. This ensured that Welsh soldiers were aware that any letter they posted had the possibility of being read by other audiences, including other Welsh soldiers in different parts of the country. As such, the Welsh press was vital in making the personal experiences of volunteers a matter of public knowledge.

As this is the largest source-base available for a study of Welsh soldiers, many of the primary accounts that are used in this thesis are also discussed by Hunter and Griffiths. To ascertain

⁵⁵ Bill Jones, ‘Writing Back: Welsh Emigrants and their Correspondence in the Nineteenth Century’, *North American Journal of Welsh Studies* 5 (2005), 26.

more original insights, therefore, they will be mined for different observations, focusing on how Welsh soldiers maintained a collective perception of masculine patriotism through their written correspondence. Volunteers knew that their letters would be read by their friends and relatives in their home communities, but also by fellow Welshmen in the army. As such, the constant inclusion of pro-war rhetoric and declarations of patriotism in written correspondence alludes to the importance of perception: of masculinity, cultural devotion to religion, loyalty to the Union, and hostility to slavery. In this manner, each volunteer correspondent wrote as an example of the ideal American patriot.

As well as mining Anglo-American sources for insights on how Welsh volunteers were perceived by non-Welsh soldiers, fresh perspectives on the projection of Welsh-American identity will be gained by analysing the newspaper obituaries of volunteers who died on campaign. These are an under-utilised primary source that reveal much about the representation and presentation of Welsh soldiers in the Union army. This thesis offers a close reading of these hitherto underexplored sources to illustrate how Welsh casualties were depicted as martyrs, emphasising their qualities as men who had sacrificed their lives in the name of the Union. It is important to note that these letters are not representative of the Welsh experience as a whole. Given the estimations of thousands of Welsh soldiers, the selection of letters used in this thesis is comparatively small. Therefore, the insights gained from Welsh-language sources can be regarded as indicative of trends and common patterns rather than as defining evidence of the universal Welsh experience.

Front-line correspondence made clear that among the Welsh soldiery, presenting as a ‘volunteer’ was paramount. Moreover, these letters reveal a wholesale acceptance of patriotism as a unifying social force. Throughout the conflict, volunteers continued to stress their commitment to defending the Union, regardless of war weariness. Because such correspondence was published by the newspapers, Welsh soldiers often wrote with a specific

agenda in mind, intended to exhibit conformity to social norms concerning idealised citizen-soldier behaviour. As such, eye-witness testimonies reflected not only the attitudes of the combatants, but how local Welsh communities expected their enlisted members to behave as their armed representatives. Much of the Welsh poetry composed at the beginning of the war reflected the need to defend the feminine ‘Columbia’ as the symbol of hearth and home with skill of arms and masculine virtue. Community sermons included rhetoric appealing to young men’s duty to defend their families and home against the perceived threat of the Confederacy, while also depicting it as a Christian duty to liberate the southern states from the evil of slavery.

This is why primary material from people who were not soldiers has been included in this thesis, such as from local poets, ministers, editors, and other types of civilian roles. Although the main focus of this piece of research is to explore the experiences of Welshmen serving in the Union army, analysing other sources from the Welsh press better establishes the context that Welsh soldiers were writing in, as well as emphasising the important role played by the community in framing Welsh soldiers’ declarations of national unity. Consequently, the letters of Welsh soldiers consistently featured affirmations of their loyalty to the Union and commitment to defending the North from tyranny.

One of the reasons why Welsh-language newspapers are such vital sources to understanding the Civil War from the Welsh perspective is because they were influential promoters of nationalism. Aled Jones and Bill Jones have argued that *Y Drych* was especially prominent as a proponent of pro-war sentiment, attempting to rally the Welsh behind a wave of northern nationalism. From the onset of hostilities, *Y Drych* was swept up by nationalistic zeal and began to criticise the position of neutrality towards the conflict adopted by both Welsh and

British leaders.⁵⁶ During the war, *Y Drych* acted as an instrument that tried to shape and determine the identity of the American Welsh. Both historians assert that it was much more than a newspaper, it was also an ambitious cultural project.⁵⁷ This was reflected in the editorial decision to publish sermons at the beginning of each edition in praise of the war effort and to rally the Welsh-American community behind support of the Union, countering any view to the contrary.

Additionally, this thesis includes several sources from American newspapers, many of which originated in settlements with sizeable Welsh populations. Regional papers such as the *Alleghanian* from Ebensburg, Pennsylvania, or the *Hydraulic Press* of San Juan, California often referred to having a Welsh readership, at times tailoring material to suit both Welsh and English-speaking audiences. A close reading of these sources provides key insights into how Welsh volunteers were viewed by their non-Welsh countrymen and neighbours. These men were lauded as heroes by regional papers that published poems celebrating soldiers' bravery, while also keeping up to date with battles and campaigns to show a measure of public support. In these papers, their Welshness was recognised yet they were not labelled as a separate immigrant cohort. Instead, they were celebrated as fellow American soldiers, loyal to the Union and the North, providing an insightful understanding of how imprinting a sense of national belonging was often community-driven.

While eye-witness testimonies of Welsh soldiers appeared to offer perspectives from ideologically motivated volunteers, this was not always the case. Where possible, these letters have been supplemented with census and pension records, together with official military documents, to facilitate a greater awareness of the context these soldiers were writing in. For

⁵⁶ Aled Jones & Bill Jones, *Welsh Reflections: Y Drych & America 1851-2001*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), p.20.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p.55.

example, such official documents offer quantitative proof that many Welshmen were drafted, and were thus unwilling participants in the war, contrasting to the image of unanimous patriotism upheld by the Welsh press. The U.S. Civil War Draft Registration Records of 1863-1865 show multiple cases of Welsh-born men who were born in Wales were conscripted into the army. For instance, the draft records of the 2nd Congressional District of Wisconsin list multiple Welsh-born men were called up in July and October 1863, most of whom were farmers aged 35-43.⁵⁸ Some were also married, which contrasts the predominance of young, single male correspondents that make up the foundation of this thesis' source-base. The records for the 5th Congressional District of Wisconsin, meanwhile, similarly reveals that farmers made up the bulk of the drafted Welshmen, but the ages of the conscripts ranged from 22-36 years old, a much younger demographic.⁵⁹

Evidently, not all young, single Welshmen were motivated to enlist unless compelled to do so by the government. The draft records of the 7th Congressional District of Ohio reveal a more mixed recruit base, with the ages of draftees ranging from 36-41 and the previous occupations consisting of farmers, but also blacksmiths, carpenters, house builders, labourers and plasterers.⁶⁰ This thesis will not devote further attention to these records, for the overall analytical focus remains concerned with the construction of national belonging from the perspective of voluntary military service. As such, it was necessary to correct the false assumption that all Welsh troops were volunteers to achieve a greater qualitative

⁵⁸ '2nd Congressional District,' *Records of the Provost Marshal General's Bureau – Wisconsin, U.S., Civil War Draft Registrations Records, 1863-1865* [database on-line], Vol. 3, Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010. <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1666/> (accessed 16 December 2023).

⁵⁹ '5th Congressional District,' *Records of the Provost Marshal General's Bureau – Wisconsin, U.S., Civil War Draft Registrations Records, 1863-1865* [database on-line], Vol. 1, Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010. <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1666/> (accessed 16 December 2023).

⁶⁰ '7th Congressional District' *Records of the Provost Marshal General's Bureau – Ohio, U.S., Civil War Draft Registrations Records, 1863-1865* [database on-line], Vol. 3, Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010. <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1666/> (accessed 16 December 2023).

understanding of the cultural legitimacy that was associated with being a volunteer over a drafted soldier.

Throughout the war, Welshmen cultivated an image based on the romanticised idealism of martial citizenship, exhibiting consistent themes of duty and patriotism in written correspondence. Taking such sources at face value would give the impression of a self-serving source-base. Approaching Welsh soldiers' first-hand accounts with a more critical perspective reveals an ethnic group that was constantly aware of the need to promote its own image as a corps of volunteers. Outspoken declarations of patriotism and devotion to the Union became the marker of a Welsh soldier, developing into a social requirement for acceptance both within and outside the Union army. They were expected to fulfil their masculine duty and volunteer to defend hearth and home, while anyone who diverted from that path was subsequently ostracised from their home community as well as on a wider platform via the press. Consequently, this thesis' chosen sources show how Welshmen sought to present themselves, both individually and collectively, as patriotic northerners.

Chapter One will critically discuss how the outbreak of the war was interpreted by Welsh-Americans and what factors motivated men to enlist in the Union army. It will suggest that local recruitment drives contributed to a surge of popular nationalism among Welsh communities, creating the conditions for young Welshmen to project themselves as patriotic American people. Duty, liberty, and patriotism were how Welsh volunteers categorised their motivations to enlist, as well as the fundamental principles on which they based their understanding of military identity. Moreover, this chapter will demonstrate that social expectations of masculine duty were prevalent in ensuring that Welshmen made efforts to declare their patriotism and commitment to defending the Union. They, like many of their Union army comrades, held national duty as an integral virtue of American manhood and thus a central component of their identity as northerners.

Chapter Two asserts that Welsh volunteers experienced their first major challenge in adjusting to the realities of army life. It investigates the process of cultural and social integration, highlighting how, at first, new Welsh recruits reacted defensively to the unfamiliar realities of army life, making efforts to locate other Welsh-speakers in neighbouring units for the purpose of establishing inter-regimental literary and seminary groups. However, traditional Welsh religiosity enabled a greater rate of cultural integration with non-Welsh soldiers through the medium of a collectively shared Protestant faith. Gradually, shared spirituality became a more important social requirement than familiarity with the Welsh language, as increasing numbers of Welshmen began attending English-language sermons and prayer groups, reaffirming the social and moral values of northern citizenship with Anglo-American comrades. This was not a universal phenomenon, especially when it came to religious attitudes towards the consumption of alcohol. In some such cases, camp life in the Union army reinforced the alienness of Welsh identity as incompatible with some military traditions. Nevertheless, most accounts of Welsh soldiers expressed feelings of unity with non-Welsh comrades in arms, partly through shared regional ties as well as shared trials of army life.

Chapter Three examines how volunteers affirmed the masculine aspects of their military identity in the way they remembered combat. It will postulate that, contrary to expectations, their sacrifices in front-line fighting hardened their resolve and created a unique bond with their fellow comrades in uniforms. Furthermore, this chapter will explore the presentation of wartime casualties in Welsh language newspapers, demonstrating that fallen Welshmen were given obituaries depicting them as patriotic martyrs. Several pages were dedicated in each edition by the editors to describe who the soldier was, whether they were born in Wales or in the United States, recalling their standing in the community, as well as reaffirming their noble traits both in and out of the army. Regardless of the cause of death, whether it was in battle or

of disease, the commemoration of Welsh fatalities through newspaper obituaries included a series of key phrases emphasising religious sincerity, devotion to the Union, as well as masculine courage. Such sources reveal how Welsh casualties were depicted as martyrs by the press, which on the one hand was a small comfort to their grieving families, but also indicative of how their service was seen as a sacrifice for their country and their community, reinforcing how important military service was to contemporary masculine identity.

This was in many respects a new form of ‘American’ manhood that contributed to the distinct status of Welsh veterans. For example, Stephen Kantrowitz has written on the struggle of what he referred to as ‘rebelliousness and respectability,’ where the gentlemanly conduct that marked Victorian American manhood clashed with the aggression required during wartime. This resulted in a new form of ‘martial manhood,’ marked both by ‘virile rebelliousness’ and ‘proof of disciplined respectability.’⁶¹ More recently, James J. Broomall has also written about the wartime identity of the Civil War being an evolution of American Antebellum manhood. He argued that northern men’s obligations to country gave their military service a distinctly public face while also fulfilling a personal masculine ideal, forging a new wartime masculinity from the elements of restrained and martial manhood.⁶² Accordingly, this chapter will highlight the importance of this new, evolving form of American manhood to the changing identities of Welsh soldiers, because it represented the radical changes that most men experienced as a result of military service.

Chapter Four adopts a different methodology by focusing on a few, notable Welsh officers who achieved distinction and high rank. Most never attained a position higher than that of captain, but two Welsh-born Union officers became generals, while another earned a

⁶¹ Stephen Kantrowitz, ‘Fighting Like Men: Civil War Dilemmas of Abolitionist Manhood’ in Catherine Clinton, Nina Silber (eds), *Battle Scars: Gender and Sexuality in the American Civil War*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.19.

⁶² James J. Broomall, ‘Wartime Masculinities’ in Aaron Sheehan-Dean (ed), *The Cambridge History of the American Civil War, Volume III: Affairs of the People*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), p.6.

scholarship to West Point because of his actions in combat. This chapter will explore the military service of such men through a series of micro-analyses, observing how their conduct was presented in ways that emphasised idealised masculine virtue in both Welsh and Anglo-American sources. In particular, the emphasis is to understand something not at all present in previous studies of Welsh soldiers, which is how Welsh immigrants were celebrated as fellow patriots by other, Anglo-American soldiers. Those few who achieved distinction were recognised as immigrants, but rather than being depicted as such, the consensus was shared experiences and status as veterans. Consequently, assessing the service record of notable Welsh officers helps understand how military service contributed to solidifying the Welsh place in northern American society.

Chapter Five addresses the correlation between anti-slavery sentiment and Welsh identity. In the same manner as Welshmen were expected to display certain key characteristics of American masculinity, the same can be said of their collective stance on slavery. Not every Welsh-American was an abolitionist, but anti-slavery was the only acceptable social and moral view in northern circles. This chapter suggests that the identity of several Welsh volunteers was affected by the existence of slavery. Some viewed the eradication of slavery as a moral crusade as well as another method of defending the Union. In fact, Welsh volunteers freed slaves when they encountered them, and open support of this policy became a social pre-requisite. This was reinforced when they aligned themselves with anti-slavery elements in the army, and further legitimised when emancipation became the army's official policy. Thus, their attitude towards human bondage was both a key element of their Welsh identity, but it was subsequently framed in an American context, for they perceived themselves as following the essence of the Constitution and Founding Fathers. On the other hand, some soldiers expressed discontentment that their adopted country condoned the existence of slavery, in some instances reinforcing the incompatibility of Welsh and

American attitudes to anti-slavery and abolition. Furthermore, while the majority of letters from Welsh soldiers were careful not to exhibit open opposition to the idea of emancipation, there are several examples of men citing other factors of greater importance, indicating that anti-slavery was not as prominent within Welsh ranks as the Welsh-American press cared to admit. Consequently, some viewed abolition as a core component of Welsh-American identity, whereas others considered duty and patriotism to be exclusive of anti-slavery sentiment.

Therefore, this study will demonstrate that Welsh soldiers' experiences during the Civil War markedly influenced their sense of national belonging. Identifying five distinct elements of the Welsh experience in the Union army facilitates an in-depth exploration of how different aspects of military service introduced Welshmen to new activities, social values, and traditions. These combined to create an immigrant identity unique to the Civil War, as it was predicated on military service. Fighting for their country ensured that many immigrants believed they had earned a new place within northern society, one where their status as Union patriots was of equal importance, or often of more importance, than their traditional Welsh identity.

Chapter One – Enlistment Narratives

This chapter argues that Welsh-Americans joined the Union army because they wanted to defend their adopted country. Enlisting was not only seen as a demonstration of contemporary masculine virtues, but also as a sign that Welsh immigrants were eager to prove their loyalty to the North. Ultimately, volunteering was the catalyst behind the alteration of Welsh soldiers' national identity. Before the war, Welsh-Americans had been living as the product of dual cultures. The advent of the Civil War changed this dramatically, creating a new manifestation of immigrant identity predicated on collective duty and patriotism. Welsh support for the Union was both unanimous and immediate, as exemplified by the statement made by a Welsh author to the *Hydraulic Press* in May 1861: 'Therefore, everyone will be branded as a traitor if he don't bind himself to support the Union.'¹

From the first year of the war, the evidence shows that Welshmen who enlisted in the Union army thought of themselves as American patriots, much more than they did so before the war. In this regard they can be seen conforming to a fusion of Castells's 'projecting' and 'resistance' identity, building a new identity to redefine their position in society as a response to the perceived threat of the Confederacy.² As an immigrant group, the Welsh achieved higher levels of integration than many Irish and German immigrants, although this did not mean that volunteers lost their distinctive 'Welshness.' Instead, they merged into the multi-ethnic and multi-lingual environment of the Union army, integrating with non-Welsh recruits through a shared belief in masculine duty and patriotism.

¹ 'An Appeal to My Countrymen' in *The Hydraulic Press*, 4 May 1861

² Castells, *The Power of Identity*, p.8.

This thesis recognises that this was not a unique process, for national integration was the goal of many immigrants. In some parts of the country, especially where the Welsh were not concentrated in insular, mono-lingual settlements, this process was marked by the Anglicisation of their language. Union soldiers encountered several Welsh farmers as they invaded Tennessee and Mississippi, and the clash of opposing cultures produced interesting dialogue. D. Lt. J of the 16th Wisconsin Volunteer Regiment was advancing through the town of Collierville, Tennessee in 1863, when he encountered a Welsh native of Carmarthenshire named Davis, who had been living as a farmer in the region for fifty years. After finding out some of the regiment's members were also Welsh, the farmer promptly greeted them with a harangue:

Can you siarad Cymraeg?...mae gennyf I lyfr in Cymraeg. I read that weithiau, ond nid yn often.³

Can you speak Welsh?...I have a book in Welsh. I read that sometimes, but not often.

This isolated farmer had assimilated to the point of forgetting parts of his native language. While this had happened over the course of half a century, it represented what some Welsh volunteers would experience within only five years – not necessarily the loss of their language, but the Anglicisation, ergo Americanisation, of social and cultural norms previously exclusive to their native language and heritage.

³ 'Llythyr Milwr Cymreig, Lake Providence, 9th February 1863' in *Y Drych*, 14 March 1863

As this chapter will illustrate, Welsh-language primary sources from soldiers promoted a seemingly unanimous narrative of pro-Union sentiments, framing military service as an exhibition of the strengthened American identity of Welsh volunteers. Frequently, new recruits referenced themes of duty, liberty, and nationalism as motivating factors, highlighting the integral role played by patriotic fervour in the adaptation of Welsh-American identity during the preliminary stages of the war. While framed as an act of national defence that brought together many disparate immigrant groups, enlistment was often understood from the perspective of local or regional communities. For those Welshmen residing in diverse, urban communities, perhaps more so than for rural, insular Welsh-speakers, joining the army renewed their sense of belonging to their own communities because they were acting as other immigrants in their neighbourhoods did. The *Pomeroy Weekly Telegraph* of Ohio reported that in response to the call for volunteers, men of all political parties and classes gathered together: ‘German, English, Welsh, Irish and native American citizens, all rallied to defend the flag of our country. On the common ground of devoted loyalty to the Constitution and Union, all were united.’⁴

Also in Ohio, the *Cleveland Morning Leader* shared a letter from a volunteer relating how he and hundreds of his fellow employees of Governor Tod’s coal mines in Brier Hill, Youngstown had collectively resigned in order to enlist in the Union army: ‘Composed as we are of Americans, Welsh, Germans, Irish, Scotch and English, we have for nearly twenty years harmonized like brothers.’⁵ As alluded to by such reports, this chapter will highlight how Welsh recruits experienced a greater sense of belonging as American people because of the outbreak of war, leading them to volunteer for military service. Moreover, this chapter will explore what factors drove them to join the Union army, considering how the Civil War

⁴ ‘The People’ in *Pomeroy Weekly Telegraph*, 26 April 1861

⁵ ‘Three Hundred Employees Taking Leave of Gov. Ted’ in *Cleveland Morning Leader*, 21 December 1861

acted as a catalyst for a concerted search for national legitimacy, as well as how Welsh soldiers balanced their American identity with their Welsh heritage.

Historiography

Assessing the experiences of Welsh soldiers in the Union army contributes to a current trend in Civil War scholarship to examine the perspectives of common soldiers. Reid Mitchell, writing in the late 1980s, advocated the exploration of soldier psychology, finding ample evidence to demonstrate that the patriotic defence of liberty was the pre-eminent reason most men enlisted for the Union army. He made the case that this heritage was a legacy of the American Revolution, and that the average citizen-soldier was eager to emulate their forefathers and fight to defend their liberty and the Union.⁶ This is often seen in the Welsh-American press, where the editors and various correspondents frequently addressed Welsh volunteers as ‘Sons of Columbia’, the spiritual heirs to the American Revolution.⁷

Developing Mitchell’s observations, James McPherson claimed that most Union volunteers professed patriotic motives for enlisting. While the initial impulse of *rage militaire* to join the army eventually cooled as the war progressed, McPherson insisted that patriotism and concepts of nationalism were the defining factors to explain why so many men re-enlisted after their three-year terms were done.⁸ Joseph A. Frank’s arguments similarly prove compelling. His approach was to focus on the politicisation of Civil War soldiers, arguing that political motives were central to their understanding of the war. Discussions of slavery

⁶ Reid Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers*, (New York: Penguin Publishing, 1988), p.12.

⁷ Hunter, *Sons of Arthur, Children of Lincoln*, p.142.

⁸ James McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p.173.

and nationalism were essential to their motivations because they were not ordinary soldiers, they were volunteers – living examples of civic duty and patriotic virtue.⁹ Most of the available Welsh-language letters reflect this in abundance. However, none of these historians conducted appropriate analyses of immigrant soldiers, given the macro-scale of their respective studies. As a result, this chapter expands on Mitchell, McPherson, and Frank's arguments by drawing attention to an underexplored ethnic group, as well as taking a different approach by examining the patriotic motivations of volunteers as a symptom of immigrant national integration.

Moreover, no other scholar of immigrant soldiers has considered the Welsh in any detail. William Burton's research suggested that immigrants as well as Anglo-Americans responded to the appeal that the Union was threatened and needed defending. However, he did add that cultural chauvinism was perhaps the most common appeal used to recruit ethnics that differed from those employed for other young men, especially the propaganda that worked ceaselessly to convince immigrants that their ethnic background made them superior military material.¹⁰ Welsh volunteers do not fit with this supposition, for while many did feel they were superior military material, their cultural ties as northern citizens were emphasised more consistently than their native, ethnically separate Welsh heritage. Dean Mahin's work on European immigrant soldiers took a similarly broad yet sweeping view, stating that most of the British-born Union volunteers enlisted to defend the freedom and opportunity they had found in America.¹¹ However, he lumped the Welsh into the 'British' category, failing to adequately distinguish the differing enlistment motivations between Welsh, English, Scottish and Irish recruits.

⁹ Joseph Allan Frank, *With Ballot and Bayonet: The Political Socialization of American Civil War Soldiers*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), p.18.

¹⁰ Burton, *Melting Pot Soldiers*, p.51.

¹¹ Mahin, *The Blessed Place of Freedom*, p.30.

Susannah Ural proffered a greater insight into immigrant motivation through her analysis of Irish-American soldiers, suggesting that Irish-Americans routinely saw the war in terms of dual loyalties, joining the army out of gratitude to their adopted homeland while remaining distinctly Irish exiles.¹² Christian Samito's research on Irish volunteers has expanded on this idea, arguing that the reasons why many Irish Americans joined the Union forces revealed much about their growing consciousness of having an American component to their identity, as well as their desire to have a place within American society.¹³ Ultimately, Samito viewed Irish enlistment in the armed forces as a method of granting themselves a new location within the American nation.¹⁴ David Gleeson concurred with his analysis of English immigrant soldiers, suggesting that, just like the Irish, the English needed the sectional conflict to confirm their bona fides as Americans.¹⁵ These scholars, and others like them, have contributed much to our understanding of why immigrants joined up to fight in the American Civil War. The Welsh certainly viewed enlistment as a method of asserting their place within American society, although unlike many German and Irish troops, there was less tension between their Welsh heritage and new status as Union soldiers.

The consensus among newly enlisted Welsh immigrants was that they were enthusiastic to fight for their country, adopted or otherwise. The few historians who have studied Welsh involvement in the Civil War have generally concluded the same. Alan Conway asserted that Welsh soldiers saw the war as a moral battle between the darkness of southern slavery and the Christian liberty represented by the Union, with abolitionism proving the fundamental

¹² Susannah J. Ural, *The Harp and the Eagle: Irish-American Volunteers and the Union Army, 1861-1865*, (New York: NYU Press, 2006), p.52.

¹³ Christian G. Samito, *Becoming American Under Fire: Irish Americans, African Americans and the Politics of Citizenship during the Civil War Era*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 2009), p.27.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p.26.

¹⁵ David T. Gleeson, 'Proving their Loyalty to the Republic: English Immigrants and the American Civil War' in (eds) D.T. Gleeson and Simon Lewis, *The Civil War as a Global Conflict: Transnational Meanings of the American Civil War*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2014), p.100.

religious motivation for fighting.¹⁶ He briefly acknowledged that volunteers expressed devotion to their adopted country but did not attempt to assess the American identity of the Welsh rank-and-file in detail. The later research of Jerry Hunter has provided a much deeper insight into Welsh motivations as well as a comprehension of the duality of Welsh-American identity. He concluded that Welsh soldiers were motivated by a notion of defending northern liberty as well as the belief that military service was an irrefutable way of demonstrating their credentials as loyal American citizens.¹⁷

Apart from Hunter the only significant study dedicated to the Welsh in the American Civil War is the unpublished PhD of Robert Huw Griffiths. He argued that Welsh immigrants integrated more easily into American society because of the Civil War, although he only devoted one chapter to Welsh volunteers, while the rest of his thesis examined Welsh-American society as a whole. Consequently, this chapter aims to expand on the work of Conway, Hunter, and Griffiths, not by considering volunteers' love of nationalism at face value, but rather to interrogate its function as a marker of cultural and national legitimacy, both for a Welsh-speaking and an Anglo-American audience.

Outbreak of War and Initial Flood of Volunteers

From the earliest moments of the war, expressing loyalty to the Union was the prerogative of Welsh volunteers. For the most part, new recruits revelled in their new status as northern soldiers. Much like other ethnic minorities, Welsh volunteers used the Civil War as an opportunity to reinforce their place within northern society, which in turn influenced a

¹⁶ Conway, 'Welshmen in the Union Armies', p. 173.

¹⁷ Hunter, *Llwch Cenhedloedd*, p.54.

generational comprehension of national identity. As argued by Susan-Mary Grant, the Union army inculcated a sense of national identity that had previously been lacking and can thus be regarded as one of the most potent agencies of American nationalism.¹⁸ Subsequently, Welsh recruits imagined themselves to be dutiful defenders of the Union as well as immigrants.

These sentiments were organised and made into a systemic, community-based recruitment drive, supporting wider Union propaganda efforts. This alludes to the recent work of Louis Reed-Wood on recruitment propaganda in the North. He has challenged the now-dominant interpretation of Civil War soldiering that treats motivation for enlistment as a primarily atomistic process, where men required little prompting to join up.¹⁹ Localism was key in this regard, for the decentralized and community-oriented framework of voluntary recruitment meant that a great number and variety of citizens aided recruiting in some way. Apart from those with a formal stake in the Union cause, newspaper editors, preachers, songwriters and other community leaders voluntarily treated recruiting as their civic duty and contribution to the war effort.²⁰

Prominent Welshmen within local communities, especially pastors, took a central role in recruiting young men. While there were never enough numbers to constitute a full regiment of around 1,000 men, there were instances when there were enough to form a Welsh company. One example was Company F of the 22nd Wisconsin Volunteer Regiment. Formed in Racine, Wisconsin, the unit was dubbed the ‘Cambrian Guards’ due to the high proportion of Welsh members. The recruitment drive for this company was inherently Welsh by nature as the *Racine County Militant* recorded: ‘On August 12 [1862] a large and inspiring war meeting of Welsh citizens was held for the purpose of securing recruits for Owen Griffith’s

¹⁸ Susan-Mary Grant, ‘Americans Forging a New Nation, 1860-1916’ in (eds). Don H. Doyle and M.A. Pamplona, *Nationalism in the New World*, (London: University of Georgia Press, 2006), p.85.

¹⁹ Louis Reed-Wood, “Makers of Loyalty”: Recruiting Propaganda in the Civil War North’, *American Nineteenth Century History* 22 (2021), 2.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 9.

company of the 22nd Wisconsin. Speeches were made by Rev W.J. Hopkins, Owen Griffith, W.G. Roberts, Robert O. Jones, John Bowen, and W.W. Vaughan.²¹ Furthermore, the attendees described themselves as the ‘Welsh citizens of Racine,’ while also declaring that ‘no man or woman is worthy of the name or title of American citizen who does not support the government.’²²

Hunter has argued that such public ceremonies were crucial demonstrations because the company of soldiers was seen as an extension of the local community on the battlefield.²³ By turning a sermon into a recruitment opportunity, the Welsh community of Racine was exhibiting a collective acceptance of northern patriotism. Consequently, given the community’s public support for the Union, the subsequent enlistment of many Welshmen was almost certainly influenced by a version of locally interpreted nationalism. Community pressure, therefore, was an integral element in the ideological and political motivations of Welsh volunteers in the early stages of the war.

This emphasis on ‘local interpreters’ of nationalism lends itself to wider debates about the nature of national identity in the Civil War North. A common disclaimer adopted by historians of nationalism and national identity in the Civil War is to acknowledge the difficulty in labelling it correctly. Three often used terms in this respect are American nationalism, northern nationalism and Union nationalism. In his posthumously released collection of essays, *The North and the Nation in the Era of the Civil War* (2003), Peter J. Parish made it clear that it was the Civil War, rather than the War of Independence, that was the great struggle for the American nation. He attested that the war inculcated a sense of national identity, for it strengthened popular nationalism in the North and reinforced the links

²¹ Hunter, *Sons of Arthur, Children of Lincoln*, p.103.

²² Ibid, p.105.

²³ Ibid, p.104.

between the local and larger “imagined” national community.²⁴ Crucially, however, he attested that this was achieved by the management or containment of problems within the national framework rather than resolving deep-rooted problems. This meant that one did not have to be an ardent expansionist or a nativist or a racist or a champion of strong central government in order to qualify as an American nationalist.²⁵

Susan-Mary Grant has laid much of the groundwork in expanding our understanding of Civil War nationalism. In her seminal work *North Over South* (2000), she agreed that the Civil War resulted in a resurgent form of American nationalism but concluded that it was more accurate to label it as being distinctly northern in character. Indeed, she wrote that the images and opinions that were instrumental in the construction of a northern nationalism can be identified in New York and to some extent in Pennsylvania as well.²⁶ Much of this northern identity was created in opposition to the South. In her chapter ‘A Nation before Nationalism’ (2006) she argued that the ideological issues accompanying the war forced the North to move toward a redefinition of nationalism that justified its actions in the face of the challenge offered by the Confederacy, to align itself to the legacy of the American Revolution as a legitimate nationalistic impulse that bore no relation to the recent secession.²⁷

Melinda Lawson’s *Patriot Fires* (2002) examined a host of speeches, pamphlets, pageants, sermons and assemblies to establish the construction process of patriotism and the struggle for meaning for national loyalty. She argued convincingly that the war was responsible for the creation of a new, American national identity, ranging from a liberal understanding of patriotism as the exercise of self-interest, to a Christian understanding of patriotism as

²⁴ Peter J. Parish, *The North and the Nation in the Era of the Civil War*, Edited by A.I.P Smith and Susan-Mary Grant, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003), p.65.

²⁵ Ibid, p.66.

²⁶ Susan-Mary Grant, *North Over South: Northern Nationalism and American Identity in the Antebellum Era*, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000), p.10.

²⁷ Susan-Mary Grant, “A Nation before Nationalism: The Civic and Ethnic Construction of America’ in Delanty, G. Krishan, K (eds), *The SAGE Handbook of Nations and Nationalism*, (London: SAGE, 2006), p.533.

sacrifice; from an unquestioning obedience to the national state, to a vigilant patriotism rooted in conscience and tolerant of dissent.²⁸ Lawson posited that this was only possible due to the crucible of war, which promoted the importance of organized, united action, a patriotism of sacrifice, and national as opposed to state loyalties.²⁹

Elizabeth Varon believed that the concept of the Union took precedence in the construction of American identity. In her book *Disunion! The Coming of the American Civil War* (2002), she attested that the concept of “Union” possessed a profound resonance for Americans before the Civil War, because the word connoted “nation” and “country” simultaneously, calling to mind the geographic, linguistic, cultural and historical bonds that held America’s citizenry together.³⁰ Most fundamentally, Varon reiterated that the Union was synonymous with the Government and the republic.

In her article “Let All Nations See” (2006), Frances Clarke referred to Americans, Northerners and Unionists as the same thing. She argued that the war exacerbated a sense of American exceptionalism at home and abroad, and that most argued unequivocally that their success in the war came from the superior morality and civic virtue of their people.³¹ Central to this American identity was Christianity, for many northerners believed they had rekindled God’s favour through virtue of their selflessness. More recently in his book, *The Union War* (2011), Gary Gallagher concurred with the centrality of the concept of the Union, for “United States”, “the Union”, “the country” and “the nation” were deployed routinely as synonyms. Union soldiers functioned as the most powerful national symbol, confirming the notion of

²⁸ Melinda Lawson, *Patriot Fires: Forging a New American Nationalism in the Civil War North*, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), p.2.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Elizabeth Varon, *Disunion!: The Coming of the American Civil War, 1789-1859*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), p.4.

³¹ Frances Clarke, “Let All Nations See”: Civil War Nationalism and the Memorialization of Wartime Voluntarism’, *Civil War History* 52:1 (2006), 67.

American exceptionalism as well as acting as the embodiment of the Union as an institution.³²

The Welsh soldiery appear to showcase elements of all three forms of nationalism as framed by these historians. As Grant posited that much northern identity was formed in opposition to the South, Welsh soldiers exhibited much anti-Southern rhetoric in how they framed themselves as patriots. As Lawson categorised national identity as a composite ideology made up of several different motivations, Welshmen with differing loyalties to community, state and government organised in collective action in the name of national defence. Moreover, as Varon and Gallagher stressed the centrality of the concept of the Union in the formation of national loyalty, many Welsh soldiers displayed similar reverence for the Union as a representative of idealised republican governance.

What is clear, however, is that studying the Welsh as a case study offers further validation to the claim that the Civil War resulted in a new form of national identity, one that stressed the synonymy of “American”, “Northern” and “Union” as inclusive terms for these white, Protestant immigrants. Given that they did not need to contest their racial and religious properties, their adherence to this new version of nationalism was not primarily founded on ethnic and cultural dimensions, for in that respect they were already more American than most. Instead, Welsh soldiers displayed a fervent espousal of a form of national identity that was based on loyalty to the North and the Union. Furthermore, examining Welsh accounts highlights the importance of understanding that Civil War combatants were active participants in this process of nationalisation, rather than passive bystanders.

As was the case with Racine, other Welsh communities displayed enthusiasm for the war. This was driven in no small part by the overtly pro-Republican Welsh-American press. There

³² Gary W. Gallagher, *The Union War*, (London: Harvard University Press, 2011), p.3.

were four main Welsh language periodicals based in New York and Pennsylvania during this period, and all were fierce supporters of the war effort. On a weekly and monthly basis, they acted as an unofficial recruitment agency, urging their readers to enlist to defend their country and their Union. The *Cenhadwr Americanaidd* was one of the most vocal in its support of the war. It was founded in 1851 by the preacher Dr Robert Everett as a religious journal and was filled with sermons and hymns proclaiming the godliness of supporting the war and the Union government. In July 1861, Everett issued a declaration on his front page, urging every Welsh male in America to heed the call of their country, to defend its honour and protect its institutions.³³

The *Cyfaill o'r Hen Wlad*, founded in 1838 proved a similar advocate of war. Religious inter-community meetings were reported in the *Cyfaill*, similar to the meeting held at Racine. At the Annual Sermon Meeting in Bridgewater, Oneida County, in October 1861, the *Cyfaill* noted that Welshmen had a duty to the Government and urged every Welsh citizen of the country to swear the oath to protect the Union Government with their lives if necessary, warning that they would be open to the wrath of God if they refused.³⁴ The other two, *Y Drych* and *Seren Orllewinol*, founded in 1851 and 1845 respectively, were similarly religious periodicals, blending Christian sermons with pro-war literary material.

One way that the *Cenhadwr* stoked popular nationalism was through the publication of local poets' pro-war verses. Benefitting from a rich literary culture, Welsh newspapers circulated poetry and songs composed by regional bards, which from 1861 onwards became enamoured with the romanticism of Welshmen fighting to defend their homes from tyranny. For instance, in January 1862, Everett circulated a piece by the bard 'Llanc Heniarth' (the Heniarth lad), who wrote:

³³ *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, July 1861

³⁴ 'Cyfarfod Pregethu Blynnyddol Bridgewater, Sir Oneida', *Y Cyfaill o'r Hen Wlad*, November 1861

Mae gynhwrf a thwrf certh arfau – yn awr, drwy’n hyfryd ororau...am hyny mewn
brys ymunwn yn rhwydd, dros rhyddid feddian wn.³⁵

The sound of arms threatens our beautiful marches...for this we in haste enlist, for
freedom we fight.

This feeling was matched by G.O. Jones, who was so incensed by the thought of his country being threatened by secessionists that he wrote: ‘Tra anghyfiawnder bery’n gwmwl du, ni th’wyna heulwen heddwch ar y wlad’ which translates to ‘While the black cloud of injustice boils, the sunshine of peace will not shine on the country.’³⁶ These were the voices of ordinary citizens who viewed the existence of the Confederacy as a direct threat to their liberty. A notable emphasis was given to the physical landscape, noting the threat of arms and the ‘black cloud of injustice’ to the ‘beautiful marches’ of the North. Members of local communities were directly appealing to Welshmen’s sense of contemporary masculine duty to defend the physical land that they had built their homes on. Such appeals remained a consistent motif in motivating men to join the army, indicating how expressions of American identity began with ideas of defending northern values of liberty and freedom.

This was something that appealed to many Union recruits, regardless of ethnic background. Andre M. Fleche believed this was a widely held view among Union troops, or at least the more philosophically inclined, who constructed a definition of American nationalism that stressed the achievement of liberty through order, and that only a stable government could

³⁵ *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, January 1862

³⁶ ‘Y Rhyfel, G.O. Jones’ in *Y Cenhadwr*, January 1862

protect true freedom.³⁷ The Welsh fall into this category, so it is easy to look at their devotion to the Union as a guarantee of their personal freedoms at home – very much conforming to Fleche’s notion of ‘liberty through order.’ This highlights an important aspect of Welsh-American national identity during the Civil War, for in many respects, volunteering was an act of regional duty as well as national. Often, recruitment was a collective effort more than any individual will, and while the rhetoric used typically revolved around national defence, this was often interpreted through regional dimensions.

Like other Union soldiers, Welsh volunteers adhered to masculine codes of conduct as integral characteristics of American citizenship. Such aspects of cultural manhood were based on Victorian-American notions of masculinity, which proved synonymous with service in the armed forces. This phenomenon is something that has been explored by Ricardo Herrera, focusing on the interim period between the Revolutionary War and Civil War. He concluded that, traditionally, American soldiers placed great stock in their public demonstration of virtue as proof of their purity of heart and of their sincerity as republicans.³⁸ Moreover, Herrera has argued that the unwillingness of citizens to share in the burdens of self-defence and in the preservation of order was viewed by contemporaries as an indication of moral rot and social decay, and consequently, soldiering became central to early Americans’ vision of themselves, viewing military service as a moral test.³⁹

Such values were synonymous with the Welsh vision of northern masculinity, and as such, they strove to embrace those ideals through action. Joining the army was understood by Welsh volunteers as a necessary duty of northern manhood, taking up arms to defend their country and their homes. After all, McPherson has asserted that the consciousness of duty

³⁷ Andre M. Fleche, *The Revolution of 1861: The American Civil War in the Age of Nationalist Conflict*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), p.68.

³⁸ Ricardo A. Herrera, *For Liberty and the Republic: The American Citizen as Soldier, 1775-1861*, (New York: New York University Press, 2015), p.28.

³⁹ *Ibid*, p.28.

was pervasive in Victorian America, that many understood ‘duty’ to be a binding moral obligation.⁴⁰ Duty was linked to concepts of masculinity, which appeared prominently in Welsh correspondence throughout the war. Lorien Foote’s analysis of manhood in the Union army concluded that most soldiers viewed manhood as an achievement rather than an innate nature, and that it was the attributes a man displayed that made him worthy of the designation.⁴¹

Such ideals of northern manhood were influenced by the gender roles of the contemporary American household, particularly by the role of ‘the domestic mother.’ Linda Kerber has argued that political socialisation took place at an early age, and Republican mothers were important factors in the creation of a political culture.⁴² The apparent patriotic zeal of Welsh volunteers was partly the result of their upbringing. Several viewed enlistment as a symbolic demonstration of manhood, protecting the domesticity and femininity of their homes and families. The image of motherhood appeared frequently in Welsh wartime poetry, calling on young men as sons of Columbia to defend the physical territory of their homeland. Enlisting to fight, therefore, was portrayed as a way of defending Welshmen’s families. Domesticity thus played an important role in shaping the gendered aspect of Welsh-American identity. Taking up arms was a fulfilment of a Victorian-American’s duty, both as citizens and as husbands and sons.

Similar imagery was evoked in a poem by the bard Llinos Glan Ohio, which was published in the *Seren Orllewinol* in August 1861. Entitled ‘Columbia,’ referring to the matriarchal name

⁴⁰ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, p.23.

⁴¹ Lorien Foote, *The Gentlemen and the Roughs: Violence, Honor and Manhood in the Union Army*, (New York: New York University Press, 2010), p.3.

⁴² Linda Kerber, ‘The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment – An American Perspective’, *American Quarterly* 28 (1976), 204.

attributed to the lands of New England, the poem described the North as a paradise for its people, a paradise now under threat by secession:

Within thy sheltering bosom millions rest in perfect freedom and in prosperous quest,
thy mighty bulwarks dare the tyrant's heels, oppression at thy name a terror feels.⁴³

The very land itself was portrayed as a mother: the protector of immigrant liberty and social freedom against all forms of tyranny and oppression. Even the weather was described as 'delightful climes' granting 'longevity and health,' a description vague enough for any reader to associate the description with their hometown or county. The idea put forward by Llinos was that Columbia's matriarchal protection was under threat by the outbreak of war, and that the land itself needed saving: 'The Goddess of sweet liberty, aloof with visage pale and lifted hands...save Columbia dear and crush to dust oppression far and near.'⁴⁴

Portraying the land as a woman in need of protecting reflected the masculine ideals expected of the period. Additionally, it spoke of how prospective volunteers associated the land directly with their domestic image of home, meaning that the maternal characteristics of Columbia could be interpreted from a regional perspective. Of further significance was the poet's decision to write and publish his verses through the medium of English rather than Welsh, for *Y Seren Orllewinol* rarely published English-language material, let alone English poetry. Not only can it be seen as an attempt to circulate the poem amongst a wider audience than merely the Welsh language community, but it also appears to be a method of asserting Welsh immigrants' loyalty to the Union through adherence to its language. Predominantly,

⁴³ 'Columbia: A Poem' in *Seren Orllewinol*, August 1861

⁴⁴ Ibid.

however, the insights gained from such poetry is how, at the outbreak of war, Welshmen were called upon by the community to defend hearth and home to display the virtues of their northern masculinity.

According to Frances Clarke, this image of 'home' was of paramount importance in the minds of American men, for the home and its female guardians had been invested with the specific political function of protecting society's moral values and instilling civic virtue in men.⁴⁵ In a time of increasing industrialisation, and perceiving a resultant increase in male immorality, social commentators increasingly emphasised domestic bonds as the crucial foundation of moral order and social cohesiveness.⁴⁶ This romantic and predominantly rural image of masculinity was certainly mirrored by Welsh bards, with a particular focus on the imagery of the land. Given that much of the Welsh population was concentrated in urban, industrial communities, it is interesting to note that the shared concept of 'home' revolved around a pastoral ideal, highlighting the regional disparities in the imagery of 'home' present in the Welsh press.

Additionally, what should be considered is that few of the Welsh letters available contained references to wives or children, indicating that most came from young, single men, especially before the draft was introduced in 1863. John Patrick Riley has written an insightful article into the experience of family men in the Civil War, concluding that their experiences were vastly different in ways incomprehensible to their comrades who were young, unmarried, and childless. He wrote that the war presented a dilemma for fathers and husbands. Tapped to volunteer their service to the state through appeals to duty, honour, and patriotism, these men nevertheless remained their families' primary breadwinners and legal heads of household. In

⁴⁵ Frances Clarke, 'So Lonesome I Could Die: Nostalgia and Debates over Emotional Control in the Civil War North', *Journal of Social History* (2007), 253.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 255.

the nineteenth century, martial duty in time of war was the responsibility of every man, but fulfilling this obligation jeopardized the safety and security of soldiers' families.⁴⁷ From this perspective, many Welsh soldiers in the earlier stages of the war found it easy to profess an unswerving loyalty to the Union, because few of the correspondents who wrote to the Welsh press had the safety of their children and spouses to consider. Riley noted that fathers in uniform, far from being aloof or disconnected from their homes, displayed a great deal of concern for the well-being of their families. This patriarchal desire to remain in control, even under the trying circumstances of war, and a sharp awareness that they were not, produced raw emotion in their letters and caused soldiering family men acute pain and conflict.⁴⁸

Such anguish does not appear prominently in Welsh letters, as either the letters came from single, childless men, or because of a degree of selective publishing on behalf of the papers. Most correspondence was directed towards parents, siblings, or neighbours, not towards wives and children. Outside of this source base, a few exceptions to this trend can be found to show that some fathers did enlist. John Griffiths, formerly of Merthyr in south Wales, wrote to his wife and children from Falmouth, near Fredericksburg on 23 December 1862. He reiterated that he could not return home at that time, for his duty called:

You say that my uncle wants to have me back home...I cannot come now, he is too late, I belong to Uncle Sam for a while yet, and if he can make me better after I get done here, probably I shall come back if God spares me.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ John Patrick Riley, "I Love Country but I Love Family and Self Much Better": The Emotional World of Civil War Family Men', *Civil War History* 67 (2021), 256.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 260.

⁴⁹ 'Letter from Falmouth, near Fredericksburg (23.12.1862) by John Griffiths, son of Mr Griffiths of the Red Lion, Merthyr' in *Merthyr Star*, 31 January 1863

This letter is an example of a Welshman who had not been born in the United States, and whose family was living in Wales with him, yet still he had decided to emigrate and enlist. Despite Griffiths' family clamouring for his return, Griffiths' perspective was that he had merely fulfilled his duty by volunteering to fight for 'Uncle Sam.' His case shows how, even to some who lived in Wales and who were heads of their own families, an affinity for masculine duty was an integral element of volunteer motivations as well as a key aspect of Welsh identity.

A further instance is when John Hughes of Springfield, Pennsylvania, enlisted in the 11th Pennsylvania Cavalry. However, rather than leave his children behind, he persuaded five of his sons to accompany him in volunteering for the 11th Cavalry. These were: John, Levi, James, Samuel, and Thomas. The latter served as a drummer boy for the regiment but was captured along with his brother James and interred at Andersonville Prison, where he died of diarrhoea on the 3rd of September 1864. He was just fourteen years old.⁵⁰ That such a youth willingly went to war with his father and brothers demonstrates that, for some, fighting for the Union was believed to be a solemn, masculine duty to protect the family, with age proving no obstacle.

Whether they were fathers or not, however, defending a family or the abstract definition of 'home' was a popular motivating factor, demonstrating the importance of masculine conduct in how Welsh volunteers framed their understanding of American manhood. This notion was promoted by Robert Everett in particular, who used his platform as the *Cenhadwr*'s editor to rally as many Welsh-speakers to the Union cause as possible. In the March 1862 edition of the newspaper, Everett penned a particularly apt description of Welsh contemporary masculinity in a sermon:

⁵⁰ 'Hughes, Thomas Pvt. Co. B. 11 PA Cavalry,' Civil War Resource File 17665, Andersonville National Historic Site

Gwroldeb, er ei fod yn air cyffredin, ac mewn ystyr yn hawdd ei gofio a'i ddeall, sydd air tra chynwysfawr a gwerthfawr...Dylid cofio fod dau fath o hono, naturiol a moesol. Gwroldeb neu ddewrder naturiol...ond gwroldeb moesol a gynyrchir gan egwyddor y galon, dan yr ystyriaeth o ddyledswydd fel yr hyn sydd iawn a rhesymol.⁵¹

Manliness, despite being a common word, and its meaning easy to remember and understand, is a comprehensive and valuable word...Remember there are two types of it, natural and moral. Manliness or natural bravery...but moral bravery is created by the principles of the heart, under the consideration of duty like that which is good and reasonable.

This provided his readers with an important message that, while natural bravery and manliness was good, what was superior was the courage to not rely on natural strength, but to listen to one's heart in the fulfilment of his duty. This notion of gentle masculinity and the protection of female virtue was present throughout the war, as evidenced by a poem published in the *Seren Orllewinol* in April 1864. The author, who gave his name as Hywel Davies, wrote that:

⁵¹ 'Gwroldeb' in *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, March 1862

Mae'r milwr dewr dan arfau dur, ar dyner dir Columbia, a'i draed wrth dramwy'r
dolydd gwyrdd, yn sathru myrdd o flodau,⁵²

The brave soldier armed with steel, on Columbia's tender soil, his feet passing
through green meadows, trampling a myriad of flowers.

The pervasive tone of the poem was a paradox, for despite defending Columbia's 'tender soil,' the land was destroyed in the process. However, this was deemed by Davies to be a necessary sacrifice, for what was of greater importance was to emphasise the heroic qualities of the 'fine patriot, who left his comfortable town, refused his father's house, for his troubled country, not for self-interest or ambition.' It illustrates how, even much later in the war, overtones of duty and sacrifice were continuously used to appeal to volunteers.

The importance of masculine conduct to the Welsh construction of American identity is emphasised by their treatment of deserters. Commitment to duty was paramount in contemporary understandings of northern virtue, therefore, deserters were classed as traitors by their former comrades. A soldier from the 22nd Wisconsin Volunteers wrote to *Y Drych* in March 1863 to report that, during an advance to Louisville, Kentucky, four men of his company had deserted, three of whom were Welsh. The author's contempt for his fellow countrymen was palpable. He proceeded to name the individuals explicitly: Evan G Roberts, Thomas Ball and Samuel L Thomas. The author admitted that, while he disliked writing of the failures of Welshmen, justice called for him to put forward their names, for he knew that

⁵² 'Y Milwr' in *Y Seren Orllewinol*, April 1864

Y Drych would reach Welsh homesteads across the United States. One reasoning for advertising the three men's desertion was:

Fel y gallai pob Cymro, ac yn enwedig pob Cymraes, gael gweled pwy ym mhlith y Cymry sydd yn gallu iselu eu hunain gymaint.⁵³

So that every Welshman, and especially every Welsh woman, see who among the Welsh can debase themselves so.

In this instance, gender was fundamental in how Welsh volunteers defined their identity, for military service was how a man could be seen protecting hearth and home. Consequently, the 'Cymraes,' a symbol of femininity and domesticity, was instructed by the anonymous author to not tarnish themselves by associating with cowards who had reneged on their duty.

Moreover, this case alludes to the aggressiveness with which Welsh soldiers sought to demonstrate their superior credentials as patriots. As witnessed here, failure to conform meant ostracisation, and the emphasis on the deserters' Welshness simultaneously ensured that they would not be viewed as northern patriots like the comrades they had left behind.

In July 1863, a second troupe of Welshmen deserted the 22nd Wisconsin, which was also reported in *Y Drych*. This time, the correspondent was the deserters' commanding officer, Captain Owen Griffith of Company F, 22nd Wisconsin Volunteers. Griffith was a Welsh-American native, having been born in Oneida in 1820 before moving to Racine, which would have made him around 42 years of age when he was commissioned as a captain when the

⁵³ 'Llythyr Milwr Cymreig' in *Y Drych*, 28 March 1863

company was formed in August 1862.⁵⁴ He was senior to many in the company, so his election as the company commanding officer alluded to his pre-war social reputation in Racine. After he and others of his regiment had spent some time as prisoners of war in Richmond, they had been paroled and given leave to visit home, arriving at Racine to a pleasant welcome from their families. However, he reported that a few men had taken advantage of this leave to desert the army:

Ac mae yn ddrwg genyf ddweud fod tri o Gymry wedi cymeryd mantais o hyny ac heb ddychwelyd yn ol. Enwau y personau ydynt, Richard R Jones, o Waukeesha, Morris O Davies ac Evan J Lewis, o Racine. Yr oedd y tri yn perthyn i fy nghwmni i. Byddaf yn ddiolchgar i bwy bynag a sydd hysbysiad i mi am danynt, maent yn cael eu hystyried fel deserters.⁵⁵

And I'm sorry to say that three Welshmen have taken advantage of this and haven't returned. Their names are, Richard R. Jones, from Waukeesha, Morris O. Davies and Evan J. Lewis from Racine. The three belonged to my company. I would be grateful to whoever has information to advertise themselves to me, as they are considered deserters.

Griffith followed the previous letter's precedent by naming and shaming each of the men who had refused to rejoin the ranks. Much like the previous letter, the intent was certainly to foster

⁵⁴ 'Owen Griffith' Civil War Records Database, *New York Registers of Officers and Enlisted Men Mustered into Federal Service, 1861-1865*, [database on-line] Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010 <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/5434/> (accessed 16 December 2023)

⁵⁵ 'Profiad Milwr Cymreig yn y Carchar yn Richmond' in *Y Drych* 11 July 1863

a hostile welcome for those men when they reached home. Interestingly, the way that these men were treated in the press mirrored how the Articles of War demanded that a disgraced officer be treated. Article 85 stated: ‘In all cases where a commissioned officer is cashiered for cowardice or fraud, it shall be added in the sentence, that the crime, name, and place of abode, and punishment of the delinquent, be published in the newspapers in and about the camp, and of the particular State from which the offender came, or where he usually resides; after which it shall be deemed scandalous for an officer to associate with him.’⁵⁶ Although these Welshmen were not officers, such was the magnitude of their perceived crime they received the same public revilement as an officer was expected to receive if he failed in his duty. This highlights how an example of a Welsh volunteer deserting the army was interpreted as a betrayal, of both their comrades and their families at home, for such men could no longer fight for either one. This was not viewed as a failing of their Welsh character, but as a failure of Welshmen who had previously professed to be American patriots.

It was possible that, in giving in to the temptation of nostalgia and homesickness, which is something that all soldiers experienced, they were seen to have betrayed their collective code of masculine conduct. David Anderson has argued that many Union soldiers self-censored themselves when it came to discussing thoughts of home. In resisting nostalgia’s temptation to pine for home and its associations, Union soldiers spoke to nineteenth-century ideas of manhood. To admit that one was homesick was to cast doubt over one’s masculinity, for a soldier’s duty was to safeguard home and hearth, so yielding to nostalgia would violate expectations of their manliness as well as ‘feminize’ them to a degree.⁵⁷ Certainly, some soldiers struggled to admit their homesickness amid a range of fears, from gentle ribbing to

⁵⁶ ‘Art. 85.’ in *Revised United States Army Regulations of 1861, with an appendix containing the changed laws affecting Army regulations and Articles of War to June 25, 1863*, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moa/AGY4285.0001.001?rgn=main;view=fulltext>, (accessed 17 December 2023), p.498.

⁵⁷ David Anderson, ‘Dying of Nostalgia: Homesickness in the Union Army during the Civil War’, *Civil War History* 56 (2010), 270.

insinuations against their manliness.⁵⁸ By giving in to such feelings of homesickness, especially when others of the 22nd had remained faithful, any chance of those men returning to the regiment had been destroyed. Indeed, the *Roster of Wisconsin Volunteers* listed them as having deserted and failed to return to the ranks for the duration of the war. Evan G. Roberts was officially mustered out on 27 January 1863, Richard R. Jones on the 20th of May, but no further information was given for Samuel J. Thomas.⁵⁹

Ella Lonn's research on the subject concluded that desertion among volunteer ranks, although common, was nevertheless more opposed than in the regular army. According to the provost marshal general, among volunteers, the desertion rate was 62.51 per thousand, compared to 244.25 per thousand in the regular army.⁶⁰ Lonn subsequently inferred that the men who enlisted in the regular service were far inferior in character to the troops of the volunteer organisations, although such a statement ignores the complexities of why individuals chose to desert. More recently, John Robertson's exploration of desertion and re-enlistment patterns among Pennsylvania troops shows that most men only left the army due to physical reasons rather than temperamental. Most served until they were physically unable to continue.⁶¹ However, of those that deserted the Army of the Potomac, 82 percent left the army within two weeks of each of the battles fought between 1862 and 1863.⁶²

The deserters from the 22nd Wisconsin likely did not view their decision as a betrayal. On the contrary, desertion may have been viewed as an act of patriarchal duty to return to their families. Robert Fantina has pointed out that many volunteers had left those at home nearly

⁵⁸ Anderson, 'Dying of Nostalgia', 270.

⁵⁹ 'Samuel J. Thomas,' *Roster of Wisconsin volunteers, War of the Rebellion, 1861-1865* [database on-line] *Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2005*, <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/29993/> (accessed 17 December 2023).

⁶⁰ Ella Lonn, *Desertion During the Civil War*, (San Francisco: Century Company, 1928), p.180.

⁶¹ John Robertson, 'Re-Enlistment Patterns of Civil War Soldiers', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 32 (2001), 25.

⁶² *Ibid*, 26.

destitute. When they left for military service, they expected to send home money provided by the government. But in most cases, the government never paid the promised money on time. This absolved them from their obligation to the military, and one can see from their point-of-view it surely left them with the duty to return home and provide for their families.⁶³ For those with wives and children to provide for, leaving Union ranks was at times a priority. However, for those men who were young and single, as were most of this thesis' source base, such behaviour was deemed as characteristically un-American and therefore a betrayal of what they were fighting for.

Such views were shared at home. Dora L. Costa and Matthew E. Kahn in their article, 'Deserters, Social Norms and Migration,' observed that deserters found reintegration into their home communities difficult after the war, particularly those from pro-war or anti-slavery settlements. Consequently, deserters were far more likely to migrate to different states after the war due to judgement from their neighbours. They argued that a soldier might fear future ostracism from his home community because his choice to desert was well known there. The potential ostracism and social sanction a deserter would face would be even stronger in communities that were pro war and thus had supplied a disproportionately large number of soldiers who fought and died.⁶⁴

Therefore, the Welsh were not unique in condemning deserters. What is clear, however, is how important masculine conduct was to volunteers who were constructing an American identity based on paternal duty to the family and the country. The 22nd's treatment of its exiles was meant to shame them publicly, stressing a theme of betrayal of both their comrades and their families. Adherence to notions of manhood, therefore, was of great

⁶³ Robert Fantina, *Desertion and the American Soldier 1776-2001*, (New York: Algora Publishing, 2006), p.68.

⁶⁴ Dora L. Costa and Matthew E. Kahn, 'Deserters, Social Norms, and Migration', *The Journal of Law & Economics* 50 (2007), 329.

importance to Welsh immigrants attempting to project an image of patriotic duty. This argument builds on Reid Mitchell's discussions about the importance of family as an enlistment incentive, asserting that the generation of 1861 did not respond to the national crisis in atomistic terms, volunteering as representatives of their families.⁶⁵ Hunter has argued that, in the case of the Welsh, their communities were directly responsible for the propagation of popular nationalism.⁶⁶ Moreover, the symbolic act of the community bidding goodbye as their men marched off to war was integral to the cult of the Welsh volunteer.⁶⁷ Consequently, the role of Welsh volunteers as representatives of home suggests that, at least during the initial stages of the war, the construction of military identity was understood through a regional framework.

Sentiments of national defence were continuously put on an equal footing with ideas of protecting hearth and home. A soldier referring to himself as 'ABC' wrote to the *Cyfaill* in October 1861 to remind other volunteers of what was expected of Welsh-American men. He claimed that some of his comrades had been complaining about being made to sleep on the ground rather than in beds, to which 'ABC' responded that a soldier's life is not one of comfort, and no man should enlist unless they are fully committed to protect the welfare of their country over their own.⁶⁸ In this soldier's opinion, the attributes of a Union volunteer should be discipline and selflessness.

Letters from 1863 indicate that, for some Welsh soldiers, such motivations were unchanged since they enlisted. Benjamin F. Thomas had enlisted in Company A of the 91st Ohio Volunteers, eventually being promoted to the rank of quartermaster sergeant of the

⁶⁵ Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers*, p.17.

⁶⁶ Hunter, *Sons of Arthur*, p.105.

⁶⁷ Hunter, *Llwch Cenhedloedd*, p.44.

⁶⁸ 'Llythyr oddiwrth Swyddog Milwraidd oddiar Faes y Gwaed,' in *Y Cyfaill o'r Hen Wlad yn America*, October 1861

company.⁶⁹ In May 1863 he wrote a letter to his mother where he reiterated the beliefs that he carried into the army. He reassured her of his commitment to be faithful to God and to defend the government against traitors, stating he had three duties to fulfil; towards God, towards family, and towards the government.⁷⁰

John W. Rowlands' letter to *Y Drych* in April 1863 evoked similar notions of manhood, professing how determined he was to serve his country unto death. He assured *Y Drych*'s readers how serious he took his oath to protect the Union government, promoting his own image as a patriotic citizen-soldier. He proceeded to explain his convictions in very colourful language, about how he would gladly spill every drop of his blood if it was necessary to uphold 'the dignity of his country and its laws, constitution and unity.'⁷¹

To some extent, the prosaic language of both letters was intended to reassure the letters' recipients that Thomas and Rowlands remained committed to the cause. Moreover, both men were aware that other soldiers, as well as neighbours and family members, would be able to read their letters in *Y Drych* or *Cenhadwr*. As such, they felt a need to write openly on their pro-war motivations. Rowlands went further than Thomas in this regard. The former wrote at length about the justice of his cause. He commented that while the life of a soldier was hard, it was an honour nonetheless, for he was participating in the struggle for freedom, unity, and order, raising his hand against 'the traitorous enemies and terrorists,' ready to sacrifice his life for the success of his country.⁷²

Volunteering was also framed as a demonstration of 'American-ness' through the legacy of the American Revolution. Some believed they were following in their forefathers' footsteps

⁶⁹ 'Benjamin F. Thomas,' *U.S., Civil War Pension Index: General Index to Pension Files, 1861-1934* [database on-line] Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2000, <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/4654/> (accessed 17 December 2023).

⁷⁰ Letter of Benjamin F. Thomas (unpublished) in Jerry Hunter, *Sons of Arthur*, p.161.

⁷¹ 'Talfyriad o lythyr oddiwrth Filwr Cymreig' in *Y Drych*, 4 April 1863

⁷² *Ibid*.

because Welshmen had been at the heart of the creation of the United States. The *Cenhadwr* published a letter written on the 19th of October 1861 by Reverend Benjamin Chidlaw, a Welsh preacher who was the regimental chaplain to the 39th Ohio Volunteers and was a close correspondent of the Welsh press. Chidlaw explained simply that his fellow Welsh soldiers were devoted to the Union government because it was in their heritage, and that the Welsh had played an important role in the very composition of the United States government. Chidlaw pointed out that thirteen Welshmen had signed the Declaration of Independence, and hundreds of them enlisted in the army of the revolution to fight the British. No wonder, he wrote, that their nation was involved with all its energy to defend the principles of their fathers.⁷³ In this manner, Chidlaw viewed Welsh immigrants as more American than most, deliberately constructing this idea as a reaction to the heightened nationalism of the Civil War.

Contrary to Chidlaw's claims, the Welsh were not unlike other immigrants in this search for cultural legitimacy. Paul Nagel's influential exploration of American nationality in the nineteenth-century argued that, after 1854, the Founding Fathers were made patrons of liberty, a role to be emulated by new stewards, while the future remained an important and impatient ideological element.⁷⁴ David Gleeson also alluded to this in his study of English immigrants during the conflict. He argued that the English largely found American culture compatible with their own, because they saw themselves as the founders of New England, ergo the founders of the American society into which others assimilated.⁷⁵ Subsequently, the Welsh found themselves repeating the same patterns as the English, tracing and boasting of their role in the creation of American culture as a method of justifying and solidifying their

⁷³ 'Llythyr oddiwrth y Parch B.J. Chidlaw' in *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, November 1861

⁷⁴ Paul C. Nagel, *This Sacred Trust: American Nationality 1778-1898*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p.136.

⁷⁵ Gleeson, 'Proving their Loyalty to the Republic', p.100.

own identity as citizens. In this they were emulating the wider propaganda efforts of the Union in using the War of Independence as testament to the pedigree and superiority of their government.

For example, popular ballads from New York and Philadelphia were full of references to the Civil War as a continuation of the American Revolution. The ‘March of the New-York Volunteers’ demanded that the men of New York ‘rush to the field to perish or to conquer’ and ‘stand by that flag for which your fathers died.’⁷⁶ Simultaneously, the ‘New York Volunteer’ described how in 1776, freemen young and old, all fought for independence, and the Stars and Stripes was ‘defended by brave patriots, the Yankee Volunteers.’⁷⁷

Consequently, what appealed to prospective Welsh recruits also appealed to the wider population. John Matsu’s analysis of General John Pope’s Army of Virginia, comprised of the first volunteers that flocked to Union banners after the outbreak of hostilities, similarly noticed the importance of the American Revolution. He asserted that it played an important role in bridging political divides between recruits. If Republicans and Democrats fought over which party was the legitimate heir to the legacy of the American Revolution, on the Fourth of July they stood united in the face of an external challenge. The union of northern Democrats and Republicans possessed a much stronger claim to a shared revolutionary legacy than Confederates’ claims of resistance to tyranny.⁷⁸

Castells’ concept of ‘Resistance Identity’ is applicable to some Welsh volunteers, for a great part of northern patriotism was partly constructed by an antagonism to everything ‘southern.’ Some Welshmen expressed genuine hatred for what they perceived as the growing threat of

⁷⁶ ‘March of the New York Volunteers’, Bodleian Ballads Roud Number: V3272, <http://ballads.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/search/roud/V3272>, (accessed 17 December 2023)

⁷⁷ ‘The New York Volunteer’, Bodleian Ballads Roud Number; V3284, <http://ballads.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/search/roud/V3284> (accessed 17 December 2023)

⁷⁸ John H. Matsu, *The First Republican Army: The Army of Virginia and the Radicalization of the Civil War*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016), p.114

secessionism. In July 1863, James Thomas wrote to *Y Drych* to describe his hatred of the rebels. He was at that moment guarding thousands of Confederate prisoners of war in Fort Delaware. He felt particular disgust at his boring duties, but more so at having to guard what he viewed as despicable men. He claimed that: 'I would rather be among a sty of pigs in Aberteifi [Wales] than amidst the enemies I saw last week in Fort Delaware.'⁷⁹

In the same month, Daniel T. Jones of the 126th Illinois Volunteers wrote to *Y Drych* to share similar feelings of hatred towards the South. He expressed his enthusiasm at having enlisted, being overjoyed that he was now marching towards Vicksburg, 'marching Left, Left, Left to crush all of Jeff's soldiers underfoot and turn all of Dixie's sacred land into a desolate wasteland.'⁸⁰ Jones' account implied that, at least in his mind, the South was a separate, foreign entity, and its people were not to be considered as fellow Americans. Such was his apparent hostility to the South's existence he seemed ready to turn its landscape into a 'desolate wasteland' to protect the Union. The American identity he was exhibiting was firmly northern in nature, as it represented everything antagonistic to the South.

In November 1861, one volunteer explained to his friend Owen Owens that his mission was to seek vengeance on the rebels. He admitted that, initially, he felt no resentment towards the rebels, but upon hearing of how they killed Union wounded after the Battle of Bull Run his desire to fight them in battle was greatly increased. He commented on an alleged incident where a prisoner from a Massachusetts regiment was made to dig his own grave before being shot by Confederate soldiers. Such was this soldier's rage that he wrote the chilling words:

Y maent heb deimlo effaith fy ngwn newydd i eto – yr wyf yn disgwyl y cant yn fuan

⁷⁹ 'James Thomas, Company E 3rd PV' in *Y Drych* 11 July 1863

⁸⁰ 'Daniel T. Jones, Sergeant Company H 126th I.I. Volunteers' in *Y Drych* 11 July 1863

They haven't felt the effect of my new gun yet – I expect they will soon.⁸¹

His conceptions of duty were more concrete than abstract notions of protecting the Union. Instead, he conveyed a more primal need to kill rebel soldiers. Portraying Confederates as foreign aliens certainly made this easier. Some identified the threat to their liberty posed by the Confederacy in the same manner that England had been oppressing native Welsh liberties and rights for centuries. Some immigrants viewed the Confederacy as an object of imperialism and thus much easier to hate. Stephen Engle noted that many Germans had settled in America after the failure of the German revolutions of 1848-49. As a result, Germans flocked to join the Union army in order to preserve the republic in America that they had hoped to establish in Germany.⁸² In this regard, some Welsh immigrants viewed the Union government as the idyllic republic they had failed to create in Wales and fought all the harder to preserve it.

A letter from William R. Jones of Racine, Wisconsin to a friend in March 1862 claimed that these beliefs were dear to his heart, explaining that a seething enmity towards the South and its English allies were central to his understanding of the war's continuation. Firstly, he expressed frustration at the unjust powers the South had been granted, including the fugitive slave law that bound every white man in the United States to be a slave-catcher for them.⁸³ He wrote of his contempt for England at defending the slaveowners and the 'dirty tricks they played on the Welsh', both historically, referring to the treachery of the long knives, where a

⁸¹ 'Llythyr o Faes y Gwaed' in *Y Cyfaill o'r Hen Wlad*, November 1861

⁸² Stephen D. Engle, 'Yankee Dutchmen: Germans, The Union and the Construction of a Wartime Identity' in (ed.) Susannah Ural, *Civil War Citizens: Race, Ethnicity and Identity in America's Bloodiest Conflict*, (New York: New York University Press, 2010), p.16.

⁸³ 'From William R. Jones in Racine, Wisconsin, to a friend, March 15, 1862' in Alan Conway, *The Welsh in America: Letters from the Immigrants*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1961), p.290.

delegation of Welsh nobles were massacred by Saxons at a peace gathering sometime in the fifth-sixth century, and recent examples of English dominance ‘when some Englishman was raised to office in Wales with a soul so small that it would not fill a pen.’⁸⁴

He summarised his feelings in this manner: ‘when I think of these things and England’s attitude to the United States I am ready for war.’⁸⁵ It is evident that Jones professed to detest the English for their support of the slave-owning oligarchic threat of the South. He perceived English intervention as a continuation of the oppression to Welsh sovereignty and cultural independence endemic to Welsh history and appears determined to defend his home from similar oppression. Consequently, in his case, animosity to England heightened his commitment to the Union, but it also meant that he opposed the Confederacy as a Welshman rather than as a self-proclaimed American patriot. While not a universal phenomenon, it does highlight how some volunteers did not experience a greater affinity for their place in America, and that in a few cases, the war heightened their ‘Welshness.’

Others shared this view. Richard and Anne Jones wrote to their father in April 1863 claiming ‘had it not been for the support from Britain, our enemies would have laid down their arms months ago. This bloody war would have been a thing of the past had it not been for the support of the British.’⁸⁶ Thomas Prosser from Newbury, Ohio, believed that ports such as Liverpool were building iron warships for the Confederacy, such as the Alabama, and crewing them with Englishmen.⁸⁷ Even following Union victory in 1865, Welshmen were quick to comment on England’s willingness to harbour Confederate politicians. A Welsh soldier wrote to his relatives in Cwmbach in Wales, describing the situation with satirical imagery:

⁸⁴ Conway, *The Welsh in America*, p.290.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid, p.300.

⁸⁷ Ibid, p.293.

Y mae llawer eto o'r blaenoriaid heb eu dal, yn ffoaduriaid o'u gwlad, ac yn llechu yn llechwraidd dan beisiau y Frenhines Victoria.

Many leading figures have yet to be apprehended, refugees from their country, and are hiding underneath Queen Victoria's petticoats.⁸⁸

Such connotations further strained Welsh-American connections with Britain and led to a marked increase in anti-Anglo sentiment among the Welsh-speaking population.⁸⁹ Indirectly, therefore, for some Welsh volunteers, fighting the Confederate armies meant striking at their ancestral imperial antagonist, reinforcing traditional ties of native identity. Others, however, viewed English support for the Confederacy as another reason to reject anything 'British' about themselves, solidifying some immigrants' conceptual understanding of nationhood as northern in nature.

Ideology was a fundamental component of Welsh soldiers' motivations. Despite not being evident from the Welsh-American press, it is a certainty that other, more material reasons for volunteering proved influential for some recruits. Stathis Kalyvas in his analysis of civil wars dissects a model of civil conflict into 'cleavages.' The primary, or 'Master Cleavage,' is perceived to be the overarching issue used to identify the nature of the conflict, namely ideological, ethnic, religious or class conflicts.⁹⁰ Thus, in this manner the American Civil

⁸⁸ 'Llythyr o America Oddiwrth Filwr Cymreig at ei berthynasau yn y Cwmbach ger Aberdar' in *Y Gwladgarwr*, 26 August 1865

⁸⁹ See Robert Huw Griffiths' unpublished PhD thesis, 'The Welsh in the American Civil War c.1840-1865' (unpublished PHD Thesis, Cardiff University, 2004) for an in-depth analysis of how the trans-Atlantic ties between Welsh immigrants and domestic Welsh became frayed due to the conflict.

⁹⁰ Stathis N. Kalyvas, 'The Ontology of "Political Violence": Action and Identity in Civil Wars', *Perspectives on Politics* 1 (2003), 476.

War was largely perceived as an ideological conflict, framed as northern liberty and democracy against southern secession. While this is and should be considered an important factor why Welshmen flocked to Union ranks, another consideration is suggested by Kalyvas' second category – the material. Kalyvas argues that the conflict on the ground was often highly localised and bore little relation to the 'Master Cleavage' that the combatants were supposed to be fighting for, stating that most soldiers fought for money and loot.⁹¹

In some cases, the economic motivations for enlisting were persuasive. In a letter to his parents in October 1862, John G Jones of the 23rd Wisconsin Volunteers mentioned that there was such a surplus of food, especially beef and pork, that his fellow Welshman Thomas Hughes had put on ten pounds since enlisting, and he himself had put on twelve pounds.⁹² On balance, however, this does not account for why thousands flocked to fight for Union banners. Frank stated that neither pay nor privilege were enough for men to risk life and limb.⁹³ None of these traditional incentives could justify the devotion and steadfastness of the soldiers of the Union army. The surplus of good food described by John G. Jones was relative and fluctuated greatly during the war. Contrary to Kalyvas' assumptions, most volunteers justified their enlistment in terms of ideological convictions.

For example, in December 1862, William S. Jones of Company C, 56th Ohio wrote to *Y Drych* describing the wholesale plunder he and his comrades had been involved in while campaigning in Mississippi. However, he claimed that he took no pleasure in it. Instead, he explained to *Y Drych*'s readers that pillaging the southern countryside was a military

⁹¹ Kalyvas, 'The Ontology of "Political Violence"', 477.

⁹² 'John G. Jones to his parents, October 20th 1862' in Clare Taylor (ed), *Wales and the American Civil War*, (Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales, 1972), p.5.

⁹³ Frank, *With Ballot and Bayonet*, p.57.

necessity, as well as the fact that, in his mind, all southerners were rebels and anarchists, and such looting was therefore justified.⁹⁴

Others thought the same, perceiving looting as a military necessity. In July 1863, Thomas J. Owens described widespread looting across the whole of Alabama by Union forces in a letter he wrote to the Welsh paper *Y Gwladgarwr*. According to Owens, they plundered horses, cattle, pigs, sheep, mules, cotton and things too numerous to name:

Yr ydym wedi pluo y bradwyr yn lled lwyr ar y siwrnai diweddaf.

We have picked the traitors clean over the journey.⁹⁵

Just as William Jones justified his actions, Owens also viewed the confiscation of livestock and wealth as perfectly acceptable, denying supplies for the Confederate army in the process. Moreover, as discussed earlier, such actions were viewed as a form of punishment on a population that some Welsh soldiers considered to be traitors and were therefore deserving of violence. Indeed, William Blair has written that many northerners had no problem with considering the rebels as traitors to the Union. Their property, predominantly farms, could therefore be legally seized, as the owners were indirectly guilty of helping the rebellion.⁹⁶ From this perspective, any Union soldier that indulged in acts of plunder was actively carrying out his duty to win the war, as it deprived the Confederate armies of potential

⁹⁴ 'Wm S. Jones, Co. C, 56 Catrawd Gwirfoddllu Ohio, Rhagfyr 18, 1862' in *Y Drych*, 31 January 1863

⁹⁵ 'Thomas J. Owens, Llythyr Oddiwrth Filwr Cymreig' in *Y Gwladgarwr*, 25 July 1863

⁹⁶ William Blair, 'Friend or Foe: Treason and the Second Confiscation Act' in (eds.) Joan Waugh and Gary W. Gallagher, *Wars within a War: Controversy and Conflict over the American Civil War*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), p.31.

supplies. Of course, there were those in Union ranks who sought to exploit this situation. Jones claimed these men joined up solely for economic or pillaging opportunities. These were mostly new soldiers, whom he and the other veterans derogatively referred to as ‘Gwyr Can Dolar’ or ‘Hundred Dollar Men.’⁹⁷

Consequently, despite pillaging the local countryside, the perception that John Jones and William Jones were keen to uphold was that such activities were purely military decisions, and that ideological factors continued to be more important motivators. For them, fighting for their country was a duty they were proud of, for as volunteers, they had not required economic incentives to convince them to fight for the Union. Jones and his comrades were what Frank referred to as a new type of soldier; one that could not be motivated by coercion and material reward. They had to be politically socialized to embody the patriotic values associated with the ideal soldier-citizen and to voluntarily acknowledge the legitimacy of democracy’s claim on a citizen’s life.⁹⁸ This interpretation refutes the earlier suppositions of such scholars as Eugene Murdock, who attested that the Civil War years were an era of limited patriotism, as evidenced by the need for a bounty system.⁹⁹

What some historians have failed to consider, however, is that categorising enlistment motivations only grants a partial insight into the period. Seeing how Welsh soldiers crafted an image of unanimous conformity stresses the importance of popular nationalism to immigrant identity. While some Welshmen’s motivations may have changed during the war, what remained constant was the need to show themselves and their families that they were American citizen-soldiers of the highest calibre.

⁹⁷ Blair, ‘Friend or Foe’, p.31.

⁹⁸ Frank, *With Ballot and Bayonet*, p.25.

⁹⁹ Eugene Converse Murdock, *Patriotism Limited 1862-1865: The Civil War Draft and The Bounty System*, (Washington: Kent State University Press, 1967), p.16.

American Cultural Symbolism

Welsh volunteers found that ideological patriotism was an easily accessible method of breaking down cultural and social barriers between Welsh and non-Welsh soldiers, for it acted as a shared belief system. This was personified in specific images or symbols of propaganda, namely the flag of the Union. Following Lincoln's call for volunteers, thousands of Welshmen from across the North signed up to defend not just their country, but more specifically the 'stars and stripes.' In several cases, the flag was used as a symbolic representation of homes under threat from the Confederacy, further solidifying their sense of belonging with the United States.

The synonymy of 'homeland' with the 'flag' was represented in the *Alleghenian* of Ebensburg, Pennsylvania, a small, industrial town with a sizeable Welsh-speaking population. The editor published a local Welsh language poem in its December 1861 edition, aimed for its Anglo-American and Welsh-American readership. The poem, entitled 'Heddwch a Gymero Le' conveyed a typical personification of northern land as an angel of freedom:

Angel rhyddid a fradychwyd – Gan y teulu rhyfedd hyn. Ddeiw'n ninnau feibion
rhyddyd, I'n ddiogeli ef yn fwyn.¹⁰⁰

The Angel of Freedom has been betrayed, by this strange clan. We come, sons of
freedom, to safeguard our freedom.

¹⁰⁰ 'Heddwch a Gymero Le' in *Ebensburg Alleghenian*, 19 December 1861

It is noteworthy that an English-language newspaper chose to publish a Welsh-language poem, for it reflects the prominence of Ebensburg's Welsh population as well as the degree of cultural awareness and appreciation within the town. As with other poems published in regional periodicals, the overall theme was a literal cry for help from the land. The land was attributed a feminine quality; Columbia in the previous case, the 'Angel' in this one. Subsequently, the poet calls on the 'sons of freedom,' perhaps as another reference to the legacy of their forefathers in 1776, to protect their 'Angel.' The poet, who is named as Dewi Aberarth, proceeded to weave a more outright image of cultural nationalism into the narrative, connecting the banner of the Union with the land itself:

Y teyrnfradwyr gaffo eu hymlyd, Drwy ein coedwig ffyrdd o'r wlad, Ein banerau
fyddo'n chwaraau, mewn gwir heddwch yn ddiwad, Lincoln mwyn a'i filwyr ffyddlon,
a wna goncro'r teulu hyll.¹⁰¹

The traitors shall be waylaid through the forested paths of our country, our banners
will be waved in true peace everlasting, Lincoln and his faithful soldiers, shall
conquer this vile clan.

By associating the image of the Union flag with the forests of Pennsylvania, it lent a more visceral, realistic visualisation of what the 'nation' meant to new volunteers. Rather than representing the Union as a vague concept to fight and die for, the national flag could now

¹⁰¹ 'Dewi Aberarth' in *The Alleghenian*, 19 December 1861

serve as a reminder of their homes. This notion brings to mind K. Michael Prince's research on the importance of the dual nature of the Confederate flag, both as a unifying and dividing object. As with Native Americans and other ethnic or minority groups within the United States, a distinctive, yet vaguely defined, symbol like a flag was given different meanings depending on how it was viewed.¹⁰²

While the Union flag was meant to be a unifying national symbol, some Welshmen interpreted it as a manifestation of their home communities. One volunteer from Iowa wrote to the *Cenhadwr* in December 1861, proudly claiming his state had produced 17,750 volunteers, 4000 more than what had been required by the federal government. He further exclaimed that Iowa's denizens were overflowing with the spirit of patriotism and were ready to endure the worst suffering 'before the Stars and Stripes was trampled underfoot.'¹⁰³

Special emphasis was given to describe the image of the Union flag being trampled, emphasizing national chauvinism to protect this sacred image from desecration at the hands of the secessionists. Of additional note was that, despite this apparent nationalist zeal, he boasted of his credentials as an 'Iowa man' first and foremost. While his loyalty was stated as belonging to the Union banner, to a certain extent his account exuded regional identity far more than a national one. Consequently, his example indicates that while volunteers claimed to be enlisting as American patriots, local loyalties often trumped abstract national belonging.

This importance of stressing the flag and country were key components of the *Cenhadwr*'s articles as the war progressed, especially when it came to publish the obituaries of fallen Welsh soldiers. In April 1862, Thomas Lewis of the 66th Ohio Volunteers was one of the first casualties reported in the papers. Everett combined sensitivity with patriotic fervour, writing

¹⁰² K. Michael Prince, *Rally 'round the Flag, Boys!: South Carolina and the Confederate Flag*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2004), p.10.

¹⁰³ 'Iowa a'r Rhyfel Presenol' in *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd* December 1861

how Thomas had left his family back in Delaware to ‘faithfully answer his country’s call’ under his country’s banner, being determined to ‘defend the stars and stripes until death.’¹⁰⁴ His death, however, came too soon and from an unexpected direction, for Lewis was not killed in action, nor did he die of disease while on campaign, but in November 1861 he had been killed in a train collision.¹⁰⁵ Everett’s commemoration of Lewis’ sacrifice for his country put major emphasis on the Union flag, highlighting its usefulness as a symbol of American identity that could be understood regardless of regional differences.

Robert Bonner’s work on the importance of the flag to Confederate soldiers, particularly its connection with martyrdom is applicable here. He argued that the symbolism of the flag did not reach its full emotional potential until it called forth wartime sacrifices on its behalf.¹⁰⁶ The act of dying for a flag placed it in a new, quasi-religious category of symbols, as a totem of a collective cause.¹⁰⁷ Death in combat was the most effective evocation of the flag, therefore sacrifices such as that of Thomas Lewis were lauded in the Welsh press as patriotic acts in the name of the stars and stripes. John Bodnar recognised this also in his study of commemoration and patriotism in American public memory. He argued that the metaphor of sacrifice was defined in two ways. It could relate to the grief and sorrow people felt over the loss of friends, but it could also stand as an act of loyalty or a contribution to the salvation of the nation itself.¹⁰⁸ Much like the symbolic value of the flag in this regard, the creation of the medal of honour acted in a similar manner, allowing the government to play a more direct

¹⁰⁴ ‘Angau Milwr Ifanc’ in *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, April 1862

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Robert E. Bonner, *Colors and Blood: Flag Passions of the Confederate South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), p.67.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p.28.

role in official commemoration and in the creation of heroes.¹⁰⁹ Medals and flags, despite being mere objects, represented the America that Welshmen were fighting to defend.

Local poets also contributed eulogies that lauded Welsh sacrifices for the Union banner. A typical example from the *Cenhadwr* in October 1862 was dedicated to an unknown soldier: 'For his flag he fought, for his country he died, a martyr to liberty's cause, fair freedom he loved, and to see her prevail, he died while defending her laws.'¹¹⁰ Portraying the soldier's sacrifice as an act of duty to the flag highlights the stars and stripes' value to Welsh-speaking audiences – as a universal symbol of American identity. This was also seen in the *Cyfaill*. One notable example is a poem simply titled 'Baner yr Undeb,' by the poet Ionoron Glan Dwryd, who wrote:

Mae Baner ein Rhyddid yn amlwg uwchben, a golwg ysblenydd y Ser a'r Brithesi.¹¹¹

The banner of our freedom waves overhead, the Stars and Stripes with splendour.

Glan Dwryd urged fellow Welsh-Americans to carry the Union flag through a river of blood and to 'brandish the sword of justice' to trample their enemy underfoot.¹¹² Its value stemmed from its role as a symbol of northern liberty. As with the poem circulated by the *Alleghanian*, the 'Stars and Stripes,' Welsh soldiers were called upon to fight and risk their lives for a roll of cloth as a personification of their homes.

¹⁰⁹ Bodnar, *Remaking America*, p.28.

¹¹⁰ 'Ar Farwolaeth Milwr' in *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, October 1862

¹¹¹ 'Baner ein Undeb' in *Y Cyfaill o'r Hen Wlad*, December 1861

¹¹² Ibid.

In June 1862, the *Cenhadwr* shared a letter from John E. Roberts of the 5th Pennsylvania Cavalry, in which he mirrored this reverence for the Union banner. While stationed in Fort Ward, Virginia, Roberts recalled how his regiment of 1,300 men were presented with a gift – a handmade flag made by some citizens of New York: ‘It is one of the most beautiful banners that has ever crossed the Potomac, and I hope we can raise it in some of the rebellious states...Our motto is “Our cause is just and conquer we must.”’¹¹³ To Roberts, his regiment’s new flag served as a physical manifestation of the justice of his cause, as well as a representation of the citizens he was fighting to defend. There was no emphasis on regional loyalties, for he gave the impression that he wanted to carry that flag into rebel territory to conquer in the name of his country.

The 22nd Wisconsin Volunteers also received a handmade flag from a local delegation of civilians, although in contrast to Roberts’ experience, this ceremony reinforced the dual identity of the regiment’s Welsh contingent. The town history of Racine County recorded that: ‘On September 15, the Welsh ladies of Racine, through Senator Doolittle, presented their brave boys, the “Cambrian Guards” with an elegant blue silk flag, bearing on one side the National Eagle.’¹¹⁴ The act of presenting a regimental flag made by members of their local community can be seen as an attempt to merge a regional and national cause. The ‘elegant blue silk’ represented the friends and family they were to defend, while the ‘national eagle’ on the banner’s other side reminded them of their duty to the country.

This contributes to Kevin Linch’s study of British militia volunteers in the late eighteenth-century, who observed similarities regarding the importance of ceremony and symbolism. He suggests that, as volunteers, the language and ceremony of soldiering was a way of exploring

¹¹³ ‘Llythyr oddiwrth Filwr Ieuanc, Mai 8ed 1862’ in *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, June 1862

¹¹⁴ Town Histories, Racine County, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/WI/WI-idx?type=turn&entity=WI.HistoryofRacine.p0518&id=WI.HistoryofRacine&isize=text> (accessed 18 December 2023), p.472.

how to be ‘soldier-like,’ while distinguishing themselves from regular soldiers, who were viewed as lesser.¹¹⁵ Volunteers and militia in Britain eagerly adopted all aspects of public military ceremony as an important public display of legitimisation, and in the same manner as Welshmen of the 22nd Wisconsin received a local banner from their community, public gifts of trophies and objects signifying gratitude and esteem signalled the way in which military units became accepted as soldiers by their communities.¹¹⁶ The military identity of Welshmen from the beginning of the Civil War, therefore, was defined by their status as men fighting for their homes.

The positive reactions of Welsh volunteers to the propaganda uses of the Union flag mirrored elements of wider northern society. Popular ballads across the North often made the flag a central theme in urging men to volunteer to fight. As stated by James Davis, such sources were a barometer of self-identity.¹¹⁷ The flag was frequently depicted as a living embodiment of northern liberty and justice that should be carried in a crusade-like fashion to the South. M.L. Hofford’s composition ‘Ring, merry bells! Or the Union Victory’ is a clear indictment of the Confederacy, displaying through evocative language the majesty and glory of the Union, represented by the flag:

Wave, flag of freedom, proudly wave! Upon the land and sea, New glory gilds thy
starry folds, Bright ensign of the free! Let heart to heart its joy impart, Let shouts of
gladness rise, The morn of triumph brightly dawns, With beauty in its skies.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Kevin Linch, ‘Making New Soldiers: Legitimacy, Identity and Attitudes c.1740-1815’ in (eds) Kevin Linch and Matthew McCormack, *Britain’s Soldiers: Rethinking War and Society, 1715-1815*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014), p.209.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p.218.

¹¹⁷ James A. Davis, ‘Locating Patriotism in Civil War Songs’, *Civil War History* 66 (2020), 382.

¹¹⁸ M.L. Hofford, ‘Ring Merry Bells! Or the Union Victory’, Bodleian Ballads Roud Number V5522, <http://ballads.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/search/roud/V5522> (accessed 18 December 2023)

The banner was portrayed as the herald of Union freedom, on both land and sea. The author even claimed that the flag was the source of that freedom, shining with glory and radiating joy from heart to heart. Thus, the northern cause was equated to liberty and the same values of the American Revolution. By declaring ‘The morn of triumph dawns,’ the implication was that carrying the flag guaranteed victory, using the analogy of the dawn of northern civilization eradicating the darkness of the Confederacy.

Some songs were specifically tailored as propaganda for specific regiments. John Mahon composed ‘The Standard of the Free’ for the 7th New York Regiment in July 1861:

Standard of the free, Glorious flag of liberty, long may thy rainbow folds be known in every sea, no star shall ever be, blotted from thy galaxy, while a freeman lives to strike a blow for the Union and for Thee!¹¹⁹

These words attempted to imbue the soldiers with the knowledge that their Union was the beacon of liberty, and how they must fight to preserve it. The author also described how the wretch who assailed the flag would be scorned and shunned by all and be sent to a traitor’s grave. This is noteworthy for it brings the discussion back to the common notion of liberty through order. Union soldiers when they first volunteered were imbued with the notion that they were arbiters of liberty, and the southern rebels were traitors to their enlightened way of

¹¹⁹ John Mahon ‘The Standard of the Free’, Bodleian Ballads Roud Number: V1656, <http://ballads.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/search/roud/V1656> (accessed 18 December 2023)

life. Consequently, the flag could be imbued with reverence as an icon of their cause: saving their civilization by asserting Union order in the southern states.

This view is reinforced by the account of Evan Rowland Jones, who kept a diary during his time in the army. Jones was soldier in Company B of the 5th Wisconsin Volunteers, known as the 'Milwaukee Zouaves'. In his published account of the war, released in 1881, his primary motivation to enlist revolved around a masculine duty to save the Union, 'to remove a false impression concerning our manhood.'¹²⁰ When his regiment was presented with their regimental banner, Jones confessed to being insulted at his major ordering the men to swear to defend the flag. In his words, the volunteers of '61 'did not require to *swear* to defend a flag.'¹²¹ He was outraged because they had enlisted full of enthusiasm towards defending the Union, and the implication that they needed to swear allegiance was preposterous.

Accordingly, their major 'never regained the respect lost by this piece of tomfoolery.'¹²² His account suggests that Welshmen were keen to be understood as ideologically motivated patriots.

Consequently, while there is merit in asserting that Welsh volunteers possessed a genuine conviction that they were fighting to defend the liberty of the Union, what is far clearer is that declarations of loyalty were connected with the construction and maintenance of a unanimous narrative of patriotism. Therefore, McPherson was only partly correct when he stated that, in the Civil War, patriotism was not the last refuge of the scoundrel; it was the credo of the fighting soldier.¹²³ This chapter and thesis argues that, in the case of the Welsh, it was the perception of patriotism that was the credo of the fighting soldier.

¹²⁰ Evan Rowland Jones, *Four Years in the Army of the Potomac: A Soldier's Recollections*, (Madison: Tyne Publishing Co, 1881), p.34.

¹²¹ Ibid, p.47.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, p.103.

Welsh Companies

Volunteering with men from the same neighbourhood meant that, in many cases, expressions of loyalty were defined by regional dimensions as well as national. Several Welshmen claimed that they were dutiful Americans, although at times, their understanding of being ‘American’ was influenced by men serving in the same company from the same community, deriving little affinity from the wider national community. This was especially true for volunteers’ conceptions of contemporary masculine conduct. As seen in some correspondence and some examples of Welsh poetry, the land itself was understood in feminine terms, portraying northern territory as a matriarchal figure in need of defending with martial strength. For the individual, this meant defending the visualisation of a rural settlement or an industrial hometown against the perceived threat of the Confederacy. Masculine conduct as a soldier was seen as an important aspect of American values, meaning that localism and nationalism were seen as synonymous if it meant protecting Welsh families through military service. Thomas E. Rodgers has concurred with this interpretation in his study on the socio-political dimensions of soldier motivation. He asserted that local conditions and values were crucial to one’s understanding of politics, which inevitably meant that nationalism and localism were intertwined.¹²⁴

This process was exacerbated by the inherently regional nature of the volunteering process. Individuals in the community could raise their own companies within larger regiments and appoint themselves as officers. This was especially prominent in the scattered Welsh communities of New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Wisconsin. The recruitment rally hosted at Racine, Wisconsin in August 1862 is typical of these enlistment campaigns, where

¹²⁴ Thomas E. Rodgers, ‘Billy Yank and G.I. Joe: An Exploratory Essay on the Sociopolitical Dimensions of Soldier Motivation’, *The Journal of Military History* (2005), 99.

prominent men, religious and secular, held speeches to persuade the local citizenry to volunteer for their newly formed companies. Some enlisted as a direct response to the efforts of the recruiter, who was often a neighbour or a figure of great social renown, more than any individual devotion to a concept of patriotism. As a result, each company represented a cross-section of the town or county it was raised in, displaying how localism pervaded Welsh units within the Union army.

The strength of pre-war community bonds was demonstrated by Company F 133rd Pennsylvania Volunteers, which was formed in Ebensburg by the local Welsh doctor, John M. Jones, who served as its captain. The *Alleghenian* published an article describing the formation of the company as a result of following a rally held specifically for the creation of a volunteer company ‘to go forth in defence of the rights most dear to northern freemen.’¹²⁵ The company referred to itself as Cambrian Guards No.2, the first Cambrian Guards title being claimed by the 11th Pennsylvania Reserves which had been formed in April 1861. Its title referred to their residence in Cambria County, Pennsylvania, which as the name suggests had been originally named for its high concentration of Welsh immigrants. The *Alleghenian* further published a copy of the company’s muster roll: Led by Captain John M Jones, he was supported by 1st Lieutenant William A. Scott and 2nd Lieutenant F.M. Flanagan, as well as five sergeants, eight corporals, one musician, one teamster, and 78 privates. Two more names appear in the Civil War Index collection of Military Service Cards, Thomas D. Davis and W.H. Davis, for a total initial complement of 98 effectives.

According to each man’s military service record cards, all 98 men of Company F enlisted on the 8th of August at Ebensburg.¹²⁶ It was truly an Ebensburgian company more than an

¹²⁵ *The Alleghenian*, 21 August 1862

¹²⁶ Civil War Veterans’ Card File, 1861-1866 Indexes, Pennsylvania State Archives, <http://www.digitalarchives.state.pa.us/archive.asp?view=ArchiveIndexes&ArchiveID=17&FL=D> (accessed 18 December 2023)

‘American’ unit, alluding to the importance of localism in the formation of soldier identity. Recruits’ military service cards did not list possible motivations, although an ode to Captain Jones in the *Cenhadwr* gives a clue. The poem was dedicated to lauding his charisma and social standing in the community as the prime motivation for local enlistment to the company:

Enwog ydoedd ef fel meddyg, hoffai pawb ei wyneb llon, credai llawer nad oedd
debyg iddo ar y ddaear hon, gado wnaeth ei alwedigaeth, a’i gyfeillion hefyd am, fod
ei gariad ef yn wresog, at ei wlad, a’i sel fel fflam.¹²⁷

He was famous as a doctor, everyone liked his happy face, many believed there was
nobody like him on this earth, he left his calling, and his friends as well, for his love
was burning, for his country, and his zeal was like a flame.

Jones was a well-liked doctor in his community, and the respect and admiration felt for him was reflected in the poet’s descriptions. According to the Pennsylvanian Civil War Muster Rolls, Jones was only 26 years old when he was mustered as the captain of Company F in August 1862.¹²⁸ Like many of his unit, he was single and unmarried, which was confirmed when, after he was killed at the Battle of Fredericksburg, it was his mother, Margaret Jones, that received his pension.¹²⁹ Despite his youth, he was seen as a man of such note that it caused men to flock to his banner to form Company F. While the overarching theme of the

¹²⁷ Hunter, *Sons of Arthur*, p.106.

¹²⁸ ‘John M. Jones’, *Pennsylvania, U.S., Civil War Muster Rolls, 1860-1869* [database on-line] Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015 <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/9040/> (accessed 18 December 2023)

¹²⁹ ‘Margaret Jones’, *U.S., Civil War Pension Index: General Index to Pension Files, 1861-1934* [database on-line], Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2000 <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/4654/> (accessed 18 December 2023)

Cenhadwr's ode was the defence of the Union, a major element of enlistment motivation for the Ebensburg male citizenry was admiration for Dr Jones as a local authority figure. This further highlights the importance of 'home' to the development of Welsh-American soldier identity: fighting for their nation in reality meant fighting for Cambria County, Ebensburg, and Doctor Jones.

Of additional importance in the case of Company F are three letters that reveal how influential local loyalties were to ideologically motivated volunteers. Shortly after the formation of the 133rd Pennsylvania Volunteers, several members of the company felt dissatisfied with their 2nd Lieutenant Francis M. Flanagan, and so wrote a petition to him requesting his graceful removal:

We, the undersigned, members of Capt. John M. Jones' Company, do hereby announce that it is the unanimous wish of all to have a change in the command of our company. We are all desirous to place a person who will be capable to instruct us in the manual of arms in the office of Second Lieutenant. We do not, by any means, bear any disrespectful feeling towards you, because we are compelled to request you to resign. But knowing your incapability to discharge the duties required of you, we are thus forced to do so. Hoping that you will not bear any ill-feeling toward us for our present action, we will close our remarks by once more declaring our unanimous wish that you will resign your office, so as to enable us to place a competent person to teach us the duties which we, as private soldiers, must at some future day discharge.¹³⁰

¹³⁰ '133rd Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers: Petition to Lt. Francis Flannagan', Pennsylvania State Archives, Records Group 19, 4-4035 (Contributed by Marcia Fronk) <http://www.pa-roots.com/pacw/infantry/133rd/133flanneganltr.html> (accessed 18 December 2023)

58 members of Company F signed the petition, as well as the commanding officer Captain Jones. Given the pervasive sense of regional identity that the mobile communities of Union companies brought with them into camp life, it is reasonable to infer that the signatures were keen to be commanded entirely by Welsh officers. Not only was their captain Welsh, but he was also a valued member of the community of Ebensburg, so the Welsh rank-and-file might have wanted to achieve the same level of representation as in the 56th Ohio, where Companies A and C were commanded entirely by Welsh officers. However, in the letter they cite incompetence as the grounds for Lieutenant Flanagan's removal. This can be interpreted as a demonstration of the volunteers' enthusiasm for the war. They enlisted to fight in defence of their homes and were proud of that fact. Removing Lieutenant Flanagan was how they believed they would become better soldiers. This appeal was unsuccessful however, for perhaps unsurprisingly, Flanagan refused to resign. Therefore, the Welsh, unperturbed, decided to petition to their commanding officer, Colonel Spiekman:

Our Second Lieutenant, Francis M. Flannagan, is not capable to discharge the duties required of him. We do not, by any means, wish to be lacking in drill, but such, surely, will be the case if Lieut. Flannagan will remain in office. We are therefore compelled to ask you, Sir, to interfere in the matter, which we hope and pray you will do, for the sake of us, who are willing and anxious to serve our country, and die in its behalf if such requirements will be asked of us; but, before we enter upon the field of battle, we want to be efficient in the knowledge of drill. We have a private in our company who we are anxious to place over us. He is thoroughly acquainted with the

present drill and is a first-class drill master and if only elected Lieutenant, he will have the company perfect in the manual of arms.¹³¹

The fact that they refused to admit defeat and petitioned their colonel is a testament to the political zeal felt by many volunteers. The second letter was dated 23 August 1862, a mere eight days after their enlistment. Within the first weeks of army life, over half of Company F had banded together to remove one of their officers. Of the signatures, 31 appear to be Welsh or have Welsh surnames, comprising 53 percent of the total signatures. While this number only represents 31.6 percent of the total members Company F, it should be noted that 31 out of the 34 Welsh in the company, or 91.2 percent, signed the petition. This is an insightful example of how Welsh soldiers embraced the idealism associated with a patriotic force of citizen volunteers. In the regular army discipline and adherence to the hierarchy of command was unquestionable. Yet as volunteers, it is evident that Welsh soldiers believed they should have a voice in the chain of command. Furthermore, it reinforces the pervasive influence of localism in certain units, as the men from Ebensburg preferred to promote Richard M. Jones, a man they already respected from back home to the rank of Lieutenant. The members of Company F wished for the command structure of their unit to represent the dynamics of social influence they were used to.

However, it is revealed why the men of Company F were so anxious to promote Richard Jones to a lieutenant in the subsequent letter that was sent to Governor Andrew G. Curtin a few days later. Such audacity is a further demonstration of the political charge of these volunteers. Captain Jones and the other signatories explained to Governor Curtin that they

¹³¹ '133rd Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers: Letter to Colonel Franklin B. Speakman', Pennsylvania State Archives, Records Group 19, 4-4035 (Contributed by Marcia Fronk) <http://www.pa-roots.com/pacw/infantry/133rd/133spiekmanltr.html> (accessed 18 December 2023)

were compelled against their will to trouble the highest authority that a soldier can appeal to. The letter exhibits plenty of deferential language, showing their awareness of such a risky manoeuvre. Jones and his men explained that their lieutenant was not capable to discharge the duties required of him, not being able to instruct them properly in drill:

Will you, kind sir, interfere in our behalf, it is the desire of the whole company that you will remove our Second Lieutenant, Francis M. Flannagin [sic], from the company, so as to enable us to elect a man who is thoroughly acquainted in the knowledge of drill, and who has seen service during the present war. Such a one, is to be found serving as a private in our company, Richard M. Jones. He was commissioned, by your honor, in April 1861, as a Lieutenant in the Scott Legion, and served with credit to the regiment and himself, for three months. His business affairs prevented him from enlisting in the three years' service but when he found a country was in actual need of all able body men, he, unhesitatingly came forth, and is now to be found in our midst. Although a private, he is, nevertheless, called upon twice a day to drill the company which he does in a first-rate manner. We are anxious to place him over us, knowing that such an object must be accomplished before we shall be fit to go into active duty. We now close, imploring you to interfere in our behalf, and ask you pardon for thus intruding upon you.

The members of Capt. John M. Jones' Company,
133rd Pennsylvania Regiment¹³²

¹³² '133rd Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers: Letter to Governor Andrew G. Curtin', Pennsylvania State Archives, Records Group 19, 4-4035, (Contributed by Marcia Fronk), <http://www.pacwroots.com/pacw/infantry/133rd/133curtinltr.html> (accessed 18 December)

From this third letter it was revealed that Richard M. Jones was not only a lieutenant for the first three months of the war, but he was also the one drilling the troops instead of Lieutenant Flanagan. In this manner Jones is portrayed to the Governor as a prime example of a patriot, having already served his country and yet unhesitatingly willing to sacrifice his life again for his country. Ideological convictions were thus firmly entrenched in their minds, to even think of petitioning the governor to remove a mere lieutenant. It also reveals that, to an extent, Jones' company were serious about their soldierly duties, wanting to train to the best possible standard, thereby enabling them to pursue their masculine duty to the best of their abilities. It must also have helped that Richard was Captain Jones' older brother – he was 28 at the time of his enlistment, and just like John, his unmarried and childless status was confirmed when his mother also received his posthumous pension after he too was killed at Fredericksburg.¹³³ Like his younger brother, his previous reputation in Ebensburg carried on into the army.

The evident pervasiveness of community ties within Company F complements Frank's argument that small, isolated communities were crucial in framing the political outlook of America's soldiers in the nineteenth century.¹³⁴ Community expectations had imposed standards of patriotic behaviour and therefore pushed youths to enlist. Conformity was the norm, and any breach of this norm meant humiliation, ostracism, and expulsion.¹³⁵ This was certainly true of the Welsh rural communities, as evidenced by this chapter's earlier glimpse into Welsh desertions. Volunteering, therefore, consisted of an element of community pressure. Any local young man who did not enlist in Dr Jones' company could have been

¹³³ 'Richard M. Jones', *U.S., Civil War Pension Index: General Index to Pension Files, 1861-1934* [database online] Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2000 <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/4654/> (accessed 18 December 2023)

¹³⁴ Frank, *With Ballot and Bayonet*, p.30.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

shunned by his neighbours, for duty dictated he enlist with other local men to protect the town from the abstract threat of the Confederacy.

Those that enlisted, therefore, viewed themselves as patriots, and generally believed they were considered as such by those they left behind. Even some men that emigrated from Wales for the purpose of volunteering were lauded by their local communities for their masculine courage. A denizen of Glynarthen in Cardiganshire, Wales wrote to the *Cyfaiill* in January 1862 to share news of the emigration and enlistment of two brothers from the village, John and Dafydd Jones:

At y lluwys a gyhoeddwyd, hysbyswch am ddau eraill o'r Cymry sydd wedi anturio eu bywydau yn wirfoddol i amddiffyn y Llywodraeth a'r Undeb, dau frawd ydynt o'r enwau John a Dafydd J. Jones, o ardal Glynarthen, Ceredigion. Perthyn i'r 16eg Gatrawd.¹³⁶

We advertise two more Welshmen that have risked their lives voluntarily to defend the Government and the Union, two brothers called John and Dafydd J. Jones, from the area of Glynarthen, Cardiganshire. Belonging to the 16th Regiment.

It was claimed they dedicated their lives voluntarily to defend the Government and the Union, the magnitude of their actions being reinforced by the fact they had not been born in the United States. Moreover, given the small size of Glynarthen, the enlistment of two local young men was notable, but through the *Cyfaiill*, the brothers received praise from a much

¹³⁶ 'Cymry ar Faes y Gwaed' in *Y Cyfaiill o'r Hen Wlad*, January 1862

wider platform. Defending their homes could not have been a prevailing motivation, for Glynarthen was not within reach of the Confederacy. A degree of adventurism may have been present, but what is clear is that both John and Dafydd were being depicted as ideologically motivated volunteers who were eager to fight for the Union government, their patriotic credentials being amplified by their non-native-born status. In short, one did not need to have been born in the United States to be considered a patriot.

The community pressure that was present throughout much of the Welsh-American recruitment drive was driven in large part by Welsh pastors, both in their capacity as influencers of local opinion, but also through the Welsh-language press. In many respects, they were simply matching the propaganda efforts of Anglo-American preachers. George M. Fredrickson has argued that the northern clergy acted as propagandists for the Union, and that, arguably, the Protestant pulpit was the single most important source of northern patriotic exhortation.¹³⁷ For example, the sermon of Pastor Sylvanus Reed, delivered on 21 April 1861 in Albany, New York outlined clearly what the duty of every self-respecting American male was. Reed also made use of the imagery of the land as the matriarchal figure that we have previously discussed in this chapter:

And the appeal which the country has made to the duty of her children, is answered far and nearby thousands and tens of thousands who are gathering for her service...to

¹³⁷ George M. Fredrickson, 'The Coming of the Lord: The Northern Protestant Clergy and the Civil War Crisis' in (eds.) Randall M. Miller, Harry S. Stout, Charles Reagan Wilson, *Religion and the American Civil War*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.118.

defend the government and to uphold that flag, is the imperative duty of every Christian citizen of the Republic, under the requirement of the highest obligations.’¹³⁸

Reed called on the men of his congregation to do their duty as children of Columbia to protect the domestic ideal of their American homes, mirroring the imagery depicted in Welsh-language poetry. He also appealed to convictions of masculine duty to convince northerners to fight for the Union banner, in a similar manner to the efforts of Welsh pastors and poets. Henry Whitney Bellows, also preached the importance of the Union flag in his sermon in New York city, delivered on the same day as Reed’s sermon:

The American flag has our hearts' blood in its ruddy veins; our national heaven opens in its field of blue; and our lives shall set sooner than its stars! And clustering round its standard, flock at once a hundred thousand men — the flower of the land — to maintain in the face of all the world the proud assertion.¹³⁹

The cloth of the flag was regarded as sacred because it represented the nation’s character and soul, serving as a living embodiment of the virtues espoused by the Constitution and the Founding Fathers. Therefore, those Welsh recruits who expressed a devotion to the ‘stars and stripes’ were simply replicating contemporary enlistment rhetoric, further indicating the extent to which they sought to be recognised as fellow northern patriots.

¹³⁸ Sylvanus Reed, *The Duty of the Citizen in these Times: A Sermon Preached in the Church of the Innocents, Albany, Sunday Morning, April 21, 1861*. Albany: Munsell & Rowland, 1861
<https://guides.library.harvard.edu/hds/civil-war/hds/civil-war-1861> (accessed 18 December 2023)

¹³⁹ Henry Whitney Bellows, *The State and the Nation--Sacred to Christian Citizens: A Sermon Preached in All Souls' Church, New York, April 21, 1861*. New York: James Miller 1861,
<https://guides.library.harvard.edu/hds/civil-war/hds/civil-war-1861> (accessed 18 December 2023)

As referenced earlier, some Welsh-Americans viewed the Civil War as an opportunity to live up to the legacy of their ancestors who had fought in the American Revolution. This was a widely shared view across northern states, for the pinnacle of American masculinity was often defined in relation to the examples of the generation of 1776. For instance, Pastor Horace Carter Hovey made frequent comparisons to the War of Independence when he preached in Coldwater, Michigan on 28 April 1861:

In 1776 we fought for the establishment of a free government; we are now struggling for the maintenance of a free government. King George assailed us, because he deemed us feeble and unable to resist oppression; King Davis marches upon us, because he thinks us too cowardly to defend our liberties...Now, as then, every man is called upon to give his money, his voice, his arm – yea, his life if required, in defence of Liberty and Equality.¹⁴⁰

By comparing Jefferson Davis to King George as an emblem of oppression, it appeared as an attempt to channel traditional antipathy towards Britain against the Confederacy, as was evident in some Welsh sources. Reverend Levi Paine delivered a service in Farmington, Connecticut, on 18 April 1862 that lauded the Union cause as a continuation of the Revolution. He declared that the Constitution, ‘must certainly be regarded as one of the wisest pro-ductions of combined patriotism and statesmanship which the world has seen. It was established, not by the colonies in their sovereign capacities, but, as its preamble

¹⁴⁰ Horace Carter Hovey, *Freedom's Banner: A Sermon Preached to the Coldwater Light Artillery, and the Coldwater Zouave Cadets, April 28th, 1861*. Coldwater, Mich.: Republican Print, 1861.
<https://guides.library.harvard.edu/hds/civil-war/hds/civil-war-1861> (accessed 18 December 2023)

announces, by the people of all the states’¹⁴¹ According to Paine, the Constitution was sacred, and actively fighting to defend its principles of liberty and freedom was the ultimate way to demonstrate individual patriotism and devotion to the Union.

These were precisely the sentiments espoused by Benjamin Chidlaw, who was active in promoting the Civil War as an opportunity for Welsh immigrants to assert themselves as northern patriots through the legacy of the Founding Fathers. In Chidlaw’s mind, the Welsh were direct descendants of the men who had defeated the British over 100 years prior. He articulated this in a sermon to the 39th Ohio Volunteers in November 1861, while the regiment was based in Camp Todd, Missouri:

They, by sacrifices that we have read of but never experienced, laid broad and deep the foundations of a free government, and eighty-five years of trial has proved it to be the best the world ever saw. The men of '76 laid the corner stones of our free institutions.¹⁴²

Chidlaw stated that the soldiers of the Continental Army had fought to create the institutions of liberty they were now enjoying, so it was the duty of northern males to do likewise. By fighting for the cause of liberty and protection of their sacred Union, they were acting upon their heritage as sons of the Revolution. The same was certainly true for Welsh-Americans,

¹⁴¹ Levi Leonard Paine, *Political Lessons of the Rebellion: A Sermon Delivered at Farmington, Connecticut, on Fast Day, April 18, 1862*. Farmington, S.S. Cowles, 1862. <https://guides.library.harvard.edu/hds/civil-war/hds/civil-war-1862> (accessed 18 December 2023)

¹⁴² Benjamin W. Chidlaw, *A Thanksgiving Sermon Preached Before the Thirty Ninth Ohio Volunteer Infantry at Camp Todd, Macon, Missouri Nov 28, 1861 and a Sketch of the Regiment, Cincinnati, 1861*. <https://guides.library.harvard.edu/hds/civil-war/hds/civil-war-1861> (accessed 18 December 2023)

for by stressing their heritage in this manner it reinforced their connections to American history, de-emphasising their immigrant roots in the process.

Conclusion

The consensus among Welsh volunteers was that they were proving themselves as patriotic Americans by enlisting to defend their homes, families and the Union government. Despite the difficulty of ascertaining a universal understanding of what motivated Welshmen to join the Union army, this chapter has argued that promoting the perception of patriotism was how Welsh volunteers expressed an outwardly strengthened American identity, one that was defined by the masculine act of enlistment. Becoming soldiers was viewed as a method of solidifying their place in America, with fighting for 'home' as a key marker of duty. However, what was considered as a 'national identity' was often understood as the geographical identity of 'home' within a specific region, county or state. In this manner, Welsh volunteers could identify more as Pennsylvanian or Wisconsinite patriots than as abstract northerners. Regardless of regional disparities, however, this chapter has asserted that, for the most part, volunteering for the Union army was an essential act of reinforcing Welshmen's sense of belonging to their adopted country.

Chapter Two – Army Life

This chapter argues that Welsh volunteers' notions of national belonging as Americans was much strengthened by their experiences of life within the confines of a Union army camp.

Arguably the most influential factor in this process was religion. Most Welshmen were devout Calvinists who relied on their religion for comfort in an unfamiliar environment.

Writing of the Welsh in Wisconsin, historian Phillips G. Davies cited a local saying: 'The first thing a Frenchman does in a new country is to build a trading post, an American builds a city, a German builds a beer hall, and a Welshman builds a church.'¹ As such, Christian faith proved to be the greatest tool of amalgamation within camp life, facilitating the development of a shared military identity between Welsh and non-Welsh soldiers.

There are two observable aspects to this process of heightened national belonging. The first, and most important, was religious observance as a recreational activity. Regardless of background, most Welshmen were alike in terms of religious piety. Crucially, this was something they shared with a significant proportion of non-Welsh soldiers. At first, volunteers made efforts to congregate only with fellow Welsh-speakers to conduct inter-regimental prayer meetings. In these physical as well as spiritual spaces, they could discuss theology through the medium of their native language. However, due to the realities of camp life, such Welsh-only events were not always possible. As a result, many attended sermons and prayer meetings with non-Welsh soldiers, highlighting the importance of religion as a social activity. Shared Nonconformism thus broke down cultural barriers, thereby offering a way for Welsh and non-Welsh soldiers to develop a shared identity based on Protestant faith.

¹ Phillips G. Davies, *Welsh in Wisconsin*, (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2006), p.18.

The second element of heightened integration was the introduction of Welsh recruits to the social norm of drinking alcohol and how this behaviour co-existed with Welsh religious identity. Many rural Welshmen came from prohibitionist homes where drinking beer and whisky was frowned upon as un-Christian and therefore un-Welsh behaviour. However, those who came from towns and cities saw no tension between Welsh Nonconformism and the consumption of alcohol. Some abstained from temptation throughout their military career, while other teetotallers drank as a mark of social acceptance with non-Welsh comrades. Meanwhile, while those from urban backgrounds integrated comfortably with non-Temperate comrades through the act of communal drinking, though not necessarily communal intoxication.

Furthermore, this chapter will demonstrate that volunteers consistently strove to appease social expectations by upholding a universal image of piety and devotion to God. In this manner, religion was used as a method of reinforcing the ideal qualities of Welsh volunteers, of masculine duty together with Christian faith. By drawing on a sample of obituaries that appeared in Welsh-American newspapers, it will be argued that Welsh casualties were commemorated in a manner that emphasised their piety and spirituality, demonstrating the synonymy of Nonconformism with Welsh-American identity.

Welsh recruits, like other Union troops, would spend more time in camp than marching or fighting. As such, the experience of living amongst thousands of other soldiers, often over many months, had a notable impact on Welsh soldiers' sense of national belonging. Peter Carmichael has recognised the importance of studying the camp experience of Civil War soldiers, stating that the whirlwind of conflicting obligations of military life reminds us that a 'soldier' was never a state of being but always a process of becoming.² The Welsh

² Peter S. Carmichael, *The War for the Common Soldier: How Men Thought, Fought and Survived in Civil War Armies*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), p.9.

unquestionably experienced this process of ‘becoming,’ for the transitional phase between patriotically volunteering and their introduction to the daily regimen of the Union military life was a challenging experience for many recruits.

This was especially daunting for volunteers from insular, farming settlements. Anne Kelly Knowles has argued that rural Welsh immigrants tended to settle in hilly areas not so much because they felt an affinity for rugged landscapes but because Americans and wealthier European immigrants bought up the best land. The leftover inferior ground posed challenges that were familiar to Welsh hill farmers who were glad to be able to buy land adjoining friends’ and relatives’ farms. As a result, rural Welsh immigrants recreated and preserved their traditional way of life in insular, inward-looking communities that rarely exceeded 1000 residents.³ Even the largest settlements were relatively small. For example, in central New York the largest concentration was in Oneida County, especially the towns of Remsen and Steuben that were home to around 7000 Welsh-Americans.⁴

Often, such communities were predicated on kinship and family ties. The Welsh tended to settle among their counterparts, and to some degree, formed clusters of communities originating from the same area in Wales.⁵ For example, the first farming settlement in Cambria, Pennsylvania, was formed by 50 Welsh immigrants from Llanbrynmair in the 1790s.⁶ One third of the Welsh families in the Flint Creek community in Des Moines County, Iowa, were originally from Anglesey, north Wales.⁷ Even more insular was the Old Man’s Creek community in Iowa, which consisted of only five Welsh families, all of whom knew

³ Anne Kelly Knowles, ‘Immigrant Trajectories Through the Rural-Industrial Transition in Wales and the United States, 1795-1850’, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 85 (1995), 256.

⁴ J.G. Williams, *Memory Stones: A History of Welsh-Americans in Central New York and Their Churches*, (Fleischmanns: Purple Mountain Press, 1993), p.27.

⁵ Williams, ‘Welsh Migration to America during the 19th Century’, p.111.

⁶ Marcus Tanner, *The Last of the Celts*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), p.325.

⁷ Walley, *The Welsh in Iowa*, p.66.

each other from Ebensburg, Pennsylvania.⁸ Consequently, for recruits from close-knit, monolingual settlements, being thrust into a melting pot of culture, languages and identities was a drastic change. Suddenly, within tight-knit ensembles of men, soldiers discovered that their every move was under the surveillance of communities that possessed the power to level damning judgments against its own. Most Union soldiers, who before the war had been intensely guarded about their personal lives, were shocked to find little separation between their private and public lives in the army.⁹

Despite speaking a different language, Welsh volunteers did prove similar to other northern recruits through the diversity of their backgrounds, with some enlisting from more isolated, agricultural villages, whereas many others joined up from more densely populated industrial communities. This differed from regiment to regiment, depending on which region its volunteers had been drawn from. In Oneida County, New York, for example, the Welsh living north of Utica in the Remsen-Steuben area were primarily dairy farmers, while Welshmen living further south operated hops farms.¹⁰ Many emigrated to the United States specifically for the acquisition of agricultural land, as found in abundance in Ohio and Wisconsin, while others settled into industries that they were culturally familiar with, particularly the slate quarries in Eastern New York and the coal mines of Pennsylvania. James J. Jones of Company B, 31st Wisconsin wrote to *Y Drych* describing the quality of the regiment's fighting men, most of whom he found were responsible and influential farmers.¹¹ By contrast, another soldier wrote to the *Seren Orllewinol* that 2,000 men from Schuylkill County Pennsylvania, including hundreds of Welshmen, had joined the army, all of whom

⁸ Walley, *The Welsh in Iowa*, p.65.

⁹ Ibid, p.22.

¹⁰ Williams, *Memory Stones*, p.143.

¹¹ 'Gair o Caerfa Halleck' in *Y Drych* 15 August 1863

were miners from the areas of Scranton, Danville and Pittsburg.¹² As such, it must be remembered that rural and urban recruits reacted to army life in different ways.

As with other Union recruits, exposure to camp life brought with it for young Welshmen widespread drinking, gambling and a host of other activities generally frowned upon, or outright banned in some prohibitionist Welsh communities. This facet of army life created tensions for some rural volunteers who were torn between their strict moral upbringing and the immediate proximity of camp temptations. This duality of conflicting cultural norms reflects Castells' arguments about the nature of identity. He asserts that, for individuals or a collective group, there may be a plurality of identities which were a source of stress and contradiction in both self-representation and social action.¹³ On the other hand, some Welshmen from towns and cities readily embraced the various elements of life in uniform, embracing what were viewed as quintessentially 'American' martial values.

It is true that certain elements of camp life divided the Welsh morally and spiritually from each other, but what proved a unifying factor was the concerted effort made by volunteers to maintain a core of Welsh culture within the army. As a reaction to the strange environment of the military encampment, Welsh volunteers sought each other out and formed inter-regimental clubs where they could read and discuss literature and theology in their native language. This preserved a mobile, physical space for volunteers to express themselves through the framework of their native culture within the sprawling environment of a Union army camp, illustrating how the initial consequence of enlistment was a reassertion of volunteers' Welshness. Ultimately, however, these meetings can be viewed more as a social comfort to alleviate homesickness rather than as a reaction to being absorbed within the wider American culture of the army. Moreover, these theological meetings proved influential as a

¹² Hunter, *Llwch Cenhedloedd*, p.38.

¹³ Castells, *The Power of Identity*, p.6.

catalyst for cultural integration, as they gradually incorporated non-Welsh members and military norms in response to the realities of daily life in the Union army.

Historiography

In a formative article written in 1927, Fred A Shannon argues that camp life was predominantly a dull experience for most Union soldiers. He based most of his article on the published diary of Evan Rowland Jones, a Welsh volunteer. From Jones' account, supplemented by a variety of soldiers' letters, Shannon's general interpretation of camp life was that food was boring but plentiful, and that the daily routine of camp life was as monotonous as the government rations.¹⁴ This led soldiers to the temptations of camp life, primarily as an effort to alleviate this boredom. The historiographical paradigm around the time of Shannon's writing concurred with this perception. Many scholars assert that most soldiers fell ravenously upon the habit of drunkenness and gambling. This bias certainly has its merits, for evidence abounds of the common soldier's tendency for these activities. However, it is a perception that tended to paint soldiers as sinners.

More recent scholars have attempted to portray a more balanced understanding of camp life, citing the popularity of the temperance movement and the sincere religiosity of many recruits. One of the most influential scholars of the common soldier's experience was Bell Irvin Wiley. His *The Life of Johnny Reb* and *The Life of Billy Yank*, published in 1943 and 1952 respectively, are among the most influential analyses of everyday life for Confederate and Union soldiers. Wiley claimed that for most Union soldiers, boredom, disease, hobbies and so

¹⁴ Fred A. Shannon, 'The Life of the Common Soldier in the Union Army, 1861-1865', *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 13 (1927), 480.

on took far more of a prominent role than combat. He recognised that boredom was the root cause of much of the disreputable activities found in a Union camp, combined with the removal of accustomed restraints and the urge to experiment with the forbidden.¹⁵

Writing in the late 1980s, James Robertson Jr provided an excellent analysis of camp life in his book *Soldiers Blue and Gray*. He argued that the army camp was the place where the recruit ceased to be a civilian and learned how to become a soldier.¹⁶ Youngsters, as well as volunteers from isolated rural areas, especially liked the novelty of army life, but only in the first days of their enlistment. Recruits arriving at camps quickly found themselves confronting several adversities.¹⁷ Homesickness, foul weather, filth, lack of privacy, stern discipline and general discomfort all combined to produce negative views of soldier life.¹⁸ However, while Robertson admitted that alcohol and gambling were as universal as profanity, such indulgences were outweighed by the more jovial hobbies of singing and sports. Every army had its quota of rogues and weaklings, but the evidence is overwhelming that most soldiers were conscientious, devoted men possessed of simple but indelible virtues, who reacted to hardship and temptation in different ways.¹⁹

Similarly, Jerry Hunter has stated that we should not perceive religious men and drinkers as being two separate groups, for many Welsh soldiers enjoyed hard drinks and religious meetings equally.²⁰ While some became fond of beer and whisky, most read their bibles cover to cover and conveyed sincere religious convictions.²¹ The merits of this interpretation will be explored in depth, as this chapter demonstrates how the Welsh soldiery fall into this

¹⁵ Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Billy Yank: The Common Soldier of the Union*, (New York: LSU Press, 1971), p.248.

¹⁶ James I. Robertson Jr, *Soldiers Blue and Gray*, (Columbia: Warner Books, 1998), p.41.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p.42.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p.60.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p.101.

²⁰ Hunter, *Llwch Cenhedloedd*, p.142.

²¹ *Ibid*.

latter category. Contrary to the belief of some historians, they mostly abstained from the more frowned upon leisure activities of camp life and retained a strong conviction in their traditional Christian practices. They retained a nucleus of their Welsh identity through this faith, organising religious meetings whenever possible. However, while they made efforts to create a haven for their native culture, they experienced several opportunities to interact with other soldiers and develop a more universal 'American' identity. Hunter weaves such discussions throughout his book, rather than dedicate a chapter to explore the Welsh experience of camp life in detail. Consequently, where this chapter builds on his foundational perspective, as well as that of other scholars such as Wiley and Robertson, is to explore a wider range of Welsh reactions to camp life, as well as consider how the recreational activities of volunteers contributed to their military integration.

Concerning recent immigrant studies, William Burton's influential work focuses more on how they were recruited rather than how they adapted to camp life. Christian Samito's research on Irish soldiers is more relevant for this chapter, attesting that military life strengthened in many Irish-Americans a greater recognition of their American identity while simultaneously permitting them to practice their Catholic religion and ethnic identity without apology.²² Similarly, William B. Kurtz' exploration of the religious side of the Civil War concurred that for many Catholic immigrants, especially Irish and Germans, their religious identity acted as a counter to the process of Americanisation. He noted that Irish Catholics congregated so they could insulate themselves from anti-Catholicism within the army, and even though Germans could serve with fellow German-speakers, the Catholics among their ranks felt alienated.²³ This chapter will counter this argument by suggesting that, despite

²² Samito, *Becoming American Under Fire*, p.118.

²³ William B. Kurtz, *Excommunicated From the Union: How the Civil War Created a Separate Catholic America*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), p.55.

differences in social norms and language, shared Nonconformism contributed greatly to Welsh volunteers' social and cultural integration within the Union army.

Initial Experience and Reinforcement of Welsh Cultural Identity

To say that enlisting in the army meant being thrust into a different world was no overstatement. The Army of the Potomac numbered around 130,000 at its height during the Chancellorsville Campaign in 1863, with the Army of the Tennessee under Grant numbering up to 80,000 during the Siege of Vicksburg in the same year. These numbers dwarfed the settlement sizes that many Welsh recruits came from. Moreover, Welshmen now found themselves sharing a living space with perhaps six or seven other soldiers, being woken up by bugle, subjected to strict uniform etiquette and daily drill exercises. Coupled with the fact that several had limited or sometimes no knowledge whatsoever of the English language, having only needed to commune in Welsh previously, this new environment of polyglot soldiers presented several challenges.

Volunteers were active in writing letters to their families and to newspapers describing the unfamiliar environment of the Union army. Welsh accounts reveal a high level of literacy, another element of army life they shared with other Union soldiers, being a by-product of a literate society. Brayton Harris' study of newspapers during the Civil War shows that this was the norm for northern soldiers. The literacy rate among northern whites reached 89 percent in 1850, coupled with the quadrupling of active newspapers between 1825 and 1860.²⁴ Michael C. Nelson has suggested that literacy was in fact an essential aspect of Civil

²⁴ Brayton Harris, *Blue & Gray in Black and White: Newspapers in the Civil War*, (Washington: Brassey's, 2000), p.9.

War volunteer identity, and that literacy was a marker of male citizenship. Nelson suggests that soldiers bonded over their shared literacy, whereas illiterate soldiers led a near asocial existence, having been ostracised from camp social life.²⁵

As a testament to the literacy of Welsh recruits, Benjamin Chidlaw wrote to the *Cenhadwr Americanaidd* in January 1862 to report that in the army camp he was based in, six regiments, including his own 39th Ohio, needed good books to read.²⁶ Welshmen especially loved receiving copies of the Welsh-American periodicals. In June 1863, a soldier in hospital wrote to thank the *Cenhadwr* for sending new editions to him ‘yn y lle anghysbell yma – in this remote place.’²⁷ He also alluded to receiving papers and books from the home front, saying that the ‘old generation’ were diligent in sending books and Welsh newspapers to their soldier representatives.²⁸

Some wrote to express dismay at the exhausting nature of military duty. Others described to friends and relatives that they had no issue with the routine of camp life. For instance, in March 1863, Joseph R. Davies gave an optimistic account of camp life in a letter to his parents back in Utica. He described that it wasn’t always raining, nor was it cold all of the time: ‘when the weather was fair soldiering was no hard work, for they would drill usually for four hours a day, leaving the rest of the day free for cooking.’²⁹ Evan Rowland Jones similarly portrayed his experience of camp life in an optimistic fashion, claiming that he enjoyed many aspects. Their food was ‘abundant and well-cooked,’ then during winter when active campaigning became impossible, army life became a routine of drill and duty, ‘with brigade drill in particular being enjoyed with a keen relish by the men.’³⁰

²⁵ Michael C. Nelson, ‘Writing During Wartime: Gender and Literacy in the American Civil War’, *Gender and Literacy in the American Civil War* 31 (1997), 59.

²⁶ ‘Cymhorth i’r Milwyr Mewn Llyfrau’ in *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, January 1862

²⁷ ‘Danfoner ein Cyhoeddiadau i’r Milwyr’ in *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, June 1863

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ ‘Oddiwrth Filwr Gymreig at ei Rien yn Utica’ in *Y Drych* 28 March 1863

³⁰ Jones, *Four Years in the Army of the Potomac*, p.146.

Some Welsh volunteers sought out other Welsh-speakers in their immediate environment. A mixture of curiosity, homesickness, and a desire to reaffirm cultural bonds in a strange environment were influential factors. Localism was also influential. For example, in October 1861, the *Cyfaill* received a letter from R.R. Davies of the self-named ‘Cambria Guards Volunteer Company’, part of the 11th Pennsylvania Reserve battalion, from their base at Camp Tenley in Washington. Davies noted that there were around 100 men in the company, all recruited from Cambria County, and that many were Welshmen from Ebenburg:

Er mwyn i chwi gael gweled faint sydd ohonom yn Gymry, rhoddaf eu henwau, er mwyn i’w perthnasau, a’u cyfeillion gael gweled beth yw eu swyddi.³¹

So you can see how many of us are Welshmen, I have given their names, so their friends and relations can see what their positions are:

Captain: R. Litzinger; 1st Lieut, A. Lewis; 2d R.McCoy; 1st Sergeant R.M. Jones; 2d Daniel D. Jones; Evan D. James; 3d Corporal; George Roberts, 5th Corporal; Wm. Evans, 6th Corporal; John Roberts, Drum Major; Privates R.R. Davis, Thos D Jones, David James, Edgar Evans, Wm Davis, Frederick Evans, Evan Abram, George Davis, Edward Davis, Edward J Evans, Griffith Evans, James Evans, Richard Jones, Philip Jones, Jos Owens.

³¹ ‘Briwsion o Ebsburg’ in *Y Cyfaill o’r Hen Wlad*, October 1861

According to his list, the company contained fifteen Welsh privates and six Welsh non-commissioned officers, for a total contingent of twenty-one. The author did not explain if Captain Litzinger or Lieutenants Lewis and McCoy were Welsh, as apart from Lewis, the other surnames are not indicative of Welsh origin. However, because their names are included in the list of Welshmen from Ebensburg, it is fair to consider them as such. Near a quarter of the company were Welsh while the command structure of the company was predominantly Welsh also. As a result, they were more able to organise religious meetings and such, as well as requisition religious texts and reading materials. Consequently, localism contributed to Davies' camp life and subsequent experience of inclusion as he was surrounded by fellow Welsh-speakers from back home.

This was not the case for Thomas J. Owen of Company C, 27th Ohio Volunteers. He wrote to *Y Drych* in July 1863 from near Memphis, Tennessee, to report that there were twenty-six Welshmen in the regiment from Jackson and Gallia Counties. Furthermore, he wrote that the 32nd Wisconsin Volunteers were encamped nearby, which contained between twenty-five and thirty fellow Welshmen from Columbia County, Wisconsin.³² The men surrounding him were from the same ethnic group but from different counties. His camp experience is therefore an insight into how Welsh-speakers from different settlements congregated in camp to enable inter-regimental cultural exchanges. To be sure, Owen's writing alluded to the pleasure he took in discovering fellow kinsmen from across the country in the same row of tents as himself. He described the Welsh of the 32nd as the friendliest and kindest people he had met, finding much happiness in visiting them and hearing them speak the purest form of the Welsh language. He did not explain what he perceived the purest form of Welsh to be, but it either relates to the different regional dialects from north and south Wales, or it alludes to the fact that English was already beginning to seep into his lexicon, and these men were speaking no

³² 'Gwersyllfa y 27ain Ohio Volunteers, Memphis Tennessee' in *Y Drych* 4 July 1863

English whatsoever. Such interactions highlight how in some cases, army life initially strengthened Welsh cultural solidarity due to exposure to Welsh-speakers from different areas.

Another example of this is shown in a letter received by *Y Drych* in April 1863 from James E. Jones of the 31st Wisconsin Volunteer Regiment. Writing from near Fort Halleck, Columbus in March 1863, this volunteer described how the Welshmen of C company forged a cultural bond with each other:

Yr ydym yn rhifo o bump ar hugain, i gyd yn perthyn i'r un cwmni...Y mae chwech ohonom ym mhob pabell, ac mae dwy babell yn ein cwmni ni yn cael ei dal gan Gymry yn hollol...Y mae yma Gymry eraill yn y babell hon heblaw fi sydd yn gyfeillion cywir i ti...³³

We number between twenty and twenty five, all belonging to the same company...There are six of us in each tent, and there are two tents in our company where the inhabitants are all Welsh...There are other Welshmen in my tent apart from myself that are friends of yours...

James noted that almost a quarter of Company C were Welsh, most of whom came from the same area in Wisconsin. As such, they made efforts to form a cohesive bond, reinforced by the fact that they lived and slept in the same tents as each other. Sharing a living space was an institutionalised practice within the army, one that played a crucial role in the formation of

³³ 'James E. Jones - Cymry y 31ain Wisconsin' in *Y Drych* 11 April 1863

soldier identity. As a result of sharing a tent with half a dozen other Welshmen, they could freely converse in their native language, thereby maintaining a nucleus of native cultural identity in a foreign environment. So, for the Welsh of the 31st Wisconsin, much like those from Ebensburg in the 11th Pennsylvania Reserves, their cultural identity as Welshmen, as well as their community-wide identity was reinforced by their initial army experience.

Indeed, James claimed that the letter's recipient was friends with some of his tent-mates, further highlighting how social bonds from home were carried into the army.

Such bonds were alluded to in *Y Drych* in January 1863. Gwilym ap Ioan, meaning William son of John, wrote a detailed account of his experience in a Union camp near Falmouth during Christmas of 1862. The Welsh of the 154th New York Volunteers, numbering only eleven members according to Gwilym, decided to band together to organise a Christmas dinner with each other. What follows is an insightful description of the domesticity of daily life in the army:

Penderfynwyd fod i dri o'r rhai mwyaf medrus fyned ati i ffrio y cig, a'r gweddill ohonom i gymeryd gofal y cloron a'r coffi. Yr wyf yn meddwl pe buasai yma rai merched ieuainc yn edrych arnom, y buasent yn synu mor handy yr oedd pethau yn myned yn mlaen, ac mor lleied o amser a gymerodd i ni cael ciniaw yn barod, ac yr wyf yn meddwl y byddent o'r un farn a'r pum' bachgen hyny gynt, sef y gallai dyn fyw heb yr un ddynes, ond nas gall dynes ddim byw heb ddyn.³⁴

³⁴ 'Ychydig Linellau oddiwrth Gymry Catrawd Cat Taraugus, sef yr 154 Volunteers New York' in *Y Drych*, 24 January 1863

It was decided that three of the most skilled would fry the meat, and the rest of us would take care of the coffee and potatoes. I think that if some young ladies were to look upon us, they would marvel at how handy things were going, and how little time it took for us to get dinner ready, and I think they would be of the same opinion as the five boys were, that man could live without a woman, but a woman could not live without a man.

Gwilym drew attention to the meal preparation as the most important content of his letter, presumably because the act of cooking and cleaning was such a novel experience for him and his Welsh comrades. This is reinforced by his comment of wishing that some young ladies could see them, to witness masculine men thriving in a world of domesticity. Life in the army had introduced them to elements of domesticity traditionally associated with femininity, which was mirrored in the author's realisation that he and his comrades could live very well without women for the first time, taking charge of the supposedly feminine tasks of cooking and cleaning. Already in their case, these young Welshmen's conventions of masculine conduct had been altered by adapting to life in the army by embracing non-traditional behaviour.

This phenomenon relates to the work of John Tosh on nineteenth-century masculinity. He has asserted that masculinity was a fundamental principle to nineteenth century males, both in terms of how they defined themselves and how they were viewed by their peers. Immigrants carried this over from Britain to America. Firstly, the act of emigration itself required a convincing display of masculine attributes, for the qualities of self-reliance and perseverance were integral to popular understandings of manliness, and overseas settlement was embraced as a means of achieving the material and social prerequisites of a secure adult masculine

status.³⁵ While manhood could be understood in different ways, physical strength was fundamental, with the primary, traditional meaning of ‘manliness’ being strength and vigour of body.³⁶ Even though several of this thesis’ subjects vindicate Tosh’s interpretation, Gwilym ap Ioan’s short letter detailing the preparation of a Christmas dinner presents a new form of manhood, in which domesticity was pragmatically adopted by Welsh volunteers, illustrating how feminine aspects were incorporated into the inherently masculine form of an American military identity.

Unlike Tosh, Karen Harvey’s analysis of eighteenth-century masculinity and domesticity suggests that such an image was more common than previously supposed. She argued that men were active in eighteenth-century domesticity, and while it was gendered, the home was not the preserve of women alone.³⁷ The house was a principal aspect of an authoritative style of masculinity.³⁸ Supporting this viewpoint, therefore, it can be argued that the army took on the symbolism of the ‘house’ for Gwilym and his comrades. Taking part in preparing, cooking, and washing up after a shared dinner was merely an adaptation of masculine behaviour to the realities of camp life, as well as a reaction to increased homesickness at Christmas time. Everything about the meal appeared as removed from military life as possible. This would explain why only the Welsh of the regiment congregated for the preparation of a special communal meal, as well as why Gwilym and his friends made sure to procure food that was better than army rations. They even chose a site to eat that was on a hillock near the Rappahannock river, as far outside of the army camp as was practicable. This demonstrates how in certain circumstances, Welsh soldiers self-excluded themselves in order to reaffirm cultural bonds.

³⁵ John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), p.177.

³⁶ *Ibid*, p.185.

³⁷ Karen Harvey, *The Little Republic: Masculinity and Domestic Authority in Eighteenth Century Britain*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p.10.

³⁸ *Ibid*, p.134.

Louise Carter's exploration of masculinity in the Napoleonic French Army provides some insightful comparisons. She argued that a soldier's patriotic, self-sacrificing, and stoic willingness to forego the pleasures of home to fight for the preservation of their country was frequently cast as one of the most fundamental and creditable characteristics of martial masculinity.³⁹ In this respect, Gwilym's domestic scene of Christmas cooking was a paradox of contemporary manhood. On one hand, Union soldiers such as Gwilym were absent paternal figures, leaving their respective households to fend for themselves. On the other hand, military service functioned as an act of duty to the household, of protecting the family from external threats. Perhaps this is why the military family became so important. Carter has observed that familial connections were further evoked in the terms 'brother soldier' and 'brother officer,' which can be found repeatedly across multiple soldier memoirs. As with the paternalistic language used for commanding officers, the language of fraternity harnessed and appropriated familial connection to convey the virtues and characteristics associated with the idealised family unit. The language of brotherhood conjured ideas of close kinship, loyalty, and affection.⁴⁰ Consequently, the seemingly mundane image of Welsh citizen-soldiers committed to a domestic scene of festive cooking is a notable example of how identity and manhood evolved as a result of camp life.

While many Union regiments contained a core of around twenty to thirty Welshmen, in some cases, these contingents were larger, to the extent that a few companies were comprised entirely of Welshmen. There were approximately 100 serving in the 50th Ohio Regiment, while there was a larger contingent in the 56th Ohio where Company A and C were all Welsh, totalling 150 men. By recruiting from the same area, Welshmen in various regiments

³⁹ Louise Carter, 'Brothers in Arms? Martial Masculinities and Family Feelings in Old Soldiers' Memoirs, 1793-1815' in Michael Brown, Anna Maria Barry and Joanne Begatio (eds), *Martial Masculinities: Experiencing and Imagining the Military in the Long Nineteenth Century*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), p.36.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p.48.

managed to preserve their ethnic identity within the ranks, forming a type of commune where they could converse and connect through the medium of their native language. Some took this further, however, and made efforts to form a collective with fellow kinsmen from outside their primary unit. Much like during peacetime, Welshmen actively sought to replicate their relationship with the wider Welsh diaspora by creating Welsh societies and inter-regimental communes. From a number of letters, it can be noted that recruits would count how many Welshmen they found in different regiments, demonstrating that they actively sought each other out wherever they camped.

Some would seek out friends or relatives from different states. In February 1863, a volunteer encamped on the Potomac Creek wrote to his parents in Utica to say he had discovered that the 8th New York Volunteers were somewhere in the vicinity, so he was going to apply for a pass so he could visit his cousin, John.⁴¹ In May 1863, Richard W. Roberts met his uncle, Hugh Hughes of the 84th New York State Cavalry, while encamped at Falmouth, and wrote of his good health to his father in Nelson, New York.⁴² Another example is by John J. Davies of the 8th New York State Cavalry, who wrote to his brother in July 1863, reporting that he had met his cousin Joseph and several friends from home in the 146th New York Volunteers while encamped at Rappahannock Station.⁴³ Others would explore the encampment simply for the purpose of discovering how many other Welsh volunteers were in the area. John G. Jones' descriptions of life in Company G of the 23rd Wisconsin Volunteers demonstrates this well. In August 1862, he wrote to his parents from Camp Randal in Wisconsin to say he had met 'eighteen Welshmen, strangers, six from South County, three from Lake Cross, two from Praireducine and seven from Spring Glen.'⁴⁴ Two months later, Jones was on campaign in

⁴¹ 'Oddiwrth Filwr Gymreig at ei Rieni yn Utica' in *Y Drych* 28 March 1863

⁴² 'Llythyr oddiwrth Filwr Cymreig, Camp yn agos i Falmouth' in *Y Drych* 6 June 1863

⁴³ 'Oddiwrth Filwr Cymreig yn Virginia at ei Frawd yn Utica' in *Y Drych* 22 August 1863

⁴⁴ Taylor, *Wales and the American Civil War*, p.1.

Kentucky, and his Wisconsin regiment was put in a brigade alongside the 188th Ohio Volunteer Infantry. In typical fashion, Jones wrote to his parents that ‘The 188th Ohio is in our brigade, and there are 42 Welshmen in it.’⁴⁵ Furthermore, he encountered members of the 22nd Wisconsin, and wrote that ‘there are Welshmen in that too, but I don’t know how many.’⁴⁶ The following year in March 1863 Jones and the 23rd found themselves in Louisiana in Camp Millikons, where they met Welshmen in the 22nd Iowa, 25th Iowa and 108th Illinois.⁴⁷

One way of interpreting such emphasis on inter-regimental congregations was as a reaction to an increasing level of integration. One clear sign of this was the Anglicisation of volunteers’ written language. Several recruits could only speak Welsh when they enlisted, and had to learn English while serving in the ranks. As such, from 1862 there is a noticeable increase in the use of English in their correspondence, or more specifically, the use of untranslated military terminology in their letters home. Words such as knapsack, cannon, rations, rifle pits, marching etc found their way into the daily conversational vocabulary of most volunteers. In fact, so many wrote letters home filled with this military jargon that in January 1862 the *Cyfaill* published an article expressly for the purpose of providing a translation guide to its readers:

Yn gymaint ag y ddefnyddir llawer o enwau Saesoneg mewn cysylltiad ag arfau rhyfel yn y gwrthryfel grymus presenol a rhai ohonynt weithiau yn achlysuero nid ychydig boen a thrafferth i’r darllenydd Cymreig.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Taylor, *Wales and the American Civil War*, p.8.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p.23.

⁴⁸ ‘Arfau Rhyfel’ in *Y Cyfaill o’r Hen Wlad*, January 1862

So many English names linked to the arms of war in this present terrible rebellion, and some of them occasionally providing not a little pain and difficulty for the Welsh reader.

This highlights the importance of camp life to the evolution of Welsh immigrant identity. Learning English was part and parcel of military service as the commands with which they were ordered to drill, march and fight were ordered in a foreign language. Consequently, as English terms became normalised in Welshmen's daily vocabulary, and the more that the English language became a method of communication for them, their affinity for their sense of 'American-ness' increased. As shown by the Confederate farmer who spoke in broken Welsh to the men of the 16th Wisconsin in Chapter One, the incorporation of English into the Welsh volunteer's lexicon represents the pervasive effect of military integration.

Such a factor partially explains why Welsh-speakers made such a concerted effort to congregate with other Welsh-speakers whenever possible. Sermons and prayer meetings offered opportunities to discourse through the medium of their native language, perhaps as a reaction to the increasing Anglicisation, ergo Americanisation, of their language. Notably, after the war, the use of the Welsh language began to decline. Anne Kelly Knowles noted in her analysis of the Welsh of Ohio that the demand for English language worship services in the Welsh chapels of Jackson-Gallia increased after the war. Regular English services began in 1901, until the last Welsh sermon was preached in 1918.⁴⁹ While this gradual decline was not an immediate consequence of the Civil War, it nevertheless infers that an increasing

⁴⁹ Anne Kelly Knowles, *Calvinists Incorporated: Welsh Immigrants on Ohio's Industrial Frontier*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), p.221.

number of Welsh-Americans found their place within northern society without their native language.

Welsh Religious Devotion

The initial experience of some volunteers constituted a reaffirmation of their native culture, with several recruits making efforts to find other Welsh-speakers in neighbouring regiments. To some extent, such practice was a legacy of belonging to a continental diaspora. Welsh-Americans were traditionally aware of their distinct ethnic identity, which was maintained on a local basis in small tight-knit communities as well as a state-wide level. Cultural events such as eisteddfodau and county seminary meetings were often hosted on a national level, where Welsh-Americans from different states congregated to celebrate a diaspora-wide identity. Religion was a pervasive aspect of such meetings. In New York State, for example, the town of Collinsville would host a national ‘Cyfarfod Pregethu’ or preaching meeting, drawing crowds of up to 30,000 Welsh citizens from across the country.⁵⁰ As such, Welsh soldiers followed these practices, seeking each other out in camp to discuss theology, read literature, and listen to sermons in their native language.

Soldiers’ written correspondence reveals that Nonconformist faith was important to most Welsh volunteers, consistently referring to their spiritual needs throughout the conflict. The religious importance of the Civil War has certainly been recognised by academic scholarship. Victorian America was a religious country, and the soldiers of both militaries carried that faith with them into the ranks. Preachers formed a crucial role in convincing northern men to

⁵⁰ Williams, *Memory Stones*, p.187.

fight on the basis of religion. Mark A. Noll has offered an excellent assessment of the theological crisis occurring in both North and South following the outbreak of the war. He asserted that much of the northern population interpreted the causes of the war through a religious lens, generally believing that God was thought to be especially concerned about the fate of the republican government.⁵¹ Noll thus suggested that many joined the Union army with the knowledge that God was on the side of the North, their war becoming a crusade against the Confederacy. Benedict Maryniak argued that only the Government and the Church could legitimately ask Northern men to selflessly risk everything in the pursuit of a common good.⁵² While their assertions are vindicated by the example of Welsh volunteers, discussions of religion as a motivating factor for immigrant soldiers in their respective works only revolve around Irish and Germans. This chapter consequently provides a fresh case study to the religious importance of the Civil War, by arguing that it functioned as a tool of Union incorporation and patriotism within the army.

Strict adherence to Nonconformism was a fundamental principle within Welsh-American life. Anne Kelly Knowles has argued that the Welsh displayed exceptional religiosity, bringing with them strongly developed institutions of chapel organisation, self-governance, and discipline.⁵³ William D. Jones has concluded this in his own research, arguing that, for many, religiosity was an integral element of Welshness, for Christianity was inextricably entwined with the Welsh language and Welsh culture.⁵⁴ While useful accounts, they are decades old. Consequently, this chapter can provide fresh insight into how the Civil War, and more specifically the religious experience of army life, influenced the evolution of Welsh-

⁵¹ Mark A. Noll, *Civil War as a Theological Crisis*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), p.73.

⁵² Benedict Maryniak, 'Union Military Chaplains' in (eds.) John W. Brinsfield, William C. Davis, Benedict Maryniak, James I. Robertson Jr, *Faith in the Fight: Civil War Chaplains*, (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 2003), p.3.

⁵³ Knowles, 'Religious Identity as Ethnic Identity', p.282.

⁵⁴ Jones, *Wales in America*, p.91.

American cultural and national identity. Piety was arguably the most important aspect that united Welsh and non-Welsh soldiers in the army. Devotion to the Union government, together with devotion to God were pivotal factors in the decision of Welshmen to enlist. They and other American soldiers were united under their shared Christianity, especially when it came to worshipping within the environment of camp life.

Owen Owens' letter to his neighbours is typical of the faith exhibited by Welsh volunteers. He reassured them that the commandment to 'remember to keep the Sabbath day holy' was very much in his mind. Furthermore, he commented that the Welsh had not had a prayer meeting since being on picket duty due to the inconveniences of army life, but met to read the 17th, 18th and 19th chapters of St John's Gospel.⁵⁵ While he did not explain if the prayer meeting was for the Welsh of his regiment or for Welshmen from different units, his account indicates that organising Welsh-language prayer meetings was seen a recreational priority. The duties of a Union soldier appeared to frequently interfere in the spiritual social lives of volunteers, so prayer groups were organised to adapt to the camp environment, especially in lieu of a chapel. While exhibiting the spirituality of Welsh volunteers, such activities also reveal the social value of Christianity as a shared religion, as it reaffirmed cultural ties between Welsh-speakers from different communities, counties, and states. Owens mentioned his dedication to the Sabbath, but also implied that meeting with fellow Welsh for the purpose of praying took precedence.

As alluded to in Owens' letter, Welshmen across the army appeared to yearn for the opportunity to attend a sermon in their native language. Thomas J. Owen, in a letter to the Reverend John Williams in June 1863, confessed that they had been bereft of what he called 'religious medicine' for a long time, as their regimental chaplain had been absent for months.

⁵⁵ 'Owen Owens to Richard and Mary Jones' in (ed) Clare Taylor, *Wales and the American Civil War*, p.1.

Even when he was present, they would only be granted a sermon on the Sabbath when the weather and camp conditions would allow, further showing how a soldier's routine left many Welshmen's spiritual needs wanting. More than anything, however, Owen longed to hear the gospel in his native tongue:

Nid wyf wedi cael y ffrwyth i wrando pregeth Gymreig er pan fum yn gwrandio arnoch
chwi y Sabbath diweddf a dreuliais yn Newark, ac mae hiraeth mawr arnaf am gael
eich gweld, eich clywed yn pregeth, a chael ymddyddau a chwi am wahanol
bethau.⁵⁶

I haven't had the privilege of hearing a Welsh sermon since I was listening to you the last Sabbath I spent in Newark, and I long to see you again, to hear you preach and discuss different things with you.

He missed hearing a sermon delivered in Welsh, but more specifically, to hear a sermon from the Reverend Williams himself. This longing is revealing of a spiritual dearth in camp, but also of a level of homesickness, as he yearned specifically for a sermon from his local preacher. This is especially significant given the author's use of the word 'hiraeth' meaning 'severe longing,' as the word was linked with the connotations of home. The spirituality of Welsh volunteers was simultaneously a cultural comfort to alleviate homesickness, for exhibiting faith in God was an essential aspect of traditional Welsh-American identity. Howard Thomas, a local historian from Prospect, New York, declared that probably no group

⁵⁶ 'Llythyr oddiwrth Filwr Cymreig' in *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, June 1863

of immigrants had higher standards. Most were Calvinistic in doctrine, and the chapel was the cornerstone of Welsh life, so much so that quarrels between members were often resolved by the chapel rather than by a court.⁵⁷

William Van Vugt's analysis of British emigrants in Ohio vindicates this view. He observed that most of the Welsh in Ohio were Calvinists and Calvinist Methodists who shunned the Wesleyan emphasis on free will and stressed a Calvinist theology based on predestination, consequently believing they had been called to redeem the world for God's purposes.⁵⁸ Piety filtered into all aspects of life, including education, which was viewed as essential to successful and godly living.⁵⁹ Thomas Owen's reference to the preacher from his home community hints at the important relationship between Welsh identity, localism and religion. The role of the local reverend was paramount in this. As propagandists for the Union, northern ministers succeeded in giving the war a religious sanction and thus played a vital role in maintaining northern morale and determination, appearing as one of the most important sources of northern patriotic exhortation. Ministers were highly influential as recruiters for the war effort, consciously framing the act of enlistment as participation in a religious crusade in defence of the Union government.⁶⁰

Regional Anglo-American newspapers provide an outside view of how Welsh pastors were perceived and how they inserted themselves into the recruitment drive. For example, The *National Republican* reported the arrival of the newly formed 14th New York Volunteers from Oneida County as they marched through the streets of New York City in June 1861, observing that:

⁵⁷ Howard Thomas, 'The Welsh Came to Remsen', *New York History* 30 (1949), 33.

⁵⁸ Van Vugt, *British Buckeyes*, p.71.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p.76.

⁶⁰ Fredrickson, 'The Coming of the Lord', p.118.

A great many Welsh are among the regiment; and Mr Lewis Michels, Captain of Company E, and Mr Thomas M. Davies, captain of Company A, are both Welshmen. Many Welshmen, and among them the Rev. R.D. Thomas, Congregational pastor of Welsh church, in East Eleventh street, in New York City...paraded with the regiment.⁶¹

The paper reported that there was a proportionately high representation of Welshmen in the regiment, including two Welsh captains. Of additional significance was the *Republican's* observation that the Reverend Thomas paraded publicly alongside the regiment as it marched through the streets of Brooklyn. His decision to do so was an effective act of propaganda, serving as a public declaration to the volunteers, as well as civilian onlookers, that God was firmly on the side of the Union, or more specifically, that Welsh Christians were fervent defenders of the Union. In this manner, Welsh-speaking recruits promoted an image of patriotism through Nonconformist faith as well as masculine duty. Moreover, Thomas' involvement sanctioned the act of enlistment as a crusade, legitimising the recruits' credentials as northern citizens as well as dutiful Christians. This was reinforced further by the fact that Reverend Thomas composed a poem that accompanied the paper's article, its original Welsh verse being translated for the paper's American audience. In it, Thomas publicly condemned the Confederacy, calling Jefferson Davis the 'spawn of Satan and the blackest enemy.'⁶²

⁶¹ 'Military Movements in the City: Arrival of the Oneida Regiment' in *The National Republican* 21 June 1861

⁶² *The National Republican*, 21 June 1861

Preachers functioned as role models for young Welshmen. After all, as distinguished figures of authority within Welsh communities across North America, they were often charismatic, popular and models for masculine behaviour. In August 1862, Welsh Calvinist minister John Williams wrote to the *Alleghanian* of Ebensburg, Pennsylvania to express publicly that, despite being in his 56th year of life and having a weak constitution, nor ever having fired a gun in his life, he would regardless not hesitate to enlist should his services be required.⁶³

This shows how intertwined patriotism and religion were for Welsh volunteers, having been inspired to enlist by the men who espoused such beliefs from their local community pulpits. Indeed, this proved to be one of the earliest methods of breaching the barriers of regionalism, for regardless of local or national identity, Welsh ministers ensured that recruits from their flock entered the Union army already believing that Union Government was sacrosanct, and that defending it by trial of arms was their way of participating in a religious crusade.

Similar evidence appeared in the *Cincinnati Daily Press* with an article entitled ‘The Welsh are Loyal.’ It reported the meeting of Welsh preachers from different counties at Remsen as a reaction to the news that a Welsh preacher in Tennessee had preached the benefits of Secession. The *Press* reported that in Cincinnati, ‘much feeling was exhibited in this city, on learning that a venerable Welsh minister, a favourite in Cincinnati, resident in Tennessee, had yielded to the pressure around him and inculcated Secession.’⁶⁴ Welsh preachers in Utica and Remsen were outraged, prompting the organisation of a conference in which they fervently defended the Union. Subsequently, these preachers published a list of seven key resolutions for their flocks, appearing in the *Daily Press* like so:

⁶³ *The Alleghanian*, 21 August 1862

⁶⁴ ‘The Welsh are Loyal’ in *Cincinnati Daily Press* 30 September 1861

1. That we believe in the supreme, universal and special government of God, through the mediation of his anointed son Jesus Christ.
2. That God has designed human Governments to defend the persons, reputation, property and liberties of all their faithful.
3. That all worldly governments as long as they will continue to aim to reach the great ends of Providence in their institution may expect the protection of heaven.
4. That we believe in the Bill of Rights and the Constitution of the USA.
5. That we believe our worthy President, Abraham Lincoln, is the man of providence, highly qualified for the present crisis.
6. That we believe the present rebellion to be unparalleled in the history of all civilized nations of the world, as to its injustice, stratagems, frauds, thefts, boldness and cruelties.
7. That we greatly rejoice that the Welsh people generally throughout the States of the Union are loyal and faithful men; that so many of them have joined the different regiments of the Federal army, and that they are determined to support and defend the Government with their money, their arms and blood against all our foes whomsoever.⁶⁵

The message was clear: Welsh readers were assured that the Union government was a product of God, and all faithful Christians should defend it, while to support the Confederacy was resolutely abhorrent behaviour. Not only that, but the collective statement agreed upon by these figures of religious authority was that the Welsh were loyal and faithful Unionists, as evidenced by the number of them that had joined the army. Consequently, supporting the Union through enlisting was deemed categorically Welsh behaviour, in equal measure with

⁶⁵ 'The Welsh are Loyal' in *Cincinnati Daily Press* 30 September 1861

being an act of Christian piety. While further highlighting the nuance required to understand how the Civil War affected the Welsh sense of belonging in the United States, this source also serves as an invaluable insight into the active role played by preachers as proponents of the virtues of defending the Union.

Therefore, the role of the preacher in the community is a key point to consider when addressing the correspondence of Welsh volunteers, for the religious devotion contained within soldiers' letters often mirrored the teachings of local pastors. Unlike American Evangelical Protestantism, Welsh Calvinistic Methodism differed in its attitude towards authority, with the latter emphasising obedience to governmental and church authority.⁶⁶ A careful reading of the letters of Welsh volunteers reveals a consistent faith in God. In December 1862, John Rowlands wrote to *Y Drych* from his camp near Fredericksburg, lamenting at his inability to properly celebrate the Sabbath:

Y Sabboth [sic] yw heddyw. Yr ydych chwi yn cael rhyddid i fyned i le o addoliad cyhoeddus. Ond nid felly yma. Heddyw fel pob dydd arall gyda ni. O, fe fydd gorffwysdra yn hyfryd i'r milwr. Mor dda fuasai genyf gael myned i Dy Dduw ambell dro, eithr ofer yn disgwyl hyny – nid yw y wledd hono yn perthyn i'n bwrdd ni.⁶⁷

Today is the Sabboth [sic]. You have the freedom to go to a place of public worship. Not so here. Today is like every other day with us. Oh, rest will be wonderful for the soldier. I would love to have entry to a house of God sometime, but it's in vain to expect that – that feast doesn't belong to our table.

⁶⁶ Knowles, *Calvinists Incorporated*, p.107.

⁶⁷ 'Llythyr oddiwrth Filwr Cymreig' in *Y Drych* 10 January 1863

His letter implied that camp life was a bitter experience, especially concerning his spiritual needs. Rather than complain about the varying conditions of army life, his greatest concern was his inability to attend a church service. He also wrote that his one true companion in camp was the Welsh Testament, which he read every day, claiming that the bravest soldier in the cause of justice and union understood the principles of justice through the strongest faith.⁶⁸ Rowlands' letter presents an excellent insight into how access to 'religious medicine' and theological literature was a major priority for Welsh volunteers, alluding to the significance of religious piety, or at least the perception of it, to Welsh-American identity.

There is even evidence that sick or injured Welsh volunteers who were being treated in military hospitals demonstrated more concern about the lack of religious devotion among the medical staff than for the quality of the medical care they received. In January 1864, a soldier wrote to the *Cyfaill* of his time in hospital in Philadelphia, expressing admiration for the care he had received, but also showing a degree of resentment at the doctors' lack of apparent Christianity. He expressed that, 'we have received incredible care while here, but we have never heard them give praise to God for their healing...It is true that God should principally be thanked for any healing we received through medical equipment.'⁶⁹ While he was grateful to the doctors for healing him and his comrades, he nevertheless thought that their healing arts were a gift from God, and that medical staff should show due diligence. Moreover, the fact that he chose to comment on it further illustrates that religious concerns were consistently at the forefront of Welsh correspondence, indicating how certain elements of army life were interpreted through the lens of Welsh Nonconformism.

⁶⁸ 'Llythyr oddiwrth Filwr Cymreig' in *Y Drych* 10 January 1863

⁶⁹ 'Dau Fis yn yr Ysbyty' in *Y Cyfaill o'r Hen Wlad*, February 1864

To an extent, themes of religiosity within Welsh soldiers' letters were a result of their traditional upbringing in communities dominated by Calvinist doctrine and practice. Ronald Lewis has claimed that Sunday school was a Welsh invention and was fundamentally important to their religion.⁷⁰ Moreover, it also played a vital role in bringing literacy to the Welsh, providing an elementary education at a time when it was not generally available. By bringing this tradition over to America, Welsh children were thus able to study the Bible, learning it by rote, eventually growing up to be able to debate topics from memory as well as using it to understand the world around them. In short, Sunday school not only taught Welsh volunteers how to read, but also prepared them to be biblical scholars.⁷¹ Jones' description of avid attendance for bible class and prayer meetings suggests that he and other Welsh-speakers carried their biblical educational practices into the army, retaining an element of native identity within a strange, unfamiliar environment.

However, the agency of the press' editorial choices should be considered, for the apparent ubiquity of patriotism within the ranks was contributed to by the newspapers' decision to publish letters that reflected the outspoken spirituality exhibited by the editors, all of whom were pastors. Rhiannon Heledd Williams has noted this well in her study of the *Cyfaill o'r Hen Wlad*. Contrary to the highly partisan *Cenhadwr*, *Seren* and *Drych*, the editor of the *Cyfaill*, William Rowlands, was more neutral in his scope, refusing to show favour to the Republican party. As a result, his voice was a minority amid the patriotic agitation that swept through the Welsh communities of the United States.⁷² Any perceived support of the Democrats was equated with resistance to the war effort and therefore treason. Consequently, Rowlands was accused not only of insufficiently taking part in the campaign against slavery,

⁷⁰ Lewis, *Welsh Americans*, p.143.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Rhiannon Heledd Williams, *Cyfaill Pwy o'r Hen Wlad? Gwasg Gyfnodol Gymraeg America 1838-1866* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2017), p.142.

but also of siding with the Democrats.⁷³ As a result, many of the letters that appear in the *Cyfaill* display prominent religious overtones, such as the above letter from John W. Jones describing the quality of the 23rd Wisconsin's worship, but nowhere near the same level of American nationalism that was common in the *Cenhadwr* and *Drych*. Consequently, this highlights how Welsh-Americans were not unanimous in how they understood the war and military service, with some preferring a narrative of Christian duty over devotion to the Union. Moreover, it illustrates that, to some volunteers, religiosity was a fundamental aspect of contemporary manhood and cultural identity.

Religious Discipline and Temptation

The greatest threat to the religiosity of Welsh volunteers within a Union army camp was boredom. After a few hours of drilling, sentry duty and other miscellaneous duties, volunteers had most of the day to themselves. Some were quite happy with this arrangement. John H. Williams of the 14th Vermont wrote that he was perfectly content to have nothing to do in camp.⁷⁴ Others, however, found this boredom utterly monotonous and unbearable. Jenkin Lloyd Jones confessed in his diary that he was frustrated that there was 'nothing to break the monotony of camp life.'⁷⁵ He tried writing letters and washing his clothes to pass the time but found much of daily life in the army boring. Robert Davis from Company F, 25th Iowa Volunteers agreed, writing to his parents: 'I think often of the boys. They are having the

⁷³ Rhiannon Heledd Williams, *Cyfaill Pwy o'r Hen Wlad?*, p.142.

⁷⁴ 'Llythyr oddiwrth Filwr Cymreig' in *Y Drych* 16 May 1863

⁷⁵ Jones, *An Artilleryman's Diary*, p.10.

hardest time they have yet seen, there is nothing to do until on picket. I would prefer to be with the artillery, there is not so much standing guard.’⁷⁶

In their efforts to alleviate this boredom, Welsh volunteers were introduced to drink. Alcohol was to be found in abundance wherever the army went. Whisky was the most popular, as it was distilled at countless locations across the country. Wherever the army went, therefore, whisky was to be found somewhere nearby, and soldiers demonstrated consistent ingenuity in securing a regular illicit supply. Union General Benjamin Butler was embarrassed to discover that soldiers in Fort Monroe, Virginia, would regularly return from picket duty with whisky in their gun barrels, having bought the liquor from an outpost one and a half miles away.⁷⁷

While diligent officers could restrict the flow of whisky into camp, soldiers could still drink when they received a pass to leave camp. Furthermore, soldiers often received whisky from well-meaning relatives in the form of care-packages. General Butler later testified before Congress that a search of an Adams Express Company depot yielded 150 different packages of liquor in crates and boxes on their way to his command.⁷⁸ Commanding Officers made efforts to confiscate most of the surplus liquor and prevent distilled spirits from making their way into camp, but un-distilled alcohol like beer was a different matter. While there were regulations imposed on beer as with whisky, due to many officers’ sympathy for the temperance movement, these did not affect the German regiments of the army. Their officers, who were commonly Germans themselves, allowed their soldiers access to beer for cultural reasons.⁷⁹ At least until 1863, alcohol was near impossible to avoid. Many Welshmen,

⁷⁶ ‘Letter by Robert Davis, 25th Regiment, Company F’, Des Moines Historical Library Manuscripts, N14/3/5 Box 8 Folder 10

⁷⁷ David A. Norris, ‘Forty-Rod, Blue Ruin & Oh Be Joyful: Civil War Alcohol Abuse’, <https://warfarehistorynetwork.com/2015/09/20/forty-rrod-blue-ruin-oh-be-joyful-civil-war-alcohol-abuse/> (accessed 18 December 2023)

⁷⁸ David A. Norris, ‘Forty-Rod, Blue Ruin & Oh Be Joyful: Civil War Alcohol Abuse’, <https://warfarehistorynetwork.com/2015/09/20/forty-rrod-blue-ruin-oh-be-joyful-civil-war-alcohol-abuse/> (accessed 18 December 2023)

⁷⁹ ‘Beer and Bullets: The History of Beer in the Civil War’, American Battlefield Trust, <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/beer-and-bullets-history-beer-civil-war> (accessed 18 December 2023)

especially those who came from agricultural settlements, were raised in an environment where prohibition was an integral aspect of Welsh identity. The abundance of beer and liquor would subsequently challenge their discipline.

To an extent, army life in the early months of the Civil War was inhospitable to men of faith.⁸⁰ Drinking, gambling and other unseemly activities were ubiquitous in the ranks, presenting a major challenge to Welsh prohibitionists. This proved a sore point for members of their families who perceived the army as a den of iniquity, and some wrote to remind their menfolk of their Christian roots. The *Cenhadwr* included a letter in October 1862 written from a concerned sister to her brother in the army: 'Dear Brother, do not play cards, no not swear, do not drink alcoholic beverages, and more than anything, do not forget your God.'⁸¹ Another wrote their concerns to the *Seren Orllewinol* as late as March 1864, claiming they heard that a soldier near Portland had died under the effects of the beverage.⁸² Additionally, the *Western Reserve Chronicle* of Warren, Ohio reported in November 1862 that a freshly emigrated Welshman who, having been introduced to whisky for the first time, subsequently died after consuming a pint of the beverage.⁸³

As a result of such sentiments, some Welshmen developed a reliance on their Nonconformist faith for spiritual discipline, to help them abstain from sin. In this regard, they were a self-regulating community.⁸⁴ This was manifested in camp activities, like-minded Union soldiers prayed fervently, read their bibles assiduously and attended religious services regularly not only during the preliminary stages but also throughout the four-year struggle.⁸⁵ Others,

⁸⁰ Kent T. Dollar, 'Strangers in a Strange Land: Christian Soldiers in the Early Months of the Civil War' in (ed) Aaron Sheehan-Dean, *The View from the Ground: Experiences of Civil War Soldiers*, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007), p.145.

⁸¹ 'Chwaer y Milwr' in *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, October 1862

⁸² 'Rhybudd i Feddwon' in *Y Seren Orllewinol*, March 1864

⁸³ *Western Reserve Chronicle*, 19 November 1862

⁸⁴ Knowles, 'Religious Identity as Ethnic Identity', p.284.

⁸⁵ Dollar, 'Strangers in a Strange Land,' p.145.

however, responded more positively. Generally, the historiography of the Civil War upholds the perception that soldiers eagerly indulged in alcohol. Using the Civil War defences around Washington DC as a case study, Blake Lindsey has identified alcohol consumption as an endemic problem for the Union forces defending the capital. The most frequent entries of official communications recorded arrests for drunkenness that occurred almost daily. Lindsey attributed the drunkenness to the particularly low morale of the Union army after disastrous defeats throughout 1862, arguing that depressed and cold soldiers found the regulation of alcohol particularly difficult to follow.⁸⁶ Drunkenness was not solely the habit of defeated soldiers of the Potomac however, for drunkenness was universal.

In his seminal study of military life in Civil War armies, Bell Wiley observed the prevalence of such activities, portraying the Union camp as a den of degenerative behaviour. He observed that a frequent accompaniment of swearing and gambling was the drinking of intoxicating beverages. Whisky was the usual tippie, but gin, brandy, wine and among German troops especially, beer, was also consumed in copious quantities. The cider stocked by sutlers sometimes had sufficient potency to make imbibers of a few glasses limber and joyful.⁸⁷ He further noted that such was their taste for alcohol, they drank copious amounts of the most suspicious substances. Commissary whisky, denounced by soldiers with about the same degree of enthusiasm as it was consumed, was analysed by a soldier journalist as bark juice, tar water, turpentine, brown sugar, lamp oil and alcohol.⁸⁸

William Miller has used Camp Curtin as a case study in his analysis of Union soldiers' behaviour in camp. He observed that the proximity of Camp Curtin to towns and cities enticed new recruits to sneak out to enjoy the temptations of alcohol. Furthermore, Miller

⁸⁶ Blake Lindsey, 'Alcohol, Conflict and Identity in the Civil War Defences of Washington, April 1861-March 1863', *The Midwest Quarterly* 58 (2017), 153.

⁸⁷ Wiley, *The Life of Billy Yank*, p.252

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p.253

argued that young men from good homes and pure backgrounds suddenly found themselves sharing tents with drinkers and gamers, and more than a few succumbed to temptation and adopted these pastimes themselves.⁸⁹ As described earlier, Robertson and Hunter have given a more balanced conclusion on the nature of camp activities, asserting that while alcohol was abundant, most volunteers were principled men who reacted to temptation in different ways, and that endemic sin was by no means the reality. Hunter posited that Welsh soldiers had a mixed reaction to temptation, enjoying strong drink and religious meetings equally.⁹⁰

This was especially true of Welshmen who joined up from industrial communities. For such men, more so than for rural recruits, drinking was a social norm in civilian life.

Simultaneously, they continued to pride themselves in their religious devotion and literacy.

William Jones has shown this in his analysis of the Welsh of Scranton, Pennsylvania, noting that the town was referred to by many as the Welsh Athens of America, such was its richness in Welsh culture and religiosity.⁹¹ The Welsh chapels and churches in the town delivered more than spiritual medicine every Sunday; they were communities unto themselves, influencing the community with their presence and organised activities.⁹² Where many differed from their rural counterparts was in the belief that Nonconformism and a taste for alcohol were not opposing aspects of life. Ronald Lewis's exploration of the Welsh industrial communities in Pennsylvania suggested that drinking was a common pastime, and that the church constantly battled with the saloon for the loyalty of the miners, as the miners saw no problems with being drinkers and being faithful Christians.⁹³ Therefore, it must be remembered that differing perspectives on the role of alcohol to a Union soldier's identity

⁸⁹ William J. Miller, *The Training of an Army: Camp Curtin and the North's Civil War*, (Shippensburg: White Mane Publishing, 1990), p.75

⁹⁰ Hunter, *Llwch Cenhedloedd*, p.142.

⁹¹ Jones, *Wales in America*, p.88.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Lewis, *Welsh Americans*, p.147.

was influenced by an agricultural or industrial background, reinforcing this thesis' work in de-homogenising the Civil War experiences of immigrants.

To be sure, some expressed distaste and resentment at this component of military life. The term 'drunkard' was used by some as an insult. In February 1863, John E. Roberts of the 5th Pennsylvania Cavalry described the rebels as being armed with the pitiful weapons of obscenity, theft, deceit and drunkenness.⁹⁴ Furthermore, having suffered many casualties as the regiment fought its way to Memphis, W.E. Williams accused General Sturgiss of being at fault, describing him as 'The old drunkard Gen. Sturgiss.'⁹⁵ In these cases, intoxication was anathema to Welsh cultural values, although it was also a popular view shared by non-Welsh soldiers. This was certainly helped by the prevalence of the Temperance movement. In October 1861, R.R. Davies wrote from Camp Tenley, Washington DC, to inform his friend of the high discipline that was imposed by General McClellan on the Army of the Potomac. Davies was thrilled that McClellan had put a stop to the supply of alcohol to the camp, which was natural as he, along with Davies and many others, were fellow Sons of Temperance.⁹⁶ For this soldier, his abstinence from drink facilitated his integration into the regiment, indicating that in some circles of the army, a rejection of alcohol was perceived as the correct conduct for American citizens.

A further example of social inclusion through prohibition was circulated by the *Alleghanian* in January 1862. It reported the minutes of a meeting of a local Temperance society in Ebensburg, containing both Welsh and Anglo-American members:

⁹⁴ 'Llythyr Milwr Cymreig' in *Y Drych*, 21 February 1863

⁹⁵ 'Llythyr oddiwrth Filwr Cymreig yn y De Orllewin' in *Y Gwladgarwr* 20 August 1864

⁹⁶ 'Briwsion o Ebensburg' in *Y Cyfaill o'r Hen Wlad* October 1861

The Ebensburg Temperance Association held its annual anniversary on New Year's Day, in the Welsh Congregational Church. The first meeting was held at two o'clock...After which Rev. T. Davis of Pittsburg and Rev. J. Williams, addressed the meeting in Welsh, and Rev. D. Harbison in English.⁹⁷

The fact that the society was an Anglo-American organisation, meeting in a Welsh church and conducting discussions through the medium of both Welsh and English confers how resistance to alcohol was, to many, a way of uniting members of diverse communities behind a shared religious ideology. Additionally, it affirmed that a Welsh belief in Temperance was simultaneously an American belief also. This account gives an indication of what R.R. Davies and others like him experienced in the army, experiencing a degree of kinship with like-minded Anglo-American volunteers.

Jenkin Lloyd Jones offers one of the best comprehensive accounts of army life, and his views on alcohol reveal a conflict between the Welsh and American aspects of his identity. In his diary he described a scene 'at once ludicrous and deplorable.'⁹⁸ During a night in camp at Buntyn Station, music was started in the 4th platoon's tent, with soldiers playing the fiddle, banjo, tambourine, bones and clarinet. However, Jones noted that the quartermaster had brought some bottled whisky into camp, and the music broke up in a drunken row, describing it as a 'deplorable, deplorable sight.'⁹⁹ Additionally, he confessed to be in spiritual crisis when it came to his Sunday activities. He expressed how he used to recoil when he heard the 'boisterous oaths and reckless sport of the soldiers,' yet now lay in his tent, 'never realising it was the Sunday that he used to spend at home, being diligent to the Lord's command with all

⁹⁷ 'Temperance Celebration' in *The Alleghanian* 9 January 1862

⁹⁸ Jones, *An Artilleryman's Diary*, p.24.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

work laid aside.’ He further wrote: ‘it was just five months ago today, and am I really so much changed? Can it be that I am so much more vicious and wicked than then, that I heed not the Sabbath?’¹⁰⁰

He lamented the loss of his religious observance, something that had previously been an integral part of his upbringing. It thus implies that Jones was not happy with this new American way of life in the army and longed to appease the spiritual side of his heart. This was most likely due to the lack of facilities to conduct religious services as opposed to a lack of personal spirituality per se. After all, key scriptural doctrines were ignored by soldiers not due to a lack of religious faith; rather soldiers pragmatically adapted their faith to the popular culture around them.¹⁰¹ Sensing that their religious beliefs were no longer compatible with prevailing behaviours and attitudes, volunteers simply changed their beliefs to fit new wartime realities, first and foremost abandoning weekly religious meetings to suit new circumstances.¹⁰²

Jones was not alone in his view that certain aspects of military life were a challenge to his cultural religiosity. One soldier even complained at being made to fight at the First Battle of Bull Run on the Sabbath, blaming the Union defeat on having to ‘sacrilegiously break the Lord’s Day of rest.’¹⁰³ Then again, more volunteers saw the consumption of alcohol as a typical part of northern society. Several Welsh neighbourhoods were prominent brewers themselves. Before deciding to enlist, James Thomas of the Company E, 3rd Pennsylvania Heavy Artillery had purchased ownership of a tavern in South Street, Philadelphia, from another Welshman named Thomas Thomas.¹⁰⁴ According to the Pennsylvania Civil War

¹⁰⁰ Jones, *An Artilleryman’s Diary*, p.26.

¹⁰¹ David W. Rolfs, ‘No Nearer Heaven Now but Rather Farther Off: The Religious Compromises and Conflicts of Northern Soldiers’ in (ed) Aaron Sheehan-Dean, *The View from the Ground: Experiences of Civil War Soldiers*, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007), p.124.

¹⁰² Ibid, p.125.

¹⁰³ ‘Y Fyddin yn Amharchu y Sabboth’ in *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd* September 1861

¹⁰⁴ ‘James Thomas, Company E 3rd PV’ in *Y Drych* 11 July 1863

Muster Rolls, he joined the army in January 1863 at the age of 30, indicating that he had attempted to run the tavern for a while before his enlistment.¹⁰⁵ In Scranton, Pennsylvania, a Welshman wrote to *Y Drych* to say that ‘On Main Street, there are Welsh people keeping bars in almost every other house. If you want Welsh grogshops, whisky holes, gin mills, rum cellars and so forth, go to Lackawanna Avenue, Main Street and Hyde Park.’¹⁰⁶ As such, some volunteers expressed a pleasant taste for such tipples. In November 1864, the *Gwladgarwr* received a letter from Gwilym of the 107th Pennsylvania Volunteers relating to camp life in the army of General Grant. He said they drilled four times daily, and received plenty of fresh meat and potatoes, being quite content but for the fact that they could not get whisky or any form of alcohol.¹⁰⁷

In his published account of service in the Army of the Potomac, Evan Rowland Jones confessed that beer was an integral component of his army experience. He estimated that probably every company in his regiment had from two to a dozen barrels of lager beer on tap, and that it was considered the correct thing to have a glass of beer to offer your friends when they came to visit, making the camp very hospitable as a result.¹⁰⁸ While music was an important method of passing the time during the evening, his account shows that alcohol came hand-in-hand with this pastime as well. He and his comrades formed a glee-club that was a never-failing source of amusement during winter encampment, where they would make moonlight excursions to the quarters of their favourite officers to serenade them. One night they surprised General Russell, their brigade commander, with such a musical visitation. To show his appreciation for the experience, Jones claimed that General Russell produced some whisky for them all. Thus, while they wintered on the Rapidan, the members of the Badger

¹⁰⁵ ‘James Thomas,’ *Pennsylvania, U.S., Civil War Muster Rolls, 1860-1869* [database on-line] Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015 <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/9040/> (accessed 18 December 2023)

¹⁰⁶ ‘Y Drych 1870’ in Russell Davies, *People, Places and Passions: “Pain and Pleasure”: A Social History of Wales and the Welsh, 1870-1945*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2015), p.193.

¹⁰⁷ ‘Llythyr oddiwrth Filwr ym Myddin Grant’ in *Y Gwladgarwr* 19 November 1864

¹⁰⁸ Jones, *Four Years in the Army of the Potomac*, p.47.

Glee Club, as they dubbed themselves, played music, ate oyster soup, and drank whisky toddy.¹⁰⁹ Nowhere in his account did he display the same feeling of religious lamentation that Jenkin Lloyd demonstrated, acting as an insightful example of the dichotomy of Welsh opinions regarding alcohol and religion.

Steven Ramold's analysis of discipline in the Union army has similarly concluded that drinking was an essential component of army life. For citizen-soldiers raised in a culture where drinking was prevalent and accepted, drinking became a connection to their past, and hopefully future, status as citizens. In an army that emphasized distinct levels of status between officers and enlisted men, alcohol consumption became a means to break down barriers between ranks and celebrate the status of the enlisted man. Moreover, as well as acting as a bonding agent, Ramold has argued that drinking was one of the universal symbols of masculinity. Besides associating drinking with the attainment of manhood, the volume of alcohol that one could consume, along with how one behaved while consuming it, was a measuring stick of virility and manliness.¹¹⁰ As symbols of masculinity, making war and drinking alcohol went hand in hand as outward demonstrations of manhood, with soldiers gauging each other's ability to consume alcohol as a measure of manhood within their peer groups.¹¹¹ More than that, however, it was a social activity. If drinking for the pleasure of drinking was the sole objective, then soldiers would drink alone, but that was usually not the case. Instead, soldiers generally drank in groups, providing an opportunity to demonstrate their masculine control of alcohol to their peers.¹¹²

This may explain why Evan Rowland Jones found himself drinking with his commanding officer, and why that officer thought it prudent to share his own supply of whisky with

¹⁰⁹ Jones, *Four Years in the Army of the Potomac*, p.152.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p.125

¹¹¹ Steven J. Ramold, *Baring the Iron Hand: Discipline in the Union Army*, (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010), p.123.

¹¹² Ibid.

subordinates. Collective consumption of alcohol functioned as a bonding agent, one of the many forms that the Union army took in its role as an influencer of a new American military identity. Some Welshmen, who before the war had been prohibitionists, now found themselves sharing beer and whisky with new American comrades, most of whom were likeminded Christians. In this regard, camp life demonstrated that the consumption of alcohol did not result in a loss of religious faith, instead representing an evolution of cultural Welsh norms to suit the environment of a military encampment. However, this was not a universal phenomenon, for while some viewed drinking as a positive element of military life, others continued to view it as an activity incompatible with their Welsh identity.

Religion and Military Inclusion

Regardless of differing opinions on alcohol and its relationship with Calvinist doctrine, religion continued to unite most Welshmen in the army with non-Welsh comrades, thereby facilitating a degree of shared national belonging in camp. Religion's continuing importance throughout the war was marked by volunteer efforts to organise prayer meetings with Welsh and non-Welsh soldiers. Notably, access to sermons and collective worship superseded the importance of the Welsh language in these activities. In this manner, shared Christianity functioned as a tool of cultural inclusion within the army, as soldiers from different backgrounds and regions found common cause in their faith, attending sermons and prayer groups through the medium of English.

Benjamin Chidlaw reported to the *Cenhadwr* in early 1862 that in some departments of the army, there were energetic efforts to form ecclesiastical groups so that soldiers could enjoy

the religious services in the camps that they missed from home.¹¹³ In this case he was referring to Welsh-speaking soldiers, although other letters indicate that elsewhere in the army, similar ecclesiastical groups were formed to include both Welsh and non-Welsh soldiers. For instance, in January 1863 the *Cyfaill* published a letter written by John W. Jones of Company G, 23rd Wisconsin Volunteers from an army encampment near Memphis, Tennessee. Jones took evident pleasure in describing the quality of his worship. He explained that, at two o'clock on the Sabbath there was a sermon for the regiment, followed by a prayer meeting at six in the evening every Sabbath night.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, every day at eight o'clock his Welsh-speaking comrades held a bible class that was open for anyone to join.¹¹⁵ His experience illustrates how shared faith was a tool of cultural inclusion within the ranks. The sermon meant for the regiment was through the medium of English, while he specifically mentioned that the prayer groups that were organised each night were open for all. This suggests that by 1863, and most likely earlier, Welsh soldiers' 'American-ness' was being strengthened by these integrated prayer groups.

In March 1864, William G. Jones wrote from the army camp at Fayetteville, Western Virginia, to describe a similar schedule: a prayer meeting every Sabbath at six a.m, followed by Sunday school at two p.m, and a sermon in the evening.¹¹⁶ Moreover, Jones's band of Welshmen organised a society every Wednesday night where they could discuss the gospel, under the tutelage of Chaplain Allen of the 12th Ohio.¹¹⁷ Again, this reveals that a primary concern of many Welsh volunteers was the formation of a communal space where they could feel the comfort of the Gospel. However, what differed from home was that Chaplain Allen delivered his sermon in English, and the discussions of the gospel present at Sunday school

¹¹³ 'Y Frawdoliaeth Gristionogol yn y Fyddin' in *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd* March 1862

¹¹⁴ 'Llythyr o Faes y Gwaed' in *Y Cyfaill o'r Hen Wlad* January 1863

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ 'Llythyr o Faes y Gwaed' in *Y Cyfaill o'r Hen Wlad* April 1864

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

and Wednesday evenings were through English also. Consequently, the inclusivity of English-language religious activities broke barriers of ethnic or cultural distinctiveness, contributing to military comradeship strengthened by shared theology.

This was also evident in the letter of Thomas J. Davies of Company F, 22nd Wisconsin, which was originally written to his uncle, but later published in the *Cyfaill* in June 1864. He wrote from an encampment near Murfreesboro, Tennessee, commenting on the distinct Welsh character of his company, but also of their religious faith. He expressed great pleasure at discovering that two thirds of Company F, as well as most of the officers and NCOs, were fellow Welshmen, but found even greater relief in their religious convictions:

A'r peth mwyaf o bwys ydyw, fod yna amryw o grefyddwyr selog; y rhai er eu bod wedi myned yn mhell o gyrraedd eu dysgawdwyr, cynghorwyr, a phregethwyr, nid ydynt wedi anghofio galw ar enw y Duw byw. Y mae ein hamgylchiadau yma yn rhwystro I gryn raddau gyrraedd rheolaidd o foddion gras; eto yr ydym yn cael aml gyfarfod melus gyda ein gilydd yn y fangre bellenig hon. Er pan ddaeth y 31ain Wisconsin yma yr ydym wedi gadw cyfarfodydd gweddi yn lled gyson, ar ddydd Sul ag unwaith yn oed yr wythnos.¹¹⁸

And of more importance is that there are a variety of religious men of great conviction; the ones that far from the reach of their teachers, advisers and preachers, yet have not forgotten to call on the Lord's name. Our environment prevents us from having regular spiritual grace; yet we have several pleasant meetings with each other

¹¹⁸ 'Llythyr oddiwrth Filwr' in *Y Cyfaill o'r Hen Wlad* June 1864

in these distant premises. When the 31st Wisconsin came here we have held prayer meetings more regularly, on Sunday and once a week.

While the opportunity to commune with a company of mostly Welshmen was beneficial, what proved more important to him than shared language was shared faith. His letter alluded to the efforts made by him and his comrades to acquire theological literature and to create communal opportunities to indulge in religious activities. This appears to have been from an authentic desire to remain good, practising Christians, rather than the cultural value of communal prayer as a Welsh tradition. He mentioned that, because of military duties, there was no opportunity for a consistent schedule of collective worship, so whenever they were able, he and his fellow Welshmen from Company F gathered to hear the Gospel.

This practice became more common when they encountered members of the 31st Wisconsin Volunteers. As mentioned in Chapter One, James E. Jones of Company C of the latter regiment noted that there were 25 Welshmen in the unit. Thomas J. Owen's letter, however, did not refer to those 25. Instead, he referred to the regiment as a whole joining prayer meetings on Sundays. In this case, therefore, the presence of a Welsh-speaking group may not have been the driving factor behind organising these religious meetings, for the previously all-Welsh character of the meetings were replaced with something more inclusive, thus allowing for greater cultural exchange between Welsh and non-Welsh soldiers. Consequently, making these seminary groups universal contributed to the establishment of a collective martial identity characterised by shared faith.

To a lesser extent, this had been happening in Welsh communities across the North as well. Evidence of this can be seen in the *Cenhadwr* in August 1862, in the form of a published

letter from the American Home Missionary Society, providing an insight into how Welsh Christians were viewed by wider American society:

The American Home Missionary Society feels an interest in the Welsh Congregational Churches. They are of like faith and order with their American Congregational Brethren, and are laying the foundations of churches, often amid great difficulty and need of help.¹¹⁹

The letter's contents implied that the strong Welsh faith in Calvinism was admired, or at least acknowledged, by Anglo-American pastors. While the letter specified that they were 'Welsh' and therefore ethnically distinct, it nevertheless stressed their similarities with the wider American Church, alluding to the importance of shared faith in the construction of an American identity. Consequently, not only does this source provide a glimpse into how Welsh immigrants were viewed by local Anglo-Americans, but it also reinforces how important a shared religion was for the formation of cultural identity, as was demonstrated in the army.

A similarly positive Anglo-American perspective of the Welsh is present in the *Daily Exchange* of Baltimore, Maryland. One article in June 1861 showed not only an awareness of the Welsh speaking members of their community, but also conveyed a high regard for the paper's Welsh readership. The *Exchange's* editor called for northern bards to accommodate for their multi-lingual readership, writing that they 'must also encourage the production of whole sheaves of lyrics in a perfect polyglot of languages French, German, Italian,

¹¹⁹ 'The American Home Missionary Society' in *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd* August 1862

Hungarian, aye! And Welsh.’¹²⁰ This extract shows how, at least in Baltimore, the Welsh were perceived as kindred spirits rather than an alien group of people. Furthermore, the paper displayed its reverence of the Welsh population in Baltimore by including a Welsh language poem with the article, written by the ‘modern Cymbrian bard,’ Reverend R.D. Thomas, appending a translation underneath. It accompanied the translation with an interesting explanation: ‘as an offering to the Confederates a timely warning of what the Welshmen of Oneida County intend to do with them.’¹²¹

Thomas wrote that the renowned descendants of the ancient Britons ‘will attack the progress of the traitors and extinguish their Confederates, by the power of their arms.’¹²² Once again, a Welsh pastor was promoting pro-war sentiments, directing his patriotic tirade at both a Welsh-speaking and an English-speaking audience. To be sure, the tone of the *Exchange*’s commentary expressed an admiration of Welsh patriotism, while the fact that the paper published a Welsh language pro-war poem demonstrates how admired Thomas’s convictions were. As such, this source highlights a second case of Welsh immigrants being viewed with admiration by non-Welsh northerners from the basis of religious fervour.

A series of letters from Edward Owen illuminate this further. Owen came from Caledonia Township in Columbia County, Wisconsin, where his family had migrated from Llanelltyd in Meirionnydd in 1846. He was one of six men from Caledonia that enlisted in Company C of the 23rd Wisconsin Infantry. He would later die of disease, but his letters provide the letters he wrote have gifted an insight into the sincerity of Welsh volunteers’ religious beliefs. The expectations of his community were made readily apparent in a letter, in which he described at length what his spiritual experiences in the army had been like so far. One letter from

¹²⁰ *The Daily Exchange* 21 June 1861

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

December 1862 described life in the camp near Memphis, Tennessee, while the 23rd was quartered with the 32nd Wisconsin. Firstly, he recounted seeing the 20th Wisconsin hold a funeral for one of their members who died from disease. He then described, to his great pleasure, the news of a preacher in a neighbouring regiment:

Wel mae yma bregethwr yn Clongiad's Regiment ac yr ydym yn cael bregeth bob Sul. Ac maent wedi gwneud cymdeithas canu ac mae Edward wedi rhoi ei enw iddynt ac rwyf finau yn meddwl am wneud os byddant yn dyfod yn mlaen. Ac mae'r bregethwr am wneud i'r Cymru alltud a Saeson ganu ar ben ei hunain yn bregeth Dydd Sul ac yr ydwn yn falch.¹²³

Well there is a preacher in Clongiad's Regiment and we are to have a sermon every Sunday. He has formed a singing society and Edward has put his name forward and I am also thinking of doing so if it comes forward. The preacher wants to make the Welsh exiles and English sing by themselves in the sermon on Sunday and we are happy.

Owen's main wish appeared to be for the opportunity to attend a sermon delivered by a pastor. Not only does this indicate the importance of faith to his identity, but it also posits that his fellow Welshmen were so desperate for an opportunity for collective worship that they had no qualms in hearing the Gospel in English. Conducting Welsh-language services did not matter anymore, for what was of greater importance was an opportunity to hear a bona fine

¹²³ 'Civil War Letters, 1862-1863 – Edward Owen', Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Main Stacks (Reading Room), File 1862 February 5

preacher. Owen's account thus alludes to the importance of faith in strengthening Welsh soldiers' sense of national belonging as northern Americans. While remaining a source of comfort for Welshmen away from home, shared Christianity also broke down barriers between soldiers from different backgrounds and communities who were content to worship collectively through the medium of English. Subsequently, Owen's culturally Welsh expectations of a Nonconformist service had adapted because of the realities of camp life. In his letter, when he mentioned the 'English' it is unclear if he meant English immigrants or English-speaking members of the congregation, while it is also notable that the preacher identified the Welsh 'exiles' as a distinct group and was determined to include them in the sermon. While this appeared at first glance to treat them as a separate immigrant group, accommodating them within the sermon proved that the attendees were united as fellow devout Christians.

The significance of praying through the medium of English should not be underestimated. It must be remembered that some of the Welsh soldiery spoke only their native language before they joined the Union army. Learning English was a factor of military life, as the commands with which they were ordered to drill, march and fight were ordered in a foreign language. Consequently, with English becoming more common in their weekly religious discourse with fellow volunteers, their status as distinct immigrants lessened. English was the language of the army, and because Welsh soldiers attended inter-regimental sermons and theological meetings that were delivered in English, the Welsh language became less integral to Welsh soldiers' religious practice in camp. This adaptation to the realities of a military environment reinforces the importance of religion in instilling a new sense of national belonging for Welsh soldiers.

As mentioned earlier, the increasing use of the English language partially explains why Welsh-speakers often made concerted efforts to seek out other Welsh-speakers in different

regiments for the purposes of communal prayer meetings. This is difficult to gauge however, for what was almost certainly present in the majority of Welsh correspondence was a degree of self-editing. Despite the apparent sincerity of Welsh religious declarations within written correspondence, as was the case with declarations of patriotism, it served a purpose.

Considering the likelihood of their letters being read by a much wider audience than just their intended recipient, many volunteers felt they had certain standards to uphold concerning individual and collective commitment to God. This does not question the authenticity of soldiers' adherence to their faith. Instead, it considers the fact that letters were deliberately crafted to reassure friends and family at home who were worried about their Christian souls, thereby reinforcing the importance of religion to Welsh-American identity.

This much is evident in the *Cyfaill*'s April 1863 edition, where a letter was published addressed from the Calvinist Church Community of Racine to the soldiers of Company F 22nd Wisconsin. The community conveyed their happiness when they read of the company's history in the newspaper, particularly of the prayer meetings and Sunday school they organised in camp.¹²⁴ Therefore, it must be remembered that the need to impress their families with stories of their devotion to prayer was present in many a volunteer's mind. This is not to say that Welsh religiosity was in doubt, rather that the dutiful mentions of prayers and sermons in many soldiers' letters represents a dutiful, collective social expectation to emphasize Christian identity to friends and relatives.

Nevertheless, a notable exception to this trend appeared in *Y Drych* in June 1863. John H. Williams of the 14th Vermont Volunteers wrote of his experience in an abandoned Episcopal church near a Union army camp by Fairfax, Virginia. Williams and the company to which he belonged were bunkering in the church, which reminded him of the privilege of hearing the

¹²⁴ 'Llythyr at Filwr' in *Y Cyfaill o'r Hen Wlad* April 1863

sermons of missionaries in his native Wales. However, instead of using the opportunity of being inside a church for the first time in months to conduct a prayer meeting, Williams and his comrades chose political discourse as a social activity. The Welsh adhered to the model of the Union volunteer perceived by J.A. Frank, of being politically aware and active. After all, Frank argued that political motives were central for volunteers, and many soldiers were engaged by the issues leading to the war, such as the right to secede from the Union, the question of slavery, the arming of black soldiers, and the attitude toward the occupied areas in the South.¹²⁵ This piece of evidence provides an important example of how Welsh volunteers were active proponents of political discussion. Williams wrote that there was no prayer meeting nor a literary meeting; instead, two men of the company, ‘more humorous than sensible,’ went up to the gallery, where they gave two ‘exceptionally good speeches – their observations beautifully critiqued the heart-breaking state of our country.’¹²⁶

Williams’ letter implies that men in the ranks loved to discuss the political climate of the war, shown here through satire. They were in a traditionally ‘Welsh’ setting of a church, reminding Williams of his native chapel, but rather than preach the Gospel their first instinct was to discuss politics. This does not mean that those men were not religious, but it does function as a reminder that levels of piety differed from regiment to regiment. While this source does highlight that the apparent religiosity of Welsh soldiers exhibited in their correspondence may have differed in practice, there are nevertheless some key details reflecting the expectations of a pious Welsh audience. Firstly, Williams was able to physically enter a church for the first time since enlisting, something inherently positive to friends and relatives that were concerned for his spirituality in camp. Secondly, he used the church as an opportunity to reminisce of sermons in his native Wales, further reassuring his

¹²⁵ Frank, *With Ballot and Bayonet*, p.2.

¹²⁶ ‘Nadolig yn Centreville’ in *Y Drych*, 7 February 1863

audience that his faith retained remained an important part of his identity. As we are reminded from this source, appeasing Christian audiences at home was the prerogative of most Welsh soldiers, regardless of the veracity of the claims of piety apparent in their correspondence. Perceptions of piety, instead, were of greater importance.

The synonymity of Christian faith and Welsh-American identity was made clear in the obituary of a fallen soldier that appeared in the Welsh paper *Y Gwladgarwr* in September 1863. It included a letter written from the chaplain of the 97th New York Regiment to Ann Williams, the wife of Richard O. Williams, Company B, describing her late husband's last hours in the hospital following the Battle of Gettysburg. He recounted how Richard had spoken of his wife and child with the greatest affection, as well as speaking to him of Jesus and of his future home in heaven. Religious language dominated the rest of the letter, with the chaplain claiming that Richard had stated with a clear voice the phrase 'Oh yes, Jesus, my great teacher, my everything.'¹²⁷ Furthermore, he claimed that he had loved Jesus for the longest time, yet today he loved him more than ever, and after witnessing his passing, the chaplain reassured Mrs Williams that, 'if you could have seen the heavenly smile on his face as he died, it would have robbed the sight of over half of its bitterness.'¹²⁸ While a fascinating source, it must be considered that, as an obituary, it followed a typical style. Its purpose was not to focus on the fact that Richard had been killed, but to give reassurance to his wife that her husband's soul would be guaranteed entry to heaven because of his participation in a crusade for the Union. It is of course possible that Richard's sincerity of faith was exaggerated, although it is similarly important to note that soldiers often experienced a heightened increase in their religiosity the closer they came to death.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ 'Marwolaeth Milwr Cymreig' in *Y Gwladgarwr* 12 September 1863

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, p.63.

This style of memorialisation appeared prominently in other Welsh obituaries, or when soldiers would write of killed comrades to the latter's families. Both types of description often stressed the strong faith of the fallen soldier, most likely as a comfort to their loved ones. This was made clear in the obituary of D.R. Owens of Company F, 118th Ohio that appeared in the *Cyfaill* in February 1864. The editor, being a minister himself, naturally promoted the late Owens' pious qualities, writing that Owens had emigrated with his parents as an infant, and was subsequently being raised within the Church where his parents were as members.¹³⁰ He died of typhoid fever in October 1863 aged 27, and his obituary portrayed him as a model of piety:

Despite joining the army and going far from home, without being able to access regular spiritual medicine and surrounded by the temptations of sin...he and a few other religious comrades maintained what spiritual medicine they could in the encampment.¹³¹

Additionally, the *Cyfaill* cited one of Owens' letters to his parents expressing his yearning for his home church congregation, as well as the testimony of others of in his regimental company that Owens was a model of a faithful Christian. As has already been noted, the *Cyfaill* was more preoccupied with themes of religion rather than patriotism, as was the case with the *Cenhadwr*, so the considerable emphasis on the late Owens' spirituality was to be expected somewhat. Relating to religion within the ranks, what should be noted is the other figures mentioned in Owens' obituary, which who were the similarly religious soldiers that

¹³⁰ 'Cofiant D.R. Owens, Milwr' in *Y Cyfaill o'r Hen Wlad* February 1864

¹³¹ Ibid.

Owens prayed with, as well as the ones that vouched for his piety to the *Cyfaill*'s readers. Not only is this a reminder of how soldiers deliberately conveyed themes of Christian devotion to those back home, but it also emphasises the communal nature of faith and its role in facilitating cultural amalgamation between Welsh and non-Welsh soldiers.

This was also seen in the obituary of Thomas Rees of the 71st New York, appearing in *Y Drych* in May 1863. Rees had died of disease in a military hospital at the age of 22, so Reverend C.B. Thomas, who was present in the latter's last hours, wrote to Rees's father in Westernville. Mirroring the sentiments conveyed through D.R. Owens' obituary, Reverend Thomas consoled the father by writing that he had no doubt of the conviction of God's grace in his son's heart; that he was a true Christian, who took no pleasure other than in matters of religion. Moreover, he had many religious friends, who would join him most nights to pray together and sing.¹³² Once again, the individual faith of the dead soldier was emphasised, as well as how that faith was shared by other dutiful Christians within the ranks. In his case, the most important aspect of his identity both as a Welshman and as a Union soldier was interpreted as his Nonconformist faith.

Another example appeared in the *Cyfaill* in December 1863. In a similar manner to the obituary of Richard Williams, news of the former's death in a hospital near Vicksburg was accompanied by a plethora of religious language. Further stressing the importance of religiosity to a soldier's identity was the fact that, in this instance, the description of Williams's character that came from his fellow volunteers, who emphasised Williams's sincere devotion to the scriptures before he died: 'When everyone else was busy in the hustle and bustle of the campsite, he could be found by himself praying, strictly keeping himself from sin.'¹³³ This reveals that some volunteers were aware of the need to reinforce each

¹³² 'Oriau Olaf Milwr Sef Thomas Rees, Gynt o Westerville, NY' in *Y Drych* 30 May 1863

¹³³ 'Cofiant y Milwr William Jones' in *Y Cyfaill o'r Hen Wlad* December 1863

other's religious devotion in their correspondence, given the reputation for temptation the army possessed. Moreover, it alludes to the value of shared faith as a method of unification and of the influence of Christianity in the formation of national belonging.

As well as offering spiritual reassurance to the families at home, there is also evidence that such obituaries were also targeted at the volunteers risking their lives on the front line.

Welshmen in arms similarly sought spiritual reassurance of the godliness of their cause, and should they fall in combat, they needed to know that their souls would be welcomed into heaven's gates. By again addressing the collection of Edward Owen's letters, we are privy to a piece of correspondence intended to reassure the recipient of his righteous cause. W.T.

Parry from back in Portage, Wisconsin wrote to Edward on 10 January 1863 to inform him about the death of his brother-in-law, Richard Williams, who had enlisted with the 22nd Wisconsin. Amid his grief he recognised that Edward must also be grieving, and gave him some words of Christian comfort:

Ac sydd bwysig i chwi a minau ydyw bod eich ymrestru yn gywir ym myddin
Tywysog y bywyd tragwyddol... fyddai marw yna a choron gogoniant fyddai y wobr.
Yr wyf yn hyderus eich bod yn mwynhau cysuron crefydd hyd yn oed yn eich sefyllfa
anfanteisiol. Hwyr yr Iesu yn brofiadol pa beth yw bod yn filwr. Gall ef eich cysuro
yn eich holl drallodion a chydymdeimlo yn eich holl ddioddefiadau. Ymunwch lawer
ag ef o hyn y daw i chwi ddaioni. Yma feddyliaf y mae cuddiad cryfder y Gristion.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ Letter to Edward Owen from W.T. Parry, Jan 10th 1863 in 'Civil War Letters, 1862-1863 – Edward Owen', Wisconsin Historical Society Archives

And it is important to you and I that you have enlisted rightly in the army of God, the Prince of eternal life...dying would be rewarded by the crown of glory. I am confident you are enjoying the comforts of religion even in your unfortunate situation. The late Jesus knows from experience what it means to be a soldier. He can comfort you in all your adversities and sympathize in all your sufferings. Join him often and from this you will receive goodness. Here I think is the hiding of a Christian's strength.

Parry, from his religious overtones, may have been the local preacher, and certainly one with authority to write to local men in the army. His words were an attempt to reassure Edward that he was in God's army and fighting for God's cause, which would grant him salvation and keep him safe. It further validates this chapter's arguments that Welshmen carried their religious beliefs into the army and used it as a comfort to the challenges of army life. Another of Edward's letters similarly reveal how religion functioned as a crutch as his war weariness increased. He expressed his happiness that his brother John had returned home, then proceeded to lament about the comforts of home and how much he would sacrifice to be able to return. He also despaired of the darkness of their freedom, although it is unclear whether he was referring to his own personal freedom or the greater freedom of the North. Nevertheless, he expressed his comfort in his Christianity: 'But the one who commanded that light shine from the darkness is the same as when creating the world. It is good to think that the Lord reigns and governs in man's kingdom.'¹³⁵

In this letter he assured his family of his continued commitment to the Union cause, conforming to the social expectation of maintaining the outward perception that he was fulfilling his masculine duty to his family and his country. To an extent, he may also have

¹³⁵ Letter to Edward Owen from W.T. Parry, Jan 10th 1863 in 'Civil War Letters, 1862-1863 – Edward Owen', Wisconsin Historical Society Archives

been convincing himself of his own commitment after years of hardships, that despite missing the comforts of home, his reference to God creating light from darkness suggests that he perceived his struggle against the Confederates as God's own struggle against evil. What may also have been an influential factor was his recurrent illness, resulting in an increased obsession with his mortality. Indeed, he was discharged on the 24th of July 1863 and was sent home to Caledonia Township to recover, although sadly he succumbed from his illness a few months later.¹³⁶ Consequently, religion can certainly be viewed as a fundamental aspect of Welsh volunteers' military life.

As this chapter has illustrated, many Welsh volunteers maintained what religious grace they could in camp, organising inclusive prayer groups and seminary meetings wherever possible. This was also accompanied by a sincere need for the presence of a bona fide preacher, for as has been referenced in Chapter One, local Welsh ministers were key figures in persuading men to enlist. The content of the sermon and the importance of local identity went hand in hand, for local preachers given additional gravitas due to their standing in the community as well as their religious authority. Consequently, what some soldiers yearned for was not just religious literary material, but also to hear sermons delivered by authentic preachers.

Randall M. Miller has explored this in his analysis on Catholicism and Irish ethnicity during the Civil War. Part of the reason Irish units clamoured for priests to deliver the Gospel was for reassurance. Priests' presence in the field, along with Catholic sisters working in the hospitals, did much to sustain Catholic identity and interest among soldiers.¹³⁷ Many were desperate for this service, which in peacetime was a necessity and in wartime a luxury,

¹³⁶ 'Edward Owen', *Roster of Wisconsin volunteers, War of the Rebellion, 1861-1865* [database on-line] Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2005 <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/29993/> (accessed 18 December 2023)

¹³⁷ Randall M. Miller, 'Catholic Religion, Irish Ethnicity and the Civil War' in (eds.) Randall M. Miller, Harry S. Stout, Charles R. Wilson, *Religion and the American Civil War*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.264.

because so many of their fellow comrades in the army were Protestants. Many Protestant officers refused to accept Catholic priests as chaplains, so in regiments where Catholics were in the minority, priests were not called.¹³⁸ Despite this, there were attempts to bridge the divide between the two faiths. Sean Fabun has argued that preaching was one of the great weapons for combating the prejudice felt towards Catholics in the army. Catholic chaplains would invite the Protestants in their regiment, or in nearby regiments, to Sunday services, many of whom attended to hear the sermon.¹³⁹

Evidence of this phenomenon was referenced in the letter of Thomas J. Davies, as Welsh-speakers attended Anglo-American sermons to hear the Gospel delivered by a chaplain, thereby opening the door for social and cultural acceptance through the unifying force of religion. Chaplains, therefore, could be considered as agents of cultural diffusion. Gardiner Shattuck has argued that the need for chaplains was increased as the soldiers found themselves more and more in action. The suddenness and unexpectedness of casualties prevented any man from thinking that he was the master of his fate. Since stray bullets and cannon balls often struck down the unwary, those dangers convinced many men that God's inscrutable providence alone protected their souls and bodies.¹⁴⁰ Consequently, seeing the number of obituaries increase in the papers would have reminded them of their own mortality, creating the need for Christian reassurance. This may partly explain Welsh willingness to listen to sermons in English, for their need to hear the Gospel from a preacher surpassed their preference for a sermon in their native language.

Welsh volunteers demonstrated this by making efforts to have sermons conducted by a real preacher whenever possible. In December 1862, R.C. Roberts wrote to his parents from his

¹³⁸ Miller, 'Catholic Religion, Irish Ethnicity and the Civil War', p.264.

¹³⁹ Sean Fabun, 'Catholic Chaplains in the Civil War', *The Catholic Historical Review* 99 (2013), 685.

¹⁴⁰ Gardiner H. Shattuck, *A Shield and Hiding Place: The Religious Life of the Civil War Armies*, (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1987), p.86.

encampment near Warrenton, Virginia, to share his happiness at the return of the regimental chaplain after an absence of four months:

Pregethodd y Sabbath diweddaf, ac er fod y cyflegrau yn rhuo yn y pellder, eto yr oedd yn felus iawn genyf gael gwranddo ar yr efengyl am unwaith, er mewn iaith estronol.¹⁴¹

He preached last Sabbath, despite the guns roaring in the distance, yet it was very pleasant to be able to listen to the gospel for once, if in an alien language.

Here is another example of Welsh soldiers appearing desperate enough to hear an authentic sermon that the language of the delivery did not matter, further highlighting the adaptation required to army life for men of faith. Moreover, Roberts's desire to hear the Gospel was not deterred by the presence of an artillery bombardment in the background. This case shows how Welsh soldiers retained their faith while in the ranks, as well as how they expressed their identity as Union soldiers through collective worship, the symbolism of which was encapsulated by the sound of artillery fire punctuating the words of the Gospel.

Chaplains were highly sought after. Some, like the preacher described by Roberts, were dedicated men who strove for the spiritual and mental wellbeing of their charges. Such chaplains preached as regularly as military exigencies would permit, sought out soldiers for individual counsel, secured and distributed religious literature, conducted prayer services and

¹⁴¹ 'Llythyr Milwr Cymreig at ei Rieni' in *Baner ac Amserau Cymru* 24 December 1862

helped care for the sick.¹⁴² The more dependable chaplains, as described in the above letter, shared the dangers of front-line service by going forward with their units. Such men gave a visual demonstration of how religion weaved its way into how the Welsh understood their American identity. Preachers played a prominent role in Welsh communities at home, representing the figureheads of native Welsh Christian culture. Yet here, volunteers saw such men in a military context. Thus, a gradual fusion of Welsh and American identity was achieved, as the Welshness of the chaplain became less important to the volunteers. Instead, their Christian beliefs and traditions were attached to American chaplains as they were more available to the scattered bands of Welshmen in various regiments, contributing to the process of associating their faith with their military duty to the Union.

Integrating more ‘American’ norms into their conceptions of worship was aided by the fact that there was not a cohesive Welsh regiment or brigade. Because most Welshmen were minorities in other companies, they were more susceptible to embracing an American military identity. For the most part, they welcomed this change and sought comradeship with other soldiers, united by patriotism and shared Christianity. At times, Welsh volunteers found themselves surrounded and outnumbered by English, Irish, German and Anglo-American recruits, yet were identified by them as comrades. An example of military fraternity is evident in a letter from a Welshmen of Company F, 118th Ohio Volunteers that appeared in *Y Drych* in June 1863. The anonymous soldier wrote that his unit was comprised for the most part of Welshmen and Germans, with 28 Welshmen within company F and 40 in the whole regiment. The company Captain was a German, Rudolph Ruel, and their lieutenants were Welsh: 1st Lieutenant William P. Davis and 2nd Lieutenant Thomas R. Owen.¹⁴³ The company’s command structure was thus a fairly even representation of the unit’s German and Welsh

¹⁴² Bell Irvin Wiley, “Holy Joes” of the Sixties: A Study of Civil War Chaplains, *Huntington Library Quarterly* 16 (1953), 297.

¹⁴³ ‘Camp ger Cooper’s Run’ in *Y Drych* 18 June 1863

contingents. In their case, the Anglicisation of their religious practices were how both groups adapted to the lack of religious facilities in camp.

Such interactions prove that life in the army was certainly a catalyst for Welshmen embracing the more 'American' side of their identity. For example, Evan Rowland Jones and Lloyd Jenkins both served with predominantly American regiments, with few Welshmen alongside them. Consequently, neither of their accounts demonstrates their Welshness, as do the letters written to the major Welsh newspapers. We know Lloyd Jenkins was Welsh as he stated as such at the beginning of his diary, yet he firmly understood his identity as Cambro-American. Furthermore, Rowland Jones' account holds no mention whatsoever of his Welsh roots, his diary appeared as would any other American volunteer's perspective on their experience of camp life. Cultural inclusion was almost certainly the result.

Conclusion

The identity of Welsh volunteers changed due to their experiences of camp life in the Union army. The introduction of newly enlisted Welshmen to the alien nature of military life was alarming at first, leading to the formation of Welsh sub-groups within individual companies and regiments to safely preserve their language and traditions. Moreover, they would seek out fellow Welsh-Americans in their surrounding units to create inter-regimental communes, thus ensuring the presence of a unique Welsh character to camp life. Within these communes, volunteers expressed themselves through the medium of their native language. More importantly, however, Welsh language prayer meetings and sermons were organised by these Welsh sub-groups wherever and whenever possible. The correspondence of Welsh soldiers that was publicised in newspapers detailed the yearning they felt to hear the Gospel through

the medium of the Welsh language, revealing how important religion was to Welsh-American identity. Therefore, the initial reaction of some volunteers to camp life was a reinforcement of Calvinism as a cultural comfort. At this stage, their faith reaffirmed their distinct Welsh identity.

However, once the volunteers had adjusted to military life, a process of gradual inclusion was achieved through interactions with non-Welsh soldiers. Another method of military inclusivity was achieved through the consumption of alcohol as a social bonding agent. To many Welshmen, drinking beer and whisky was perceived as sinful behaviour, completely against the strict Calvinist discipline that was an integral aspect of Welsh-American identity. Nevertheless, long term exposure to an environment where masculinity was expressed through sharing alcohol brought many Welsh volunteers to the conclusion that citizens of the Union could simultaneously pray diligently to God while enjoying the libations of camp.

The primary method in which Welshmen experienced a new, collective identity as American soldiers while in camp was through religious devotion. Because there was a small nucleus of Welshmen within most regiments, it made the opportunities for inter-cultural exchange much greater. Due to the lack of facilities catering to Welsh-speaking Calvinists, devout Christians among Welsh volunteers were desperate for opportunities for collective worship. Eagerness to rectify a lack of spiritual piety made attending English language sermons incredibly popular, far more so than services in their native language. In this manner, different languages and ethnic identity mattered less than a shared desire to use worship as a social activity. Such cultural intercourse allowed Welsh volunteers to find common cause with their non-Welsh comrades in uniform through a shared devotion to God. Gradually, English became the language of religion in camp for Welsh volunteers, which proved to be an effective catalyst of unification that overcame barriers of regional, cultural and ethnic identity. In public, they were united as American soldiers by their patriotism and professed

loyalty to the Union, but in the day-to-day realities of army life, their devotion to Christianity was arguably more effective in bonding Welshmen with the greater American soldiery. Spiritual comradeship was subsequently instrumental in strengthening Welsh soldiers' sense of national belonging.

Chapter Three – Civil War Combat

Despite the initial inexperience of new volunteers, both Federal and Confederate recruits proved themselves disciplined and dedicated enough to sustain four years of vigorous war.¹ Front-line combat was not only the greatest challenge facing Civil War combatants; it was also the aspect of military service that alienated them the most from civilian life. The evolution of Welsh identity therefore owed much to the experience of being under fire, as it brought Welsh and non-Welsh soldiers together in a bond of collective trauma. Most of this thesis' subjects professed to be fighting for their homes and their country against the threat of southern secession, so the oft-indescribable ordeal of combat was viewed by many Welshmen as the epitome of patriotic duty. Diseases, hunger, injuries, and the loss of comrades were therefore viewed as necessary in this process. Moreover, masculine duty became a more prevalent theme in soldiers' correspondence as their familiarity with combat increased, particularly as soldiers depicted the ordeal as an exhibition of masculine virtues. Assessing the way in which combat was depicted in written form by Welsh veterans thus facilitates an understanding of how they attempted to reinforce their identity as proud northerners, utilising combat experience as a demonstration of manhood.

A beneficial aspect of focusing on the depiction of combat by Welsh soldiers, rather than the nature of combat itself, is that it avoids the perennial methodological issue facing scholars attempting to categorise what fighting was really like for Civil War combatants. Different eye-witness accounts presented varying experiences, for each man's recollections of battle were hyper-localised. Even volunteers involved in the same battle found their experiences differed from each other, depending where on the battlefield they were deployed.

¹ Aaron Sheehan-Dean, *The Calculus of Violence: How Americans Fought the Civil War*, (London: Harvard University Press, 2018), p.51.

Furthermore, the degree of detail varied considerably between different eye-witness accounts. Some survivors were loath to provide details or otherwise unable to remember with any clarity, whereas others were able to record their experiences in vivid terms. Battles followed a Napoleonic style of warfare, consisting of massed, tightly packed units advancing to within a few yards of each other before delivering close-range musket volleys. Consequently, an individual's memories of fighting tended to be dominated by deafening gun fire, a thick smokescreen, as well as the screams of men and the nearby impact of bullets and cannonballs.

As with every other aspect of military service, Welsh volunteers experienced and understood combat in different ways. To counter this methodological challenge, this chapter will focus on how Welsh volunteers crafted their combat recollections as a performance, reinforcing a collective conformity to the patriotic model of masculine duty established at the outset of the conflict. Therefore, while various soldiers' accounts are insightful examples of how ordinary men experienced proto-modern warfare, Welsh letters also demonstrate that their behaviour was described in as 'American' a manner as possible, continuously emphasising qualities that were associated with national duty and manhood.

Through this approach, this chapter's analysis expands on the arguments of McPherson, Mitchell and Earl Hess. While these scholars have done excellent work in exploring the realities of combat for individual soldiers, none has realised the importance of the trauma of warfare in bonding immigrant volunteers with fellow Union soldiers. Protestations of nationalism meant more to those who had survived the ordeal of combat in the name of the Union. That some Welshmen did not share a first language with most northern soldiers did not matter, for what they did share was the imperceptible bond of having fought and sacrificed for a common cause. Moreover, a new status as veterans alienated them from those Americans who did not fight, something both Welsh and non-Welsh soldiers understood. In

this manner, risking death was used as a method of maintaining a collective process of national belonging.

A pivotal agent in nurturing a military identity for Welsh recruits was the regiment. As Carol Reardon has stated in her study of the Union military, even more than pride in his corps, a soldier defined his primary corporate identity in the army as a member of a specific regiment.² Enduring the trials of wartime campaigning bonded men together as survivors, and the shared bonds of affection and respect among their members demonstrated the essence of unit cohesion.³ This unit identity was often the most influential sources of wartime motivation for Union soldiers, both Welsh and non-Welsh. Dora Costa and Matthew Kahn have compellingly argued something similar in their 2008 study, *Heroes and Cowards*, proposing that a tightly knit company, one in which men had much in common and knew each other, was the most loyal company even in a highly ideological war. From a quantitative data analysis of Union soldiers, they have concluded that group loyalty was more than twice as important as ideology and six times as important as leadership.⁴ Consequently, the regional dimensions of certain companies and regiments which contained fellow Welshmen from home proved influential in determining their wartime identity. Yet some regiments, especially those from states without strong Welsh immigrant populations, contained very few, while other units with greater numbers of Welshmen found those numbers dwindled as the war progressed due to casualties. For example, in August 1862, a volunteer from the 1st New Jersey Regiment wrote to the *Cyfaill* expressing how lonely he was now that all his closest friends in the company had been killed.⁵

² Carol Reardon, *With a Sword in One Hand & Jomini in the Other: The Problem of Military Thought in the Civil War North*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), p.96.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Dora L. Costa and Matthew E. Kahn, *Heroes and Cowards: The Social Face of War*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), p.118.

⁵ 'Ysgrifennedig at William N Jones a'i briod' in *Y Cyfaill o'r Hen Wlad* August 1862

The increasing number of Welsh casualties is a key point to consider. As with Chapter Two, this chapter offers original insights by analysing wartime obituaries that appeared in Welsh-American newspapers. Such obituaries contributed much to the reinforcement of nationalism among Welsh ranks, for the newspapers depicted Welsh soldiers' deaths as symbols of patriotic martyrdom. Those that were killed in battle or had died of disease received eulogies that emphasised themes of sacrifice, partially to offer comfort for grieving families, but also to reassure other Welsh soldiers about the legitimacy of their ordeal. Fallen friends became martyrs to the northern cause, whose American identity had been sanctified by the sacrificial nature of military service.

A newspaper eulogy of a Welsh soldier followed a typical formula; describing where he was born, providing a short history of his life in America, followed by a commendation of his moral character and a celebration of his sacrifice for his country. If a Welshman had been born in Wales, then his death was portrayed as a sacrifice for his adopted country. The native origins of Welsh casualties were always mentioned in eulogies, because stressing their 'Hen Wlad,' or 'Old Country' origins amplified the magnitude of a soldier's sacrifice for a country not of his birth. Through such methods, newspaper obituaries provided an unassailable example of Welsh credentials as American patriots.

These arguments appealed to the Welsh soldiery, as such views were mirrored consistently in volunteers' written correspondence. Regimental histories and post-war accounts are similarly useful, yet Gerald F. Linderman has pointed out that, while numerous, post-war recollections were often intent on establishing their authors' individuality, even to the point of denying the existence of representative patterns of combat experience.⁶ Thus, letters written directly from

⁶ Gerald F. Linderman, 'Battle in Two Wars: The Combat Soldier's Perspective' in Gabor Boritt (ed), *War Comes Again: Comparative Vistas on the Civil War and World War II*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.84.

the front-line provide the most illumination on the matter, especially in highlighting how Welsh soldiers consistently maintained pro-Union sentiments before and after combat. This may have been influenced by Welsh soldiers' nature as volunteers, rather than regular or drafted soldiers. The perceived superior cultural status of being a volunteer ensured that declarations of patriotism were the conditions by which Welshmen were held accountable to each other. Exposure to combat reinforced Welshmen's need to portray themselves as dutiful American citizens, not as unwillingly coerced combatants. R.J. Jenkins' letter to *Y Drych* in August 1863 provides an example of this:

Byddaf yn dda genyf glywed fod gwyr ieuanc Cymreig y Talaethau wedi ymrestru yn wirfoddolion cyn i'r drafft ddyfod ar eu gwarthaf. Peth da er lles ein gwlad ydyw y drafft er mwyn cael milwyr i'r maes, ond drwg i'r penau copr a'n canlynwyr.⁷

It would reassure me to hear that young Welshmen of the States have volunteered before the draft reaches its worst. The draft is a good thing for our country's wellbeing in getting soldiers to the field, but a bad thing for the copperheads and our followers.

Jenkins declared that, in his opinion, to be considered a real soldier one had to volunteer, commenting that it was far better for a Welsh citizen to enlist of his own volition rather than suffer the shame of being drafted. This alludes to the social status that came with being a volunteer, for in this manner, Welsh-Americans established themselves as a group of

⁷ 'Oddiwrth Gymro ar y Rappahannock' in *Y Drych*, 22 August, 1863

motivated citizen-soldiers, predicating the legitimacy of their American citizenship on a shared identity as armed patriots.

Ultimately, those Welshmen that survived their first brush with death experienced a unique collective identity that only fellow survivors of armed conflict can understand. Previous cultural and regional differences with other non-Welsh soldiers mattered little compared to the shared bond of combat survival. Eric T. Dean Jr has argued that the veteran's experience in the Civil War was paradoxical; negative thoughts of danger and death and positive memories of loyalty to comrades were inextricably bound together. The veteran developed a separate identity, built on a unique experience.⁸ This is how Welsh letters from the period should be treated, as a window into Welsh veterans' concepts of national belonging predicated on military integration. Consequently, this reinforces the importance of basing this thesis' arguments on a volunteer-based source collection. Even though several Welsh immigrants were drafted from 1863 onwards, the social consensus was to express oneself through the perspective of an ideologically motivated American volunteer. This remained the prevailing narrative throughout the war.

Historiography

The attempt to qualitatively understand soldiers' battlefield experiences has been undertaken by several Civil War scholars. Eric Dean has summarised this by suggesting that a basic outlook has come to pervade contemporary thinking on the war, one that has overlooked and

⁸ Eric T. Dean, "A Scene of Surpassing Terror and Awful Grandeur:" The Paradoxes Military Service in the American Civil War, *Michigan Historical Review* 21 (1995), 41.

minimized the stark brutality of battle and subsequent effect on soldiers.⁹ Since the 1920s, some scholars have sought to challenge previous studies of the Civil War that narrowly focused on the commanders of armies, namely Lee and Grant, by endeavouring to illuminate the experiences of the common-or-garden soldier. Early work in this field ranged from Fred Shannon's in-depth 1920s study of the Union army, to Bruce Catton and Bell I. Wiley's works in the 1950s. They proposed that the average soldier's conduct under fire was dependent on a combination of good morale and leadership. Having a close-knit relationship with their unit was the key to good morale and having dependable officers whom they trusted could exhort them to greater acts of courage in combat. However, none of these early scholars conceived the possibility of unit-dynamics influencing immigrant identity. As shall be proven in the case of Welsh volunteers, loyalty to the North was hardened by fighting, which was reinforced by the close-knit unit loyalty of men who had survived combat in defence of their chosen country. In essence, they felt American when they enlisted, they adopted American social and cultural norms through adaptation to camp life, but surviving combat solidified their identity as Union soldiers and thus as representatives of wider northern society.

Earl J. Hess is one of the most influential modern scholars on the topic of Civil War combat. He has written in detail about the characteristics and evolution of fighting in the war, recognising it as particularly brutal, on a par with the carnage that would be seen in the conflicts of the next century. Hess has argued for the pressing need for a new perspective on Civil War military history to counter colourful academic narratives of battle or biographies of well-known commanders.¹⁰ Instead, new concepts and re-evaluations of old ideas are needed

⁹ Eric T. Dean, 'The Awful Shock and Rage of Battle: Rethinking the Meaning and Consequences of Combat in the American Civil War', *War in History* 8 (2001), 150.

¹⁰ Earl J. Hess, 'Rejuvenating Civil War Military History: A New Take on Infantry Tactics', *Journal of the Civil War Era* 7 (2017), 168.

to nuance our perception of Civil War armies. In 2003, Brent Nosworthy made this case in his book, *The Bloody Crucible of Courage*, explaining that the experiences of individual soldiers were idiosyncratic and tied to unique situations. He wrote that when one considers the large number of engagements that occurred, the variety and types of experiences encountered during the heat of combat appear to be endlessly varied. Consequently, attempting to categorize and understand the soldiers' experiences is extremely difficult, if not impossible.¹¹

J.A Frank and George Reaves wrote a similarly important study about 'seeing the elephant' at Shiloh, analysing volunteers' first introduction to a full-scale battle. Their criticism of scholars attempting to categorize the battlefield experience of volunteers is a key point, for while volunteers tried to write down their observations as accurately as possible, a disparate aggregate of sights and sounds was probably a more eloquent description of battle.¹² As such, this chapter will not attempt to understand what combat was really like, focusing instead on the way that combat was depicted by soldiers and how it highlights the importance of masculine conduct in the self-portrayal of Welsh soldiers as patriotic Americans.

A key aspect of this was bravery. It took exceptional bravery to march to within yards of each other and trade rifle volleys, all while being torn apart by artillery shells. As will be demonstrated, Welshmen emphasised this bravery in letters to friends and relatives, often elaborating in detail on the horror they witnessed to extol their own courage. Discussions of such correspondence in this chapter will reference Linderman's influential 1987 study, *Embattled Courage*. He observed that Union soldiers filled their letters home with the moral values they thought were most important: manliness, godliness, duty and honour. However, at

¹¹ Brent Nosworthy, *The Bloody Crucible of Courage: Fighting Methods and Combat Experience of the Civil War*, (New York: Basic Books, 2003), p.211.

¹² J.A. Frank and G.A. Reaves, *"Seeing the Elephant": Raw Recruits at the Battle of Shiloh*, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), p.93.

their centre, Linderman argued, was courage, which was used interchangeably with the idea of manliness.¹³ Welsh-language accounts mirrored this focus on courage in abundance, showing that Welsh soldiers' concepts of American identity were rooted in masculine conduct on the battlefield. While Linderman attempted to ascertain what combat was like for Union soldiers, this chapter departs from his work by exploring how a group of immigrant volunteers used descriptions of soldierly conduct as a method of asserting themselves into wider northern society as paragons of contemporary manhood.

In terms of unit identity, a notable piece of scholarly work to consider is Hess's *The Union Soldier in Battle* in 1997. He labelled the Union army as a military family, a vessel for hundreds of thousands of northern men that provided the most pervasive and most deeply felt source of battlefield morale.¹⁴ This complements McPherson's conclusions that while Union volunteers found combat universally traumatic, their belief in duty and honour fuelled their determination to continue fighting for their country as the years of war progressed. He asserted that, if anything, the motivating power of soldiers' ideals of manhood and honour seemed to increase rather than decrease during the terrible years of the war.¹⁵ The experience of combat did more than strengthen existing bonds; it also dissolved the petty rivalries and factions that existed in some regiments and forged new bonds among men who saw the elephant together.¹⁶ This certainly resulted in a strong unit-based collective identity, but neither Hess nor McPherson realised that for immigrant groups such as the Welsh, this bond born of combat provided a tool of integration with their non-Welsh comrades, furthering the speed with which the former embraced a collective identity as American people.

¹³ Gerald F. Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War*, (London: Free Press, 1987), p.7.

¹⁴ Earl J. Hess, *The Union Soldier in Battle: Enduring the Ordeal of Combat*, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997), p.122.

¹⁵ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, p.82.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.87.

Discussions of Civil War weapons and tactics, as well as analyses of Union soldiers' experiences of battle have already been explored by contemporary scholars. While acknowledging what the Welsh experience of combat was like, the purpose of this chapter will be to analyse how Welshmen wrote letters to reaffirm a sense of masculine duty and patriotism, as well as observe how the experience of combat resulted in a narrative of shared sacrifice. Firstly, this chapter will analyse how Welshmen recounted their experiences of being under fire in letters to friends and relatives. Some of the letters published by Welsh newspapers contained colourful and lucid descriptions of artillery fire, of men shot down by bullets, as well as fighting hand to hand with the enemy. Other soldiers, however, were sparse in their descriptions, avoiding emotive language and providing only the shortest and most vague recollections of battle. Regardless of this, most conformed to a practice of emphasising courage and masculine qualities above all else, depicting participation in armed combat as a method of displaying one's patriotism and commitment to the Union. Portraying themselves as Union veterans of the battlefield consequently renewed the developing wartime identity of Welsh volunteers as loyal northerners.

Secondly, this chapter will approach the numerous obituaries that were published in the Welsh press. Despite mourning the loss of many young Welshmen, the overall tone of these obituaries was not that of war-weariness. In fact, the opposite is true. The editors made concerted efforts to frame their kinsmen's deaths as noble sacrifices in the defence of the Union, driving others to emulate their fallen brethren. Even those who had not been killed in battle, but rather had succumbed to disease, were given the same noble eulogy as the former category. It was not how they died that mattered; it was the fact that they had died at all. This does not discount the importance of battlefield experience to the identity-formation of Welsh soldiers, but some died for their country before they had a chance to test their mettle in combat. Consequently, the trend in Welsh correspondence was to laud the heroism and

masculine duty shown by any Welshman that lost his life for the Union. Ultimately, the Welsh place in wider northern society became consecrated through a lens of martyrdom.

Additionally, this chapter will assess how increasing Welsh casualties created a firm resolve of commitment among Welsh soldiers, determining to carry on fighting to honour fallen comrades. Many expressed that to give up before the Confederacy had been defeated was tantamount to a betrayal, for all they had suffered would have been in vain. This created a renewed social expectation of zealous nationalism for the Union among the Welsh soldiery, along with a virulent anti-Copperhead ideology. To many, being a Democrat supporter, or wishing to see an early end to the conflict, was perceived as un-patriotic and anti-Welsh behaviour. Elements of Castell's 'Resistance' identity permeates these observations, with affirmations of continued loyalty to the North and the Union being grounded in anti-Confederate sentiment.¹⁷

Fighting for the Union

Writing letters was a technique used by Welsh volunteers to reaffirm personal views on the nature of military service, as well as a way of showing commitment to defending the Union to friends and relatives at home. In the earliest stages of the conflict, military service was perceived as an adventure, and some stories of combat were framed with a degree of bravado detached from the reality of war. Testimonies from freshly enlisted volunteers were full of enthusiasm about the war, with new recruits expressing impatience to be let at the 'Rebs' and crush the treasonous South underfoot. This eagerness to close with the enemy only increased

¹⁷ Castells, *The Power of Identity*, p.8.

as volunteers advanced closer to Confederate lines and began hearing the sounds of battle. A letter from R.C. Roberts appeared in the *Cyfaill* in July 1862, conveying his excitement as his regiment neared the Shenandoah Valley, within earshot of Stonewall Jackson's guns:

Ond clywsem sŵn ein cyd filwyr yn ymladd i lawr yn nyffryn y Shenandoah yn rhywle; yr oedd y cyflegrau yn rhoi bob eiliad... Yr oedd pawb yn galonog, a'r llesg wedi ei wneuthur yn gryf, a llawer oedd wedi methu cadw i fyny ar y daith oeddynt yn cadw i fyny a ni, er mwyn cael gweled y ffyn.¹⁸

But we heard the sound of our comrades fighting somewhere down in the valley of the Shenandoah; the cannons were roaring every second...All were hearty, and the frail were made strong, and many who previously failed to keep up on the journey now kept up with us, in order to see the fun.

His perspective as a raw recruit is alluded to by the level of bravado evident in his account, contending that the prospect of nearing combat was enough to embolden and re-energise even the weakest of them. Like many new recruits, Roberts still saw the war as an adventure, not yet registering the sound of cannon fire with imminent danger. Another letter of his, published a month afterwards, conveyed similar impatience: 'you'll see, brother, that our regiment has strangely escaped being part of this bloody battle [Culpepper]. We were very close to being in the battle of Bull's Run; we were even closer to having battle with Jackson at Front Royal...It's likely our turn to fight will come soon.'¹⁹ He had not yet been tested by battle, and as such needed to reassure his brother that he was still eager to close with the

¹⁸ 'Llythyr Milwr o Faes y Gwaed' in *Y Cyfaill o'r Hen Wlad*, July 1862

¹⁹ Ibid.

enemy and prove his manhood. Upon first contact with the enemy, however, such excitement was soon replaced with a plethora of different emotions.

For some recruits, the first taste of battle proved anti-climactic. Frederic Jones provided a vivid yet remarkably short description of the Second Battle of Bull Run to his parents, which later appeared in the *Cyfaill* in October 1862:

A agorasant arnom gyda grape a canister pa rai a ysgubent ein rhengau yn adwyau ar dde ac aswy...pan oeddem yn troi o gwmpas chwynellai magnelbelen dros fy mhen, gan dori ymaith fy rhychddryll (rifle) o fewn chwe modfedd i'm pen. Achosodd yr ysgytiad (concussion) i mi syrthio mewn anymwybyddiaeth i'r llawr; a phan ddychwelodd fy synwyr i mi, canfyddwn fy mod yn meddiant y rebels.²⁰

They opened up on us with grape and canister that swept breaches into our ranks on the right and left...when we turned around a cannonball flew over my head, cutting off my rifle within six inches of my head. The concussion caused me to fall unconscious to the floor; and when my senses returned to me, I discovered I was in the hands of the rebels.

The reader could be forgiven for feeling transported to the field of battle. Frederic sought not to assuage his parents' worries for his safety. To be sure, he described in detail how close he came to death, even measuring it in inches. Despite this, this was his only recollection of the battle, for he was immediately knocked unconscious. Whether he aimed to convey his

²⁰ 'Llythyr oddiwrth Frederic Jones wedi ei gymeryd yn garcharor' in *Y Cyfaill o'r Hen Wlad*, October 1862

disappointment, or his relief, is not immediately clear, but regardless, his first experience of battle was not what he had expected.

The same can also be seen in D. Lloyd Jones' letter to *Y Drych* in January 1863. In it, he described that his combat experience to date had been characterised by sharp, sudden skirmishes with the Confederates, who vanished soon after. He wrote how his regiment, the 16th Wisconsin, encountered a Confederate battery four miles south of Holly Springs in Mississippi. They heard cannons and rushed at the double quick to a large field near the mill of Lumpkin Mills, where they could see the rebel six-pounders half a mile away sheltered in some trees. Their skirmishers promptly advanced against them in perfect order, at which point the 'Butternuts' fled.²¹ He revelled in the excitement of nearing the field of battle and of being fired at, yet where the climax of enemy contact should be, there is a mixture of relief and disappointment inferred from seeing the rebels' disappearance.

A further example of the adventurism associated with military service was shown in the *Alleghanian* in November 1861, as it reported the exploits of Lewis L. Jones, a Welshman of Cambria County who had joined Company C of the 7th Ohio Volunteers. Following the Battle of Cross Lanes in Western Virginia, the paper wrote that Jones had been wounded 'in the thickest of the fight' and subsequently been taken prisoner by the rebels. However, after a few weeks of incarceration, despite his wounds, he and 25 others had 'skedaddled' and escaped their captivity safely back to Union lines and was at that moment being treated in a hospital in Cincinnati. His wound, although 'exceedingly dangerous,' did not prove fatal due to his 'naturally hardy constitution,' and the paper claimed he would be rejoining his regiment in a few weeks' time.²² As with earlier sources, the prospect of dying in combat did

²¹ 'Llythyr Oddiwrth Filwr Cymreig yn Mississippi' in *Y Drych*, 10 January 1863

²² 'A Cambrian Dangerously Wounded' in *The Alleghanian* 28 November 1861

not appear to be a prominent theme compared to the reinforcement of ideal virtues of manhood, as the paper stressed Jones' bravery both in and out of enemy territory.

An additional, similar example in the Anglo-American press was presented by the *New York Herald* in July 1861. It reported the exemplary conduct of Welsh volunteer Private Parry of Company B 2nd New York Regiment, who together with his comrade Private Gilmore, had saved the colours of their regiment during the Union defeat at the First Battle of Bull Run, killing eight to twelve men in doing so.²³ Gilmore's origins were not described, although Parry was hailed by the *Herald* as a 'young Welshman from Oneida County, New York.'²⁴ The paper did not linger on the details of the engagement, for even though it mentioned how close Parry and Gilmore were to being killed, what was emphasised instead was the bravery that saw them through the battle. Of further note is the reference to Parry's regional identity, for just as Lewis Jones was referred to as a Cambrian, Parry was described as an Oneidan, showing that Welsh soldiers were recognised as Americans by non-Welsh contemporaries, on a regional as well as national basis. This further stresses the complex undertones behind the military identity of Welsh-American soldiers, of how regional identification often took precedent to national identification.

As most volunteers found, the naïve interpretation of what the front-line would be like was shattered quickly. A common theme in Welsh letters was the trauma of being fired at. In July 1863, the *Cenhadwr* published a letter from Corporal Thomas Jones of Company I, 97th New York Regiment, recalling being under heavy fire, 'all day yesterday from the rebel battery situated on the hills around two miles behind Fredericksburg – the bullets and shells fell and

²³ 'Let True Bravery Be Rewarded' in *The New York Herald* 27 July 1861

²⁴ *Ibid.*

fragmented in our midst, and as we were lying down on the ground, a shell flew past a few feet over my head, falling and exploding within 30 feet of me, killing two men.’²⁵

His letter echoed the vivid descriptions provided by Frederic Jones’ account. As in the latter’s letter, here is an example of a Welshman describing in detail how close he came to death, disregarding any fears his friends and family may have had for his safety. To an extent, this indicates how prevalent societal pressure was as an influence in soldier’s correspondence. Describing cannonballs almost striking them demonstrated to readers that both Thomas and Frederic were in the thick of the fighting, as was to be expected of dutiful volunteers fighting for their country. This image was initially adhered to by Thomas, for after his enlistment in October 1861, he served with enough distinction to be promoted to the rank of corporal in March 1863. However, a mere three months later in June he deserted the army, being officially mustered out in November 1863.²⁶ This meant that by the time the above letter was received by the *Cenhadwr*, Thomas had already left the army. While it is impossible to ascertain his precise motivations for deserting, given his recent brush with death, it serves as a reminder that not all Welsh volunteers continued to express convictions of patriotism once the grim nature of combat had been discovered.

Hugh Hughes of Company K, 23rd Wisconsin, described a similar memory of cannon fire in March 1863: ‘On our first entry into the field, a ball came from one of the enemy’s guns, which landed and exploded almost twenty yards from us, killing one and injuring three.’²⁷ As with the previous two letters, Hughes’ recollection made no attempt to hide how close he came to being shot. While providing an exciting read for its audience, his family must have been mortified. The evident priority was not to withhold the realities of combat to his loved

²⁵ ‘Oddiwrth Filwr Cymreig ar y Rappahannock’ in *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, July 1863

²⁶ ‘Thomas Jones,’ *Annual report of the Adjutant General of the State of New York, Vols. 1-2* [database on-line] Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2009 <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/31393/> (accessed 18 December 2023)

²⁷ ‘Oddiwrth Filwr Cymraeg’ in *Y Drych*, 7 March 1863

ones. Instead, he had to display his bravery in the face of an enemy barrage. Hughes' service record reveals that being under fire did not drive him to desert, for he continued to serve until April 1863 during the Vicksburg campaign, where he died of diarrhoea.²⁸

Others witnessed combat from afar before experiencing it up close. This appeared to be the case in William H. Jones' letter to the *Cenhadwr* in June 1863. He wrote to give a short history of his regiment, the 117th New York Volunteers, whom he colloquially referred to as the soldiers from Oneida - further evidence of the regional dimensions of a Welsh volunteer's identity. He described witnessing a neighbouring regiment, the 89th New York's assault on an enemy position:

Taniodd y gelyn o un o'u Batteries ar ein badau ac atebwyd yn ol yn uniawn, a bu tanio prysur trwy y dydd hyd yn agos i 6 o'r gloch prynhawn, pan y gorchmynwyd i'r 89ain N.Y fyned drosodd a chymeryd y battery – aethant drosodd a rhuthrasant a chymerasant y battery a'r gynau, 6 mewn rhif, a thua 200 o garcharorion. Lladdwyd dau o'r 89ain a chlwyfwyd 5...Dyma ychydig o hanes y gatrawd. Y mae yn amherffaith iawn.²⁹

The enemy fired from one of their Batteries and we answered back directly, and there was busy firing through the day until close to 6 o'clock evening, when the 89th N.Y was ordered over to take the battery – they went over and rushed and took the battery and its guns, 6 in number, and around 200 prisoners. Two of the 89th were killed and 5 were injured...Here is a little history of the regiment. It is very imperfect.

²⁸ 'Hugh Hughes,' *U.S., Registers of Deaths of Volunteers, 1861-1865* [database on-line] Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012 <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/2123/> (accessed 18 December 2023)

²⁹ 'Oddiwrth Filwyr o Oneida' in *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, June 1863

His account of rushing the guns correlate with Paddy Griffith's analysis of shock tactics in the Union army. The essence of victory, Griffith claimed, was the use of the bayonet to scare enemy units and making them retreat, hence its moniker as the 'instrument of victory.'³⁰ This would entail charging at the enemy through multiple volleys of cannon and musket fire. As such, this tactic was psychologically difficult for most soldiers, because it left them longer in danger before doing anything in return, thus asking volunteers to show an unnatural response to fear.³¹ Interestingly, however, Jones witnessed the charge of the 89th from afar, so his testimony does not evoke the fear and adrenaline that he might have faced had he advanced into the face of enemy fire. This reiterates the fact that volunteers involved in the same engagement often had different combat experiences, proving how difficult it is to categorise the average soldier's experience of warfare in the Civil War.

His comment that the history of his regiment so far was 'very imperfect' conveyed a sense of disappointment that he had not yet been blooded in battle, exuding impatience to get to grips with the enemy. Jones may have been jealous of the 89th's fortunes, of not being able to laud his masculine vigour as a Union soldier. Even had he not desired to engage in combat, doing so would have given him the opportunity to boast of it to friends and family back home.

Linderman's critical analysis of soldier correspondence raised similar points, especially how Union soldiers were obsessed with courage, and appearing so to their peers. To counter any criticism of basing his methodology on such letters, he argued that the language descriptive of 'courage's war' was neither soldier self-delusion nor manipulation employed by high

³⁰ Griffith, *Battle Tactics of the American Civil War*, p.142.

³¹ *Ibid*, p.143.

commands; it was, rather, a fair reflection of the structure of values within which soldiers thought throughout the war.³²

By observing a charge against an entrenched enemy position, Jones saw men killed and wounded by cannon and rifle fire. However, by choosing to omit these details, his testimony can be interpreted as evoking a different type of masculine courage. Hiding the horrifying reality of war from his friends and relatives was a potential act of mercy, which contrasted many of his compatriots' more lucid letters. Given the horrific nature of war, an unwillingness to revisit traumatic memories in his correspondence is understandable.

Furthermore, a lack of detail is due to the fact that soldiers simply could not remember or discern much detail amidst the chaos of battle. J.A. Frank and George Reeves have discussed this in their analysis of Union volunteers at the Battle of Shiloh. The asymmetry and insularity of soldiers' recollections of combat were connected to the difficulties of perceiving their surroundings in the noise and smoke. In this overwhelming environment each soldier tried to come to grips with his own situation, which predominantly was the phenomenon of being shot at. From this perspective, preoccupation with enemy firepower in soldiers' letters is hardly surprising, as it was associated with the average soldier's survival.³³

James McPherson has raised similar points, suggesting that even after soldiers had 'seen the elephant and found it ugly,' most remained determined to fight, their belief in duty, honour and country holding them to the firing line.³⁴ However, because the conventions of masculinity equated admission of fear with cowardice, many were reluctant to confess what surely all felt. It was only as time went on, that soldiers who had proved their courage under fire grew more candid in admitting fear.³⁵ Adhering to this interpretation, Jones braved the

³² Linderman, *Embattled Courage*, p.99.

³³ Frank and Reeves, "*Seeing the Elephant*", p.99.

³⁴ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, p.36.

³⁵ *Ibid*, p.37.

dangers of front-line service until mid-1864, when he died from an illness in a hospital in Washington D.C at the age of 26.³⁶

Some Welsh accounts of combat were pragmatic or professional in style, reading more like official battle reports than eye-witness testimonies. For example, in February 1863, *Y Drych* published a letter from John W. Rowlands, describing his experience fighting in the Second Battle of Bull Run:

We started the battle, and we were the last ones to leave the field, that shameful day, when we could have held our ground and triumphed over the rebels, but we were refused permission to do so. Shame! Shame! To the generation that suffers from such fools leading the bravest soldiers on earth.³⁷

He later provided a blunt account of the prelude before the battle of Antietam: ‘On the 16th we were guarding the bridge throughout the day, three companies over as skirmishers, around 70 men. Only 25 of them returned, leaving 45 on the field, most of them dead.’³⁸ He provided two differing descriptions of combat. The first concerned his involvement at Bull Run, where the bulk of his account ignored the feeling of being shot at. Instead, his letter radiated shame and frustration at being defeated. He laid the blame squarely on the idiocy of the generals, claiming that, were it not for such incompetence, the war that should have been won by now by the bravest soldiers in the world, men such as he, who were being betrayed by the

³⁶ ‘William H. Jones,’ *New York, U.S., Registers of Officers and Enlisted Men Mustered into Federal Service, 1861-1865* [database on-line] Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014
<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/5434/> (accessed 18 December 2023)

³⁷ ‘Llythyrâu oddi wrth filwyr Cymreig’ in *Y Drych*, 7 February 1863

³⁸ Ibid.

generals' timidity and stupidity. He further stressed the importance of being the last to leave the field at Bull Run, the position of honour.

Emotive language was needed to emphasise his own quality and that of his comrades, and that despite being on the losing side, it was not for lack of martial prowess. This appears both as a reassurance to friends and relatives of his unwavering commitment to the war, but also as a reassurance to himself that he was the model of a Union volunteer. This contrasted his account of Antietam, as seen by his unemotional recording of the loss of many soldiers. He witnessed a company of 70 skirmishers crossing a bridge to engage Confederate forces, but returned having suffered 45 casualties, a loss of 64 percent. However, his letter shows no visible emotional reaction to such attrition. Perhaps because the unit was not his own, or perhaps because he was loath to revisit such memories in his correspondence. Regardless, it is an insightful reminder of the difficulty with categorising the average soldier's experience of combat, as what a survivor chose to put to pen differed in each case. Additionally, his account shows that some soldiers measured their identity as patriots through success on the battlefield, so when the rest of the army was defeated, individual courage was stressed to compensate.

A further example of a short, unemotional testimony is a letter by John Davies of a New York Cavalry regiment, who provided a concise description of battle at Brandy Station in August 1863 to his brother: 'We fought fiercely for some time through thrown showers of grape, canister and shells; but we drove them back each time to within a mile of Culpepper, when they received a detachment of infantry as reinforcements; so we were forced to fall back, understanding they had a large army in the vicinity, and with all of us exhausted having fought over nine miles of land.'³⁹ While his account alluded to prolonged fighting, it

³⁹ 'Oddiwrth Filwr Cymreig' in *Y Drych*, 22 August 1863

described the conduct of the regiment as a whole, rather than giving an insular perspective of his personal experience of fighting. Nonetheless, the emphasis of his letter was to stress that his regiment fought fiercely and drove back the enemy each time in the face of repeated bombardment by enemy artillery. Towards the end of his letter, he admitted that he and his company were forced to withdraw, yet he crafted his descriptions in such a way that justified the retreat. As with Rowlands' account, his identity as a soldier was marked by masculine conduct, but because his unit was forced to retreat, he explained it was due to exhaustion rather than any perceived failing of duty. The overall emphasis was not to provide gratuitous details, instead portraying his conduct and that of his comrades as exemplary. Both this letter and that of Rowlands share this detail of reassuring those at home of their active participation in combat, demonstrating the importance of active duty to contemporary notions of manhood.

A more emotive testimony was provided by William G. Jones in July 1864, concerning his experience with the 91st Ohio Regiment at the battle of Cloud Mountain in May 1864. While giving his readers a more detailed insight into the nature of battle, the effort to justify a withdrawal or an unsuccessful engagement behind a narrative of courage was still present:

As we approached Cloud Mountain, our bodyguard descended from their horses. We began to smell the waft of the Rebs here, and we started flanking the enemy... We began skirmishing between 10 and 11 o'clock, when the enemy rushed forward fiercely, forcing our two initial companies back... By the time we came forward, the battle had become hot, the enemy coming forward, yelling and shouting, but soon we forced them to flee and leave the field.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ 'Llythr o'r Frwydr' in *Y Cyfaill o'r Hen Wlad*, July 1864

His account emphasised his courage, as well as the collective bravery of the regiment, even though they were forced back for most of the battle. Seemingly to make up for this, he included immersive details for his readers, such as being able to smell ‘the waft of the rebs’ and recalling the enemy ‘coming forward yelling and shouting.’⁴¹ When he described the Confederates being forced to flee, he ambiguously wrote ‘we,’ leaving it unclear whether he was referring to his regiment, or more likely, the division as a whole. Once again, a Welsh volunteer’s account of combat was crafted with an intended audience in mind, stressing his role in the thick of the action as expected of a patriotic soldier. In his case, as with the two previous accounts, he needed to emphasise his courage and commitment to his martial duty to his friends and family, alluding to the importance of contemporary American manhood in the development of Welsh volunteers’ identity.

Others, however, did not hesitate to record feelings of horror and disgust. The published diary of Jenkin Lloyd Jones included his recollections of the battle of Mission Ridge in November 1863. His experience differed from other veteran testimonies in that he provided the perspective of an artilleryman, positioned further away from the front line. Consequently, his diary has no mention of marching under enemy bullets to fire a volley of muskets at close range. Instead, the most striking section of his diary is his recollection of seeing the trail of wounded returning after an unsuccessful frontal assault. His horror was evident, as was his sense of helplessness at not being in the front ranks of the infantry. As he witnessed the assault of 11th Corps on Confederate positions, he lamented that the artillery could not be brought to much use. He wrote that: ‘my feelings as I stayed under that hill, listening to the noise and rattle of the fight, mingled with suppressed cheers of charging parties, and the groans of the wounded as they passed in the long trains of ambulances, or the lighter

⁴¹ ‘Llythr o’r Frwydr’ in *Y Cyfaill o’r Hen Wlad*, July 1864

wounded hobbling back afoot with bleeding and mangled limbs, I cannot describe in words.’⁴²

He exhibited a different kind of courage than what was required to endure enemy fire, which was to witness the horrifying wounds inflicted upon his fellow soldiers as they withdrew. Not only is it written well, but it is also a surprisingly honest and vivid eyewitness account of a Civil War battlefield. It is likely that, as he was writing in his personal diary, rather than writing to a family member or a newspaper, he did not need to boast of his courage on the field of battle and could freely describe seeing men covered with blood and having mangled limbs, something that does not appear in letters published by the newspapers. Crucially however, seeing the carnage of a battlefield did not appear diminish his commitment to the Union cause. It had the opposite effect, inciting his need for vengeance, which he expressed in the following words: ‘Their punishment will be great.’⁴³

Another insightful eyewitness account is a letter from Joseph E. Griffith of the 22nd Iowa Volunteers. He wrote to the *Cenhadwr* in July 1863 to share his experience of marching with Grant against the Confederate stronghold of Vicksburg. He provided the newspaper with two separate perspectives of combat, both of which emphasised themes of courage and manhood. Firstly, he wrote about the battle of Champion Hill on the 16th of May 1863:

They tried to fortify in rifle pits, of which they had three or four rows. Our Brigade, under Brig. Gen. Lawler were ordered to fire and charge them immediately. As soon as it was ordered, it was done. Iowa boys, always ready when duty calls, putting aside any burden that would stop them, prepared for the assault. When the order was given,

⁴² Jones, *An Artilleryman's Diary with the Sixth*, p.95.

⁴³ Ibid.

we went forward with a roar, and after around half an hour of hard work, the victory belonged to us.⁴⁴

He described participating in a frontal charge on entrenched enemy positions, a daunting prospect to even the most hardened veteran. However, his tone appeared almost contemptuous of the Confederates' chances, summarising hand to hand combat as 'half an hour of hard work.' Moreover, Griffith expressed his regional loyalty as an Iowa man first and foremost, boasting that the 'Iowa boys' courageously stormed through three or four rows of rifle pits, making it seem that the victory belonged solely to them. It fits the established model of a Welsh volunteer's first-hand account, emphasising courage in the face of danger as the most important characteristic of a northern man.

His second account of combat, however, presented a gratuitous image of war to the *Cenhadwr*'s readers. On the 22nd of May 1863, he was involved in a storming party that was tasked with seizing a section of the Vicksburg defences that came to be known as the Railroad Redoubt:

22ain – Bryn uchel a safai rhyngom a brongloddiau y gelyn...Y ffosydd ydynt ddeg troedfeydd o led ac wyth o ddyfnder. Ymddangosai yn annichonadwy cymeryd y fath le trwy ruthriad; eto yr oeddym yn cael ein gorchymyn i fyned ymlaen, ac heb ofyn dim cwestiynau, bechgyn swydd Johnson a aethant ym mlaen. Arweinwyd ni gan ein Milwriad dewr hyd oni syrthiodd. Ar ruthriad diatreg neidiasom i'r ffosydd a chyfarfyddasom a'r gelynion ar wyneb eu brongloddiau. Yno yr 22ain a ddrylliwyd yn y modd mwyaf arswydol. Nid oedd gan y gelynion ond llwytho eu drylliau a'u troi

⁴⁴ 'Llythyr oddiwrth Jos.E. Griffiths' in *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, July 1863

i lawr, ac yr oeddynt yn sicr o daro rhywrai. Mewn un lle, ac yno yn unig y cymerasom y gaerfa. Daliwyd hi am wyth awr, hyd onid oedd yr holl fechgyn bron wedi eu lladd...Ein baner ni oedd yr unig un a chwyfiodd uwchben bronglawdd y gelyn ar y dydd Gwener bythgofiadwy hwnw.⁴⁵

22nd – High hill that stood between us and the enemy embankments...the trenches are ten feet wide and ten deep. It appeared unfeasible to storm it; yet we were ordered to carry on...We were led by our brave colonel until he fell. On a charge we leapt at the trenches and met the enemy on the face of their embankments. There, the 22nd were shot in the most horrible manner. The enemy had only to load their guns and aim them down, they were sure to hit someone. In one place only we captured the redoubt. It was held for eight hours, until almost all the boys were killed...Our banner was the only one waving over the enemy embankment on that unforgettable Friday.

Unlike his description of Champion Hill, his memories of Vicksburg were of suffering and horror, of the grimmer nature of hand-to-hand combat. Griffith described being under withering enemy fire, which made the attack feel like a hopeless, suicidal venture. For the time, the defences of Vicksburg were not even considered particularly formidable. Edward Hagerman has pointed out that Pemberton's defenders had only a total of about 500 entrenching tools, so his troops were incapable of performing any extraordinary feats of entrenchment on short notice. Even when strengthened with rifle pits, ditches, abatis, palisades and embrasures for artillery, the Confederate fortifications still did not constitute a

⁴⁵ 'Llythyr oddiwrth Jos.E. Griffiths' in *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, July 1863

heavy system of works.⁴⁶ Despite this, however, Hagerman argued that weak though the Confederate positions were in profile, their compensating natural strength, combined with the firepower of the rifled musket, rendered them quite satisfactory.⁴⁷ Griffith's eye-witness testimony certainly made it seem so, as the power of rebel artillery and rifles had demolished the Union assault. Even the weakest field entrenchments thus presented a fatal obstacle for an assailant when defended by sufficient weaponry.

Of additional note is the value of Griffith's account as an insight into the nationalism of immigrant soldiers on active campaign. The dominant tone of his testimony concerned his duty to his country and stressed his commitment to the war effort in the face of danger. To further demonstrate that enduring the ordeal of combat was an act of asserting his identity as a Union patriot, he ended his letter with a description of a Union banner that his company had planted above the enemy embankment, a poignant symbolic image. This may have been required to assuage his own feelings regarding the unsuccessful result of the day's fighting. Griffiths' unit suffered heavily: he mentioned 160 killed in the regiment, including Captain Robertson of Griffiths' own company I. Moreover, Company I itself lost ten men killed and six men wounded. The banner that he saw flying overhead was thus positioned over the bodies of his fallen comrades, a visual reminder of how volunteers' wartime identity became defined by shared sacrifice.

Another Welshman's experience of fighting at Vicksburg displayed similar protestations of renewed nationalism. David M. Williams of the 17th Wisconsin wrote to *Y Drych* in July 1863 to record his experience of assaulting Vicksburg's defences a few days before Griffith's attack on the Railroad Redoubt. His description mirrored the hopelessness conveyed by

⁴⁶ Edward Hagerman, *The American Civil War and the Origins of Modern Warfare: Ideas, Organization and Field Command*, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), p.203.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Griffith: 'Forward we went.'⁴⁸ Williams wrote that the approach to their designated target proved difficult as they had to advance half a mile in open country in full view of the enemy's rifles. Soon, he wrote, many fell, some wounded, some never to rise again.⁴⁹ However, 'forward was the word,' and as they got to within 50 yards of the fort, Williams saw that not a single other regiment had come to support them, with their own survivors numbering no more than 150 men. After some time, with the enemy's bullets wounding and killing on every side of him, Williams claimed that his regimental commander, McMahan, asked him personally what to do; his answer being that they should retreat, for they had no hope to accomplish anything.⁵⁰

His bleak description of the assault made it seem that his regiment were sacrificing themselves to an inevitably unsuccessful outcome. However, the way he opened his letter indicates that he was writing with his audience in mind. He declared that 'not by camping in beautiful, quiet places can we defeat our enemies that have risen in damnable rebellion against the greatest Government that the heavens have shone light onto.'⁵¹ Williams, like many others, needed to maintain the image that military service was an act of patriotism, and that suffering numerous casualties in battle did not diminish his loyalty to the Union government. His letter conformed to the established pattern of Welsh wartime correspondence of exhibiting masculine courage under fire, reinforced by statements of patriotism.

The eventual fall of Vicksburg solidified the feeling of military pride immeasurably. In September 1863, the *Cyfaill* published a letter from John W. Jones of the 23rd Wisconsin Volunteers, after he had witnessed the surrender of Vicksburg's garrison. After suffering so

⁴⁸ 'Llythyrau Oddiwrth Filwyr' in *Y Drych*, 4 July 1863

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

much during the siege, it is understandable to see a letter filled with patriotic symbolism. He rejoiced at the feeling of victory, so much so that he remembered that it felt like ‘the end of the war’ for him. Just after dawn, he recalled seeing thousands of Union soldiers standing up from their fortifications, looking up at the defences of the enemy ‘that swarmed with Confederate soldiers. At 6am, Union banners were waving gloriously overhead, while the national salute was fired by the army’s cannons.’⁵² The American component of his identity appeared evident as he described the scene, more so in the conclusion of his testimony where he saw the ‘dear old Union banner flying triumphantly over the Vicksburg Court House.’⁵³ Regardless of what his authentic feelings were, the way he crafted his letter depicted the victory of the Union over the Confederacy as inevitable, solidifying his pride and subsequent status as a member of the victorious army, as well as exhibiting his loyalties as an American in a clear fashion.

An example of how Welsh volunteers used battlefield sacrifices to heighten their claims of national belonging can be seen in the regimental history of the 56th Ohio Volunteer Regiment. The book provided its readers with a vivid account of combat, particularly of the regiment’s involvement in the battle of Champion Hill. It was written by a Welshman, Lieutenant Thomas J. Williams of Company C, while the unit was also comprised mostly of fellow Welsh. Consequently, his Welsh-centric perspective is evident throughout his narrative. Williams described combat in a visceral fashion, much like Joseph Griffith’s candid recollections of the Railroad Redoubt. In typical fashion, one of Williams’ most pervasive memories of fighting was the experience of being under fire:

⁵² ‘Llythyr o Faes y Gwaed’ in *Y Cyfaill o’r Hen Wlad*, September 1863

⁵³ Ibid.

There came the crash of thousands of muskets. The bullets fell thick and fast all about us...The crash of musketry and the boom of artillery was deafening and continual.

The memory of those four dreadful hours in that terrible orchestra of death is indelibly fixed in the memory of every comrade who was present.⁵⁴

He described seeing a friend, Henry Richards, being killed in front of him: 'fell in death, shot through the brain, and all along the line men were being shot...But there was no halt.'⁵⁵ More tragically, he described seeing the death of his brother, John:

We halted to give them a volley, my brother, John H. Williams, was shot through the heart. He was raising his musket to take aim, and as he fell in death, he pitched his musket toward the enemy. It fell with the bayonet stuck in the ground, the stock standing up. Captain Williams sprang forward, grasped the musket and gave the enemy its contents. I saw my brother fall, there being but one man between us in the front rank of the company...The fatal bullet, like a flash of lightning, had blotted out his life...There was no stop.⁵⁶

Through sharing what he and his fellow Welsh Ohioans went through as soldiers, Williams reiterated to his readers that several of his friends, as well as his brother, had given their lives willingly in the name of the Union, reasserting a narrative of having earned their place in

⁵⁴ Thomas J. Williams, *An Historical Sketch of the 56th Ohio Volunteer Infantry During the Great Civil War From 1861 to 1866*, (Columbus: Lawrence Press Co, 1899), <https://archive.org/details/historicalske00will/page/n301/mode/2up?q=welsh> (accessed 18 December 2023), p.44.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Williams, *An Historical Sketch of the 56th Ohio*, p.45.

American society through sacrifice in battle. Following this, Williams emphasised his comrades' soldierly virtues, namely courage and discipline. Throughout his book, the words 'there was no stop' are a constant accompaniment to his memories of combat. When he described Richard Davis of Company C falling dead across his feet, shot through the heart, he recalled, 'loading and firing, we fell back unwillingly, but at no time did we turn our backs to the foe. At every favourable place we would halt and give them a few rounds.'⁵⁷ Brent Nosworthy has suggested that volunteers often needed to stress their discipline under fire in their written correspondence, because of those who stayed and performed their duty and those who broke, was not always predictable. All too often, the so-called manly soldier, who exuded strength, braggadocio, and all the trappings of courage on the drill ground and during the march, crumbled when he found himself within the bloody crucible of courage.⁵⁸ Consequently, much like the obituaries of dead Welsh soldiers, Williams felt the need to depict the men of his regiment as paragons of soldierly virtue and courage, who refused to break under pressure. Given that his history was published decades after the war's end, it highlights how both during and after the war, Welsh-American identity was expressed through, and legitimised by, wartime sacrifices for the Union.

Williams' testimony is an important insight into how combat was remembered by veterans, although given that his account was a regimental history of the 56th, his recollections should be interrogated further. Robert Hunt has critiqued similarly crafted regimental histories in his analysis of the Army of the Cumberland, where Williams' first-hand account fits into a category of regimental histories that Hunt referred to as 'traditional citizen-soldier imagery at its finest.'⁵⁹ As Williams has done in his accentuation of his late brother's battlefield deeds,

⁵⁷ Williams, *An Historical Sketch of the 56th Ohio*, p.46.

⁵⁸ Nosworthy, *Bloody Crucible of Courage*, p.250.

⁵⁹ Robert Hunt, *The Good Men Who Won the War: Army of the Cumberland Veterans and Emancipation Memory*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010), p.23.

Hunt has posited that regimental historians and memoir writers had certain self-serving reasons to glorify the actions of certain individuals. However, the larger effect and intent of such descriptions was to ground the origin and prosecution of the North's war on the solid foundation of the nation's sacred past.⁶⁰ He argued further that, by writing a history from the perspective of the recruits, the writers reaffirmed what most people considered to be basic American principles, which was to describe their version of the revolutionary war and how their soldiers were the minutemen reborn.⁶¹ Williams' account corroborates this well, stressing the extraordinary discipline and heroism of his comrades, even depicting his brother's death in as poetic a fashion as possible. The emphasis was certainly on the men, rather than the character of the war.

Consequently, as the 56th Ohio's regimental history and other sources have indicated, Welshmen did not need to win battles to be seen as patriots. Instead, one's conduct under fire was all that was required to demonstrate one's valour to friends and relatives. In June 1863, Richard W. Roberts wrote to his parents to describe cannonballs sweeping through the ranks of his regiment, killing or wounding many of them. They were attacked on their right flank by rebel infantry, losing 60 men who were taken prisoner. After withdrawing, his unit engaged in a fierce firefight with the 'Rebs' for twelve minutes, driving them back and forcing the 'wolves' to retreat. Roberts was full of praise for his regiment's discipline, writing that 'our boys have shown unprecedented bravery throughout the whole fight.'⁶²

Chancellorsville was, after all, a defeat for the Union army, but Roberts did not attribute the loss to inferior leadership as had Rowlands at the Second Battle of Bull Run. Instead, his experience of the Union defeat was one of personal victory, claiming that his unit had fought

⁶⁰ Hunt, *The Good Men Who Won the War*, p.24.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² 'Llythyr oddiwrth Filwr Cymreig' in *Y Drych*, 6 June 1863

magnificently in their section of the line, even forcing the Confederates to retreat. In this regard, Roberts' letter reinforces the notion that the nature of combat differed in every respect, so much so that soldiers on opposite ends of the Union line at the battles of Antietam, Fredericksburg and Gettysburg would have completely different experiences from each other. Above all, however, it shows that, by mid-1863, Welsh soldiers in the Army of the Potomac had to concentrate on writing evocative declarations of courage and discipline, for they had no major victories to speak of up to that point. In such cases, the military identity of Welsh volunteers was expressed through performance under fire, not by overall victories in battle.

Elements of this are seen in John E. Davies' letter to the *Seren Orllewinol* in August 1864. In it, he gave a brief account of the fighting at Petersburg with Company F of the 48th Pennsylvania. After crossing the James River, Davies said that they came under enemy fire. One of those killed was Isaac Lewis of Minersville, Company F. He shot the rebel who had shot him, and they both fell simultaneously.⁶³ At face value, this incident would seem to be embellished, but it highlights the manner in which Welshmen who died in battle were presented as heroes either to the press or as a result of the press' own promotional efforts. Even those whose lives were taken by Confederate soldiers had to be seen getting their own back or selling their lives as dearly as possible. The image presented, thus, was of patriotism even in death.

Another such combat recollection was shared with *Y Drych* in March 1863. A soldier calling himself Evan, from Company C of an unspecified regiment, described his unit being attacked by a detachment of Confederate cavalry, a few nights before the 2nd Battle of Murfreesboro Pike. Rather than having to endure bullets and cannon fire, Evan had to contend with charging horsemen. On the 29th of December, his company were ordered to go on picket duty

⁶³ 'Y Rhyfel' in *Y Seren Orllewinol*, August 1864

when they realised a Union wagon train was being attacked by rebel cavalry. They advanced at the double quick, scattering the rebels, but upon seeing how few Union troops there were, the horsemen counter-attacked:

Ciliasom ninau yn ein holau i ymyl ty oedd ar fryn bychan, ac yno y buom yn saethu atynt am amser maeth. Yr oedd yr holl gatawd i fyny erbyn hyn, a bu tanio brwd o bob ochr...cwypasom ni tua 83 ohonynt hwy...Llosgasant dros ugain o'n wageni a chymerasant lawer o'n dynion yn garcharorion – yn eu plith yr oedd Robert Davies, mab Evan Davies y Wesley. Yr oedd nifer y gelyion yn 3,000; ac mae ein cwmni ni wedi gwneuthur iddynt eu hunain enw am eu dewrdrâ yn gwrthwynebu y fath lu.⁶⁴

We retreated to the side of a house on top of a small hill, and there we were shooting at them for a long time. The whole company was up by then, and there was earnest firing from every side...we dropped around 83 of them...They burned over a score of our wagons and took many of our men prisoner – in their midst were Robert Davies, the son of Evan Davies of Wesley. The enemy numbered 3000; and our company have made a name for themselves for their bravery in resisting such a host.

This was described as a desperate action, in which they were surrounded and outnumbered, with no safe exit. As was symptomatic of some Welsh volunteers' accounts, Evan portrayed an engagement that was a defeat as a personal victory instead. After all, the company had lost several wagons and men to the rebel cavalry. Subsequently, Evan compensated for any accusation of failure by praising his and his comrades' bravery in 'resisting such a host.' This

⁶⁴ 'Oddiwrth Filwyr Cymreig' in *Y Drych*, 7 March 1863

can also be seen in certain embellishments within his letter. For example, 3,000 cavalry is far too great a number to have wasted time and effort in surrounding a single company of less than 100 men. It is probable that Evan inflated the enemy's numbers, either from an inability to discern accurate numbers in the heat of battle, or likely to explain this defeat as an impossible situation. Once again, this demonstrates that it was participation in combat, rather than the overall result of battle that marked Welshmen as exemplary soldiers to the communities that were monitoring their progress through the eyes of the newspapers.

Additionally, this source raises an interesting observation concerning the Welsh identity of the writer. Unlike many of the letters used in this chapter, Evan's account did not concentrate on the American identity of the Welsh speakers in his unit. On the contrary, he focused on the Welsh in his company over his Anglo-American comrades. For instance, he singled out a fellow Welshman from home, Robert Davies, who had been captured in the initial Confederate attack. Later in his letter, he wrote that Robert Roberts had also been captured, but that the rest of the Welsh boys were healthy and had 'shown themselves as men' during the battle.⁶⁵ Describing which Welshmen were left alive reflects how combat reinforced his cultural solidarity from non-Welsh soldiers, as well as showing that his home community's primary concern was for news of local Welshmen in the army.

Indeed, while his comment adhered to the obsession with performative masculinity, it also shows that in the heat of battle, his primary thoughts were for his native kin. In this instance, his Welsh identity appears to have been strengthened by the test of combat. This is reinforced by his claim that the 'blood of the old Britons' ran in their veins, referring to the Celts who resisted the Romans and later the English. This should be considered, as it challenges the assumption that sentiments of national belonging among Welsh volunteers were ubiquitous.

⁶⁵ 'Oddiwrth Filwyr Cymreig' in *Y Drych*, 7 March 1863

Consequently, Evan's testimony is one of the few Welsh accounts that shows how a self-proclaimed wartime American identity melted away when faced with the grim reality of combat.

Even considering this fascinating observation, the lack of similar perspectives from primary sources suggests that appearing as northern patriots was the recognised consensus among Welsh volunteers. An interrogation of wartime correspondence concludes that proclamations of American identity persisted after combat engagements. Whether this was true for every soldier is not important, for what proved ubiquitous was the need for Welsh volunteers to publicise their support for the Union and extol personal bravery in combat. The standards of ardent patriotism that were exhibited by most recruits when they enlisted had to be maintained through sustained fighting. This precipitated a trend of letters from the front-line emphasising collective masculine bravery and discipline under fire, regardless of victories or defeats. Participation in combat subsequently became the marker by which Welshmen judged themselves to be superior northerners.

Increasing Casualties

As alluded to earlier, expressions of loyalty to the North were marked not only by fighting for the Union, but also through dying for it. From 1863 onwards, Welsh newspapers contained numerous obituaries of soldiers who had died, either from combat or from disease, most of whom were mourned as martyrs to the Union cause. A typical example followed a pattern of praising a volunteer's Christian virtues, together with lauding a volunteer's courage and skill at arms, further equating faith in God with faith in the Union. These obituaries were meant to comfort grieving families at home, but also to inspire Welsh soldiers reading the papers on

the front line. Promoting a narrative of tragedy was firmly rejected, both by the editors of the press and by soldiers, the latter of which needed to view sacrifices as justifiable.

Consequently, the more Welsh casualties that appeared in the press, the stronger that Welsh soldiers' nationalism appeared. In the same manner that those who enlisted were portrayed as faithful Christians participating in a religious crusade, those who gave their lives were perceived to have achieved the ultimate form of patriotism.

Analysing these Welsh-language obituaries is a rewarding method of understanding how wartime deaths were utilised as a tool of national integration. Moreover, the study of how death was viewed reveals much about contemporary American society. Nicholas Marshall's article on the prevalence of death in Civil War America has explained that Civil War historians have not adequately taken into account the context of death and dying, arguing that the demographic realities of nineteenth-century America revealed a society constantly coping with large-scale mortality.⁶⁶ Pre-war editions of Welsh newspapers were filled with obituaries commemorating the lives of community members who had died of natural causes.

Significantly, during the Civil War, the style of commemoration shifted to focus on themes of duty, patriotism, and sacrifice. The metaphorical bodies of dead Welshmen acted as proof of their American citizenship. Alice Fahs described this in *The Imagined Civil War*, arguing that the wounded, dying, and dead bodies of soldiers became the vehicle for a new sentimentalism that fused patriotism and Christianity.⁶⁷ Furthermore, she has argued that it allowed wartime writers to cope with a central problem posed by the war: the shocking anonymity of suffering and death undergone by ordinary soldiers far from home.⁶⁸ Consequently, the

⁶⁶ Nicholas Marshall, 'The Great Exaggeration: Death and the Civil War', *Journal of the Civil War Era* 4 (2014), 4.

⁶⁷ Alice Fahs, *The Imagined Civil War: Popular Literature of the North and South, 1861-1865*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), p.95.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p.96.

commemoration of Welsh soldiers who died became another tool to promote a collective national identity centred on patriotism, punctuated by wartime sacrifice.

One of the earliest examples of a soldier's obituary appeared in the *Cenhadwr* in November 1862, dedicated to William Rees of the 103rd Pennsylvania Volunteers. The way his death was presented marked how later casualty reports were emulated:

Yr oedd William Rees yn fab i Mr William a Catherine Rees. Daeth ei rieni ag ef i'r wlad hon pan oedd William ond chwech mis oed, ac felly yr oedd yn American o ran ysbryd a theimlad. Ac wrth weled ei wlad fabwysiedig mewn perygl o gael ei dadymchwelyd gan deyrnfradwyr y Deheu, ymrestrodd ef fel miloedd o'i gyfoedion...Ond wedi myned i lan gorsiog y Chicahominy, dyma elyn mwy niweidiol na'r gwrthryfelwyr yn cymeryd gafael yn ein dewrion ddynion, sef Twymyn sydd yn naturiol i'r fath leoedd lleidiog.⁶⁹

William Rees was the son of Mr William and Catherine Rees. His parents took him to this country when William was but six months old, and so he was an American in spirit and feeling. And seeing his adopted country in danger of being destroyed by the Southern traitors, he enlisted as did thousands of his peers...But having reached the marshy shore of the Chicahominy, an enemy more damaging than the rebels took hold of our brave men, a fever that is natural in such damp places.

William Rees wasn't killed in battle. Like so many other soldiers, he succumbed to disease. However, the *Cenhadwr* refused to make that distinction a lesser factor, for William's death

⁶⁹ 'Cofiant Milwr Cymreig' in *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, November 1862

was still portrayed as a sacrifice for his country. Attention was drawn to the fact that he was born in Wales but had grown up in America, so he was called an American in spirit.

Moreover, the *Cenhadwr* claimed he saw the danger his adopted country was in, and so enlisted without hesitation. Highlighting William's immigrant status magnified the symbolism of his death, for he had given his life for his adopted country.

Moreover, this source is an effective reminder that Union soldiers feared disease more than they did Confederate bullets. Before most Welsh recruits had even seen an enemy combatant across a battlefield, they had to endure pervasive illnesses brought on from poor hygiene, diet, and local climates. Interestingly, such fears are not evident from the newspapers.

Soldiers often emphasised heroism under fire, but rarely admitted fear of typhus or diarrhoea. This can be viewed as a symptom of the pre-occupation with duty and manhood. Indeed, the few accounts that give a medical perspective of army life are either unpublished family letters or private diaries.

One such letter was written by Robert Davis, a private in Company F, 25th Iowa Volunteer Regiment, in January 1863. Robert was a native of Cefn Cynhafel Fawr in Merioneth, north Wales, but he emigrated with his family to Ohio, eventually settling in Long Creek. Later, he and his brother Edward enlisted on the 2nd of August 1862 at Columbus City. At the time of writing, he and his regiment had begun the long 300-mile march to Vicksburg, nineteen days after being involved in the battle of Arkansas Post. He chose not to describe his experience of battle to his family. Instead, what he decided was worth putting on paper was other Welshmen he'd met, his monetary concerns in camp, as well as his experience of being ill while on campaign.

Moreover, he complained about the idleness of camp life, saying there was nothing to do until picket duty. Yet in the same sentence, he paradoxically wished that he had joined an

artillery regiment, where they had less sentry duty and general standing around than the infantry. It is noteworthy that mundane concerns of camp life were more prevalent memories in his account, especially considering that he had been through the ordeal of combat. Then again, being ill on the march was far more of a hazard than fighting Confederates. He did not clarify what type of ailment he suffered from, although it was likely dysentery or malaria:

Ers tallwm mi fies yn lled sal am dwy wythnos ac heb fod yn yr hospital ni chymerais lawer o ffisig, yr oeddwn yn ei dwli (throw). Yr oedd yn wachgen i gymeryd pills quinain a sydd gan y doctors yma i gyd mi fyswyn yn leicio pe basai gennif chwaneg o lever pills. Nid oedd genif dim ffydd yn y doctors.⁷⁰

Recently I was very ill for two weeks without being in the hospital. I didn't take much medicine, as I would throw it up. It was useless to take the quinine pills that all the doctors have here. I would like it if I had a handful of lever pills. I had no faith in the doctors.

Davis had to endure his affliction without being able to access a field hospital as he was on active campaign. All that was available to him were ineffective pills and ineffective doctors. His fear of the latter was well founded. Many of the army's medical practitioners still believed that disease was caused by ill humours within the body. In an attempt to purge these humours, physicians would prescribe emetics or purgatives.⁷¹ The top remedial agents of the Civil War were alcohol, opium, calomel and quinine, but of these four, none carried the

⁷⁰ 'Letter by Robert Davis, 25th Regiment, Company F', Des Moines Historical Library Manuscripts, N14/3/5 Box 8 Folder 10

⁷¹ Michael R. Gilchrist, 'Disease & Infection in the American Civil War', *The American Biology Teacher* 60 (1998), 259.

volatility of calomel or the demonstratable efficacy of quinine.⁷² Combined with sanitation and cleanliness in the field being usually non-existent, these factors contributed heavily to the demise of many soldiers who would have otherwise recuperated from disease such as measles and chickenpox.⁷³ His mistrust in the army's medical branch is all the more poignant considering that he would eventually die of a fever at Camp Sherman near Vicksburg on the 22nd of August 1863.⁷⁴

As was the case with William Rees, the newspapers did not distinguish between those who had lost their lives to disease and those who died in battle. It was the act, rather than the cause that was significant. Dying for one's country became the ultimate form of patriotism that solidified the evolving American identity of Welsh soldiers. Davis's experience with illness was mirrored in Jenkin Lloyd Jones' diary. While his account includes highly detailed descriptions of battle, a far greater proportion of his recollections involved being taken ill with diarrhoea or malaria. This was also the experience of Thomas A. Jones of the 27th Ohio Volunteer Regiment. Unlike most of the Welsh language sources utilised in this thesis, his recollections were not delivered in the form of a letter to family or a newspaper. Instead, his recorded memories of his experience as a volunteer with the 27th were spoken as an oral history to his grandson a few months before he died, who later committed his words to paper. His descriptions of life on active campaign matches those Welshmen who were reluctant to disclose what combat was like. When recalling his first instance of front-line fighting, Jones revealed practically nothing. He devoted merely a single sentence to his first grapple with the

⁷² Michael A. Flannery, *Civil War Pharmacy: A History of Drugs, Drug Supply and Provision, and Therapeutics for the Union and Confederacy*, (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2004), p.143.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ 'Robert Davis,' *U.S., Civil War Roll of Honor, 1861-1865* [database on-line] Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2017 <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61388/> (accessed 18 December 2023)

Confederate forces of Price and Van Duren in October 1862: 'On the second day we were put in the line of battle. Shells were thrown in. Price drew off the second day.'⁷⁵

Far more of his memories were of marching incessantly in harsh weather conditions while suffering the privations of hunger and disease. On a march to Kansas City, Missouri, he described that they had thrown their tents away on the march and that their provisions were so scanty 'that we almost starved...All we had was a pint of cornmeal a day.' Later, while marching to Mobile, Alabama, he complained that they had 'nothing to eat, no salt, and no bread, but we killed some cows and that helped.'⁷⁶ This malnutrition invariably led to disease:

In looking back, one of the strangest things about the war was the small ailments that men died of. A blister, indigestion, or a touch of flue [sic] would put a man under, when in ordinary circumstances, or at home, he would have been well in a couple of days. Thirteen of the biggest men in the Company had measles. Of course, there being no wagons, they had to shift along. All were dead in less than twelve months.⁷⁷

His account reveals why the biggest danger to a Union soldier was disease. Most men succumbed from an ailment that, in any other environment, was considered common and easy to recover from within a few days, yet on campaign it proved fatal. Arguably, this was more tragic than being killed in battle. This suggests why Welshmen who died of disease were given such patriotic obituaries, for they gave their lives for their country in a way they did not

⁷⁵ 'A Civil War Experience' in Herbert E. Jones, *Recollections of the People, Institutions and Events of the 1880's and 1890's in the Big Bend Country*, Madog Center for Welsh Studies, University of Rio Grande, (Rio Grande, 1963), p.49.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

expect to. Despite his fears, he survived the war without succumbing to illness. However, given that he was discharged from the army in August 1864, and decades later was admitted as a resident to the Pacific Branch of the National Home for Disabled Veterans in Sawtelle, Los Angeles, it suggests he was seriously wounded in action.⁷⁸

Through such public obituaries, Welsh fatalities were described as the ideal American volunteers, men who held duty, patriotism, courage, and religiosity to be the most important qualities of northern manhood. This was expressed in the *Alleghanian* when it reported the death of Richard M. Jones of the 133rd Pennsylvania in January 1863, following the battle of Fredericksburg:

In the charge of his regiment on the Rebel breastworks, he was seen to fall, and, although spoken to by some of his companions, he failed to return an answer...Throughout the county he was widely known, and his loss will be keenly lamented. He was a member of the Presbyterian Church and died in the full hope of a blessed immortality above...A patriot and a Christian – he is gone!⁷⁹

The paper made sure to note that Richard fell whilst in the thick of fighting and highlighted his fearlessness in the face of the enemy. Furthermore, it equally emphasised his patriotism and his Christianity, portraying him as a martyr for a jointly noble cause. Notably, the paper mentioned that Richard was known throughout the county, indicating that his death was mourned by both Welsh and non-Welsh residents of Ebensburg and Cambria County. More

⁷⁸ 'Thomas A. Jones,' *U.S., National Homes for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, 1866-1938* [database on-line] Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2007 <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/1200/> (accessed 18 December 2023)

⁷⁹ 'Obituary' in *The Alleghanian*, 15 January 1863

tragically for the Ebensburg community, Richard's brother John, of the same company, was also killed at Fredericksburg. He was described as an excellent young man, kind-hearted and generous, and a member of the Welsh independent Church of Ebensburg.⁸⁰ Reporting the death of brothers was certainly grave for the community, but the editor made sure to make note of their joint sacrifice as patriots and Christians.

The need to emphasize the martial qualities of Welsh soldiers was a consistently prominent theme. As the *Alleghanian* did when it described Richard M. Jones' fall in the heat of battle, the editors of the Welsh press made similar efforts to highlight the courage of Welsh soldiers as one of the most important characteristics. Such connotations were made clear in the *Cenhadwr* in March 1863, when it published a letter from Captain N. Hall of Company G, 3rd New York Cavalry, reporting the death of Thomas Griffiths to his father:

Your son, who joined the army in Utica, August 30, 1861, died on the 30th of last month – a disease of the heart and lungs. It is my honour to give evidence of his worthy and manly behaviour, one of strong understanding and a true heart...he served well and faithfully in Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina. In multiple battles with him he showed himself as an honest man, and a brave soldier.⁸¹

The official record stated that he died in the regimental hospital of dropsy pericardium.⁸²

While Captain Hall's heartbreak is evident, the overall tone is not overtly lamenting. Instead, Hall celebrated the time he had spent with Thomas, lauding the latter's bravery, honesty, and

⁸⁰ 'Obituary' in *The Alleghanian*, 15 January 1863

⁸¹ 'Marwolaeth Milwr' in *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, March 1863

⁸² 'Thomas J. Griffiths,' *New York, U.S., Civil War Muster Roll Abstracts, 1861-1900* [database on-line] Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011 <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/1965/> (accessed 18 December 2023)

masculinity. As this was written directly to Thomas' grieving father, it is natural to presume that Hall was merely following an established precedent of reassuring those at home that Thomas had died as a hero. Nonetheless, what is informative is what Hall had decided to write about. His description of Thomas' presents the perspective of a soldier's opinion about what was considered honourable behaviour: courage, honesty, and manliness. Nowhere in Hall's letter was the Welsh heritage of his fallen comrade mentioned, only that he was a brave and masculine soldier.

There were some exceptions to this pattern of memorialisation, especially in Anglo-American newspapers. In June 1862, the *Mineral Point Weekly* released the obituary of Thomas J. Davies of Company E, 11th Wisconsin Volunteers. It contained none of the emphasis on religiosity or masculine conduct seen in previous examples, describing that Davies had been persistently sick ever since leaving Madison and that 'he always persisted in the belief that his time on earth was unassured, asserting that he would die within a certain period.'⁸³ In May 1864, the *Alleghanian* reported the death of another Welsh soldier in similarly blunt terms. It wrote that Adam James, a young Welshman, had enlisted from Ebensburg into the 7th Pennsylvania Cavalry was 'accidentally shot a few weeks ago,' for tragically, he leant his gun against a fence, and while in the act of retaking it, 'the hammer caught, exploding the cap and lodging the contents in his abdomen. He was about 22 years of age and bore an excellent character.'⁸⁴ While it may have been difficult to laud the virtues of a man who had been killed in such a fashion, devoting a single line to James' character contrasts the style normally used by Welsh newspapers, perhaps due to being at a later stage in the war and therefore more used to reporting multiple stories of Union casualties.

⁸³ *Mineral Point Weekly Tribune* 4 June 1862

⁸⁴ *The Alleghanian* 12 May 1864

On the other hand, the *Miner's Journal* of Pottsville, Pennsylvania was more like the *Cenhadwr* and *Cyfaill* in its commemorative style, even during a similarly late stage in the conflict. In June 1864, the paper reported the death of Welsh soldier, Lieutenant William D. Williams of Company F 184th Pennsylvania Volunteers. The *Journal* recognised his immigrant status, writing that he had been born in Wales but had come to the United States when he was a year old. He had enlisted immediately once the war broke out, fighting in multiple battles until he was mortally wounded at Cold Harbor: 'He was in the battles of Farrington, Island no.10, Shiloh etc, and through this campaign of General Grant, up to the time he received the wound that caused his death. He was a good soldier, an estimable citizen, and greatly respected in Tremont.'⁸⁵ His identification as a Welsh immigrant was accompanied by his sterling military service record, his reputation as an American patriot being solidified by his sacrifice for his adopted country.

The *Journal's* following edition released a similar obituary of Welshman, Corporal John Powell of Company F, 48th Pennsylvania Volunteers, who had died in a hospital in Washington D.C. in May 1864, following his wounding at the battle of the Wilderness. Like Lieutenant Williams, Powell had been born in Wales and had emigrated as a child, and he was similarly portrayed as a committed and dutiful patriot through his service record:

At the breaking out of the Rebellion he enlisted in the 48th Regt. and served under General Burnside through the North Carolina campaign. He was in a great many battles and was wounded in the second battle of Bull Run. Having recovered he joined his regiment again and was in Knoxville when that place was besieged by Longstreet. He re-enlisted as a veteran at Knoxville, Tenn., January 1864, for three years.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ 'Death of a Soldier' in *Miners' Journal & Pottsville General Advertiser* 25 June 1864

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

Admiration for his character was emphasised by the fact that he enlisted in the first call for volunteers, but also because he had been wounded, re-joined his regiment, then signed up for another three years. His actions in this regard implied he was a man committed to his country, or at least that was how he was presented in the *Journal*. Further connotations of his patriotic virtues were alluded to by the paper's description of his funeral: 'On the 26th a large number of the neighbours assembled in order to pay the last tribute of respect to the dead soldier, and his remains were interred with military honours in the cemetery of the Welsh Congregational Church, Minersville.'⁸⁷ He was commemorated as a local hero, but more than anything as a veteran, alluding to the centrality of military service in the formation of northern identity during the Civil War.

Similar overtones were seen in the *Cyfaill*'s obituary of William W. Davies, who died as a prisoner of the Confederates in Richmond. Private Ebenezer Evans wrote to the *Cyfaill* in July 1863, having read of William's death in the Ebensburg *Alleghanian* in January. He was described as a brave soldier and a good Christian. His 'noble and kind behaviour' made him dear to the members of his company and his regiment, and 'under every hardship he displayed a cheerful and manly spirit.'⁸⁸ As with the obituary of Thomas Griffiths, the masculine characteristics of William W. Davies were deemed the most important aspect of his eulogy. Evans recalled his friend's nobility and kindness, as well as his resilience and manly spirit in the face of hardship, demonstrating how soldiers interpreted contemporary American masculinity. The perception of manly conduct was an important consideration in how Welsh volunteers acted like Union soldiers, which was reflected in how they commemorated dead comrades.

⁸⁷ 'Death of a Soldier' in *Miners' Journal & Pottsville General Advertiser* 25 June 1864

⁸⁸ 'Marwolaeth Milwr Cymreig pan yn Garcharor yn Richmond' in *Y Cyfaill o'r Hen Wlad*, July 1863

August 1863 proved a heavy month for the readers of the *Cyfaill*, as the obituaries of eight fatalities appeared simultaneously. The first three obituaries were of men from Oshkosh, Wisconsin: Thomas E. Williams, William J. Owen and John W. Hughes, all of whom had been born in Wales. The first two were both 28 years old, losing their lives at the Battle of Perryville. Both were described simply as ‘brave and kind.’ The third was only 20 years old, who had claimed that he was the first Welshman to have enlisted in the regiment. His epitaph was that he demonstrated a ‘great love for his country.’⁸⁹ Despite these eulogies being short and succinct, they remain insightful on account that these men were all ‘adopted’ Americans. These men had chosen to fight for a country none had been born in, so as a result, the press portrayed them as patriots, reiterating the significance of martyrdom in how Welsh immigrants interpreted national identity during the Civil War.

The fourth man was David Jones, who had been born in Dolbenmaen in Wales, emigrating to Illinois in 1845. He later joined Company A of the 52nd Illinois Volunteers, surviving the battles of Fort Donaldson, Shiloh and Corinth, only to be struck down by typhoid fever in May 1863. His ignominious death from disease was nevertheless considered an act of devotion to his adopted country. The remaining four obituaries are presumably dedicated to Welshmen born in America, given that the *Cyfaill* did not specify a native origin as it did for those born in Wales. Regardless of this fact, none were treated differently. Griffith T. Rice succumbed to typhoid fever and received an emotional epitaph, being described as a flower that hadn’t yet opened. More importantly, however, he was portrayed as a true American hero, that no one more than he was so conscientious in the cause of his country. The *Cyfaill* quoted his sister saying were he to fall on the field of battle, nothing could be said other than he died honourably in defence of his country.⁹⁰ David Griffith also died of typhoid fever, as

⁸⁹ ‘Marwolaethau Milwyr Cymreig’ in *Y Cyfaill o’r Hen Wlad*, August 1863

⁹⁰ Ibid.

did Evan G. Jones, whereas William J. Jones was killed at Vicksburg.⁹¹ Each of them was described as a model of Union spirit, gladly giving their lives as loyal citizens.

This style of commemoration was not unique to the *Cyfaill*, for in the same month, the death of William Morgan at Gettysburg was reported in *Y Drych* in a similar manner. He had enlisted in the 126th New York Volunteer Regiment at 19 years of age, after emigrating from his birthplace of Blaenau Gwent in south Wales. His eulogy was concise yet rich in patriotic overtones: his friends and relatives could ‘rejoice that he had fallen in such a noble cause.’⁹² While meant to honour the fallen and provide small comfort to grieving families, this type of eulogy was simultaneously targeted at Welsh volunteers on the front line. As tools of socio-cultural propaganda, such obituaries offered models of behaviour for other Welsh immigrants to emulate in defence of the Union.

The memorialisation of Welsh soldiers focused on the theme of loyalty to the Union as well as collective grief. A clear example can be seen in the *Cenhadwr* in August 1863, when it gave an account of the funeral of Thomas Thomas, late of Company B, 6th Iowa Cavalry. Following the pattern seen in the *Cyfaill* and *Drych*, Thomas’ roots in Wales were emphasised to magnify the scale of his commitment to the Union. The *Cenhadwr* reported that he had emigrated from Carmarthenshire in west Wales, and had been living in Iowa for six years, but when the call came, he joined the army to defend the rights of his country.⁹³ The emphasis was on ‘his’ country, showing that his native roots were not as important as his loyalty to the North. His perceived identity as an American patriot was reinforced by his funeral service:

⁹¹ ‘Marwolaethau Milwyr Cymreig’ in *Y Cyfaill o’r Hen Wlad*, August 1863

⁹² ‘Milwr Cymreig wedi marw yn Gettysburg’ in *Y Drych*, 29 August 1863

⁹³ ‘Marwolaeth Milwr’ in *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, August 1863

Late on the Sabbath of the 12th of July, and the following Tuesday a large crowd of Welsh and Americans gathered to show their sympathy...a procession was formed of twelve to fifteen carts. The reception in the church was begun by Reverend Daniel Rowlands, and the Reverend James Griffiths preached in both English and Welsh.⁹⁴

Notably, the service was attended by Welsh and non-Welsh community members, while the eulogies were delivered bilingually, alluding to the relationship between soldier identity and the Anglicisation of language. Additionally, such a funeral service shows how Welsh speakers were viewed by non-Welsh members of their community. While some rural Welsh volunteers came from insular, solely Welsh speaking settlements, many others from both rural and urban backgrounds came from diverse towns and villages where Welsh people were viewed as integral members of the community. Thomas' death was marked by universal grief. This case suggests, therefore, that inclusion through shared loss was experienced by front-line troops as well as by those at home.

Nevertheless, collective remembrance in the public sphere was not dominated by themes of tragedy, for the Welsh press was predominantly occupied with maintaining the pro-war sentiments of the Welsh-American population. Consequently, some obituaries were tailored to renew such feelings with demands for vengeance. This can be observed from how the death of James H. Evans of Company E, 56th Ohio was portrayed in the *Cenhadwr* in October 1863. He was described as the youngest son of his family, and the one his mother most relied on for her subsistence, as he took great care of her, 'yet he left his comfortable home in order to defend his country in its time of danger, as well as to protect its families.'⁹⁵

⁹⁴ 'Marwolaeth Milwr' in *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, August 1863

⁹⁵ 'Marwolaeth Dau Filwr Cymreig' in *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, October 1863

It followed the typical pattern of earlier obituaries in glorifying the brave qualities of a man who had volunteered to protect the life of his family and his country. However, what differs from other primary sources is the shift of commemorative language to focus on the mother's loss. Rather than focus on the tragedy of his passing, it highlighted the plight of his bereft mother, engendering a deep hatred of the Confederacy for taking a doting son away from his ailing mother, instigating a certain need for revenge. The *Cenhadwr*'s obituary of Thomas P. Jones of Company G, 149th Pennsylvania 'Bucktails' was crafted in a similar fashion. While fighting at the battle of Gettysburg, he was shot in the thigh and captured by the enemy who, according to his father, refused to give him food or water nor any medical treatment for four days.⁹⁶ He was subsequently retrieved by Union forces, who sent him to a hospital in Philadelphia. However, because of his neglect at the hand of the rebels, the surgeons were unable to save his life. He was only 18 years old.⁹⁷ Showing how he had suffered whilst in Confederate hands effectively portrayed the rebels as barbarians, who had ensured the untimely death of a young man that could have survived his wounds. This supported Robert Everett's agenda of fomenting hatred of the South and fuelling Welsh support for the eradication of the Confederacy.

Revenge was a common motivation shared by all Union soldiers, regardless of ethnic or regional origin. George S. Burkhardt in his study on Confederate atrocities has argued that such massacres as Fort Pillow engendered a systematic desire for vengeance in Union ranks, where outraged northerners called for bloody revenge and would often retaliate in kind.⁹⁸ The Welsh, consequently, were not alone in their increased desire to kill rebels as they read of, or witnessed, comrades becoming casualties. This is interesting to note, as few Welsh accounts

⁹⁶ 'Marwolaeth Milwr Cymreig' in *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, October 1863

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ George S. Burkhardt, *Confederate Rage, Yankee Wrath: No Quarter in the Civil War*, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2007), p.118.

explicitly mention the act of killing. Most of the killing they would have inflicted was anonymous casualties by volley fire, where they could barely see their opponents shrouded in gun-smoke. Historian Jonathan Steplyk has written about this topic in his book, *Fighting Means Killing*. He supposed that, even among soldiers reluctant or ambivalent toward killing, many found that they could fight just as purposefully and potentially lethally as their more sanguine comrades. Furthermore, the nature of Civil War combat potentially masked and shielded soldiers from the certainty of knowing that they personally had killed.⁹⁹ However, this changed as casualties mounted. Civil War companies were close-knit units, often recruited from the same city, hometown or county. Consequently, the killing or wounding of family members could especially incite soldiers to seek revenge in battle.¹⁰⁰

Such themes appeared in the previously discussed regimental history of the 56th Ohio, written by Thomas J. Williams. There is also an echo of this notion in the *Cyfaill*, in the obituary of John Thomas of the 7th Wisconsin, D Company. It was explained that he had been injured during the Battle of Wilderness and was subsequently taken prisoner by the enemy. Much like Thomas P. Jones of the 149th 'Bucktails', his treatment while in rebel hands was appalling. He died of his wounds whilst in captivity in May 1864, which the *Cyfaill* was furious about, claiming that 'he received neither care nor a companion to shed a tear over his grave.'¹⁰¹ In this case, highlighting the sorrow of his death perpetuated the need to enact vengeance on the South.

As more Welshmen fell in the line of duty, support for the war continued to grow, to ensure that the sacrifices of those who died were not wasted with an unfavourable peace. During 1864, the *Seren Orllewinol* continued the practice of extolling the heroism of fallen Welsh

⁹⁹ Jonathan M. Steplyk, *Fighting Means Killing: Civil War Soldiers and the Nature of Combat*, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2018), p.41.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p.55.

¹⁰¹ 'Marwolaeth John Thomas, 7th Wisconsin Company D' in *Y Cyfaill o'r Hen Wlad*, October 1864

soldiers, showing no signs of war-weariness. The first reported fatality of January 1864 was John Jones of Minersville, Pennsylvania, who died ‘honourably, in the defence and service of his country.’¹⁰² Despite being short, this excerpt is notable given that Jones’ Welsh character was not mentioned at all. It appeared like any other report of a fallen Union soldier, further highlighting the homogeneity some Welshmen wished to achieve in the Union army.

A noteworthy example of the *Seren Orllewinol*’s memorial style is its eulogy of Dafydd Owens, 97th Ohio Volunteer Regiment. Owens was killed during the battle of Lookout Mountain in November 1863 but did not receive an obituary until March 1864. The *Seren Orllewinol* wrote:

Teimlodd ein cyfaill ieuanc gwladgarol dros ei wlad, ac wele ef yn awr am y tro cyntaf yn ei fywyd yn dywedyd ‘Na’ i’w rieni. Pan ddymunasant arno beidio ymrestru, atebodd yntau na gallasai gydsynio a’u cais...’Fy ngwlad i yw hi’ ebe fe, ‘y mae yn ddyledswydd arnaf ei hamddiffyn hyd y mae ynof, ac yr wyf yn penderfynu gwneud hyny’...Fel milwr yr oedd yn fedrus, dewr ac ufudd – yn hollol barod bob amser i wneud ei ddyledswydd.¹⁰³

Our young colleague felt patriotic for his country, and we saw him say ‘No’ to his parents for the first time in his life. When they asked him not to enlist, he replied he couldn’t consent to their wishes... ‘It’s my country’ said he, ‘I have a duty to defend it, and I have decided to do just that.’...As a soldier he was skilled, brave and loyal – always totally ready to do his duty.

¹⁰² ‘Marwolaethau’ in *Y Seren Orllewinol*, January 1864

¹⁰³ ‘Cofiant Milwr Cymreig’ in *Y Seren Orllewinol*, March 1864

He was born in Anglesey in north Wales, yet willingly enlisted in the Union army to fight for his adopted country. Following the social precedent set by the newspapers, his death was understood as an act of national service. This was depicted in narrative form as the *Seren Orllewinol* extolled Dafydd's duty to his country, which was one of the masculine traits most cherished by Welsh soldiers. Also noteworthy is his rebellion against the wishes of his parents, as it implied that ideals of masculine duty to defend the family against an outside threat were not always shared by other members of the family. Secondly, it differs from the assumption that enlistment was community driven. Instead, it was an individual, patriotic decision on the part of Dafydd. The *Seren Orllewinol* claimed that, in Dafydd's eyes, America was his homeland, not Wales, for which he would gladly fight. It offers a glimpse into the possibility that Welsh identity at home varied from Welsh identity in the army, reinforcing the importance of military service as a catalyst for cultural integration.

However, in October 1864, the *Seren Orllewinol* contradicted its message of nationalism. It published the obituaries of two Welshmen that had been killed in combat, although it contrasted with the prevalent model of remembrance by establishing the Welsh identity of the soldiers as the predominant theme. Their names were Lewis Lewis of Company E, 55th Pennsylvania Volunteers and Phillip Evans of the 2nd New York Artillery Regiment. The former had been killed assaulting the breastworks of Petersburg, while the latter had been killed by a bullet during the Battle of Wilderness. In describing their deaths, the paper alluded to the overtly Welsh sacrifice of the war: 'The Welsh nation are well represented in the Union's armies, and they, like others, fall on the field of battle through enemy bullets. After a bloody battle, the names of our Welsh brothers litter the casualty lists. This terrible war has

taken the lives of many Welsh boys.’¹⁰⁴ This excerpt was accompanied with another report of a Welsh casualty, Thomas J. Williams, of Company B, 44th New York Cavalry, who also died while assaulting the defences of Petersburg. The *Seren Orllewinol* remembered fondly how, years ago, Thomas had won the Eisteddfod in Utica, with a recital entitled ‘Y Dryw Bach,’ ‘The Little Wren,’ but had ‘fallen in the flower of his youth, but he died a hero.’¹⁰⁵

Unlike the consistently pro-war *Cenhadwr* and *Drych*, by 1864 it appears that the *Seren Orllewinol* was no longer extolling the national virtues of Welsh dead. The *Seren Orllewinol*’s editor, Richard Edwards, made no attempt to justify Lewis and Evans’s deaths as martyrs to the Union cause. He referred to the conflict as a ‘terrible war’ that had taken the lives of ‘many Welsh boys,’ whose names littered the casualty lists. Rather than claim that they died as American patriots, Edwards’ obituary amplifies the tragedy of Lewis and Evans’ deaths by identifying them as belonging to the Welsh nation, fighting for a country not their own. Earlier obituaries in Welsh newspapers interpreted the combat deaths of Welshmen born in Wales as noble sacrifices that magnified their identity as American citizens. By contrast, however, the *Seren Orllewinol* interpreted this in the opposite manner.

Thomas J. Williams’ eulogy is even more clear in this regard. As with the previous two casualties, there is a noticeable shift in tone from praising death in battle as an act of national service to focusing on the tragedy of the ‘Welsh’ life that had been lost, likely due to the continued death of Welsh-speakers for a war that seemed un-ending. In this instance, the *Seren Orllewinol* did refer to Williams as a hero, but as a Welsh hero, rather than an American one. It brought a memory of pre-war Utica into his obituary, not something that appeared in most memorials. Williams’ cultural qualities as a bard and poet were celebrated, reminiscing that he had won the Eisteddfod with a recital entitled ‘The Little Wren,’ an apt

¹⁰⁴ ‘Marwolaethau Milwyr Cymreig’ in *Y Seren Orllewinol*, October 1864

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

parallel to Williams himself, whose youth was stolen from him by a bullet. Reminding his audience of Williams' bardic talents emphasised his standing as a traditional Welshman, portraying his death as a loss for the Welsh of Utica. This ably demonstrates the complexities inherent to the development of Welsh-American identity during the war, as in some cases the ethnic heritage of volunteers could be enhanced as a result of wartime sacrifices but could occasionally serve to distance the Welsh from the country they were fighting for.

On the whole, however, Welsh obituaries remain an excellent, relatively untapped source base that illuminate how important memorialisation was in reaffirming Welshmen's place within wider northern society, as well as the fundamental role played by the army in fostering collective belonging in the ranks of its Welsh volunteers. For example, the obituary of William Phillips of Company G, 48th Pennsylvania Volunteer Regiment described his funeral as a solely military affair. Phillips died in a military hospital in March 1864, but was not commemorated until May. After a typical narrative of 'his purpose was to serve his country,' the *Seren Orllewinol* described that 'he was buried with military honours the following Sabbath afternoon.'¹⁰⁶ Echoing what was seen in the *Miners' Journal's* obituary of Corporal John Powell in July 1864, this burial was crafted as a strictly military affair, without any mention of his Welsh roots. Phillips was mourned only by his comrades in arms, indicating the extent that Welsh volunteer identity was defined by the army, as the overtly military nature of his funeral was the defining feature.

This was also reflected by the *Cenhadwr's* account of William E. Jones' death in November 1863. Late of Company C, 23rd Wisconsin Volunteer Regiment, he died of a heart attack while in hospital near Vicksburg, yet he was as honoured as if he had been killed in combat. The *Cenhadwr* described his character in typical style: when the Union was in danger, and

¹⁰⁶ 'Marwolaethau' in *Y Seren Orllewinol*, May 1864

the call came for volunteers, he felt he had to enlist and serve his country. He received an honourable burial as an ordinary soldier, with eight soldiers firing their rifles in salute over his grave by the river, far from home.¹⁰⁷ The *Cyfaill* also gave an account of his passing, practically identical to the *Cenhadwr*'s version, except for the poetic addition, 'expecting to witness a dawning of the cause of their country.'¹⁰⁸

This image was especially important, as it personified the sacrifice a Welshman made for his adopted country regardless of the cause of death, united by the army's strict decorum and bond of shared loss in defence of the Union. Moreover, it indicates how the Welsh identity of volunteers became distinctly more American in scope, defined by mutual loss of comrades and the trials of military campaigning. This consideration facilitates a greater understanding of what 'buried with military honours' meant to the soldiers, for the experience of those in the moment of grief for a fallen brother-in-arms was incomprehensible to a civilian. This is reinforced admirably by how Hugh W. Hughes' death was depicted in the *Cyfaill*'s September 1864 edition. He died in Overton hospital in Memphis, from chronic diarrhoea, and according to a comrade from the 22nd Wisconsin, his last words to an injured American soldier by his side were 'Good Bye Friend.'¹⁰⁹ More than anything, this encapsulates the importance of military service to the evolution of Welsh-American identity during the Civil War, as this Welshman's last words were in English, not in Welsh, not to his family, but to a fellow wounded soldier, serving the same cause.

Welsh volunteers' place within American society was strengthened by membership in the military family. As Earl Hess has stated, once in uniform, volunteers forged bonds of trust and affection that went far beyond civilian acquaintanceships. Developed during hard

¹⁰⁷ 'Marwolaeth Milwr Cymreig' in *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, November 1863

¹⁰⁸ 'Marwolaeth Milwr Cymreig' in *Y Cyfaill o'r Hen Wlad*, November 1863

¹⁰⁹ 'Marwolaeth Milwr Cymreig yn Overton' in *Y Cyfaill o'r Hen Wlad*, September 1864

marches in all types of weather and long nights spent in tented camps under the stars, these bonds knitted the regiment into a military family and endured the ultimate test of the soldier on the battlefield.¹¹⁰ Gerald Prokopwicz has also discussed this phenomenon in *All for the Regiment*. The bonds of comradeship in his immediate unit were the primary motivator for the Union volunteer both in and out of combat. He argued that, blinkered by loyalty to the friends and neighbours who made up his company and his regiment, the Union volunteer simply regarded the experiences of outsiders as irrelevant.¹¹¹

This had a direct influence on their performance in battle, for as Prokopwicz argued, the outcome thus devolved upon the individual enlisted men and his decision to stay with his regiment or run away. As long as enough men in his regiment chose to stand and fight, he would stay too, unconcerned of the progress of his brigade, division or corps.¹¹² They fought for each other first, before they fought for their country. As such, it is understandable why, if true, a Welshman's last words were uttered in the language of his military family, rather than the language of his birth.

For the most part, the Welsh press was unanimous in its support for the war and made sure to publish letters that generally agreed or supported its agenda. Nevertheless, occasional glimpses of war-weariness were present in some editions, as seen with the earlier example of the *Seren Orllewinol*. Even the *Cyfaill* showed similar exhaustion at times. William Griffith served with Company E, 9th Minnesota Volunteers, dying of Typhoid Fever in Missouri, October 1863. His eulogy in the *Cyfaill* contrasted the norms of other obituaries, stating simply: 'we are confident that he is now in a country where there is no need for him to bear the arms of war.'¹¹³ It honoured his sacrifice to his country, but instead of espousing

¹¹⁰ Hess, *The Union Soldier in Battle*, p.111.

¹¹¹ Gerald J. Prokopwicz, *All For The Regiment: The Army of Ohio, 1861-1862*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), p.101.

¹¹² Ibid, p.104.

¹¹³ 'Cofiant Milwr, sef William Griffith, La Seur Minnesota' in *Y Cyfaill o'r Hen Wlad*, March 1864

Griffith's devotion to his country, the tone was altered, commenting instead on the idea that he was now in a better place that was free of war. It did not diminish the status of his military service, but it did not celebrate it either, evoking much more of a tragic narrative than with previous obituaries.

This was more obvious in the *Cyfaill*'s May 1864 edition when it reported the death of two brothers, Howell H. Howell and John D. Davies. They were not related by birth, but had been raised as step-brothers, as their respective parents were both widows who had married each other. As such they were considered as brothers in truth. Both were killed by musket balls within minutes of each other at the battle of Pittsburgh Landing.¹¹⁴ It was tragic enough that they died in April 1862 yet took two years for them to be mourned in print. The facts of this case were calamitous enough: brothers of marriage and of arms, who had been raised together and had died together, leaving their parents without children. There was no mention of honourable sacrifice, effectively highlighting the shock of such an occurrence.

Similar connotations followed the inglorious death of Dr Thomas Jones. He received an obituary in the *Cyfaill* in September 1864, which described that he was a medic for the 8th Pennsylvania Reserves and had suffered through all the major battles of the Army of the Potomac to give support to the soldiers in every weather. He was made Brigade Surgeon, and was often in the thick of danger, such was his commitment to care for the injured.¹¹⁵ This reflects the bravery and commitment to duty expected of Welsh volunteers. He was taken prisoner after Spottsylvania but was released shortly afterwards. Unfortunately, as he approached Union lines, the pickets mistook him for a rebel officer, and he was shot in the chest. The *Cyfaill* wrote that, 'In Doctor Jones's death, our nation lost one that was an honour

¹¹⁴ 'Cofiant Milwyr' in *Y Cyfaill o'r Hen Wlad*, May 1864

¹¹⁵ 'Marwolaeth Meddyg Milwraidd' in *Y Cyfaill o'r Hen Wlad*, September 1864

to it, and the country lost a true and patriotic citizen.’¹¹⁶ This depiction of remembrance conveys the belief that the entire community was in mourning. Notably, despite not being a soldier, he was revered as a patriot on equal footing. He was commemorated with the same focus on his masculine qualities, namely kindness, bravery and his commitment to duty. It was not merely the act of fighting that defined a Welsh patriot’s identity, but also his dedication to the principles of American manhood.

As indicated by much of the soldier correspondence analysed so far, shared suffering was a noteworthy aspect of military masculinity. Ioan Emlyn of the 102nd Pennsylvania alluded to this when he wrote to *Y Drych* informing its readers of his time with the regiment: ‘We have had the honour of co-suffering.’¹¹⁷ He described that some of their nation, that had come out happy and eager to defeat the rebellion, had met their fates, some killed by enemy bullets when defending the rights of their country, others through disease caught in the service of their country.¹¹⁸ To acknowledge anything other than those men’s American identities was an insult to what they had fought for. After all, Emlyn stated explicitly that they were fighting in service of ‘our country.’ The honour found in co-suffering with fellow soldiers was a core component of Welsh wartime identity, leading to a continued determination to see the war through to its conclusion. Welsh volunteers perpetuated the belief that the embodiment of American manhood was to be a man who endured suffering with discipline and nobility. A further example is John E. Roberts’ letter to *Y Drych* in January 1863. He despaired that his regiment was in a ‘pitiable state,’ enduring awful conditions while operating in Virginia between the York and James rivers, with many dying of diarrhoea and dropsy. Within this

¹¹⁶ ‘Marwolaeth Meddyg Milwraidd’ in *Y Cyfaill o’r Hen Wlad*, September 1864

¹¹⁷ ‘Gwersyllfa ger Falmouth, Va’ in *Y Drych*, 14 March 1863

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

context, he described the only other Welshman in his regiment, Corporal William Roberts of Company H, as a man from Pottsville, Pennsylvania: ‘This man is an honour to the nation.’¹¹⁹

Collective hardship was instrumental in fostering an aggressively anti-Copperhead feeling among Welsh ranks.¹²⁰ Having suffered so much and lost so many comrades, those who desired an early and unfavourable end to the war were perceived as traitors who sought to make Welsh sacrifices redundant. Paul Taylor, like McPherson, has argued that soldiers became passionately anti-Copperhead as the war progressed, making little effort to differentiate between anti-war political speech and violent subversion directed against federal authority and loyal citizens.¹²¹ A mountain of letters from soldiers railing against ‘skedaddlers’ and those Copperheads who spoke or acted against the draft were routinely published in Northern papers.¹²² The Welsh conformed to this behaviour with zeal, corresponding with the only acceptable social view being unanimous support for the Union.

In May 1863, a volunteer wrote to the *Cenhadwr* criticising the rumours of a compromise with the Confederacy. He shamed the notion, writing, ‘how dare they throw down their arms and allow the rebels to recapture Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, Maryland and Virginia...No, I hear over the graves of our brave soldiers.’¹²³ In March 1863, a soldier writing under the name of Gomer described similar sentiments to *Y Drych*. He belonged to the 22nd Wisconsin, who according to him were unanimous in their opposition to an early peace. In his letter, he recalled that soldiers of his brigade had met in the camp of the 22nd to celebrate the anniversary of George Washington’s birthday, with over two and a half thousand men present. There, soldiers made speeches against the Confederates and the

¹¹⁹ ‘Camp ger Williamsburg’ in *Y Drych*, 24 January 1863

¹²⁰ Copperheads were a faction of the Democratic Party who opposed the war and sought an immediate peace deal with the Confederacy.

¹²¹ Paul Taylor, *The Most Complete Political Machine Ever Known: The North’s Union Leagues in the American Civil War*, (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2018), p.115.

¹²² *Ibid*, p.116.

¹²³ ‘Compromise yn Wir! Gair Oddiwrth Filwr’ in *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, May 1863

northern traitors - the Copperheads. He explained that if those traitors knew the true feelings of the entire army, they would be more careful when publishing their poisonous words of treason in the press. The army was more determined than ever, he wrote, to put the terrible rebellion down – to the soldiers, the copperheads were nothing more than cowardly snakes, who fled to their holes at the first sign of danger.¹²⁴ Hatred of anti-war sentiments acted as another bonding agent with fellow non-Welsh veterans. Michael Jones wrote to *Y Drych* in July 1863 to express similar opinions. He wrote that he was disgusted to discover that many Welsh citizens at home were ‘supporters of the Rebellion’ because they supported an early end to the war. He claimed that this was a betrayal, which he followed with his own threat. He stated that he would refuse to return home until the rebellion had been crushed, when he would be sent back by ‘his Uncle Sam to hang, shoot and kill some Copperheads.’¹²⁵

Despite the prevalence of such convictions in military letters, especially the glorification of shared suffering, re-enlistment was not unanimous when volunteers’ three-year terms came to an end in 1864. Several left the army as soon as they were legally able to, while others remained in service until the war’s official end. Captain Owen Griffith of Company F, 22nd Wisconsin, who denounced Welsh deserters discussed in Chapter Two, left the army in March 1864. General William Powell was forced to leave due to a family crisis, whereas Sergeant Joseph Griffith left due to a battlefield commission. Of Griffith’s fellow Welshmen in the 22nd Iowa, five were listed on the regiment’s official roster as Welsh-born, although this does not count those Welsh speakers born in America. Of these five, Griffith resigned to train as an officer at West Point, Edward Breese and Thomas E. Marsden of Company I reenlisted when their terms ended, mustering out after April 1865, while the remaining two,

¹²⁴ ‘Llythyr Milwr Cymreig’ in *Y Drych*, 28 March 1863

¹²⁵ ‘Llythyrau oddiwrth Filwyr’ in *Y Drych*, 18 July 1863

Griffith W. Griffiths of Company I and Richard Thomas of Company A died of disease.¹²⁶

None of these men, therefore, left voluntarily when their terms ended.

The Welsh-heavy Company F, 133rd Pennsylvania was mustered out following the Battle of Chancellorsville in May 1863. Of those that petitioned the governor for the removal of Lieutenant Flanagan in Chapter One, nine were killed in action, including Captain Jones, four were hospitalised, while none of the remaining 44 signatories re-enlisted. By contrast, the Welsh-heavy Companies C and E of the 56th Ohio predominantly chose to stay with the army. Only two of Company C's men were mustered out before 1865, one being its Welsh chaplain and the other being Captain William B. Williams, who was discharged by order of the War Department. Of the 31 recognisable Welsh names, six died from combat or disease, nine were wounded and either in hospital or discharged, and the remaining 16 reenlisted, meaning that all those who were physically able to reenlist choose to do so.¹²⁷

Meanwhile, Company E was disbanded after its three-year term ended, but the survivors were transferred to Company B. Of these, three mustered out voluntarily, one of whom was its captain, John H. Evans. Of the 23 other recognisable Welsh names, two were discharged due to wounds, six died, and 15 reenlisted, all being classed as veterans.¹²⁸ Consequently, most of Company F, 133rd left together, whereas most of Companies C and E of the 56th remained, alluding to the importance of group dynamics and unit loyalty concerning the decision to re-enlist. Ultimately, both examples highlight that Welshmen from different regiments and states experienced the war in different ways, reinforcing the prevailing argument that the 'immigrant' experience of the Civil War was by no means homogenous. Regardless of when

¹²⁶ 'Roster and Records of Iowa Soldiers, War of the Rebellion, Vol III', *Iowa in the Civil War*, <http://iagenweb.org/civilwar/books/logan/mil506.htm> (accessed 18 December 2023), p.559.

¹²⁷ 'Official Roster of the Soldiers of the State of Ohio in the War of the Rebellion, 1861-1866', Volume 5, 54th-69th Regiments - Infantry, (Akron: Werner PTG and MFG Co, 1887) <https://archive.org/details/ohiowaroster05howerich/page/108/mode/2up?q=56&view=theater> (accessed 18 December 2023), pp.97-108.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

they left the army, however, most Welsh soldiers felt that what they had endured in uniform had earned them superior status as Union patriots.

Conclusion

The above perspective mirrored the feelings of many Welsh soldiers that shared suffering on campaign had solidified their identity as northern Americans, having endured the ordeals of military service to prove that immigrants were loyal citizens. Consequently, the very notion of a ceasefire was anathema to them. Moreover, the idea that Welsh-Americans at home were voting Copperhead felt like an act of treachery, in the same manner that Welsh deserters were viewed to have betrayed their comrades. This was abundantly clear in the *Mineral Point Weekly Tribune* in November 1865. Only six months after the end of the war, Welsh-American hostility to the Copperhead movement surfaced during the election campaign for the Wisconsin State Treasurer. The *Tribune* published a letter from a Welsh veteran who explained that, despite a Welshman named John W. Davis running for the position, he would not receive the votes of his countrymen because he was the candidate for the Copperhead faction:

The Welsh people of Wisconsin are almost invariably sound on the Union question and will show the crafty wire-pullers of the Democracy on election day that no such Welsh Rarebit as John W. Davies goes down with them. We trust that the Union men in those sections [flourishing Welsh settlement in Racine, Dodge and Columbia

counties] will see to it that none of the misrepresentations of these ‘hirelings’ go unrebuted.¹²⁹

Such words encapsulated the belief that Welsh immigrants’ national identity had become definitively American in scope as a result of the war. Active service in the Union army, together with the sacrifice of many in the name of their adopted country, had engendered a determined support for the Union government and the Republican party, to the extent that a Welshman running as a Democrat candidate was perceived as a traitor.

To conclude, this chapter has argued that front-line service during the Civil War promulgated the notion that Welsh immigrants’ place in northern society was reinforced by fighting and dying for their adopted country. The experience of fighting side by side united Welshmen in an irrevocable bond with their fellow Union soldiers, solidifying the role of the army as a forge of national identity. The overwhelming collective experience of suffering for a national cause was instrumental in strengthening Welsh volunteers’ commitment to the Union. The more they suffered through disease, starvation and combat injuries, the more determined they were to continue the fighting. Letters shared to the newspapers reveal a consensus on the need to emphasise masculinity and patriotism as evidence of martial citizenship. Together with an overwhelming narrative of martyrdom in newspapers’ obituaries, it is clear that Welsh immigrants’ national identity evolved into something truly American as a result of service in the Civil War.

¹²⁹ ‘A Card that Won’t Win’ in *Mineral Point Weekly Tribune*, 1 November 1865

Chapter Four – Patriots

This chapter examines the Civil War and post-War careers of four Welsh-American soldiers who were above average representatives of their countrymen, due to the fact that they attained high rank and acquired a certain level of notoriety in the Welsh and Anglo-American press. So far, this thesis has analysed a selection of Welsh letters from a variety of different regiments to indicate trends and experiences regarding the national unity of military service. Many of these sources were written in isolation, in that they describe the feelings of those soldiers in that present moment in time. As insightful as such letters are, they do not present a comprehensive representation of how a Welsh volunteer's thoughts and opinions evolved throughout the conflict, for it was rare to have a continuous stream of letters from the same correspondents tracking the evolution of their wartime tribulations. The ubiquity of national defence rhetoric exhibited by soldiers in Welsh newspapers in 1861 and 1862 were unlikely to be contradicted in 1864 or 1865, given a combination of selective editorial censorship and societal pressures. Therefore, observing the experiences of a select few in more detail creates greater opportunities to understand how such feelings developed or changed over a military career in the Civil War. Through a combination of personal letters and newspaper articles, four Welsh soldiers stand out in terms of their achievements and notoriety.

As with every denomination of Union soldier, certain Welshmen made newspaper headlines, were mentioned in dispatches, or were written about by their comrades in glowing terms due to notable conduct. By observing how key figures were viewed by their Anglo-American contemporaries, this chapter aims to observe how military service affected the national identity of select Welsh soldiers, as well as how these men were welcomed as fellow Americans by non-Welsh northerners. Consequently, the individuals chosen for closer

analysis in this chapter have been selected on account of the success and notoriety achieved as a result of military service. Additionally, each was born in Wales and emigrated to a state containing a major Welsh-speaking population: Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Ohio and Iowa. One is Joseph E. Griffith, from Iowa City, Iowa, who was promoted to the rank of captain and earned a scholarship to West Point; another, Joshua T. Owen, from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, served as a brigadier general in the Army of the Potomac. Perhaps the most famous of all Welsh-Americans in the Union army was William Henry Powell from Ironton, Ohio, who was promoted to brigadier general, as well as winning the medal of honour for his actions in the Shenandoah Valley. The example of Griffith, Owen and Powell demonstrated that a Welsh volunteer could embrace his native heritage whilst simultaneously distinguishing himself as an American soldier. The fourth man proved to be something of a black sheep in this regard: Evan Rowland Jones, whose invaluable war diary has been utilised already in this thesis. He enlisted as a private in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, eventually becoming a captain. His star shone brighter after the war, when he was appointed as the American consul for Newcastle and Cardiff, yet after some time he declined to return to his adopted homeland and settled in south Wales, rejecting the process of national belonging he had begun to experience during and in the years following the Civil War.

This chapter's purpose is to examine their wartime experiences in more detail and over a longer time period than has been possible in previous chapters, as well as how they understood duty and manhood in uniform. To compensate for the lack of personal letters available from or about these four soldiers, this chapter will explore evidence from newspapers as well as official military and pension records. Analysing such documents will not definitively prove their American identity, but it will indicate how they acted outside of the image of zealous patriotism presented in Welsh newspapers, while also incorporating an invaluable Anglo-American perspective. Much of the newspapers' role in the promulgation

of Welsh-American nationalism was the way that correspondents tended to be portrayed as ideal national servants. Letters from the front presented an image of Welsh soldiers whose actions were either sanitised or sensationalised by a self-aware author together with a selective, nationalist editor. However, a reliance on purely Welsh sources means that some get missed out. Several Welsh soldiers that would have been lauded as patriots slipped into obscurity because they, their comrades or their families did not deign to write to the papers, or because there were not enough Welshmen in a company to warrant attention from the press.

For example, some Welshmen received the medal of honour as a result of their actions in combat, news of which can only be gleaned from Anglo-American newspapers. The first of these was Private Thomas Evans, of Company D, 45th Pennsylvania Infantry. There is no mention of his name in the Welsh papers, but from his records in the *Sailors and Soldiers Database* of the National Park Service it states that on the 26th of November 1864, during the Battle of Piedmont, Evans captured the flag of the 45th Virginia Infantry.¹ It is peculiar that a Welshman who had demonstrated great courage amidst the chaos of battle received no recognition for this act in the press, especially considering that Pennsylvania volunteers often appeared in the *Cenhadwr* and *Cyfaill*, or at least in the *Alleghanian*. The next near-anonymous recipient was Corporal Joseph Davis of Company C, 104th Ohio. During the Second Battle of Franklin in Tennessee, November 1864, Davis also captured a Confederate flag, thus earning his medal of honour.² As with Evans, this deed was not reported in the Welsh press, although Corporal Davis's name was mentioned briefly in the *Highland Weekly*

¹ 'Evans, Thomas', Medal of Honor Details, Soldiers and Sailors Database, National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/civilwar/search-medals-detail.htm?medalOfHonorId=4D1D6434-786B-42D0-B5AB-F07A77078539> (accessed 18 December 2023)

² 'Davis, Joseph', Medal of Honor Details, Soldiers and Sailors Database, National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/civilwar/search-medals-detail.htm?medalOfHonorId=093C8BF9-7947-4CF7-9D2C-64B02BE9E63C> (accessed 18 December 2023)

News in March 1865, alongside with six others from Ohio regiments.³ Moreover, in the regimental history of the 104th Ohio written by Nelson A. Pinney of Company D, Davis's action was omitted in its entirety. All Pinney had to say on the matter was that the 104th routed the enemy, capturing over 1100 of the rebel front line, as well as 11 rebel battle flags.⁴

The third man was Private Thomas Davis of Company C, 2nd New York Heavy Artillery, who captured a flag at the battle of Sailor's Creek in Virginia 1865.⁵ Other than his record on the *Soldiers and Sailors Database* there is no further description of his commendation. The fourth man was Private David Edwards, of Company H, 146th New York Infantry, who also captured a flag in Virginia, this time at the battle of Five Forks.⁶ He received a mention in the *New York Herald* in May 1865, alongside others of different regiments who similarly captured rebel banners.⁷ Consequently, utilising non-Welsh sources gives an opportunity to see how certain Welsh soldiers were viewed as exhibiting ideal 'American' behaviour by non-Welsh contemporaries, unveiling from obscurity those referred to by William Burton as 'invisible ethnics.'⁸

Historiography

³ 'Honor to Western Soldiers' in *The Highland Weekly News*, 16 March 1865

⁴ Nelson A. Pinney, *History of the 104th Regiment Ohio Volunteer Infantry from 1862-1865*, (Akron: Werner & Lohmann, 1886)
https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=MwtOAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA56&source=gbv_selected_pages&cad=3#v=onepage&q&f=false (accessed 18 December 2023), p.62.

⁵ 'Davis, Thomas', Medal of Honor Details, Soldiers and Sailors Database, National Park Service,
<https://www.nps.gov/civilwar/search-medals-detail.htm?medalOfHonorId=80422F68-7DF3-49A4-99D8-3D4560EB1A98> (accessed 18 December 2023)

⁶ 'Edwards, David', Medal of Honor Details, Soldiers and Sailors Database, National Park Service,
<https://www.nps.gov/civilwar/search-medals-detail.htm?medalOfHonorId=39036205-E4FF-45A4-9A12-2DFC8DFE625C> (accessed 18 December 2023)

⁷ 'Presentation of Captured Battle Flags to the Secretary of War' in *The New York Herald*, 7 May 1865

⁸ Burton, *Melting Pot Soldiers*, p.175.

Despite being volunteers and not professional army regulars, the conduct of Powell, Griffith, Owen and Rowland Jones was perfectly in keeping with contemporary expectations of how officers should behave. When discussing the officers of the Union army, scholars have differentiated between volunteers and regulars, or ‘West Pointers,’ those men that graduated from the military academy of West Point and served as officers in the regular army. Thomas J. Goss has described how the two dissimilar groups of military commanders approached command differently because many of them had different perceptions of the nature of the war. Their pre-war experience led to two views of the obstacle facing generals in the army: regulars tended to view the war as a military problem requiring a focus on the battlefield, while the politically adept amateurs viewed the rebellion as a partisan political struggle for power.⁹

While a volunteer’s expectations of his commanding officer may have differed when in camp, in the midst of battle every officer had to pass a different test of professionalism under fire. Officers had to appear disciplined under fire. Kanisorn Wongrichanalai’s 2016 study of gentlemen officers explored the constant tests of masculinity that were endured both in and out of the firing line. For educated, middle-class volunteer officers, the most important elements of a gentleman’s character included discipline, individualism or independent thought, and selflessness.¹⁰ Wongrichanalai attested that personal behaviour under fire and the performance of the men under his command revealed the extent of an officer’s character.¹¹ By combining individualism, discipline, and self-sacrifice, an officer could demonstrate character on two levels: by maintaining his own composure under fire as the

⁹ Thomas J. Goss, *The War within the Union High Command: Politics and Generalship during the Civil War*, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), p.137.

¹⁰ Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai, *Northern Character: College-Educated New Englanders, Honor, Nationalism and Leadership in the Civil War*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), p.139.

¹¹ Ibid.

ultimate test of the individual will, and by exercising control over the troops under his command.

In all of these respects, the men chosen as the subjects of this chapter's focus conformed to these expectations, because they were depicted as excellent leaders of men and disciplined commanders in battle. What marked them as different from other Welsh-speaking soldiers was how much fellow soldiers wrote about them, how much attention they received in Anglo-American and Welsh-American newspapers, as well as the manner in which they achieved high-rank. Hunter has done the most of any historian to illuminate the extent of Welsh involvement in the Civil War, but due to the broad scope of his research he omitted to undergo micro-studies of specific Welshmen, apart from one. In *Llwch Cenhedloedd* he dedicated a small chapter to General William H. Powell as a noteworthy example of a Welsh-born Union soldier. Hunter utilised Powell's example as a case study to explain how a native-born Welshman could readily adopt an American identity through military service. He alluded to Joseph Griffith's actions at Vicksburg but not in any detail, while he did not register General Owen's military career at all. The Welsh press has minimal records on these men, but American newspapers reveal much more information. As a result, this chapter's exploration compliments the broader analysis of Welsh volunteers as a collective, while approaching American newspapers achieves something that Hunter's work was too comprehensive to have any scope for, which is to explore how Welsh volunteers were viewed as fellow Americans by non-Welsh Union soldiers.

Due to a reliance on Welsh-language sources, only Joseph Griffith and William Powell have appeared in Hunter's *Llwch Cenhedloedd* as prime examples of high-achieving ethnic volunteers. Moreover, none of the major historians on Welsh-American history, such as Bill Jones, Anne Kelly Knowles, Robert Llewellyn Tyler and Daniel G. Williams have researched the figures present in this chapter. It is only by approaching Anglo-American sources can the

fortunes of Evan Rowland Jones and Joshua T. Owen be examined. As is typical of soldiers of distinction, Powell and Owen are mentioned as part of wider studies of key campaigns or battles by military historians, but their Welsh heritage is rarely acknowledged.

The first scholar to describe Powell's background and career was Ezra J. Warner in his important study of the lives of Union commanders in 1964. Subsequently, the only scholarly descriptions of Powell have been within wider studies of Union cavalry actions or commanders. Apart from Hunter, John L. Heatwole's 1998 book on the Shenandoah Campaign is one of the few that devotes attention to Powell's abilities as a commander, together with Robert Black's 2005 study of the Civil War's cavalry raids, although there is no recognition of his immigrant heritage at all. There is no scholarship dedicated to Griffith apart from a short biographical article in 1900 by Frederick Lloyd in the *Annals of Iowa*. Gordon O'Rhea in 2002 and Francis O'Reilly in 2003 discuss Joshua Owen and his leadership of his brigade during the Fredericksburg and Cold Harbor campaigns, acknowledging him as a competent and disciplined officer, but not much more. Therefore, what this chapter aims to achieve is not merely to describe these Welshmen's military service record, but rather to consider how they represent the influence of the Union army on the national identity of Welsh volunteers, especially on those immigrants who had been born in Wales.

Union Archetype: William H. Powell

Brigadier General William Henry Powell is a testament to how Welsh immigrants made the North their irrefutable home as a result of fighting for the Union. He was born in May 1825 in Pontypool, south Wales. His parents came to the United States when he was five,

eventually settling in Ironton, Ohio. By 1861, Powell had built the Bellfonte Nail works, operating as its superintendent and financial agent.¹² When war broke out, he raised his own company of cavalry from among the men under his supervision, forming Company B of the 2nd Loyal Virginia Cavalry. He was subsequently elected captain by his men. Despite his lack of military experience, he proved to be an exceptionally competent commander. Following his distinguished service against Confederate forces in West Virginia, he was promoted to major, then colonel in short succession, eventually reaching the rank of brigadier general and was entrusted the command of a division.

His most notable achievement was an engagement that eventually earned him the medal of honour; the raid at Sinking Creek, Virginia, in November 1862. Powell, who was already a major by this point, led a small detachment of 20 men from Company G, 2nd Virginia Cavalry, on a raid into Greenbrier County, West Virginia. As he reached the foot of Cold Knob Mountain, during a snowstorm, Powell saw smoke from the campfires of a large Confederate encampment. He and his men were ahead of the rest of the regiment, yet Powell judged that the Confederates were in a relaxed state and the opportunity would be fleeting. He decided to attack.¹³ The assault was a complete success. Without firing a shot or a life being taken, Powell, Davidson, and the 20 riders of the 2nd Virginia had captured some 500 men.¹⁴ After the raid, Powell was promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel and was eventually granted the medal of honour. Following this success, he continued to serve with distinction as a divisional commander under General Philip Sheridan in the Shenandoah Valley during 1863 and 1864, participating in the battles of Moorefield, Opequon and Fisher's Hill.

¹² Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Blue: Lives of the Union Commanders*, (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1964), p.384.

¹³ Robert W. Black, *Cavalry Raids of the Civil War*, (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 2004), p.83.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p.84.

Given the number of capable yet historically obscure generals in the Union army, it is somewhat understandable how Powell's conduct as a commander has not received much contemporary scholarly analysis. Indeed, given the notoriety of his contemporaries, General Philip Sheridan and General George Armstrong Custer, it is strange that a competent commander like Powell has not been studied in further detail. For example, despite commanding a division, Powell is barely mentioned in Eric Wittenburg's 2002 study of Sheridan's wartime leadership, focusing more on Custer, Merritt and Sheridan himself. Moreover, he accused Powell of not positioning his division correctly at the Battle of Cedar Creek, leaving a hole in the Federal left, arguing that only fortune's intervention kept disaster from shattering the army of the Shenandoah.¹⁵ David Goffey refuted this claim in his 2005 study of Sheridan's subordinates, recognising Powell's consistent competence. He noted that Sheridan had in fact told Wright to bring in Powell, but this adjustment had not been completed in time, hence his absence from Cedar Creek.¹⁶ Even then, however, Goffey wrote that Sheridan deserved credit for cultivating 'young talent like Merritt, Custer and Mackenzie.'¹⁷ There was no mention of Powell, however.

Apart from Hunter, John L. Heatwole is one of the few scholars that has adequately recognised Powell's abilities as a commander. When Sheridan commenced his campaign in the Shenandoah Valley in 1864, he tasked Powell with the systematic destruction of the eastern third of the valley. Heatwole stated succinctly that 'Colonel Powell was the right man for the job.'¹⁸ He knew how to control his men and use them effectively, as Powell was accustomed to dealing with rough and strong-willed individuals at the furnaces and rolling

¹⁵ Eric J. Wittenburg, *Little Phil: A Reassessment of the Civil War Leadership of Gen. Philip Sheridan*, (Washington: Potomac Books, 2002), p.84.

¹⁶ David Goffey, *Sheridan's Lieutenants: Phil Sheridan, His Generals and the Final Years of the Civil War*, (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2005), p.75.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p.94.

¹⁸ John L. Heatwole, *The Burning: Sheridan in the Shenandoah Valley*, (Charlottesville: Rockbridge Publishing, 1998), p.77.

mills, and soon had his charges disciplined in the routines and intricacies of cavalry service.¹⁹ Sheridan recognised his achievements and promoted him to brigadier general afterwards. What is clear is that most secondary sources do not present an authentic insight into Powell's leadership nor his character as a volunteer. Additionally, none have acknowledged his immigrant heritage.

From what Welsh-language sources are available, Powell was perceived by his Welsh contemporaries to be a model soldier. He was first mentioned in *Y Drych* in January 1863, when Sergeant E.A. Rosser, one of Powell's Welsh-speaking subordinates in Company B, 2nd Virginia Cavalry, penned a letter to the editor to laud his commander in glowing terms:

Mae genyf i'ch hysbys am ddyrchafiad Cymro yn ein catrawd, sef y Capt Powell o Ironton, O. I fod yn Major ac mewn llau na dau fis, cafodd eilwaith ei ddyrchafu i fod yn Lieu. Col. Llwyddiant iddo ac i bob Cymro arall sydd yn cyflawni ei ddyledswydd. Y siarad yma yw mai efe yw yr 'iawn ddyn yn yr iawn le.'²⁰

I have to advertise you of the promotion of a Welshman in our regiment, Capt. Powell from Ironton, Ohio, to a Major and in less than two months, promoted again to a Lieu. Col. Success to him and to every other Welshman who is fulfilling their duty. The talk here is that he is the 'right man in the right place.'

Rosser's admiration for his commander is evident, not only as an officer, but also as an example of a successful Welsh-speaking soldier. Despite the dominant trend of Welshmen

¹⁹ Heatwole, *The Burning*, p.78.

²⁰ 'Llythyrau oddiwrth Filwyr Cymreig' in *Y Drych*, 24 January 1863

using their enlistment as evidence of their American loyalties, the emphasis of Rosser's letter is not just Powell's promotion, but also his Welshness. His wish of success to him 'and any other Welshman who is fulfilling his duty' is a further indication of how accomplishments in the army, certainly in 1861 and 1862, were sometimes portrayed as a reinforcement of Welsh martial attributes. As with the *Cenhadwr* and *Cyfaill*, Rosser's portrayal of Colonel Powell adhered to *Y Drych*'s agenda of promoting Welshness above all.

This tone of Welsh superiority showed its head once more in a subsequent letter to *Y Drych* by Private Howell G. Hopkins, also of Company B, 2nd Virginia Cavalry, which was later copied in the *Gwladgarwr* in Wales in May 1863. Hopkins described that Powell had been struck with a bout of typhoid fever and had returned home to recover:

Y mae ein Catrawd ni, sef yr 2il Meirch Virginia, yn awr yn gwersyllu in Piatt ar y Kanawha, ac oddeutu 40 milldir yn nes i afon Ohio oddi yma...Y mae ein cydfilwr a'n cydwladwr W.H. Powell yn awr gartref yn glaf o'r typhoid fever, ond ein gobeith ni oll yw ei fod wedi ei adferyd erbyn hyn, am mai efe yw ein swyddog goreu a chyn bo hir os adferir ei fywyd, bydd yn un o swyddogion goreu y wlad.²¹

Our Regiment, the 2nd Virginia Cavalry, now encamped in Piatt on the Kanawha, 40 miles closer to the Ohio River...Our comrade and compatriot W.H. Powell is now home, a patient of the typhoid fever, but we all hope that he's recovered by now, for he is our greatest officer and soon, if he keeps his life, he'll be one of the greatest officers in the country.

²¹ 'Llythyr oddiwrth Filwr Cymreig' in *Y Gwladgarwr*, 2 May 1863

His concern for his commander's wellbeing is evident, partly because of his shared Welsh connection with Powell, but also because of the latter's perceived outstanding character. Although subjective, it is implied that 'our comrade and compatriot' referred to Powell's shared native roots, especially given the depiction of him as 'our greatest officer.' Both accounts stemmed from Welshmen who had enlisted in Powell's original company, so not only had he commanded them as a captain before he became lieutenant colonel, but because it was Powell that formed the company in Ironton, both Rosser and Hopkins were most likely familiar with him as an influential man from home. Consequently, given their local ties with him, reinforced by their shared language and heritage as immigrants, it is no surprise that their depiction of Powell is one that accentuated his standing as a talented soldier, but overwhelmingly as an immigrant soldier.

These two eye-witness testimonies suggest that Powell exhibited idealised Welsh behaviour, or at least was thought of by subordinates as a model of Welsh martial spirit. Then again, his depiction in Anglo-American primary sources suggests a different story. Neither eye-witness accounts from Anglo-American soldiers who served with him, nor regional northern newspaper acknowledged his Welsh heritage. Instead, both accounts portrayed his abilities as typical of a northern male. His name appeared more consistently in newspaper headlines in the later stages of the war during the Shenandoah Campaign of 1864.

For example, in November 1864, the *New York Herald* wrote that, 'General Powell's division of cavalry started on an important reconnaissance on Monday last but had not returned at the date of our latest despatches.'²² Despite the absence of anything major to report, the *Herald* still felt the need to provide an update on Powell's division. A week later, it did have a major story to report, namely an engagement near Front Royal:

²² 'The Situation' in *The New York Herald*, 11 November 1864

The moment was one of deepest interest. It was as much as General Powell could do to keep the men in line, and still, in their proper places, and keep them from going forward until the proper time. This time soon arrived.... The order was given to charge, and away went the officers and men, in turn with flashing sabres and death-dealing carbines, on to the rebel ranks...A volley or two which they poured into our men from the brow of a high hill or ridge did not check them in the last, but seemed to make them more dashing than ever; for once the volley was over, and the bullets had gone over to, the boys gave their wildest yell, did their best, and the rebels broke and left.²³

While the article attempted to give a record of events, noteworthy attention was devoted to an appraisal of Powell's leadership abilities. The *Herald* described the men under his command as champing at the bit to be let go at the rebels, so it was a testament to their general's ability that he managed to 'keep them going forward until the proper time.' Putting aside any dramatization on the *Herald's* account, it highlights the image of Powell's qualities as a battlefield commander. It was reported that Powell's charge had captured wagons, artillery and 188 prisoners, as well as two battle flags. The *Cleveland Morning Leader* subsequently magnified the achievement, claiming that Powell's command had in fact captured 280 prisoners six miles beyond Front Royal, including a flag from the 14th Virginia Cavalry, which was 'by far the handsomest ever taken from the rebels and has for a motto "God will aid the Patriot."²⁴ So far there is a notable absence of any comments concerning his immigrant status. Accounts of German-born General Siegel and Irish-born General Meagher

²³ 'The Cavalry Movements' in *The New York Herald*, 19 November 1864

²⁴ *Cleveland Morning Leader*, 19 November 1864

were typically accompanied praise with recognition of their ethnic status, whereas this is not the case with Powell's Welsh roots. This suggests either a lack of awareness on behalf of the press, or that he was indeed perceived as an integrated northerner.

The *Herald* also lauded Powell's nobility of character, describing him as a gentleman. In December 1864, the *Herald* described a meeting between Powell and a southern civilian whose farm he and his men were crossing. The exchange between them depicted him as a man of great wit, politeness and courtesy: 'On the march General Powell stopped at a farmhouse to warm himself. He was asked by the hostess in an earnest tone whether he was 'civilized or savage.' He replied that he was a Yankee 'with his horns knocked off,' and that he and his troops were civilized and naturalized and that she need have no apprehensions of harm to herself or property as long as she behaved herself.'²⁵ His exchange with the southern hostess, fabricated or otherwise, made him out to the *Herald's* readers as a man worthy of respect. Even his witty dialogue seemed to elevate his stature as an example of American manhood, compassionate and professional out of combat, but indefatigable under fire. As described by Lorien Foote, while the war energized honour, boisterous manhood and physical prowess, it also reinforced the importance of domestic morality and gentility for those who embraced those attributes.²⁶

As has been shown in several Welsh-language letters, volunteers believed that the ideal conduct of a Union soldier entailed exhibitions of nobility, duty and courage. Some eye-witness accounts from Anglo-American soldiers suggest that Powell was admired in particular for this last attribute, one he seemed to demonstrate in abundance. Private Joseph J. Sutton served in Company H of the 2nd West Virginia Cavalry, so had been commanded by Powell as his major and lieutenant colonel. In 1892 he published a regimental history of the

²⁵ 'Thomas' and Sherman's Successes Discredited' in *The New York Herald*, 28 December 1864

²⁶ Foote, *Gentlemen and the Roughs*, p.172.

2nd, containing not a single mention of his commanding officer's Welsh heritage. Instead, his interpretation of Powell is as a prime example of a Union patriot. Sutton described one particular incident during a skirmish near Summerville:

About this time the advance came in sight, when the Johnnies realized they had been duped and all ran from the woods, but the advance guard captured most, if not all of them. Major Powell pursued and captured one, who proved to be a rebel lieutenant.

The major has since told the writer that he often wondered why the fellow did not stop behind some tree and shoot him, when he saw that he was being pursued by only one man.²⁷

Sutton would have his readers believe that Powell thought nothing of chasing after a fleeing rebel without close support, exposing himself to unnecessary danger. Regardless of whether this incident is fabricated or embellished by the author, it shows that Powell's courage had impressed Sutton and the men under his command, or at least indicates how the men of the 2nd Virginia viewed their commander as a model of male virtue. Furthermore, Powell's esteem in his subordinates' eyes is visible in Sutton's response to news of the latter's promotion from major to lieutenant colonel. He wrote that 'the entire command knew Lieutenant Colonel Powell to be a brave, fearless and efficient officer, and all seemed fully to realize that he was the proper man to lead them.'²⁸ Then, when Powell was promoted to Brigadier General, Sutton spoke for himself and his comrades when he stated that 'in this

²⁷ Joseph J. Sutton, *History of the Second Regiment West Virginia Cavalry Volunteers During the War of the Rebellion*, (Portsmouth, 1892)
https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/History_of_the_Second_Regiment_West_Virg/OzNCAAAIAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0 (accessed 18 December 2023), p.64.

²⁸ *Ibid*, p.82.

promotion the regiment took a pride and felt instinctively that all had a share in the glittering star that adorned the shoulders of the old Captain of Company B.²⁹ His conduct evidently produced a major significant sense of loyalty in his men. Moreover, his gravitas transcended the dynamics of unit identity. As explored in previous chapters, the identity of Union volunteers, both Welsh and non-Welsh, was first and foremost tied to the company or regiment. With the accession of Powell to command of the brigade, Sutton and his compatriots of Company B had progressed from a purely regiment-centric sense of social cohesion to a brigade-wide identity, due to their adoration of the ‘old Captain of Company B.’

Another eye-witness testimony of Powell’s talents is the published history of loyal West Virginia Regiments written by Theodore F. Lang in 1895, the former major of the 6th West Virginia Cavalry. He had not served with Powell as long as Sutton had, but he became one of the latter’s subordinates in the 3rd Brigade when Powell was promoted as a brigadier general. Much like Sutton’s interpretation, Lang’s book praised his commanding officer’s gallantry and patriotism, as well as highlighting the loyalty that Powell generated among his men. Lang described that in January 1863, Powell, by now the lieutenant colonel of the 2nd West Virginia, contracted an attack of bilious fever that induced him to tender his resignation in April. Following Colonel Paxton’s dismissal from service, the men of the regiment petitioned their brigadier general, Eliakim Scammon, as well as the governor of West Virginia, Francis Pierpont, to urge Powell to withdraw his resignation and accept a commission as colonel, which he duly accepted in May 1863.³⁰ Evidently, Powell’s men detested the notion of being deprived of his leadership, so petitioned not only the most superior officer in their immediate vicinity, but the highest authority in the area, the governor, to amend his decision.

²⁹ Sutton, *History of the Second Regiment*, p.170.

³⁰ Ibid, p.187.

Furthermore, Lang uses this incident to highlight Powell's humility, evidently an admirable quality of a northern gentleman officer.

A notable difference from Sutton's history, however, is that Lang did in fact acknowledge, as well as celebrate, Powell's Welsh roots in his book. He noted that Powell was born in Monmouthshire, south east Wales, and belonged to 'a gallant, Christian race, patterns of every virtue, every grace, ever loyal to God and country.'³¹ Lang believed the Welsh to be a race of fellow patriots, possessing some of the best qualities desired by a northern citizen, such as grace, gallantry and Christianity. Consequently, Powell's immigrant status was surely known, or indicates that some members of his brigade were aware of his non-native heritage, yet his conduct was depicted as fully conforming to the ideal of the dutiful, Union patriot. This suggests that Sutton, having known Powell since the beginning of the war, was certainly aware of the latter's Welsh roots, so the absence of any such discussion or recognition in his history implies that Powell was fully seen to be a fellow American. In turn, this highlights the role of the army in creating shared concepts of identity, revealing in Powell's case that Welsh volunteers were accepted and celebrated by Anglo-American comrades in the Union army.

This image of Powell was shared not merely by his subordinates, but also by his superiors. His brigade commander, General W.W. Averell, recommended Powell for promotion to brigadier general in September 1864, commending him as 'a gentleman of high character, and one of the best brigade commanders that I know. The cavalry arm of the service can ill afford to lose so excellent an officer.'³² Moreover, Brevet Major General Crook echoed Averell's opinion, stating that he had distinguished himself in every battle and 'I regard him

³¹ Theodore F. Lang, *Loyal West Virginia from 1861 to 1865: with an introductory chapter on the status of Virginia for thirty years prior to the war*, (Baltimore: Deutch Publishing Company, 1895), p.181.

³² *Ibid*, p.191.

as one of the best cavalry officers I have ever seen in the service.’³³ To both his subordinates and to his superiors, Powell was considered an exemplary soldier.

After years of distinguished service, Powell resigned his commission in January 1865, which sparked some protest among his peers. The *Cleveland Morning Leader* reported that ‘Brigadier General William H. Powell tendered his resignation some time since. A protest against its acceptance was sent to Washington, but the necessity was so great that the War Department has accepted it.’³⁴ Powell’s necessity was great, for he had received news that his father had died, and his mother was seriously ill. Notably, just as was the case of his initial resignation in May 1863, the men of his division sent an official protest directly to the War Department, demonstrating the high regard his troops felt for him. Furthermore, 35 officers of the Divisional Staff wrote a formal goodbye letter that was published in the *Daily Intelligencer* on 20 January 1865:

The scenes and circumstances through which we have passed during the last year; and the energy, heroism and devotion displayed by you, have endeared you to our hearts and engraven your name and fame in our memories. The distinction won by you in command respectively of the 2nd Brigade and 2nd Cav Division, has rendered the name “Powell” a terror to the enemies of our country, and will have an enduring record in the history of this war. Dangers, privations, wounds nor imprisonment could drive you from the service of your country in her hour of trial and danger; but in her period of triumph and lull of battle, you have yielded to the tender entreaties of “loved ones

³³ Lang, *Loyal West Virginia*, p.192.

³⁴ ‘From New York’ in *Cleveland Morning Leader*, 23 January 1865

at Home” who in affliction and bereavement have claimed the fulfilment of the duties of a “husband” and “father.”³⁵

The consensus of the men he fought with was that Powell was the model of northern masculinity, as someone who could not be driven from service to his country by dangers, privations, nor wounds and imprisonment. Instead, it was duty to his family that took him away from the army. Consequently, Powell was depicted as a true representation of contemporary American masculinity, for he was courageous in fighting for his country, but also in protecting his family and household. Additionally, the letter addressed his gallant service in the service of ‘your country,’ alluding to how he was viewed as an American, not as an immigrant, by his contemporaries. Moreover, such was his magnitude of character that his commanding officer, Major General Philip Sheridan also wrote a public goodbye address to him. He expressed that he greatly regretted the necessity that compelled him to leave military service:

The regret is not only for the loss I myself sustain but the loss to the public service. I desire to express to you my heartfelt thanks for your gallantry which has contributed so much to make the victories of the Shenandoah Valley decisive. Should you again enter the service I would consider myself fortunate in having you under my command.³⁶

³⁵ ‘Brig. Gen’l Wm. H. Powell – Tribute of Respect from his Late Comrades in Arms’ in *Daily Intelligencer*, 20 January 1865

³⁶ Ibid.

In his letter, Sheridan referred to Powell as a national hero, saying that his resignation was a loss to public service. This was public affirmation from one of the highest-ranking Union officers that Powell was viewed as a model of courage, discipline and commitment to duty. Furthermore, such was Powell's talent that Sheridan declared that he would have him under his command again whenever he wished to return to military service, announcing to all readers of the *Intelligencer* how significant this cavalry officer was. Powell's imagined status as an American hero was reinforced by Sheridan's claim that losing him was a loss to public service.

Even after the war, evidence of Powell's military identity persisted. Such was his regional standing that in July 1866, the *Jackson Standard* of Ohio recommended Powell as a candidate for Congress. He heard of this via the *Ironton Register* and issued a letter in response, thanking the *Standard* for its opinion of him. However, he declined the invitation, 'merely upon the grounds of availability, or military record, achieved through the faithful co-operation of many of our brave boys – residents of this District.'³⁷ His grace and humility was apparent when he referred to his 'feeble efforts in behalf of our common country in her recent struggles...I assure you and them, that my warmest sympathies are with the Union party.'³⁸ Notably, he referred to 'our' common country, publicly stating his national identity to a non-Welsh audience. Indeed, that he was considered by some, at least in local circles, to be an American of such quality that he belonged in Congress, indicates the extent to which Powell had been accepted into northern society.

An article in the *Daily Intelligencer* in January 1869 alluded to the regional aspect of Powell's influence, as the editor claimed that 'Of General Powell, much less is known in this,

³⁷ 'Card from Gen. Powell' in *The Jackson Standard* 26 July 1866

³⁸ *Ibid.*

the eastern end of the state.’³⁹ He wrote that, having had no previous experience as a legislator or been involved in public life, Powell was ill-suited to be merely accepted on trust as a reputable candidate, for although all honour was due him as a gallant and brave soldier, ‘West Virginia can proudly boast of a thousand citizens, soldiers and officers equally brave, gallant and patriotic as he.’⁴⁰ This prompted an anonymous writer to challenge the *Intelligencer’s* assessment of Powell, stating that: ‘few men have sacrificed as much to serve their country and this state as Gen Powell...As a citizen in the ordinary walks of life, he is and always has been as distinguished for his exemplary character as he was for zeal and energy in the army.’⁴¹ According to the author, Powell was considered to be a true citizen, both on a national level and also on a regional basis, referring to his sacrifices for the country and for West Virginia.

As he had lived in both Wheeling and Ironton, his social authority and regional identity transcended both Ohio and Virginia. For example, as an ardent support of the Union he was invited to speak at a rally of the Central Grant Club in Gallipolis, Ohio, in September 1868. Over 800 people from all over the county came to hear him speak in favour of General Grant’s character.⁴² He was criticised by the *Gallipolis Dispatch* for this, being called a low, vulgar and malicious calumniator, which prompted an immediate and passionate response from the *Ironton Register*: ‘General Powell is so transcendently far above you that all your calumny and lies will not stain his fame to the extent of a fly speak...it is no wonder you did not like him. Your rebel instinct would lead you to hate him.’⁴³ Thus, in the *Register’s* view, opposing such a patriot as Powell was tantamount to betraying the Union. His supporters,

³⁹ ‘The U.S. Senatorship’ in *The Wheeling Daily Intelligencer* 11 January 1869

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² ‘Rally by Central Grant Club’ in *Gallipolis Journal* 3 September 1868

⁴³ ‘Abusive’ in *Gallipolis Journal* 17 September 1868

both in and out of the army, did not know him by his Welsh heritage. Instead, he was viewed as a model northern male.

Such first-hand accounts of Powell's character allude to an immigrant who was considered fully American because of his experience of fighting for the Union. He was revered by those who served under him and was seen by both Welsh and non-Welsh soldiers as an idealised example of northern manhood. Therefore, Powell's example is indicative of how Welsh volunteers expressed support for the Union in private and public correspondence, but also exhibited this idealised behaviour to their Anglo-American comrades in the army.

Union Archetype: Joseph E. Griffith

Powell's equivalent in the Army of the Tennessee was Joseph E. Griffith of Company I, 22nd Iowa Volunteer Regiment. Despite not achieving a similarly high rank, he found great success as a soldier, being promoted from sergeant to first lieutenant in May 1863.⁴⁴ Like Powell, Joseph Griffith was fighting for his adopted country, having been born in 1843 in Llanegryn, north Wales. After his mother died, he and his family emigrated to Wisconsin, but soon removed to Iowa, and settled in the old capitol county of Johnson, where his father became the pastor of the 'Welsh Church' six miles west of Iowa City.⁴⁵ In August 1862, he enlisted as a private in the 22nd Volunteers, which was comprised predominantly of men from Iowa City, like Griffith himself. Moreover, he found that he was not the only Welsh-speaker in the regiment. He was accompanied by four others who had been born in Wales, or

⁴⁴ 'Joseph E. Griffith', Soldiers and Sailors Database, National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/civilwar/search-soldiers-detail.htm?soldierId=6E0D3DA3-DC7A-DF11-BF36-B8AC6F5D926A> (accessed 18 December 2023)

⁴⁵ Frederick Lloyd, 'Joseph Evan Griffith', *The Annals of Iowa* 4 (1900), 294.

had their nativity listed as ‘Wales’ on the official roster: Edward Breese, Griffith W. Griffith and Thomas E. Marsden in Company I, and Richard Thomas of Company A – all resident in Iowa City.⁴⁶

Griffith’s quick intelligence had early on secured his promotion to the rank of sergeant, so that when he crossed the Mississippi from Carthage to Hard Times Landing on the 30th of April, he carried this rank with him in his ‘baptism of blood’ the next day at the battle of Port Gibson, the first in the series of actions in the rear of Vicksburg. After a hard struggle against Confederate forces in Mississippi and Tennessee, it was at the siege of Vicksburg, in an engagement known as the ‘Railroad Redoubt’ on the 22nd of May 1863 that Sergeant Griffith distinguished himself.

The 22nd Iowa’s regimental historian, Lieutenant S.C. Jones of Company A, gave a short but evocative account of the fight in his diary. At 10:15am, the army ‘arose at once as if by magic out of the ground’ then charged the fort. At once, they were met with Confederate grape and canister shot, ‘belching forth flame and missiles of death,’ yet despite this, Jones claimed that the regiment steadily ‘pushed up on the slope into the ditch and over the parapet, placed the flag on the fort, and kept it there for some time.’⁴⁷ Griffith entered the redoubt with a detachment of the 22nd Iowa and planted the Union flag on the battlements. After a prolonged struggle, he found himself to be the last survivor, at which point he escorted 13 Confederate prisoners out of the redoubt back to Union lines. For his actions, he was granted the rank of lieutenant as well as given a scholarship to West Point. None of this information is evident in Jones’ own account. He noted that 13 prisoners were taken out of the fort, but neglected to

⁴⁶ ‘Historical Sketch Twenty-Second Regiment Iowa Volunteer Infantry’, Roster and Records of Iowa Soldiers, Iowa in the Civil War, <http://iagenweb.org/civilwar/books/logan/mil506.htm> (accessed 18 December 2023), pp.576-668.

⁴⁷ S.C. Jones, *Reminiscences of the Twenty-Second Iowa Volunteer Infantry, Giving its Organization, Marches, Skirmishes, Battles and Sieges, as taken from the diary of Lieutenant S.C. Jones of Company A*, (Iowa City, 1907), <https://archive.org/details/reminiscencesoft01jone/page/n111/mode/2up> (accessed 18 December 2023), p.38.

mention Griffith's role in the action, claiming that the storming party contained 'only a few of our boys.'⁴⁸ His own recollections were of being under terrible cannon and rifle fire, sheltering in a ditch at the fort's base with some sharpshooters who picked off any rebel Confederate who made targets of themselves. Therefore, he was unable to provide an accurate recollection of the hand-to-hand fighting that Griffith and others of Company I endured inside the Confederate breastworks.

As has been discussed in Chapter Three, Sergeant Griffith was able to provide his own, vivid combat recollection to the *Cenhadwr* in July 1863. He confessed that Vicksburg looked 'unfeasible to storm,' yet he was resigned to carry on regardless. As the unit advanced, he witnessed his colonel shot in front of him, then 'on a charge we leapt at the trenches and met the enemy on the face of their embankments...the enemy had only to load their guns and aim them down.' They captured the redoubt and held it for eight hours, 'until almost all the boys were killed.' Unsurprisingly, he called it an 'unforgettable Friday.'⁴⁹ Like Powell, Griffith did not paint himself as a hero, merely as a survivor of terrible events. Rather than focusing on his own exploits, he emphasised the bravery of his comrades and commanding officers, as well as providing an authentic glimpse into the helplessness of combat.

Other sources, however, indicate that he was viewed as a patriot for of his actions. One example is Brigadier General Michael K. Lawler's military report on the 26th of May 1863. While stating that it was useless to mention all those who distinguished themselves for bravery, Lawler nonetheless singled out Griffith for public commendation. He wrote that, while all officers and men did their duty nobly, 'Joseph E. Griffith, Company I, Twenty-

⁴⁸ Jones, *Reminiscences of the Twenty-Second Iowa*, p.38.

⁴⁹ 'Llythyr oddiwrth Jos.E. Griffiths' in *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, July 1863

second Iowa Volunteers, distinguished himself particularly in the charge on the fort, and is the only survivor but one of the men who took it in the morning.’⁵⁰

Not only did Brigadier General Lawler praise him for his actions, so too did his Divisional Commander, General E.A. Carr. He congratulated his division in an announcement which was later published in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*:

In a former order I attempted to name those who had particularly distinguished themselves. in this it is simply impossible. Almost every man has performed deeds which in ordinary battles would entitle him to special attention. Perhaps it will not be amiss to name Sergeant Joseph E. Griffith, Company I, 22d Regiment Iowa Infantry, who went into the fort attacked by the 2d Brigade with eleven men and came out with twelve prisoners. All of his companions were killed.⁵¹

Once again, on a day consisting of extraordinary individual bravery, Griffith received public distinction above others. As if this wasn’t enough, his actions were subsequently lauded by his Corps Commander, Major General John A. McClelland, in a letter to Governor Richard Yates of Illinois, also appearing in the *Tribune*:

Twelve men went into it; eleven were killed, and the twelfth, aided by our sharp shooters on the top of the parapet, captured and brought out twelve rebels – a feat

⁵⁰ ‘Report of Brigadier General Michael K. Lawler US Army commanding Second Brigade, Fourteenth Division, including operations May 2-22’ in *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, prepped by Lieutenant Colonel Robert N. Scott, Volume 24 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1889), p.142.

⁵¹ ‘Gen. Carr’s Congratulatory Order’ in *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 6 June 1863

more daring and successful is hardly recorded. Its achiever was Sergeant Joseph E. Griffith, Company I, 22d Iowa Volunteer Infantry, who deserves equal admiration and praise.⁵²

Given the dismal failure of the overall assault, it is understandable how the upper echelons of Grant's army were eager to find some examples of success that they could laud in public, which may partly justify this level of praise from senior commanders to a non-commissioned officer. Nonetheless, Griffith was presented as an exceptional example of the Union soldiery, exhibiting both courage and daring. This was reflected in the opinions of his commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Warmoth, who sent his own report of Griffith's actions to several newspapers, providing further detail into how Griffith accomplished his daring feat.

The *Tipton Advertiser*, relaying Warmoth's report, claimed that Sergeant Griffith was knocked insensible after a Confederate counterattack, but he managed to regain consciousness just as ten rebels had fired their muskets. He then 'sprang to his feet, caught his musket, took the rebels all prisoners and marched them to Federal lines.'⁵³ This made his brush with death even more visceral to readers, depicting his actions as both gallant and plucky. Subsequently, the *Muscatine Weekly Journal* lauded the exploits of the 'Iowa Boy at Vicksburg,' adding further details to the story. It wrote that Griffith had killed a rebel captain, then knocked down two men with the butt of his musket, before escorting the rest to Federal lines. It summarised its appraisal in this manner: 'Griffith is represented as quite a youth, but

⁵² 'The Siege of Vicksburg: Letter from Gen. McClelland to Gov. Yates' in *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 18 June 1863

⁵³ *Tipton Advertiser* 4 June 1863

as we can seem not lacking in courage.’⁵⁴ As has been established as a pattern, his status as an immigrant was not discussed, only the adoration of his soldierly virtues.

Having explored the extent to which Griffith’s exploits were publicised, it is therefore curious that, as an eyewitness, S.C. Jones failed to mention the Welsh sergeant from his own regiment, although as an active combatant, Jones can be forgiven for his preoccupation with his surroundings during the battle. A possible justification for this omission could be its nature as a source of collective, rather than individual history, as highlighting the heroism of one soldier would have detracted from the courage shown by every other soldier of the regiment. Another eyewitness account from the 22nd Iowa, the letters of the brothers George and Lycurgus Remley, similarly made no mention of Griffith’s accomplishment at the Railroad Redoubt:

A few words about the charge of the 22nd of which you will have doubtless heard before this reaches you. On the 22nd of this month the 22nd Iowa stormed one of the strongest rebel forts, drove the enemy from and took possession of one end of it, and kept our flag – not the regimental flag – on the top of the earthworks for about five hours, when the rebels made a charge, regained possession of the entire fort and made prisoners of some of our men who were in the fort – among whom was Harvey Graham – the others escaping amid a perfect shower of bullets.⁵⁵

The brothers’ narrative was about the collective achievement of the regiment, framing the action almost as if they were solely responsible for placing the regiment’s banner on the

⁵⁴ ‘Exploits of an Iowa Boy at Vicksburg’ in *Muscatine Weekly Journal* 19 June 1863

⁵⁵ Julie Holcomb (ed), *Southern Sons, Northern Soldiers: The Civil War Letters of the Remley Brothers 22nd Iowa Infantry*, (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2004), p.69.

enemy earthworks. The brothers could well have been in the unit giving supporting fire, far from the carnage of the redoubt itself, yet Griffith's achievements are made the regiment's own. A possible explanation is that, because the Remley brothers were writing to their parents at home, they were eager to magnify their antics, or likewise to obscure their closeness to danger. More likely, the explanation lies in the toll suffered by the 22nd Iowa, for heaping praise on an individual diverted attention away from the losses suffered during the assault.

John S. Kountz served in an Ohio regiment during the war, winning a medal of honour for his service. He wrote a record of the siege of Vicksburg in 1895, where there is a single paragraph where Griffith is mentioned. He wrote that Sergeants Joseph E. Griffith and N.C. Messenger and about 12 others entered the redoubt by scaling the parapet at the salient angle, where a converging artillery fire had partially breached it. However, as this was the only point of the Confederate line of defence that had been penetrated, the rebels had re-fortified the interior facing this position, so 'although the most of its defenders had abandoned the redoubt, the intruders were soon compelled to retire to the outside of the parapet after sustaining severe loss.'⁵⁶

Unlike some primary accounts celebrating Griffith's courage under fire, Kountz wrote a mere passing reference to what was undoubtedly a furious firefight that surely deserved better commemoration. Then again, his account reflects a more standard military report, for despite the promotion and celebration of Griffith's bravery, the assault on the redoubt was still a defeat, and unless written by an eyewitness or a participant, it is logical why it only received a cursory description in Kountz' wider narrative of the siege. Regardless, Griffith's

⁵⁶ John S. Kountz, *Record of the Organizations Engaged in the Campaign, Siege and Defence of Vicksburg*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1901), p.68.

comparative absence from the historical record reinforces the validity of adopting a chapter methodology of micro-studies.

A later excerpt from S.C. Jones' book is more revealing of Griffith's nobility of character, something that was likewise a source of great admiration. He remembered Griffith as an admirable and kind-natured man in an interesting personal anecdote:

On the 11th we moved to Brashear City. Lieutenant Joseph E. Griffith joined the regiment today after an extended leave of absence. Lieutenant Griffith came to me and told me that my father was sick and not expected to live, when he left home (our homes are in the same neighbourhood). I told him I had no word from home for a long time. He urged me to apply for a leave of absence and wrote out an application and went with me until I procured the necessary signatures of Commanders of Regiment, Brigade and Division.⁵⁷

This suggests a much deeper level of familiarity than previously indicated, for according to Jones, he and Griffith were from the same neighbourhood in Iowa City, thus he was likely to be aware of the latter's Welsh heritage. Despite this, as was the case with Powell's depiction in Sutton's account, Jones did not feel the need to emphasise this at all, indicating that he saw him as no different than any other Iowan volunteer. As men that grew up in the same neighbourhood in Iowa City, as well as stemming from a diverse town rather than a rural, insular community, the likelihood of cultural amalgamation was much higher. Jones stressed that Lieutenant Griffith was an excellent example of a northern officer, particularly concerning his kindness and nobility of character. As Sutton and Lang did with General

⁵⁷ Jones, *Reminiscences of the Twenty-Second Iowa*, p.49.

Powell, Lieutenant Griffith was viewed as a model of martial behaviour by some of his contemporaries.

An informative indication of how the Union army facilitated cultural and national inclusion is the fact that after the war, Griffith pursued a career as a professional soldier. An article by J. J. Jones, writing from New York appeared in the *Cenhadwr* in August 1867 which regarded Griffith as an exemplary American soldier. Firstly, it described his success at West Point, saying that he had finished in the top five of his class out of 63 cadets, and that General Grant himself congratulated him ‘from the bottom of his heart.’ Subsequently, the editor allowed ‘Yankee’ voices to also share their admiration for the young man, including a letter written by an anonymous officer from the academy:

Last evening, we received a call from Lieutenant Joseph E. Griffith, late Sergeant in Company I, 22 Iowa Infantry, now first Lieutenant in that company. The story of the gallant daring exhibited by this young Iowa officer, has already been related in the Gazette and repeated all over the North. We have heard from his own lips the simple tale of the fearful attack on the fort, its capture, the killing and wounding of every Federal soldier in it, Lieutenant Griffith himself being among the wounded, and his final return to our lines with thirteen prisoners.⁵⁸

This reinforces the supposition that in some military circles, Griffith’s actions were commonly known. While meant as an off-hand comment, the reference to the ‘young Iowa officer’ further shows the importance of regionalism in the definition of military identity. Regarding the presentation of this identity, there is a clear dichotomy of how he was viewed

⁵⁸ ‘Athrofa Filwraidd Prif-Wersyllfa Unol Dalaethau America’ in *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, August 1867

by Anglo-American contemporaries and Welsh-Americans. This officer's account suggests that Lieutenant Griffith was viewed as a homogenous northern officer, not as a distinctly different immigrant. However, the Welsh author of the article interpreted Griffith as the culmination of the best aspects of a Welsh identity:

Pe dygwyddai for ar genedl y Cymry yn yr oes bresenol angen am wasaneth gwr megys Oliver Cromwell, y Rhaglaw Joseph E Griffith yw y dyn, yn berffaith ym mhob ystyr, os nid yn rhagorach o ran ei orchestion cynar a'I ddysgeidiaeth...oblegyd mae y gwr ieuanc dewr a glew hwn yn anrhydedd I'w genedl, ac yn haeddu canmoliaeth y Cymry yn gymaint a'r Americanaid.⁵⁹

If it happened that the Welsh nation in this present age needed the service of a man like Oliver Cromwell, Lieutenant Joseph E. Griffith is that man, perfect in every way, if not better considering his early achievements and his teaching...because this brave young man is an honour to the nation and deserves the praise of the Welsh as much as the Americans.

This depiction of Griffith was as a credit to the Welsh nation, perfect in every way. He was raised as the son of a pastor, so he appeared to conform to the religious convictions so beloved of the Welsh-language press. However, the author ensured to distinguish between the Welsh and the Americans who praised the new lieutenant, firmly attempting to claim Griffith as a member of the former, distinct nation. This was utterly at odds with how he had been presented by Anglo-American sources and alludes to one of the prevailing themes of Welsh-

⁵⁹ 'Athrofa Filwraidd Prif-Wersyllfa Unol Dalaethau America' in *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, August 1867

American identity throughout the Civil War: that Welsh volunteers both identified as northern patriots and were identified as such by Anglo-American contemporaries, which proved contrary to the vision of Welsh nationalism and exceptionalism promoted by the Welsh-language press of North America.

After the war, Lieutenant Griffith continued to be viewed as a patriot and a veteran in Anglo-American circles. *Daily Gate City* published an article in May 1867 entitled 'Brave Iowa Boy,' notifying its readers of Griffith's imminent graduation from West Point. The article stated: 'Sergeant Joseph E. Griffith, of Iowa City, celebrated as the 'Sergeant Griffith' of the 22nd Iowa Infantry, who distinguished himself at the charge on the Rebel's works at Vicksburg, on the 22d of May 1863, will graduate at West Point this year, at the head of his class.'⁶⁰ The article's emphasis on 'The' Sergeant Griffith indicates that he was a figure of renown in his locale of Iowa City, and that his primary identity was not as a Welshman nor an American, but as an Iowan first and foremost.

After his graduation, Griffith was assigned to the engineer corps where he continued to excel. The Adjutant General of Iowa's military report in 1876 listed Griffith as having been promoted to the rank of a lieutenant colonel.⁶¹ After resigning from the army, he accepted a position as a civil engineer for a while, before settling down in his home of Iowa City as a commercial businessman. It was there that he died suddenly in July 1877 at the age of 34, leaving behind a widow and three children.⁶² Reports of his death show that he was mourned in national circles as well as in local ones. The *Rock Island Argus* of Illinois reported that he died of apoplexy: 'Capt Joseph E. Griffith, known historically for gallantry at Vicksburg during the war, was a graduate of West Point, connected with the engineer corps, US Army,

⁶⁰ 'Brave Iowa Boy' in *The Daily Gate City*, 23 May 1867

⁶¹ 'The Iowa Adjutant General Report 1876 - Roster,' *U.S., Adjutant General Military Records, 1631-1976* [database on-line] Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011 <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1873/> (accessed 18 December 2023), p.24

⁶² Lloyd, 'Joseph Evan Griffith', 297.

and in that capacity long occupied with the survey of the lakes, died here this morning, aged 36 years.’⁶³ The *New York Herald* copied the *Argus*’ story the next day, also noting that Griffith was known for ‘gallantry at Vicksburg during the late war.’⁶⁴ Decades later, in 1893 the *National Tribune* published a commemorative article about the 22nd Iowa, citing Griffith’s extraordinary bravery during the assault on the Railroad Redoubt. It described that, at one time during the assault, ‘Serg’t Joseph E. Griffith, of Co. I, with a squad of 20 men, climbed the wall of the fort, and effecting an entrance engaged in a hand-to-hand fight, from which the Sergeant and only one man returned alive.’⁶⁵

In a similar manner to the obituaries that were analysed in the previous chapter, Griffith’s actions during the war were posthumously memorialised as the deeds of a northern patriot. Here he was remembered not as a Welsh soldier, but as an American patriot. It was only a brief citation, yet having his name commemorated in a major Washington newspaper long after the Civil War had ended is an effective indication of how Welsh veterans reaffirmed their place in northern society, directly and indirectly, as a result of military service.

Exceptions to the Union rule: Evan Rowland Jones and Joshua T. Owen

Two other immigrants who achieved much due to military service are absent from the available Welsh-language accounts of the war: Joshua T. Owen and Evan Rowland Jones, whose diary has provided much insight into Welsh-American Union soldiers. The former proved an exception to the Union rule because he did not match the sterling records of William H. Powell and Joseph E. Griffith, while the latter contrasted with the archetypal

⁶³ ‘Death from Apoplexy’ in *The Rock Island Argus*, 7 July 1877

⁶⁴ ‘Captain Joseph E. Griffith’ in *The New York Herald*, 8 July 1877

⁶⁵ ‘The 22d Iowa’ in *The National Tribune*, 5 October 1893

image of a Welsh-American volunteer because he renounced his American identity after the war.

Curiously, before and during the war, E.R. Jones appeared to display all the characteristics of having fully settled into his adopted community. He was born in Tregaron, Ceredigion in 1840, then emigrated in 1856 to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where he found work as a shop clerk. He was a fervent abolitionist and a supporter of the Republican party, so much so that he became a founding member of the Welsh anti-slavery society of Milwaukee in 1860, while also serving as its secretary.⁶⁶ When war broke out, he was 21 years old and viewed it as his duty to enlist with his friends, conveying both an element of community identity as well as a degree of naïve adventurism. His eye-witness account indicated that he viewed himself as a dutiful northerner, for there is not a single mention of his Welsh heritage throughout his memoir.

He served with distinction with the 5th Wisconsin, fighting at such battles as Antietam, Fredericksburg, Gettysburg and the Wilderness, eventually being promoted to the rank of major at the end of the war. Soon after, he was offered a job in the Wisconsin State Department by his former commanding officer, Thomas Allen, who was the State Secretary for Wisconsin between 1866-70. Initially, his post-war experience was of an American veteran adjusting to civilian life. After some years of working under Thomas Allen in the State Department, in 1869 he was appointed by the US government as the American consul in Newcastle. From there, his career as an author blossomed, publishing numerous books such as *The Emigrant's Friend* in 1880, a guidebook for immigrants to the United States, just as he had been. A year later, he published his diary of his time with the 5th Wisconsin. Next, he

⁶⁶ 'Major Evan R. Dies – Editor of the "Shipping World" was Civil War Veteran' in *New York Tribune* 17 January 1920

founded the magazine *Shipping World*, which he ran as editor until his death in 1920. Up to that point, he appeared to be living his life as an integrated immigrant.

However, everything changed when he received a promotion in 1883, when he was appointed as the American consul for Cardiff. This position also included Cardiff's dependencies, which included the ports of Newport, Swansea and Llanelli, as well as Cardiff itself, one of the largest ports in the world due to its coal exports. It is from this point, when he was exposed to his native country once more, that a change became noticeable. Professor E. Wyn James pointed out that Jones threw himself back into his native roots, forming the 'Society for Utilising the Welsh Language' and 'Cardiff Fellows' in 1885, which were aimed at promoting the use of Welsh in schools and strengthening the native Welsh character of Cardiff against increasing Anglicisation.⁶⁷ Furthermore, he attempted a political career in Wales. The Welsh newspaper *Papur Pawb* stated in April 1893 that Jones was serving as the Member of Parliament for the Borough of Carmarthen.⁶⁸ Interestingly, he was still claiming an American salary despite his renewed Welsh nationalism. According to the Official Register of the United States, in 1885 he was registered as a resident of Cardiff and was receiving \$2000 per year,⁶⁹ a significant sum. In 1887 and then in 1889 he was still receiving an annual sum of \$2000, although the only notable change in the latter year was that he was registered as 'naturalised' in south Wales.⁷⁰

He was not alone in drawing his military pension while residing in Wales. The List of Pensioners on the Roll 1899 reveal that there were several veterans who had moved back to Wales but were still drawing allowances from the U.S. Government. For instance: John O.

⁶⁷ E. W. James, 'Evan Rowland Jones, "Y Major Bach:" Tregaron – Wisconsin – Caerdydd', *Y Dinesydd* September 2020

⁶⁸ 'Isfilwriad Evan Rowland Jones, A.S.' in *Papur Pawb*, 15 April 1893

⁶⁹ 'Ministers, Consuls &c.', Department of State, *Official Register of the United States, Containing a List of the Officers and Employees in the Civil, Military, and Naval Service*, Vol. I, (1885) <https://archive.org/details/officialregister1885ames/page/n7/mode/2up> (accessed 18 December 2023), p.25.

⁷⁰ Ibid, p.27.

Hughes of Merioneth, north Wales, who had served in Company I, 13th Pennsylvania Infantry Company; David Jones of Swansea, former seaman of the USS New Ironsides; John P. Jones of Caernarfon, north Wales, veteran of Company G, 153rd Pennsylvania; Owen Owens of Amlwch Port, north Wales, formerly of Company F, 22nd Wisconsin; Evan Parry of Bangor, north Wales, veteran of Company F, 153rd Pennsylvania; Thomas Williams of Cardiff, south Wales, formerly of Company D, 6th Pennsylvania Cavalry.⁷¹ Therefore, Evan was by no means unique in this regard.

Living in Wales and drawing an American salary does not prove that he rejected the American component of his identity. However, his subsequent actions upon returning to the country of his birth indicate a renewed emphasis on celebrating his native heritage and language. Unfortunately for him, a paper from his adopted home state of Wisconsin took this as a betrayal of his American identity. It described how he came to America from Wales, surrounded by the golden opportunities that America provided. The government was kind to Jones, giving him a job as American consul for south Wales:

Then his head began to turn. He tried to ape the English. He fell dead in love with the queen's dominion. Had he remained in the old country instead of coming to the United States he would be a pauper or working for fifteen shillings a week. Now he is so proud that he is ashamed of his adopted country, has renounced his United States citizenship, and sworn allegiance to Victoria...If he had remained loyal to American ideas and American standards, he would never have won the favour that has induced him to give up his American citizenship.⁷²

⁷¹ Commissioner of Pensions, *Names and Addresses of the Pensioners of the United States Living in Foreign Countries Other than Canada, January 31, 1899*, (Washington: Pension Bureau, 1899), p.46.

⁷² 'Story of a Mugwump: How Jones was cared for by Uncle Sam and then deserted him' in *Wood County Reporter*, 28 January 1892

The columnist emitted a sense of genuine betrayal at Jones' decision to stay in Wales. To some extent, it was indicative of how the Welsh were considered as American as any others after their service in the war, which was precisely what they had been fighting for in the first place. But in the case of Jones returning to the old country, especially for a veteran employed in a high office of the American government, this was seen as a refusal of the liberty for which he had fought. Consequently, it was not just the Welsh papers that could condemn Welsh volunteers for anti-American behaviour. This is indicative of two things: firstly, that Welshmen who fought for the Union could renounce any feeling of national belonging if the environment had no need for it; secondly, that Welsh immigrants in northern states could be and were believed to be integrated citizens by Anglo-American audiences.

Joshua T. Owen was a similar example of an immigrant volunteer who achieved remarkable success due to his career in the Civil War yet became the subject of some controversy. Contrary to E.R. Jones' case, of an American consul publicly rejecting his American identity, Owen conformed to the image of an integrated Welsh immigrant like Powell and Griffith. Owen was born in Carmarthen, emigrated to the United States with his family as a youth, then eventually settled in Philadelphia. He became a man of local note and stature. In 1845 he was graduated from Jefferson College in Canonsburg, Pennsylvania; he then engaged in teaching with his brother in the Chestnut Hill Academy and in the practice of Law. He was a member of the Pennsylvania legislature from 1857 until 1859 and of the militia as a private in the 1st City Troop of Philadelphia.⁷³ As a lawyer he was successful and fairly wealthy. The U.S. 1860 census recorded that his annual personal estate was worth \$1000 dollars, or

⁷³ Warner, *Generals in Blue*, p.353.

approximately \$36,500 in today's estimations, but his real estate value was \$17,000, something closer to \$621,300.⁷⁴

Once the war broke out, he enlisted immediately, commanding the nine-month 25th Pennsylvania Regiment, after which he became the colonel of the predominantly Irish 69th Pennsylvania Volunteer Regiment, which he raised himself in Philadelphia. He was then promoted to the rank of brigadier-general in November 1862, commanding the Philadelphia Brigade, constituting the Irish-heavy 72nd and 106th Pennsylvania Volunteers alongside his own 69th.⁷⁵ Apart from William H. Powell, Owen was the only other Welsh immigrant who became a general, yet unlike his counterpart from West Virginia, mention of Owen's high-rank was utterly absent from the Welsh-language media during the Civil War.

Contrary to the examples of Powell and Griffith however, Owen's name was shrouded in controversy, which may explain his absence from Welsh-language records. General Joshua T. Owen had a stain against his military reputation as he was arrested, twice, by his divisional commander, General John Gibbon. The first time was just before the battle of Gettysburg in June 1863, while the second followed the battle of Cold Harbor in June 1864, which precipitated Owen's court martial and discharge from the army. The contemporary claim was that Owen was arrested for cowardice and negligence of duty, yet from a closer examination the real reason behind his arrest is not entirely transparent. At the time, Gibbon attested it to his penchant for drinking, but strangely made no mention of it in his memoirs. Consequently, General Owen missed commanding his brigade in the most famous battle of the war, nor was his reputation done any favours by his forcible discharge. Owen proved to be a devoted northern citizen throughout his life, yet his conduct during the war was not beyond reproach

⁷⁴ 'Joshua T. Owen,' 1860 United States Federal Census [database on-line] Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2009 <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/7667/> (accessed 18 December 2023)

⁷⁵ 'Joshua T. Owen', Civil War Veterans' Card File, 1861-1866, Pennsylvania State Archives, <http://www.digitalarchives.state.pa.us/archive.asp?view=ArchiveItems&ArchiveID=17&FID=1350900&LID=1350949&FL=O&Page=1> (accessed 18 December 2023)

and thus did not adhere to the idealised perception of a Welsh-American volunteer that Welsh society demanded.

Owen proved a controversial figure throughout the war. There are some revealing articles in Anglo-American newspapers about his conduct as Colonel of the 69th Pennsylvania Volunteers. For example, in November 1862, the *Wood County Reporter* wrote that Colonel Owen had been court-martialled for ‘conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline, and unbecoming an officer and a gentleman.’⁷⁶ Thus, he was no stranger to abrasive behaviour. The report claimed that Colonel Owen had been very much intoxicated and, rather than being stationed with his regiment, he had been found late in the afternoon in the streets of Harper’s Ferry, engaged in a scandalous quarrel and collision with the lieutenant colonel of his own regiment, by whom he was pulled from his horse and thrown violently to the ground. After this point, he was arrested by the provosts.⁷⁷

Considering his eventual court martial and discharge in June 1864, it would appear at first glance that accusations of his incompetence were well founded, stemming from such early instances of abrasive behaviour as his brawl in Harpers Ferry. Public intoxication, especially as a high-ranking officer, would certainly have been enough to rankle prohibitionists and Sons of Temperance within Owen’s immediate circle of officers. The men under his command, however, as predominantly Irish-born Philadelphians, saw differently. The *Reporter* stated that, fortunately, the court martial sentence was re-commissioned on the basis of Owen’s previous good character, but also due to a collective testimony delivered by the men of the 69th Pennsylvania, defending their colonel as a zealous and obedient officer who had displayed great gallantry and conduct on the field of battle.⁷⁸ Owen was clearly a

⁷⁶ ‘Gen. McClellan on Delinquent Officers’ in *The Wood County Reporter*, 15 November 1862

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

respected officer, although admittedly unconventional. His apparent fondness for drink may have endeared him more to the soldiers under his command, who had already been impressed by his gallantry and conduct as a commander.

He was not treated as a Welsh outsider but as a fellow American, as implied by a ballad composed by Private Arthur Fadden of Company B, 69th Pennsylvania Regiment. According to Fadden, under ‘brave Owens,’ the Irish volunteers of the 69th would be led into ‘Dixie’s land,’ carrying aloft the stars and stripes of ‘our own true flag.’ This imagery is reminiscent of Welsh-language enlistment rhetoric from both volunteers and bards in the press and thus references the wider patterns of immigrant nationalism at the beginning of the war. Notably, Fadden ended his ballad with these lyrics: ‘There is nothing like brave Owens, and his Irish Volunteers.’⁷⁹

While Fadden distinguished his colonel as a non-Irishman, this was a source of pride more than anything. Given the aim of his prose was to highlight the Irish quality of the regiment, distinguishing them as patriots fighting for their adopted country, it is strange that Owen’s status as a Welsh immigrant was not advertised. This either suggests that his heritage was not known by the men under his command, or perhaps more likely, that Fadden and others already viewed their colonel as an integrated northerner, as they aspired to be perceived. Above all, Owen was viewed as brave, which as has been discussed, was a fundamental component of contemporary northern masculinity.

His popularity in the 69th is alluded to in Charles H. Banes’ *History of the Philadelphia Brigade*, which was published in 1876. Banes had previously served as the captain of Company E, 72nd Pennsylvania Regiment and as such, his eye-witness testimony of Owen’s

⁷⁹ ‘Col. Owens’ gallant Irish volunteers,’ J. H. Johnson, No. 7 North Tenth Street, Phila. Monographic. Online Text. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, www.loc.gov/item/amss.cw101000/ (accessed 18 December 2023)

character as an officer reflected the latter's apparent nobility and professionalism. The first description of Colonel Owen was that he was 'calculated by his generous and genial spirit in camp and his bearing in action.'⁸⁰ Furthermore, Banes argued that the 69th in particular had become the rivals of the other regiments in the Philadelphia Brigade as a result of Owen's leadership, creating envy for 'acquiring the knowledge of the duties of a soldier...being noted for its faithfulness on guard and for the tenacity of its men in following orders.'⁸¹ Therefore, contrary to the image of the drunk and disorderly man arrested in Harpers Ferry, one contemporary opinion was that Owen kept his men under the tightest level of discipline.

However, Owen's controversy in the Anglo-American press persisted. In December 1863, an allegation was aimed at Owen from a Minnesota periodical for decidedly un-patriotic behaviour. The *Weekly Pioneer and Democrat* accused him of damaging the reputation of the 1st Minnesota Regiment in order to further his political career. The paper alleged that a claim had been made originally in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* that the 1st Minnesota had strayed from its proper position during the battle of Bristoe Station in October 1863 and had to be taken in hand by a certain General Joshua T. Owen, of Pennsylvania, who formed the regiment 'in his line and so handled it as to do effective service.'⁸² Owen attached his correspondence with General Webb pointing out that the mistake had already been rectified: 'I herewith enclose a copy of my report of the action at Bristow Station, affecting the reputation of the First Minnesota Regiment; it will afford me pleasure to make an official correction of the same. I respectfully decline to correct other people's errors.'⁸³

⁸⁰ Charles H. Banes, *History of the Philadelphia Brigade: Sixty-ninth, Seventy-first, Seventy-second, and One Hundred and Sixth Pennsylvania Volunteers*, (Philadelphia: Lippincott & CO, 1876), https://books.google.co.uk/books?redir_esc=y&id=PTILAAAAMAAJ&q=owen#v=onepage&q&f=false, (accessed 18 December 2023), p.14.

⁸¹ Ibid, p.34.

⁸² 'The Regiment Vindicated' in *The Weekly Pioneer and Democrat*, 11 December 1863

⁸³ Ibid.

Regardless of the merits of his measured reaction to the *Democrat's* public accusations, this incident added further criticism to his already mixed reputation in certain circles. As if to reinforce that Owen was no friend of the newspapers, he was mistakenly reported as killed in action twice. On the 18th of May 1864 the *Portland Daily Press* reported he had fallen near Spottsylvania at the head of his brigade.⁸⁴ It wrote that he had been involved in every major engagement, from Bull Run to Antietam, Chancellorsville, and Gettysburg, as well as stating he had won especial mention for bravery at the battle of Bristoe Station, the same engagement that he had been accused of falsifying the conduct of the 1st Minnesota. The *Daily Press* believed it was writing the general's obituary, so it emphasised his involvement in the major battles of the war, despite the fact that he did not actually fight at Gettysburg. It highlights how Owen's image was a mixed one, with some newspapers condemning his behaviour, with others lauding his performance.

The next day the *Nashville Daily Union* also claimed he had been killed in the battle near Spottsylvania Court House.⁸⁵ Fortunately, this mistake was rectified by the Washington *Evening Star*:

This officer has been reported killed twice during this campaign, and the second time the statement was so positive that Philadelphia papers wrote long obituary notices. We now learn that Gen. Owen was still alive yesterday. He has had two horses shot under him – the last one about three days ago; and the animal fell so heavily upon him that he was for a time insensible and was carried to a hospital.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ 'The Death of Gen. Owen' in *The Portland Daily Press*, 18 May 1864

⁸⁵ 'Gen Owen' in *The Nashville Daily Union*, 19 May 1864

⁸⁶ 'Gen. Joshua T. Owen' in *The Evening Star*, 16 May 1864

Moreover, according to the *Stroudsburg Jeffersonian* of Pennsylvania, he lost a finger as a result of combat.⁸⁷ The *Bedford Gazette* of Pennsylvania echoed this story, reporting with relief that ‘Brig. Gen. Joshua T. Owen is not as dead as reported. He is still on duty, having only lost one finger.’⁸⁸ If Owen had survived two horses being shot from under him, as well as losing a finger in combat, it demonstrated to Owen’s Pennsylvanian supporters that he was throwing himself into the thick of danger. It was somewhat expected for Union officers to lead from the front during battle and it appears that Owen certainly adhered to this practice. This Welsh general was publicly seen to be living up to the expectations of an ideal Union volunteer, leading his men from the front in the pursuit of his duty. Additionally, the *Evening Star*’s description of how news of Owen’s death caused long obituaries to appear in Philadelphia newspapers alludes to the regional aspect of Owen’s identity, and that regardless of how other state papers viewed him, those from Philadelphia and other areas of Pennsylvania believed him to be a northern, or more specifically a local, patriot.

Samuel Bates in his 1869 *History of Pennsylvania Volunteers* presented Owen as a more than competent combat officer, displaying no indication of an unwillingness to fight or showing any lapse of duty. His conduct at the battle of Charles City Crossroads, on the sixth day of the Seven Days Campaign in June 1862 was exemplary by all accounts, and much praised by his colleagues. Bates described how the 69th Regiment was brought up to halt the rebel advance. To give his men assurance Colonel Owen had ordered them to kneel. He waited until the rebel line emerged from the woods within fifty yards, then brought it to a halt by a musket volley:

⁸⁷ ‘Gen. Joshua T. Owen’ in *The Jeffersonian*, 19 May 1864

⁸⁸ *Bedford Gazette*, 20 May 1864

The order to fix bayonets and charge was given and springing to their feet the men rushed on in the most daring and impetuous manner, driving the enemy in utter rout, pursuing him beyond his original ground, and holding it undisturbed until midnight, and until withdrawn.⁸⁹

Bates's initial impression of Owen is one of simple yet effective competence. More revealing of Owen's standing among military circles was General Hooker's official report of the engagement. Hooker's account was full of praise for Owen's conduct at the head of his regiment:

After great loss the enemy gave way and were instantly followed with great gallantry by Grover...while the Sixty-ninth Pennsylvania heroically led by Owen, advanced in the open field on their flank, with almost reckless daring...As Colonel Owen has rendered me no report of the operations of his regiment I can only express my high appreciation of his services.⁹⁰

His own commander stated openly that Owen led his men 'heroically' during the battle. As was seen in Powell's example, those in military circles appreciated Owen's conduct as a talented soldier. Charles Banes' brigade history shared this assessment of Owen's proficiency as a combat leader. He described his experience of the battle of Fredericksburg in blunt terms, describing how they were exposed to a crossfire of artillery, witnessing men struck

⁸⁹ Samuel P. Bates, *History of Pennsylvania Volunteers, 1861-5; Prepared in Compliance with Acts of Legislature* (Harrisburg: B. Singerley, 1869), Vol. II.
<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moa/aby3439.0002.001/709?page=root;sid=778308149b189f58bf191421757c33c6;size=100;view=image;q1=Sixty-Ninth+Regiment> (accessed 18 December 2023), p.699.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p.700.

down, ‘lacerated by the bursting shells, while the posts and fences along the road were torn to pieces and the fragments sent flying in the air.’⁹¹ Adhering to the contemporary obsession with expressing one’s courage, he wrote that in the face of this barrage, ‘without hesitating, the brigade followed its gallant leader, General Owen, and, crossing the bridge, formed front in line of battle on the open field.’⁹² Owen was in fact leading the brigade from the front and was one of the first men across the bridge, indicating that he was consistently modelling his courage under fire.

Crucially, he was not perceived to be reckless. The veracity of this assumption is vindicated later on in Banes’ account. During the prelude to the Chancellorsville campaign, while crossing the river below Fredericksburg, Banes observed the presence of three general officers: Hunt, Benham and Owen, representing three arms of the service. Seeing this, he commented that ‘there was no immediate danger from lack of competent leaders if there was any opportunity for glory.’⁹³ Throughout his account, Banes had portrayed General Owen as a cautious yet thoroughly competent commander, who proved jovial and admirable, inspiring a firm loyalty from his men.

As is the case with General William Powell, there are only a few scholarly assessments of Owen’s qualities as a commander. Francis O’Reilly, in his 2003 analysis of Owen’s leadership of his brigade at Fredericksburg deemed him a cautious yet thoroughly competent commander. He was observed leading his brigade in house-to-house fighting, even flanking Confederate position in the dark, involving himself in the thick of the action. Indeed, O’Reilly referred to him as ‘Feisty Joshua Owen.’⁹⁴ Then, when pinned down in the enfilade of the stone wall, Owen held a tight control over his men, refusing to let them fire at the stone

⁹¹ Banes, *History of the Philadelphia Brigade*, p.141.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid, p.160.

⁹⁴ Francis Augustin O’Reilly, *The Fredericksburg Campaign: Winter War on the Rappahannock*, (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2003), p.96.

wall. His decision kept the brigade from wasting bullets, although it disillusioned many of his soldiers. General Howard, the divisional commander, on the other hand, marvelled at the staying power of Owen's brigade, dubbing them the Stonewall brigade.⁹⁵

The battle of Cold Harbor in June 1864, where Owen's conduct led him to be arrested and discharged from the army by General Gibbon, has been examined in detail by Gordon Rhea. The latter concluded with O'Reilly's assessment that Owen was competent, courageous, and above all, considerate of his men. Gibbon wanted the Philadelphia Brigade to attack in column, and he made that point explicit: Owen was to 'assault the enemy's works with his brigade in column in rear of the right of Colonel Smyth's brigade.' Owen started out as directed, massing his brigade in eight lines and pushing ahead behind Smyth's right flank. When he reached the swampy terrain on Smyth's right however, he decided on another tack. Instead of advancing as ordered, he inclined sharply southwest through woods, emerging in line on Smyth's left flank.⁹⁶ Gibbon was furious that Owen didn't support Smyth's assault and pressed charges against him, resulting in his mustering out of service in July.

However, Rhea argued that, in truth, Owen's decision to shift left of Smyth had been an opportune move. Contrary to Gibbon's assertion, Smyth and McMahon had made no lodgement, and throwing Owen's brigade into the Boatswain Creek sector would only have increased Union casualties.⁹⁷ He agreed that Owen was a competent officer who led from the front, and cared deeply for his men; like George Thomas, he never sent his men forward in sacrificial frontal assaults. To an extent, this could justify the reason behind claims of his misconduct before Gettysburg, in that he refused to send his men into needless danger in reckless attacks, unlike many brave yet naïve Union commanders. His own official battlefield

⁹⁵ O'Reilly, *The Fredericksburg Campaign*, p.328.

⁹⁶ Gordon C. Rhea, *Cold Harbor: Grant and Lee, May 6-June 3, 1864*, (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2002), p.339.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p.340.

reports reinforce this supposition. In his descriptions of his conduct under enemy fire, he appeared to follow each order to the letter yet was capable enough to adapt to an unfavourable situation to avoid his men becoming unnecessary casualties. By no means did he appear a coward; only a competent officer who refused to adhere to full frontal assaults on well-defended Confederate positions.

Owen's own report of his brigade's conduct at the battle of Antietam on the 20th of September 1862 shows this clearly. He mentioned taking heavy fire from the enemy's positions, yet he successfully reasserted discipline and kept his men in line. He witnessed the left flank of Sedgwick's division fleeing in panic, followed by General Sumner ordering a withdrawal:

As speedily as possible I restored the brigade to order and assumed a position in support of the reserve batteries. This position proved to be a most formidable one, and the enemy did not dare to attack it, except with artillery and at a great distance, and with ultimate defeat. I take great pleasure in saying from my personal observation that the regimental commanders and field officers behave with great coolness and courage, and that the line officers, with rare exceptions, acquitted themselves with credit...As this is the first occasion of this brigade having fallen back in battle, I beg leave to state in its defense, and as a matter worthy of discussion in a military point of view, whether the disaster was not attributable to its having been placed in too great proximity to the other two lines, and thus, while intended to act as a reserve, subjected to as deadly a fire as those it was intended to support.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ 'Col Joshua T Owen's Official Report: Report of September 20, 1862 on the 2nd Brigade, Sedgwick's Division,' Antietam on the Web, http://antietam.aotw.org/exhibit.php?exhibit_id=123 (accessed 18 December 2023)

His report mentions that this ordered withdrawal was the first time his brigade has been forced to retreat, so Owens felt that he needed to justify that he had been specifically ordered to withdraw, rather than due to a lack of nerve or courage. Moreover, he questioned the orders he received, indicating he was an accomplished officer who was able to use his own initiative and refused to adhere to orders with blind obedience. In this function as a critical thinker, he conducted himself much like a typical citizen soldier. His report on the battle of Fredericksburg similarly revealed his tendency for questioning orders, which may also explain why he maintained a strained relationship with some of his superior officers. His eyewitness testimony of the assault on Marye's Heights shows the utter futility and sacrificial nature of civil war combat, from the perspective of an officer sharing the dangers with his men. While it was typical for Civil War officers to lead from the front, it nevertheless demonstrated a level of bravery that spoke volumes for his character. Early on, his horse was shot from under him:

I threw myself in front of the line, and called upon the brigade to come on, which they instantly did, when, from behind a stone wall at the base of the steep declivity; from rifle-pits on the face of the hill; from two batteries on either side of a large brick house at the top of a hill; from traverses on the right and left flanks of my line, and from a line of infantry drawn up on top of the hill, a most terrific fire was opened upon us. To my amazement, the two lines which I was told to support I found to have been almost entirely annihilated. I instantly ordered my men to halt and lie close to the ground...I immediately directed Lieut. Robert S. Seabury, on my staff, to deploy three companies as skirmishers in the houses to my right and front, which enfiladed

the stone wall and some of the rifle-pits on the face of the hill, which he did in gallant style. This disposition of my men materially checked the enemy's fire, but gradually the fire of his artillery and infantry began to converge upon the position held by my brigade.⁹⁹

This report is an attempt to justify his failure of achieving the required objective, which at ground level was utterly futile by the time he arrived. This is not the opinion of a coward, but a talented commander who refused to follow suicidal orders. Instead, he adapted his tactics, instructing his men to take cover, deploying enough men to provide a screen of protective fire before withdrawing in good order in the face of overwhelming odds. He concluded his report with the following:

I desire also to speak of the conduct of this veteran brigade, which has borne a distinguished part in nine general engagements. It is entitled to, and I trust will receive, that consideration which its long service and uniform good conduct merits.¹⁰⁰

Owen evidently felt the need to emphasise his men's dogged professionalism under fire, especially as they had ultimately failed in their objective, not due to a failure on the men's performance, but rather due to the impossible situation they faced. He was aware that he had abstained from rushing up the slope in massed formation like other units, which explained why his brigade took comparatively few casualties. On the ground, his cautious decision was commendable, yet it is clear how it could have been construed as wilful disobedience of

⁹⁹ 'Report of Col. Joshua T. Owen, Sixty-ninth Pennsylvania Infantry, Commanding Second Brigade.' Civil War Home, <https://civilwarhome.com/owenfredericksburg.html> (accessed 18 December 2023)

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

direct orders. Ultimately, his concern was not with his own reputation, but that of his men, giving further insight into his nature as a respected commander.

In February 1864, his measured approach to operational command was apparent in his report on the engagement at Morton's Ford in Virginia. His account was copied into the *New York Times*:

At 10:35 I received orders to cross the river, which I succeeded in doing, and pushed the enemy back about half a mile, and then under orders not to press the enemy too hard, but to skirmish with him if he appeared so disposed, I halted my advance and made my disposition to hold the favorable ground which I had taken...The passage of the river under the enemy's fire, I consider as worthy of special notice, and I specially mention the good conduct and gallant bearing of my Adjutant-General, Capt. ROBT. S. SEABURY, who was the first to cross the river at the head of the 300 picked skirmishers, and to drive the enemy back from the rifle pits, capturing twenty-seven men and two officers.¹⁰¹

His words reflected a calm and professional soldier, conveying no overestimation or emotive language. He wrote that he successfully pushed the enemy back over the river, then cautiously halted his forward advance to consolidate his position. Owen expressly followed his orders to the letter, perhaps making up for previous accusations, driving the Confederates back whilst maintaining the strict cohesion of his brigade. His conduct appears to have been defined by competence, not cowardice, as Gibbon would have us believe. Mirroring his

¹⁰¹ 'The Army of the Potomac; Gen. Owen's Official Report of the Recent Passage of the River' in *The New York Times*, 8 February 1864

attitude towards his soldiers at Fredericksburg, Owen readily doled out praise to his troops and their junior officers in his report. Even after being assigned to a different brigade, his admiration for his troops is evident, further adding to a portrait of a man who was easily respected by soldiers. In the available primary sources, his Welsh heritage is rarely highlighted, if at all. His brigade being comprised mostly of Irish-Americans might explain his absence from Welsh-language records, as there were few fellow Welsh soldiers to write of his qualities to the press. His actions in and out of combat were interpreted by his contemporaries in the army as prime examples of northern masculinity and gentlemanly conduct.

Despite his discharge from the army in mid-1864, his reputation as a veteran was relatively untarnished within Republican circles in Pennsylvania. Only in certain Democrat newspapers was he viewed with derision, especially during election campaigns. In April 1866, when General John W. Geary ran for the governorship of Pennsylvania as the Republican candidate, Owen was ardent in his support of a fellow veteran. The *Bedford Gazette* took offence at the latter's support of Geary, however, deeming Owen's recommendation as an insult: 'Can we not hear something from General Knipe, or General Tyndale, or General Isaac Wistar, who are soldiers.'¹⁰² The editor thus alluded to Owen's allegations of cowardice, although his perspective may have been tainted by anti-Irish prejudice, given Owen's command of the Philadelphia Brigade, as the *Gazette* also insulted the Irish-born Major General Collis, despite his medal of honour. Contrary to the *Gazette*'s opinion, Owen was viewed as both influential and charismatic by the Union veterans of Philadelphia. In April 1866, the *Philadelphia Evening Telegraph* reported that Owen had been elected president of a group of soldiers campaigning for Geary's election as governor, nicknamed

¹⁰² 'Soldiers to the Rescue' in *The Bedford Gazette* 13 April 1866

‘The Geary Legion.’¹⁰³ Furthermore, such was Owen’s standing among the military community that he was also elected as one of the delegates to represent the Legion at the Soldiers’ State Union Convention held in Philadelphia later that year.¹⁰⁴

Owen’s influence spread among the veterans of Pennsylvania. In July 1866, the *Potter Journal* referred to General Owen as ‘president of the central organisation of the Boys in Blue’ who had, on behalf of this ‘influential body of soldiers’ ensured promises of bounties from General Geary and the U.S. Government upon his successful appointment as Governor.¹⁰⁵ Later, in August of that year, Owen was described by the *Union Flag* as the chairman of the central executive committee of the soldiers and sailors of Pennsylvania, who were meeting in Philadelphia to secure the election of Geary.¹⁰⁶ He became an influential public speaker, representing the interests of Union veterans throughout the state. The editor of the *Elizabeth Daily Monitor* reported that ‘Major General Joshua T. Owen, leader of the Philadelphia Irish Brigade’ was due to speak at the Tannery in Trenton in October 1868, together with Brigadier General Caldwell K. Hall: ‘those who have never heard these gentlemen must not lose the great opportunity now offered.’¹⁰⁷ Even after the war, his national identity was defined by the military. Not only was he still called ‘General’ by his colleagues, but he was also referred to as the ‘Commander of the Boys in Blue’ for Pennsylvania.¹⁰⁸ Despite leaving the army, the army did not leave him, further ensuring his cultural integration as a Union veteran. On the 7th of November 1887 he died at his house in

¹⁰³ ‘The Geary Legion’ in *The Evening Telegraph* 30 April 1866

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ ‘Geary on Bounties’ in *The Potter Journal* 24 July 1866

¹⁰⁶ ‘The Boys in Blue’ in *The Union Flag* 10 August 1866

¹⁰⁷ *Elizabeth Daily Monitor* 27 October 1868

¹⁰⁸ ‘Attention! Soldiers and Sailors’ in *Vermont Daily Transcript* 12 September 1868

Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, aged 66.¹⁰⁹ He was buried in South Laurell Hill Cemetery, in the city not of his birth, but where he certainly called home.

Conclusion

In summary, this chapter's analytical methodology differs from the rest of the thesis in its narrower focus, framing its discourse through a series of micro-studies on four Welsh-born Union volunteers. This approach has utilised a greater range of Anglo-American primary sources to understand how Welsh-speaking officers were perceived by non-Welsh contemporaries, as well as the extent to which certain Welsh volunteers adhered to Jenkin Lloyd Jones' claim of being 'born across the water but reared under the flag.' This chapter chose its subjects based on the success each achieved both during and after the war as a direct result of military service. William H. Powell's exceptional career as a cavalry officer saw him rise from captain to brigadier general, earning him a medal of honour in the process. Joseph E. Griffith's heroism at the siege of Vicksburg earned him a battlefield promotion to lieutenant, as well as an immediate commission to West Point Academy, where he was known as 'Grant's cadet' and graduated near the top of his class. Evan R. Jones began the war as a private, rose to the rank of major, then achieved a remarkable post-war career as a state legislator in Wisconsin and as the American consul for Newcastle and south Wales. Joshua T. Owen began the war as the colonel of his own regiment, was promoted to the rank

¹⁰⁹ 'Joshua T. Owen', *Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S., Death Certificates Index, 1803-1915* [database on-line] Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011 <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/2535/> (accessed 18 December 2023)

of brigadier general, then following his discharge in June 1864 he served as a member of the Pennsylvania State legislature and was an active leader of Philadelphia Union veterans.

This chapter has demonstrated that, of these four men born in Wales, three showed signs of cultural integration, whereas one rejected his place in American society and reintegrated fully into his native identity once he had returned to the 'old country.' This observation is based primarily on Anglo-American newspapers, Union army correspondence and eye-witness testimonies that have offered a much broader representation of military identity than can be gleaned from the numerous but sporadic letters that appeared in Welsh newspapers. This chapter's focus on the Anglo-American perspective of notable Welsh soldiers has highlighted how Powell, Griffith, Owen and Jones were all viewed by their non-Welsh comrades as fellow northern patriots instead of as immigrants. Non-Welsh sources have illuminated that, during the war, these officers modelled their conduct as dutiful, motivated soldiers, earning respect and admiration as a result. Only rarely was the distinct, Welsh heritage of these men a matter of discussion, stemming more from cultural acceptance and shared identity rather than ignorance.

Chapter Five – Anti-Slavery in Welsh Writing

Welsh-American identity at the onset of war was largely crafted in opposition to the institution of southern slavery. In the nineteenth century, the pillars of Welsh-American society were commonly held to be religious devotion, familial duty and anti-slavery sentiment. To present as ‘Welsh’ was to present as an opponent of slavery. Not every Welshman who volunteered was an abolitionist, but most had been raised to oppose the institution of human bondage for religious as well as cultural reasons. To establish definitions, it is essential to differentiate between those who harboured anti-slavery sentiments and those who more ideologically aligned to abolitionism. This thesis considers an abolitionist as someone who, before the Civil War, called for the immediate destruction of slavery, rather than an anti-slavery advocate who favoured gradual erosion of the institution. Concerning the Welsh specifically, Gareth Evans-Jones has simplified this further, writing that every Welsh abolitionist was an anti-slavery advocate, but not every Welsh anti-slavery advocate was necessarily an abolitionist.¹

While anti-slavery was a prevalent ideology, it did not facilitate military integration in the same manner as shared patriotism and religious beliefs. Front-line correspondence indicates that some Welsh immigrants, particularly those who had emigrated in the 1860s, felt unable to fully integrate within the army as their opposition to slavery made them distinct. In these cases, the American component of their identity was not strengthened by the army’s stance on slavery. Instead, their traditional opposition to human bondage resulted in a reinforcement of their native Welsh identity. However, in other cases, volunteers cited traditional Welsh anti-slavery attitudes as evidence of an American cultural heritage through the principles of

¹ Gareth Evans-Jones, “Y Cenhadwr” and “Y Dyngarwr”: Two Welsh-American Abolitionist Journals?, *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium* 35 (2015), 111.

the Constitution and the Founding Fathers. Moreover, the role of Welsh-Americans in the creation of these documents further encouraged the adoption of these principles by Welsh immigrants, as well as an expectation to fight for emancipation and the preservation of the Union.²

This aspect of Welsh identity posed a quandary for volunteers seeking to assert their place within wider American society, for much of the northern population was divided on the issue of slavery. The years following the War of 1812 was a seminal period in the development of northern sectionalism. During these years, antislavery principles ruled the realm of ethics and rhetoric, yet chattel slavery increased in scale.³ The defeat and expulsion of native tribes led to the creation of new states in the mid-West, prompting intense competition between northern and southern politicians over whether the new territories would be free or slave states.

Both North and South saw a flurry of political activity. Conflict arose after the passing of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 that demanded northern authorities return escaped slaves to their former masters. Subsequent debates over the legality of kidnapping escaped slaves from northern territory had prompted a wave of personal liberty laws in northern states, while the Whig party had imploded due to disagreements over slavery. The fledgling Republican party emerged from the remnants of the Whigs, basing its political ideologies on the idealism of the American Revolution, the re-adoption of the spirit of the Declaration of Independence, as well as the 'Free Soil' creed that slavery must not expand.⁴ The political divide between the

² As referenced in Chapter One, seventeen of the signatories of the Declaration of Independence and Constitution had Welsh heritage, notably Adams, Jefferson and Madison, something Welsh-Americans were keenly aware of. Ignoring the hypocrisy of such men owning slaves, Welsh-Americans tended to focus on the essence of liberty and equality within the Constitution's text rather than how it worked in practice.

³ Matthew Mason, *Slavery and Politics in the Early American Republic*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), p.130.

⁴ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, pp.128-129.

North and South became ever more hostile. The overwhelming cause of this political infighting was unequivocally, slavery.

Following the near-universal support of Welsh-Americans for the Republican party, the *Cenhadwr*, *Cyfaill*, *Drych* and *Seren* were unanimously pro-abolitionist. It is unclear what proportion of its readership shared abolitionist beliefs, but what is evident is that Welsh-speakers were constantly exposed to anti-slavery rhetoric. No other point of view was tolerated. Given the selective self-censorship of the Welsh press, together with wider prevailing social expectations, there is no clear evidence of Welshmen supporting slavery. This is not to say that Welsh soldiers viewed African-Americans as equals, only that the dominant consensus was that human beings did not belong in bondage. Welsh volunteers were by no means paragons of civil rights, but certainly became active participants in the campaign for emancipation once they joined the Union army. This meant that Welsh-American identity during the war was characterised by a superior moral attitude towards slavery. Once the Union army's official stance on emancipation became clear, Welsh anti-slavery became northern anti-slavery, conforming to Castells' 'legitimising identity' phenomenon.⁵

Historians who have studied Welsh immigrants assert that the majority of them were anti-slavery, while contending that considerable numbers were also committed abolitionists. Jerry Hunter has pointed out that abolition had been gaining support in the Welsh communities of the United States during the first decades of the nineteenth-century, and by the mid-1850s anti-slavery declarations were a central part of Welsh America's communal ideology. However, he noted that the Welsh of America had not always felt that way. On the contrary, several early Welsh immigrants who settled in America prior to the nineteenth century were

⁵ Castells, *The Power of Identity*, p.8.

slave-owners.⁶ From the 1840s, men such as Reverend Robert Everett were fundamental in changing this. As illustrated in Hunter's book on Everett, the latter's letters, newspaper articles and sermons held that slavery was the great American sin. In his view, it was the duty of every American, including Welsh immigrants, to participate in the eradication of that foul institution.⁷ Partly because of their own leanings and partly because of Everett's activism, most Welsh ministers that otherwise would have preached the merits of peace to Welsh-American congregations supported Everett's stance and fully supported the advent of the Civil War as an anti-slavery crusade.⁸

Following Hunter, Gareth Evans-Jones has written an article considering Everett's influence on the Welsh-American abolitionist movement. He argued that Everett had been angered by the complacency of many of his fellow Welsh-Americans regarding slavery prior to 1840 and so, in order to promote the abolition effort among them, he wrote numerous articles against slavery and founded two abolitionist papers, *The Cenhadwr* and *The Dyngarwr*.⁹ His motive was not to make a profit; on the contrary, he sent copies of the monthly *Dyngarwr* to every Welsh minister in the United States free of charge. By the end of 1843, the Welsh ministers of the United States had been provided with a small volume of anti-slavery material in their mother tongue, including essays, poetry, prose and guidelines to continue the campaign for abolition.¹⁰

Additionally, Everett's contribution to the evolution of abolition among Welsh-Americans was magnified by his role in circulating a Welsh-translation of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. He was not the first to accomplish this because by 1853 there were

⁶ Hunter, *Sons of Arthur*, p.50.

⁷ Jerry Hunter, *I Ddefro Ysbryd y Wlad: Robert Everett a'r Ymgyrch yn erbyn Caethwasanaeth Americanaidd*, (Llanrwst: Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, 2007), p.226.

⁸ *Ibid*, p.227.

⁹ Evans-Jones, "Y Cenhadwr" and "Y Dyngarwr", 118.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 127.

already three different Welsh versions of Stowe's novel in circulation, translated respectively by Hugh Williams, Williams Rees ('Gwilym Hiraethog') and Thomas Lefi ('Y Lefiad').¹¹ Then, in 1854, Everett serialised the novel through the *Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, as well as amending Hugh Williams' translation for an American audience. Consequently, while *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had a profound impact on abolitionism on both sides of the Atlantic, Everett played a fundamental role in enabling Welsh-American audiences to access it. Consequently, ministers such as these crucial in ensuring that Welshmen enlisted with the Union army, for they blended patriotism with their belief in God's providential activity to guarantee the success of northern arms to provide an exemplary slave free republic.¹²

William Van Vugt, in his 2006 exploration of immigrants in Ohio, has argued that, despite integrating slower into American culture than the English and Scots, Welsh Ohioans almost universally opposed slavery.¹³ Daniel G. Williams concluded in his 2012 study that, alongside the diligent campaigning of abolitionists such as Everett, an ethnic conception of Welshness developed in the nineteenth-century as a reaction to the slanderous assessment made of the Welsh language, identity and culture in the Blue Books Commission of 1847. He claimed that this renewed Welsh identity was rooted in Nonconformity, temperance and abolitionism as a fundamental political belief.¹⁴ Williams has convincingly argued that, for Welsh-Americans, Nonconformity and anti-slavery were synonymous with each other, and that 'Welshness' became associated with a moral struggle for the hearts and minds of the people, based on a curious combination of social equality and intolerance of different

¹¹ Daniel G. Williams, *Black Skin, Blue Books: African Americans and Wales, 1845-1945*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012), p.25.

¹² Grant R. Brodrecht, *Our Country: Northern Evangelicals and the Union during the Civil War Era*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018), p.9.

¹³ Van Vugt, *British Buckeyes*, p.76.

¹⁴ Williams, *Black Skin, Blue Books*, p.28.

religions and cultures.¹⁵ In short, the reconstruction of Welsh identity in the nineteenth century took place within the crucible of the transatlantic anti-slavery movement.¹⁶

In his 2015 overview of Welsh-American history, Eirug Davies argued that many Welsh immigrants pitied slaves on the basis of a perceived shared experience, as many of the former were only able to journey to the United States through an agreement of indentured labour.¹⁷ While this specific claim is somewhat over-exaggerated, his wider point about the prevalence of anti-slavery among the Welsh-American population is accurate. More recently, Vivienne Sanders' 2021 overview of the Welsh in America noted that on the whole, Welsh-Americans were overtly oppositional to slavery. For instance, she cited that in 1851, Welsh anti-slavery sentiment caused a clash over the insertion of a Welsh memorial slab on the Washington Monument in the nation's capital, with many concurring that a connection of Welsh immigrants with a slave-owning president was against their principles.¹⁸

The most recent analysis of Welsh-American attitudes towards slavery is Gareth Evans-Jones' 2022 study *Mae'r Beibl O'n Tu*, exploring the religious connotations of Welsh opposition to American slavery. He noted that anti-slavery as well as pro-slavery advocates interpreted the Bible to justify their beliefs. After considering the evidence, however, he has concluded that predominantly, the Welsh understood that all of humanity was descended from Noah's three sons, which created a sense of duty to fight for the plight of slaves as members of the Welsh extended family.¹⁹

Nonetheless, the issue is far more nuanced and multi-faceted than these scholars have suggested. Historians such as Hunter, Evans-Jones and Williams have made the case that as a

¹⁵ Williams, *Black Skin, Blue Books*, p.28.

¹⁶ Daniel G. Williams, 'Uncle Tom and Ewythr Robert: Anti-Slavery and Ethnic Reconstruction in Victorian Wales', *Slavery & Abolition* 33 (2012), 279.

¹⁷ Eirug Davies, *Y Winllan Well: America's Cymry*, (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 2015), p.258.

¹⁸ Sanders, *Wales, the Welsh and the Making of America*, p.152.

¹⁹ Gareth Evans-Jones, 'Mae'r Beibl O'n Tu: Ymatebion Crefyddol Y Cymry yn America i Gaethwasiaeth (1838-1868)', (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2022), p.40.

cultural group, Welsh-Americans were predominantly enamoured with anti-slavery as an ideology and, by extension, were mostly supportive of abolitionism. Certainly, belief in abolitionism constituted a major justification why many Welsh-speakers enlisted in the Union army. However, the primary sources do not entirely support this hypothesis. Welsh newspapers, particularly the *Cenhadwr* and *Cyfaill* were vehemently abolitionist in their tendencies and regularly published articles and poems denouncing the institution of slavery. Strangely, accounts from Welsh soldiers are notably vaguer on the issue, with slavery rarely being the focus of correspondence from the front line.

Such examples have been largely absent from Welsh historiography, which has paradoxically worked hard to establish the regional differences of Welsh-speakers from different states but tends to treat the Welsh as a homogenous group when it comes to slavery. Additionally, the view of Hunter, Williams and Evans-Jones was that anti-slavery was a fundamental aspect of Welsh culture yet have not considered how some anti-slavery Welsh volunteers imagined their beliefs as ideal traits of northern American citizenship. Consequently, this chapter will interrogate the complexities of Welsh-American soldiers' attitudes towards slavery, challenging current misconceptions about Welsh-American anti-slavery during the nineteenth-century. Firstly, this chapter will explore the background of Welsh-American opposition to slavery and the social perception of Welsh abolitionism. Secondly, this shall be compared with soldier accounts concerning the differing degrees of anti-slavery sentiment within the ranks, as well as the importance of slavery to Welsh-American identity.

Historiography of the Union Army and Slavery

A recent trend in Civil War historiography is to conclude, rightly so, that Union soldiers were divided in their opinions on slavery and emancipation. However, many scholars lean towards the argument that generally, the average Union soldier did not oppose human bondage until emancipation became a war aim, largely ignoring the abolitionists within the ranks. Such historians can be divided into two categories: those that use a qualitative approach to explore the army's attitudes towards slavery on a macro-scale, and those that focus on specific regiments or ethnic groups as case studies. Of the former category, Reid Mitchell has correctly argued that, among the soldiery, hatred of slaveholders did not necessarily imply love for the slave. The Civil War was a war to protect freedom before it was a war to extend freedom. But there were some volunteers in 1861 who joined support for the Union with abolitionist sentiments, but only a small proportion of the northern army in 1861 wished to turn the war into a war for emancipation. The hostility of the average Union volunteer toward antislavery sentiment should not be exaggerated.²⁰ Whether they saw slavery as an injustice that oppressed their fellow humans or as an institution that fostered bad economics, many Northern soldiers learned to hate slavery.²¹

Furthermore, Mitchell viewed the Emancipation Proclamation as key, for even those soldiers who did not welcome the new policy were inclined to accept it, recognising that emancipation was not only a legitimate war measure, but was also a necessary one.²² James Robertson Jr also believed that only a minority of Union soldiers espoused sentiments of anti-slavery. He argued that comparatively few northern soldiers displayed enthusiasm for fighting on behalf of black people, and that for every Federal who voiced sympathy for the plight of the slaves, a dozen disclaimers could be heard.²³ In his view, most Union soldiers

²⁰ Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers*, p.15.

²¹ Ibid, p.105.

²² Ibid, p.127.

²³ Robertson Jr, *Soldiers Blue and Gray*, p.11.

saw emancipation at best as a war measure, and the acceptance of blacks by the soldiery was lukewarm.²⁴

McPherson similarly recognised anti-slavery as a complex issue for soldiers, noting that few Union soldiers professed to fight for racial equality, but if ‘emancipation per se’ meant a perception that the abolition of slavery was inseparably linked to the goal of preserving the Union, then three in ten Union soldiers took that position in the first 18 months of the war, with many more being converted later.²⁵ He has argued that soldiers fought mostly for the restoration of the Union but this goal was unattainable without striking against slavery. Their experiences in the South reinforced the antislavery sentiments of many soldiers, but much stemmed from personal observation rather than abolitionist position grounded in humanitarian concern.²⁶ He further argued that, as northern armies invaded the South they became agents of emancipation by their very presence, although the attitudes of a good many soldiers on this matter were more pragmatic than altruistic.²⁷

While insightful, such pioneering studies do not lend enough credence to the possibility that, among some army circles, anti-slavery was a dominant ideology, as was the case with Welsh volunteers. Chandra Manning and Elizabeth Varon are recent proponents of this argument. Manning argued that few northerners were willing abolitionists until they enlisted and began encountering freed slaves, which hardened their attitudes towards emancipation as a war aim.²⁸ Meanwhile, Varon adopted a stronger argument, suggesting that many Union soldiers saw the war as a crusade against slavery from the very beginning.²⁹

²⁴ Robertson Jr, *Soldiers Blue and Gray*, p.11.

²⁵ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, p.117.

²⁶ Ibid, p.118.

²⁷ Ibid, p.119.

²⁸ Chandra Manning, *What this Cruel War was Over: Soldiers, Slavery and the Civil War*, (New York: Knopf, 2007), p.47.

²⁹ Elizabeth R. Varon, *Armies of Deliverance: A New History of the Civil War*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), p.2.

Several scholars of immigrant soldiers do not concur with this view, further illustrating how an understanding of Welsh soldiers counters a previously believed consensus about Union soldiers and slavery. For instance, William Burton's seminal work, *Melting Pot Soldiers* did not mention slavery whatsoever, indicating his belief that it was not a pressing issue for many foreign-born soldiers. Susannah J. Ural's 2006 work on Irish-Americans has suggested that many volunteers insisted they were fighting to preserve the Union, not free the slaves, and they did not approve of this new development in the northern war effort. As the years passed, many native-born northerners would come to accept this goal as they witnessed the brutality of slavery and its impact on the South, but most Irish-American Catholics at home and in the army maintained their opposition to this policy.³⁰

In 2009, Christian G. Samito presented a more nuanced view of Irish soldiers, arguing that while many of them held on to racist hostility against blacks, others criticized slavery on encountering it. Thus, while Irish-American civilians and soldiers engaged in the same debates as native-born northerners about the prosecution of the war, as well as freedom for the slaves, Samito concluded that some adhered to racism while others embraced egalitarianism, or at least accepted a pragmatic approach so as to win the war.³¹ Ryan W. Keating's 2017 analysis of Irish soldiers highlighted noticeable ideological shifts among those who had campaigned in the South and grown appalled at the splendour of southern aristocrats won at the expense of negro labour. Ultimately, though Keating noted that Irish volunteers questioned the motives behind emancipation, they remained largely supportive of means that could help lead to the rapid conclusion of hostilities.³²

³⁰ Ural, *The Harp and the Eagle*, p.139.

³¹ Samito, *Becoming American Under Fire*, p.132.

³² Ryan W. Keating, *Shades of Green: Irish Regiments, American Soldiers & Loyal Communities in the Civil War Era*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), p.156.

General perceptions of German-Americans reveal a similarly complex issue. Christian Keller's 2007 analysis noted that some German soldiers loudly protested emancipation and that, not surprisingly, most of them were Democrats. However, other Germans, especially those imbued with the idealism of the failed 1848 revolutions, believed strongly in the goal of bringing freedom to the slaves, even before the Emancipation Proclamation.³³ In 2013, Alison Clark Efford explored the experiences of German volunteers from Missouri, stressing that they earned a reputation for opposing slavery as ferociously as they supported the Union.³⁴ In 2021, Brian Matthew Jordan's micro-study of the German 107th Ohio Volunteer Regiment revealed a dichotomy on the issue, for in a regiment teeming with obedient Democrats, many men greeted the news of the preliminary emancipation proclamation with scorn and derision, yet there were still plenty in the ranks who cheered the announcement.³⁵

This chapter aims to counter these historiographical assumptions about the lack of anti-slavery sentiment in the army. Even though Welsh volunteers were as non-homogenous in their positions on slavery as any other immigrant group, what makes them distinct from Irish, German and Anglo-American soldiers is how the cultural perception of anti-slavery remained a universal phenomenon throughout the war and was utilized by volunteers as another method of asserting their status as northern patriots. In essence, regardless of personal opinions about the morality of slavery and the practicalities of emancipation, Welsh volunteers' national identity within the army was defined by the perception of anti-slavery.

The Anti-Slavery Climate of Welsh-America

³³ Christian B. Keller, *Chancellorsville and the Germans: Nativism, Ethnicity and Civil War Memory*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), p.27.

³⁴ Alison Clark Efford, *German Immigrants, Race and Citizenship in the Civil War Era*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p.92.

³⁵ Brian Matthew Jordan, *A Thousand May Fall: An Immigrant Regiment's Civil War*, (New York: Liveright, 2021), p.22.

As has been previously established, the states in which most Welsh immigrants were concentrated were New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Wisconsin, with lesser but still notable populations residing across New England and the midwestern states. These regions were witness to fierce intellectual debates on the matter of slavery, with pro-Republican and pro-Democrat Anglo-American newspapers sparring publicly on their opposing views on the centrality of emancipation as a social and political issue. In New York, periodicals that were sympathetic to abolitionism, such as the *Daily Tribune*, declared that ‘slavery and slavery only’ was the poison that ‘lurked into America’s body politic,’³⁶ which was countered with the *Herald* and its ilk claiming that the future was ‘not the overthrow of slavery, but the extinction of abolitionism.’³⁷ In Pennsylvania, some regional papers, such as the *Bedford Gazette* were less vehement in their opposition to the cause of antislavery, claiming that ‘slavery, therefore, is not the cause of the war. There is nothing new in it.’³⁸

Others, as was the case with the *Raftsmen’s Journal*, proclaimed that ‘American slavery...is a sin against God, and in depriving him of liberty, is a sin against the Declaration of Independence.’³⁹ The *Dodgeville Chronicle* of Wisconsin espoused similar sentiments to its readers. It said the foundation of the war was slavery, and that rebellion and slavery were synonymous terms: ‘We are now brought, in the providence of God, to a point where we must destroy slavery in our nation or slavery will destroy what liberty it has not already destroyed.’⁴⁰ It made a key reference to liberty, that most dear thing of the constitution, implying that tolerating both the existence of slavery and the Confederate rebellion would destroy their constitutional rights. The *Alleghanian* of Ebensburg, Pennsylvania, which had a

³⁶ *New York Daily Tribune*, 7 July 1861

³⁷ *New York Herald*, 27 September 1861

³⁸ *Bedford Gazette*, 8 November 1861

³⁹ *Raftsmen’s Journal*, 24 July 1861

⁴⁰ *The Dodgeville Chronicle*, 25 September 1862

sizeable Welsh-speaking readership, was a particularly strong advocate of abolitionism. It denounced slavery as a social, moral and political evil, and ‘such too, were the views of and feelings of Washington, of Jefferson, of Madison and all the illustrious fathers of our Republic.’⁴¹

Welsh abolitionists in the years preceding the Civil War reflected what Richard Newman referred to as ‘second-wave agitators’ as they transformed from petitioners to activists. Newman argued that the ‘first-wave’ of northern abolitionists had attempted to convince elites to abolish slavery through petitions and other such campaigns, whereas abolitionist strategy and tactics were revolutionised by a transformative movement emphasising the power of nonelites to halt slavery.⁴² Mobilising the masses became the abolitionist prerogative after 1830, and Welsh-Americans were no exception, for the editors of the *Cenhadwr*, *Cyfaill*, *Drych* and *Seren Orllewinol* were devoted to the public espousal of abolitionism. Even after the war, this narrative prevailed. For example, in their history of the conflict, *Hanes y Gwrthryfel Mawr*, John William Jones and Thomas B. Morris listed slavery as the only cause of the Civil War, or more specifically, the southern slave-holding elites.⁴³ Consequently, the only socially accepted position within Welsh-American society on a general scale was antislavery, with varying degrees of support for abolition.

A typical example can be found in the August 1861 edition of the *Seren Orllewinol*, which included an important article concerning the role of Welsh-American communities in promoting emancipation. The article referred to a meeting that had just taken place in a ‘cynghorfa,’ which can be translated to mean a ‘congress’, although it was uncertain if it meant the national one at Washington or a local meeting of social notables. Either way, the

⁴¹ *The Alleghanian*, 6 March 1862

⁴² Richard S. Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), p.6.

⁴³ Jones and Morris, *Hanes Y Gwrthryfel Mawr Yn Y Talaethau Unedig*, pp.108-116.

Seren Orllewinol unequivocally approved of the decision to carry on the war, but especially concerning the implication that it would make the Fugitive Slave Law powerless under the circumstances. Then the *Seren Orllewinol* commended General McClellan and others who stood in defence of the honour of their country, as well as those earnest patriots who had gone out to the battlefield to answer the Lord's call.⁴⁴ In this instance it was not the preservation of the Union that took precedence in the *Seren Orllewinol*'s, and by extension, its Welsh readership's concerns. Instead, the repeal of the Fugitive Slave Law that protected the rights of slaveowners was the most important issue. While still celebrating Welsh patriotism for the Union cause, as was the norm, the implication was that enthusiasm for continuing the war was more on grounds of being able to liberate southern slaves. The *Seren Orllewinol*'s comment about praising those patriots who had gone out to answer the Lord's call referred to this, equating the war as a Christian crusade of liberation.

As mentioned in Chapter One, the community was a cradle of enlistment through the organisation of local political meetings. Such congregations were influential in exploiting moral and religious opposition to slavery as a motivation for Welshmen to volunteer in the Union army. A prime example of one such meeting was reported in the *Seren Orllewinol* in November 1861, informing its readership of the meeting of the Independents in Minersville, Pennsylvania. The members had enclosed to the *Seren Orllewinol* that they as a society had looked at the present rebellion with great distress:

Nad oedd gan y De y cysgod lleiaf o esgus dros eu hymddygiad: ac o ganlyniad fod ei hymosodiad ar y llywodraeth yn wir bechadurus tuag at Dduw, ac hefyd yn myned yn uniongyrchol tuag at ddwyn oddi amgylch ddinistr ein gwlad. Gain ei fod yn amlwg

⁴⁴ 'Y Gydynghorfa' in *Y Seren Orllewinol*, August 1861

mae caethiwed yw dallineb y De, a gwreiddyn chwerwedd y wlad y gwnawn o ganlyniad weddio am i'r Arglwydd oruchlywodraethu eu hynfydrwydd presennol, er dwyn oddi amgylch derfyn caethiwed trwy ryddhau yr holl gaethion yn y wlad.⁴⁵

The South has not got the least excuse for its behaviour: and as a result, its attack on the government is truly sinful to God, and directly responsible for destroying our country. As it is obvious that Slavery is the fault of the South, and the root of the country's bitterness, we shall pray to God to oversee their present insanity, to end slavery by freeing all the slaves in the country.

This meeting illustrates how politics and religion were often synonymous within Welsh-speaking communities. Consequently, abolition did not appear as a political choice to the Welshmen of Minersville. Instead, it was sanctioned by God, hence the emphasis on framing anti-slavery as an American ideology, not merely an immigrant ideal. To be sure, the group viewed the South's secession not as an act of treason towards the legitimate government, but as an act of heresy against God, driven by the insanity of the slave trade. The local consensus, therefore, was that ending slavery was the only way to end the war and fulfil God's wishes. Young members of the Minersville congregation who subsequently enlisted were shown that joining the Union army to free slaves was the dominant social expectation, framing them not only as patriotic northerners, but more importantly as devout Christians. This document did not expressly discuss the congregation's stance on whether abolition and piety made Welsh-American distinct from their Anglo-American neighbours, but it does highlight how notable

⁴⁵ 'Penderfyniad Cymanfa Yr Annibynwyr yn Minersville, PA' in *Y Seren Orllewinol*, November 1861

figures in Welsh communities depicted loyalty to the Union as synonymous with loyalty to God, fusing patriotism with an aspect of Welsh cultural and social values.

Furthermore, readers of the papers were exposed to a traditionally Welsh culture of literature and poetry. Bards wrote prose praising the war and denouncing slavery through the public platform of the newspapers and although not quantifiable, acted as another influential factor in framing the war as a crusade to end slavery. For example, in September 1861, the *Cenhadwr* published one written by the bard Ab Ieuan, (which translates as ‘son of Ieuan’), which was called ‘Cwyn y Caeth – The Slave’s Lament’:

Pam yr wyf fi mewn caethiwed? Nid wy’n gwybod am un weithred, O droseddu y
cyfreithiau, Lle’r wy’n byw na gwlad fy nhadau...Pam yr wyf yn cael fy ngwerthu,
Fel anifeiliaid o’m deutu? Dyn wyf fi a dyn sy’n prynu, A dyn gwyn sydd yma’n
gwerthu.⁴⁶

Why am I in bondage? I know not of one act of breaking the laws, Where I live not in
the land of my fathers...Why am I to be sold, Like animals? A man am I and a man is
buying, And a white man is selling.

Through the image of the slave raging at the injustice of his treatment, the bard not only stressed that this slave was first and foremost, a man, but that there was a sort of kinship between African-Americans and Welsh-Americans. This is not to suggest that the relationship was perceived as equal by any means, for Ab Ieuan depicted his poem’s protagonist as someone in need of rescue, but his reference to living ‘not in the land of my

⁴⁶ ‘Cwyn y Caeth’ in *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, September 1861

fathers' was an apt reminder that Welsh-speakers were also residing away from their ancestral home. Simultaneously, the 'fathers' acted as a reference to the Founding Fathers, further stressing the injustice of a land of liberty allowing men to enslave and sell other men. Indeed, the poet generally conveyed a sense of shame at living in a country that condoned such behaviour.

This feeling was similarly reflected in the *Cenhadwr*'s November edition of the same year. The bard this time was Asaph Glyn Dyfi, and the poem was titled, 'Y Caethwas – The Slave,' and its verse condemned his adopted country for the crime of slavery:

Cywilyddia, O Amerig! Beth ai rhyddid ydyw hyn? Bwyta cnawd y gorthrymedig,
Gwneud y du yn gaeth i'r gwyn, Tori auraidd ddeddf dynoliaeth, Dwyn ei
genedigaeth fRAINT, Fe ddaw dydd o daledigaeth, Am y trosedd erch ei faint.⁴⁷

Shame Oh America! What freedom is this? Devouring the flesh of the oppressed,
Making the black a slave to the white, Breaking the golden law of humanity, Stolen
his birthright, The day of justice shall come, For the crime frightful in its size.

The author's outrage was palpable, displaying a great embarrassment for his own country condoning such a crime against humanity. This would certainly suggest that Glyn Dyfi was setting his Welsh identity at the forefront, rather than being associated with a race that was so morally degraded. Of similar importance is his prediction that the day of justice would come, for it called to his Welsh readers to deliver this justice with their own hands. This is a key point, for as with the earlier poem by Ab Ieuan, the recognition of slavery as a crime against

⁴⁷ 'Y Caethwas', in *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, November 1861

humanity and against God was accompanied by a call for Welshmen to resolve the issue. According to the bardic interpretation, therefore, Welsh liberal thought set them apart from the rest of the country, and abolition was depicted as an inherently Welsh attitude. Evidence from the *Cenhadwr*'s next edition in December 1861 demonstrated this in more detail. 'Can y Negro Bach' by Saria C. Jones of Lexington, Illinois, meaning 'The Song of the Little Negro' was evident in its symbolism that slaves were believed to be as children in need of rescue:

Blant Brytannia, clywch fy llef, Ac aed fy ngwaedd i glustiau'r Nef, Am gymorth i'm rhyddhau, Gan ddysgwyl caf fi weled yr awr, Gaid fflangell Massa'i thaflu lawr...A'i gwir glywodd Negro tlawd, Fod plentyn Cymro iddo'n frawd, 'Run gwaed a chnawd eu dau?⁴⁸

Children of Britannia, hear my wail, And may my cry reach the ears of heaven, For support to free me, Hoping to witness the hour, When Massa's whip is thrown down...Is it true that the poor Negro heard, That a Welsh child is his brother, Both the same flesh and blood?

As with the previous examples, the prevailing narrative was that while Welsh-Americans appeared proudly oppositional to slavery, that attitude was not based on equality. Some viewed southern African-Americans as helpless and in need of liberating as might a Christian missionary view an unconverted populace. Moreover, the bard's perspective implied that Welsh immigrants were distinct from the wider American populace. It is unclear whether the

⁴⁸ 'Can y Negro Bach' in *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, December 1861

‘Welsh child’ referred to the average Welsh immigrant or Abraham Lincoln himself, who had been glorified by Welsh-Americans through his tenuous matrilineal Welsh heritage. Either way, the bard claimed that there was kinship between African-Americans and Welsh-Americans, with the latter being the source of their eventual liberation. Thus, Jones’s poem indicates how some used moral and religious opposition to slavery as a method of denying national inclusion in a country that condoned human bondage.

On the other hand, other bards attempted to counter this anti-American imagery through focusing on the admirable values that the country was founded on. Such compositions identified the North as a utopia and the South as a separate entity. Consequently, it was not America that condoned slavery, but an alien country. In January 1862, the *Cenhadwr* published ‘Y Rhyfel’ by G.O. Jones, a poem that acknowledged the evilness of slavery but in a foreign land:

Nid yn awyrgylch ein gwlad fostgar ni, Mae gwenwyn tawch Caethiwed – waeth pale, Yn gyfryw na all Rhinwedd ynddo fyw.

Not in the atmosphere of our proud country, Is the poisonous fume of Slavery – a terrible place, where Virtue cannot live.⁴⁹

Jones gave the impression that he had overcome the paradox to his identity as a Welsh-American by concluding that slavery did not belong in America, for his ‘proud country’ was not suffering the poisonous fume of human bondage. In his mind, therefore, the principles of the Founding Fathers had not been compromised by the taint of slavery because the North

⁴⁹ ‘Y Rhyfel’ in *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, January 1862

was the true America, whereas the South was a foreign, virtue deprived land. For this Welshman, his abolitionism was no barrier to his sense of belonging as a northern citizen.

This point about the North as the 'true America' is a reminder of how some Welsh-Americans did not see the war as a civil conflict at all, but as a war between Americans and non-Americans. This reflected a belief among the Welsh that they were Americans because they were northerners and thus the embodiment of the virtues that were central to the ideological and constitutional foundations of the United States. The South, by contrast, with its separate nationalism and its human bondage, was viewed as being categorically un-American. As argued by James McPherson in his 1999 article 'Was Blood Thicker than Water?', this reflected a growing conviction that northern and southern whites were two distinct peoples with hostile interests, belonging to distinctive ethnic groups.⁵⁰

This phenomenon is something that has been admirably covered by Melina Lawson in her notable work *Patriot Fires* (2002). During the course of the war, Lawson argued that factions in both Republican and Democratic parties made it clear that their loyalty to the Union was contingent upon its continued embodiment of the principles they held most dear.⁵¹ For Welsh-Americans, therefore, their patriotism to the North was founded on the imagined role of the Union as the propagator of liberty. Susan-Mary Grant has similarly written at length on the subject of northern nationalism, arguing in her book *North Over South* (2000) that northern nationalist ideology was predicated on the northern image of the South in the antebellum period, the core of which was a belief that the South was a world apart from the North, and that the differences between them did not derive from slavery alone.⁵² She further claimed that northern ideology went beyond mere sectionalism, arguing that the Republican

⁵⁰ James McPherson, 'Was Blood Thicker Than Water? Ethnic and Civic Nationalism in the American Civil War', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 143:1 (1999), 104.

⁵¹ Melinda Lawson, *Patriot Fires*, p.9.

⁵² Susan-Mary Grant, *North Over South*, p.8.

Party in the 1850s was engaged in, and partly a product of, national construction by which the very idea of America came to be associated with the North and the Republican party.⁵³

Consequently, it made sense for Welsh-Americans to perceive the North as the ‘true America’, partly as a result of their own ideological convictions regarding slavery, but also as supporters of the Republican party.

In May 1862, Ab Morydd’s verse in the *Cenhadwr* fused abolition with northern patriotism:

Pan rodia’r caeth yn rhydd, ein baner a fydd ben, Yn llaw eu cadarn lor, uwch tir a mor, Amen.⁵⁴

When the slave is made free, our banner shall fly overhead, in the hands of our strong Lord above land and sea, Amen.

The bard claimed that victory over the South would only be achieved by ending slavery, which not only reflected the militarily sound justification of emancipation, but also equated the purpose of the war as a religious war of liberation, not against the South, but against slavery. Of additional significance was a note attached by the author, instructing for his words to be set to the tune of the ‘Star-Spangled Banner,’ one of the most patriotic songs of its era that would later become the national anthem. By composing Welsh lyrics to a popular, distinctly patriotic piece of music, the bard was demonstrating that culturally Welsh opposition to slavery was an inherent act of loyalty to both God and the Union government.

⁵³ Grant, *North Over South*, p.9.

⁵⁴ ‘Trem ar Amgylchiadau yr Unol Daleithiau’ in *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, May 1862

A few months later, in October 1862, the *Cenhadwr*'s editor, Robert Everett wrote an article echoing similar beliefs. He asserted that 'their country' and its constitution was adamantly opposed to slavery, countering the argument that the wording of the document protected the institution. He argued specifically that the general Constitution didn't defend it, didn't include it, nor supported it, as the Founding Fathers took care when forming the document to not include the words slave nor slavery in it. He further stated that slavery already existed when the Constitution was created, and while the document acknowledged its existence, there was not a single word that supported it.⁵⁵ In his view, therefore, being a Welsh abolitionist meant also being an American abolitionist, for the nation's foundational documents were as similarly opposed to human bondage.

A month later, Everett circulated an essay written by Dewi Emlyn from Washington, similarly preaching the merits of abolition as a northern prerogative. The latter praised the virtue of northerners while denouncing southerners as 'murderers and thieves of the worst description,' who enslaved men on the basis that they were allowed to, simply because the colour of their skin was enough to justify the action.⁵⁶ In this case, Welsh-American identity was influenced by the North-South divide, for northerners were perceived to oppose slavery while southerners appeared to condone it. Accordingly, Everett and fellow Nonconformist Welsh ministers promoted the consensus that northern Welsh-Americans belonged because they upheld the Constitution's imagined anti-slavery principles.

A November 1862 article in the *Cyfaill* conformed to this perception. The author claimed that only a few Welshmen and Englishmen had ever voted in favour of slavery, moreover, he could not remember meeting a single one ever, except for those that lived in the South.⁵⁷ His

⁵⁵ 'Gorseddfaïnc Anwiredd gan olygydd y Cenhadwr' in *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, October 1862

⁵⁶ 'Gohebiaeth o Washington' in *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, November 1862

⁵⁷ 'Cynhauaf yr Enaid' in *Y Cyfaill o'r Hen Wlad*, November 1862

inference was that any Welsh-speaker that condoned slavery was a southerner, and not worthy to be considered fellow Welshmen. This was reinforced in a letter sent to the *Cyfaill* a year later from Wales. It was written by D. Williams, representing a number from the ‘Old Country’, addressed to their ‘hen gyfeillion crefyddol hoff yn America’, ‘dear old religious friends in America,’ admiring their brave movements against the great tragedy that had beset their country, wishing them good fortune and success in the North to eradicate slavery from your country.⁵⁸ It conformed to the image that the northern states were the home of Welsh-Americans because of the absence of slavery from those regions. Additionally, the author clearly stated that America was ‘their’ country, not merely their adopted home, and that Welsh immigrants across the Atlantic were considered religious colleagues, not relations.⁵⁹ A prevailing attitude, therefore, was that Welshmen living in northern states were perceived to be American citizens by their struggle for the eradication of slavery.

The *Cyfaill* continued to be a zealous advocate for emancipation. In September 1864, following years of wartime attrition and news of mounting Welsh casualties, the editor published a sermon called ‘Marwolaeth yn Angenrheidiol er Cynhyrchu Bywyd’, ‘Death is Essential to Create Life.’ In it, he wrote that the terrible sin of slavery should be ravaged and killed, root and stem, before life could be returned to the slave. He even blamed the North for the existence of slavery:

Sydd yn warth ar ein llywodraeth, yn gywilyddus i ddynoliaeth, yn ffiaidd i wlad dan enw Cristionogaeth...ni allesid byth symud y staen oddiar yr enw Americanaidd, y

⁵⁸ ‘Llythyr yn Cynnwys Cyfarchiad oddiwrth Amryw o’r Hen Wlad’ in *Y Cyfaill o’r Hen Wlad*, November 1863

⁵⁹ Robert Huw Griffiths’ PhD, ‘The Welsh in the American Civil War c.1840-1865’ (unpublished PHD Thesis, Cardiff University, 2004) covers this topic excellently, showing how the trans-Atlantic ties of native Welsh and Welsh-Americans started fraying and were cut as a result of the Civil War

cywilydd a deflid i wyneb ein dinasyddion gan drigolion y byd, nac ychwaith ddwyn y caeth yn rhydd, yn gyfartal i'w frawd gwyn.⁶⁰

Which is a disgrace on our government, shameful to humanity, appalling to a Christian country...you may never remove the stain from the name American, the shame thrown into the faces of our citizens by the people of the world, nor steal the slave free, equal to his white brother.

There is an interesting use of terminology in this excerpt, because the author uses the phrase 'our government,' but then chooses to express 'this country' as opposed to 'our country.' The editor may have been conveying shame at the fact that, despite the Union government opposing slavery, the institution had been allowed slavery to persist. This was accompanied by a declaration that there was no way to eradicate the stain on the name 'American' just as there was no way to kidnap the slave and make him free. The editor claimed that God could not himself free the slave from bondage, so as a result, faithful northerners were called upon to rally under justice's banner to act in His name, to punish their country for its terrible sin. He even claimed, through destruction and the spilling of blood, that thousands had to die to make the Negro free, because they themselves had died in their thousands.⁶¹ What is clear is that opposition to slavery was a crucial element of his Welsh identity, giving the appearance that this part of him was at odds with his sense of belonging as an American. He saw the South as a continuation of the North, justifying his desire to see fellow northerners destroy their country to win a final victory over the institution of slavery.

⁶⁰ 'Marwolaeth yn Angenrheidiol er Cynhyrchu Bywyd' in *Y Cyfaill o'r Hen Wlad*, September 1864

⁶¹ Ibid.

The rural and urban communities that raised them, as well as the literature they were exposed to, contributed to ensuring that many Welshmen in the Union army were similarly committed abolitionists. Soldiers' accounts, on the other hand, suggest that Welsh volunteers exhibited a more mixed level of conviction regarding abolition and emancipation. Generally, Welsh soldiers were against slavery as a moral and Christian wrong but were less unanimous in their desire to free slaves from bondage. It is true that the majority of available letters included antislavery rhetoric. However, there are some cases where Welsh soldiers alluded to slavery without directly referring to that terminology, or completely avoided discussing the issue as a pressing matter. This chapter now turns to critically explore Welsh-American soldiers' attitudes to slavery as part of a wider analysis of how, despite differing degrees of support, emancipation became an integral component of being a Union soldier.

Anti-Slavery Soldiers

Many Welsh volunteers used anti-slavery as another method of reaffirming their status as northern Americans. Much of pre-war Welsh-American identity had been tied to anti-slavery, but with the advent of the Civil War and subsequent military service, opposition to slavery was perceived to be an additional marker of northern nationalism. The rhetoric of those who volunteered in 1861 shared similar themes of duty and patriotism. What is more telling is Welsh frontline letters from 1862 onwards, when many had invaded southern territory at least once, and had for the first time been exposed to southern society, and with it, slaves.

Such experiences hardened many attitudes. Regardless of personal opinions, recent scholarship posits the clear view that exposure to runaway slaves formed a crucial part in the development of the Union army's role as an emancipating force. In her 2007 study of the

Union army's relationship with enslavement, Manning argued that few soldiers thought of themselves as abolitionists.⁶² She argued that more influential than Union soldiers' pre-existing notions, or even their first-hand observations of the South, were their interactions with actual slaves, which led many to view slavery as a dehumanising and evil institution that corroded the moral virtue necessary for a population to govern itself.⁶³ Moreover, she acknowledged that while most Union soldiers came to support emancipation, neither did they suggest a belief in racial equality, seeing them fundamentally as a people apart. Critically, however, due to prolonged contact with slaves, many Union troops became convinced that slavery was antithetical to the Republican government, and while it was not a universal belief in the army, the clear demands for the destruction of slavery plainly emerged among enlisted Union soldiers.⁶⁴

Glenn David Brasher has concurred with this argument in his 2012 study of the Peninsula Campaign of 1862, where runaway slaves forced the issue of deciding upon emancipation. Brasher argued that many slaves on the Lower Peninsula quickly made contact with Federal troops, whom they saw as their path to liberation, setting in motion a process that resulted in the Lincoln administration's policy of protecting runaways who had been forced to labour for the Confederacy.⁶⁵ This did not create approval nor acceptance of their presence, but it did tie emancipation with winning the war in the minds of Union soldiers. In 2013, Robert I. Girardi's research on Union soldiers from Illinois concluded that it was necessity rather than personal preference that eventually brought them round to the idea of emancipation. Even this was complicated, as many soldiers deserted when they came to believe they were risking

⁶² Manning, *What This Cruel War Was Over*, p.3.

⁶³ *Ibid*, p.49.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p.50.

⁶⁵ Glenn David Brasher, *The Peninsula Campaign and the Necessity of Emancipation: African Americans and the Fight for Freedom*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), p.29.

their lives for slaves, as it was an unwelcome change in the purpose of the war. Patriots were not necessarily crusaders for the freedom of others.⁶⁶

While the reactions of Welsh soldiers to runaway slaves mirrored those of non-Welsh soldiers, front-line letters indicate that emancipation was not as begrudgingly accepted as Manning, Brasher and Girardi have suggested. For example, a Welsh soldier going by the name of 'Ff.' wrote a letter to the *Gwladgarwr* in January 1862, reaffirming that his initial motivation to enlist, which was to defend the banner of freedom, remained strong. As if to highlight the process of linguistic Anglicisation that came from military service, this native Welsh speaker chose to include an English hymn in his letter in order to encapsulate his patriotism as well as his position on slavery: 'The flag that our fathers died nobly to save, shall never go down on Liberty's grave, still free and unfettered our eagle shall soar, till the reign of oppression for ever is o'er.'⁶⁷

The symbolism of the banner of 'our fathers' referred to those who fought in the American War of Independence, indicating that this Welsh immigrant saw himself as a direct descendant of those patriots. Concerning the centrality of slavery as a motivating theme, his use of the term 'oppression' is vague, for he did not specify whether it was southerners or southern slaves that were being oppressed. However, his inference to the eagle being 'unfettered' is a more direct symbol of American nationalism breaking the chains of southern slaves. In this Welshman's case, abolition was presented as a central motivating factor and as a marker of national identity, for he had depicted himself as a continuation of the Founding Fathers' libertarian principles.

⁶⁶ Robert I. Girardi, "I am for the President's Proclamation teeth and toe nails": Illinois Soldiers Respond to the Emancipation Proclamation', *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 106 (2013), 404.

⁶⁷ 'Llythyr oddiwrth Filwr Cymreig o America' in *Y Gwladgarwr*, 11 January 1862

This expression of northern identity through associating anti-slavery with the Founding Fathers was also exhibited by Thomas R. Griffiths, who wrote in December 1862 to his family back in Minersville, Pennsylvania, shortly after participating in the battle of Fredericksburg. Interestingly, it was not the battle itself that was the focus of Griffiths' recollections. Instead, he was more concerned with the town and its imagined significance. He opened his letter by issuing contempt for the town's inhabitants, describing that they were the 'most rebellious people' the soldiers had yet encountered, who had 'thrown insults as well as boiling water' on Union troops as they marched through the streets. Despite the hostility of the populace, however, the town held some major significance to Griffiths, as he claimed that George Washington's grandfather had lived there, and along the river the 'Father of the American nation had formed his beliefs and commitment to freedom.'⁶⁸ He suggested that he was literally walking in the footsteps of the nation's founder, reinforcing his loyalty to the Union and in the cause of abolition, for he subsequently wrote that he was determined to spill 'every last drop of blood over freedom and the destruction of bondage...one country is our motto.'⁶⁹ Griffiths was pointedly ignoring the hypocrisy of Washington owning slaves, choosing to follow his liberal words rather than his actions, which highlights how some volunteers interpreted the legacy of the American Revolution to suit their own cause of national belonging.

By contrast, R.C. Roberts did not share Griffiths' sentimentality towards Virginia as the birthplace of Washington. Instead, because of his perceived cultural superiority as a northerner, Roberts believed that the devastation wrought by the Union army against the land of Virginia was a righteous punishment for the slave trade. In December 1862, he despaired against the state's refusal to 'free its children from the oppressor's hands,' and because of the

⁶⁸ 'Llythyrau oddiwrth Filwyr Cymreig' in *Y Drych*, 31 January 1863

⁶⁹ Ibid.

evil of slavery ‘your fields are turned to deserts and your residences to ash.’⁷⁰ Similar sentiments were expressed by John D. Griffiths of Company H, 52nd Pennsylvania, in a letter written to his uncle in Steuben, New York, in December 1863. After witnessing what southern society was like, he dictated to his uncle how proud he was to be a northerner, for the society he had been raised in had not been tainted by the ‘sin of slavery,’ where prosperity was earned from ‘back breaking labour of free men and industry, whereas southern civilization was founded on slavery.’⁷¹ Both men had, with their own eyes, seen a slave society for the first time, and because of this seemed eager to reinvigorate their northern superiority. In both men’s views, they were pursuing the war to end slavery. As was typical of soldier correspondence, there is an element of reassurance present in both men’s accounts, intended for an audience of abolitionists. Nevertheless, their words are indicative of how some Welsh soldiers viewed the war as a joint cause - the defence of the Union together with the eradication of slavery.

This was reinforced in some cases as runaway slaves sought safety with Union armies as the latter advanced through the upper South. Most often they were protected, although it was often not simply an act of compassion. Steven Ramold has offered a succinct and effective analysis of this symbolic act, reminding his readers that even emancipationists were not united in their opinions and degree of support for racial equality. The act of denying slave-owners their property was symptomatic of the centre ground sought by most Union soldiers. By sheltering the fugitive, the soldiers removed the slave from bondage and denied the Confederacy an asset. At the same time, their doing so was not an indication that soldiers believed the escaped slaves to be their equals. Instead, the act of protection allowed Union

⁷⁰ ‘Llythyr Oddiwrth Filwr Cymreig’ in *Y Gwladgarwr*, 27 December 1862

⁷¹ ‘Llythyr Oddiwrth Filwr Cymreig’ in *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, December 1863

soldiers to damage the Confederacy without forcing them to alter their racial perceptions of African-Americans.⁷²

In July 1863, the *Gwladgarwr* published a letter from Thomas J. Owens, who was part of the armed forces raiding the Alabama countryside. He described masses of runaway slaves who had flocked to the protection offered by the army, seeing ‘hundreds of negroes...many carried their children and felt tired after walking for miles...but their desire for freedom was great, after serving under the hard yoke of the slave masters all their lives.’⁷³ He subsequently justified his participation in the plunder of local property as an act of punishment, although he made no comment on whether he was an advocate of emancipation. He did not describe what kind of reception these runaways received from Union soldiers either and his initial assessment of them implied pity more than kinship. Nevertheless, his actions had made him a liberator, so whether he agreed with abolition or not, he was able to illustrate his liberal qualities to his family back home.

John W. Hughes’s recollection of meeting runaways was clearer in terms of his abolitionist leanings. In March 1863 he sent a letter to *Y Drych* insisting that his commitment to destroying the institution of slavery was greater than ever due to his unit sheltering a band of contrabands. He described how listening to the negroes talking about the treatment they had endured was enough to drive everyone to become soldiers, and that further, ‘I would rather die on the battlefield honourably rather than return home. The democrats want to keep the poor Negro caged until the day of judgement.’⁷⁴ This is an apt reminder that many abolitionists had never met a former slave and that meeting runaways certainly hardened some Union soldiers’ attitudes towards the Confederacy. Of note is his referral to the ‘poor

⁷² Steven J. Ramold, *Across the Divide: Union Soldiers View the Northern Home Front*, (New York: NYU Press, 2013), p.68.

⁷³ ‘Llythyr Oddiwrth Filwr Cymreig’ in *Y Gwladgarwr*, 25 July 1863

⁷⁴ ‘Llythyrau Milwyr Cymreig’ in *Y Drych*, 11 April 1863

negro,' which suggests that, as was the case with Thomas J. Owens, Hughes viewed them as pitiful figures more than men on an equal footing. The sincerity of his statement cannot be qualitatively judged from this isolated letter, but what is clear is that this volunteer felt that describing his commitment to ending slavery was worth putting to pen. His opinion was that it was his duty as a Union soldier to destroy slavery, demonstrating how some Welshmen harnessed anti-slavery as a marker of northern virtue.

A notable incident involving contrabands occurred in November 1862, when the 22nd Wisconsin Volunteers was operating in Kentucky. As previously established, there were many Welsh-speakers in the regiment and, although its commander was not Welsh, Colonel William L. Utley embodied the liberal qualities admired by many Welsh Wisconsinites, for he welcomed the arrival of a number of escaped slaves to the refuge offered by the regiment. Kentucky was a slave state but sided with the Union in the Civil War, so Union troops were required to return any runaways as recaptured property. Utley was approached by the runaways' previous owner, who demanded that they be returned to him, as was his right under the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. To the latter's fury, Utley outright refused, being a principled abolitionist like most of his men. The *Cleveland Morning Letter* reported that the slave owner promptly petitioned Utley's senior commander, General Gilmore, who also demanded that Utley return the runaways from the 22nd's protection: 'Their master, a rebel, demanded them of the Colonel. He replied that he would not surrender them. The master went to General Gilmore and obtained an order for Colonel Utley to surrender the negroes.'⁷⁵

Utley refused this direct order from his commander. This act of mutiny was published in the press, to great acclaim from abolitionists. The *Jefferson Democrat* from Chardon, Ohio,

⁷⁵ *Cleveland Morning Letter*, 16 December 1862

copied Gilmore's orders and Utley's reply, evincing great pride in the fact that Utley was an old Geauga County native:

Colonel: You will at once send to my quarters, the four contrabands...They are in your regiment, or were this morning, Your obedient servant, Q.A. Gilmore, Brig Gen, To Col Utley, Commanding the 22d Wis Volunteers.

Utley: Dear Sir – Permit me to say that I recognize your authority to command me in all matters pertaining to the military, and to the movements of the army; but do not consider this as belonging to that department. I recognize no authority on the subject of delivering up contrabands, save that of the President of the United States. In conclusion, I will say that I had nothing to do with their coming into camp, and I shall have nothing to do with sending them out, Wm L Utley.⁷⁶

Utley's character and principled conduct was further expressed in the *Cleveland Morning Letter*, when it published the next sequence of letters between Utley and his infuriated commander. The above reply brought an order from General Gilmore to Utley to appear at headquarters, where he was told he would be put under arrest if he persisted in his refusal to obey orders. 'Very well', replied the spirited Colonel, 'you will find that you will have to arrest every officer in the regiment, and, further, that the attention of the Secretary of War will be called to your conduct in this matter.'⁷⁷ While this may simply be exaggeration on

⁷⁶ 'Col. Utley Refuses to Turn Slave Catcher' in *The Jefferson Democrat*, 28 November 1862

⁷⁷ *Cleveland Morning Letter*, 20 November 1862

Utley's part, it nevertheless shows how Utley represented the feelings of the regiment, at least in terms of its loyalty to the principles of abolition.

The matter escalated on the ground. The *Wood County Reporter* relayed information that locals in Georgetown had assailed the 22nd Wisconsin, demanding that the refugees be handed back to them: 'As the brigade was passing through Georgetown, the mob assailed it with revolvers, stones and whatever missiles they could lay their hands to, demanding the negroes they had with them...When Col. Utley started the next day the citizens told him he never would be permitted to leave the city with the negroes he had with him. He ordered his regiment to load their guns and fix bayonets, then advised the citizens that if they intended any hostile demonstrations upon him, as was shown to the other regiments the day previous...he would shoot down every man who interfered.'⁷⁸ Whether the Welsh and non-Welsh soldiers under his command agreed with this order is an ignored issue, but this example does highlight how, as has been seen in Welsh-language newspapers, regional news outlets were pivotal in depicting abolitionist soldiers as patriots.

Utley was not arrested, although he was tried in local courts for theft. Fortunately, Abraham Lincoln intervened by compensating the slave-owner, thus securing Utley's release.

Following these events, Utley's principled defiance won great acclaim back in Wisconsin.

The *Morning Letter* claimed that he was now 'one of the most prominent men of Wisconsin...a man who abounds in good sense.'⁷⁹ Not only that, but he had been appointed as Adjutant General of Wisconsin, because he was the only officer in Kentucky who obeyed the laws of Congress in reference to the slaves.⁸⁰ Despite not being Welsh, Utley's abolitionist behaviour impressed the Welsh under his command, for in the same vein as

⁷⁸ 'The Irrepressible African – Col Utley of the Wisconsin 22d Threatened with Imprisonment' in *Wood County Reporter*, 6 December 1862

⁷⁹ 'Colonel Utley of the 22nd Wisconsin' in *Cleveland Morning Letter*, 25 August 1864

⁸⁰ Ibid.

General Powell and Sergeant Griffith, his defiance had modelled how Wisconsin Welsh volunteers should behave. Indeed, two Welsh-speakers from the 22nd wrote to *Y Drych* to express their admiration for Utley's conduct, reflecting the shared conviction that a soldier's duty was emancipation.

The first letter was received in January 1863 from Camp Baird, near Danville, Kentucky, in which the author insisted that Utley was a national hero. He exclaimed that there were some things in connection with his regiment that were of great importance to the entire country. According to the author, Colonel Utley from Racine was a principled philanthropist, 'who did not care the colour of your skin as long as there was a sign of humanity inside.'⁸¹ Moreover, he firmly believed that the behaviour of Colonel Utley would be 'the medicine to open the eyes of those in high positions in the State.'⁸² While he might have believed that Utley's example was a national one, his primary belief was that his commanding officer was an exceptional man of Wisconsin, further illustrating the regional dimension of Welsh-American identity. Even so, the author described how he and others of the regiment sought to emulate Utley's abolitionist principles, therefore as they advanced through Kentucky, taking horses, mules and other supplies everything else they could need, what caused the most excitement was when contrabands came close to their lines.⁸³ His interpretation, therefore, was that rescuing slaves from captivity was the prerogative of a true, Wisconsin soldier.

A second letter concerning Utley was sent to *Y Drych* in March 1863 from the 22nd's camp near Nashville, Tennessee. After commenting on how happy the men were to have left Kentucky at last, following the debacle with the contrabands, the author reiterated how the 22nd sought to emulate Utley's abolitionist principles. The author declared that the citizens

⁸¹ 'Oddiwrth Filwr Cymreig yn Kentucky' in *Y Drych*, 24 January 1863

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

had seen how the 22nd was determined to ‘defend their principles even to the drawing of blood if need be’ and that it was ‘futile for them to try and take their Negroes out of their ranks.’⁸⁴ Such was his apparent conviction that he claimed he would happily use violence against fellow citizens to protect African-Americans. This was not just his view, he claimed, but the entire regiment’s. Unit pride was swelled by describing how General Granger had failed to convince the 22nd to relinquish their runaways, apparently stating that, ‘well, that is a bully regiment any way.’⁸⁵ As with previous letters in the consideration of how correspondence was crafted to appease an abolitionist readership back home, what is different in this case was that Welsh abolitionists in the 22nd had concrete evidence to demonstrate their committed opposition to slavery. This attitude was presented as a fundamental aspect of acting like Union soldiers.

J.J. Davies of Company D, 8th New York Cavalry was an example of a Welshman who actively freed slaves because of his position as a soldier, without specifically stating his position on the matter. He wrote to his brother in Utica in March 1863, detailing his unit’s actions while campaigning in Virginia. The 8th Cavalry were raiding the countryside when they came across what Davies described as a great house, with an estimated 300 slaves working the fields. What happened next was described in a simple, almost mundane fashion, yet it revealed the convictions of some Union soldiers when it came to emancipation:

Yna rhanwyd yr Ysgwadron yn fan gwmniau o 10 bob un, a phob cwmni yn cymryd
Nigger gyda hwynt.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ ‘Llythyr Milwr Cymreig’ in *Y Drych*, 28 March 1863

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ ‘Llythyr oddiwrth Filwr Cymreig yn Virginia at ei Frawd yn Utica’ in *Y Drych*, 21 March 1863

Then the Squadron divided into groups of 10 men each, and each group took a Nigger with them.

Davies did not stress abolitionist beliefs, so from his isolated testimony it is unclear whether he supported emancipation. Nonetheless, he accompanied his comrades in rescuing slaves from their captivity when given the opportunity. He did not mention if this was a direct order or if it was a collective decision, yet his account still highlights the army's role in making emancipation a core element of a northern soldier's identity. This act did not emphasise Davies' roots as a Welshman, rather it appeared to be one of his duties as a Union cavalryman. Evidently, the war provided some Welsh abolitionists with a rare chance to become active participants in the eradication of slavery, conforming with Elizabeth Varon's assessment of Union soldiers who imagined the Civil War as a war of deliverance, waged to deliver the South from the clutches of a conspiracy and to deliver it to the blessings of free society and of modern civilization.⁸⁷

Such incidents reinforced the army's role in turning Welsh volunteers into active emancipators. This mirrors Jonathan W. White's 2014 study of emancipation. White argued that, once the army adopted a policy of freeing slaves, the army cracked down on anti-abolition sentiment among the ranks. He perceived that anti-slavery within the army was a top-down phenomenon, claiming that there was much evidence from the field suggesting that the Union high command had at least as much, if not more, influence on the common soldiers as the soldiers had on their leaders.⁸⁸ He cited how in the months following the Proclamation, the army from the top down moved to silence any and all opposition. Democratic newspapers

⁸⁷ Varon, *Armies of Deliverance*, p.2.

⁸⁸ Jonathan W. White, *Emancipation, The Union Army And the Re-Election of Abraham Lincoln*, (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2014), p.39.

were banned from Union camps, anti-war letters sent to soldiers were confiscated and their authors were arrested for disloyalty, and Democratic soldiers who voiced their displeasure with Lincoln were arrested, court martialled and punished.⁸⁹ They even denied promotion to Democratic officers and generals and punished them for dissent. Consequently, those pro-Republican and anti-slavery Welsh volunteers found that their moral and political beliefs had become the official stance of the Union army. Therefore, opposing slavery was another method of expressing their commitment to the North and the Union.

Even as late as 1864 and 1865, some accounts from the front continued to emphasise a determination to eradicate slavery. In March 1864, a discharged Welsh veteran of the 2nd Iowa Volunteers wrote to the *Buchanan County Guardian* to advertise his credentials as a citizen: 'I am of foreign birth, a Welshman, a coal miner by profession. I am elected a member of the legislature that meets next January...I have been in the army, a member of the 2nd Iowa Regiment of Infantry and was discharged on account of sickness.'⁹⁰ He proceeded to voice his opinion on the possibility of a ceasefire with the Confederacy, ending the war early but leaving slavery intact. His exact words were: 'My motto regarding our national affairs is – no compromise with wrong!'⁹¹ Similarly, in March a veteran illustrated to the *Cyfaill* that the continued existence of slavery kept him motivated to fight on. He had spent '18 months in Uncle Sam's army' yet speaking on behalf of his comrades as well as himself, he declared 'we have not tired of service so far, for we consider this to be a just cause, and we are willing for the work until the ungodliness of buying and selling men has been utterly cleaned from our midst.'⁹² Their cases illustrate that, for some Welsh soldiers, the idea of leaving slavery intact to seek an early peace was unthinkable and seen as a moral wrong.

⁸⁹ White, *Emancipation*, p.40.

⁹⁰ 'No Compromise with Wrong' in *Buchanan County Guardian*, 8 March 1864

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² 'Llythyr o Faes y Gwaed' in *Y Cyfaill o'r Hen Wlad*, 14 March 1864

A soldier calling himself ‘Omicron’ was serving with Company K, 3rd Wisconsin Volunteers, which was part of General Sherman’s forces during the Atlanta Campaign of May-September 1864. Seeing the devastation wrought upon the Georgian countryside, ‘Omicron’ composed a poem encapsulating his feelings, which he then sent to the *Cyfaill* in November 1864:

Dros fryniau Georgia falch, Y seinir arch y Llyw, Trech Eyr nag un gwalch, A’r
caeth gaiff ryddid gwiw, A thystia’r goleu bach sydd draw, Fod byddin rhyddid fawr
ger llaw.⁹³

Over proud Georgia’s hills, stands the ark of the Lord, The Eagle will overpower any
rogue, and the slave shall be granted freedom, And the small light shall be witness,
that Freedom’s great army is at hand.

This mirrored R.C. Roberts’ experience of the invasion of Virginia in 1862, of marvelling at the natural beauty of the landscape while revelling in its destruction in the name of emancipation. This was presented as a religious crusade, for Omicron conveyed to the *Cyfaill* that he saw himself as a liberator under the blessing of God. He claimed that now, with the Union army in Georgia, the ‘ark of the Lord’ was present, and for that reason, slaves would now be set free. The symbolism of the eagle is of additional importance, as it once again shows a Welsh language source making efforts to portray a sense of American nationalism, set side by side with the righteousness of God. Emancipation, therefore, was interpreted by this Welshman as inherently American, as well as being inherently Christian – appeasing both aspects of his identity.

⁹³ ‘Gobaith y Viedette’ in *Y Cyfaill o’r Hen Wlad*, November 1864

Thomas J. Owen of the 27th Ohio wrote again to the *Gwladgarwr* in July 1865, shortly after the war had ended, to express his pride at having participated not only in the successful defence of his country, but also having contributed to the destruction of slavery – equating abolitionism with nationalism:

I can say now that the faithful and masculine soldiers that are returning home over the coming days have fought for our country, risking their lives on the battlefield, and feeling joyful to be in the army, with peace having been won through the triumph over treason, slavery, oppression and injustice.⁹⁴

Owen had written to the paper back in 1863 to express his opposition to slavery, so the dictation of his anti-slavery beliefs persisted throughout the war. His personal involvement as a ‘masculine soldier’ in the victory over human bondage illustrated how his military service appeared to strengthen his sense of belonging, for he felt ‘joyful to be in the army’ and being able to return home after fighting for ‘our country.’ His letter implied that, in his view, defending the Union against the rebellion was the same as ending southern slavery. In this manner, Owen expressed a sense of northern identity as both a veteran and a successful abolitionist. Furthermore, this identity as a veteran contributed to the further segregation of Owen and other Welsh volunteers from their pre-military lives, for unlike civilian abolitionists, the former had succeeded in their mission. As Stanley Harrold pointed out in his 2019 study, abolitionists had little impact on the North’s conduct of the war, and it was the army rather than organised abolitionism that transformed the war to save the Union into one

⁹⁴ ‘Thos. J. Owen 27^{ain} Ohio’ in *Y Gwladgarwr*, 1 July 1865

for emancipation.⁹⁵ In this regard, Welsh veterans certainly acted as northerners but remained distinct from the wider population in their imagined status and shared experiences.

This distinct, soldier's identity was also reflected in an ode composed by James Thomas from Aberdare, south Wales, honouring his brother Morgan, who had emigrated to America for the purpose of joining the Union army. The *Gwladgarwr* circulated the poem on 22 April 1865, a few weeks after the war had ended: 'After my brother emigrated over, into the midst of horror and sadness...To fight for a country's rights and win freedom for the slaves...For lovers of freedom win the praise, For my brother is a soldier.'⁹⁶ James's admiration for his brother was evident. Furthermore, his emphasis on the title of 'soldier' granted Morgan improved status, particularly given the successful end to the war and the eradication of slavery. Despite appearing like an obituary in its glorification of Morgan's qualities as a devoted abolitionist, he did not refer to his brother in the past tense, implying that, at least at the time of composition, Morgan was alive and well. The style of commemoration did not portray Morgan as a patriotic American, however. In his brother's eyes, and to an extent the *Gwladgarwr*'s readers, Morgan Thomas was a prime example of a Welsh abolitionist, not a Welsh-American. Had Morgan written to express his own thoughts on his identity, a different portrayal might have been given, but it does highlight how some newly emigrated Welshmen did not necessarily consider northern patriotism to be as important as anti-slavery as a facet of national identity.

Another native of Aberdare expressed similar pride at having served in the victorious Union army. D.M. Williams, whose father John was a doctor back in Aberdare, had enlisted in Company H, 17th Wisconsin and saw service in the West under the command of Generals

⁹⁵ Stanley Harrold, *American Abolitionism: Its Direct Political Impact from Colonial Times to Reconstruction*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2019), p.160.

⁹⁶ 'Morgan Fy Mrawd yn Filwr' in *Y Gwladgarwr*, 22 April 1865

Grant and Sherman. On 2 April 1865, Williams penned a letter to the *Gwladgarwr* exhibiting a degree of pride at being not only a veteran of, ‘Sherman and Grant and their invincible armies that are ready to deliver the death blow to the worshippers of slavery even today.’⁹⁷ He specified stated that he was of the 17th Wisconsin Veteran Volunteers, granting himself a degree of evident social pride at that distinction. He appeared eager to remind his readers in Aberdare that he was fighting to end slavery. Despite not referencing loyalty to the North, he did allude to such sentiments by focusing on his status as a veteran, someone who had served for three years and then re-enlisted, displaying his commitment to fight the ‘worshippers of slavery.’ The overall emphasis of his letter, however, was on his abolitionist principles as a Welshman, more than his duty as a loyal northerner. To be sure, Williams had written to *Y Drych* two years earlier to emphasise how being an opponent of slavery was a characteristic of being Welsh. In June 1863, he and other Welsh-speaking comrades in the 17th were encamped outside the Confederate stronghold of Vicksburg, when they were horrified to discover from a local civilian that there were fellow Welshmen in the Vicksburg garrison:

Gwelsom uwch ben drws ystordy, Roberts and Jones. Meddyliais mai plant Gomer oeddynt...Cyfarfyddais a hen wr penllwyd, a gofynais iddo. Dywedodd mai Cymry oedd Mr Roberts and Jones, ond eu bod yn swyddogion yn myddin y Gwrthryfelwyr, a’u bod yn Vicksburg yn awr. Yn wir, nis gallaf ddisgrifio fy nheimpladau pan glywais hyn, for rhai o’r genedl ysbryd rhydd yn dal swyddi yn myddin y Caethfasnachwyr.⁹⁸

We saw a sign over a storehouse door, Roberts and Jones. I guessed they were children of Gomer...I met an old grey-haired man, and I asked him. He replied that

⁹⁷ ‘Llythyr oddiwrth Filwr Cymreig o’r Rhyfel yn America’ in *Y Gwladgarwr*, 29 April 1865

⁹⁸ ‘Llythyr Oddiwrth Filwyr’ in *Y Drych*, 4 July 1863

Mr Roberts and Jones were Welshmen, but they were officers in the Rebel army, and they were now in Vicksburg. Truly, I cannot describe my feelings when I heard this, that some of the free spirit nation were in the service of the army of the Slavers.

In the tradition of his contemporaries, he had seen a potentially Welsh name and went to investigate. Consequently, he was appalled that fellow Welshmen would enlist in the army defending the rights of slavers. In his mind, this was uncharacteristically of Welsh behaviour, contrasting with his own abolitionism. He was a faithful member of the ‘free spirit nation,’ which emphasised both the importance of anti-slavery as a tenet of Welsh identity, as well as his belief that the Welsh ‘nation’ was a distinct group. His later letter in April 1865 showed that, despite alluding to the social status of being a Union veteran, he was not outspoken in his devotion to his adopted country, stressing his principles as a Welsh trait. Affirming their place within American society as a result of anti-slavery, therefore, was not a universal experience.

The Language of Neutrality

Following Gareth Evans-Jones' astute observation that most Welsh-Americans were anti-slavery but not abolitionists, there are several indications that the centrality of anti-slavery as a combat motivation for Welsh volunteers was more complicated than previously believed. The *Cenhadwr* and its ilk promoted purely pro-abolitionist sentiment in their selection of soldiers' letters, thereby creating the impression of a general consensus on the issue. While the above sources have shown that several Welsh volunteers were open in their anti-slavery beliefs, the attitudes of other Welshmen in the Union army were mixed.

For example, in April 1863, John V. Williams of Company A, 7th Iowa Volunteers shared his thoughts with the Iowa newspaper, *Muscatine Weekly Journal*. He admitted that he was no abolitionist, and nor did he, ‘like the darkey, but any grade of a negro is superior to a rebel; and a rebel in the field is a gentleman compared to a man who is plotting to destroy our Government.’⁹⁹ He was in favour of emancipation, not because of any compassion for the ‘negro’ but because, in his words, ‘without emancipating the slaves we cannot crush the rebellion.’¹⁰⁰ His is a rare perspective as he was a Welshman who openly admitted he was not an abolitionist. Williams stated that he was in favour of ending southern slavery only as a method of destroying the Confederacy, not from moral or religious grounds like others of his generation. His apparent loyalty as a northerner was not defined nor influenced by anti-slavery beliefs. His case reinforces the point that Welsh-Americans were not wholly united by abolitionism and that, in some instances, antipathy towards slavery varied between rural and urban communities. George Van Cleve has pointed out that even in Pennsylvania, one of the cradles of abolitionism, support was skewed across the state as rural residents in particular either continued to support slavery, were hostile to blacks, or were indifferent to their fate.¹⁰¹

One soldier wrote to the *Cenhadwr* in August 1862 to describe his first glimpse of black soldiers in South Carolina and was full of nothing but admiration for their bearing and discipline. He commented on their healthy appearance and their obvious strength, believing them comparable to white soldiers. He also noticed that many had been former slaves who had escaped from their southern masters.¹⁰² Compared to the accounts of some who

⁹⁹ ‘What the Soldiers Say’ in *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, 24 April 1863

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ George William Van Cleve, *A Slaveholder’s Union: Slavery, Politics and the Constitution in the Early American Republic*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), p.63.

¹⁰² ‘Y Milwyr Negroaidd yn So. Carolina’ in *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, August 1862

encountered runaways, this soldier did not seem to view freedmen as pitiful figures. Indeed, he revelled in their shared status as Union soldiers, alluding to a greater sense of kinship.

By contrast, Richard Rees viewed black soldiers with less admiration than the *Cenhadwr*'s correspondent. While participating in General George Stoneman's great raid through North Carolina in March 1864, he recalled seeing atrocities committed against southern civilians who were suspected of being guerrillas. The perpetrators were black soldiers who, according to Rees, were particularly violent in their counter-insurgency methods. He wrote that, 'Four of their elders were hanged in that place. The Negro soldiers hanged an old man in his own house, in the presence of his family.'¹⁰³ Conveniently, Rees omitted any detail on whether he was personally involved in these reprisals, but by choosing to include the details of the old man's family being forced to witness the execution, he conveyed a sense of disgust at his African-American comrades in arms.

Other soldier accounts allude to the varying degrees of significance attributed to slavery through the absence of the word 'slavery' in written correspondence. Some volunteers expressed socially conventional attitudes of duty and patriotism but deigned to omit any comment on slavery. For instance, in January 1862, a letter was sent to the *Cyfaiïll* from Glynarthen in west Wales, notifying its readers of the recent emigration and enlistment of two brothers from the area, John and Dafydd J. Jones. The stated motivation of these local men to volunteer in an overseas war was that they had 'risked their lives willingly to defend the Government and the Union.'¹⁰⁴ The sentiment appeared patriotic enough, and the tone was light for the Welsh word for 'risked' similarly derives from the word for 'adventure.' Nevertheless, it is notable that the Jones brothers did not credit anti-slavery as a motive. Instead, it was the more familiar rhetoric of defending the rights and privileges of the Union

¹⁰³ 'Llythyr Oddiwrth Filwr Cymreig yn North Carolina' in *Y Gwladgarwr*, 5 March 1864

¹⁰⁴ 'Cymry ar Faes y Gwaed' in *Y Cyfaiïll o'r Hen Wlad*, January 1862

from the threat of the rebellion. Contrary to the unanimity of abolition that the Welsh-American press sought to convey, this source suggests that some volunteers believed that defending the Union was of greater importance than freeing slaves.

More than a few soldiers wrote letters with a similarly neutral stance, focusing on themes of duty and patriotism, neither voicing support for slavery nor openly admitting opposition to it. In June 1862, T. J. Jones of the 81st New York reported the death of one his regimental friends in the regiment, John E. Griffiths, sending his written obituary to the *Cyfaill*. Jones commemorated his friend as a ‘loyal soldier of Christ, as well as to his country.’¹⁰⁵ Despite several testimonies from Welsh soldiers professing total commitment to the eradication of slavery, Jones believed that the two most admirable qualities of a volunteer were duty and religious devotion. This reflects much of the previous material analysed in Chapter Two and Three suggesting that the Welsh place in America was reaffirmed by patriotic duty and Nonconformist devotion more than anti-slavery.

The obituary of William Morgan in August 1863 showed a similar omission on the centrality of slavery to a volunteer’s psyche. Morgan had emigrated to Ontario County, New York from his home in Blaenau Gwent, south Wales, enlisting in the 126th New York Volunteers. After a year’s service, he was killed at the battle of Gettysburg in July 1863. It was written that he left behind a large circle of friends and relatives to grieve his passing, but that they ‘can rejoice that he had fallen in an honourable cause.’¹⁰⁶ The exact nature of that ‘honourable cause’ was left vague and subjective, but it insinuated that dying for emancipation was not as acceptable to grieving relatives as having died for a national cause. The analysis of obituaries in Chapter Three has shown that the prevailing language of commemoration focused on duty, patriotism and religiosity, with no consideration of emancipation. Moreover, using such a

¹⁰⁵ Y *Cyfaill o’r Hen Wlad*, June 1862

¹⁰⁶ ‘Milwr Cymreig wedi marw yn Gettysburg’ in *Y Drych*, 29 August 1863

broad term as the ‘cause’ allowed grieving friends and relatives to interpret their loved one’s sacrifice in any way that suited them, whether that meant freeing slaves or simply defending the government.

Thomas. W. Thomas’ obituary in August 1864 did not cite opposition to slavery as a posthumous quality either. It was written by *Y Drych* and later reprinted in the *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, yet despite the press’s typical narrative on the merits of abolition, Thomas was commemorated with the familiar emphasis on patriotism and religiosity. He had moved to Wisconsin from his home of Anglesey, north Wales, in 1862, enlisting in the 22nd Wisconsin Volunteers. He had taken ill with a fever while participating in Sherman’s Atlanta campaign, but despite making an initial recovery in a hospital in Chattanooga, ‘he caught erysipelas there and died suddenly.’¹⁰⁷ Despite being a member of an outwardly abolitionist regiment, as discussed earlier with Colonel Utley’s example, the cause of emancipation was omitted.

Instead, Thomas’ two most valuable qualities were presented as bravery and piety. The editor quoted Thomas’ lieutenant writing to him that, in the latter’s death, ‘we have lost a good man and a brave soldier,’ while in previous letters, Thomas had indicated that he ‘took great pleasure in religious medicine when circumstances allowed.’¹⁰⁸ This fallen soldier was depicted as an American patriot, for according to the editor, ‘Lookout Mountain will be an ageless memorial to him and the brave men who had sacrificed their lives for our country, and the murmur of the Tennessee will sing their elegy for all the days of the earth.’¹⁰⁹ In this case, Thomas was perceived to have given his life for his country, which appeared as a more acceptable form of commemoration than any reference to ending slavery. His perceived

¹⁰⁷ ‘Marwolaeth Milwr Cymreig’ in *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 24 August 1864

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

status as an American patriot was sanctified by his death, with the editor claiming that the land itself would remember eternally. In some cases, therefore, Welsh volunteers may have openly declared that abolition was a fundamental aspect of their perceived duty, but patriotism and religiosity were believed to be of greater importance when it came to memorialisation.

A few volunteers described what they were fighting for in clear terms when it came to duty and love of country, but notably subjective when it came to human rights. For instance, Sergeant Daniel T. Jones of Company H 126th Illinois Volunteers wrote directly to *Y Drych*'s editor in June 1863 to describe his motivations for enlistment, with 'an intense enthusiasm and indescribable belief in patriotism, freedom and the human rights of those that were in danger.'¹¹⁰ The terminology appears deliberately subjective, for the rights of 'those in danger' could be interpreted to either mean those in bondage, or simply those citizens who were threatened by the rebellion. In this manner, Sergeant Jones was not expressing any opposition to the idea of fighting to end slavery nor declaring any support for it either. Support for emancipation did not appear to be worth explicitly describing, either because he assumed the readers would know that he meant slaves, or because his commitment to the abstract concepts of duty and freedom were easier to convey.

John R. Hughes of the 152nd Heavy Artillery was similarly vague in his convictions, telling *Y Drych* in March 1863 that the true will of his heart was peace in their country, and the word of the Lord spread throughout all the lands of America.¹¹¹ As was common among Welsh volunteers, Hughes viewed the war as a religious crusade, but unlike some, he failed to specify whether his participation in spreading the word of the Lord included the issue of human bondage. Subsequently, *Y Drych* received a letter in July 1863 from a soldier calling

¹¹⁰ 'Haine's Bluff, Mehefin 29 1863' in *Y Drych*, 11 July 1863

¹¹¹ 'Arall Eto' in *Y Drych*, 14 March 1863

himself 'Undeb', meaning 'Union.' This soldier addressed his letter to what he referred to as 'the Welsh nation.' He claimed that the Welsh nation was superior in its 'moral qualities' over every other nation, but those moral qualities did not revolve directly around antislavery. Instead, the best Welshman was 'faithful to his country and the cause of his country, and also to the principles that bring relief to his co-creatures, and utterly faithful to the gospel and the Son of God.'¹¹² Like Sergeant Jones, both accounts stressed that the ideal Welsh-American volunteer was committed to defending his country as well as his duty to God, with the matter of ending slavery being alluded to or ignored as an aspect of military identity.

As early as December 1861, E.L. Hughes of the 30th Pennsylvania wrote to the *Gwladgarwr* from Camp Keyes in Maine, assuring his readers of the guaranteed victory of the Union over the rebellion. In his view, winning the war as a foregone conclusion, for 'when we look at the righteousness of the cause, the South shall empty.'¹¹³ Once again, the terminology is intentionally subjective, for while moral righteousness might refer to emancipation, it can just as equally be viewed as defending the Union. John P. Rosser expressed similar convictions in June 1864, where he alluded to being a committed abolitionist rather than expressly saying so. He steadfastly denied the possibility that the Copperheads would win an early, unfavourable peace, stating that 'God of the heavens has supported wars of righteousness before now, and he shall certainly do so presently, so the North succeeds despite Jeff.'¹¹⁴

The divine connection with what Rosser viewed as the righteousness of the war indicated his traditionally Welsh Nonconformist devotion, but he did not clearly voice the importance of antislavery as his motivation to fight on. Moreover, in September 1864, Gwilym of the 107th Pennsylvania expressed his wish for 'a swift end to wars and for the banner of freedom to fly

¹¹² 'Llythyr oddiwrth Filwr Cymreig at ei Gyd Genedl, Byddin yr UD, Gorffennaf 1af 1863' in *Y Drych*, 18 July 1863

¹¹³ 'Llythyr Oddiwrth Filwr Cymreig o America' in *Y Gwladgarwr*, 28 December 1861

¹¹⁴ 'Llythyr Oddiwrth Filwr Cymreig' in *Y Gwladgarwr*, 15 June 1864

high in the breeze from now until the end of ages.’¹¹⁵ The reference to freedom was arguably a clearer indication of his desire for emancipation and its importance as a motivating factor in his enlistment, but still, the vague imagery suggests that some Welsh volunteers remained uncomfortable with declaring full support for abolitionism throughout the war.

Such accounts hinted at the importance of anti-slavery but did not openly broach their convictions. Other Welsh soldiers did not attempt such nuance. Unspoken opinions about the middling importance of slavery to Welsh volunteers were mostly present in newspapers back in Wales, where the pro-abolitionist censorship of the Welsh-American press was not as prominent. For example, in March 1862 the *Merthyr Star* shared a letter written by Howell J. Davis of the 46th Pennsylvania Volunteers to his cousin David. Contrary to some of the accounts discussed in Chapter One, Davis did not even cite patriotism as a motivation for enlistment, let alone a determination to end slavery. Instead, he joined up, ‘as everything was dull at that time, and the Government was offering very good inducements for men to enlist, besides many of my friends and acquaintances were freely offering their services.’¹¹⁶ D. Ll. Jones shared this economic mindset when he described his decision to re-enlist in February 1864 after the end of his term of service, writing to the *Gwladgarwr*:

There is a considerable excitement in our midst involving enlisting in the veterans corps and I believe that most of our regiment aims to re-enlist. They are good incentives for us, those who have been in service for two years... They will pay a hundred-dollar bounty and 160 dollars from the New Bounty and give us a month’s pay in advance.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ ‘Llythyr Oddiwrth Filwr ym Myddin Grant’ in *Y Gwladgarwr*, 19 November 1864

¹¹⁶ ‘Letter from Howell J. Davis, writing from Hancock, Maryland’ in *Merthyr Star*, 1 March 1862

¹¹⁷ ‘Llythyr Oddiwrth Filwr Cymreig’ in *Y Gwladgarwr*, 6 February 1864

Neither account followed the common trope seen in the Welsh-American press of duty and religion being the most important aspects of military service. Slavery was not cited whatsoever, with not even a deliberately vague reference to defending the rights and freedoms of those in need. Both men fully admitted that enlistment was driven by lucrative incentives, although in Jones' case, having endured years of war up to that point, his pragmatism was understandable. Moreover, previous letters of Jones that have appeared in this thesis focused on his campaign experiences, giving no indication of ideological motivations. Crucially, however, he alluded to one of the most important aspects of Welsh-American military identity, in that he was following most of the regiment's men in choosing to re-enlist. While financial gain was an added bonus, his ties with his regiment kept him serving in uniform.

Two accounts even gave the impression that the suffering of southern slaves was not as concerning as the suffering of free citizens during the war years. While campaigning in Louisiana in September 1864, Thomas E. Hughes of Company G 23rd Wisconsin penned a letter to the *Cyfaill* despairing at the poverty and suffering that the war had caused, not to the enslaved populace, but to ordinary civilians. He noted that the present war 'has caused the greatest poverty in the United States ever heard of in the pages of history...the families of north and south, especially those whose husbands and sons are in the army, many of them are in a low and poor position.'¹¹⁸ Despite the accuracy of his words, it is strange that despite being in the heart of rebel territory, surrounded by a slave economy, he claimed that those who suffered most in the war were the families of those menfolk were serving. While not

¹¹⁸ 'Llythyr Oddiwrth Filwr Cymreig' in *Y Cyfaill o'r Hen Wlad*, October 1864

evidently antagonistic to abolitionism, the fate of southern slaves did not appear to be a prominent concern of his.

A volunteer under the name of 'Evan' wrote to his parents in Aberdare, south Wales in July 1865, which was subsequently published in the *Gwladgarwr*. While he reiterated how proud he was to have served in the army that had successfully defended their country and government, he despaired at the suffering the war had caused. He regretted the 'blood and flesh sacrifices of our courageous and liberal sons' as well as the 'rivers of tears...thousands of homes were ruined, and our country became filled with widows and orphans.'¹¹⁹ As with the above letter of Hughes, what he deemed to be the greatest tragedy of the war was the families of those whose sons and husbands had been killed in the fighting. Moreover, despite campaigning in southern territory for 'almost three years,' the plight of those suffering in human bondage was not cited as a concern of his. Instead, he marvelled that he had been able to fulfil his duty, 'of being able and suited to be a soldier to defend such a country and government that we have here in America.'¹²⁰ This is not to suggest that he condoned slavery in any way, but only that it did not concern him at all. From Evan's perspective, his loyalty was as an American defending his country from rebellion, not as an abolitionist. Given the suffering that he, as a soldier, had endured both on and off the battlefield, it is understandable how the plight of military widows and orphans was foremost in his mind.

This theme also appeared in J.W. Jones' testimony, written in May 1865 from the 23rd Wisconsin's camp near Mobile, Alabama. He noted with sadness that their regiment had marched out of Wisconsin with 1,100 soldiers in 1862 but only 275 returned home in 1865. Adding to the tragedy, according to his count there had been 26 Welshmen in the regiment at

¹¹⁹ 'Llythyr o America Oddiwrth Filwr Cymreig at ei berthnasau yn y Cwmbach, Aberdar' in *Y Gwladgarwr*, 26 August 1865

¹²⁰ Ibid.

its inception, but only four were able to return.¹²¹ He did not specify whether those four were the only survivors, but the image of loss that statistic portrayed was palpable. Accordingly, he wished for revenge through the hanging of Jefferson Davis for treason, not for the exploitation of human bondage.¹²² For a veteran who had lost many friends and colleagues, many of whom were from his home community, his own suffering mattered more in his concept of military duty than the freedom of southern slaves.

In August 1866, the *Jackson Standard* shared a letter from former soldier Miles Jones of Oak Hill, Ohio that had been written back in December 1863. Jones was running for the position of Sheriff as the Democratic candidate, and the publication of his past letter emphasised his Democratic qualities. At an army camp in Kentucky, he penned his reasons for supporting C.L. Valladigham, the Copperhead leader. He claimed to speak on behalf of himself and his company, stating that he was in favour of prosecuting the war with the utmost vigour until every state was willing to acknowledge themselves as members of the United States. He then wanted the government to admit those rebellious states into the Union, irrespective of slavery, rather than prosecute the war for '10 years longer for the mere sake of freeing the negroes...Soldiers beware, Welshmen, beware.'¹²³

This was a more openly hostile perspective towards emancipation, most likely due to its publication in an Anglo-American newspaper, rather than the abolitionist Welsh-language media. Then again, the fact that he only shared his letter with a newspaper after the war had finished suggests that had his opinion been declared earlier, he would have met with fierce opposition. Of additional note, the *Standard* was staunchly Republican in its leanings, so the inclusion of this incriminating letter from Miles Jones may have been intended to besmirch

¹²¹ 'Llythyr o America' in *Y Gwladgarwr*, 24 June 1865

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ 'Why?' in *The Jackson Standard*, 16 August 1866

his reputation ahead of the upcoming election. Demonstrating this point was the vitriolic response sent to the *Standard* the subsequent week from a fellow Welshman of Oak Hill: ‘One who supported traitor Valladingham. One who did so for mischief and aggravation. One who thought more of aggravating a few individuals of his own company than of supporting the Government in its utmost need. Welshmen, beware!’¹²⁴

This fellow Welshman of Oak Hill denied the possibility that Jones’ company would have agreed with the latter’s political support of Copperheads and anti-emancipation, effectively declaring him to be a traitor. The following week, another Welshman wrote to the *Standard*, dismissing the idea of Welsh Copperheads: ‘We are pleased to know that few Welshmen have this spirit.’ He then cited a line of scripture in Welsh condemning the ‘half dozen Welsh copperheads in this county’ and asked them to translate it for their Irish neighbours.¹²⁵ For some Welsh veterans of Ohio, the cause of emancipation was equated with the defence of the Union, and any voice of opposition was challenged as treasonous behaviour. In this regard, soldiers’ identity was influenced by anti-slavery or abolitionist beliefs, as veterans worked hard to equate the cause of nationalism with emancipation.

Conclusion

During the war, the prevailing social view among Welsh volunteers was antagonism to slavery. Many volunteers openly declared support for the emancipation of southern African-Americans, while others were careful to voice their support in a subjective enough fashion that they could not be accused of pro-slavery sentiment. Some avoided this quandary by

¹²⁴ ‘Another Why’ in *The Jackson Standard*, 23 August 1866

¹²⁵ ‘Dieithriaid’ in *The Jackson Standard*, 6 September 1866

declining to comment on the matter. Consequently, this chapter has noted that recent historiography is too sweeping in its assessment of Welsh-American abolitionism, for within the Union army, support for ending slavery was not as unanimous as previously believed.

This chapter's analysis has also attempted to expand the scope of recent patterns in immigrant studies by critically assessing the anti-slavery attitudes of an under-explored ethnic group.

Welsh-language evidence has revealed that the perception of antislavery remained the dominant social consensus among Welsh soldiers, for the efforts of such abolitionists as Robert Everett, combined with traditional Welsh cultural views on human bondage ensured that many volunteers sought to appear fervent in their desire for emancipation. This interpretation was eagerly promoted by the Welsh-American press, printing numerous articles, poems and sermons on the merits of abolition, as well as circulating correspondence from volunteers who shared this ideology. There was no open acceptance of anti-abolitionism in Welsh circles, making it impossible to gauge the degree of pro-slavery sentiment among Welsh volunteers. However, this chapter has also highlighted that exceptions to the abolitionist Welsh soldier stereotype can be found in the Welsh-language press through deliberately vague terminology regarding 'freedom' and 'liberty,' or in the celebration of patriotism and duty as key motivations, ignoring the matter of slavery entirely.

Regardless of whether the average Welsh volunteer expressed support or neutrality on the issue of emancipation, there is evidence to suggest that it became an important aspect of perceived inclusion within northern society as well as the army. Certain regiments, such as Utley's 22nd Wisconsin and J. J. Davies' 8th New York Cavalry became active liberators in freeing and protecting runaways, constituting a fundamental aspect of interpretative patriotism. A few reiterated their identity as northern Americans by framing the South as a different or heathen country that deserved the destruction wrought by Union hands, framing themselves as patriotic liberators of the oppressed slave population. Others interpreted

emancipation as an act of Christian duty. Even those that did not voice support for abolitionism remained aware of the need to avoid open criticism of emancipation, both as a traditional Welsh-American cultural view and as the Union army's eventual official policy. This illustrates that irrespective of personal convictions, Welsh volunteers consistently exhibited anti-slavery language in written correspondence, indicating that Welsh-American military identity was contributed to by the perception of liberty.

Thesis Conclusion

When Jenkin Lloyd Jones wrote the opening statement of his diary, he was writing as a veteran, having spent years risking his life for his adopted country. His perspective represents an immigrant whose sense of belonging within wider American society had been strengthened by his time fighting in the Union army. His identity remained nuanced, for he referred to himself as proudly Welsh and American, yet ultimately it was for the latter part of himself that fought for. He ended his diary:

Three of the best years of my life have been lost to self-instruction, and the plans and hopes of my childhood have been ruthlessly toppled down, but the time has not been lost. I have no regrets for the way it has been spent. My prayer is that the remainder of my life may be as usefully spent.¹

By no means were Jones's experiences carefree; his days were filled with disease and hunger, suffering and he endured adverse weather as well as Confederate gunfire. He fought in 11 major battles, including Vicksburg, Chattanooga and Gettysburg, the latter of which gave him a broken foot causing him to walk with a cane for the rest of his life. That he expressed no regret over his enlistment, losing the best years of his youth to a brutal conflict, demonstrates once again how the perception of patriotism was a fundamental driving force for Welsh volunteers throughout the war years and for decades afterwards. Jenkin became a lifelong pacifist after the Civil War's end, eventually becoming a Unitarian preacher of great renown. After mustering out of the army, he returned to Wisconsin where he found work as a

¹ Jones, *An Artilleryman's Diary*, p.234.

travelling missionary, walking over more than 25,000 miles across the United States during his career.² He established Unitarian societies in Racine, Madison, Baraboo and Whitewater, became the Missionary Secretary of the Western Unitarian Church, then founded and acted as editor of the liberal religious and reform weekly, *Unity* in 1878.³ It is interesting to note that the three principles driving *Unity* were ‘Freedom, Fellowship and Character,’ a strikingly similar sentiment to the principal foundations of his experience in the Union army.

Despite putting violence behind him, his identity had been defined by the army, as suggested by his last written words before he died on the 12th of September, 1918:

I ask for no higher compliment; I seek no truer statement of the work I have tried to do than the white-headed old negress gave the beardless boy [Jones] on the hot Corinth battlefield in 1862. Then if I deserve it, let someone who loves me say, “Here is a Linkum soldier who done got run over”—one who like his leader tried to pluck a thistle and plant a flower wherever a flower would grow.⁴

His experience of being a native-born Welsh immigrant who had enlisted to fight for the Union represents how the Civil War was a radical turning point for a generation of Welsh immigrants. Moreover, his status as a veteran indicates how fellow immigrants continued to manifest their post-war ties to America through the unique status of having fought for their country. Indeed, many felt they had left a fitting legacy for their descendants, having

² Cathy Tauscher and Peter Hughes, ‘Jenkin Lloyd Jones’, *Dictionary of Unitarian & Universalist Biography*, <https://uudb.org/articles/jenkinlloydjones.html> (accessed 18 December 2023)

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

abolished slavery, defeated the Confederacy, and earned their place as northerners due to their battlefield experiences.

To a lesser extent, association with the war effort became a method for Welsh civilians to also express the American aspect of their identity. When Abraham Lincoln was assassinated in April 1865, Welsh-Americans mourned publicly. Robert Everett lamented at the loss of the ‘most valuable gentleman in terms of talent and importance in our country’, while Reverend E.R. Lewis wrote that ‘my heart is broken...I cannot eat nor sleep nor be at peace.’⁵ Richard Edwards claimed that the entire country was grieving because of the tragedy, a grief that had ‘never been seen in America before.’⁶ Moreover, as mentioned before, in 1866, John William Jones and Thomas B. Morris, editors of *Y Drych*, wrote a Welsh language history of the conflict, *Hanes y Gwrthryfel Mawr yn y Talaethau Unedig*, stressing the integral role played by Welshmen during the conflict.⁷

More than anyone, however, it was the soldiers that were most affected by the conflict. Their white, Protestant status marked them quite similar to much of Anglo-American society, yet the war was nonetheless viewed as an opportunity to solidify their status, not as immigrants, but as dutiful, patriotic northern Americans. For many Welsh veterans, there could be no question of whether they were more loyal to their native heritage or to the country they had fought and died for. Some clamoured for recognition of this fact. Shortly after the war, former soldier H.O. Rowlands of Waukesha, Wisconsin, wrote to the *Chicago Daily Tribune* in July 1865 to laud the patriotism of his Welsh comrades in arms. He claimed that, to sustain the Union, ‘the young heroes of the nation rushed intrepidly to the salvation of their adopted and beloved country, and the blood of hundreds of them has consecrated the altar of

⁵ *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, May 1865

⁶ *Y Seren Orllewinol*, May 1865

⁷ Jones and Morris, *Hanes Y Gwrthryfel Mawr Yn Y Talaethau Unedig*, p.4.

Freedom.’⁸ In a similar fashion to many Welsh soldiers’ letters, Rowlands emphasised the exemplary patriotism of his cultural brethren through a motif of wartime sacrifices. The belief was that participation in the war had marked Rowlands and other Welshmen as loyal patriots to the Union, emphasising a sense of national belonging with a reminder of all they had given and lost in military service for their adopted country. This largely contradicted the voices of those within Welsh-American society who wished for Welsh cultural distinctiveness to remain strong. Even as early as June 1861, the *Seren Orllewinol* expressed a fear that so many Welsh were joining the Union army that they were being absorbed: ‘hundreds of Welshmen are being lost amongst other nations, so that their own nation does not receive the honour from them,’⁹ While this may have been a concern for some community leaders, both secular and religious, the evidence considered in this thesis indicates that Welsh soldiers did not see being ‘lost’ as a problem. In fact, it appears the opposite was true – that being included as equal members of north American society was the ultimate goal, preferring blending in to standing out. The Welsh press may have viewed the Union army as comprising a multitude of different nations, yet the letters of Welsh soldiers suggests that they believed they all belonged to the same nation.

In conclusion, an analysis of Welsh soldiers in the Union army has unveiled a complex array of different experiences and sentiments with a common motif – a seemingly ubiquitous pre-occupation with perceptions of national duty and patriotic service for a righteous cause. Soldiers’ letters were consistently filled with references to contemporary masculinity and its synonymity with national duty. Regardless of local variances, Welshmen had been raised in communities where total devotion to the ideals of duty, liberty and freedom were expected to be demonstrated in public, with local preachers and prominent men in each community

⁸ ‘The Welsh Nation in America and the War – Letter from a Soldier’ in *The Chicago Daily Tribune* 11 July 1865

⁹ *Y Seren Orllewinol* June 1861

urging neighbours to enlist. Subsequently, Welshmen entered the army already imbued with notions of fighting to defend their country as well as their family. Moreover, the ideals of protecting the family were universal, as military service was considered the ultimate expression of a northern American's duty to his country as well as his community. In this manner, a local or state-level understanding of duty contributed to the evolution of national identity.

Fundamentally, the notion of the military family and the shared bonds of armed service were how Welsh volunteers merged into the vast array of the Union army. Because most were not concentrated into 'Welsh' regiments, the opportunity for cultural integration was far greater, with many embracing new forms of behaviour that were understood as quintessentially 'American,' or more specifically, 'northern' in nature. Due to a traditionally intense religiosity, shared by rural as well as urban Welsh-speakers, many formed prayer groups with non-Welsh soldiers, attended English-language sermons and received spiritual medicine from Anglo-American preachers. Consequently, their native Nonconformist faith became ingrained with life in the Union army. Even the consumption of alcohol, while a repulsive habit for several prohibitionist recruits, gained significance as a demonstration of masculine virility and social bonding with non-Welsh comrades.

The role of the army as a method of reaffirming immigrants' sense of national belonging was exacerbated by Welsh volunteers' combat experiences. The often-indescribable trial of battle set veterans apart from non-veterans, forging an additional bond of collective comradeship through shared trauma – literally fighting and dying for each other. This was true of all Union soldiers. Moreover, Welsh casualties received obituaries that glorified the sacrifices they had made for their adopted country, depicting their place in American society being commemorated through martyrdom. As the war progressed, anti-Copperhead sentiment

became an expected core ideology of Welsh volunteers, with any notion to the contrary being treated as an act of treason, ergo un-American behaviour.

The same principle applied to Welsh views on slavery. While certainly prevalent, anti-slavery sentiment was not as ubiquitous as previous scholarship has suggested. However, Welsh soldiers from every region were compelled to maintain at least a nominal support of anti-slavery, if not abolition, or else risk social ostracization. Generations of Welshmen had been brought up on a traditional anti-slavery stance, with preachers consistently delivering sermons damning the institution as evil. Such was the prevalence of abolition and demand for abolitionist literature within Welsh speaking communities, that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was translated into Welsh. In this matter, anti-slavery attitudes often reinforced the differences between Welsh immigrants and northern American society, for Welsh communities were largely supportive of abolitionism, if not active campaigners. Primary evidence from volunteers does not present a consensus on the issue of slavery as an aspect of their military identity. Some expressed a consistent commitment in their letters to friends and relatives to uphold the abolitionist principles they claimed were present in the Constitution, whereas several were far vaguer in their support, alluding to abstract themes of freedom and liberty without expressly describing slavery. What was clear, however, was that any evidence of anti-abolitionism was not tolerated, and appearing opposed to human bondage was the dominant social image. After the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, traditional Welsh anti-slavery beliefs were made official army policy, furthering the role of military service in the construction and maintenance of national belonging among Welsh abolitionists.

As was the case with other ethnic soldiers, wartime experiences and subsequent impact on national identity, depending on such factors as which state they lived in, what kind of community they enlisted from, as well as whether they were immigrants or had been born in the United States. Through a greater focus on Anglo-American sources, this thesis has

ascertained a better insight into how Welsh-speaking soldiers, recent immigrants as well as American-born, were viewed by non-Welsh comrades. What is clear is that, in several cases, Welsh soldiers' immigrant heritage was acknowledged, yet they were considered model examples of northern masculinity and labelled as American as any other of their comrades in arms. Especially for those who had been born in Wales, such acceptance highlights the role of the army in developing, strengthening and maintaining a greater sense of national belonging to northern society for Welsh volunteers. Therefore, while highlighting the non-homogeneity of this under-explored ethnic group, it is clear that service in the Union army facilitated a process of integration and national pride that resulted in many Welsh volunteers accepting and revelling in their status as northern Americans.

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