

## Learning Activity Key Stage 3

This resource provides learning activities for your students using People's Collection Wales. It is one of a series of nine relating to Patagonia for KS3.

Establishment of the Welsh Settlement in Patagonia

The Voyage of the Mimoso, 1865

The Native Patagonians and the Welsh Settlers

### Early days in Patagonia

'Crossing the Patagonian plains': from the Camwy Valley to Cwm Hyfryd

Dark times – Floods and Emigration

Early Schools in the Welsh Settlement - Patagonia

History of the Welsh Language in Patagonia

Chapels and Churches in Patagonia



## Early days in Patagonia



## By Culturenet Cymru

## Introduction

*'... soon we were overcome by worries and hardships ... after landing in a bare land far from the comforts of civilisation ...'* Thomas Jones, *Glan Camwy*

### Tasks and learning objectives

1. Guanaco and rhea
2. Travellers
3. The Tehuelches and the Settlers

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## Early days in Patagonia

'... soon we were overcome by worries and hardships ... after landing in a bare land far from the comforts of civilisation ...' Thomas Jones, Glan Camwy

Shortly after the 'Mimosa' had anchored in New Bay on 27 July 1865, Captain George Pepperrell, the surgeon Thomas Greene, and some half a dozen of the male passengers, decided to disembark and inspect the land. It is said that Hugh Hughes (Cadfan Gwynedd) was the first of the emigrants to set foot on Patagonian soil. Amid the excitement and celebration that followed, Dafydd Williams, a young shoemaker from Aberystwyth, disappeared. They called out his name and lit bonfires in the evening in the hope that he would see the glow of the fire, but to no avail. His body was not recovered until many years later.

Most of the passengers came ashore on 28 July 1865. The weather was cold and wet and many of them realised that the preparation for their arrival was far from satisfactory. There was little time to rest, however, as there was work to be done - possessions needed to be unloaded from the ship, and the construction of the wooden buildings had to be completed. During this time, several mothers and children remained on the 'Mimosa', and although some shelter was found in the wooden storehouse which had already been completed, many of the emigrants had no choice but to sleep in the open air.



*Richard Ellis's journal, cover, 1865*

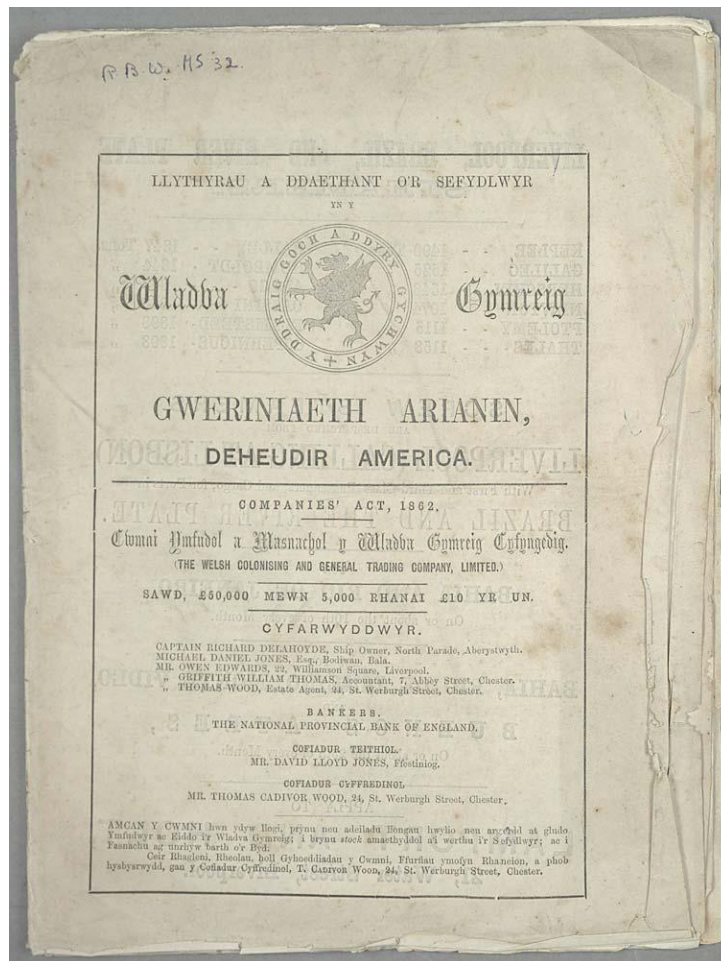
As some of the emigrants were becoming disheartened, a decision was made to start moving everyone from New Bay to the Valley - a journey of some 37 miles across the rough and barren land. On the last night of July, members of the governing council, 'Cyngor y Wladychfa', discussed the way forward. They decided that the young men should leave first and lead the way to the Valley. The men were split into three groups with the first (led by Edwin Cynrig Roberts), leaving on 1 August. The second group (which included carpenters and stone masons) left three days later, and the third group began its journey shortly afterwards. In the meantime, Lewis Jones left for Patagonia aboard the 'Mary Helen' to collect further supplies.

The journey from New Bay to the Chupat Valley (later named as the Camwy Valley) proved difficult for the new settlers. The men were exhausted by the long voyage, and a shortage of food and drink merely added to their problems. There were many dangers also to be faced, including possible attacks by indigenous tribes or wild animals, such as the puma.

# Early days in Patagonia

They experienced many adventures and hardships along the way, but succeeded in reaching their destination - the site of an old fort which they named 'Caer Antur'.

Edwin Roberts returned to New Bay, where the other emigrants were staying. During his absence, four of the emigrants had died (including three children) and although the first wedding had been held on 18 August, the atmosphere was sombre. They had eagerly awaited the return of Lewis Jones but were beginning to lose hope. At last, early in September, the ship 'Mary Helen' was spotted in the distance, accompanied by the ship 'Rio Negro' which was carrying a regiment of soldiers and horses on their way to the Valley.



*A collection of letters sent by some of the founders of the Welsh Settlement, 1865-6 [title page, image 1 of 3]*

Lewis Jones had arranged for around half the mothers and children to be carried aboard the 'Mary Helen' to the mouth of the River Chupat. Although the journey should only have taken a day, the voyage turned into a nightmare for the passengers as the ship was struck by a storm. The vessel was not suitable to carry passengers and the settlers had to endure the difficult conditions. After fifteen days at sea, the 'Mary Helen' finally came within sight of land. The passengers were all in poor physical condition, and desperate for food and water. After they came ashore, they had to walk another six miles to Caer Antur. The 'Mary Helen' returned to the New Bay to collect the rest of the women and a second load of cargo. On the second journey, the ship reached the Chupat within two days. Over the following weeks, the effects of the first voyage aboard the 'Mary Helen' became all too apparent. Several mothers and young children became seriously ill and a number of infants died.

# Early days in Patagonia

In the meantime, Lewis Jones had arrived at Caer Antur accompanied by sixteen soldiers and their leader, Julián Murga. They had travelled to the Chupat Valley on behalf of the Argentine government in order to give the lands formally to the Welsh. Julio V. Díaz, a land surveyor, was also among the contingent, and was given the responsibility of dividing the land in the Valley into small farms or 'chacras'. A formal ceremony was held to authorise the establishment of the Welsh Settlement, the Argentine flag was raised, followed by the Welsh Red Dragon, and a document was signed declaring that the name of the first town would be Pueblo de Rawson, rather than Caer Antur. The ceremony did not please everyone, but no dissenting voices were heard. However, it is worth noting that it was 'Tre-Rawson', the Welsh form of the town's official name, that was used by the settlers, perhaps as a statement of their independence.



*Plan of the first houses in Rawson, originally drawn by R. J. Berwyn, copy by Tegai Roberts*

Despite the practical difficulties, the settlers set about at once to organise their new community. The priority was to provide a home for each family and work began on the construction of simple cottages of mud, sedges and reeds. A wooden storehouse was constructed, and it was here that religious services were held on Sundays. The education of the children also received due attention and a simple wooden building was constructed to house the Settlement's first school. There was no time to rest and everyone was kept busy with various tasks, such as clearing the land, tending to the animals and preparing food. The governing council, 'Cyngor y Wladfa', held regular meetings and within a few months, its members had decided that the farms should be divided among the families.

The shortage of food remained a major problem. Although the men had some success in hunting wild animals, food supplies were running low. As the settlers had arrived in Patagonia late in the year, the opportunity had been lost to plant crops for the following year. The situation grew increasingly desperate, and a number of the emigrants concluded that the best solution would be to abandon the Valley and move to a more fertile area, such as the state of Santa Fe in north-east Argentina. One of the main supporters of this idea was the Rev. Abraham Matthews.

# Early days in Patagonia



Postcard of the first cart in Patagonia, c.1866

Around the same period, another split emerged among the settlers regarding a proposal by the president of the Settlement, Lewis Jones, to enter the 'guano' trade. When it became apparent that this plan would not bring any profit to the Settlement as a whole, but to a private company which was to be established by Lewis Jones, a storm of protest erupted. Within a few days, Lewis Jones had lost his position as President and had left the Settlement to live in exile in Buenos Aires. Seven others, including the surgeon Thomas Greene, also decided to leave. In the meantime, the long-awaited food supplies arrived and William Davies was elected as President. The arrival of these supplies was a relief to the settlers, but the future of the Settlement remained in the balance as the proposal to move to Santa Fe continued to gain support.

#### Sources

R. Bryn Williams, *Y Wladfa* (Cardiff, 1962)

E. MacDonald, *Yr Hirdaith* (Llandysul, 1999)

## Task 1. Guanaco and rhea

What are guanaco and rhea?

## Task 2. Travellers

Discuss Michael D. Jones's opinion and research into the way travellers are viewed or treated in Britain today.

*Complete the worksheet – Michael D. Jones*

## Task 3. The Tehuelche and the settlers

What kind of relationship existed between the Tehuelche and the settlers?

*Complete the worksheet -The Tehuelches and the Settlers*

## Michael D. Jones

Discuss Michael D. Jones's opinion and research into the way travellers are viewed and treated in Britain today.

*We believe that there can only be total annihilation facing them, unless they give up their nomadic life and settle somewhere particular, lead a civilized life and concentrate on rearing animals and cultivate the land. Certainly, this is their only hope. It would be good if the Settlers could convince them to do this.*

Michael D. Jones and David Rees's visit to the Welsh Settlement (Bala, 1882)

### Research

## The Tehuelches and the Settlers



The Tehuelche tribe – characteristics

The Tehuelche tribe – lifestyle

Relationship with the settlers