Isabel Grace Thomas

THE KEY TO SURVIVAL?

MUSIC MANAGEMENT OF POST-INDUSTRIAL WORKING MEN'S CLUBS IN THE SOUTH WALES VALLEYS

MA Thesis in Cultural Heritage Studies: Academic Research, Policy, Management.

Central European University

Vienna

May 2023

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Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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Chair, Examination Committee

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Thesis Supervisor

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Examiner

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External Reader

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I, the undersigned, **Isabel Grace Thomas**, candidate for the MA degree in Cultural Heritage Studies: Academic Research, Policy, Management declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Vienna, 31 May 2023

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Signature

Abstract

Working men's clubs (WMCs) – otherwise known as social clubs, workmen's institutes, miners' welfare halls and political clubs – have played a central role in the cultural life of countless working-class communities in Britain, from their Victorian social reform origins to "Clubland" with its stereotypes of crude comedians, glitzy music acts and calls from the chairman for "best of order!" In the mining towns of the South Wales valleys, they grew alongside the second wave of industrialisation. Likewise, they fell into decline as employment in heavy industry decreased and brought economic difficulties, along with the breakdown of social and cultural structures. Community members within and around those clubs that have survived have varying attitudes towards the heritagisation of industrial history in the region.

On the other hand, music programming in a variety of forms has been a vital method for satisfying members and bringing in new, non-member audiences. Over time, this may have created three types of WMC music heritage: official, mainstream, and a third music heritage that I define as based in performance practises, audience practices and programming practices. By taking beneficial aspects of this heritage, WMCs could – and, in some cases, do – adapt to modern needs, contributing to the wellbeing of communities as well as thriving music scenes, in post-industrial areas that feel disillusioned by previous top-down regeneration attempts.

This thesis uses extended fieldwork and a case study of WMCs in the post-industrial town of Blackwood in Caerphilly County to examine their place in Wales' industrial heritage, their music histories and possible music heritage, and the position different types of WMC music management might take in new policy in the UK and Wales. What can clubs learn from their musical pasts that could support their continued existence, revival or reinterpretation further into the 21st century?

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the staff of the CEU Cultural Heritage, Medieval Studies and History departments, my supervisor József Lászlovszky, and all the staff who gave their input to the formulation of this research under my insistence that "it takes a village to raise a thesis". In particular, I would like to thank Zsuzsanna Szálka for the initial encouragement with pursuing this degree and the hands-on experience with institutional music heritage and management research. Thanks also to Dóra Mérai for the grounding in concepts and examples of industrial heritage, adaptive reuse, public engagement and critical heritage studies. A further thank you to the Visual Studies Platform for new skills and the opportunity for visual ethnography.

I would like to acknowledge the bands, promoters, and people behind the venues and rehearsal spaces in South Wales who supported my adventures outside of classical music. The biggest thanks go to my dad, for his confidence that I could adapt to the world of electric organs and backing vocals, and to Sean for his faith that I had a rock vocalist hidden somewhere beneath my head voice. Both and many others provided countless hours of conversation and rants about music and politics as we drove through the valleys that stimulated these research interests.

I am grateful to the management, staff, members and attendees of working men's clubs in all their forms, for continuing to value in-person social interaction, community support, and affordable spaces in the face of neoliberalisation, individualism and profit-driven governments.

Finally, thanks to friends in Cardiff and Vienna: to Felix et al for valleys sleepovers and live music outings, to new friends in Austria for encouraging alternative ideas alongside an appreciation for both cathedrals and punk scenes, and to CEU peers who showed me the value of music and affordable spaces from transcultural perspectives.

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All photographs were taken by the author unless indicated otherwise.

List of Abbreviations

AHD = Authorized Heritage Discourse

CIU = The (Working Men's) Club and Institute Union

EU = European Union

FGA = The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act

GMVs = grassroots music venues

SDGs = United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

UK = United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

UNESCO = The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

WMCs = working men's clubs

Introduction

Overview

A wide three-storey red brick building looks out into the Severn Channel Estuary, where ships once exported coal on an un-rivalled scale, carried down from the South Wales valleys by train. In the near distance to its right: Barry Island, where workers' families gathered for days out at the seaside, now a rainy tourist destination. To the left in the further distance: Cardiff, once the international face of industrial Wales, now a focal point for film and television industries, and prospective "Music City" in a battle against high rise developments.

The red brick façade is broken up by boarded windows and doors. A few years ago, the occasional club member would enter through the front, dressed up for bingo while, as party bands and cabaret acts, a mixed bag of local community members and outsiders from the capital, we carried our gear up the perilous iron staircase winding round the back to the upstairs stage. A further hidden staircase led to a mice-inhabited dressing room, the dusty mirrors plastered in posters advertising solos, duos, groups, drag acts and comedians from fifteen years ago. Nowadays, even the front door is closed up. The building will be converted into housing with an estuary view. From Seaview Labour Club heading northwards, the river and railway tracks pass by some of the many post-industrial towns of the South Wales valleys where hundreds of similar clubs face the possibility of a similar fate.

Rather than uncritically accepting a narrative of working men's clubs as dying remnants of the past, this thesis takes the idea that the clubs are a heritage resource that, if managed well, could – and in many cases already do – fulfil important and much-needed roles in the social and cultural life of regions still struggling from the effects of deindustrialisation, particular

concerns in the post-industrial South Wales valleys. It examines the possibilities behind a quote on the ClubHistorian website founded by Cherrington:

> They could still continue to perform local community roles into the future if their past contributions were looked at a bit more closely and how these might be transformed for the 21st century.[1]

In particular it takes a look into their music histories, and considers, in the context of the valleys, this research question:

What can clubs learn from the management of WMC musical cultures over the last 180 or so years that would help them to survive, and how could these remaining heritage spaces continue to contribute to the wellbeing of communities?

To answer this question, the thesis is divided into three chapters addressing the following research questions:

1. How did WMCs in the South Wales valleys emerge in response to geographically and culturally specific processes of industrialisation? To what extent is industrial heritage an official authorized form of Welsh heritage?
2. What is the music history of WMCs in Wales? Which aspects of it have been heritagized, and in what ways?
3. How do the various approaches to music management contribute to the sustained existence or revitalisation of WMCs, and who does this benefit? How can these approaches prosper under new national schemes and policies?

[1] 'Clubs - Who Cares? At the Heart of the Community', ClubHistorians, accessed 5 November 2022, http://www.clubhistorians.co.uk/html/clubs_-_who_cares-.html.

Research background

Since moving from classical and folk performance into rock, pop and soul in 2016, I have been fascinated by the strange world of working men's clubs. The clubs have played an underappreciated role in British history, despite being the focal points of social life in many working-class communities, and key to the cultural experiences of a substantial portion of the population for a century and a half. Workmen's clubs, social clubs, political clubs, "Non-Pol" clubs, ex-servicemen's clubs, and miners' institutes[2] were once a focal point of many working-class communities, dating back to the 1860s, and reaching a peak in the 1970s. While many have now shaken their "working men" branding, they played an important role in the industrial revolution in Britain, with most beginning during the strongest phase of industrialisation in the second half of the 19th century. They provided a communal social and leisure space for industrial workers and, increasingly, their families. As industries were closed, however, the income, attendance and leisure cultures of the clubs experienced a decline. The economic structure and workers' camaraderie, around which the communities had revolved culturally and socially, disintegrated, leaving many areas with few or no remaining community social and cultural spaces. Seaview Labour Club is one of hundreds of clubs across the UK that, after having survived these changes (128 in South Wales and Monmouthshire are currently registered to the Club and Institute Union),[3] now face an aging membership and rising costs that threaten their existence.

While research and policy are being developed in the UK to prevent cultural venues from closure due to rising costs, restrictive laws and lack of public investment, WMCs have been

[2] Like Ruth Cherrington, a historian of Working Men's Clubs, I use this term to encompass the clubs and institutes. My choice is based upon a desire to highlight the heritage of such clubs by connecting them to this origin, as many built in the mid-20th Century are ignored as heritage spaces because of their limited architectural value.
[3] Rhys Waring, 'The Working Men's Clubs of South Wales' (Masters dissertation, London, University of Westminster, 2019), 10.

largely ignored from this potential support. I believe that this is due to a disregard for working-class cultures by researchers, policymakers and cultural managers, and a disconnect between their socio-economic backgrounds and those of club members. As Pete Brown explains in his social history of clubs, their history has been characterised by "middle-class people looking down on the 'lower classes' and their leisure habits, and failing to see anything they could recognise as culture or worthwhile leisure pursuits".[4] In Wales, a reconsideration of these ongoing assumptions could be particularly fruitful because the policy framework, as I will argue, is remarkably suited to a consideration of WMCs as sources of community regeneration and wellbeing. It could even be argued that WMC history in Wales is the hidden root of modern policy,[5] and the basis of many of the social and cultural values behind modern Welsh politics.[6]

From my own experience in the field, I have witnessed the importance of music for either sustaining clubs in their traditional modes of operation (as one interviewee stated: "if we didn't have our entertainment on the Saturday, it would be shut") or transforming them into something that reinterprets the heritage of the building for the modern world. This thesis will therefore consider how these industrial heritage spaces can continue to provide benefits to the community through music management that builds upon their thus-far hidden music histories and music heritage in all its possible interpretations. Clubs may need to go through a process of revival or even reuse to transform them into venues suited to modern needs and expectations. This may involve not only adaptive heritage reuse that uses the building as a resource, but also a reinterpretation of cultural heritage: the activities that went on in the space and the distinct musicians and musical cultures that developed within them.

[4] Pete Brown, *Clubland: How the Working Men's Club Shaped Britain* (HarperNorth, 2022).
[5] For an argument on the importance of WMCs to the development of specifically cultural policy in the UK, see: Ruth Louise Cherrington, 'The Development of Working Men's Clubs: A Case Study of Implicit Cultural Policy', *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 15, no. 2 (1 May 2009): 187–99.
[6] For example, WMCs are connected to the rise of the Liberal Party and then the Labour Party in Wales, trade unionism, senior care and healthcare through the founding of convalescent homes for miners, and Aneurin Bevan's National Health Service.

Literature review

Over the last decade several important secondary sources have emerged on the topic of leisure in working men's clubs. Before this, apart from John Taylor's 1972 *From Self-Help to Glamour*,[7] most of the few studies on clubs had focused on their contribution to British political history. The newer publications which encompass social and cultural histories of beer, bingo, dancing, billiards, darts, theatre and live music include *Not Just Beer and Bingo! A Social History of Working Men's Clubs* and 'The Development of Working Men's Clubs: A Case Study of Implicit Cultural Policy' by Ruth Cherrington,[8] *Clubland: How the Working Men's Club Shaped Britain* by Pete Brown,[9] 'Being a Man, Being a Member: Masculinity and Community in Britain's Working Men's Clubs, 1945–1960' by Richard Hall,[10] and the nostalgic *The Dirty Stop Out's Guide to Working Men's Clubs* by music journalist Neil Anderson.[11] I draw heavily upon these sources, most significantly for bringing together their mentions of music and combining it with personal experience and fieldwork in order to assemble a history of the music of WMCs in the second chapter.

The thesis as a whole is situated in the field of critical heritage studies, which acknowledges the power structures and injustices in some forms of heritage management and addresses them through a consideration of community-based and bottom-up understandings of heritage. Laurajane Smith's 2006 *Uses of Heritage* was fundamental to this, in which she identifies an "Authorized Heritage Discourse" that "privileges monumentality and grand scale, innate artefact/site significance tied to time depth, scientific/aesthetic expert judgement, social

[7] John Taylor, *From Self-Help to Glamour: The Working Man's Club, 1860-1972* (Oxford, History Workshop, 1972).
[8] Ruth Cherrington, *Not Just Beer And Bingo! A Social History Of Working Men's Clubs* (AuthorHouse, 2012); Cherrington, 'The Development of Working Men's Clubs'.
[9] Brown, *Clubland*.
[10] Richard Hall, 'Being a Man, Being a Member: Masculinity and Community in Britain's Working Men's Clubs, 1945–1960', *Cultural and Social History* 14, no. 1 (1 January 2017): 73–88.
[11] Neil Anderson, *The Dirty Stop Out's Guide to Working Men's Clubs* (Sheffield: Dirty Stop Outs, 2017).

consensus and nation building".[12] Within the emerging field of popular music heritage, there have been attempts to delineate the different forms that AHD takes in music and the ways in which certain music genres and scenes operate with a different understanding of heritage, or, in some cases, challenge it.[13] In the second chapter, I interrogate heritage discourses using critical heritage studies, popular music heritage studies and the concept of AHD as a conceptual framework for considering the music heritage of WMCs.

The first chapter, on the other hand, considers WMCs within industrial heritage discourses. Understanding that certain narratives of industrial history have been pushed by national and industry interests that overlook the negative histories of exploitation, disasters and resultant political action has been a focus of many heritage experts in recent years.[14] The dominance of labour history compared to economic history in Wales, [15] on the other hand, has set the South Wales valleys apart from many of the contexts that have been critiqued. Despite this, the museumification of industrial heritage in the South Wales valleys draws attention away from existing community spaces around which personal and collective memories, as well as ongoing traditions, revolve.

[12] Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 11.
[13] Andy Bennett, '"Heritage Rock": Rock Music, Representation and Heritage Discourse', *Fields in Transition, Fields in Action* 37, no. 5 (1 October 2009): 474–89; Les Roberts and Sara Cohen, 'Unauthorising Popular Music Heritage: Outline of a Critical Framework', *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 20, no. 3 (3 April 2014): 241–61; Sarah Baker, ed., *Preserving Popular Music Heritage: Do-It-Yourself, Do-It-Together* (New York: Routledge, 2015); Brett Lashua and Yaw Owusu, 'Decentring Liverpool's Popular Music Heritage: Routes Jukebox', in *Music and Heritage* (Routledge, 2021).
[14] Harald A. Mieg and Heike Oevermann, *Industrial Heritage Sites in Transformation: Clash of Discourses* (Routledge, 2014); Arthur McIvor, 'Where Is "Red Clydeside"?: Industrial Heritage, Working-Class Culture and Memory in the Glasgow Region', in *Constructing Industrial Pasts*, ed. Stefan Berger, 1st ed., vol. 38, Heritage, Historical Culture and Identity in Regions Undergoing Structural Economic Transformation (Berghahn Books, 2020), 47–67; Keith Gildart et al., 'Revisiting the History of the British Coal Industry: The Politics of Legacy, Memory and Heritage', 12 October 2020, https://wlv.openrepository.com/handle/2436/623678; Bella Dicks, 'Industrial Heritage as Place Making: The Case of Wales', in *Constructing Industrial Pasts*, ed. Stefan Berger, 1st ed., vol. 38, Heritage, Historical Culture and Identity in Regions Undergoing Structural Economic Transformation (Berghahn Books, 2020), 68–90, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv1850gh6.8; Zelmarie Cantillon, Sarah Baker, and Raphaël Nowak, 'A Cultural Justice Approach to Popular Music Heritage in Deindustrialising Cities', *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 27, no. 1 (January 2021): 73–89.
[15] Louise Miskell, ed., *New Perspectives on Welsh Industrial History*, 1st edition (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2020).

Popular music heritage and industrial heritage come together in the very recent work of Raphaël Nowak, Sarah Baker and Zelmarie Cantillon who analysed how the former is used as a way to revitalise cities after deindustrialisation. Popular music initiatives in their areas of focus – Wollongong in Australia, Birmingham in the UK and Detroit in the USA – often take a "cultural justice" approach by addressing historical inequality and challenging dominant cultural narratives.[16] The term "cultural justice" is an adaptation of the term "cultural injustice" used by Nancy Fraser to refer to domination, nonrecognition and disrespect within forms of communication, cultural depictions and access to culture.[17] This research and heritage practice, therefore, takes a step further from Smith's AHD, towards cultural heritage activism.[18] It has been used in popular music heritage by Long et al. to refer to the injustice against popular music in general being considered as heritage,[19] and by Baker et al. to refer to the use of popular music as a way to address cultural injustice. Baker et al. write:

> Rather than only imagining deindustrialising cities in terms of pollution, ruin and despair, looking to rich histories and contemporary practices of popular music can provide alternative narratives that acknowledge and celebrate the cultural vibrancy of these places.[20]

In this work, there is a distinct focus on cities; my research tentatively looks at this in the context of the towns and villages of the South Wales valleys, where the Welsh Government has identified a link between culture, heritage and justice, but not yet an articulation of cultural

[16] Sarah Baker, Zelmarie Cantillon, and Raphaël Nowak, 'Popular Music Heritage, Cultural Justice and the Deindustrialising City', *Elements in Music and the City*, February 2023, https://www.cambridge.org/core/elements/popular-music-heritage-cultural-justice-and-the-deindustrialising-city/A1E9391590AFCB15DB0A807C883F48FA.

[17] Nancy Fraser, 'From Redistribution to Recognition?: Dilemmas of Justice in a "postsocialist" Age', in *The New Social Theory Reader*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2008).

[18] For a clear example of this connection, see: Kalliopi Fouseki and Maria Shehade, 'Heritage Activism and Cultural Rights: The Case of the New Acropolis Museum', in *Heritage in Action: Making the Past in the Present*, ed. Helaine Silverman, Emma Waterton, and Steve Watson (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), 137–50.

[19] Paul Long et al., 'Popular Music, Community Archives and Public History Online: Cultural Justice and the DIY Approach to Heritage', in *Community Archives, Community Spaces: Heritage, Memory and Identity*, ed. Jeannette Bastian and Andrew Flinn (Facet Publishing, 2019).

[20] Cantillon, Baker, and Nowak, 'A Cultural Justice Approach to Popular Music Heritage in Deindustrialising Cities', 78–79.

justice: “access to and participation in the arts, culture and heritage [is] an aspect of social justice itself and a powerful weapon against poverty, in all its manifest forms”.[21]

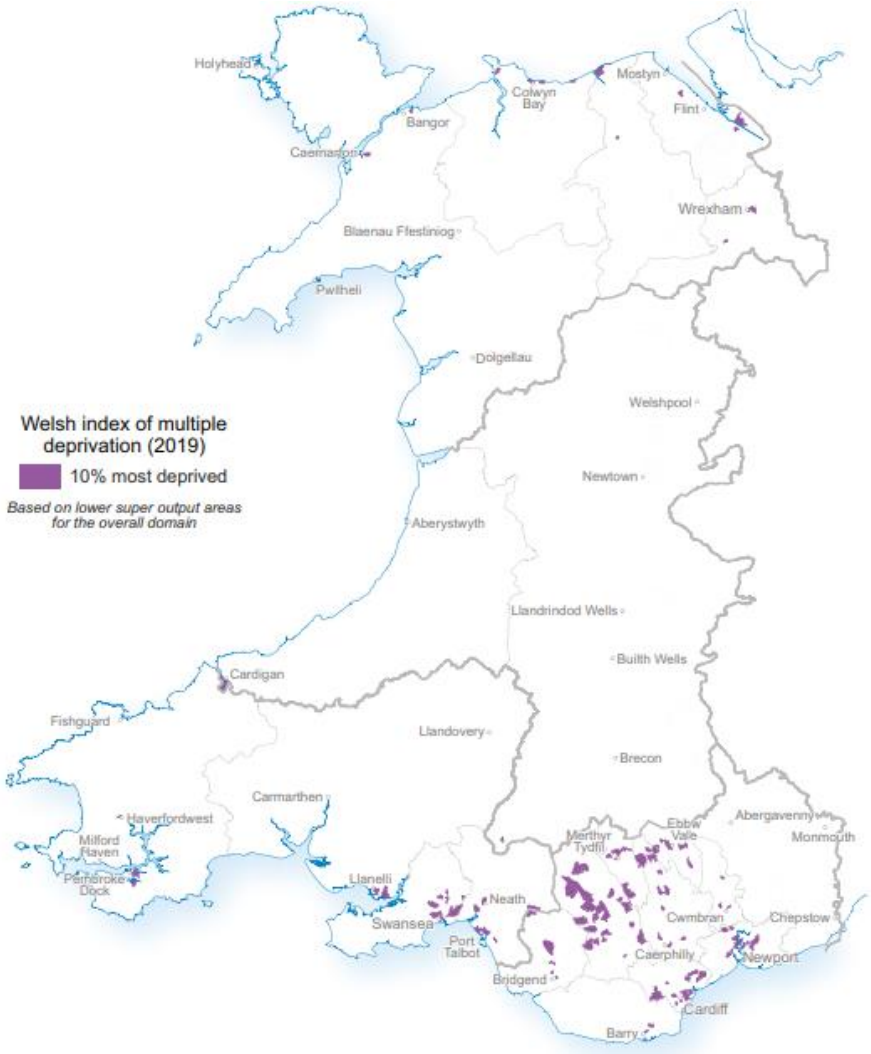

Figure 1: A high proportion of the most deprived areas are in the valleys, despite decades of regeneration efforts including industrial heritage branding. Source: Future Wales Plan.

Methodology

The post-industrial South Wales valleys are my particular focus for five reasons. First, while there have been publications and a handful of short documentary films made on WMCs in England or Britain as a whole, there has been limited focus on the Welsh context, which fits to

[21] Kay Andrews, ‘Culture and Poverty: Harnessing the Power of the Arts, Culture and Heritage to Promote Social Justice in Wales’, A report with recommendations by Baroness Kay Andrews OBE for the Welsh Government, March 2014, 1.

some extent into a different national cultural history and policy landscape. Second, the contemporary Welsh Labour government, which gained devolved legislative powers in 2006, arguably has a close connection to the political and unionist histories of WMCs. Third, the 2016 *Wellbeing of Future Generations Act* presents an opportunity to consider the connection between heritage spaces, culture and wellbeing at the national strategical level.[22] Fourth, in the South Wales valleys, industrial heritage has a particular significance with a range of sites showing varying degrees of recognition of the home and leisure buildings that built up around the industries, which I will place into a historical account of industrial heritage discourse in Wales in Chapter 1. Finally, I am familiar with the distinctly high concentration of post-industrial towns in the valleys and their clubs due to the demand for music entertainers, giving a valuable insider view into a world which is not familiar to many in music academia. I complement this experience with fieldwork and a case study.

Fieldwork

In addition to time spent in the cover bands and original music scenes of the South Wales valleys since 2016, which involved gigs in various working men's clubs, I spent August 2022 doing ethnography in the field. This entailed trips to pubs, clubs and grassroots music venues in Cardiff and towns of different sizes across the various valleys, specifically Pontypridd, Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil, Pontypool, Coed Ely, Blaenavon, Maesteg, Church Village and Brecon.[23]

The intention of this ethnography was to discover links between the industrial histories of the valleys and the current and historical music scenes. At this point, I was not aware of the extent

[22] While Historic England has this year announced a Heritage Wellbeing strategy, the connection is not so officially enshrined at the legislative level as in Wales.
[23] At this point I had not yet settled on Blackwood for the case study, and was looking at Pontypridd or Blaenavon as likely possibilities.

to which WMCs would serve as my area of focus, but the fieldwork materials contributed to my knowledge of the music histories of WMCs in living memory. This complemented the information about their longer music histories that I was able to discover from primary and secondary literature, and it enabled me to notice explicit and more hidden traces of heritage in contemporary club practices, all of which heavily informed Chapter 2, on music heritage of WMCs. The fieldwork also informed my knowledge of industrial heritage in the valleys, and some observations of heritage sites (especially the Blaenavon UNESCO site and Rhondda Heritage Park) alongside views of interviewees living from or working nearby complemented some of the statements of scholars in Chapter 1.

At each venue I engaged in participant-observation, as an audience member of a musical performance. Furthermore, as is more common in immersive research methods within ethnomusicology, in many cases I participated in the "musicking"[24] act itself as a keyboard player, guitarist, lead vocalist and/or backing vocalist, for a whole gig, a couple of a songs, a jam night or an open mic. Thus, I was able to observe from the audience and from the stage/performance area. At the venues, I also made field notes based on observations and casual conversations, recorded in-depth semi-structured interviews with musicians, either as individuals or as a band (in some cases, following a band across rehearsals and multiple gigs), and filmed parts of the venue, performances and interviews. The purpose of filming was twofold: to generate visual material that would fill in for the lack of documentation about the spaces and scenes and allow me to notice things I may have missed in-situ, and to create a documentary film that I can use for dissemination of the ideas raised in this thesis via film screening events in communities followed by group discussion.

[24] Music is not a "thing", but an activity, See: Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (University Press of New England, 1998).

Six months later, once I had reviewed the material and finished related readings, I conducted interviews with the management of WMCs within a chosen case study town in the valleys. To account for the clubs that I was unable to contact, I extracted google reviews of each of the WMCs I could find in the town, as the most consistent and substantial online material about the clubs. I then labelled those reviews which mentioned music and compared positive and negative language combined with specific genres and types of programming across clubs, in order to draw a bigger picture. Although I do not reference these reviews in the text, they gave me the audience perspective to stand alongside musician and management perspectives.

Ethnographic interviews

I undertook 12 interviews, with people I encountered or sought out who could share a perspective on the connection between music heritage and industrial heritage in the South Wales valleys. The vast majority were members of cover bands and original bands living, rehearsing or playing in the valleys, while others included a record shop owner, a busker, and a vintage shop owner from a community group pushing for local tourism around Tom Jones, a famous singer who began in the WMCs of Rhondda Cynon Taf. There was a mixture of group interviews (bands) and individual interviews, with a total of 20 people. The interviews provided subjective information on the connections and disconnections between industrial heritage, music heritage and contemporary scenes in South Wales. Through this, I looked for recurring patterns and inducted a bigger picture of the research topic.

These interviews took place either at music events or at their rehearsal spaces and workplaces. I considered this setting important because musicians in particular may not be used to being in a formal environment, and bands in particular may never have been in such a scenario together as a group. With the right atmosphere, many participants were enthusiastic to take the spotlight, telling a visitor all about their setlist decisions, personal tastes, and memories around popular

music history/heritage. This may have been the first time some respondents have reflected on their experience in this way, requiring the interview to keep space for thinking and reflecting.[25] I did this as much as was possible in the sometimes chaotic environments, and asked follow-up questions to allow deeper personal and group reflection when there was time.

I pre-empted potential reluctance to engage with a woman with a middle-class Cardiff accent – due to sexism, class divides, geographical rivalries etc. – by communicating digitally through more formal/official channels at first, then during interviews being engaging and demonstrating that to some extent I understand this scene. Based on Rathbun's suggestions,[26] I told interviewees why they are relevant or interesting to me when making first contact, in the hope that this would engender more responsiveness. I did not specifically tell them any hypothesis, in order to not affect their answers, and I attempted to appear knowledgeable so that they would not think they are wasting their time, but not too knowledgeable as to be intimidating. When using follow-up questions, I used some degree of naivety, and tried not to worry that some interviewees might have a diminutive perception of me, as I believed to some extent that "[t]he proper ethnographic interview is a conversation in which ethnographers risk the appearance of naivety and ignorance in order continually to satisfy themselves that they have understood what is being said".[27] It must be acknowledged, however, that due to my resultant social status, I felt nervous during participant-observation at gigs, but luckily was encouraged to be bold and move close to the stage, around barriers and into backstage areas by supportive venue staff and a few sympathetic band members.

[25] Brian Christopher Rathbun, 'Interviewing and Qualitative Field Methods: Pragmatism and Practicalities', in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*, ed. Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady, and David Collier (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 685–701.
[26] Rathbun.
[27] A. P. Cohen, 'Informants', in *Ethnographic Research: A Guide to General Conduct (Research Methods in Social Anthropology 1)*, ed. R. F. Ellen (London: Academic Press, 1984), 226.

Management case study interviews

In order to research the current situation of working men's clubs within a post-industrial area and the use of music in sustaining them against closures or revitalising them, I chose to carry out a case study analysis of a town in the South Wales valleys that contains a variety of clubs from different eras and with different operational styles. I chose Blackwood in Caerphilly County because of some time spent there personally, a few months when my partner lived in a town the next valley over, and a few years of gigging across the county.

My research methods involve interviewing club management, mapping out clubs and other music venues in the area and their proximity to industrial heritage sites, desk research of club histories and analysis of google reviews. I combine this with research on industrial and music histories of the area and the field research across the valleys which I used in other chapters.

I chose four WMCs in Blackwood and nearby villages, based on three factors:

1. Variety in terms of age, architectural style, heritage status, management styles, and income methods.
2. Different stages in terms of threat of closure, closure, rebuilding and reopening (determined from Google reviews).
3. Availability for contact and willingness to be interviewed.

Figure 2: The 3 non-anonymous WMCs from Blackwood case study in their current conditions. Sources: Useyourlocal, Caerphilly Observer, Blackwood Miners Institute website.

Variety was considered by comparing building features against the architectural typology formulated by Rhys Waring. The first of these is "the feature club", buildings which "take on an almost civic style, sometimes borrowing classical or Victorian architectural elements, albeit at a smaller scale", and are more common in the oldest clubs and, in South Wales, miners' institutes.[28] The second is "the domestic club", "visually fitting in with the local housing stock"

[28] Waring, 'The Working Men's Clubs of South Wales', 34.

(and, in the valleys, shop rows which frequently matched housing stock), and often set up in an existing building to fulfil demand for a club to be founded quickly and with limited funds.[29] Finally, "the functional club", which has "a floor plan derived from the required uses, and often extended or altered numerous times", and most commonly began in the 1960s with increased funding.[30] Of these typologies, the anonymous club is domestic, Blackwood Working Men's Club and Cefn Fforest Miners' Welfare Hall are early examples of the functional type, and Blackwood Miners' Institute is in the feature style (see figure 2).

Availability and willingness to be interviewed was a crucial factor: while it was easy to carry out extensive interviews with Blackwood Miners' Institute and Cefn Fforest Miners' Welfare Hall, both under new management in the 21st century that reinterprets their funding structures and function in the community, other clubs were much harder to reach.[31] As a result, the interviews that I was able to carry out were with a combination of bar managers, stewards, secretaries and committee members. Due to the tight-knit nature of many of these clubs, however, interviewees knew most details about management structure, financial structure, entertainment bookings, challenges, audiences and membership.

In each of the hour-long in-depth Zoom interviews with Blackwood Miners' Institute and Cefn Fforest Miners' Welfare Hall the questions encompassed six topics: funding, programming, operations management, external communications, use of the historic building and change management. In the other two interviews, however, which took place over fifteen minutes via

[29] Waring, 34.
[30] Waring, 34.
[31] Many clubs have neither website nor email address; one phone call even received the response, "This number is no longer available". Morning, lunchtime and even some afternoon calls went unanswered, as clubs were not yet open for the day or staff were in a different room, while evening calls had responses such as "I can't talk right now, it's too noisy in here". Voicemails went unreturned, notes left by bar staff were ignored, and invitations to call back at a specific day and time were mostly fruitless as shifts had changed or staff were no longer willing to talk. Requests to speak with committee members were mostly unsuccessful, with responses ranging from "They're old, they won't want to talk" to "I don't think the chairman uses a telephone".

the phone, I focused on programming, rephrased some key questions from the other topics, and added two additional questions about current and future difficulties.[32] The interview questions can be found in full in Appendix 2. The clubs interviewed in total were: Blackwood Miners' Institute, Cefn Fforest Miners' Welfare Hall, Blackwood Working Men's Club ("The Woodbine"), and one anonymous club.

The area that was the most lacking was historical perspective: while some interviewees were able to talk about the club over the last few decades, knowledge of club origins and its history before the latter 20th century was missing. There was little awareness of the existence of any archival records, and older club members and committee members were unavailable for sharing oral histories over the phone.[33] As a result, my analysis of these clubs combines the few mentions of them in history writing and small amounts of historical information found in the records of heritage organisations with the more general history of WMCs and music scenes in South Wales. This is the best backdrop I can provide for now for context from which to consider their contemporary situations and future possibilities.

[32] I ended with, "Is there one song that gets requested the most or gets the best response?" in order to bring some lightness to the end of the conversation and help them go away feeling positive about their interview experience. This might assist future research, since gaining trust in such areas as an academic is notoriously difficult.
[33] A longer period of fieldwork is therefore needed for future research, involving inquiry about club records and extended time spent in the clubs gaining the trust of older members.

Chapter 1: Working Men's Clubs as Industrial Heritage

Introduction

Working men's clubs were once a focal point of many working-class communities in industrial areas of the UK. They provided a space for workers to socialise, learn, grow and be entertained, the balance of which depended on the institution and its management. They can be dated back to London in the 1860s, where Mechanics Institutes had been providing a drier, more education-focused precedent, and reached a peak in the 1970s, most notably in the heavy industries of the North of England and South Wales. Not long after this peak, they faced a decline due to industry closures and the accompanying forms of social and cultural change. Newer legislative challenges in the twentieth century and rising running costs caused a high proportion to close, with some demolished and others sold for purposes such as housing, pubs, shops and gyms. This chapter will give a history of WMCs within the context of the industrial revolution(s) and its aftermath in the UK, with a particular focus on the high concentration in the towns and villages of the South Wales valleys. It will end with a consideration of the – sometimes opposing – official and unofficial recognitions of industrial heritage in WMCs.

Working men's clubs in the industrial revolution

Growth of industrial worker population

While England experienced the most widespread industrial changes in the UK with rapid urbanisation occurring in the North around areas such as Manchester, Sheffield and Newcastle, industrial development in Wales was significantly more uneven, mostly concentrated within the South Wales valleys. Sudden population growth occurred in valley and hillside villages

located in areas most suited for extraction. This was dependent not only on the availability of resources but also the proximity to possible transport networks, as canals and steam trains became an important feature of the industrial revolution in Wales. Iron and textile manufacturing dominated the first phase, but coal became increasingly important to power the trains and, eventually, steam ships.

Social and cultural shifts accompanied economic changes. The leisure pursuits of industrial workers at this time in Wales involved the adaptation of rural rituals of competitive inter-village sport matches and music competitions (*eisteddfodau*) to a new location with expanded populations.[34] Christian Nonconformism grew in the industrial towns and villages, where chapels acted as a focal point for many of the leisure activities. Pubs also grew as not only traders but also transport workers passed through the new networks, and became social hubs in the community.

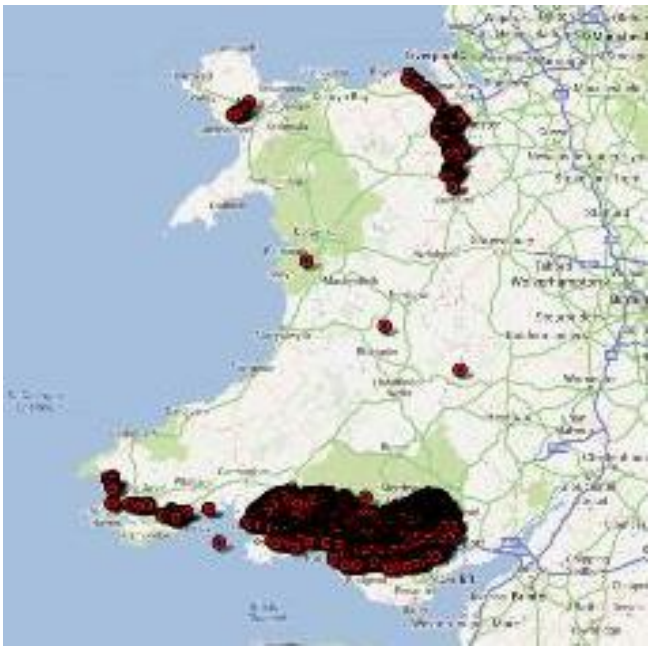

Figure 3: Total historical collieries in Wales. Source: Northern Mine Research Society

[34] Trevor Herbert, 'Music in Welsh History', in *A History of Welsh Music*, ed. Helen Barlow, Martin V. Clarke, and Trevor Herbert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 1–24.

The second phase of the industrial revolution in Wales from the mid-19th century expanded most significantly the steel and coal industries, as huge coal reserves were discovered in South Wales, especially in the valleys descending southwards from the Bannau Brycheiniog mountain range (see figure 3). Subsequently, new regions faced a sudden huge expansion in worker population, most notably in the Rhondda valley.

By this time, the plight of the industrial worker had become a national concern, not always for benevolent reasons. After Chartism, a mass movement to increase the right to vote, worries abounded about the ability of working-class voters to choose wisely.[35] As a result, the landowner classes and industry owners were concerned with educating the working classes and creating satisfying working and living conditions that would avoid an uprising on the scale seen across the Channel.[36] Alongside the growth of trade unions and leftist political parties initiated mostly by workers and the middle classes, WMCs were the most successful top-down response to these issues in terms of rapid and wide expansion. Therefore, WMCs emerged from a Victorian social reform movement that was motivated in part by the fear of the organised working classes and the desire to impose a "safe" value system upon them.[37]

First institutions

The first institutions somewhat resembling WMCs were, on one hand, miners' libraries and reading rooms, and, on the other hand, workers' institutes. Miners' libraries and reading rooms were established for two reasons:[38] humanitarian concerns for the welfare of workers and their families, who had been affected by heavy alcohol consumption accompanied by domestic

[35] Malcolm Chase, *The Chartists: Perspectives & Legacies* (Merlin Press, 2015).
[36] Richard N. Price, 'The Working Men's Club Movement and Victorian Social Reform Ideology', *Victorian Studies* 15, no. 2 (1971): 117–47.
[37] Price.
[38] There are some conflicting views on the extent to which these top-down approaches applied in Wales. For, example, see: Chris Baggs, '"The Whole Tragedy of Leisure in Penury": The South Wales Miners' Institute Libraries during the Great Depression', *Libraries & Culture* 39, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 115–36.

violence, and a motivation to increase production by improving worker health and education and reducing work-based disputes.[39] In South Wales, these were concentrated in and around the colliery sites, while in the north of England, they grew alongside alcohol-free clubs and tea-rooms.[40] They underwent a growth in popularity during the second half of the 19th century, accelerated in part due to the effects of the 1870 Education Act,[41] which made some education compulsory, introduced a tax-based funding system and expanded school access to children from different social backgrounds.

Workers' institutes were established and paid for by industrial owners, one of the earliest examples being the Darlington Mechanics' Institute in the North of England, which provided access to education and cultural activities. Similar institutes were set up towards the mid-nineteenth century, providing education and libraries as well as, sometimes, sports events. Others converted over time from libraries and reading rooms into larger institutes, including one of the first surviving examples of an institute in South Wales, located in Cwmaman in the Cynon Valley. The reading room provided within a house in 1868 by the Cwmaman Coal Company was expanded first into a shop premises in 1884 funded by workers' wages, and then in 1892 into a hall with 700 seating capacity in addition to the reading rooms and billiard room.[42] Cwmaman shows a fairly typical trajectory in Wales from top-down education centre, through an expanding institute, to worker-owned cultural centre, linked to *eisteddfodau* singing competitions and, from 1912, the Cwmaman brass band.[43]

[39] Gerallt D. Nash, Trefor Alun Davies, and Beth Thomas, *Workmen's Halls and Institutes: Oakdale Workmen's Institute* (National Museum Wales, 1995), 4.
[40] Nash, Davies, and Thomas, 4.
[41] Nash, Davies, and Thomas, 5.
[42] 'The History of Cwmaman Institute', Cwmaman Theatre, accessed 31 May 2023, https://www.cwmamantheatre.co.uk/about-us/the-history-of-cwmaman-institute/.
[43] 'The History of Cwmaman Institute'.

The focus on education and management by employers hindered the popularity of the early institutes. By the 1850s and '60s, adult education was moving away from a scientific curriculum to a literary and cultural one; for the working classes, this involved a "civilizing" programme using culture.[44] In the opinion of clergyman Frederick Robertson, founder of the Brighton Working Men's Institute in 1848, this would be best achieved through poetry and fiction while suppressing access to current "infidel" politics, but his institute lasted only three years.[45] Thus, a new approach was needed to sustain the popularity of such institutes in the long term.

Somewhat reluctantly at first, arts and culture[46] became used as a "hook" to bring working men into such institutions, by means of spaces for relaxation and entertainment.[47] Christian socialist Frederick Denison Maurice, founder of the Working Men's College in London in 1854, saw a connection between a civilizing programme and the attraction of amusement, believing that amusement also played a role in the spiritual awakening to human faculties that had been numbed by mechanical labour.[48] Amusement would also become a means to attract men away from the pubs, who could then be educated "to appreciate the opportunities of higher culture".[49] Writing to his acquaintance, the Unitarian minister Reverend Henry Solly, Maurice imagined:

> A working men's college might legitimately […] have a room dedicated to rational amusements, chess, draughts, readings of poetry and fiction, cheap concerts, recitations.[50]

Solly was influenced by Maurice's work when he founded the Working Men's Club and Institute Union in 1862 aiming to create primarily social centres rather than educational

[44] Price, 'The Working Men's Club Movement and Victorian Social Reform Ideology', 118.
[45] Price, 119.
[46] Most likely, "low culture" or "popular culture" in most cases, although we will see variations in the following chapter
[47] Price, 'The Working Men's Club Movement and Victorian Social Reform Ideology', 118.
[48] Price, 118–19.
[49] In Price, Solly collection volume 2, B, 13-14
[50] In Price, Solly collection volume 2, B, 13-14

institutions, with the latter element largely failing in WMCIU spaces[51] and continuing to decline into the late twentieth century. Rejecting some of the unappealingly moralising tone of the early clubs, which, based on the Temperance movement, had banned alcohol, restricted cigarettes and pushed Bible study, he saw the importance of recreation for creating clubs and institutes as successful, sociable hubs.[52] The rapid spread of WMCs at this time can be largely attributed to Solly's abilities to persuade the wealthy upper classes to donate to both the CIU in general and the formation of specific clubs, where they became patrons and had a say in management and decision-making.

New management and funding structures

Movements to become independent from patrons, and eventually to also found independent clubs, began in London from the mid-1870s, spurred by restrictions on drinking, gambling, politics and forms of performance.[53] This culminated in an overthrowing of the control of patrons over the CIU in 1885, an event which Ashplant calls the "democratic revolution" of clubs.[54] However, the world wars and Great Depression made self-financing challenging in some areas, so that many clubs in the first half of the 20th century were still restricted to patronage.[55]

In South Wales, many industry owners were founding institutes for their workers into the twentieth century, but they included some degree of worker management. For example, the Six Bells Miners Institute built by the Arrael Griffin Colliery Six Bells in 1902 was intended to be managed by the director of the firm that oversaw the colliery, with a committee made up of its

[51] Price, 'The Working Men's Club Movement and Victorian Social Reform Ideology', 123.
[52] Price, 121.
[53] T. G. Ashplant, 'The Working Men's Club and Institute Union and the Independent Labour Party : Working Class Organisation, Politics and Culture c. 1880-1914' (Ph.D., University of Sussex, 1983), 464.
[54] Ashplant, 464.
[55] Cherrington, *Not Just Beer And Bingo! A Social History Of Working Men's Clubs*.

managers and workmen.[56] Other clubs were established by workers but went through different types of ownership due to financial difficulties, such as the Park and Dare Workmen's Institute and Hall in Treorchy, Rhondda (library and refreshments from 1892, expanded with theatre and cinema in 1913), which was sold in 1926 due to the General Strike but repurchased by National Union of Mineworkers in 1952 at a time when many mines were being nationalised.[57] Grants from the Miners' Welfare Commission assisted some of the independent clubs and institutes to survive despite the reduction in income from miners' wages, so that institutes such as the one in Cwmaman were able to provide fund raising and food to assist those in the most difficulty, alongside political campaigning.[58]

Following the war, new clubs were set up and others renamed, frequently taking on a "vernacular of wartime" with titles such as Ex-Serviceman's Club or Old Comrades' Club and new buildings or extensions made from remnants of war such as air-raid shelters and tank repair materials.[59] Heading into the 1950s and '60s, new clubs were established on the growing number of housing estates built to house a booming population, where council staff who had grown up and developed their management skills in mining communities – including the WMC governance structures and political groups – appreciated the importance of such spaces within the built environment.[60] They were mostly built from concrete with car parks to accommodate suburban lifestyles and the new affluent society, with some set up in houses at the end of a terrace row, while others stood independently. Throughout the UK, many of these WMCs served the worker populations emerging around new, light industries, while in South Wales,

[56] 'Six Bells Miners Institute – Arrail Street Six Bells', *Out Of The Blue Artifacts* (blog), accessed 31 May 2023, https://outoftheblueartifacts.com/six-bells-mining-institute-arrail-street-six-bells/.
[57] Cadw, 'Park and Dare Workmen's Institute and Hall', Full Report for Listed Buildings, 1996, https://cadwpublic-api.azurewebsites.net/reports/listedbuilding/FullReport?lang=en&id=18064.
[58] 'The History of Cwmaman Institute'.
[59] Hall, 'Being a Man, Being a Member'.
[60] Cherrington, *Not Just Beer And Bingo! A Social History Of Working Men's Clubs*.

the continuation of heavy industry in much of the valleys kept a greater continuity between the miners' institutes of the late 19th and early 20th centuries and the newer clubs.

Working men's clubs provided a home-from-home in which workers could socialise away from the commercial pressure of pubs and the limited comforts of their own houses.[61] Attendance was sustained through culturally-learned behaviours and rites of passage passed down across generations.[62] As they continued to grow, many increasingly incorporated families and became important centres of the live entertainment industry in the UK until their peak in the 1970s. The tradition of WMC membership was largely sustained in South Wales until mine closures created deep societal change that threatened this cultural continuity.

Clubs in crisis

As industrial areas suffered economic decline from industry closures, the South Wales valleys, in which mining work was already declining from the 1960s due to the availability of cheaper coal and oil elsewhere, was hit particularly hard by the sudden, highly controversial closures of the mines by the mid-1980s Thatcherite UK government. As a result, the social and cultural life in these areas suffered. Many of the industrial towns in the valleys areas seemed to have appeared from nowhere in the 19th century, and, colloquially, comparisons were made to the "frontier towns" of the USA. The identities and customs of these towns had grown around the heavy industry, with hillside housing rows, chapels and leisure spaces built by industry owners, educated elites, humanists, religious groups, and the workers themselves. While these spaces generally survived the immediate closures that the mines underwent, they experienced a gradual decline as the economic structure and workers' camaraderie, around which the

[61] Hall, 'Being a Man, Being a Member'.
[62] Cherrington, 'The Development of Working Men's Clubs'.

communities had revolved culturally and socially, disintegrated. As club and institute historian Ruth Cherrington explains:

> "Just as many young men no longer follow their fathers into the same occupation, they are not following them in their leisure time either."[63]

Reports of the latest WMC closure, auction or redevelopment has been a common sight in Welsh news media for the last few decades,[64] now exacerbated by the financial repercussions of the pandemic and rising energy costs. The common reason given is the decline of industry, although changes in youth recreation are also mentioned. While schemes have been developed to protect against the closures of small music venues, notably by Music Venue Trust, WMCs, despite their high reliance on live music to fill calendars in the last few decades, are not eligible, as I will explain in Chapter 3. It might even be argued that the limited aesthetic appeal of some (due to delayed renovations or the lack of architectural merit beyond the "feature club" type), the relative mundanity of their scheduled cultural activities, and their unrecognised roles in social history (until recently)[65] create assumptions that prevent advocacy. Yet, mayor of Rhondda Cynon Taf, Rhys Lewis, stated:

> I know from first hand experience that many workingmen's clubs are flourishing and offer a place for the community to come together to socialise and organise community events. Sadly, many clubs have either closed, rebranded as pubs or bars or continued to operate, albeit in a much diminished role in the community.

The decline of a large number of WMCs is often attributed not only to the changes in industry, but also to government policy. Encore, a campaign to save the clubs, names three existential factors to clubs that should be resolved: the absence of local work, the 2007 smoking ban, and

[63] Cherrington.
[64] Between 2008-2016, 20% of clubs in Rhondda Cynon Taf, the location of much Welsh industrial history, closed. Claire Miller and Tyler Mears, 'Traditional Working Men's Clubs Are Declining across the Valleys', WalesOnline, 10 November 2016, http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/local-news/traditional-working-mens-clubs-declining-12146047.
[65] Cherrington, *Not Just Beer And Bingo! A Social History Of Working Men's Clubs*; Brown, *Clubland*.

alcohol laws.[66] In their earlier years, the clubs benefitted from avoiding pub regulations because of their crossovers with the upper-class gentlemen's clubs which were enjoying some degree of institutional protection. However, in more recent years they have been re-classified into the same category as public spaces such as pubs, and face the same restrictions, for better or worse.[67]

The focus on smoking and alcohol has a historical basis as a defining characteristic of the battles for independence from wealthy patrons dictating club activities. Such movements originated in and later spread out from London in the mid-1870s, spurred on by restrictions on drinking, gambling, politics and even performance genres, culminating in the aforementioned overthrow of the patrons' control of the CIU in 1885.[68] Thus, the identity of WMCs is somewhat based upon the image of cigarettes and alcohol alongside cultural self-determination.

While the first of Encore's three factors for closure (the absence of local work) is complicated and somewhat unpredictable, the latter two (drinking and smoking regulations) are looking increasingly unlikely to reverse because of the emergence of cultural norms since legislation was introduced. Therefore, other strategies are needed to address the issue of declining membership if the clubs are to avoid demolition or repurposing of the building, let alone the continuation of the social and cultural traditions within. Such strategies have varying approaches to the heritage of the spaces, including renovation, museumification, heritage protection (listed buildings), and adaptive reuse.[69]

[66] 'Encore', ClubHistorians, accessed 5 November 2022, http://www.clubhistorians.co.uk/html/encore.html.
[67] Some might say for the better: laws on equal access to women, anti-discrimination and public health challenge some of the more controversial club practices
[68] Ashplant, 'The Working Men's Club and Institute Union and the Independent Labour Party', 464.
[69] It is these strategies that I will address later in this thesis, with a consideration of the role of music in their management.

Working men's clubs within industrial heritage discourse

In order to think more widely about how WMCs fit into heritage policy and management, this section will look at their place within industrial heritage discourses, both in academic heritage fields and within the development of Welsh industrial heritage as a concept. I take my understanding of industrial heritage from Stefan Berger, as "a heritage which emerges in industrial spaces and which impacts, through worlds of work, urban spaces, and transportation, on the everyday life of people living in such industrial spaces".[70] There are several factors from the 1990s which have widened industrial heritage in Wales to consider buildings beyond the typical industrial structures, such as collieries, mills, factories and railway lines, to potentially include WMCs as industrial heritage. This brings it closer to the definition of The International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage as "the remains of industrial culture which are of historical, technological, social, architectural or scientific value", including "places used for social activities related to industry".[71]

The most significant of these happened towards the end of the 20th century, involving the protection and management of WMCs by two influential actors: St Fagans National Museum of History, which rebuilt Oakdale Workmen's Institute on its grounds between 1989-1995, and the Blaenavon Partnership, which included Blaenavon Workmen's Hall on the UK state party nomination to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2000. The chapter will end with a return to critical heritage studies, considering whether or not it is useful to consider WMCs as industrial heritage at official and unofficial levels.

[70] Stefan Berger, 'Mining Heritage', in *Making Sense of Mining History*, ed. Stefan Berger and Peter Alexander (London: Routledge, 2019), 304.
[71] The International Committee for the Conservation of the and Industrial Heritage, 'The Nizhny Tagil Charter for the Industrial Heritage', 17 July 2003, 2.

Emergence of industrial heritage discourse in Wales

For much of its modern history, Wales has been associated with pre-industrial ways of life, represented by romantic writers in the 18th century and intellectuals largely outside of Wales as a rural place of Celtic ancestry, the "first people" of Britain.[72] This pre-industrial imagery was driven by "antiquarian, aesthetic, nationalistic and anti-industrial interests."[73] The "*gwerin*" (folk/common people) identity of rural, authentic craftspeople was represented in Wales as the country's heritage from the opening of the Welsh Folk Museum, a branch of the National Museum, in the village of St Fagans near Cardiff in 1948.

At the same time, its founder Iowerth Peate came from the National Museum's Department of Folk Culture and Industry, and saw both folk and industry as connected within the heritage of Wales. Peate's idea of industry involved, largely, the exclusion of "highly industrialized areas and the heavy industries associated with them", which, he argued, threatened Wales with homogeneity.[74] Therefore, folk culture was compatible with industry and machines only where industry existed on a small scale (see tools depicted in figure 4) that would not overwhelm the *gwerin* with intense cultural change. This folk-industry depiction showed folk culture as something relevant to modern times, and industry in some form as part of Welsh heritage.[75] As Bella Dicks points out, however, the exclusion of areas with high levels of industry "erases from his picture of the 'true nation' the working-class politics, labour movement and urban 'mass' culture of the southern coalfields".[76] It was not until many decades later that such areas were considered under a new concept of Welsh industrial heritage.

[72] Dicks, 'Industrial Heritage as Place Making', 74.
[73] Roslyn Blyn-Ladrew, 'Ancient Bards, Welsh Gipsies, and Celtic Folklore in the Cauldron of Regeneration', *Western Folklore* 57, no. 4 (1998): 225.
[74] Elen Phillips, 'A Picture of the Past and a Mirror of the Present: Iorwerth Peate and the Origins of the Welsh Folk Museum', in *Collecting the Contemporary: A Handbook for Social History Museums* (Edinburgh & Cambridge, MA: Museums Etc, 2014), 40–62.
[75] Dicks, 'Industrial Heritage as Place Making', 75–76.
[76] Dicks, 75.

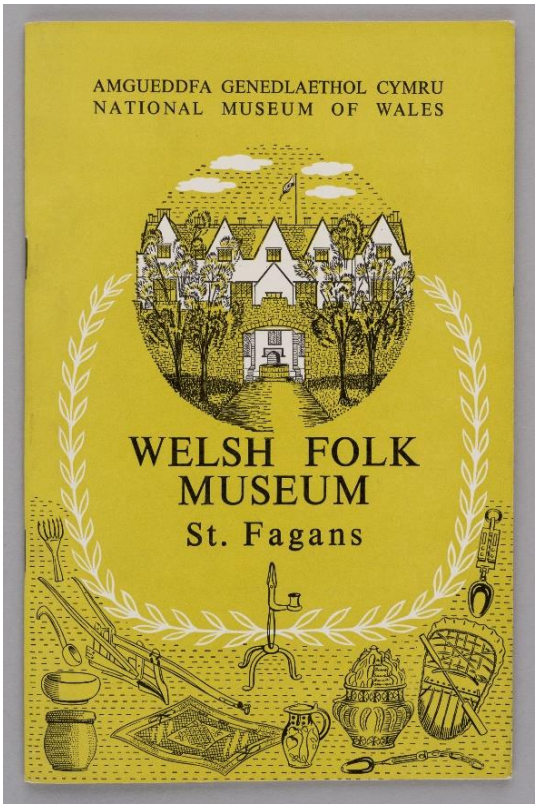

Figure 4: Early St Fagans museum booklet. Source: Amgueddfa Cymru.

Due to post-war development, rising numbers of industrial heritage enthusiasts within and outside of Wales campaigned for the remnants of steam industry, notably railways and steam-powered machines, to be preserved.[77] In 1959, a new industrial gallery at the National Museum made the first significant separation of industrial life from the *gwerin* identity. Like many industrial heritage depictions of the 20th century, it celebrated science and engineering, perhaps influenced by the support of British Petroleum,[78] and excluded the social and cultural history of industrial areas. The Department of Industry within the National Museum continued this direction in 1977, when it established the Welsh Industrial and Maritime Museum in the increasingly derelict Cardiff Docks, focusing on the history of technological advancement. An initiative that would have been the first significant example of heritagisation of industrial social history in Wales, the Q-Shed building with its street scene of dockland life, including a pub,

[77] Dicks, 76.
[78] Dicks, 73.

was interrupted by the redevelopment of the docklands, failing to fit into the developers' modern consumer-focused visions.[79]

Nevertheless, such depictions focused on the capital city as a centre of Wales' industrial heritage, to the exclusion of the other heavily industrialized areas which had experienced their own significant cultural changes due to industrialization. In the 1970s, however, two new industrial museums were established: the Slate Museum in the Dinorwic quarry in North Wales and the National Wool Museum in the western Camarthenshire village of Dre-fach Felindre. These museums intentionally connected with local history, rather than decontextualizing structures into a Cardiff museum setting, driven by the more recent history-making trends.[80] They did, however, leave out for the most part the social and cultural history connected with the industries.

From the 1980s, radical new left historians in Wales who had studied labour history and the unions used industrial history as a way to unite the seemingly opposing identities of rural Welsh-speaking Wales and urban/industrial Anglophone Wales, seeing the conjunction as core to the idea of Wales as a nation.[81] In many ways, it is true that this division, represented by the separation of the folk and industry parts of the national museum, was a false dichotomy, since the coalfield of South Wales had retained a semi-rural character with numerous small pits drawing their workforce from nearby small towns and villages, while migration to Wales' industries had caused some degree of Anglicization of such settlements. Industrial heritage-making developed alongside this emerging new left concept of Welsh history and helped to reinforce it as a unifying tool.[82] It is likely, too, that this was connected to the highly controversial mine closures in the mid-1980s and the emergent protests which stimulated a

[79] Dicks, 76.
[80] Dicks, 79.
[81] Dicks, 72–73.
[82] Dicks, 73.

strong national opposition to the UK Government and the Conservative Party of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Sure enough, heritagization of the South Wales coal industry began almost immediately after the collapse of the protests, with the conversion of the Blaenavon coalmine into the "Big Pit" visitor attraction in 1983, followed by the conversion of Lewis Merthyr Colliery into the Rhondda Heritage Park in 1989.

Towards the end of the century and the devolution of Wales, investment in industrial heritage was expanded, with a focus on industrial tourism as a source of regeneration. Wales had been at the forefront of the emergence of industrial tourism from the 1960s, when there was an optimism that it would create jobs and bring money into post-industrial areas that were deemed to have few economic alternatives.[83] This continued, with a particular focus on economically disadvantaged areas, including the Wales Tourism Board's 2000 policy *Achieving Our Potential*, and the Cadw report *Priorities for the Historic Environment* as recently as 2019.[84] However, William Price argues that a lack of interest at the local level as well as decreasing investment, worsened after Brexit because of the withdrawal of previously significant EU funding, puts these heritage sites at risk.[85] Furthermore, there is significant criticism over whether the last few decades of industrial tourism has had the regeneration effects intended, and acknowledgement of the negative effects of tourism, although this is rarely acknowledged in policies.[86] As Price writes, "Tourism is not a panacea for the economic concerns of post-industrial areas; repeatedly and uncritically asserting otherwise is problematic".[87]

[83] William R. Price, 'Mining for Tourists: An Analysis of Industrial Tourism and Government Policy in Wales', *Tourism Planning & Development* 18, no. 4 (4 July 2021): 436.
[84] Price, 451.
[85] Price, 452.
[86] Price, 453.
[87] Price, 453.

Figure 5: One of the band members interviewed looks into the many closed premises in Blaenavon town centre, indicative of the failure of industrial heritage and UNESCO-based tourism to regenerate the region (2022).

Recognition of social and cultural elements

WMCs emerged as heritage spaces as part of the greater recognition of the social and cultural dimensions of industrial history in Wales in the 1980s and 1990s. By the 1970s when the industrial museums were opened, attendance at the open-air folk life museum at St Fagans was diminishing as the museum was gaining a reputation for no longer representing the people of a changing Wales, especially considering the nearby proximity to Cardiff and, northwards, the South Wales valleys.[88] The museum responded in 1982 by incorporating a row of industrial workers' houses into part of its collection,[89] its changes displayed chronologically up to the 1970s. These houses, the Rhyd-y-Car cottages, were furnished to show some of the changes in both work and life patterns through the 19th and 20th centuries including tools, mining lamps, a canary cage, books, radio and television.

[88] John Williams-Davies, '"Now Our History Is Your History": The Challenge of Relevance for Open-Air Museums', *Folk Life* 47, no. 1 (1 July 2009): 119.

[89] Around this time, other actions were being taken to incorporate industry into Welsh history, including documentary films on mining and the opening of the 'Big Pit' in Blaenavon as a visitor experience. For some, it was too soon, as the wounds of deindustrialisation and strikes were still raw or even ongoing.

Further, in 1989, St Fagans made the significant decision to add Oakdale Workmen's Institute to its collection. While this decision was highly influenced by the strategic desire to have a space for functions on-site, it had the additional symbolic effect of demonstrating a recognition that the WMCs of the South Wales valleys were an important part of Wales' heritage. Like many areas of the South Wales coalfield, Oakdale, a small town next to Blackwood in Caerphilly County, did not set up such an institute until 1916, and its establishment was overseen by workers themselves with loans from their employer, the Tredegar Iron and Coal Company. It closed a few years before the colliery finally shut, at which time it was bought by St Fagans. Subsequently, due to the addition of industrial heritage to its collection, St Fagans could no longer refer to itself as a "National Folk Museum", instead being renamed to the "Museum of Welsh Life", which included the social and cultural heritage that emerged from the industrial revolution.

The incorporation of Oakdale Workmen's Institute into St Fagans decontextualizes and museumifies this heritage space. Although it continues to live as a venue for events, these are not organised by or in proximity to its original local community. Therefore, it displays working men's clubs and institutes as a long-gone part of history. A later example of recognition of social and cultural elements of industrial heritage, however, blurs the line between heritagisation and continuing living traditional building use: the inclusion of Blaenavon Workmen's Hall, which continues to be used as a theatre, cinema and library as well as museum, in the 2000 UNESCO World Heritage nomination of the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape.

The Blaenavon nomination provides a clearer and more internationally influential[90] example of WMCs as part of industrial heritage. Its statement of relevance to UNESCO's criterion (iii) places the same importance on social history as on the economic history of industry: "The Blaenavon Landscape constitutes an exceptional illustration in material form of *the social and* economic structure of 19th century industry" (emphasis mine).[91] Within the nomination, buildings that were not directly employed for extracting or manufacturing processes, workplace management, or workplace wellbeing (such as, for example, communal baths) were nonetheless considered part of the industrial cultural landscape. These include the school and the Workmen's Hall listed as key items of the cultural landscape.

The rebranding of Big Pit as the National Coal Museum and part of the World Heritage site was a response to risks of closure in the 1990s due to the withdrawal of public sector funding. The 1990s and 2000s saw new forms of Welsh heritage management that expected private sector involvement alongside the growth of EU structural development funds and the creation of the competitive Heritage Lottery Fund.[92] The Welsh Industrial and Maritime Museum was "[t]he first casualty of the new entrepreneurial regeneration logic",[93] which left a gap in heritage recognition of the coal industry, "whose legacy politically and culturally dominated the most populous, and yet most disadvantaged, area outside the cities: the South Wales Valleys".[94] The incorporation of Big Pit into the National Museum's remit ensured there was no glaring gap of the industrial heritage of the valleys in national heritage recognition, which

[90] The inscription statement notes "The Observer of the United Kingdom, representing the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape, hoped that this decision would encourage nominations of other industrial sites." UNESCO, 'Report of the 24th Session, 27 November - 2 December 2000', accessed 25 January 2023, https://whc.unesco.org/archive/repcom00.htm#984.
[91] Cadw, 'Nomination of the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape for Inclusion on the World Heritage List', 2000, 158.
[92] Dicks, 'Industrial Heritage as Place Making', 79.
[93] Dicks, 78.
[94] Dicks, 80.

would have been exacerbated by the increasing awareness of its importance due to the work of the radical historians.[95]

Figure 6: Heritagisation of Blaenavon Workmen's Hall commemorates industrial heritage beyond workplaces.

Blaenavon Workmen's Institute, however, is one of a few examples from the 1990s onwards of industrial heritage development that successfully implemented the new financial approach, with the additional benefit of official UNESCO heritage recognition. Other examples include Blaengarw Workmen's Hall, rescued in 1992 under a combination of national, council and community management,[96] the "Stiwt" in North Wales (Wrexham Miners' Institute) which combines 1990s funding from Arts Council Wales and Cadw with income from ticket sales,[97] and Blackwood Miners' Institute, following a similar model, which I will analyse in Chapter 3. These examples were in a good position for such an approach, as old, attractive listed buildings that could argue for heritage funding, as arts institutions that could gain arts funding, and as performance spaces that could connect to the profits of the culture industries. While

[95] Dicks, 81.
[96] 'Blaengarw Workmen's Hall', Visit Wales, n.d., https://www.visitwales.com/attraction/theatre-or-performing-arts-venue/blaengarw-workmens-hall-944484.
[97] 'Our History', Stiwt, n.d., http://www.stiwt.com/our-history.

some miners' institutes and workmen's halls became listed buildings, other WMCs with more modern, smaller or less outstanding architecture, or with limited arts programming, experienced very few gains from this competitive funding environment.

Conclusion: official and unofficial industrial heritage

Since the late 1980s, then, some WMCs have been recognised in Wales as industrial heritage through official heritage management and listing. This has taken place as part of a nation-building process drawing upon left-wing labour histories and an attempt to create heritage institutions within and outside of the National Museum with which modern inhabitants of Wales, particularly in the more highly populated South, can identify.

It is possible, however, that the best approach to a continued use of the WMC buildings is one that makes little reference to industrial heritage, if it is considered as an authorized heritage discourse that aims to serve touristic and national interests rather than benefiting the communities impacted by it. As Price acknowledges, "reliance on industrial – and other forms of cultural heritage – as a core aspect of identity and tourism branding may lead to challenges for areas that are trying to move forward in new directions or seeking distance from the past".[98] This may be a bigger issue in industrial heritage due to the associated history of hard labour, health issues, low wages and exploitation in general that may remain in the memories of the exploited and their ancestors.[99] On the other hand, there are repercussions to an approach that attempts to forget an area's industrial past, particularly when it disregards labour history, and, as a result, marginalises working-class histories, as Arthur McIvor has argued.[100]

[98] Price, 'Mining for Tourists', 453.
[99] Dicks, 'Industrial Heritage as Place Making'.
[100] McIvor, 'Where Is "Red Clydeside"?'

According to Lord Ellis-Thomas, industrial heritage in the South Wales valleys is "unloved heritage".[101] Interviewee 6, who grew up in a children's home converted from a coal baron's mansion in a large valleys mining town, suggested that while the history should be taught, it might be better to demolish buildings that represent exploitation. Some clubs, on the other hand, are worth preserving, in his view, for what the space provides for leisure activities:

> A lot of them are large, old buildings. We're grateful for them because they're better venues than, you know, small poky pubs. So from that point of view I don't really think of them other than their functionality: do they work as venues, or not?[102]

Figure 7: Newbridge Memo pre- and post-renovation, with mining artwork painted over. Source: Newbridge Memo website.

[101] Cadw, 'Priorities for the Historic Environment of Wales', 2018.
[102] The consideration of WMCs as music venues, either as well as or instead of industrial heritage buildings will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Regarding the Blackwood area case study in Chapter 3, while Blackwood Miners' Institute has to some extent retained the mining branding in its title, Newbridge Memo has moved on from the miners' institute background, even painting over the historical wall paintings of mining life with plain white (see figure 7). Cefn Fforest Miners' Welfare Hall currently stands at the centre of the debate: public communications switch between different titles,[103] and, while some local individuals and groups are creating fundraising items and photo exhibitions based on the industrial heritage, the initial branding has faced criticism for its focus on mining, from a community that has, to some extent, moved on. In the meantime, within some clubs, photographic memories of industrial work fill the walls alongside individuals, sports teams, important historical documents, and newspaper clippings of industrial disasters or achievements (see figure 8 for an example in Rhondda Cynon Taf); these are increasingly covered up by gig posters and new, non-industrial ephemera.

Figure 8: Visual reminders of social memories alongside industrial history around the bar and entrance to a concert room (2022).

[103] Cefn Fforest Miners' Welfare Hall & Institute, Cefn Fforest Miners' Institute, Cefn Fforest Welfare Hall etc.

Therefore, industrial heritage in the WMCs of the South Wales valleys demonstrates a conflict between an official, authorized form of heritage, a bottom-up DIY heritage emerging from some members of the communities, and a desire to forget. More research is needed on attitudes towards commemorating and forgetting or erasing industrial heritage in WMCs, and the geographical and management structures influencing this, but we can conclude that attitudes vary from one club to the next. It might be useful to think of industrial heritage less in terms of authorized heritage discourse, but to consider this heritage as a way in which people make sense of the past in the present and work towards a future that is beneficial.[104] Although preservation of the past is one form heritage practice, meaning can also emerge from change. While there is no single approach to the industrial heritage of WMCs in the South Wales valleys, these varying relationships with industrial history may affect to what extent music is used either to connect to the industrial past or to move on from it, as the next chapter will explore.

[104] Rodney Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013).

Chapter 2: Is There a Music Heritage of Working Men's Clubs?

Introduction

In this chapter, I will show the factors behind the historical changes of WMC music scenes from the mid-19th century to their role in the second half of the 20th century as "the largest ever British provider of live entertainment",[105] and then into decline and new cultural uses. In Wales, high and low culture had a history of merging as melodies and lyrics moved between the churches and the pubs hosting *mabsant* festivals, which Nonconformism eventually adapted and replaced.[106] As they developed alongside industrialisation, brass brands and male voice choirs combined repertoires of "hymns and [operatic/oratorio] arias"[107] with arrangements of popular songs from folk tunes, pub "Free and Easys" and music hall entertainment. Later, they also incorporated commercial pop, musical theatre and film music. These ensembles, now considered key to Welsh cultural heritage, existed in working men's clubs and miners' institutes alongside amateur dramatics groups, variety style entertainment, and, from the mid-20th century, the emergence of rock n roll, soul, cover bands, karaoke and tribute acts.

I use a combination of secondary sources on British cultural history, first-hand experiences and ethnography of the post-industrial towns of South Wales in order to write a brief history of music in the WMCs of the South Wales valleys that considers the rise of popular music in particular. I then place WMCs conceptually within music heritage discourses, demonstrating

[105] Brown, *Clubland*.
[106] Richard Suggett, 'Festivals and Social Structure in Early Modern Wales', *Past & Present*, no. 152 (1996): 79–112.
[107] "Hymns and arias" is a phrase commonly used to summarise Welsh music heritage, tying it to church and chapel practices, and is often sung at sports matches as the chorus of a song of the same name by entertainer Max Boyce.

how they challenge some of the existing paradigms for understanding popular music heritage, and consider whether there are elements of their music heritage that might be considered worthy of preservation in addition to, or instead of, industrial heritage.

The development of music in clubs and institutes

Victorian beginnings

Working class forms of entertainment in the Victorian period were frequently seen as harmful pursuits, not only by traditionalists, but also Liberals who feared that leisure was becoming commercialised via the pub and music hall, which would dull critical faculties and lead the population towards fascism.[108] As a result, early institutions designed to "elevate" the working classes were generally sceptical about including any scheduled entertainment or cultural activities. Even the presence of a piano would be criticised for drawing workers away from an education in science.[109]

Music classes were provided in some mechanics' institutes, while the decision of the London Mechanics Institution to include "refined amusement" among its three aims began to influence other parts of the country.[110] Towards the middle of the century, some mechanics' institutes existed which scheduled concerts, and Huddersfield Mechanics' Institution contained a music department that would perform oratorios.[111] It would be some time, however, before similar institutions, namely miners' institutes, would spread in the South Wales valleys and start hosting similar activities.

[108] Brown, *Clubland*.
[109] Clifton Stockdale, 'Mechanics' Institutes in Northumberland and Durham 1824-1902' (PhD thesis, Durham, Durham University, 1993), 127.
[110] Stockdale, 45.
[111] Stockdale, 129.

Meanwhile, "rational recreation" became a stronger feature in clubs and institutes being formed by those who explicitly believed that culture had a role in personal moral development, as long as it did not take place in forms that merely provided escapism from factory life. The Reverend Solly, founder of the Working Men's Club and Institute Union recognised that people needed somewhere enjoyable to go after a day's work, forming clubs rather than educational institutions. However, it seems that he placed music into the category of rooms dedicated for "classes, reading, lectures and music" rather than "conversation, refreshments, recreation etc.".[112] Solly believed that readings should be "interspersed with music",[113] known as "Penny Readings", but these were seen as imposed from above, while Free and Easys, in some ways a precursor of the variety show type of entertainment that characterised clubs in the 20th century, emerged from the bottom up.[114]

By the 1890s, after the ownership of most clubs had been taken over by their working-class members, variety-style entertainment featured heavily in the English context, mostly on Fridays and weekends and in basic concert rooms.[115] The eventual victory of the latter going into the 20th century might be seen as, on the one hand, a loss for those (both outside and within the working-classes) still believing in the "betterment" of the population, or, on the other hand a return to communal pre-industrial cultural forms that were elsewhere lauded in an antiquated form in British Romanticism, although here adapted to an industrial world.

[112] Solly, quoted in Brown, *Clubland*. On the other hand, he might have imagined two different functions of music. The role of music in Solly's clubs for accompanying conversation and refreshments, whether formal or informal, requires a closer look at club archive records and historical accounts.
[113] Solly, quoted in Brown.
[114] Taylor, *From Self-Help to Glamour*, 2.
[115] Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830-1885* (Routledge, 2014).

The concert hall boom

The aforementioned "democratic revolution" of clubs [116] in the 1880s eradicated the suppression of alcohol consumption. As a result, club profits soared from the sale of beer, procured cheaply through deals and negotiations between breweries, individual clubs and the CIU. No longer restricted by top-down ideas of what was best for the working-classes, clubs invested this money into new leisure rooms and stages, and, in many cases, large concert halls funded by loans with brewery companies, so that, by 1888, according to the Club and Institute Journal, nearly every club had a stage and some sort of scheduled performances.[117]

As members became more relaxed in their spaces, traditions carried over from pre-industrial cultures merged with industrial life and these new leisure cultures. Clubs incorporated the "Free and Easy" format that was flourishing in the pubs, which took the self-entertainment of group singing and oral culture from rural pre-industrial life and applied it to taking "turns" at the piano with folk tunes, songs about working life, minstrel tunes from the US, popular styles from Europe, and new songs commissioned to encourage more drinking.[118] In the WMCs, members also added music hall songs and political songs about working conditions and strikes.[119] Listening practices also reflected this new comfort in community-owned clubs, as "the audience brought their traditions with them, shouting for encores for acts they liked, and coughing and stamping through an act they didn't", even in shows that resembled music hall entertainment whose audiences were increasingly expected to be quiet.[120]

[116] Ashplant, 'The Working Men's Club and Institute Union and the Independent Labour Party'.
[117] Brown, *Clubland*.
[118] Brown.
[119] Brown.
[120] Brown.

The improvement of facilities and flourishing of bottom-up cultural activities led to an increased professionalisation within the clubs. According to Brown, the founding of entertainment companies and touring began as a way to avoid repetition which had been more acceptable in the Free and Easy format, which in some clubs was moved to other nights of the week in order to make room for weekend concerts.[121]

Higher culture was also accepted now that members were choosing it for themselves rather than having it imposed.[122] In the 1880s, new clubs had halls that accommodated seated audiences of up to three hundred with substantial staging, so that amateur dramatics groups were able to put on productions at a significant level of quality, including Shakespeare and musical theatre, a practice which had begun in the clubs in the 1860s by Richard Gaston, editor of the Club and Institute Journal.[123] Further, it seems that many of the miners' institutes in South Wales continued to run operatic and choral societies well into the 20th century.[124] This could be explained by the structural history of Wales in the 19th and early 20th centuries, in which the revival of the traditional *eisteddfodau* singing competitions and the prevalence of music in nonconformist churches stimulated musical engagement and contributed to a certain coherence of Welsh culture, in the absence of important administrative and cultural institutions.[125] The early CIU conceptions of culturally "elevating" the working classes were already in place in nonconformism. Reformers taught large populations to read not only biblical texts but also music scores, so that staff notation and sol-fa books sold out upon release in,

[121] Brown.
[122] Brown.
[123] Brown.
[124] Cwmavon Miner's Institute in the Rhondda, in particular, seems to have had a rich cultural life with such groups. Gareth Williams, *Valleys of Song: Music and Society in Wales 1840-1914* (University of Wales Press, 1998).
[125] Herbert, 'Music in Welsh History', 5–6.

respectively, 1859 and 1863.[126] Music historian Trevor Herbert considers this engagement with elevated art forms to be particular to Wales:

> the term [rational recreation] had a different nuance in Wales than in England, where it was used by more elevated classes to define self-improving pastimes among the working class that were worthy of their benevolence. In Wales, the engagement with choralism was more instinctive, spontaneous, organic and in all senses popular.[127]

Thus, specifically Welsh processes of working-class cultural engagement in the second half of the 19th century created a specific musical environment within which WMCs would emerge, contrasting with those in England at that time. By the early 20th century, many choral conductors were deemed not to be sufficiently musically trained, occasionally including sentimental popular repertoire deemed inappropriate within *eisteddfodau*, but were noted to be excellent at managing their men through a musical instinct and a democratic unselfishness,[128] that would have been cultivated in part in the WMCs.

The First World War and Depression increased the popularity of WMCs, which were often set up on housing estates in converted houses or shops and served as a place of respite in the face of hardship.[129] In Wales, the halls in some workmen's institutes played a particularly important role in hosting live music in the inter-war years, as Wales was lacking in dedicated opera houses and orchestral venues, even if they were not designed explicitly for this purpose.[130] Others were created as "music halls", suggesting performances of the "music hall" genre.[131] As more conventional music hall became stricter, WMCs took over as spaces for the continuation of informal, participatory performance formats that had moved from the fields and village halls,

[126] Herbert, 15.
[127] Herbert, 15.
[128] Herbert, 20–21.
[129] Cherrington, *Not Just Beer And Bingo! A Social History Of Working Men's Clubs*.
[130] Lyn Davies, 'Professionalisation in the Twentieth Century', in *A History of Welsh Music*, ed. Helen Barlow, Martin V. Clarke, and Trevor Herbert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 252–53.
[131] Trevor Herbert, 'Traditions and Interventions: Popular Music 1840–1940', in *A History of Welsh Music*, ed. Helen Barlow, Martin V. Clarke, and Trevor Herbert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 306.

to the pubs and variety shows.[132] The next section will show how this grew in popularity in the second half of the 20th century.

Post-war music practices

Initially, the period following the Second World War in WMCs in the UK was characterised by "austerity"-style, "self-help, weekend-only" entertainment where members were called up for a "turn", performances were often repetitive, younger members might add some early rock 'n' roll, and the reward was a beer token as well as the pleasure of joining in,[133] therefore undoing some of the rise of professionalism of earlier decades. In Wales, however, it was also characterised by a revival of the brass band and male voice choir traditions due to a nostalgia for pre-war times, a phenomenon which requires further research. However, newer clubs built in the 1960s and '70s joined the UK-wide emergence of "Clubland" and its derivations in post-industrial times, as the next two sections will show.

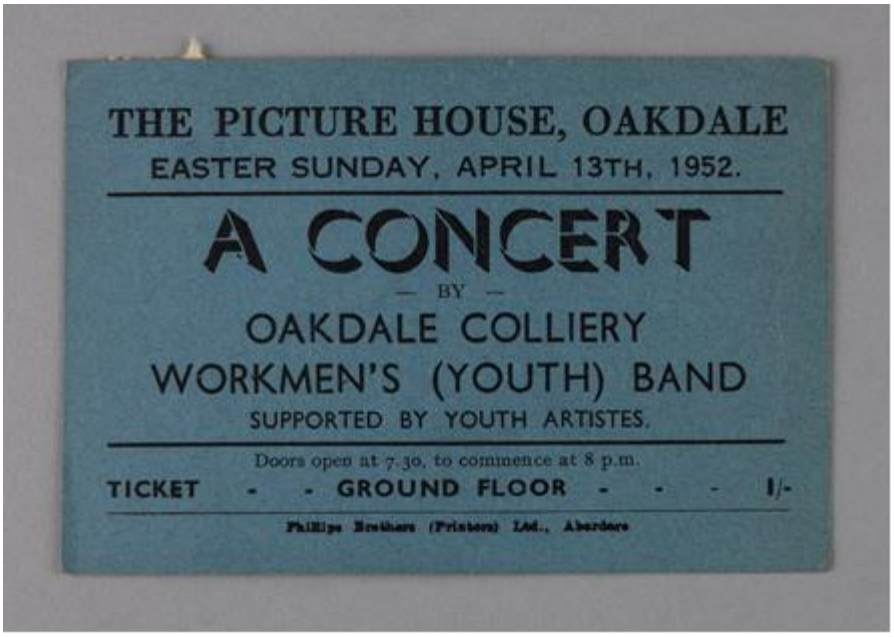

Figure 9: Oakdale Workmen's Hall ticket, showing the post-war popularity of brass bands, and the long-standing tradition of booking "artistes", i.e. nowadays. solo performers of popular songs. Source: Amgueddfa Cymru.

[132] Brown, *Clubland*.
[133] Taylor, *From Self-Help to Glamour*, 2.

Economic security and emergence of "Clubland"

From the late 1950s, another wave of concert hall installations emerged in response to a further increased transformation of clubs into spaces for whole families, who could enjoy them as entertainment venues rather than spaces for the perceived male activities of, as Richard Hall identifies, drinking and bar-games.[134] New clubs were also founded (as in Chapter 1) on new housing estates, frequently with sizeable concert rooms due to 1950s-early 1970s increasing wages, low unemployment, relaxation of alcohol legislation and higher consumer spending.[135]

The connection of so many new WMCs to the CIU network created a large "club circuit" in which new music and comedy stars emerged at different levels of professionalism. Some organised entertainment was provided by performers familiar with the "provincial night-club circuit", which made a club become "part of the world of showbusiness, as well as the members' second home".[136] They even strongly resembled music venues, as indicated by Dave Russell's consideration of the CIU WMCs as the largest group making up "Clubland" alongside commercial music performance spaces such as cabaret clubs, variety clubs.[137] Alongside the rise of professionalism in WMCs at this time, entertainment in many clubs was provided by the members themselves, as local non-professionals and hobbyists sometimes shared the stage with semi-professionals and rising stars. Such performers often had little desire to become professional full-time musicians, creating a music scene populated with local performers, and sometimes club members or relatives of members. The balance of professionals to non- or semi-professionals varied depending on the existing cultures of each area or club; while some clubs spent huge budgets bringing over famous acts not only from across the UK but also from

[134] Hall, 'Being a Man, Being a Member'.
[135] Dave Russell, 'Glimpsing "La Dolce Vita": Cultural Change and Modernity in the 1960s English Cabaret Club', *Journal of Social History* 47, no. 2 (2013): 300.
[136] Taylor, *From Self-Help to Glamour*, 2.
[137] Russell, 'Glimpsing "La Dolce Vita"', 299.

the US,[138] valleys clubs tended to exist on the opposite end of the scale, veering more towards local non- and semi-professional entertainers. Interviewee 10 talked about the continuation of this into the present:

> Music functions differently in the valleys. […] A lot of people don't want to get famous more than they just want to have a good time and play their instruments pretty well and impress their friends.

The band in interview 8 also identify with this past approach and continue it in current times, as do many cover bands who play only local gigs:

> If you're working full time […] for a couple of hours on the weekend, you're a star. […] For that hour and a half a night, you become who you always wanted to be. […] It's the best sort of façade. And to be brutally honest, no one's going to get rich off it, but that's not why you're doing it.

Interviewee 3 commented on why popular music scenes may have taken off so strongly from the 1950s in the mining communities and continue today under the context of post-industrial unemployment hardship:

> There's still a lot of rock 'n' rollers. […] There's a selection of Teddy Boys certainly in the valleys. […] They're always dressed to the max with their hair done, and the ladies like to dance. […] I think it's just something to aspire to. I think it's sort of the coal mining idea, the dark and the dredge. It's [American popular music in the valleys] always bright and colourful.

In addition to being a form of escapism, certain genres also functioned as a vehicle for expressing discontent with difficult work lives and, at this time, a lighter opposition to authority. Interviewee 9 described the covers bands playing rock music from 1950s rock 'n' roll to heavier artists such as Led Zeppelin and Deep Purple as

> a bit of a finger up to the government, in certain songs, and a release, with certain songs and groups. There's a lot of community spirit. Rock 'n' roll itself is showing that people are angry as well, but still enjoying themselves.

[138] Brown, *Clubland*; Hall, 'Being a Man, Being a Member'.

This dual purpose of music for escapism and as a vehicle for frustration became magnified in the next period of WMCs, as mine closures and economic hardships led to boredom, disillusionment, and even anger.

Post-industrial music scenes

Mine closures took place in Wales throughout the 20th century, but by far the most sudden change with lasting consequences took place in the 1980s in the South Wales valleys. In some ways, the economic hardships at this time may have stimulated the flourishing of live music, which began to gradually veer towards cover and tribute acts and karaoke, as I will explain. Popular music featured and continues to feature as a form of intentional forgetting in the WMCs of the South Wales valleys,[139] having been simultaneously a means of escapism from lives of difficult industrial work and an effort to move on. Many of the interviewees brought up this phenomenon, and how the deindustrialising and post-industrial periods built upon the use of popular music as escapism from difficult working lives in the mines. Interviewee 2 shared his view that, "In the valleys I think people haven't got a lot of money in material wealth, and music, I think, is a good, positive experience," while the band in interview 8 stated,

> The heritage didn't influence me being a musician, but it obviously influenced the people behind, the generation above me, more so in giving them something to do. […] People looked for an escape. […] There were emerging identities that come about as a result of that.

In this period of post-industrial decline, the Manic Street Preachers, perhaps the most famous Welsh band, emerged from Blackwood and nearby areas.[140] In their early days, they performed

[139] For a similar example, see Rosa Reitsamer's study of popular music in Austria, where not only did punk arise in Linz as part of a transformation from an industrial "Steel City" town into a "cultural city", but Austrians in the post-War period – searching for an alternative identity to the Nazi past and a way to separate themselves from communism – appropriated the 'rebel' attitudes they saw in American rock 'n' roll. Rosa Reitsamer, '"Born in the Republic of Austria" The Invention of Rock Heritage in Austria', *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 20, no. 3 (3 April 2014): 336–37.

[140] James Dean Bradfield, Sean Moore and Nicky Wire met at Oakdale Comprehensive School, while Richey Edwards grew up in Blackwood.

at local venues, although a club that could have provided an important venue for their early career, Oakdale Workmen's Institute, closed down their first year, thereby cancelling their second gig on 28th February 1986, and was subsequently moved to St Fagans, thus removing its opportunity to become a cultural centre benefitting bands like the Manics. In interviews, they have described the influence of growing up in this post-industrial area on their band identity, including their political lyrics and rebellious attitude.[141] Like my fieldwork interviewees, the Manics used pop and rock glamour as a form of escapism from working-class life in an economically-deprived post-industrial town, manufacturing themselves around a myth and "rock n' roll fairytale" as an answer to the "very recognisably working-class desperation to escape their small-town lives in South Wales' Blackwood".[142] "At a time when 'working-class' bands were meant to be down-dressed, lumpen and unspectacular",[143] this particular image may be a specific characteristic of the South Wales valleys culture.[144]

Although the Manics did not play a full show in Blackwood after 1986 due to a riot with "boozed rugby lads",[145]their seemingly contradictory combination of escapism, rebelliousness and aspirationalism may well have been influenced by the glamorous "golden age" of clubs in the area which were starting to decline through their youth. The influence of the glamorous, escapism tone of valleys WMCs on the Manics seems to be confirmed by the music video for their 2013 single 'Show Me The Wonder', which depicts people preparing for a night out of music and comedy resembling the later version of the variety-show format, at an imaginary WMC called "Fernvale" (resembling the word Oakdale).[146]

[141] A lack of available rooms with PA system and space for a band, however, caused them – apart from their first single recorded in the now-demolished Cwmfelinfach Miners' Institute – to travel to rehearsal studios in Cardiff. I will address this issue in the case study of Blackwood in Chapter 3.
[142] Marc Burrows, *Manic Street Preachers: Album by Album* (Pen & Sword Books Limited, 2021), 12.
[143] Burrows, 13.
[144] Their relationship with mainstream popular music industries is complicated, however, involving some degree of performativity in their industry aspirationalism for stardom early on. Burrows, 12.
[145] Burrows, 2.
[146] *Manic Street Preachers - Show Me the Wonder*, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J9L-jyFEsK4.

Figure 10: Stills from the Manics' music video "Show Me The Wonder", showing the coexistence of industrial heritage and music scenes, by a band that have themselves been canonised in cover band setlists at WMCs.

The band were cited by multiple interviewees as hugely influential on valleys music scenes of the last few decades. This escapism attitude continued into the 1990s and early 2000s with the rise of heavier rock music in the valleys, both in the original music scenes and among cover bands. At the local level, this is often attributed to the economic hardships caused by deindustrialisation. Interviewee 7, a rehearsal space/GMV owner and member of a heavy metal band said,

> I think with the valleys […] There was never anything much to do when we were younger. […] You start hearing about these gigs, and going with a kind of pent-up boredom.

Interviewee 7 talked about the cover bands that visit his studio who continue to play the heavier music of this era and heavier rock versions of mainstream songs heard on the radio and in the clubs:

> It's like, yeah, I can do heavy versions of all that now. […] Every night you hear popular songs that are getting their own twist kind of put onto it.

The three bands I mentioned all take this approach for much of their setlists in WMCs, blurring mainstream songs with heavier tones to appeal simultaneously to the "family audiences" on the weekend and holidays and the continuing desire from audiences to release frustration that may be attributed to the ongoing socio-economic troubles. Bands from other parts of South Wales, on the other hand, can struggle to match valleys tastes: in the pubs, they are not heavy enough (in the words of interviewee 9, "We were a bit too fluffy for them"), while WMC music tastes can vary from valley to valley based on the historical music scenes within them, the attitude towards family events, and, potentially, ongoing frustration at economic deprivation and lack of success with government and council investment in social and cultural opportunities.

In the 21st century, WMCs are no longer busy centres of entertainment. There is still a demand for cover music in valleys clubs, but the scenes are diminishing. Interviewee 1 stated,

> We play a lot of gigs in the valleys, more than Cardiff or Newport or Swansea […] they still enjoy the experience of a band doing their best, in no way different to the old sixties where any local band would just go and play the workingmen's club and just play the hits of the day, whether it was The Beatles, The Searchers, The Stones or something.
>
> We've played working men's clubs and labour clubs. Mostly pubs these days because a lot of the old working men's clubs have gone.

Therefore, despite the efforts of Temperance leaders to draw workers from the pubs to new institutions, many of their descendants have followed the cultural scenes that flourished within

them back into the pubs. They are, once more, customers; encouraged to spend money on alcohol, rather than members of a club with opportunities for social, educational and cultural growth alongside entertainment. It is important to note, however, that this perspective varies depending on the valley, town or village depending on prior music practices, when the mines closed, and how much investment was made in deindustrialising processes and afterwards. Interviewee 10, a drummer of an original band from the large valleys town Merthyr Tydfil said,

> There is a massive, massive scene for working men's clubs, labour clubs, civic clubs, and as well it is interlinked with history with the sites in South Wales. Party bands, birthday bands, wedding function bands…

Meanwhile, local original music seems to have significantly diminished. Interviewee 10 said, "There's not a lot of clubs where you can play original music, unfortunately for me", while interviewee 4, the record shop owner, brought up the changing music scenes:

> They say there are some good Welsh bands, but it's not as prolific as it was back in the seventies and eighties and nineties. […] I think there were more venues. It was easier for people to get out and play. Certainly, there were more venues in Ponty and surrounding villages and towns. And now they've all gone, a lot of them.

Music heritage

Defining the music practices of WMCs as a sort of heritage is a difficult task because, much like the majority of the architecture, they are not generally seen as aesthetically significant. Debates around "rational recreation" and the role of culture in "elevating" the working classes vs entertainment to bring in members were eclipsed towards the end of the 19th century by the democratization of club ownership, and therefore, of music programming. Participatory activities such as the "Free and Easy" and Music Hall-style performances dominated, with very little – if any – original song compositions. The following section will place WMC music scenes and practices within the context of music heritage discourses with a focus on popular

music, followed by a consideration of whether there might be considered any music heritage of WMCs.

Official and unofficial music heritage

As with industrial heritage discourse in Chapter 1, we might look to Blaenavon Workmen's Hall and Oakdale Workmen's Institute as indicators of how the music of WMCs in the South Wales valleys is represented in heritage discourse. Representation of music heritage within the buildings is, however, limited. Blaenavon acts primarily as a place for hire, outsourcing its tradition of musical performances to a theatre company in which music plays a role in neither programming nor educational outreach, while music is primarily heard at Oakdale as part of private events and wedding parties. Upon contacting St Fagans Museum for an interview about the Institute, the confusion over who would be the appropriate interviewee displayed a disconnect between the museum curators and the events management team, demonstrating a general absence of depictions of intangible heritage associated with the building. An exception is the yearly Christmas Nights, when a brass band plays traditional carols mixed with pop tunes, sometimes located within or outside of the Institute. This association of miners with brass bands is fairly typical across the UK and represents a fairly conventional idea of heritage that underplays the role of WMCs in the 20th century as concert halls hosting a variety of music from cabaret to cover bands.

Popular music heritage as a whole, from famous musicians to local traditions, has little official depiction in Wales. Although some elements of popular culture have been commemorated in Cardiff in the 21st century with projects such as the 'Doctor Who Experience' and the 'BBC 100 in Wales' exhibition at the National Museum, there is no music equivalent in the country. Historically, it has been difficult for elements of popular culture to be considered as heritage, "for their mass-produced, commercial and global properties rendered them the antithesis of

authentic cultural value as conceived in conventional heritage discourse".[147] This was somewhat overcome, however, by the characteristics of rock music as a 'revival' of the Romantic spirit with its idea of the artist as genius,[148] combined with the passing of time and the gradual association of popular music with particular moments of historical significance. The emergence of a "rock music canon" from the mid-1990s[149] then applied similar criteria to the rest of popular music as it too gained a heritage status.[150] Therefore, popular music heritage at the practical level has tended towards an adaptation of traditional concepts of heritage in terms of monumentality, and aesthetic and historical values. Popular music within the UK at the level of official discourse has tended to build upon this idea of popular music heritage and justify it by attaching it to the built environment. For example, the UK Government Department for Culture, Media and Sport has recognised popular music heritage in the form of associated buildings or sites since 1997.[151] More recently, it has given support to a Beatles museum in Liverpool,[152] showing a potential move away from buildings and towards the intangible.

This official approach has commonly been criticised within popular music heritage studies over the last decade for erasing minority cultural histories and reinforcing a form of heritage that represents those in power. Various scholars, for example, have claimed that the erasure of varied music histories from popular memory serves the interests of a white, male, middle-class, baby-boomer heritage canon,[153] which limits freedom and authenticity within popular music's

[147] Bennett, '"Heritage Rock": Rock Music, Representation and Heritage Discourse', 477.
[148] Robert Pattison, *The Triumph of Vulgarity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).
[149] Carys Wyn Jones, 'Is There a Canon of Rock Music?: Canonical Values, Terms and Mechanisms in the Reception of Rock Albums' (Ph.D., Cardiff, Cardiff University, 2006), 191.
[150] Motti Regev, 'Introduction', *Popular Music* 25, no. 1 (January 2006): 1.
[151] Roberts and Cohen, 'Unauthorising Popular Music Heritage', 246.
[152] Roberts and Cohen, 244–45; 'Music Venue Trust Brands Rishi Sunak's New Beatles Attraction as "Pointless Nonsense"', *NME* (blog), 29 October 2021, https://www.nme.com/news/music/music-venue-trust-brands-rishi-sunaks-new-beatles-attraction-as-pointless-nonsense-3082963.
[153] Andy Bennett, 'Popular Music and the "Problem" of Heritage', in *Sites of Popular Music Heritage*, ed. Sara Cohen et al. (New York: Routledge, 2015), 20–21.

role in identity-building for post-war generations.[154] In response, heritage projects have emerged which uncover, research or showcase diverse music heritage, such as the documentary film *Routes Jukebox* which reconnects Liverpool's music heritage to some of its complex history of migration and diverse communities.[155]

Furthermore, opposition over the official recognition given to different heritage acts takes place in everyday discourse. For example, while interviewee 9 said the Stereophonics and Tom Jones "have been brilliant for Welsh music" and interviewee 3 stated,

> I think we should have a statue and bring the tourists in and, you know, make some money off of Tom […] The Welsh National Anthem was written here – Evan James and James James. Yeah, absolutely, let's push it, push Pontypridd.

interviewee 2 – a member of an original rock band in Pontypridd and performer of covers at open mics and jam nights – exclaimed,

> I'm not gonna say it's because of Tom Jones, because that's not true at all. He didn't create this positive vibe about music in Wales. It's down to us. It's not down to Tom Jones. Tom Jones and the Stereophonics are not responsible for people's passion for music in Wales.

The division of heritage into these opposing forms, however, obscures much of the middle-ground, where mainstream narratives of music are internalised by individuals and communities in sometimes fascinating ways. Some research has been done to draw out this more elusive form of popular music heritage. In the 2014 special issue on popular music heritage in the *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Roberts and Cohen delineate three categories which draw upon Laurajane Smith's AHD concept:[156] "official authorised popular music heritage",

[154] Simon Frith, 'Towards an Aesthetic of Popular Music', in *Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance and Reception*, ed. Richard Leppert and Susan McClary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 133–49; Tia DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life* (Cambridge University Press, 2000); David Leaver and Ruth Ä Schmidt, 'Together Through Life—an Exploration of Popular Music Heritage and the Quest for Re-Enchantment', *Creative Industries Journal* 3, no. 2 (January 2010): 107–24.
[155] Lashua and Owusu, 'Decentring Liverpool's Popular Music Heritage'.
[156] Smith, *Uses of Heritage*.

"self-authorised popular music heritage" and "unauthorised popular music heritage", or "heritage-as-praxis".[157] This second category, while contributing to a popular music canon, is created in a less official capacity, through systems such as the unofficial blue plaque scheme which nonetheless cooperates with the official one,[158] or the actions of music industry decision-makers and music scenes, gaining its legitimacy through the involvement of public figures.[159]

Breaking down the discourse

The categories are flexible and changing, however, as Roberts and Cohen acknowledge.[160] Initiatives combining research with community collaboration have shown some of the ways in which these delineations of popular music heritage are complex and blurred. Sŵn 2016, a pop-up music exhibition at Sŵn Festival by Cardiff University in 2016, showed how personal collections of items representing individual music memories contribute to a collective popular music heritage that mixes together local, national, UK and international artists. Likewise, a 2017 collaborative community project by Paul Carr at the University of South Wales, entitled "The Lost Musical Memories of Merthyr Tydfil" involved grassroots heritage-making that considered original alongside non-original, local bands and those touring from elsewhere.[161]

Popular music heritage, then, cannot necessarily always be understood as local musicians with aesthetic or cultural significance, but blends global music industries with local places and people.[162] In the case of the non-original music dominating the history of WMCs, from Free and Easys, male voice choirs and brass bands to cover bands, tributes and karaoke, performances of "classics" from popular music history that stimulate memories of the same

[157] Roberts and Cohen, 'Unauthorising Popular Music Heritage'.
[158] Roberts and Cohen, 248.
[159] Roberts and Cohen, 250.
[160] Roberts and Cohen, 243.
[161] Paul Carr, 'Introduction to the Special Issue: Lost Musical Histories—Curating and Documenting Local Popular Music-Making in the UK', *Popular Music History* 12, no. 1 (2019): 5.
[162] Again, see the Routes Jukebox project as an example, which also considers migrant diasporas. Lashua and Owusu, 'Decentring Liverpool's Popular Music Heritage'.

location in another time may act in some way as participation in a popular music heritage experience, even while mixing covers of local artists from the past (e.g. Stereophonics, Manic Street Preachers, Tom Jones, Max Boyce) with non-local (e.g. Beatles, Rolling Stones, Fleetwood Mac, soul, Motown, US pop-punk).

Comparing the theory of Roberts and Cohen with other theories can expand some of these concepts on the levels of AHD in popular music. Firstly, Antti-Ville Kärjä, who draws upon folk musicologist Philip Bohlman's theories of folk canons as "imagined canon", "mediated canon" and "small group canon",[163] applies this to popular music as "prescribed canon", "mainstreaming canon" and "alternative canon".[164] He considers the music industry to be at a higher level of top-down influence than Roberts and Cohen, whose official authorised heritage is based primarily upon government acts of recognition such as listing buildings and creating commemorations while record companies operate at the same level as mainstream journalism and scenes. For Kärjä, however, a prescribed canon is created not only by state decisions but also record companies creating a sense of past for their artists in order to facilitate sales. This blurs the line, then, in the connection between industry and state heritage interests/narratives.

Another comparison can be made with ethnomusicologist Jeff Todd Titon, who uses ecological metaphors to write about the management of music heritage. Although Titon's fieldwork has focused on traditional music, his definition of the field of ethnomusicology as "the study of people making music", drawing attention to both the social dimensions of music and the act of making music,[165] means that his theories are frequently widely applicable to other styles. Titon, too, recognises the influence of industry in official authorised heritage practices, in which

[163] Philip V. Bohlman, *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988).
[164] Antti-Ville Kärjä, 'A Prescribed Alternative Mainstream: Popular Music and Canon Formation', *Popular Music* 25, no. 1 (January 2006): 3–19.
[165] Jeff Todd Titon, *Worlds of Music*, 2nd edition (New York: Schirmer Books, 1992). xxi

conservation and commerce are linked in an official recognition of "masterpieces", at the highest level, and which are performed to an audience in something that, in my interpretation, resembles a self-authorised display of heritage.[166] For Titon, the pressure upon musicians to be "stage-ready" for a performance of heritage is detrimental to living music practices and contributes to a stereotyped version of musical styles which serves hegemonic culture.[167] Kärjä, too, acknowledges the hegemonic tendencies of his 'mainstreaming canon', which he describes as bringing together people from different geographical and social groups to a shared style of music with a hegemonic element alongside a focus on authenticity and roots, that defines itself in relation to the Other (which fits more into the third category) that it nonetheless makes use of for claims of authenticity.[168]

Furthermore, Roberts and Cohen observe that music scenes, even DIY (which we might expect to enter into the third category because of their smaller scale), contribute to authorised heritage conventions,[169] while a retrospective observation would see that the "independent" record labels from Kärjä's "alternative" category have contributed to the genres "alternative rock" and "indie" that are by now fairly firmly incorporated into the mainstream.[170] Therefore, we can see that the distinctions between these three levels of heritage can be blurred, as well as influencing each other. Not only authorised and unauthorised, but also authorised and self-authorised popular music heritage in some contexts may work against each other, to reinforce or disrupt commercial and hegemonic interests.[171]

[166] Jeff Todd Titon, 'Sustainable Music: An Ecological Approach to Cultural Sustainability, Pt. 1', *Sustainable Music* (blog), 29 October 2009, https://sustainablemusic.blogspot.com/2009/10/ecological-approach-to-cultural.html.
[167] Jeff Todd Titon, 'Sustainable Music: Stage Readiness and Heritage', *Sustainable Music* (blog), 18 April 2009, https://sustainablemusic.blogspot.com/2009/04/stage-readiness-and-heritage.html.
[168] Kärjä, 'A Prescribed Alternative Mainstream', 11–13.
[169] Roberts and Cohen, 'Unauthorising Popular Music Heritage', 248.
[170] This concept is endemic in alternative music. For an early example of the "Alternative rock doesn't seem so alternative anymore" claim, see: John Pareles, 'Great Riffs. Big Bucks. New Hopes?', *New York Times*, 28 February 1993.
[171] Roberts and Cohen, 'Unauthorising Popular Music Heritage', 248.

Table 1: An overview of theories on popular music heritage officiality and authorisation.

Author(s)	Category	Influence	Description	Examples
Kärjä, (2006)	prescribed canon	Bohlman – imagined canon	Decisions made by states and other institutions, marginalisation of others, national identity-building, music industry decisions	GDR culture management, record companies inventing an imagined past for their artists
Titon, (2008)	masterpieces	'The Business of Culture'	Heritage is proclaimed by institutions with authority	UNESCO
Roberts and Cohen, (2014)	official authorised popular music heritage (big H)	Smith – authorised heritage discourse	Official recognition, acts of consecration, contributes to a canon	Blue plaques, UK Department of Culture, Media and Sport, listed buildings
Kärjä	mainstreaming canon	Bohlman – mediated canon	Brings together people from different backgrounds to a shared musical style, hegemonic, seeks authenticity	Rock critics rejecting The Monkees but applauding artists' origins in the blues, 'desert island' lists
Titon	performed heritage	Folk festival programmers 'Is he stage-ready?'	Spaces where heritage is performed to an audience	Music tourism
Roberts and Cohen	self-authorised popular music heritage (big H)	Smith	Contributes to a canon, gains authenticity from public figures	Unofficial blue plaques, music industry, music scenes, journalism mythologies
Kärjä	alternative canon	Bohlman – small group canon	Micro-histories, transgressive potential	'Independent' music companies, specialised magazines, informal networks
Titon	community collaboration	Ecology metaphor – feed the soil, not the plant	Collaboration between community members and people who work in culture	Music scenes that are allowed to be fluid and changeable
Roberts and Cohen	unauthorised popular music heritage (little h / heritage-as-praxis)	Smith	Works against authorised heritage, may not be aware it is heritage, heritage discourses outside mainstream	Individual music histories e.g. British Sound Archive, anti-heritage punk graffiti

Music within WMCs both takes on board and reinforces popular music canons and top-down – especially commercially influenced – forms of heritage. It is also a form of DIY culture with participatory practices, but it takes a mainstream canon and adapts it to a new cultural milieu

where it serves specific social functions.[172] For example, interviewee 6 performs his favourite American blues songs, but also tries to use his "local dialect" rather than "Americanisms" in his original songs. In these local contexts, the mainstream popular music heritage canon influences new original music, as new artists emerge and may enter the mainstream, to be celebrated back in the local places of their origin. This celebration may not take a tangible form, but exists in the choice of covers and karaoke songs and the collective memories of communities. As the rock covers band in interview 5 stated from the back of their van at a summer festival in a WMC,

> Rock music in the valleys stems from those groups of people [Manics, Lostprophets etc.] and that genre and everyone just wanted to be cool again. I think rock music is a big heritage property for them, like the density of pubs and venues and small communities in South Wales. […] It was built on industry and they have the working men's clubs made by the miners. So all these – like the Stereophonics, Manic Street Preachers and all that, Tom Jones – started off in the working men's clubs, from the communities.

Conclusion: the music of working men's clubs as heritage?

I will now define what I see as three types of music heritage that emerged from the WMCs. The first type is that which fits most easily into the AHD concept: the brass bands, male voice choirs and *eisteddfodau* that have become part of national identity. These music practices were often attached to the clubs and institutes, providing rehearsal and performance space, but as AHD they have become detached from these roots, put onto national stages, and marketed as the heritage of the valleys or of Wales as a whole.[173]

[172] Bennett, '"Heritage Rock": Rock Music, Representation and Heritage Discourse', 477.

[173] Perhaps the example that takes this the furthest is the choir Only Men Aloud, which was formed from professional singers in Cardiff, taken to the talent contest Britain's Got Talent, and become one of the most pushed representations of Welsh heritage in the late 2000s-2010s. OMA and their offshoot Only Boys Aloud sing a repertoire of primarily choral arrangements of popular songs, with some added musical theatre songs and hymns. This sanitised and professionalised music heritage reduces representation of the working-class communities from which the vast majority of male voice choirs originated, and funds the institutions in the capital city rather than the valleys buildings from which such traditions grew.

The second is a sort of "mainstream" popular music heritage which celebrates the stars who arose from WMCs and valleys music scenes. The connections between the stars and the buildings that shaped them are acknowledged to some extent in local collective memory, for example in the interviews I made, and in public discourse, such as some of Tom Jones' biographies which describe the development of his act in the clubs. However, these connections are not often intentionally commemorated. In England, The Smiths, for example, make up part of the branding of Salford Lads' Club,[174] with wall posters creating a sense of history in the identity of the space.[175] However, in Wales, this recognition of popular music heritage is only seen at city centre grassroots venues: most notably, Clwb Ifor Bach in Cardiff and TJs in Newport.[176] Of the locations at which the Manic Street Preachers played seminal gigs, Six Bells Working Men's Club in Abertillery still survives. This club, as well as those in which Tom Jones honed his stage presence, may be missing a commercial opportunity.

Figure 11: Commemoration of The Smiths at Salford Lads' Club. Source: Manchester Evening News.

[174] A building built on many of the same values as working men's clubs but aimed at boys and young men.
[175] Catherine Strong and Samuel Whiting, '"We Love the Bands and We Want to Keep Them on the Walls": Gig Posters as Heritage-as-Praxis in Music Venues', *Continuum* 32, no. 2 (4 March 2018): 151–61.
[176] The walls of most tend to depict a bottom-up heritage-as-praxis of the space as a GMV in contrast to wider heritage narratives outside of the venue. See: Yorgos Paschos, 'Exploring the Forgotten: The Evidential Heritage Values of Grassroots Music Venues', *Riffs: Experimental Writing on Popular Music* 6, no. 2 (2023): 66–77.

The third type would be the more long-term popular music practices in WMCs as heritage. Genres and particular scenes that have lasted the test of time may not be a distinctive heritage of valleys WMCs, but the musicking practices within might be considered as such, I would argue. The Welsh cultural theorist Raymond Williams refers to two distinct ways of inheriting the past: "archaic culture", encompassing elements that are ascribed age value which we might apply to modern ideas of "folk song" as much as to antiques or historical re-enactments, and "residual culture", which refers to how older cultural practices continue to influence society in conscious or unconscious ways.[177] In the 1970s, Taylor demonstrated one example of residual pre-industrial practices affecting what might appear at first glance to be new cultural forms, by identifying rituals within working men's clubs which to him resembled pre-industrial culture from the farm hamlets to the small pub to the club[178]. This included the chairman calling singers to the stage, who would whisper to the pianist and then perform the same songs as the previous weeks, to a heckling and sing-along audience who had to be called on for "best of order". Brown explains that "the audience brought their traditions with them, shouting for encores for acts they liked, and coughing and stamping through an act they didn't", a practice which continued long into the second half of the 20th century, while the "Free and Easy" format in WMCs took the self-entertainment of group singing and oral culture from rural pre-industrial life.[179]

These practices have continued into the 21st century. Brown adds that karaoke, a rising feature of WMCs, is "a continuation of the Free and Easy",[180] while two interviewees identified that

[177] Raymond Williams, *Culture & Society 1780-1950* (Doubleday & Company, Inc, 1960).
[178] Taylor, *From Self-Help to Glamour*.
[179] Repertoire from the pubs into the clubs consisted of folk tunes, songs about working life, minstrel tunes from the US, popular styles from Europe, political songs about working conditions and strikes, and new songs commissioned to encourage more drinking. Brown, *Clubland*.
[180] Brown.

WMC audiences still have a desire to heckle and joke back and forth with the performer. The cover band in interview 8 had the following interaction:

> They heckle you a lot.
>
> Yeah. It's only like – let's encourage them.
>
> Like, it could be the comedian and the people in the front row getting up and shouting stuff at you, right? So we just give it back.

Figure 12: A singer teases the audience of a valleys WMC with jokes and socialist songs (2022).

Meanwhile, after his set at a WMC with a band going by an intentionally crude name, interviewee 6 told me,

> Most people rarely have the experience of being able to shout at the bands on the stage, although they may feel as if they want to. So we allow them that opportunity.

His band adapts its pub blues setlists to WMCs by including more popular "mainstream" songs in order to play "family music that really suits everyone". Despite the crude band name, this adaptation to family environments was a common feature of WMCs for much of the 20th century, when the club invited wives and children of members in on weekends and holidays for recreational activities and live music. Therefore, repertoires, styles and performance

practices of working men's clubs in the South Wales valleys contain elements of residual culture that were adapted to industrial change and continued into current times.

Is this residual culture of participatory music formats and rowdy collective performance practices heritage, though? As Williams writes, the working-class in Wales has struggled to create something that would be considered as culture in a narrow sense because of its subjugated position and limited resources. However, he describes the collective, participatory cultural practices surrounding institutions such as WMCs as something that, to me at least, certainly sounds like it could be heritage:

> We may now see what is properly meant by 'working class culture'. It is not proletarian art, or council houses, or a particular use of language; it is, rather, the basic collective idea, and the institutions, manners, habits of thought and intentions which proceed from this.[181]

[181] Raymond Williams, *Culture & Society 1780-1950*, 346.

Chapter 3: Music Management in Club Survival

Introduction

Working men's clubs have employed music in different ways in the past to bring in members and satisfy different strands of membership, from the early days of rational recreation debates and the emergence of self-organised cultural activities to the differentiation of "homosocial" rooms from family-oriented weekend concert halls.[182] This chapter examines how, since the 1990s, some clubs attempted to continue previous forms of music programming, while others, often revitalised clubs under newer forms of management, experimented with combinations of original and non-original, heritage acts and rising talent, stage performances and participatory formats. It draws connections between the post-industrial financial difficulties of WMCs and their different approaches to music programming. Afterwards, I will show two ways in which WMCs in their various 21st century management approaches could fit into emerging cultural policies in Wales and the UK: firstly, culture and heritage as sources of wellbeing, and secondly, support for live music venues.

Case study of club music management in Blackwood

Blackwood (in Welsh, Coed Duon) is a post-industrial town in Caerphilly County Borough, in South Wales. John Hodder Moggridge, an English clothier from landed gentry who was concerned with the lives of workers in the South Wales coalfields, founded the town in 1820 on the site of sparse cottages and farmland in an attempt to improve living conditions.[183] The rapid growth of population from people arriving for work was accounted for in housing, shops

[182] Hall, 'Being a Man, Being a Member'.
[183] 'Bradford People: John Hodder Moggridge', Bradford on Avon Museum, accessed 31 May 2023, https://www.bradfordonavonmuseum.co.uk/archives/5258.

and workshops, and the growing village became a key part of the Chartism movement.[184] Between 1908-1912 the High Street was remade to accommodate the growth of new businesses.[185] Through the 20th century, it expanded to incorporate other nearby villages and towns including Cefn Fforest, Oakdale and Twynyffald, and settlements around the nearby Pengam and Coed Cae collieries.

As with most other mining towns in the South Wales valleys, the closure of mines in the latter half of the 20th century was followed by a period without significant investment in replacement work, creating a lack of employment and resultant economic downturn. Also like other valleys towns, efforts have been made from the late 1990s to revitalise the area, with limited impact. Actions such as removal of the railroad – which turned the town into a key shopping centre in the valleys but removed connections to Cardiff and other areas with better job prospects – are factors in the limited benefits of regeneration attempts and its disconnection from larger cultural scenes. As a result, there remain problems of unemployment, economic difficulties and migration outwards for better work opportunities.

There are currently nine WMCs in Blackwood, while Newbridge Memo, a cultural centre adapted from a miners' institute, and the now-relocated Oakdale Workmen's Institute are from the nearest smaller towns to the east. As stated earlier, available rehearsal rooms with PA systems and space for bands to rehearse was limited in the mid-1980s as the most famous valleys band The Manic Street Preachers was emerging from Blackwood. Nowadays, many of the WMCs contain quality sound systems, particularly in the revived WMCs of Blackwood Miners' Institute and the Newbridge Memo from the mid-1990s, and Cefn Fforest Miners' Welfare Hall that is undergoing renovation. Information on the status of WMCs in the area

[184] 'Town to Celebrate Its 200th Birthday', South Wales Argus, 19 January 2020, https://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/18171574.blackwood-200-years-old-2020---dip-history/.
[185] 'Town to Celebrate Its 200th Birthday'.

before the 1990s was difficult to find, possibly because of the distractions of strikes and de-industrialisation in the mid-1980s. In personal correspondence, however, the founder of the Manics' most-frequented studio wrote:

> We filled an essential gap in the infrastructure required that was hardly available in Cardiff never mind the valleys. […] They ended up travelling down from Blackwood every day often for weeks on end, I guess because there was nothing suitable in Blackwood. I imagine WMCs could provide rehearsal space and maybe some do or have done.

With music infrastructure in mind, I will consider the role WMCs play or could possibly play in the stimulation of a vibrant cultural life in Blackwood, considering in particular both original and non-original music.

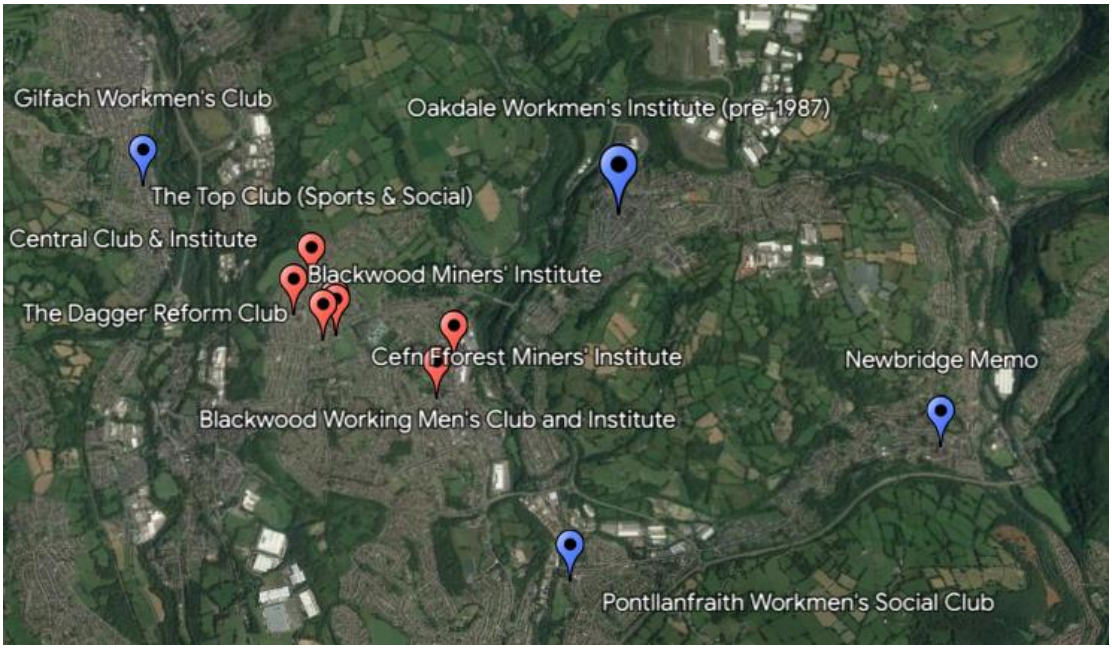

Figure 13: WMCs in Blackwood (red) and surrounding areas (blue).

History of the four clubs chosen

As is common with smaller WMCs, the anonymous club and Blackwood Working Men's Club ("The Woodbine") have little knowledge of their own histories. According to a plaque, the anonymous club joined the CIU in 1936. At a prior unknown date, the club was converted from two shop buildings which had already existed at the site. Since this time, the only known change has been the addition of tiles on the front exterior to prevent vandalism. At Blackwood Working

Men's Club, there are few sources for the origin of the club, but some records of its past expansion, including the addition of a billiards space which displaced the steward's housing into ownership of a nearby residential property.

There are plenty of sources emerging, however, on the history of Cefn Fforest Miners' Welfare Hall because of materials discovered during the renovation of various rooms and the sharing of photographs and news clippings from personal home collections, an activity which is encouraged by the management as a way to build community support. As an example of an inter-war club, it was constructed using grants from the Miners' Welfare Fund and opened in 1930. By this time the local funding committee had given £8,200 towards work on institutes in Cefn Fforest, £6,594 of which had gone to the Welfare Hall, making it "the best he [co-secretary of the MWF local committee] had seen up to the present time".[186]

The club has been referred to under many names, including "The 'Stute", a fairly typical nickname in Wales, and was considered a social club by the early 1960s when plans were developed to expand the building, which was still "the social hub of a thriving pit community".[187] Linked with the recreation ground next door with its tennis courts and cricket ground, the Hall was later used as a club house for the local rugby club and then a boxing gym until its closure and dilapidation over the last decade. It is now managed by a group of local community members, politicians and cultural managers who are overseeing the revival of the building into a "wellbeing centre", building upon its origins as a place with welfare in mind and its history as a space for recreation and social community-building. This renewal of the building has a clear heritage grounding, with materials stating "Our mission: Building the future on the foundation of the past". It also uses the directions laid out by Welsh Government

[186] 'Cefn Fforest Welfare Scheme: Mr. Finlay Gibson Opens New Institute', *Western Mail*, 12 October 1931.
[187] 'Pit Club Plans "bigger, Better" Look', *SW Coal News*, March 1964, 9.

concerning the connections between heritage, wellbeing, culture and community development, formulating this into four aims (see figure 14).

Figure 14: The four aims of Cefn Fforest Miners' Welfare Hall. Source: Newsletter of Cefn Fforest Miners Welfare Hall (July 2021).

Finally, there are conflicting histories on the origins of Blackwood Miners' Institute, opened in 1927. According to the official website, it was first established as a snooker hall, becoming "Blackwood Miners' Welfare Institute and Library" under the ownership of the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation, which was set up to deliver welfare provision following the 1920 *Mining Industry Act*,[188] and maintained by the weekly wages of miners from Oakdale.[189] According to both Cadw and Daryl Leeworthy of RCAHMW, however, it opened with both a hall and a snooker room, funded by a £7,000 grant from the MWF in addition to £850 raised

[188] 'Our History and Structure', Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation, accessed 31 May 2023, http://ciswo.org/histoy.
[189] 'Our History', Blackwood Miners Institute, accessed 31 May 2023, https://blackwoodminersinstitute.com/about-us/our-history.

by the miners.[190] In 1936, two additional floors were built, including, among other features, a stage and auditorium, dance floor and rehearsal rooms.[191] It fell into disrepair in the 1970s and '80s following mine closures, and was sold to the council in 1989 (at that time, Islwyn Borough Council), reopening in 1992 as "a community arts and entertainment venue" with council and national (pre-devolution Welsh Office) funding.[192] In 2002, "Blackwood Miners Welfare Institute" was listed by Cadw as a Grade II* building, "as an especially well-preserved workmen's institute, a building type characteristic of industrial South Wales, specially important for its social-historical interest in addition to retaining strong internal and external architectural character".[193] As demonstrated in Chapter 1, this listing and description was part of a rising interest in the social and leisure elements of industrial heritage in Wales.

Analysis of funding

Most clubs have been owned by the membership, whether from the beginning or as a democratising process from any point between 1870 and the post-war period. Membership secured funds for the club and ensured the continued use of the building, reinforced by the tradition of fathers buying sons their first year of membership as an 18th birthday gift.[194] In the 21st century, however, membership no longer sustains clubs financially in the vast majority of cases. In some places, the system has been abandoned, while, in other places, clubs regularly welcome non-members, especially for live music events.

[190] 'Blackwood Workmen's Hall and Institute, Blackwood Miners Institute', Coflein, accessed 31 May 2023, https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/414818/; Cadw, 'Blackwood Miners Welfare Institute', Full Report for Listed Buildings, 2002, https://cadwpublic-api.azurewebsites.net/reports/listedbuilding/FullReport?lang=en&id=26710.
[191] 'Our History'.
[192] 'Our History'.
[193] Cadw, 'Blackwood Miners Welfare Institute'.
[194] Cherrington, 'The Development of Working Men's Clubs'.

Figure 15: A rare WMC that has remained members only, Blaenavon (2022).

Blackwood Miners' Institute has no membership scheme, moving to other methods of bringing in customers and engaging with the community, while Cefn Fforest Miners' Welfare Hall has a "Friends of Cefn Fforest" scheme which secures some initial income and loyalty over the renovation period but no official ownership. At the anonymous club, membership is charged at £10 per year, so it serves more to reinforce group ownership by giving small benefits such as bar tokens at Christmas than to bring in income. At Blackwood Working Men's Club, the membership fee, also £10 per year, gives members a specific percentage of ownership of the club. Resultantly, if the club is sold, each member will receive a portion of the sale. While the interviewee did not say whether such a possibility was likely in the foreseeable future, it does provide some motivation for club closure, where the building or land is in demand. When asked about the issue, they responded, "I wouldn't say that it's going to happen. But obviously, who knows with the way things are going". Thus, while a membership scheme retains existing WMC attendance, it may contribute in the long-term to the closure of a club when it involves the traditional ownership model, and it provides negligible income in the present.

Funding, instead, comes from a different combination of sources across the different clubs, based on their need to cover overheads, building maintenance and renovation costs, the degree

of reliable club attendance and qualification for external funding. The common theme across all four is the role of music in providing a substantial amount of income, but the form varies.

In the anonymous club, music performances function as a way to bring in members and non-members, in order to increase bar sales, which is the main source of income. The concert hall is mostly unused due to the effect of declining numbers on the atmosphere of the larger room. As a result, performances take place in the smaller lounge/bar area. These events are unticketed because of the limited quality of the acts; the interviewee attributed this to a sudden rise in entertainment prices going into the new millennium, but was unable to identify why this might have happened.

At Blackwood Working Men's Club, the majority of income is, again, from bar sales, which increase dramatically when live music is on. The club dedicates a substantial budget to booking live bands: from a few hundred pounds to, in some cases – such as popular touring tribute bands – more than a thousand. These costs are recuperated as income is generated from the combination of bar sales and ticket sales, which are £15 per person on average. Additional income is generated from rental of commercial and residential property accumulated from past expansion that is no longer used. However, music plays the most important role in sustaining the club, with the interviewee stating, "Honestly, if we didn't have our entertainment on the Saturday, it would be shut, because the rest of it wouldn't bring in enough income".

It is currently unclear to what extent Cefn Fforest Miners' Welfare Hall will rely on music financially in the longer-term, or did so during its history of musical activity. Upon first opening, there was only mention of a "lounge hall", with no clarification of the existence of a concert room and stage.[195] A 1962 newspaper article reports dancing as a popular activity, which it might be assumed implies the existence of live bands in the club; however, at this

[195] 'Cefn Fforest Welfare Scheme: Mr. Finlay Gibson Opens New Institute'.

time, bingo was the "main money-spinner", and was planned as the main source of money for the expansion. It is not clear what proportion of income the new reopening will make from entertainment, but music will play an important role in the identity of the venue and some of its early income upon opening.

Since it is intended that the building will become a wellbeing-focused cultural/community centre, it is not envisaged that bar sales will be pushed, and there is a possibility that alcohol will not be served depending on the requirements of external supporters (although a café has been talked about as a potential option), limiting the secondary income that comes from live events. Therefore, funding must be generated in another form. While the venue is applying for the National Lottery People and Places Fund (significantly, not the Heritage Fund) for building work that cannot be carried out by its currently active nonprofessional volunteers, renovation efforts are focusing on the function room so that the possibility of performances to provide a source of income while work on the rest of the building continues can be explored.

Use of the function room and a possible fundraising album drawing on popular musicians connected with the area – alongside other activities such as crowdfunding challenges and bucket collections at the local supermarket – are intended less for the money they will bring in, and more to prove to the larger potential funders both the ability to raise some self-generated income and the existence of community support. Although the future proportion of direct and indirect income from live music is unknown, the presence on the committee of a music promoter and music journalist with decades of experience in the valleys would indicate some dedication to the importance of live music to the Welfare Hall, although his strong preference for original music – which the interviewee hints may require cheap or free rehearsal and performance spaces – over covers and tribute shows may limit the amount that could be generated by live music events.

Finally, Blackwood Miners' Institute has the largest finances of all, as "a 1.2-million-pound operation". Approximately, bar income is 10% of total, with 20% from room and hall hires, 5% private donations, funding from Caerphilly County Borough Council (staff salaries), temporary support from Arts Council Wales (15%), and the rest of income generated through ticket sales. Any remaining funding needed that is not covered by ticket sales is provided by the council. The Caerphilly Council Theatre and Arts Service manager who also manages the institute makes a comparison between this model and the historical funding methods, where council tax paid by residents is in some ways equivalent to the institute's history of collecting miners' wages. Unlike the anonymous venue and Blackwood Working Men's Hall, live music is not the only form of programming, but exists alongside theatre, dance, stand-up comedy and celebrity talks, as well as classes and rehearsals. Therefore, cultural activities in general are not only intrinsic to the identity of the institute, but are a substantial source of income, with music making up a significant (30-35%) portion.

Analysis of programming

In terms of programming of live music performances, Blackwood Working Men's Club and the anonymous club work very much in the same way clubs operated for the second half of the 20th century when "Clubland" took hold. They each have an events/entertainment secretary who is in contact with an agent, and book acts around a month in advance. The agent is trusted to choose the appropriate acts for the club audience, and sends promotional posters that the club shares on the door and on social media. In both clubs, the main regular slot is on a Saturday evening; at the anonymous club, however, it takes place very early, from 5pm to 7pm, to coincide with the habitual arrival and leaving times of regulars. Such events, taking place in the bar/lounge area since around 2011, are therefore fairly casual and perhaps suited to a particularly aged sit-down audience. At Blackwood WMC, on the other hand, the 20th century

concert room tradition of hosting music for dancing to into the later evening continues, but with an aging audience of 60+, on average.

Unlike the historical associations between the clubs and institutes in Wales and music ensembles, particularly male voice choirs and brass bands, neither the anonymous club nor Blackwood WMC hosts classes or rehearsals. Neither do they host open mics or jam nights, which might be considered the modern versions of Free and Easies and variety shows. The only participatory music elements from earlier club traditions are the act of dancing or singing along,[196] the ability to choose songs on a jukebox, and karaoke. At the anonymous club, karaoke was popular on a Thursday until "everybody started doing the same thing", while at Blackwood WMC it started on Christmas Eve 2022 and was repeated at charity functions, with more karaoke planned for the future because of its popularity. While it may be a novelty, and it could also suggest that there is a demand for inclusive and participatory music activities and a revival of self-provided entertainment.

At Blackwood Miners' Institute and Cefn Fforest Miners' Welfare Hall, on the other hand, both performances and the use of the space for classes and rehearsals are important. This might be attributed to their historical "institute" direction, including an internalisation of the mid-Victorian push towards education in arts and culture. On the other hand, with their connections to council policy, they emerge from a community music-making tradition in Britain that is oppositional to mainstream politics in terms of intervening in a community,[197] in order to contribute to creativity, skills and a sense of place,[198] as well as other wellbeing purposes.

[196] At the anonymous club, the light-hearted 'Penny Arcade' is guaranteed to induce singalongs from the audience.
[197] Kathryn Deane, 'Community Music in the United Kingdom: Politics or Policies?', in *The Oxford Handbook of Community Music*, ed. Brydie-Leigh Bartleet and Lee Higgins (Oxford: Oxford Academic, 2018).
[198] Peter Moser, 'Growing Community Music Through a Sense of Place', in *The Oxford Handbook of Community Music*, ed. Brydie-Leigh Bartleet and Lee Higgins (Oxford: Oxford Academic, 2018).

At Cefn Fforest, this has so far taken a hands-off approach: although it has not opened yet, youth from the community who were worried to be causing trouble were invited in to use the space to practise their DJing skills. The committee member with expertise in music promotion has stressed the importance of providing space for new musicians to practise and play in public, emphasising that "most of the big bands were small at some point". This echoes the statements of live music researchers: small venues with room for not-for-profit programming and cheap rehearsal spaces are a vital part of ensuring the future quality of the music industries in the British Isles.[199]

At Blackwood Miners' Institute, the approach is more hands-on, supporting local artists and new creative ideas alongside community programming that goes beyond the concert hall performances. The manager told me: "We are not just the presenting house; we also create work here". Although it once had a reputation for supporting local original popular music, a period in which a knowledgeable promoter left and was succeeded by new council workers with no experience of the music scene destroyed its reputation for consistency. In the last few years, the venue has been rebuilding its provision of opportunities for local new artists, including using the smaller downstairs bar/lounge room for taking a risk on new artists in contemporary styles, and providing music classes led by a rock musician.

Despite the efforts of such promoters and cultural managers in the local area, cover acts and tributes dominate the clubs in and around Blackwood that are currently open. At Blackwood WMC, soloists, duos and bands playing covers are booked for the Saturdays, while tribute bands with a higher fee play every three or four months. At the anonymous club, in the time since the concert hall became impossible to fill, performances have almost always been by solo singers. At the other clubs, cover artists also dominate, while the right tributes are a guaranteed

[199] John O'Flynn and Áine Mangaoang, 'Mapping Popular Music in Dublin: Executive Report' (Dublin: Dublin City University, May 2016).

way to bring in audiences; the relaunch night of one Blackwood WMC that has been renovating for three years is depending on a Meatloaf tribute band to bring in old and new customers.

The music promoter/committee member of Cefn Fforest Miners' Welfare Hall complained that cover and tribute acts "squeeze new talent", while he described "vocalists", i.e. soloists singing covers to backing tracks, as "basically karaoke". He did, however, appreciate the value of tributes for those who "didn't get to see the real thing". His view is not uncommon; interviewee 9 responded to it with the seemingly rehearsed counterargument,

> Cover bands open the door for original bands really, 'cos they keep the music scene going. […] I always say the covers sort of help the originals and vice versa I think on the music scene around South Wales.

However, low risk programming due to economic concerns and audiences accustomed to non-original music may well have contributed to the paucity of "real thing" buzz around new artists compared to the vibrant valleys scenes 20-30 years ago. The promoter admitted that he would turn up to cover and tribute events if they were requested by the community, but struggled to understand the role that WMC music has often played of providing a stimulus for, and background to, socialising, rather than for the quality of the music itself. This is not new: throughout much of the 20th century, audiences would be subject to demands for "best of order" from the club chairman in tensions between the desire to listen attentively to the performer and an enjoyment of music as a background to socialising.[200]

At Blackwood Miners' Institute, music programming is split across two categories: original music, which has a limited audience, and entertainment, which comprises tribute shows and frequently sells out. Balancing non-original with original music is a challenge involving conflicting pressures from Arts Council Wales and Caerphilly County Borough Council. While the former is currently pushing "creativity", a range of art forms and artists, support for local

[200] Taylor, *From Self-Help to Glamour*.

artists, and diversity in operations and programming – alongside some pressure to become independent of ACW funding – CCBC is increasingly pushing commercialisation in response to regional and national budget cuts. The effect of this "business approach", as the interviewee called it, is that profitable programming that fills audience capacities would be prioritised over taking risks with new ideas, scheduling inclusive shows that require a small audience such as sensory theatre, and funding community engagement and outreach programmes. In Blackwood, as many other areas where the DIY scene has been diminishing over the last few decades, this profitable programming entails a dominance of tribute shows, while at the institute, one of the most popular returning events is a "jukebox" show – in other words, a choreographed and fully professional cover band.

The programme choices at Blackwood Miners' Institute are also heavily influenced by community consultation. This takes the form of ongoing surveys (post-show, general, or feedback on new works) and focus groups on particular areas such as family programming. This allows the venue to ensure they are appealing to a range of audience demographics, including the older mining generation who are more likely to see the place as heritage and younger generations who may feel distanced from the history and must be brought into connection with the building as a living space. Like with the tax-based funding structure, the manager makes a historical comparison, connecting this ongoing in-depth method of community consultation to the self-governed entertainment of the past and the sense of ownership that this creates in the community:

> What is really important for me and for the council is to make sure that this remains a community space, because obviously miners' institutes were owned by the community, and, you know, they decided what events go on there. They paid their money to make sure that the building was maintained and looked after. And obviously, it's working in the same way now because they pay their council tax, the council tax goes towards the operations of the building and all salaries, and then we're putting on events in consultation with the community.

New opportunities

Wellbeing policy in Wales

In Wales, heritage is recognized as "at the very centre of our cultural identity as a nation",[201] a statement which must be considered in the context of the contribution heritage has made to the creation of a Welsh identity, for building up support for devolution and, increasingly, independence from the UK. Heritage in Wales is used variously as an economic, political and nation-building tool. [202] On the other hand, it is also used as a source of local identity, community regeneration and citizen wellbeing, with a new policy landscape that may benefit WMCs, as I will now demonstrate.

In the last decade, heritage and culture policy has been heavily influenced by the concepts of sustainable development and wellbeing. *The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act* implemented in 2015 and overseen by the Future Generations Commissioner from 2016 enshrined the concept of sustainable development defined in the 1987 Brundtland report[203] and the role of culture as a pillar of sustainable development into Welsh law.[204] The importance of access to a "vibrant" culture was identified.[205] This has been cemented into future policy by

[201] Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, 'Wales and the Sustainable Development Goals: Supplementary Report to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Voluntary National Review of Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals 2030', 2019, 53, https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-07/supplementary-report-to-the-uk-review-of-progress-towards-the-sustainable-development-goals-2030_0.pdf.
[202] I was given insight from an anonymous manager of a heritage institution in South Wales that there may be a deliberate strategy to invest in places connected to memories, and accompanied by campaigns to build awareness of the central origin of the funding, in order to engender a positive attitude towards Conservative leaders and the UK Government. Also see: 'Majority of UK Government's "levelling up" Funds for Wales Going to Conservative Constituencies', Nation.Cymru, 27 October 2021, https://nation.cymru/news/majority-of-uk-governments-levelling-up-funds-for-wales-going-to-conservative-constituencies/.
[203] Brundtland, 'Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future' (Geneva: United Nations, 1987).
[204] Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, 'Wales and the Sustainable Development Goals', 11., 71.
[205] Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, 12.

the *Future Wales* plan, which identifies culture as both a wellbeing goal and a component of sustainable development.[206]

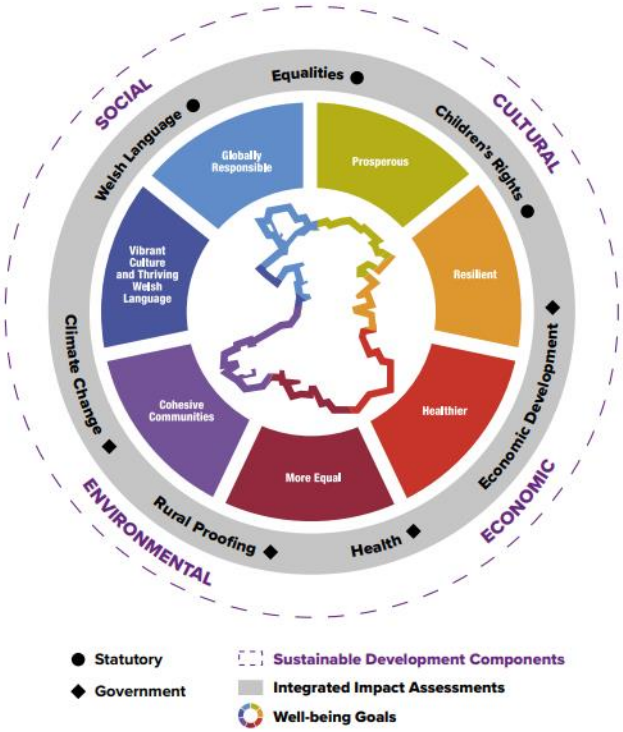

Figure 16: Wales' framework of sustainable development connected to wellbeing. Source: Future Wales Plan.

The Supplementary Report to the first UK Voluntary National Review of progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which connects the SDGs with the FGA, states that "The importance of the arts for the benefit of health and wellbeing is fast becoming widely accepted", describing formal agreements and collaborations between Arts Council Wales and both the National Health Service in Wales and Public Health Wales, and referring to existence of a National Assembly Cross Party Group on Arts and Health.[207] One of the potential results of this partnership that is being explored is "social prescribing", whereby patients are prescribed social and cultural activities for free in order to address the cause of various physical and mental

[206] Welsh Government, 'Future Wales', 2021, https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-02/future-wales-the-national-plan-2040.pdf.
[207] Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, 'Wales and the Sustainable Development Goals', 54.

health symptoms.[208] The role that could be played by WMCs – given that they are sometimes known as "social clubs" – in addressing this may be apparent, but it does not seem to have been explored yet.[209] The prevalence of alcohol at WMCs may be a hindrance, but the scheduling of cultural activities and classes in separate rooms to the bar, as is common at Blackwood Miners' Institute, and the emergence of clubs that are re-orienting themselves as wellbeing centres where alcohol may not even be served, may provide a solution.

The Act contains a framework for measuring the progress towards wellbeing in sustainable development by providing 46 National Wellbeing Indicators.[210] Number 35, "Percentage of people attending or participating in arts, culture or heritage activities at least three times a year", demonstrates that the Welsh Government considers arts, culture and heritage participation as inherently good for wellbeing, regardless of which goals they contribute to. The wellbeing goals and their links with heritage and culture are a foundation of more recent planning policy in Wales, resulting from the 2015 *Planning (Wales) Act*.[211] Characteristics contributing to the "intrinsic value" of a place for "aesthetic, cultural, spiritual or historical reasons" are intended to be identified in local assessments as part of the FGA and Environment Act.[212] Significantly, while the UN SDGs consider wellbeing to be an important part of sustainable development, but do not consider culture or heritage as inherently important, Wales' report and other policy documents make explicit connections between them. Therefore, it is a specific characteristic of Welsh law and policy to deliberately acknowledge the importance of culture and heritage both

[208] Public Health Wales, 'Understanding Social Prescribing in Wales: A Mixed Methods Study' (Wales School for Social Prescribing Research, September 2021).
[209] One might even argue that the disappearance of community social structures that were provided by WMCs may be a factor in the poor mental health of the communities that used to rely on them.
[210] In the Wales SDG Supplementary Report, these 46 indicators are mapped out onto the 7 wellbeing goals and the 17 SDGs for the purpose of stimulating discussion. See Appendix 4 for policy connections between wellbeing, culture and heritage.
[211] Welsh Government, 'Planning Policy Wales - Edition 11', 24 February 2021, 170.
[212] Welsh Government, 12.

as instruments to achieve other goals such as education and health and as intrinsically valuable for wellbeing.

With this in mind, the Welsh Government would benefit from taking an initiative on identifying and supporting buildings with important meanings and memories for the community and with a history of providing welfare, community support, and a healthy social and cultural life, having an open mind as to the importance of working-class leisure spaces.[213] The connections between culture, heritage, wellbeing and regeneration of post-industrial communities will therefore be considered for policy recommendations at the end of this thesis.

Working men's clubs as music venues

Of those WMCs in the UK which have not been impacted by spiralling closures, it is difficult to find one in which live music does not take place, and frequently at least once or twice a week.[214] However, working men's clubs, miners' institutes and their descendants miss out on much of the advocacy to create schemes and policies protecting music venues from closure.

The most significant of these measures has been the foundation of Music Venue Trust in 2016. This enabled collective advocacy for grassroots venues, which led to ringfenced funding for grassroots music venues from Arts Council England, which the organisation has compared with a lack of similar programmes in Wales.[215] It also created "Grassroots Investor", a structure by which the buildings can be owned by a music-oriented organisation rather than external property investors, creating a sort of "National Trust for Venues" in defence against short-term

[213] It might also join new horizons of research into not only social, but specifically "cultural prescribing". 'Handle with Care | Beyond the Obvious 2023', Culture Action Europe, n.d., https://cultureactioneurope.org/events/save-the-date-beyond-the-obvious-2023/#!event-register/2023/6/6/beyond-the-obvious-2023.
[214] Oakdale Workmen's Institute, as a museumified building were music only takes place occasionally as part of wedding parties and other functions, and, rarely, museum heritage public engagement activities, is in this way an anomaly in the UK.
[215] Music Venues Trust, 'Response to Music Industry in Wales Inquiry', 2019.

risks to their sustainability.[216] The activities of Music Venue Trust have been characterised by a prioritising of "Grassroots Music Venues", the organisation's definition of which is now used by the UK, Scottish and Welsh governments, but which seems to exclude WMCs.

The three factors for defining GMVs are "cultural and social role", "amenities & infrastructure" and "economic activity", the criteria in which contain descriptions such "The venue's raison d'être is the music it programmes", "It takes risk with its cultural programme, and that risk taking is the ignition system of the engine that is the UK music industry", and employs at least two out of "sound engineer, booker, promoter, cashier, stage manager, security personnel".[217] After exploring the participatory and self-governing histories of WMCs and the case studies of Blackwood, it is easy to see how all but those few that have intentionally converted into GMVs (and even The District Club rock music venue in Pontypridd is absent from the list of Music Venues Alliance Wales members) would struggle to fit this criteria, despite playing a large role in the live music experiences of their local communities. Since Music Venue Trust is pushing for adoption of the GMV term within Welsh cultural policy,[218] it is worth considering whether particular geographical areas, especially those outside of cities and/or within economically deprived or historically working-class regions, are being left out of support.

Research into the non-economic value of live music led to the creation of a 2017 UK Live Music Census, intended to advocate for increased support of live music among national and local policymakers.[219] Here too, though, WMCs are conspicuously absent.[220] The absence of

[216] Music Venues Trust.
[217] Music Venues Trust.
[218] Music Venues Trust.
[219] Adam Behr, Matt Brennan, and Martin Cloonan, 'The UK Live Music Census: The Value of Researching Live Music in Glasgow, Newcastle, Oxford, and Beyond', in *Music Cities: Evaluating a Global Cultural Policy Concept*, ed. Christina Ballico and Allan Watson, New Directions in Cultural Policy Research (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020), 167–88.
[220] WMCs are hidden within the results of the census: as well as not being targeted for surveys, the answers to audience and musician surveys asking about their live music activity in the last 12 months spreads possible WMC results across many of the twelve categories, making them indivisible from categories such as "small music

towns and villages – in which live entertainment often depends strongly upon WMCs – from the UK Live Music Census effectively erased the presence of the vast majority of clubs from the UK live music scene.[221] Many WMCs in these areas, despite a lack of support, have avoided closure; however, only one appears: Brudenell Social Club in Leeds which was converted into a commercial purpose-built music venue, retaining its name and some of its post-war club architectural characteristics. Apart from Brudenell, neither regenerated WMCs nor those existing in similar operation to their heydays were sufficiently represented in the census, considering that they were the largest provider of UK live entertainment for much of the 20th century and continue to host live music.[222]

Out of the seven locations in the UK chosen by the Live Music Census team for primary and affiliate censuses, none were in Wales. Policy research in Wales has been more limited than in England, Scotland and Ireland, with substantial efforts beginning in 2020 by Paul Carr in a collaboration between the Welsh Government and Cardiff Metropolitan University. As Carr points out, the knowledge of venue types in Wales in particular is extremely limited and in need of research so that policymaking can be informed.[223]

venue", "concert hall/auditorium", "hotel or other function room" or "other", for example. Emma Webster et al., 'Valuing Live Music: The UK Live Music Census 2017 Report', 1 March 2018, 10.

[221] Out of the census cities, the three with strong industrial histories are notable examples of intentional erasure of working-class history and the social and cultural elements of industrial heritage for the purpose of neoliberal regeneration methods. See: McIvor, 'Where Is "Red Clydeside"?'

[222] These results may be explained by a skewed research design: volunteer census collectors were motivated to take part with free tickets, which created three problems. Firstly, WMCs are less likely to have ticketed events since their income comes primarily from membership fees and bar spending. Secondly, participants may have been more likely to choose fashionable or prestigious venues. Finally, the predominance of students, who from 2012 in the UK were increasingly from comfortable financial backgrounds, means that census takers would have been less likely to be aware of the existence of WMCs.

[223] 'The Welsh Music Industries in a Post-Covid World', *University of South Wales* (blog) (University of South Wales, 30 November 2020), https://www.southwales.ac.uk/news/news-2020/welsh-music-industries-post-covid-world/.

Significantly, Carr's 2022 report *Mapping the Music Industries in Wales* created a specific category for "social clubs", another common term for WMCs.[224] This allows for the observation of patterns: for example, social clubs are almost entirely absent in the regions outside of South Wales, with a particularly high proportion of social clubs per population or per total music venues in the local authorities of the South Wales valleys.[225] Most notably, Rhondda Cynon Taf, an area known for its industrial history and the location of industrial heritage sites including the Rhondda Heritage Park, has 13 social clubs, compared to 4 pubs, 3 GMVs, 3 "Other", 2 restaurants and 2 theatres.[226] It is therefore surprising that Caerphilly borough is listed as having only 2 social clubs, especially given my identification of multiple WMCs in Blackwood alone that schedule live music at least once or twice a week. Therefore, it would be worth examining Carr's methodology; perhaps his consultation with music publishers Sentric Music[227] prevented a consideration of many WMCs, which have had a historically difficult relationship with authority and laws, and who therefore may not be paying for music licensing.

For this reason, I have created three categories of WMCs-as-music-venues: music for survival, music in a cultural centre, and grassroots music venue. In this section, I will show demonstrate examples of such clubs, in order to demonstrate how WMCs might be considered as music venues. Consideration of clubs as music venues may open them up to new forms of support and advocacy within UK policy and among campaign groups.

In some clubs, music is essential to financial survival. In these cases, a balancing act must be played between keeping costs low and bringing in entertainers that most people will enjoy or

[224] Paul Carr, 'Mapping the Music Industries in Wales: A Report for Creative Wales' (University of South Wales, June 2022).
[225] Carr.
[226] Carr, 11.
[227] Carr, 13.

even show up specifically to see. As a result, music is mostly non-original, encompassing cover and tribute acts, and karaoke, open mics and jam nights may also play a role, the latter two only being possible if there is already an established critical mass of musicians at different ability levels in the area. This type of WMC-as-music-venue can be seen at the anonymous club and Blackwood Working Men's Club, which, despite not being branded as music venues, rely on music for bringing in income, either via ticket sales or, more often, increased bar sales.

In other clubs, music as a cultural activity alongside theatre, comedy, public talks and/or classes is a more central part of its identity as a cultural centre. Blackwood Miners' Institute fits this description, as do other revitalised institutes under new management such as Newbridge Memo. As a result, the institution as a whole may be considered to be a music venue for those who principally attend for music events, or a part of its space that is most commonly dedicated to live music, such as the downstairs room at Blackwood Miners' Institute, may be considered as a live music venue.

In a few clubs, retention of some elements of the WMC identity has gone hand-in-hand with the transformation of the building into a grassroots music venue. Such examples exist almost solely in England, primarily in urban areas where the historical working-class communities have been supplanted by expanding middle-class housing, student areas or cultural zones. Bethnal Green Working Men's Club and Leeds Brudenell Social Club are great examples of this, although they also involve some degree of experimental arts. Reusing the building as a GMV may include retaining historical building functions such as stage, curtains, lighting, backstage rooms, furniture, ticket booths and sprung dancefloors, as well as aesthetic value which becomes reinterpreted as a fashionable form of branding.[228]

[228] Such aestheticization of working-class cultures can also be seen at clubs where new, younger or more fashionable demographics in the area are joining with a sense of irony. Brown compares the gentrification of

Cefn Fforest Miners' Welfare Hall has the potential to lead in this direction if the music promoter on the committee is given substantial power over programming decisions, but its location in an area with limited external visitors beyond nearby residents, combined with the current emphasis on creating a wellbeing centre, may prevent it from succeeding in this direction. On the other hand, given the difficulties for Blackwood Miners' Institute to rebuild a reputation for original music following their top-down management without use of local music knowledge, the town may benefit from a separate building developing a reputation for new original music as a GMV.

One venue existing in Wales has blended the first and third types with a great deal of success in attendance and reputation. The District Club in Pontypridd, Rhondda Cynon Taf, is a social club from 1896, with potential origins as a district library that, as was established in Chapter 1 as a common trajectory, expanded into a club. In 1973 it relocated to Pontypridd city centre, and "The District" developed a reputation as a venue for rock music from 1996.[229] As well as being known as a music venue, it has retained the billiards room, bar, lounge and ballroom features of WMCs. Furthermore, reviving some of the "sports and social club" type of WMC, since 2018 it is also home to Pontypridd Football Club and Pontypridd Ladies Football Club. Significantly, its programme features a combination of cover bands, tribute bands and original bands, both local and touring. Therefore, it has blended the cool/underground imagery of rock GMVs with the local memory of WMCs and their leisure activities. It might be worth considering whether other WMCs in the valleys, including Blackwood, could have a similar future. A policy framework that recognises the value of some, if not most, WMCs, would assist

Mildmay Club (previously Mildmay Radical Club) in East London with the appropriation of musical heritage by new brass bands such as Hackney Colliery Band. Brown, *Clubland.*

[229] 'About', Pontypridd District, accessed 31 May 2023, https://www.thedistrictclub.co.uk/about.

in the flourishing of such venues and their contribution to both wellbeing and the roots of the music industry.[230]

Conclusion: creative opportunities

The case study of Blackwood, looking into the WMC scene with an in-depth study of four highly varied clubs, has demonstrated that while clubs are at risk of closure, the reasons differ fairly significantly to those experienced by the GMVs represented in live music research in the UK. Rather than noise complaints and development pressures,[231] the main factors are aging membership, financial difficulties in the local area, and government regulation of clubs that reduces their economic competitiveness in relation to pure "drinking establishments" such as the music- and events-free Wetherspoons chain.

It has also demonstrated that there are creative options for ensuring the continued use of WMCs not only as historical buildings, but making use of the history of welfare, community support, entertainment, socialising and grassroots cultural activities. These uses of the clubs contribute to wellbeing,[232] and as such, by combining wellbeing with community development, heritage and culture, they should fit fairly well into current Welsh Government policies. The danger is in making sure that council or government support does not alienate a community that is so accustomed to being suspicious of top-down politics.[233] The attitude, even including scepticism around community consultation, is nicely summarised in the words of interviewee 2:

> Initially it was a great idea for local councils to manage local communities, but the thing is now […] it's turned into a monster […] They're a business enterprise […] They will listen, but then they'll disregard what the people want.

[230] See Titon's "nourishing the roots" approach: Titon, 'Sustainable Music', 29 October 2009.
[231] Only one club reported one brief complaint in recent memory.
[232] The pure fun that can be achieved through entertainment should not be ignored as an important factor in wellbeing.
[233] Bella Dicks, 'Participatory Community Regeneration: A Discussion of Risks, Accountability and Crisis in Devolved Wales', *Urban Studies* n/a (10 July 2013).

Furthermore, it is common for residents near old industrial sites to be sceptical about regeneration projects in general, questioning whether new activities will benefit them or their community, based on a distrust after previous projects.[234]

As the engagement levels at Cefn Fforest demonstrate, however: with WMCs in particular, compared with other council development projects, there can be genuine interest from the community when engagement is bottom-up and ongoing. In many cases, there may be a substantial fountain of memories in the community of the various activities in the lively eras of the clubs and their importance for the wellbeing and community cohesion of the area. Both collective and individual memories might be best drawn upon now as a resource for community regeneration and the successful implementation of the government future-making plans before they are lost over time.

Such an approach may also draw upon music heritage associated with the building and local or regional music scenes: as the Cefn Fforest promoter pointed out, there is huge demand for local bands from the 1960s and '70s who are still alive to return for a gig and engage those who are keen to remember this shared past.[235] In Blackwood Miners' Institute, there is an unexplored opportunity to draw upon the history of the venue as a touring location in the early careers of bands such as Black Sabbath as well as local and national bands. Music heritage in the form of stars might then be combined with the heritage of bottom-up and participatory music-making practices as a way to revive these historical buildings for the benefit of the community and to nourish the roots of the music industries.

[234] Danielle Emma Sinnett and Ana Margarida Sardo, 'Former Metal Mining Landscapes in England and Wales: Five Perspectives from Local Residents', *Landscape and Urban Planning* 193 (January 2020): 103685.
[235] A belief in the demand for local popular music heritage acts was reinforced in a meeting I had with the CEO behind the revival of the Muni Arts Centre in Pontypridd and Maesteg Town Hall when discussing ways to engage local and regional residents with the reopened venues.

I will summarise these and other possibilities within the conclusion of this thesis, giving recommendations for club management and for policymaking.

Conclusion

Summary

This thesis has shown the connections between working men's clubs in the South Wales valleys as industrial heritage and their music histories. It has opened up the question of whether particular music practices within the clubs could be considered as heritage. Finally, it has showed the various ways in which music is used to keep WMCs going in the 21st century, continuing some of the musical cultures of the different eras and different types of WMCs and reinterpreting them for modern needs. The connection between clubs, industrial heritage and popular music heritage in the South Wales valleys is present at the local level but underrepresented in histories; this thesis has gone some way to levelling the balance.

Intangible heritage, in my view, is essential to an understanding of WMCs as heritage. Without the inherited traditions of mutual wellbeing support, community influences on cultural programming and participatory culture, they are merely buildings.[236] However, the built heritage is the backbone of this activity, and many clubs were designed over decades of building use, additions and modifications into becoming excellent buildings for supporting a range of uses by different ages, interests and social groups in the community. Over time, music has emerged as perhaps the most successful activity for keeping clubs open, so there now can be identified different forms of music heritage connected with national discourses, mainstream ideas of music "stars", and the less easily identified – but, I would argue, the most important, valuable and distinctive – traditions of participatory and bottom-up performance practices, audience practices and programming practices. In order to sustain the valuable heritage of

[236] For an understanding of all heritage as intangible heritage, see: Smith, *Uses of Heritage*.

WMCs for the benefit of new generations, I believe that managers, committees and club members themselves should be open to new ideas that draw upon this rich intangible heritage.

As living costs increase and communities face ongoing funding cuts, WMCs in some form could be in a position to respond. While the vast majority of interviewees acknowledged the cost-of-living crisis and its potential effect on music-making, there was some optimism for the value of local music, participatory scenes and WMCs. A band member in interview 8 noted,

> Flipside of that is because the living situation is so dire at the moment, people are going to be that much more inclined to go out just to get away from it all. […] We'll sort of see the rise of the social club again.

Therefore, now may be the perfect time for WMCs to build on their heritage as affordable spaces for socialising, culture, entertainment, escapism and community support. In this conclusion, I will give recommendations for the facilitation of this: management recommendations for clubs, and policy recommendations specified for specific departments of government. Finally, I will give stimuli for future research on the subject.

Recommendations

Management recommendations

- Consider introducing jam nights and open mics (suggestion of interviewee 7) to provide an affordable night out and informal learning and networking place for musicians. Even consider a **modern return to the Free and Easy format**, e.g. the fashionable Bandaoke format.
- Open up rooms with PA systems and/or stages unused in the week and daytimes into **cheap rehearsal spaces** to bring in younger people, stimulate live music in the venue and fill the lack of dedicated rehearsal spaces in Wales.[237]

[237] Carr, 'Mapping the Music Industries in Wales: A Report for Creative Wales'.

- Find any **"star" music heritage** associated with the club and utilise it for advertising, community-building, and increasing the heritage values of the venue. Connect to tourism industry if relevant.

Policy recommendations

- Creative Wales: Support WMCs as a place where **encounters between musicians at different levels** of professionalisation, including learners, is possible, creating a healthier scene for long-term benefits for the Welsh economy from cultural exports and cultural tourism.
- Public Health Wales: Support clubs that have a focus on cultural activities and not on alcohol consumption under the **social prescribing** framework that is in development.
    - Consider the benefits that aesthetic value, age value and places of memory[238] add to social prescribing activities.
- Welsh Government: Before accepting (or even funding) reuse of community spaces into residential spaces, evaluate whether there will be **enough "recreational spaces"**[239] in the community if the development goes ahead. Considering the *Socio-economic Duty* of public bodies in Wales, are the only spaces left commercially-focused?
    - Develop a way to evaluate affordable leisure or social spaces out of the residential population and their spatial distribution.
    - Consider not only the current state of spaces, but their potential compared with best practices of similar venues elsewhere.

[238] For the values found in live music and live music venues, see: Emma Webster, Matt Brennan, and Adam Behr, 'Valuing Live Music: The UK Live Music Census 2017 Report: Executive Summary', 2017, 4., 7.
[239] Welsh Government, 'Planning Policy Wales - Edition 11', 20–22.

- Develop some financial incentive for shareholders/chairpersons/members to retain the building as a community space rather than sell to development[240]

- Croeso Cymru: Create a **popular music heritage tourism network/path** through the region, connecting Cardiff to Newport, Barry and the valleys under the remit of the *Future Wales* regional plan.
    - Commission research into potential audience numbers for tourism around particular music stars and scenes.
    - Stimulate local venues to create something that marks it as a destination in the network (statue, mural, display case).

Future of the research

Similar to how memory breaks down at the moment of archiving,[241] sustaining, rescuing or reusing working men's clubs at a time of rapidly accelerating closure or demolition involves confronting this heritage at the moment at which it is breaking down. While the Club Historians website may be correct in believing that "[c]lubs must adapt or die, to become more modern and accept that crowds don't beat a path to their doors anymore",[242] it is difficult to instigate changes when a loyal group of members remains in the building. Even in the changes of the 1950s, older members were reportedly overwhelmed as they sat in the lounge surrounded by expanding rooms and a glamorous new concert hall.[243] Therefore, those seeing a community-serving, wellbeing and/or GMV potential in WMCs must either wait until the club management and membership collapses with age, time or financial problems, which risks the building being

[240] Best practices can be found within the context of adaptive heritage reuse: 'Collecting Good Practices', OpenHeritage, accessed 31 May 2023, https://openheritage.eu/collecting-good-practices/.
[241] Tracy Ireland and John Schofield, 'The Ethics of Cultural Heritage', in *The Ethics of Cultural Heritage*, ed. Tracy Ireland and John Schofield, Ethical Archaeologies: The Politics of Social Justice (New York, NY: Springer, 2015), 3.
[242] 'Club Historians Write Up on BBC Local Radio Interview (Coventry and Warwickshire) about Her Book - Not Just Beer and Bingo! A Social History of Working Men's Clubs September 12th 2012', ClubHistorians, accessed 5 November 2022, http://www.clubhistorians.co.uk/html/bob_brolly.html.
[243] Hall, 'Being a Man, Being a Member'.

sold to developers, or find a way to proactively work with the existing members. Best practice for these strategies is an area for future research.

Another issue requiring future research is the presence of human rights ideas in the debate around early WMCs over cultural enrichment. Was the inclusion of cultural activities in the WMCs that opened in the second half of the 19th century connected to a sense of rights to art and culture,[244] or was it merely a way to bring people into the building? The issue of access is particularly pertinent currently, as cultural centres and venues struggle to survive the cost of living crisis affecting income and operating costs. In the South Wales valleys currently, where cultural opportunities are low and the withdrawal of EU funding has significantly worsened the situation, it is particularly important to preserve spaces where people have access to cultural activities – but is it a right?

Many questions therefore arise concerning the most ethical way forward in managing these spaces and the cultural life within for the benefit of the local community. In recent years, some WMCs facing closure have been taken over by local councils, charities and cultural trusts. They operate not-for-profit, yet, for the first time since the late 19th century, they are largely managed from above rather than from club members becoming committee members, and frequently by community outsiders who have experience managing other cultural institutions or council buildings elsewhere. This could be seen, then, as a return to the outside- and above-imposed Victorian cultural paternalism, and therefore brings the ethics of the club and institute founders into a 21st century context where they must surely be critically recontextualised. Further research may analyse what did and does (not) work, and how the ethics of certain approaches may be guided by unacknowledged biases on working-class heritage and high versus low

[244] Brown frequently refers to the right of the working-class to even be entertained after a hard day's work.

culture that may even be inherited from previous historical contexts and moral frameworks of older religious and cultural movements.

In my personal belief, venues should stimulate a mixture of original music among the non-original, professionals among the non-professionals, music fans among those looking for a good evening of sociability, and everything in between. Non-original music should also involve some opportunity for critique, parody, adapting lyrics to suit the local context, within participatory formats continued from the past. In other words, low and high music alike should have space to be re-territorialised into local contexts, using the heritage of music practices from the WMCs of the past and their residues in the present, before the memories of them disappear.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Ethnographic Interview Questions

Semi-structured, questions altered depending on interviewee and time available:

- Which of these (or any alternative terms) would you describe yourself as, and why? Professional, semi-professional, hobbyist, amateur.
- Do you ever play in any working men's clubs or social clubs?
- Are there any covers that you play differently to the original?
- Which songs, what do you change, and why?
- How much does your setlist stay the same or change at different gigs?
- What are the factors affecting this?
- Do you play any songs by artists from your local town or region? Why/why not?
- When you hear the term “Welsh music”, what comes to mind?
- Do you feel particularly Welsh, British, European or none of these? Why?
- Do you play any songs that reflect your political opinions?
- Is the cost-of-living crisis that's currently developing having any impact on you or your music?

Appendix 2: Blackwood Management Interview Questions

Structured, but short interviews took only funding and programming sections, and added questions in italics:

Funding:

- What are your different income streams?
- Does state funding, lottery funding, private donors etc place requirements upon your programming?
- Are you able to determine what percentage of income and expenses are attributed to music, or is it indirect e.g. bar sales, offering space for rehearsal etc?

Programming:

- Who is responsible for music programming?
- How far ahead do you book music performances and workshops/clubs/rehearsals etc?
- Do you have different rooms connected with different programming and different audience types?
- How important is it to book high quality music? How do you define high quality?
- What other things are important to you in music programming (e.g. social engagement, experimentation, fun, community-building, venue tradition etc)?
- Does music function as a way to bring people into other events/classes/bar use?
- Are there any occasions where music functions as background music for socialising?

Operations:

- *Do you have a committee? What is their role? How did people become committee members?*
- Do you use volunteers? What are their roles? How do you keep them engaged?
- How much position does the chairperson have compared with other board members or employees?

External comms

- How do audiences/members find out about events (and classes)?
- What is the role of internal and external promoters?
- Do you have any specific approach to visual branding?

Use of the historic building

- Is there somebody in charge of preservation? What are their views on the effect of use of the space for certain events or exhibitions on the integrity of the site and materials?

- Have you or do you intend to install any updated music technology e.g. PA system, lighting, recording facility? How does this affect the historical building (appearance or physical modification)?

Change management:

- Are there any future changes planned for the venue?
- If so, what are the stages of public consultation regarding the venue's changes and future planning?
- How do you keep past members on board while attracting new ones?
- Do you have plans to reach minority groups or those who may have previously felt unwelcome at the institution – e.g. women and children, disabilities, but also other minorities and migrant groups?

Further questions:

- Do you see any potential difficulties in the future of the institution/club?
- *Any trouble with licensing rules, noise complaints, artists struggling with parking or access etc?*
- *Do you have trouble bringing in a new generation, and if so, how do you deal with this?*
- *Is there one song that gets requested the most or gets the best response?*

Appendix 3: A Typology of Working Men's Clubs

Working men's clubs and institutes	• Main aim of CIU • Origins with Solly • Owned by members from late 19thc • Sometimes named after specific industries
Miners' Welfare Halls	• Part of movements for better mining work conditions and mutual support for hardship
Sports and social clubs	• Established and owned by industrialists for workers' leisure
Political, reform and radical clubs	• Often political from the beginning, compared to intended neutrality of CIU clubs • In Wales, Cons Clubs often catered to non-Welsh speakers • Reform Clubs were centres for political activity, then became social clubs • Also: Labour clubs, Liberal clubs, Conservative clubs
"Sham" clubs	• Established bottom-up for cheap drinking • No recreational activities • Condemned by CIU as a risk to the movement
Ex-servicemen's clubs	• Formed after the First World War by ex-soldiers, a place for camaraderie to process what they had been through • Some affiliated to CIU, some Royal British Legion, some both • Also: comrades' clubs, British Legion clubs

Appendix 4: Connections between wellbeing indicators, FGA goals and UN SDGs

Wellbeing indicator	Relevant goals indicated	Comment
Percentage of adults who have fewer than two healthy lifestyle behaviours	FGA Goal 6 (A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language)	Cultural (i.e. not only physical) activity is considered as a healthy lifestyle behaviour.
Percentage of children who have fewer than two healthy lifestyle behaviours	FGA Goal 6 absent	Culture is not considered within healthy lifestyle of children – why?
Measurement of development of young children	FGA Goal 6	Culture may be here considered as part of childhood development, but could be focused on Welsh learning
Percentage of people satisfied with local area as a place to live	FGA Goal 6	Culture contributes to satisfaction with local area
Percentage of people agreeing that they belong to the area; that people from different backgrounds get on well together; and that people treat each other with respect	FGA Goal 6	Culture contributes to diverse communities belonging in an area
Percentage of people attending or participating in arts, culture or heritage activities at least three times a year	FGA Goal 6, SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being)	Arts, culture and heritage participation is considered by WAG as inherently good for wellbeing
Percentage of designated historic environment assets that are in stable or improved conditions	SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production)	Heritage buildings contribute to sustainability by reusing existing buildings stock