The Society of Jesus in Wales, c.1600–1679

Rediscovering the Cwm Jesuit Library at Hereford Cathedral

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Abstract

This article will analyze and evaluate the surviving volumes from the Cwm Jesuit Library, seized and brought to Hereford Cathedral by Bishop Herbert Croft in 1679 at the height of the national hysteria attending the alleged Popish Plot.¹ Located originally at the Cwm, on the Herefordshire-Monmouthshire border, the headquarters of the Jesuit College of St. Francis Xavier (a territorial missionary district rather than an educational establishment), the library lay at the heart of the seventeenth-century Welsh Jesuit mission.² Unanalyzed since 1679, the Cwm collection is the largest known surviving post-Reformation Jesuit missionary library in Britain and, as such, reveals a great deal about post-Reformation life in Wales and the English borderlands. This paper will reveal fresh information about the importance of the Welsh mission to the successes of the Jesuits in England and Wales.

Keywords

Wales – Catholics – library – recusant – inscriptions – rare books – provenance – Cwm – College of St. Francis Xavier

The Missio Walliae

The creation of the English province of the Society of Jesus by Superior General Muzio Vitelleschi in January 1623 was the culmination of some forty years of

1 The paper is drawn from the Cwm Jesuit Library Project, a three-year research collaboration (2011–2014) between Hereford Cathedral and Swansea University, funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council.

2 The Welsh word “Cwm” (pronounced “coom”) means “valley” or “glen.”

missionary endeavor by the Society of Jesus in the British Isles. The strength of support for Catholicism in Wales had been one of the reasons cited by William Allen in 1575 for encouraging the then superior general, Everard Mercurian, to sanction the *missio Angliae* in 1580. Dr. Morys Clynnog (c.1525–c.1580), a Welsh Catholic exile and author and, in the 1578–1579 period, the first rector of the English College in Rome, had asserted as early as 1572 that as the Israelites awaited the Messiah, so too the Welsh awaited the restoration of Catholicism.³ Clynnog also declared that Catholicism was so strong in Wales that “scarcely a single man in a thousand will be found to be a heretic”: it appeared that the success of any future *missio Angliae* would depend on the inclusion of the *missio Walliae*.⁴

Upon the creation of the English province in 1623, England and Wales were divided into districts to enable efficient administration and distribution of the Jesuit missionaries, whilst still allowing operations to remain largely undetected. Each district was designated as a “college” or a “residence,” a unique Jesuit response to the difficult conditions created by the body of anti-Catholic legislation passed by the English parliament in London from the 1580s onwards. Although eventually intended for development into Jesuit *collegia* in the educational sense when political conditions allowed, the terms instead denoted each district’s financial stability: districts with secure annual incomes were termed *colleges*, governed by a rector, whilst those with less secure incomes were termed *residences*, governed by a superior.⁵

3 Meic Stephens (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to the Literature of Wales* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1990), 94. See also Geraint Bowen, “Morys Clynnog (1521–1580/1),” *Transactions of the Caernarfonshire Historical Society* 27 (1966): 92; and T. F. Mayer, “Clenock, Maurice (c.1525–1580?),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [ODNB] (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2004; online edition January 2008), accessed January 2, 2014.

4 Patrick Ryan, S.J. (ed.), “Some correspondence of Cardinal Allen, 1579–85, from the Jesuit archives,” in *Miscellanea VII*, Catholic Record Society 9 (CRS: London, 1911), 63, cited in Thomas M. McCoog, S.J., “The Society of Jesus in Wales; the Welsh in the Society of Jesus: 1561–1625,” *The Journal of Welsh Religious History* 5 (1997): 1 and n. 2, 19. The quotation from Clynnog is cited in J. M. Cleary, “Dr Morys Clynnog’s invasion projects of 1575–1576,” *Recusant History* 8 (1966): 306–307.

5 Maurice Whitehead, “The Jesuit *Collegium Sancti Francisci Xaverii* in South Wales and the South-West of England and its links with the Low Countries, ca. 1600–1679,” in *The Jesuits of the Low Countries: Identities and Impact (1540–1773)*, eds. Rob Faesen and Leo Kenis (Peeters: Leuven-Paris-Walpole MA, 2012), 199. See also Thomas M. McCoog, S.J., “The Slightest Suspicion of Avarice: the Finances of the English Jesuit Mission,” *Recusant History* 19 (1988): 106–107; and Thomas M. McCoog, S.J., “The Society of Jesus in England, 1623–1688: An Institutional Study” (Ph.D. thesis, University of Warwick, 1984), 166–174.

Territorially, the Welsh district, or the College of St. Francis Xavier, was the most extensive district of the English province, covering, until approximately 1667, the whole of Wales, Herefordshire, Monmouthshire, Somerset, and Gloucestershire, an area of some thirty thousand square kilometers. Even after 1667 when, for practical reasons, the area had been divided in two and the residence of St. Winefride created in North Wales, the College of St. Francis Xavier, now the South Wales and Herefordshire district, was still one of the most extensive districts of the entire province, covering some twenty thousand square kilometers even in its reduced size. The headquarters of this large territorial district, from approximately 1600 to 1679, was at the Cwm. Located twenty miles south of Hereford and three miles south-west of Monmouth, this settlement comprised three farms: the Cwm and the Upper Cwm—where the Jesuits of the College of St. Francis Xavier lived and worked—and Llangunville, which operated as the main supply farm of the college.⁶

The three farms are located on the Welsh-English border, as well as near the three county borders of Monmouthshire, Herefordshire, and Gloucestershire. This was a curious choice of location for the main base of this vast territory, particularly given its non-central position within the district and its difficult terrain: access is still difficult in the modern day, particularly in inclement weather. However, the importance of borders in seventeenth-century British religious history cannot be underestimated: methods of law enforcement in place at the time were organized according to geographical boundaries, such as parishes and counties, and therefore jurisdiction obtained only within these areas. Thus, for a community of Jesuits covertly ministering to a large recusant Catholic population, the ability quickly to pass into a different county (in this case, one of three), or even country, would have provided some measure of security against the dangerous work being undertaken.⁷ By the time anyone in pursuit had reached the main town of the next county, alerted the sheriff or

6 None of the original farm houses have survived, although the existing Georgian farmhouses of the Cwm and the Upper Cwm stand above their respective original seventeenth-century cellars, and various seventeenth-century barns and other working farm buildings can be found in and around all three farms.

7 County borders were utilized by the Catholic community in many similar locations in England and Wales. Stonor Park, within striking distance of the Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Berkshire county borders, had been home to the recusant Stonor family since 1349: it operated as a missionary headquarters for both Edmund Campion, S.J., and Robert Parsons, S.J., in the early years of the Jesuit English mission: Bede Camm, *Forgotten Shrines: An Account of Some Old Catholic Halls and Families in England and of Relics and Memorials of the English Martyrs* (Burns, Oates & Washbourne: London, 1936), 97–103.

local magistrate, raised a posse and returned to where the suspect had last been seen, the person or persons in questions would have long been gone. The potential linguistic difference between English and Welsh border towns added a further element of possible delay in the efficient pursuit of a suspect. Interestingly, the three farms were also within close proximity of the three borders of the Church of England dioceses of Hereford, Llandaff, and St. Davids, with a fourth ecclesiastical border, that of the diocese of Gloucester, also within striking distance. This strongly suggests that the location had been deliberately chosen to minimize dangers of detection or capture by government authorities and to maximize potential means of escape.

In June 1605, the bishop of Hereford, Robert Bennet (d. 1617), had written to Robert Cecil, earl of Salisbury (1563–1612), stating that, when searching for Jesuits and priests in Monmouthshire, his men had “found houses full of alters [*sic*], images, bookes of superstition, reliques of idolatry, but left desolate of men and women,” all of whom had “fledd into Wales.”⁸ Similarly, when the Cwm was ultimately raided seventy-three years later in December 1678, not a single Jesuit was caught at any one of the three farms. Moreover, the raiding party, sent by the bishop of Hereford, had jurisdiction only as far the nearby county boundary with Monmouthshire.

The entire area around the Cwm, particularly the counties of Monmouthshire and Herefordshire, had developed rapidly as a Catholic stronghold in post-Reformation England and Wales. Edward Zouche, eleventh baron Zouche (1556–1625), described the area as “stuffed with papists” shortly after his appointment as president of the council of Wales and the Marches in 1602. Richard Lewkenor (1542–1616), justice of the peace for Chester, had also commented in 1601 that there was a “great backslyding in religion in these parts and especially in Monmouthshere, Herefordshire and Shropshire [*sic*].”⁹ It is estimated that, despite the penal laws, between eleven and twenty percent of the population of Herefordshire and Monmouthshire were still Catholic by as late as 1641.¹⁰

As well as a number of secular priests and Benedictine missionaries, a sizeable Jesuit presence was working in Wales from the early 1600s onwards,

8 The National Archives, London (TNA), SP 14/14, f. 116. See also William Richardson, “Bennet, Robert (d. 1617),” *ODNB* (accessed December 4, 2013); Pauline Croft, “Cecil, Robert, first earl of Salisbury (1563–1612),” *ODNB* (accessed October 3, 2013).

9 Louis A. Knafla, “Zouche, Edward 1st, eleventh Baron Zouche (1556–1625),” *ODNB* (accessed December 3, 2013). As cited in Wendy Brogden, “The Whitsun Riots of 1605: a Catholic commotion” (M.A. thesis, Birmingham University, 2013), 26.

10 John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community, 1570–1850* (Darton, Longman & Todd: London, 1979), 97.

representing between five and seven percent of the total number of Jesuits in the English mission at any one time. Robert Jones, S.J. (1564–1615), who would in 1609 be appointed head of the English and Welsh mission, was the founding father of Jesuit missionary endeavor in Wales, having been sent there shortly after his arrival in London in 1595.¹¹ Jones was closely involved with the selection and successful use of the three Cwm farms as a missionary headquarters, and with developing the extensive library that was built up from approximately 1600 onwards. His close links with, and patronage by, the wealthy and powerful Somerset family, earls of Worcester (of nearby Raglan Castle), ultimately provided the financial security that allowed the *missio Walliae* to be cemented into the new College of St. Francis Xavier in 1623.

The earliest surviving records of Jesuits at work in the area indicate a flourishing establishment by 1620: eleven Jesuits are listed as part of a fully functioning administrative structure firmly established by this date. Initially described as existing “cum missio Walliae” [*with the Welsh mission*], subsequent surviving lists record an average of fourteen Jesuits attached to the College of St. Francis Xavier between 1623 and 1638, numbers which continued until the early 1660s.

Evidence found within the surviving library books from the Cwm provides conclusive links between the successful missionary work of Robert Jones and the creation, some thirty years later, of the College of St. Francis Xavier in 1622 as part of the newly emerging English province. Crucially, this new evidence shows that 1622 was not the commencement of Jesuit activity in Wales, but rather that the creation of the College of St. Francis Xavier was a new appellation for an existing successful mission: it cemented and confirmed the successes and achievements of Jesuits working on the Welsh mission since Jones’s arrival in 1595.

Robert Jones had been active in establishing an organization of Welsh gentry, secular priests and Jesuits from a base in Monmouthshire within a decade of his arrival in 1595. By 1604, he was responsible for sending students from Shropshire, Worcestershire, Herefordshire, and Monmouthshire to the English colleges at Valladolid and Douai.¹² Furthermore, the status of the College of St. Francis Xavier as a well-established and well-developed Jesuit mission within the English province was utilized to the full: the district was one to

11 Thomas M. McCoog, S.J., “Jones, Robert (c.1564–1615),” *ODNB* (accessed November 20, 2013). See also Thomas M. McCoog, S.J., *The Society of Jesus in Ireland, Scotland and England, 1589–1597: Building the Faith of St Peter upon the King of Spain’s Monarchy* (Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu/Ashgate: Rome/Farnham, 2012), 174, 190.

12 McCoog, “Jones, Robert.”

which new and inexperienced recruits could be sent to gain experience and to be nurtured in their vocation.¹³ Crucially, of the eighty-three Jesuits who served in the Welsh mission and who professed their vows between 1577 and 1663, twenty took their vows in Wales. This figure is surpassed only by the College of St. Ignatius, or the London district, where twenty-two of the eighty-three men took their vows. Nineteen of the men have no place or date of profession recorded, and only one or two men took their vows within other districts of the English province, such as Oxfordshire (residence of St. Mary), Derbyshire (College of the Immaculate Conception), Devonshire (residence of St. Stanislaus) or Worcestershire (residence of St. George).¹⁴

The Cwm Library before 1678

Prior to 2011, the library from the Cwm at Hereford Cathedral was thought to number around 170 volumes: the research project has subsequently revealed that the surviving Cwm library comprises between 300 and 350 volumes there.¹⁵ Analysis of these volumes reveals hitherto hidden aspects of Catholic life in post-Reformation England and Wales, as well as the importance of the College of St. Francis Xavier in the successes of the Jesuit mission as a whole. Particularly noticeable is the truly international nature of Catholic life in seventeenth-century Wales and England. The surviving books, dating from between 1503 and 1676 (although primarily after 1595), were published all over Europe, in locations such as Rome, Paris, Antwerp, Liège, Munich, Ingolstadt, Toledo, and Douai. The three most frequently occurring locations are Cologne, Antwerp, and Mainz, which respectively produced approximately twenty, nineteen and nine percent of the surviving books. All three cities were renowned European printing centers. Antwerp in particular had played a central part in sustaining the English book trade since at least the 1540s, and Mainz was one of the first European cities to import printed books into England, via

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- 13 A more detailed history of the development of the Cwm as a Jesuit missionary center will appear in Hannah Thomas, "Missioners on the Margins? The Territorial Headquarters of the Welsh Jesuit College of St. Francis Xavier at the Cwm, c.1600–1679," *Recusant History* (forthcoming 2015).
 - 14 Statistics compiled from Thomas M. McCoog, S.J., *English and Welsh Jesuits 1555–1650, part 1 A–F and part 2 G–Z*, CRS 74, 75 (CRS: Southampton, 1994, 1995).
 - 15 The collection has now been fully listed for the first time in its history and is available for searching at the Hereford Cathedral website: <http://www.herefordcathedral.org/education-research/library-and-archives/online-catalogue>.

travelling clerics.¹⁶ Other parts of Europe produced similar quantities of the surviving Cwm books: for example, approximately eight percent were printed in Lyon, seven in Paris, six in London and around four each in Ingolstadt, Douai, and St. Omer. Similarly, both Paris and Lyon were at the heart of European-wide book traffic from the very early days of the printed book.¹⁷

Although caution is required, as the date of printing of individual books within the Cwm collection does not necessarily equate to the date of acquisition, broad patterns are discernible. The majority of the surviving books were printed throughout the period of the most intensive Jesuit missionary work in Wales, from 1595 until 1676: it is reasonable to assume that relatively new books were being purchased on the continent and smuggled into Wales throughout this period. Far from being isolated in a secluded valley on the Welsh border, the Jesuits of the College of St. Francis Xavier remained deeply connected with their European counterparts and a shared continental Catholic culture.¹⁸

Patronage and covert support

How did these books make their way from continental printing centers to the secluded Jesuit regional headquarters at the Cwm? This is a particularly relevant question in the early stages of Jesuit activity in Wales, when being found in possession of Catholic literature could result in fines, imprisonment, or even execution. One possibility is the discreet patronage and support given by the influential Somerset family, based at nearby Raglan Castle.

16 James Raven, *The Business of Books: Booksellers and the English Book Trade* (Yale University Press: New Haven, 2007), 14–16, 21, 30.

17 *Ibid.*, 11.

18 The surviving Cwm library volumes confirm Southern's statement that all but a handful of works intended for the English recusant community were printed in continental printing centers such as Cologne, Antwerp, and Mainz, though suggesting that this remained the case long into the seventeenth century, nearly one hundred years past Southern's *terminus* of 1582. As well as allowing the standard daily practices of Catholic devotion and piety to continue, books imported from the continent by various illicit means were a key part in the successes of the Counter-Reformation, particularly in establishing authority and absolute commitment over the much-debated idea of "church papistry." See A. C. Southern, *Elizabethan Recusant Prose 1559–1582* (Sands & Co: London, 1950), 32, 338–363; Anthony Milton, "Licensing, Censorship and Religious Orthodoxy in Early Stuart England," *The Historical Journal* 41 (1998): 625–651; and Alexandra Walsham, *Church Papists: Catholicism, Conformity and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England* (Boydell & Brewer: Woodbridge, 1999), 22–49.

As earls of Worcester (and later dukes of Beaufort), the family claimed descent back to John of Gaunt and kinship with the Tudor monarchy. The fourth earl of Worcester, Edward Somerset (1550–1628), was a particular favorite of both Elizabeth I and James I, living a highly successful, outwardly Protestant, public life during both reigns.¹⁹ Privately he remained a Catholic, allegedly described by Elizabeth as “reconciling the irreconcilable: a stiff papist with a good subject.”²⁰ Somerset owned much of the land that the Jesuits used as their base of operations, including the three Cwm farms and the rest of the Cwm estate, and he is known to have granted other lands and protection to the Jesuits in Wales.²¹

Through the marriage of his daughter, Frances, to William Morgan of Llantarnam, a member of the local Catholic gentry, Somerset came into contact with the Jesuit, Robert Jones, who was patronized by Morgan. This close working relationship between Somerset, Morgan, and Jones was a fundamental foundation in the successes of the Jesuit mission in Wales from its earliest days, as well as the source of key financial support.²² Jones is known to have stayed at Raglan Castle from 1595 onwards, more than likely using it as a base before the Cwm estate was secured. Many of Somerset's other children were married into strategically important Catholic families, such as the Petres, the Guildfords, and the Wynters or Wintours, creating a strong network of Catholic support and patronage at gentry level that could have aided and enabled the access and distribution of continental Catholic literature amongst the recusants and missionaries of the area.²³

The Cwm Library

The surviving Cwm books at Hereford cathedral are principally theological and include Biblical commentaries; works of ascetic and dogmatic theology;

19 Whitehead, “*Collegium Sancti Francisci Xaverii*,” 201.

20 David Lloyd, *The states-men and favourites of England since the Reformation their prudence and policies, successes and miscarriages, advancements and falls; during the reigns of King Henry VIII, King Edward VI, Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth, King James [and] King Charles I* (London, 1665), 393.

21 Pauline Croft, “Somerset, Edward, fourth earl of Worcester (c.1550–1628),” *ODNB* (accessed December 5, 2013).

22 See p. 576 above.

23 Evidence does survive of the use of gentry networks to facilitate the spread of Catholic literature, such as a list, compiled by the spies of Sir Francis Walsingham (c.1532–1590), entitled *Howe and to whome the Popish Bookes weare bestowed*, December 2 1581 (British

patristic and hagiographical studies with a particularly Jesuit emphasis; as well as several editions of the Jesuit *Institute*, including a full set of the 1635 non-pirated edition of the *Corpus institutorum Societatis Jesu* printed by Johann Mersius in Antwerp in 1635.²⁴ The collection also includes a large body of controversial or polemical works, addressing the debates raging on both sides of the Counter-Reformation in England and Wales. Interestingly, in both the Cwm collection and the only other surviving Jesuit missionary library in the English province, that of the College of the Immaculate Conception, or the Derbyshire district, books of this nature represent the largest category by a significant margin.²⁵

The primary aim of the Jesuit mission to England and Wales, as set out by Mercurian in 1580, was to work among the English and Welsh Catholics to strengthen their faith and win back the lapsed. Theirs was not outwardly a job of conversion and, crucially, they were to avoid any political involvement whatsoever, either in person or in their letters.²⁶ However, from the high percentage of books surviving in both the Cwm and Holbeck libraries on the controversial and highly politicized debates raging on all sides, it is clear that, in reality, this restriction proved somewhat unrealistic: by 1679, much of the missioner Jesuits' time and attention had been, and continued to be, devoted to reading up on these latest debates.²⁷

Cwm books at Hereford, 1679 onwards

By December 1678, the political pressure created by the so-called "Popish Plot" had created an atmosphere of intense paranoia and fear of the alleged papist

Library, Lansdowne MS 33/62). Several daughters born of the various Somerset marriages also entered the English convents in exile, such as Anne Somerset (1613–1650) and Mary Wintour (1605–1630). See "Who Were the Nuns? A Prosopographical study of English Convents in Exile 1600–1800," <http://wwtn.history.qmul.ac.uk>, refs AC1114 and BB198 in particular (date accessed March 13, 2014). See also Michael G. Brennan, *The Travel Diary (1611–1612) of an English Catholic, Sir Charles Somerset* (The Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society: Leeds, 1993), 6–8, 10.

24 McCoog, "Institutional Study," 21–22.

25 Hendrik Dijkgraaf, *The Library of a Jesuit Community at Holbeck, Nottinghamshire (1679)* (LP Publications: Cambridge, 2003), 237. In both libraries, this category accounts for some twenty-four percent of total holdings. The next largest category in the Cwm library is Dogmatic Theology (thirteen percent) and in Holbeck, Ascetic Theology (eighteen percent).

26 McCoog, "Institutional Study," 55–57. See also McCoog, *Society of Jesus*, 7–9.

27 Dijkgraaf, *Holbeck*, 270–283.

threat.²⁸ The authorities in places with a known significant Catholic population were pressured into bringing the threat under control: this was particularly the case in Monmouthshire and Herefordshire. An order was sent from the House of Lords on December 7, 1678, to Bishop Herbert Croft of Hereford (1603–1691) to “find out the truth of the matter of fact concerning the said place called Combe, and to give this house a full account.”²⁹ The raid was carried out on December 19 by a party of men led by Captain John Scudamore, a Protestant member of an otherwise staunchly Catholic local family, on behalf of Bishop Croft, and “several cartloads” of books were removed from the premises. Two contemporary accounts of the raid survive: the *Narrative of a Discovery of a College of Jesuits at a Place Called the Come in the County of Hereford*, written by Bishop Herbert Croft to celebrate the successful raid and closure of the site in December 1678 and published in London in early 1679; and an unpublished letter, sent to Croft by Scudamore a few days after the raid had taken place, to report on the success of the raid that Scudamore and his men had carried out at the Cwm.³⁰

A comparison of the two accounts demonstrates that Croft himself was not present during the raid and that much of Croft’s own *Narrative* is in fact a more sensationalized version of Scudamore’s account. Croft was particularly keen to have his own version of events published: he wrote to the House of Lords on December 30, 1678, not only to ask for permission to keep the books removed from the Cwm library, but also to ask that “the Lords may think fit to print the narrative I sent up.”³¹

Interestingly, many of the additional details added by Croft in his *Narrative* suggest a degree of familiarity with the Cwm estate, both physically and historically. Croft adds a description of the farmsteads, details of now-missing leases and land transactions, and accounts of other lesser-known farms and lands also associated with the estate, as well as an eloquent description of the “fair and gentile” houses occupied by the Jesuits.³²

28 For more on the fictitious Popish Plot, see John Kenyon, *The Popish Plot* (Phoenix Press: London, 2000); John Spurr, *The Post-Reformation* (Pearson: Harlow, 2006), 161–172; and John Miller, *Popery & Politics in England 1660–1688* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2008), 154–188.

29 House of Lords Volume 13: December 7, 1678, *Journal of the House of Lords Volume 13: 1675–1681* (1767–1830), 407: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=11622> (accessed November 4, 2013).

30 Herbert Croft, *Narrative of a Discovery of Jesuits at a place called the Come in the County of Hereford* (London: 1679). Scudamore’s unpublished letter is at British Library, Lansdowne 846/73, ff. 229–230.

31 TNA, SP 29/408, f. 205.

32 Croft, *Narrative*, 3.

As a child, Croft had been converted to Catholicism by his father, Sir Herbert Croft of Croft Castle, Herefordshire, eventually joining his father at St. Omer, where he had been educated by the English Jesuits. He subsequently flirted with the idea of joining the Society of Jesus himself, before returning to England in 1628 and re-converting to Anglicanism.³³ It seems very likely that, prior to 1678, Bishop Croft had long been aware of, and familiar with, the Jesuit missionary headquarters within his diocese, and that this familiarity slipped out when furnishing Scudamore's factual account with the more sensational details and additional information.

Furthermore, Croft's very request to add the seized books to his cathedral library at Hereford raises questions about his familiarity with the mission and work of the clandestine community of Jesuits based at the Cwm. Although his plea is based around the premise that the cathedral library was "well furnished before the great rebellion, but then rifled of all," analysis of the existing library suggests that the library survived the Civil War without major losses.³⁴ Curiously, no records or accounts survive, if indeed they ever existed, of what was brought to Hereford in February 1679, when Croft's request was approved by the Privy Council.³⁵

This odd discrepancy, given Croft's efforts to ensure that the Cwm books were added to Hereford Cathedral Library in the first place, is made all the more peculiar when one considers that the cathedral library in 1679 probably consisted of about seven hundred volumes, and that the Cwm collection of between 300 and 350 volumes represented between forty and fifty percent of the existing library—a sizeable addition by anybody's standards. Owing to the lack of surviving records or contemporary accounts, a clear picture of the Cwm library *in situ* prior to 1678, and immediately after its removal to Hereford cathedral in February 1679, can now be gained only from the books themselves. Detailed analysis of surviving provenance marks and other inscriptions can begin to provide a more detailed understanding both of the library and of life for the Jesuits of the Welsh mission.

Provenance Analysis

Although there is not sufficient scope in the present article to explore all surviving provenance marks found within the collection, mention of a few key

33 William Marshall, "Croft, Herbert (1603–1691)," *ODNB* (accessed January 2, 2014).

34 TNA, SP 29/408, f. 205. See also Joan Williams, "The Library," in *Hereford Cathedral: A History*, ed. Gerald Aylmer (Hambleton Press: London, 2000), 521.

35 TNA, PC 2/67, 116–117. Privy Council to Bishop of Hereford, February 25, 1678/9.

inscription groups can throw helpful light on these matters. The connection between the earls of Worcester, the Morgans of Llantarnam, and Robert Jones, S.J., is clearly evidenced within the surviving library books. Jones is known to have used at least seven aliases during his ministry, and one of them, “Anselmus,” appears to have been used consistently from very early on in his career as a Jesuit: indeed, it appears to have been his preferred alias by the time of his arrival in London on February 22, 1595. This particular inscription appears in some thirty-seven volumes within the collection, printed between 1554 and 1614. Two letters survive in Jones’s hand in which he uses this alias: his signature on both of the letters has been matched paleographically to the inscriptions in the books, and all surviving examples share key paleographic characteristics, providing a continuous link between Robert Jones, S.J., and “Robert Anselmus” for a period of at least ten years.³⁶

Similarly, a “William Morgan” inscription can be found in six volumes within the collection, always paired with an “Anselmus” and in the same beautifully executed gothic style as in Figure 1.

Although William Morgan is not an uncommon name in Wales, the presence of both the Morgan and the “Anselmus” inscriptions together suggest that this is the inscription of William Morgan of Llantarnam, patron of Robert Jones. Perhaps Morgan donated a few choice volumes from his personal collection to help with the foundation of a permanent base for the flourishing Welsh mission, or perhaps Jones lent his patron a select group of carefully chosen reading materials for his spiritual development.³⁷ At the very least, these provenance marks provide proof of the physical movement of texts and book circulation amongst members of the Welsh Catholic community, and attitudes towards ownership of these volumes.

“Anselmus” links into other members of the lay community served by the Jesuits based at the Cwm, and also provides interesting insights into how books may have been initially donated to the Cwm library. The ownership mark of Edward Poyntz (c.1570–1615) appears on some twenty-six volumes within the

36 ABSI Angl. III, f. 67 and ARSI, 651/602. I am grateful to Thomas McCoog, S.J., for providing me with a copy of both of these documents. The 1606 letter has previously been transcribed as “Angelinus,” but close inspection of the originals and enlarged copies show that it is in fact “Anselmus.” See Henry Foley, S.J., *Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus* 4 (Burns & Oates: London, 1878), 368–373.

37 This was a method used by the missionaries to encourage appropriate spiritual development. John Gerard, S.J., noted how he started the household practice of reading ascetical books during his time at Braddocks, Essex, as well as several works read and “usefully translated” by John Walpole as part of his spiritual development: see John Gerard, S.J., *The Autobiography of a Hunted Priest* (Ignatius Press: San Francisco, 2012), 35, 39.

FIGURE 1 “Anselm” and “William Morgan” inscriptions. Hereford Cathedral Library (HCL), N.7.8 (1503).

collection, printed between 1564 and 1605, usually taking the form “Liber Edw[ardi] Poyntz,” often followed by the motto “Potiora spero” [I hope for better]. A number of them also bear an “Anselmus” inscription, adding further evidence to the clandestine circulation of Catholic texts amongst lay members of the Catholic community.

Poyntz was a member of a well-known English Catholic family of Iron Acton in Gloucestershire, which also had Welsh property at Caerleon in Monmouthshire. He has been identified as the second son of Sir Nicholas Poyntz of Iron Acton (1537–85), from Sir Nicholas’s second marriage to Lady Margaret Stanley. Edward’s position in the family means he is barely mentioned in the records and chronicles of the official family line: indeed, his appearance in a recent monograph on archaeological excavations at the family’s principal seat, Acton Court at Iron Acton, is limited to a brief description of him as an eleven year-old boy at the time of his mother’s death.³⁸

38 Kirsty Rodwell and Robert Bell, *Acton Court: the Evolution of an Early Tudor Courtier’s House* (English Heritage: London, 2004), 17, 29.

Books bearing the inscription of Edward Poyntz are among the few with clear evidence of how they came to be in the Cwm library. Poyntz's will of October 3, 1613 (proved September 10, 1615), bequeathed "all his bookes to Nicholas and John Poyntz his sonnes to be equallie [*sic*] parted between them."³⁹ Further research has revealed that Edward's youngest son, John Poyntz, was a Jesuit, known more commonly under his alias John Stephens: he entered the Society of Jesus in 1640 and is known to have served the College of St. Francis Xavier between 1641 and 1645, presumably donating his father's books to the Cwm library in this period.⁴⁰ Contemporary accounts indicate that Edward Poyntz, Robert Jones, S.J., and William Morgan worked closely together in facilitating recusant life in Wales: a report by the High Sheriff of Herefordshire in 1605 describes Poyntz as being "altogether Jesuited," and Morgan as keeping company with "Jones the Jesuit, the firebrand of all."⁴¹

There is evidence within the collection of other Jesuits also donating personal book collections to the library at the Cwm, suggesting that at least part of the surviving library was built up from similar donations and in a somewhat haphazard manner. Interestingly, there are very few duplicate volumes or works in the surviving collection, suggesting that although donations may have been accrued in a haphazard manner, a filtering policy was in place to ensure the library was as varied as possible.

Library Management

Evidence also survives within the collection of management of the library itself and of the books as part of a functioning, managed system. Several varieties of classification system can be found in a number of the volumes, providing evidence of different stages of Jesuit activity in Wales. Among these inscriptions are variations of an abbreviated form of "College of St. Francis Xavier of the Society of Jesus," usually "Coll S Xav Soc Jes," which can be found in some twenty-one volumes.

Fifteen of these inscriptions are in the same hand and are accompanied by the initials "ww," as in Figure 2, on books printed between 1616 and 1647. Presumably, these are the initials of a Jesuit in residence with a position of some responsibility in the administration of daily Jesuit life, and were inscribed

39 TNA, PROB 11/126.

40 McCoog, *English and Welsh Jesuits, Part 2*, 303–304.

41 TNA, SP 14/14, f. 120. Report of the High Sheriff of Herefordshire entitled *A Relacon of the Jesuites' Proceedings in Herefordshire and thereabout* [*sic*] (1605).

FIGURE 2 College of St. Francis Xavier ownership mark. HCL, N.2.1 (1647).

sometime after 1622, following the creation of the college. There are two or three likely candidates for these initials, all of whom have a direct connection with the college and the area around it. The most likely is William Wigmore (c.1599–1665) *alias* Campion, who served at the College of St. Francis Xavier from 1647 until his death in 1665, and is listed as a consultor to the rector.⁴²

Another three variations of a similar inscription can be found within the collection, written in different hands and featuring slightly different variations of an abbreviated form of “College of St. Francis Xavier of the Society of Jesus:” these three books were printed between 1589 and 1632, suggesting that perhaps this is an earlier variation of the previous inscription, added to the library before Wigmore’s arrival in 1647. As in continental Europe, and despite the penal laws, an abbreviated form of the college or residence name was a standard way of marking book ownership within the seventeenth-century English province: several examples survive from the library of the College of the Immaculate Conception in Derbyshire, which have been marked with variations of “Soc J Coll Concep BV.”⁴³ Other books within the Cwm collection bear evidence of an earlier phase of ownership mark, namely the eleven volumes inscribed simply either “Soc J” or “S.J.,” indicating that there was probably a functioning regional missionary library in Wales *before* the foundation of the English province in 1623.

Other examples of possible classification systems and ownership marks within the collection reinforce the evidence that the Jesuits working within the *missio Walliae* had a useable library from the very early days of their activity in the area, perhaps one that was stored at Raglan Castle before the Cwm estate was secured as a permanent base. A sequential inscription in the form of the letters “JR” (or “FR”) followed by a number can be found on six of the books, in the same hand:

42 McCoog, *English and Welsh Jesuits*, Part 2, 134.

43 See Dijkgraaf, *Holbeck*, 321–322. For example, a surviving book from the Walloon Jesuit College at St. Omer is inscribed “Coll Soc[ieta]tis Jesu Audom” (*Novum Testamen*, printed 1524, now held at Winchester College Library, Winchester).

FIGURE 3 “JR” or “FR” inscription and sequential number. HCL, U1.10 (1602).

Surviving volumes are numbered 10, 16, 36, 55, 58, and 68, and all books bearing this inscription were printed before 1620. The lack of repetition of these numbers suggests a sequential nature, perhaps indicating bookcase, shelf, and volume number. Similarly, some fourteen volumes, all of which were also printed before 1622, feature a further classification device: the initials “SI” tooled on both covers. Interestingly, a number of the books feature both the “SI” tooling and the “JR” inscription, suggesting that they may have operated together or separately as classification or cataloguing systems. The relatively small period in which these volumes were printed, between 1564 and 1622, adds weight to this theory and, crucially, none of the marks occur in any of the surviving Jesuit book collections in major European repositories. “SI” tooling in particular was not therefore a standard way of marking Jesuit ownership of a volume and is, in all likelihood, evidence of a pre-Cwm library of essential volumes for daily missionary work.⁴⁴

44 I am grateful to Goran Proot, Bart op de Beeck, David Pearson, the Bibliothèque Municipale Lyon, the University of Antwerp and members of CERL who responded to my queries and provided me with their knowledge.

A Catholic Community

Evidence can also be found within the collection of the Cwm books fulfilling a spiritual need for the Catholic community in the Welsh Marches, and functioning as part of a wider religious community. There are links with several prominent local recusant families within the collection, including signatures and ownership marks of local recusants. It is unclear whether these books were used in private homes and worshipping spaces before being donated to the Cwm library, or whether they were used and marked *in situ*, the latter implying that the library also functioned as a public space of sorts. A number of the books also bear the Welsh devotional mottos “Duw a Digon” [God is Plenty] and “Heb Dhuw, Heb Dhim” [Without God, Without Anything] in different hands and expressed in different locations within each volume. The library and the texts contained therein clearly functioned as a means of expressing a shared, albeit clandestine, community identity.

Conclusion

Rediscovering the Cwm library has led to the rediscovering both of a hitherto neglected Catholic community in the Welsh borderlands with England and some eighty years of successful Jesuit missionary endeavor in Wales. A close study of the surviving Cwm library has revealed that, far from being an insignificant area of the English province of the Society of Jesus with local Catholic support that rapidly died away in the face of increasingly harsh penal legislation, the Welsh Jesuit community, later transformed into the College of St. Francis Xavier, was at the forefront of Jesuit missionary endeavor in the British Isles from the 1590s onwards. Strength of local support and the financial assistance offered by the immensely powerful earls of Worcester meant that the *missio Walliae* was soon transformed into an outstanding example of a successful Jesuit mission: there, not only were the ideals of daily Jesuit life attainable in the difficult conditions of post-Reformation England and Wales, but it was also possible to create an environment in which new and inexperienced recruits could be sent to gain experience and to be nurtured in their vocations. Far from being a small, local missionary outpost of the English province of the Society of Jesus, the Welsh district was a diverse, vibrant, and crucially important lynchpin in the successes of the Jesuits in England and Wales, one that has only begun to be understood through a deeper analysis of its surviving library.