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Rhifyn arbennig y
Rhyfel Byd Cyntaf

Glowyr ar faes
y gad 1914-18

Welsh miners at
war 1914-18

A special First
World War edition

Dai a Tomi

*When Dai
became Tommy*

Cyflwyniad

O fewn dim i ddechrau'r Rhyfel Byd Cyntaf ym mis Awst 1914, dechreuodd milwyr 'penwythnos' y fyddin diriogaethol ymuno â byddin broffesiynol fechan Prydain. Cyn hir, byddai milwyr cyffredin 'Kitcheners Army' yn ymuno â'r rhengoedd hefyd.

Yn sosialwyr, radicaliaid ac anghydfurfwyr rhonc, roedd glowyr Cymru yn naturiol amheus o unrhyw gri wladgarol, ond fel dynion eraill, cawsant eu sgubo ymaith gan lanw o frwdfrydedd dros y rhyfel. Roedd tua 250,000 eisoes wedi cofrestru cyn i'r Llywodraeth, a oedd yn galw'n daer am fwy o lo i borthi economi'r rhyfel, rwystro rhagor o lowyr rhag recriwtio.

Byddai'r rhan fwyaf o ddynion yn mynd ymlaen i wasanaethau fel troedfilwyr gyda'r bataliynau Cymreig neu Seisnig. Bu llawer yn aelodau o ganghennau eraill o'r lluoedd arfog, nid yn unig yn Ffrainc a Gwlad Belg ond hefyd yr Eidal, Gwlad Groeg, Gallipoli, Palesteina, yr Aifft, Mesopotamia, Dwyrain Affrica a hyd yn oed Tsieina.

Lle bynnag roedd lluoedd Prydain wrthi, roedd milwyr Cymreig ar faes y frwydr. Lle bynnag oedd y Cymry, roedd yna lowyr yn eu plith. Roedden nhw'n ddynion caled, wedi hen arfer â pherygl a chaledi, a byddai eu doniau yn arbennig o addas i'r brwydro i ddod.

Rydym wedi casglu dwsinau o straeon personol am lowyr a wasanaethodd dros eu gwlad yn ystod y rhyfel. Mae nifer fach ohonynt wedi'u talfyrru a'u hailadrodd yma. Maes o law, bydd fersiynau llawnach o'r rhain a straeon eraill i'w gweld ar ffurf ddigidol ar ein gwefan neu'n cael eu harddangos yn Big Pit Amgueddfa Lofaol Cymru ym Mlaenafon.

Wrth gasglu gwybodaeth am unigolion, cawsom ein llywio'n aml gan waith awduron ac archaeolegwyr proffesiynol sy'n gweithio yn y maes, a chan yr holl waith da sy'n cael ei gyflawni gan lu o haneswyr lleol ar hyd a lled Cymru sy'n ymchwilio'n ddiflino i gefndir y dynion y mae eu henwau wedi'u naddu ar ein cofebion rhyfel lleol. Diolch o galon iddyn nhw, ac i rai fel Dr Ritchie Wood a Gordon Hill, a'n helpodd i ddarllen a gwirio fersiynau bras cynnar o'r cylchgrawn hwn.

Mae cofnodion gwasanaeth llawer o'r dynion a wasanaethodd gyda'r lluoedd arfog ym 1914-1918 yn anghyflawn neu ar goll yn aml, felly gall fod yn anodd rhoi'r straeon at ei gilydd. Os allwch chi helpu i lenwi bylchau neu gywiro unrhyw wallau yn y straeon hyn, neu os oes gennych chi straeon ychwanegol, rhwch wybod i ni. Byddwn yn parhau i wneud gwaith ymchwil a chasglu hanesion am flynyddoedd eto.

Gwnaed pob ymdrech i ddod o hyd i ddeiliaid hawlfraint a chael caniatâd i ailgynhyrchu'r lluniau sydd yn y cylchgrawn hwn, ond os oes unrhyw hawlfraint yn dal heb ei gydnabod, hoffem glywed gan y deiliad.

Introduction

When the First World War began in August 1914, the soldiers of Britain's small professional army were quickly joined in battle by the weekend soldiers of the Territorial forces. Eventually, both were followed by the citizen soldiers of 'Kitchener's Army'.

Socialist, radical and non-conformist, the miners of Wales were traditionally sceptical about appeals to patriotism; but like other men, many miners were soon swept away by the enthusiasm for the war. Some 250,000 miners enlisted before the Government, desperate for coal to fuel the war economy, halted further recruitment.

Most men served as infantrymen in Welsh or English infantry battalions. Many served in other branches of the services, not only in France and Belgium but in Italy, Greece, Gallipoli, Palestine, Egypt, Mesopotamia, East Africa and even China.

Welsh soldiers fought on every battlefield on which British forces were engaged. Wherever the Welsh fought, there were miners among them. They were tough men, used to hardship and danger, and found their talents particularly suited to the fighting that took place.

We have collected dozens of personal stories of miners who served in the war. A small number of these stories are reproduced here in shortened form. In due course we will publish full versions of these and other stories on our website or at Big Pit National Coal Museum in Blaenafon.

In compiling information on individuals we have often been guided by the work of professional authors and archaeologists working in the field, and by the good work being done by the many local historians around Wales who are tirelessly researching the background of men listed on local war memorials. Our thanks to them and to those such as Dr Ritchie Wood and Gordon Hill, who helped by checking early drafts of this magazine.

The service records of many of the men are often incomplete or lost, so piecing together their stories can sometimes be difficult. If you can help fill in gaps or correct errors in the stories that follow, or if you can provide additional stories, please let us know. We will continue to research and collect stories for several years to come.

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Ardaloedd o'r Byd lle bu Ymladd

Areas of the World where fighting took place



Rhyfel Byd Palesteina - 'Jack the VC'

Colier yng nglofa Bedlinog ger Merthyr Tudful oedd Jack, lle'r oedd yn byw gyda Mary Ellen ei wraig a'u plant.

Symudodd i Ferthyr yn 10 oed, a phan oedd yn ei arddegau, bu'n gweithio danddaear cyn ymuno â'r Magnelwyr Ceffylau Brenhinol yn 18 oed a gwasanaethu yn yr India a De Affrica. Yn ystod ail ryfel y Böer, roedd yn rhan o'r garfan Brydeinig a ryddhaodd Ladysmith ym mis Mawrth 1900 a dyfarnwyd Medal De Affrig y Frenhines a Medal De Affrig y Brenin iddo cyn dychwelyd i fywyd sifiliad fel glöwr ym Merthyr.

Ym mis Awst 1914, ac yntau'n 37 oed, penderfynodd Collins listio gyda'r 'Welsh Horse' neu'r Marchoglu Cymreig. Bu'n yrrwr gyda'r magnelwyr cyn hynny, felly roedd wedi hen arfer â cheffylau, ond ym mis Medi 1915, ac ar ôl 12 mis o hyfforddiant fel marchfilwr fe wnaeth criw'r Marchoglu Cymreig, ynghyd â sawl uned o farchogion gael eu hel o'r cyfrwy. Bellach yn droedfilwyr, cawsant eu hanfon i'r Dardenelles er mwyn cymryd rhan ym mrwydr Gallipoli, gan lanio ar droedle ANZAC ar 8 Hydref 1915.

Doedd dim Cwmnïau Twnelu ffurfiol ar gael yn Gallipoli i ddechrau, felly fel uned a recriwtiwyd o ardal

lofaol, cafodd y Marchoglu Cymreig eu rhoi ar waith, gan ddechrau cloddio a thwnelu ar Hill 60 yn syth ar ôl cyrraedd.

Bu'r Marchoglu Cymreig yn ymladd y Twrciaid danddaear am dros ddeufis, a byddent yn tanio 5 ffrwydryn dan linell frwydr y Twrciaid mewn un diwrnod cyn cael eu hanfon i'r Aifft. Ni wyddom yn bendant a oedd Collins yn rhan o orchestion twnelu'r Marchoglu Cymreig, ond ac yntau'n löwr medrus, mae'n debygol ei fod.

Defnyddiwyd y Marchoglu Cymreig i warchod Camlas Suez gydol 1916. Yn ystod y cyfnod hwn, cafodd Collins ei ddyrchafu'n Is-gorporal ac unodd y Marchoglu Cymreig ag Iwmyn Sir Drefaldwyn i ffurfio 25ain Fataliwn y Ffiwsilwyr Brenhinol Cymreig.

Ym 1917, aeth y Prydeinwyr ar gyrch i Sinai a Phalesteina, a dechrau gwthio lluoedd Twrci yn ôl mewn cyfres o frwydrau. Ar 31 Hydref 1917 yn Wadi Saba, ger Beersheba yn Israel heddiw, cyflawnodd yr Is-gorporal Collins weithred a enillodd iddo Groes Fictoria a dyrchafiad yn Gorporal llawn.



Y cadfridog Allenby yn cyrraedd Jeriwsalem / General Allenby enters Jerusalem © AWM

A World War Palestine - Jack the VC

John Collins was a collier at Bedlinog Colliery near Merthyr where he lived with his wife Mary Ellen and their children.

He had moved to Merthyr at the age of 10 and worked underground as a teenager before joining the Royal Horse Artillery at 18 and serving in India and South Africa. During the second Boer War he was in the British column that relieved Ladysmith in March 1900 and was awarded both the Queen's South Africa Medal and the King's South Africa Medal before returning to civilian life as a miner in Merthyr.

In August 1914, at the age of 37, Collins decided to enlist in the Welsh Horse; he had been a driver in the artillery, so he was used to horses. However in September 1915, after undergoing twelve months training as cavalrymen, the Welsh Horse, along with several other mounted units, were dismounted. Now infantrymen, they were sent to the Dardanelles to participate in the actions at Gallipoli and landed at the ANZAC bridgehead on 8 October 1915.

To begin with there were no formal tunnelling companies available in Gallipoli, so as a unit recruited from a mining area, the Welsh Horse were pressed into service and began mining and sapping operations at Hill 60 immediately on arrival.

The Welsh Horse fought the Turks underground for over two months and blew five mines under Turkish lines in a single day before being evacuated to Egypt. We don't know for certain whether Collins was involved in the tunnelling exploits of the Welsh Horse, but as an experienced miner it is likely he was.

The Welsh Horse were employed on the defence of the Suez Canal throughout 1916. During this time Collins was promoted to Lance Corporal and the Welsh Horse were amalgamated with the Montgomeryshire Yeomanry to form the 25th Battalion of the Royal Welch Fusiliers.

In 1917 the British went on the offensive in Sinai and Palestine and began pushing the Turkish forces back in a series of battles. On 31 October 1917 at Wadi Saba, near Beersheba in modern-day Israel, Collins performed an act that won him the Victoria Cross and promotion to full Corporal.



Toedflwyr Twrciaid
Turkish Infantry © AWM



London Gazette 18th December 1917

For most conspicuous bravery, resource and leadership, when, after deployment, prior to an attack, his battalion was forced to lie out in the open under heavy shell and machine-gun fire, which caused many casualties.

This gallant non-commissioned officer repeatedly went out under heavy fire and brought wounded back to cover, thus saving many lives. In subsequent operations throughout the day Cpl. Collins was conspicuous in rallying and leading his command. He led the final assault with the utmost skill, in spite of heavy fire at close range and uncut wire. He bayoneted fifteen of the enemy, and with a Lewis gun section pressed on beyond the objective and covered the reorganisation and consolidation most effectively, although isolated and under fire from snipers and guns.

He showed throughout a magnificent example of initiative and fearlessness.



Fis yn ddiweddarach, ar noson 29 Tachwedd, gwnaeth Collins ei farc unwaith eto wrth i'r Prydeinwyr fwrw ymlaen i amgylchynu Jerwsalem. Galwyd ar warchodlu Twrcaidd un pentref i ildio'u harfau, ond fel roedd hi'n ymddangos eu bod yn rhoi'r gorau iddi, dechreuodd y Twrciaid danio.

Diolch i'w wrhydrîr noson honno, cafodd Collins ei ddyrchafu'n Sarsiant, ei enwi mewn cadlythrau (y 'Dispatches') a chyflwynwyd medal Ymddygiad Rhagorol iddo, y DCM – 'Distinguished Conduct Medal'.

Llwyddodd lluoedd Prydain i oresgyn Jerwsalem ym mis Rhagfyr a pharhau i wthio'r Twrciaid ymhellach yn ôl drwy'r bryniau i'r gogledd o Jerwsalem a dyffryn yr Iorddonen gydol gweddill 1918. Er hynny, nid oedd 25ain Fataliwn y Ffiwsilwyr Brenhinol Cymreig ymhlith y lluoedd Prydeinig a fyddai'n gorymdeithio i Ddamascus maes o law ym mis Hydref 1918. Cawsant eu trosglwyddo i Ffrainc ym mis Mai 1918.



Cyflwynwyd Croes Fictoria a'r DCM i Collins gan y Brenin Siôr V ym Mhalas Buckingham ar 1 Mehefin. Dychwelodd i'w fataliwn wedyn, a symud i faes y gad ger Merville ym mis Gorffennaf. Cafodd ei saethu yn ei glun chwith ddechrau mis Medi, a'i gludo'n ôl i Brydain i wella. Roedd bellach yn ddeugain oed, a chafodd ei ryddhau o'r fyddin ar 5 Tachwedd 1918, gan nad oedd ei angen mwyach.

Yn adnabyddus fel 'Jack the VC', ymgartrefodd John Collins ym Merthyr am weddill ei oes, gan weithio fel labrwr tomen lo ac yna'n swyddog diogelwch. Yn ystod yr Ail Ryfel Byd, bu'n Uwch-ringyll 9fed Bataliwn Cartreflu Morgannwg. Bu farw ar ôl cwmpo yn ei gartref ym 1951, a chafodd ei gladdu ym mynwent Pant.

A month later, on the night of 29 November, Collins distinguished himself again as the British advanced to surround Jerusalem. The Turkish Garrison of a village were called upon to surrender and came forward with all the appearance of doing so but then opened fire.

For his actions that night Collins was promoted to Sergeant, Mentioned in Dispatches and awarded the DCM.

London Gazette 1st May 1918

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. As soon as the enemy opened fire at point blank range, he rallied all the men near him, took control of a portion of the line, and brought every available rifle to bear on the enemy.

During the consolidation he did exceptionally good work, and later, when the enemy counter-attacked, went under heavy fire from post to post to ensure that they were being held to the best advantage.

His ability and devotion to duty were of the highest order.

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British forces occupied Jerusalem in December and continued to push the Turks back through the hills north of Jerusalem and the Jordan valley throughout the rest of 1918. The 25th Royal Welch Fusiliers were not with the British forces that eventually marched into Damascus in October 1918. They had been transferred to France in May 1918.

Collins was presented with the Victoria Cross and Distinguished Conduct Medal by King George V at Buckingham Palace on 1 June. He then returned to his battalion and moved into the front line near Merville in July. In early September he was shot in the left thigh and shipped home to recover. Aged 40, he was discharged from the army on 5 November 1918 as surplus to military requirement.

Known as Jack the VC, John Collins lived in Merthyr for the rest of his life, working as a tip labourer and then a security guard. During the Second World War he was Sergeant Major of the 9th Battalion of the Glamorgan Home Guard. He died after a fall at home in 1951 and is buried in Pant Cemetery.

Ildio Jeriwsalem
The surrender of Jerusalem © IWM



Tsieina

Roedd Frederick Williams yn gweithio fel glöwr yng nglofa Coedely, Tonyrefail, pan ymunodd ag 2il Fataliwn Cyffinwyr De Cymru fel milwr rheolaidd tua 1910. Ym mis Awst 1914, roedd y bataliwn yn gwasanaethu yn Tientsin, 'consesiwn' masnachu Prydeinig-Ffrengig yng ngogledd Tsieina. Pan gyhoeddwyd y rhyfel, cafodd y milwyr Awstro-Hwngaraidd a oedd hefyd yn y ddinas, eu carcharu gan y Prydeinwyr a'u cynghreiriaid o Japan.

Yna, anfonwyd lluoedd Prydain y Cyffinwyr i helpu milwyr Siapan i gipio porthladd Tsingtao a oedd dan reolaeth yr Almaenwyr – porthladd milwrol a masnachol strategol bwysig a oedd yn ganolfan i'r Sgwadron Almaenig yn y Dwyrain Pell, ar waith yn y Môr Tawel.

Anfonwyd Prydain y Cyffinwyr a hanner 36ain Catrawd y Sikhiaid o Tientsin i gymryd rhan mewn gwarchae ar ganolfan yr Almaenwyr. Am chwe wythnos, bu lluoedd Prydain a Japan yn brwydro'u ffordd ymlaen a thynhau eu gafael ar y porthladd. Roedd yn gyfnod anodd i'r 2il Fataliwn, yn gorfod byw ar hanner eu dognau a heb offer cloddio go iawn. Ar ben pob dim, roedden nhw'n dal i wisgo lifrai'r haf pan drawyd yr ardal gan stormydd teiffŵn annhymhorol a llifogydd mawr.

Er bod yna fwy o filwyr Prydeinig nac Almaenig (6 Prydeiniwr i bob Almaenwr), dangosodd y gelyn ei rym, gan barhau i ladd a dal eu tir am ddeufis a mwy cyn ildio o'r diwedd ar 7 Tachwedd. Bu farw pedwar ar ddeg

China

Frederick Williams had been a collier at Coedely Colliery in Tonyrefail before joining the 2nd Battalion South Wales Borderers as a regular soldier around 1910. In August 1914 the Battalion were serving at Tientsin, a British and French trading concession in Northern China. When war was declared, the German and Austro-Hungarian troops also in the city were quickly taken prisoner by the British and their allies the Japanese.

The British sent troops to assist the Japanese in capturing the German-owned port of Tsingtao, a strategically important trading and military port, which served as a base for the German Far East Squadron that operated in the Pacific.

Britain sent the Borderers and half the 36th Sikhs from Tientsin to take part in the siege of the German base. For six weeks the Japanese and British force methodically advanced their trench lines and tightened their grip on the port. It was a difficult time: the men were on half rations, lacked entrenching tools and were still wearing their summer kit when the area was struck by unseasonable typhoons and flooded.

The German garrison was outnumbered six-to-one but made a fight of it, constantly inflicting casualties on



o aelodau'r 2il Fataliwn yn ystod yr ymgyrch, naill ai o'u hanafiadau neu yn sgil clefydau, a chafodd dau swyddog a thri deg pedwar o ddynion eu clwyfo.

Llwyddodd Preifat Williams i oroesi'n ddianaf. Ar ôl gadael i'r Japaneaid feddiannu Tsingtao, hwylodd ef a'i gyd-filwyr yn ôl i Brydain. Roedd yn ôl ar y moroedd mawr ym mis Mawrth 1915, ar ei ffordd i Gallipoli y tro hwn, a glaniodd y bataliwn ar 'S Beach', Cape Helles ar 25 Ebrill 1915.

Fel llawer o'r rhai a oroesodd wrthdaro'r Almaenwyr yn Tsingtao, ni fyddai Williams mor ffodus yn erbyn y Twrciaid yn Gallipoli. Er i'r Cyffinwyr lwyddo i lanio'n weddol ddidrafferth ar y traeth, roedd Frederick Williams ymhlith 38 o aelodau'r Bataliwn a laddwyd yn ystod y deuddydd cyntaf.

'Tsingtao' – anrhydedd rhyfel unigryw ymhlith holl gatrodau Prydain.

the allies and holding out for over two months before finally surrendering on 7 November. The campaign cost the Battalion fourteen men killed from wounds or disease, and two officers and thirty-four men wounded.

Private Williams was not one of the casualties. Leaving the Japanese to occupy Tsingtao, he and the Battalion sailed for Britain. In March 1915 they sailed again, this time for Gallipoli, where they landed

at S Beach, Cape Helles on 25 April 1915.

Like many of those who survived fighting the Germans at Tsingtao, Williams did not survive the fight against the Turks at Gallipoli. Although the Borderers had landed on the beach almost unopposed, the 28-year-old Frederick Williams was one of thirty-eight men from the battalion killed during the first two days.

'Tsingtao' is a battle honour held by no other British Regiment.



Gallipoli

Roedd glaniadau Gallipoli yn rhan o Ryfelgyrch y Dardanelles – ymgais Prydain a Ffrainc i sicrhau llwybr agored a diogel ar fôr at eu cynghreiriaid Rwsiaidd, trwy gipio Istanbul, prifddinas yr Ymerodraeth Otoman. Ryder yn cofio am gyfraniad Corffluedd Byddin Awstralia a Seland Newydd (ANZAC), ond roedd 75% o'r milwyr a frwydrodd ac a gollodd eu bywydau yno yn hanu o'r DU – a llawer o Gymry yn eu plith.

Un o'r Cymry hynny oedd Frederick Croad o Donyrefail, glöwr yn Gilfach Goch. Dywedodd gelwydd golau am ei oed, ac felly'n 17 oed, aeth ef a'i ffrind ati i listio a neidio ar drên i Iwerddon er mwyn hyfforddi gyda Ffiwsilwyr Brenhinol Munster. Er bod y ddau ifanc yn awyddus i wasanaethu eu gwlad, doedden nhw ddim eisiau ymuno â'r gatradd hon, felly dyma benderfynu gadael y trên yn Llantrisant a'i throi hi'n ôl am adref.

Dair blynedd ynghynt, roedd yr Ysgrifennydd Gwladol Winston Churchill wedi anfon milwyr i'r De er mwyn cadw trefn ar lowyr gwrthryfelgar, digwyddiad sy'n enwog fel Terfysgoedd Tonypandy bellach. Yn rhyfedd ddigon, 2il Fataliwn Ffiwsilwyr Brenhinol Munster oedd y milwyr hynny a gafodd eu hanfon i Gilfach-goch. Doedden nhw ddim yn boblogaidd a dweud y lleiaf, yn sgil adroddiadau eu bod wedi defnyddio'u bidogau i chwalu protestiadau gerllaw yn Nhonypandy.

Yn anffodus, doedd dim dianc i'r ddau ffrind. Daeth yr heddlu milwrol i chwilio amdanynt, a chyn pen dim, roedden nhw'n ôl ar y trên i Iwerddon er mwyn gwasanaethu gyda 6ed Bataliwn Gwasanaeth Ffiwsilwyr Brenhinol Munster.

Roedd y 6ed Bataliwn yn rhan o'r 10fed Adran (Gwyddelig) a anfonwyd gyda'r 53edd Adran (Cymreig) i benrhyn Gallipoli ym mis Awst 1915.

Roedd yr ymladd wedi cychwyn ym mis Ebrill 1915, ond pan gyrhaeddodd Preifat Croad a'i gymrodyr Fae Sulva ar 7 Awst, cawsant eu peledu gan fôr o fagnelau a gynnu peiriant y Twrciaid.

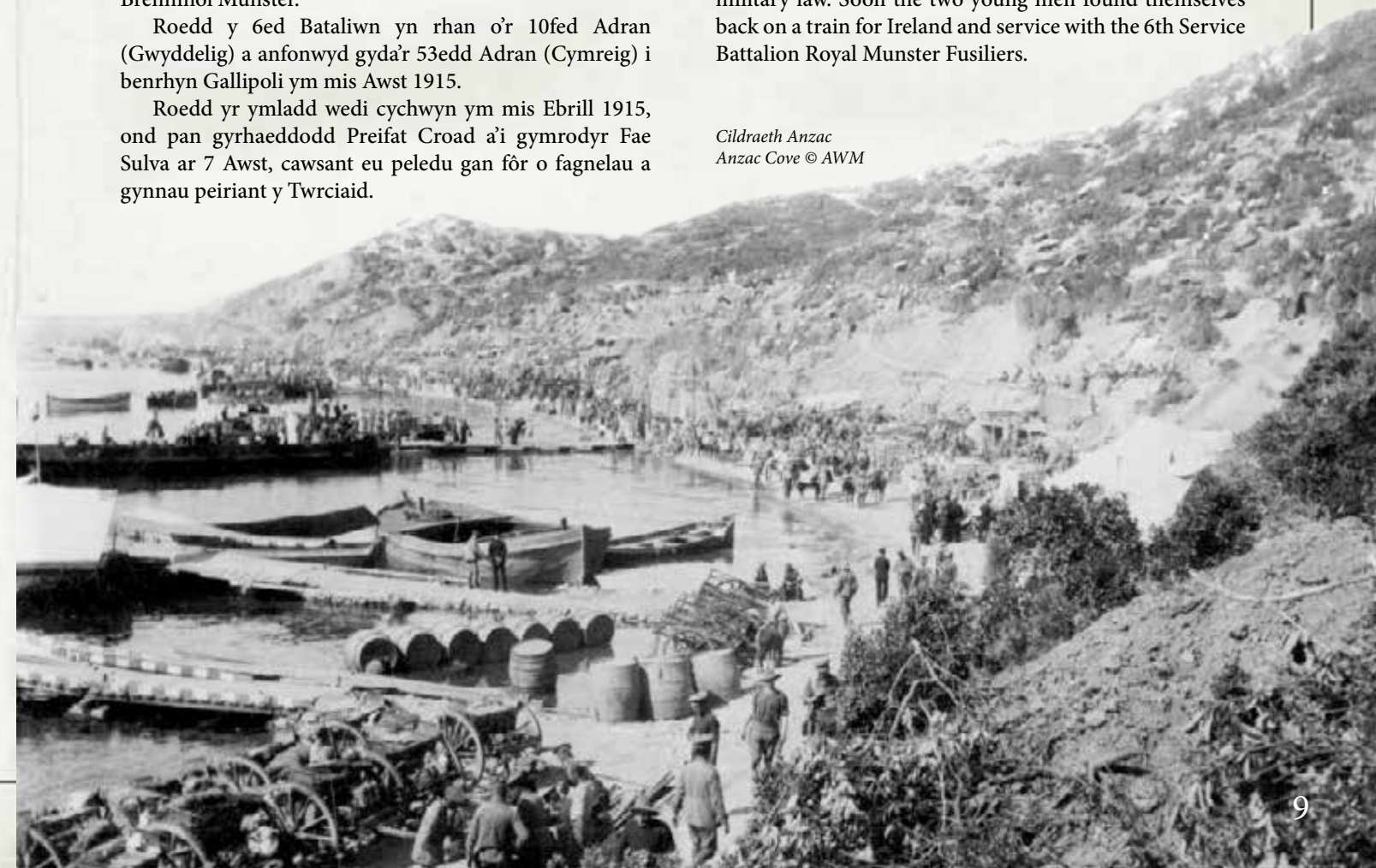
The Dardanelles Campaign, of which the landings in Gallipoli were a part, was an attempt by the British and French to secure a sea route to their ally Russia by capturing the Ottoman capital of Istanbul. The role of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) in the fighting at Gallipoli is rightly remembered, but 75 per cent of the soldiers who fought and died at Gallipoli were from the UK and there were many Welshmen among them.

One of those who fought at Gallipoli was Frederick Croad from Tonyrefail, a miner at Gilfach Goch when the war broke out. He lied about his age and aged just 17 he and his friend enlisted and hoped to join an English regiment but instead found themselves on board a train bound for Ireland. The two young men were willing to serve their country, but they didn't want to join the Royal Munster Fusiliers, so they got off the train at Llantrisant and went home.

Just three years earlier the Home Secretary Winston Churchill had sent troops to south Wales to help police the mining disputes now known as the Tonypandy Riots. The troops sent to Gilfach Goch were none other than the 2nd Battalion Royal Munster Fusiliers, and they were not liked, especially after they were reported to have used their bayonets to break up a demonstration in nearby Tonypandy.

However there was no escaping the long arm of the military law. Soon the two young men found themselves back on a train for Ireland and service with the 6th Service Battalion Royal Munster Fusiliers.

Cildraeth Anzac
Anzac Cove © AWM



Tarodd rhai o'r llongau yn erbyn y creigiau, gan orfodi'r dynion i neidio i'r dŵr a cheisio cerdded i'r lan. Yn anffodus, boddodd rhai o'r dynion dan faich eu hoffer trwm. Flynyddoedd yn ddiweddarach, daeth un olygfa arbennig yn ôl i'r cof wrth i gwch Fred Croad nesáu at y lan. Cofiai syllu i'r dŵr clir fel grisial, a gweld milwyr yn gelain ar wely'r môr, yn dal i sefyll a siglo o dan y don.

Ar ôl cyrraedd y traeth, bustachodd y Prydeinwyr i fyni'r clogwyn, a chyrraedd ffosydd y Twrciaid ar y brig wedi brwydro ffyrnig. Roedd y ffosydd yn wynebu'r môr, ac felly heb glawdd neu ragfur yn wynebu'r tir. Gorfu i'r Prydeinwyr ddefnyddio beth bynnag oedd ar gael i godi mur, gan gynnwys cyrff Twrciaid.

Daeth ymgyrch y Dardenelles i ben gyda buddugoliaeth i'r Otomaniaid, pan giliodd y goresgynwyr ym mis Ionawr 1916. Cafodd y 6ed Bataliwn ei throsglwyddo i Salonika, lle byddant yn brwydro am bron i ddwy flynedd dan amgylchiadau erchyll, cyn codi pac i Balesteina am 10 mis. Yna, ym mis Mehefin 1918, cafodd y 6ed Bataliwn ei dadfyddino, a chafodd y dynion dros ben eu trosglwyddo i'r 2il Fataliwn ar gyfer dyddiau ola'r rhyfel yn Ffrainc.

Yn ystod ei gyfnod gyda Ffiwsilwyr Brenhinol Munster, cafodd Fred Croad ei anafu ddwywaith, ei wenwyno a dal malaria. Llwyddodd i oroesi'r cyfan, a dychwelyd adref i Gymru gan briodi, magu 4 o blant, a byw i fod yn 71 oed.



© IWM



Fred gartref yn Nhonyrefail ym 1917, trwy garedigrwydd Graham Croad, wŷr Fred

Fred at his home in Tonyrefail in 1917. Courtesy Graham Croad, Fred's Grandson

The 6th Battalion was part of the 10th (Irish) Division, which together with the 53rd (Welsh) Division were sent to the Gallipoli peninsula in August 1915.

The fighting had been going on since April 1915, but on 7 August Private Croad and his comrades were part of fresh landings in Suvla Bay where they came ashore under fire from Turkish machine guns and artillery.

Some of the boats ran aground, and the men had to jump into the sea and wade ashore. Some men got out of their depth and sank to the bottom due to the heavy loads they were carrying. In later life Croad related how, as his boat neared the shore, he could see in the crystal clear waters below drowned soldiers apparently standing upright on the bottom weaving back and fore.

Once on the beach, the British fought their way up the cliff, and after bitter fighting got into the Turkish trenches at the top. These trenches faced out to sea so had no parapet at the rear. The British had to build up the rear of the trenches with whatever they could find, including dead Turks.

The Dardanelles campaign ended in victory for the Ottomans when the invasion force was withdrawn in January 1916. The 6th Battalion was transferred to the campaign in Salonika and fought there for nearly two years in appalling conditions, before moving to Palestine for ten months. Then in June 1918 the 6th were disbanded and the remaining men transferred to the 2nd Battalion for the final stages of the war in France.

During his time with the Royal Munster Fusiliers Fred Croad was wounded twice, gassed and contracted malaria. He managed to survive and return to Wales, married, had four children and lived to the age of 71.

Mesopotamia



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Brwydr rhwng lluoedd Prydain a'r Ymerodraeth Otoman oedd rhyfelgyrch Mesopotamia, sef Irac heddiw. Prif ganolbwynt yr ymladd oedd y tiroedd rhwng afonydd Euphrates a Tigris, sef Gardd Eden yn y Beibl.

Ym mis Tachwedd 1914, fe wnaeth y Prydeinwyr anfon Adran Poona y fyddin Indiaidd i warchod un o burfeydd olew cynta'r byd ger ffin Iran ac Irac heddiw, a oedd yn ffynhonnell hollbwysig o olew i Lynges Frenhinol Prydain.

Roedd trwch y fyddin Otomanaidd wedi'i lleoli'n ddigon pell o'r arfordir. Pan laniodd y Prydeinwyr, llwyddwyd i sgubo'r fyddin fechan oedd yn eu hwynebu o'r neilltu yn weddol rhydd cyn symud ymhellach oddi wrth yr arfordir a meddiannu safle cadarn i amddiffyn dinas Basra a'r meysydd olew.

Ym mis Tachwedd 1915, bu'r Prydeinwyr mewn brwydr bum niwrnod prin bum milltir ar hugain i'r de o Baghdad yn erbyn byddin Otoman. Ofer fu ymdrechion y ddwy ochr, ond pan giliodd y Prydeinwyr, roedd byddin fwy'r Otomaniaid yn dynn wrth eu sodlau, a chawsant eu hamgylchynu yn ninas Kut.

Erbyn hyn, roedd milwyr wrth gefn profiadol wedi cyrraedd yr ardal - sef yr Adrannau Indiaidd a'r 13eg Adran (Gorllewin) a oedd yn cynnwys 8fed Bataliwn y Gatradd Gymreig, yr 8fed Ffiwsilwyr Brenhinol Cymreig a 4ydd Cyffinwyr De Cymru.

Roedd y 13eg Adran eisoes wedi brwydro yn Gallipoli, ac wedi colli bron i 6,000 o filwyr o'r 10,500 gwreiddiol. Gorymdeithiodd y llu newydd tua'r gogledd er mwyn rhyddhau Kut o fachau'r gelyn, ond roedd amser caled ac amddiffynfeydd cadarn o'u blaenau. Yn ystod y brwydro ym mis Ebrill 1916, dyfarnwyd Croes Fictoria i bedwar milwr o'r 13eg Adran gan gynnwys James Henry Finn.

The Mesopotamian campaign was fought between British forces and those of the Ottoman Empire in present-day Iraq. The fighting was mostly limited to the lands between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, the site of the biblical Garden of Eden.

In November 1914 the British sent the Poona Division of its Indian army to protect one of the world's earliest oil refineries near the present-day Iraq-Iran border, which was an important source of oil for the British Royal Navy.

After early success in first occupying and then defending the city of Basra and the oilfields, the British decided to switch to the attack and advanced up the Tigris River towards Baghdad, defeating the several Ottoman forces sent to halt them.

In November 1915 the British fought a five-day battle just twenty-five miles south of Baghdad with a new Ottoman army. The battle was a stalemate, but when the British retreated the larger Ottoman force followed them back to the city of Kut and surrounded them.

British reinforcements were now arriving in the form of two experienced Indian Divisions and the 13th (Western) Division, which included the 8th Battalion of the Welsh Regiment, the 8th Royal Welch Fusiliers and the 4th South Wales Borderers.

The 13th Division had previously fought at Gallipoli where it suffered nearly 6,000 casualties out of its original strength of 10,500. The new force advanced north to relieve Kut but were unable to break through the string defences, leaving the trapped garrison with no option but to surrender. During the fighting the fighting of April 1916, the 13th Division lost half their number as casualties and saw four of its soldiers awarded the Victoria Cross, including James Henry Finn.



James Henry Finn, Private, 4th Battalion South Wales Borderers -
For most conspicuous bravery.
After a night attack he was one of a small party which dug-in in front of our advanced line and about 300 yards from the enemy's trenches. Seeing several wounded men lying out in front he went out and bandaged them all under heavy fire, making several journeys in order to do so. He then went back to our advanced trench for a stretcher and, being unable to get one, he himself carried on his back a badly wounded man into safety. He then returned and, aided by another man who was wounded during the act, carried in another badly wounded man. He was under continuous fire while performing this gallant work.

Yn frodor o Gernyw, bu Finn yn gweithio yng nglofa Cwmtyleri ac yn byw gyda theulu ei gyfaill yn Abertyleri. Tua deg mis yn ddiweddarach, cafodd ei glwyfo ar faes y gad, ac roedd wrthi'n derbyn triniaeth yng ngorsaf ambiwlans y maes pan drawyd yr ardal gan siel. Nid oes ganddo fedd hysbys.

Ar ol atgyfnerthu a chael rhagor o adnoddau, dechreuodd y Prydeinwyr ymosod eto ym mis Rhagfyr 1916. Y tro hwn, gorfodwyd y fyddin Otomanaidd allan o sawl caer amddiffynnol ac adfeddiannwyd dinas Kut. Ar 11 Mawrth 1917, gorymdeithiodd y Prydeinwyr i Baghdad a chawsant groeso gwaredwyr.

Cyflwynodd y Cadlywydd Prydeinig, Cadfridog Maude, Broclamaswn Baghdad, a oedd yn cynnwys y geiriau cyfarwydd "our armies do not come into your cities and lands as conquerors or enemies, but as liberators".

Collodd y Prydeinwyr 92,000 o filwyr yn rhyfel Mesopotamia, a daeth diwedd ar y brwydro ar 14 Tachwedd 1918, ddiwrnod ar ôl goresgyn Istanbul, y brifddinas Otoman.



*Troedfilwyr Twrcaidd
Turkish Infantry © IWM*



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Salonika

Cychwynnodd ymgyrch Salonika (Gwlad Groeg a Macedonia) ym mis Hydref 1915. Roedd lluoedd Prydain a Ffrainc wedi glanio ym mhorthladd Salonika, Gwlad Groeg, er mwyn rhoi cymorth milwrol i'r Serbiaid a oedd yn ceisio gwrthsefyll ymosodiad gan y byddinoedd Almaenig, Awstro-Hwngaraidd a Bwlgaraidd ar y cyd.

Ar ei anterth, roedd Llu Prydain yn Salonika yn cynnwys 100,000 o filwyr, ac yn eu plith roedd Y Gatrawd Gymreig, y Ffiwsilwyr Brenhinol Cymreig a Bataliwn Cyffrinwyr De Cymru.

Roedd yr amodau yn erchyll. Yn y gaeaf, roedd yr ychydig ffyrdd ar gau yn aml a'r milwyr yn wynebu oerfel difrifol, stormydd eira a niwl trwchus. Amodau chwlbioeth a phrinder dŵr oedd prif fwanod yr haf. Ymledai afiechydon fel tân gwyllt. Am bob milwr a laddwyd mewn brwydr, roedd tri yn marw o ryw glefyd neu'i gilydd. Mewn pedair blynedd o ryfela, collwyd 505,024 o filwyr i bethau heblaw ymladd.

Ym mis Gorffennaf 1916, cafodd y Bwlgariaid eu rhwystro rhag goresgyn Gwlad Groeg ger Llyn Doiran. Dyfarnwyd Croes Fictoria i'r Preifat Hubert Lewis o Aberdaugleddau yn ystod cyrch ar y ffosydd. Er gwaetha cael ei anafu deirgwaith, llwyddodd i ddal tri aelod o'r gelyn ac achub cyd-filwr clwyfedig cyn llewygu ar ôl colli cymaint o waed.



The campaign in Salonika (Greece and Macedonia) began in October 1915. British and French forces landed at the Greek port to provide military assistance to the Serbs who had been attacked by combined German, Austro-Hungarian and Bulgarian armies.

At its height the British Salonika Force was 100,000 strong and included battalions from the Welsh Regiment, the Royal Welch Fusiliers and the South Wales Borderers.

Conditions were appalling. The troops faced impassable roads, freezing temperatures, blizzards and dense fog in the winter and soaring temperatures and a lack of water in summer. Disease spread like wildfire. For every casualty in battle, three men died of disease. In total there were 505,024 non-battle casualties during the four years.

In July 1916 a Bulgarian invasion of Greece was repulsed near Lake Doiran. During a trench raid as part of these operations Private Hubert Lewis, from Milford Haven, won a Victoria Cross. Despite being wounded three times himself, he captured three of the enemy and rescued a wounded comrade before collapsing from loss of blood.

In the spring of 1917, the British switched to the attack in the Lake Doiran area but made little impression on the tough Bulgarian defences. In July 1918, the British attacked



*Troedfilwyr Bwlgaraidd
Bulgarian Infantry © IWM*

© IWM



Yn ystod gwanwyn 1917, dechreuodd y Prydeinwyr ymosod fwyfwy ond heb gael fawr o effaith ar amddiffynfeydd cadarn lluoedd Bwlgaria ar fryniau caerog ardal Llyn Doiran. Ni chafodd unrhyw dir ei ennill na'i golli mewn gwirionedd tan fis Gorffennaf 1918, pan lansiwyd trydydd ymosodiad gan y Prydeinwyr ar uchelfannau'r Doiran.

Roedd yn drychinebus i'r Prydeinwyr a ddioddefodd golledion enbyd wrth fynd benben â'r gelyn ar grib 2,000 troedfedd o uchder.

Mae adroddiad o'r enw, I saw the Futile Massacre at Doiran, yn disgrifio'r hyn ddigwyddodd wrth i'r bataliynau Cymreig symud yn eu blaenau:

© IWM



Roedd Sarsiant Bert Wines, 26 oed yn löwr o Glyn Ebwy ac yn aelod o 7fed Cyffinwyr De Cymru. Fel mwyafrif o'i Fataliwn, ni oroesodd y frwydr.

Er gwaetha'r diwrnod trychinebus i'r unedau Cymreig, doedd eu dewrder ddim yn angof. Dyfarnwyd medal Ffrengig Croix de Guerre i'r 7fed Bataliwn - yr unig fataliwn i ennill y fath anrhydedd o blith holl Lluoedd Salonika, a dim ond un o bedair uned Brydeinig ar Ffrynt y Gorllewin.

Er i'r Prydeinwyr fethu â chipio Doiran, daeth yr ymgyrch i ben pan ildiodd Bwlgaria yr awenau ddeuddeg niwrnod yn ddiweddarach, ar 30 Medi 1918.

again. The frontal assault on the heights of Doiran, a 2,000-foot-high mountain ridge that was heavily defended and entrenched, was a disaster.

A report entitled I saw the Futile Massacre at Doiran describes what happened when the Welsh battalions advanced:

No feat of arms can ever surpass the glorious bravery of those Welshmen ... some of the men had to fight in respirators. Imagine, if you can, what it means to fight up a hillside under a deadly fire, wearing a hot mask over your face, dimly staring through a pair of clouded goggles, and sucking the end of a rubber nozzle in your mouth. At the same time heat is pouring down on you from a brazen sky. In this plight you are called on to endure the blast of machine-gun fire, the pointed steel or bursting shells of the enemy. Nor are you called on to endure alone; you must vigorously fire back, and vigorously assail with your own bayonet. It is as much like hell as anything you can think of.

Sergeant Bert Whines was a 26 year old miner from Ebbw Vales and was with the 7th Battalion South Wales Borderers as they attacked. Like most of the battalion he didn't survive the battle.

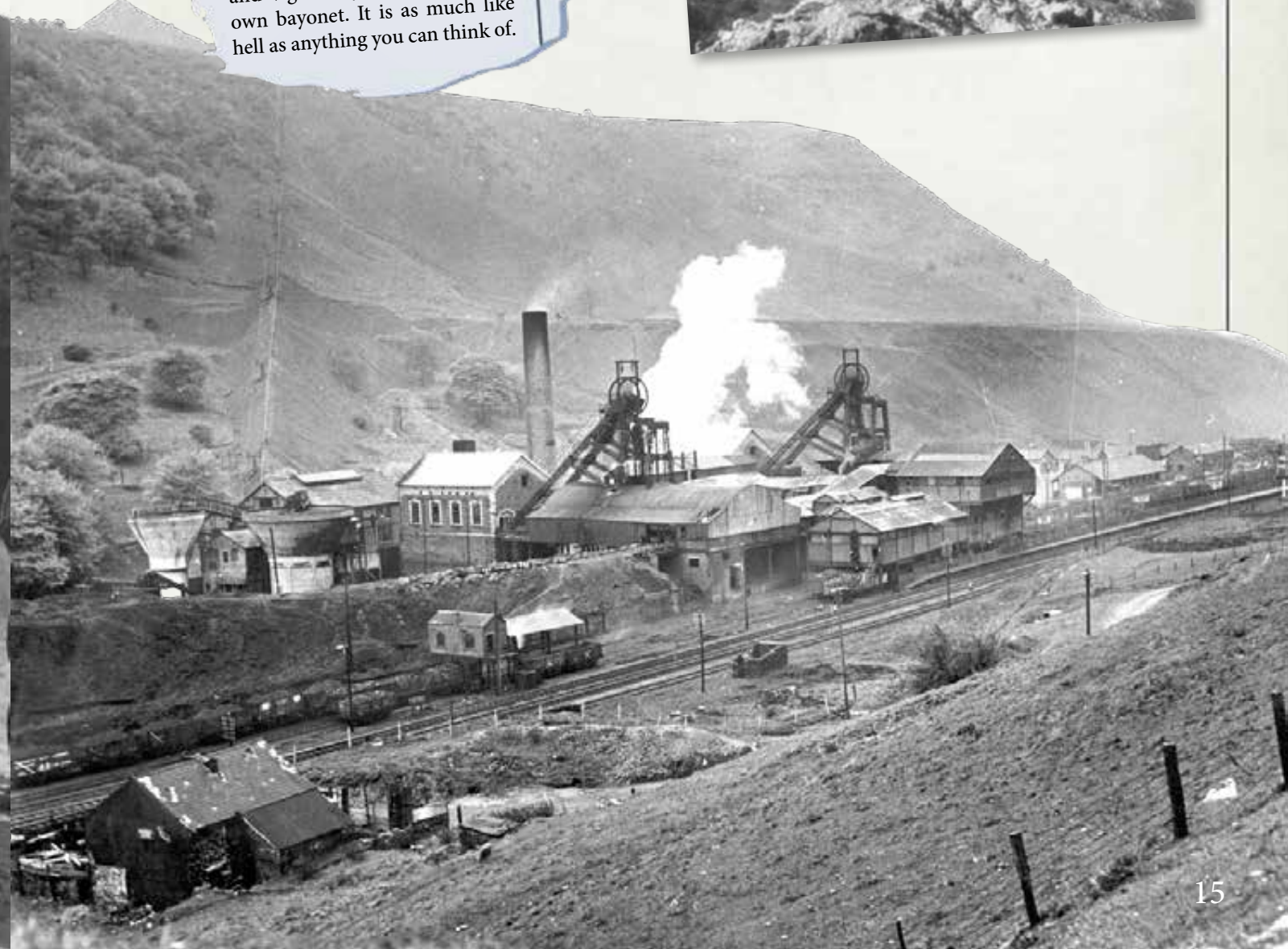
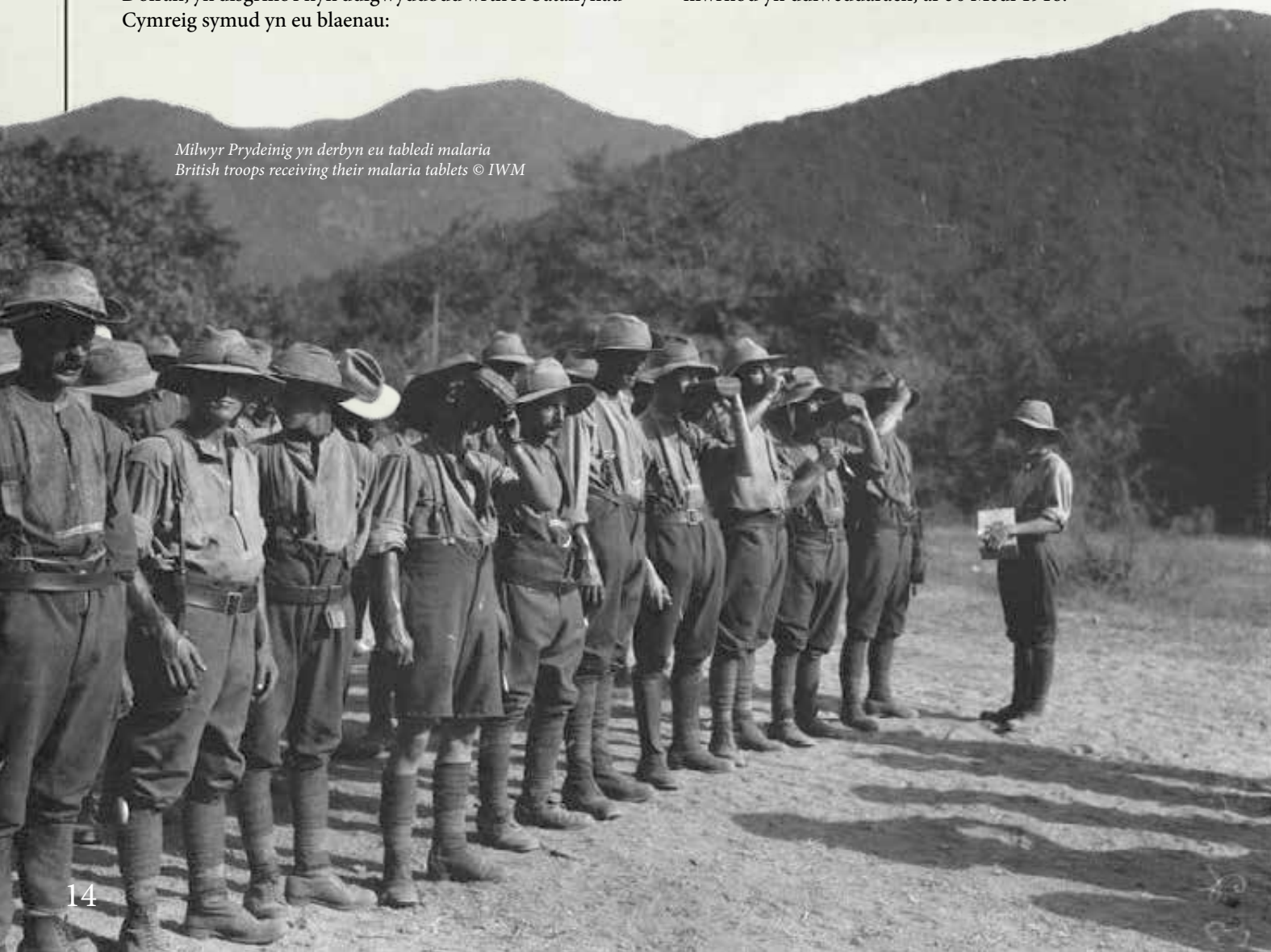
The day was a disaster for the Welsh units but their courage was recognised: as well as many medals for individuals, the 7th Battalion South Wales Borderers was also awarded the French Croix de Guerre, a decoration awarded to no other battalion in the Salonika Force, and to only four British units on the Western Front.

Although the British were repulsed at Doiran, the campaign concluded with the surrender of Bulgaria just twelve days later on 30 September 1918.

Safleoedd amddiffynnol Bwlgaraidd
Bulgarian fortified positions



Milwyr Prydeinig yn derbyn eu tabledi malaria
British troops receiving their malaria tablets © IWM



Dwyrain Affrica



Clerc yng nglofa Cwmtylleri ger Abertylleri oedd Thomas Percival Hughes. Roedd yn bêl-droediwr ac athletwr dawnus. Enillodd un o rasys troed mawr y dydd, y Cambria Dash, yn 19 oed.

Dri mis yn ddiweddarach, ymunodd â 3ydd Bataliwn Catrawd Sir Fynwy Ond, lladdwyd cymaint o'r milwyr ym mrwydr y Somme ym 1916 nes diddymu'r 3ydd Bataliwn, a throsglwyddwyd y rhan fwyaf o'r dynion i chwaer fataliynau.

Cafodd rhai unigolion eu hanfon i unedau eraill. Yn eu plith Sarsiant Hughes a aeth i Ddwyrain Affrica ar ôl cael ei ddewis i ymuno â rhengoedd Reifflwyr Affricanaidd y Brenin.

Parhaodd yr ymgyrch yn Nwyrain Affrica gydol y rhyfel. Yn gyfres o frwydrau a rhyfel gerla a gychwynnodd yn Nwyrain Affrica Almaenaidd, ymledodd i ardal bum gwaith maint yr Almaen a oedd yn drwch o wylltir, corsydd, mynyddoedd neu ardaloedd cras.

Doedd yno ddim ffyrdd o gwbl, a dim ond dwy reilffordd. Roedd rhaid i'r milwyr ddioddef naill ai gwres llethol neu law trwm, her na allai cludiant ar olwynion ymdopi â hi. Buont yn ymladd malaria, pryfed tse-tse, nadroedd ac anifeiliaid gwyllt cyn ymrafael â'r Almaenwyr.

Yn ogystal â'r catrodau o Brydain, De Affrica a'r India yn cyd-ymladd ar ochr y Cynghreiriaid, gwnaeth milwyr brodorol Affrica gyfraniad enfawr hefyd. Reifflwyr

East Africa

Thomas Percival Hughes was a clerk at Cwmtillery Colliery, near Abertillery. He was a talented footballer and athlete. At the age of 19 he won one of great foot races of its day, the Cambria Dash.

Three months later he enlisted in the 3rd Battalion of the Monmouthshire Regiment. Following the battle of the Somme in 1916 its ranks were so depleted by casualties that it was disbanded and most of its men transferred to sister battalions.

Some individuals were sent to other units. Among these was Sergeant Hughes, who shipped out for East Africa and the King's African Rifles.

The campaign in East Africa lasted for the whole of the war. It consisted of a series of battles and guerrilla actions that started in German East Africa and ultimately affected an area some five times the size of Germany, which was covered mostly by dense bush, swamps, mountains or arid areas.

There were no roads and only two railways. The troops had to cope with either sweltering heat or torrential rain, which made wheeled transport impossible. They battled against malaria, tse-tse fly, snakes and wild animals before they got to grips with the Germans.

While British, South African and Indian Regiments fought on the allied side, native African troops also played a major part in the war. The principal African unit fighting

Affricanaidd y Brenin oedd y brif uned ymladd 'Affricanaidd', uchel ei pharch, ar ochr y Prydeinwyr. Yn ystod y rhyfel, cynyddodd yr uned o chwech i ddau ar hugain bataliwn; ac erbyn y diwedd, roedd yn cynnwys 1,193 o swyddogion Prydeinig, 1,497 o swyddogion Prydeinig heb gomisiwn a 30,658 o Affricanwyr. Cawsant gymorth 600,000 o gludwyr Affricanaidd ar faes y gad.

Doedd dim hanner cymaint o Almaenwyr yn Nwyrain Affrica, a dim gobaith o ennill. Brwydrodd yr Almaenwyr yn ddygn am bedair blynedd hir a chaled cyn ildio ar 25 Tachwedd 1918, bythefnos cyn diwedd y rhyfel yn Ewrop. Yn anffodus, ni chafodd Hughes gyfle i weld hynny gan iddo farw ar faes y frwydr ar 4 Awst 1917 tra'n gwasanaethu gyda 3/4ydd Bataliwn Reifflwyr Affricanaidd y Brenin.

Roedd Hughes ymhlith 10,000 o luoedd Prydain a'r Gymanwlad a fu farw yn yr ymgyrch. Dim ond 2,000 o Almaenwyr a laddwyd ar y llaw arall, ond pobl gyffredin Dwyrain Affrica ddioddefodd fwyaf – gan farw o afiechydon, gorludded neu ryfela – 365,000 yn ôl un amcangyfrif, gan achosi i un hanesydd ddisgrifio ymgyrch Dwyrain Affrica fel 'a war of extermination and attrition without parallel in modern times'.

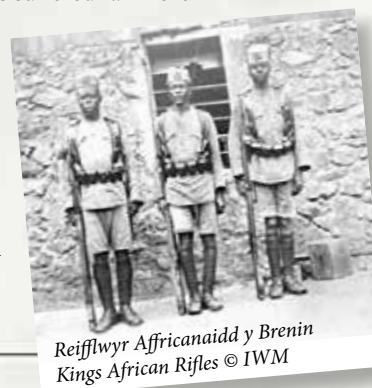


Reifflwyr Affricanaidd y Brenin
Kings African Rifles © IWM

for the British was the highly respected King's African Rifles. During the war they rose from just six to twenty-two battalions, eventually consisting of 1,193 British officers, 1,497 British NCOs and 30,658 Africans. They were assisted in the field by an additional 600,000 African bearers.

The Germans in East Africa were vastly outnumbered and had no hope of winning. Nevertheless they fought a series of brilliant mobile campaigns for four long years and only surrendered on 25 November 1918, two weeks after the end of the war in Europe. Sadly, Hughes wasn't there to see the end as he was killed in action on 4 August 1917 while serving with the 3/4th King's African Rifles.

Hughes was one of 10,000 British and Commonwealth troops who died in the campaign. German losses were light in comparison at about 2,000, but the ordinary people of East Africa who acted as bearers suffered far more from disease, exhaustion and military action. Some estimate that as many as 365,000 civilian lives were lost, leading some historians to describe the East African campaign as 'a war of extermination and attrition without parallel in modern times'.



Reifflwyr Affricanaidd y Brenin
Kings African Rifles © IWM

Yr Eidal



Mae'r stori A Farwell to Arms gan Ernest Hemingway wedi'i lleoli yn yr Eidal adeg y Rhyfel Byd Cyntaf, ond mae stori'r milwyr Prydeinig a aeth i ymladd yn y wlad honno yn llai cyfarwydd.

Roedd yr Eidal yn rhan o'r Gynghrair Driphlyg gydag Awstria-Hwngari a'r Almaen, ond wedi gwrthod mynd i ryfel ym mis Awst 1914, cyn cyhoeddi rhyfel yn erbyn Awstria-Hwngari ym mis Mai 1915.

Rhanbarthau mynyddig gogledd-ddwyrain yr Eidal oedd canolbwynt yr ymladd, ardal o hen hen gynnen rhwng Awstria a'r Eidal.

Roedd pethau'n edrych yn bur ddu ar yr Eidalwyr yn enwedig ar ôl i'r Almaenwyr anfon lluoedd a symudwyd o'r ffrynt Rwsiaidd yn hydref 1917.

Felly, ddiwedd 1917, penderfynodd Prydain a Ffrainc anfon milwyr i'r Eidal er mwyn ceisio cryfhau gwrthsafiad yr Eidalwyr. Anfonodd y Prydeinwyr bum Adran gan gynnwys y 7fed Adran brofiadol. Roedd Bataliwn 1af y Ffiwsilwyr Brenhinol Cymreig yn eu plith.

Roedd Albert Francis Viles yn löwr yng Nglynrhedynog, Cwm Rhondda, cyn ymuno â'r Ffiwsilwyr Brenhinol Cymreig fel milwr arferol ym 1909. Gwasanaethodd yn yr India a Malta cyn glanio yn Ffrainc ym mis Hydref 1914 ac ymladd ym mhrif frwydrau'r Bataliwn 1af yno.

Wrth deithio tua'r de drwy Ffrainc, dechreuodd y dyddiau gynhesu. Mae dyddiaduron y dynion a fu yng nghanol cyflafan fwdlyd Passchendaele, yn cyfeirio

Italy

The Italian campaign is where the writer Ernest Hemingway set his novel A Farwell to Arms, but the story of the British soldiers who came to fight in Italy has largely been forgotten.

Italy had been a member of the Triple Alliance with Austria-Hungary and Germany but refused to go to war in 1914, eventually changing sides and declaring war on Austria-Hungary in May 1915.

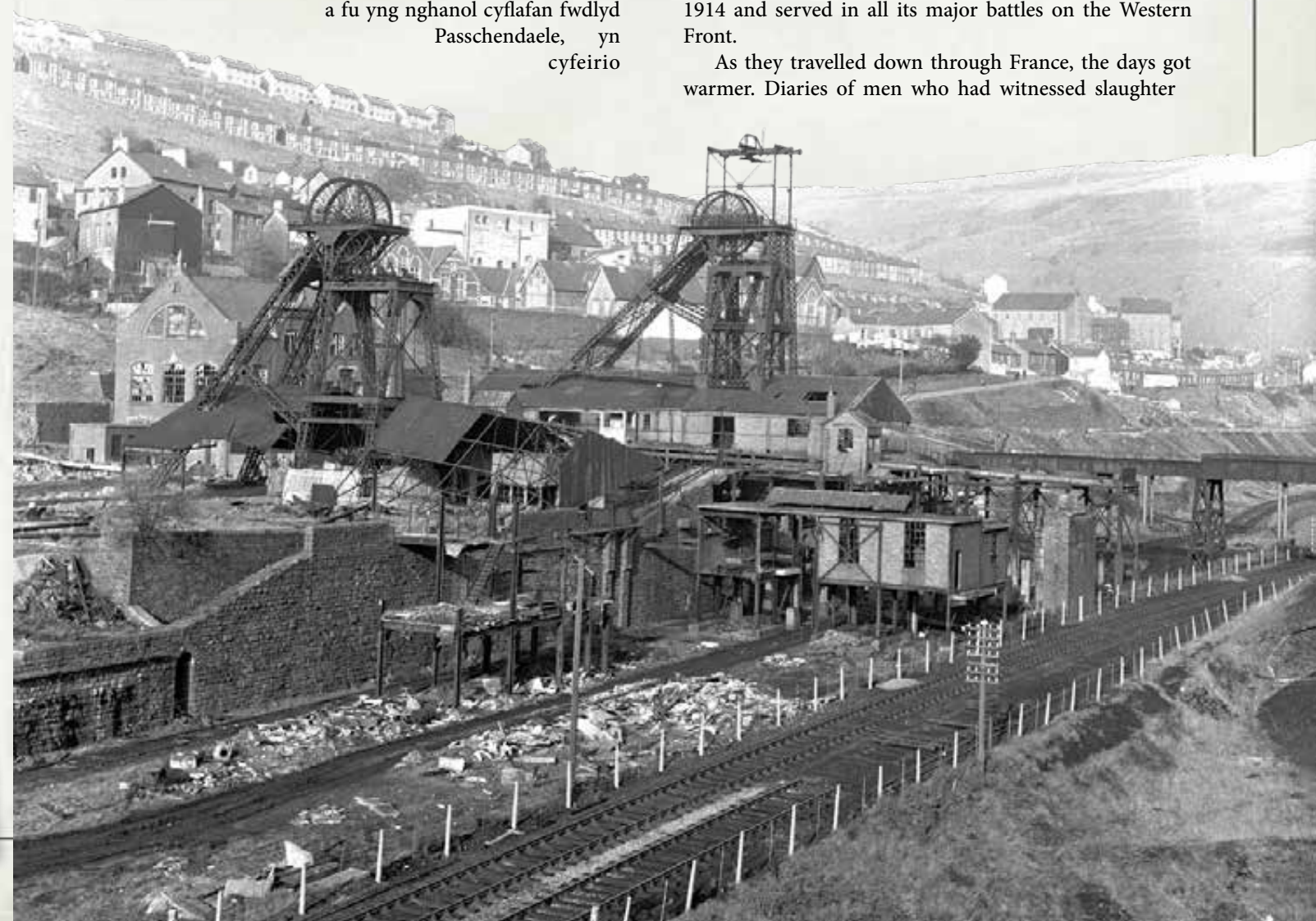
Much of the fighting took place in the mountainous regions in the north-east of Italy, an area of ancient rivalry between Austria and Italy.

Things did not go well for the Italians, especially after the Germans sent in troops transferred from the Russian front in autumn 1917. So in late 1917 the British and French sent troops to Italy in an effort to stiffen Italian resistance. Amongst the British troops were those of the 1st Battalion Royal Welch Fusiliers.

So in late 1917 the British and French sent troops to Italy in an effort to stiffen Italian resistance. The British sent five Divisions including the experienced 7th Division, one of whose units was the 1st Battalion Royal Welch Fusiliers.

Albert Francis Viles was a collier in Ferndale in the Rhondda before he joined the Royal Welch Fusiliers as a regular soldier in 1909. He had served in India and Malta before landing in France with the Battalion in October 1914 and served in all its major battles on the Western Front.

As they travelled down through France, the days got warmer. Diaries of men who had witnessed slaughter



at yr Eidal “fel byd arall” gyda’r werin yn taflu orenau a ffigys atynt wrth iddyn nhw orymdeithio i atgyfnerthu’r fyddin Eidalaidd.

Roedd rhai’n ffodus, a chawsant eu lleoli mewn ffosydd ar fryniau sych a chynnes, ac eraill yn llai ffodus yn yr Alpau lle’r oedd ffosydd wedi’u naddu a’u ffrwydro o’r graig solet. Ardal gorsiog i’r gogledd o Fenis oedd lleoliad ffosydd y gweddill, nŵl yng nghanol y mwd, mosgitos a malaria ar ben bob dim.

Roedd David Elias Evans, glöwr ifanc 20 oed o Fynwent y Crynwyr, Treharris, yn aelod o Fataliwn 1af Catrawd De Swydd Stafford. Bu Preifat Evans yn gwasanaethu am dair blynedd yn Ffrainc, gan ennill y Fedal Filwrol. Roedd ei fataliwn yntau a Bataliwn 1af y Ffiwsilwyr Brenhinol Cymreig yn rhan o’r 7fed Adran a symudodd i’w safleoedd amddiffynnol ar hyd afon Piave ym mis Ionawr 1918.

Ar ôl trechu’r fyddin Awstro-Hwngaraidd ym mis Mehefin, newidiodd y cynghreiriaid i gyrch ymosodol ym mis Hydref. Fyny fry ym mrynau llwyfandir Asiago, roedd milwyr Prydain yn teithio drwy’r goedwig ac i fyny a lawr llethrau serth. Yn wir, roeddynt yn symud mor gyflym nes bod rhaid aros deuddydd cyn i’w dognau eu cyrraedd, a nhw oedd y lluoedd Prydeinig cyntaf i groesi’r ffiniau cyn-rhyfel i dir y gelyn.

Ar 4 Tachwedd 1918, ildiodd Awstria-Hwngari a llofnodwyd cytundeb heddwch. Lladdwyd 1,024 ac anafwyd 5,073 o filwyr Prydain yn ymgyrch yr Eidal. Roedd Evans a Viles ymhlith yr anffodusion. Bu farw Preifat Evans o’i anafiadau ym mis Ebrill wrth i’w fataliwn amddiffyn llinell y Piave, a lladdwyd Corporal Viles mewn canolfan glirio i’r anafedig ym mis Medi.

Milwyr mynydd Awstriaidd
Austrian mountain troops © IWM



in the mud of Passchendaele talk of Italy as being ‘like another world’ where they had oranges and figs thrown to them by civilians as they marched to reinforce the Italian army.

Some were lucky: they moved into trenches that were on warm, dry hills. Others were not so fortunate and went into positions in the Alps where the trenches had to be hewn and blasted out of the solid rock. Others found themselves in the swamps north of Venice and back in the mud, with the added joys of mosquitoes and malaria.

David Elias Evans was a 20-year-old collier from Quakers Yard, Treharris serving with the 1st Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment. Private Evans had served with the Battalion for three years in France and had won the Military Medal. Along with the 1st Royal Welch Fusiliers, the 1st South Staffordshires moved into defensive positions along the River Piave in January 1918.

The allies switched to the offensive in October, crossed the Piave and split the Austrian forces in the Battle of Vittoria Veneto. Up in the hills of the Asiago Plateau the British troops advanced through woods and up and down precipitous slopes. They moved so fast that it was two days before their rations caught up with them and they became the first British troops to cross the pre-war boundaries into enemy territory.

On 4 November 1918 Austria-Hungary admitted defeat and an armistice was signed. British casualties in the Italian campaign were 1,024 killed and 5,073 wounded. Both Evans and Viles were among the casualties. Evans died of wounds received in April while his battalion was defending the line of the Piave and Corporal Viles died in September at a casualty clearing station.



Milwyr mynydd Eidalaidd
Italian mountain troops © IWM

Y Ffrynt Gorllewinol - Troedfilwyr

Uwch-ringyll Cwmni J. H. Williams VC



Cafodd y swyddog Cymreig heb gomisiwn i ennill y nifer fwyaf o fedalau, Uwch-ringyll Cwmni John (Jack) Henry Williams, ei eni yn Nant-y-glo. Roedd ef a’i wraig Gertrude yn byw ym mhentref Cwm, Glynebwy, lle’r oedd yn gweithio fel gof yng nglofa’r Marine.

Roedd Jack Williams eisoes wedi gwasanaethu am gyfnod byr gyda Chyffinwyr De Cymru cyn y rhyfel, cyn talu i adael er mwyn priodi. Ailgofrestrodd gyda’r 10fed Bataliwn ym mis Tachwedd 1914, ac wedi tri mis cwta, cafodd ei ddychafu’n Sarsiant.

Ym mis Gorffennaf 1916, yn ystod brwydr y Somme, anfonwyd Williams a’r 10fed Bataliwn i glirio coedwig Mametz fel rhan o’r 38ain Adran (Cymreig). Er i 4,000 o filwyr Adran 38 gael eu hanafu neu eu lladd rhwng 10 a 12 Gorffennaf, llwyddwyd i ail-gipio’r goedwig. Am hynny y cafodd Williams y gyntaf o’i fedalau niferus, y DCM.

...for continued and sustained coolness and gallantry during the battle.

Flwyddyn yn ddiweddarach, roedd yng nghanol gwres y frwydr eto yn Pilckem Ridge yn ystod trydedd frwydr Ypres (Passchendaele). Llwyddodd Adran 38 i adennill y gefnfen, a chafodd Williams Fedal Filwrol ar 31 Gorffennaf.

...for bravery at the beginning of the battle for Passchendaele heights.

Prin fis wedyn yn Armentières, cyflawnodd Sarsiant Williams weithred arwrol arall gan anwybyddu bwledi a shrapnel i achub ei gyd-filwr chwyfedig. Enillodd Far i’w Fedal Filwrol.

...for bravery during a raid near Armentières, where he brought back a wounded comrade.

Roedd yn arwr eto’r flwyddyn ganlynol, pan gafodd fedal Croes Fictoria am ei weithredoedd yn Villers Outreaux, Hydref 1918.



London Gazette on December 14th, 1918

For most conspicuous bravery, initiative and devotion to duty on the night of October 7th-8th 1918, during an attack on Villers Outreaux, when, observing that his company was suffering heavy casualties from an enemy machine gun, he ordered a Lewis gun to engage it, and went forward, under heavy fire, to the flank of the enemy post which he rushed single-handed, capturing fifteen of the enemy.

These prisoners, realising that Williams was alone, turned on him and one of them gripped his rifle. He succeeded in breaking away and bayoneting five enemy, whereupon the remainder again surrendered. By this gallant action and total disregard of personal danger, he was the means of enabling not only his own company but also those on the flanks to advance.

Rhyddhawyd Williams o’r fyddin am resymau meddygol yn ddiweddarach ym mis Hydref. Cafodd ei anafu’n ddifrifol gan shrapnel yn ei fraich dde a’i goes, ychydig ddyddiau wedi’i wrhydri uchod.

Tra’r oedd yn dal i wella o’i glwyfau, aeth Jack Williams i seremoni arbennig ym mhalas Buckingham ym mis Chwefror 1919 – lle derbyniodd fedalau’r VC, DCM, MM a’r Bar gan y Brenin Siôr V. Dyma’r tro cyntaf i’r brenin anrhydeddu un dyn bedair gwaith mewn diwrnod.

Dychwelodd i Lynebwy, a bu’n Gapten y Cartreflu yn ystod yr Ail Ryfel Byd. Bu’n gweithio yng Ngwaith Dur Glynebwy tan ei farwolaeth ar 7 Mawrth 1953, a chafodd ei gladdu ym mynwent Glynebwy.

Jack Williams yw’r swyddog Cymreig heb gomisiwn â’r nifer fwyaf o fedalau hyd heddiw. Mae ei fedalau i’w gweld yn Amgueddfa Cyffinwyr De Cymru a Chatrawd Sir Fynwy, Aberhonddu, Powys.

The Western Front - the Infantry

Company Sergeant Major J. H. Williams VC

The most decorated Welsh non-commissioned officer of all time, Company Sergeant Major John (Jack) Henry Williams was born in Nantyglo. He lived with his wife Gertrude in the village of Cwm, Ebbw Vale where he worked as a blacksmith at Marine Colliery.

Before the war Williams had served with the South Wales Borderers for a short period before buying himself out and getting married. He re-enlisted in the 10th Battalion in November 1914 and after just three months he was promoted to Sergeant.

In July 1916, during the battle of the Somme, Williams and the 10th South Wales Borderers were sent to clear Mametz Wood as part of the 38th (Welsh) Division. Between 10 and 12 July the Division sustained some 4,000 casualties but managed to capture the wood. It was during this action that Williams won the first of his medals, the DCM.

...for continued and sustained coolness and gallantry during the battle.

A year later he was in action again at Pilckem Ridge during the third battle of Ypres (Passchendaele). The Division was again victorious in capturing the ridge, and on 31 July Williams earned himself a Military Medal.

...for bravery at the beginning of the battle for Passchendaele heights.

Just a month later at Armentieres Sergeant Williams performed another deed of heroism when he ignored bullets and shrapnel to bring in a wounded comrade. This act earned him a Bar to his Military Medal.

...for bravery during a raid near Armentières, where he brought back a wounded comrade.

A year later, in October 1918 at Villers Outreaux, he performed the act of bravery that won him the Victoria Cross.

Passchendaele 1917 © IWM



London Gazette on December 14th, 1918

For most conspicuous bravery, initiative and devotion to duty on the night of October 7th-8th 1918, during an attack on Villers Outreaux, when, observing that his company was suffering heavy casualties from an enemy machine gun, he ordered a Lewis gun to engage it, and went forward, under heavy fire, to the flank of the enemy post which he rushed single-handed, capturing fifteen of the enemy.

These prisoners, realising that Williams was alone, turned on him and one of them gripped his rifle. He succeeded in breaking away and bayoneting five enemy, whereupon the remainder again surrendered. By this gallant action and total disregard of personal danger, he was the means of enabling not only his own company but also those on the flanks to advance.



Williams was medically discharged from the army later in October. He had been severely wounded by shrapnel in his right arm and leg a few days after he had performed the above act.

In February 1919, while still recovering from his wounds, Williams attended a ceremony at Buckingham Palace where he received the Victoria Cross, Distinguished Conduct Medal, Military Medal and Bar from King George V. This was the first time the King had decorated the same man four times in one day.

Williams returned to Ebbw Vale and in the Second World War served as a Captain in the Home Guard. He worked at the Ebbw Vale Steel Works until his death on 7 March 1953, and was buried at Ebbw Vale Cemetery.

Jack Williams remains the most decorated Welsh NCO of all time and his medals are now on display at the South Wales Borderers and Monmouthshire Regiment Museum at Brecon, Powys.

Prif Is-swyddog George Prowse VC

Ganed George Henry Prowse ar 29 Awst 1886 yn Bryn-sion Terrace, Gilfach-goch. Ym 1914, roedd yn gweithio danddaear yng nglofa Mountain, Gorseinon.

Ym mis Medi 1915, ymunodd â Bataliwn Drake Adran y Llynges Frenhinol, adran o'r llynges a wasanaethodd ar dir yn Gallipoli ac ar Ffrynt y Gorllewin.

Er iddo gael anaf i'w glun ym 1916, dychwelodd i faes y frwydr wedi cyfnod yn yr ysbyty, a bu'n rhan o frwydrau mawr 1917 a 1918, gan gael ei ddychafu'n Brif Is-swyddog.

Ym mis Awst 1918, cyflwynwyd DCM i Prowse a chafodd Groes Fictoria ychydig wythnosau wedyn.

Ar 27 Medi 1918, lladdwyd Prowse mewn brwydr ger Arleux. Ei fedal Croes Fictoria ef oedd yr olaf i'w chyflwyno â rhuban glas y llynges.



© Ken Taylor

Chief Petty Officer George Prowse VC

George Henry Prowse was born on 29 August 1886 in Bryn-sion Terrace, Gilfach Goch. In 1914 he was working underground at Mountain Colliery, Gorseinon.

In September 1915 he joined the Drake Battalion of the Royal Naval Division, a naval unit that served on land at Gallipoli and on the Western Front.

He was wounded in the thigh in 1916 but returned to duty after a spell in hospital and took part in most of the major battles of 1917 and 1918, rising to the rank of Chief Petty Officer.

In August 1918, Prowse won the Distinguished Conduct Medal and few weeks later he won a Victoria Cross.

On 27 September 1918 Prowse was killed in fighting near Arleux. His Victoria Cross was the last awarded with the blue naval ribbon.



London Gazette of 30th. October 1918

For most distinguished bravery and devotion to duty when, during an advance, a portion of his company became disorganised by heavy machine gun fire from an enemy strong point. Collecting what men were available he led them with great coolness and bravery against this strong point capturing it together with 23 prisoners and 5 machine guns.

Later he took a patrol forward in the face of much enemy opposition and established it on important high ground. On another occasion he displayed great heroism by attacking, single handed, an ammunition limber which was trying to recover ammunition, killing three men who accompanied it and capturing the limber.

Two days later he rendered valuable services when covering the advance of his company with a Lewis gun section, and located two machine gun positions in a concrete emplacement which was holding up the advance of the battalion on the right. With complete disregard of personal danger, he rushed forward and attacked and captured the posts, killing 6 of the enemy and taking 13 prisoners and two machine guns. He was the only survivor of this gallant party but by this daring and heroic action he enabled the battalion on the right to push forward without further machine gun fire from the village. Throughout the whole operation his magnificent example and leadership was an inspiration to all and his courage was superb.

Corporal J. L. Davies VC

Glöwr 28 mlwydd oed yng nglofa Wyndham oedd James Llewellyn Davies. Roedd yn byw yn Nant-y-moel gyda'i wraig a'i dri mab.

Ymrestrodd ym mis Hydref 1914 a bu'n gwasanaethu fel gynnwr gyda'r Magnelwyr Brenhinol yn ystod ymgyrch y Dardanelles cyn trosglwyddo i 13eg Fataliwn y Ffiwsilwyr Brenhinol Cymreig. Ymosodiad y Prydeinwyr ar Pilckem Ridge - a oedd ym meddiant yr Almaenwyr - oedd cyrch agoriadol prif ran Trydedd Frwydr Ypres, neu Passchendaele.

Diolch i'w weithredoedd ar Pilckem Ridge ar 30 Gorffennaf, dyfarnwyd Croes Fictoria i Gorporal Davies wedi ei farwolaeth.

London Gazette of 6th September, 1917

For most conspicuous bravery during an attack on the enemy line, this non-commissioned officer pushed through our own barrage and single-handedly attacked a machine gun emplacement, after several men had been killed in attempting to take it. He bayoneted one of the machine gun crew and brought in another man, together with the captured gun. Corporal Davies, although wounded, then led a bombing party to the assault of a defended house, and killed a sniper who was harassing his platoon. This gallant non-commissioned officer has since died of wounds received during the attack. He died of wounds the following day. Corporal Davies is buried at Canada Farm Cemetery, Elverdinghe, near Ypres, Belgium.



Corporal J. L. Davies VC

James Llewellyn Davies was a 28-year-old collier at Wyndham Colliery. He lived in Nantymoel with his wife and three sons.

He enlisted in October 1914 and saw service as a gunner in the Royal Artillery during the Dardanelles campaign before transferring to the 13th Battalion Royal Welch Fusiliers. The British attack on the German-held Pilckem Ridge in July 1917 was the opening attack of the main part of the Third Battle of Ypres, or Passchendaele.

For his actions at Pilckem ridge on 30 July the now Corporal Davies was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross.



Sarsiant Robert Bye VC

Cafodd Robert James Bye ei eni ym Mhontypridd a bu'n gweithio fel glöwr gyda'i frawd iau Vivian ym mhwl Deep Dyffryn, Aberpennar.

Ymunodd â Bataliwn 1af y Gwarchodlu Cymreig a gwasanaethu yn Ffrainc o fis Awst 1915 ymlaen. Roedd wedi'i ddyrchafu'n Sarsiant Bye erbyn Gorffennaf 1917 pan ddyfarnwyd Croes Fictoria iddo:

London Gazette on September 6, 1917

For most conspicuous bravery. Sjt. Bye displayed the utmost courage and devotion to duty during an attack on the enemy's position. Seeing that the leading waves were being troubled by two enemy blockhouses, he, on his own initiative, rushed at one of them and put the garrison out of action. He then rejoined his company and went forward to the assault of the second objective.

When the troops had gone forward to the attack on the third objective, a party was detailed to clear up a line of blockhouses which had been passed. Sjt. Bye volunteered to take charge of this party, accomplished his object, and took many prisoners. He subsequently advanced to the third objective, capturing a number of prisoners, thus rendering invaluable assistance to the assaulting companies. He displayed throughout the most remarkable initiative.



Sergeant Robert Bye VC

Robert James Bye was born in Pontypridd and worked as a collier with his younger brother Vivian at Deep Dyffryn Colliery, Mountain Ash.

He joined the 1st Battalion Welsh Guards and served with it in France from August 1915. In July 1917, during the battle of Passchendaele, Sergeant Bye was awarded the Victoria Cross.

During the action observers calculated that by his own hand Bye had killed, wounded or captured over seventy enemy soldiers.

Robert Bye survived the war and returned to civilian life as a miner in Penrhiwceiber, before moving to the Nottinghamshire coalfield in search of work.

Tybiwyd bod Sarsiant Bye wedi lladd, anafu neu ddal dros saith deg o filwyr y gelyn.

Llwyddodd Robert Bye i oroesi'r rhyfel a dychwelyd i fyw bywyd cyffredin fel glöwr ym Mhenrhiw-ceibr, cyn symud i faes glo Swydd Nottingham i chwilio am waith.



Sarsiant Bye yn derbyn Croes Fictoria gan y Brenin Siôr V
Sergeant Bye receiving the Victoria Cross from King George V



Plac i goffáu lle ganed Robert Bye yn 13 Maritime Street, y Graig, Pontypridd

Plaque erected to mark the birthplace of Robert Bye at 13 Maritime Street, the Graig Pontypridd

Frank Richards

Ymhlith y llu o lyfrau a ysgrifennwyd am y Rhyfel Byd Cyntaf, mae *Old Soldiers Never Die* yn glasur o stori o safbwynt milwr rheolaidd. Gellid dadlau mai dyma'r portread gorau o ryfela mewn ffosydd – a Chymro yw'r awdur.

Roedd Frank Richards yn byw yn y Blaenau, a phan oedd yn 12 oed, dechreuodd weithio fel porthor yn y lofa leol. Ym 1901, ymrestrodd gyda'r Ffiwsilwyr Brenhinol Cymreig a bu'n gwasanaethu fel signalwr gyda'r 2il Fataliwn yn India a Burma tan 1908.

Ar ôl cwblhau ei saith mlynedd gyda'r Gatrawd, dychwelodd i fywyd bob dydd yn y Blaenau a gweithio fel coediwr yn y pwll glo.

Roedd Richards dal i fod yn filwr wrth gefn erbyn mis Awst 1914. Cafodd ei alw'n ôl ar unwaith i'r gatrawd, ac ar 10 Medi, hwyliodd i Ffrainc gydag 2il Fataliwn y Ffiwsilwyr Brenhinol Cymreig er mwyn ymuno â Byddin Alldeithiol Prydain.

Daw'r dyfyniad canlynol o bamffled o gyngor gan yr Arglwydd Kitchener i filwyr oedd yn glanio yn Ffrainc.

In this new experience you may find temptations both in wine and women. You must entirely resist both temptations, and, while treating all women with perfect courtesy, you should avoid any intimacy.

Er bod Richards o'r farn bod cwrw Ffrengig yn ffaidd, cafodd flas mawr ar rai o winoedd gorau'r wlad, a chafodd gyfle i gwrdd â sawl un o enethod y wlad yn ystod ei wasanaeth. Gwnaeth ei siâr o ymladd hefyd, a bu'n rhan o bron i bob ymgyrch o bwys ar Ffrynt y Gorllewin.

Er gwaethaf cael cynnig o ddyrchafiad, doedd bod mewn awdurdod ddim yn apelio ato, a bodlonodd ar barhau'n signalwr. Ystyrid ef yn signalwr gorau'r gatrawd. Ym mis Chwefror 1916, enillodd fedal y DCM yn ystod ymosodiad ar dwll ffrwydron o eiddo'r Almaenwyr.

For conspicuous gallantry. During a successful attack, Privates Richards and Barrett took their telephone over the parapet, established and maintained communication. They lay out in the open for three hours, and repaired the wire whenever it was cut.

Roedd Richards ar y rheng flaen ar 22 Mehefin 1916 pan chwythodd ffrwydryn Almaenig arall yn uniongyrchol o dan gwmni B y bataliwn. Enwyd y twll dilynol yn 'Red Dragon Crater', ac roedd yn mesur tua 120 llath o hyd, dros 70 llath o led a thua 30 troedfedd o ddyfnder. Er i'r cwmni golli dwy ran o dair o'i ddynion, aeth Richards ac aelodau eraill o'r bataliwn ati ar unwaith i fwrw'r gelyn yn ôl ar ôl dinistrio'i ffrwydryn.



© Margaret Holmes

Yn ystod Trydedd Frwydr Ypres (Passchendaele) ym 1917, enillodd Richards Fedal Filwrol yn ystod cyrch ar goedwig Polygon. Cafodd ei daro yng nghroth ei goes gan shrapnel yn gynnar yn y frwydr, ond daliodd ati am ddeuddydd fel rhedwr yn cludo negeseuon pwysig rhwng y bataliwn a chadlywyddion y cwmni.

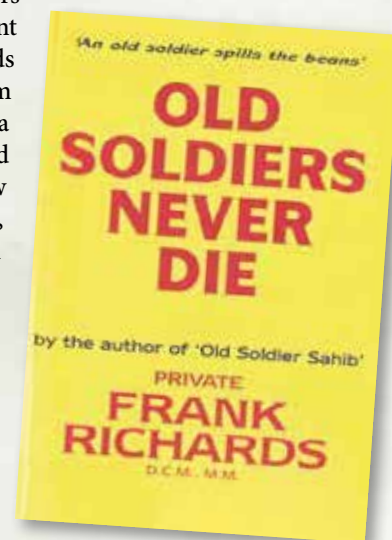
Wrth gario un neges, gwelodd gél-saethwr Almaenig yn cuddio mewn twll ffrwydron a oedd yn saethu at y milwyr Cymreig a basiai heibio gan gredu ei fod wedi marw. Estynnodd y gŵr o'r Blaenau am ei ddryll, a saethu'r Almaenwr yn gelain.

Dro arall, roedd yn cynnal rhagarchwiliad yn nhir neb gyda Chadlywydd y Bataliwn. Cafodd hwnnw ei anafu a bu'n rhaid i Richards ei gludo'n ôl i loches y Prydeinwyr.

Er ei fod o fewn trwch blewyn i farw sawl gwaith, ni chafodd anafiadau difrifol erioed. Effeithiodd yr amodau byw a'r deiet yn y ffosydd ar ei iechyd fodd bynnag, a'i rwystro rhag dychwelyd i waith corfforol caled y pyllau glo. Ar ôl gadael y fyddin, bu'n rhaid dibynnu ar fân swyddi dros dro am flynyddoedd wedyn, cyn dod yn glerc mewn swyddfa gyflogi maes o law.

Yn y 1930au, dechreuodd ysgrifennu am ddyddiau'r ffosydd a gofynnodd i'w hen swyddog, y bardd Robert Graves, am air o gyngor. Aeth Graves ati i'w helpu gyda'r llawysgrif a dod o hyd i gyhoeddwr.

Roedd *Old Soldiers Never Die* yn llwyddiant ysgubol, ac aeth Richards ymlaen i ysgrifennu am fywyd milwr yn India a Burma o'r enw *Old Soldier Sahib*. Bu farw ym 1961 yn 78 oed, ond mae ei lyfrau a'i atgofion yn fyw o hyd.



Frank Richards

Among the many books that have been written about the First World War, *Old Soldiers Never Die* is a classic account of the war from the standpoint of the regular soldier. It is arguably the greatest account of trench warfare, and was written by a Welshman.

Frank Richards lived in Blaina and started work at the age of 12 as a door boy in a local colliery. In 1901 he enlisted in the Royal Welch Fusiliers and served as a signaller with the 2nd Battalion in India and Burma until 1908.

Having completed his seven years with the colours, he returned to civilian life in Blaina where he worked as a timberman at a local colliery.

Richards was still an army reservist in August 1914. He was immediately called back to the colours and sailed for France with the 2nd Battalion Royal Welch Fusiliers on 10 September to join the British Expeditionary Force.

The following is an extract from a pamphlet bearing advice for troops landing in France from Lord Kitchener.

In this new experience you may find temptations both in wine and women. You must entirely resist both temptations, and, while treating all women with perfect courtesy, you should avoid any intimacy.

Richards thought French beer was 'rotten stuff', but he frequently enjoyed some of the best wine that France had to offer and met many a 'true daughter of France' during his war-time service. He also did his fair share of fighting, taking part in almost every major campaign on the Western Front.

Despite offers of promotion he had no desire for authority, and remained as a signaller. He was considered to be the best in the regiment. It was in this role that in February 1916 he won the Distinguished Conduct Medal during an attack on a German-held mine crater.

For conspicuous gallantry. During a successful attack, Privates Richards and Barrett took their telephone over the parapet, established and maintained communication. They lay out in the open for three hours, and repaired the wire whenever it was cut.

Richards was in the front line on 22 June 1916 when another German mine exploded directly under the battalion's B Company. The resulting crater was named the Red Dragon Crater and was about 120 yards long, over seventy yards in width and some thirty feet deep. B Company lost some two thirds of its strength but Richards and the other men of the battalion went forward immediately and repulsed a German raid that followed the blowing of their mine.



In 1917 during the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele) Richards won a Military Medal during the attack on Polygon Wood. Early in the battle he was hit in the calf by a spent piece of shrapnel, but carried on for two days as a runner carrying important messages between the battalion and company commanders.

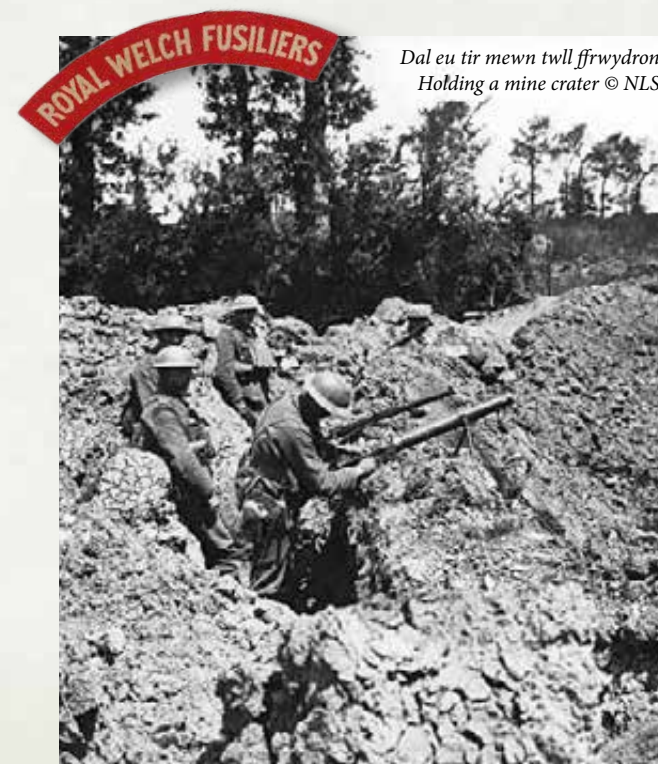
While carrying one message he came across a German sniper hiding in a shell hole 'sniping' at the Welsh troops, who had passed him by believing he was dead. The man from Blaina shot him with a revolver.

On another occasion he was out in no-man's-land carrying out a reconnaissance with the battalion commander, when the latter was wounded and had to be helped back to British lines.

Private Richards came close to death on many occasions but was never seriously wounded. The conditions and the diet in the trenches did affect his health though and prevented him returning to the hard physical work of the coal mines. For several years after his discharge from the army he was forced to rely on a variety of temporary jobs, before eventually becoming a clerk in the local labour exchange.

In the 1930s he began writing about his time in the trenches and wrote to his old officer, the poet Robert Graves, asking him for advice. Graves helped with the manuscript and found a publisher.

Old Soldiers Never Die was an immediate success and Richards went on to write another book about his service life in India and Burma called *Old Soldier Sahib*. He died in 1961 at the age of 78, but his books and the memories they contain live on.



Dal eu tir mewn twll ffrwydron Holding a mine crater © NLS

Yr Arfau Eraill

Corfflu Meddygol Brenhinol y Fyddin



Roedd Isaac Roberts yn ŵr priod 34 oed o Ystradgynlais ac yn gweithio yng nglofa Diamond cyn ymuno â Chorfflu Meddygol Brenhinol y Fyddin ym mis Rhagfyr 1915. Bu'n gwasanaethu fel cludwr stretsieri ar linell flaen Ffrynt y Gorllewin, ac fel cynorthwydd meddygol yn Ysbyty Brigâd Ambiwlans Sant Ioan, un o ysbytai niferus Étapes, prif ganolfan filwrol Prydain yn Ffrainc.

Roedd symud a thrin y milwyr clwyfedig a sâl yn her a hanner. Roedd Preifat Roberts ymhlith 100,000 a mwy o filwyr meddygol Prydain ar Ffrynt y Gorllewin.

Byddai milwr wedi'i anafu yn y maes yn cael ei drin yng Ngorsaf Cymorth Cyntaf y Gatrawd yn y ffosydd i ddechrau, gan Swyddog Meddygol y Bataliwn, ei gynorthwywyr a chlodwyr stretsieri. Yna, cai ei symud i Orsaf Trin Clwyfau dan ofal aelodau'r Ambiwlans Maes, yn agos i'r llinell flaen. Os oedd angen triniaeth bellach, byddai'n cael ei symud i Orsaf Clirio Clwyfedigion mewn gwersyll pabellog y tu ôl i'r llinell flaen ac yna ymlaen i un o ysbytai'r ganolfan yn ôl yr angen, a hynny ar drên gan amlaf. Byddai'r milwyr ag anafiadau difrifol iawn yn cael eu cludo'n ôl i Brydain ar Long Ysbyty, ac i'r ysbyty perthnasol am ragor o driniaeth.

Cafodd canolfan filwrol Étapes ei thargedu'n gyson gan fomwyr yr Almaenwyr. Fel prif wersyll wrth gefn

Prydain yn ogystal ag ysbytai, roedd hefyd yn gartref i farics, storfeydd arfau, pontydd rheilffordd, gorsafoedd a chledrau.

Roedd y rhan fwyaf o gyrchoedd awyr yr Almaenwyr liw nos, ac mewn ymosodiad didrugaredd ar noson 31 Mai 1918, bomiwyd yr ysbyty gan ladd Roberts wrth iddo ofalu am ei gleifion.

Ysgrifennodd cyfaill lythyr at ei wraig yn esbonio sut y claddwyd Roberts gan weinidog anghydfurfiol gyda holl Gymry'r ardal yn bresennol. Byddai llythyron dilynol yn talu teyrnged i ddewrder ac ymroddiad Preifat Roberts.

Meddai'r Gwir Anrhydeddus Evelyn Cecil AS, Ysgrifennydd Cyffredinol Cymdeithas Ambiwlans Sant Ioan, *'the members of the Order are very sensible of the constant attention and care, which he gave to all his duties... and they are indignant at the tragic circumstances in which he met his death by enemy action whilst they were bombing the hospital.'*

Cafwyd teyrnged arbennig gan ei Is-gyrol, a ysgrifennodd *'that no man worked harder or more conscientiously than Private Roberts, nor showed greater pluck. He was always one to assist others and whilst in the field had gone out to collect wounded regardless of personal danger... He was an influence for good amongst others.'*

The Other Arms

Royal Army Medical Corps

Isaac Roberts was a 34-year-old married man from Ystradgynlais and worked as collier at the Diamond Colliery before joining the Royal Army Medical Corps in December 1915. He served on the Western Front as a stretcher bearer in the front line and as a medical orderly in the St John Ambulance Brigade Hospital, one of several hospitals at Etaples, the main British military base in France.

The evacuation and treatment of wounded and sick soldiers was a huge undertaking. Private Roberts was just one of over 100,000 British medical troops on the Western Front.

A soldier who was injured in the field was first treated at a Regimental Aid Post in the trenches by the Battalion Medical Officer, his orderlies and stretcher bearers, then moved to an Advance Dressing Station close to the front line manned by members of the Field Ambulance. If further treatment was needed, he would be moved to a Casualty Clearing Station, a tented camp behind the lines and then if required moved to one of the base hospitals, usually by train. The most seriously wounded were taken back to Britain by Hospital Ship and onto the relevant hospital for further treatment.

The military base at Etaples was a prime target for the German bombers. It was the main British reinforcement

camp, so as well as hospitals it consisted of barracks, munitions depots, railway bridges, train stations and railway lines.

Most German air raids took place at night and it was during a heavy night raid on 31 May 1918 that Roberts was killed when bombs fell on the hospital while he was attending to his patients.

A friend wrote to his wife telling her how he had been buried by a congregational minister with 'all the Welsh boys in the neighbourhood attending'. Other letters paying tribute to his devotion and courage would follow.

The Right Hon. Evelyn Cecil M.P., Secretary General to the St John's Association, wrote, *'the members of the Order are very sensible of the constant attention and care, which he gave to all his duties...and they are indignant at the tragic circumstances in which he met his death by enemy action whilst they were bombing the hospital.'*

His Lieutenant Colonel and others paid Roberts a striking tribute when he wrote saying 'that no man worked harder or more conscientiously than Private Roberts, nor showed greater pluck. He was always one to assist others and whilst in the field had gone out to collect wounded regardless of personal danger... He was an influence for good amongst others.'

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Through Mud and blood to the green fields beyond Corfflu'r Tanciau

Er i Arglwydd Kitchener ddisgrifio'r tanc fel tegan mecanyddol digon ond heb fawr o werth milwrol, cafodd y Corfflu Gynnau Peiriant Trwm ei sefydlu'n fuan wedyn yn 1916.

Volunteers are required for an exceedingly dangerous and hazardous duty of a secret nature. Officers who have been awarded decorations for bravery, and are experienced in the handling of men, and with an engineering background, should have their names submitted to this office.

Defnyddiwyd tanciau am y tro cyntaf, ym mis Medi 1916. Roedd y tanciau yn gallu teithio ar gyflymder o hyd at bedair milltir yr awr, ac roedd ganddynt griw o wyth dyn.

Roedd yr amodau tu mewn yn gyfuniad erchyll o wres, sŵn a mwg egsôst yr injan, a'r dynion yn cael eu hyrddio a'u hysgwyd bob ffordd wrth i'r tanc groesi'r tir a metal tawdd yn tasgu i bobman wrth i fwledi daro yn erbyn y platiau allanol. Byddai'r dynion yn swp sâl yn aml, yn sigledig ar y naw ac yn methu gwneud fawr ddim ar ôl siwrnai gymharol fer.

There were no tactics when I joined; the only tactic was to get into your tank and drive towards the enemy; the infantry with any luck would follow you. As soon as we were out of action, we could open the tank traps. Oh, you would never believe the relief. You took long breaths of fresh air, you gulped it in.

Roedd Preifat Richard Owen Hughes yn löwr 26 oed ym Mhenallta ger Ystrad Mynach. Ymunodd â'r Gatrawd Gymreig yn Ffrainc yn Rhagfyr 1915. Cafodd ei anafu gan shrapnel yn ei fraich dde a'i ben mewn ymosodiad yn ystod Brwydr y Somme. Ar ôl gadael ysbyty ymunodd Hughes a Chorfflu'r Tanciau fel gynnwr yn Awst 1917. Yn wahanol i lawer a wasanaethodd gyda Chorfflu'r Tanciau, daeth Hughes drwyddi a dychwelodd yn fyw ym Merthyr.

Er hynny, cafodd yr Almaenwyr fraw o'u gweld am y tro cyntaf, felly cafodd tanciau newydd a gwell eu cynhyrchu, a chynyddodd y niferoedd nes ffurfio Corfflu'r Tanciau ym mis Gorffennaf 1917.

Roedd tanciau'n arbennig o ddefnyddiol yn sathru ar wifrau pigog y gelyn 'fel gwely o ddanadl poethion', gyrru dros safleoedd gynnu peiriant a helpu'r troedfilwyr drwy greu llwybr iddynt drwy strydoedd pentrefi a ddinistriwyd.

Dyma atgofion Almaenwr o'r braw ymhlith ei gyd-filwyr wrth weld y tanciau'n nesáu.

Suddenly indistinct forms could be discerned. They were spitting fire and under their weight the strong and deep obstacle line was cracking like matchwood. Alarm! The troops rushed to their machine guns: it was all in vain! The tanks appeared, not one at a time, but in whole lines, kilometres in length.

Yna, byddai troedfilwyr â'u bidogau yn sgubo tu ôl

i'r tanciau ac o fewn ychydig oriau, byddai llinellau'r Almaenwyr yn gwegian. Roedd y papurau newydd wrth eu boddau. Tanks Shock to Huns meddai un pennawd buddugoliaethus.

O gymharu â'r Somme a Passchendaele, roedd nifer y meirw ym mrwydrau hanner ola'r rhyfel yn dipyn llai diolch i'r tanciau. Serch hynny, fe dalodd Corfflu'r Tanciau yn ddud am hynny.

Dyma atgofion swyddog oedd â'r dasg erchyll o chwilota drwy danciau wedi'u llosgi.

We would open the door and there would be several pairs of legs standing there. Just legs. Nothing on top of them...it was the same in every tank. Just legs.

Er mai'r Prydeinwyr ddyfeisiodd y tanc, yr Almaenwyr aeth ati i weithredu'r hyn a ddysgwyd ugain mlynedd yn ddiweddarach yn ystryw'r Blitzkrieg, lle byddent yn croesi meysydd y gad o fewn ychydig oriau yn hytrach na'r pedair blynedd hir ym 1914-1918.



Mwgwd fflawiau durwsg
Chain mail 'splinter' mask



Through Mud and blood to the green fields beyond The Tanks Corps



Although Lord Kitchener had at first described the tank as 'a pretty mechanical toy but very limited military value', the Heavy Section Machine Gun Corps was established in 1916.

Volunteers are required for an exceedingly dangerous and hazardous duty of a secret nature.

Officers who have been awarded decorations for bravery, and are experienced in the handling of men, and with an engineering background, should have their names submitted to this office.

Tanks were used in action for the first time in September 1916. They could achieve a top speed of just four miles per hour and required an eight man crew.

Interior conditions were a combination of intense heat, noise and exhaust from the engine, violent movement as the tank crossed the ground and molten metal splash as bullets struck the plating. Men would often be violently sick or badly incapacitated by the conditions and were often in no fit state to continue after quite short journeys.

There were no tactics when I joined; the only tactic was to get into your tank and drive towards the enemy; the infantry with any luck would follow you. As soon as we were out of action, we could open the tank traps. Oh, you would never believe the relief. You took long breaths of fresh air, you gulped it in.

Private Richard Owen Hughes was a 26-year-old collier at Penallta Colliery near Ystrad Mynach. He joined the 2nd Battalion Welsh Regiment in France in December 1915. He was wounded by shrapnel in his right arm and head during the Battle of the Somme. Having recovered from his wounds and a bout of TB, Hughes joined the Tank Corps in August 1917 as a gunner. Unlike many men who served in the Tank Corps Hughes managed to survive the war and returned to live in Merthyr Vale.

Nonetheless, the first appearance of these tanks caused considerable alarm to the Germans, so newer, better models were produced and their numbers grew, until in July 1917 the Tank Corps was formed.

Tanks proved to be useful in flattening enemy barbed wire like 'beds of nettles', over-running machine gun posts and strong points.

A German recalled the terror that spread through his comrades as the tanks advanced.

Suddenly indistinct forms could be discerned. They were spitting fire and under their weight the strong and deep obstacle line was cracking like matchwood. Alarm! The troops rushed to their machine guns: it was all in vain! The tanks appeared, not one at a time, but in whole lines, kilometres in length.

Then the infantry swept in behind them with the bayonet and in a few hours the German lines had been

overrun. The headlines were exultant: Tanks Shock to Huns rejoiced one newspaper.

In comparison to the Somme and Passchendaele the losses suffered in the battles in the latter part of the war were much lighter thanks to the tanks, but the Tank Corps paid a heavy price.

One officer recalled the gruesome task of salvaging burned out tanks.

We would open the door and there would be several pairs of legs standing there. Just legs. Nothing on top of them...it was the same in every tank. Just legs.

Although the British had invented the tank, it was the Germans who applied the lessons twenty years later in the Blitzkrieg tactics that saw them cross in hours the battlefields that had been fought over for four long years in 1914-18.



© NLS



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Y Magnelwyr Brenhinol

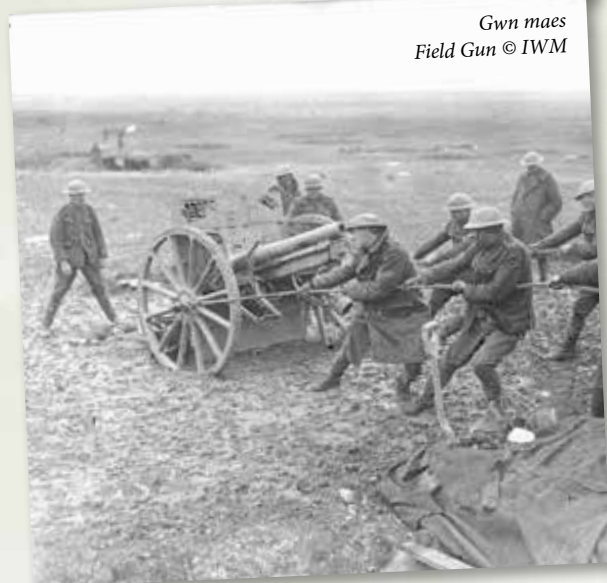
Er bod magnaeth wedi teyrnasu ar faes y frwydr ers 200 mlynedd, roedd y Rhyfel Byd Cyntaf yn rhyfel magnaeth yng ngwir ystyr y gair. Yn ogystal â sicrhau buddugoliaeth mewn brwydr, dyma achosodd yr anafiadau mwyaf erchyll, y nifer uchaf o farwolaethau heb sôn am arswyd eithafol.

Roedd Catrawd y Magnelwyr Brenhinol yn cynnwys tair elfen ym 1914:

- Y Magnelwyr Ceffylau Brenhinol: wedi'u harfogi â magnelau neu ynnau ysgafn, symudol.
- Y Magnelwyr Maes Brenhinol: wedi'u harfogi â gynnuau o galibr canolig a howitsers.
- Y Magnelwyr Garsiwn Brenhinol: wedi'u datblygu o fagnelwyr amddiffynfeydd arfordirol, a'u harfogi â gynnuau calibr mawr a howitsers. Roedd ganddynt rym hynod ddinistriol.



Mortar Ffos Almaenig
German Trench Mortar © IWM



Gwn maes
Field Gun © IWM



Cafodd arf newydd, Mortar Ffos, ei ddatblygu yn gynnar yn y rhyfel. Roedd y mortarau ysgafnach yng ngofal troedfilwyr, a'r Magnelwyr Maes Brenhinol yn defnyddio'r mortarau trymach.

Roedd y Gynnwr Thomas James Evans yn hanu o Dreherbert, Cwm Rhondda, ac yn gweithio fel glöwr ym mhwl Bute Merthyr. Ym mis Mai 1915, cyrhaeddodd Ffrainc gyda 'C Battery', 52ed Frigâd y Magnelwyr Maes Brenhinol.

Ym mrwydr Loos ym mis Medi 1915, roedd Evans yn cefnogi ymosodiad y troedfilwyr ar Hohenzollern Redoubt oedd ym meddiant yr Almaenwyr.

Roedd cefnogaeth agos y magnelwyr yn hollbwysig i'r troedfilwyr, a chysylltiadau cyfathrebu rhwng yr arsyllwyr blaen a'r fagnelaeth yn allweddol. Aeth y Gynnwr Evans ymlaen gyda'r troedfilwyr i gynnal y llinellau ffôn a chafodd ei anafu ddwywaith. Cafodd y DCM yn wobwr.



Gelyn yr Almaenwyr
Enemy of the Hun © NLS

Cyhoeddwyd y llythyr canlynol gan swyddog y Gynnwr Evans, yn y Rhondda Leader ar 10 Mehefin 1916:

Gunner Evans laid several yards of communication wire under terrific fire and was wounded in the leg before he had gone ten yard, but he continued his task and laid 300 yards more wire. He was again wounded, his leg was now fractured (sic). Two comrades brought him back to our original fire trenches, but Evans insisted on them leaving him to go back and lay more wire. He lay in the open unable to move for sixteen hours, having voluntarily refused removal to avoid taking men away from their duty.

Yn anffodus, ni chafodd y Evans gyfle i dderbyn ei fedal na chlodd ei swyddogion. Cafodd ei ladd ar 20 Rhagfyr 1915, pan ymosododd sielau nwy'r Almaenwyr ar ei safle saethu. Roedd yn 23 mlwydd oed.

The Royal Artillery

Artillery had been king of the battlefield for 200 years, but the First World War was a true artillery war. It was the battle-winner, it caused the greatest loss of life, the most dreadful wounds and the deepest fear.

In 1914 the Royal Regiment of Artillery was made up of three elements:

- The Royal Horse Artillery: armed with light, mobile, horse-drawn guns.
- The Royal Field Artillery: armed with medium-calibre guns and howitzers.
- The Royal Garrison Artillery: armed with large calibre guns and howitzers that had immense destructive power.

A new weapon, the Trench Mortar, was developed early in the war. The lighter mortars were manned by the infantry, while the RFA provided the manpower for the heavier mortars.

Gunner Thomas James Evans was from Treherbert in the Rhondda where he worked as a collier at Bute Merthyr Colliery. Evans landed in France in May 1915 with C Battery, 52nd Brigade RFA.



Howitzer 15 modfedd
15 inch Howitzer © IWM

At the battle of Loos in September 1915 Evans's battery was supporting an infantry attack on the German-held Hohenzollern Redoubt.

Close artillery support was essential to the infantry and communications between the forward observers and the battery was essential. Evans went forward with the infantry to maintain the telephone lines and was twice wounded. His actions earned him the DCM.

The London Gazette, 11 March 1916:

For conspicuous bravery and resource. Gunner Evans accompanied Lieutenant Hollwey with the Infantry attack, laying telephone wires. When the officer was wounded he assisted to carry him back under very heavy fire, and then returned and finished laying a wire to a trench. This wire was so badly cut it proved impossible to mend it, so he returned and laid a new wire to another point under a heavy and continuous fire. Finally, when this wire was cut, and he had used up all the spare wire, he carried back messages to our lines.

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The Rhondda Leader of 10 June 1916 carried a letter from Evans's officer:

Gunner Evans laid several yards of communication wire under terrific fire and was wounded in the leg before he had gone ten yard, but he continued his task and laid 300 yards more wire. He was again wounded, his leg was now fractured (sic). Two comrades brought him back to our original fire trenches, but Evans insisted on them leaving him to go back and lay more wire. He lay in the open unable to move for sixteen hours, having voluntarily refused removal to avoid taking men away from their duty.

Sadly Evans did not live to receive his medal or his officers' praise. He was killed in action on 20 December 1915, when his gun position was heavily shelled by German gas shells. He was 23 years old.



Howitzer 15 modfedd
15 inch Howitzer © IWM

Y Peirianwyr Brenhinol



Dibynnai rhyfel 1914-1918 ar beirianeg yn fwy nag unrhyw ryfel arall. Gyda'u holl sgiliau technegol amrywiol, roedd y Peirianwyr Brenhinol yn sicrhau bod adnoddau'n cyrraedd byddinoedd trwy adeiladu a chynnal rheilffyrdd, ffyrdd, pontydd a chamlesi. Nhw hefyd oedd yn gyfrifol am gynnal telefonau, radios diwifr a mathau eraill o offer signalu. Roeddent yn tyllu ffynhonnau ac yn cynllunio ac adeiladu amddiffnyfeydd a safleoedd saethu rheng flaen. Aethant ati i ddatblygu ymatebion i ryfela cemegol a rhyfela danddaear hefyd. Os oedd galw am waith arbennig gyda sgiliau arbennig, yna'r peirianwyr amdani.

Does dim syndod i'r Peirianwyr Brenhinol gynyddu o lu o 11,000 o ddynion i sefydliad mawr a chymhleth o 300,000 a mwy o ddynion erbyn 1918.

Ymunodd William Fisher â'r Peirianwyr Brenhinol ym 1915 gan wasanaethu gyda Chwmni Gwarchae Rhif 2 (Caergybi), Peirianwyr Brenhinol Ynys Môn, fel cloddwr/peiriannydd i ddechrau ac Uwch-ringyll y Cwmni maes o law. Roedd y rhan fwyaf o'r dynion a wasanaethodd fel Cloddwyr yn weithwyr crefftus. Roedd Fisher wedi'i gofnodi fel saer maen.

Yn ei fywyd cyffredin, coediwr yng nglofa'r Universal, Senghenydd, oedd Fisher. Ar 14 Hydref 1913, roedd newydd orffen shift nos a 950 o ddynion newydd gychwyn shift y dydd pan gafodd y pwll ei ysgwyd gan danchwa. Roedd yn ffrwydrad mor nerthol nes hyrddio caets dwy dunnell i fyny un o'r siafftiau ac allan i ben y pwll. Llwyddodd gweithwyr rhan ddwyreiniol y pwll i gyrraedd y brig yn ddiogel, ond roedd y rhan orllewinol yn wenfflam, ac ychydig iawn a ddaeth oddi yno'n fyw. Bu farw 439 o ddynion a bechgyn, a dyma'r trychineb gwaethaf erioed yn hanes glofaol Prydain.

Roedd Fisher ymhlith yr achubwyr fentrodd i waelod y pwll wedyn, i chwilio am unrhyw un oedd yn dal yn fyw. Dros y misoedd dilynol, byddai'n ymlafnio danddaear yn casglu cyrrff y meirwon. Roedd clirio cwympiadau'r to,

ailsefydlu'r system awyru a chasglu gweddillion dynion, bechgyn a cheffylau yn waith torcalonnus, anodd a pheryglus tu hwnt. Cafodd un o'r achubwyr ei ladd, a bu bron i Will Fisher drengi hefyd.

Cafodd ei lythyrau yn disgrifio'i brofiadau, a'i ddyddiadur o flynyddoedd y rhyfel, eu hatgynhyrchu mewn llyfr gan aelod o'i deulu, Requiem for Will ym 1997.

Daeth Fisher i Ffrainc ym mis Mai 1915, a thros y pedair blynedd nesaf, byddai ei ddyddiadur yn rhestru amrywiaeth rhyfeddol o ddyletswyddau ar y rheng flaen a thu cefn iddi.

Gwnaeth gais i drosglwyddo i'r Cwmni Twnelu, er mwyn ennill mwy o gyflog o bosibl, ond yn ofer. Bu'n gweithio ochr yn ochr â'r Twnelwyr yn cloddio tyllau ymochel i'r milwyr ar faes y gad, a chafodd gipolwg uniongyrchol ar eu gwaith wrth gryfhau tyllau a achoswyd gan ffrwydron.

Gan gofnodi digwyddiadau yn y fan a'r lle, mae ei ddyddiadur yn gofnod llygad-dyst o fywyd ar y rheng flaen a'r tu ôl, gan lawr nodweddiadol o wleidyddol y cyfnod. Roedd yn anfodlon gyda 'system' y sefydliad a'i ffaeledau, er yn dal yn barod i weithio a gwella'i fyd o fewn y system honno.

Llwyddodd Will Fisher i oroesi'r rhyfel, a dewisodd barhau'n filwr am flwyddyn ychwanegol er mwyn cael sicrwydd cyflog yn hytrach na dychwelyd i ansicrwydd bywyd cyffredin. Fe'i rhyddhawyd o'r fyddin ym mis Mawrth 1920 fel gŵr 'A1' (holliach). Bu farw'n ddeugain oed ym mis Gorffennaf 1920, o'r diciâu a gelodd pan ymunodd â'r fyddin ym 1915.

The Royal Engineers

ROYAL ENGINEERS

The First World War relied more than any war before on engineering. With their wide range of technical skills the Royal Engineers kept the armies supplied by building and maintaining railways, roads, bridges and canals. They maintained the telephones, wireless and other signalling equipment. They dug wells, designed and built the front-line fortifications and artillery positions. They also developed responses to chemical and underground warfare. If a job needed doing and required skill, it probably fell to the engineers to do it.

No wonder the Royal Engineers grew from just 11,000 men into a large and complex organization of over 300,000 men by 1918.

William Fisher joined the Royal Engineers in January 1915 and served with No. 2 (Holyhead) Siege Company, Royal Anglesey Royal Engineers, first as a Sapper and finally as the Company Sergeant Major. The majority of men were skilled tradesmen and workers. Fisher himself was listed as a mason.

In civilian life Fisher had been a timberman at Universal Colliery, Senghenydd. On 14 October 1913, he had just finished a night shift and the 950 men of the day shift had just began work when a huge coal dust explosion ripped through the workings. The blast was so powerful that it sent the two-ton cage shooting up one of the shafts into the headgear. The men working on the east side of the mine were all safely brought to the surface, but the west side was a raging inferno from which only a few emerged. The final death toll reached 439 men and boys, making it the worse disaster in British mining history.

Fisher was one of the rescuers who later went back down the mine to look for survivors. He was one of those who, over the months to follow, toiled below ground to recover the bodies of the dead. Clearing the roof falls, re-establishing the ventilation and recovering the remains

of men, boys and horses was an appalling, difficult and dangerous task. One rescuer was killed and Fisher came close to death himself.

His letters describing his experiences at Senghenydd, and his diary from his war years, were reproduced by a relative in 1997 in a book called Requiem for Will.

Fisher arrived in France in May 1915 and over the next four years his diary listed an impressive range of duties both at and behind the front lines.

He tried unsuccessfully to transfer to the Tunnellers but worked alongside Tunnellers digging accommodation dugouts for the troops in the front lines, and got to see their handiwork at first hand when deployed to fortify craters created by mine blows.

Recording events as they happened, his diary provides an eye witness account of life in and behind the front lines from the viewpoint of a typically politicized miner of his day. He was dissatisfied with the establishment 'system' and its shortcomings, but nevertheless prepared to work and rise within it.

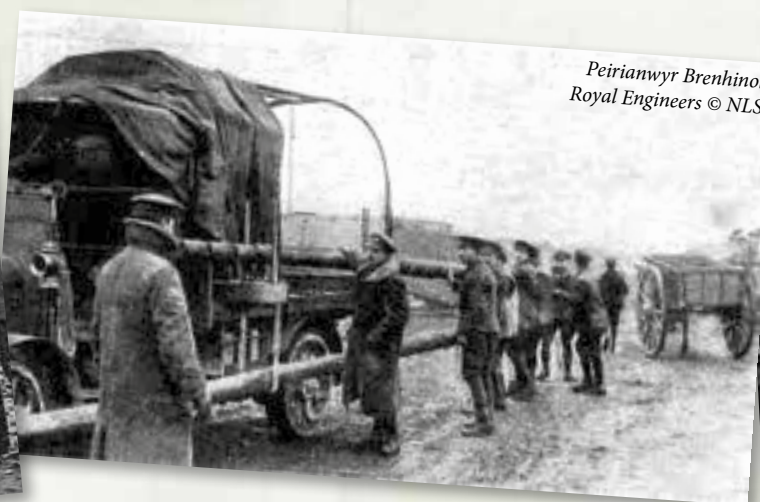
Will Fisher survived the war and choose to remain in the army for an extra year for the certain pay rather than return to an uncertain civilian life. He was eventually discharged from the army in March 1920 as A1 (fit). He died aged 40 in July 1922, of the tuberculosis he had concealed when joining up in 1915.



Senghenydd 1913



Senghenydd 1913



Peirianwyr Brenhinol
Royal Engineers © NLS



William Fisher

Dan ddaear - y Twnelwyr cyntaf



Mae cloddio yn ddull hynafol o ryfela sydd wedi'i ddefnyddio gan fyddinoedd byth ers i furiau'r dinasoedd cyntaf gael eu hadeiladu yn yr Oes Efydd. Gyda datblygiad amddiffynfeydd gydol y cyfnod canoloesol a'r cyfnod modern cyntaf, credwyd bod dyddiau cyrchoedd a oedd yn dibynnu ar gloddio milwrol ar ben.

Yr Almaenwyr oedd y cyntaf i sylweddoli y gallai cloddio gyfrannu at y math o ryfela yn y ffosydd a oedd wedi datblygu yn Ffrainc a Gwlad Belg. Ym mis Rhagfyr 1914 aethant ati gloddio twneli o dan frigâd o filwyr o India cyn ffrwydro deg ffrwydryn.



Edwards a chorporal yn clustfeinio am y gelyn -
trwy garedigrwydd Dix Noonan Webb

Edwards and a corporal listening for the enemy -
courtesy of Dix Noonan Webb

Ymatebodd y Prydeinwyr drwy ffurfio eu hunedau cloddio ad hoc eu hunain yn cynnwys dynion o gatrodau a fagwyd mewn ardaloedd mwngloddio. Roedd dynion Catrawd Sir Fynwy ymysg y cyntaf o Brydain i wneud y gwaith hwn.

Roedd Arthur Edwards yn fab i reolwr cyffredinol Cwmni Haearn a Glo Blaenafon, ac roedd wedi gweithio fel peiriannydd mwngloddio cyn dod yn dirfesurydd. Roedd hefyd yn Gapten yng Nghatrawd Sir Fynwy ar ôl cael ei gomisiynu ym 1908.

Glaniodd Capten Edwards yn Ffrainc gyda'r 2ail Fataliwn ym mis Tachwedd 1914. O fewn wythnosau roedd yn bennaeth Uned Fwyngloddio'r 4edd Adran a oedd yn cynnwys dynion o'i fataliwn ei hun ac o fataliwn y 5th South Lancashires.

Dechreuodd Edwards a'i ddynion gloddio ger ffyrnt Ypres yn Le Touquet, mewn ardal lle'r oedd y Ffrancwyr wedi ceisio cloddio o'r blaen ond heb fawr o lwyddiant. Roedd yn rhaid rhoi'r gorau i'r gloddfa Brydeinig gyntaf hefyd oherwydd yr amodau dyfrlawn.

Man cychwyn yr ail gloddfa oedd seler mewn tŷ ychydig o lathenni y tu ôl i'r rhengoedd blaen. Y nod oedd cyrraedd rhes o fythynnod tua 500 llathen i ffrwdd,

ychydig y tu ôl i ffosydd blaen yr Almaenwyr, a oedd yn lloches i saethwyr cudd peryglus.

Roedd y gelyn wrthi'n cloddio hefyd, ac ar un adeg cafwyd ymladd ffyrnig dan ddaear rhwng Edwards a'i ddynion a chloddwyr o'r Almaen a oedd wedi torri i mewn i dwneli'r Prydeinwyr. Cafodd yr Almaenwyr eu gyrru yn ôl yn y diwedd, ond lladdwyd un o ddynion Edwards gan grenâd nwy. Yn y cyfamser, roedd y gwaith o gloddio'r prif dwanel yn parhau, ac ar ôl cyrraedd y tir o dan fythynnod yr Almaenwyr, plannwyd deg bag ar hugain o bowdwr gwn a phedwar boc ar hugain o gotwm gwn.

Yna am wyth o'r gloch un bore ym mis Mawrth, yn dilyn awr o ymosodiad gan y gynnuau mawr, taniwyd y ffrwydron yn y gloddfa a diflannodd hanner dwsin o'r tai gwreiddiol. Hon oedd y gloddfa Brydeinig gyntaf i gael ei thanio'n llwyddiannus yn y Rhyfel.

Roedd dyn arall o Flaenafon yn aelod o uned Edwards, sef John 'Champo' Lewis, a oedd yn gweithio fel glöwr mewn glofa leol. Roedd yn enwog drwy'r cwm fel mewnwr Clwb Rygbi Blaenafon.

Pan sefydlwyd y Cwmnïau Twnelu ym mis Ebrill 1915, daeth uned Edwards i ben, a dychwelodd ef a'i ddynion i'w hunedau.

Derbyniodd Capten Edwards y Groes Filwrol, a derbyniodd sawl aelod o'r uned, gan gynnwys 'Champo' Lewis, y DCM am eu gwaith. Cafodd Edwards dderbyniad dinesig brwdfrydig pan ddychwelodd adref i Flaenafon ar seibiant.

469 Pte. J. LEWIS 1/2nd Mons. TF

For conspicuous gallantry, energy, and devotion to duty near Le Touquet from 18th December 1914, to 9th April 1915, when engaged in working underground (continually in water) preparing a mine which was successfully exploded at a later date. This work was very arduous and most hazardous, as the possibility of the German counter-mine being exploded at any moment was ever present. (3.6.15)

Ond nid dyna ddiwedd gweithgarwch dan ddaear dynion Blaenafon yn ystod y rhyfel. Ar y Somme ym mis Awst 1915, fe'u hatodwyd i Gwmni Twnelu a chwaraeodd ran bwysig yn dinistrio ymgais gan y gelyn i gloddio yn ardal 'Redan' a oedd ym meddiant y Prydeinwyr.

Aeth Capten Edwards ymlaen i reoli Cwmni 'A' 2ail Gatrawd Sir Fynwy yn ystod y brwydrau ar y Somme a chael ei ddyrchafu'n Uwchgapten ym 1916. Llwyddodd Capten Edwards a 'Champo' Lewis i oroesi'r rhyfel.

Going Underground - the first Tunnellers



Mining is an ancient method of warfare used by armies ever since the Bronze Age to undermine city walls with the object of causing them to collapse. With the advent of heavy artillery in the late medieval period, the days of sieges involving military mining were thought to be over.

The Germans were the first to recognise that mining had a role to play in the static trench warfare that had developed in France and Belgium. In December 1914 they dug tunnels under a brigade of Indian troops and exploded ten mines.

The British responded by forming their own ad hoc mining units made up of men drafted from regiments raised in mining areas. Among the first that the British would turn to would be the miners of Monmouthshire.

Arthur Edwards was the son of the general manager of the Blaenavon Iron & Coal Company, and worked as a mining engineer before becoming a surveyor. He was also a Captain in the Monmouthshire Regiment and landed in France with the 2nd Battalion in November 1914. Within weeks he was placed in command of the 4th Divisions Mining Party formed by detachments drawn from his own battalion and the 5th South Lancashires.

Edwards and his men began mining on the Ypres front at Le Touquet, in an area where the French had tried to mine but with little success. The first British mine also had to be abandoned due to the poor waterlogged conditions.

Their second mine started from the cellar of a house a few yards behind the front line. The objective was a row of cottages about 500 feet away, just behind the German forward trenches, known to harbour some troublesome snipers.

The enemy were also digging, and at one point Edwards and his men engaged in fierce hand-to-hand fighting underground when German miners broke into the British workings. The Germans were eventually driven out, but not before they fired a gas grenade, killing one of Edwards's men. Meanwhile work in the main tunnel continued, and when under the German-held cottages, it was charged with thirty bags of gunpowder and twenty-four boxes of gun-cotton.

Then at 8am one morning in March, following an hour-long artillery bombardment, the mine was detonated and half a dozen of the original group of houses disappeared. This was the first successful British mine blown in the war.

One of Edwards's men was another Blaenafon man, John 'Champo' Lewis, a miner at a local colliery. He was well known throughout the valley as someone who played at scrum-half for the Blaenavon Rugby Club.

In April 1915, after the Tunnelling Companies had been formed, Edwards's unit was broken up, and he and his men returned to their units.

Edwards was awarded the Military Cross and several of his men, including Champo Lewis, were awarded the

Distinguished Conduct Medal for their work. Edwards himself enjoyed a rousing civic reception when he went home on leave to Blaenafon.

469 Pte. J. LEWIS 1/2nd Mons. TF

For conspicuous gallantry, energy, and devotion to duty near Le Touquet from 18th December 1914, to 9th April 1915, when engaged in working underground (continually in water) preparing a mine which was successfully exploded at a later date. This work was very arduous and most hazardous, as the possibility of the German counter-mine being exploded at any moment was ever present. (3.6.15)

This wasn't the end of underground activity for the Blaenafon men. On the Somme in August 1915, they were attached to a Tunnelling Company and played an important part in destroying an enemy mining attempt in the vicinity of the British-held 'Redan' feature.

Captain Edwards went on to command A Company of the 2nd Monmouthshire during the battles on the Somme, and was promoted to Major in 1916. Both he and Champo Lewis survived the war.



Rhai o ddynion Edwards
Some of Edwards's men © IWM

Y Gweithwyr Proffesiynol

Ym mis Chwefror 1915, penderfynodd y Prydeinwyr fod angen disodli'r unedau cloddio ad hoc gan Gwmnïau Twnelu arbenigol o dan gyfarwyddyd y Peirianwyr Brenhinol. Roedd yr wyth Cwmni Twnelu cyntaf yn cynnwys clay kickers (dynion carthfosiyydd) a oedd yn sifiliaid ac yn gyn-lowyr o blith y troedfilwyr. Roedd dynion a weithiai dan ddaear fel sifiliaid yn y DU ar 17 Chwefror yn gweithio dan ddaear fel milwyr yn Givenchy bedwar diwrnod yn ddiweddarach.

Garfield Morgan, Cwmni Twnelu 171

Bu Preifat Garfield Morgan yn gweithio fel glöwr yng Nglofa'r Great Western, Pontypridd. Roedd yn gwasanaethu gyda'r 8fed Bataliwn, Cyffinwyr De Cymru pan ddaeth galwad am ddynion â phrofiad o fwyngloddio a oedd yn fodlon cael eu trosglwyddo i wneud gwaith arbennig gyda'r Peirianwyr Brenhinol.

Roedd Morgan yn ansicr os oedd am wirfoddoli nes i'r Sarsiant Cyflenwi ddweud "Byddwch yn ennill chwe swllt y diwrnod". Roedd cyflog o'r fath yn dda ym 1915, a diflannodd amheuan Morgan yn syth! Gwirfoddolodd ef a hanner cant o ddynion o'i Gwmni, ac roedd Morgan yn un o'r deuddeg a gafodd eu dewis ar gyfer cyfweiliad.

Roedd yr Uwch-ringyll a oedd yn hebrwng y dynion wedi'u rhybuddio y gallai'r swyddogion ofyn iddyn nhw lofnodi am dâl safonol cloddiwr, sef dwy geiniog a hanner y diwrnod, ac roedd yn cynghori'r dynion i fynnu'r gyfradd uwch. Preifat Dave Evans oedd y cyntaf i gael ei gyfweld, ond dychwelodd yn fuan i ddweud yr hanes wrth y dynion eraill.

Roedd Uwchgaptan wedi gwrthod darn o bapur i'w law, gan ddweud, "Llofnodwch yma." "Beth yw'r gyfradd, syr?" gofynnodd Evans. "Dwy-a-dwy." "Dwi ddim am lofnodi, syr." Gwrthiodd y Swyddog ei ên allan yn ei ddieter. "Wel cer o' ma," meddai. Yr un oedd hanes pob un o'r lleill. Cerddodd pob un i mewn yn ei dro, gan herio'r Uwchgaptan cyn cael ei anfon allan. Pan ddaeth y dyn olaf allan, dechreuodd yr Uwch-ringyll baratoi'r dynion i orymdeithio i ffwrdd, ond ar ôl ychydig gamau clywsant lais yn gweiddi "Ataliwch y dynion, Uwch-ringyll! Dewch â nhw yn ôl yma."

Gan fod angen dybryd am ddynion, ildiodd yr Uwchgaptan a chytunodd i dalu chwe swllt y diwrnod iddynt. Yn ogystal â'r dynion o 8fed Bataliwn Cyffinwyr De Cymru, ymunodd dwsin o ddynion o 11eg Bataliwn Cymru, dwsin o ddynion 8fed Bataliwn y South Staffordshires a deg ar hugain o clay kickers. Roedd pob un o'r tri a thrigain ar eu ffordd i Ffrainc o fewn tridiau. Ymunodd pedwar ugain o wirfoddolwr o Fataliwn 1af a 3ydd Bataliwn Catrawd Sir Fynwy. O ganlyniad, sefydlwyd Cwmni Twnelu 171, ac aeth y dynion ati i gloddio yn dwy ardal o dir uchel ger Ypres.

Dechreuodd y Cloddiwr Morgan weithio yn ffosydd Hill 60, tomen flêr o bridd gwastraff ag enw drwg, a oedd yn frith o gyrff milwyr o Brydain, Ffrainc a'r Almaen yn pydru. Dechreuodd ef a dyn arall, Albert Rees, dwneleu tuag at un o ffosydd yr Almaenwyr hanner canllath i ffwrdd. Wrth gloddio'r pridd, daethant ar draws corff pydredig milwr o Ffrainc. Gwnaethant eu gorau i godi'r corff, ond torrodd yn ddarnau yn eu dwylo. Er nad oedd fawr ddim yn troi ar y naill ddyn na'r llall, gwnaeth y profiad hwn eu hysgwyl i'r

byw. Yn ystod y ddwyawr gyntaf daethant ar draws tri chorff arall – y cyntaf o lawer.

Doedd y twnnel ddim mwy na thair troedfedd o uchder a dwy droedfedd tair modfedd o led, ac roedd angen defnyddio preniau cadarn i'w ddiogelu. Dim ond un droedfedd ar bymtheg o dan y ddaear oedd y twnnel, ac roedd y clai tywodlyd gwlyb yn pwyso'n drwm arno, gan arwain at frwydro cyson yn erbyn y ffrydiau mwd a oedd yn dod drwy bob bwlch. Er gwaetha'r amodau anodd a'r sielio di-baid, aeth y gwaith twnelu rhagddo ddydd a nos.

Gweithiai'r dynion mewn paruau yng ngolau cannwyll, y naill yn ei gwrcwd y tu ôl i'r llall. Roedd y dyn yn y blaen yn defnyddio rhawiau arbennig (sef grafting tools), bidogau a'i ddwylo i gloddio'r clai diferol, cyn ei basio i'r dyn y tu ôl iddo. Byddai'r ail ddyn yn pacio'r clai mewn bagiau tywod a'u clymu wrth raff a oedd yn cael ei dal gan ddynion yn y pen agored. Byddai'r dynion hyn yn llusgo'r rhaff i'r cefn wedyn.

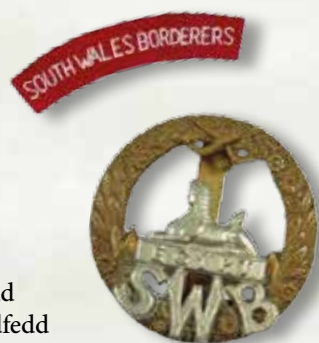
Roedd yr Almaenwyr wrthi'n twnelu yn Hill 60 hefyd, felly roedd rhaid gweithio mewn distawrwydd. Byddai unrhyw sŵn yn helpu'r gelyn i ddod o hyd i'r twneli a rhoi cyfle iddynt danio un o'u ffrwydron eu hunain. Felly roedd rhaid i'r dynion sibrwd wrth siarad, a hyd yn oed wrth regi! Roedd rhaid trin yr offer yn ofalus a defnyddio'r dwylo wrth osod darnau o bren yn eu lle.

Yn ddiweddarach, pan oedd Morgan yn gweithio gydag Albert Rees unwaith eto, teimlodd Albert Rees ei raw yn torri trwodd i wagle ym mur ochr y twnnel. Gafaelodd ym mraich ei gymrawd gan bwyntio at y fan. Edrychodd y ddau ar y twll am ennyn cyn diffodd y canhwylau yn gyflym.

Wrth i'r ddau ddyn wrando mewn distawrwydd yn eu cwrcwd, cafodd dŵr ei dasgu gan droed ar ochr arall y twll! Sgrialodd y ddau Gymro yn ôl ar hyd y twnnel ac i fyny'r siafft i roi gwybod am yr hyn roedden nhw wedi'i ganfod.

Dychwelodd y ddau ddyn i'r twnnel gyda'r Zail Is-gaptan Black, â'u calonau'n curo fel gordd. Teimlodd y tri eu ffordd ar hyd ochrau'r twnnel tywyll heb yngan yr un gair. Ymhen hir a hwyr, sibrydodd y Cloddiwr Morgan wrth Black eu bod yn agos at y fan. Wrth i Black gynnau ei fflacholau, cafwyd ffrwydrad yn syth a chlywyd sŵn bwled yn cael ei thanio mewn lle cyfyng. Rhwygodd y fwled ddarn o lawes tiwnig y swyddog, a sgrialodd y dynion yn ôl tuag at ben diogel y twnnel.

Arhosodd y tri yn eu cwrcwd ger siafft y fynedfa am



The Professionals

In February 1915 the British decided that they needed to replace the ad hoc mining parties with specialist tunnelling companies under the direction of the Royal Engineers. The first eight tunnelling companies were made up of clay kickers (sewer men) recruited from civilian life and former miners drawn from the ranks of the infantry. Men who were working underground on 17 February as civilians in the UK were working underground as soldiers at Givenchy only four days later.

Garfield Morgan, 171 Tunnelling Company

Private Garfield Morgan had been a miner at Great Western Colliery, Pontypridd. He was serving with the 8th Battalion South Wales Borderers when the call came for men with mining experience willing to be transferred for special duty with the Royal Engineers.

Morgan hesitated at volunteering until the Quarter-Master Sergeant told them 'Your money will be six shillings a day'. It was high pay for 1915 and Morgan's moment of doubt promptly ended. He and fifty men from his company stepped forward and he was one of the dozen eventually selected to be interviewed.

The Sergeant-Major escorting the party warned the men that they might be asked to sign for the standard sappers' pay of two-and-two pence a day and advised them to stick out for the higher rate. The first to be interviewed was Private Dave Evans but he was back quickly and told the others what had happened.

A Major had thrust a piece of paper into his hand and said 'Sign here.' What's the rate, sir? Private Evans had asked. 'Two-and-two.' I'm not signing, sir. The officer stuck his chin forward in anger. 'Then get out' he said. It was the same with every man. One by one they walked in, defied the Major and were promptly ordered out. When the last man came out, the Sergeant-Major started to march the party away, but they had gone just a few paces when a voice called out 'Halt the men, Sergeant-Major! Send them back up'.

Needing men badly the Major gave in and signed them all up at six shillings a day. The party from the 8th South Wales Borderers was joined by twelve men from the 11th Welsh, another twelve from the 8th South Staffordshires and thirty clay kickers. All sixty-six were on their way to France within three days. Another eighty volunteers from the 1st and 3rd Battalions of the Monmouthshire Regiment joined them on attachment. Once formed, they became 171 Tunnelling Company, and began mining at two areas of

high ground close to Ypres.

Hill 60 was a misshapen spoil heap with an ugly reputation, already littered with decomposing British, French and German bodies. He and another man, Albert Rees, started tunnelling towards a German trench just fifty yards away. As they scraped away the soil they discovered the decaying body of a French soldier. They tried to lift it clear but the body broke up. Neither man considered themselves squeamish but they were badly shaken. During the first two hours they uncovered three more bodies. They were the first of many.

The tunnel was only 3 feet high by 2 feet 3 inches wide and had to be stoutly shored up with timber. At a depth of just 16 feet, the wet, sandy-clay pressed inward with great force, and a constant struggle had to be waged against mud jets which squirted through every chink. Despite the conditions, and the non-stop shell-fire, the tunnelling progressed day and night.

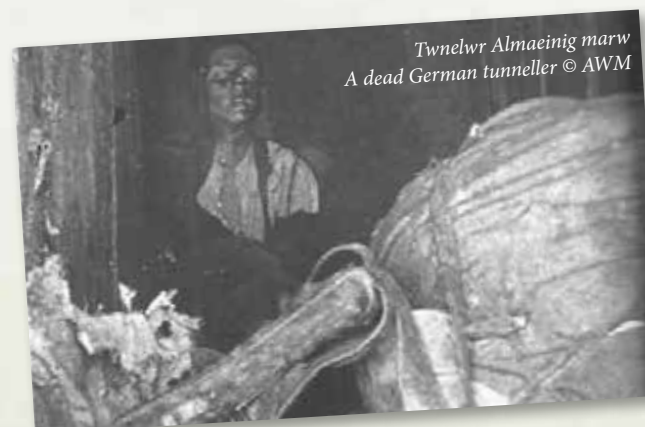
Men worked in pairs by candlelight, one crouched immediately behind the other. The front men clawed out the dripping clay with grafting tools, bayonets and hands, then passed it back to their mate. The mate packed it into sandbags and tied the bags to a rope held by men at the open end who dragged it to the rear.

The Germans were also tunnelling at Hill 60 so everything had to be done in silence. Any noise would help the enemy to locate the tunnels and give them the chance to set off a mine of their own. So the men talked, and even swore, in whispers. Tools were handled gently and timbers were patted into place by hand.

Later, when Morgan was working with Albert Rees again, the latter felt his grafting tool break through into a void in the side-wall of the tunnel. He grabbed his comrade's arm and pointed to the spot. They looked at the hole for a moment then quickly put out the candles.

As the two men crouched together silently listening, a foot splashed heavily into water on the other side of the hole. The two Welshmen scrambled back along the tunnel and up the shaft to report what they had found.

They returned with 2nd Lieutenant Black, and with hearts pounding, the three men silently felt their way along the sides of the pitch-black tunnel. Eventually Morgan put his mouth close to Black's ear and whispered that they ought to be about at the spot. When Black switched on his flashlight there was an immediate explosion and the sharp



awr, nes i Black ddweud â rhyw ffug sirioldeb, “Fe awn yn ôl nawr. Cofiwch fod yr Almaenwyr yn ein hofni nhw.” Nid oedd unrhyw Almaenwyr yno y tro hwn, ond roedden nhw wedi gadael tun yn llawn ffrwydron yn barod i’w danio. Torrwyd gwifrau’r Almaenwyr ac ychwanegwyd ffrwydryn cotwm gwn 250lb. Dychwelodd y Prydeinwyr i weithio yn eu twnnel gwreiddiol wythnos yn ddiweddarach, gan adael 500lb o gotwm gwn yno ar ôl cwblhau’r twnnel.

Pan oedd y ffrwydron yn cael eu paratoi yn y twnnel, cafwyd ymosodiad nwy gan yr Almaenwyr. Chwyrliodd y nwy i’r lefelau dan ddaear, gan effeithio ar swyddog a phymtheg o ddynion a oedd yn gweithio islaw. Roedd y Cloddiwr Morgan yn un o’r rhai a lwyddodd i ffoi i ben arall y twnnel, gan afael yn ei wddf a chwydu cyfog gwyrdd llachar ar hyd y ffordd. Cyrhaeddodd orsaf dros dro cyn cael ei ruthro i’r ystyby lle bu’n gorwedd am un wythnos ar ddeg gan wella’n raddol.

Roedd cofnodion gwasanaeth Garfield Morgan ymysg y rhai a gollwyd yn ystod cyrchoedd bomio’r Ail Ryfel Byd. Llwyddodd i oroesi’r brwydrau dan ddaear ar Ffrynt y Gorllewin a dychwelodd adref i Bontypridd. Cafodd ei gyfwrdd am ei brofiadau tua diwedd y 1950au ar gyfer un o’r llyfrau cyntaf a ysgrifennwyd am y Twnelwyr.

Trevor Henry Smith, Cwmni Twnelu 170

Roedd Trevor Henry Smith o Flaenafon yn halier dan ddaear yn Big Pit, lle’r oedd tri o’i frodyr yn gweithio hefyd.

Gwasanaethodd ei frawd hyn Charles ym 5ed Bataliwn Catrawd y Queen’s Own Royal West Kent, yn India. Gwasanaethodd Llewelyn yn 8fed Bataliwn Cyffinwyr De Cymru yn Salonika, ac ymunodd y brawd ieuengaf, Ivor, ag 16eg Bataliwn y Ffiwsilwyr Brenhinol Cymreig yn Ffrainc ar ddiwrnod olaf y rhyfel.

Hwylodd Smith i Ffrainc ym mis Tachwedd 1914 i ymuno â Bataliwn 1af Cyffinwyr De Cymru, ond trosglwyddodd i Gwmni Twnelu 170 yn fuan wedyn.

Roedd Cwmni Twnelu 170 yn un o’r Cwmnïau Twnelu cyntaf i gael eu sefydlu ym mis Chwefror 1915, ac aeth ati i weithio yn syth yn ardal Givenchy, ardal lofaol tua 30 milltir i’r de o Ypres.

O fis Mehefin 1915 ymlaen, bu’r cwmni yn wynebu’r Brickstacks ac amddiffynfa Hohenzollern, sef yr amddiffynfeydd cryfaf o eiddo’r Almaenwyr ar Ffrynt y Gorllewin. Roedd y lle cyn hwn ar safle hen waith glo, ac roedd yn cynnwys tomen lo a gafodd yr enw ‘The Dump’ gan y Prydeinwyr. Roedd modd gweld i bob cyfeiriad oddi yno.

Roedd cloddio yn yr ardal hon yn anodd oherwydd presenoldeb yr hyn a ddisgrifiodd yr Almaenwyr yn Schwimmsande o dan y clai lle’r oedd y ffosydd wedi’u cloddio. Haen dau fetr o drwch o dywod rhedegog dyfrlawn oedd hon.

Roedd yr Almaenwyr wedi methu treiddio drwy’r haen hon, ac roedden nhw’n disgwyl i’r Prydeinwyr wynebu’r un problem. Yn ffodus iawn, nid oedd y problem hon cynddrwg ar ochr Brydeinig y llinellau, a llwyddodd cloddwyr Cwmni

crack of a bullet being fired in a confined space. It ripped a piece out of the sleeve of the officer’s tunic and sent them all stumbling and scrambling back towards the safe end of the tunnel.

They crouched by the entry shaft for an hour, then, with outward cheerfulness, Black said ‘We’ll go back now. Remember the Jerries are just as scared of us as we are of them.’ There were no Germans there this time but they had left a canister of explosive wired up ready to fire. The German wires were cut and a 250lb guncotton charge was added. The British resumed work on their original tunnel a week later, and when completed charged it with 500lbs of guncotton.

While the mine was being charged a German gas attack took place. The gas swirled down into the underground galleries, affecting an officer and about fifteen men working below. Morgan was one of those who managed to flee to the rear, clawing at his throat and throwing up bright green vomit on the way. He reached a clearing station and was rushed from there to hospital, where he lay for eleven weeks recovering.

Garfield Morgan’s service records were among those lost during Second World War bombing raids. He survived the underground battles on the Western Front and returned home to Pontypridd. He was interviewed about his experiences in the late 1950s for one of the first books written about the Tunnellers.

170 i suddo siafft drwy’r haen drwy ddefnyddio tiwbin dur. Ar ôl hynny, roedd modd i’r Prydeinwyr fwrw ymlaen â’u twneli drwy’r clai tuag at, ac o dan, yr Almaenwyr o dan amodau cymharol ddiogel.

Ffrwydrodd Cwmni 170 ddwy gloddfa ger amddiffynfa Hohenzollern ar ddechrau Brwydr Loos ym mis Medi 1915. Arhosodd y cwmni yn yr ardal hon dros y blynyddoedd nesaf, gan weld llawer o frwydro. Gwasanaethodd y Cloddiwr Smith gyda’r cwmni gydol y cyfnod hwn, ac enillodd y Fedal Filwrol am ddewrder ar 23 Mawrth 1916.

Cafodd ei anafu ddeufis yn ddiweddarach, ond gwellodd ac ailymuno â Chwmni 170. Fodd bynnag, daeth ei lwc i ben y flwyddyn ganlynol pan fu farw yn 33 oed ar 23 Tachwedd 1917 mewn llety milwyr yn sgil anafiadau a gafodd. Yn ogystal â’r hysbysiad swyddogol, derbyniodd ei fam nifer o lythyrau.

Ar 24 Tachwedd ysgrifennodd y Caplan, “Fe’i deddais heddiw ym mynwent Noux Les Mines, gan eich cofio chi wrth weddio uwch ei fedd. Roedd ei swyddogion a nifer o’i gymrodwr yn bresennol.”

Ysgrifennodd un o swyddogion y Cwmni. “Mae’ch mab wedi gweithio i mi ers dwy flynedd, ac roedd yn weithiwr rhagorol bob amser a oedd yn gwirfoddoli am waith hefyd. Gallaf eich sicrhau fy mod i’n gweld ei eisiau yn fawr, a bod y Prif Swyddog arall, y swyddogion eraill a dynion y Cwmni yn cydymdeimlo â chi yn eich profedigaeth fawr.”

Gwnaeth y Prif Swyddog y sylw canlynol. “Mae’n arbennig o greulon bod milwr a enillodd y Fedal Filwrol ar 23 Mawrth 1916, ac a glwyfwyd ar 23 Mai 1916, wedi marw ar ôl gwneud gwaith mor dda a ffyddlon dros ei wlad.”

Trevor Henry Smith, 170 Tunnelling Company

Trevor Henry Smith of Blaenafon was an underground haulier at Big Pit, where three of his brothers also worked.

Elder brother Charles served in the 5th Queen’s Own Royal West Kent Regiment, in India. Llewelyn served in the 8th South Wales Borderers in Salonika and the youngest, Ivor, joined the 16th Royal Welch Fusiliers in France on the last day of the war.

Smith himself sailed for France as a replacement for the 1st Battalion South Wales Borderers in November 1914, but at an early stage transferred to the 170 Tunnelling Company.

170 Tunnelling Company was one of the first tunnelling companies formed in February 1915 and went into immediate action in the area of Givenchy, a coal mining area roughly thirty miles south of Ypres.

From June 1915 the company was facing the German-held Brickstacks and the Hohenzollern Redoubt, considered to be the strongest defensive work on the Western Front. It was on the site of a pre-war coal mining complex and contained a slagheap, known to the British as The Dump, which provided views in all directions.

Mining in the area was difficult because below the clay in which the trenches were dug lay what the Germans called the Schwimmsande, a two-metre thick layer of waterlogged running sands.

The Germans had been unable to penetrate this layer and thought the British would have similar problems. Fortunately the problem was not quite as bad on the British side of the lines and the miners of 170 Company managed to sink a shaft through it with steel tubing into the clay below. From then on the British were able to drive their tunnels through the clay towards, and under, the Germans in relative safety.

The 170 Company blew two mines at the Hohenzollern redoubt at the opening of Battle of Loos in September 1915. They remained in this very active area for the next couple of years. Smith served with them throughout this time and was awarded the Military Medal for bravery on 23 March 1916.

He was wounded two months later and recovered to rejoin 170. However, his luck ran out the following year when he died aged 33 on 23 November 1917 of wounds received ‘in billets’. As well as the official notification, his mother received a number of letters.

On 24 November the Chaplain wrote ‘I buried him today in the cemetery at Noux Les Mines and remembered you in my prayers at his grave. His officers and a number of his comrades were present.’

An officer of the Company wrote ‘Your son has worked for me for the last two years and I always found him an exceptionally good worker who also volunteered for the work. I can assure you I miss him dreadfully, and the other Officer Commanding, the other officers and men of the Company sympathise with you in your great loss.’

The Officer Commanding made the following observation: ‘It is especially hard on a soldier who had been awarded the Military Medal on March 23rd 1916, and wounded on May 23rd 1916, to be taken after doing such good and faithful work for his country.’



Big Pit 1910



Trevor a'i frodyr
Trevor and his
brothers © PCW



King Samuel Humphries, Cwmni Twnelu 258

Ganed King Samuel Humphries yn Senghenydd ym 1892. Gweithiodd gyda'i dad a'i dri brawd yng Nglofa'r Universal, Senghenydd. Roedd ei dad o'r un enw, King Samuel Humphries, a'i frawd hŷn John Phillip Humphries ymhlith y 439 o lowyr a laddwyd yn y danchwa ar 13 Hydref 1913.

Dim ond 11 mis yn ddiweddarach ym mis Medi 1914, ymunodd King â'r fyddin. Glaniodd yn Ffrainc gydag 8fed Bataliwn y Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers ym mis Chwefror 1916. Gwasanaethodd yn y ffosydd gyda nhw tan fis Gorffennaf 1916 pan drosglwyddodd i Gwmni Twnelu 258 y Peirianwyr Brenhinol.

Sefydlwyd Cwmni Twnelu 258 yn Rouen ym mis Ebrill 1916 ychydig fisoedd cyn i'r Cloddiwr Humphries ymuno ag ef. Aeth dwy adran i ofalu am y Sector Pwll Sialc, a'r ddwy arall i gefnogi Cwmni Twnelu 173 yn Hill 70 ger Loos. Roedd yr amodau yn y ffosydd yn Hill 70 yn echrydus, ac roedd yn rhaid i'r Twnelwyr roi'r gorau i weithio yn y nos gan fod angen gadael y ffosydd yn ystod yr oriau tywyll.



Yn fuan wedyn roedd dynion Cwmni Twnelu 258 yn gwrthdaro â'r Almaenwyr o dan dir neb, a lladdwyd saith o ddynion Cwmni Twnelu 258 gan un o ffrwydron yr Almaenwyr. Ymatebodd y Prydeinwyr drwy danio dau ffrwydryn mewn ymgaes i atal cynnydd yr Almaenwyr. Roedd twneli'r Almaenwyr yn ddyfnach na rhai'r Prydeinwyr, ac ni chawsant eu difrodi'n ddrwg. O ganlyniad, arafu cynnydd yr Almaenwyr yn hytrach na'u stopio fu hanes y Prydeinwyr.

Roedd y Prydeinwyr wrthi'n paratoi agorfa ar gyfer ffrwydryn dyfnach arall pan glywsant synau'r Almaenwyr yn cwblhau ffrwydryn gerllaw. Tynnwyd y twnelwyr Prydeinig yn ôl, cyn dychwelyd i atgyweirio eu twneli ar ôl i'r Almaenwyr danio eu ffrwydryn. Fodd bynnag, bu'n rhaid iddynt wynebu pocedi o nwy a'i gwnaeth yn amhosibl iddynt barhau i dwnelu.

Roedd twneli'r Almaenwyr eisoes wedi cyrraedd y ffosydd Prydeinig, felly roedd y sefyllfa'n ddifrifol. Ar 16 Medi 1916 cyrhaeddodd y cyfarpar anadlu Proto cyntaf, a hyfforddwyd pedwar ar ddeg o ddynion Cwmni Twnelu 258 i'w ddefnyddio. Mae cofnodion gwasanaeth y Cloddiwr

Humphries yn dangos iddo gael ei hyfforddi i ddefnyddio'r Proto, felly mae'n bosibl ei fod ymysg y dynion cyntaf i gael eu hyfforddi.

Defnyddiwyd yr un cyfarpar anadlu Proto gan y bobl a oedd wedi ceisio achub bywydau'r glowyr yn nhrychineb Senghenydd. Roedd y cyfarpar wedi'i gludo i flaen y gad i'w ddefnyddio yn y gwaith achub o dan y ffosydd, ond yn hytrach na hynny, defnyddiodd dynion Cwmni Twnelu 258 y cyfarpar i barhau i dwnelu a gosod eu ffrwydron. Roedd y twnelwyr o'r Almaen yn agos iawn, a bu'n rhaid i'r Prydeinwyr weithio'n ddistaw er eu bod yn gwisgo'r cyfarpar anadlu trwm. Am 6.45pm ar 18 Medi, taniodd y Prydeinwyr eu ffrwydryn 6,000lbs, gan ddinistrio twneli'r Almaenwyr.

Parhaodd dynion Cwmni Twnelu 258 i weithredu yn ardal Loos tan gyrch yr Almaenwyr yng ngwanwyn 1918, pan fu'n rhaid i ddynion Cwmniau Twnelu 258 a 173, ynghyd â milwyr eraill o'r Peirianwyr Brenhinol, wneud gwaith brys fel troedfilwyr.

Ar ôl cael hyfforddiant sylfaenol iawn ar sut i drafod eu harfau, ymladdodd y twnelwyr yn ddewr i gadw'r cefn ger Vrély cyn mynd ati i ddymchwel pont er mwyn arafu cynnydd yr Almaenwyr. Pan dorodd yr Almaenwyr drwy'r safleoedd yn Lys, y Twnelwyr oedd yr unig filwyr wedi'u trefnu yn wynebu'r Almaenwyr yn y dechrau, ac aethant ati i ailsefydlu blaen y gad newydd, gan gloddio ffosydd a gosod weiren bigog.

Ar ôl goroesi'r danchwa ym 1913, roedd brodyr Humphries wedi ymuno â'r fyddin hefyd. Ymunodd ei frawd ieuengaf, William James Humphries, â Magnelfa C 120fed Brigâd y Magnelwyr Maes Brenhinol fel Gynnwr, ond cafodd ei ryddhau ychydig fisoedd wedyn pan ddaeth i'r amlwg ei fod wedi dweud celwydd am ei oedran. Dim ond 17 oedd e.

Gwasanaethodd David George Humphries yn 16eg Bataliwn y Ffiwsilwyr Brenhinol Cymreig. Bu farw ar 10 Gorffennaf 1917 ychydig cyn dechrau Brwydr Passchendaele. Yn ôl papur newydd y South Wales Echo, roedd y dyn ifanc 22 oed wedi rhuthro i faes y gad gan weiddi, "For my God, my king and for my dear old home."

Roedd y teulu Humphries yn un o nifer o deuluoedd o Senghenydd a gollodd anwyliaid yn nhrychineb 1913 a rhyfel 1914-18. Yn wahanol i'w frawd David a llawer o ddynion eraill o Senghenydd, goroesodd King y rhyfel, ac aeth ymlaen i gael ei ddyrchafu'n Rhingyll ac ennill y Fedal Filwrol.

Nid oedd y Cloddiwr Humphries yn Ffrainc pan ddaeth y rhyfel i ben gan ei fod wedi dychwelyd i Brydain yn glaf ar ôl cael Bwrsitis yn ei law chwith. Gadawodd y fyddin ym mis Ionawr 1919, ac fe gafodd bensiwn o 6 swllt a 6 cheiniog yr wythnos (am flwyddyn) gan ei fod 20% yn anabl ar ôl cael ei wenwyno â nwy.



King Samuel Humphries, 258 Tunnelling Company

King Samuel Humphries was born in Senghenydd in 1892. Along with his father and three brothers he worked at the Universal Colliery, Senghenydd. His father, also called King Samuel Humphries, and elder brother John Phillip Humphries, had been among the 439 miners killed in the explosion of 13 October 1913.

Just eleven months later in September 1914 King Humphries enlisted. He landed in France with the 8th Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers in February 1916. He served in the trenches with them until July 1916 when he transferred to the Royal Engineers 258 Tunnelling Company.

The 258 Company had been formed at Rouen in April 1916 just a few months before Humphries joined it. Two sections took over the Chalk Pit Sector while the other two moved to support 173 Tunnelling Company at Hill 70 near Loos. The conditions in the trenches at Hill 70 were appalling and the Tunnellers had to stop work at night because the trenches had to be abandoned during the hours of darkness.

The men of 258 Company were soon in contact with the Germans beneath no-man's-land, and early on, seven men from 258 Company had been killed by a German mine. The British countermined and fired two of their own mines to try to halt the German advance. The German tunnels were deeper than those of the British, so were little damaged, and the German advance was only slowed rather than stopped.

The British were preparing a chamber for another deeper charge when sounds of the Germans completing a mine very nearby were heard. The British tunnellers were withdrawn, but returned to repair their tunnels once the Germans had fired their mine, only to encounter pockets of gas that made it impossible to continue tunnelling.

The German tunnels had nearly reached the British trenches so the situation was critical. Then on 16 September 1916 the first Proto breathing apparatus arrived and fourteen men of 258 Company were quickly trained in its use. Humphries's service records show that he was trained in the use of the Proto so he could have been one of the first batch of men trained.

The Proto breathing apparatus was the same equipment used by the rescuers in the Senghenydd disaster. It had been brought to the front to be used in rescue work beneath the trenches, but instead the men of 258 Company used them to continue tunnelling and placing their charge. The German tunnellers were very close, so the British had to work silently even though they were wearing the bulky breathing apparatus. At 6.45pm on 18 September the British blew their 6,000lb charge, destroying the German tunnels.

The men of 258 Company continued to operate in the area around Loos until the German spring offensive of 1918, when the men of 258 and 173 Tunnelling Companies, along with other Royal Engineers troops, were converted into emergency infantry.

After some very basic drill in how to handle their weapons, the tunnellers fought a dogged rearguard action

near Vrély before being placed on bridge demolition work to slow the German advance. When the Germans broke through the Lys positions, the tunnellers were at first the only organized troops facing the Germans, and set about re-establishing a new front line, digging and wiring trenches.

Humphries's brothers had also joined up having survived the explosion of 1913. His youngest brother, William James Humphries, became a Gunner with C battery 120th Brigade Royal Field Artillery but was discharged a few months later when it was discovered that he had lied about his age – he was only 17.

David George Humphries served in the 16th Battalion of the Royal Welch Fusiliers. He died on 10 July 1917 just before the opening of the Battle of Passchendaele. The South Wales Echo reported that the 22-year-old rushed into action crying 'For my God, my king and for my dear old home'.



Tyllu camoulet
Boring a camoulet © AWM

The Humphries family was just one of a number of Senghenydd families who lost members in both the 1913 disaster and the First World War. Unlike his brother David and many other Senghenydd men, King survived, ending as a Sergeant and the holder of the Military Medal.

King Humphries wasn't in France when the war ended as he had been invalided back to Britain with Bursitis of the left hand. He left the army in January 1919, and was awarded a pension of 6 shillings and 6 pence a week (for a year) due to a 20 per cent disability after gassing.

Swyddogion

Yn ogystal â dynion medrus a phrofiadol, roedd y Cwmniau Twnelu newydd angen swyddogion â'r profiad cloddio gofynnol i fanteisio'n llawn ar allu'r dynion.



Yr Uwchgaptan W. C. Hepburn, Cwmni Twnelu 172

Roedd William Clay Hepburn yn 37. Roedd hefyd yn Gaptan ym Mataliwn 1af Catrawd Sir Fynwy a anfonwyd i Ffrainc ym mis Chwefror 1915. Fodd bynnag, trosglwyddwyd Hepburn i'r Peirianwyr Brenhinol yn fuan wedyn.

I was sent home to get some boring machinery and when I came back I joined 172 TC under Johnson VC. Johnson was a regular RE and he didn't like tunnelling one bit. He told me two or three days after I had been with him 'Look here, I don't know anything about these tunnels. You do - you take over'. Then he would go off into the trenches and try to get people to strafe the Hun - that was what he was after.

Ar ôl ychydig wythnosau yn unig, daeth Hepburn yn bennaeth ffurfiol ar Gwmni Twnelu 172, ac ef oedd y peiriannydd cloddio sifil cyntaf i fod yn bennaeth swyddogol ar Gwmni Twnelu. Ni ddioddefodd Cwmni Twnelu 172 yr un anfodlonrwydd a oedd yn amlwg yn y Cwmniau Twnelu eraill yn y dechrau wrth i swyddogion parhaol geisio gorfodi disgyblaeth filwrol ar ddynion a oedd wedi gweithio fel mwyngloddwyr sifil.

Roedd Hepburn yn sifiliad ei hun yn y bôn, ac yn ddyn digynnwrf a goddefgar hefyd a oedd yn poeni llawer mwy am ganlyniadau na phrotocol milwrol. Dim ond gwenu a wnaeth Hepburn pan aeth un o'i swyddogion iau newydd ati i dynnu ei het i swyddog uwch yn hytrach na'i saliwto, a gwneud yr un peth wedyn i'r Uwch-ringyll.

Dechreuodd Cwmni Twnelu 172 weithio ger Ypres. Roedd yr amodau cloddio yn ofnadwy, y tywydd yn wael a'r tir yn wlyb a thywodlyd iawn. Ni chafodd y gwaith twnelu ddechrau addawol yno.

My company did the work at St Eloi, starting roughly March 1915. There was a gap where the road came right through St Eloi, which was no man's land, right down to a cross-roads. The first thing we did was to start to put a tunnel right under the cross-roads. We did that - and ran into a cesspool which drove us out. Conditions were terrible for the first attempt to mine at St Eloi. The weather was bad; ground very wet and sloppy with pumps going all the while. We weren't given any plan about where to start mining. We went out and stood and looked at the Mound - couldn't get up to the place by day at all because we were under fire. We had the Mound as our objective. I had Hickling with me. He was the man who did most of the digging there.

Er mwyn osgoi'r amodau hyn, penderfynodd Hepburn a'r Is-gaptan Hickling gloddio trigain troedfedd i lawr i glai glas, caled Ypres cyn twnelu tuag at y gelyn. Y ddau yma oedd y cyntaf i wneud hyn, a buan iawn y daeth pwysigrwydd dyfnder i'r amlwg.

Yn gwbl annisgwyl ym mis Mehefin, torrodd Cwmni Twnelu 172 i un o lefelau'r Almaenwyr, gan ganfod 1,000lbs o ffrwydron a osodwyd gan yr Almaenwyr ac a oedd yn



Twnelwyr 172 - trwy garedigrwydd Patience Hilton
Tunnellers of 172 - courtesy of Patience Hilton

barod i'w tanio. Bu Capten Hepburn a'i ddynion wrthi am ddau ddiwrnod yn ceisio diffwio'r ffrwydron a'r un taniwr ar ddeg, gan boeni drwy'r amser y gallai gwreichionen o'u canhwyllau chwythu'r cyfan. Ailddefnyddiwyd ffrwydryn yr Almaenwyr yn un o'r pum ffrwydryn a osododd Cwmni Twnelu 172 o dan rengoedd blaen yr Almaenwyr yn St Eloi.

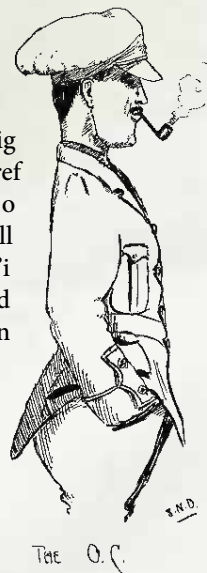
Am hanner awr wedi tri'r bore ar 10 Gorffennaf, daeth gorchymyn gan Gaptan Hepburn i daniu'r ffrwydryn cyntaf. Cerddodd Capten Hepburn a Horace Hickling o bwynt tanio i bwynt tanio, gan gario'r bocs tanio a'i gysylltu â phob set o wifrau tanio yn ei thro. Roedd yr oedi anochel yn rhan o'r cynllun, wrth i'r swyddogion Prydeinig gredu y byddai morâl yr Almaenwyr yn gwaethgu wrth aros am bob ergyd heb wybod faint yn rhagor oedd i ddod. Wrth i'r rwbet setlo o'r ffrwydrad blaenorol, dringodd yr Almaenwyr allan o'u ffos a rhedeg yn wyllt am y cefn.

Enillodd Capten Hepburn y DSO, medal am wasanaeth rhagorol, am yr hyn a gyflawnodd.

Roedd Capten Hepburn wrthi'n gweithio ugain lefel ymosodol ymlaen yn barod ar gyfer yr ymosodiad arfaethedig yn y gwanwyn. Cafodd ei anfon adref ym mis Tachwedd 1915 yn dioddef o sgil-effeithiau gwenwyn nwy yn Hill 60. Dychwelodd i'r rhyfel maes o law a'i ddychafu'n Uwchgaptan, ond nid oedd yn ddigon iach i weithio yn y rheng flaen byth eto.

William Clay Hepburn - o gylchgrawn *Just a Small One*, a gynhyrchwyd gan Gwmni Twnelu 172, Nadolig 1915

William Clay Hepburn - From *Just a Small One*, a magazine produced by 172 Tunnelling Company, Christmas 1915



Officers

As well as skilled and experienced men, the new tunnelling companies also needed officers with the necessary mining experience who could get the best out of their men.

Major W. C. Hepburn, 172 Tunnelling Company

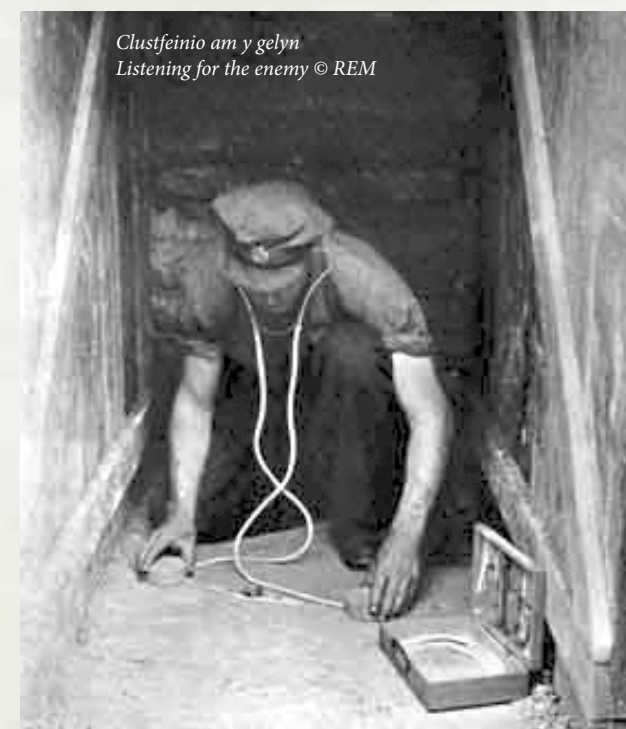
William Clay Hepburn was the 37-year-old Colliery Manager of Oakdale Colliery in Blackwood. He was also a Captain in the 1st Battalion Monmouthshire Regiment that was sent to France in February 1915, but he was soon transferred to the Royal Engineers.

I was sent home to get some boring machinery and when I came back I joined 172 TC under Johnson VC. Johnson was a regular RE and he didn't like tunnelling one bit. He told me two or three days after I had been with him 'Look here, I don't know anything about these tunnels. You do - you take over'. Then he would go off into the trenches and try to get people to strafe the Hun - that was what he was after.

After just a few weeks, Hepburn formally took command of 172 Tunnelling Company, becoming the first civilian mining engineer to officially command a tunnelling company. 172 Company suffered little of the discontent that initially upset other tunnelling companies where regular officers tried to impose military discipline on their former civilian miners.

Hepburn, essentially still a civilian himself, was relaxed and tolerant, and concerned far more with results than military protocol. When instead of saluting, one of his new junior officers doffed his hat to a superior and later did the same to the Sergeant-Major, Hepburn simply smiled.

The 172 Company began operating near Ypres. Mining conditions were terrible, the weather was bad and the ground very wet and sandy. Tunnelling here did not make an auspicious start.



Clustfeinio am y gelyn
Listening for the enemy © REM

My company did the work at St Eloi, starting roughly March 1915. There was a gap where the road came right through St Eloi, which was no man's land, right down to a cross-roads. The first thing we did was to start to put a tunnel right under the cross-roads. We did that - and ran into a cesspool which drove us out. Conditions were terrible for the first attempt to mine at St Eloi. The weather was bad; ground very wet and sloppy with pumps going all the while. We weren't given any plan about where to start mining. We went out and stood and looked at the Mound - couldn't get up to the place by day at all because we were under fire. We had the Mound as our objective. I had Hickling with me. He was the man who did most of the digging there.

To escape these conditions Hepburn and Lieutenant Horace Hickling decided to dig sixty feet down into the firm, blue Ypresian clay before tunnelling towards the enemy. They were the first to do so and the value of depth soon became apparent.

In June 172 Company broke through unexpectedly into a German gallery where they found a 1,000lb charge of explosive laid by the Germans ready to be fired. For two days, Hepburn and his men worked to remove the charge and its eleven detonators, in constant fear that a spark from their candles would send it all up. The German explosive was reused in one of the five mines 172 Company laid below the German front lines at St Eloi.

Then on 10 July, at half past three in the morning, Hepburn gave the order to fire the first mine. He and Hickling walked from firing point to firing point, carrying the exploder box with them and attaching it to each set of firing wires in turn. The inevitable delay was part of the plan, the British officers felt that the waiting and wondering if each blow was the last would do extra harm to German morale. As the debris from the last mine was settling the Germans climbed out of their trench and ran wildly towards the rear.

Captain Hepburn was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for his achievements.

He was preparing a further twenty offensive galleries in preparation for the planned 1916 spring offensive but was sent home in November 1915, suffering from the after-effects of a gassing at Hill 60. He eventually returned to duty and later became a Major, but he was never again fit enough for front-line duty.

Yr Is-gymrol T. W. E. David, Bataliwn Cloddio Awstralia



Roedd Tannatt William Edgeworth David yn ddyn anghyffredin.

Ganed David yn Sain Ffagan ym 1858 lle'r oedd ei dad yn rheithor. Astudiodd ddyddodion rhewlifol yn Ne Cymru cyn symud i Awstralia i ymuno ag Arolwg Daearegol De Cymru Newydd, lle aeth ati i ddarganfod a diffinio maes glo South Maitland.

Ymunodd ag alldaith Nimrod Ernest Shackleton i'r Antarctig ym 1907, ac ym mis Mawrth 1908 pan oedd yn 50 oed, arweiniodd y daith gyntaf i Fynydd Erebus, llosgfynydd byw ar Ynys Ross. Ym mis Ionawr 1909, T. W. E. David, Douglas Mawson ac Alistair Mackay oedd y bobl gyntaf i gyrraedd ardal Pegwn Magnetig y De. Cymerodd y daith 2,028 cilometr 122 diwrnod i'w chwblhau, ac mae'n un o'r teithiau car llusg hiraf erioed i'w chwblhau gan ddynion heb gymorth.

Er na wnaeth yr Athro David ymuno ag alldaith Scott i'r Antarctig ym 1910, darbwylodd llywodraeth Awstralia i'w chefnogi, gan helpu Scott i benodi daearegwyr o blith ei fyfyrwyr. Dyfarnwyd y Polar Medal iddo ym 1910.

Pan ddechreuodd y rhyfel ym 1914, roedd David yn weithgar iawn yn ystod raliau recriwtio, gan helpu i argyhoeddi llywodraeth Awstralia i sefydlu corfflu o ddaearegwyr a chloddwyr a darparu adnoddau ar ei gyfer.

Pan oedd yn 56 oed, comisiynwyd David yn Uwchgaptan Bataliwn Cloddio Awstralia, a gadawodd am Ffrainc ym mis Chwefror 1916. Erbyn hyn, roedd y rhyfel twnelu yn llawer mwy gwyddonol ei natur, ac roedd gwybodaeth am ddaeareg o dan y ffosydd yn hanfodol bwysig. Llwyddodd yr Uwchgaptan David i ddarparu cyngor gwerthfawr ar ddŵr daear ac ar leoli a chynllunio ffosydd a thwnelau.

Ym mis Medi 1916, syrthiodd bedwar ugain troedfedd i lawr ffynnon yr oedd wrthi'n ei harchwilio ger Vimy ar ôl i'r offer weindio fethu. Wrth gael ei gludo i fyny ar ôl cael ei anafu'n ddrwg, dywedodd wrth y dynion a oedd yng ngofal yr offer weindio, 'pwyll pia hi -

ches i ddim cyfle i weld y ddaeareg ar y ffordd i lawr'.

Cyfaddefodd wedyn mai rhyfygu yr oedd wrth ddweud hyn. Roedd yn lwcus iawn i fod yn fyw, ond chwe wythnos yn ddiweddarach roedd wrth ei waith unwaith eto, er na wellodd yn llawn wedyn. Yn rhinwedd ei swydd fel prif ddaearegwr, o fis Mehefin 1917 ymlaen roedd yn gweithio gyda'r prif archwilydd cloddfeydd yn y Pencadlys Cyffredinol. Enwyd ef mewn adroddiadau deirgwaith, enillodd y DSO ym 1918 a'i ddyrchafu'n Is-gymrol.

Gwasanaethodd ei fab ym myddin Prydain fel swyddog meddygol catrawd y 6th Cameron Highlanders, gan ennill y Groes Filwrol. Gwasanaethodd ei ferch Mary fel gyrrwr yng Nghorfflu Atodol Byddin y Menywod a Lleng y Menywod.



David (canol) ym Mhegwn Magnetig y De

David (centre) at the South Magnetic Pole

Lt Col T. W. E. David, Australian Mining Battalion

Tannatt William Edgeworth David was an extraordinary man.

David was born in 1858 in St Fagans where his father was rector. He studied glacial deposits in south Wales before moving to Australia to join the Geological Survey of New South Wales, where he discovered and defined the South Maitland coalfield.

He joined Ernest Shackleton's 1907 Nimrod expedition to the Antarctic and in March 1908, aged 50, he led the first ascent of Mount Erebus, an active volcano on Ross Island. In January 1909, with Douglas Mawson and Alistair Mackay, he was the first to reach the region of the South Magnetic Pole. The journey of 2,028 kilometres took 122 days and is one of the longest unsupported man-hauled sledging journeys ever undertaken.

Although Professor David did not join Scott's 1910 Antarctic expedition, he persuaded the Australian government to support it and helped Scott appoint geologists from among his students. He was awarded the Polar Medal in 1910.

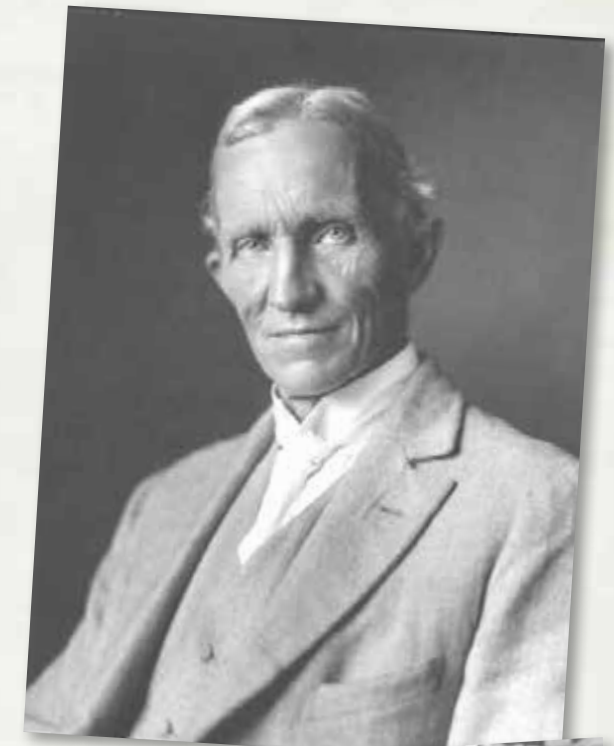
When war broke out in 1914 he became a leading figure at recruiting rallies and helped convince the Australian government to raise and equip a corps of geologists and miners.

At the age of 56 David was commissioned as a Major in the Australian Mining Battalion and left for France in February 1916. The tunnelling war was, by now becoming much more scientific with knowledge of the geology below the trenches playing a vital role. Major David provided valuable advice on ground water and the sighting and design of trenches and tunnels.

In September 1916 he fell eighty feet down a well he was inspecting near Vimy, due to the winding gear failing. As he was being hauled back up badly injured he said to the men on the winding gear 'take it slowly, because I missed the geology on the way down'.

He later admitted that this was a bit of bravado. He was very lucky that he wasn't killed, but six weeks later he was back in action, although he never fully recovered. From June 1917, as chief geologist, he was attached to the inspector of mines at General Headquarters. Three times mentioned in dispatches, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order in 1918, and was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel.

His son served with the British army as a regimental medical officer with the 6th Cameron Highlanders, winning the Military Cross. His daughter Mary served as a driver with the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps and Women's Legion.



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Yr Achubwyr

Gan fod cymaint o dwnelwyr medrus wedi'u lladd neu eu hanafu ar ddechrau'r rhyfel cloddio gan nwyon o'r ffrwydron a ddefnyddiwyd dan ddaear, penderfynwyd bod angen trefnu cyfleusterau 'achub' tebyg i'r rhai a ddefnyddiwyd yn y pyllau glo.

Sefydlwyd ysgol achub cloddfeydd arbennig tua dechrau 1916, a maes o law roedd pob twll Prydeinig o fewn 200 metr i orsaf achub dan ddaear. Cafodd 'dynion Proto' eu dethol yn ofalus am eu gallu i gadw'u pen o dan bwysau, a chawsant eu henwi diolch i'r cyfarpar anadlu sifilaidd (Proto) a ddefnyddiwyd ganddynt. Roedd dau ddyn ar ddyletswydd bob amser, gyda chyflenwad o gyfarpar achub wrth law.

Mae yna hanesion di-ri am yr ymdrechion i achub pobl o dan y ffosydd, ond yr enwocaf yw'r hanes a arweiniodd at yr unig dro i dwnelwr ennill Croes Fictoria. Roedd cloddwr o Gymru yn ganolog i'r hanes.

Glöwr yn Nhredegar Newydd oedd Corporal Isaac Rees Evans. Fel Milwr Arbennig Wrth Gefn yn y Ffiwsilwyr Brenhinol Cymreig, cafodd ei alw yn syth i'r fyddin, gan lanio yn Ffrainc ym mis Rhagfyr 1914 i ymuno ag un o dri bataliwn y Ffiwsilwyr Cymreig Brenhinol a oedd eisoes yn gwasanaethu yn Ffrainc.

Flwyddyn yn ddiweddarach, rhyddhawyd Evans o'r Fyddin fel milwr wrth gefn a oedd wedi cwblhau ei amser. Cyn pen deufis, ym mis Chwefror 1916, ail-ymrestrodd â'r Peirianwyr Brenhinol ac ymunodd â Chwmni Twnelu 254.

Un o'i ffrindiau yng Nghwmni Twnelu 254 oedd Sais o'r enw William Hackett. Fel llawer o ddynion ei genhedlaeth, roedd y Cloddiwr Hackett yn anlythrennog, ac roedd yn dibynnu ar ei ffrindiau i ysgrifennu llythyrau adref at ei deulu.

Ar fore 22 Mehefin 1916, roedd y Cloddiwr Hackett a phedwar dyn arall wrthi'n cloddio twnnel tuag at y gelyn yn ardal Givenchy, pan ddinistriwyd pum troedfedd ar hugain o'r twnnel gan un o ffrwydron yr Almaenwyr, gan gaethiwo pum dyn.

Roedd ffrwydrad yr Almaenwyr wedi creu twll ar wyneb y tir a oedd yn 120 llathen o hyd, dros 70 llathen o led a thua 30 troedfedd o ddyfnder. Cafodd yr enw 'Twll y Ddraig Goch' gan fod y ffrwydrad wedi digwydd yn syth o dan Gwmni B 2ail Fataliwn y Ffiwsilwyr Brenhinol Cymreig, Adran 38 (Cymreig), gan ladd neu anafu tua dwy ran o dair o'r cwmni. Fodd bynnag, llwyddodd gweddill y Bataliwn i ad-drefnu eu hunain yn gyflym, gan lwyddo i orchfygu cyrch mawr gan yr Almaenwyr.

Trefnwyd criw achub ar unwaith dan ddaear. Ar ôl deuddydd o gloddio, llwyddwyd i greu twll bach drwy'r pridd a'r preniach toredig. Helpodd William Hackett i arbed tri dyn, ond gwrthododd adael Thomas Collins, 22 oed, a oedd yn gweithio i 254 er ei fod yn aelod o Fataliwn y Swansea Pals, ac wedi'i anafu yn ddifrifol. Credir bod y Cloddiwr Hackett wedi dweud, "Twnelwr ydw i, mae'n rhaid i mi ofalu am y gweddill yn gyntaf".

Parhaodd yr achubwyr â'u gwaith, ond dymchwelodd y lefel eto, gan gaethiwo'r ddau ddyn. Mae'r ddau yn

gorwedd o dan gaeau Givenchy hyd heddiw.

Un o'r dynion a geisiodd achub William Hackett a Thomas Collins oedd Albert Mallows o Flaendulais. Roedd yn löwr a oedd wedi gwasanaethu ym Mataliwn y Swansea Pals hefyd cyn trosglwyddo i Gwmni Twnelu 254 a hyfforddi fel un o ddynion Proto.

Dyfarnwyd Croes Fictoria i William Hackett am ei weithred anhunanol, ac ef oedd yr unig dwnelwr i gael yr anrhydedd hon.

Ar ôl marwolaeth y Cloddiwr Hackett, ysgrifennodd Corporal Evans at ei wraig weddw Alice, a oedd eisoes yn ceisio ymdopi ag anffawd ar ôl i'w mab o löwr 16 oed, Arthur, golli un o'i goesau mewn damwain yn y pwll fis cyn i'w dad farw.

Yn dilyn y digwyddiad uchod, parhaodd Evans a Mallows i wasanaethu gyda Chwmni Twnelu 254, gan weithio yn sector Givenchy tan fis Mai 1917, pan symudodd y cwmni i gyfeiriad y gogledd ar gyfer y cyrch yn Ypres.

Arhosodd y cwmni yma gydol Brwydr Passchendaele, gan adeiladu tyllau ymochel i amddiffyn y troedfilwyr yn erbyn ergydion sielau. Wrth wneud y gwaith hwn ar 1 Awst 1917, cafodd coes dde'r Cloddiwr Mallows ei hanafu'n ddifrifol, a bu farw'n ddiweddarach y diwrnod hwnnw mewn ysbyty triniaeth dros dro. Roedd yn 21 oed.



The Rescuers

Early in the mining war, so many skilled tunnellers had been killed or injured by the gasses released by the explosives used underground that similar rescue facilities to those in coal mining needed to be organized.

A special mines rescue school was set up early in 1916 and eventually no British mining shaft was further than 200 metres from an underground rescue station. Named after the civilian rescue breathing equipment they used, 'Proto-men' were hand-picked and selected for coolness under pressure. Two men were on duty at all times, with a stock of rescue equipment ready to hand.

There are many tales to tell of rescue efforts beneath the trenches, but the most famous is that which resulted in the only award to a tunneller of the Victoria Cross. It was an episode in which Welsh miners were intimately involved.

Corporal Isaac Rees Evans was a miner at New Tredegar. As a Special Reservist in the Royal Welch Fusiliers, he was immediately called up and landed in France in December 1914 as a replacement for one of the three battalions of the Royal Welch Fusiliers already serving in France.

A year later Evans was discharged from the Army as a time-expired reservist. Just two months later in February 1916, he re-enlisted in the Royal Engineers and joined 254 Tunnelling Company.

One of his friends in 254 Tunnelling Company was an Englishman called William Hackett. Like many men of his generation Sapper Hackett was illiterate and relied on his younger friend to write his letters home for him.

On the morning of 22 June 1916 Hackett and four other men were driving a tunnel towards the enemy lines in the Givenchy area when the explosion of a German mine blew in twenty-five feet of the tunnel, trapping the five men.

The crater formed at the surface by the German mine was about 120 yards long, over 70 yards wide and some 30 feet deep. It was given the name the Red Dragon Crater because the mine had exploded directly under B Company of the 2nd Royal Welch Fusiliers, of the 38th (Welsh) Division, killing or injuring some two thirds of the company. The remnants of the Battalion had recovered quickly though and defeated a large German raid.

Back underground a rescue party was immediately organized. After two days of digging a small hole was formed through the fallen earth and broken timbers. Hackett helped three men to safety, but he refused to leave 22-year-old Thomas Collins, who had been attached to 254 Company from the Swansea Pals and was seriously injured. Hackett is reported to have said 'I am a tunneller, I must look after the others first'.

The rescuers worked on but the gallery collapsed again, entombing the two men. Both still lie beneath the fields of Givenchy today.

One of the men who attempted to rescue Hackett and Thomas Collins was Sapper Albert Mallows from Seven Sisters. He was a miner who had also served in the Swansea Pals before transferring to 254 Company and training as a Proto man.



William Hackett

July 3rd

Dear Mrs Hackett,

I am most sorry to have to write to you under such circumstances that is to inform you that your Husband Sapper Hackett was Killed in Action on 22nd June but I can tell you that that he died a heroes death as brave as any man as died in this war which I hope before long you will hear more about it.

And I can tell you your Husbands death is sadly felt as he was respected by all the officers and men of the 254 Company and as for myself I miss him so much as if he was my own Father as you know I used to write his letters for him. And all the boys of his section wish me to send you their best wishes and hope that you and the children will have the best of health and good luck and hope you will try and bear the sad news and they asked me to tell you that you can be proud of the way your husband died as he was a hero if ever there was one.

I only wish I could tell it the way it happen but as you know we are not allowed to but if I am spared to come over this lot I will come and see you and let you know all about it.

Well Mrs Hackett I must draw to a close by wishing you and the children the best of health and good luck.

I beg to remain

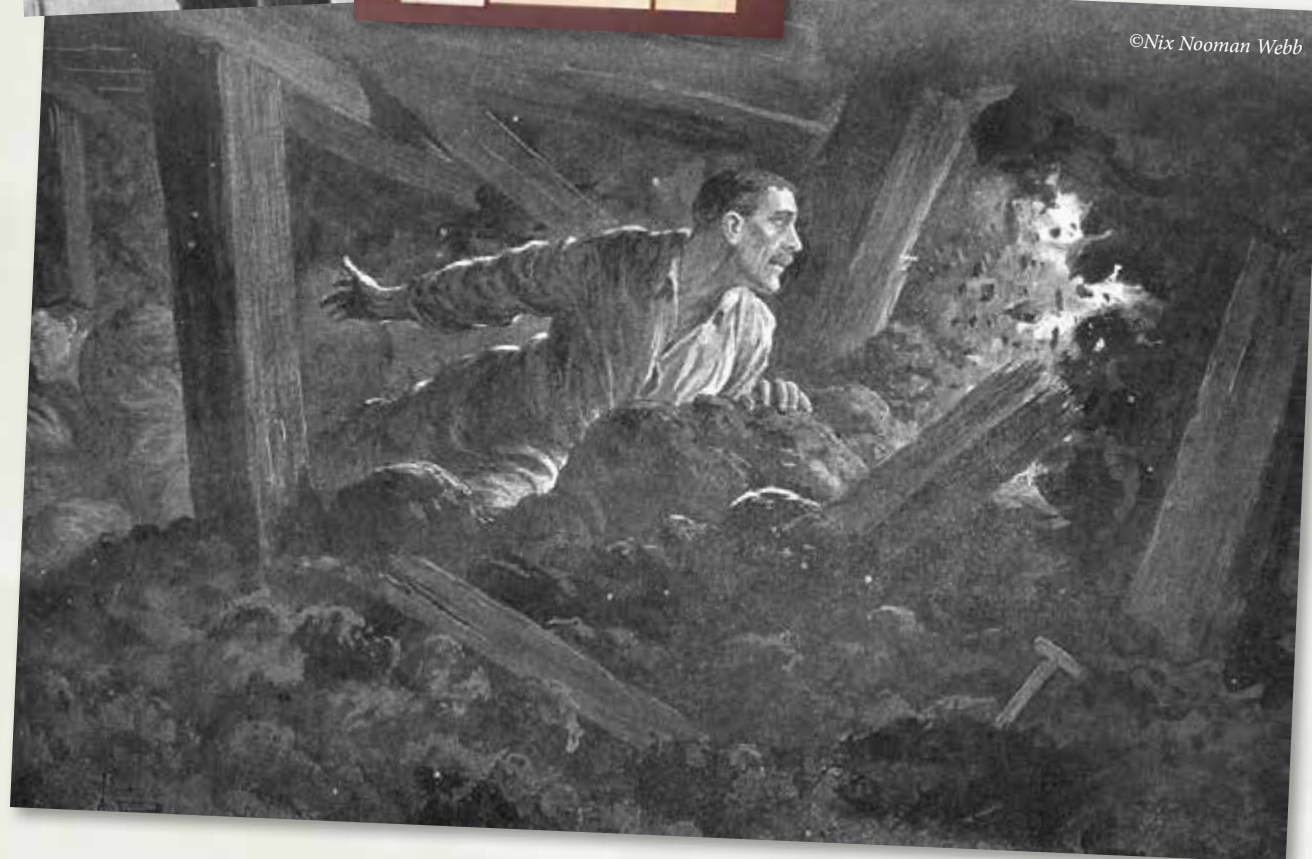
Yours truly I R Evans

Roedd y cwmni'n parhau i weithio ar gynlluniau ymochel ar faes brwydr Passchendaele ar 13 Mawrth 1918 pan beledwyd yr ardal gan sielïau nwy'r Almaenwyr. Anafwyd swyddog ac un ar hugain o ddynion Cwmni Twnelu 254 a lladdwyd Corporal Evans a phedwar dyn arall. Un o'r rhai a laddwyd y diwrnod hwnnw ac sydd wedi'i gladdu wrth ymyl Corporal Evans yw'r Cloddiwr Lewis Leigh o Borthcawl.



Bu'r paentiad hwn o Thomas Collins ar wal parlwr ei fam weddill ei hoes

This painting of Thomas Collins hung in his mother's parlour for the remainder of her life © REM



For his selfless act Hackett was eventually awarded the Victoria Cross, the only tunneller to be awarded this medal.

After Hackett's death Evans wrote to his widow Alice, who was already dealing with misfortune as her 16-year-old son Arthur, a coal miner, had lost a leg in a pit accident a month before his father's death.

Following the above incident, Evans and Mallows continued to serve with 254 Company working in the Givenchy sector until May 1917, when the company moved north to the Ypres salient.

The company remained here throughout the Battle of Passchendaele, constructing dugouts to protect the infantry from shellfire. It was while on this work on 1 August 1917 that Sapper Mallows's right leg was badly shattered, and he died later the same day in a clearing hospital. He was 21 years old.

The company was still working on dugout schemes on the Passchendaele battlefield on 13 March 1918 when the Germans bombarded the area with gas shells. An officer and twenty-one other ranks of 254 Company were wounded and Corporal Evans and four other men were killed. One of those killed that day and buried next to Corporal Evans is Sapper Lewis Leigh from Porthcawl.

Capten W. H. Rees, Cwmni Twnelu 250

Glöwr tawel, bach o gorfforaeth o Glydach ger Abertawe oedd William Haydn Rees. Roedd e'n 21 mlwydd oedd pan laniodd yn Ffrainc ym mis Mawrth 1915 fel Preifat ym Mataliwn 1af Catrawd Dyfnaint.

Erbyn mis Hydref y flwyddyn honno, roedd wedi'i gomisiynu'n Ail Is-gapten yng Nghwmni Twnelu 250 y Peirianwyr Brenhinol, ac erbyn diwedd y rhyfel roedd wedi'i ddyrchafu'n Uch-gapten.

Sefydlwyd Cwmni Twnelu 250 ym mis Hydref 1915, a bu'n cloddio'r cloddfeydd dwfn (Petit Bois, Peckham a Spanbroekmolen) o dan gefnen Messines. Peckham oedd cloddfa olaf Cwmni Twnelu 250, ac roedd yn dipyn o dalcen caled. Roedd y clai ei hun yn rhwystr difrifol wrth iddo chwyddo'n ddirolaeth. Roedd trawstiau a oedd yn ddigon cryf mewn twnelau eraill yn torri fel matsis a bu'n rhaid eu disodli â thrawstiau saith modfedd enfawr. Roedd y llawr yn codi mor ddrwg nes y bu'n rhaid codi'r dramffordd bren a osodwyd i waredu gwastraff a gosod un arall yn ei lle.

Gan fod yr anawsterau saernïol mor ddifrifol ym Mheckham, teimlwyd mai dim ond mwyngloddwyr greddfod fyddai'n gallu ymdopi â'r twnnel. Un o'r rhain oedd yr Is-gapten Haydn Rees, 'the stocky little Welshman from the collieries', a swyddog yng ngofal adran Rhif 3.

Fel ym mhobman arall, cafodd morterau a daniwyd yn erbyn mynedfeydd y twnnel effaith ddifrifol ar gynnydd, a phan oedd cyrch gan yr Almaenwyr ar fin llwyddo, bu'n rhaid i'r Twnelwyr ruthro i'r stepen danio a cheisio defnyddio reifflau anghyfarwydd. Pan oedd ysbryd y dynion yn isel, pwysleisiodd yr Rees eu bod yn ffodus i fod lle roedden nhw gan mai Peckham oedd yr unig dwnnel ar hyd cefnen Messines lle nad oedd yr Almaenwyr wrthi'n cloddio hefyd.

Fodd bynnag, roedd yr Almaenwyr wrthi'n cloddio mewn llefydd eraill, ac ar un adeg bu'n rhaid i Rees a'i ddynion adael eu twnelau eu hunain pan oedd dwsin o ddynion yn gaeth mewn gwrthgloddfa o eiddo'r Almaenwyr yn nhwnnel Petit Bois. Rhuthrodd tîm achub yn gwisgo cyfarpar anadlu Proto i'r twnnel, gan ddweud bod rhwystr wedi'i ganfod 1,250 troedfedd o fynedfa'r siafft. Roedd yn edrych fel bod angen clirio 300 llathen neu fwy o rwbel er mwyn cyrraedd y dynion. Doedd eu gobeithion o oroesi ddim yn addawol.

Roedd Rees yn gyfarwydd â gwaith achub oherwydd ei brofiad o weithio mewn glofeydd, ac aeth ati i helpu i drefnu'r gwaith achub. Torrodd y dynion drwy'r clai yn gyflym iawn. Fel arfer, byddai pymtheg troedfedd y dydd o glai yn cael ei ystyried yn dda, ond llwyddodd timau achub Petit Bois i symud deugain troedfedd y dydd ar gyfartaledd.

Roedd pob un o'r dynion a oedd yn gaeth wedi goroesi ffrwydrad gwreiddiol yr Almaenwyr. Roedden nhw wedi ymgasglu ger pen y twnnel a oedd wedi dymchwel lle'r oedd ychydig o aer yn dod trwy doriad yn y bibell awyru am ychydig oriau.

Roedd y Cloddiwr Bedson yn fwyngloddwr profiadol, a chynghorodd y dynion eraill i wasgaru cyn gwneud ei ffordd i ben pellaf y twnnel a oedd ychydig yn uwch

a lle nad oedd yr aer lawn mor aflan. Yn y fan honno gwnaeth wely o fagiau tywod iddo ei hun, tynnodd y gwydr o'i oriawr fel y gallai deimlo'r amser â'i fysedd, a gosododd ei botel ddŵr wrth ei ymyl.

Wedyn gorweddodd i aros. Chwe diwrnod a hanner yn ddiweddarach, torrodd yr achubwyr drwodd, gan ganfod mai dim ond y Cloddiwr Bedson a oedd yn fyw.

Dychwelodd Rees a'i ddynion i'w cloddfa ym Mheckham wedyn. Cafodd y prif dwnnel 1,150 troedfedd ei ddifrodi'n ddifrifol deirgwaith yn sgil cwmp, a hyd yn oed ar ei orau roedd y twnnel hwn yn llawn dŵr, tywod a llysnafedd. Ym mis Ionawr 1917, pan oedd yn ymddangos bod y rhan fwyaf o'r problemau wedi'u goresgyn, dymchwelodd y brif lefel eto yn annisgwyl. Roedd Rees yn benderfynol o adfer y lefel, ac aeth ati i ddefnyddio pyst dur yn hytrach na rhai pren, gan osgoi'r rhan a ddifethwyd ac ail-wifro'r ffrwydryn 87,000lb i'w danio.

Min nos ar 6 Mehefin 1917 pan oedd popeth yn barod, clywodd y swyddogion y geiriau canlynol gan y Cadfridog Plumer, a oedd yng ngofal y milwyr a oedd ar fin ymosod "Gentlemen, we may not make history tomorrow, but we shall certainly change the geography."

Yn ystod oriau mân 7 Mehefin, disgwyliodd yr Is-gapten Rees a'r swyddogion eraill yn y ffosydd Prydeinig a wynebai gefnen Messines gan gyfri'r eliadau hyd at

Suddenly, all hell broke loose. It was indescribable. In the pale light it appeared as if the whole enemy line had begun to dance, then, one after another, huge tongues of flame shot hundreds of feet into the air, followed by dense columns of smoke, which flattened out at the top like gigantic mushrooms. From some craters were discharged tremendous showers of sparks rivalling anything ever conceived in the way of fireworks. The whole scene was majestic in its awfulness. At the same moment, every gun opened up, the din became deafening and then nothing could be seen of the front, but the bursting of our barrage and the distress flares of the enemy.

Twnelwr anhysbys, Cwmni Twnelu 250, 1927

yr amser penodedig cyn tanio'r pedwar ffrwydryn ar bymtheg o dan ffosydd yr Almaenwyr.

Y ffrwydradau hyn oedd dechrau Brwydr Ypres a bu farw 10,000 o Almaenwyr mewn ychydig eiliadau. Hwn oedd y swm gwneud cryfaf erioed, a chafodd ei glywed mor bell i ffwrdd â Dulyn. Roedd y twll a gafodd ei greu gan ffrwydrad Peckham yn 240 troedfedd o led, ac fel sawl twll arall a grëwyd ym 1917, mae'n bodoli hyd heddiw. Goroesodd y Capten Rees y rhyfel a dychwelodd adref i Glydach.



Captain W. H. Rees, 250 Tunnelling Company



William Haydn Rees was a short, quiet-spoken, Mine Surveyor from Clydach near Swansea. When he landed in France in March 1915 as a Private in the 1st Battalion of the Devonshire Regiment he was 21 years of age.

By October of the same year he had been commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in 250 Tunnelling Company and ended the war with the rank of Major.

The 250 Tunnelling Company was formed in October 1915, and dug the deep-level mines (Petit Bois, Peckham and Spanbroekmolen) under the Messines Ridge. Peckham was the last of the 250 Tunnelling Company mines, and was beset by what seemed impossible odds. The clay alone was a serious hindrance as it swelled uncontrollably and timbers that proved strong enough in other tunnels snapped like cheese sticks and had to be replaced with massive seven-inch balks. The floor lifted so badly that a wooden tramway laid for spoil-removal had to be ripped up and replaced.

Such were the constructional difficulties in Peckham that it was felt that only miners of heart could have carried on. Such a man was Lieutenant Haydn Rees, 'the stocky little Welshman from the collieries', and officer in charge of No. 3 section.

As elsewhere, mortar fire on the tunnel entrances had had a devastating effect on progress and when a German raid looked as if it might succeed the tunnellers had to rush to the fire step to fumble with unfamiliar rifles. When morale was low Rees pointed out that they were really fortunate to be where they were, for Peckham was the only tunnel along the Messines Ridge where German countermining was absent.

The Germans were active elsewhere however, and Lieut. Rees and his men were at one stage called away from their own tunnels when twelve men were trapped by a German countermine in the Petit Bois tunnel. A rescue team in Proto breathing apparatus rushed to the scene and reported that a blockage had been found 1,250 feet in from the entrance shaft. It looked as if 300 or more feet of tangled debris might have to be cleared to reach the men. Their chances of survival were rated as poor.

Rees knew about rescue work from his days in the

collieries and helped to organize the rescue attempt. The men sprang at the clay and tore their way through it at incredible speed. Normally fifteen feet a day was considered good, but the Petit Bois rescue teams held an average of forty feet a day.

The trapped men had all survived the initial explosion of the German mine. They had gathered by the fallen end of the tunnel where a little air seeped through a break in the ventilation pipe for a few hours.

Sapper Bedson, an experienced miner, advised the others to spread out and made his own way to the far end of the tunnel, which was slightly elevated and where the air was a trifle less foul. There he made himself a bed of sandbags, removed the glass from his watch so that he could feel the time, and placed his water bottle beside him. He then lay down to wait. The eleven other men died on the first day but six and a half days later when the rescuers finally broke through, Sapper Bedson was still alive.

After this Rees and his men returned to their Peckham mine battling the terrible conditions and numerous collapses in order to lay the 87,000lb charge and keep it ready for firing.

On the evening of 6 June 1917, with everything ready, General Plumer, who commanded the troops about to attack, told his officers 'Gentlemen, we may not make history tomorrow, but we shall certainly change the geography.'

In the early hours of 7 June, Rees and other officers in the British trenches facing the Messines Ridge counted down the seconds to the appointed time and fired the

Suddenly, all hell broke loose. It was indescribable. In the pale light it appeared as if the whole enemy line had begun to dance, then, one after another, huge tongues of flame shot hundreds of feet into the air, followed by dense columns of smoke, which flattened out at the top like gigantic mushrooms. From some craters were discharged tremendous showers of sparks rivalling anything ever conceived in the way of fireworks. The whole scene was majestic in its awfulness. At the same moment, every gun opened up, the din became deafening and then nothing could be seen of the front, but the bursting of our barrage and the distress flares of the enemy.

Anonymous tunneller, 250 TC, 1927

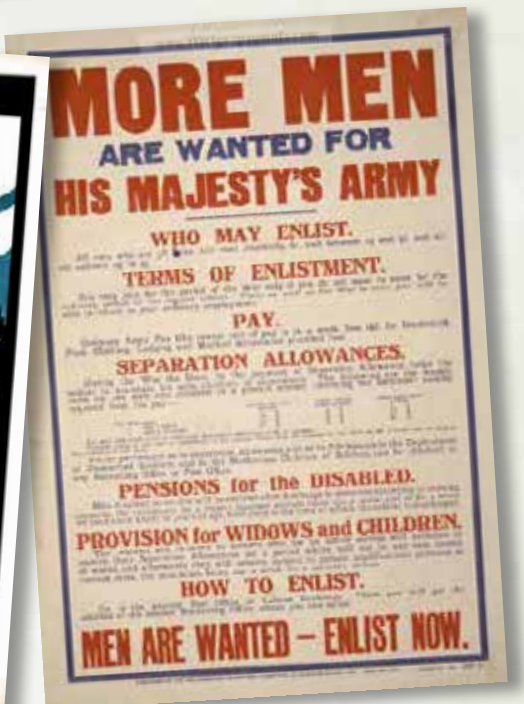
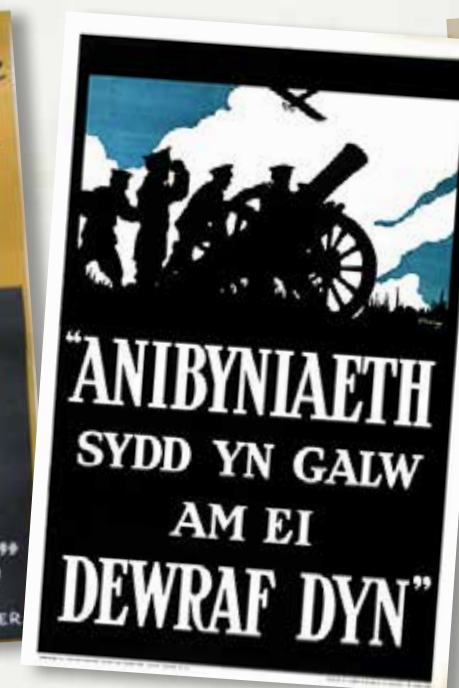
nineteen mines under the German trenches.

The firing of the mines marked the opening of the battle of Ypres and 10,000 Germans died in moments. It was the loudest man-made sound in history and was heard as far away as Dublin. The crater left by the Peckham mine was 240 feet in diameter and, like several other craters formed in 1917, still exists today.

Anfonwch Ragor o Ddynion

Wrth i'r rhyfel twnelu ehangu a mwy o Gwmnïau Twnelu gael eu sefydlu, roedd angen mwy o gloddwyr profiadol. Nid oedd modd trosglwyddo gormod o ddynion o'r bataliynau troedfilwyr, gan fod angen dybryd amdanynt i wneud y gwaith hwnnw, felly cyn bo hir bu'n rhaid i'r Cwmnïau Twnelu ddechrau recriwtio cloddwyr yn uniongyrchol o fywyd siflaidd.

Roedd rhai o'r rhain yn lowyr ifanc a chymharol ddibrofiad, ond roedd llawer yn ddynion hŷn a oedd yn dweud celwydd am eu hoedran weithiau. Nid oedd rhai o'r dynion hŷn yn gallu ymdopi â'r llafur corfforol caled, ac anfonwyd llawer ohonynt adref o fewn wythnosau. Fodd bynnag, roedd profiad cloddio'r rhai a oedd yn ddigon cryf i aros yn werthfawr iawn maes o law.



Send More Men

As the tunnelling war expanded and more tunnelling companies were formed, more and more experienced miners were needed. There was a limit to the number of men who could be transferred from the infantry battalions, where they were also badly needed, so miners soon began to be recruited direct from civilian life.

Some of these were young and relatively inexperienced miners but many were older men who sometimes lied about their age. Some of these older men were not up to the hard physical labour involved and were sent back home within weeks, but the mining experience of those that made the grade soon came to be appreciated.

William Arthur Lloyd, Cwmni Twnelu 179

Roedd William Arthur Lloyd yn 37 oed ac yn dad i chwech o blant. Bu'n gweithio yng Nglofa Brychdyn Newydd, Wrecsam cyn symud i weithio y tu ôl i'r bar yng nghlwb lleol y glowyr. Ymunodd â Chwmni Twnelu 179 yn uniongyrchol o fywyd siflaidd yn fuan ar ôl sefydlu'r cwmni ym mis Gorffennaf 1915.

Symudodd Cwmni Twnelu 179 i barth deheuol y Somme, a thros y misoedd nesaf bu Lloyd yn ymladd y gelyn dan ddaear mewn drysfa o dwnelau wrth i un o frwydrau mwyaf gwaedllyd y Rhyfel Byd Cyntaf gael ei hymladd uwchben.

Roedd y brwydrau dan ddaear yn ffyrnig hefyd. Lladdwyd chwe dyn o Gwmni 179 a saith troedfilwr a oedd yn gysylltiedig â'r cwmni gan un o'r frwydron yr Almaenwyr ym mis Tachwedd 1915. Roedd Cwmni Twnelu 179 wedi tanio un o'u frwydron eu hunain mewn ymateb, ac erbyn canol mis Rhagfyr roedd Lloyd a'i gymrodwr wedi gosod

ffrwydryn arall ac yn aros am yr amser gorau i'w danio.

Ond unwaith eto, roedd yr Almaenwyr wedi bod wrthi'n cloddio eu twnelau eu hunain, a heb yn wybod i'r Prydeinwyr roedden nhw wedi gosod eu ffrwydryn eu hunain. Am 3pm ar 19 Rhagfyr roedd y Cloddiwr Lloyd a phedwar cloddiwr arall yn gweithio 80 troedfedd o dan dir neb pan daniodd yr Almaenwyr eu ffrwydryn, gan gladdu pum dyn. Gwnaed ymdrech i achub y dynion yn syth ar ôl y ffrwydrad, ond roedd y twnelau wedi dymchwel yn gyfan gwbl, gan gladdu'r dynion am byth.

Y Cloddiwr Lloyd a'i gymrodwr oedd y diweddaraf ymhlith y rhai a fu farw yn y rhyfel dan ddaear. Bu farw cyfanswm o 38 milwr y cynghreiriaid, gan gynnwys deg glöwr o Ffrainc, o dan y rhan o'r Somme lle'r oedd Cwmni Twnelu 179 yn gweithredu.

Twll ffrwydron Hawthorn Ridge / Hawthorn Ridge mine © IWM



William Arthur Lloyd, 179 Tunnelling Company

William Arthur Lloyd was a 37-year-old father of six and had worked at New Broughton Colliery, Wrexham before switching to bar work in the local miners' club. He joined 179 Tunnelling Company direct from civilian life shortly after it was formed in July 1915.

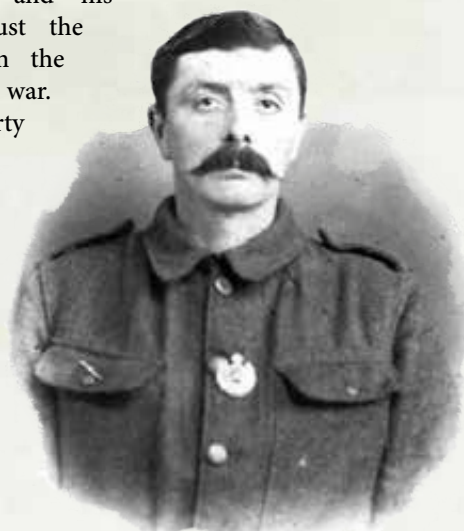
The 179 Tunnelling Company moved into the southern sector of the Somme and for the next few months Lloyd fought the enemy underground in a warren of tunnels as one of the bloodiest battles of the First World War raged above.

The battles underground were pretty fierce as well. In November 1915, six men of 179 Company and seven attached infantrymen were killed by a German mine. 179 Company had retaliated with a mine of their own and by mid-December Lloyd and his comrades had laid another charge and were just biding their time waiting for the right time to blow it.

But once again the Germans had been digging their own tunnels and unbeknown to the British had laid their own charge. At 3pm on 19 December Sapper Lloyd and four other miners were working eighty feet below no man's land when the Germans set off their charge entombing the

five men. Immediately after the explosion, efforts were made to rescue the men, but the explosion had completely collapsed the tunnels, burying the men forever.

Sapper Lloyd and his comrades were just the latest casualties in the underground war. Altogether thirty eight allied soldiers, including ten French miners, lost their lives beneath that part of the Somme where the 179 Company operated.



Thomas Parry, Cwmni Twnelu 171 a 173

Glofa Lady Lewis
Lady Lewis colliery



Diffoddwr tân 41 oed a weithiai yng Nglofa Lady Lewis, Ynys-hir gyda'i fab 18 oed, Daniel oedd Thomas Parry. Ym mis Awst 1915, ychydig fisoedd ar ôl i'w fab ymuno â'r lluoedd, ymunodd Thomas Parry â'r Peirianwyr Brenhinol fel Cloddiwr.

Ymunodd â Chwmni Twnelu 171 yn Ffrainc fel 'Cydweithiwr Twnelwr' 10 diwrnod yn unig ar ôl ymrestru yng Nghaerdydd. Ar ôl dangos ei allu dros y ddeufis nesaf, cafodd ei ddrychafu'n Dwnelwr gan dderbyn mwy o gyflog am ei waith.

Thomas Parry, 171 & 173 Tunnelling Company

Thomas Parry was a 41-year-old colliery fireman at Lady Lewis Colliery, Ynys-hir where his 18-year-old son Daniel also worked. In August 1915, a few months after his son had joined up, Parry enlisted in the Royal Engineers as a Sapper.

He joined 171 Tunnelling Company in France as a Tunneller's Mate just ten days after signing up in Cardiff. Two months later, his experience satisfactorily demonstrated, he was re-mustered as a Tunneller and received the higher rate of pay.

After a year with 171 Company near St Yves and the Messines Ridge, Sapper Parry was invalided back to a London hospital with kidney problems. While still recovering and no doubt bored with garrison life, he was given seven days company punishment for 'conduct to the prejudice of good order and military discipline'. He is said to have always liked a pint!

Parry rejoined the fight with 173 Tunnelling Company, and was working near Ypres when in March 1918 the German Spring Offensive was launched.

Ar ôl blwyddyn o weithio gyda Chwmni Twnelu 171 ger St Yves a chefnen Messines, dychwelodd y Cloddiwr Parry yn glaf i'r ysbyty yn Llundain oherwydd problemau â'i arennau. Ac yntau'n dal i wella o'i salwch, ac wedi diflasu â bywyd garsiwn fwy na thebyg, cafodd gosb saith niwrnod am 'conduct to the prejudice of good order and military discipline'. Roedd yn hoff iawn o'i beint yn ôl pob sôn!

Dychwelodd Parry i'r frwydr gan ymuno â Chwmni Twnelu 173, ac roedd yn gweithio ger Ypres pan lansiodd yr Almaenwyr eu Cyrch Gwanwyn ym mis Mawrth 1918.

Gyda'r Almaenwyr o fewn pymtheng milltir i borthladdoedd y Sanel, cyhoeddodd y cadlywydd Prydeinig, y Maeslywydd Syr Douglas Haig, 'Order of the Day' ar 11 Ebrill, "With our backs to the wall and believing in the justice of our cause, each one of us must fight on to the end."

Llwyddodd Thomas Parry i oroesi cyrch yr Almaenwyr, a'r rhyfel, ond lladdwyd ei fab 22 oed, Daniel ar 11 Ebrill wrth wasanaethu gyda Bataliwn 1af Catrawd Dyfnaint. Ddiwrnod yn unig cyn hynny, roedd y London Gazette wedi cyhoeddi bod Daniel wedi ennill y Fedal Filwrol am weithred gynharach o ddewrder.



With the Germans just fifteen miles from the Channel ports, the British commander Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig issued an Order of the Day on 11 April: 'With our backs to the wall and believing in the justice of our cause, each one of us must fight on to the end.'

Parry survived the German offensive, and the war, but his son Daniel was killed on 11 April while serving with the 1st Battalion Dorset Regiment. Just the day before the London Gazette had announced that Daniel had been awarded the Military Medal for an earlier act of bravery.

Troedfilwyr Cysylltiedig

Erbyn canol 1916, roedd tua 25,000 o Brydeinwyr yn gwasanaethu yn y Cwmnïau Twnelu. Fodd bynnag, roedd bron i ddwywaith yn fwy na hynny o droedfilwyr cysylltiedig yn gweithio'n barhaol ochr yn ochr â nhw fel anifeiliaid pwn, gan gyrchu a chludo, pwmpio aer a dŵr a gwaredu gwastraff o'r gwaith cloddio twnelau.

Aeth un o swyddogion 8fed Bataliwn Catrawd Dwyrain Surrey ati i ddisgrifio bywyd gyda'r Twnelwyr:

Very interesting, very safe at some times, and very dangerous at others. There was no danger from shells and trench mortars, but the French, from who we had taken over in August, had very mistakenly begun mining without carrying out a vigorous policy; the Germans had replied with much more energy and effect, and by this time had got more than two-thirds of the way across No Man's Land, here about 100yards wide, with their galleries.

Consequently, going underground involved some uncertainty as to the return journey. But the life was far superior to that of the infantry. We had shorter spells in the trenches; two days in the line, and two or three days back at headquarters in Meaulte. This meant that one worked really hard for a definite visible result in the line and had a real rest out of it; whereas, the infantry's duties were those of passive routine in the line and very tedious and continuous training while out of it.

Daniel Brookes Evans

Roedd Daniel Evans yn un o lawer o ddynion a fu farw pan oedd ar ddyletswydd gyda'r Twnelwyr. Roedd yn ddyn priod o Ferthyr Tudful a oedd yn gweithio mewn glofa leol ar ddechrau'r rhyfel. Mae ei gofnodion gwasanaeth yn anghyflawn, ond gwyddom iddo ymuno ag 16eg Bataliwn y Ffiwsilwyr Brenhinol Cymreig, gan lanio yn Ffrainc ym mis Rhagfyr 1915.

Roedd 16eg Bataliwn y Ffiwsilwyr Brenhinol Cymreig yn rhan o Adran 38 (Cymru), a chymerodd ran yn yr ymosodiadau tyngedfennol ar goedwig Mametz rhwng 7 a 12 Gorffennaf 1916. Yn debyg i'r bataliynau Cymreig eraill, colodd y 16eg Bataliwn tua dwy ran o dair o'i swyddogion a'i dynion ym Mametz.

Llwyddodd Corporal Evans i oroesi'r ymladd ym Mametz, ond cafodd ei drosglwyddo i Gwmni Twnelu 177 wedyn a'i ladd wrth ymladd yn 'Railway Wood' ar 9 Ebrill 1917.

Heddiw mae Bedd y Peirianwyr Brenhinol yn nodi'r fan lle cafodd wyth o Beirianwyr Brenhinol Cwmni Twnelu 177 a phedwar troedfilwr cysylltiedig eu lladd yn y frwydr dan ddaear. Mae cyrff y dynion hyn, gan gynnwys Evans.

Mae enwau'r dynion wedi'u harysgrifio ar ochrau gwaelod y groes. Yn ogystal ag arwyddluniau'r Peirianwyr Brenhinol, ceir arwyddluniau'r Ffiwsilwyr Brenhinol Cymreig a Chatrawd Lerpwl y Brenin – sef catrodau'r dynion a laddwyd.

Er i Gwmni Twnelu 177 a'r Cwmnïau Twnelu eraill yn yr ardal gael mwy o lwyddiant na thwnelwyr yr Almaen ar y cyfan, byddai'r ffosydd uwchben ym meddiant yr Almaenwyr a'r Prydeinwyr am yn ail hyd at ddiwedd y rhyfel.



Cludo coed i'r ffrynt
Carrying timber to the front © AWM

Attached Infantry

By mid-1916 the British had around 25,000 men serving in the tunnelling companies, but almost twice that number of attached infantry worked permanently alongside them acting as beasts of burden, fetching and carrying, pumping air and water and removing spoil produced by the digging of the tunnels.

An officer with the 8th Battalion East Surrey Regiment, has left us with a description of life with the Tunnellers:

Very interesting, very safe at some times, and very dangerous at others. There was no danger from shells and trench mortars, but the French, from who we had taken over in August, had very mistakenly begun mining without carrying out a vigorous policy; the Germans had replied with much more energy and effect, and by this time had got more than two-thirds of the way across No Man's Land, here about 100yards wide, with their galleries.

Consequently, going underground involved some uncertainty as to the return journey. But the life was far superior to that of the infantry. We had shorter spells in the trenches; two days in the line, and two or three days back at headquarters in Meaulte. This meant that one worked really hard for a definite visible result in the line and had a real rest out of it; whereas, the infantry's duties were those of passive routine in the line and very tedious and continuous training while out of it.

Daniel Brookes Evans

Daniel Evans was one of many men who lost their lives while on attached duty with the Tunnellers. He was a married man from Merthyr Tydfil who was working at a local colliery when war broke out. His service records are incomplete but we know he joined the 16th Battalion of the Royal Welch Fusiliers and landed in France in December 1915.

The 16th Battalion was part of the 38th (Welsh) Division and took part in the fateful attacks on Mametz Wood between 7 and 12 July 1916. Like the other Welsh battalions the 16th lost around two thirds of its officers and men as casualties at Mametz.

Corporal Evans survived the fighting in Mametz but was killed in action on 9 April 1917 at Railway Wood whilst attached to 177 Tunnelling Company during the defence of Ypres.

Today the Royal Engineers' Grave, with its Cross of Sacrifice, marks the spot where eight men from 177 Tunnelling Company and four attached infantrymen were killed in action underground. The bodies of these men, including Daniel Evans, still lie where they died in the fighting tunnels below.

As well as the insignia of the Royal Engineers, there is also the insignia of the Royal Welch Fusiliers and The King's Liverpool Regiment, the regiments from which the men had been attached.

Although underground the British generally got the upper hand over the German tunnellers, possession of the trenches above switched back and forth between the Germans and the British right up to the end of the war.



James Herbert Spencer

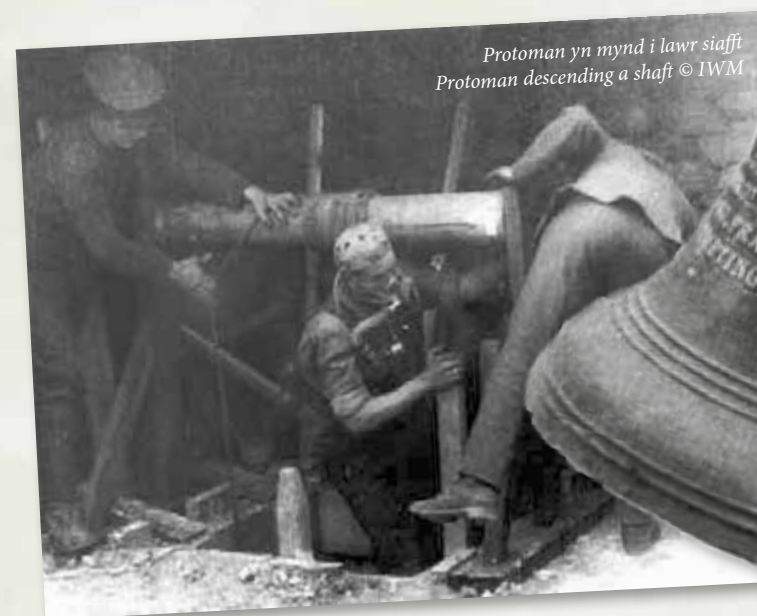
Glöwr 26 oed o'r Coed-duon oedd James Herbert Spencer. Roedd yn byw gyda'i rieni ac yn Gorporal yng Nghwmni 'H', Bataliwn 1af Catrawd Sir Fynwy.

Glaniodd Corporal Spencer yn Ffrainc gyda'r bataliwn ym mis Chwefror 1915. Roedd yn un o'r pedwar ugain o wirfoddolwr cyntaf o Fataliwn 1af a 3ydd Bataliwn Catrawd Sir Fynwy i ddod yn rhan o Gwmni Twnelu 171.

Pan ddechreuodd Cwmni Twnelu 171 gloddio ger The Mound a Hill 60, roedd Twnelwyr y ddwy ochr ar ras wyllt i gloddio eu twnelau yn agos i rai'r gelyn, ac ar ôl eu llenwi â ffrwydron, eu tanio wedyn cyn y gelyn. Digwyddiad o'r fath a achosodd farwolaeth Sarsiant Spencer, fel yr oedd erbyn hynny, ar 2 Mehefin. Roedd yn parhau i fod yn aelod o Fataliwn 1af Catrawd Sir Fynwy pan fuodd farw, ond Prif Swyddog Cwmni Twnelu 171 a anfonodd lythyr at ei fam yn nodi manylion ei farwolaeth:

Your son was in charge of a party working up at the trenches on Wednesday evening. The Germans blew in one of our mines, burying one man and partly burying another. There was a large amount of poisonous gas in the mine at the time. Your son very gallantly went down to this end of the gallery to try and rescue one other man, but was overcome by the fumes, and when he was brought out of the gallery, was dead.

He has been buried behind the trenches, and his grave marked by a cross. He was always conspicuous in the trenches for his zealotness and he met his end fearlessly and doing his duty as a soldier should. I can only again express my sympathy with you in your loss, yours sincerely - E. Wellesley, Capt. RE, OC 171 Coy, Royal Engineers.



Roedd cymrodyr Spencer wedi ceisio ei achub rhag y nwy. Aeth yr Is-gapten Kinloch i lawr i'r siafft yn gwisgo cyfarpar Proto, a llwyddodd i glymu rhaff o gwmpas Sarsiant Spencer. Ond yn anffodus, daeth ei gyfarpar ceg yn rhydd yn ddamweiniol, ac wrth i'r nwy ddechrau effeithio arno ef hefyd, bu'n rhaid iddo adael y siafft. Cafodd yr Is-gapten Kinloch ei ladd yn ddiweddarach yn y rhyfel gan ffrwydrad mewn cloddfa ym mis Gorffennaf 1915.

Mae'r arysgrif ganlynol i'w gweld ar gloch Eglwys Santes Margaret yn y Coed-duon:

*To The Glory Of God
In Memory Of Sergt. J.H. Spencer, Who Was
Gassed At Hill 60, France, June 2nd 1915,
When Nobly Attempting To Save A Comrade.*

Collwyd bedd Sarsiant Spencer wedyn ac mae ei enw yn ymddangos ar Gofeb Clwyd Menin. Mae enwau llw o rai eraill a fu farw 'o dan' a ger Hill 60 yn ystod y rhyfel ac nad oes ganddynt fedd hysbys i'w gweld ar Glwyd Menin hefyd ac ar gofebion eraill fel yr un ym Mynwent Tyne Cot.

Genhedlaeth yn ddiweddarach, roedd brwydr ffyrnig arall rhwng yr Almaenwyr a'r Prydeinwyr ar Hill 60. Mae'n annhebygol bod milwyr 1940 yn gwybod bod cyrff y rhai a fu farw ym 1914-18 oddi tanynt ym mhobman.



James Herbert Spencer

James Herbert Spencer was a 26-year-old miner from Blackwood. He lived with his parents and was a Corporal in H Company, 1st Battalion Monmouthshire Regiment.

Spencer landed in France with the battalion in February 1915. He was in the first batch of eighty volunteers from the 1st and 3rd Battalions of the Monmouthshire Regiment who were initially attached to 171 Tunnelling Company.

When 171 Tunnelling Company began mining at The Mound and Hill 60 the tunnellers of both sides were in a terrifying race to dig their tunnels close to those of the enemy, and having filled them with explosives, detonate their charge before the other side could. On 2 June it was one such occasion that caused the death of now Sergeant Spencer. He was still a member of the 1st Battalion of the Monmouthshire Regiment when he died but the Commanding Officer of 171 Tunnelling Company sent a letter to his mother giving details of how he died:

Your son was in charge of a party working up at the trenches on Wednesday evening. The Germans blew in one of our mines, burying one man and partly burying another. There was a large amount of poisonous gas in the mine at the time. Your son very gallantly went down to this end of the gallery to try and rescue one other man, but was overcome by the fumes, and when he was brought out of the gallery, was dead.

He has been buried behind the trenches, and his grave marked by a cross. He was always conspicuous in the trenches for his zealotness and he met his end fearlessly and doing his duty as a soldier should. I can only again express my sympathy with you in your loss, yours sincerely - E. Wellesley, Capt. RE, OC 171 Coy, Royal Engineers.

Spencer's comrades had tried to save him when he was overcome by gas. Lieutenant Kinloch, wearing a Proto apparatus, descended the shaft and managed to tie a rope around Spencer but accidentally knocked off his mouthpiece and, on being overcome by gas himself, was forced to leave the shaft. Kinloch was later killed in a mine explosion in July 1915.

The church bell of St Margaret's in Blackwood bears the following inscription:

*To The Glory Of God
In Memory Of Sergt. J.H. Spencer, Who Was
Gassed At Hill 60, France, June 2nd 1915,
When Nobly Attempting To Save A Comrade.*

Sergeant Spencer's grave was later lost and his name appears on the Menin Gate Memorial. The names of many more who were to die under and around Hill 60 over the remaining years of the war and have no known grave also appear on the Menin Gate and other memorials such as that at Tyne Cot Cemetery.

© Ray Westlake



A generation later Hill 60 was again the site of a desperate battle between the Germans and the British. It is unlikely that any of the soldiers of 1940 knew that the dead of 1914-18 lay all around them.





Milwyr wrth gefn Gwarchodlu'r Grenadwyr yn barod i wasanaethu
Reservists of the Grenadier Guards reporting for duty © IWM



David John Jones

Roedd David John Jones yn löwr yn Nhreorci, Rhondda a hefyd yn filwr wth gefn pan ddechreuodd y rhyfel. Ymunodd a'r 2il Fataliwn Gwarchodlu'r Grenadwyr am dair blynedd cyn dychwelyd i fywyd cyffredin.

Tua dechrau 1915 daeth yn rhan o Gwmni Twnelu 170 a oedd yn gweithio yn Cuinchy ar y pryd, pentref bach ar ochr ddeheuol Camlas Bethune-La Bassee. Roedd Cwmni Twnelu 170 wedi cael llwyddiant cynnar yn erbyn yr Almaenwyr drwy ffrwydro dwy gloddfa fawr o dan reng flaen yr Almaenwyr yn y 'Brickstacks'.

Yn ôl ei gofnodion gwasanaeth, roedd David Jones ar fin trosglwyddo'n barhaol i Gwmni Twnelu 170 cyn i ddigwyddiadau 22 Mehefin 1914 roi diwedd ar hynny. Y bore hwnnw, tarodd y cloddwyr Almaenig a oedd yn gweithio gyferbyn â Chwmni Twnelu 170 yn ôl drwy ffrwydro cloddfa, gan gaethiwo naw o'r twnelwyr Prydeinig.

Jones oedd y dyn cyntaf i weld y trychineb, ac er gwaethaf y perygl o ergydion gynnu peiriant y gelyn o'r ffosydd, rhuthrodd i'r fan. Ar ôl disgyn i'r gloddfa, dychwelodd yn fuan wedyn yn llusgo un o'i gymrodyr anymwybodol. Weithiau'n cropian, weithiau'n rhedeg, llwyddodd i symud y dyn anffodus i ddiogelwch, ac ar ôl ei adael yng ngofal ei gymrodyr aeth yn ôl i chwilio am eraill.

Dro ar ôl tro disgynnodd Jones i'r gloddfa, gan ymladd yn erbyn mwg a nwy gwenwynig y ffrwydrad dan ddaear ac ergydion y gelyn uwchben, nes iddo helpu i achub pob un o'r dynion a oedd yn gaeth. Erbyn hynny, er nad oedd wedi'i anafu, prin ei fod yn gallu anadlu oherwydd effeithiau'r nwy gwenwynig, a bu'n rhaid iddo yntau gael cymorth i gyrraedd y ffosydd Prydeinig.

Yn dilyn arhosiad byr yn yr ysbyty yn gwella o effeithiau'r nwy, dychwelodd Preifat Jones i weithio gyda dynion Cwmni Twnelu 170. Yn y cyfamser roedd wedi ennill y DCM "for conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty". Yn ogystal, enillodd Fedal Rwsiaidd Sant Siôr 4ydd Dosbarth.

Ym mis Medi 1915 ar ddiwedd ei gyfnod fel milwr wrth gefn, a chydag arian rhodd £20 a gafodd gyda'r fedal, dychwelodd Jones i fyw fel sifiliad gyda'i wraig a'i blant yng Nghymru. Bu farw yn 87 oed ym 1969.

Daeth David John Jones yn enwog yn sgil cyhoeddi llyfr poblogaidd ym 1917, Deeds that Thrill the Empire a phaentiad yn portreadu ei weithred.



David John Jones

When war broke out in 1914 David John Jones was a miner in Treorchy in the Rhondda as well as an army reservist, having served in the 2nd Battalion Grenadier Guards for three years, before returning to civilian life.

Jones was immediately recalled to the colours in August 1914 and joined the battalion in France at the end of November as a replacement.

Early in 1915 he was attached to 170 Tunnelling Company, which was then operating at Cuinchy, a hamlet on the south side of the Bethune-La Bassee Canal. The British had achieved some notable early success against the Germans when they had blown two large mines under the German front line.

Jones was due to transfer permanently to 170 Tunnelling Company but on 22 June 1915 events intervened when the German miners opposite exploded a mine that trapped nine of the British Tunnellers.

Jones was the first man to witness the catastrophe, and risking the fire of the enemy, whose trenches bristled with machine guns, he hurried to the spot. He descended the mine and reappeared dragging after him one of his unconscious comrades. Sometimes crawling on hands and knees and sometimes running, he brought the unfortunate man to safety and, leaving him to the care of his comrades, went back for another.

Time after time Jones descended the mine, battling with the poisonous fumes left by the explosion and above it running the gauntlet of the enemy's fire, until he had assisted in rescuing every one of the entombed men. By that time, although he had not been wounded, he was so overcome by the gas that he could scarcely draw his breath, and had himself to be assisted back to the British trenches.

After a short stay in hospital to recover from the effects of the gassing, Jones returned to work alongside the men of 170 Tunnelling Company. In the meantime he had been awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal 'for conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty'. He was also awarded the Russian Medal of St George 4th Class.

In September 1915, with his period of service as a reservist having expired, and with a £20 gratuity paid for the DCM, Jones returned to civilian life and to his wife and children at home in Wales. He died aged 87 in 1969.

David John Jones's exploits were made famous in a popular book of 1917, Deeds that Thrill the Empire.



David John Lewis, Cwmni Twnelu 170

Roedd David John Lewis yn löwr yng Nglofeydd Gyfarthfa, Merthyr Tudful ac yn byw gyda'i fam, Ellen a'i ddau frawd yn 3 Miles Street.

Roedd wedi ymrestru fel Milwr Arbennig Wrth Gefn yn 2il Fataliwn y Gatrwd Gymreig ar 9 Medi 1913, a chafodd ei alw i wasanaethu un mis ar ddeg yn ddiweddarach ar 8 Awst 1914. Roedd y Bataliwn wedi glanio yn Le Havre cyn pen pum diwrnod ond nid oedd Preifat Lewis gyda nhw. Mae'n debyg ei fod wedi'i ddal yn ôl yn y brif ganolfan naill ai oherwydd bod y bataliwn yn llawn neu i gael hyfforddiant ychwanegol ac yntau'n filwr wrth gefn cymharol newydd.

Ymunodd Lewis â'r bataliwn maes o law ddiwedd Rhagfyr, ond ddeufis yn ddiweddarach ym mis Chwefror 1915 daeth yn rhan o Gwmni Twnelu 170 a oedd yn cael ei sefydlu ar y pryd.

Symudwyd Cwmni Twnelu 170 ar frys i Givenchy o flaen tref Bethune er mwyn ymateb i weithgarwch cloddio'r Almaenwyr. Arhosodd y cwmni yn yr ardal brysur hon am gryn amser, gan gymryd rhan yng ngweithrediadau'r 2il Adran ger Cuinchy a'r Brickstacks. Yn ogystal, ffrwydrodd ddwy gloddfa fawr yn amddiffynfa Hohenzollern ar ddechrau Brwydr Loos. Ym 1917, brwydrodd y cwmni yn erbyn yr Almaenwyr yng ngweithfeydd glo dan ddaear Fosse 8, gan golli sawl dyn pan ryddhaodd yr Almaenwyr nwy gwenwynig i'r gweithfeydd. Fel y Cwmniau Twnelu eraill, roedd Cwmni Twnelu 170 yn gwmni amryddawn, ac ym mis Ebrill 1918, aeth dynion y Cwmni ati i ddiffodd tân mawr yn Bethune.

Roedd Preifat Lewis wedi trosglwyddo'n ffurfiol i Gwmni Twnelu 170 ym mis Chwefror 1916 fel Cydweithiwr Twnelwr. Gwasanaethodd gyda'r cwmni weddill y rhyfel, cafodd ei ddychafu'n yn Gorporal a'i anafu ym 1918.

Ddiwedd Hydref 1918, cafodd Corporal Lewis ganiatâd i ddychwelyd adref am bythefnos, ond ar ôl methu dychwelyd i'w uned ar 7 Tachwedd 1918, cyhoeddodd llys ymholi ei fod yn 'absennol yn anghyfreithlon'. Cafodd ei gyflog ei atal gan yr un Llys o'r dyddiad hwnnw ymlaen, a thynnwyd cost ei lifrai a'i gyfarpar (£16.6.7) o unrhyw dâl a oedd yn ddyledus iddo.

Anfonwyd llythyrau yn holi amdano i brif ganolfan y Peirianwyr Brenhinol yn Chatham ac at Uwch-arolygydd yr Heddlu ym Merthyr. Ar 27 Ionawr 1919, ysgrifennodd yr Heddlu at ei brif swyddog yn dweud eu bod ar ddeall bod Corporal Lewis wedi gadael ei gartref i ddychwelyd i'w uned. Fis yn ddiweddarach, ar ddiwedd mis Chwefror, nid oedd neb yn gwybod beth oedd hanes Lewis.

Ni lwyddodd y gyfraith filwrol i ddod o hyd i David John Lewis ac ni chlywodd ei deulu ganddo byth wedyn. Ni wyddom a gafodd ddamwain o ryw fath neu a benderfynodd ei fod wedi cael digon ar fywyd milwrol ac am ddechrau o'r newydd. Ond nid oes amheuaeth ei fod wedi cyfrannu at ymdrech y rhyfel drwy dreulio tair blynedd a hanner yn ymladd yr Almaenwyr dan ddaear!

David John Lewis, 170 Tunnelling Company



David John Lewis was a collier at the Gyfarthfa Collieries Merthyr Tydfil and lived with his mother Ellen and two brothers at 3 Miles Street.

He had enlisted as a Special Reservist in the 2nd Battalion of the Welsh Regiment on 9 September 1913 and was mobilised eleven months later on 8 August 1914. The Battalion landed at Le Havre just five days later but Lewis wasn't with them, either because the battalion was fully manned or, being a relatively new reservist, to receive some extra training.

Lewis finally joined his battalion at the end of December but just two months later in February 1915 he was attached to 170 Tunnelling Company, which was then being formed.

The 170 Tunnelling Company was rushed to Givenchy in front of the town of Bethune, to counter German mining activity. The company remained in this very active area for a considerable time and took part in the 2nd Division's operations near Cuinchy and the Brickstacks. It also blew two large mines at the Hohenzollern Redoubt in the opening of the Battle of Loos. During 1917 it fought in the underground workings of the Fosse 8 coal mining complex of mines, and lost several men when the Germans released poison gas into the workings. Like the other tunnelling companies 170 Tunnelling Company could turn its hands to most things and in April 1918 troops of the Company fought a large fire in Bethune.

Lewis had formally transferred to 170 Tunnelling Company in February 1916 as a Tunnellers Mate. He served with them for the rest of the war, being promoted to Corporal and was wounded in 1918.

At the end of October 1918 Lewis was given two weeks home leave, but when he failed to return to his unit on 7 November 1918 he was declared 'illegally absent' by a court of enquiry. The same Court stopped his pay as of that date and deducted the cost of his uniform and equipment (£16.6.7) from any pay owed.

Letters were sent to the Royal Engineers base at Chatham and to the Police Superintendent of his home town of Merthyr enquiring of him. On 27 January 1919 the Police wrote back advising his commanding officer that Lewis was reported to have left his home to return to his unit. A month later, at the end of February, his whereabouts were still not known.

It doesn't appear as though the long arm of military law ever caught up with David John Lewis and his family never heard from him again. We don't know whether some accident befell him or whether he decided he'd had enough of the military and needed a fresh start. What we do know is that after having spent three and half years fighting the Germans underground he had done his bit.

Gwlad Addas i Arwyr

In the years after the War we waited for that better country and conditions we had been promised. They were slow in coming, and the 'audacious demands' we had been invited to make when peace was concluded did not seem likely to be granted.

Bert Coombes, *These Poor Hands*, 1939

Ym mis Awst 1914, cyflwynodd Ffederasiwn Glowyr y De gynnis i gynnal streic glowyr rhyngwladol i atal y rhyfel. Er gwaethaf y cynnis hwn, ymunodd tua 40,000 o lowyr o Gymru (o gyfanswm o tua 270,000) â'r lluoedd ym 1914 a 1915.

Roedd colli cymaint o'r gweithlu yn destun pryder oherwydd roedd y dynion a oedd yn ymuno yn tueddu i fod ymysg y rhai ieuengaf, mwyaf iach yn gorfforol a mwy cynhyrchiol. Ymrestrodd tua 40% o'r holl lowyr rhwng 19 a 38 oed yn y saith mis cyntaf. Hyd yn oed pan oedd dynion ar gael i gymryd eu lle, roeddent yn tueddu i fod yn weithwyr llai iach a llai cynhyrchiol.

Aeth bywyd arferol yn y meysydd glo rhagddo fel o'r blaen, yn cynnwys marwolaethau ac anghydfodau. Wrth i'w cyn-gydweithwyr farw ar, ac o dan feysydd dramor, roedd glowyr yn parhau i farw o dan feysydd Prydain – dros 1,300 y flwyddyn.



Ni chafwyd unrhyw drychinebau mawr yng Nghymru yn ystod y rhyfel, ond roedd dynion a bechgyn yn parhau i gael eu lladd a'u hanafu'n ddifrifol yn rheolaidd. Roedd hanes Glofa Wyndham yn ystod blynyddoedd y rhyfel yn nodweddiadol.

Cafwyd marwolaeth gyntaf blynyddoedd y rhyfel yn y lofa ar 1 Medi 1914 pan laddwyd William Jones, glanhawr ffordd dan ddaear 69 oed, ar ôl cael ei daro gan raff injan gludo a oedd yn cludo tramiâu gwag o amgylch cornel. Cyn y gallai godi, aeth y tramiâu drosto a bu farw o'i anafiadau. Cafwyd y marwolaethau olaf ar 6 Mai 1918 pan laddwyd William Thomas Vaulter 17 oed a John Owen 33 oed pan ddisgynnodd y to ar dalcen glo (o bosibl yn yr

un digwyddiad). Ac eithrio ym 1917, lladdwyd dynion a bechgyn yn Wyndham ym mhob blwyddyn o'r rhyfel ac anafwyd llawer o rai eraill yn ddifrifol.

Yn sgil cynnydd mawr mewn prisiau bwyd a chynnydd o 50% ym mhris glo yn ystod y rhyfel, roedd y glowyr yn galw'n gyson am ragor o gyflog. Roedd llawer o bobl yn credu bod perchenogion y pyllau glo yn gwneud mwy o elw nag erioed o'r blaen ac y gallent fforddio talu mwy. Gwrthododd y perchenogion, felly ym mis Gorffennaf 1915 aeth 200,000 o lowyr y De ar streic. Er i'r llywodraeth fygwth carcharu'r streicwyr, ni ildiodd y dynion ac roeddent yn llwyddiannus gyda'r rhan fwyaf o'u gofynion.

Serch hynny, parhau wnaeth yr anghydfodau, ac er mwyn diogelu'r cyflenwad glo i'r Llynges, penderfynodd y llywodraeth gymryd cyfrifoldeb am faes glo'r De. Yr un fu hanes meysydd glo eraill y DU flwyddyn yn ddiweddarach.

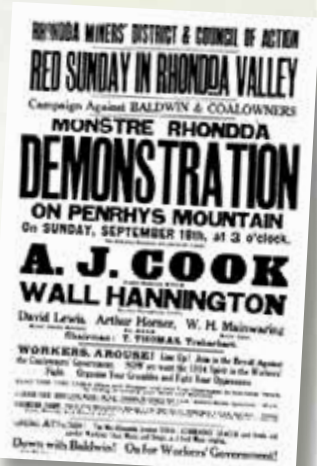
Roedd galw mawr am lo o hyd ar derfyn y rhyfel. Roedd y glowyr yn cael eu hystyried yn weithwyr hanfodol i'r diwydiannau cartref, a rhyddhawyd llawer o gyn-lowyr o'r fyddin wythnosau'n unig ar ôl y Cadoediad.

Ym mis Tachwedd 1918, gofynnodd y Prif Weinidog David Lloyd George y cwestiwn hwn mewn araith, "What is our task? To make Britain a fit country for heroes to live in."

Ym marn y glowyr roedd hyn yn cynnwys gwladoli eu diwydiant. Roedd Comisiwn Brenhinol a sefydlwyd i ymchwilio i'r mater yn cytuno â'r glowyr, ond nid felly llywodraeth y dydd, a phenderfynodd drosglwyddo'r pyllau glo yn ôl i ddwylo'r perchenogion ym 1921.

Roedd y perchenogion yn dadlau bod cyfraddau cyflogau wedi cynyddu gormod yn ystod cyfnod y llywodraeth wrth y llyw, gan fynnu bod y glowyr yn derbyn cyflogau is os oedden nhw am gadw eu swyddi. Ar 1 Ebrill 1921, cafodd miliwn o lowyr Prydeinig eu cloi allan am dri mis. Trechwyd y glowyr.

Gwellodd economi'r byd am gyfnod byr wedyn, ac roedd yn ymddangos bod y diwydiant yn ffynnu fel yr oedd cyn y rhyfel, ond nid oedd oes newydd yn gwawrio. Dros yr ugain mlynedd nesaf, lleihaodd nifer y glowyr yng Nghymru o 270,000 i 130,000. Cynyddodd lefelau diweithdra yn gyflym, ac roedd cyn-filwyr a chyn-lowyr, a oedd bellach yn gardotwyr, yn olygfa gyffredin ar y



A Land Fit for Heroes

In the years after the War we waited for that better country and conditions we had been promised. They were slow in coming, and the 'audacious demands' we had been invited to make when peace was concluded did not seem likely to be granted.

Bert Coombes, *These Poor Hands*, 1939

In August 1914 the South Wales Miners' Federation proposed an international miners' strike to stop the outbreak of war. In spite of this about 40,000 Welsh miners (out of about 270,000) joined up in 1914 and 1915.

This manpower drain was a concern because those who joined up tended to be the youngest, physically fittest and more productive men. About 40% of all miners between 19 and 38 enlisted in the first seven months. Even when they were replaced it was, on the whole, by less fit and less productive workers.

Normal life in the coalfields in the form of death and dispute continued much as before. While their former workmates were dying on and under foreign fields, miners continued to die beneath British fields at the rate of over 1,300 a year.

There were no major disasters in Wales during the war, but men and boys were killed and badly injured on a regular basis. The story of Wyndham Colliery was typical.

The first death of the war occurred at the colliery on 1 September 1914 when William Jones, a 69-year-old underground road cleaner, was struck down by the rope of a haulage engine which was hauling a journey of empty drams around a corner. Before he could get back up, the drams ran over him and he died of his injuries. The last deaths were on 6 May 1918 when William Thomas Vaulter aged 17 and John Owen aged 33 were killed under falls of roof on a coal face (possibly in the same incident). Apart from 1917, men and boys were killed at Wyndham in every year of the war and many others were seriously injured.

A sharp rise in food prices and a 50 per cent increase in the price of coal during the war led to regular wage demands by miners. There was a strongly held view that the coal owners were making record profits and could afford to meet these demands. The owners refused, so in July 1915 200,000 south Wales miners went on strike. The government threatened to imprison strikers but the men

remained solid and were granted most of their demands.

Disputes continued however, so to ensure the coal supply to the Navy the government took over control of the south Wales coalfield. A year later the rest of the UK coalfields were taken over.

The country was still desperate for coal when the war ended. Considered essential to the home industries, many former miners were discharged from the army within weeks of the Armistice being signed.

In November 1918 the Prime Minister David Lloyd George gave a speech in which he asked, 'What is our task? To make Britain a fit country for heroes to live in.'

As far as the miners were concerned this included the nationalisation of their industry. A Royal Commission set up to investigate the matter agreed with them, however the government of the day disagreed, and handed the mines back to the coal owners in 1921.

The owners argued that wage rates had increased too much during government control and demanded that the miners accept lower wages or they would refuse to employ them. On 1 April 1921, a lockout of a million British miners began which lasted for three months. The miners were defeated.

For a short period the world economy improved and the industry appeared to be returning to its pre-war boom, but it was a false dawn. The next twenty years saw the number of miners in Wales fall from 270,000 to 130,000. Unemployment rose rapidly and former soldiers and miners, now beggars, became a familiar sight on the streets and at soup kitchens.

I would lay puzzling why, why, after all we had gone through in the service of our country, we have to suffer such poverty, willing to work at anything but no work to be had. I only had two Christmases at work between 1919 and 1939.

Pte Turner, 97th Brigade Machine Gun Corps



*Dadorchuddio y Senotaff
Unveiling of the cenotaph in Whitehall*

*Cofeb y Twnelwyr yn Givenchy
The Tunnellers Memorial at Givenchy*



GLO COAL

Cydnabyddiaeth am Ffotograffau a Darluniau

IWM - Imperial War Museum
NLS - Llyfrgell Genedlaethol yr Alban
AWM - Cofeb Rhyfel Awstralia
RVF - Amgueddfa'r Ffiwsilwyr Brenhinol Cymreig
MCM - Amgueddfa Castell Mynwy
PCW - Casgliad y Werin Cymru
GWP - Great War Photos

Photograph and Illustration Credits

IWM - Imperial War Museum
NLS - National Library of Scotland
AWM - Australian War Memorial
RVF - Royal Welch Fusiliers Museum
MCM - Monmouth Castle Museum
PCW - People's Collection Wales
GWP - Great War Photos

Rhestr o wefannau defnyddiol ac amgueddfeydd i ymweld â nhw

Gwefannau

www.ystalyfera-fallen.co.uk
www.wmp.co.uk
www.cwgc.org
www.amgueddfacymr.ac.uk
www.casgliadywerincymru.co.uk
www.westernfrontassociation.com
www.worldwar1.com
www.nationalarchives.gov.uk
www.bbc.co.uk/guides/zggykqt#zww9mp3
www.greatwarphotos.com/category/tunnellers/
www.laboisselleproject.com/tunnellers/
www.tunnellersmemorial.com/
www.hut-six.co.uk/WW1/tunnellers-az.html
www.royalmunsterfusiliers.org
<http://welshnewspapers.llgc.org.uk/en/home>

Amgueddfeydd

Imperial War Museums
www.iwm.org.uk
New Court World War I Museum
www.worldwar1museum.co.uk
Amgueddfa Gatrodol y Cymry Brenhinol (Aberhonddu)
www.royalwelsh.org.uk
Firing Line
www.cardiffcastlemuseum.org.uk
Amgueddfa'r Ffiwsilwyr Brenhinol Cymreig
www.rwfmuseum.org.uk
Amgueddfa Castell Mynwy
www.monmouthcastlemuseum.org.uk

List of useful websites and museums to visit

Websites

www.ystalyfera-fallen.co.uk
www.wmp.co.uk
www.cwgc.org
www.museumwales.ac.uk/rhagor
www.peoplescollectionwales.co.uk
www.westernfrontassociation.com
www.worldwar1.com
www.nationalarchives.gov.uk
www.bbc.co.uk/guides/zggykqt#zww9mp3
www.greatwarphotos.com/category/tunnellers/
www.laboisselleproject.com/tunnellers/
www.tunnellersmemorial.com/
www.hut-six.co.uk/WW1/tunnellers-az.html
www.royalmunsterfusiliers.org
<http://welshnewspapers.llgc.org.uk/en/home>

Museums

Imperial War Museums
www.iwm.org.uk
New Court World War I Museum
www.worldwar1museum.co.uk
The Regimental Museum of The Royal Welch (Brecon)
www.royalwelsh.org.uk
Firing Line
www.cardiffcastlemuseum.org.uk
Royal Welch Fusiliers Museum
www.rwfmuseum.org.uk
Monmouth Castle Museum
www.monmouthcastlemuseum.org.uk

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www.amgueddfacymru.ac.uk

ORIAU AGOR

Ar agor–pob dydd

Chwefror–Tachwedd

9.30am–5pm

Teithiau tanddaearol

10am–3.30pm

Ffoniwch am amserau agor

dros y gaeaf.

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Gallwch hefyd weld hwn a rhifynnau

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www.amgueddfacymru.ac.uk/rhagor

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OPENING TIMES

Open–every day

February–November

9.30am–5pm

Underground tours

10am–3.30pm

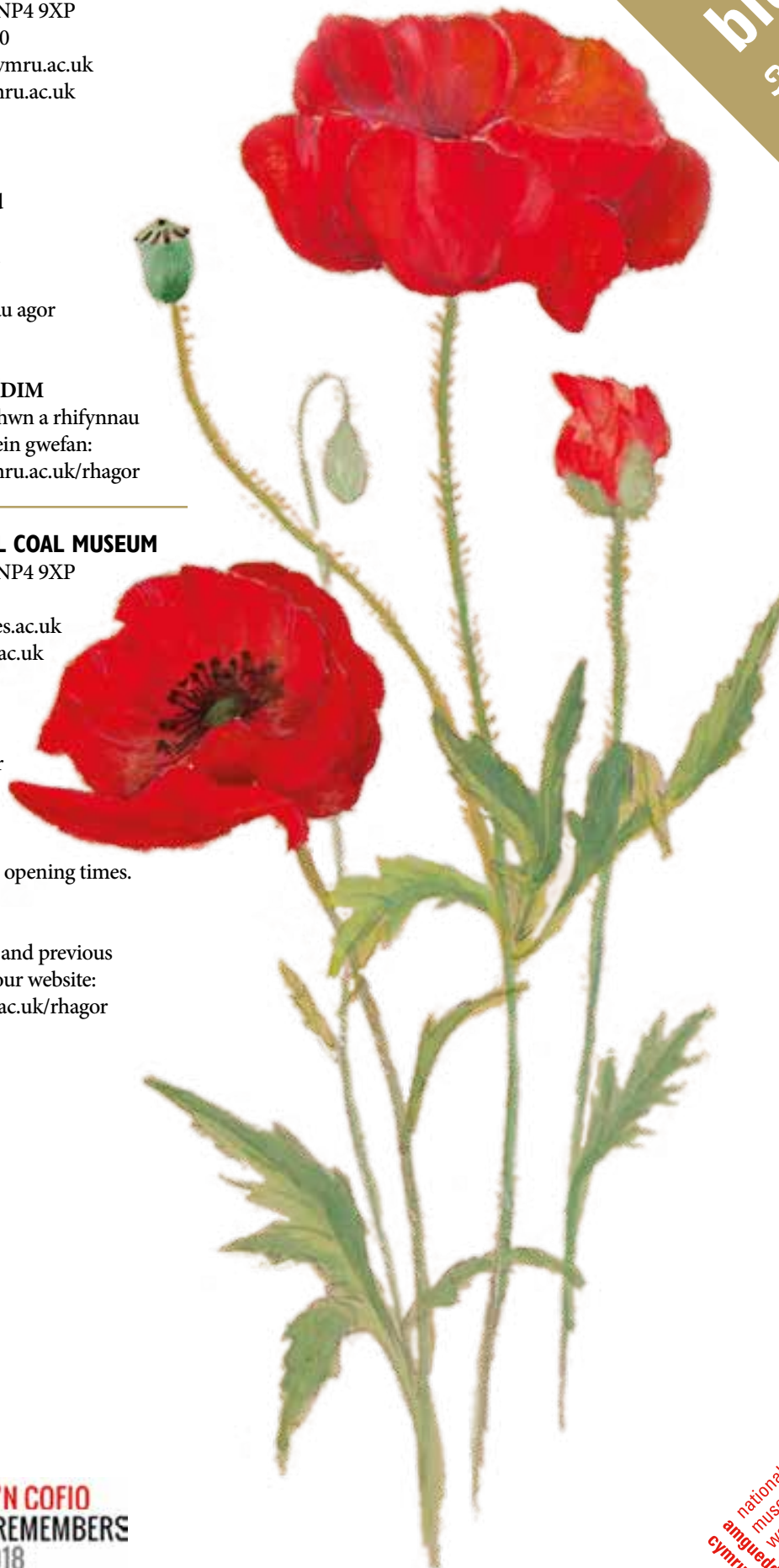
Please call for winter opening times.

FREE ENTRY

You can also see this and previous

editions of GLO on our website:

www.museumwales.ac.uk/rhagor



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