

Breconshire Local & Family History Society (BLFHS)
Cymdeithas Hanes Lleol a Theuluoedd Brycheiniog



Newsletter 40 – February 2015

Welcome to our Newsletter. We invite you to contribute articles, tips, questions and answers for others to share. Feedback is always welcome. Have you missed an edition? Read the archived Newsletters on our website.

February Meeting Review: “WW1 Communications from the Front” by Hilary Williams

A good sized audience attended this talk, given by our Chairperson. Using two collections of World War one postcards and letters, kindly shared by Mr Harley Simpson and Mrs Rosemary Evans, Hilary illustrated the importance of personal communications during the Great War. A sophisticated postal service, which enabled postal communication to and from the Front Line, was also used to distribute Government propaganda and to sustain the morale of the serving soldiers and their families at home. Hilary also encouraged the audience to use postcard and letter collections passed down within families to throw new light on family and local history. A full report, including sound recording and slide-show will be uploaded onto our website shortly.

This month on our Website

Since our last Newsletter (published 24 January 2015) we have added/updated the following:

- **Parish Pages:** added *Llanwrtyd* (twenty-three parishes now available):
<http://www.blfhs.co.uk/members/parishes/index.htm>
The Llanwrtyd pages include full transcripts of the Bishop's Transcripts of the parish church registers, the result of work undertaken by the BLFHS Transcription Team.
- **Aids to Research:** added guides to: Bishop's Transcripts; Ecclesiastical Latin; and Old and New Style Calendars: <http://www.blfhs.co.uk/members/guides.htm>
- **Minutes:** added minutes of the management committee meetings held on 8 January:
<http://www.blfhs.co.uk/members/minutes.htm>
- **Newsletter:** added Newsletter 40 (the one you are now reading):
<http://www.blfhs.co.uk/members/newsletters.htm>
- **Public News Pages:** updated 20 February <http://www.blfhs.co.uk/news.htm>
- **Members' News Pages:** updated 20 February <http://www.blfhs.co.uk/members/news.htm>

Check the News Pages every few days and the Noticeboard at least weekly.

Help needed! The next parishes to be tackled are: Llanbedr Ystrad Yw, and Llanddew.

If you can contribute any photographs or textual material, email John at john@jlb2011.co.uk

Please report any problems with the website to our webmaster, John Ball, at john@jlb2011.co.uk

Almshouses and Charities

On 10 February 1721, Mrs Elizabeth Walker and Mrs Catherine Games set up a charity for '*the most ancient and poor women in the several ancient parishes*' The funds were used to create the twelve almshouses in Llanfaes. The charity is still active, providing two-bedroom houses for older people – they now house men as well as women.

This is just one example of many bequests made by the great and the good, and sometimes the not so great, in parishes all over Breconshire. Some of the donations are recorded on painted plaques inside churches or carved into stones set in the church burial ground.

The BLFHS has recorded the Memorial Inscriptions [MIs], of many burial grounds but there is another project waiting to be undertaken: the recording of the charity inscriptions. Some of the inscriptions could be obtained from internet records or transcribed from photographs, but the project would also provide an opportunity to visit some of the beautiful churches around Breconshire. If you would like to get involved in this project, please contact Hilary Williams.

Did you know?

My thanks to Ken Jones of the Brecknock Society and BLFHS member Steve Morris, for the following information, supplemented by an article on Wikipedia:

The “**Red Baron**” (Manfred Albrecht Freiherr von Richthofen) was the ace German fighter pilot with the Imperial German Army Air Service during World War I. He was officially credited with eighty air combat victories – more than any other pilot of the war – before being killed in action near Amiens on 21 April 1918.

Amongst those who died as a result of his air combat victories were two Brecon Grammar School Boys. They were the first and seventy-fifth victims of the Red Baron’s eighty air combat victories.



Tom Rees (18 May 1895 - 17 Sep 1916) was a British Army Officer who served in the Royal Flying Corps during the First World War. Joining the military in early 1915, Rees was raised to the rank of lieutenant before his twenty-first birthday and was promoted to captain on the day of his death. He was killed on 17 September 1916 while flying as an observer in an F.E.2b aircraft, which was shot down by the Red Baron. This aircraft was the first of the Red Baron’s eighty credited aerial combat victories. Tom Rees, son of Thomas Rees and Alice Rees (née Evans) of Cefnbrynich farm, Sennybridge, was the youngest of their six children. He attended Brecon Boys' County Grammar School, before commencing at the University College of Wales at

Aberystwyth in 1912. He was considered a scholar and was described as a smart university student. While Rees was at Aberystwyth University, he joined the Officers' Training Corps and upon graduation with a BA degree, he volunteered for War Service and joined the Army. On 21 January 1915, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Royal Welch Fusiliers infantry regiment and was subsequently posted to that regiment's 14th (Service) Battalion, briefly serving with them on the Western Front. He volunteered to join the Royal Flying Corps in November 1915 and returned to the United Kingdom for aircrew training. Upon graduating, he was posted to No. 11 Squadron and returned to the Front. He had earned early promotion to lieutenant as a result of his "academic abilities" prior to his transfer and this was later followed by promotion to captain, promulgated on 17 September 1916.

On Sunday, 17 September 1916, Rees was the observer in a two-man FE 2b (serial number 7018) piloted by Second Lieutenant Lionel Morris. They were part of a group of eight Royal Aircraft Factory BE 2cs and six FE 2b escorts from the Royal Flying Corps 3rd Brigade. As the formation returned from bombing the railway station at Marcoing they encountered a group of about twenty German aircraft from Jasta 2. The Red Baron was newly assigned to Jasta 2 and was under tutelage. In the ensuing fight, two aircraft from No 12 Squadron and four from No 11 Squadron were shot down, including Rees and Morris's aircraft, which was shot down by the Red Baron. Rees was killed during the dogfight, but his pilot Morris, although mortally wounded, managed to land the aircraft. This was the Red Baron's first official victory. Rees was buried by the Germans with full military honours at the town cemetery at Villers Plouich. Rees's family learned of his death in November 1916 on the morning of the funeral of his older brother David John, who had been killed in a tree-felling accident adjacent to the family farm.

2/Lt. Ernest David Jones; of Llanfaes, Brecon was a first pilot in the newly formed Royal Air Force (RAF), which had replaced the Royal Flying Corps (RFC). On 1st April 1918, he was shot down by the Red Baron as his 75th strike.

Ernie was born in 1899, the second son of Benjamin and Matilda Jones of George Street, Brecon. Benjamin was a foreman printer. By 1901 the family was living at 38 Orchard Street, Llanfaes, Brecon. The family was at the same address in 1911, but Ernie’s mother was now a widow and a grocer, as her mother had been previously, at this address. Ernie and his brother Ivor attended Mount Street and Brecon County School. After leaving school, Ernie worked as a clerk with Barclays Bank in Newport, and then Cardiff. Ernie joined the Royal Flying Corps and later the RAF. While piloting his aircraft on a bombing sortie over the Front Lines he was shot down by the Red Baron. Von Richthofen’s own combat report includes a full account of the air action in which he commends the bravery of his adversary. Initially listed as missing, Ernie was later reported as killed. 2/Lt. Ernest Jones’ name is on the Arras Memorial. He was just 19 years old.



http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tom_Rees_%28British_Army_officer%29

Two Merthyr Cynog WW1 stories and an Essay on “Peace”

Member Viv Parry sent this me these anecdotes connected with his father’s WW1 service.

"My father served in WW1 but we don't have any correspondence that he might have sent. He never talked about the war and never liked listening to Remembrance Day services and in particular the sounding of the last post and used to ask us to turn the radio off and later the TV when the programme was on. Two family stories that used to do its rounds were:

1. My father's name was David but in the family environment he was called 'Davy' and in the community he was known as 'Dai'. On the day he left to join some of the locals gathered in the village to say "Cheerio". There was one person there; I won't give him his proper name and will call him Morgan Smith as he was not the sharpest knife in the box. His departing words were "So long now Dai, I don't suppose I will see you again".
2. When my father was out in France and his platoon was either marching up to or coming from the front they passed another platoon from a different regiment going in the opposite direction and in that platoon was the son of the adjoining farm (the farm houses are only about 100 yards apart). They could only shout to each other and were not allowed to break ranks.

Viv also sent me a newspaper cutting from the "*The Brecon and Radnor Express*". It was written in 1919 by my mother's first cousin, who was also a grandson of the Evanses of Drover's Arms, Epynt. The Biblical saying "*Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings*" comes to mind as you read it.

Children's Corner
BY "UNCLE TOM"

*A monthly competition open to elementary school-children
in Brecon and Radnor organised by
The Editor of The Brecon & Radnor Express
January 14th. 1919*

*Master Archie Evans (Council School, Upper Chapel) – only 11 years of age -sent in an
almost perfect essay. His essay is appended.*

PEACE

Peace is a simple word, but we had not experienced its effect for more than four years, until the 11th. November, 1918. On this date, at 11 o'clock in the morning, came to an end one of the most cruel and terrible wars ever known.

The blessings of Peace were received with much joy, especially in our large cities and towns. Flags were flying, bonfires and fireworks shone for miles, and the bells of Peace were ringing. These celebrations were not enjoyed in our country village. Yet, we in silence at our home fires rejoiced at the glorious victory gained by our brave men on the battlefields of France, Flanders, Italy and Palestine, and we wondered what must their excitement have been when the Armistice was signed, and the last shot fired. What a peaceful air with the stillness of the guns and no shots firing! The battlefield echoes not with the sound of the guns, but with men's voices, and more so when the four long years of war had proved to them a brilliant success.

Again, in our own country, Peacetime is becoming to make itself known. All our towns, which for four years have been in darkness owing to enemy raids, are today lighted up, and the townspeople are again able to go about in ease.

But in the rejoicing of Peace we must not forget, those who have lost dear ones in this terrible war, but hope that God will bless and comfort them. There are many others still, who have given as much as life itself. These are the blind, maimed, the deaf, and dumb, and it will be the duty of our country to provide homes for all these brave men.

We all hope that this Peace is one that will last forever, and that there will be no more shedding of human blood. To prevent such, it is necessary that a war-faring and blood thirsty ruler like the Kaiser will never be allowed to govern a country, and that all men should be taught to hate war with its horrors, and love Peace with its blessings.
- Master Archie W. Evans, The Council School, Upper Chapel, near Brecon, aged 11.

A Useful website:

The Long, Long Trail: The British Army in the Great War of 1914-1918 <http://www.1914-1918.net/> operated by Chris Baker.

NEXT MEETING

Date and time: Wednesday, 4th March 2015 at 2:00 pm

Venue: Brecon Library

Subject "*Dr Mary Eppynt Phillips*"

In association with Brecon Women's Festival, Hilary Williams will give an illustrated Talk about this remarkable female doctor, who was a native of Merthyr Cynog .

BLFHS WEBSITE: Our website address: <http://www.blfhs.co.uk>

CONTACT DETAILS

If you wish to respond to or comment on an item in this newsletter, or contribute to the next newsletter or to our website, please contact our Chairperson:

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