

Brith Gof's views of Patagonia on show at Chapter**A lost paradise, lost language — and a lost opportunity**

By IFAN PAYNE

THERE is a point of view in which Patagonia can be seen as being to Wales what Ethiopia is to the Jamaicans.

Of course the situation is in mirror-image. To the Jamaicans, Ethiopia is the old country, whereas Patagonia was the new found land for Welsh exiles.

Nevertheless, as Ethiopia represents Nirvana for Rastafarians so the Welsh have seen Patagonia as the their earthly paradise free from religious persecution.

Today we tend to view Patagonia through romantic eyes. Even the sound of the Welsh name for Argentina, of which Patagonia is a region,

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"Arianin" hints at material as well as spiritual wealth.

But judging from the slides of their tour presented by Brith Gof at Chapter on Sunday afternoon, this paradise consists of sand, sagebrush, dogs and huge overpowering skies which serve as a constant reminder of man's insignificance in this universe.

The Welsh immigrants during the last century were successful in setting up chapels, planting orchards and channeling water for physical survival rather than ensuring cultural survival.

For as colonists we have

a death wish. The Welsh language died out completely after just one generation of fairly extensive settlements in the mid-western United States and similarly it hangs on only by a thread in Patagonia.

The video made of the tour showed the look of deep concentration on the faces of the audience, and the standing ovation given to the Brith Gof performance in Patagonia which testified to the power of the company's dramatic production.

But the issues outlined above were espied only from afar, barely seen on the horizon beyond the scope of this interesting but finally, for its missed opportunities, disappointing presentation of the company's tour of this Welsh semi-paradise.