

BOOK REVIEWS

Chris Evans, *Slave Wales: The Welsh and Atlantic Slavery 1660-1850* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010)

Reviewed by Dr Sarah L. Bastow, University of Huddersfield

Slave Wales by Chris Evans is a very readable text outlining Welsh involvement in the slave trade in numerous different ways, from the role played by individuals in the transportation of slaves from Africa to the New World, to the use of Welsh wool in the production of clothes for slaves. The book is divided into short segments each dealing with a different aspect of Welsh involvement and finishing with a case study or summary (in shaded text). The case studies highlight key ideas, provide biographical detail of key individuals and make links to each subsequent chapter, but do also result in a textbook style appearance. This approach will however be of great benefit to the wider readership in making an academic text accessible. The book has a good mixture of brief biographies of men of Welsh origin or with Welsh connections and sections which look at the economic and social impact of slavery on Wales. Occasionally the connections with Wales can appear a little tenuous, but in many ways this serves to illustrate the all pervasive nature of the slave trade and how seemingly unconnected events and activities occurring far from Welsh shores had an impact on Wales.

The book begins with a mini biography of Henry Morgan, the well know privateer-come pirate, who had Welsh origins. Morgan was active in the Caribbean and this does set the scene for Welsh activity in the area albeit not directly terms of slavery. The following section moves on to look at Jeffrey Jefferys and Thomas Philips both of whom had much more direct connections with the atrocities of the slave trade. The role of key individuals in transporting, selling/purchasing and exploiting African slaves and the appalling nature of the slave trade and their roles in it are made clear without this becoming simply a condemnation of the evils of slavery. Other key individuals and families covered include the role of Anthony Bacon and the involvement of the Pennant family. Richard Pennant is also the subject of one of the highlighted case studies; as a key Welsh entrepreneur, slave owner and also an anti-abolitionist MP at the very time when the tide was turning against slavery this allows a range of issues to be highlighted.

The sections on the economic and social impact of slavery give an interesting dimension to the text and reveal a very different way of assessing the impact of both slavery on Wales and the Welsh on slavery. Whilst slaves transported from Africa to the shores of the New World may never have heard of Wales, the county did have an impact on their consciousness in terms of their daily activities for Wales produced the clothes they wore and the brass and copper used to make 'manillas' the currency for trade on the Guinea coast. In turn the income produce by the toil and industry of African slaves on plantations in the West Indies and America also had a direct impact on Wales funding the development of great estates, the copper and iron industries and the development of slate mining. The role of copper in the history of

slavery again re-emerges in a later section on slavery in the Gulf of Mexico and in particular in Cuba which allows for an exploration of an under examined aspect of the slave trade.

It is perhaps unsurprising to find references to nonconformists in relation to both Wales and the topic of slavery, but what *Slave Wales* points out is that Welsh Baptists were in fact quite willing to embrace slavery. Evans notes that particularly in the earlier eighteenth century most found no contradiction between their religious beliefs and slavery. He also notes that later objections to slavery occurred not just because the principle of enslavement was wrong, but also due to 'the failure of planters to spread the gospel' (p. 82). The lack of Welsh representation in the anti-abolitionist movement of the 1790s is also discussed and accounted for due to both geographical and economic circumstances. The story of abolition leads on to a discussion of Trinidad which outlines the role of Sir Thomas Picton's brutal regime there. Picton's use of torture was largely over-looked by virtue of his death at Waterloo which gained him a much more heroic posthumous reputation.

The book therefore covers lots of new ground and the approach allows the all pervasive nature of slavery to be illustrated. Slavery was the means by which fortunes were made and provided the blood money which was the foundation of many key industries. The endnote references are largely to primary material which shows the focus of the book, but linked to this aspect is the fact that the wider historiography of slavery is not particularly prominent in the text. This is a shame as this would allow the reader to see more clearly where Wales fits into the wider picture and moreover how this book clearly allows a new insight into the wider debates on slavery and the British Empire. Where the historiography is directly addressed (pp. 133-4) the importance of the book is clear. The further reading does give an indication of where the reader should go to gain additional information, but to see key interpretations directly addressed, or where appropriate challenged, throughout the text would further strengthen the points made. The text is clearly designed to show Wales and Welsh involvement with slavery specifically and therefore as a more independent entity than traditional histories of slavery would indicate, where the more generic terms of 'British' and 'Empire' are more frequently and sometime indiscriminately deployed. This raises an interesting question regarding the sense of self definition that some of the key individual discussed would have held. Did they see themselves as Welsh individuals acting to specifically benefit Wales, as entrepreneurs concerned with only their own fortunes and well being or as part of a wider British society and representative of the values of the British Empire?

Linden Peach, *The Fiction of Emyr Humphreys: Contemporary Critical Perspectives* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011)

Reviewed by Elidir Jones

It is a testament to the strength and influence of Emyr Humphreys that this is the second volume in two years to be published on his work in the *Writing Wales* in

Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010. Pp. 159. \$25.00 (paper). Daniel Livesay. *Journal of British Studies*, January 2012, Cambridge University Press. DOI: 10.1086/662230. The authors haven't yet claimed this publication. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010. Pp. 159. \$25.00 (paper). Daniel Livesay (a1). (a1). Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1086/662230>. Published online by Cambridge University Press: 21 December 2012. Export citation Request permission. Abstract. An abstract is not available for this content so a preview has been provided below. Please use the Get access link above for information on how to access this content. Copyright. COPYRIGHT: © North American Conference of British Studies 2012. Slave Wales: The Welsh an has been added to your Basket. Add to Basket. Buy Now. About the Author. Chris Evans teaches history at the University of Glamorgan. 2 customer reviews. 5.0 out of 5 stars. 5.0 out of 5 stars. 5 star. The only book that seriously addresses the issue of slavery and how that relates to Wales. Well written and researched, Read more.