

Penallt Village War Memorial

The War Memorial at Penallt, Monmouthshire, Wales, was designed and created by a Village War Committee after the Great War. In October 1919, the committee decided to hold a series of events to raise funds and accepted donations from villagers. Chair of the committee was the Vicar of Penallt, the Reverend John Le Geyt du Heaume.

A local stonemason, Mr Ballinger was commissioned to make the Memorial at his Dingestow workshop.

The Monmouthshire Beacon ran a small article on 1st February 1921, informing readers that:

"War memorial. – Some time ago a meeting of the War Memorial Committee took place at which Mr Ballinger's tender for erecting a memorial cross in blue Portland stone, with base and three steps, was accepted. The site will be a strip of grass opposite the Vicarage gates. The monument will be ready for unveiling on Palm Sunday. The fund is in hand and is £10 short of the estimate fee."

The Memorial cost £88-6s and was quite a lot of money in 1921. For some families in the village, this was around three times their annual household income. A final payment of £15-11s was made to Mr Ballinger on Armistice Day, November 11th 1921.

The Friday, March 4th 1921, edition of The Beacon announced that the Penallt War Memorial was to be unveiled at 2.30 p.m. on Saturday 12th March 1921.

The Friday March 18th 1921, edition of The Beacon reported on the unveiling ceremony of The Penallt War Memorial at Pentwyn, Penallt, Near to the Bush Inn. The Memorial was unveiled by The Mackintosh of Mackintosh, a famous name of the times.

"The inscription on the memorial reads 'To the Immortal Memory of the Men of this Parish who died for God, King and Country in the Great War, 1914-1919. In Loving Gratitude from their Friends at Penallt.'

The fourteen names of the men of this parish who made the supreme sacrifice are not on the memorial but were written and placed in a sealed bottle which is in the base. The bottle also contains the names of the committee.

The names of the fallen are: R. Pearce-Brown, S. Davies, J. Glead, E.T. Cope, R. Gunter, A. England, R. England, G. Wilkins, Victor Wilkins, Charles Vaughan, E. Morgan, W. Morgan, F. Wilkins, F. Roberts."

(N.B. This report in The Beacon had a number of errors: A. England died of natural causes, E.T. Cope was actually G.E. Cope and F. Roberts was actually P. Roberts.)

A survey in 2010 showed that the memorial was in a very poor condition and beginning to lean. The base stones were separating, making the structure unstable.

In 2013, Peter Garwood of Trellech, and John O'Brien, from Catbrook, made a successful series of grant applications to the Lottery Heritage Fund, The War Memorials Trust, Monmouthshire County Council and the Trellech Community Council. Other funds were provided by The Royal Naval Association, the Royal British Legion, and villagers of Penallt This enabled the setting up of Penallt War Memorial Fund at Barclays Bank in Monmouth, thus guaranteeing funds for the restoration of the Memorial and having it rededicated at some future stage.

The stonemason chosen to carry out the work on the Memorial was Scott T. Fisher, of Coleford. He and his crew started on the 15th July 2014, taking great care with every part of the structure. It was hoped that careful archaeological digging might reveal that the story that a bottle being placed in the Memorial prior to being sealed in 1921 was true.

The inside of the Memorial base was accessed when the cross and base and uppermost layer of steps had been removed. The inside was filled with 93-year-old concrete. The team were excited to find that the bottle was clearly visible inside the concrete, proving that the account from the 1921 Beacon was correct. The bottle did have a piece of paper inside it which had been folded twice and rolled up to fit in the bottle. The paper appeared quite intact after 93 years. Carefully the bottle was freed and the bottle was sealed and taken to Gwent Archives conservation service in Ebbw Vale.

On the 21st August 2014, the removal of the document took place. The ink was, in many places, quite legible. The Archives preserved the paper to prevent any further deterioration. The original document and the bottle are now part of the archive at Gwent Archives, meaning they will be preserved, maintained and available to a wide audience.

Errors are also found on the document found in the bottle. For some reason not understood, the names of Charles Vaughan and R. England were not recorded on the document prior to it being placed in the bottle. In addition, George Gleed was actually John Gleed.

Work on the Memorial was completed in September 2014. Now in the Memorial are two time capsules containing the original information from 1921, and based on modern research, a detailed archive of the men who made the supreme sacrifice for King and Country and of those from the village who were known to have served and survived.

On Saturday the 20th September 2014, the renovated Great War Memorial at Penallt was unveiled by Penallt Village historian and author, Mr Vernon Kimber, and rededicated by Reverend Sandra Howells. The Great War Memorial was covered in a large Union Jack flag and the Union flag was flown from the adjacent flag post by Mrs P. Evill. A small crowd of villagers, some of whom were directly related to the men of the village who died in the Great War, gathered just before 11 a.m. along with a contingent from the Royal British Legion and the

Royal Naval Association who kindly provided Standard bearers for the ceremony. In addition, a number of serving and ex-service men and women were present, having travelled some considerable distance to honour their comrades from another era.

Mr John O'Brien made the welcome speech and introductions, and Mr Vernon Kimber, author of two books on the history of Penallt, made a speech about the impact of the Great War on the village and its general impact on the country and the villagers.

He then unveiled the Memorial by removing the flag. The Rev. Sandra Howells then movingly and eloquently re-dedicated the Memorial. The Laurence Binyon verse and the names of the fallen were read out by Peter Garwood. The Rev. Sandra Howells carried out the Act of Commitment to which those gathered responded. Ceri Edmonds of Usk Band played the Last Post, and after the two-minute silence she played Reveille. The ceremony concluded by the singing of the National Anthems. As part of the grants, a small exhibition was held in Penallt on April 16th 2016, and this printed booklet about the Great War Memorial was produced.

2nd Lieutenant Richard Pearce-Brown

Richard Pearce-Brown was born on the 16th April 1882, at Thorngaby, Yorkshire. At the time of enlisting, he was a bank cashier. Richard Pearce-Brown's family lived at the 8-roomed house, Traligael in Whitebrook.

At the age of 32 years and 4 months, he joined the Coldstream Guards as Private 13928 Richard Pearce-Brown at Doncaster on 25th November 1914. He was given a commission on April 29th 1915. He transferred to the 4th Battalion Durham Light Infantry as a Second Lieutenant. His commission was gazetted 18th May 1915.

Richard Pearce-Brown entered France on 12th May 1916, and was 34 when he was killed on the Somme in July 1916; He was serving in D. Company 12th Durham Light Infantry. During the evening of 16th July 1916, his battalion advanced and took over trenches ready for an attack the next day on the Germans at Pozieres. His company, like the rest of the battalion, was cut to pieces by machine gun fire while trying to cross the enemy wire. Service records show that the only items off his found on the battle field after the German attack were his identifying dog tags. No other items of personal kit were to be found. He was killed in action on the 17th July 1916.

A tall, well-built man, his size must have made him an easy target in the trenches and attacking in no mans land. He was relatively inexperienced and once in the trenches, he lived for just over eight weeks.

Richard Pearce-Brown's medal entitlement was British War Medal and Victory Medal but not the 1915 Star. Richard was buried at Pozieres British Cemetery, Ovilliers-La-Bois.

2nd Lieutenant Sidney Alfred Davis

Sidney Alfred Davis was the son of Henry and Fanny Louisa Davis of Bridge Cottage, Redbrook. He was born in Penallt in 1892.

The 1901 census shows he lived at Lone Lane, Penallt. He was an old boy of Monmouth School. Sydney was married in the 2nd Quarter of 1917 to Edith Louise Davis (nee Godfrey).

He served with the 1/4th Battalion, The Gloucestershire Regiment as Private 2569 TF S. A. Davies (Territorial Force) from 2nd September 1914 to January 1917. At this point he transferred to the 1/5th Battalion Gloucester Regiment and becoming Corporal 100613 S. A. Davies. He was given a commission on 26th April 1917.

Sydney is listed as killed in action 22nd August 1917, aged 25 years in the attack at Ypres.

Lt. G. E. Cope (Private E Cope)

The Cope family lived at Fernside, Whitebrook, up to 1915. George Eric Cope, was born 18 Apr 1896, in Hoylake, Cheshire, West Kirby, England. Eric Cope joined on 14th October 1914, as 14634 Corporal George Eric Cope, 12th Battalion Gloster Regiment becoming a Lance Corporal on 15th December 1914, and a Corporal on 30th January 1915. After 222 days of service at Home, he took a commission on the 5th April 1915, to become a Lieutenant, in the Northumberland Fusiliers, 20th (Tyneside Scottish) Bn. "20th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers". It crossed to France in January 1916.

George Eric was killed 1st July 1916, in Thiepval, France, during The Battle of the Somme. He entered the theatre of operations in January 1916, in France and then was noted as "Dead" 1st July 1916. He is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial. His medal entitlement was The British War and Victory medal but not the 1915 Star.

Private R4/088207 Arthur Henry England

Arthur Henry England was born in Mitchel Troy in 1885, the son of Edwin and Mary England. The 1911 census shows he had moved to Chapel Farm in Penallt and was working as a Farmer. Arthur Henry enlisted on 16th November 1914. In November 1914 he is in the Welsh Transport Section. By December 29th 1916, he was in "C" Squadron, The Army Service Corps 2nd Remount Depot. It is not known what theatre of war he served in. His medal entitlement was the British War medal and the Victory medal, but not the 1915 star.

Arthur's medal index card shows that he was discharged 5th September 1917 as suffering from sickness. This does not specify what sickness, but presumably he was wounded and his health became worse. His medal index card shows he was discharged under Kings Regulations Para 392 (xvi), indicating he was no longer physically fit for service. He was awarded the Silver War Badge No.235794.

Arthur died 8th January 1918, at home, aged 32 years and was buried in Penallt Churchyard on 18th January 1918.

397 Driver Robert England Royal Field Artillery (T), 630123 Royal Horse and Royal Field Artillery

The original report by The Beacon of the unveiling of the war Memorial listed a "R. England" as being one of the fallen. This name does not appear on the plaque in Penallt Church, but only the name of Arthur Henry England. Neither have we been able to find an official war death listing for "R. England" that links back to Penallt. We thought that he was listed in The Beacon because it was felt that his death was due to the war. His death certificate shows that he died on 18th April 1918, aged 31, due to Pulmonary Tuberculosis (T.B.). This was certified by Dr Rowland Payne L.R.C.P. It also states that his brother "R. England was present at the death". Presumably, this was Rushton England. Robert's occupation was listed as farm labourer and there does not seem to be any military connection to his death. However, we found a medal index card for a man who was in the Royal Field Artillery (Territorial) as 397 Driver Robert England, and who later became 630123 Driver Robert England. The rank of Driver would be ideal for a man who had experience of horses on a farm. This Robert England is listed as wounded and was given the Silver War Badge and was discharged from service on 21st May 1917 under Kings' Regulations, Para 392, XVI. This could explain why his name was in The Beacon at the unveiling of The War Memorial at Penallt Village in 1921. He served in France from 2nd May 1915, and his medal entitlement was the British War medal, the Victory medal, and the 1915 star. Robert England, on discharge, had taken to working back on a farm for a living which would explain the occupation on the death certificate. The Beacon records both brothers as serving in the Welsh Transport Section in November 1915. From December 1917 only Arthur is in the army.

Robert England was buried in the family grave at Penallt Churchyard on April 21 1918. His name does not appear on the memorial within the church and the reason may be that it was felt that his death was not attributable to war service. There are no contemporaneous notes from meetings of village committees in any archive that we have consulted to get an insight into the reason for his not being named on the church memorial.

Private 11669 John Gleed

John was born in 1895, at Penallt, son of George and Eliza Gleed of Bannut Tree, Penallt. John Gleed joined 1st Battalion Royal Welsh Fusiliers enlisting at Monmouth town and became 11669 Private John Gleed. He entered the theatre of war on 23rd November 1914, and was killed in action 16th May 1915, aged 20. He was the first man to die in action from Penallt.

John served in France and Flanders. His medal entitlement was the British War Medal and British Victory Medal and the 1915 Star. As he has no known grave he is named on Le Touret Memorial.

Driver W/1616 Reginald Charles Gunter

Reginald was born in 1895, at Worcester, the son of Alice Gunter and Charles Gunter. The 1911 census showed Reginald living at The Birches, Penallt. Reginald is listed as being a "houseboy".

Reginald Gunter was listed on December 29th 1916, as having joined 122nd Brigade Royal Field Artillery in "D" Battery. Enlisting at Hereford town, he became W/1616 (or possibly W/16161) Driver Reginald Charles Gunter. He entered the theatre of war on 24th December 1915, and was killed in action 16th August 1917. He served in France and Flanders. His medal entitlement was the British War Medal, British Victory Medal and the 1915 Star. He was buried at Bard Cottage Cemetery, Ieper, Belgium.

Private 179120 Edward John Morgan

Edward ("Teddy") was born in 1899 at Penallt. He was baptised at Penallt Old Church on 26th February 1899, the son of Tom Watkin Morgan and Annie Morgan (Nee Haskins) of Cherry Orchard, Penallt.

The 1901 census shows he resided at Near Old Church, Penallt, aged 2. The 1911 census showed Edward resided at Lone Lane, Penallt.

Edward joined the Machine Gun Corps (Infantry) (F) Battalion. He became 179120 Private Edward John Morgan. Edward died in the Military Hospital, Cannock Chase, Staffordshire on 15th November 1918, aged 19, just after the Armistice, from pneumonia. The register for deaths shows him to have died at Lichfield. Technically he only served for 5 days and as such, his medal entitlement is nil.

Edward was buried at Penallt Churchyard on November 24th 1918, on the East side of the church. His headstone is inscribed:

"Lost awhile our treasured love
Gained forever safe above"

Private 33558 William John Morgan

William was born in 1880 at Penallt. The 1891 census showed him aged 11, a scholar, residing with his father at an address "Nr Old Church". The 1901 census shows he resided at 161 Victoria Road, Coleford, as a boarder in the house. His occupation was "Grocers Assistant", aged 20. The 1911 Census shows he lived at Blackbrook Cottage, he was aged 32, had married, and his wife Edith Elizabeth A. Morgan (Nee Rowlands) was 33. William was working at the Redbrook Tinplate Works as a "Sheet Opener".

He joined 9th Battalion Welch Regiment. He enlisted at the town of Tonypany and became 33558 Private William John Morgan. He was killed in action 7th July 1916, aged 37. At the time of his death, he was listed as the son of William and Mary Morgan and husband of Elizabeth Alice Morgan of Tinworks Road, Lower Redbrook, Monmouth.

He served in France and Flanders. His medal entitlement was the British War Medal and British Victory Medal but not the 1915 Star. As he has no known grave, he is named on the Thiepval Memorial.

Private 55541 Phillip Harry Roberts

Phillip was born in 1897, at Penallt, son of George and Mary Ann Roberts Penallt. The 1901 census shows he resided at Old House Farm, Penallt, aged 4. The 1911 census shows he was living at Cherry Tree Cottage, Tregagle.

By December 29th 1916, he is listed as having joined The Welsh Horse Regiment. He enlisted in Newport town. At that time it was stated that he resided in Cwmcarnan.

He became 11710 Private Phillip Harry Roberts and later was transferred to 2nd Battalion, then to 17th Battalion Royal Welsh Fusiliers, becoming 55541 Private Phillip Harry Roberts. The 1918 Register of Absent Voters showed him residing at Cherry Tree Cottage.

Phillip died 23rd November 1918, aged 21, of wounds or disease after the signing of the Armistice. He served in France and Flanders. His medal entitlement was British War Medal and Victory Medal but not the 1915 Star. He is buried at The St Sever Cemetery Extension Rouen.

Rifleman 59797 Charles James Vaughan

Charles was born in 1897, at Penallt. He was baptized at Penallt Old Church on 9th January 1898, the son of James and Elizabeth Vaughan of Little Hoop, Penallt.

The 1901 census shows he resided at Little Hoop, Penallt, aged 3. The 1911 Census shows him aged 13, a scholar, still living at "Little Hoop". He joined The 1st Battalion Monmouthshire Regiment (Territorial Regiment), and enlisted in Monmouth town. At that time it was stated that he resided in Penallt.

He became 59797 Rifleman Charles James Vaughan. His theatre of war was listed as "Home", so we can assume he never left these shores. Charles died 22nd November 1918, aged 21, at Herne Bay, from influenza, after the signing of the Armistice.

Charles was buried in a family grave at Penallt Churchyard on December 1st 1918, and his headstone has the inscription "died serving his country".

Private 13227 Victor Edwin Wilkins

Victor was the son of Henry and Louisa Wilkins of Llandogo and Penallt. The 1901 census shows them at 43 Penyvan Hill, Llandogo. Victor was age 13, and working as a farm labourer. The 1911 census showed they lived in a four room house, "The Bowery", Tregagle Farm. Victor was aged 23, and worked at Redbrook tinsplate works as a labourer. In 1915, the family were still at The Bowery, Tregagle Farm, Penallt.

In the third quarter of 1915, Victor married Winifred L Thomas in a ceremony held at Pembroke. He lived at The Bowery in Penallt in 1918, and served with the Shropshire Light Infantry.

Private 13227 Victor Edwin Wilkins enlisted around the 7th-9th September 1914, at Monmouth, along with 13228 Pte. William Henry Howells and 13229 Pte. William Edward Hawkins. Note the consecutive

numbers indicating they had enlisted at the same time. Wilkins was posted to the 2nd Battalion and landed in France/Flanders on the 25th August 1915.

Victor was wounded, date unknown, and died on the 1st February 1919, at the War Hospital in Bath. At the time of his death, his home address was given as The Bowery, Tregagle, Penallt.

A. B Wales Z/2349 Alfred George Wilkins

Alfred was a brother to Victor Edwin Wilkins, whose story is above. He was born 18 July 1894, at Llandogo, not far from Penallt. He was the son of Henry and Louisa Wilkins. The 1891 census shows his family resided at No 14 Llandogo. The 1901 census shows them at 43 Penyvan Hill, Llandogo. By then his father had died and his mother was age 46. The 1911 Census shows George was still at home at The Bowery", Tregagle Farm, aged 16, and working as a farm labourer.

Alfred George worked as a "Tinworker" prior to enlistment, and he was employed in the local tinworks in the Redbrook area. Alfred George joined The Royal Naval Regiment Reserve on 25 October 1915, and became Wales Z/2349 Able Seaman Alfred George Wilkins and was in place on 1st February 1916. He was listed as part of the compliment of Victory VI RND.

Alfred is recorded as being attached to the 5th Battalion from 12th November 1915, with pay number 1230. On the 30th December 1915, he was drafted from the 5th Battalion Depot (5.1230) to the 7th Reserve Battalion Blandford.

On the 1st February 1916, he was listed as part of the compliment of Victory IX RND and Rated as an "AB" (Able-bodied Seaman). On the 16th May 1916, he was transferred from 7th Reserve Battalion to 2nd Anson Battalion, (A/208).

On 31st July 1916, he was sent to 3rd Reserve battalion. He entrained at Blandford on the night of 24/25 Sept 1916, from 3rd Reserve Battalion for Anson Battalion for The British Expeditionary Force as a Lewis Gunner.

On 9th November 1916, he was ordered to the Entrenching Battalion. On 21st July 1917, the report was received from the base that Alfred had been killed in action on 11th July 1917, age 23.

His next of kin were informed that day. On the 23rd July 1917, he was placed on the R.N.D., "D.D" (Discharged Died) list No. 112.

Alfred was the fourth man from Penallt to be killed in action. His medal entitlement was the British War and Victory medal. He is buried at Naval Trench Cemetery, Gavrelle, France.

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