



# More saying goodbye to the green, green grass of home

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## 10,000 a year deciding on a new life abroad

THE number of people leaving Wales for a new life abroad has almost doubled within nine years, latest figures reveal.

The government statistics found 4,000 more emigrated in 2006 than in 1997. It matches evidence from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and The Emigration Group which shows Britain is experiencing unprecedented emigration levels. More than 200,000 UK residents have left for a life abroad in the past two years.

Figures from the ONS show that in the year to July 2006 – the latest year for which figures are available – an estimated 10,000 people left Wales to move abroad, with Australia and New Zealand the most popular destinations. Nine years earlier, just 6,000 citizens were recorded leaving the country.

Paul Arthur, director of The Emigration Group, said highly-skilled workers and professionals such as doctors and architects were not the only ones leaving Wales for a life abroad. Increasing numbers of tradesmen and women were also choosing to emigrate.

“Australia and New Zealand – two of the most popular places to emigrate to – are booming economies, and people see they need all sorts of skills to help build these countries for the future,” he added. “We help many skilled trades people emigrate as well as professionals like doctors and teachers, and one thing they all mention are the opportunities that exist for themselves and their children.”

People often felt opportunities

for employment in Britain were diminishing, and worried there would be even fewer for their children. Despite the similarities between Wales and countries like New Zealand in terms of scenery and main economies, they felt life abroad would offer more leisure facilities, leading to better health.

In the 1960s, thousands left the UK under the subsidised migration scheme, Ten-pound Pom, which offered financial support to UK citizens emigrating to Australia. American states such as Pennsylvania also attracted Welsh citizens in the mid-19th century, from industrialised South Wales.

Economists and social scientists say the same countries remain

popular today, and a perception exists that foreign countries offer more opportunities.

Professor Steve Hill, an economic development expert at the University of Glamorgan, said, “Predominantly those leaving are young people in their 20s and 30s. The reason they go is that they are more mobile, and many who go become settled and do not come back. They respond to economic opportunities. It is like those here becoming teachers, for example,

going to London and the South East (of England). It can seem you get quicker career progression in certain places.”

Prof Hill added that Britain – including Wales – had also experienced an influx of migrants from abroad and that often, when people living abroad reached their 50s, they chose to move home. “Wales is a nice place to be at that age – there is less congestion, less

pressure on services and it has a pleasant environment,” he said.

Psychologist Dr Paul Saunter also said youngsters were attracted to countries like Australia and Canada due to the perception these provided more opportunities and a better quality of life.

However the principal lecturer in psychology at Uwic in Cardiff, said often people did not research the full implications of a permanent move, and would return in weeks once they discovered life abroad came with its own problems.

“It is easy to find the good things

somewhere else, but not the bad. This only comes with experience. The problems of a country are often not immediately available to us. People can become very disillusioned once these become apparent,” he added.

The ONS says there has been a 50% increase in the number moving abroad to countries like Australia in the past three years.

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## Most popular destinations for moving abroad

### Australia

The most popular choice. Ex-pats say the weather and economic opportunities are the main reasons for moving, while some cite the Australians' friendly attitude.

### New Zealand

The Emigration Group estimates one in three households in New Zealand owns a boat. Those moving say they are more able to enjoy outdoor pursuits there.



### **Canada**

The third most popular destination.

Again, easy access to outdoor pursuits.

### **Spain**

The Costa del Sol in the south-east and the Catalonia region in the north-east are popular destinations, especially with the over-50s wanting to retire abroad.

Large communities of Britons mean retirees do not feel isolated once they've moved, and many say the country's warmer climate helps ease the pain associated with age-related ailments like arthritis.

## **Wales' history of emigration**

An estimated 10,000 people may have left Wales in 2006, however leaving the country to build a life abroad is not a new phenomenon.

In the 19th century, Welsh citizens – largely from industrialised areas – moved to parts of America to find employment in coal mines.

The most popular states were Pennsylvania, possibly due to an earlier influx of Welsh citizens in the 1600s.

In 1683, Baptists from Mid and

West Wales moved to Philadelphia, and many settled on the city's outskirts. It is thought almost 30,000 acres of land close to Delaware River, which is further south, was bought by the Welsh.

One of the first Welsh settlers was Howell Powell – who historians say left Brecon in 1642 for Virginia.

Others say the first Welsh emigrants to America were Madog ab Owain Gwynedd (Prince Madog) and a band of settlers disillusioned with their lives in the 12th century.



**MOVING UP** An outdoor lifestyle is one of the attractions of Australia, with Cradle Mountain, Tasmania, shown here as a spectacular example