

**Draethen, Waterloo &
Rudry Community**

ROLL OF HONOUR

November 2021



WE WILL REMEMBER THEM!

As a councillor and former soldier, I have had the honour and privilege to lay a wreath on Remembrance Sunday at St James' Church War Memorial on behalf of Draethen Waterloo and Rudry Community Council and its residents.

We do this to pay our respects and honour the memory of those who lost their lives while serving their country and we say, "We will remember them".

But what do we really know about them? Put simply, all most of us know is their name and the unit they served with as inscribed on the memorials.

In order to better appreciate their sacrifice, we really need to know something more about them, how they lived before the wars and who they left behind.

Unfortunately, as with the passing of time, there is a passing of memory and ordinary men and women who fought for their country don't necessarily figure highly in the records of yesteryear.

Notwithstanding, we have endeavoured to find out what we can about them from the scant information inscribed on St James' Memorial and the commemorative plaque which was once displayed at the Ebenezer Congregational Chapel in Rudry and is now kept in Rudry Parish Hall.

It has not been easy to gather the information and there are gaps we cannot fill and perhaps never will. However, it gives some insight into the men and their families and I for one, feel I have come to know them as if they were still here. That is, of course, the point of the project!

I hope that this brief insight into their oft-short journeys will keep their memories alive for years to come and, importantly, that our younger generations know not only of the sacrifice of these local men but also of the horrors of two world wars which ended the lives of so many young men and which must never be repeated.

Special thanks go to Neil Patrick, Chair of the Draethen Community Group, and Amanda his wife who contributed enormously to the research and to those family members and others who came forward with what they knew.

If nothing else, this collection of their stories means that we can now better 'remember them'!

Cllr Mike Garland
Draethen Waterloo and Rudry Community Council

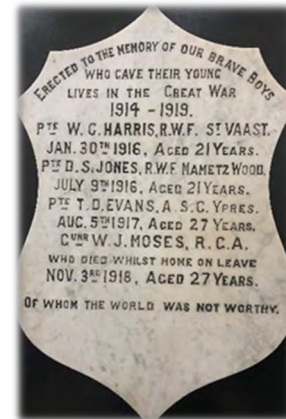
While we have taken care to verify our research as far as we are able, we cannot be 100% certain of the 'facts' as stated. Accordingly, we apologise in advance if any information is inaccurate and welcome any corrections, additions and comments accordingly.

We have acquired photographs from family members and the internet and acknowledge the owners' rights to object to their use within this document. Photographs will be removed at the owner's request but we hope their use in this educational document of remembrance will be acceptable.

These are the inscriptions – the starting point for our research

Four names from WW1 as inscribed on the Ebenezer Congregational Chapel's Plaque.

1. Private WC Harris, RWF, S^t Vaast, January 30th 1916, Aged 21
2. Private D.S. Jones, RWF, Mametz Wood, July 9th 1916, Aged 21
3. Private T.D. Evans, ASC Ypres - Aug 5th 1917, Aged 27
4. Gunner W.J. Moses, RGA – November 3rd 1918, Aged 27



They are also inscribed on the St James' Church Memorial along with:

Inscriptions from WW1 on the St James' Church War Memorial

5. George Butcher, 6th RBR
6. Hubert Morgan, RFA
7. Mark Baggett, CAN^D I F
8. Augustus Harris, Welsh Guards
9. D.J. Jones, Australian IF
10. W.E. Lewis, 16th Welch
11. Daniel Mason, RFA
12. J.H. Richards, Welsh Guards
13. W.T. Shute, SWB

Inscriptions from WW2 on the St James' Church War Memorial

14. Ivor J Cross, Royal Artillery
15. Hiram E. Davies, Royal Air Force
16. David J Harris, Rifle Brigade
17. Frederick T Thomas, Welch Regiment
18. Ralph Thomas, Submarine Service
19. Bert Davies, Pioneer Corps

20. Hubert JL Harris, Royal Air Force

We have added Hubert Harris, even though he is not inscribed on either memorial but because he is from Draethen/Rhyd y Gwern and, therefore, a local man from a local family. Hubert is, however, inscribed on the Machen War Memorial.



1 Private W.C. Harris, RWF, S^t Vaast – 30th January 1916 (Age 20)

19275 - Private WC Harris – B Company, Machine Gun Section, 16th Battalion Royal Welch Fusiliers



"He died as he had lived. A brave and cheerful soldier."

William Clifford Harris was born in Rudry on 10th February 1895, so was in fact 20 not 21 when he died [a correction from a family member]. He was baptised at St James' Church on 17th March 1895. His father was William Harris (b.1868) and, therefore, to distinguish the two, William junior was referred to by his middle name Clifford.

He lived at the Post Office, 16 Garth Place, Rudry. His father was a grocer/Postmaster born in Rudry (1869) and his mother, Ida Kate, née Wall (b.1869), was from Stoke St Mary in Somerset; they married in 1892. Clifford's Grandfather [also William] was born in Rudry (1844) and was the Overman at the local colliery. Clifford had a brother, Harold John (b.09/07/1896), and 5 sisters, Irene Florence (b.18/11/1898), Marguerite (Daisy, b.16/04/1903), Olive Ann (Nancy, b.01/02/1907), Jessie ER (b.07/12/1908) and (Ida) Elvira (b.1910) who sadly died in 1913 aged 3.

Clifford was initially educated at Rhydri School but in October 1907 applied to and was accepted at Lewis School for Boys at Pengam. He finished his education at the school before moving to take up a post as a student teacher at Rhydri School in October 1912, aged 17. He subsequently moved to Cwmaber Boys' School as an Uncertified Assistant Teacher on 17th September 1913.

Cwmaber Boys' School, (in Abertridwr) with their motto 'Better brains than brawn', opened in 1909 and provided education for up to 250 boys from the Abertridwr and Senghenydd areas. From the autumn of 1914, the school logbook, kept by the Head Teacher, George Davies, made frequent reference to staff leaving to join the Forces.

*During the Holidays - Mr W C Harris (U.T)
joined the New Army, & the staff is therefore
short of one teacher.*

*During the holidays Mr W C Harris (U.T)
joined the New Army and the staff is
therefore short of one teacher [Cwmaber
Boys' School, 4th January 1915]*

Clifford enlisted in the 16th Battalion, Royal Welch Fusiliers on Thursday 31st December 1914 at Caerphilly. He was just 19 years old. Along with other recruits to the 16th Battalion, Royal Welch Fusiliers, Clifford completed his initial training in North Wales, probably at Llandudno, and then moved with the Battalion to Winchester in September 1915 to complete his training before embarking for France.

*A former member of the staff, Mr W C Harris
who joined the new Army, visited the school
today.*

*The school logbook records that before
leaving for Winchester he returned on
leave to Rudry and called at the school to
catch up with colleagues and pupils
[Cwmaber Boys' School, 26th July 1915].*

The 16th Battalion moved to the area north of the Somme close to Richebourg St. Vaast and was, for a short period, attached to Guards companies for instruction in the front line. On the 6th January 1916 the Battalion moved to take up front line duties for the first time.

On 9 January the Battalion War Diary recorded *"Our artillery shelled enemy wire at S16A.58. Enemy artillery retaliated on our front line and 2 men were killed and 8 wounded. An officer's patrol went out after dark but could find no gap in enemy wire."*

On 30th January, Clifford was killed in action by a German sniper.

Sadly, this is the final record in the School logbook regarding Clifford:

News reached the School today that one of our Staff Pte W.C. Harris, 16th Batt. Royal Welsh Fusiliers, has been killed in action on Sunday, Jan 30th 1916. He was shot by a German sniper in the chest, but continued firing until he was again shot in the head.

News reached the school today that one of our staff, Pte W C Harris, 16th Batt' Royal Welsh Fusiliers, has been killed in action on Sunday, Jan 30th 1916. He was shot by a German sniper in the chest but continued firing until he was again shot in the head [Cwmaber Boys School, 7th February 1916].

Clifford is buried in S^t Vaast Post Military Cemetery, Richebourg-L'Avoue.



Postscript

Clifford's brother Harold also served. He was gassed but survived and married Clara M Pearce (b.07/10/1913) in 1936. There were Pearce families at 12 and 13 Garth Place. Harold passed away in 1969.

Clifford's Mother, Ida, died in 1933 and was buried at St James on 16th February. His Father, William died in 1935 was also buried at St James on 30th March.

Of Clifford's sisters, the eldest, Irene, followed in her Father's footsteps as Postmaster but never married. She died on 15th March 1975.

Daisy became a hospital matron before she was 30 and after her marriage in 1940 to Stanley B Scourfield, became very involved with the St John Ambulance Brigade. She represented the Priory of Wales at the 1953 Coronation. Daisey died in Maesteg on 13th January 1968.

Nancy married Albert Gordon Templeman (b.15/02/1902) in 1928 and in 1939 they were listed at 16 Garth Place where Irene was noted as sub-postmistress. Nancy's daughter, Maureen Templeman (b.04/04/1928), followed in Clifford's footsteps to become a [PE] teacher at the Twyn School and up until a few years ago lived at 17 Garth Place, opposite the post office. She is now resident at the Church View Care Home on St Martin's Road. Nancy also had a two sons, John E (b.07/05/1933) and Michael (Mike, b.1935). Mike also lived at 17 Garth Place and died 23rd January 2015. Nancy died 11th November 1997.

2 Private D.S. Jones, RWF Mametz Wood - 9th July 1916 (Age 21)

18663 - Private [David] Stanley Jones - 16th Battalion, Royal Welch Fusiliers

Stanley was born at Dan-y-graig Farm (near the Maenllwyd) in 1895 to John (b.1859 - a woodsman on the Tredegar Estate) and Louisa née Moses (b.1861). Louisa was Walter J Moses,' Aunt (No. 4 in our Roll), making Walter and Stanley first cousins. Stanley was the younger of two sons, the eldest being [John] Edward (a milk vendor) born in 1894. They all spoke Welsh and English. Stanley's Father John died 23rd May 1922 aged 63 and is buried in St James.



The inscription on the Ebenezer tablet states that Stanley was killed in action on 9th July but a Notice placed in 'Y Goleuad' on 18th August 1916 stated he was killed on 8th July. However, the Army records state he was killed in action on 11th July, and the latter is likely the more accurate as the 16th Battalion was not committed to any attack on the 8th or 9th.

Y Goleuad (The Light) was a liberal weekly Welsh language newspaper distributed to Welsh Calvinistic Methodist groups throughout Wales and to the Methodist Welsh speakers of Liverpool, Manchester, Bristol, and London. Its content generally reflected denominational interests. The Notice stated:

Jones – Gorffennaf 8, ar faes y frwydr, y Preifat D Stanley Jones (RWF, mab Mr a Mrs John Jones, Dan y Graig, Rudry. Cyn ymuno a'r fyddin yr oedd yn glerc yn Swuddfa Addysg Cyngor Sir Forganwy, yng Nghaerdydd.

(Jones – July 8, on the battlefield, Private D Stanley Jones (RWF, son of Mr and Mrs John Jones, Dan y Graig, Rudry. Before joining the Army he was a clerk at Glamorganshire County Council's Area Education Office in Cardiff.)

There is little we can find on Stanley's service but we know that like Clifford, he joined the 16th Battalion, Royal Welch Fusiliers and his Army number indicates he too joined at the onset of war in 1914 and was not a conscript.

It is likely, therefore, that he followed the same journey as Clifford but survived the initial front-line action only to perish, along with so many other young men at Mametz Wood.

The Battalion sailed for France on 29th November 1915 and went into the trenches in January 1916.

On 5th July 1916, Stanley and the 16th Battalion, relieved troops in trenches near Caterpillar Wood in preparation for an attack on Mametz Woods

Mametz Wood was the objective of the 38th (Welsh) Division during the First Battle of the Somme. It comprised 3 brigades made up from battalions from the Royal Welch Fusiliers, the South Wales Borderers and the Welch Regiment.

The wood (about a square mile) was defended by elements of the German Lehr Infantry Regiment and 163rd Infantry Regiment. These units were entrenched within the wood; the German second line was only 300 yards behind, allowing the position to be reinforced easily. From 6th July, the 38th Division conducted reconnaissance and probing attacks, to determine the strength of the German position.

On the 7th July 16th at 0800 hours, the primary attack began but it soon became obvious that the preliminary bombardment had failed to silence the German machine gun positions and German shells started to fall upon the attackers and the trenches they had left, resulting in a temporary communication breakdown.

Caught between machine gun fire from their front and their flanks, the attack bogged down within 200 yards of the wood. Unable to move further, the troops were ordered to dig in to await a renewed British bombardment. At 1100 hours the troops tried again but were unable to push further forward.

Further attacks by the 17th Division on 8th July failed and a planned full-scale attack for 9th July was postponed.

On the 10th July, Stanley would have been preparing for the dawn attack by the 16th Battalion along with the 13th, 14th and 15th Battalions of the Royal Welch Fusiliers. The 14th and 16th were to lead, putting Stanley at the front of the action. They attacked in parallel lines or 'waves' with bayonets fixed and rifles held in the high port position, four paces between each man, 100 yards between each line with the 16th Battalion (and Stanley) leading for the 113th brigade with 14th Battalion close behind.

The official War Diaries of the 14th and 16th Battalions, Royal Welch Fusiliers note the singing of the hymn *Aberystwyth* in Welsh as the men waited to go 'over the top' in White Trench. It is likely Stanley would have been part of this as he was from a Welsh speaking family.



Royal Welch Fusilliers waiting in a trench before the battle of Mametz Wood

The commanding officer of 16th Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel Ronald Carden then called for quiet and spoke to the battalion before the assault.

"Make your peace with God," he said. "You are going to take that position, and some of us won't come back - but we are going to take it."

Tying a coloured handkerchief to his walking-stick he said: "This will show you where I am." A tall man, Carden was shot and fell during the attack but he struggled up and continued to lead the 16th to the wood where he was shot again and killed.

Despite heavy casualties the fringe of the wood was reached and some bayonet fighting took place before the wood was entered and a number of German machine guns silenced. Fighting in the wood was fierce with the Germans giving ground stubbornly.

This went on through the night and into the 11th, the day Stanley was reportedly killed. The remaining Germans offered determined resistance and the Welshmen also suffered from 'drop short' whereby their own artillery shells firing at their range limit would fall on their own men.



At 1445 hours on 11th July and despite the fact they had not asked for one, an artillery barrage began and the Welshmen ended up taking casualties from many of the rounds before launching their final attack at 1530 hours. Nevertheless, the brigade was able to clear Mametz Wood by the end of the day.

We do not know at which point Stanley fell but 3,802 Welsh soldiers and 190 officers, were killed, wounded or missing [never found] in taking the wood.

The wood was essentially obliterated by the fighting and shelling as this picture of a section taken in August 1916 shows:



It's hard to imagine the what those young soldiers like Stanley went through but one, Robert Graves from the 2nd Battalion, Royal Welch Fusiliers described the scene as the 33rd Division entered the woods shortly after the fighting.

"Mametz Wood was full of the dead of the Prussian Guards reserve, big men, and the Royal Welch and South Wales Borderers of the new-army battalions, little men."

"There was not a single tree unbroken... There had been bayonet fighting in the wood. There was a man of the South Wales Borderers and one of the Lehr Regiment who had succeeded in bayoneting each other simultaneously."

Stanley is buried in the Dantzig Alley British Cemetery at Mametz with 2,052 other soldiers.



A memorial to the 5,000 men of the 38th (Welsh) Division who died on the Somme in 1916 was erected in 1987.

The Red Dragon Memorial looks defiantly towards Mametz Wood, snarling and tearing at barbed wire.

3 Private T.D. Evans, ASC Ypres - 5th August 1917 (Age 27)

28891 - Private Thomas David Evans - 8th Battalion, Border Regiment



Thomas David Evans was born in Pentyrch about 1892 to William (b.1857) and Elizabeth (b. 1868 née Llewellyn). William was noted as a Farmer; they were Welsh speakers [first language].

In 1901 the family was recorded as living at Mount Pleasant, Lisvane where, in 1911, Thomas was noted as a 'milkman' and his Mother Elizabeth had been widowed. At some point he went to work in the engineering department of the Gelli Colliery, Ystrad, while his mother moved to Graig Farm in Llanishen (just inside the Rudry Parish border).

Thomas had one younger brother, Isaac William (born 1896), and two younger sisters, Gwenllian (born 1894) and Elizabeth Ann [Annie] (born 1899). We believe Isaac, known as William, married Elsie Maud Edwards (b.1896) in 1922 and lived in Cyncoed Road, Cardiff. They had a daughter, Linda. Isaac died 16th August 1953.

ASC, as inscribed on the Ebenezer tablet, is the Army Service Corps (becoming the 'Royal' Army Service Corps in late 1918), and while Thomas enlisted in the ASC, he subsequently served in the Border Regiment and was part of its 8th Battalion when he died. The St James' Memorial correctly notes '8th Border Regt'.

We do not know exactly when Thomas enlisted, but he was apparently well known in motoring circles which might explain why he signed up to serve with the Army Service Corps. It appears he served with this regiment for a time at the Salonika front in Greece before being transferred to several different infantry regiments.

We believe he first transferred to the Welch Regiment, then the Lancashire Fusiliers before joining the Border Regiment.

In any event, by 1917 he was serving with 8th Battalion, The Border Regiment in the Ypres Salient, during the ongoing Battle of Passchendaele.

We do not know the exact circumstances of his death and his remains were not recovered. The 8th Battalion, Border Regiment had seen action in the front line and by August 1917, was held in reserve.

Troops of the Border Regiment at rest



However, the reserve line was still in the line of fire and suffered constant shelling, which is when and how Thomas was likely killed. This theory is supported by the fact that there were no remains of poor Thomas to be buried.

He is commemorated at Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium.

4 Gunner W.J. Moses, RCA - 3rd November 1918 (Age 27)

348453 - Gunner Walter James Moses - 121st Siege Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery



There are two Commonwealth War Grave Commission (CWGC) memorials in the St James' churchyard, marking the burial place of two soldiers from WW1. Gunner Moses' is one of them.

We have been unable to establish how he died other than it was when home on leave on 3rd November 1918 aged 27.

Walter was born at Rudry Mill on 8th November 1891 to Lewis Moses (born 1863) a Corn Miller & Farmer and Mary Ann Moses (born 1861). He had an older sister, also called Mary Ann (born 1885) and an older brother, Aaron John (born 1889). The household also had a servant/agricultural labourer, Joseph Henley (born 1882).

It is not clear when Walter joined up but the 121st Siege Battery was raised on 22nd March 1916, so likely at some point after this.

In the months leading up to August 1918, Walter's battery had been involved in dealing with the German Spring Offensive which began on 21st March. The 9.2 inch howitzer's of the battery were involved in fairly short range fighting and much artillery was lost during the Great Retreat.



Members of the 121st Siege Battery moving a 9.2 inch howitzer.

In August, as part of the counter offensive, the heavy artillery was positioned as far forward as possible moving up behind the advancing infantry.

As the regimental historian relates, 'The guns of Fourth Army demonstrated, on 23rd October, the crushing effect of well-co-ordinated massed artillery. They simply swept away the opposition'.

After a pause to regroup and reconnoitre, IX Corps stormed across the canal on 4th November (the Battle of the Sambre). After that the campaign became a pursuit of a beaten enemy, in which the slow-moving siege guns could play no part.

We imagine that Walter was given leave after the guns had played their part at the end of October.

As noted, we can find no record of how Walter lost his life whilst at home on leave but he is buried in St. James churchyard according to his war service.

5 George Butcher, 6th RBR - 1st July 1916 (Age 27)

**12666 - Private George Henry Butcher - B Company, 6th Battalion
Princess Charlotte of Wales' (Royal Berkshire Regiment)**



George was born at Ty'n-y-parc (Wern Ddu) in Rudry in 1889 to Henry, a Woodman from Cleavedon (born 1862) and Ann from Llanadeyrn [Llanedern] (born 1852). He had an older brother Albert (born 20/12/1888). By the time of the 1911 Census, the family had moved to 24 Van Terrace and George and his brother Albert were working as labourers and their Father Henry was a Coal Mine Hower. They had a lodger, Edward Tuck (born 1867 from Gloucestershire) also a labourer.

We don't know exactly when, but George enlisted at Caerphilly, joined the 6th Battalion and went to fight in France. Sadly, he was killed on the first day of the Battle of the Somme on 1st July 1916.

The Royal Berkshires became the Princess Charlotte of Wales' (Royal Berkshire Regiment) after Princess Charlotte, granddaughter to King George III, was so impressed by the regiment during their spell guarding members of the Royal family, she begged for them to be 'her' regiment.

The 6th Battalion of the Royal Berkshires was formed in September 1914 and made up the 54th Brigade of the 18th (Eastern) Division along with 8th Norfolks, 10th Essex and 8th Suffolks.

The Battalion reached the Somme region in the summer of 1915 and, as with other units, spent time in and out of the lines, experiencing both the dull and unpleasant realities of trench warfare and occasional action in the form of raiding parties, etc.

In March 1916 training for the Somme offensive began in earnest and by 1st July the 6th Battalion was as well prepared as any and considerably more so than others.

A barrage began on 24th June and more shells were fired at the German lines than in the entire preceding 12 months of war.

During daylight the German artillery was quiet but they opened up at night and their shelling was extremely accurate and effective. The British dugouts offered little protection against artillery and many men of the Berkshires were in the trenches on carrying party duties, taking ammunition and other supplies to the front. In the period 27th June to the night of 30th June the 6th Battalion lost 6 men killed and 27 wounded to shellfire.

On the eve of battle itself the Battalion made their final preparations. George and his fellow soldiers checked their equipment, packed their kit and waited. Most other units had to be moved forward to the assembly trenches and final positions for the off, which would at least have given them something to occupy their minds whereas the Berkshires were already in the front line.

The men were to go over without their full pack but with 170 rounds of ammunition, two mills bombs (grenades), a waterproof sheet, two smoke helmets (the primitive gas masks of the day), two empty sandbags and a haversack containing food rations such as hard biscuits, basic groceries and two tins of meat. Specialist troops such as bombers and Lewis Gun parties would have a variation on this equipment, usually more rather than less to carry.

Nevertheless, the men of the 6th Berkshires had a much lighter load than those of other divisions, where much more emphasis had been placed on consolidation than attack - many men in the first waves further north went into action with 70lb packs and rolls of barbed wire or entrenching tools to add to their burden.

The attack by the 18th Division was to be spearheaded by the 6th Berkshires on the left and the 8th Norfolks on the right.

The masses of men, once in position for the off, now had little to do but hope that a shell would not burst amongst them, wait for their promised meal of hot tea or soup with a bully beef sandwich and wonder, along with 120,000 others up and down the line, what the coming hours held in store for them.



Shortly after 7.25am on the 1st July, the leading waves of the 6th Berkshires began calmly to climb up their trench ladders and file out into no mans' land in advance of the main attack. Those behind them in turn moved into the trenches vacated in preparation to follow.

The 6th Berkshires were positioned opposite the Casino Point machine gun nest, under which a 5,000lb mine had been placed through tunnelling. However, it had been too shallow and the Royal Engineers Officer responsible for detonating the mine was appalled to see at the appointed time of 7.28am that British troops, including the 6th Berkshires, were already out in no mans' land and were obviously vulnerable to its blast. After a moment's hesitation he realised that at least one machine gun in Casino Point was causing considerable casualties to the advancing men and so exploded the charge.

The result was the complete destruction of the position, sending earth, burning debris and dead Germans into the air. However, because of the shallowness of the charge, rather than erupting straight upwards this man-made volcano hurled its contents over a wide area, causing casualties among many surrounding British battalions, both those advancing and the troops assembling in preparation for following waves of the attack.

Private Fred Henwood of 6th Battalion wrote in his diary, "One of our companies, being well in front, got to the German parapet and was just landing in [the Germans'] trench when the mine went up and blew most of that company up with it."

Crucially however, the crater was in the Berkshire's hands almost immediately, along with the first trench line around it.

At 7.30am the artillery fell silent and the whistles up and down the sixteen or so miles of British trenches blew and men started clambering out. The 6th Berks' leading wave, already far out into no man's land when the whistles blew, was upon the German front line of "Mine Trench" and the crater left by the exploding Casino Point mine within seconds of the barrage ceasing and the first prisoners were taken.

At 7.32am the leading wave of Berkshires moved off towards the second German line, "Bund Support", whilst the second wave began advancing across no mans' land and subsequent waves prepared to follow. The Germans were by now manning their weapons in the carefully positioned tiers of trenches ahead and firing downhill into the advancing British troops.

The battle raged on and casualties were mounting. Many officers had fallen and individual units were becoming badly depleted.

The exhausted troops of the leading Berkshires were facing the stiffest resistance of the day in Montauban Alley and Loop Trench. The German artillery had been accurately shelling throughout the day, making the task of the carrying parties and consolidation troops hazardous as they brought ammunition and supplies to the forward units and worked to create new strongpoints in case of counterattack.

Montauban Alley shortly after its capture on 1st July



By 6.00pm however, resistance was negligible and by 6.30pm any surviving Germans were fleeing across the open land in front whilst the British troops consolidated their final positions for the day, all objectives along the 18th Division's front having been or shortly to be taken.

Despite the gains to the South, no overall breakthrough was achieved. The lack of progress and full extent of the carnage on the front further north, where in places whole battalions had been virtually wiped out for no gain, had yet to filter through to the high command although they clearly realised that events had not gone according to plan.

Instead, the troops in the south looked out over the rolling landscape of the Somme beyond, dotted with the woods - Delville, High, Mametz and more - which were within easy walking distance, clearly unoccupied by enemy troops and yet which would soon become icons of the slaughter of the First World War, particularly Mametz for the Welsh.

We don't know at what point George fell that day but his 'B' Company are particularly noted in the Battalion's records as having "suffered severely." All officers having become casualties as the Company led the assault. Total casualties among the Battalion of 656 men was 7 officers killed and five wounded, 82 other ranks killed with 254 wounded. On 2nd July, the survivors of 6th Battalion were relieved to Carnoy.



Carnoy Valley, July 1916 (now Carnoy Military Cemetery)

In total 57,450 British soldiers were killed or wounded on that terrible day.

With no known grave, George's name was placed on the Thiepval Memorial to the missing. George is also listed on the Caerphilly War Memorial.



6 Hubert Morgan, RFA - 13th October 1918 (Age 20)

**74351 - Gunner Hubert Morgan - C Battery, CLXXXIII Brigade
Royal Field Artillery (41st Division)**



The War Diaries of the 189th are not available beyond April 1917 so there is some uncertainty in these details. However, as there was only one soldier named Hubert Morgan being recorded among the WW1 dead of the Royal Field Artillery, we believe the military information set out is correct.

As for Hubert's family and background, he was born near the Ebenezer Congregational Chapel in Rudry on 8th October 1898, meaning he had just turned 20 years old when he died. His parents were William Henry Morgan, a coal miner from Pentyrch (b.1868) and Mary Ann (née Moses) Morgan from Rudry (b. 30/09/1870). They were married in 1890 and spoke both Welsh and English as did the children.

Hubert had six brothers, William Thomas (b.1893), Trevor (b.24/05/1895), Ernest (b.1897), Jalesin (b.1904), Garfield (b.08/07/1906) and Glyndwr (b.1908). He had two sisters, Annie Mary (b.1901) and Jennat (b.1903).

We think the family may have lived at 16 Woodland Terrace in Senghenydd (a row of miners' cottages) for a while as it appears that Hubert and Trevor attended the Graig Board School in Pontypridd and the record notes they both previously attended 'Rudry Council School'. Hubert left Graig school on 30th March 1908 with Trevor having left the previous year. In 1910, Garfield was at Maes-Y-Coed infants in Pontypridd but the register notes he 'left district' on 11/11/1910'.

The family had moved to 49 Dol-y-felin Street in Caerphilly as this is where they were recorded in 1911 with William, Trevor and their Father working as Coal Miner Hewers. Hewers were the men [and boys] who used hand tools to 'pick' at the coal face, often in very confined spaces where they would work on their hands and knees.

Hubert was still at school, but we don't know where. Ernest was living with his uncle Thomas Moses and his great aunt Ann Watkins in a cottage by Rudry Mill (which was run by Lewis Moses). Even without Ernest, there were ten people living in a small house!

Hubert enlisted in Caerphilly although we do not know exactly when he joined the 189th RFA.

The 189th Brigade was raised in September 1915 and was referred to as the 'Hackney Gun Brigade' and proceeded to France in May 1916. There were four batteries, lettered A, B, C and D. Each battery had four 18-pounder field guns. C Battery served in France from May 1916 to April 1919. By November 1916 the batteries had six guns each.

Gunners of the Royal Field Artillery getting an 18-pounder gun into action alongside a ruined cottage, near Saint-Floris, Nord-Pas-de-Calais, France 2nd May 1918.



We have not been able to ascertain the precise circumstances or even the battle at which Hubert fell, but it was likely in connection with the battle to take the final obstacle, the Hindenburg Line.



Brigadier General JC Campbell, VC, CMG, DSO addressing troops from the Riqueval Bridge after breaking the Hindenburg Line defences

In any event, Hubert was wounded and died from those wounds on 13th October 1918.

He is buried in the Queant Communal Cemetery, British Extension.

Hubert is also inscribed on the Caerphilly War Memorial.



Postscript

Before Hubert died in 1918, tragedy had already befallen his family almost five years to the day earlier.

His Father William Snr, brothers William Jnr and Ernest and his uncle Thomas Moses were all killed in the Senghenydd Mining Disaster on 14th October 1913 – they were buried at St James' Churchyard on 18th October.

We can't quite work out the relationship but Hubert is also related to Gunner Walter Moses [No. 4 in our Roll of Honour] – possibly second cousins – both serving in the Artillery.

Hubert's widowed Mother was recorded in 1939 as living at 9 Mill Road, next door to Garfield, his wife Lilian Edith (b.09/04/1910 née Morgan) and their children Pearl and Godfrey at number 7. Garfield was still working as a Hewer. Both Garfield and Lilian died in 1979.

7 Mark Baggett, CAN^D I F - 8th July 1917 (Age 26)



811953 - Private Mark Guy Baggett - 31st Battalion, Canadian Infantry (Alberta Regiment)

Mark was born in Barry (likely at 34 Phyllis Street) on 27th March 1891 to Joseph Frederick and Mary Ann (née Slocombe) Baggett. Joseph (b. 1855 – d.1925) was a labourer from Bristol and Mary Ann (b.1855) was also from Bristol. They had 5 daughters, Alice Mary (b.1879 - 1968), Amy (b.1883 - d.1976), Mary Ann Salisbury (b.1893 – d.1988), (Florence) Mabel (b.1898 – d.1987) and Clara (b.1901 – d.1902). There were 4 sons, Mark Guy and his brothers John Andrew (b.1885 – d.1977), Joseph (b.1889 – d.1954) and Percy (b.1895 – d.1971). On 27th October 1902 Mark and his brother Percy were admitted to Holton Road School for Boys in Barry. Their address was listed as 2 Morgan Street.

On 26th January 1903, Mark was admitted to Bishton Council School but left in March which is possibly when they moved home as by 1911 the family was listed at Refail House in Rudry [now The Old Smithy] and Mark was working as a coal hewer. Missing from the family is Clara, who died in 1902 - Mary Ann Baggett was noted as having had 11 children of which 2 had died. Alice had married Robert George Turner (colliery stoker) on 25th February 1901 and moved from Barry to 26 Rhôs Row, Bedwas Road. In 1911 they were noted there with children Robert John (b.1903) and Lillian Doris (b.1911). Rhôs Row survives, at least in part, as numbers 158 to 182 Bedwas Road opposite Lansbury Park.

We know that shortly after the 1911 census the family moved from Refail House to Yew Tree Cottage, Rudry (between the Maenllwyd and Draethen).

Records show that Mark's parents, Joseph and Mary, along with Mark, Percy and Mabel were all recorded as being aboard the SS Royal George bound for Montreal on 10th August 1914 – a 17 day voyage. The passenger list does not note any other 'Baggetts'.

Mark and his brother Percy were both noted as lodgers at the same address in Edmonton in the 1916 Prairie Provinces Census. There was no mention of his parents or Mabel.

We cannot establish when others of his family moved to Canada but Mary Ann Salisbury Baggett died 11th August 1988 in Edmonton. John Andrew Baggett died 5th December 1977 and is buried in Linaria, Alberta. Alice died on 21st March 1968 in Westlock, Alberta. Their Father, Joseph, died [in 1925] in Edmonton.

So it was in Edmonton, the capital city of Alberta, that on 14th February 1916 aged 24, Mark joined the Canadian Infantry. He was noted as 5'3½" tall with a 37½" chest, blue eyes and brown hair.

OATH TO BE TAKEN BY MAN ON ATTESTATION.

I, Mark Guy Baggett, do make Oath, that I will be faithful and bear true Allegiance to His Majesty King George the Fifth, His Heirs and Successors, and that I will as in duty bound honestly and faithfully defend His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, in Person, Crown and Dignity, against all enemies, and will observe and obey all orders of His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, and of all the Generals and Officers set over me. So help me God.

Date, 14th Feb'y 1916. Mark Guy Baggett (Signature of Recruit)
V. J. Reay (Signature of Witness)

In July 1916, Mark made his will leaving all to his Mother but with the address as Yew Tree Cottage, Rudry. (After he was buried, his headstone was later inscribed with 'Thy will be done' which was requested by Mrs R Turner of Yew Tree Cottage, at a cost of 3s/9d.) Mrs Turner was likely Mark's sister Alice (Mrs Robert Turner).

Mark was initially in the 138th Battalion which was specifically recruited in Edmonton as a reinforcing unit and sailed from Canada on the SS Olympic on 24th August 1916 with 32 officers and 870 other ranks.

The Royal Mail Ship (RMS) Olympic, launched in 1910, was the older sister of RMS Titanic and the largest ship afloat at the time of her launch. When war was declared, Olympic was used as a troopship and spent much of the war ferrying troops from and to Canada.



Mark arrived in England on 30th August 1916 and after further training with the 138th, then the 175th Battalions, was transferred to the 31st Battalion ('Bell's Bulldogs') in France on 16th February 1917.

Initially, as with all troops arriving in France, Mark was at the base camp in Étaples, Northern France, which was used for training soldiers on their way to the front.

In May 1917, at the battle of Fresnoy, the 31st Battalion lost 225 men, nearly half its strength. We don't know for sure but Mark was likely here as he was noted as being admitted to No. 4 General Hospital in Camiers on 4th May with a gunshot wound to his right shoulder.

He returned to duty on 8th June and was with his Battalion engaged in operations towards Lens.

It was during these operations that Mark then suffered a gunshot wound to the head on 8th July 1917 and was taken to No.7 Casualty Clearing Station where he sadly died that same day aged 26.



He is buried at Noeux-les-Mines Communal Cemetery.

Through the course of the First World War, a total of 4,675 men served in the 31st Battalion, Canadian Infantry, which suffered 941 dead with 2,312 wounded.

Canada sent 418,052 troops to fight overseas during WW1 of which 56,638 never returned home. 39,456 were killed in action and a further 17,182, like Mark, died from their wounds.

8 Augustus Harris, Welsh Guards - 16th September 1916 (Age 22)



1184 - Lance Corporal Augustus (Gus) Harris - 1st Battalion, Welsh Guards

Augustus, or Gus as he was known, was born to Thomas (b.1865) and Elizabeth 'Lillie' (née Pugh - b.14/12/1870) Harris at Ty'n-y-Coedcae [farmhouse] on 25th November 1893. He had two brothers, Gwyn (b.1899) and (Thomas) Brindley (b.1895) and two sisters, Beatrice (b.1891) and May (b.1897). The family previously lived at 9 New Row, Machen.

Gus worked as a tinsmith at the Waterloo Tin Plate Works as did brother 'Brindley'. Their father was a tinsmith roller at the same works. Gus was a well-known rugby player.

On 17th August 1914 Gus joined the Glamorgan Constabulary as PC 526 but left on 9th April 1915 so he could join the Welsh Guards the following day. Sixty of his Glamorgan Police colleagues who also joined up lost their lives – 23 with the Welsh Guards.

Gus served on the Western Front from August to December 1915 and again from July 1916. In August 1916 he was promoted to Lance Corporal.

His brother Brindley joined the Army Flying Corps on 10th January 1918 (then RAF on 1st April 1918). He survived the war, married Clarice and lived with their three daughters in Oxford until his death in 1969. According to Brindley's record, their Mother Lillie was living at 13 Standard Street, Trethomas in 1918.

12 JH Richards, Welsh Guards - 16th September 1916 (Age 19)



2208 - Guardsman James Herbert (Bert) Richards - 1st Battalion, Welsh Guards

Bert was born in Abercarn in 1896 to William (b.1869) and Clara Ann (née Thomas, b.1869). He had five younger brothers, Eldred Arthur (b.22/02/1899), Trevor Glyndwr (b.27/11/1900), William Percival (b.02/04/1902), Melvyn Ernest (b.1909) and Stanley Clifford (b.20/12/1909), as well as a younger sister Katie (b.1898).

In 1901 the family was registered at 10 Waterloo Terrace but Bert was noted at another house on Waterloo Terrace (we think either No. 2 or 3) with his maternal Grandparents James (b.1849) and Ann (b.1843) Thomas. In 1911, while the family was still at No. 10 Waterloo Terrace, Bert was registered at Dranllwyn, Machen with Grandparents James and Ann.

At 14 years of age Bert was working as a tinsmith cleaner and his grandfather James was a tinsmith assorter. Bert's Army record suggests, that like Gus, he also joined in 1915.

We have noted Gus and Bert together as they fought in the same Welsh Guards' battalion and died on the same day – 16th September 1916; a day that saw "hard and confused fighting."

Arriving on the Somme from the Ypres Sector at the end of July, 1916, the Welsh Guards [Motto: *Cymru am Byth*] took over front line trenches for the first time on 10th August. These being between the villages of Beaumont-Hamel and Serre; both scenes of horrific fighting during the 1916 Somme campaign. Having moved south, the Battalion took part in operations around Ginchy on 9th to 11th September. Here there was fierce hand-to-hand fighting as the Guardsmen and other troops fought around and through the village.

For the Welsh Guards a short rest from the fighting would be enjoyed as final details were worked out for a big attack (the Battle of Flers – Courcellette) planned to take place on 15th September.



This was to see British tanks in action for the first time.

In preparation, the Guardsmen took up positions west of Trônes Wood on 14th September.

Here, and in trenches close to Ginchy, the Battalion sat it out in pouring rain, patiently waiting for their turn to assault the enemy's line at Lesbœufs, a heavily fortified village on the right of the main assault.

Just after mid-day on 16th September, the Welsh Guards went forward. But conditions were such that only short rushes could be made and the assaulting troops, finding themselves in standing crops, soon lost direction. At the end of the day the Battalion had suffered 144 casualties with both Gus and Bert among them.

With no known graves the men's names are recorded on the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme – both on Pier 7/Face D.



Postscript

Gus Harris

Some weeks after Gus was killed, his wristwatch was found on the battlefield by an officer of the Royal Field Artillery and sent to Cardiff Police Station from where his Mother reclaimed it. She later moved to Bedwas and was living at 8 East Avenue in 1939.

Bert Richards

Bert's Mother Clara died before the war ended and was buried in St James Churchyard, Rudry on 4th May 1918.

After the war, Bert's brother Eldred married Dorothy Minnie Mason (b.29/10/1895) in 1922 and moved to 13 John Street, Abercarn. His brother Trevor married Dorothy's sister, Lily Maud Mason (b.1901) in 1924 and moved to 14 John Street, next door. The sisters grew up in Garth Place, Rudry. Trevor & Lily had 2 children, Lily J (b.1926) and Bernice Audrey (b.1927)).

Bert's brother William married Ann L Williams (b.25/10/1895) in 1927 and they had a daughter Dorothy E in 1934. They lived at 9 The Crescent, Machen. William died in 1969. His brother Stanley married Catherine Edmunds (b.10/02/1915) in 1938 and they lived at Tir Jenkins Farm.

9 D.J. Jones, Australian IF - 21st September 1918 (Age 34)



6651 - Private David John Jones - 5th Battalion Australian Imperial Force

David's is the second of the two CWGC memorials in St James' churchyard.

He was born in Rudry in early 1884 to Ephraim Moses Jones (a circular sawyer and general labourer born 09/07/1858 in Rudry) and Elizabeth Jones, née Davies (born 1857) from Troedyrhiw. He had an older sister Maria (born 1881) and an older brother James Moses (b. 22/05/1878). At the time they lived in a 'cottage near the Maenllwydd' in Rudry. By 1911 the family had moved to 76 High Street, Abertridwr and David's brother James was a winding engineman. In the same year David was noted as a commercial traveller, lodging at 32 Granville Square, Clerkenwell in London.

He then emigrated from Liverpool to Australia on board the Everton Grange in April 1912. The passenger list also noted him as a commercial traveller. At the age of 32 and working then as a farm labourer in East Trentham (40 miles NW of Melbourne), he enlisted [on the 8th March 1916] with the 5th Infantry Battalion, 21st Reinforcements of the Australian Imperial Force. He listed his next of kin as Mr Ephraim Jones of 8, Bryngelli Terrace, Abertridwr and was noted by the Australian Department of Defence as 'an all round athlete'.

After completing basic training, he embarked with the 5th Battalion on HMAT Nestor on 2nd October 1916 arriving at Plymouth on 16th November 1916. Further training was undertaken and he left Folkestone for France on 2nd February 1917 on board SS Victoria.

David was wounded in action on 4th October 1917 with shrapnel wounds to his hand, left leg and face. After recovery he re-joined his unit on 9th November and returned home on leave from 27th January to 12th February 1918.

After being sent to Intelligence School on 19th June, he re-joined the 5th Battalion on 26th June and was wounded for the second time on 9th August 1918 in an attack near Bayonvillers. Of the 27 officers and 593 other ranks of the 5th Battalion in the attack, 2 officers and 9 other ranks were killed and 6 officers and 62 other ranks (including David) were wounded.

David was evacuated with gunshot wounds to the shoulder, spine and chest on Hospital Ship St Denis on 15th August 1918. He was taken to The King Hospital in London but died from his wounds at 2.30am on 21st September 1918. His body was sent to his Father's home in Abertridwr and buried in St James' Churchyard, Rudry on 25th September. He was laid to rest in a polished Elm coffin and was attended by his Father, Mother and other members of his family.

He is commemorated on the St James' memorial and also on the base of a brass missal by the altar, as well as being listed on the Abertridwr remembrance roll in the Nazareth Chapel – now moved to the community centre. He is also commemorated on panel 44 at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra and his name will be projected onto the exterior of the Hall of Memory on 15/12/2021 at 3.01am and on 04/03/2022 at 1.54am.

Postscript

David's Mother Elizabeth died on 18th November 1925, aged 69 years. She was buried with David. In 1939, David's Father, along with James (now retired) and his wife Tegwen Elizabeth, née Thomas (b.23/02/1879) were still living at 8 Bryngelli Terrace, Abertridwr. James died in 1941 (aged 63), Ephraim in 1943 (aged 85) and Tegwen in 1958 (aged 79).



10 W.E. Lewis, 16th Welch - 17th October 1916 (Age 22)

565566 - Private Walter Edward (Glyn) Lewis - 16th (Cardiff City) Battalion, Welch Regt.



Glyn, as he was known, was born in 1895 in Cathays, Cardiff. His Father was David Walter Lewis (b.1865) and Mother Amelia, née Owens (b.1874). At some point Glyn, his parents and brother Thomas Edgar Owen Lewis (b. 26/08/1896), were living at 52 Penarth Road but then moved to 179 Corporation Street in Newport where they were joined by Minnie Medora Madge Lewis, born 1903. They then moved to 5 Waterloo Terrace, Waterloo from where Glyn's Father worked as a tin worker at Waterloo works. All the family were Welsh speakers.

We don't know when Glyn joined up but we know his younger brother Thomas also joined the Welch Regiment in 1914 – it is likely they joined at the same time. Thomas survived the war although he was wounded in October 1918. Also, in 1918 (now serving in the 3rd Battalion and noted at 5 Waterloo Terrace), Thomas married Norah Hawksley (b.17/01/1897). They had four children, Walter Edgar Owen (b.19/02/19), Carrina (b.10/01/21), Alan B (b.17/08/27) and Joyce (b.17/04/33). In 1939 Thomas and family were living at 15 Bishton Street, Newport and he was a retail milk salesman.

The brothers' 16th Battalion fought alongside the 16th Battalion of the Royal Welch Fusiliers. It is entirely possible, therefore, that Glyn, his brother Thomas as well as Stanley Jones, all fought at Mametz.

After the July 1916 fighting at Mametz Wood, the 38th (Welsh) Division, including Glyn's 16th Battalion, Welch Regiment, moved north to the Hebuterne front. Here, and still on the Somme, the men of the Battalion were mainly occupied in digging advance trenches in No Man's Land.

At the beginning of August, the Division moved north again. This time to the Ypres Salient and trenches close to Wieltje. It was in this sector that twenty-two year old Glyn was wounded and died of those wounds on 17th October 1916.

His was buried at Mendinghem Military Cemetery in Belgium along with another 2,433 identified casualties.



An article published in the Weekly Argus in November 1916, under the Machen headline, quoted a letter from the Wesleyan Chaplain to the father of Private W.E. (Glyn) Lewis conveying the news that *"a successful operation notwithstanding, he passed away on the 16th May you be comforted by the fact that he gave his life for a noble cause"*. [Military records note the 17th, not the 16th ...]

Postscript

Glyn's Mother died shortly after in 1917 aged 43 and is buried at St James' Church as is his Father who died in 1931 aged 66. His Brother Thomas died 26th April 1961.

11 Daniel Mason, RFA - 29th September 1918(Age 20)

160577 - Driver Daniel Mason - C Battery, CXXIV Brigade, Royal Field Artillery



Daniel was born in 1898, probably at 7 Sheep Cottages, Pritchard Row, Claw-y-plwyf in the [ancient] Parish of Mynyddyslwyn. Claw-y-plwyf was a hamlet North of Ynysddu and near the Cae'r-llwyn Colliery, but Daniel grew up at 2 Garth Place in Rudry where the family was listed in 1901.

His Father, also Daniel (born 1862 – a coal miner) and his Mother Myra (born 1862) were both from Kingswinford in Staffordshire. Daniel Junior had two brothers, Thomas John (born 1885) and Enoch (born 1891) and four sisters, Annie (b.15/03/1887), Edith (b.1890), Dorothy Minnie (b.1895) and Lily Maud (b. 1901).

The 1911 census sees the family still at 2 Garth Place with Thomas John and Enoch working as Miners. Annie had left in 1910 marrying Charles Edgar Morgan, also from Rudry (an engine fitter) at St James' Church and setting up home in Rogerstone along with young Dorothy Minnie (aged 15) who was by then a dress maker's apprentice. Dorothy married a tinplate worker called Eldred Richards in 1922 and moved to Abercarn. Lily Maud married John James Davies in Hirwaun in 1916. Edith married Idris Morgan Burris (b.1889), who also lived at Garth Place, at St James' Church in 1912.

We can find very little information regarding Daniel's military service save that at some point he joined the Royal Field Artillery (RFA) and fought in France. The RFA was the largest arm of the artillery, responsible for the reasonably mobile medium calibre guns and howitzers deployed close to the front lines.



German prisoners carrying wounded past a 6-inch howitzer of the RFA in position near Inchy, Canal du Nord, September 1918

The 124th Brigade, RFA was part of the 37th Division and during 1918 covered the Battle of the Ancre during April, the Battle of Albert in August and the September fighting at the Hindenburg Line. It appears that the final battle for Daniel was the Battle of the Canal-du-Nord which began on 27th September 1918. The battle, which lasted until 1st October saw 30,000 losses, including Daniel.

Daniel was wounded and died from those wounds on 29th September 1918. He is buried at Ruyaulcourt Military Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France.



Postscript

Daniel's Mother Myra died in 1930 aged 68 and his Father Daniel in 1939 aged 77 – both are buried in St James' Churchyard. Daniel's brother Enoch married Eurfran Powell (b.16/07/1895) and in 1939 was listed at 2 Garth Place with two children, Reginald Vivian (born 23/02/1915) and Iris (born 23/01/1920). Both Enoch and Reginald worked underground as Colliery Hewers. Enoch died 28th August 1969 and was also buried in St James' Churchyard. Reginald died in 2007. Iris married John T Coles in 1945 and died in 2017.

13 W.T. Shute, SWB - 20th August 1918 (Age 29)



31668 - Private William Trewin Shute - 2nd Battalion, South Wales Borderers

There is some uncertainty with the records but there is only one 'William Shute' that appears among the war dead of the SWB.

He was born in 1889 at Aberavon (likely 23 Church Street) to George Thomas Shute (born 1857), a tin plate roller, and Mary Shute (née Davies, born 15/12/1862). George and Mary were married in 1888. 'Trewin' was William's Grandmother's maiden name (Alice Trewin).

In 1901 he was the only noted child at 47 Wern Square, Aberavon. By 1911, William and his parents were listed at 'Redbrook, Bedwas' and William was noted as a Tin Plate Catcher, as was his Father George. In those days, the Civil Parish of 'Bedwas' included Waterloo in the sub-district of Mynyddislwyn. We believe Redbrook was situated off the Newport Road near the turning for Waterloo and that William and his Father worked at Waterloo Tin Plate Works. Records show that William joined the South Wales Borderers in 1914 at Newport.

The Machen memorial also lists William but notes him as being in the 1st Battalion SWB. However, military records show he was in the 2nd Battalion and, in any event, the 1st battalion had no casualties on the 20th August 1918, the day he was killed, as they were training away from the front line.

In August 1918 the British army was making rapid advances and trench warfare had given way to a war of rapid movement. The diary for the 2nd Battalion shows them in action between Garbeon and Meteren-Becque. From positions near Outtersteene Ridge the battalion attacked the German positions. The advance began well, being '*excellently carried out with plenty of dash and initiative by individuals and junior commanders. Enemy machine guns were rushed and outflanked and rifle grenades were freely used and found of great value*'. The advance had reached the Merris-Outtersteene road bridge, from where, *at 1.32 pm the code word was received to move forward.*

The Battalion succeeded in their objective but suffered 132 killed, among them William, fatally wounded in the head. He is buried at Outtersteene Communal Cemetery Extension, Bailleul, France alongside 3 other SWB fallen and 10 unknown soldiers.



Postscript

William's Father George died in 1937 aged 80 and his Mother Mary was listed at 64 William Street, Trethomas in 1939. She was living with Mary J [Shute] Rees (b.09/12/1894) and Thomas Rees (b.12/04/1888) who had married in 1929. We can't establish if Mary J was her daughter or niece. William's Mother died in 1951 aged 89.

14 Ivor J Cross, Royal Artillery - 22nd December 1944 (Age 41)



**1817036 - Gunner Ivor John Cross, 12th Battery
6th Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment, Royal Artillery**

Ivor's parents were Ivor John (Senior) born 25/02/1878 and Ellen Jane Cross (née Woodland) born 29/01/1877. Ivor senior was the son of William and Ann Cross [m. 1897] who lived then at Yew Tree Cottage, Rudry.

Ivor junior was born 28/09/1903, probably at Warren Cottages, where his parents lived in 1911 along with two older brothers, William (b. 1898) and Stanley (b. 04/01/1902) and 2 younger brothers, Brinley (b. 15/02/1905) and Albert (b. 05/08/1909). He also had a sister Mary Ann (b. 1911).

Records show that Ivor, Stanley and Brinley were all baptized together at St James' Church on 19th May 1907 and that Ivor was baptised as John which is how he may have been known. We believe Ivor's brother Brinley joined the RAF in 1941 (service number 1418265). At the time he enlisted he was living in 4 Wernddu Row with his wife Sarah Oliver (née Satterley). Brinley survived the war and died in 1995 aged 90; Sarah (b. 02/12/1907) died in 1986.

Stanley, who was baptised Emrys Stanley Cross, married Lavinia Maud Brown (b.25/02/1904) in 1924 at St James' Church. They had two children, Harold D (b.12/10/1927) and Violet J (b.17/05/1932). In 1939 they were living at 7 Wernddu Row. Both Stanley (Emrys) and Lavinia died in 1978. Albert married Phyllis Maud Mould (b.06/11/1913) in 1936 and they lived next door to at Ty'n-y-parc; Albert was a carpenter.

In 1939 Ivor and his parents were living at Ty'n-y-parc in Rudry where Ivor's Great Grandparents John and Mary Cross had lived from at least 1861 to 1891. By 1901 His great grandfather John was aged 82 and widowed. Living In the same household as Ivor's Great Grandfather John Cross at this time was the Butcher family including 12 year old George Butcher (No. 5 on our Roll of Honour) who would later be killed on the first day of the Battle of the Somme, 1st July 1916. Ivor and George were cousins. In 1939, Ivor was now 36 and working as a general labourer in a local dolomite quarry.

We believe Ivor signed up for service in 1941 aged 37, joining the Royal Artillery and assigned to the 12th Battery of the 6th Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment.



In September 1941, the regiment was ordered to prepare for embarkation for the Middle East. On 14 November 1941, Ivor and his regiment sailed from Liverpool aboard the *Monarch of Bermuda* in Convoy WS12. They were bound for Iraq to join the build-up of AA defences for the oil terminal at Basra.

However, on 8 December, while the convoy was at Durban, South Africa, the Japanese invaded Malaya. On 11th December the convoy was split, and the part containing 6th HAA Regt (now aboard HM Transport *Aorangi*) was diverted to Singapore, arriving on 13th January 1942 and the gunners manned existing gun sites around Singapore island.

As the Japanese offensive expanded through South East Asia, General Wavell sent some of the AA reinforcements from Singapore on to the Dutch East Indies. RHQ, 12th and 15th HAA Btys of 6th HAA Regt went to Sumatra.

Sumatra

On Sumatra, 6th HAA Regt was sent to guard two airfields known as P1 and P2, and the Pladjoe and Soengei Gerong oil refineries situated in dense jungle at Palembang. On arrival, the batteries had six 3.7-inch guns with them, but no instruments or communication equipment. Much ammunition had been lost when one of the ships was sunk by Japanese bombers. Ivor's 12th Bty had four guns at P2 and two each at Pladjoe and Soengei Gerong. The batteries were in position by 3rd February 1942.

On the same day that Singapore fell (14th February), the Japanese launched their invasion of Sumatra. This began with a paratroop drop at P1 and Pladjoe. Once the paratroop drop began, the AA batteries opened fire, shooting down one aircraft, causing another to force-land and others to veer off course. The drop was successful nonetheless, and the paratroopers began working through the jungle to the gun installations. A 3.7-inch shell fired with minimum fuse over open sights cleared a nest of snipers from a tree, while another destroyed a Japanese light anti-aircraft gun.

As the airfield was overrun, the gunners attempted to pull back to Palembang, but there were only two serviceable AEC Matador gun tractors left. The remaining guns were disabled and the gunners and RAF personnel attempted to retreat. The road was under fire and the convoy ran into a roadblock, so the HAA and LAA gunners and RAF men made their way in small parties to Palembang, taking heavy casualties along the way. Only one 3.7-inch gun was recovered, which was sited at the ferry site at Palembang.

At the refinery, Ivor's 12th Bty formed a party to attack another drop zone and engaged the Japanese in a five-hour firefight with small arms. The battery's guns were in action all day, claiming 16 'kills' in conjunction with 78/35 LAA Bty. As Japanese invasion barges approached next day, the Dutch commander destroyed the refinery and evacuated to P2, which was still operational. Once again, the AA gunners at the refinery had to disable most of their guns; two guns were ferried across the river to cover the railway and bridges, then on to P2, but the last remaining gun of 15th Bty at the ferry had to be abandoned.

Once the last aircraft had flown out of P2, the decision was made to evacuate southern Sumatra. The force retreated to Oosthaven by road and rail, destroying the remaining AA guns which could not negotiate the bridges on the route. From Oosthaven the surviving RAF personnel and AA gunners, including Ivor were shipped to Java. Ivor no doubt felt lucky to have escaped but unknown to him, even greater hardships lay ahead.

Java

By mid-February, Java was the only part of the Dutch East Indies holding out. 77th (Welsh) HAA Regt had been defending the naval base of Sourabaya against air attack for several weeks. The British and Dutch forces were not in good shape, the units having arrived piecemeal, some without their equipment: Ivor's 12th Bty had no guns left and they were employed as infantry to defend the airfields, together with 89/35 LAA Bty who still had some Bofors guns.

Japanese landings on Java began on 1 March with the airfields as their primary target. The survivors of 12th Bty, with some RAF defence troops and some light Dutch armoured vehicles, defended Kalidjati airfield. The defence forces put up a vigorous defence before the airfields were overrun. The survivors of 12th Bty joined 15th Bty, which had been under air but not ground attack.

'Blackforce', a mixed force of Australians and British commanded by Brig Arthur Blackburn, VC, kept up an active defence for several days, but the Dutch commander ordered his units to cease fire on 8th March, and the remnants of 16th AA Bde including Ivor and the other survivors of 6th HAA Regt surrendered to the Japanese on 12 March.

Imprisonment

The PoWs from the 6th HAA regiment on Java were moved around various camps until October 1942 when they were transported by sea to Singapore and then on to Japan: 65 men of 6th HAA Regt died aboard ship or shortly afterwards.

Those that reached Japan were set to work in the coal mines, docks and ironworks. Others were sent to Borneo to construct airfields and died in the infamous Sandakan Death Marches, and at least 20 men of 6th HAA Regt were killed in the Balalae Island massacre when 517 PoW's were executed after being forced to build an airfield.

Ivor was sent to Fukoka PoW Camp 1 on Kyushu island. The conditions here were so cruel that following the end of the war, in 1946, War crimes investigations were carried out and The Gibbs Report documented the conditions at the Camp:

"...prisoners worked 10 hours per day at hard labour outside of camp compound in construction of airfield bomb shelters and in coal mining. They were exposed to bombing raids and were very inadequately fed for manual labour. These prisoners also did such work as grave digging, carrying coffins to burial sites and other work in the cemetery. Numerous prisoners with malaria and suffering from intermittent fever were compelled to work."

According to survivor testimonies given to Gibbs, the Japanese camp guards and their officers added considerably to the men's suffering:

Commandant: Yuichi Sakamoto, 1st Lt. Japanese Imperial Army, sadistic, conniving & brutal.

Medical Officer: Matsato Hata, incompetent, inconsiderate and brutal. Interpreters: Mr. Kitiyoka and Mr. Katsura.

Guard: Mr. Honda, cruel who administered many beatings without cause to sick men as well as to those (un)able to discharge assigned work.

Ivor died, allegedly of pneumonia, on 22nd December 1944 aged 41, at Fukuoka City Camp #1 on Kyushu Island, Japan. He had been a PoW for 20 months.

By 1944, the other POWs there were mostly shot down American airmen. Ivor's ashes were consequently interred in 1946 at the National Cemetery at the Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis. His name appears on the memorial there:



According to Commonwealth War Graves Commission records, 6th HAA Regt's fatal casualties during World War II comprise 29 buried in France and Belgium, 19 in the UK, and 447 in the Far East. The regimental historian has identified 738 men who survived the Far East campaign.

Amongst many other camp guards from Japanese POW camps, Sakamoto, Hada, Katsura and Honda, were all found guilty at the Japanese War Crimes Tribunal and were sentenced thus:

Captain Yuchichi Sakamoto: Life Imprisonment

Sup. Pvt. (Med) Masato Hada: Life Imprisonment

Sup. Pvt Takeo Katsura: 40 Years Imprisonment

Civ. Guard Hajime Honda: Death

15 Hiram E. Davies, Royal Air Force - 26th June 1943 (Age 22)

1317697 - Flight Sergeant Hiram Edwin Davies - Air Gunner
106 Squadron, Royal Air Force



Hiram was born on 21st February 1921 to Edwin (b. 10/03/1892) and Dora Susan Davies, née Lewis (b.1894) of 2 Waterloo Terrace, Waterloo. They had married on 8th June 1919 at St James' Church, Rudry. Edwin worked at the Waterloo Tin Plate Works and we believe he served in the Merchant Navy during WW1. Hiram's Mother Dora died on 5th June 1929 from tuberculosis and is buried at St James' Church. His father remarried Alice Mary Lewis (b. 03/11/1892) in 1930 – Alice was Dora's sister. We believe she died in 1931 and is also buried in St James' Churchyard. At that time, they were living at 7 Waterloo Terrace. Hiram's Father died in 1971 and is buried at St James.

Hiram joined the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve in 1940 and by 1943 was a Flight Sergeant and the mid upper turret gunner on Lancaster W4367 of 106 Squadron RAF, based at Syerston near Newark in Nottinghamshire.



106 Squadron aircraft all carried the Squadron code ZN and it was a disciplined and determined unit. Its Commanding Officer since May 1942 was Guy Gibson, shortly to win worldwide fame as the leader of 617 Squadron, the 'Dambusters'.

Morale in 106 Squadron was good, and Gibson led it with strict discipline. It was his leadership of 106 which doubtlessly was a major factor in him being chosen to set up and lead 617 Squadron in March 1943.

Following the departure of Gibson, 106 Squadron was to be led briefly by Wing Commander John Searby, who was very much a protégé of Gibson and continued to lead in an exemplary fashion. His tenure was brief however and in a few months' time as C/O of 83 Squadron on the attack of the German V-weapons development site at Peenemunde, was to be awarded the DFC. Searby was replaced by Wing Commander RE 'Ronnie' Baxter on 9 May. Baxter continued to lead 106 maintaining its efficiency and esprit de corps. Under the successive leadership of these three men, 106 Squadron had become a highly disciplined, committed and determined unit by the summer of 1943.

Target: Gelsenkirchen: In the afternoon of Friday 25 June 1943, Hiram, age 22, and the rest of the 106 crews were briefed for the night's attack. It was to be Gelsenkirchen in the Ruhr. This was to be a strong effort. 473 aircraft, comprising 214 Lancasters, 134 Halifaxes, 73 Stirling, 40 Wellingtons and 12 'Oboe' Mosquitoes acting as pathfinders for blind bombing as cloud cover was thought to be 7/10ths over the target. The crew for Hiram's W4367 that night was:

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Pilot: | 143377 - Pilot Officer Peter John Page, age 22 |
| Flight Engineer: | 576427 - Sgt. Edward Ernest Tyler, age 19 |
| Navigator: | 1032799 - Flt. Sgt. James Hancock, age 31 |
| Bomb Aimer: | 1366232 - Flt. Sgt. John MacMillan, age 32 |
| Wireless Operator/Air Gunner: | 990571 - Flt. Sgt. Joseph Pass, DFM, age 27 |
| Mid Upper Gunner: | 1317697 - Flt. Sgt. Hiram Edwin Davies, age 22 |
| Rear Gunner: | 1251211 - Flt. Sgt. John Charles Welch, age 22 |

Crews liked to stay together but casualties, rotations and replacements inevitably meant that men would regularly find themselves with new crew members.

In Hiram's crew, the wireless operator, Joseph Pass was an old hand having transferred recently to 106 Squadron from 49 Squadron, where he was the W/O on the Squadron Commanders' aircraft, completing 19 sorties and 113 flying hours. Just a month before, he had been awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal (DFM).



Hiram's Lancaster, W4367 ZN-C, 'The Saint'

Hiram left his dog tags behind in his quarters, before kitting up. This decision was to have consequences later.

At dusk, they boarded Lancaster W4367 of 106 Squadron for what was to be their last flight. Fourteen Lancasters of 106 Squadron lined up on Syerston's tarmac for take-off lead by S/L Young and they all took off safely between 22.30 and 23.00. The flight out was relatively quiet. The weather was poor with total cloud cover for most of the outbound flight.

On reaching the target, it was found to be completely covered by cloud. The Oboe Mosquitos were designed to direct blind bombing through cloud, but on this night, almost half the Mosquitos had equipment malfunctions and so the target was unable to be accurately marked. The result was a wide scattering of the main force's bombs across the Ruhr and Gelsenkirchen escaped major damage.

The 106 Squadron aircraft bombed between 01.21 and 01.53 and those returning commented on the ferocity of the flak and the abundance of night fighters.

The German night fighters had had a frustrating night's hunting for the bomber stream on its outward flight, due to the cloud cover, lack of moon light and successful interference of their radars by British jamming. However, as the bombers reached Holland on the return flight, the moon emerged and some of the cloud cover cleared.

From the main force, thirty aircraft were lost; the highest percentage suffered by Bomber Command up to that date. 106 Squadron suffered its equal worst losses of the war to date, with four aircraft lost from the 14 dispatched.

R5572 crashed in central Holland and produced the only survivor from the four crews. Sgt. Davidson, RCAF, reported his aircraft broke up in the air and he was thrown clear. W4256 crashed in Northern Holland with the crew of Sgt. White and EE125 was lost without trace with the crew of B Flight Commander S/L Young.

Hiram's Lancaster, W4367, had almost reached the Dutch coast when it was attacked by a Messerschmitt Bf 110 G-4 night fighter flown by Oberleutnant Hans Leickhardt of Nachtjagdgeschwader (NJG) 5 on detachment to NJG 1. Leickhardt was to go on to become an 'ace' with 13 kills and died in unknown circumstances on 5/6 March 1945.

Hiram's Lancaster crashed into the IJsselmeer with no survivors. Pilot Peter Page was from Lutterworth in Leicestershire and had only recently married. His widow Joan would remain single for the rest of her life.

After the war, the lake was reclaimed and the crash site is now in the village of Dronton, NNE of Harderwijk.

Hiram's body was never located, or his remains identified, which perhaps would have been possible if he'd worn his dog tags. He is commemorated on Panel 136 of the Air Forces Memorial, or Runnymede Memorial, near Egham, Surrey, dedicated to some 20,456 men and women from air forces of the British Empire who were lost in air and other operations during World War II.

The bodies of all of Hiram's crew mates except fellow gunner John Welch were recovered and are buried in Harderwijk General Cemetery.



16 David J Harris, Rifle Brigade – 25th October 1942 (Age 23)

6914860 - Corporal David John Harris

9th Battalion, The Rifle Brigade (Prince Consort's Own) (Tower Hamlet Rifles)



David was born in late 1918 to Philip (b.1879) and Elsie Nora Harris, nee Evans (b. 30/01/1886) who lived at Garth Place, Rudry. David's Father was originally from Rhydyfelin and worked as a furnaceman at Waterloo Tin Works. He married Elsie, who was from Porth, in 1903.

David had an older brother, Horace Rhys (b. 28/06/1903) who married Kathleen Hurley from Cardiff (b.29/06/1908) in 1931 and by 1939 was living at 16 Waterloo Terrace and working as a tinsplate roller. Horace died in 1980 and Kathleen in 1987.

He also had an older sister Cecilia (b.16/05/1905).

On 6th June 1922, David's younger brother Thomas Wyndham Harris was born. He died in Merthyr Tydfil district in 1978.

David's Father Philip died in 1932 and in 1939 Elsie was listed [as widowed] at Berllan-gollen along with Cecilia and Thomas and was noted as working in the canteen at the tinsplate works. Thomas was noted as a Greyhound racing dog attendant.

Cecilia went on to marry Henry Wookey Sharland (AKA Harry - b.28/03/1910) from the Griffin Inn in 1942 (his Father Thomas John Sharland being the licensee and Wookey being his Mother Louisa's maiden name). We believe Henry was previously married [in 1933] to Ivy Alice [Russell] who died in 1941. Cecilia died in 1965. It appears that Henry then married for a third time in 1966 (aged 56) to Kathleen Mary Baker (aged 57). Both Henry and Kathleen died in 1979.

We don't know when David joined but it would have been at the onset of war if not earlier considering his rank of corporal. If so, he would have signed up for the 1st Battalion, The Tower Hamlets Rifles.

The 1st Battalion took part in the 1940 campaign in France before being evacuated to England in 1940. They later served in North Africa as part of the 8th Army and were redesignated in 1941 as '9th Battalion, The Rifle Brigade (Prince Consort's Own) (Tower Hamlet Rifles)'

We know the Battalion was defending the oasis of Bir Hacheim at the end of May 1942 and David certainly was recorded as 'wounded' on 15th July 1942. However, the date of David's death on 25th October 1942 when he was listed as 'killed in action', suggests it was during the Second Battle of El Alamein which was fought from 23rd October to 11th November 1942.

In August 1942, Lt-General Bernard Law Montgomery commanded over 190,000 men from across the British Empire, Greece, Poland and France. They were equipped with over 1,000 tanks, 900 artillery pieces and 1,400 anti-tank guns. Montgomery unleashed his offensive on the night of 23rd October 1942 with a spectacular artillery barrage.

25 pounders firing at El Alamein on 23rd October 1942



In the early hours of 24th October British infantry and engineers began Operation Lightfoot, a painstaking and hazardous process of creating two channels in the minefields, through which the armoured forces were to advance.



Soldiers advancing at El Alamein, 1942

A mine explodes close to a British artillery tractor as it advances through enemy minefields at El Alamein, 1942



British tanks advance to engage German armour after infantry had opened gaps in the Axis minefield at El Alamein, 24th October 1942

The British then established a forward line from where the Axis forces would be engaged and worn down. This battle of attrition, euphemistically termed 'crumbling' by Montgomery, involved brutal close-quarter fighting in which the soldiers were tested in a maelstrom of heat, noise and horror.

At some point on the second day of this battle , David was killed and is buried at El Alamein War Cemetery (IX.E.17) along with 7,367 other fallen.



17 Frederick T Thomas, Welch Regiment - 12th February 1945 (Age 27)

**14782045 - Private Frederick Theophilus Thomas - 1/5th Battalion
The Welch Regiment**



Frederick was born on 2nd December 1917 to William (b. 18/03/1883) and Lydia née Jones (b. 24/02/1888). William and Lydia had married in 1905. William was a Tinplate Barcutter and in 1939 Frederick lived with his parents at Fishermans Rest Cottages, Porset - although William and his family were from Rudry. Frederick was at that time a Tinplate Behinder. He married Edith Priscilla Watkins (b. 05/10/1918) in 1941. She was noted in 1939 [lodging] at 23 High Street, Llanbradach with Arthur and Dorothea Williams. Both Edith and Dorothea were Ladies' Hairdressers.

We don't know when Frederick joined up but the 1/5th Battalion, originally with the 160th Infantry Brigade, moved to Normandy in late June 1944 and fought alongside the 4th Battalion in the 53rd (Welsh) Division in the North West Europe Campaign distinguishing itself at 's-Hertogenbosch, the Falaise Gap, the Ardennes and the Reichswald Forest, where Frederick was killed in action.

Soldiers from the 53rd Welsh Division advancing through the Western outskirts of the Reichswald Forest – 8th February 1945



The battle, which began on 8th February 1945 as part of Operation Veritable, saw some of the fiercest fighting of the campaign, against determined German paratroopers. Throughout Veritable the 53rd Division suffered almost 2,500 casualties (including psychiatric casualties), roughly a quarter of what they suffered throughout the entire campaign, while capturing over 3,000 prisoners.

On the day Frederick was killed, the Germans counterattacked in force, preceding their infantry assault with heavy mortar fire. The 6th Royal Welsh Fusiliers and 1/5th Battalion, Welch Regiment stood their ground until the panzer grenadiers were 300 yards away. Then the Welshmen opened fire and cut down the German attack and held their ground but had taken heavy casualties including Frederick.

Frederick was buried at the Reichswald Forest War Cemetery. He is also inscribed on the Caerphilly War Memorial.



Postscript

After Frederick's death, his widow Edith remarried in 1951 to Leonard A Matthews and she died in 1996 aged 78. His Mother Lydia died in 1955 aged 67 and his Father William in 1972 aged 89. Both were buried at St James.

18 Ralph Thomas, Submarine Corps - 16th January 1945 (Age 25)



C/SSX 25692 - Leading Seaman Ralph Thomas, HM Submarine Porpoise

Thanks to Ralph's nephews, Hywel D Thomas and Stephen D Jones, for providing a wealth of information, letters and photographs.

Ralph was born on 28th February 1919 to (David) Arthur Thomas (08/08/1883 – 30/10/1951) and Mary Elizabeth Thomas née Filer (23/04/1886 – 19/05/1981). They had married in 1907. The family were living at Tywn Sych, Machen in 1911 and Ralph's Father was a colliery haulier – there were two children at this time, David Arthur Jnr and Brenda.

Tywn Sych was one of two thatched co-joined cottages located near New Row, Machen (but within Rhyd-y-gwern Parish, later absorbed into Rudry Parish).

Ralph had 4 brothers and 5 sisters:

- David Arthur (1907-1959).
- Brenda (1909-1996) who married Stanley Buck (b.1912) a Master Printer in 1934.
- Freda (1912-1998) who married Morgan Lewis in 1933.
- William 'Bill' Llewellyn (1914-1983) who married Grace in 1937.
- Stanley 'Stan' (1917-2001) who married Dora Davies (b.1921) in 1942. Dora sadly died from tuberculosis in 1957 and in 1959 Stan married Rosina Eileen (Rose) Tilley (b.1920). Stan also served in the Royal Navy.
- Brinley 'Bryn' (1921-1993) who married Celia ML Evans (1931-2004) in 1958.
- Vera Mary (1923-1978) who married (Emlyn) Vernon Morgan (-2005) in 1952.
- Nancy Winifred May (1925-2017) who married Kenvyn (Ken) Richard Jones (1922- 2010) in 1949. Ken was a former Mayor of Caerphilly Town Council.
- Elizabeth V (Betty) (1928-2013) who married Francis W (Frank) Rodgers (1922-1990) in 1951.

Ralph's parents are buried in St James' Churchyard as are Bryn and Celia's ashes.

Ralph, as with all his siblings, attended Machen Primary or Elementary School until the age of 14 and he enjoyed sport and excelled at running, rugby and boxing.



(David) Arthur Thomas

Ralph's father Arthur was a skilled gardener, winning 1st place at the Machen Agricultural Show. He also kept pigs and hens and with a large produce garden was fairly self-sufficient.

After leaving school, Ralph went to work in the Waterloo Tinsplate Works from September 1933 to the end of January 1935. Father Arthur and elder brother David also worked there. It is thought that after leaving the tin works, Ralph went to London and stayed with his sister Freda and Morgan at 40 Byron Avenue, Kingsbury. In 1938, when Ralph joined the Royal Navy, he gave the Kingsbury address.

In 1939, Ralph's parents along with Bill and Stan were living at 4 Pentwynngwyn Road in Rudry. Also at the same address was Ralph's sister Brenda and her husband Stanley Buck, along with 4 year old Shirley Buck and 3 year old Marie Buck. Also, probably visiting from London, was Freda, as she had married Morgan Lewis in 1933 at Hendon.

Ralph began his career in the Royal Navy on 24th May 1938 at HMS Pembroke (Royal Navy Barracks at Chatham) and left, fully trained on 13th January 1939.

His first ship, from 14th January 1939 to 16th September 1940 was the destroyer HMS Foxhound. His first taste of action was on 14th September 1939 when Foxhound, along with Faulknor and Firedrake, while escorting Ark Royal, sank the German U Boat, U390, the first to be sunk in the war; there were 4 survivors.

Ralph was also at the 2nd battle of Narvik and in a letter to his parents dated 29th April 1940, he wrote, *"We were in action on the thirteenth of April (1940) with the Warspite and other Destroyers. As you know we came out Victorious. Altogether we sank eight destroyers, also silenced shore batteries, so you can guess it wasn't a joy ride and them Germans can shoot fast and furious but thank "God" not straight. I'll be able to spin a rare yarn when I come home."*

On the morning of 3rd July 1940, Foxhound ferried Captain Cedric Holland, the emissary of Admiral James Somerville, commander of Force H, to meet with Admiral Marcel-Bruno Gensoul, commander of the Vichy French forces at Mers-el-Kébir, Algeria.

We know that Ralph was one of the crew manning the launch from Foxhound with Captain Holland on board. Holland was to deliver an ultimatum regarding the disposition of the French ships there to ensure that they could not fall into the hands of the Germans. While negotiations were underway that afternoon to disarm the French ships, Winston Churchill ordered the talks terminated to forestall the impending arrival of French reinforcements. The British opened fire a half-hour later, including Foxhound.

A month later the ship escorted Force H during Operation Hurry, a mission to fly off fighter aircraft for Malta and conduct an airstrike on Cagliari on 2nd August. Shortly afterwards, she escorted Hood back home and began a refit at Sheerness that lasted until October.

Ralph left Foxhound on 16th September 1940 and was stationed at HMS Vincent [land base] in Gosport until 1st November 1940. During this period he did come home to Rudry on leave.

On the 2nd November, Ralph returned to Chatham [during the Blitz] and stayed there until August 1941 when he headed to Liverpool's naval base, HMS Eaglet. He stayed here until 25th September and then joined the Flower Class Corvette, HMS Carnation to operate in the Mediterranean and Sierra Leone.

Ralph left HMS Carnation and re-joined HMS Eaglet in Liverpool on 20th November 1941 and stayed there until 7th July 1942. It was while he was in Liverpool that he met Irene Nottingham, his future wife.

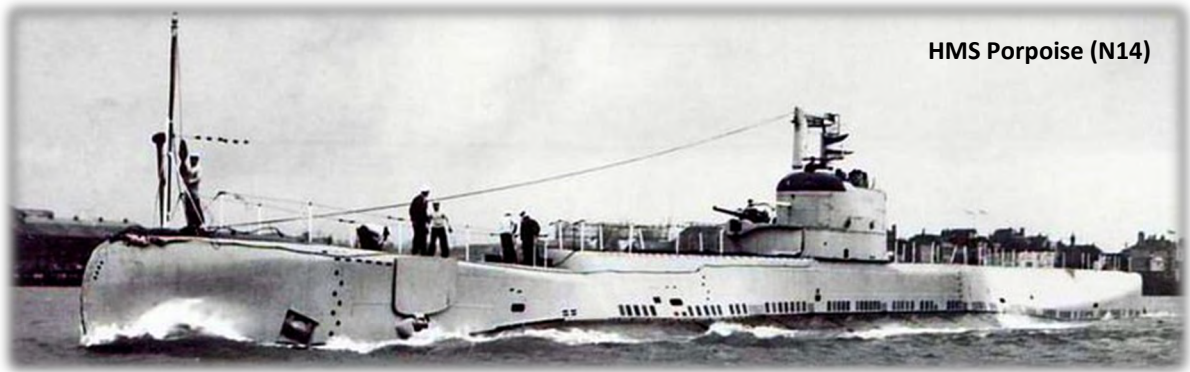
Ralph applied to transfer to submarines and after training at various bases, he joined HMS Clyde on 29th December 1942. On New Year's Eve HMS Clyde set sail for Philadelphia for a re-fit. On a letter home from the Clyde, Ralph notes [in a p.s.], *"I'm engaged to Irene you know. Irene is in North Wales."*

Irene Nottingham was born in the West Derby district of Liverpool in 1922, to Thomas (b.16/01/1901) and Elizabeth née Vint (b.02/11/1902). Irene had an older sister, Lilian (b.21/02/1921) who married David A Jackson in 1943.

In that same year, HMS Clyde returned to Liverpool and in March 1943, Ralph married Irene. The two weddings followed the re-marriage of Irene's Mother to Frederick P Bowman, a widower, in 1942.



On 13th May 1943 Ralph joined HMS Porpoise which, in April 1944, left Holy Loch in Scotland for Gibraltar and then on to Malta, Suez, Aden and Ceylon. In July 1944 HMS Porpoise was to lay mines in the Malacca Strait. On the 6th July, Porpoise sank a Japanese sailing vessel with gunfire in the Strait of Malacca. Also, on this day, she set 30 mines off the mouth of the Deli River, Sumatra, Netherlands East Indies.



Ralph wrote home from Ceylon in July 1944 while serving on HMS Porpoise. He mentions that *"the heat and climate are hell, but that things are easier and a change is imminent"*. He asks after Dai, Brenda, Freda, Bill and families. He thinks fondly of home ... *"I often try and picture the woods these July months. I think a days' haymaking would suit me fine. How is the garden? Bryn and Dad are busy as ever I guess?"*

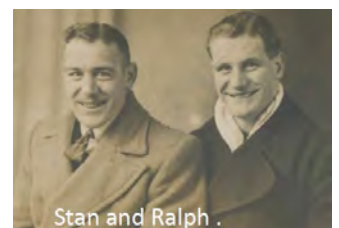
HMS Porpoise then headed for Western Australia and on 11th September 1944, departed Freemantle for her 21st patrol of the war. She was to conduct Special Operation Rimau which consisted of launching fifteen one-man submersible canoes known as 'Sleeping Beauties' against the naval base of Singapore. The submarine carried a total of ninety-six passengers and crew members during this operation.

Porpoise's role was to carry the Commandos with their special equipment, to a point where they could launch their covert attack on the Japanese shipping in Singapore Harbour to attach explosives and sink key vessels in the harbour there.

During 29-30 September 1944, HMS Porpoise transferred the Sleeping Beauties to the Mustika and sailed back to Freemantle. Of the twenty-three men ear-marked for Operation Rimau, none survived the war. All were either killed or executed by the Japanese. The results of the operation are unknown, although there are unconfirmed rumours that three ships were sunk.

From October to December, Ralph was on HMS Wuchang and wrote home saying, *"The European situation seems well in hand these days and I expect you are all looking forward to the final blow. I don't think it will be long now. Life out here is rotten, it's a lot worse than people realise. The lads hardly ever go ashore as the heat is far from comforting. We are allowed one bottle of beer a week, but as you may guess that's no loss to me. Roll on the defeat of Germany and stand by Tokyo. I can assure you that the yellow fiends aren't excused and that their stay will soon terminate after Germany. I see plenty of Welsh lads these days."*

In another letter from Wuchang, Ralph mentions meeting up with his brother Stan who also served in the Royal Navy. *"I had a very pleasant surprise on Sunday past to see none other than our Stan come rolling aboard. He's in fine fettle as a matter of fact. I have never seen him looking in better condition. By the way he sports a huge beard and it suits him well."*



"Up to date we have had two runs ashore. I took him for a good hike on Sunday and afterwards we had big Eats. It's fair to say that Stan can still eat plenty. Last evening we had a run to the canteen in spite of the torrential rain. We had two lashings of steak, eggs, chips and fried onions. Forgive me if I make your mouths water."

In Ralph's last letter home at the end of December 1944, he writes, *"Stan and I spent Christmas together as far as they know at home, that for Mam and Dad's sake as I know they wished for that. Actually, we weren't so fortunate as I haven't seen the Bro. since, but all being well I should see him again in the near future."*

Ralph is back on HMS Porpoise when it leaves to lay mines off Penang in the Malacca Strait. The mines were successfully laid by 9th January but then HMS Porpoise is lost in action.

Based on Royal Naval records, interceptions of Japanese transmissions and Japanese Naval records we can be fairly certain that HMS Porpoise, with Ralph and all his crew mates, was destroyed on 11th January 1945 in the Malacca Straits having been bombed by Tenzan B6N2 bomber aircraft in at least three separate attacks. It was the last submarine to be lost in the war.

Ralph is remembered on the Chatham Naval Memorial - Son of David Arthur and Mary Thomas; husband of Irene Thomas, of Aintree, Lancashire. Remembered with Honour.



In December 1945 Irene was living at 63 Evered Avenue, Liverpool. She died in 1993 aged 71.

19 Bert Davies, Pioneer Corps - 17th June 1940 (Age 50)

13005230 - Private Bert Davies, 73 Coy., Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps (AMPC)



Bert Davies was born in Rudry on 1st June 1890. At 50 years of age, he is the oldest of our fallen. At some point he moved to Ledbury and joined the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps. We have, so far, been unable to find out more about his origins and family.

In May 1940, he was part of the British Expeditionary Force's withdrawal from France and among some 20,000 AMPC soldiers from 107 AMPC companies fighting in the channel ports. While the AMPC was primarily a labour force, it was also ranked as a combatant unit. In May 1940 an infantry brigade was improvised from several AMPC companies, known as 'Digforce' after its commander Lt Colonel Diggle, and fought to defend the Andelle and Béthune rivers against the advancing panzer divisions. One man in four had a rifle and many were considered 'old soldiers'.

The brigade was part of Operation Ariel to evacuate the BEF to England and Bert, along with others from his 73rd Company and seven other AMPC companies, in a two day, five mile queue, managed to board HMT Lancastria, a 16,000 ton Cunard White Star liner on Sunday 17th June 1940. All this as Luftwaffe bombers circled the harbour taking turns in making bombing and strafing runs at the ships below.

By 4.00pm with around 8,000 on board and within minutes of hauling up anchor, the ship was hit by a JU88 bomber – two bombs missed but one went through the dining salon and exploded in a lower deck and another is said to have gone straight down the funnel to the engine room. The ship sank within 15 minutes with heavy loss of life. The press reported 2,823 lost but according to army and ship's officers' counts, it was more likely around 5,000.

The bomber returned and made two more passes over the ship using machine guns and dropping incendiary bombs to ignite the thick spread of oil.

There were reports of many heroic acts like the unknown lone Bren gunner on one of the decks who kept firing at the planes even as the sea closed over him. Like the naked man covered completely in black oil who dived time after time into the sea from the safety of the rescuing ship to bring floundering people to its side where they could be hauled aboard. And the poignant scene of a mother, and her tiny baby being thrown into the water when a lifeboat capsized crying out to others drifting nearby, "My baby! My baby! Please find my baby!" Back came the answer, "It's all right, Ma, we've got her," as they held her baby well above the water.

So poor Bert perished along with at least 57 fellow members of his [73rd] Company, AMPC. Bert's body was never found and he is commemorated at the Dunkirk Memorial [Column 150].

The Lancastria's final moments before slipping under the waves.



The memorial notes Bert was the son of Thomas and Jane Blenkinsopp and we can only assume that his Mother Jane [Davies] was widowed and remarried but the information we have so far managed to glean is unreliable.

20 Hubert JL Harris, Royal Air Force - 30th March 1940 (Age 24)

556343 - Sergeant (Pilot) Hubert James Lewis Harris, 108 Squadron, Royal Air Force



Various records note that Hubert was from Lower Machen, which is why he is inscribed on the Machen Memorial and not at St James. But we know from census records that Hubert and his family lived in the civil parish of Rhyd-y-Gwern and specifically in the village of Draethen; not Lower Machen.

Hubert was born in Draethen (Rhyd y Gwern) in 1916 to Samuel Cobden Harris (b.30/01/1878), a tiler and plasterer and Frances Mary Harris (née Beechey – b.19/01/1881). Samuel and Frances had married in 1910 and Hubert had an older sister, Eileen Dorothy born 14/02/1911. Samuel worked on the Tredegar Estate and they lived at Glen View [cottage], Draethen which, so far, we have been unable to locate. Although the family is rumoured to have lived at Bridge Cottage, whose location fits the story, we are fairly certain it has never been known as Glen View.

Hubert's Grandfather [Lewis Harris] was also from Draethen and like his son, a tiler and plasterer.



Hubert attended Caerphilly Boys Secondary School and at the age of 16, following examinations on 1st November 1932, was accepted for entry as an aircraft apprentice with the Royal Air Force.

In 1936, Hubert was based in RAF Ismalia [Egypt]. This is a picture of a Hawker Hart (light bomber biplane) of his squadron – it may or may not be Hubert at the controls, we can't be sure.



By 1940, he had already served in the RAF for 8 years and, at the time of his death, he was a Sgt Pilot serving with 108 Squadron and, on 30th March 1940, specifically assigned with 1 Ferry Pilots Pool, Air Transport Auxiliary, on passage from St Athan to RAF Sealand in Flintshire.



Hubert was flying solo in an Avro Anson MKI [N9545] and [apparently] had permission to fly over his parent's house in Draethen. The story is that he was also trying to impress a young lady in the village. Having done so, he then circled back towards the village and tragically crashed into a field near Plas Machen Farm and was killed.

The Coroner recorded a verdict of 'Accidentally killed by crashing in an aeroplane' and could not justify saying that there was any negligence. Hubert's Father said he and his wife saw the aircraft, not knowing but wondering whether it was 'their boy'. It circled round after flying over and went in the direction of the river. They then heard the noise of the crash and ran to the fields.

Hubert is buried at Michaelston-y-Fedw (Tirzah) Baptist Churchyard, Row 1, Grave 5. The Chapel no longer exists and the graveyard is part of land attached to a cottage in the village and owned by Mr & Mrs James who kindly provided access to take this photograph.



Postscript

Hubert's sister Eileen, married Prof. Donald Mervyn Poulson (b.05/10/10) in Brighton in 1945 and in May 1946 was noted as a passenger on the Atlantis heading for Melbourne, Australia – arrived Freemantle 23rd June 1946. She was unaccompanied and noted as a teacher. Her address was given as 85 London Road, Hailsham, Sussex and her onward address as 2 Campbell Street, Hobart, Tasmania.

In 1949, Eileen was again noted as a passenger, on the Orion, bound for Melbourne and again, unaccompanied but giving her address this time as 'Glen View', Draethen. According to descendants of Hubert's Cousin, Iorwerth Harris (who made his home in Dagenham), she emigrated to Australia so this was her final outward journey.

Although Eileen was noted as unaccompanied on both trips, records show that husband Donald was also at 2 Campbell Street in Hobart so we presume he travelled separately.

Hubert's Father died in 1950 and is buried with Hubert in Michaelston-y-Fedw. It is said that he went to the crash site immediately after the fatal crash and, when the police were not looking, removed a part of the plane as a keepsake.

The mystery of where 'Glen View' was or still is but under another name remains. The crash report notes that Hubert's father was at the crash site fairly quickly with only a few people there before him. This supports the theory that the family lived at Bridge Cottage, being a short dash over the bridge and through the field on the right - but all other records, including Eileen's passenger list record, show 'Glen View' as their residence - not 'Bridge Cottage'. Furthermore, in the same year, one census notes the family living in 'Draethen' with another family listed specifically at 'Bridge Cottage' - so the two cannot be the same...

Epilogue

Undertaking the research to learn about the lives of these 20 men has been both challenging and rewarding. It has also been emotional as the personal details revealed their backgrounds, their families and the close knit community that was and is Draethen, Waterloo and Rudry.

As a small rural community we can easily relate to people who once lived in the houses which still stand today and which some of us now occupy. I was especially drawn to Mark Baggett (No. 7) who 110 years ago lived in the house I now occupy.

The journey has also enabled me to meet local folk I had previously not had the pleasure to meet and to see and learn about houses that our fallen once lived in that I had passed by many times without taking much notice. Such as Yew Tree Cottage, which was then much smaller and was associated at some time or another with several of the families. Although the whereabouts of 'Glen View' where the Harris family lived still eludes us, perhaps a reader will at some point enlighten us!

The documentation which we have presented has, I believe, changed the being of these men from simple names carved into stone long ago, to individuals we can now relate to and appreciate as if we had known them or of them in life. As Neil Patrick noted, we have essentially travelled back in time and gained a deeper and more visceral appreciation of what this all meant to people here at the time. Our immersion into their lives through the records and the task of assembling the hundreds of fragments has made the past very real and will preserve the memories of those brave men.

What has been quite poignant is the family relationships which existed with several of the fallen and which had been largely forgotten or overlooked with the passing of time. The grief of their loss would have been felt widely among the community.

George Butcher (No. 5) and Ivor Cross (No. 14) were cousins, although George was 14 years older than Ivor. George fell in WWI aged 27 and Ivor in WWII aged 41.

Also related are cousins Walter Moses (No. 4), Stanley Jones (No. 2) and Hubert Morgan (No. 6). All three were born between 1891 and 1898.

When you consider that the population in the Parish of Rudry in 1870 was just 329 rising to 1,053 one hundred and fifty years later, it is not surprising that marriages between local inhabitants resulted in many interconnected families.

Even without the family connections, the men and/or their families would have been known to many —such as the three fallen who all hailed from Waterloo Terrace.

As more records are released, we will continue to add any available information and it is not impossible that we will unearth further family connections from such a small and proud community.

Remembrance Day is not just to remember those who fell in the two world wars but also those who died in other conflicts around the world.

Lance Corporal Liam Tasker and Theo set a record for bomb finds in searching for Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) in Afghanistan. On 1st March 2011 Liam was shot dead while on patrol aged just 26. Hours later his beloved Theo suffered a seizure and also passed away, with many believing he died of a broken heart.



**Lance Corporal Liam Tasker and his faithful spaniel Theo
Royal Army Veterinary Corps, 1st Military Working Dog Unit.**

In an interview some years later, Liam's mum, Jane Duffy, summed up why it is so important to remember the fallen.

"As a mum, your biggest fear is that your sons or daughters are going to be forgotten. They died serving their country, they should always be remembered. There's so many people forgotten about. I think they should all be remembered – they're all heroes, they're all heroes."

-  Pte Clifford Harris, Royal Welch Fusilliers, from Garth Place, Rudry, age 20
-  Pte Stanley Jones, Royal Welsh Fusilliers, from Dan-y-Graig Farm, Rudry, age 21
-  Pte Glyn Lewis, Welch Regiment, from Waterloo Terrace, Waterloo, age 22
-  Pte Frederick Thomas, Welch Regiment, from Rudry, age 27
-  Pte William Shute, South Wales Borderers, from Waterloo, age 29
-  Pte Thomas Evans, Border Regt, from Graig Farm, Llanishen, age 27
-  Pte George Butcher, Princess Charlotte of Wales' (Royal Berkshire Regiment) from Wern Duu, age 27
-  L Cpl Gus Harris, Welsh Guards, from Ty'n-y-Coedcae Farm, Waterloo, age 22
-  Guardsman Bert Richards, Welsh Guards, from Waterloo Terrace, Waterloo, age 19
-  Gunner Walter Moses, Royal Garrison Artillery, from Rudry Mill, age 27
-  Gunner Hubert Morgan, Royal Field Artillery, from Rudry, age 20
-  Driver Daniel Mason, Royal Field Artillery, from Garth Place, Rudry, age 20
-  Gunner Ivor Cross, Royal Artillery, from Rudry, age 41
-  Pte Bert Davies, Pioneer Corps, from Rudry, age 50
-  Cpl. David Harris, Rifle Brigade, from Garth Place, Rudry, age 23
-  Pte Mark Baggett, Canadian Infantry, from Refail House, Rudry age 26
-  Pte David Jones, Australian Imperial Force, from Rudry, age 34
-  Flight Sgt. Hiram Davies, Royal Air Force, from Waterloo Terrace, Waterloo, age 22
-  Leading Seaman Ralph Thomas, Royal Navy, from Rudry, age 25
-  Sgt (Pilot) Hubert Harris, Royal Air Force, from Draethen, age 24

We will remember them



They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

Extract from Robert Laurence Binyon's poem 'For the Fallen', published in The Times, 21st September 1914.

The poem was written in mid September 1914, a few weeks after the outbreak of the First World War. During these weeks the British Expeditionary Force had suffered casualties following its first encounter with the Imperial German Army at the Battle of Mons on 23rd August, its rear-guard action during the retreat from Mons in late August and the Battle of Le Cateau on 26th August, and its participation with the French Army in holding up the Imperial German Army at the First Battle of the Marne between 5th and 9th September 1914.

Laurence said in 1939 that the four lines of the fourth stanza as noted above came to him first. These words have become especially familiar and famous, being adopted by the Royal British Legion as an Exhortation for ceremonies of Remembrance to commemorate fallen Servicemen and women.