

Assembling Newtown: *Moving with the Times*

Glanhafren Market Hall
September 19th - 30th 2017

**An Exhibition about
Newtown's global
past
present
future**

What's this all about then?

How does a small town survive or thrive a 'global age'?

What does globalization mean to you?

How do you think globalization has affected Newtown?

These are big questions, ones we hope together to form some answers to.

Purpose of Exhibition

We are trying to put together the pieces of a puzzle. We are trying to assemble a picture of Newtown as it is has been and might be in the future.

We have been visiting Newtown for two years now. We have met and interviewed lots of people, looked at the changes of the town over the past century, worked with schools, talked to community groups, local businesses, undertaken and in-depth survey of residents and produced a report of the findings.

The purpose of this exhibition is to showcase some of that research. To reflect our impressions of the town, our thoughts on how it is being affected by people and places and process from far outside its boundaries, and see what you think of them.

Why Newtown?

Why was Newtown chosen as one of the research sites for the GLOBAL-RURAL project? What makes Newtown special?

Newtown, like most small rural towns has been integrated into global (or at least international) networks of trade and culture for a very long time.

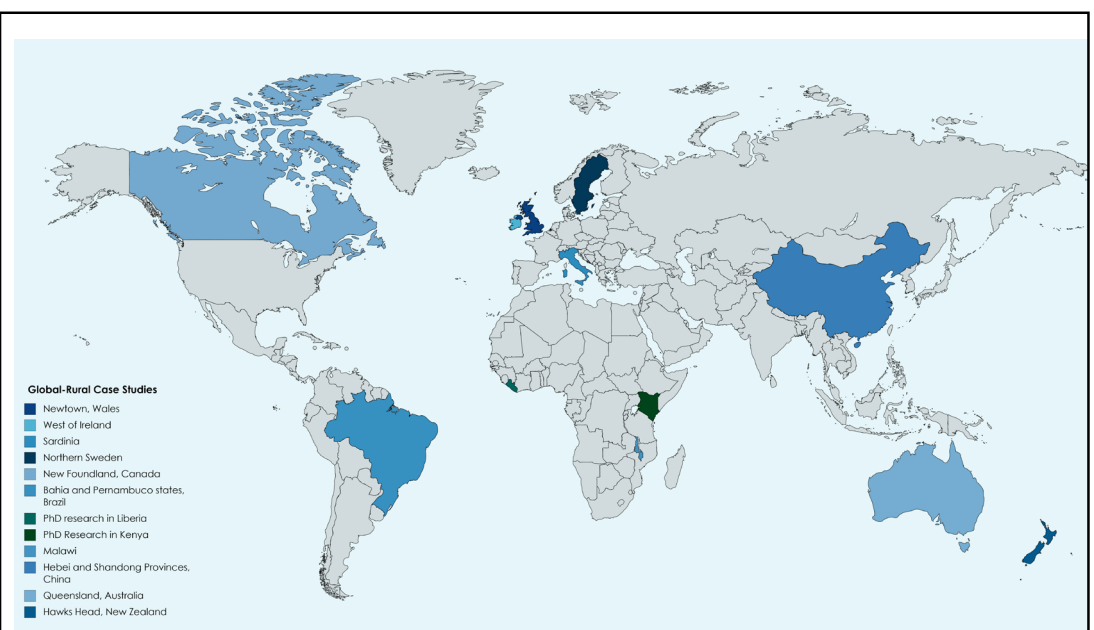
Newtown's fortunes have been influenced by changes in technologies, markets and social attitudes and ideas from many different places. In response, the town has constantly reinvented itself.

In some ways, Newtown is the archetypal 'global village'. It is a typical small market town yet, like every other place, is totally exceptional with its own unique history and combination of people, ideas, resources and institutions.

GLOBAL-RURAL

The Assembling Newtown project is part of a five-year research project (THE GLOBAL-RURAL project), funded by the European Research Council. It aims to help us understand how globalization works and impacts upon rural regions in different parts of the world.

Globalization is a widely researched subject. Such research has tended to focus on urban life, on 'global cities' and big projects that transform the landscape, but relatively little research has focused on the 'global countryside'.



Globalization

Globalization describes different processes and changes in how the world works.

It is often seen as the integration of businesses, markets, economies, culture, people and politics across the world. It is driven by international trade and investment, with ever more complex production networks ensuring we can have the latest phone or our favourite type of coffee when we want them. It is aided by technology, particularly information technology.

And it has consequences: we need more natural resources to make or grow more things, we make more waste, strip more land, pollute more, we make many people wealthier and many people worse off, we share ideas, values and beliefs with more people, we raise living standards, improve health.

Geographers would say that the relative distance between places has contracted. Effectively places are 'closer' because of advances in travel, telecommunications, integration of production networks, and so on.

While sometimes described as a 'borderless world' in which all places are equally connected and interdependent, the reality is rather different and uneven. Someone in a remote desert does not have the same ability to interact with others as a consumer, or a friend, or trader, or a musician, as someone living in a world city like London. Equally just because you live in London does not mean you have either the means (wealth) or skills (language) to interact with a potential business partner in Hong Kong.

So this idea of globalization is more about HOW FULLY our lives are integrated into networks that extend way beyond our immediate living space, and to WHAT EXTENT our lives are dependent on other people and places.

Key to understanding globalization is recognising that it is not new. For thousands of years (long before Marco Polo!) people have travelled and traded across vast distances, have invested in businesses that made money in other countries, and have exchanged ideas and technology across cultures.



Current globalization

In recent decades the speed and intensity of these exchanges have changed so rapidly that many people talk about a new era of globalization.

In this era business decisions made in Missouri or Tokyo today can affect lives in mid Wales tomorrow - perhaps bringing new jobs or job losses.

Our decisions (to upgrade your phone?) might affect lives in the Congo (a source of rare earth metals such as coltan for your phone) or China (where the phone might be assembled) or Hull (where the phone is transferred from ship to truck).

These types of decision seem quite different. One made by a few people in an office can affect the lives of thousands; another made by one person (the consumer) appears to have no impact yet in a tiny way also impacts thousands.

So globalization is not just something that happens to us but is something we play an active role in making happen.

This is what our project is looking at: how rural communities are affected by processes of globalization AND also play an active part in them.

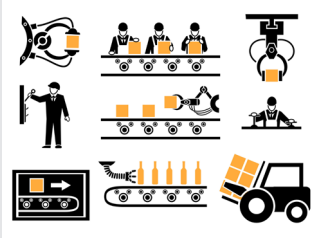


Newtown and Globalization

Newtown has gained from and been undermined by globalization. It has seen its population swell and decline, buildings constructed, occupied, emptied and reoccupied, and its position as a political and economic centre shift regionally and nationally as changes in technology, transport, financial markets, innovation, industry, and mobility have helped shape the town.

This interaction has not been one way. Newtown has also helped shape the world in direct and indirect ways. Robert Owen provides a prime example of how ideas and beliefs can travel the world and change it. The Royal Welsh Warehouse is almost the poster child for modern global trade. One hundred years later Laura Ashley came to symbolise the ups and downs of modern globalization.

Automation - since the era of Henry Ford and the Model T Ford motor car, mass production has been accompanied by the automation of production. Robots have been changing the world of work and the types and number of jobs for people to do since the 1960s. The result is a paradox. While output continues to rise in some sectors of the economy (like manufacturing) the number of jobs has and will continue to fall. **What will the world of work look like in 2035?**



Global production networks / supply chains - the centres of economic production have not only shifted but also become increasingly complex and highly integrated.



Migration - "The Human Face of Globalization" - The OECD estimated in 2010 that 3% of the world's population (190 million people) live outside the land of their birth. Yet mass migration is not new.

The great human migration began around 60,000 years ago, from Africa into the Middle East. The Roman Empire spanned Great Britain to Babylonia and Egypt. Tribes like the Huns, Goths, Franks, Jutes, Saxons and Danes migrated to new lands between 400 and 800 A.D. creating the foundations of today's European nation states.

For two hundred years European businesses uprooted millions through slavery and indentured labour. Between 1820 and 1920 around 55 million Europeans emigrated to North America and Australasia. Millions of Chinese migrated to Australia, North America over the same period, settling in large numbers in south-east Asia. And about a million Japanese moved to North America, Hawaii, Peru and Brazil (in 2014 an estimated 1.5 million Brazilians are of Japanese descent).

At the same time, throughout this human history countless millions have moved smaller distances, such as from farm to town, or town to city.

Deindustrialisation - Economies like the UK have shifted to higher tech and service sector industries.

As a share of UK GDP the importance of manufacturing has declined dramatically – from 25% of GDP in 1970, to 18% of GDP in 1990, to 10% of GDP since 2007. Equally the number and type of jobs in manufacturing has changed - 25% of all jobs in 1980, down to 8% of jobs in 2010.

The UK remains a major manufacturing nation. It accounts for 45% of UK exports and 2.7 million jobs. Yet we are entering a new phase of industrial change ('Industry 4.0'), with the introduction of integrated 'smart factories'. **How will skills and jobs change further?**

Things that make the 'global world' work

Out-sourcing – moving functions that have been performed in-house or locally to an external supplier - often referred to as 'off-shoring', 'near-shoring', 'delocalisation' or 'outsourcing'.



Risk – as our world becomes increasingly interconnected so do the risks we face. Pollution spreads across countries, diseases like swine flu can become pandemics, housing loans in one country can cascade into a full-blown international banking crisis, conflict in one country can see millions displaced, and some risks operate at a truly global scale; such as climate change.



Containerization - since the 1950s shipping containers have become standardised so that they can be stacked on ships, loaded onto the back of trucks, or transported by rail. Excluding bulk goods (grains, coal, oil), 90% of goods transported worldwide are transported in these containers.



Innovation – new technologies, ideas and systems, drive globalization creating new business ideas and transforming our lives. It increases efficiencies, it creates new markets, it also drives demand for more and more new things leading to depletion of resources.



Deregulation – this refers to the liberalising of national markets, removing barriers to trade, increasing the ability of corporations and industries to operate across borders, and light touch state regulation of financial and industrial markets (e.g. the so called 'Big Bang' – the deregulation of the London Stock Exchange in 1986).



Newtown's Global Past

In the beginning

The British Isles were subject to repeated periods of colonisation and abandonment as Ice Ages waxed and waned. The current occupation began around 10,000 years ago.

Different waves of people introduced:

- new ideas (the 'neolithic revolution' 6,000 years ago brought agriculture and settlements)
- new technologies (smelting ore, casting bronze),
- new models of society (capable of building megalithic henges and developing international trading networks).

Peoples of the British Isles have long been embedded into international as well as domestic trading and cultural networks (exporting tin, salt, wheat, silver and people; importing wine, olives, bronze).

With the Roman invasions of 43 AD, Britain became enmeshed in formal road and ocean trade networks extending from Ireland to Portugal to Morocco to Syria to Egypt.

A roman road ran right through modern day Newtown. This road was part of a roman road network that extended over 53,000 miles at the height of the Roman Empire.

After the fall of the Roman Empire came the arrival of the Germanic Anglo-Saxons, then the Danes. It was not until the 11th century Norman conquests and then the 12th century Plantagenet dynasty that a substantial settlement began in Newtown / Y Drenewydd.

Newtown came into being as a spoil of war in 1279.

Mediaeval Origins

Edward I began a concerted campaign to conquer Wales in 1277. **Roger de Mortimer**, a powerful Marcher baron, led Edward's campaign in mid Wales against Llewelyn ap Gruffudd, also known as **Llewelyn the Last**, the last prince of an independent Wales. De Mortimer was a cousin of ap Gruffydd and had been intermittently at war with him over the lands of what is now Montgomeryshire since the 1250s.

As reward, Edward granted de Mortimer further lands in Powys. These included the cantref of 'Cedewain', which together with the cantrefi of Mechain, Arwystli, Cefeliog make up most of modern Montgomeryshire. De Mortimer was also granted a **charter** to establish a new market town in Cedewain in 1279. He chose a site on the western edge of his territory, in a narrow valley upon the River Severn, next to the riverside chapel of St. Mary (Newtown was formerly known as Llanfair-yn-nghydewain or 'St. Mary's church in Cedewain').

As a mediaeval market town Newtown seems to have been fairly unremarkable, its growth limited by a large deer park (part of the Newtown Hall manor) to the west and the river north and east. The basic layout of the town centre, its streets, the size of its shop frontages, street names and landmarks, and the market days are still with us today.

It remained the administrative centre, collected taxes, ran its market, and was a small town of under 800 people for nearly five centuries.

By the late 1700s its fortunes were changing and it would soon find itself the centre of a global trade in a particular textile - flannel.

Robert Owen

Newtown was both the birth and burial place for Robert Owen (1771 – 1858). Owen's ideas informed early British socialism, provided building blocks for emerging ideas about class and class conflict, universal education provision, the co-operative movement, workers' rights and the conditions of labour and the emerging trades union movement.

Much of his life's work was informed by a reflection upon elements of the community he was born into; self-contained, co-operative, mutualistic, close to nature, and providing a basic school education from a young age.

Owen left Newtown in his teens. He went on to make his fortune in the same industry for which Newtown would later become known as "the Leeds of Wales" – textile manufacture.

Between his departure and his death the town had been transformed by rapid industrialisation and urbanisation.

There is much more to find out about Robert Owen at **The Robert Owen Memorial Museum** on the ground floor of the Town Council building in the centre of Newtown.



Industrial Revolution

The 1800s saw an expansion of population in the mid Wales region, clustered in a number of industrialising market towns.

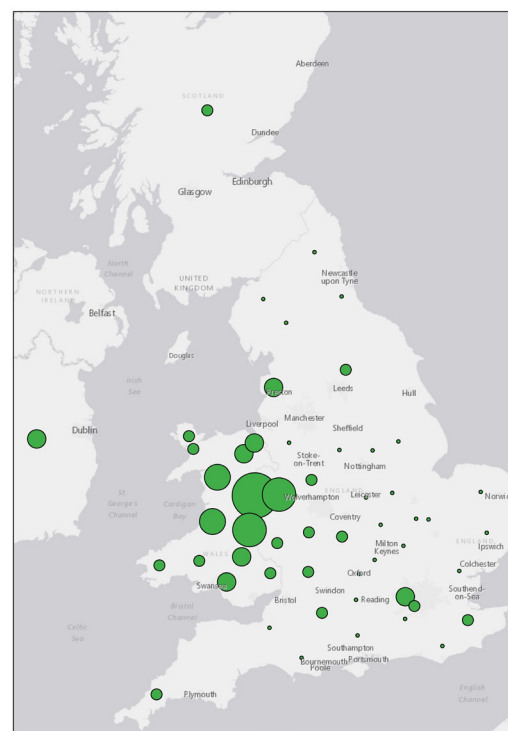
Across the wider region mills and textile manufacture became a core component of the regional economy.

New factory units, new workers, new transport connections (a canal in 1830s, rail in 1860s), began to transform the town.

Its population swelled – from about 800 in 1800 to 7,000 by 1881. Many migrated from the surrounding hills, many from England and other parts of Wales, and a number from much further away to capitalise on the town's new found fortunes.

The 1881 census reveals residents of Newtown born in British Guiana, Canada, the East Indies, France, Germany, Gibraltar, India, Ireland, Jamaica, Switzerland and the United States.

The map below is taken from the 1851 census. It shows the birth county for people living in the "Newtown Enumeration Registration District" (which included places like Llanidloes, Kerry, Abermule) at the time of the 1851 census.



Origins of people resident in Newtown at the time of the 1851 census

BBC NEWS Dig unearths Roman road at Tesco



Archaeologists working on the road near the Tesco site in Newtown

One of the longest sections of Roman road ever found in Wales is being unearthed at the site of a new Tesco.

The highway was carved out of the Powys countryside in Newtown 2,000 years ago, and is thought to have linked two forts.

An International Trading Centre

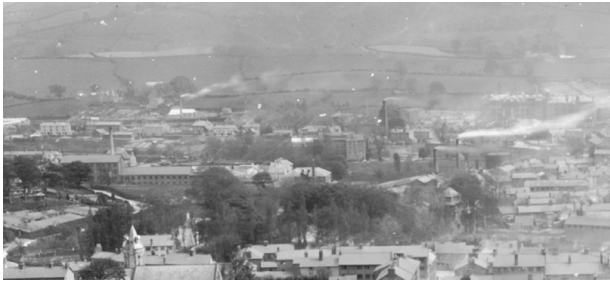
During the 1700s and early 1800s much trade was within regions. Innovations in communications saw a refocusing of production for national and international markets. Tying production to such markets made communities vulnerable to decisions and competition from places further away.

This was amplified by increasing industrialisation, the centralisation and mechanisation of production clustered around rapidly growing urban centres.

Numerous steam powered factories with looms and other machines came to dominate the booming mid Wales townscapes of the mid-1800s. Ultimately they were no match for the more advanced mill-towns of northern England or the industrialising might of America and other European nations.

One consequence of industrialisation was mass migration from country to city and a slow decline in rural economic activity across the UK.

Some towns, such as Newtown, had a second lease of life in adapting to industrial capitalism through adopting **new forms of commerce**.



View of Newtown and its factories from Bryn Bank, 1890s; by P.B. Aberly [Royal Welsh Warehouse top right]
Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru – The National Library of Wales

Sir Pryce Pryce Jones

Newtown capitalised on the new infrastructure of the 'Penny Post' and the arrival of the railway.

In 1861 Llanllwchaiarn- born Sir Pryce Pryce Jones created the first real mail order business. While a few other companies were trying out catalogues to promote their wares Pryce-Jones was the first to use it as the foundation for an international business. It became so successful that by 1880 it employed 4,000 people and had hundreds of thousands of customers around the world; able to sell, distribute and deliver goods from Newtown, mid-Wales to Newtown, New South Wales in a matter of weeks.

It presented itself as a purveyor of authentic, crafted Welsh goods, mostly textiles, but was not averse to sourcing materials more cheaply from the mills of northern England.

Over expansion in the 1910s (they opened a Canadian department store in 1911), competition from alternative global traders, and falling foul of the Great Depression saw the fortunes of the company (and with it Newtown) diminish until the 1950s.

The Problem of Mid Wales

In 1871, at the height of its manufacturing output, the population of mid Wales peaked at 316,000 people. Over the next 100 years it would decline to just 190,000.

Mechanisation of agriculture, poor living conditions, the 'pull of town life', the booming coalfields of south Wales and industrial England, and the potential for a new life overseas all contributed to an emptying of mid Wales.

For example, in 1891 nearly 229,000 Welsh born lived in England, working in dairying, domestic service, and textiles. Sixty thousand had moved to Lancashire alone.

Despite its regional economic importance Newtown and Llanllwchaiarn proved no exception to this trend, the population falling to just over 5,000 people in the 1930s.

Waning Fortunes

Although the last significant mills struggled on for a few years after the war, the destruction of the largest factory, the Cambrian Mills in a fire in 1912 marked the effective end of woollen manufacture as the staple trade of the town.

World War Two temporarily reversed declines in both population and investment. New factories were built in the region – including 'The Lion Works'.

After the war economists and planners realised that industrialisation of rural Wales during the war had driven up wages, increased community spending power, lowered unemployment and diversified the local economy in terms of skills and jobs. A number of reports between 1944 and 1955 concluded the region was in crisis. It needed substantial investment in factories and a 'development corporation' to coordinate investment to deal with it.

The 'Lion Works' was built in 1940 as a 'shadow works' making supplies for World War 2. The factory employed thousands, most of them women, many from South Wales, to make aircraft components and machine gun barrels. Newtown also accommodated evacuees from Merseyside, several thousand soldiers at the nearby army training camp, and the Prisoner of War camp at Glandulas.

Then it was a prisoner of war camp [for Italian PoWs], and then for displaced persons after the war, and then some locals lived here in the early '50s.

It was an Italian and his wife and his daughter. Well they came to the office. They wanted to know if they could have a look around the yard because he had been a prisoner here at one time [...] They came back to the office and we were talking, you know? And he said to me with tears in his eye "We should never have been at war!"

Interview with Newtown resident, 2015

Following the war, 'The Factory' became a bicycle factory owned by Phillips Cycles Ltd. Phillips were a very successful English midlands based company looking for new cheap sites for production.

In response to **global competition** they streamlined their operations, closing the Lion Works in 1958 and focusing on better connected sites in the English midlands. This was a body blow for the economic fortunes of the town.

Top secret World War II past of Newtown's Lion Works

By Carl Yapp
BBC Wales News website

© 13 June 2011 | Mid Wales

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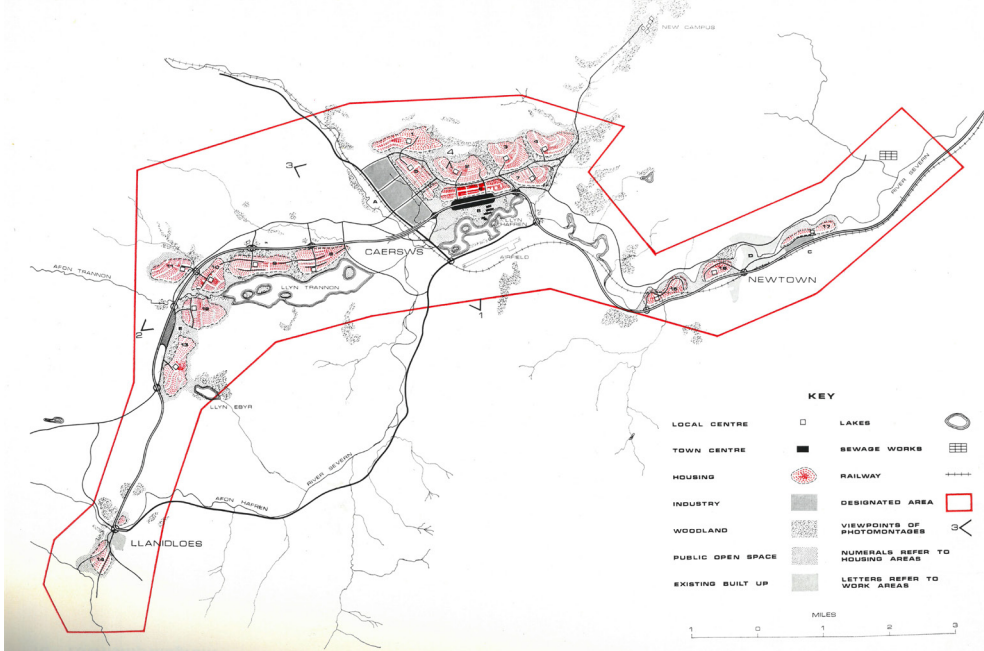


Geoff Charles, Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru – The National Library of Wales

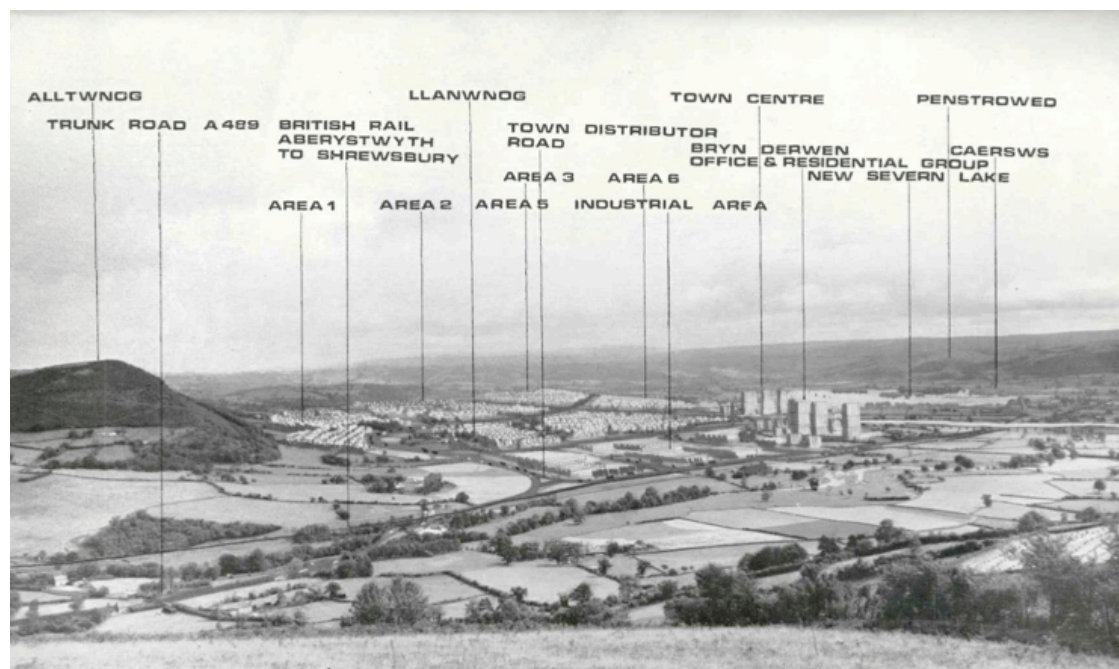
"My anxiety is to see that the first new town in Mid-Wales is so placed as to be able to attract industry and workers there, including some of the 100,000 Welshmen who left Wales to seek work in the Midlands conurbation. If this is done and is a success its influence will extend to other parts of Wales."

Jim Griffiths, Hansard 1965

19 Master plan



Masterplan, New Town (above) / View from Graigorddle (below) - Consultants' proposals for a new town in Mid-Wales, by Economic Associates Ltd, 1966



A New Town for Mid Wales

As far back at 1959 the five county councils that formed the Mid Wales Industrial Development Association (MWIDA) proposed a new town of 50,000 people centred on Caersws to deal with the 'problems of mid Wales'.

By the 1960s these problems were seen as five-fold; a massive reduction in farm labour through mechanisation, young people leaving the region, older people migrating into the region to retire, much lower than average incomes compared to England and the rest of Wales, and a lack of resources for local authorities to provide services over a wide area.

How does this compare to Mid Wales today?

New Newtown

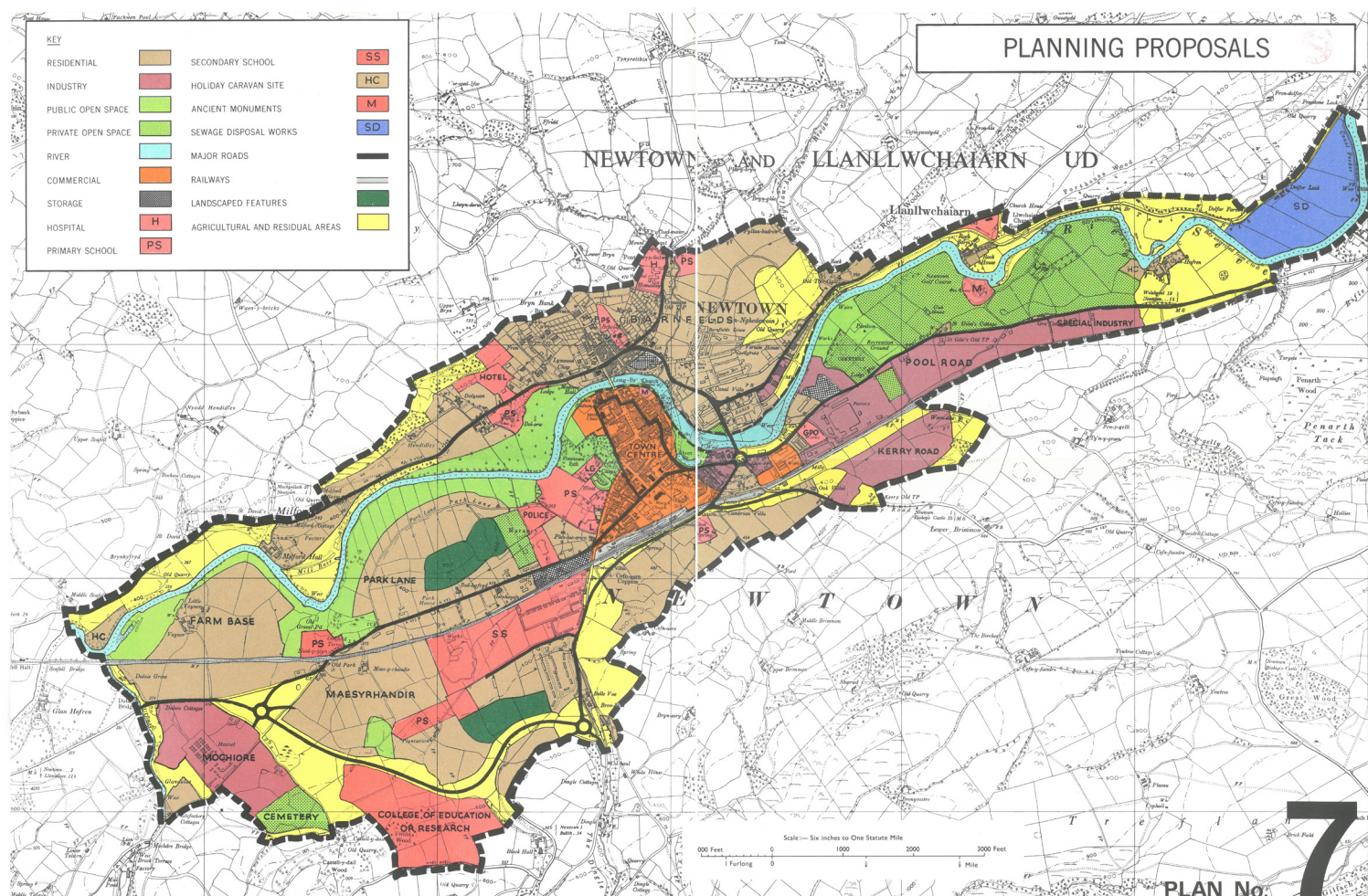
While some argued for expansion of a few key settlements across the region, others, such as Emlyn Hooson, MP for Montgomeryshire, Professor Arthur Beacham and J. Gareth Thomas at the University of Wales, and Peter Garbett-Edwards (future Chief Executive of the Mid-Wales Development Corporation) felt that a critical mass was essential for tackling this problem.

The first Secretary of State for Wales, Jim Griffiths MP, one of the architects of the British Welfare State, knew Newtown and the region well. He had also long held a belief that mid Wales needed a major urban centre to solve its problems.

Two "1 in 150 year" floods in 1960 and 1964, which devastated Newtown, provided an impetus for action. In 1965 he commissioned a study to identify where, how and at what size a new town could be created in mid Wales under the New Towns Act to act as a focal point for regeneration of the region.

This culminated in a plan for a new town of 70,000 people centred on Caersws, stretching 20 kilometres with Newtown forming its eastern fringe and Llandinam its western one. For Griffiths this was a means of initiating his long cherished project of building a **planned new town** - "Treowen" (Owen's town). The plan was shelved following a campaign of opposition as reflecting British rather than Welsh interests, driven by a perception it was really a means to solve the Midlands 'overspill' issue.

Despite the rejection of the new New Town in Mid Wales, the government eventually adopted the idea of a 'new town' in scaled-down form. It established the Mid Wales New Town Development Corporation in 1968, with the much more modest target of doubling the population of Newtown to 11,000 by 1977.



The eventual plan for the expansion of Newtown & Llanllwchaiarn is above. How much does this look like the town we have today?

Winds of Change

Plans were set in motion to grow the town's population and economy by attracting manufacturing to new industrial estates and workers to new housing estates. The Development Board for Rural Wales (DBRW) was formed in 1976, replacing the Mid Wales Development Corporation. Although its operations covered mid Wales the DBRW was based in Newtown and retained responsibility and specific funds to develop Newtown.

Newtown, and many other parts of mid Wales, experienced rapid change. New people, new businesses, new buildings and new institutions mixed in with those already here. This section explores some of these changes.

New Newtown - new Homes, new Jobs, new Town

The 1970s were a time of economic and political turmoil. The post-War boom years of low unemployment, innovation, the rise of leisure time, consumerism and relative prosperity gave way to the 'white heat of technology', oil crises, deindustrialisation, spiralling inflation, the 'Three Day week', the 'Winter of Discontent', recessions and the nickname 'the sick man of Europe'.

The deregulation of financial markets under Margaret Thatcher (the 'Big Bang') encouraged a further shift of the economy towards the service sector (retail, hotels, property, IT, media and banking). Manufacturing industries benefited from new technologies, innovation, specialism and automation, all of which have increased productivity. But it also meant fewer jobs and changes in the training and skills they required. In the 1950s nearly 36% of the workforce was employed in manufacturing. By 2011 this had fallen to 9%.

In mid-Wales the story is a little different. Efforts to solve the 'problem of Mid Wales' by emphasised its growth as a manufacturing centre. Currently nearly 19% of workers in Montgomeryshire are employed in manufacturing.

"It was no good going for the new financial services kind of jobs. I mean, we were not going to attract them to Mid Wales [...]. Manufacturing was kind of seen as the poor relation of job creation, but it was right for us. So we did go pretty big for manufacturing"

Former DBRW employee, interviewed 2016

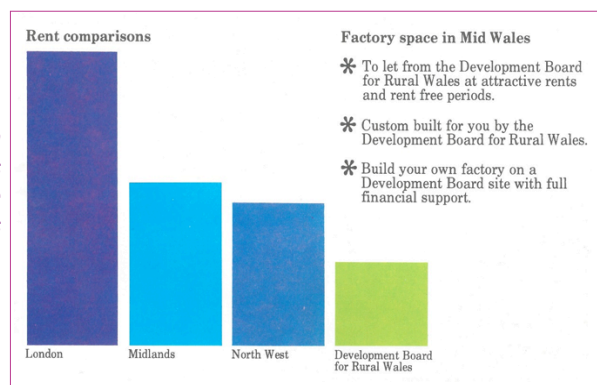
Over twenty odd years 140 factory units were built in Newtown, covering 1.2 million sq feet. It brought 2000 jobs and housing for 4000 people. The result was a virtual doubling of the population of Newtown and Llanllwchaïarn between 1971 and 1991.

Attracting businesses

The DBRW highlighted benefits for urban manufacturing firms - lower rents, pleasant surroundings with new housing. They also provided incentives such as rent-free periods on industrial units and custom-built factories for firms choosing to re-locate to the area.

Creative marketing strategies were used such as sponsored trips to visit Newtown for prospective businesses and the famous 'Mid-Wales Experience' train. This train toured parts of England, providing a showcase for over 150 Mid-Wales companies, as well as educational and tourism attractions. It was reputedly visited by 25,000 people during the course of 18 days.

Targetted adverts were placed in brochures and trade magazines



DBRW "did a huge amount for the area... there was this kind of money is no object attitude. At one point we had a train that went [to] Reading, Bristol and all that. It was completely kitted out in all Mid Wales tourism stuff and videos and cinema on site. ... It was incredible!"

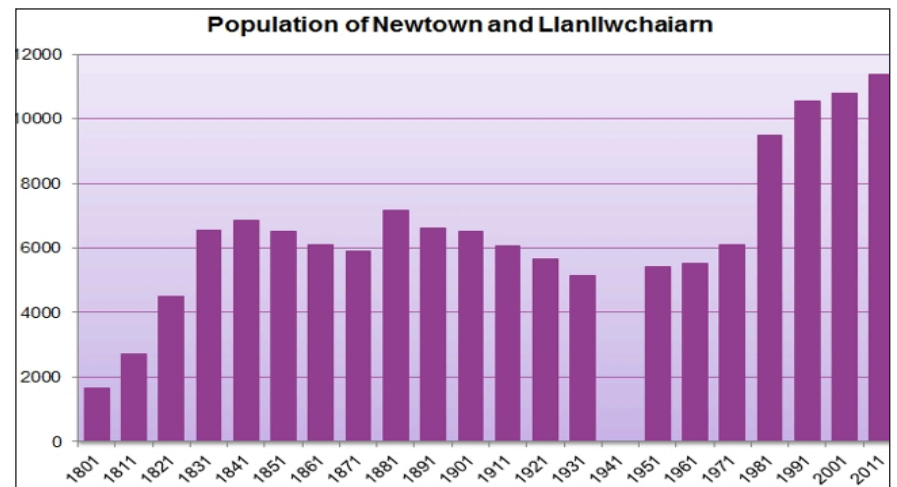
Ex-DBRW employee, interviewed 2015

"They basically said have a look round. If you see an empty one you fancy come and ask us. So that's what I did... I picked a nice one which had a view out over the river valley".

Business owner, interviewed 2015

Serving the people

The DBRW used its budget not only to attract businesses and build housing, but for cultural and community facilities. The plan included space for schools, a theatre, expanding the Further Education College, expanding the hospital, a shopping centre, churches, community centres, police station, leisure facilities, a large hotel (never built) and even a by-pass ('a big new relief road'), which were needed to accommodate for the town's growing population.



"Without those three industrial estates being built and the housing associated with it I don't know what it would be now. I suppose a large struggling village"

Newtown resident, interviewed 2016

Movement - of people and industry

"We want to recognise this fact that in 1968 Mid Wales was losing people at the rate of a village a year. A village, say, of two hundred or two hundred and fifty souls. Something had to be done to arrest this decline, otherwise we'd end up by being just a band of sheep farmers."

Resident, Time for Action interview, 2nd Feb 1977

The premise of the DBRW was to bring more people to the area and stem the flow of people leaving mid-Wales.

Businesses mostly came from outside of the local area (78%). Around a fifth came from South East England and a fifth from the Midlands.

Change was rapid, particularly in the 1970s. Older housing in the Ladywell area was cleared and residents moved to new housing estates. Sewerage works, pipelines, roads, electricity systems, industrial estates, factories, schools and training sites were all constructed to provide an infrastructure for the bigger better New Town.

Along with the new factories came workers and their families. Such an influx of people was bound to have an impact on the town. Local people were unable to apply for 'Corporation housing', creating some tensions, as documented in the Radio 4 program ("Time for Action") in February 1977 about the 'New Town' (presented by Roger Cook).

Today Newtown has become known as a very welcoming place to live and visit.



New jobs for Newtown

THREE new Mid-Wales Development Corporation factories in Newtown have been set to firms who already have factories in the town. This was announced by Mr Emrys Roberts, chairman of the corporation, on Tuesday.

He said the new factories would provide a total of 300 new jobs, mostly for men.

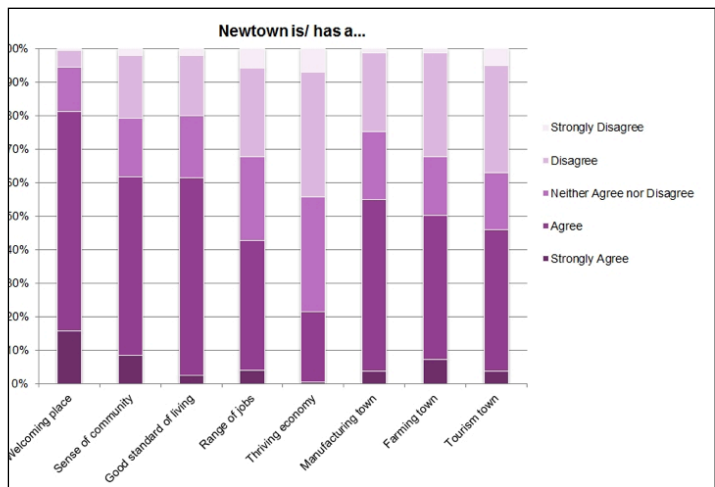
CWC Equipment Ltd had taken over a 20,000 sq ft factory to manufacture automatic photographic equipment largely for export. Precision Presswork Group Ltd would move into a 10,000 sq ft factory to make presswork and press brakes, much of which would go to West Germany. And Dorsey Retail Ltd, a member of the Dorsey Group, would use another 20,000 sq ft factory for precision engineering work providing skilled employment for men.

The corporation was negotiating to let three other factories, said Mr Roberts.

Making Newtown

Given the scale of change to the town in the 1970s and 80s Newtown today seems to be fairly confident of its identity and community cohesion. In a 2016 survey we conducted most people (81%) saw Newtown as 'welcoming' and a majority felt it has a 'strong sense of community' and a 'good standard of living'.

We also found residents appreciate Newtown's location and green spaces, their social connections and the relaxed, friendly, safe character of the place.



It wasn't all plain sailing

Both new arrivals and existing residents had to adjust to the rapid changes in their home-town.

"We're moving to someone else's town and we've got to move in with them and not expect them to adapt to us. We've got to adapt to them. It's mainly the people on this estate I mix with. Some of them are from Wales, but there's not many Newtonians because they're not really allocated that many houses from the Corporation so you're not really mixing that much with the Newtonians"

Resident interviewed in 1977

"If we stay here Jenny will be as Welsh as the next one. She was only ten days old when we came here. So if we stay here she's going to be Welsh, she's going to be a Newtonian, and it's going to be her town so we want the better for her."

Resident interviewed in 1977

"What we have got in Newtown is a great improvement. It has produced employment where no employment has existed before. But it has brought many other problems"

Emlyn Hooson MP, interviewed for "Time for Action", Feb 1977

"Newtown had a very strong sense that Newtonians were Newtonians. You know, nobody had asked them about this business. It was being imposed on them. All these strangers were coming in and their way of life was being undermined"

Resident, interviewed 2015

"There was just lots of young people. So the town was really vibrant. We used to go the pub at lunchtime and then we'd all go out after work. There was lots and lots going on. It was just a really brilliant place to be."

Resident, interviewed 2016

"When you step of the train at Newtown station you're a Newtonian and that's it"

Resident, interviewed 2015



Photograph courtesy Max Morgan

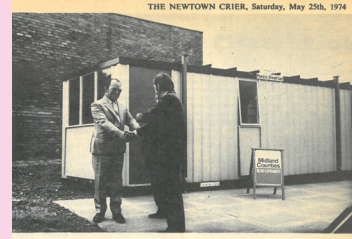
The DBRW were also keen to promote the area to tourists, so festivals, events and getting big names in to the theatre were all funded or subsidised.

"We hired Aston Villa Football Club to do a massive tourist exhibition. We hired the Royal Albert Hall and did a St David's Day promotional thing. I mean, it was big scale stuff"

"We had the Mid Wales Stampede. Like cows and sheep and everything, and cowgirls lassoing and that, all down through the Main Street!"



Like today, people moved to for many reasons. Some were looking to escape inner city life or start a new business, others were escaping far worse.



Walker, of the Development Corporation, hands over the keys of the new refreshment kiosk to Mr. L. Ferraro.

NEW ENTERPRISE
At the request of the employees on the Dyffryn Industrial Estate, the Development Corporation provided and equipped a snack bar for the staff of the many factories.
The venture is launched initially on an experimental basis. Should it prove to be a viable concept, a permanent permanent building will be provided at a later stage.



A company town?

As a manufacturing town, Newtown has experienced ebbs and flows of new business, new jobs, new people as part of a global economy.

The planning and investment deals on offer in the 1970s and 80s were attractive for new businesses, but in an era of footloose transnational corporations there was less to keep them once the incentives were removed. Others have become more embedded, developing a skills and logistical network in the area.

Two mainstays of the Newtown economy, Laura Ashley and Control Techniques, both came from outside of the area to set up their main manufacturing bases in Mid Wales.

Mail Order Days

Whilst it was technology, (of the steam train and transport networks) that enabled Pryce Jones to succeed in mail-order, it was technological advances that spelled the end for mail order in Newtown.

Throughout the 90s and 2000s consumer trends shifted towards online shopping and catalogue stores, and staff numbers slowly reduced.

The town remained connected to mail-order retail, making use of the Pryce Jones Royal Welsh Warehouse, notably through Kays Catalogue, which later merged with Littlewoods and became part of Shop Direct. Although Littlewoods still has a presence in the Pryce Jones building with its outlet clearance store, mail order operations ceased in 2011 when Shop Direct closed its call centre with a loss of 163 jobs.



Where did the 'new Newtownians' come from?
This map shows the location of all those accepted by the Mid Wales Development Corporation for housing between 1970 and 1973



Snapshots of Today

In September 2016 our researchers asked over 200 people in Newtown about what it is like to live in Newtown, their thoughts about the future of the town and how they are connected to global processes and events. And in 2014-2015 we surveyed 48 businesses on Newtown's industrial estates to get an idea of the different ways local companies are embedded in local and international trading networks.

Here we highlight some of the findings. We have also prepared a report from the household survey - available from our website.

At home

Newtown has joined the internet age. 82% of those surveyed agree the internet is an important source of information and 78% buy goods and services online. Although rural broadband can be 'patchy' to say the least, following local campaigns broadband speeds in Newtown have improved (though Montgomeryshire is amongst the lowest in the UK), along with the once notorious mobile phone reception. We increasingly make use of this to stay connected with friends and family, news and entertainment.

We have ever greater numbers of ways to keep in touch. The use of apps on mobile phones and tablets are increasingly common ways for families to keep in touch and business to be conducted. Yet our survey found 59% of respondents still like to use letters and greeting cards to keep in touch.

Do you enjoy getting post, or is it more hassle than it's worth?

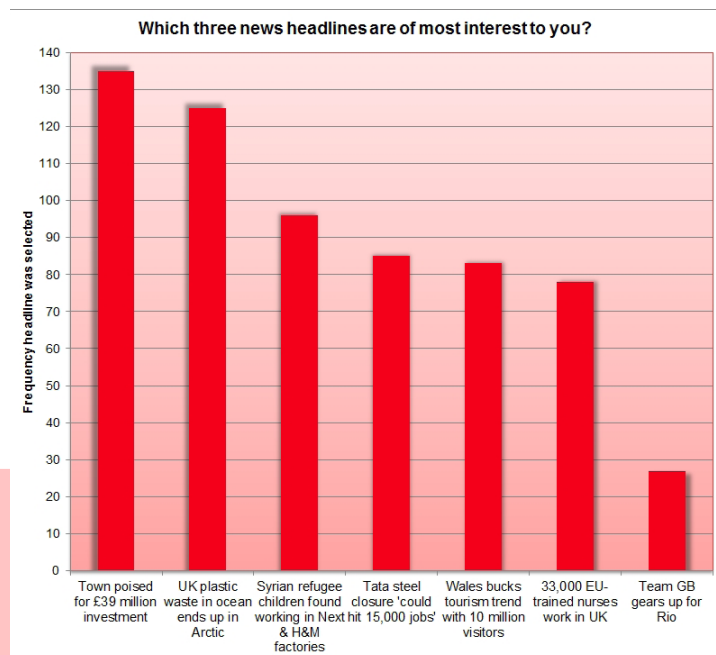
Getting away

Over the past few decades, access to affordable travel has increased, largely through cheaper airfares, the rise of package holidays, last minute deals and the internet, all of which make organising the logistics of travel much easier. In Newtown, residents have taken advantage of this.

93% of residents surveyed have visited another country, usually for a holiday. Whereas only 15 people had never been abroad. 38% had taken a flight in the last 12 months, 57% of those surveyed bought holidays online.

Thinking globally

Our survey results and interviews indicate that Newtown residents are globally aware and outward looking as well as locally engaged. We asked a question about newspaper headlines with a global theme (investment, pollution, ethical employers, factory closures, tourism, migrant workers, and sporting events). These are what people chose.



Contact Attachments

One aspect of globalization is that things become more easily mobile. More and more goods are being moved around in standardised containers and pallets.

What connects agricultural feed, oil drums, recycling bins and soft drinks ingredients with Newtown? They can all be moved around by forklifts ... if fitted with the correct attachments. Newtown's Contact Attachments provides tools that help businesses do just this. In doing so it is connected to multiple global industries and global concerns, like waste reduction and recycling.

The range of 'attachments' the company manufactures has expanded and become increasingly specialised; from providing the UN with equipment for lifting 45 gallon drums off trucks in Burundi to designing a device for taking the wheels on and off the Eurostar train. Whilst the UK market accounts for the majority of sales, European and worldwide sales are growing thanks to the effective use of Internet-based marketing.



Around town



Many of our towns are described as 'clone towns', identikit strips of retail space dominated by a few international and national chain stores and hollowed out of their individuality and the mix of local independent stores and services. At the same time the absence of chain stores and

supermarkets may make a small town high street seem rather archaic and cut off, so that the opening of a recognised high street brand is a mark of prestige and place in the world.



Newtown is no different. It is fast becoming the fast-food capital of mid Wales. Following the opening of the McDonalds on the old Laundry site in 2000, a Subway (surprisingly the world's largest food franchise) arrived in 2014, a Greggs in 2015, a KFC in 2016 and there is even a proposed Burger King.

Large global companies like Tesco and Lidl ensure that shoppers in Newtown have access to similar services and products as shoppers elsewhere in the UK and Europe, but does their buying power erode the viability of smaller groups and independents?

Most residents surveyed (90%) do at least some of their food shopping at the supermarkets. And although many residents also support local traders and businesses our respondents were split evenly on the question of whether or not Newtown's high street will survive and how it will change.

What kind of 'life' would you like to see on the high street?

When it comes to food and changing tastes our survey found that Newtownians favoured 'traditional food' (meat and two veg), though Indian and Italian food were close seconds.

Surprised?

Mapping Connections

Newtown's residents now, much like in the late 1800s are a mix between those originating from Newtown and those moving to the area. 20% of our survey respondents have lived in Newtown since birth, the remaining 80% had moved from other areas. 55% were originally from outside Wales. As the map shows, these locals largely moved from the West Midlands and South East England, 5.5% had moved from outside of the UK.

Manufacturing has traditionally been a key way that Newtown has been globally connected. Our survey of 48 businesses across Newtown's industrial estates indicates the importance of maintaining a strong local/regional customer base. However, a third of businesses make overseas sales, and for these companies international customers could account for up to 50% of their clients.

There are many businesses doing surprising things and operating globally within Newtown. They link the cogs of global markets, regulations and trends with a market town in mid-wales.

Makefast

Safety is a global concern and a Newtown firm, Makefast, is a key manufacturer and innovator in personal protective equipment components. The mundane flat metal safety buckle has been the company's biggest selling product on an international stage over the last 20 years. On the surface, this object is less exciting than high-quality parts for luxury yachts, which they also design, make and supply around the world.

However, the humble buckle played a small but essential role in a spectacular event of human endeavour that garnered global media attention a couple of years ago. Tommy Caldwell and Kevin Jorgeson became the first to free-climb the near-vertical Dawn Wall on El Capitan in Yosemite National Park. On their way up the 3000ft ascent, the pair spent 22 days living on the rock, resting between climbs in 'portaledge' - hanging tents suspended from the rock which were made by the outdoors equipment company Black Diamond and incorporated safety buckles from Makefast of Newtown.



Fizzy Wool

Tracing globalization through ordinary things

Some objects are everywhere. We are so accustomed to seeing them in our everyday lives – in our living rooms, classrooms, offices and on our television screens – that we do not really notice them anymore. They are a common thread in everyone's lives, be they in Newtown, Newfoundland or Nairobi. They seemingly move from one place to another remaining much the same, and are apparently experienced by people in a uniform manner.

Looking behind the scenes of some of these mundane items reveals a global network operating to both bring goods into Newtown and to transport goods from Newtown across the globe. Here we follow the stories of Fanta, made by Coca-Cola, the second most widely-stocked soft drink in Newtown, and wool, a product long-associated with the town – tracing the processes behind their comings and goings into and out of the town.

Fanta

According to their own statistics 96% of the world's population recognize the Coca-Cola logo, and over 10,000 Coca-Cola brand drinks are consumed every single second.

'Coca-Cola is the only business in the world where no matter which country or town or village you are in, if someone asks what you do, and you say you work for Coca-Cola, you never have to answer the question, 'What is that?'

Muhtar Kent, Chairman & Chief Executive Coca-Cola Company

While sales of their fizzy drinks have declined in the UK recent times, largely due to growing health-concerns regarding sugar consumption, Coca-Cola continues sell more of its soft drinks in the UK than its competitors. As of 2011, the average British consumer has 210 servings of Coca-Cola drinks per year.

Newtown residents play their part in this. Based on our own survey data, Coca-Cola is the most widely available soft drink in the various shops, restaurants and cafes of Newtown, followed by Fanta.

How many Fantas and Cokes do you have in a week, a month, a year?

But everybody talks about Coke, so let's talk about Fanta! This fizzy flavoured drink has a huge global profile.

The origins of a brand

Prior to WW2, Coca-Cola was a well-established brand in Germany. However, due to trade embargos and the outbreak of hostilities, supplies of Coca-Cola syrup ceased. In an effort to keep the business operating, a new drink – Fanta – was created from the leftovers of the food-processing industry (including whey and apple skins).

Fanta was discontinued after the war, but the brand was reinvented and relaunched in 1955 in Italy, using local citrus ingredients – the 'classic' Orange Fanta.



By the 1970s, Fanta was one of the most popular soda drinks in the world. We might assume that it is delivered to supermarket shelves and café counters as a 'standard' product. It is not that simple. Different people drink Fanta, move Fanta, and make Fanta. Different ingredients go into different cans, bottles and cups.

Fanta comes in a range of different flavours. Currently there are over 90 worldwide. Relatively few all are available in Newtown. Some are only produced in certain regions, depending on available ingredients and regional tastes. More unusual flavours include Peach Mangosteen (Albania), Sweet Lemon (Buenos Aires), Ice Kiwi Lime (Australia) and Green Tea (Thailand).

The same, but different

But we might reasonably expect that people drinking the 'classic' Fanta Orange would have the same taste experience, wherever they are. But we'd be wrong.

In the UK Fanta Orange contains 5% orange juice, while the US version has no orange juice. The sugar content also varies, as does the type of sugars and sweeteners used. In the UK, a can of Fanta Orange contains 23g of sucrose sugar. In the US, an equivalent serving has 41g of High Fructose Corn Syrup.

Ingredients vary, not least the main component – the water. So, a can of Orange Fanta in Newtown, Connecticut will taste slightly different to a can bought in Newtown, Powys, which will taste different from one bought in Newtown, Johannesburg. And Fanta is not actually made or distributed by the same company worldwide.

Wool

Like soft drinks, wool is everywhere. It can be found in clothes and carpets, brushes and tennis balls, loft insulation and stereo speakers.

Wool plays an important part in our everyday lives; whether we eat lamb or not, or wear synthetic tops instead of woolly jumpers. Wool production and innovation played an important part in Newtown's global history and continues to do so. It plays an important part in the lives of people all over the globe.



Newtown's role in the global wool industry has not disappeared, but changed. Local farmers still produce wool for processing, contributing to the 29 million kilograms of wool generated in the UK every year. Half of this is sold overseas, with more than one quarter being exported to China. Before this happens, the wool needs to be collected, graded and sold. In the UK, these steps are undertaken by the British Wool Marketing Board (BWMB).

Grading takes place in one of eleven depots across the UK. The second largest of these is in Newtown, which handles fleeces from over 6,500 farms in North and Mid Wales, Shropshire and Cheshire.

Fleeces are evaluated by qualified graders based on criteria such as colour, length and strength of the fibres. Over 110 different grades are required to categorize the wide variation in the type and quality of wool. This reflects the diversity of breeds and variable climate in the UK. For example, mid Wales is most suited to hardy hill sheep breeds, whose coarser textured and harder-wearing wool will primarily be used in carpet manufacture.

Once 400 kilos of a particular grade of wool have been collected at the Newtown depot, it is wrapped into bales at the packing machine. These bales are then sold in 8,000 kilo lots via a bi-monthly electronic auction based in Bradford.

Buyers arrange for lots to be collected from BWMB depots and delivered to a 'scouring' plant where this 'greasy' wool is subjected to an intensive cleaning process.

It's not just for textiles

Lanolin is one of the most well-known and important by-products of scouring, having a multitude of applications. It can be found in sticky tape, printing ink, engine oil and in a vast array range of beauty treatments. Lanolin is also used as a high-cholesterol supplement for commercial prawn feed; particularly in South-East Asia where commercial aquaculture is a large-scale enterprise.

Once cleaned, different wool types are often 'blended' by wool merchants to produce a 'top' that meets the specific requirements of clients. Welsh wool is often well suited for carpet manufacture. Much of this wool is exported to India and China. Here it will be dyed and weaved, and transformed into a finished product. Zhangjiagang, in China's Jiangsu province is a major hub of early stage wool processing, with over 150 wool textile-processing companies based in the city.

The finished woollen products will then be packed into containers and exported, finding themselves on shop floors (often quite literally) the world-over. In this way, wool gathered in Newtown has a global footprint, some of it inevitably travelling thousands of miles to end up back where it started - albeit as part of a rug, jumper or prawn curry.

What's Next?

Globalization is a 'hot topic'.

It is blamed for job losses, the continuing deindustrialisation of the west, making the rich richer, putting power in the hands of mobile multi-national corporations cutting wage and tax bills, exploiting labour and causing ecological damage.

It is praised for raising living standards, creating jobs, lowering prices, injecting international finance in places that need investment, creating a worldwide market that shares trade, cultures and innovations, making us all more mobile and interdependent, or even removing the restrictions of distance entirely.

Some or all of these things are true. And some or all of them have either affected Newtown in the past or today, or have been affected by Newtown and its people.

Giving Newtown a Voice

Newtown residents we surveyed were hopeful overall about the future, but also expressed many fears as well, some of which are linked to wider national and political issues such as levels of investment and cuts in services. Most residents think that it is local actors such as the Town Council, community groups, local businesses and the County Council that will be best placed to bring about change for the town.

Who would you want making the changes you think Newtown needs? Who do you trust?

Changing people

In the recent past depopulation was the key issue for mid Wales. It became such a big issue that there were even plans to build a large town of 70,000 people centred on Caersws! Powys is the only county in Wales that is projected to have a small but net decrease in population between now and 2039 (from 132,700 to 122,400 people). Most other parts of Wales are projected to see rises in their populations, particularly urban areas.

People will continue to move to and from Newtown, as they always have done.

Do you think Newtown is the right size, with the right mix of people, jobs, facilities and things to do? How do you imagine this will have changed by 2035?

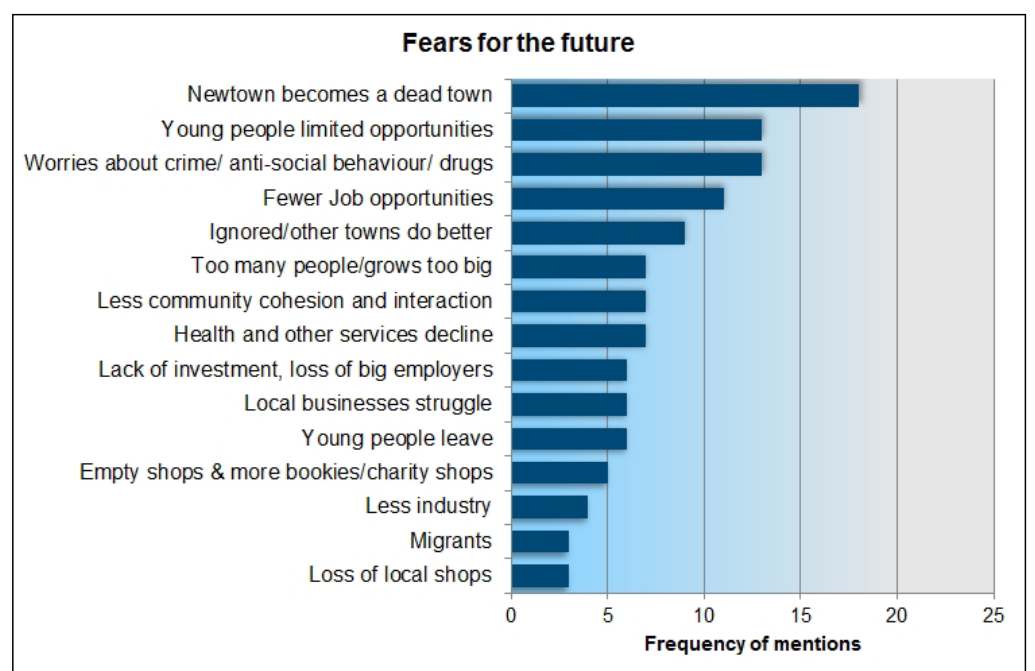
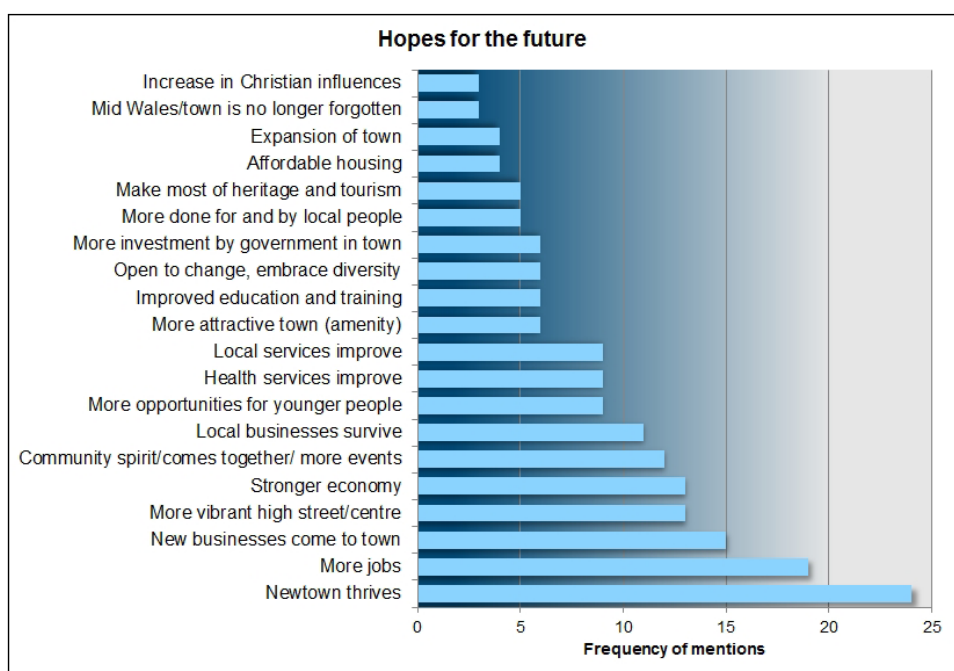
Economy

The biggest fear we have heard during our research is that Newtown may become a 'dead' town. This is partly connected to worries about the bypass; that local businesses will suffer, the town will not benefit from passing trade, and it might be forgotten about politically.

This fear is also reflective of more general worries about the future of the high street, what jobs and opportunities there will be, especially for young people. In the past Newtown has grabbed opportunities to develop, innovate and evolve and it continues to do so today.

Wider global trends such as continued advances in automation, technology and innovation will continue to play a part in framing how the town changes.

Imagine you had £50 million to spend on Newtown. What would you do with it?



The Assembling Newtown: Moving with the Times pop-up exhibition 19th-30th September, Glanhafren Market Hall, Newtown, 10am-4pm, free entrance, all welcome.

For further information about the Assembling Newtown research, please visit our website: www.assemblingnewtown.org

The wider GLOBAL-RURAL project also has a regularly updated website: globalruralproject.wordpress.com

