

The Great War: in the beginning...



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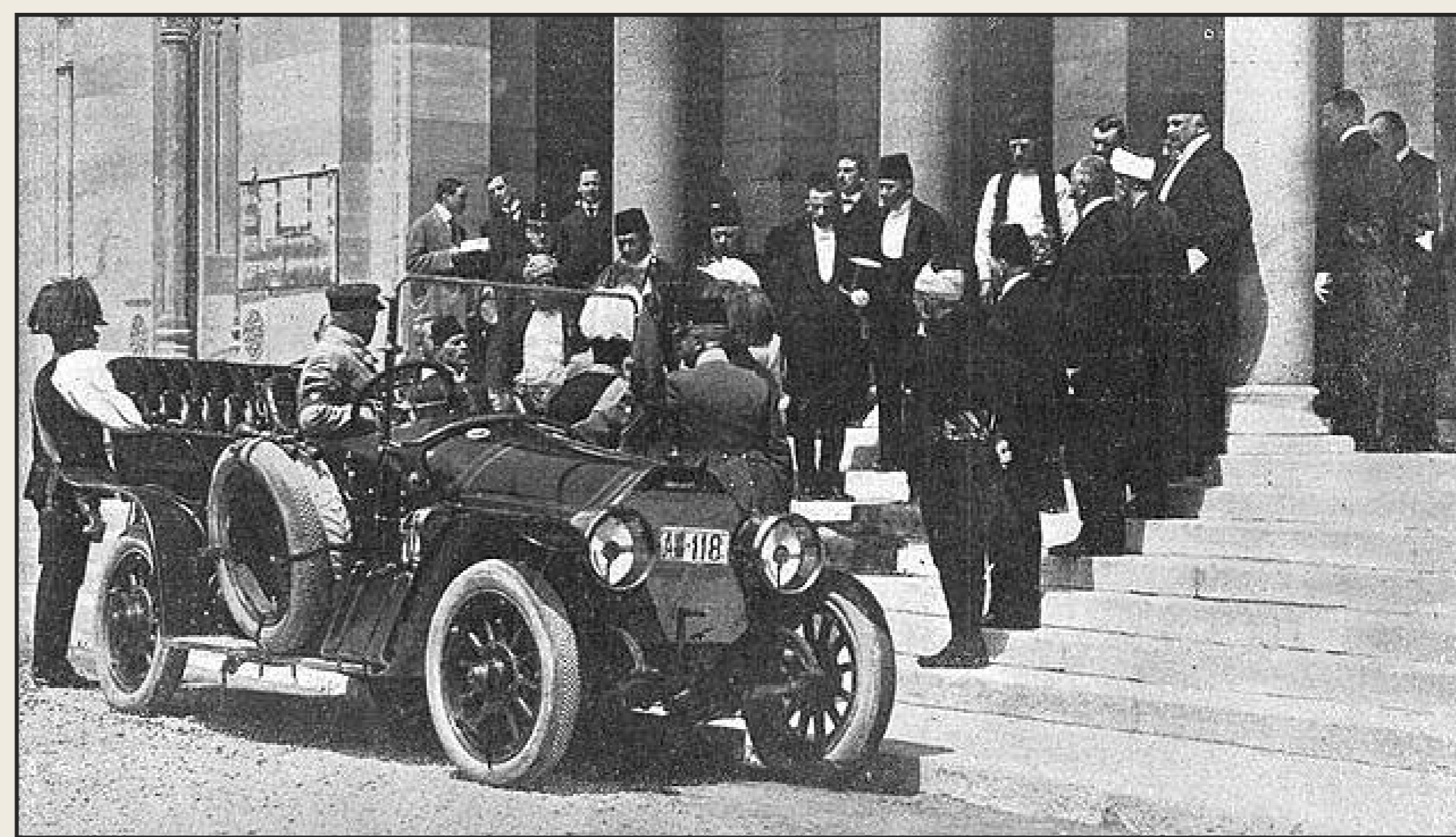
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Archduke Franz Ferdinand with his wife Sophie, Duchess of Hohenberg and their three children (from left), Prince Ernst von Hohenberg, Princess Sophie, and Maximilian, Duke of Hohenburg in 1910.

Archduke Franz Ferdinand

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Spanish magazine *El Mundo Gráfico*

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Headlines in the local paper on 5th August 1914

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International news, Monday 29th June 1914
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Following several major conflicts in Europe in the nineteenth century, various treaties and alliances were brokered to maintain a balance of power and keep hostilities at bay. Britain had an alliance with France. France in turn was allied to the vast Russian Empire. Austro-Hungary had a similar alliance with Germany. The major powers also had arrangements with smaller countries.

Following the events in Sarajevo, the Austro-Hungarian government took immediate reprisals against Serbia, followed by threats of war. Serbia had earlier begun to mobilise her troops and had appealed to Russia for help. By the end of July 1914, events had moved swiftly. Following a final ultimatum, Austro-Hungary duly declared war on Serbia and Germany declared war on Russia and France. Germany then breached Belgian neutrality, which in turn led Britain to declare war on Germany.

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The assassination, 28th June 1914. As shown in the Italian paper *La Domenica, del Corriere*, 5 July 1914.
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Recruitment and propaganda

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Lord Kitchener was appointed Secretary of State for War on August 5th, 1914, and asked Parliament to authorise an increase in the army of 500,000 men. The first recruiting advertisement appeared the next day. David Lloyd George, Chancellor of the Exchequer and Welsh MP, made a special appeal to the Welsh nation 'to back up our brave defenders in the present crises'. The response was overwhelming.

Some men volunteered straight away; the sense of adventure or peer pressure encouraged others. Uniforms and equipment were short, Trefriw Woolen Mill were commissioned to produce special flannel. The introduction of conscription by Parliament in January, 1916, made military service compulsory for unmarried men. There were no reserved occupations. Farmers were exempt, though their sons and labourers were not.

Whatever pressure was exerted on the men of Capel Curig or other nearby villages to join the Army – by their peers, the recruitment system, the newspapers or propaganda – it was remarkably successful. The number of names on the War Memorial in Capel and other memorials throughout Wales is vivid testament to this.

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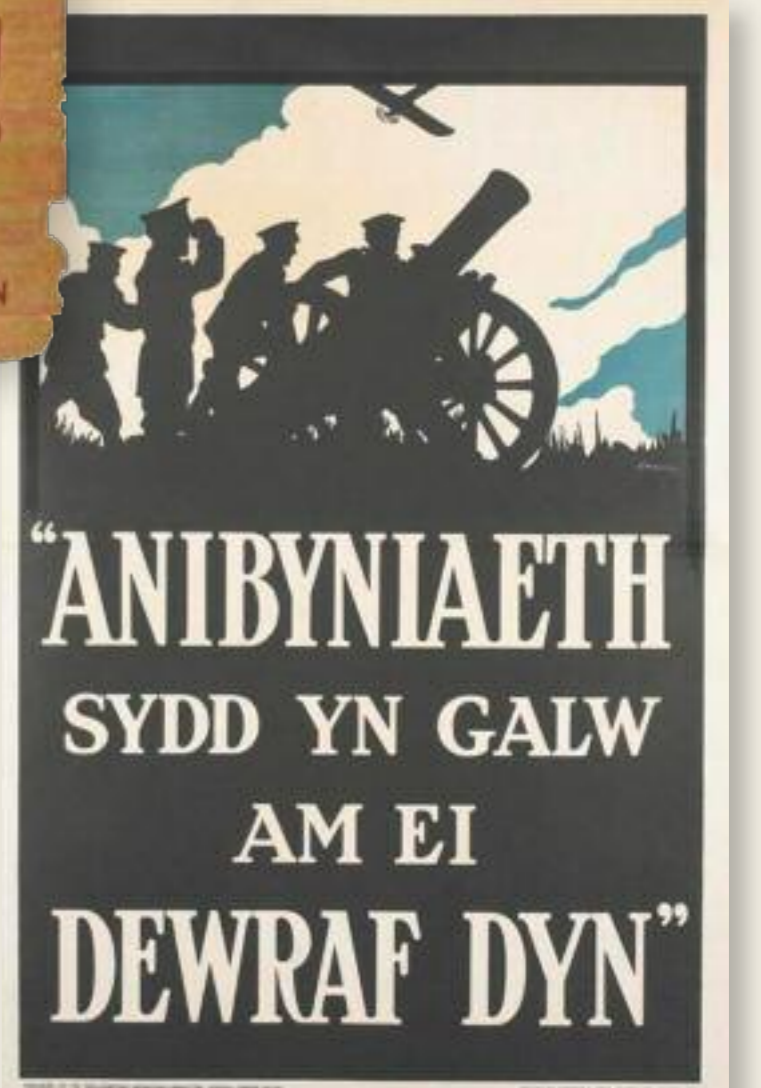
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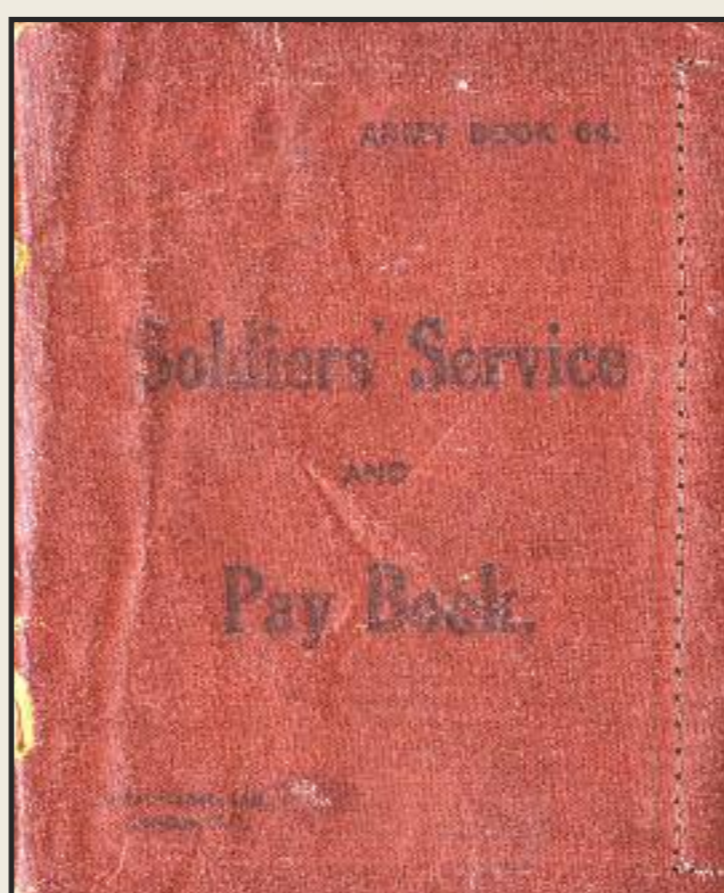
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Soldiers Pay Book – not quite his bible but it needed to be treasured.

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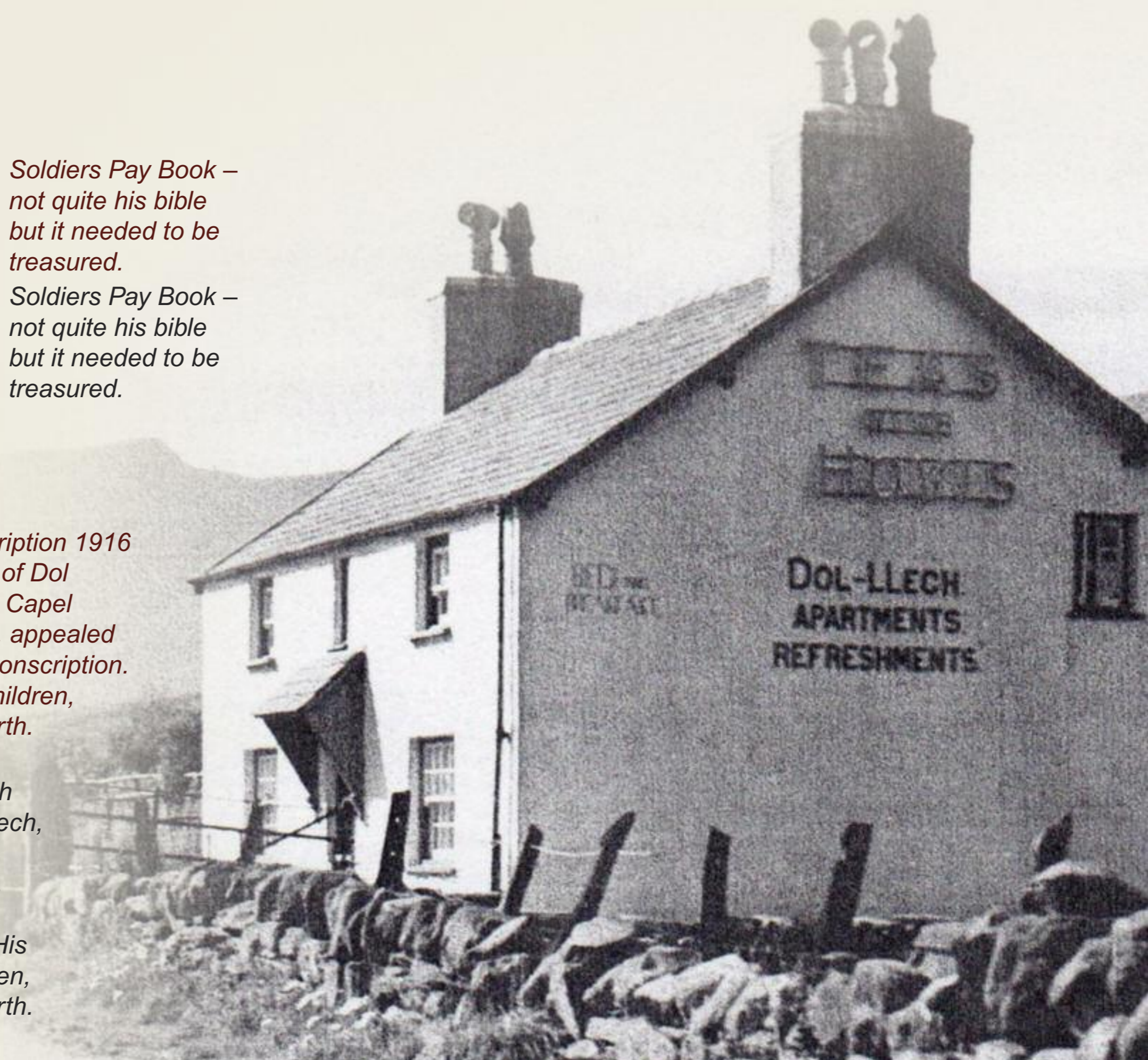


Soldiers preparing for embarkation after training near Northampton.

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The introduction of conscription 1916 lorwerth Roberts age 18, of Dol Llech, a mountain farm in Capel Curig, and a widow's son, appealed successfully against his conscription. His mother had 7 other children, all in school except lorwerth.

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The Lads as Soldiers

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Limited records tell us of the life of recruits who served from Snowdonia in the war – the memorials give some clues. Some memorials are well recorded, others the records are lost. The movement of population also affects information available about the past.

Thirty one men appear on the memorial, of a population of about 400 persons (in 1911); they served in a mix of Regiments, involved in different aspects of the war. The majority joined the Royal Welsh Fusiliers. The war took them to different parts of the war zone, fighting on the western & eastern fronts, to Palestine and other far places.

The 1st Battalion, the Royal Welsh Fusiliers (all professional soldiers) would have found Christmas 1914 in the trenches hard with a sharp frost. The local newspapers reported that the Royal Welsh Fusiliers were involved unofficially with making contact with the Germans. The soldiers climbed out of the trenches and socialised in no-man's – exchanging gifts. This happened in other parts of the Front. After the event Officers issued strict orders that it was not to be repeated.

The Western Front where the British fought is low lying which soon changed into a mud-clogged wasteland, 75,000 troops were admitted to hospital with trench foot or frostbite. In Gaza conditions would have been different – RWF soldiers complained about the problems of digging trenches in the sand.

Heavy losses of Royal Welsh Fusilier Territorial soldiers were reported on North Wales Weekly News the 7th January 1915; the first news of the level of casualties. In this area 500,000 men were to die before the end of the war.

A terrible weapon that the soldiers had to contend with was gas; the Germans were the first to introduce it to the battlefield but the allies soon accepted it as a weapon against the enemy. It was first used by the British at the battle of Mons, were a wind change brought casualties to the British forces.



Soldiers, marching through Llanberis behind the band, would have been impressive. (Gwynedd Archives)
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Map of Western Front. Map of Western Front.

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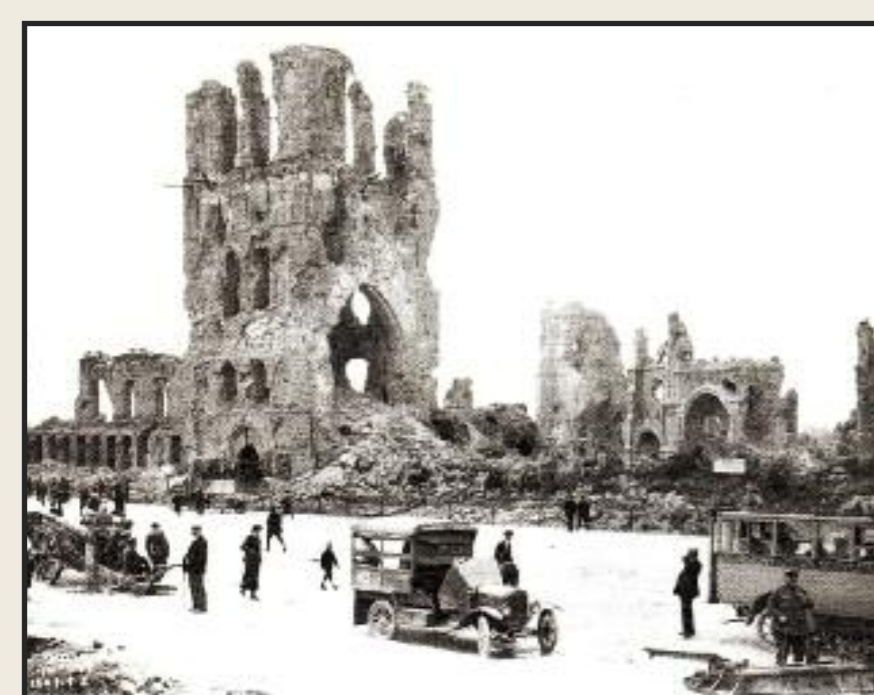
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Trenches before Gaza, three Capel Curig soldiers died in this area. (IWM)
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Ypres, the Cloth Hall. The war caused tragic damage to many wonderful buildings. The Cloth Hall has now been rebuilt. (Flanders Fields Museum)
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In the Mud, it was known that soldiers drowned in terrible conditions. (IWM 1220.)
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Christmas in the Trenches (IWM)
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This picture is titled 'Gassed'; mustard gas was an indoctrinating weapon, bringing about injury, burns and short term loss of sight to the soldiers. (IWM. John Singer Sargent, RA, oil on canvass, 231 x 611 cm)
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Memorials to the men of Snowdonia



After the war, the Imperial (later Commonwealth) War Graves Commission built 2,400 cemeteries in France, Belgium and other theatres of war to re-bury soldiers hastily buried on the battlefield. Nearly half the men killed were never found, and the missing were commemorated on magnificent memorials like the Menin Gate at Ypres. An estimated fifty to sixty thousand towns and villages across the United Kingdom erected permanent memorials to those of their community who had died in the war. In north Wales, plans were launched in 1917 for a Heroes' Memorial to honour the 8,500 fallen from the region. This was opened in 1923 by the Prince of Wales, who also laid the foundation stone of the new university science building.

But most communities wanted to commemorate their dead locally as well, and money was raised by donations and events. £364 was raised in Dolwyddelan, including donations from the United States and the Welsh colony in Patagonia. The memorial unveiled in 1922 was surrounded by a Garden of Remembrance containing thirteen trees, one for each of the men who died in the war. Trefriw chose a cenotaph to commemorate its 19 war dead.

A Memorial Institute was built at Betws y Coed to provide facilities for the men who had distinguished themselves on the field of battle, as well as honouring the parish's 17 dead. Over £4,000 was raised through donations, concerts, plays, bazaars, sales of work, whist drives, teas and flag days. The Institute, comprising a 500 seat hall with a stage and balcony, a reading room, kitchen was finally opened on 28th September 1929.

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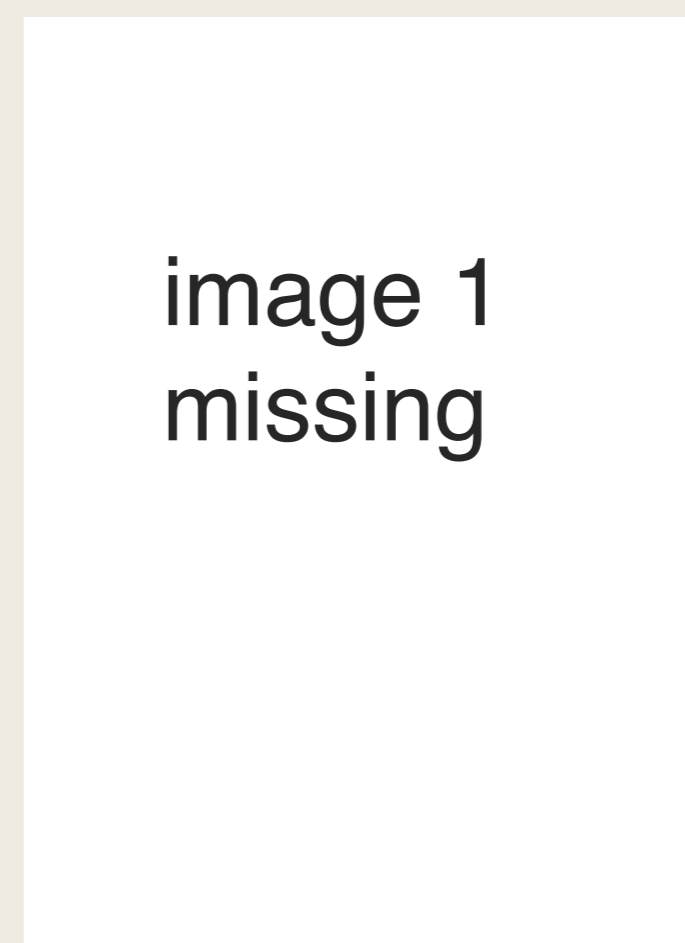


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The North Wales Heroes' Memorial Archway in Bangor
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Dolwyddelan's memorial with 13 trees for each of the WW1 fallen © John Firth
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Maintenance on the Llanberis war memorial
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The Trefriw Cenotaph
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Memorial plaque in the Betws y Coed Memorial Institute
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Betws Y Coed Memorial Institute I
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Many Snowdonia soldiers are commemorated on the Menin Gate at Ypres
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Capel Curig War Memorial

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On the A5 road through Capel Curig, there is a small granite war memorial in the form of a Celtic cross commemorating the 31 volunteers and conscripts from the surrounding area for their service in the World War 1. There is no record of who financed it, who constructed it or when it was erected.

The memorial names six men from Capel Curig who died in the First World War. The English translation of the Welsh inscription on the memorial is: 'In thankful memory of those from this parish who laid down their lives in the 1914-1918 War'. They gave their lives in France, Belgium and Palestine. Matthew Hughes and David Roberts, both of Bryn Llys, who had been at school together, died on the same day near Gaza in 1917. Also at school with them was Evan Jones of the Chapel House, Tan y Garth, Pont Cyfyng. He was a Private in the 9th Battalion, York & Lancaster Regiment and died in Belgium in 1917, aged 20. He was described in the newspaper report of his death as a religious young man and a very faithful member of Salem Chapel, Capel Curig.

Captain Thomas Alfred Oliver, the only officer on the memorial, was the son of local artist Alfred Oliver and lived much of his life at the Studio, Capel Curig. He joined the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, but later transferred to the Royal Flying Corps where he acted as a test pilot and shot down five enemy planes.

Rather unusually, there is also a roll of honour on the memorial listing twenty five other men with Capel Curig connections who served in the war. Several of these also died. The largest number joined the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, but thirteen other regiments are represented as well.



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Captain Thomas Alfred Oliver.
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The Capel Curig War Memorial.
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Flanders Poppies.
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Watercolour by Thomas Oliver of his plane, a Nieuport 17 under enemy fire. He left on a mission on 14 August 1917 when he was shot down.

Watercolour by Thomas Oliver of his plane, a Nieuport 17 under enemy fire. He left on a mission on 14 August 1917 when he was shot down.

PTE. EVAN JONES, CAPEL CURIG.
 Derbyniodd Mr. a Mrs. Wm. Jones, Gorf-wysfa, Capel Curig, y newydd prudd an farw eu mab, Pte. Evan Jones, ar ddiwrnod y 14fed o Awgust 1917, yn yr oedran cynnar o 20ain mlwydd oed. Yr oedd yn fachgen ieuanc crefyddol ac yn un flyddlon gyda'r achos yn Salem, Capel Curig. Chwith meddwl na chawn weled Evan mwy yn ein mysg. Bu am flynyddau yn firm y Mri. Pugh, Cyf., argraffwyr, Llanrwst. Cydymdeimlir a'i rieni trallodus yn eu profedig-aeth lem.

Notice of Evan Jones' death in North Wales Weekly News.

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The Duke of Edinburgh in 1955 inspecting Capel Curig veterans, several named on the memorial.
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Poetry of the War

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World War 1 saw a flood of expressive writing unlike any other time. Much of the poetry came from “soldier-poets” who wrote about their experiences of trench warfare, but other writers were inspired to describe these awful years. While war poetry appears quintessentially English, there were many Welsh voices who expressed their experiences, some well-known, some less so.

Welsh language poets from this era include Ellis Humphrey Evans (Hedd Wyn) who was born near Trawsfynydd and R Williams Parry, born at Tal-y-Bont in the Nantle valley. Poets with connections to Wales, who wrote in English include Wilfred Owen, who was born near Oswestry, Edward Thomas, who had Welsh parents, T. E. (Thomas Edward) Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia) who was born in Tremadog, and, most famously, Robert Graves and Siegfried Sassoon, who fought with the Royal Welch Fusiliers.

Hedd Wyn (Blessed Peace in English) was born in 1887 and conscripted into the Royal Welch Fusiliers in January 1917. He completed his poem, Yr Arwr ("The Hero") on his way to France, following basic training. He forwarded it to the Secretary of the National Eisteddfod of Wales. On September, 1917, Hedd Wyn was pronounced the winner of the chair at the Eisteddfod in Birkenhead, just seven days after he was killed by shell fire at the Battle of Pilckem Ridge, Belgium. The Chair stood empty, draped in black.

Here is one of his poems,

*Gwae fi fy myw mewn oes mor ddreng,
A Duw ar drai ar orwel pell;
O'i ôl mae dyn, yn deyrn a gwreng,
Yn codi ei awdurdod hell.*

*Pan deimlodd fyned ymaith Dduw
Cyfododd gledd i ladd ei frawd;
Mae s n yr ymladd ar ein clyw,
A'i gysgod ar fythynnod tlawd.*

*Mae'r hen delynau genid gynt
Ynghrog ar gangau'r helyg draw,
A gwaedd y bechgyn lond y gwynt,
A'u gwaed yn gymysg efo'r glaw.*

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Here is one of his poems,

*Why must I live in this grim age,
When to a far horizon, God
Has ebbed away, and man, with rage,
Now wealds the sceptre and the rod.*

*Man raised his sword, once God had gone,
To slay his brothers, and the roar
Of battlefields now cast upon
Our homes the shadow of the war.*

*The harps to which we sang are hung
On willow boughs, and their refrain
Drowned by the anguish of the young
Whose blood is mingled with the rain.*

Siegfried Sassoon (born 1886-1967) and Robert Graves (born 1895-1985)

Siegfried Sassoon (born 1886) and Robert Graves (born 1895) both served in the Royal Welch Fusiliers. Sassoon was a Captain and exhibited remarkable bravery before being invalided back to Britain, where he attacked the futility of the War but, after rehabilitation from shell-shock, returned to the front. Here is an example of his poetry which is deeply ironic. He was awarded the Military cross and survived the war.

How to Die

*Dark clouds are smouldering into red
While down the craters morning burns.
The dying soldier shifts his head
To watch the glory that returns;
He lifts his fingers toward the skies
Where holy brightness breaks in flame;
Radiance reflected in his eyes,
And on his lips a whispered name.*

*You'd think, to hear some people talk,
That lads go West with sobs and curses,
And sullen faces white as chalk,
Hankering for wreaths and tombs and hearses.
But they've been taught the way to do it
Like Christian soldiers; not with haste
And shuddering groans; but passing through it
With due regard for decent taste.*

Siegfried Sassoon

Graves was also a Captain and a friend to Sassoon. He too was badly wounded but returned after convalescence. His poetry is very down to earth and highly descriptive of the horrors and alienation of war. He survived the war.

It's a Queer Time

*It's hard to know if you're alive or dead
When steel and fire go roaring through your head.
One moment you'll be crouching at your gun
Traversing, mowing heaps down half in fun:
The next, you choke and clutch at your right breast -
No time to think - leave all - and off you go ...
To Treasure Island where the Spice winds blow,
To lovely groves of mango, quince and lime -
Breathe no good-bye, but ho, for the Red West!
It's a queer time.*

*You're charging madly at them yelling "Fag!"
When somehow something gives and your feet drag.
You fall and strike your head; yet feel no pain
And find ... you're digging tunnels through the hay
In the Big Barn, 'cause it's a rainy day.
Oh, springy hay, and lovely beams to climb!
You're back in the old sailor suit again.
It's a queer time.*

*Or you'll be dozing safe in your dug-out -
A great roar - the trench shakes and falls about
You're struggling, gasping, struggling, then ... hullo!
Elsie comes tripping gaily down the trench,
Hanky to nose - that lyddite makes a stench -
Getting her pinafore all over grime.
Funny! because she died ten years ago!
It's a queer time.*

*The trouble is, things happen much too quick;
Up jump the Boches, rifles thump and click,
You stagger, and the whole scene fades away:
Even good Christians don't like passing straight
From Tipperary or their Hymn of Hate
To Alleluiah-chanting, and the chime
Of golden harps ... and ... I'm not well today ...
It's a queer time.*

Robert Graves

Wilfred Owen (1893 – 1918)

Wilfred Owen was born of Welsh ancestry in 1893. He was very proud of his Welsh background. He enlisted in the Artists Rifles 1915 and was commissioned into Manchester Regiment 1916. He served on the western front until June 1917 when he was invalided to Craiglockhart psychiatric hospital. He re-joined his regiment in November 1917 and was killed by machine-gun fire at the crossing of the Sambre–Oise Canal, one week before Armistice was signed. He is generally recognised as the greatest poet of the First World War.

Anthem for Doomed Youth.

*What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.
No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells,
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs, -
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.*

*What candles may be held to speed them all?
Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing down of blinds.*

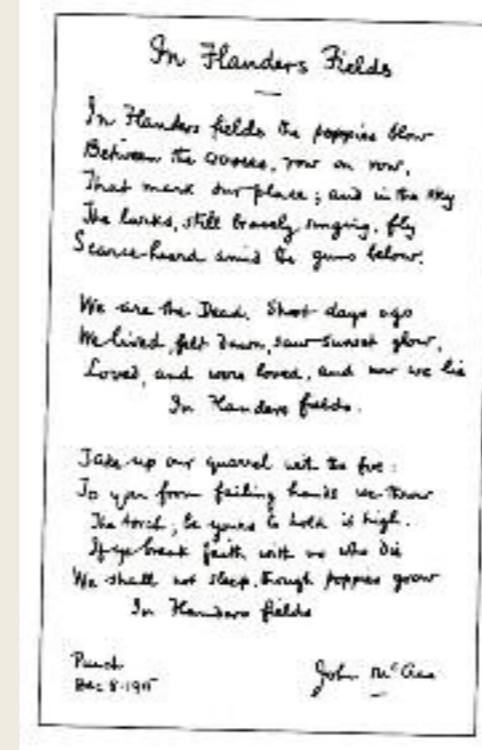
Wilfred Owen

A Soldiers Dream

*I dreamed kind Jesus fouled the big gun gears;
And caused a permanent stoppage in all bolts;
And buckled with a smile Mausers and Colts;
And rusted bayonet with His tears.*

*And there were no more bombs, of ours or Theirs,
Not even an old flint-lock, nor even a pickel,
But God was vexed, and gave all power to Michael;
And when I woke he'd seen to our repairs.*

Wilfred Owen (1893 -1918)



Edward Thomas (1878-1917)

Edward Thomas was born in 1878 and enlisted in the Artists' Rifles in July 1915. He was killed at Arras in April 9th, 1917. He is commonly considered a war poet, although few of his poems deal directly with his war experiences. However, he wrote this touching stanza in 1915:

In Memoriam

*The flowers left thick at nightfall in the wood
This Eastertide call into mind the men,
Now far from home, who, with their sweethearts, should
Have gathered them and will do never again.*

R Williams Parry (1884 – 1956)

R. Williams Parry, born 1884, was initially rejected for military service, due to defective eyesight, but later saw some service on the home front; he was in the army from Nov. 1916 till December 1918. After demobilisation he returned to Cardiff, and in 1921 became head teacher of Oakley Park School, Montgomeryshire. He subsequently taught at Bangor University and is considered one of the most important Welsh language poets of the twentieth century. He wrote an elegy to Hedd Wyn.

*Beneath the earth, beyond the sea -- poet, heavy
Do you lie: clasped the hands that cannot free,
Gone cold the blazing eye to see
Beyond the door that binds and guards your keep.*

*All the living now is over -- all the roaming
Now is done. You, when came the fatal hour,
Long known a rover, now no longer
Could you run, nor lie upon the earth, but under.*

*Tender is the moon tonight -- rising over
Trawsfynydd's bog, but you lament the light
That lauds the lonely moor and height;
Black gravel seals and steals away your sight.*

*How could you have ever known -- when you upon
Your native bracken trod, or stood alone
On treeless height or tireless hill did roam,
That you would fall asleep so far from home?*

*There yet may rise another moon -- and many a
happy
Time yet come. But brothers, O! at least not soon,
Lest we forget the worst was done
When we gave up our darling to his doom.*

*A sin it was to drive this soul -- so gentle, so
Reclusive, from his solitary toil;
Still worse, to drop him down a hole
To waste in dust; but worst, on distant soil.*

*Leaving labour, leaving land -- leaving meadow
On the hill; leaving field and wooded stand,
Leaving daylight, leaving rill, and
Leaving all the green world lost behind.*

*His honoured chair abides alone - the empty arms
Forever reach: in silent speech they long
To hold the bard, and beckon home,
His song unsung, the peace that will not come.*

*Y bardd trwn dan bridd tramor, -- y dwylaw
Na ddidolir rhagor:
Y llygaid dwys dan ddwys ddôr,
Y llygaid na all agor.*

*Wedi ei fyw y mae dy fywyd, -- dy rawn
Wedi ei rhedeg hefyd
Daeth awr i fynd i'th weryd,
A daeth i ben deithio byd.*

*Tyner yw'r lleuad heno -- tros fawnog
Trawsfynydd yn dringo;
Tithau'n drist a than dy ro
Ger y ffos ddu'n gorffwysu.*

*Trawsfynydd! Tros ei feini -- trafaeliaist
Ar foelydd Eryri;
Troedio wnest ei rhedyn hi,
Hunaist ymhell ohoni.*

*Ha frodyr! Dan hyfydwch -- llawer lloer
Y llanc nac anghofiwch
Canys mwy trist na thristwch
Fu rhoddi'r llesg fardd i'r llwch.*

*Garw a gwael fu gyrru o'i gell -- un addfwyn,
Ac o noddfa'i lyfrgell;
Garw fu rhoi'i bridd i'r briddell,
Mwyaf garw oedd marw ymhell.*

*Gadael gwaith a gadael gw dd, -- gadael ffridd,
Gadael ffrwd y mynydd;
Gadael ddi a gadael dydd,
A gadael gwyrdion goedydd.*

*Gadair unig ei drig draw! - Ei dwyfraich,
Fel pe'n difrif wrandaw,
Heddiw estyn yn ddistaw
Mewn hedd hir am un ni ddaw.*

David Lloyd George



David Lloyd George, a great statesman, was one of the 20th century's radicals. In 1890 he was elected as Member of Parliament for Caernarfon Boroughs, a seat he held until 1945. As a new MP was proud to proclaim that he 'was a man of the people' but he was driven by fierce ambition.

In 1905, the Prime Minister Sir Henry Campbell- Bannerman appointed Lloyd George to President of the Board of Trade where he soon made his mark, but he was also able to act as an unofficial 'Minister of Wales' setting up a Welsh Department of Education to encourage the teaching of Welsh and Welsh literature in secondary schools and colleges. Promoted to Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1908, Lloyd George is very much associated with reforms that benefited the majority of society.

In 1914, after the outbreak of war, Lloyd George became Minister of Munitions and oversaw the building of new munitions factories. At least two shell factories were constructed in north Wales, one in Porthmadog and one in Caernarfon. In 5th December 1916 Lloyd George accepted an invitation to form a government, replacing Herbert Henry Asquith as Prime Minister. His dynamism ensured he was regarded as the right man to give Britain's war effort a much-needed boost and in 1918 he was hailed as 'The man who won the war'.

He was always keen to support Wales and when he was PM, he surrounded himself with so many Welsh staff that it became known as the Welsh 'Tafia'. He bolstered the Welsh language and culture and preferred to speak Welsh when home in Caernarfon. He died on 26th March 1945 at Ty Newydd, Llanystumdwy where a small museum exists today chronicling his life.

The noted historian A J P Taylor said of him, 'Count up all his faults, and it is difficult to resist the feeling that Lloyd George was the greatest ruler of Britain since Oliver Cromwell'.

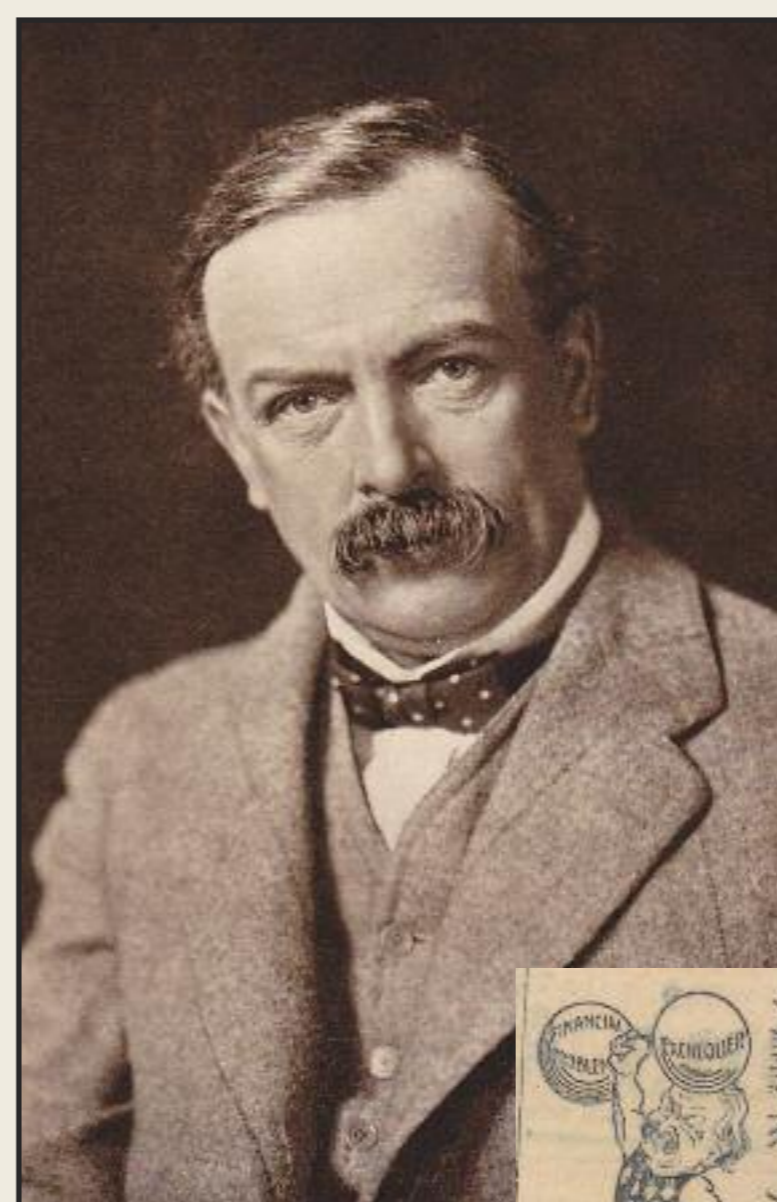
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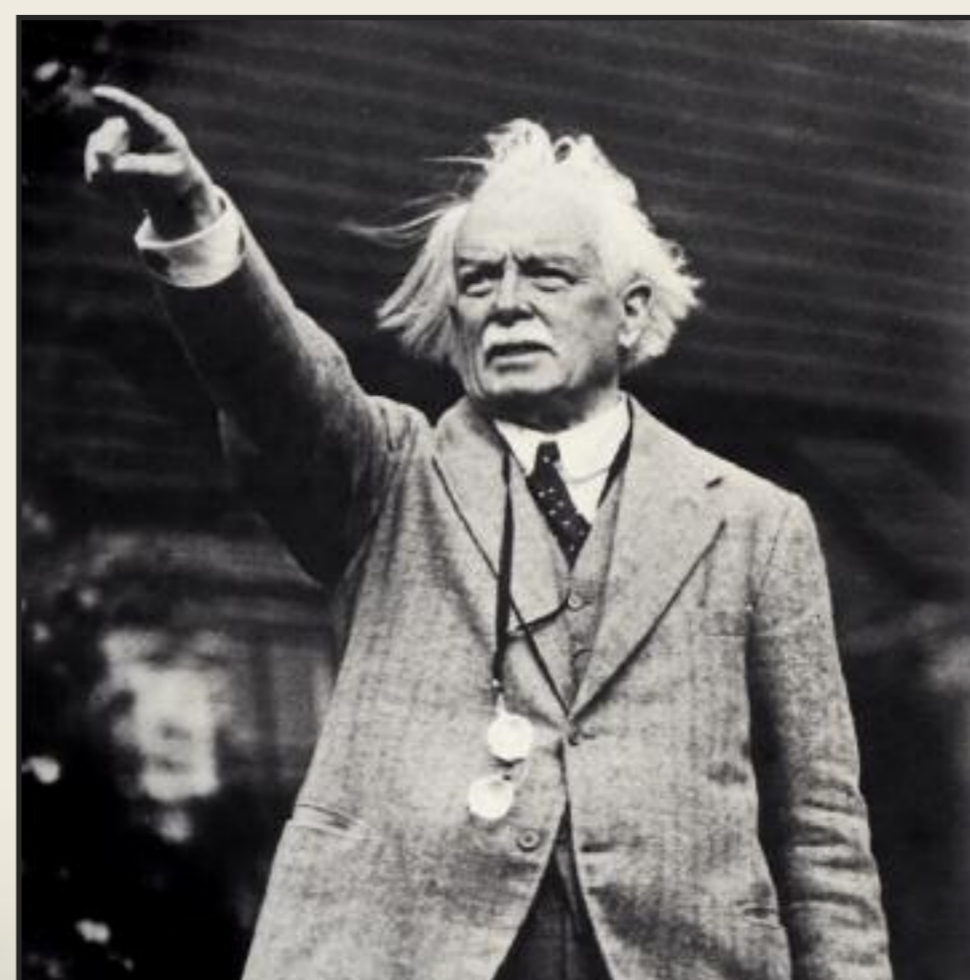
Lloyd George, Minister of War, meets Sir Douglas Haig, General Joffe and Monsieur Thomas (French Minister of Munitions on the Western Front, September 1916.

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The War Minister visits the trenches September 1916. He was not frightened of getting his feet muddy! Gwynedd Archives, XS 2009/9/1

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Lloyd George, a fine orator was in the political wilderness in the 1920s and 1930s
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no image 4

Lloyd George on the Western Front September 1916



David Lloyd George with his family under canvas; the camp on the slopes of Moel Hebog, near Beddgelert
L-R: Megan, Mrs Lloyd George, Miss Nuttall, Lloyd George, Mr Wily, Miss Olwen

The Home Front

The Home Front



The First World War had a greater impact on the everyday lives of the civilian population than any previous conflict. Farmers who drove to Llanrwst fair on 8th August 1914 found their horses commandeered for the army. By 1917, petrol shortages meant that only car owners with a licence for essential use could keep their vehicle on the road.

On the Home Front, women were encouraged to save food. Sugar was in short supply from the early days of the war, leading to complaints in Caernarfonshire that extra fruit grown on allotments could not be preserved. Food prices started to rise and there were frequent allegations of shopkeepers profiteering. The government was forced to introduce food rationing in 1917. Many local councils lacked resources to distribute ration tickets, and in Ogwen District Council the work was undertaken by school teachers. Coal was also in short supply and north Wales councils were asked to encourage peat cutting as a substitute. In October 1917, the local newspaper advertised peat for sale in Capel Curig and Ogwen.

There was a large influx of Belgian refugees in the early months of the war. Snowdonia families provided them with homes, including the Royal Oak at Betws y Coed and the Jerusalem Chapel House, Bethesda. Concerts and regular donations raised money for the Belgian Refugees' Fund. Local women met regularly to knit warm clothing for refugees, soldiers and sailors. The Capel Curig Church Committee despatched a large parcel to Mrs. Lloyd George in 1915. Churches and chapels also sent parcels to soldiers from their congregations at least every Christmas.

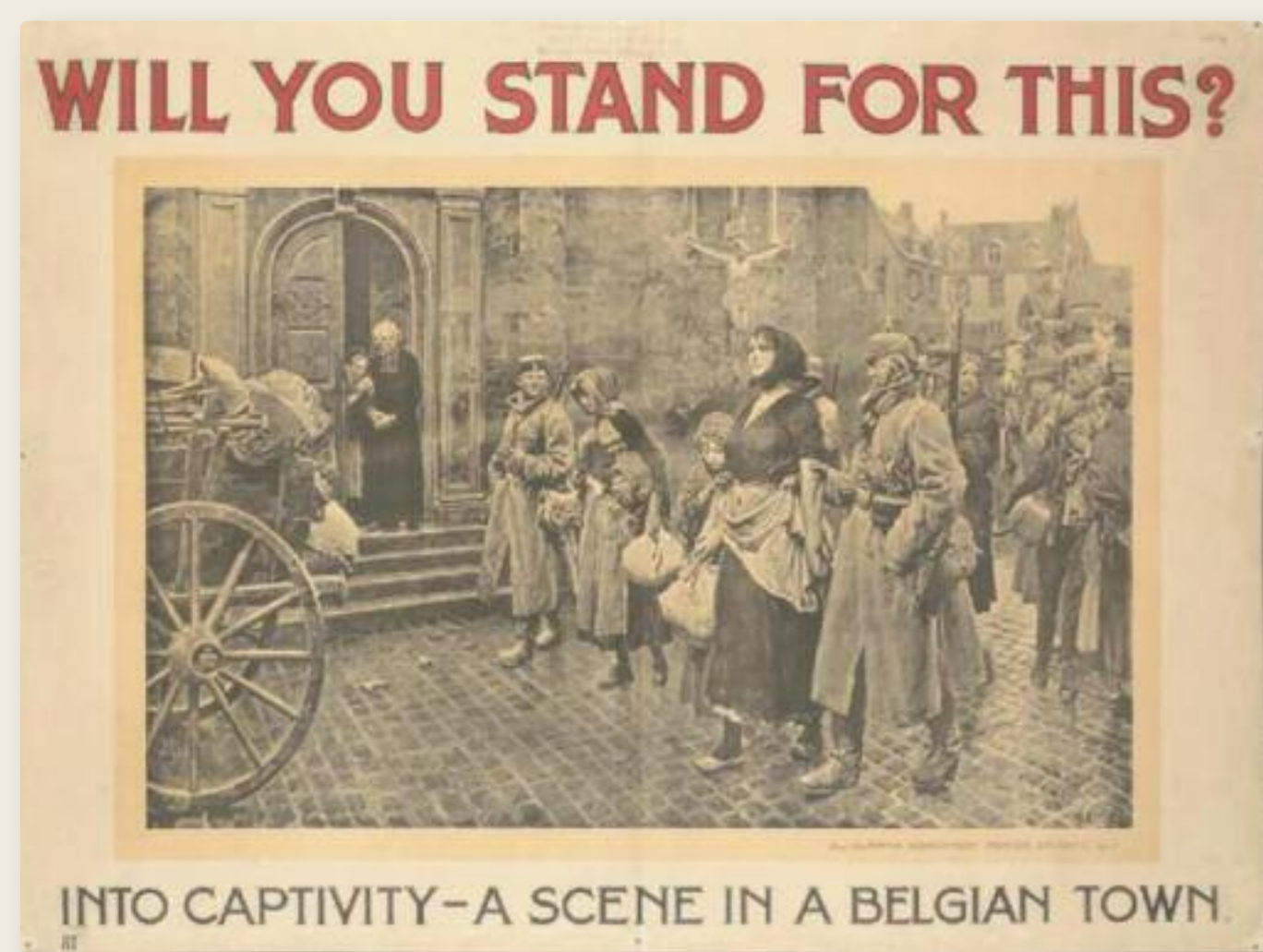
A War Savings Association was formed in Bethesda which subscribed £45,000 to the government war loan scheme. Teachers encouraged children to save and a branch opened in the quarry, enabling the quarrymen to save some of their high wartime earnings.

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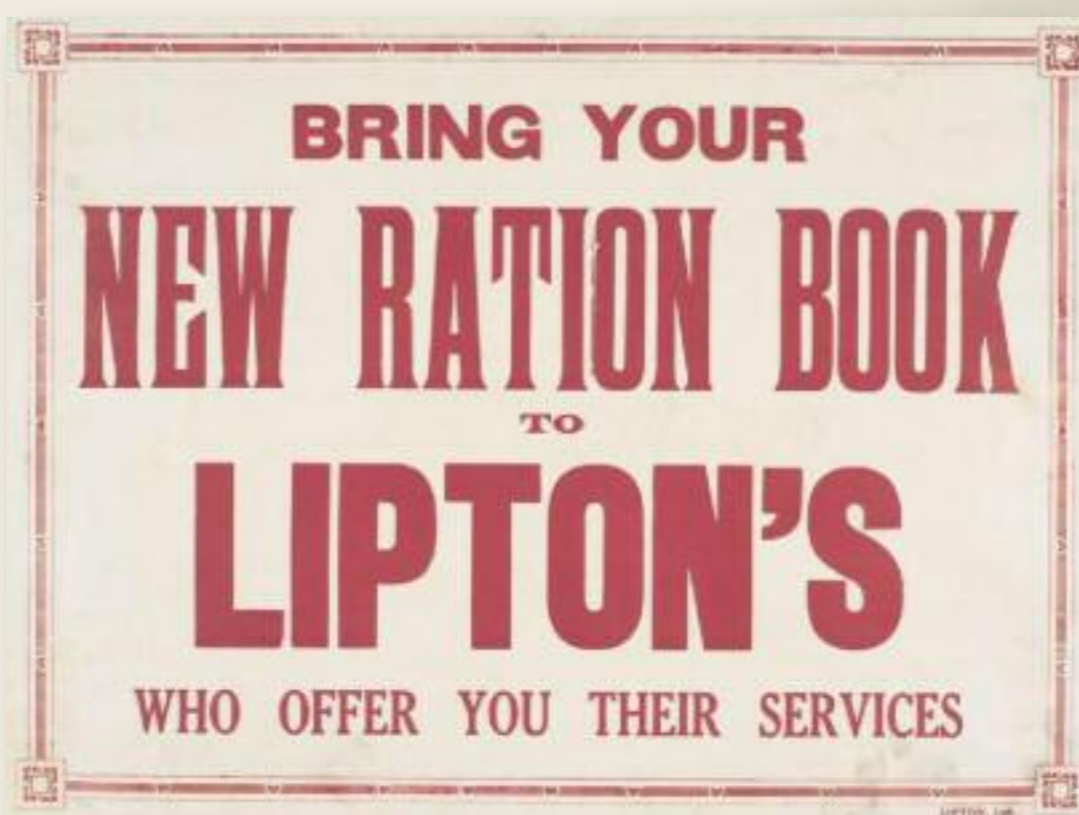
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Snowdonia families raised funds and provided homes for Belgian refugees (© IWM)
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Small local councils struggled to administer food rationing (© IWM)
Small local councils struggled to administer food rationing (© IWM)



Women were encouraged to save food to reduce pressure on shipping (© IWM)
Women were encouraged to save food to reduce pressure on shipping (© IWM)



War loans encouraged people to save their war earnings (© IWM)
War loans encouraged people to save their war earnings (© IWM)

EAT LESS BREAD



Flag days helped provide comforts for the troops. (Gwynedd Archives)
Flag days helped provide comforts for the troops. (Gwynedd Archives)

Farming

Farming



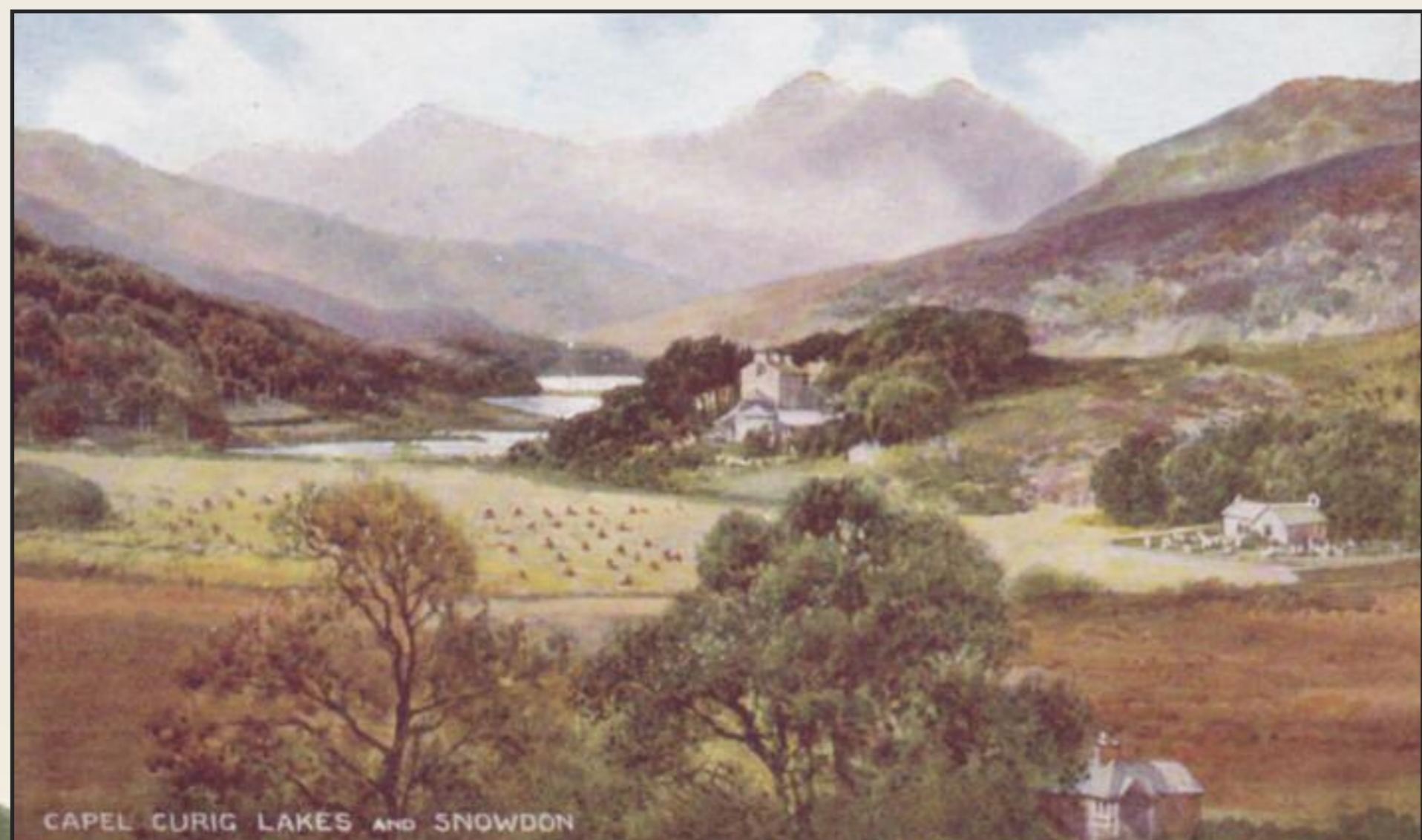
Before the war, Britain was heavily dependent on imported food, especially wheat for making bread which was an important part of working class diet. In the early stages of the war, the government expected that the navy would be able to keep imports flowing. But food shortages began to emerge in 1916 as shipping losses due to German submarine attacks mounted. When David Lloyd George became Prime Minister he authorised the Board of Agriculture to expand food production, especially by growing more corn.

There was considerable potential to expand food supplies in Wales, where 100,000 acres previously growing crops had been converted to grazing land since 1875. A fifth of this land was in Caernarfonshire. In March 1917, the county's newly formed War Agricultural Executive Committee wrote to 38 farmers ordering them to plough up small amounts of pasture ranging from a half to ten acres. One of the early farms affected was Plas Gwynant in Nantgwynant.

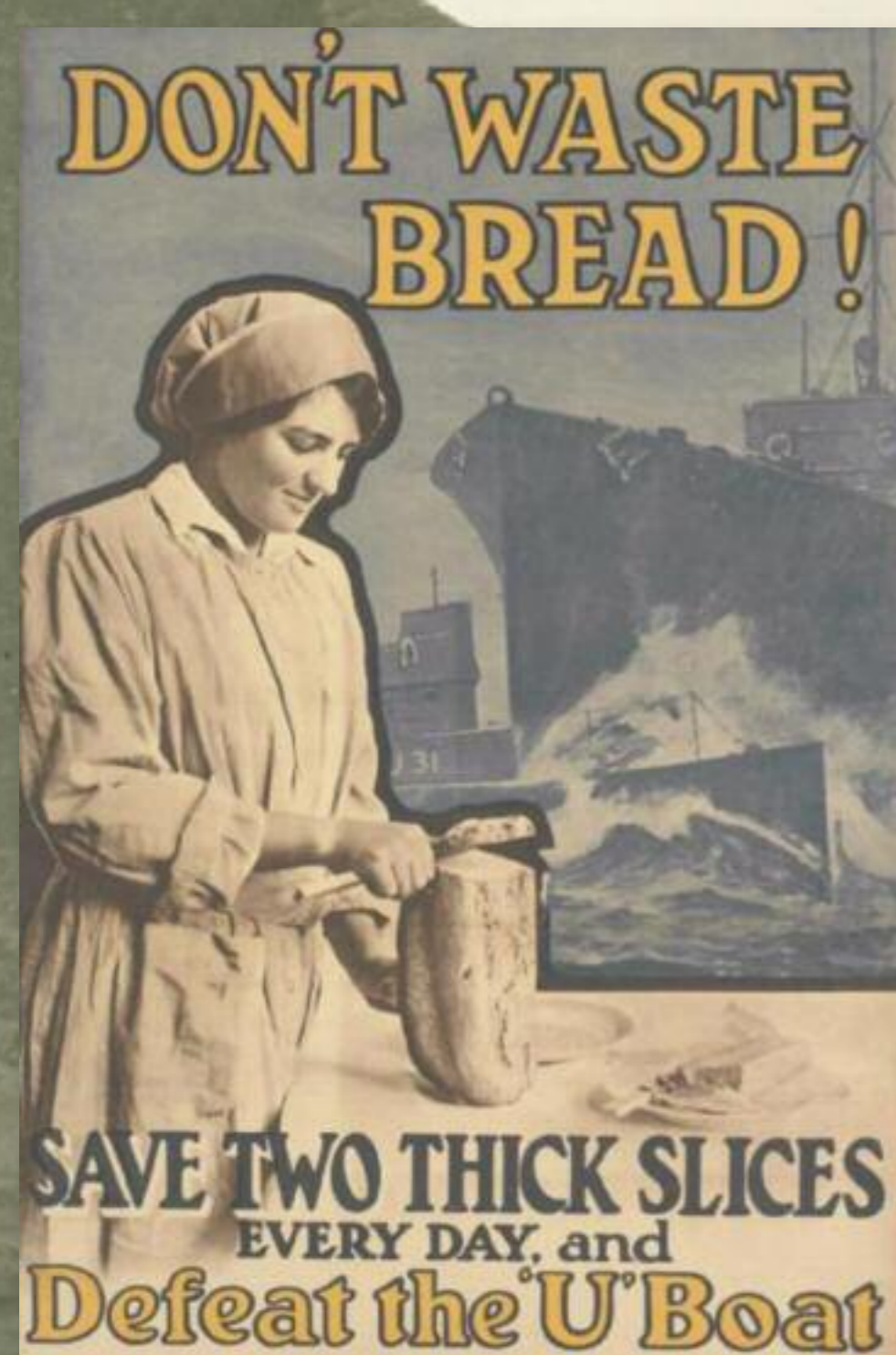
Farmers complained of lack of labour, horses, equipment, fertilizers and capital, which the County War Agriculture Committee attempted to solve. The Women's Land Army, soldiers on leave, prisoners of war, council roadmen and schoolchildren all played a part in overcoming the shortage of farm workers. By 1918 the acreage under corn in Caernarfonshire was twice the pre-war level. In the south-east of the county including Capel Curig, Betws y coed and Trefriw, 85% of farms were given orders to cultivate corn, averaging 8 acres per farm. Following the Armistice, cultivation orders for 1919 were withdrawn.



Soldier helping a woman farm hand gather in the crops © IWM (Q31134)
Soldier helping a woman farm hand gather in the crops © IWM (Q31134)



Most Capel Curig farms were ordered to grow corn



Food imports reduced by 20% during the war



Caernarvonshire Women's War Agriculture Committee thatching proficiency test. © IWM (Q50604)

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Soldiers, prisoners of war and council roadmen helped with the hay and corn harvests. (Haf Roberts)
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Industry, work and the slate quarry

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The War Years introduced many new controls and restrictions bringing disruption and upset into a rural lifestyle that had had little disturbance since the start of the industrial revolution.

One of the main local industries was slate quarrying. Production had been in decline from the early years of the twentieth century due to problems brought about by industrial unrest, the use of tiles and corrugated steel for roofs, and the lack of investment. By 1914 Penrhyn Quarry, the major quarry in the area, showed production halved from the figures of 1898. The war caused the loss of the valuable German market, internal markets were declining and the industry was affected by the loss of manpower to the army. Some quarries closed altogether for a while.

During the latter two years of the war a reduced level of production began again, probably changing from making roofing slates to the manufacture of slate slabs for paving, electrical mounting boards, architectural features and, of course, grave stones.

3 January 1918, North Wales weekly News. Dolgarog strike at aluminium works more wages— letter from Ministry of Munitions call off til 10 January 1918.

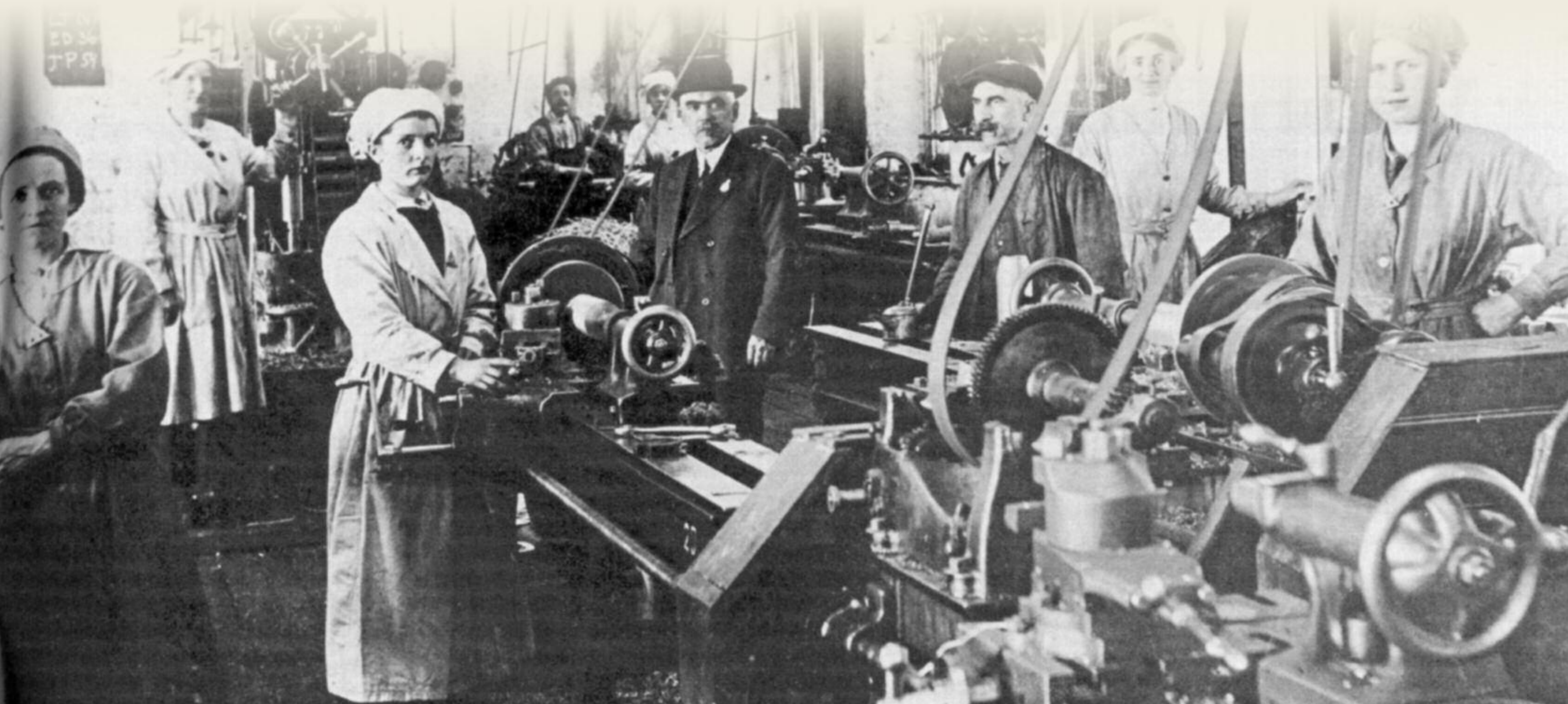


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panel 11?



The Douglas-Pennant family, Penrhyn Castle.

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Edward Sholto Douglas-Pennant was Baron Penrhyn during the period of the First World War. He was head of the largest slate quarrying industry in the country.

The demand for slate plummeted during the war so, although the family had their seat in Penrhyn Castle, near Bangor (now National Trust), they had their main residence in Northamptonshire.

The involvement of the family in the First World War was substantial; two of Edward's half-brothers were killed in the war, as was his elder son.

Edward had 5 children, of which the eldest two were young men at the start of the war. The younger son, Hugh, survived the war. However, Alan, the elder son, a Lieutenant in the First Battalion of the Grenadier Guards, was reported missing on 29th October, 1914, at the age of 24. Edward also lost two half-brothers during WW1. Lieutenant Charles Douglas-Pennant, First Battalion of the Coldstream Guards and Captain George Douglas-Pennant, of the Grenadier Guards.

The women of aristocratic families often acted as volunteers, having fewer domestic duties. Edward's sister, Violet Blanche Douglas-Pennant, became an important political figure during the war. An organiser of the Scottish Women's Hospital Unit, she helped form the Women's Army Auxiliary Corp (WAAC) and was involved in the recruiting for the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS).

Edward's half-sister, Lilian Douglas-Pennant, was with the British Red Cross. She was in France in 1915 and 1917-1919 and was a member of the British delegation to the Palace of Versailles in 1919, where she probably acted as interpreter.

Another sister, Alice, was on close terms with the Royal Family, and used a room near or adjoining Buckingham Palace to serve teas for the wounded service men on leave. For this she was given a sterling silver bracelet dog tag inscribed with her name by the grateful troops. She is buried in Capel Curig churchyard, grave number C185.



Penrhyn Quarry, at times a very profitable concern.
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Penrhyn Castle, one of the Douglas Pennant homes.



Violet Douglas Pennant



Lillian Douglas Pennant



Alice Douglas Pennant, not dressed for work, but all ladies like to dress up sometimes!
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Edward Sholto Douglas Pennant, the third Baron during the war years.



Charles Douglas Pennant.

The Memorial Stone in France.???

Peace at last Peace at last

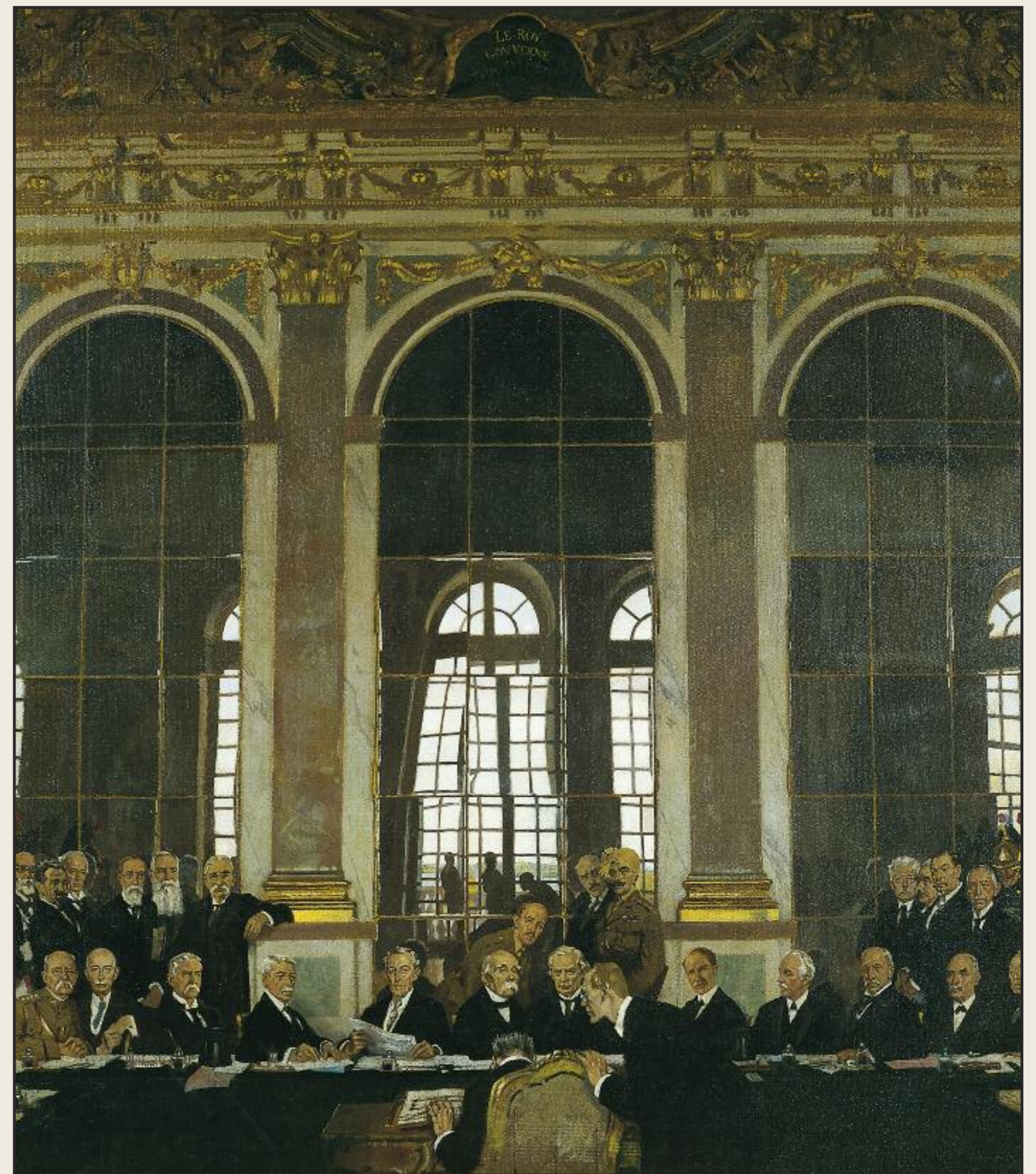


The Armistice that ended fighting with Germany on 11th November 1918 was greeted with joy throughout the country. Crowds gathered outside Buckingham Palace, but memory of the boys who had fallen and sympathy for the bereaved prevented wild rejoicing. Most servicemen were not demobilized until the summer of 1919, after the signing of the Versailles Peace Treaty. The Archbishop of Canterbury issued a form of service for Peace Thanksgiving services held in Anglican churches on Sunday 6th July. Local celebrations took place throughout the summer to welcome back the returning servicemen.

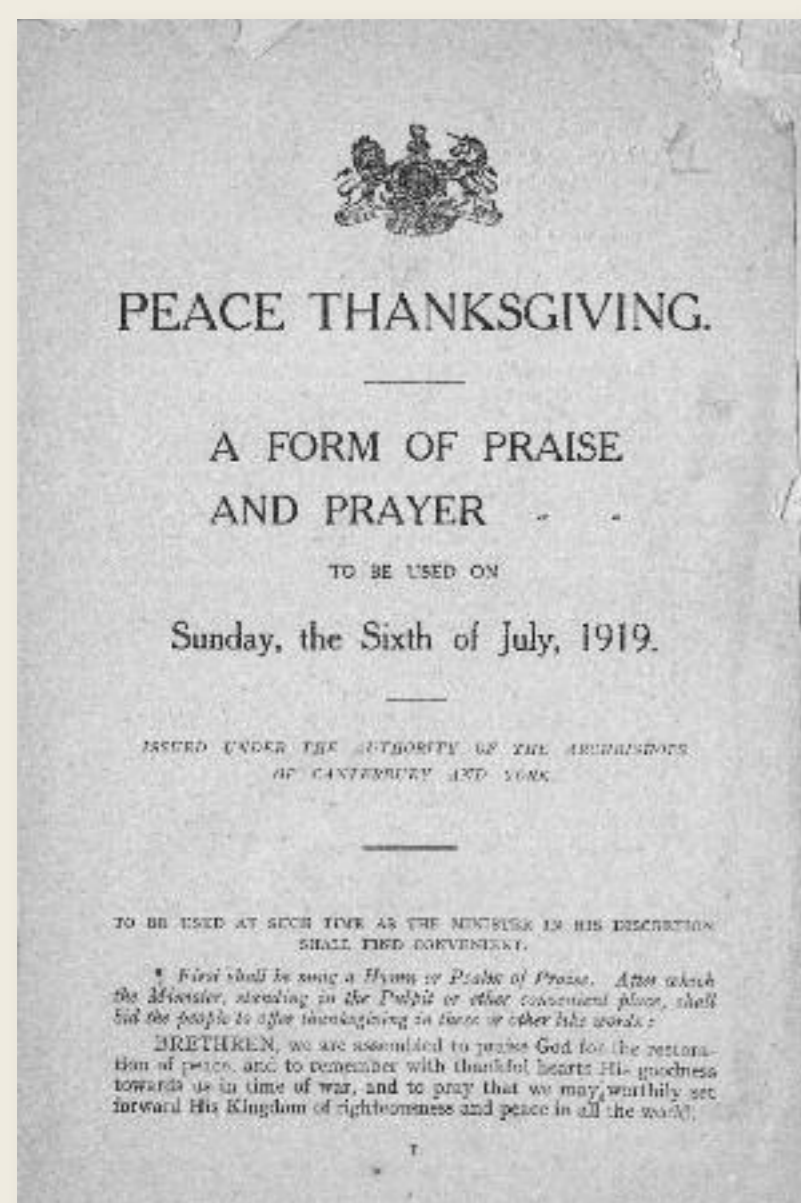
In July there were welcoming celebrations for returning soldiers in Brynmawr Chapel, Betws y Coed, and a large event in Trefriw and Llanrhychwyn. Wreathes were laid in the churchyard and there was a procession through the village led by the soldiers with a captured German machine gun, accompanied by the village jazz band. There were sports for everyone and the ladies' committee provided tea.

Lloyd George set up a Ministry of Reconstruction in 1917 to oversee the task of rebuilding national life on a fairer basis after the Great War was over. The economy was severely disrupted, the country in debt, and there was danger of mass unemployment when servicemen returned. Lord Penrhyn fulfilled his promise of re-employing all the Penrhyn quarrymen who had joined the services. But 500 men who had left for other work remained unemployed. Production restarted at Rhos quarry, Capel Curig, in 1917, but only employed a third of the pre-war number of men. The Forestry Commission set up in 1919 to expand Britain's forests after the severe wartime depletion, provided much needed new employment in Snowdonia.

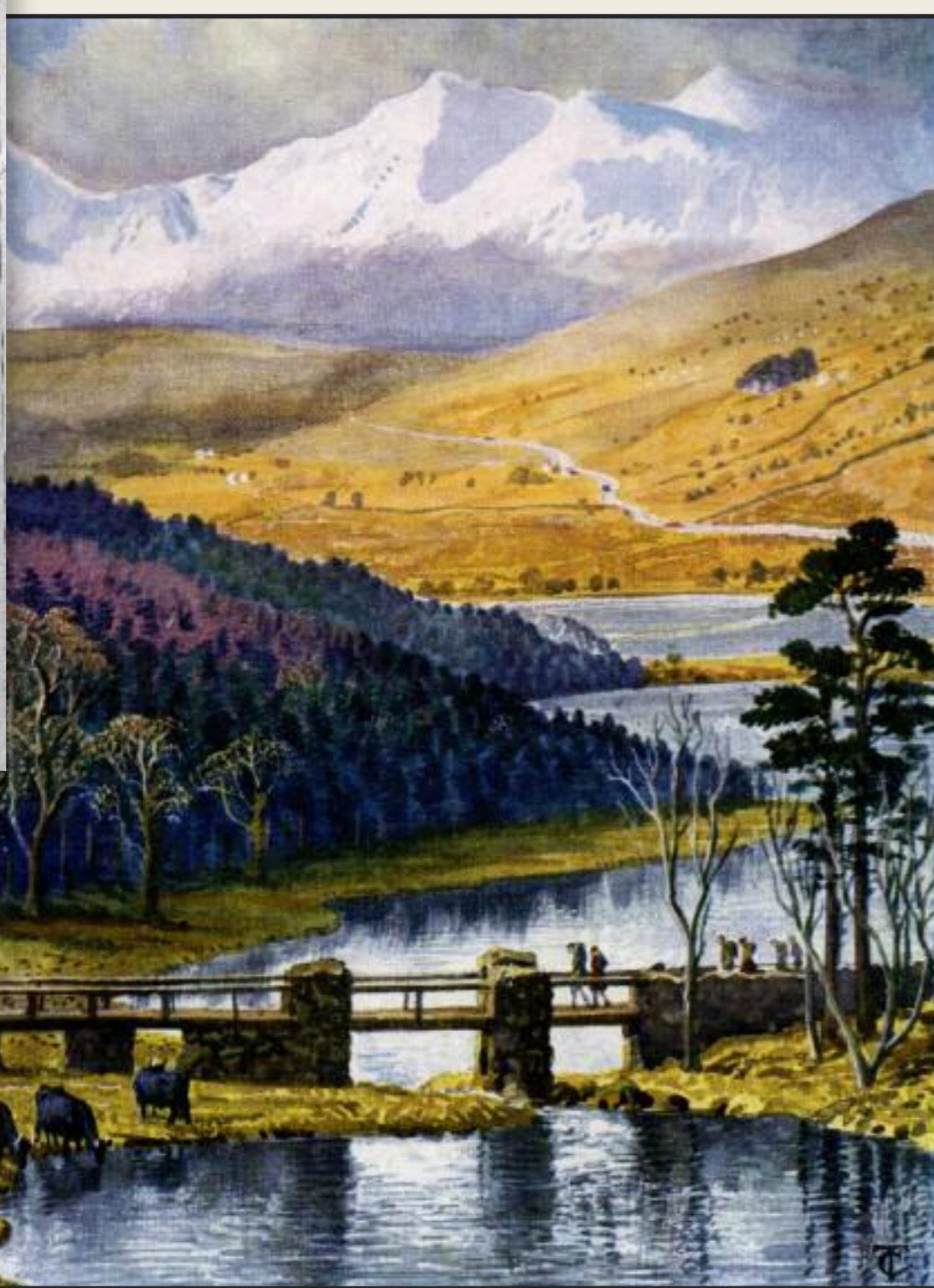
Every community in the area set about constructing a war memorial to express their shared remembrance of the young men who had not returned, and their collective sacrifices during the war.



*The Signing of Peace in the Hall of Mirrors, Versailles, 28th June 1919
Sir William Orpen, oil on canvas, 152x127cm, (IWM)
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Sir William Orpen, oil on canvas, 152x127cm, (IWM)*



*Service of Peace Thanksgiving
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The Forestry Commission created new jobs after the war

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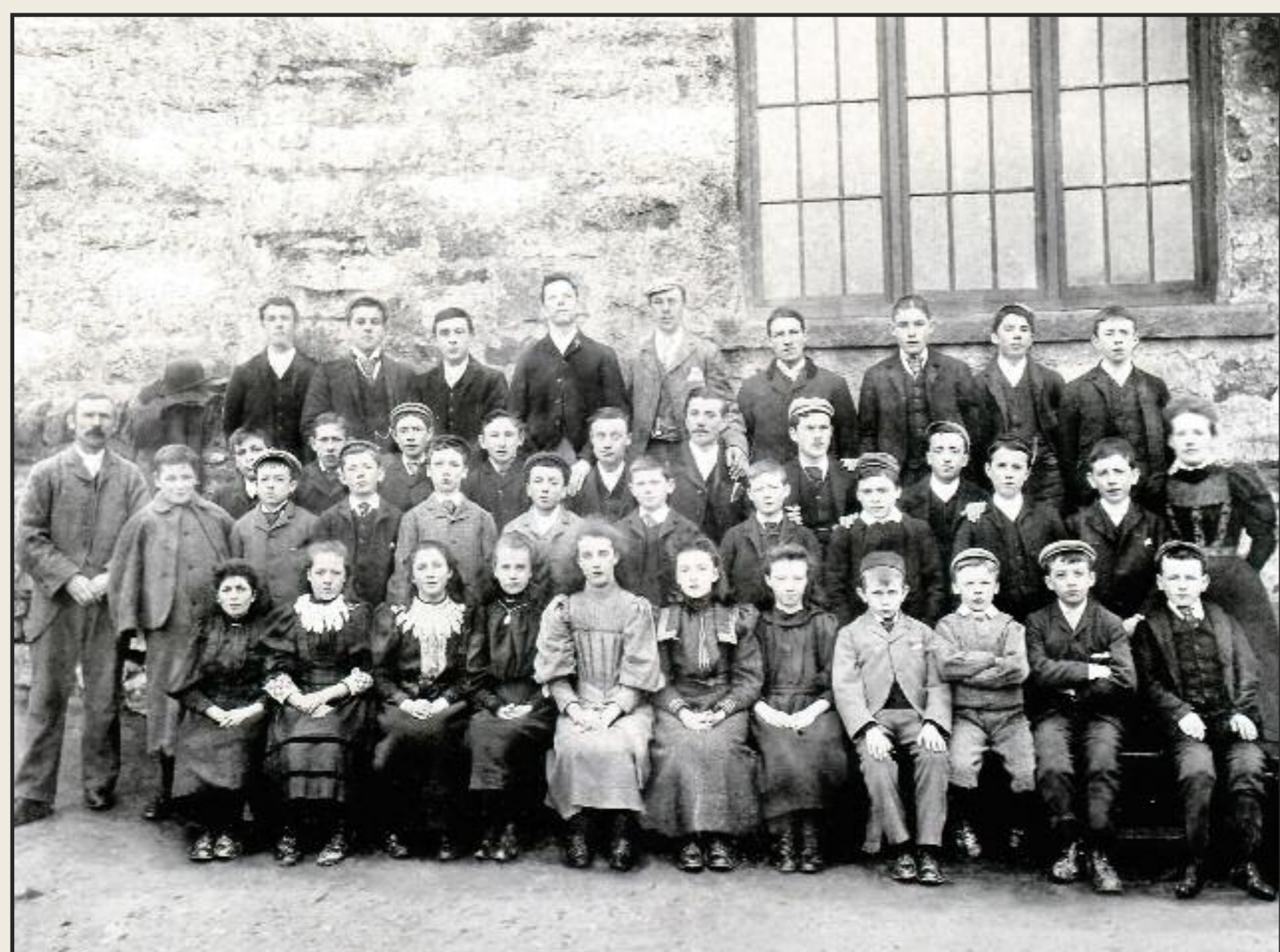
Some would call these souvenirs for four years of hard labour.



Dolgarrog celebrates the homecoming of the troops (Peter Smith archive)

Uncle Tom, Penmachno to Prisoner of War Camp

Uncle Tom, Penmachno to Prisoner of War Camp



Penmachno National School, late 1890s. Some of these children volunteered. (Hywel Roberts)

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Blackpool Beach. "Setting off to France today" (Hywel Roberts)

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First card from France, 29 July 1916 (Hywel Roberts)

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Card sent before he was injured, 17 August 1916 (Hywel Roberts)

Card sent before he was injured, 17 August 1916 (Hywel Roberts)



Card purchased in France shows German prisoners carrying wounded Frenchmen (Hywel Roberts)

Thomas Williams was born to a family of quarrymen in Talywaen, Penmachno but Tom became a tailor. From 1906 onwards he worked at H R Davies, Gents Tailors, Abergele Road, Colwyn Bay. On 25 November 1915 he enlisted with the Liverpool Scottish Battalion. Following training near Blackpool he was sent to France on 10 April 1916. From France he sent regular postcards to his niece, Kate Williams, then aged 7, of Gwiga, Penmachno. These cards have been kept but unfortunately none of his letters have survived.

He experienced fierce fighting in the Battle Guillemont and said he felt lucky to have survived but he was injured in August and sent home to hospital in Ashton-under-Lynne. He was back in France on 12 June 1917. Initially he was involved with the preparation work of digging trenches etc. but by 20 July he was back in the trenches and experienced mustard gas attacks in late July. Tom participated in and survived the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele) where he again experienced fierce fighting. It was during this battle that the Battalion's Medical Officer, Capt. Noel Chavasse, was killed rescuing injured soldiers in no-mans-land and was awarded his second VC of the War; the only man to do so.

By November Tom was in the middle of the Battle of Cambrai, which was the first battle in which tanks played a major part. Following the innovative and successful British attack and advance on 20 November there was a massive German counter-attack on 30 November 1917 during which Tom was shot in the left thigh and taken prisoner. Tom was lucky compared to his cousin, David John Williams of Preswylfa, Penmachno, serving with the 2nd Battalion South Wales Borderers who was killed 4 days later, also in the Battle of Cambrai.

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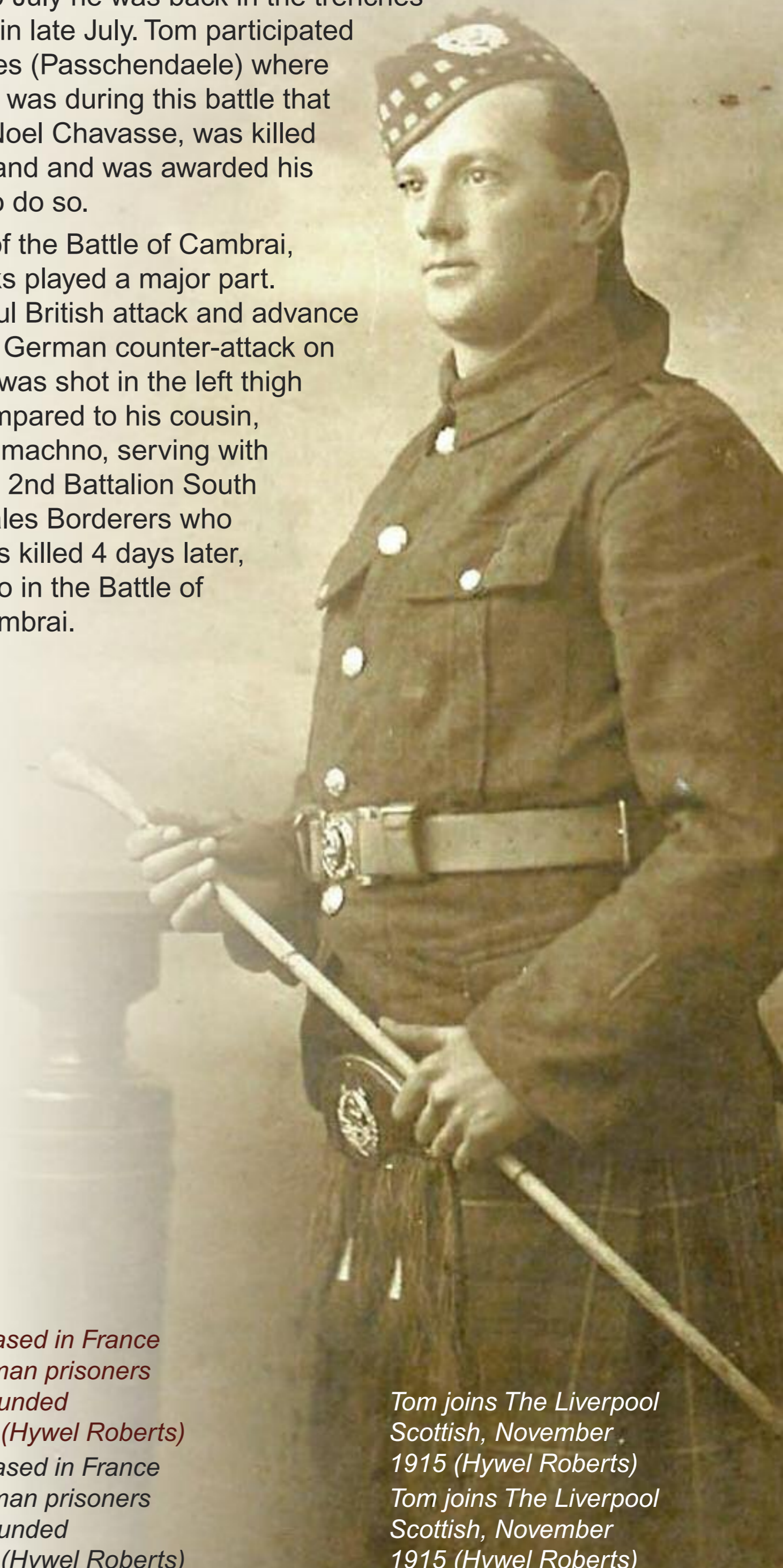
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Dressing station near Cambrai, Tom was captured near the town. Note German and British injured (IWM)

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Tom joins The Liverpool Scottish, November 1915 (Hywel Roberts)

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Uncle Tom from Penmachno to Prisoner of War camp 2

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There's no record of where Tom's injuries were treated, his official records show that he was at the Minden Prisoner of War camp. However there's postcard evidence that he also spent some time at the Friedrichsfeld POW camp. Tom left a photo album which includes 23 photos taken inside the camp which are very rare, most of which contain the official Minden camp stamp. There are photos of other POWs with names and addresses on the back including French and Russian POWs suggesting that they exchanged photos as keepsakes. A postcard from Holland dated 21 December 1918 says he's on his way home and "feeling in the pink"!

He was sent to the POW Repatriation Centre at Rippon and was assessed as 20% disabled with war wounds and given two months leave as all POWs. Further leave of one month led to his discharge on 25 March 1919 as being "surplus to Military requirements having suffered impairment since entry into the Service". He was awarded a pension of 5s 6d a week "to be reviewed in 52 weeks". Tom was back at work as a tailor with H R Davies in Colwyn Bay on 26 March 1919 after serving 3 years and 125 days.

Subsequently he received the Silver War Badge, the British War Medal and the Allied Victory Medal, the last two had his number, rank, name and regiment inscribed on the

rim of the medal. On Armistice Day 1919 Tom, with other ex-servicemen, was presented with a leather wallet by the Borough Council with the inscription: "The residents of Colwyn Bay, Colwyn and District desire to record their high appreciation of the loyal services rendered to King and Country by you during the Great War 1914-1919".

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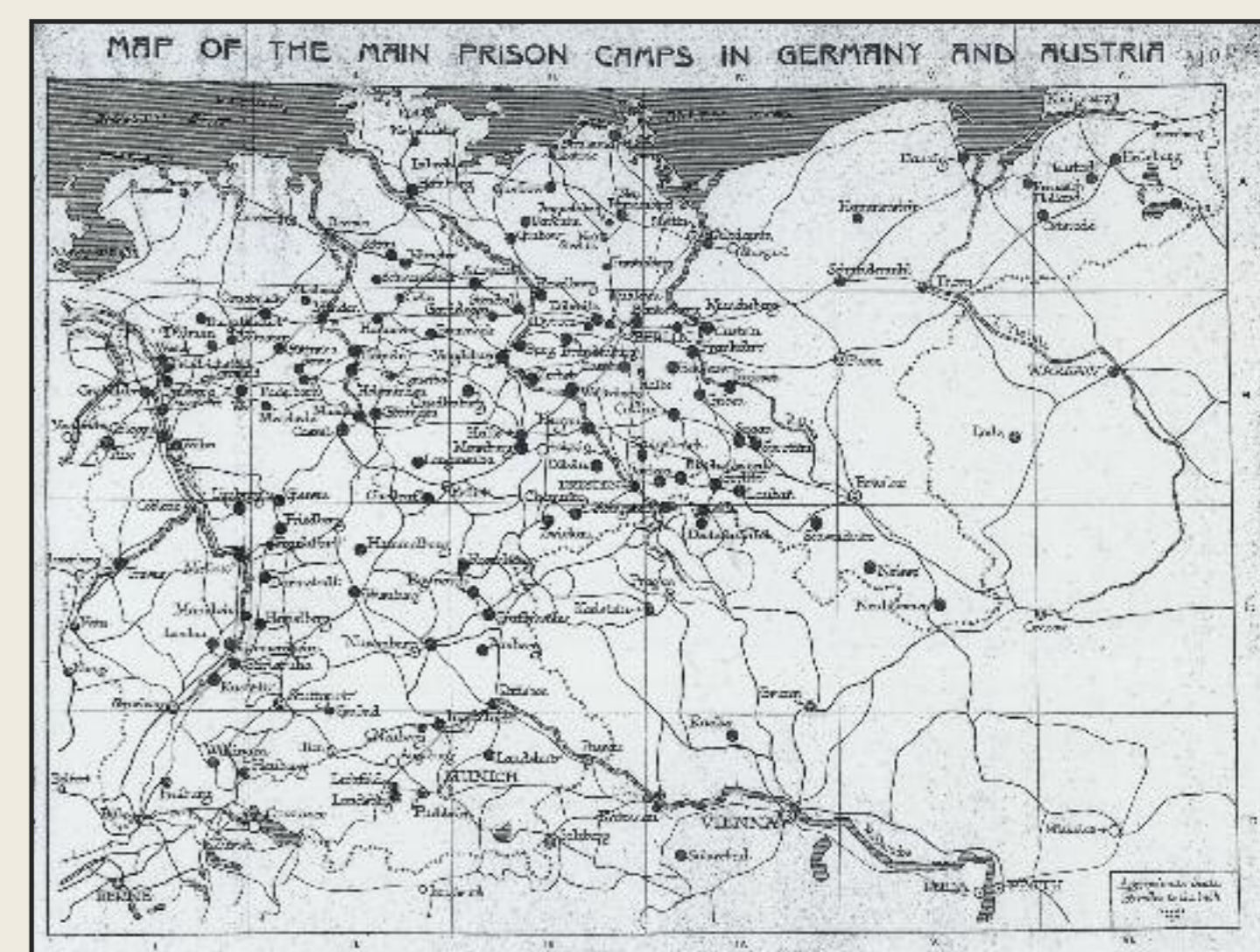
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Tom's official POW camp photo with camp stamp superimposed.

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Map of POW Camps in Germany and Austria, it is surprising how many there were.

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Postcard from Phillipe France, with the message "A souvenir of our time in captivity"

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Group of Russians with a message from one to his wife. Contains 3 stamps: the Camp stamp, a Free Post stamp and a stamp stating "unable to deliver because of a breakdown in communications" – the revolution had broken out in Russia.

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