Apr 23rd, 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

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Dena Strong
Illinois Wesleyan University

Dr. Gareth Matthews, Faculty Advisor
Trinity College

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YR HEN IAIHT BARHAU:
VIEWS OF "THE WELSH QUESTION"

Dena Strong, IWU, and Dr. Gareth Matthews*,
Welsh Studies Department, Trinity College,
Carmarthen, Dyfed (Wales)

Dr. Matthews originally assigned me the task of explaining some aspect of the
Welsh national identity to an audience of people in my hometown-- a place where most of
the people I've met are unaware that there’s a difference between Wales and England. I
chose the Welsh language and Trinity people’s views of it, with the intention of turning it
into a feature article for the local paper. However, it quickly became apparent that I was
going to find a lot more material than I could fit into a single article; I kept the feature
voice so that it might be able to be split up into a series of articles.

In this study I conducted five interviews (four individuals, one small group) about
people’s backgrounds and their attitudes toward the Welsh language. Trinity College is
officially bilingual and has been for years, so one would expect a greater level of
acceptance of/support for the Welsh language; I didn’t find anyone who argued in favor of
actively exterminating it. However, I met almost every other attitude on the spectrum--
including total apathy.

There were five broad patterns to people’s backgrounds: Welsh who speak English
only, Welsh who speak English and Welsh, English who speak English only, English who
speak English and Welsh, and those whose backgrounds don’t have any bearing because
they have no opinion for it to affect. Within those categories there are some dramatic
contrasts of opinion-- for example, two of the people in the Welsh who speak English
only category hold views which are almost diametrically opposed. There are no
clearly-defined opinion patterns; although one would expect Welsh-speakers to support the
language and English-speakers to oppose it, half of the interviewees fell into categories
opposite to the expected views.

While the Welsh language was generally seen as something to be supported in one
way or another, there was no common ground on how far that support should go. Nobody
agreed with everybody else, and few agreed with most. The debate over the Welsh
language continues in Carmarthen and in Wales as a whole, as it has for at least five
hundred years.