

CYNON VALLEY HISTORY SOCIETY

CYMDEITHAS HANES CWM CYNON

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HANES

NEWSLETTER OF THE CYNON VALLEY HISTORY SOCIETY
CYLCHLYTHYR CYMDEITHAS HANES CWM CYNON

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ISSUE 75

Welcome to Issue 75! I would like to thank everybody who has written articles for this magazine in particular the editors David Leslie Davies who edited Issues 1 to 8, the late John Mear 9 to 23, the late Eric Rose 24 and Geoffrey Evans who edited issues 25 to 72.

To commemorate this special anniversary I would like to take you back 75 years to see what was happening in the Cynon Valley in 1941 when Britain was coming very close to being conquered by Nazi Germany.

Both Ilford County High School for Girls and Ilford County High School for Boys were evacuated to Aberdare. I will start with a description of Ilford County School performing "The School for Scandal", followed by a description of when the evacuees came to Aberdare in 1940. Two women Nina Bawden and Nancy Spratt will tell of their reminiscences of being evacuees here as young girls. We then go to into the war and read an interesting letter from a P.O.W. Leaving the war, we travel to an idyllic world of the gardens of Glandare House. From the sweet scent of roses, we go to the brutal deaths in a coalmine. Finally, we see what the Home Guard did during WW2. Captain Mainwaring and Co. had more fun than this !!

"THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL" — 1944



Our photograph does not show the Ilford production - as far as we know there were no photographs taken. This photo shows the same play, but performed by the girls of the County School at Plasdraw, three years later in 1944

Back Row : left to right: Alice Condon, Gaynor Hopkins, M.D. Richards, Eira Edwards, M.K. Lewis, Betty Upton

Middle Row : Joan Bollard, M. Richards, Yvonne Beeching, M. Lewis, Pamela Burge, Betty Davies, Pat Hancock, Hazel Hill, Margaret Patricia Bonnell

Front Row : Pamela Evans, Beryl Jones, Beth Adams, Betty Williams, Olive Thomas, Barbara James, Elaine Williams, Pat Davies

Sitting on floor : Ann Havard Jones

In July 1941 Ilford County School Drama Club performed Richard Brinsley Sheridan's comedy "School for Scandal" at a variety of stages: a school in Abercynon, Abercwmboi, The Little Theatre then to the Coliseum in Trecynon. The following Monday they performed in the beautiful grounds of Mountain Ash County School on a lawn with a background of tall trees.

The last performance brought their successful and enjoyable tour to a close, and it was not without some sighs and regret they finally packed up their costumes in which they had been accustomed.

A.W. Duncan, a young man of outstanding ability, (who looked like a Charles Laughton in the making), won the biggest success as the elderly, honest good-hearted Sir Peter Teazle. Mary Cracknell made an imposing looking and rather sinister Lady Sneerwell.

How did the evacuees first come to Aberdare?

Arrangements were made in May 1940 to send 300 boys and 200 girls from Ilford to Aberdare but because of poor organisation, some ended up in Blaengarw! This small group was kindly received by the locals but there was no secondary school there so after five days they said goodbye to their new friends and got back on another train to Aberdare Low Level Station, arriving at about 3.30pm on May 26th. The main group was given a very warm welcome by thousands of local people who overflowed on



Ilford County High School for Boys

to the pavements of Duke, Station and Market Streets.

Wearing their crimson blazers with packs slung on youthful shoulders, the gas masks and the many labels, the pupils were taken to the Gadlys Central School. Along the way a forest of hands were waved in greeting by the crowds and there were welcoming cheers. Boy Scouts came and helped the children with their luggage.

By about 6pm all the young visitors had been placed in billets. *The Aberdare Leader* tells of the problems that arose: 'Because of the warm hospitality of the Aberdare people there were more than sufficient billets available, so many householders were given one child when they had expected two; and tragically, some received none at all. Distressed housewives complained to the billeting officers that they had gone to a lot of trouble to prepare a spare room; and that teas were laid on for children who never arrived'.

The evacuees began to acquaint themselves with the town in the evenings and they were to be seen in large numbers in the streets and the shops, the churches, chapels, cinemas and in the Park with their new found Aberdare friends during the weekends. They joined local Boy Scout and Girl Guide companies.

Having to share schools, the boys went to the County School in Trecynon, and the Girls to the one in Plasdraw, the local children went to school on the mornings and the Ilford evacuees went to lessons in the afternoon.

Elsewhere, 800 evacuees came to Mountain Ash and Abercynon in early June 1940.

Nina Bawden described her billet in Aberdare owned by a chemist and his wife who "had magnificent red hair". They ate five huge meals per day. Nina was incredibly lucky, as rationing should not have allowed this to happen !

A theatre company came to Aberdare, Sybil Thorndike and her husband Lewis Casson were fortunate to stay at Nina's billet. Sybil said while reaching for another crumpet, "This is the first decent meal I've had for weeks." She must have wished she could have stayed there for the rest of the war! (From the autobiography of Nina Bawden, *In my own time*, Virago (1994). Bawden drew upon her experiences in Aberdare when she wrote her successful 1973 children's novel "Carrie's War." The book has been adapted twice for television by the BBC, firstly in 1974, and again in 2004.

Nancy Spratt's memories as an evacuee

Nancy Spratt was another of the evacuees who came from Ilford to Aberdare. Here are her memories of life as an evacuee: "We were ushered to a church hall, and after some speeches of welcome, and a huge number of instructions, we were escorted to our allotted billets. My friend

and I were taken along a street of rather old-fashioned stone houses to be introduced to our new family. We waited outside a door with a well-scrubbed stone doorstep, and a highly polished brass knocker and door handle. The door was opened by a plump smiling middle-aged lady who took us in and introduced us to her husband. They were Mr and Mrs Jones.

Soon it was time for tea. Mrs Jones held a large loaf of white bread horizontally, and proceeded to cut slices from it, which were almost but not quite circular. We had a small piece of bacon, some fried potatoes, fried bread, half a tomato, and a small portion of what looked like black shiny tar. Mrs Jones saw our puzzled looks. “That’s *bara lawr*, or laverbread in English. It’s seaweed, I hope you’ll like it because it’s off ration, and very nourishing.” After a few suspicious pecks, we found it was really quite nice.

Then it was time for bed. “If you want a wash, there’s a tap outside in the bosh.” (Bosh? We soon knew that this meant the washbasin, or kitchen sink, the first of many dialect words we got used to). We went out and splashed our hands and faces, then we turned to look at the view. The land dropped steeply from our row of houses to a field, then rose up again to the biggest mountain we had ever seen. We determined to climb to the top of the mountain in the morning. “I’ll take you up to bed. Here’s a candle, there’s gas upstairs but we don’t use it because of the blackout. Now say goodnight in Welsh, ‘Nos da.’ “Nos da,” we said to Mr Jones, as we took our candles and followed Mrs Jones up the steep stair. She led us into a rather small room almost all taken up by a three-quarter bed and a marble-topped washstand. “I hope the bed is big enough,” she said, “You’ll be able to keep each other warm. Those are real Welsh blankets, so you will be quite cosy. I’ll find you a quilt in the autumn – if the war hasn’t ended by then. Nos da.” What she didn’t realise, and neither did we, was that we had moved in for two years.

Mr and Mrs Jones were kindness itself, and we soon settled into our shared family life. Daytimes were taken up with school, evenings with homework, piano practice, reading or knitting and writing long letters to our parents. Sundays had to be observed appropriately – no homework, knitting or sewing, and regular attendance at a local chapel and Sunday School. Here, as everywhere else, we were most kindly received, and we learnt to love, and join in, the heartfelt Welsh hymn-singing.

Our school had to share the local grammar school building, with the Welsh girls having their lessons in the morning, and our school day starting just after lunch. In the mornings we did homework, or had odd lessons in local chapels or primary schools, so we had a complicated timetable. Before long our crimson blazers could be seen all around the town, as we explored our new surroundings and joined local Guide companies, youth clubs, Sunday Schools, just assuming, quite rightly, that we would be made welcome everywhere.

We soon became familiar with Aberdare, the cold open-air swimming pool, the big park with its swings and roundabouts, the quaint library where you had to queue up at a small desk while the librarian brought you a few books to choose from, no chance to go in and browse yourself. The local cobbler claimed to be able to read your character from the way you wore down your shoes, and the local baker with his huge coal-fired oven would take in baking for local housewives.

Having been brought up in a town with no hills, and very little open space to play or explore, life in small-town Wales was an exciting revelation. Saturdays and school holidays we climbed the hills, walked the valleys, swam in the lakes and visited the towns and villages around us. We picked blackberries, and whinberries, usually for immediate consumption, sometimes taking them home to be made into pies by our kind billet mother — so long as they hadn’t been picked on the Sabbath day! To help the war effort, we were asked to collect sheep’s wool from the hedges, and rose hips to be made into rose hip syrup.

When the bombing raids ceased, children gradually began returning home. The school had to be reopened, and as the numbers of returned scholars grew, a similar proportion of teachers had to go back. Eventually it was no longer possible to maintain the evacuated school, and after three years away we all had to return home, to a quiet and apparently safe London, but to endure later the flying

bomb and rocket attacks.

So, after three years away, two of them in Aberdare, it was all over. End of term was a flurry of packing, throwing away, many, many goodbyes and countless memories to keep and treasure. A final event was the goodbye party of the Guide Company, which was going to be decimated by the departure of all the evacuees. In my patrol was just one rather young Welsh girl. She was fairly new and I didn't know her very well. "Well, goodbye," I said, and almost as an after-thought, I added, "I'll write to you." That was more than seventy years ago, and we are still writing, my last direct link with my years in Aberdare."

An Article from the Aberdare Leader dated Saturday, July 12th, 1941

SATURDAY, JULY 12, 1941.

Pars about Servicemen

War Prisoner's Interesting Letter.

EXPERIENCES OF OGWYN GEORGE (FORMERLY OF MOUNTAIN ASH).

Another interesting letter from OGWYN GEORGE, a former resident of Richmond Road, Mountain Ash, has been received by Mr. Raymond Richards, Campbell Terrace, a friend. He thanks Mr. Richards for his letter "which bucked him up no end." He adds—"I received few letters until January, my first letter arriving on New Year's Day. Then they all came in a rush in January and February, but are very slack again at the present moment. I must tell you though that I led the Welsh contingent here on March 1st, and we all wore our leeks, filched from the kitchen. 'Sospan Fach' was much in evidence all day. I also had a wonderful birthday party on February 19th. I bought a barrel of beer and numerous bottles—about 70 all told—and the German commander gave me two bottles of whisky! We get terrible moments of despondency sometimes, and everyone's birthday is welcomed, as it brings forth a celebration (as does even the cat having kittens!)."

"My health has improved wonderfully. My face has been altered by the crash (when his Sunderland flying boat came down in flames over Oslo, and Ogwyn was the only survivor). Nevertheless the burning has healed wonderfully. I lost my left ear altogether, and my eyes look very queer, but I am still Ogwyn and same in spirit. In my spare time, which I have very much of as you might imagine, I learn languages, and I am told I have rather a bent for them. I'll really surprise you when I come home. While I was in hospital (which was 4½ months) I spoke Norwegian quite well, and I can carry on a conversation in German. I have a violin here, bought for me by one of our officers, so I still keep my fingers in touch. My left hand was nearly lost, but the doctor in Norway made a fine job of it, and although it looks rather like a duck's webbed foot, it is still very usable."

In closing he says "You will notice we are allowed to send by air mail. Please send your letters by air mail, they take only about three weeks to arrive then. My love to all in Mount. Here's to a quick finish to the war."

Ogwyn also mentions the receipt of a letter from the Red Cross. His camp is known as Dulag Luft.

Ogwyn is a grandson of Mrs. Holloway (now resident in Bristol), and son of the late Mr. J. George (one-time policeman). He is a member of the Mountain Ash Juvenile Orchestra. Last year he was reported missing, believed killed, but it later became known after several months that he was a prisoner of war in Germany.

PENRHIWCEIBER LAD WAS IN GREECE.

We learn that Trooper AUBREY HODGES (19), of the Royal Tank Corps, son of Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Hodges, St. Winifred's Villas, Penrhiwceiber, was among those gallant lads who went through the heroic struggle in Greece. His parents had not heard from him for five months. On Saturday they received a letter from him (dated May 17), in which he spoke of having been in Greece, and was then "O.K." Formerly he was employed at the John Bull Stores, Mountain Ash, for three years, and in May two years ago voluntarily enlisted in the Forces. Four months later, war was declared. His many friends here wish Aubrey the best of luck.

We learn that Pte. JAMES O'BRIAN, 26 Caemaen Street, Ynysboeth, stationed in a Welsh Coast town, met with an accident at his billet three weeks ago, and is now under treatment in hospital. It appears he was attending to the "black-out" in a three-storey house upper window when he fell and sustained severe head injuries, and broke both his legs. His many friends hope for an early recovery.

CEFNENNAR GIFTS TO SERVICEMEN.

Driver AUSTIN WILLIAMS, who was recently presented with a gift from the Cefnpennar and Cwmpennar Welcome Home Fund, wrote home expressing appreciation of the gift.

Another Cefnpennar boy who has been presented with a gift by the Fund recently was REG EVANS, who spent his leave at the Golf House. Reg was the former professional attached to the Golf Links.

(Continued in page 5.)

Aberdare Gardeners visit Glandare House

A record crowd were met by Mr Gladwyn the head gardener. It was interesting to see the party break up and the various members rush to greet their special floral favourites: with some, the stately delphiniums took pride of place; others could not get over the variety and unusual colouring of the airy aquilegias. Some regretted that the visit had not been a fortnight later when the roses would have been in full bloom.



At Glandare, however, the floral beauties are so many and varied that everybody's taste seemed to be catered for. After a long feast in which sight and scent shared, a move was made through the shrubbery across the lawns and along the wonderful rockery. Mr Cox led us back to the lawn where Mr Myrddin Davies proposed and Mrs Fall seconded a vote of thanks to Miss Rees for her kind invitation to the garden.

Aberdare Leader, 5th July 1941

Death Sweeps through Rhigos Drift

An Explosion killed 16 of the miners on 17th July who worked at the Rhigos No.4 Drift Mine.

Although there were only 36 workers in the drift when it happened, the disaster plunged nearly a dozen surrounding villages into mourning. Llwydcoed, lying several miles away suffered greatest, four homes being bereft of their breadwinners. In one case, father and son died—Dan Jones aged 65, of Merthyr Road, and his son Dan aged 27.

D.T. Williams of Rhigos told a reporter what happened: "We had just had our food when there was a tremendous blast. We did not hear any noise of an explosion but the dust was blinding. We groped our way to the mouth of the drift, and after regaining our breath we went back in to try to find the men in the "Deep" but the atmosphere was too bad and we had to go out again."

There was great heroism: Richard Howells of Harriet Street, Trecynon had come out safely, but had returned and helped to save others before being killed himself. Jack Mochan of Hirwaun was found dead, he was found lying over a boy collier shielding him.

Aberdare Leader 19th July 1941

The Home Guard

1st Batt. Glam. Home Guard
"A2" Company

Company Orders for weekending Thursday, July 10, 1941

- Sunday, July 6: All Sections on Defence Work, 1100hrs
Company Signallers at Headquarters, 1500hrs
- Monday, July 7: Enrolments and Inquiries at Orderly Room, 1845hrs
Company Signallers Course at Headquarters, 1900hrs
- Tuesday, July 8: Sectional Operations. Defence Work, 1900 hrs
- Wednesday, July 9: Company Signallers Course at Headquarters, 19.00hrs
Junior N.C.O.'s Course at Headquarters, 1900hrs
- Thursday, July 10: Special Section nightmen at Platoon Headquarters, 1030hrs
Section Tactical Exercises 1900hrs

E.J. EXCELL,
Capt.
O.C. "A2" Coy
Aberdare Leader, 5th July 1941

Obituary Gweno Lewis



Gweno Lewis, Aberystwyth 2003

Gweno Lewis, wife of the poet Alun Lewis, was working on the text of his second book of poems, *Ha! Ha! Among the Trumpets*, when on 5 March 1944 he died at the Goppe Pass on the Arakan front in the jungle of Burma. He was 28 and they had been married for barely three years, most of which had been spent apart.

The cause of Lieutenant Alun Lewis's death, in a forward position facing the Japanese, was officially given as an accidental revolver shot to the head after he had fallen down the side of a nullah. This was the verdict his widow preferred to believe, but among the men of the 6th Battalion, the South Wales Borderers, his death was generally thought to have been suicide. His widow was awarded a war pension.

The poet's tombstone in the Taukkyan War Cemetery in Rangoon, which Gweno Lewis visited in 1958, bears as epitaph these lines which she chose from one of his poems:

And what's transfigured will live on
Long after Death has come and gone.

Alun Lewis's love for his wife was a constant theme in his poetry. She was 'a fine companion, full of life and broad of mind' who, even when absent, remained 'a singing rib within my dreaming side'. It was his love for Gweno, he wrote in a letter home, together with his experience of Army life in England and active service in India, that had made a poet of him: 'What a combination! Beauty and the Beast!'

Gweno Ellis was born in Aberystwyth, Cardiganshire, in 1913; her family owned a large draper's shop in the town and were comfortably off. Although she had been an undergraduate at the University College of Wales at the same time as Alun Lewis, it was not until 1939 that they renewed their acquaintance. She was then teaching German at Mountain Ash Grammar School, a few miles from the poet's home in Cwmaman, near Aberdare, while he taught History at the Lewis Boys' School in Pengam, in a nearby valley.

Their courtship was brief and tempestuous, mainly because of his moody, restless temperament and, as war grew imminent, the tensions in his intellectual and emotional life as he wrestled with his pacifist convictions before, on an impulse, joining the Army in May 1940.

He proposed to her on a visit to Llanthony Abbey in June 1941. She did not accept immediately because it would mean losing her job: Glamorgan County Council had a rule that married women could not be employed as teachers for the duration of the war and it would have been the responsibility of Alun Lewis's father, who was Director of Education for Aberdare, to see that it was kept. But after a week or so her mind was made up. They married, without telling their families, at the Registry Office in Gloucester on 5 July 1941, and she was later allowed to keep her job.

On their way to the ceremony Lewis plucked a spray of roses from a garden and bought her a gilt-framed print of Botticelli's 'Birth of Venus' as a wedding gift. Next day they visited Tintern Abbey and Chepstow, after which he rejoined his regiment at Morecambe:

So we must say Goodbye, my darling,
And go, as lovers go, for ever,
Tonight remains, to pack and fix on labels
And make an end of lying down together.

Shortly after their wedding he wrote to his parents: 'I think Gweno and I will always be happy together, if the world gives us a chance. I know her well now, and I know she's a girl who reveals deeper and deeper secretions of wisdom and courage, and she loves the real things — home and family and the little ways which make people so worth loving.'

In the winter of 1942 Lewis's regiment was shipped to India and his wife was never to see him again. In the following July he went on an Intelligence training course in Karachi and there met a married woman, Freda Aykroyd, with whom he spent a few idyllic days and for whom he wrote a number of poems. Shortly afterwards he fell prey to his old enemy, depression, a condition made worse by his unhappy relationship with his commanding officer, and he was thought to have been still suffering mental anguish at the time of his death.

Gweno Lewis lived the rest of her life with the uncertainty surrounding her husband's death and the knowledge of his brief affair with another woman. Nevertheless, she co-operated fully with John Pikoulis, whose biography of Lewis appeared in 1984, answering questions and making available a large selection of his letters and unpublished writings, as did Freda Aykroyd.

She also welcomed the renewed interest in her late husband's work after the appearance of Ian Hamilton's edition of his selected poems and stories in 1966. With Jeremy Hooker she put together a new edition of his Selected Poems (1981) and a selection of his letters under the title *Letters to my Wife* (1989), and took great satisfaction from the appearance of his *Collected Stories* in 1990 and *Collected Poems* in 1994.

The poet's letters to his wife reflect the comradely bond that existed between them, as well as his boyish attempts to cheer her up while he was away from home. The last one, written a few days before his death, ends: 'I must run now. Sorry I have to go. And God be in our heads and in our eyes and in our understanding. Buy me a typewriter when someone has one to sell, and I'll buy you a beautiful beautiful emerald or maybe a sapphire or maybe something neither of us knows.'

A reserved woman, of great dignity and retaining even in old age something of the svelte beauty she had in her twenties, after her retirement in 1974 Gweno Lewis lived quietly with her brother Hywel at the family home, known as The Château, high above the town of Aberystwyth and with magnificent views over Cardigan Bay. Although she seldom accepted invitations to literary gatherings, in 1985 she unveiled a commemorative plaque on the house in Cwmaman where her husband was born and, in 1990, presented a collection of Alun Lewis's unpublished manuscripts to the University of Glamorgan.

Meic Stephens

Gweno Mererid Ellis, German mistress and Deputy Headmistress, Mountain Ash Grammar School (1938–74): born 7 March 1913 Aberystwyth, Cardiganshire; married 1941 Alun Lewis (died 1944); died Llawhaden, Narberth, 13 January 2016.

Re-Opening of the Cynon Valley Museum

It is my pleasure to inform you that the museum will reopen on Saturday September 3rd. There was great opposition to the closure of the Museum when RCT County Borough Council closed it in May 2014 despite a 3200 signature petition. The council have now given The Cynon Valley Museum Trust a 25-year lease to run the museum. Dinah Pye, chairwoman of the trust, thanked all the trustees for their hard work and is delighted that the public have now got their museum back.

SOCIETY NEWS

Judge Philip Brian Richards to become a Bard

One of our former members, retired Judge Philip Brian Richards of Mountain Ash, was inducted into the Gorsedd of Bards at a ceremony on August 5th at the National Eisteddfod in Abergavenny. He has been honoured for his work in the Law sector, and this during the year of his retirement. He learnt Welsh as a second language, and not only presided over cases in Welsh, but has also twice served as Chair of the Lord Chancellor's Standing Committee on the Welsh Language. He has also been active with *Rhieni dros Addysg Gymraeg* (Parents for Welsh Language Education), and has served as a governor in a number of Welsh schools in Rhondda Cynon Taff over the years.

CVHS Lecture Programme, 2016–2017

2016	Speaker	Title of Talk
September 15 th	Annual General Meeting and Presentations.	
October 20 th	Don Llewellyn	The William Evans Papers
November 17 th	Dr. Dean Jenkins	WWI Roll of Honour for Abercwmboi
December 15 th	Christmas Celebration and Slide Shows	
2017		
January 19 th	Brian Davies	Lord Aberdare's Favourite Walk
February 16 th	Dr. Gethin Matthews	WWI Chapel Memorials in South Wales
March 16 th	Steven Graham	Aberdare Town Plan, 1956
April 20 th	Jennifer George	Thomas Hardy
May 18 th	Dr Stuart Broomfield	After the Tredegar Riots of 1911
June 15 th	Gethin While	Feudal Japan

Society Outing 2016

Nineteen members from the society went on a bus trip on Saturday 9th July to Ludlow, which was the capital of the Welsh Marches. We were very impressed by the fascinating misericords in the parish church and the castle. Prince Arthur the oldest son and heir apparent of Henry VII died there aged 15. British history would have been quite different if he had lived to become king instead of his younger brother: the later Henry VIII !

In Memoriam

We record with great sadness the recent deaths of two of our members.

Alun Jenkins

Alun died suddenly at his home on 23rd June, at the age of 72. He was celebrating the eighth anniversary of his kidney transplant in the week he died. His funeral service took place at Llwydcoed Crematorium on July 8th, 2016.

Alun became a member of the society five years ago, and after joining the committee at the last Annual General Meeting, immediately took over the vacant position of Programme Secretary. Therefore, all of the lectures for the coming year have been organized by him.

Born in 1944, Alun lived all of his life in the village of Abercwmboi. He married Anne Winnan in 1965 and there were three children of this marriage; there are also six grandchildren and one great-granddaughter. He was immensely proud of them all.

Alun was a man of many parts, including as a Baker at Café Mona, The Co-operative Bakery and Parry's Butterful Cakes, having received a Hovis medal for baking; and Manager of Atkinson's in Aberdare. He was also a representative of several life insurance companies; and once owned his own double-glazing company. He was also an acknowledged expert at repairing stained glass windows.

Together with his family, he researched the family history, and his last project was finding, recording, and visiting the graves of the men from Abercwmboi who paid the supreme sacrifice during The Great War of 1914-1918. His son, Dean, will present the results of this research at the meeting on 19th, November, as a dedication to Alun.

Raymond (Ray) John Davies (Lt. Cdr., RD, RNR)

Ray, died on July 9, 2016, aged 85. He was born in Cwmbach in 1930, where he attended elementary school, followed by Aberdare Boys County School, 1941-46 where he gained his School Certificate, and after which he began a most varied career. He initially trained as an engineering draughtsman with the NCB and at the Treforest School of Mines for his HND. During this period, he also taught evening classes at Aberdare College of Further Education, which sparked his interest in teaching. Consequently, he made the brave decision to take two years out of employment to become a full-time student and acquire a formal teaching qualification from the University of London, 1956-57, and subsequently an M.Ed. from Cardiff University. There followed an engineering appointment at Llanelly Technical College, 1957, then in 1961 he moved to a similar post at South Glamorgan Institute of Higher Education. Next he embarked upon a completely new career in the Royal Navy where he achieved the rank of Lieutenant Commander. He returned to civilian life in 1970, when he took up a teaching post in Marine Engineering at Llandaff Technical College.

In the summer of 1959, Ray married a local girl, Margaret Shirley Phillips. The couple raised a daughter, Camilla, who is now a Consultant Anaesthetist at a major London hospital.

Ray had a range of interests that were well developed: in literature, history, in many sports – he was a qualified football referee – and in music. The old Coliseum Operatic Society, Ebenezer Choral Society, Cwmbach Male Voice Choir and Mountain Ash Choral Society all benefited from his enthusiastic support. He was also involved in the 'Cynon Valley Talking News' which ensured that local unsighted people had access to taped readings of *The Leader*. He was also a keen Rotarian, and was well known in south Wales as a quizmaster and organiser of the club's competitions. Ray was also celebrated for his lecture on *The Sinking of the Titanic*, which he must have delivered hundreds of times to various clubs and societies. He was also to be seen at the annual Remembrance Day ceremonies at Aberdare Cenotaph as Senior Officer. Ray was a faithful member of the Church, both as a choirboy at St Mary Magdalene, Cwmbach and in later life at St Elvan's, a church that was almost full for his funeral on July 19th, 2016.

Both members will be greatly missed.

ANNIVERSARIES OF 2016

1916 Easter Rising in Ireland

1916 July-November Battle of the Somme

1916 The birth of Roald Dahl (There are many celebrations about this Cardiff-born author including a new film: The BFG)

NEW HISTORICAL BOOKS

Easter 1916 : The Irish Rebellion by Charles Townshend

Somme : Into the breach by Hugh Sebag-Montefiore

The Romanovs : 1613-1918 by Simon Sebag Montefiore (This universally acclaimed epic historical bestseller is on the grandest scale, 784pp)

The Battle of the Atlantic : How the Allies Won the War by Jonathan Dimbleby

Welsh Slate : Archaeology and History of an Industry by David Gwyn (This was published by the Royal Commission of the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales. This is the definitive work about the North Wales Slate Industry. It has many illustrations, a wealth of photographs and is very well researched.

Jack Scarrott Prize Fighter : Memoirs of a Welsh Boxing Booth Showman by Lawrence Davies. (Has 451pp and is to be published on 31st August at £14.99. It is thoroughly researched with chapters on many boxers).

RECENT HISTORICAL PROGRAMMES

The Somme 1916: From Both Sides of the Wire, three parts on BBC2

Peter Barton has access to unseen German military documents.

Timewatch : The Last day of World War One with Michael Palin BBC4

Versailles, 10 parts on BBC2. It is a trashy, extravagant romp through the reign of Louis XIV that takes liberties with reality!

FEEDBACK AND FUTURE ISSUE

Once again, I would be grateful for feedback about any articles in this issue. It is always good to know what you think about them or if you have any additional information about them.

In the next issue we shall look at the history of Penrhiwceiber.

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