

# Newtown and the World

Everyday globalisation in a Powys town



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European Research Council



# Thinking about our place in the world....



# Thinking about globalisation

- The increasing inter-connection and inter-dependence of different parts of the world
- The stretching of social, economic and communications networks over greater distances
- The intensified and accelerated flow of people, goods, capital, information and ideas around the world
- The mixing of different cultural influences from different parts of the world
- Growing consciousness of global issues



Beyond the  
global city



From New York....

... to Newtown



# Everyday globalization



# Assembling Newtown



**The Research Team: Anthonia Onyehialam, Jesse Heley, Michael Woods, Laura Jones, Marc Welsh**

- Study of everyday globalisation in Newtown
- Team from Aberystwyth University
- Part of larger GLOBAL-RURAL project funded by European Research Council



[www.assemblingnewtown.org](http://www.assemblingnewtown.org)

# Assembling Newtown

- What social, economic, political and cultural connections link Newtown with the wider world?
- What have been the key factors in shaping the connected geographies of Newtown over the last 50 years?
- What has been the effect of evolving global connections on the social, economic and cultural life of the town?
- Have evolving global connections contributed to the development of a 'global consciousness' among residents of the town?
- What do the dynamics and experiences of everyday globalisation in Newtown tell us about how globalisation is reproduced through local places?

# Lecture Outline

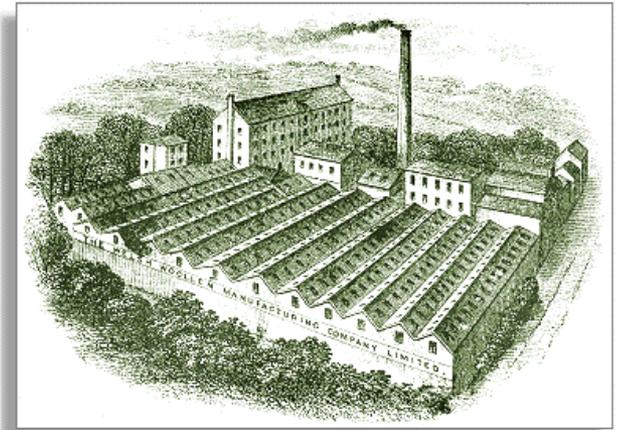
- Introduction
- The Historical Global Connections of Newtown
  - International textile town
  - Pryce Jones and mail order
  - Wartime, POWs and refugees
  - The 'new town' and Laura Ashley
- Newtown's Global Connections Today
  - Newtown and the global economy
  - Globalisation and everyday life
- Our Ongoing Research
- Newtown into the Future

# Historical Global Connections

- Globalisation did not suddenly start in 1970...
- The stretching and multiplication of relationships between places has been happening for centuries
- Not always a smooth or linear process
- Newtown's economy has always developed in the context of connections with other parts of the world

# International Textile Town

- Newtown textile industry based on combination of local resources (wool, water) and imported technologies
- Developed with a global textile industry shaped by distant events (American civil war, British policy in India, growth of Australian and New Zealand wool industries)
- Welsh woollen cloth exported via Shrewsbury and London, Liverpool or Bristol to North America for use as clothing for slaves



# International Textile Town

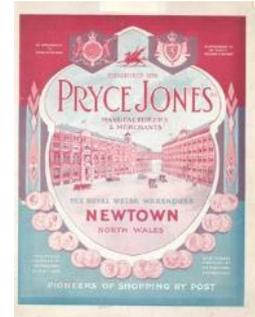
- Industrialisation attracted migrants to Newtown from Wales, milling areas of England and Scotland, and beyond
- The 1881 census recorded people living in Newtown born in British Guiana, Canada, East Indies, France, Germany, Gibraltar, India, Ireland, Jamaica, Switzerland and the United States



(Source: M Richards, A Study of Newtown in 1881)

# International Textile Town

- Sir Pryce Pryce Jones pioneered mail order business from Royal Welsh Warehouse
- From 1859 exhibited Newtown Welsh flannel at trade fairs and expositions across Europe and North America
- By 1900 had over 200,000 customers worldwide
- Sold to European royal households, the German army and customers in America and Australia
- Promoted idea that one could buy from a distance, laying foundations for modern internet shopping



# Davies Family

- Wealth of the Davies family of Llandinam was not of local provenance but it enriched and shaped Newtown and area
- Davies family money connected Newtown with the collieries of South Wales and the steam engines of France, southern Europe, West Africa and South America that used coal exported through Barry docks



# Davies Family

- Philanthropy of David Davies MP and the Davies sisters of Gregynog brought international arts scene to Newtown
- Newtown Pavilion and Gregynog Music Festival attracted world-class musicians
- Davies sisters amassed an internationally significant collection of impressionist paintings at Gregynog
- Collected water lilies for Gregynog from pond painted by Monet



# Robert Owen

- Born in Newtown in 1771, later pioneer of cooperative movement and founder of New Lanark, Scotland and New Harmony, Indiana
- Robert Owen Museum established in Newtown in 1929
- Labour party rallies in mid 20<sup>th</sup> century (addressed by Clement Attlee in 1951 and Herbert Morrison 1949)
- Visit of Soviet delegation in 1956 (with red flag flying above Bear Hotel)



# Robert Owen

- Robert Owen Museum continues to attract international visitors
- Visitors book for April 2015 – April 2016 includes visitors from Sweden, France, Australia (Perth, Canberra and Victoria), Japan, Iceland, USA (Seattle and New York), Canada (Edmonton, Ottawa and Ontario), Spain, Finland, Netherlands, South Africa, New Zealand and Bulgaria



# International Textile Town

- Newtown's incorporation in the international textile industry made it vulnerable to disruption in the global economy
- Financial crisis in USA in 1837 provoked a banking crisis in the UK and an economic downturn that hit Newtown woollen mills
- By early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Newtown's textile industry was in decline, unable to compete with Lancashire and overseas mills



# World Wars

- 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion Royal Welch Fusiliers formed in Newtown in 1914, served in Egypt and at Gallipoli in First World War
- Served in Normandy, Belgium, Holland and Germany in Second World War



# World Wars

Mobility of people into Newtown during wartime

- Evacuees from SE England
- Belgian refugees during First World War
- Italian Prisoners of War during Second World War, camp at Glandulas





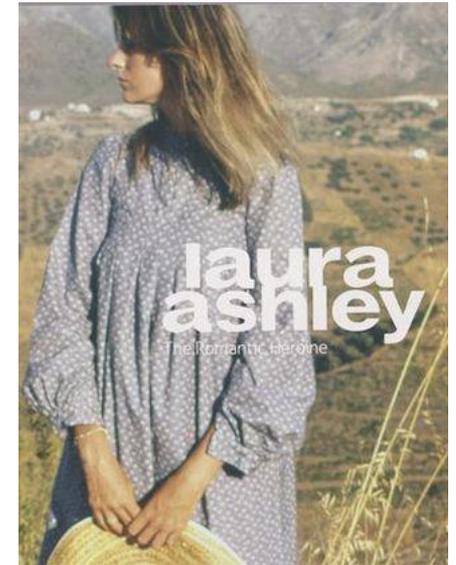
# Post-War Newtown

- Development strategy based on attracting inward investment in manufacturing
- Nearly half of companies moving into new industrial estates came from southern England or Midlands
- Small number of foreign companies from Germany, Netherlands and Ireland
- Other companies grew into global concerns



# Laura Ashley

- Founded in Kent, relocated to Carno, expanded to Newtown with factory and offices in 1970s
- Rapid growth of Laura Ashley brand in 1970s and 1980s with global appeal of 'English rose tradition'
- Shops in London, Paris, Geneva, Brussels and San Francisco and concession sales in Australia, Canada and Japan
- By 1981 selling in 5,000 shops around the world



# Laura Ashley

“The French and German and Dutch stores called in their orders into Newtown to have them processed and then we processed them either through the curtain factory or through the distribution service to send them back out to Europe.”

Former Manager, Laura Ashley

“We saved money by centralising and the place we centralised into wasn't Eindhoven or London, it was actually Newtown in those days.”

Former Manager, Laura Ashley

# Laura Ashley

Started to relocate production to eastern Europe and south east Asia

“Well there were times when the fabric could be printed in the Newtown Texplan operations ... it would then be driven to Carno on the way to Aber with a modern cutting operation. They would put it on a lorry and drive it to Hungary. Sew it together and drive it back again, and that was cheaper than getting the operation in the UK. That went from that, which seemed illogical but was still cheaper, to saying ‘no, we source the whole thing in the Far East and bring it through’”

Former Manager, Laura Ashley

# Laura Ashley

- Management also moved away from Mid Wales
- American CEO appointed in 1991 who transformed distribution system to cut out routing through Newtown from factory to shop
- In 1998 company bought by Malaysian firm MUI Asia Ltd



# Historical Global Connections

- Newtown's development since 18<sup>th</sup> century has been embedded in international networks of trade, business, migration and politics
- Newtown as we know it today has been shaped by these global engagements and by global events and fluctuations in the global economy



Newtown today

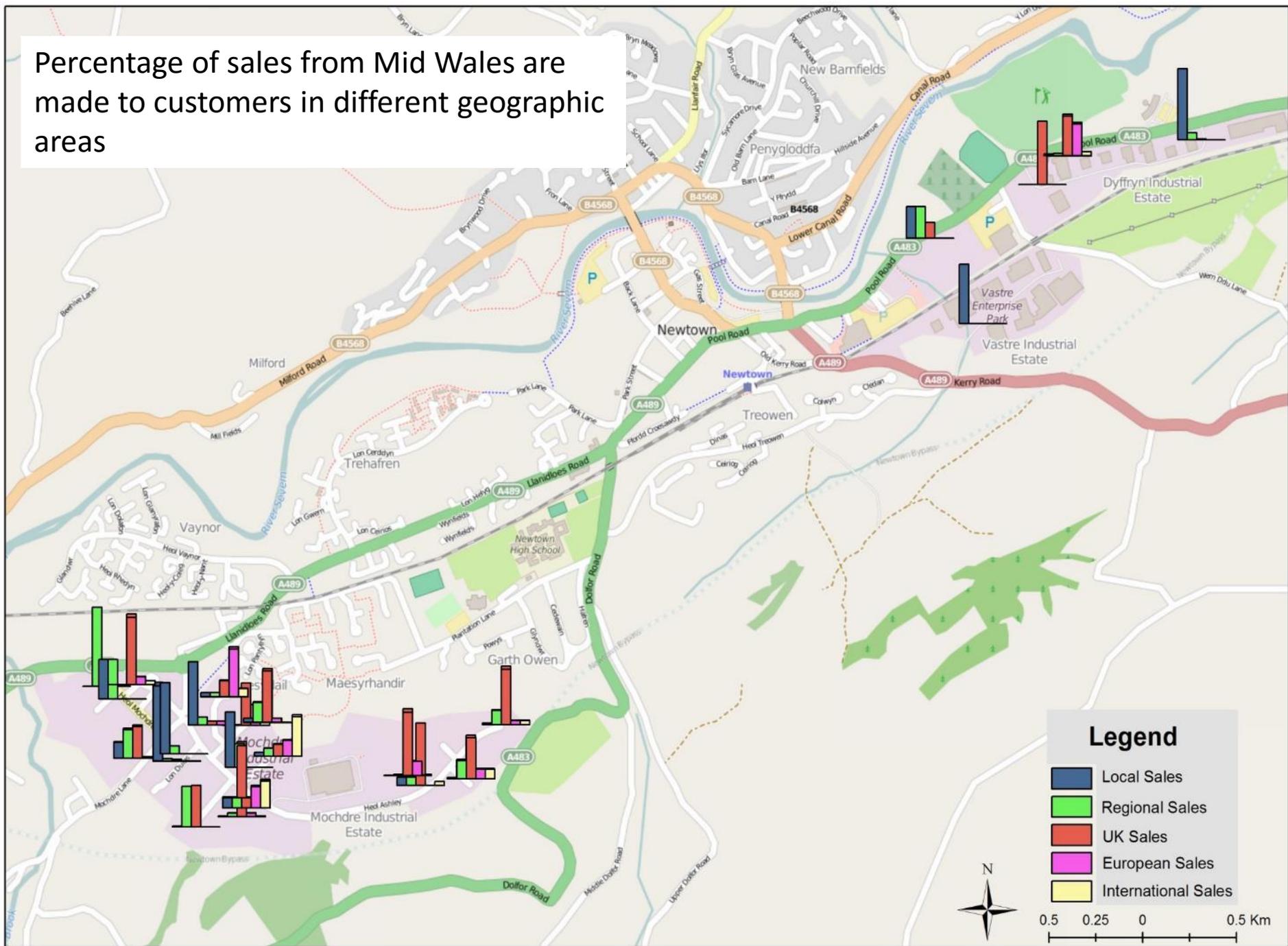
# Newtown and the Global Economy

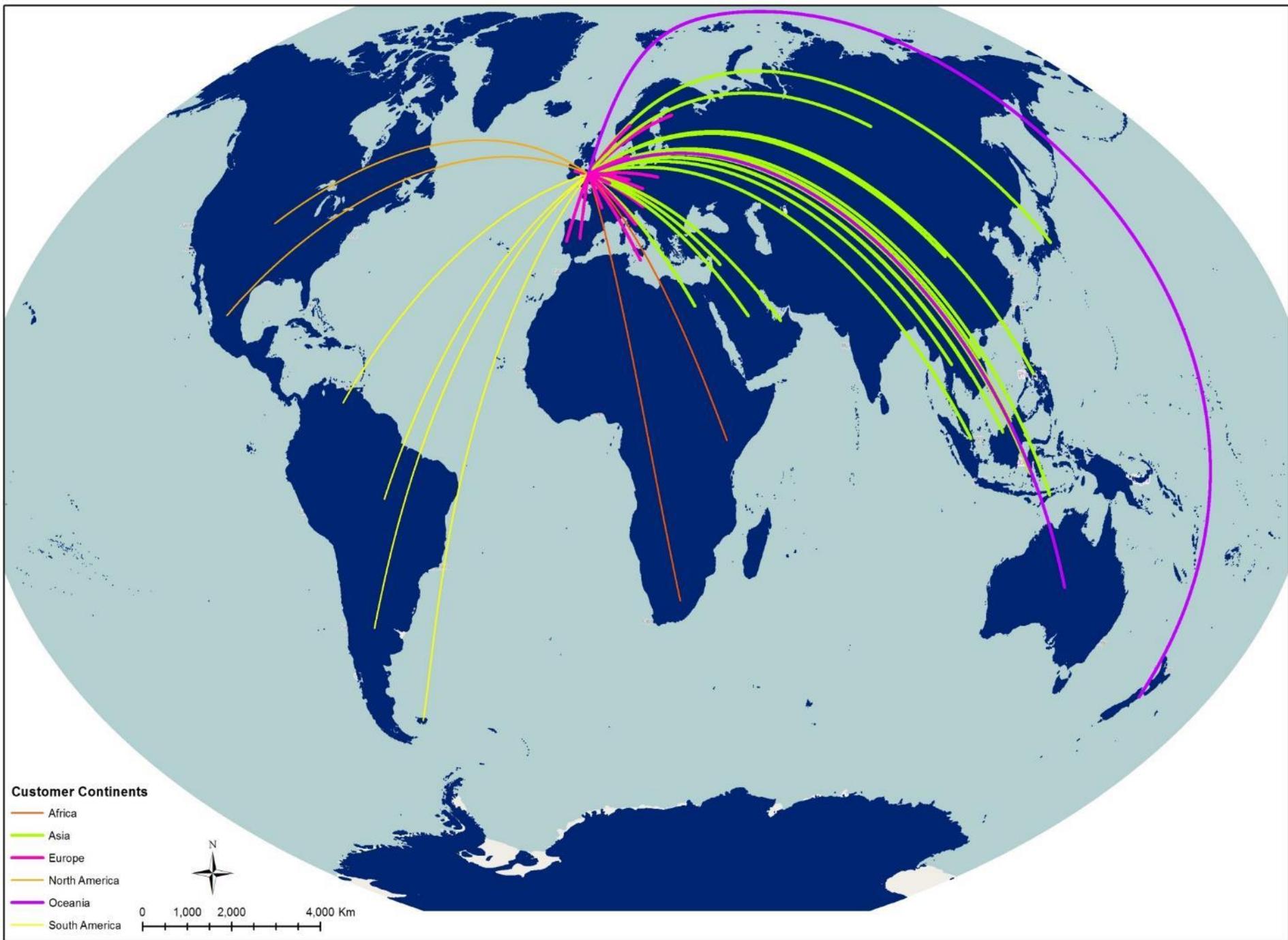
Survey of businesses on Newtown industrial estates

- 48% made purchases from suppliers outside of the UK
- 33% made sales to international customers



Percentage of sales from Mid Wales are made to customers in different geographic areas





# First 'free ascent' of El Capitan Dawn Wall, Yosemite, 2014



# Business story 1: Makefast



- Manufacture yacht fittings (e.g. canopies and sunroofs)
- Safety fasteners for PPE (e.g. life jackets and harnesses)
- Relocated to Newtown in 1989
- Customers - boat and yacht building companies in USA, Europe and China
- Safety buckles for portaledge used on El Capitan's Dawn Wall, Yosemite National Park



# Business story 2: Contact Attachments

- Relocated to Newtown in 1970s due to financial incentives offered by DBRW
- Manufacture of forklift truck attachments
- Customers include:  
BP, the UN, Chevron,  
Singapore Airlines,  
Eurostar, Honda,  
Glaxo-Smith Kline
- Internet sales to over 40 countries



Map of International Customers  
Source: Contact Attachments website

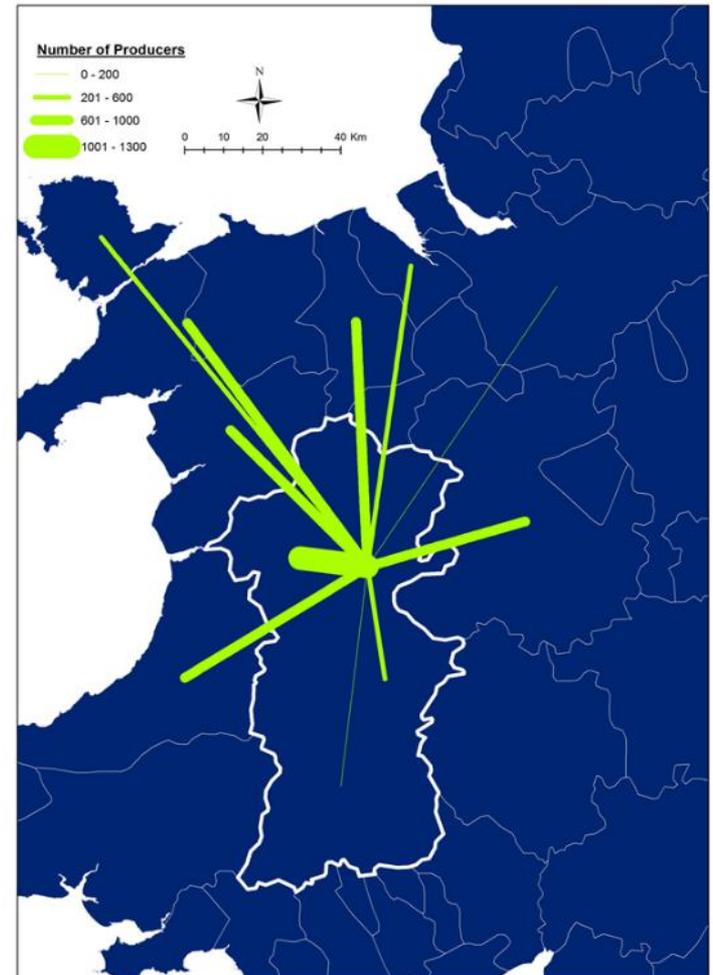
# Business story 3: G&T Evans

- Building and agricultural merchants since 1945
- Dulas Mill - former site of Italian POW camp
- Niche products:
  - 'Wood Wool' to Potteries
  - Financial crisis 2008, fall in demand
  - Nissen Hut to Port Lockroy research base, Antarctica



# Newtown and the Global Economy

- Wool industry continues to connect Newtown to the global economy
- No woollen mills left
- Wool now only a by-product of local sheep farming
- Newtown still has a regional collection depot for the British Wool Marketing Board



# Wool Grading Depot



British Wool Marketing Board  
Grading Depot, Newtown

# Auction



BRITISH WOOL MARKETING BOARD

|           |  |        |         |        |
|-----------|--|--------|---------|--------|
| GRADE     | DESCRIPTION                            |        |         | WEIGHT |
| 0830      | FINE & MEDIUM NATURAL DISCOLOURED LAMB |        |         | 3349   |
| GRADED BY | LYING AT                               | VM     | S/DRY % | BALES  |
| NEWTOWN   |  | 0.1    | 67.4    | 10     |
| SPEC. NO. | TERMS                                  | MICRON | COLOUR  |        |
| 144100692 | SPOT                                   | 31.1   | 5       |        |

SALES NUMBER : BW80      SOLD 100% - AVERAGE : 145

|     |          |            |
|-----|----------|------------|
| LOT | BID P/KG | CLEAN P/KG |
| 85  | 118      | 175.1      |

+1p (F1)      +2p (F2)      +5p (F3)

| LOT | BUYER              | BID P/KG | STATUS | TERMS        | GRADE | CLEAN P/KG |
|-----|--------------------|----------|--------|--------------|-------|------------|
| 84  | CURTIS WOOL DIRECT | 102      | Sold   | SPOT         | 0805  | 159.6      |
| 83  | CURTIS WOOL DIRECT | 163      | Sold   | SPOT         | 0803  | 223.3      |
| 82  | CURTIS WOOL DIRECT | 153      | Sold   | SPOT         | 0802  | 222.1      |
| 81  | CURTIS WOOL DIRECT | 117      | Sold   | SPOT         | 0791  | 171.3      |
| 80  | DICKIE             | 113      | Sold   | SPOT         | 0790  | 171.0      |
| 79  | DICKIE             | 105      | Sold   | 6 MTHS AVAIL | 0763  | 164.8      |
| 78  | MODIANO            | 107      | Sold   | 6 MTHS AVAIL | 0763  | 163.4      |
| 77  | STANDARD           | 111      | Sold   | 3 MTHS AVAIL | 0763  | 164.4      |
| 76  | MODIANO            | 112      | Sold   | 3 MTHS AVAIL | 0763  | 162.1      |
| 75  | MODIANO            | 108      | Sold   | 3 MTHS AVAIL | 0763  | 161.4      |
| 74  | CURTIS WOOL DIRECT | 106      | Sold   | SPOT         | 0763  | 158.0      |

| BUYER              | BID P/KG | CLEAN P/KG |
|--------------------|----------|------------|
| STANDARD           | 118      | 175.1      |
| CURTIS WOOL DIRECT | 117      | 173.6      |
| STANDARD           | 116      | 172.1      |
| UNSOLD LOT         | 115      | 170.6      |

British Wool Marketing Board  
Auction Rooms, Bradford

# Scouring



“China obviously is a big market where they have a lot of primary processing, scouring and combing. **So there’s a lot of business there which goes out in greasy wool.** So it’s not processed in this country, which in a way is a shame that you’re not adding value more within this country, but that is an effect of globalisation as well”.

(Curtis Wool Merchants)

# Blending



Haworth Scouring and Combing Plant, Bradford



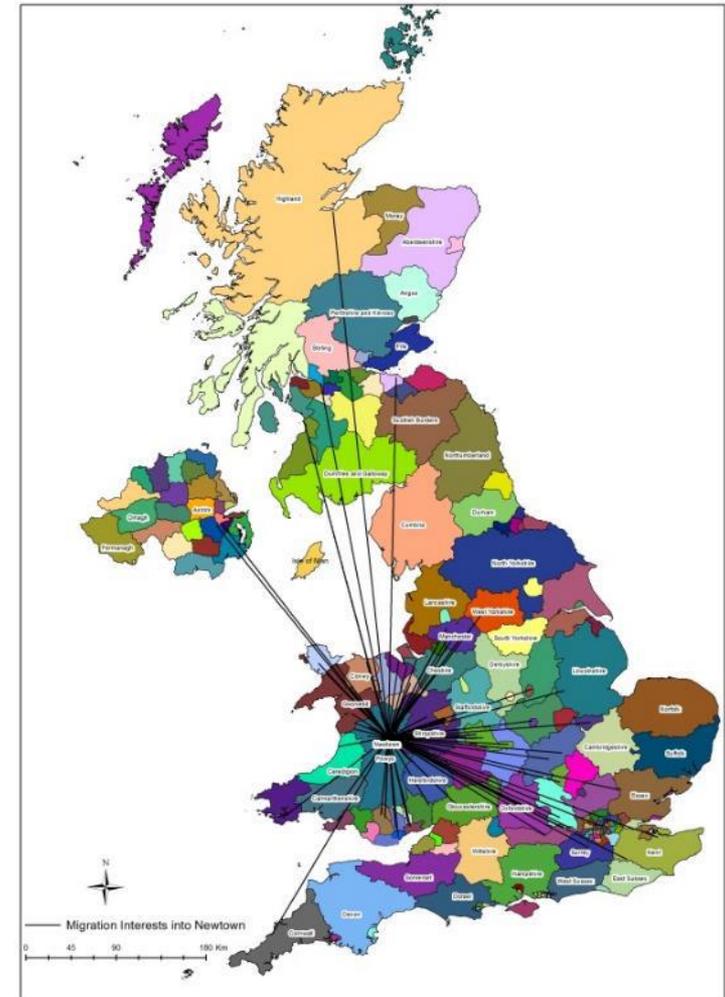
# Export

| British Wool Exports | 2014/15    | 2013       | 2011       | 2005       | 2003      |
|----------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|
| Europe               | 55%        | 61%        | 65%        | 63%        | 86%       |
| China                | <b>31%</b> | <b>22%</b> | <b>17%</b> | <b>10%</b> | <b>3%</b> |
| Far East             | 7%         | 9%         | 10%        | 18%        | 3%        |
| America              | 3%         | 3%         | 3%         | 2%         | 4%        |
| Australasia          | 2%         | 3%         | 3%         | 4%         | 1%        |
| Africa               | 2%         | 2%         | 2%         | 3%         | 3%        |



# Newtown and Migration

- Newtown was transformed by migration in the 1970s and 1980s
- Almost all of the migrants attracted by the new town were from within Britain
- In 1958 the town council chairman reportedly ‘scotched rumours that 100 coloured workers were arriving in the town’
- In 2011 census more than half of Newtown residents were born outside Wales, but only one in twenty were born outside the UK



# Newtown and Migration

“There was lots of Chinese families. I was quite surprised. The estate that we were on at Treowen had lots of Vietnamese and Chinese families. A lot, but then over the years they’ve moved away because Newtown is so small [and] they want to expand. So they’ve moved and we’ve stayed. There’s hardly any family for a few years and then next thing there was more [from the] Philippines because of the Internet bride then. The age of that came in. So there was a lot of them coming.”

Newtown resident on 1970s and 1980s

# Newtown and Migration

The 2011 census recorded 579 people in Newtown born outside the UK



Plus 123 others from Europe, 11 from Africa, 42 from Asia and the Middle East, 6 from South America and the Caribbean, and 2 from Oceania





# Globalisation and Everyday Life

## The global high street?

- Careful to avoid romanticising the high street of the past
- Chain stores have been there a long time
  - Peacock's Stores: 1934
  - Woolworth's: 1935
  - Spar Foodliner: 1963



# Globalisation and Everyday Life

**1991:** Safeway Supermarket (now Morrison's) opened on former 'Factory Field' site



**2000:** McDonalds built on site of former Pryce Jones laundry building

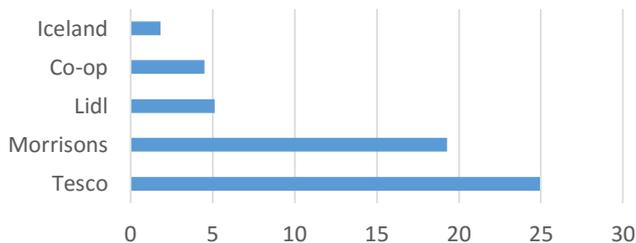
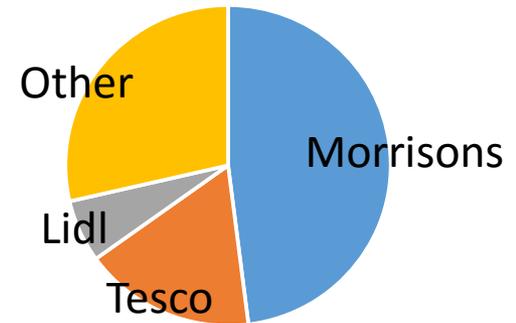
**2010:** Tesco supermarket opens on site of Smithfield cattle market



# Globalisation and Everyday Life

## Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners Retail Study for Powys County Council 2012

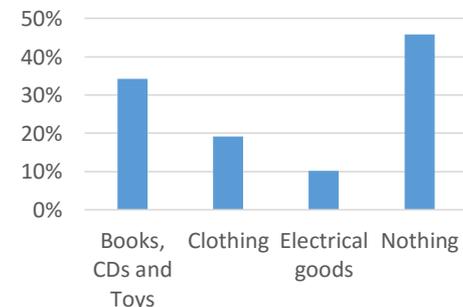
48% of residents in Newtown and southern Montgomeryshire did their main food shopping in Morrisons, Newtown, and 17% in Tesco, Newtown



Estimated turnover of Tesco, Newtown = £24.95 million

Estimate turnover of Morrisons, Newtown = £19.29 million

54% of residents surveyed across Powys regularly bought from the internet, mostly books, CDs and toys (34%), clothing (19%) and electrical goods (10%)



# Globalisation and Everyday Life

“I’ve just got used to **Internet shopping** quite a lot. I mean, there is enough here for people to... and a lot of people like the town and the shops that are there. It’s just not what I’m used to, but when we’re having to **travel** for forty-five minutes to have a decent shopping experience”

“I have to say that **YouTube**, I mean, I burn it really. You know, I’m downloading stuff all the time now. It’s just fantastic because in more recent years music has really got hold on me and realising that **I’ve got a whole new world to discover**”.

“you think oh gosh how does a place like Newtown get a **McDonalds**? Everybody was very grateful for that... (But it’s) not just like a food outlet, it’s more like... it’s a meeting place. It’s a social place because everybody, you know, meets at McDonalds”

“...the Internet has enabled me to move here and carry on working and live in the area”

“They sit along those red benches and sometimes you’ll walk past a group of about seven or eight students and they’re all just sat with their heads in their **mobile phones**. Some actually communicating to each other sat next to each other on the bench”.

“I booked myself a **holiday** to Jordan and... it was a wonderful holiday. It was really wonderful and it was the food and I came back absolutely, completely transported by my **middle-eastern food**. I really, really loved it... put it this way I keep the cumin industry going!”

***People’s thoughts on living in Newtown and participating in global culture***

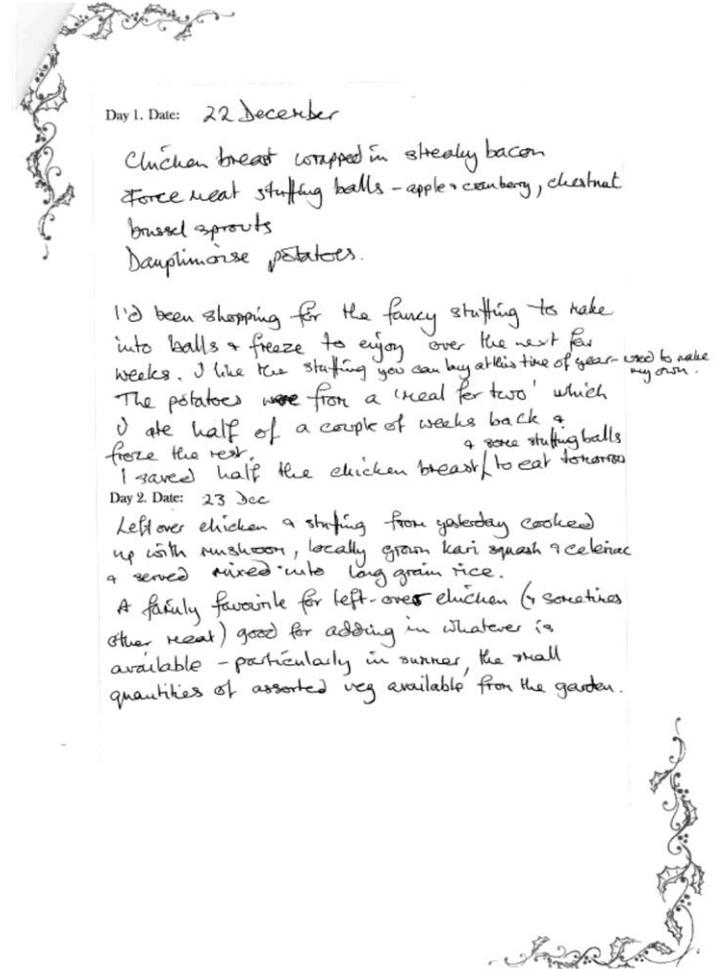
# Globalisation and Everyday Life

- What food do we eat and where does it come from?
- Where are the clothes we wear made?
- Where are the consumer goods we buy made?
- What films and television programmes do we watch?
- What music do we listen to?
- What sports teams do we follow?
- Where do we go on holiday to?
- Where do we have friends and relatives?
- Who are we 'friends' with on Facebook, who do we network with on the internet?

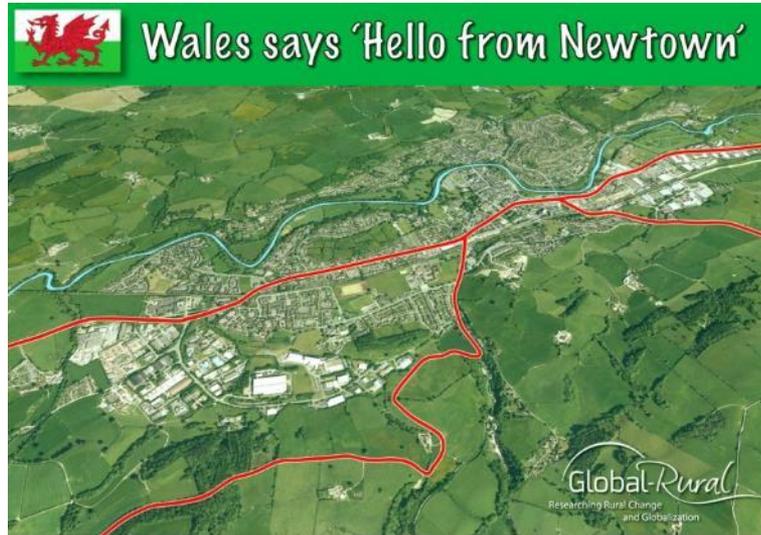
# Our Ongoing Research

## Food Diaries

- 15 members of Newtown WI
- Food diary for 2-week period over Christmas
- Recording what they cooked and why?
- Reflecting on incorporation of international influences into our food practices and traditions
- Issues of food provenance, sourcing etc.



# Our Ongoing Research



*Greetings from Newtown!!*

To:

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

You have received this card from someone you know in Newtown, Powys in Wales. They are helping us map the different ways a small town like Newtown is connected with other parts of the world. We think it is always nice to get a handwritten postcard and hope it has brightened your day! **Can you help us with our research?** Go to the web link written on the left and answer just 5 short questions. It should take less than 3 minutes to complete!

Our project looks at 'globalization' and how rural communities are connected to different places around the globe, through things like trade, migration, family, technology. This card is part of our research in Newtown, which in turn is part of a larger five-year research project funded by the European Research Council and based at Aberystwyth University in Wales. For further information on our Newtown work visit our website at: [assemblingnewtown.org](http://assemblingnewtown.org)

Please type following link into your web browser :  
[goo.gl/XTpnUE](http://goo.gl/XTpnUE)

## The Postcard Project

- Working with approximately 60 school children, aged 8-11.
- Send a postcard to relatives/friends in other parts of the world
- Mapping these connections
- Recipients undertake survey exploring their relationship with Newtown
- Engage with ideas around communication, technological change and migration in the classroom

# Our Ongoing Research

- Activities at Newtown Food Festival
- Work with students at Newtown High School and FE College
- Door-to-door survey of residents
- ‘Crowd-sourcing’ information through website



The screenshot shows the homepage of the 'Assembling Newtown' website. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for 'Home', 'Projects', 'About Newtown', 'About us', 'Events', and 'Contact us'. The main header features a large landscape photograph of a town nestled in a valley with rolling green hills in the background. The text 'Assembling Newtown' is overlaid on the left side of the image, and the 'Global Rural' logo is on the right. Below the header, the page is divided into three columns. The left column is titled 'Home' and contains a paragraph about Newtown in Powys, its history, and its role in a rapidly changing world. The middle column is titled 'Our Projects' and features a thumbnail for 'A history of Newtown' with a map and text. The right column is titled 'Submit Your Stories' and encourages users to share their memories and thoughts about the town, with a 'View More' link at the bottom.

Cymraeg Home | Projects | About Newtown | About us | Events | Contact us

## Assembling Newtown

Global Rural

### Home

Newtown, in Powys, is typical small market town, an urban centre in a rural setting, common to many parts of the UK and Europe. Like all these other towns Newtown is also totally unique, with its own history, its own mix of people and businesses and buildings, and its own problems and opportunities for the future in a rapidly changing world. Like most rural towns it has been integrated into international networks of trade and culture for a very long time. It has experienced peaks and troughs and had to continually reinvent itself as markets and social attitudes have changed.

The **Aberystwyth University** Geography Department is leading an international research project looking at how rural places are changing in response to global events and global processes, and how people in different places increasingly interact with each other in a world where distance does not seem to matter. This larger project (GLOBAL-RURAL) is looking at places as far afield as eastern Australia, Brazil, Ireland, China

### Our Projects

Assembling Newtown involves a broad range of investigations into the ways Newtown is connected with other parts of the world. Some of these issues are being explored through a large number of in-depth interviews with a cross-section of

### Submit Your Stories

Tell us your story.

Send us your pictures, memories and thoughts about the town and how it has changed or will change in the future. Or get in touch if you would be willing to be interviewed for Assembling Newtown.

[View More](#)

# Newtown and the Future

- Newtown will continue to be shaped by its engagement with global networks, just as it has for the last 300+ years
- Globalisation affects all aspects of life in town
- Presents both opportunities and challenges
- Key challenges for Newtown in a globalising world
  - Keeping money within the local economy
  - Attracting back return migrants
  - Protecting local culture and heritage
- Importance of initiatives such as Market Hall project



# For more information...



## Home

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Project website: [www.assemblingnewtown.org](http://www.assemblingnewtown.org)

Twitter: @globalrural

E-mail: [globalrural@aber.ac.uk](mailto:globalrural@aber.ac.uk)