

Learning Activity – Progression Step 4

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 PS4.

Establishment of the Welsh Settlement in Patagonia
The Voyage of the Mimososa, 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



The native Patagonians and the Welsh settlers



By Culturenet Cymru

Introduction

'They are on the best terms with the Welsh and the Indians look upon the Welsh as their brothers.'

Tasks and learning objectives

1. The early years
2. Lewis Jones's diary
3. The Cart
4. Agriculture

[Download the Collection of images and worksheets for this activity from People's Collection Wales](#)

The native Patagonians and the Welsh settlers

'They are on the best terms with the Welsh and the Indians look upon the Welsh as their brothers.'

The Welsh were not the first inhabitants of Patagonia. For centuries, indigenous tribes had lived on the Patagonian plains, speaking their own language and practising their own customs. Among them were the 'Tehuelche', a nomadic tribe which originated from the area between the River Negro and the Strait of Magellan. It was the Tehuelche who had the most contact with the Welsh settlers during the nineteenth century.

The organisers of the Patagonian venture were aware of the existence of these tribes prior to the departure of the first group of Welsh settlers for Patagonia, though they knew very little about them. In the late 1850s, Michael D. Jones emphasised that the indigenous Patagonians should be treated fairly and recognised as the rightful owners of the land. He referred in particular to William Penn's exemplary treatment of native Americans in Pennsylvania during the late seventeenth century. In 1683 Penn made a treaty with the North American tribes in which they vowed not to use force against each other. Michael D. Jones argued that the Welsh should treat the native Patagonians in the same way.



Lewis Jones (1836-1904) among Tehuelches, c.1867

In terms of appearance, the Tehuelche were unusually tall; one Welshman claimed that he had seen an indigenous person near the Strait of Magellan who was 'two yards and ten inches tall'. Following his visit to the Welsh Settlement in 1882, Michael D. Jones also noted that the Tehuelche were 'large, shapely men; gracious in appearance'. Indeed, in some circles, it was claimed that the native Patagonians were the tallest people in the world and that most of their men measured six feet and six inches. The Tehuelche were also characterised by their dark complexion and black hair. They were usually clean-shaven and they would often paint their faces and bodies to protect their skin from the sun.

The native Patagonians and the Welsh settlers

The men wore a "cheripa", a piece of cloth that was tied around the waist. The women covered themselves with a mantle that was made from the skins of wild animals and tied with ostrich ligament. It was worn with the fur on the inside, and with the outside painted red.

Until the early nineteenth century, the Tehuelche used dogs to hunt. From that time, however, they began using horses. Plenty of food could be collected by hunting on the Patagonian plains, and they would rely heavily on the guanaco (an animal similar to the llama) and the rhea (similar to the ostrich). The implements that were most widely used for hunting were the bow and arrow, and the 'boleadores'. The boleadores was a weapon which had three stone balls tied to three leather cords. When the boleadores was thrown, the weight of the balls would tie the cord around legs of the animal and capture it.

The Welsh settlers had little experience of hunting when they arrived in Patagonia. The Tehuelche trained them to ride wild horses and showed them how to use the boleadores. By mastering these techniques, the Welsh could hunt guanaco and rhea in order to ensure a sufficient supply of food. Had the Tehuelche not been prepared to share their hunting methods, the fate of the early Welsh settlers would possibly have been different.



Complete boleadores which belonged to Robert MacBurnaey, c. 1915

The Tehuelche were a nomadic tribe and they would visit the Welsh twice a year. Although there was conflict between the Argentine army and the indigenous tribes, the Tehuelche were always on the best terms with the Welsh. Trade was an important aspect of the relationship between the Welsh and the Tehuelche. When visiting the Camwy Valley, the Tehuelche would offer the skins of wild animals and ostrich feathers in exchange for bread, flour, sugar, tobacco and yerba tea. They also made bedclothes, petticoats and children's costumes for the Welsh settlers. The Tehuelche were very fond of the settlers' bread and they would often go from house to house to plead on them to exchange bread for meat. Indeed, the word 'bara' (Welsh for bread) was widely used by the native Patagonians. As a result of these visits, many of the Tehuelche learned some Welsh and there is record of their descendants competing in the annual Eisteddfod in Trelew.

The native Patagonians and the Welsh settlers



Native Patagonian wearing a cloak made from guanaco skins

In the 1880s, Michael D. Jones could foresee the extinction of the Tehuelche tribe. He argued that only by conforming with the European methods of settlement would they would have any hope of survival:

'We believe that they face nothing but extinction, unless they give up their nomadic life, and settle in some particular place; lead a civilised life; and focus on rearing livestock and farming the land. Surely, that is their only hope of deliverance. If only the Welsh settlers could persuade them to do that.'

In fact, over the following years, the Tehuelche not only adopted these methods of settlement but were gradually assimilated into the culture of European settlers. Today, only a small cluster of the Tehuelche tribe continues to practise the old customs in Patagonia.

Sources

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

The native Patagonians and the Welsh settlers

Task 1. The early years

What were the high and low points in the early years of the Welsh Settlement?

Complete the worksheet - The Early Years

Task 2. Lewis Jones's diary

What can you deduce from Lewis Jones's diary?

Read - Lewis Jones's Diary, 1862-3

Task 3. The Cart

Write a creative piece to describe what you see in the photograph.



Postcard of the first cart in Patagonia, c.1866

Complete the worksheet - The Cart

Task 4. Agriculture

What was the state of agriculture at the time and how does it compare with today?

Complete the worksheet - Farming Life

The Early Years

What were the high and low points during the early years of the Welsh Settlement?

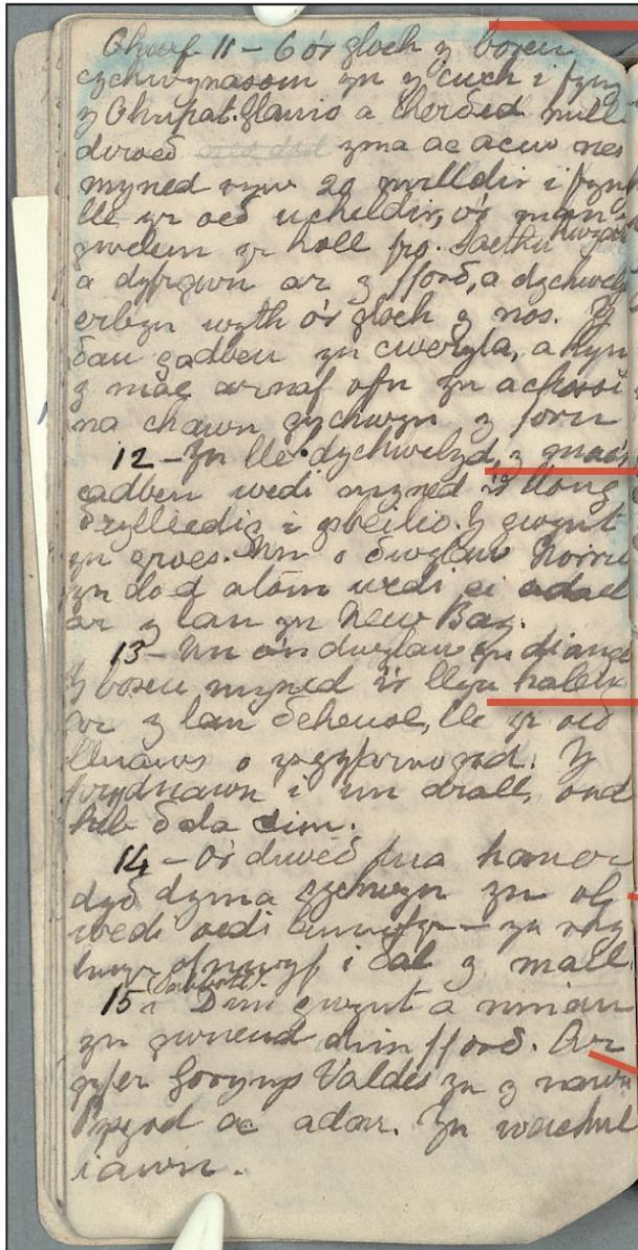


high	low



Lewis Jones's Diary, 1862-3

This diary belonged to Lewis Jones (1836-1904). It records his journey to Argentina in 1862-3 to hold negotiations with the government and to inspect the land in Patagonia.



February 11, - 1863 6 o'clock in the morning

We set off in the boat up the Chupat. Landed and walked for miles until we had gone 20 miles up to where the highland was, from where we could see the whole region. Shot ducks and otters on the way, and returned by 8 o'clock in the evening. The two generals were quarrelling, and this I'm afraid caused (meant) that we could not set off in the morrow (the following day).

12 -

Instead of returning the general has gone to wrecked ship to loot. It is a cross-wind. One of Norris's hands came towards us having been left ashore at New Bay.

13 -

One of the hands escaped in the morning. Went to the salt lake on the south shore, where there was a multitude of hares. To another one in the afternoon, but without catching any.

14 -

At last, around midday, we began our return after endless delay - too late, I'm afraid, to catch the mail.

15 - (Sabbath)

No wind and we made no progress. For the Valdés Peninsula in the afternoon. Fish and birds. Very feeble.

The Cart

Write a creative piece describing what you see in the photograph.



Farming Life

How did agriculture at that time compare with today?

