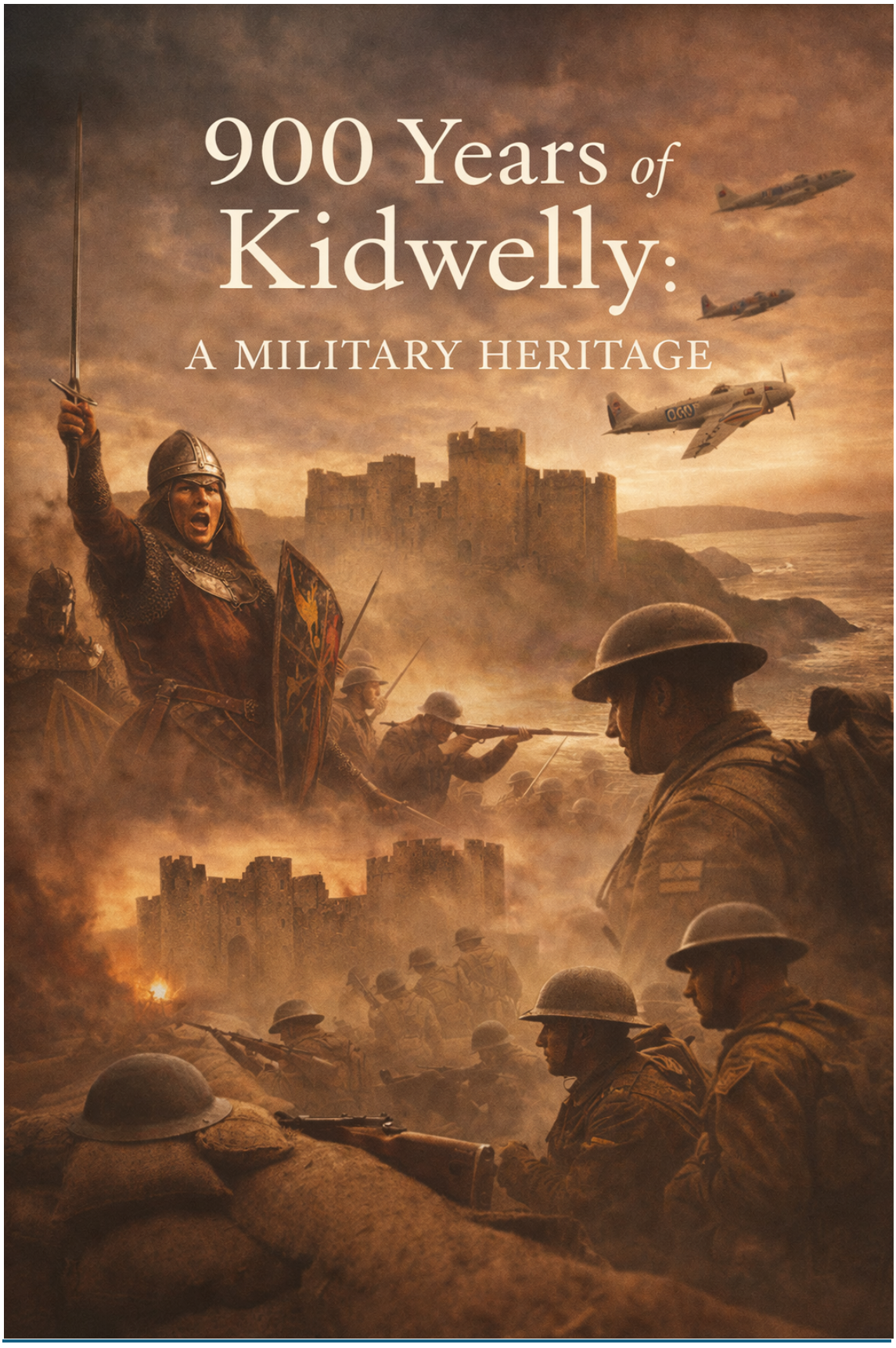

900 Years of Kidwelly:
A MILITARY HERITAGE

900 Years of Kidwelly: A Military Reflection

When I stand beneath the walls of Kidwelly Castle, I'm always aware that this ground was never meant to be quiet. These fields, lanes, rivers, and buildings were shaped by watchfulness, defence, preparation, and conflict long before they became familiar landmarks of everyday life. Kidwelly's military history isn't confined to battlefields or barracks—it's written into the landscape itself.

For nine centuries, this town has lived with the presence of war. Sometimes it arrived suddenly, in the clash of steel and the fall of blood on open fields. At other times, it came quietly through drill halls, training camps, memorial stones, and the silent absence of names carved into church walls. From medieval resistance to modern global conflict, Kidwelly has repeatedly found itself drawn into the wider struggles that shaped Wales, Britain, and the world.

My journey into this military history began, as so many of my discoveries have, with names. Names on memorials. Names half-forgotten in archives. Names spoken once by families and then left behind as generations passed. I started to realise that Kidwelly's story of war was not a single chapter, but a continuous thread running through its entire existence.

This is a town born in conflict. From the Norman occupation and the defiant stand of Gwenllian ferch Gruffydd in 1136, Kidwelly was a place contested, fortified, and fought over. The castle was not a symbol it was a weapon. The surrounding land was not scenery it was strategy. Control of Kidwelly meant control of river, road, and power.

Yet the military story does not end in the Middle Ages. It evolves. Kidwelly's men marched to foreign fields in imperial wars, stood shoulder to shoulder in the trenches of the First World War, and faced the mechanised terror of the Second. During the build-up to D-Day, American troops trained here, preparing for a conflict that would decide the fate of Europe. Later, the Cold War would leave its own mark, hidden beneath the ground, silent but ever watchful.

What strikes me most is how ordinary much of this history feels when you walk through the town today. The places remain, but their purpose has faded from memory. A field that once trained soldiers. A building that once coordinated defence. A name on stone that once belonged to a living, breathing person who left Kidwelly and never returned.

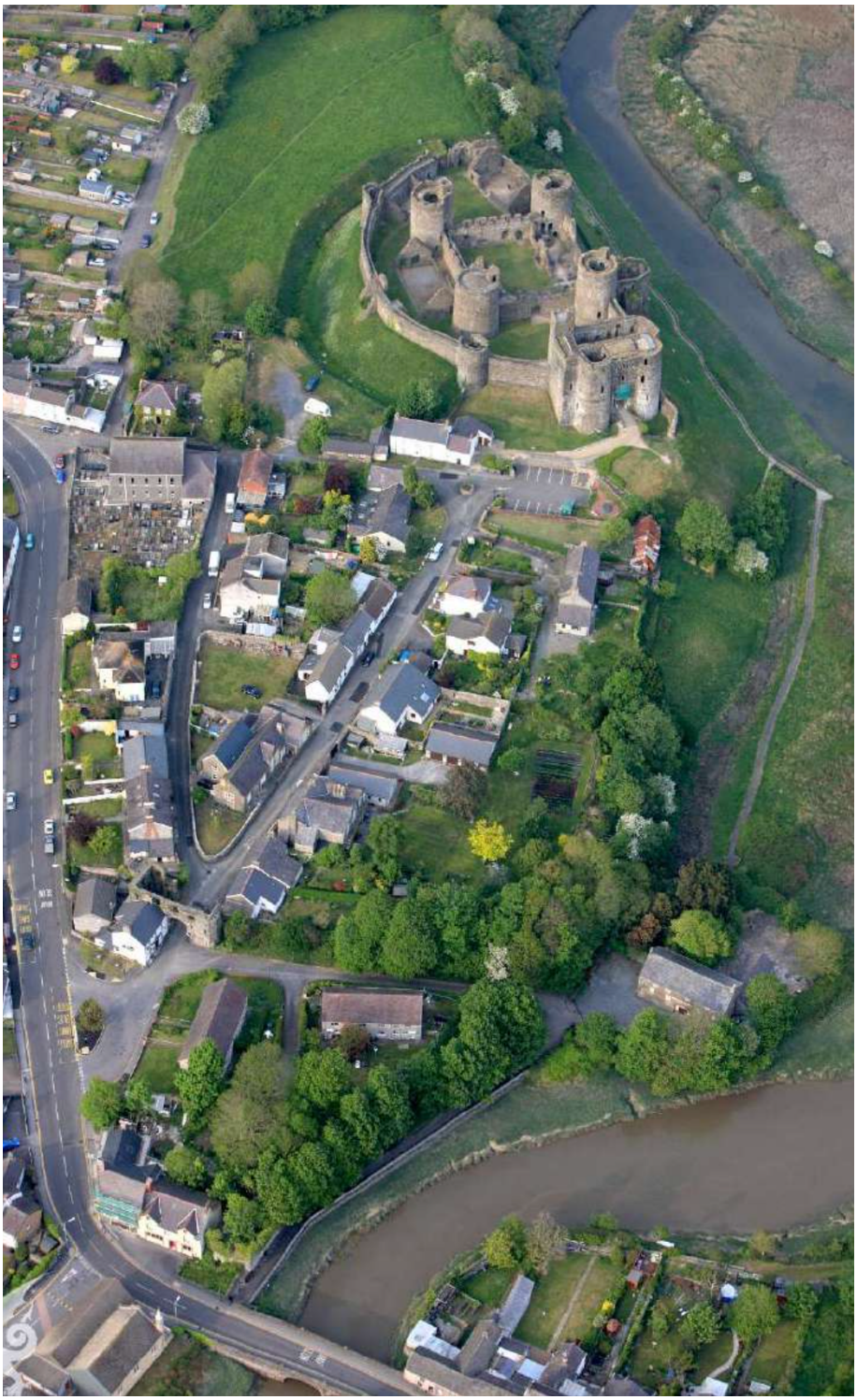
This collection is not about glorifying war. It is about understanding presence, sacrifice, and continuity. It is about recognising that Kidwelly's military heritage is not separate from its social or industrial history it is interwoven with it. War shaped who lived here, who left, who died, and who remembered.

As you read through these chapters spanning nine centuries of conflict, service, resistance, and remembrance I hope you'll come to see Kidwelly as I do: not simply as a town that witnessed history, but as one that repeatedly stood within it. Its military past is not distant. It is close. It is local. And it still echoes beneath our feet.

can you create an image to reflect what i am trying to achieve in a front page cover to encapsulate the story being told.

Cydweli – Our Kidwelly: A Town Shaped by War

Look around you. The same river that once carried Norman longships and supply craft still flows past our castle walls. The same ground that bore armed feet, raised shields, and anxious watch now carries us to work, school, and home. Kidwelly isn't just a place where wars passed through it's a place shaped by them.



That dark, commanding silhouette of Kidwelly Castle isn't simply a landmark. It is a fortress born of conflict. Built to dominate land and river alike, it watched, warned, and waited. Within its walls, decisions were made that determined who controlled this corner of Wales and who did not. Every stone speaks of defence, resistance, and survival.

Here, in 1136, Gwenllian ferch Gruffudd stood against overwhelming force. A warrior princess not content to be remembered quietly, she chose defiance over submission. Her death near these walls did not silence resistance—it ignited it. In many ways, the military history of Kidwelly begins with her final stand. Her memorial is not simply a marker of loss; it is a reminder that this town has never accepted occupation without a fight.

Centuries passed, but Kidwelly's role did not fade. As warfare evolved, so too did the town's contribution. Men from these streets marched away to serve crown and country, some never to return. Training grounds appeared where fields once lay quiet. Buildings took on new purposes—watch posts, billets, coordination points—often unnoticed by those who later passed them by.

By the twentieth century, Kidwelly once again stood on the edge of global conflict. With Pembrey Airfield nearby, the skies above filled with aircraft preparing for war. Soldiers trained, watched the horizon, and waited. This was no longer a medieval frontier, but the principle remained the same: readiness, vigilance, and sacrifice.

What makes Kidwelly remarkable is not that it has a military past, but that it lives with it still. Castle shadows fall across playgrounds where children laugh, unaware they play where sentries once stood guard. The river flows on, calm now, though it once carried threat as often as trade. Memorial stones stand quietly, asking nothing more than to be remembered.

Kidwelly's military history is not sealed in armour cases or confined to distant battlefields. It is here—in the ground beneath our feet, in the names etched in stone, and in the long memory of a town that has stood watch for nine hundred years. This is not a story of war alone. It is a story of endurance.

The Rise, Fall, and Rise Again

Beneath the castle's shadow, our town's tale unfolds—a saga of resilience written in mortar and marrow. When the Normans carved Kidwelly into a borough in 1115, they couldn't have imagined how fiercely this place would cling to life.

We bled before we built. The 13th century saw our walls scarred by Welsh princes' sieges—yet each attack only hardened Kidwelly's resolve. By the 1300s, we'd risen from the ashes to become a thriving port, where Flemish wool merchants haggled beside French wine traders, and the Gwendraeth's waters glittered with commerce. Then came the silt.

The 18th century choked our estuary and our fortunes. But true to form, Kidwelly spat the grit from its teeth and reinvented itself. Enter Thomas Kymer, our visionary. His canal (1768) didn't just move coal—it pumped lifeblood back into the town, linking us to the world beyond Carmarthen Bay.

The clang of industry became our heartbeat. The tinplate works of 1737 forged more than metal—it forged an identity. Victorian ambition gave us the Town Hall's Gothic spires, while the black cat on our coat of arms slyly reminded us: Kidwelly always lands on its feet.

The Legends That Walk Among Us

Some towns have ghosts. We have Gwenllian. Her spirit lingers not just in Maes Gwenllian's grass, but in every stubborn streak of Kidwelly character. That nursery rhyme we all learned as babbies—"Hen Fenyw Fach Cydweli"—isn't just a ditty. It's a coded love letter from our ancestors, stitching folklore into our bones.

And let's talk about that black cat. Superstition? Maybe. But when you've seen this town survive plagues, wars, and economic tides, you start to believe there's magic in our soil.

The Unbroken Thread

Today, when the morning sun gilds the castle walls, it illuminates a truth: Kidwelly was never just about surviving. It's about thriving on our own terms. The same river that carried medieval trade now draws kayakers and artists. The tinplate works' silence is filled with museum visitors and dreamers.

We're still writing this story. Every rugby match at ***Ray Gravell's*** old stomping grounds, every summer fair on the Quay, every debate in the Market Arms about whether the castle looks better at sunrise or sunset—it's all part of the next layer in Kidwelly's legacy.

So, here's to us—the latest caretakers of this stubborn, glorious town. May we honour the past without being trapped by it. After all, what's 900 years of history if not permission to make some more?

Blood and Honour: The Battles That Forged Kidwelly's Soul

When morning mist rolls in from the Gwendraeth these days, it's hard to imagine those same fields running red with blood. But stand quiet by Maes Gwenllian at dawn, and you might just hear the ghostly echo of clashing steel - a reminder that our pretty market town was once the stage for battles that shaped Wales itself.
1136:

The Princess Who Fought Like a Dragon

The year Henry I died, when Norman lords thought Wales was ripe for the taking, they hadn't counted on Gwenllian ferch Gruffydd.

Picture her - a princess of Gwynedd, wife to Deheubarth's prince, mother of future kings - leading warriors from these very fields.

That spring morning in 1136 wasn't some romantic last stand. It was brutal, desperate house-to-house fighting through the Norman settlement outside the castle. Our Gwenllian didn't just command from the rear; she was in the thick of it, her sword singing until the moment Maurice de Londres' men dragged her down.

The Normans thought beheading her would break us. Instead, they made her immortal.

Funny thing is, walk through Kidwelly today and her presence is everywhere - in the schoolgirls who bear her name, in the fierce debates at the rugby club, in the way we still bristle at being told what to do. Gwenllian didn't win the battle, but she won the war for our collective memory.

1257-58: Llywelyn's Gambit

A century later, when Llywelyn ap Gruffydd - the last true Prince of Wales - came knocking, Kidwelly was ready to write another chapter. This wasn't some haphazard raid; it was a masterstroke of medieval strategy that nearly tore Norman control of South Wales apart at the seams.

The key? Maredudd ap Rhys Gryg's betrayal - a Norman loyalist who switched sides so dramatically it sent Patrick de Chaworth scrambling. For months, Llywelyn's forces turned the countryside around Kidwelly into their playground, burning Norman outposts, starving the castle garrison, and turning the very bridge over the Gwendraeth into a slaughterhouse.

That final battle was no tidy affair. Maredudd took a spear through the gut near the river crossing. Dafydd ap Hywel - one of Llywelyn's best commanders - fell in the mud with a dozen wounds. But when the survivors limped home to Strata Florida Abbey, they carried something precious: proof that Norman invincibility was a myth.

From Llwchwr to Kidwelly:

A New Year's Day That Changed Welsh History

On New Year's Day 1136, on the open land between Loughor and Swansea, a battle was fought that would echo far beyond the Gower peninsula. The Battle of Llwchwr was not only a Welsh victory over Norman forces; it was the spark that ignited a wider rebellion across South Wales one that would lead directly to the courageous and tragic stand of Gwenllian at Kidwelly.

At the time, Norman castles dominated much of South Wales, imposing powerful symbols of conquest and control upon the landscape. Beneath this dominance, resentment simmered. The death of King Henry I of England in 1135 plunged the kingdom into instability. His successor, Stephen de Blois, seized the throne from Henry's daughter, Matilda, triggering a bitter civil war later known as *The Anarchy*. With Norman authority weakened, Welsh rulers recognised a rare opportunity to reclaim lost ground.

One such leader was Hywel ap Maredudd of Brycheiniog. Early in 1136, he raised an army and marched into South Gower. When a Norman force moved to intercept him near Garn Coch, they were caught off guard by the size and determination of the Welsh host. The ensuing clash was fierce and bloody, but it ended in a decisive Welsh victory. Contemporary accounts suggest that as many as 500 Norman soldiers were killed. For local communities, this was a powerful revelation: Norman power was not invincible.

News of the victory at Llwchwr spread rapidly throughout Wales. Among those inspired was Gruffydd ap Rhys, lord of Deheubarth. Sensing a moment to unite Welsh resistance, he

travelled north to seek the support of Gruffydd ap Cynan of Gwynedd. During his absence, leadership in Deheubarth fell to his wife, Gwenllian—a figure who would come to hold a profound place in Welsh memory.

Encouraged by the success at Llwchwr, Gwenllian raised an army and marched on the Norman castle at Kidwelly (Cydweli). Her decision reflects the renewed confidence felt across Wales in the wake of the New Year's victory. Yet the assault ended in tragedy. Gwenllian was defeated, captured, and beheaded. Two of her sons, Morgan and Maelgwyn, also lost their lives—one killed in the fighting, the other executed after capture.

Rather than silencing resistance, Gwenllian's death hardened Welsh resolve. Her brothers, Cadwaladr and Owain, launched retaliatory campaigns across Deheubarth, capturing settlements including Llanfihangel, Aberystwyth, and Llanbadarn. Later that year, Welsh forces met a large Norman army at Crug Mawr, just outside Cardigan. After heavy fighting, the Normans were driven back toward the River Teifi. As they fled, the bridge collapsed beneath them, and many drowned. Cardigan town was taken and burned, though its castle remained in Norman hands.

Today, the fields of Garn Coch, the walls of Kidwelly Castle, and the crossing of the Teifi are quiet places. Yet they form part of a shared landscape shaped by resistance, loss, and determination. The victory at Llwchwr gave hope to a people under pressure, inspired Gwenllian's stand at Kidwelly, and helped ignite one of the most significant Welsh uprisings of the medieval period.

Remembering these events is not only about battles and leaders, but about the communities who lived on this land and the courage they found when opportunity arose. New Year's Day 1136 was not just the beginning of a year it marked the renewal of a Welsh struggle for independence.

An Overview Perspective on the Events of 1136

The events described in the account of the Battle of Llwchwr place this New Year's Day encounter firmly within a wider moment of change in medieval Wales. What stands out most is not simply the outcome of a single battle, but how quickly that outcome altered the balance of confidence and action across the region.

Llwchwr occurred at a time when Norman authority, though outwardly strong, was increasingly vulnerable. The political uncertainty in England following the death of Henry I created cracks in a system that had relied on stability and force. The Welsh victory exploited those weaknesses and demonstrated that Norman control was far more fragile than it appeared.

The significance of the battle lies in its role as a catalyst. The success at Llwchwr did not exist in isolation; it encouraged coordinated resistance and emboldened Welsh leaders to act decisively. The subsequent campaigns across Deheubarth, including the attack on Kidwelly and the later confrontation at Crug Mawr, form a connected sequence rather than separate episodes.

Within this sequence, Gwenllian's stand occupies a central place. Although her assault on Kidwelly ended in defeat, its impact extended beyond the immediate outcome. Her death intensified Welsh resistance and transformed the struggle into something more deeply rooted in identity and memory. The response that followed shows how setbacks could strengthen resolve rather than diminish it.

Taken together, these events illustrate a broader pattern: resistance grows not only from success, but from shared experience. Victories, losses, and sacrifices combined to create momentum that reshaped Welsh–Norman relations in the short term and influenced the political landscape in the long term.

Viewed from this perspective, Llwchwr represents the beginning of a wider resurgence rather than a single turning point. It marked the moment when opportunity, leadership, and circumstance aligned, allowing a suppressed challenge to become an organised movement. The legacy of 1136 therefore lies not just in what was achieved, but in how it changed what people believed was possible.

Kidwelly under Siege, 1403

The Long Shadow: Centuries of Conflict

In the long centuries between the clash at Maes Gwenllian in 1136 and the desperate siege of 1403, the air around Kidwelly was rarely free from the scent of smoke or the sound of sharpening steel. To those who lived in the shadow of the great fortress, the castle was not just a symbol of power it was a lightning rod for violence.

It stood as a stone defiance against a Welsh people who viewed the land as their own, and for nearly three hundred years, the struggle for Kidwelly was a cycle of loss, fire, and rebuilding.

The peace that followed the fall of Princess Gwenllian was a fragile one. By 1159, the tide turned when Rhys ap Gruffudd, known to history as the Lord Rhys, swept through the region. He did not merely raid; he conquered.

Under his hand, Kidwelly was reclaimed for the Welsh, and for a brief time, the halls of the castle echoed with the language of its native soil. But in these lands, possession was as shifting as the tides of the Gwendraeth. By the end of the century, the Lord Rhys had to seize the castle once more, rebuilding its walls in 1190 to withstand the inevitable return of the Norman lords.

The turn of the thirteenth century brought no respite. In 1201, the castle was the site of a bitter tragedy when Meredith, son of the Lord Rhys, was struck down by the castle garrison during a struggle for control. This personal blood-feud was only a prelude to greater devastation. In 1215, Rhys Gryg driven by a fierce desire to finish his father's work—captured the town and put the castle to the torch.

The wooden ramparts and thatched roofs of the settlement offered no resistance to the flames. For five years, the Welsh held the blackened ruins, until the relentless pressure of the Anglo-Norman Marcher lords forced them out once again.

The middle of the century saw the most brutal of these exchanges. In 1231, Llywelyn the Great led a campaign that left the castle shattered, and in 1257, a massive Welsh rising once again saw the town beyond the walls reduced to ash.

It was this constant state of siege that finally forced the de Chaworth family to abandon wood and earth for the permanence of stone. They built the massive, rounded towers that still stand today, designed specifically to ensure that the horrors of the early 1200s would never be repeated.

By the time the sun rose on the attackers of 1403, Kidwelly was a veteran of war. The families who fled into the countryside or barricaded themselves behind the gates were following a path worn deep by their ancestors.

The siege led by Owain Glyndŵr was not a new tragedy, but the latest chapter in a three-hundred-year story of endurance. The stone walls held in 1403 because they had been forged in the fires of 1159, 1215, and 1231. Kidwelly had learned, through centuries of blood and flame, that survival was the only true victory.

As summer faded in 1403, the people of Kidwelly knew the danger was closing in. Word had travelled fast along the coast and through the valleys: Owain Glyndŵr was advancing, and with him came not just Welsh rebels, but foreign soldiers from France and Brittany. Across Wales, towns were falling, castles were threatened, and English authority was crumbling. Kidwelly was next.

For those living in the town, there was little time to prepare. When Glyndŵr's forces arrived, the defences that had protected the castle for generations offered no safety to the houses clustered beyond its walls. The town fell quickly. Families fled with what they could carry, some seeking refuge behind the castle gates, others disappearing into the countryside, uncertain if they would ever return. Homes, workshops, and livelihoods were left behind in the hands of the attackers.

Inside Kidwelly Castle, life became a matter of endurance. The gates were closed, and the garrison settled in for what everyone feared would be a long siege. Supplies were counted and rationed. Every sound beyond the walls carried threat. The defenders could see smoke rising from the town below, a constant reminder of what had already been lost.

As weeks passed, fear deepened. By October, the situation was grave enough for the castle's constable to write directly to King Henry IV. His words were not those of confidence, but of desperation. Without "aid, rescue or succour," he warned, the castle and everyone inside it — might be destroyed. It is easy to imagine the weight of that letter: the knowledge that relief might never come, and that the walls which promised safety could just as easily become a trap.

No army arrived to lift the siege. Instead, help came only in fragments weapons and supplies delivered by sea, quietly reinforcing the garrison while the besiegers remained outside. The defenders repaired walls under pressure, watched for attack day and night, and waited. Winter eventually did what soldiers could not. Cold, hunger, and exhaustion forced Glyndŵr's men to withdraw, and Kidwelly Castle remained standing.

Yet for the people of Kidwelly, there was no sense of victory. The danger returned the following summer. In August 1404, the rebels came again. By then, much of the town had already been abandoned, and during the renewed attack it was burned. Once more, the castle held out, but the cost was written across the landscape in ash and ruin.

For years afterwards, the threat of Glyndŵr's revolt lingered. Even as the rebellion faded into smaller, guerrilla actions, Kidwelly remained a place shaped by fear and resilience. Those who returned to rebuild the town did so in the shadow of a castle that had protected them — but only just.

Today, when we walk the walls of Kidwelly Castle, it is easy to admire the stonework and strength of its design. Harder, but far more important, is to remember the people who lived through those months of uncertainty: the families forced from their homes, the soldiers who waited behind the walls, and the town that endured occupation, fire, and fear, yet survived.

The siege of Kidwelly was not just a clash of armies. It was a human story of loss, endurance, and the quiet determination to endure when help might never come.

Kidwelly in the Shadow of Rebellion

When the siege finally loosened its grip on Kidwelly, what remained was not peace, but uncertainty. The attackers were gone, yet the damage lingered. The castle still stood, its walls unbroken, but the town below bore the marks of abandonment and fire. Survival had come at a cost, and it would be felt for years.

Those who returned to Kidwelly did so cautiously. Homes had been looted or destroyed, workshops stood empty, and familiar streets felt altered. Some families never came back at all, choosing instead to settle elsewhere rather than rebuild in a place that had proven so vulnerable. For those who did return, life resumed slowly, shaped by loss and the memory of fear.

The castle remained garrisoned, no longer just a symbol of authority but a reminder of how close Kidwelly had come to falling. Repairs were made, defences strengthened, and watchfulness became part of everyday life. The rebellion had shown that even the strongest walls could be tested, and complacency was no longer an option.

Beyond Kidwelly, Owain Glyndŵr's revolt continued to flare across Wales. Though its intensity faded after 1405, it never truly ended in a single moment. Instead, it dissolved into years of unrest, raids, and reprisals. For communities like Kidwelly, the war did not end when the besiegers withdrew; it ended slowly, as fear gave way to exhaustion and silence.

English authority eventually reasserted itself, but it returned changed. Trust between rulers and ruled was fragile, and the scars of the revolt remained visible in ruined towns, tightened laws, and a deep sense of caution along the Welsh Marches. Kidwelly, having endured occupation, siege, and fire, became a quieter place, more defensive in spirit as well as stone.

Over time, the castle's role shifted. It was no longer a frontline fortress, but a guardian whose greatest battles were already behind it. The town rebuilt around it, adapting rather than forgetting. Each generation lived with the knowledge that Kidwelly had once stood at the edge of collapse — and had survived.

Today, the aftermath of the siege is harder to see than the walls themselves. There are no charred beams or broken gates left to point to. What remains is more subtle: in the layout of the town, in the dominance of the castle over its surroundings, and in the understanding that history here was not gentle.

What followed the siege of 1403 was not triumph, but endurance. Kidwelly did not emerge unscathed, nor did it fade away. It carried on shaped by conflict, defined by resilience, and marked forever by the moment when war arrived at its doorstep and refused to leave quietly.

After the Fires Faded – Kidwelly After 1404

When the flames died down and the attackers were gone, Kidwelly was left in an uneasy silence. The castle still stood, unbroken and watchful, but the town beneath it was changed. There was no moment when life simply returned to normal. Instead, recovery came slowly, shaped by fear, memory, and caution.

AFTER THE FIRES FADED — KIDWELLY AFTER 1404

There was no third siege. That fact alone tells its own story. Kidwelly Castle had proven itself too strong, too costly to attack again. Owain Glyndŵr's rebellion did not end in 1404, but it shifted. Open assaults gave way to smaller raids and distant skirmishes elsewhere in Wales. For Kidwelly, the danger became something less visible but no less real — the constant expectation that violence might return.

The castle remained garrisoned long after the rebels withdrew. Soldiers stayed on the walls, watches were kept, and supplies were maintained as if another attack could come at any time. For those living nearby, the presence of armed men became part of everyday life. Protection and occupation were often hard to tell apart.

Below the walls, the town rebuilt itself carefully. Burned houses were replaced, shops reopened, and fields were worked again, but not everyone returned. Some families had lost too much, others too many, and Kidwelly grew quieter than it had been before the siege. The memory of flight and fire lingered long after the physical damage was repaired.

As the years passed and Glyndŵr's revolt slowly faded into history, authority returned but it returned changed. Laws were tightened, loyalties scrutinised, and trust was thin. Kidwelly, having stood at the edge of collapse, became more inward-looking, shaped by survival rather than ambition.

The castle's role also changed. It was no longer a frontline fortress expecting battle, but a reminder of one already fought. Its strength had prevented conquest, but it had not prevented suffering. That knowledge stayed with the town long after the banners and weapons were gone.

By the middle of the fifteenth century, war had moved elsewhere. New conflicts rose, new causes replaced old ones, and Kidwelly was spared further sieges. The absence of battle did not mean the absence of consequence. The events of 1403 and 1404 had already done their work.

Today, when we think about what followed the siege of Kidwelly, it is tempting to look for another clash, another dramatic moment. But what came next was something quieter and, in many ways, harder: rebuilding, remembering, and living with the knowledge of how close everything had come to being lost.

The story of Kidwelly after the siege is not one of triumph or defeat. It is the story of endurance of a town that survived the worst, and carried the memory of it forward in stone, silence, and resilience.

Kidwelly Fallen Heroes

The Kidwelly War Memorial, which will celebrate its 100th anniversary soon, was unveiled on May 31, 1924. It commemorates the local men who lost their lives in the First and Second World Wars. The memorial is located on New Street in Kidwelly, Carmarthenshire, and is a prominent landmark in the town.

Designed by Glendinning Moxham, a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects from Swansea, the memorial features a statue of a soldier with a reversed rifle atop a tall plinth. The plinth, made of Portland stone, is adorned with Greek key motifs and a laurel wreath in relief, bearing plaques with the names of the fallen soldiers.

Among those honoured on the memorial are notable stories such as the three Hughes brothers—David, Samuel, and William—who all died within a year during WWI. Additionally, Royal Marine Delwyn Davies, who drowned in 1943 after a storm off the Pembrokeshire coast, is also remembered.

War Memorials Kidwelly

The Hughes Brothers: Stories of Sacrifice

Among the names inscribed on the Kidwelly War Memorial are those of the Hughes brothers—William, Samuel, and David—whose stories of service and sacrifice highlight the profound personal impacts of global conflicts.

William Henry Hughes

Private William Henry Hughes, born in Kidwelly in 1886, was the eldest of the Hughes brothers. At the outbreak of World War I, William enlisted in the Gloucestershire Regiment and later transferred to the 5th Battalion, Machine Gun Corps. His division played a significant role in the Somme Offensive, enduring fierce battles at High Wood, Guillemont, and Le Transloy. Tragically, William was killed in action on April 16, 1917, during the Battle of Vimy, and he is commemorated at the Bois-Carre British Cemetery in Thelus, France.

Samuel Hughes

Private Samuel Hughes, born in 1891, enlisted in the Royal Welsh Fusiliers and served with the 8th Battalion. Samuel's division saw extensive action in Gallipoli, Egypt, and Mesopotamia. After falling ill, Samuel returned home but succumbed to sickness on March 12, 1918. He is buried in the Kidwelly St. Mary Churchyard, where his service and sacrifice are remembered.

David Hughes

Private David Hughes, born in 1888, served with the 2nd Battalion, South Wales Borderers. His battalion initially fought in China before joining the Western Front via Gallipoli and Egypt. David was killed in action on April 6, 1916, during his battalion's first spell in the trenches in France. He is buried at the Mesnil Ridge Cemetery in Mesnil Martinsart, France.

Delwyn Davies: A WWII Tragedy

Marine Delwyn Davies, from Llansaint, served with the Royal Marines during World War II. On April 25, 1943, Delwyn was aboard H.M. Landing Craft Gun (L.C.G.) 15 during a tragic incident off the coast of Pembrokeshire. A severe storm caused the landing crafts to sink, resulting in the loss of all hands. Delwyn, only 18 years old, was among those who perished. His body was recovered and buried at Llansaint (Seion) Calvinistic Methodist Cemetery.

To the Glory of God and in memory of the fallen from this Parish.
1914-1919

Private Morgan Morgan 1883-1915

Regiment/Service: Welsh Regiment, 9th Battalion. Morgan Morgan, Private, 13565, Welsh Regiment. Morgan was born in Kidwelly in 1883, the son of David and Amy Morgan. He lived with his wife Sarah Morgan
at Bwlch Newydd, Trimaran prior to the war, and enlisted at Llanelli into the 9th Battalion, Welsh Regiment. The Battalion was attached to 58 Brigade, 19th (Western) Division, which had assembled around Bulford during September 1914. Divisional training was completed near Tidworth, from March 1915, and the Butterfly Division crossed to France between 11 to 21 July 1915, moving to positions near Loos. The Division fought during the opening assault at the Battle of Loos, which is where Morgan was killed in action on 25 September 1915. The battalion had taken part in a brave, but impossible charge across No Man's Land, in the face of well positioned German machine guns. Morgan and John Tucker of Kidwelly were killed, and Tom Lewis, Volin Jones, Sid Buist and Charlie Peck of Kidwelly were all wounded in the same charge. Morgan has no known grave and is remembered on the Loos Memorial. His nephew, David, also fell.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/15351812/morgan-morgan

Private John Tucker 1890-1915

John Tucker, Private, 13406, Welsh Regiment. John was born in Llanybri in 1890. He lived with his sister, Sarah George and her husband, at 19, Lady Street, Kidwelly prior to 1911. John enlisted at Kidwelly into the 9th Battalion, Welsh Regiment, which was attached to 58 Brigade, 19th (Western) Division. The Division assembled around Bulford during September 1914. Divisional training was completed near Tidworth, and the Division moved to France during July 1915, taking up positions near Givenchy, north of Loos. The Division fought during the opening attack of the Battle of Loos, which is where John was killed in action on 25 September 1915, alongside his friend Morgan Morgan of Kidwelly. John is buried at Brown's Road Military Cemetery, Festubert, France.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/56454449/john-tucker

Private David Gower 1895-1915

David Gower, Private, 13462, Welsh Regiment. David was the son of David and Mary Gower, of 38, Gwendraeth Town, Kidwelly. He enlisted at Llanelli into the 9th Battalion, Welsh Regiment, who were attached to 58 Brigade, 19th (Western) Division. The Division assembled around Bulford during September 1914. Divisional training was completed near Tidworth, from March 1915, and the Butterfly Division crossed to France between 11 and 21 July 1915, and remained on the Western Front throughout the war. The Division fought at the Battle of Loos, and were still in the area when David was accidentally killed on 23 November 1915, possibly through grenade training. He was 20 years old, and is buried at Chocques Military Cemetery, France.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/56567048/david-gower

Lance Corporal Ivor Emanuel 1892-1915

Lance Corporal Ivor Emanuel of the Welsh Guards died heroically in the Battle of Loos on September 27, 1915. Born in 1891, Emanuel joined the Welsh Guards, a regiment newly established in February 1915 by King George V.

The Battle of Loos, fought from September 25 to October 8, 1915, in Loos-en-Gohelle, France, marked the first British use of poison gas. Despite harsh conditions and fierce German resistance, Emanuel and his comrades advanced with remarkable courage.

Tragically, Emanuel was killed in action at the age of 24, just two days into the battle. His sacrifice underscores the profound personal losses of World War I. The Welsh Guards suffered significant casualties, but their efforts contributed to the broader war effort.

Lance Corporal Ivor Emanuel's legacy is honoured on memorials dedicated to the fallen of Loos and the Welsh Guards. His bravery and sacrifice remain a poignant reminder of the cost of war and the valour of those who served.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/246243426/ivor-emanuel

Private William Howard Davies D-1918

Private William Howard Davies, born in Llanelly, Carmarthen, was a dedicated soldier who served with distinction during World War I. Enlisting in Pembrey, Davies began his military career with the South Wales Borderers (regimental number 202062) before transferring to the Machine Gun Corps (Infantry), where he served in the 21st Company.

His life was tragically cut short on October 15, 1918, in the fierce battles of France and Flanders, just a month before the Armistice. Davies' death in the Western European Theatre marked him as one of the many who paid the ultimate price in the brutal and relentless conflict.

Private Davies' service number, 116422, stands as a testament to his role in the war. His commitment and sacrifice are a poignant reminder of the bravery and dedication exhibited by countless soldiers. His memory endures, honouring the contributions and sacrifices made by those from his hometown of Llanelly and beyond.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/12746715/william-howard-davies

Private David Hughes 1886-1916

David Hughes, Private, 14762, South Wales Borderers. David was the son of John and Margaret Hughes, of Kidwelly. He married Mary Emily Musk at Seven Sisters in 1907, and the couple lived at 20, Bryndulais Row, Seven Sisters. David worked at the Yniscedwen Tinplate Works at Ystalyfera prior to the war, and enlisted at Ystradgynlais into the 2nd Battalion, South Wales Borderers. The battalion had begun their war in China, where they captured the German Garrison at Tientsin. The Battalion returned to England where they joined 87 Brigade, 29th Division. The Division moved to Gallipoli via Egypt, landing on 25 April 1915. They remained here until evacuation to Egypt on 11 January 1916, and then moved to the Western Front on 15 March 1916. David was killed in action soon after, during the battalions first spell in the trenches, on 6 April 1916, aged 30. He is buried at Mesnil Ridge Cemetery, Mesnil Martinsart, France. Two of his brothers also fell: Sam and Willie Hughes.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/58988842/d-hughes

Private William Henry Hughes 1886-1917

William Henry Hughes, Private, 35648, Machine Gun Corps. William was born in Kidwelly in 1886, the son of John and Margaret Hughes. He married Mary Anne Morgan in 1906, and the couple lived at 52, Water Street, Kidwelly. William enlisted at Carmarthen into the Gloucestershire Regiment. He later transferred into the 5th Battalion, Machine Gun Corps, who were attached to the 5th Division. The Machine Gun Corps had been formed prior to the 1916 Somme Offensive which opened on 1 July 1916. The 5th Division fought on the Somme at High Wood, Guillemont, Flers-Courcelette, Moral and Le Transloy. On 5 October 1916, after suffering heavy casualties, the Division moved to Festubert, where they remained until March 1917. They next saw action at the Battle of Arras, fighting at the Battle of Vimy in April 1917, which is where William was killed in action on 16 April 1917. He is buried at Bois-Carre British Cemetery, Thelus, France. His brothers David and Samuel also fell.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/56183210/william-henry-hughes

Private Augustus Edward Hugh

Augustus Edward Hugh, Private, 45307, Welsh Regiment. Augustus was the son of David James and Charlotte Hugh, of Bay View, Station Road, Kidwelly. He enlisted at Haverfordwest into the 8th Battalion, Welsh Regiment, who were attached to 40 Brigade, 13th (Western) Division. The Division concentrated at Blackdown in Hampshire, and on 13 June 1915 left Britain for Alexandria. By 4 July1915, the Division moved to Mudros, then landed at Gallipoli between 6 and 16 July 1915, relieving the 29th Division. They left and returned to Mudros at the end of the month, and the entire Division landed at ANZAC Cove from 3 August and Hill 60, ANZAC. Soon after 1915, taking part in the Battles of Sari Bair, Russell's Top, and Hill 60, ANZAC. Soon afterwards the Division was transferred from ANZAC to Suvla Bay, and it was
evacuated from Suva on the 19th of December 1915, whereupon the infantry moved after a week's rest to the Helles bridgehead, where they faced the last Turkish attacks at Helles. On 8 January 1916, the Division was evacuated from Helles, and by 31 January was concentrated at Port Said, where they held forward posts in the Suez Canal defences. On the 12th of February 1916 the Division began to move to Mesopotamia, to strengthen the force being assembled for the relief of the besieged garrison at Kut al Amara. Augustus was killed in action during the advance into Mesopotamia on 14 January 1917. He was 36 years old and is buried at Amara War Cemetery, Egypt.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/56325489/augustus-edward-hugh

Private Owen Lucius Edwards 1895-1917

Owen Lucius Edwards, Private, 54190, Welsh Regiment. Owen was the son of John and Mary Edwards, of Sea View, New Street, Kidwelly. He enlisted at Kidwelly into the 16th Battalion, the Welsh Regiment, attached to 115 Brigade, 38th (Welsh) Division. The Division had landed in France during December 1915 and had spent their first winter in the trenches near Armentieres. In June they marched south to the Somme, where they were tasked with the capture of Mametz Wood. The attack on the wood began on 7 July, but met with fierce resistance, and it took until 14 July to clear the wood. The Division suffered terrible casualties at Mamet, and were taken out of the line, and moved to Ypres to rebuild. Owen was probably wounded at Boesinghe, as he is recorded as having died of wounds at the Norwich Military Hospital on 13 March 1917. He was just 22 ears old and is buried at Kidwelly (St. Mary) Churchyard.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/232516355/owen-edwards

Pioneer Charles Wyndham Lewis 1896-1917

Charles Wyndham Lewis, Pioneer, 129892, Royal Engineers was born in Kidwelly in 1896, the son of Charles Rees Lewis and Anne Lewis (née Thomas), of 22 Lady Street, Kidwelly. He enlisted in the Royal Welsh Fusiliers at Llanelli but was later transferred to the Royal Engineers, serving with their 'P' Special Company. The Special Companies were responsible for gas warfare or chemical warfare and handled the operation of Stokes Mortars. Charles was killed in action during the Third Battle of the Scarpe on 6 May 1917 and is buried at Beaulencourt British Cemetery, Ligny-Thilloy, France.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/24760827/charles-wyndham-lewis

Private James Frederick Stokes 1890-1917

James Frederick Stokes, Private, 267163, Welsh Regiment was born in Smethwick in 1890 and lived in Kidwelly prior to the war. He married Mary Anne Evans early in 1914. James enlisted at Llanelli into the 1/6th Battalion, Welsh Regiment, which served as Pioneers to the 1st Division. The Battalion landed in France at Havre on 29 October 1914, initially attached to the 28th Division before moving to the 1st Division on 23 October 1915. They participated in notable actions such as the Hohenzollern Redoubt and the early stages of the Somme Offensive, including battles at Albert, Bazentin, Pozieres, Flers-Courcelette, and Morval. The Battalion followed the German retreat to the Hindenburg Line in early 1917 and was later deployed to the Flanders Coast during the summer of 1917.

James was severely wounded on 2 July 1917 and was carried on a stretcher to a dressing station, but he succumbed to his injuries before reaching the station. He is buried at Ramscappelle Road Military Cemetery, Belgium. James left behind his widow, Mary, and two young daughters, Gladys and Violet May.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/13961703/james-fredrick-stokes

Lance Corporal David Morris Davies D 1917

David Morris Davies, Lance Corporal, 18624, Royal Welsh Fusiliers was born in Kidwelly in 1896, the son of David and Ceridwen Davies, of 29 Ferry Road. He enlisted in Llandudno into the 16th Battalion, Royal Welsh Fusiliers, which was part of the 113 Brigade, 38th (Welsh) Division. The Division landed in France in December 1915 and gained recognition for their role in the capture of Mametz Wood in July 1916. After their relief from Mametz, the Division moved through Hebuterne to Ypres, where they took up positions north of the city at Boesinghe.David was wounded during the fighting at Ypres and was sent back to Britain for hospital treatment. He died of his wounds in a hospital at Christchurch, Hampshire, on 7 August 1917. He was brought back home and is buried at Kidwelly (Siloam) Welsh Baptist Chapel yard.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/232516113/david-morris-davies

Private William James 1887-1915

William James, Private, 31684, Royal Welsh Fusiliers was born in 1887 and was the eldest son of James and Mary James, formerly of Upper Mill and later of Gwendraeth Place, Kidwelly. He enlisted at Llanelli into the 13th Battalion, Royal Welsh Fusiliers, which was part of the 113 Brigade, 38th (Welsh) Division. The Division landed in France in December 1915 and spent their first winter in the trenches near Armentières. In June 1916, they moved south to the Somme and were involved in the capture of Mametz Wood in July. The Division suffered heavy casualties during this operation and was withdrawn to Ypres to rebuild. William was killed in action during the Battle of Pilckem on 31 July 1917. He is buried at Dragoon Camp Cemetery, Belgium.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/12322577/william-james#add-to-vc

Guardsman Norman Hadley Williams 1890-1916

Norman Hadley Williams, Private, 3211, Welsh Guards was born in Cradley, Staffordshire, in 1890, the son of Frank and Fanny Williams. The family lived in Kidwelly prior to 1901. Norman married Maria Jane Evans in Kidwelly in September 1916, after enlisting in the 1st Battalion, Welsh Guards.The Welsh Guards were formed by Royal Warrant on 26 February 1915. They were stationed at White City before landing at Havre on 18 August 1915, and were attached to the 3rd Guards Brigade, Guards Division—a formation established in France in August 1915 by consolidating various Guards units. The Division remained on the Western Front for the duration of the war.Their first major engagement was the Battle of Loos on 25 September 1915, followed by the Action of Hohenzollern Redoubt. In July 1916, they moved to the Somme, where they fought in the Battle of Flers-Courcelette and the Battle of Morval, capturing Lesboeufs Village. After spending the winter in the area, they advanced with the German retreat to the Hindenburg Line in March 1917. Later that year, the Division moved to Ypres and fought at the Battle of the Pilckem Ridge.Norman was killed in action on 5 August 1917 during this battle. He is buried at Artillery Wood Cemetery, Belgium.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/56464772/norman-hadley-williams

Private Thomas George Roberts D-1917

Thomas George Roberts, Private, 13540, Welsh Regiment known as George, was born in Pembroke, and lived in Kidwelly prior to the outbreak of war, where he worked as a groom for Colonel Young. He enlisted at Llanelli into the 9th Battalion, Welsh Regiment, which was part of the 58 Brigade, 19th (Western) Division.The 19th Division, known as the "Butterfly Division," assembled around Bulford in September 1914. After completing divisional training near Tidworth from March 1915, the Division crossed to France between 11 and 21 July 1915 and took up positions near Loos. They participated in the opening attack of the Battle of Loos and subsequently moved to the Somme, where they were involved in the second wave of the attack on Ovillers-La Boiselle on 1 July 1916, capturing the village at great cost. They continued to fight through the Somme battles of Pozieres and the Ancre in 1916 before moving north to Ypres to take part in the Battle of Messines.George was killed at Messines on 23 July 1917. He is buried at Locre Hospice Cemetery, Belgium.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/12688223/thomas-george-roberts

Private Samuel Jones 1892-1918

Samuel Jones, Lance Corporal, 14660, South Wales Borderers was born in Kidwelly, the son of David and Margaret Jones. The family later resided at 21 Havelock Street, Llanelli. Samuel enlisted in Llanelli into the 5th Battalion, South Wales Borderers, which was part of the 58 Brigade, 19th (Western) Division.The 19th Division, known as the "Butterfly Division," assembled around Bulford in September 1914 and crossed to France in July 1915, remaining on the Western Front for the duration of the war. The Division fought in the Battle of Loos on 25 September 1915, and later participated in the second wave of the attack on Ovillers-La Boiselle on 1 July 1916, capturing the village at significant cost. They continued to fight through the battles of Pozieres and the Ancre in 1916, before moving north to Ypres to take part in the Battle of Messines and subsequent fighting for the ridge.In the spring of 1918, the Division was caught up in the German Spring Offensive near Bapaume, suffering heavy casualties. After being withdrawn to positions near Messines to rest, they faced another German attack the following month. The Division, having endured severe losses, was relocated to the quieter French sector to rebuild, only to be engaged again in the German offensive on the Aisne. Following further rebuilding, the Division participated in the great offensive, fighting in the Battle of the Selle, Valenciennes, the Sambre, and the Passage of the Grand Honnelle.Samuel survived this prolonged and brutal fighting but was accidentally killed on 2 December 1918 while attached to a unit of the Royal Engineers for transport duties at Candas. He was 26 years old and is buried at Doullens Communal Cemetery Extension No. 2, France.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/56397051/samuel-jones

Private William John Morgans 1897-1917

William John Morgans, Private, 53503, Welsh Regiment was the son of Thomas and Ann Morgans, of 26 Ferry Road, Kidwelly. He enlisted at Llanelli into the Pembroke Yeomanry but later transferred to the 14th Battalion, Welsh Regiment, which was part of the 114 Brigade, 38th (Welsh) Division.

The 38th Division landed in France in December 1915 and spent their first winter in the trenches near Armentières. In June 1916, they moved south to the Somme, where they famously captured Mametz Wood. The Division suffered severe casualties at Mametz and was withdrawn to Ypres to rebuild. It was during this period that William joined the battalion.

At Ypres, the Division fought in the battles of Pilckem Ridge and Langemarck before moving back to the Armentières sector. William was wounded in this sector and died of his injuries on 11 November 1917, aged 20. He is buried at Estaires Communal Cemetery Extension, France.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/56142607/william-john-morgans

Rifleman Willian Evan Davies D-1916

William Evan Davies, Rifleman, 5898, London Regiment was the son of Morris and Elizabeth Davies, of Ferry Road, Kidwelly. Before the war, he worked in London and enlisted there into the 1/9th Battalion (Queen Victoria's Rifles), London Regiment. The battalion landed in France on 5 November 1914 and became part of the 13 Brigade, 5th Division. The Division had landed at Havre on 15 August 1914 and had already participated in significant battles such as the Battle of Mons and the subsequent retreat, including fighting at Le Cateau and the Marne, where the German advance was halted. They then advanced to the Aisne and moved to Flanders, engaging in the Battle of La Bassée and the Battle of Messines in October 1914. The Division fought through the First Battle of Ypres, captured Hill 60, and participated in the Second Battle of Ypres in April 1915.

On 10 February 1916, the battalion was transferred to the 169 Brigade, 56th (London) Division. The Division saw action in the diversionary attack on Gommecourt and the battles at Ginchy, Flers, and Morval, where they captured Combles. William was killed during the Battle of Le Transloy on 9 October 1916. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial, France.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/12394327/william-evan-davies

Sergeant Edward Idris Evans 1890-1919

Edward Idis Evans, Sergeant, 49945, Royal Welsh Fusiliers was born in 1890 to William and Rhoda Martha Evans (née Davies) in Penygare, Kidwelly. He enlisted in Kidwelly on 3 September 1914, joining the 9th Battalion, Welsh Regiment, which was attached to the 58 Brigade, 19th Division. The battalion deployed to France on 18 July 1915, where they saw action near Festubert and played a crucial role in the opening attack of the Battle of Loos on 25 September 1915. Recognized for his leadership during this challenging assault, Edward was promoted to Sergeant.

In 1916, the Division moved to the Somme, engaging in the second wave of the attack on Ovillers-La Boiselle on 1 July, followed by the Battles of Pozieres and the Ancre. Edward was injured on the Somme, necessitating his return home. After his recovery, he joined the Depot Battalion in Cardiff.

Edward was reassigned to the 9th Battalion, Royal Welsh Fusiliers, on 11 August 1917, re-joining his unit at Ypres in time for the Battle of Passchendaele. His valour during the Ypres battles earned him the Military Medal, published in the London Gazette on 17 December 1917. In 1918, the division faced the German Spring Offensive near St. Quentin, enduring heavy casualties during a courageous rear-guard action near Bapaume. Edward sustained wounds on 25 March 1918, prompting his evacuation and return home.

While recovering from his wounds in the hospital, Edward developed a persistent cough, which was diagnosed as tuberculosis. He was discharged from the army on 30 August 1918 and succumbed to tuberculosis at 2 Priory Street, Kidwelly, on 1 November 1919, at the age of 29. Edward was laid to rest with full military honours at Capel Sul Chapel yard. His acceptance for commemoration by the CWGC was confirmed on Saturday, 5 April 2014.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/261757862/edward-idris-evans

Master David Edmunds 1870-1915

David Edmunds, Master, Mercantile Marine was born in Burry Port, the son of Joseph and Mary Edmunds. He married Elizabeth Randell in Kidwelly in 1902, and the couple lived at The Grove, Kidwelly. David served in the Mercantile Marine as the master of the SS Tangistan, a steamship built by William Gray in Hartlepool and launched in 1906. The Tangistan had a beam of 14.93 meters and a draught of 4.87 meters.

On 9 March 1915, while nine miles off Scarborough, the SS Tangistan was torpedoed and sunk by the German U-boat U-12, commanded by Arno Spindler. Tragically, David Edmunds drowned in the attack. He was 44 years old. Out of the thirty-eight people on board, only J. O'Toole survived. David Edmunds is commemorated on the Tower Hill Memorial in London.

In a photograph, David is seen standing to the right with his parents, wife, and daughter, a testament to the family he left behind.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/15228114/david-edmunds

Private Alexander Gilasbie D-1917

Alexander Gilasbey, Private, 285143, Welsh Regiment was born in Kidwelly, the son of Alexander and Frances Gilasbey. In 1902, he married Kate Lane, and the couple lived at 5 St. Mark's Place, Bath. He enlisted in the army at Bath and was posted to France, joining the 10th Battalion, Welsh Regiment, which was part of the 114 Brigade, 38th (Welsh) Division. The battalion had been stationed in France since December 1915.

Alexander likely joined the battalion at Boesinghe following their withdrawal from the Battle of Mametz Wood in July 1916. The 38th Division then moved via Hebuterne to Ypres, where they rested and rebuilt their strength in preparation for the Battle of Pilckem Ridge, which began on 31 July 1917.

Alexander was killed in action at Ypres on 4 September 1917, following the battles at Pilckem Ridge and Langemarck. He was 35 years old. Alexander Gilasbey is buried at Bard Cottage Cemetery, Belgium.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/11556545/alexander-gilasbey

Samuel Hughes 1891-1918

Samuel Hughes, Private, 12535, Royal Welsh Fusiliers was the son of John and Margaret Hughes of Kidwelly. He married Beatrice Jones in 1912, and the couple lived at 14 Gwendraeth Town, Kidwelly. Samuel enlisted at Llanelli into the 8th Battalion, Royal Welsh Fusiliers, which was part of the 40 Brigade, 13th (Western) Division.The 13th Division had seen extensive action during the war, fighting in Gallipoli, Egypt, and Mesopotamia. It was in Mesopotamia that Samuel fell ill. He was sent home for treatment but, unfortunately, he died of sickness on 12 March 1918, at the age of 27. Samuel is buried at Kidwelly (St. Mary) Churchyard. His grave was photographed by Diane Williams. Tragically, Samuel's brothers David and Willie also fell during the war.

Stephen Sullivan D-1917

Stephen Sullivan, Private, 15773, Welsh Regiment was the son of Christopher and Margaret Sullivan of Neath. The family resided at 5 Gwendraeth Terrace prior to 1911. Stephen enlisted at Llanelli into the 10th Battalion, Welsh Regiment, which was part of the 114 Brigade, 38th (Welsh) Division.The 38th Division landed in France in December 1915 and spent their first winter in the trenches near Armentières. In June 1916, they marched south to the Somme, where they took part in the capture of Mametz Wood. The Division suffered terrible casualties at Mametz and were subsequently taken out of the line to rebuild in Ypres.

Stephen was killed in action at Ypres on 30 March 1917. He was 24 years old and is buried at Bard Cottage Cemetery, Belgium.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/11558052/stephen-sullivan

Private Oliver Jones 1892-1917

Oliver Jones, Private, 48144, Welsh Regiment was the son of David and Mary Ann Jones of Kidwelly. He enlisted at Llanelli into the Welsh Regiment and was posted to the 24th Battalion. This battalion had been formed from the merger of the Pembroke and Glamorgan Yeomanry Battalions and was part of 231 Brigade, 74th (Yeomanry) Division.

The 74th Division marched into Palestine at the beginning of 1917 and fought in two major battles at Gaza that year. Oliver was killed in action during the Third Battle of Gaza on 6 November 1917, at the age of 25. He is buried at Beersheba War Cemetery, Israel. Tragically, just six months later, his brother Mervyn was also killed on the Western Front.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/22729286/oliver-jones

Private Mervyn Jones 1896-1918

Mervyn Jones, Private, 24316, Royal Welsh Fusiliers was the son of David and Mary Ann Jones, of 33 Lady Street, Kidwelly. He enlisted at Llanelli into the 13th Battalion, Royal Welsh Fusiliers, which was part of 113 Brigade, 38th (Welsh) Division. The battalion moved to France in December 1915, initially taking up positions near Fleurbaix. They fought in the Battle of Mametz Wood during the Somme Offensive in 1916 and later moved to Ypres, participating in the Third Battle of Ypres in 1917.

On 21 March 1918, the German Spring Offensive shattered the British lines on the Somme, resulting in heavy casualties and the near destruction of many British battalions. The 38th Division was sent from their positions near Armentières to reinforce the lines on the Somme a few days after the offensive began. Mervyn was killed in action on 22 April 1918, at the age of 22. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Pozieres Memorial, France.

Tragically, Mervyn's brother Oliver had been killed just six months earlier in Palestine.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/16080856/mervyn-jones

Lance Corporal Oliver Evans 1888-1918

Oliver Evans, Lance Corporal, 42224, Royal Welsh Fusiliers was the son of William and Lucy Evans, of Greyhound, Lady Street, Kidwelly. He enlisted at Llanelli into the 9th Welsh Regiment and later transferred into the 13th Battalion, Royal Welsh Fusiliers, which was attached to 113 Brigade, 38th (Welsh) Division.

The 38th Division landed in France in December 1915 and spent their first winter in the trenches near Armentières. In June 1916, they marched south to the Somme, where they famously captured Mametz Wood, suffering terrible casualties. After being taken out of the line, the Division moved to Ypres to rebuild and fought at Pilckem Ridge and Langemarck. They then moved to Armentières, where they remained from September 1917 until the launch of the German Spring Offensive in March 1918.

With the British lines overrun on the Somme, the 38th Division moved south in April 1918, taking up positions north of Albert. It was here that Oliver was killed in action on 22 April 1918, at the age of 30. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Pozières Memorial, France.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/16080811/oliver-evans

Private William Henry Lewis D-1916

William Henry Lewis, Private, 13848, Welsh Regiment 2Bn. was born in Cardiff, the son of Edwin and Fanny Lewis. Before 1906, the family moved to New Town, Kidwelly. William enlisted at Llanelli into the 2nd Battalion, Welsh Regiment, which was part of 3 Brigade, 1st Division.

The 1st Division was among the first to arrive in France during World War I. They fought at the Battle of Mons and took part in the retreat to the Marne, where the German advance was halted. The Division then fought at the Aisne and at Chivy before moving north to Ypres. Here, they participated in the First Battle of Ypres, successfully stopping the German Offensive and wintering in Flanders.

In 1915, the Division saw action at the Battle of Aubers and later moved south to Loos. They fought during the Battle of Loos and the action at the Hohenzollern Redoubt. William was killed in action on 20 April 1916, at Loos. He is buried at St. Patrick's Cemetery, Loos, France. William is not commemorated locally in Kidwelly.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/24255014/william-henry-lewis

Private Archie Styles 1897-1918

Archie Styles, Private, 45031, Welsh Regiment. was the son of Charles and Emily Styles, of Old Shop, Mynydd y Garreg, Kidwelly. The family later moved to Crawley Down, Sussex. Archie enlisted in the army at Shoreditch and was posted to France in the summer of 1916, joining the 14th Battalion, Welsh Regiment.

The Battalion was part of 114 Brigade, 38th (Welsh) Division, which had landed in France in December 1915. They spent their first winter in the trenches near Armentieres before marching south to the Somme in June 1916, where they famously captured Mametz Wood. The Division suffered heavy casualties at Mametz and was taken out of the line to rebuild at Ypres. They fought at Pilckem and Langemarck, then moved to Armentieres, remaining there from September 1917 until the German Spring Offensive in March 1918.

As the British were overrun on the Somme, the 38th Division was moved south in April 1918, taking positions north of Albert. Archie was wounded in this area and died of his wounds on 4 May 1918, aged just 21. He is buried at Harponville Communal Cemetery, France.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/58918685/archie-styles

Private Ernest Wild 1896-1918

Ernest Wild, Private, 108756, Machine Gun Corps was the son of Thomas and Sarah Wild, of Angel House, Kidwelly. He enlisted at Carmarthen into the Monmouth Regiment but later transferred into the 33rd Company, Machine Gun Corps, which was attached to the 11th (Northern) Division.

On 1 July 1915, the Division sailed from Liverpool, landing at Alexandria before moving on to Mudros, completing concentration by 28 July 1915. They landed at Suvla Bay, Gallipoli on 7 August 1915 and remained there until the evacuation on 21 December 1915, when they moved to Egypt. In July 1916, the Division landed at Marseilles and then spent the remainder of the war on the Western Front.

The Division fought at the Battle of Flers-Courcelette during the Somme Offensive and spent the winter on the Ancre. In June 1917, they took part in the Battle of Messines and then fought at the Battle of Langemarck during the Third Battle of Ypres. At the end of September, they fought at the Battle of Polygon Wood, then at the Battle of Broodseinde and the Battle of Poelcapelle. After the Passchendaele Offensive had been closed down, the Division remained in Flanders for the coming months.

On 21 March 1918, the Germans attacked the British lines on the Somme and days later switched the attack to Flanders. Ernest was killed in action in Flanders on 13 April 1918. He was 22 years old and has no known grave, and so is remembered on the Ploegsteert Memorial, Belgium.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/12708639/ernest-wild

2nd Corporal Sidney Morris Jenkins

Sidney Morris Jenkins, Corporal, 139015, Royal Engineers was the son of David and Jane Jenkins, of 24, Water Street, Kidwelly. He enlisted at Llanelli into the Royal Engineers and served with their 180th Tunnelling Company. This company was tasked with the dangerous job of removing unexploded charges and mines from the battlefields.

During the desperate days following the German Spring Offensive of 1918, Sidney was wounded by shell fragments that struck him in the abdomen and left leg. Despite efforts to save him, he succumbed to his wounds on 23 July 1918, at the age of 24. Sidney is buried at Montigny Communal Cemetery, Somme, France.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/56139678/sidney-morris-jenkins

2nd Lieutenant James Richard Tudor Jones 1894-1918

James Richard Tudor Jones, Second Lieutenant, Loyal North Lancashire Regiment was the son of James and Elizabeth Tyson Jones, of Hill House, Kidwelly. He initially enlisted into the Royal Army Medical Corps and served in France from 3 October 1915. On 19 March 1918, he was commissioned into the 2nd Battalion, Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, which was attached to the 94th Brigade, 31st Division.

At the beginning of 1918, the 31st Division was stationed in the St. Quentin sector, where they faced the German Spring Offensive starting on 21 March 1918. This offensive included the Battle of St. Quentin, where the division was forced to withdraw west, fighting at the First Battle of Bapaume and the First Battle of Arras. The division suffered heavy casualties and was moved to Flanders to rest.

In April 1918, the Germans launched an offensive in Flanders, and the 31st Division was involved in the battles there, including the Battle of Estaires and the Battle of Hazebrouck, contributing to the Defence of Nieppe Forest. By August 1918, the Allies had gained the upper hand, and the division participated in the Advance in Flanders. It was during this advance that James was killed in action on 23 July 1918, at the age of 24. He is buried at Raperie British Cemetery, Villemontoire, France.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/56414413/james-richard_tudor-jones

Pioneer Frank Davies D-1918

Frank Davies, Pioneer, WR/262339, Royal Engineers was the son of Thomas and Sarah Davies, of West End Street, Kidwelly. He married May Hughes at Kidwelly on 3 November 1908, and the couple had three children, living at Pencastle, Water Street. Frank enlisted at Carmarthen into the Liverpool Regiment but later transferred to the Royal Engineers, where he served with the Railways section in France from 23 December 1916.

The Royal Engineers Railways were responsible for operating and maintaining the rail supply networks on the Western Front, which were crucial for transporting supplies, ammunition, and troops to and from the front lines. On the morning of 10 September 1918, Frank was tragically killed on the railway line between Nuits-St. Georges and Dijon. He was given a full military burial by the French and is interred at Nuits-St. Georges New Communal Cemetery, France.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/67015619/f-davies

Private Alfred (Fred) Oswald Stephens 1897-1918

Alfred Oswald Stephens, Private, 63510, South Wales Borderers was the son of David and Margaret Stephens, of Kidwelly. He enlisted in September 1918 into the 3rd Battalion, South Wales Borderers. The 3rd Battalion was primarily a training unit for the regular battalions of the South Wales Borderers. Unfortunately, Alfred's time in the army was brief, as he became ill and died on 14 October 1918, just two weeks after enlisting. He is buried at Kidwelly (Siloam) Welsh Baptist Chapelyard.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/232516195/alfred-oswald-stephens

Private William James Anthony 1895-1918

William James Anthony, Private, 54593, Welsh Regiment was the son of John and Ann Anthony, of Llangadog, Kidwelly. He enlisted at Carmarthen into the 13th Battalion, Welsh Regiment, which was attached to 114 Brigade, 38th (Welsh) Division. The Division landed in France during December 1915 and spent their first winter in the trenches near Armentieres. In June 1916, they marched south to the Somme, where they famously captured Mametz Wood in July 1916. The Division suffered terrible casualties at Mametz, and were taken out of the line to rebuild, moving to Ypres. Here they fought at Pilckem and Langemarck in July and August 1917, then moved to Armentieres, where they remained from September 1917 until March 1918 when the German Spring Offensive was launched.

The British had been over-run on the Somme, and in April the Division was moved south, taking up positions north of Albert. They weathered the storm of the coming months until the war turned during the Battle of Amiens on 8 August 1918. The Germans had now lost the upper hand, and the British regained lost ground on the Somme with an attack that began on 21 August 1918. The 38th Division was in the midst of the attack during the Battle of Albert, then moving east to fight at the Battle of Bapaume.

The advance towards the Hindenburg Line began, and the Division continued their march east, fighting at the Battle of Havrincourt and the Battle of Épehy. After a short rest period, the Canal du Nord was breached, opening a passage through the Hindenburg Line. The Division then fought at the Battle of Beaurevoir, capturing Villers-Outreaux, before advancing to the Selle.

William became ill around the time of the Hindenburg Line battles. He was brought back to a Base Hospital on the Channel coast near Boulogne for treatment, but sadly died on 21 October 1918. He was just 22 years old and is buried at Terlincthun British Cemetery, Wimille, France.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/55974074/william-james-anthony

Private David John Howells 1886-1918

David John Howells, Private, 202759, Welsh Regiment was the son of Philip and Eleanor Howells, of Maes Gwenllian, Kidwelly. He served with the 18th Battalion, Welsh Regiment, which was attached to 119 Brigade, 40th (Bantam) Division. This Division was formed between September and December 1915 and moved to France in June 1916. Late in 1916, they moved south to the Somme and fought at the Battle of the Ancre, remaining in the area over the winter. In March 1917, the Germans withdrew to their shortened line, called the Hindenburg Line, and the 40th Division was one of the divisions that followed the withdrawal. Later in the year, they took part in the Battle of Cambrai, playing an important role in the attack on Bourlon Wood. They remained in the area over the coming months but were caught here by the German Spring Offensive of 21 March 1918. They fought at the Battle of St Quentin and retreated westwards, engaging in the First Battle of Bapaume.Due to the terrible casualties suffered by the Division here, they were sent north to Flanders to rest and rebuild. However, in April, the Germans launched an offensive in Flanders, and the 40th Division was caught up in the thick of it again, fighting at the Battle of Estaires and then at the Battle of Hazebrouck. The Division was ready for front-line action again by 18 July 1918, when they took part in the Advance in Flanders and the Battle of Ypres, 1918.David was taken ill during the final months of the war and was brought to the Base Hospital near Boulogne, where he died aged 32 on 31 December 1918. He is buried at Terlincthun British Cemetery, Wimille, France.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/55975597/david-john-howells

William John Lowe D-1919

William John Lowe, Driver, M2/0/8835, Royal Army Service Corps was born in Lampeter in 1887, the son of William and Sarah Lowe, and later resided at 16, Lady Street, Kidwelly. He served with the Motor Transport Section of the Army Service Corps as a Driver.

While on active service in France, William developed an abscess on his left hip following a fall, which necessitated hospitalization. After recovering, he returned to service but was again admitted to hospital in August 1916 due to shell shock, spending almost two months in treatment. Following his recovery, William was posted back to France.

On 28 April 1917, during the Battle of Arras, he suffered gunshot wounds to his face and hands. He was admitted to hospital on 4 May 1917 and spent 41 days recovering from these injuries. After his treatment, he was pensioned off but continued to suffer from the effects of his wounds.

William died at home on 30 March 1919 because of his wartime injuries.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/225530361/william-john-lowe

Private Thomas Miles 1862-1919

Thomas Miles, Private, 27433, Royal Defence Corps was born in Carmarthen in 1862, the son of Moses and Margaret Miles. By 1891, he was employed in Cardiff, and by 1901, he was lodging with the Bish family in Merthyr Tydfil. Later, Thomas worked as a coal hewer in Kidwelly, where he lived before moving to employment at Pembrey Munitions Works.

He enlisted into the Welsh Regiment at Merthyr on 17 December 1915, giving his age as 43 and noting previous military service with the Military Police. In April 1916, he was transferred to the North Staffordshire Regiment. By November 1916, the battalion had been re-designated as the 17th Battalion, Royal Defence Corps, and Thomas was posted to Guernsey, where he remained for the rest of the war.

After the war, Thomas was discharged on 14 December 1918. He returned to Tymawr, Water Street, Kidwelly. He applied for a war pension, claiming that he had developed asthma while enduring harsh conditions at Barry Dock in the winter of 1916, where he had slept without a mattress and with only two blankets. Although the outcome of his pension application is unclear, it is evident that Thomas was suffering from health issues.

Thomas Miles passed away in Kidwelly towards the end of 1919, at the age of 57. Further research may reveal more about his post-war experiences and the circumstances of his death.

Private Joseph Parry 1871-1918

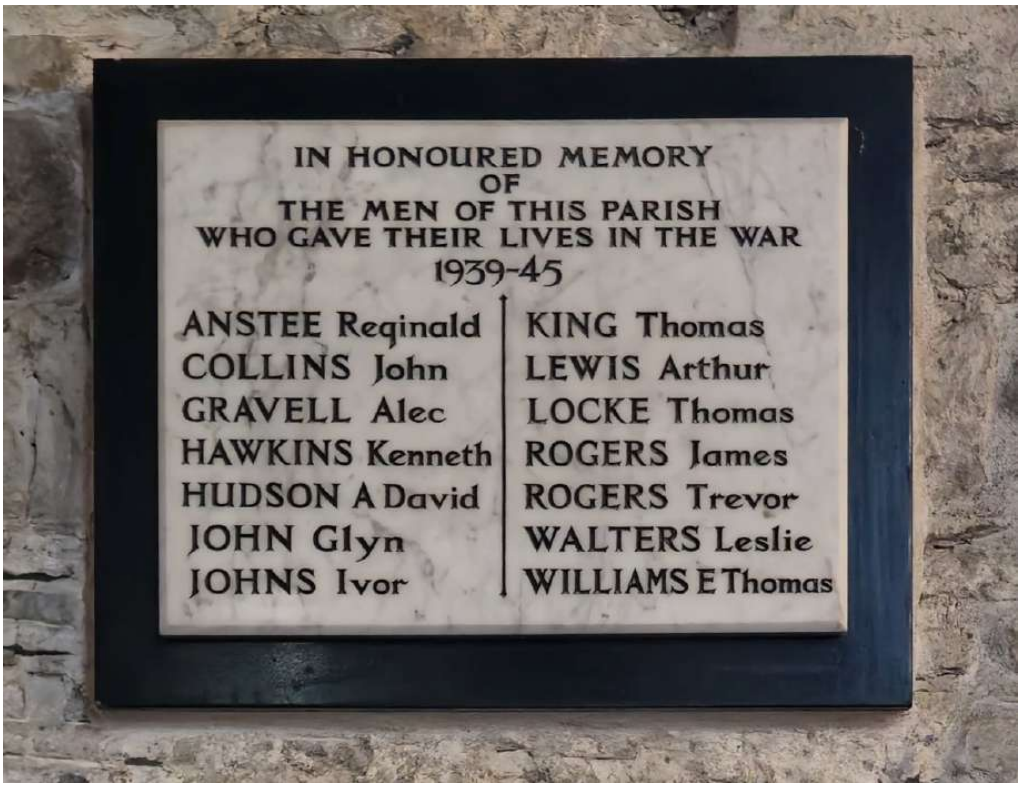
Joseph Parry, Private, 15270, South Wales Borderers was born in Bedwellty, Tredegar. He married Margaret Conniff in Kidwelly in 1906, and the couple settled at 61 Priory Street, Kidwelly. A long-serving veteran, Joseph had previously served in the South African War of 1899-1901. He re-enlisted with the South Wales Borderers in 1914, joining from the reserve.

Joseph deployed to France with the 1st Battalion, South Wales Borderers, on 26 January 1915. After some time, he returned to Britain and was assigned to the Depot Battalion. Joseph tragically died of illness on 22 September 1918, at the age of 47. He is buried in Kidwelly (St. Mary) Churchyard.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/232516317/joseph-parry

The memorials in St. Mary's Church in Kidwelly serve as poignant tributes to the courage and sacrifice of those who have given their lives in service to their country. Each name etched on these plaques reflects a story of dedication, valour, and selflessness. As we gather here, we remember and honour the legacy of these brave individuals, whose sacrifices ensure that we may live in peace and freedom. Their memory continues to inspire and remind us of the high cost of liberty and the enduring spirit of those who served. May their sacrifices never be forgotten and may their stories of bravery continue to resonate through generations.

IN HONOURED MEMORY OF THE MEN OF THIS PARISH
WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES IN THE WAR
1939-45



ANSTEE Reginald
COLLINS John
GRAVELL Alec
HAWKINS Kenneth
HUDSON A David
ROGERS Trevor
JOHN Glyn

JOHNS Ivor
KING Thomas
LEWIS Arthur
LOCKE Thomas
ROGERS James
WALTERS Leslie
WILLIAMS E Thomas

Sergeant Reginald Arthur Anstee 1916-1945

Sergeant Reginald Arthur Anstee was a distinguished member of the Royal Welch Fusiliers, renowned for his bravery and commitment. Born in 1916 he dedicated his life to military service, ultimately reaching the rank of Sergeant. His role was crucial during the intense final stages of World War II, where his courage and leadership were put to the test in the battle-scarred fields of Europe.

Date of Death: 28 March 1945
Age at Death: 29 years old

Sergeant Anstee's service was marked by his participation in the final Allied offensives that sought to bring the conflict to a close. Tragically, his life was cut short during this period of intense and decisive warfare. His sacrifice came as the Allied forces pressed forward into Germany, working to dismantle the remnants of the Axis resistance.

He is buried at the Reichswald Forest War Cemetery in Kleve, Kreis Kleve, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany—a solemn resting place for many Commonwealth soldiers who fell in the closing months of the war. This cemetery stands as a testament to the countless lives lost and the enduring legacy of those who fought bravely in the name of freedom.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/56032194/reginald-arthur-anstee

Lance Sergeant John Thomas Collins 1917-1944

John Thomas Collins, Lance Sergeant, 4198756, Royal Welch Fusiliers was the son of Alfred and Janet Collins of Kidwelly. He served with the 4th Battalion, which was part of the 158th Brigade, 53rd (Welsh) Division.

The Battalion landed at Normandy at the end of June 1944, participating in the intense and challenging combat around Caen and the Bocage region. Lance Sergeant Collins was engaged in these fierce battles when he was tragically killed in action on 13 August 1944, at the age of 27.

John Thomas Collins is buried at Brouay War Cemetery in France, a site dedicated to the memory of those who fell during the Normandy campaign. His sacrifice is remembered with deep respect and gratitude.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/56396188/john-thomas-collins

Leading Aircraftman Alec Gravell 1925-1945

Alec Gravelle, Leading Aircraftman, 1869547, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve a dedicated member of the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, was the beloved son of Llewelyn and Mary Ann Gravell from Kidwelly. Serving with 148 Squadron, RAFVR, Alec was involved in operations with the Boeing B-24 Liberator VI, a key aircraft in the Allied air campaign.

Following the Allied invasion of Italy, 148 Squadron was stationed at Foggia, from where they conducted crucial missions over enemy territory. Tragically, Alec Gravelle's life was cut short when he died in Italy on 9 July 1945, at the tender age of just 20.

Alec Gravelle is interred at Bari War Cemetery, a site that honours the memory of those who sacrificed their lives in the Mediterranean theatre of World War II. His courage and service are remembered with great respect, and his legacy endures as a symbol of youthful bravery and dedication.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/56107200/alec-gravell

Private Kenneth Hawkins 1923-1943

Kenneth Hawkins, Private, 5193672, York & Lancaster Regiment, a valiant member of the York & Lancaster Regiment, was the son of Charles and Mary E. Hawkins from Kidwelly. He served with the 6th Battalion, which played a significant role throughout various theatres of World War II.

The 6th Battalion was deployed to France in 1940 as part of the 46th Infantry Division, where they engaged in intense combat in the St. Omer/La Bassee area. Their bravery continued as they participated in crucial operations in North Africa, joining the First Army in Tunisia in 1942. From 1943 onwards, the battalion fought with the Eighth Army in Italy, taking part in significant campaigns from Salerno to Rimini.

Kenneth Hawkins's service came to a tragic end on 10 September 1943, when he was killed in action at the age of just 20. He is buried at Salerno War Cemetery in Italy, a solemn resting place for those who fell during the Italian Campaign.

Kenneth Hawkins's sacrifice is remembered with deep respect and honour, reflecting his courage and the significant contributions of the 6th Battalion in the liberation efforts across Europe.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/56575929/kenneth-hawkins

Able Seaman David Andrew Hudson 1923-1941

David Andrew Hudson, Able Seaman, D/JX 154807, Royal Navy was the son of Thomas and Mary Ann Hudson of Kidwelly. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy aboard H.M.S. Gloucester, a Town-class cruiser. In September 1939, Gloucester was the flagship of the 4th Cruiser Squadron and was stationed in the East Indies, patrolling the Indian Ocean for the remainder of that year. By December, the ship was relocated to Simonstown, South Africa, where she attempted, unsuccessfully, to engage German raiders.

In May 1940, Gloucester was transferred to the Mediterranean. She played a prominent role in several key naval engagements, including Malta convoys and the Battle of Calabria on 9 July 1940. An Italian air attack on 8 July had severely damaged the ship, killing or wounding most of the bridge personnel, including the captain.

During the latter half of 1940, Gloucester operated in the eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean. On 11 January 1941, while supporting Operation Excess, the ship survived a bomb attack that failed to detonate. In March, Gloucester participated in the Battle of Matapan and, in April, conducted several bombardments along the North African coast, sustaining minor damage from a subsequent bomb hit.

On 22 May 1941, while in the Kithera Channel, approximately 14 miles north of Crete, Gloucester was attacked by German Stuka dive bombers. She was struck by at least four heavy bombs and sustained three near-misses before sinking. The attack resulted in the loss of 723 lives, with only 82 survivors. The sinking of H.M.S. Gloucester is considered one of Britain's worst wartime naval disasters.

David Andrew Hudson, only 18 years old at the time of his death, is remembered on the Plymouth Naval Memorial, Devon.

Ordinary Seaman Robert Glyn John 1919-1940

Robert Glyn John, Ordinary Seaman, D/JX 167980, Royal Navy was the son of Robert Daniel John and Ida Agnes John of Kidwelly. He served as an Ordinary Seaman in the Royal Navy aboard H.M.S. Hunter, an 'H' Class destroyer. During the First Battle of Narvik on 10 April 1940, Hunter was part of the 2nd Destroyer Flotilla, which engaged German destroyers that had transported forces to occupy Narvik in northern Norway the previous day.

The British flotilla, including Hunter, attacked the German destroyers in the Ofotfjord at the entrance to the harbour. They succeeded in sinking the destroyers Wilhelm Heidkamp and Anton Schmidt, heavily damaging Diether von Roeder, and inflicting lesser damage on two other German destroyers. Additionally, seven German or German-seized transport ships were sunk.As the British flotilla withdrew, they were confronted by three German destroyers emerging from the Herjangsfjord and subsequently by two more from Ballangen Bay. In the ensuing battle, the British flotilla leader, HMS Hardy, was severely damaged and had to be beached in flames. H.M.S. Hunter, after receiving heavy fire and colliding with HMS Hotspur, sank.

Robert Glyn John was killed in the sinking of H.M.S. Hunter on 10 April 1940, at the age of 21. He is commemorated on the Plymouth Naval Memorial, Devon.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/13296500/robert-glyn-johns

Sergeant Alfred Ivor Johns 1914-1945

Alfred Ivor Johns, Sergeant (Air Bomber), 1837104, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve

Alfred was the son of George and Margaret Ann Johns and the husband of Megan Johns of Burry Port. He served with 102 Squadron, RAFVR, flying the Handley Page Halifax III, based at Pocklington in North Yorkshire.

On the night of 5 January 1945, Alfred's squadron participated in a massed bomber raid on Hannover, Germany. During the mission, Alfred's Halifax was shot down over Germany, resulting in his death. He was 31 years old.

Alfred Ivor Johns is buried at the Hanover War Cemetery in Germany.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/18584773/alfred-ivor-johns

Ordinary Seaman Thomas King 1908-1942

Ordinary Seaman Thomas King Royal Navy, Service No. P/JX. 253120

Born on 12 May 1908 to Albert John and Sarah King of Burry Port, Thomas was baptised at St Mary's Church and educated at Burry Port Council School before joining maritime work like his father.

In 1935, he married Elizabeth Williams of Pembrey; they later settled in Canning Town, Essex, where Thomas worked as a stevedore. He joined the Royal Navy in 1940, bringing valuable merchant marine experience.

Serving aboard HMS *Penzance*, he protected Atlantic convoys from U-boat attacks. On 4 April 1942, during the defense of Convoy OG82, Thomas was lost overboard. His body was recovered and returned to Burry Port, where over 300 mourners attended his funeral with full military honours.

He is commemorated on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial and Burry Port's war memorial.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/222175169/thomas-king

Private Arthur Lewis 1915-1944

Arthur Hugh Wilson Lewis, Private, 14627373, Black Watch (Royal Highlanders)

Arthur served with the 6th Battalion, Black Watch (Royal Highlanders), which had initially fought in France during 1939 and 1940 as part of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF). After being evacuated to the UK, the battalion was rebuilt and subsequently moved to North Africa, where they participated in the extensive campaign there. Following the North African Campaign, the battalion took part in the Invasion of Italy.

Arthur was killed in Italy on 8 June 1944, at the age of just 19. He is buried at the Bolsena War Cemetery in Italy.

Marine Owen Thomas Dunn Locke 1914-1942

Owen Thomas Dunne Locke, Marine, PLY/X 101541, Royal Marines

Owen was the son of William James Locke and Margaret Susan Locke of Kidwelly. He served in the Royal Navy aboard H.M.S. Repulse, a battlecruiser built during World War I that had taken part in the Second Battle of Heligoland Bight in 1917. Upgraded during the interwar years, Repulse was stationed in the Mediterranean at the outbreak of World War II. She saw action during the Battle of Norway in 1940 and participated in the chase for the Bismarck. In December 1941, Repulse was sent to the Pacific as part of 'Force Z'.

As the threat of war with Japan loomed, Repulse was detached to the Far East to deter Japanese aggression. This force, which was intended to be a large battle fleet acting as a counter to Japanese intentions, was dispatched to Singapore as an under-strength squadron without the planned aircraft carrier. On 8 December 1941, shortly after the outbreak of war in the Pacific, Repulse left Singapore with the fast battleship Prince of Wales and four destroyers to intercept Japanese invasion convoys heading towards Malaya. Admiral Sir Tom Philips, commanding the fleet from Prince of Wales, knew that air cover could not be guaranteed but proceeded, believing Japanese forces could not operate so far from land and that his ships were immune to fatal air attack damage.

On 10 December 1941, the fleet failed to locate Japanese invasion forces and turned south, where they were attacked by 86 Japanese aircraft from the 22nd Air Flotilla based in Saigon. Repulse initially evaded several torpedo attacks but was eventually hit by four torpedoes in rapid succession, fatally crippling her. Orders were given to abandon ship, and Repulse sank at 12:23. Survivors were rescued and brought to Singapore.

Owen Thomas Dunne Locke died of wounds on 22 February 1942, aged 28, and is remembered on the Plymouth Naval Memorial, Devon.

Sergeant Thomas James Rogers D-1944

Thomas James Rogers, Sergeant (Air Gunner), 1852120, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve

Thomas was born in 1915, the son of Thomas and Mary Rogers of Kidwelly. He served with 424 (R.C.A.F.) Squadron, RAFVR, which operated the Handley Page Halifax III and was based at Skipton-on-Swale. On the night of 30 March 1944, the squadron participated in a massed bomber attack over Nuremberg.

During the return journey on 31 March 1944, Thomas was killed when his Halifax was shot down over Germany. He is buried at Hanover War Cemetery in Germany.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/18585638/thomas-james-rogers

Able Seaman Trevor Rogers 1920-1941

Trevor Rogers, Able Seaman, D/JX 178503, Royal Navy

Trevor was born in 1919, the son of Thomas and Mary Rogers of Kidwelly. He served in the Royal Navy aboard H.M.S. Galatea, an Arethusa-class light cruiser. Galatea joined the Mediterranean Fleet upon commissioning and acted as the flagship for the Rear Admiral (Destroyers).

After the outbreak of war, Galatea was ordered home. Between February and March 1940, she participated in operations to intercept Axis merchant ships attempting to break out of Vigo. In April 1940, she was involved in the Norwegian Campaign and in May, she joined the Nore Command as the flagship of the 2nd Cruiser Squadron. On 4 April 1940, the Polish destroyers Burza, Grom, and Blyskawica reached their new home base at Rosyth. That afternoon, they left the harbour with Galatea, her sister ship Arethusa, and three destroyers to conduct a patrol in the North Sea and were later ordered to intercept German invasion groups heading for Norway.

On 1 September 1940, Galatea struck a mine and was under repair until May 1941. After her repairs, she took part in the operations to hunt the Bismarck. In July 1941, she joined the Mediterranean Fleet via the Red Sea and by November, was based at Malta with Force "K", operating against Axis supply convoys to North Africa.

On the night of 14 December 1941, shortly before midnight, Galatea was torpedoed and sunk by the German submarine U-557 off Alexandria, Egypt. Her Captain, 22 officers, and 447 ratings were killed. Approximately 100 survivors were rescued by the destroyers H.M.S. Griffin and H.M.S. Hotspur. Trevor was among those killed when the ship was lost on 15 December 1941. He was 21 years old and is remembered on the Plymouth Naval Memorial, Devon.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/13303625/trevor-rogers

Sapper Leslie Walters 1918-1944

Leslie Walters, Sapper, 1905896, Royal Engineers

Leslie was the son of William and Elizabeth Walters of Kidwelly, and the husband of Pat Walters. He served with the 11th Field Company, Royal Engineers, which was part of the invasion force that landed in Normandy in June 1944.

Leslie was killed during the advance through Holland on 19 September 1944, at the age of 26. He is buried at Bergen-Op-Zoom War Cemetery in the Netherlands.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/12727774/leslie-walters

Private Thomas Edwin Jones Williams 1926-1945

Thomas Edwin Jones Williams, Private, 14739353, Welch Regiment

Thomas Edwin Jones Williams, known on the memorial as E. Thomas Williams, was the son of Mrs. A. Williams of 51 Lady Street, Kidwelly. He enlisted in the local Territorial unit, the 4th Battalion, Welch Regiment, which was part of the 53rd (Welsh) Division. This division spent much of the war on home service, initially in Northern Ireland, before returning to England to prepare for the Normandy landings. The division landed in Normandy at the end of June 1944 and took part in the operations to break out from Normandy.

The 53rd Division continued the drive through France and Belgium into Holland. By early March 1945, the division had crossed into Germany and was positioned near Issum, preparing to attack Alpon to open the advance on the Rhine. The attack began on 4 March and faced heavy opposition from the German 21st Parachute Regiment, which mounted a staunch defence.

Thomas was killed on 7 March 1945, as the 53rd Division was being relieved. He was 19 years old and is buried in Reichswald Forest War Cemetery, Germany.

We will remember them.

To all those from Kidwelly who served during the First and Second World Wars — and especially to those who never returned — we offer our deepest respect and lasting gratitude. Your courage, sacrifice, and commitment to peace and freedom have shaped the lives we live today.

We remember not only the fallen, but the families left behind, the communities forever changed, and the countless quiet acts of bravery carried out in the face of hardship.

Thank you — we honour your memory, today and always.

https://tinyurl.com/Kidwelly-Fallen-Hero

Kidwelly War Memorials

World Cemeteries

This map marks the cemeteries and memorials of the war heroes from the small Welsh town of Kidwelly in Carmarthenshire. These brave individuals served during times of global conflict and are now commemorated across 58 locations worldwide. From the deserts of the Middle East to the forests of Europe, and from naval memorials to war cemeteries, each site tells the story of a life given in service.

This map is a poignant tribute, illustrating the far-reaching legacy of sacrifice from one tight-knit community. It connects Kidwelly to a world of remembrance and honour, ensuring that their stories endure.

From Alexandria (Chatby) Military Cemetery to the Tower Hill Memorial in London

We Will Remember Them

https://tinyurl.com/Kidwelly-War-Cemeteries-Map

Alexandria Chatby Military Cemetery	Private Frank Picot
All Saints Churchyard	Delwyn Davies
Amara War Cemetery	Augustus Edward Hugh
Artillery Wood Cemetery	Gdsm. Norman Hadley Williams
Awoingt British Cemetery	Pvt John Bidgood Godfrey Ashford,
Bard Cottage Cemetery x 3	Private Stephen Sullivan, Pte. Arthur Jesse Lippiatt, Private Alexander Gilasbey
Bari War Cemetery	Ld Aircraftman Alec Gravell
Basra Memorial	Private Edwin Vaughan
Beaulencourt British Cemetery	Pioneer Charles Wyndham Lewis
Becklingen War Cemetery	Lance Corporal John Dudley Jones
Beersheba War Cemetery	Private Oliver Jones
Bergen-op-Zoom War Cemetery x 2	Sapper Leslie Walters, Private Thomas Hector Rogers
Bois-Carré British Cemetery	Private William Henry Hughes
Bolsena War Cemetery	Private Arthur Lewis
Burry Port Cemetery	Ordinary Seaman Thomas King,
Brouay War Cemetery	L-Sgt John Thomas Collins
Browns Road Military Cemetery	Pvt John Tucker
Capel Sul Welsh Independent Chapel Cemetery	SGT Edward Idris Evans
Caudry British Cemetery	Private John Elias Morris
Chocques Military Cemetery	Pvt David Gower
Cologne Southern Cemetery	Private W H Davies
Dadizeele New British Cemetery	Captain Francis Percy Campbell Pemberton
Delhi War Cemetery	Lieutenant William Glanville Thomas
Doiran Memorial	L-Corp Edgar James Bish
Doullens Communal Cemetery Extension No. 2	Pvt Samuel Jones
Dourlers Communal Cemetery Extension	Pvt T Martin
Enfidaville War Cemetery	Pvt David Daniel Evans
Englefontaine British Cemetery	Albert Edward Ward
Estaires Communal Cemetery Extension	Pvt William John Morgans
Fins New British Cemetery Sorel-Le-Grand	Pvt William John Roberts

Flatiron Copse Cemetery	Pvt William Bowry
Hanover War Cemetery x 2	Sergeant (Air Gnr.) Thomas James Rogers, Sergeant (Air Bomber) Alfred Ivor Johns
Helles Memorial	David John Morgan
Jerusalem War Cemetery	Rifleman Henry George Howells
Kohima War Cemetery	Fusilier Richard Lewis Evans
Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery	Private William Stanley Davies
Locre Hospice Cemetery	Private Thomas George Roberts
Loos Memorial at Dud Corner Cemetery x 3	Private Morgan Morgan, Private William John Griffiths, Lance Corporal Ivor Emanuel
Mendinghem Military Cemetery	Private David Griffiths
Menin Gate Memorial x 2	Sergeant William Leslie Shenton, Private David Gravell Jones
Mesnil Ridge Cemetery	Private D Hughes,
Montigny Communal Cemetery	2nd Cpl Sidney Morris Jenkins
Nuits-St. Georges New Communal Cemetery	Pioneer Frank Davies
Perth Cemetery China Wall	Corporal Thomas Rogers
Ploegsteert Memorial	Private Ernest Wild
Plymouth Naval Memorial x 6	Able Seaman Trevor Rogers, Marine Owen Thomas Dunn Locke, Able Seaman William Lewis, Ordinary Seaman Robert Glyn Johns, Able Seaman David Andrew Hudson, William Elwyn Evans
Pozieres Memorial x 2	Private Mervyn Jones, Lance Corporal Oliver Evans
Ramscappelle Road Military Cemetery	Private James Fredrick Stokes
Raperie British Cemetery	2nd Lt James Richard Tudor Jones
Reichswald Forest War Cemetery x 2	Reginald Arthur Anstee, Private Thomas Edwin Jones Williams
Saint Patrick's Cemetery	Private William Henry Lewis
Salerno War Cemetery	Pvt Kenneth Hawkins
Santerno Valley War Cemetery	Guardsman Adolph Jones
Sardis Welsh Independant Chapelyard	LTC Ivor Emanuel
Siloam Welsh Baptist Chapelyard x 2	Lance Corporal David Morris Davies, Private Alfred Oswald Stephens
St. Mary's Churchyard x 5	PVT Owen Edwards, Samuel Hughes, William John Lowe, PVT Joseph Parry, PVT William Henry Hughes.
Terlincthun British War Cemetery x 2	Private William James Anthony, Pvt David John Howells
Thiepval Memorial x 3	William Evan Davies, Company Sergeant Major Thomas John, Rifleman William Evan Davies
Tower Hill Memorial x 2	Master David Edmunds, Master David Henry Parry

MYNYDD Y GARREG HOME GUARD

IN WORLD WAR II

Kidwelly's Hidden Role in D-Day:

"The images contained in this article are AI-generated visual representations. They are intended solely to help illustrate the narrative and should not be interpreted as authentic historical images."

The Welsh Crucible for Operation Overlord

Kidwelly, Carmarthenshire – As the world marked the anniversary of D-Day, the pivotal Allied invasion of Normandy, it is vital to spotlight the quiet Welsh communities that served as crucial preparation grounds. The small town of Kidwelly, largely untouched by the direct conflict, suddenly found itself at the heart of the military effort, hosting thousands of American troops who were gearing up for Operation Overlord.

The American Arrival and Local Impact

In the months leading up to June 6, 1944, Kidwelly and its surrounding areas became a vast, secret training camp. American forces, part of the extensive build-up for the liberation of Nazi-occupied Europe, were billeted across the community. Broomhill House, in particular, became a key temporary headquarters and accommodation for the GIs.

The arrival of the American forces brought a unique dynamic. Local fields, barns, and community halls were transformed into makeshift barracks. The presence of these troops was a constant, tangible reminder of the impending invasion and the critical role the area would play in its success, creating a bond of camaraderie and mutual respect between the Welsh community and the American servicemen.

Rigorous Training for Normandy

The preparations in and around Kidwelly were comprehensive and intense. The diverse terrain of the Welsh countryside provided an ideal setting for the rigorous training that would prove crucial during the landings.

* Tactical and Amphibious Operations: Soldiers honed their skills in marksmanship, tactics, and specialized training, utilizing the landscape to simulate the challenges they would face on the beaches of France.
* Logistical Hub: Beyond physical training, the area was a key logistical base. Supplies were stored, equipment was maintained, and communication lines were established, all supported by the local population.

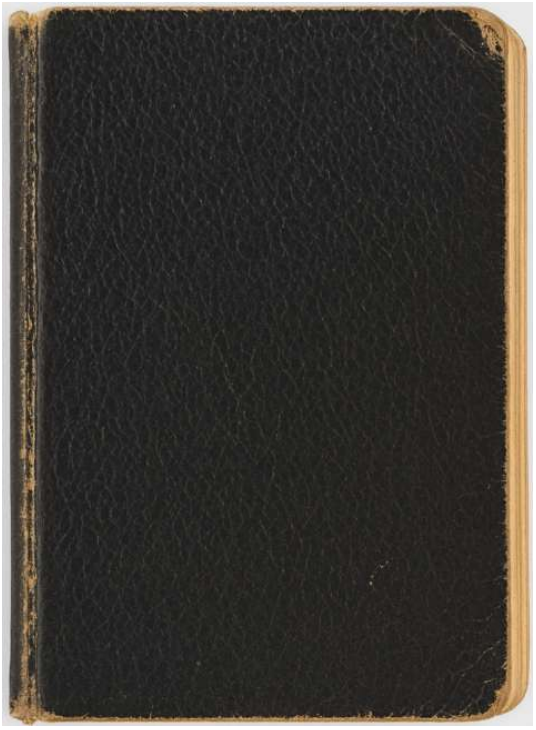
The Crucial Role of the Home Guard

The success of the American training was significantly enhanced by collaboration with local defence units, notably the Kidwelly Home Guard Battalion, which included a key unit from nearby Mynydd y Garreg. These local volunteers provided invaluable expertise and assistance.

A Hidden War Within a War.

While the Home Guard was the official face of local defence, their activities hint at a deeper, more secretive layer of Britain's invasion preparations. Across the UK, a parallel and utterly clandestine organization known as the **Auxiliary Units** or, in later rumours, a 'Secret Army' was being formed.

Recruited from men with intimate knowledge of the land (like gamekeepers, farmers, and poachers), these "stay-behind" guerrillas were trained in sabotage and silent killing, to operate from hidden bunkers if the Nazis invaded. Their existence was so secret that many took it to their graves, only revealed decades later by discoveries like **Edwin Lewis's "sabotage notebook"** in Cornwall—a handwritten manual of explosive devices and assassination techniques.



The Home Guard, including our men in Mynydd y Garreg, formed the visible part of a defensive iceberg, beneath which lay this far more shadowy structure.

The Unit: "F" Company 6th Battalion, Carmarthenshire Home Guard

The Home Guard was organised into counties, then battalions, and then local companies. The unit based in Mynydd y Garreg was:

- **Unit: "F" Company**
- **Battalion: 6th Battalion, Carmarthenshire Home Guard**
- **Area of Responsibility:** This company would have covered Mynydd y Garreg, the surrounding rural areas, and the strategically vital coastline from Kidwelly Ferry eastwards towards Pembrey.

Key Locations and Structures

Several physical reminders of the Home Guard's presence still exist in the area:

1. **The Home Guard Hut on Mynydd y Garreg:** The most direct piece of evidence is the former Home Guard hut itself, located on the common land of Mynydd y Garreg. This would have been their base for drills, storage, and meetings. After the war, this hut was famously converted into the **"Welcome to Town" pub**, and later became a private residence. Its origins are well-known in local memory.
2. **Pillboxes and Defence Posts:** The area around Kidwelly and Mynydd y Garreg was part of a defensive "stop line" intended to halt an enemy advance should they have landed on the nearby Pembrey Coast.
    - **Kidwelly Stop Line:** This line followed natural and man-made features, including the River Gwendraeth Fach and the Kidwelly Canal.
    - **Pillboxes:** Several Type 24 pillboxes were constructed along this line. One still exists very close to Mynydd y Garreg, **situated on the north bank of the Kidwelly Canal, near Heol Las**. This would have been a key defensive position manned by the local Home Guard.
    - **Anti-Tank Cubes:** Large concrete anti-tank cubes can still be found in the fields between Mynydd y Garreg and the coast, another part of the inland defence scheme they would have patrolled.

What Their Role Would Have Been

The men of "F" Company were likely a mix of local farmers, miners from the nearby pits, and other workers ineligible for regular military service due to age or occupation. Their duties would have included:

- **Manning the fixed defences** like the pillbox on the canal.
- **Patrolling the coastline and the vital infrastructure** such as the Kidwelly viaduct and the canal bridges.
- **Guarding key local points** against sabotage or paratrooper attack.
- **Training** with outdated rifles, Molotov cocktails, and other improvised weapons.
- Acting as a source of local knowledge and manpower for the regular army.

Training in the Local Quarry

The Mynydd y Garreg Home Guard utilized the rugged local landscape for essential training:

* Safe Firing Range: A local quarry, such as Smarts Quarry, served as a perfect, natural, and safe firing range. The high walls acted as backstops, allowing the men to practice with their limited arsenal, which included British Lee-Enfields and US-supplied P17 rifles and Sten guns.
* Fieldcraft: The rough terrain of the quarry and surrounding areas was used to drill essential fieldcraft, including Observation Post (OP) duties and simulated Village Defence tactics.

The Firearms of a Local Defence Volunteer

1. The Standard Rifle: SMLE No.1 Mk III*

By mid to late war, the **Short Magazine Lee-Enfield (SMLE) No.1 Mk III*** became the standard and most common rifle for the Home Guard.

- **What it was:** The iconic rifle of the British Army in WWI and the first half of WWII. It was a reliable, bolt-action rifle known for its rapid-fire capability and a 10-round magazine.

- **When they got it:** Initially, the regular army had priority. After the threat of invasion receded from late 1941 onwards, and as the newer No.4 Lee-Enfield rifle entered army service, large numbers of SMLEs were passed down to the Home Guard. The men of "F" Company in Mynydd y Garreg would have drilled and stood guard with these for the majority of the war.

2. The American Stop-Gap: P17 and P14 Rifles

Before enough SMLEs were available, the Home Guard was equipped with American rifles supplied under the Lend-Lease program.

- **The P17:** Officially the **"U.S. Rifle, cal .30, Model of 1917"**. This was a robust, bolt-action rifle very similar in function to the Lee-Enfield. It fired the American .30-06 cartridge, which was different from the British .303.
- **The P14:** The **"Pattern 1914 Enfield"** was a British rifle designed before WWI but mass-produced in the US. It was highly accurate but slower to operate than the SMLE.
- **Use in Mynydd y Garreg:** It is highly probable that the local unit used these American rifles in 1941 and 1942. Ammunition would have been a specific supply chain, and they might have even been painted with a red band around the stock to signify they used non-standard ammunition.

3. The Canadian Cousin: The Ross Rifle

Some Home Guard units, particularly in 1940, received the Canadian **Ross Rifle**.

- **What it was:** A Canadian bolt-action rifle used in WWI. It had a reputation for being accurate but was notoriously prone to jamming in muddy conditions, which led to its withdrawal from frontline service.
- **Likelihood:** While possible, it was less common than the American P17 and P14. It may have been issued if there were shortages of other types.

The "Miscellaneous" Collection (Especially in 1940)

During the desperate early days following the Dunkirk evacuation (Summer 1940), the Home Guard was armed with a wild assortment of weapons, often privately owned. It's plausible that in Mynydd y Garreg, before proper military rifles arrived, you might have seen:

- **Hunting Rifles and Shotguns:** Brought from home by farmers and gamekeepers.
- **Drill Purpose Rifles:** Wooden or deactivated rifles used only for marching practice.
- **Improvised Weapons:** This was the era of pikes, Molotov cocktails, and petrol bombs, famously satirised by the TV show *Dad's Army*.

Summary Timeline for the Mynydd y Garreg Home Guard:

- **1940 (Formation):** A desperate mix of privately owned shotguns, hunting rifles, and very few military firearms. Training might have been with dummy rifles.
- **1941-1942:** Likely issuance of **American P17** and **P14** rifles, and possibly the Canadian **Ross Rifle**.
- **1942 onwards:** Standardisation on the British **SMLE No.1 Mk III*** rifle, which would have been their primary weapon until stand-down in December 1944.

A Relic of the Home Guard Returns to the Light

For decades, whispers circulated in Mynydd y Garreg of the local Home Guard using the old quarry for target practice. It was an oral tradition, passed down through generations but never substantiated by physical evidence. That changed when local detectorist Dave Grower meticulously scanned the quarry floor and uncovered a remarkable find: a Bren Mk1 Light Machine Gun, dated 1942.

Heavily corroded by decades of Welsh weather, the weapon is more than just a relic it is a tangible link to the wartime experiences of “F” Company. Rather than being lost or casually discarded, the Bren was likely deliberately decommissioned. As the threat of invasion faded after 1944, the Home Guard was stood down and its weapons collected. This particular gun, possibly worn out or obsolete, appears to have been rendered inoperable and left behind at the very site where the men had trained with it.

When restored for display, one detail stood out: the rifle butt is not original. A new one was carefully crafted to replace the missing piece, ensuring the weapon could be presented in its full form. This subtle restoration highlights both the passage of time and the care taken to preserve the artifact for public memory.

Now brought back into the light, the Bren stands as both confirmation of local memory and a powerful artifact of national history. Its discovery bridges oral tradition with physical proof, ensuring that the story of the quarry and the men who defended their community will endure not just in recollection, but in display.

From Quarry to Hall: A Journey of Preservation

Recognising the artifact's significance, local detectorist Dave Grower undertook the careful restoration of the Bren Mk1, stabilising the relic to halt further decay. Rather than keeping the weapon in private hands, he chose to donate it to Mynydd y Garreg Hall, ensuring it remained within the very community whose wartime story it embodies.

Accompanying the display is a simple but powerful plaque that tells the tale:

DISCOVERED on the MYNYDD

RESTORED and DONATED

by Detectorist Dave Grower

1942

BREN MK1

HOME GUARD: MYNYDDYGARREG & KIDWELLY: WW2

This act of preservation transforms local folklore into tangible history. What was once only whispered in memory now stands in plain sight, a centrepiece for understanding the area's wartime experience. The Bren gun symbolises the serious firepower entrusted to part-time soldiers of the Home Guard—ordinary men who volunteered to defend their homes, their families, and their community.

Weapon Specification:The Bren Mk1 Light Machine Gun

The discovery of a Bren Gun specifically is highly significant. It was not a personal rifle but a **section-support weapon**, indicating the level of equipment eventually issued to the Home Guard.

- **Designation:** Bren Mk1. (Named after Brno, Czechoslovakia, where the design originated, and Enfield, UK, where it was manufactured).
- **Calibre:** .303 British (The standard British rifle and machine gun cartridge of the era).
- **Operation:** Gas-operated, air-cooled, magazine-fed light machine gun.
- **Magazine:** Distinctive curved top-mounted box magazine holding **30 rounds**. (It was typically loaded with 28-29 rounds for reliable feeding).
- **Rate of Fire:** ~ 500 rounds per minute (cyclic).
- **Effective Range:** ~ 600 yards (approx. 550 metres) against area targets.

- **Crew:** Ideally a two-man team—a gunner and a loader who carried extra magazines and spotted targets.
- **Role:** To provide suppressing fire for the infantry section. Its accuracy and reliability made it the backbone of British and Commonwealth infantry squads.

Why This Fits the Mynydd y Garreg Home Guard:

1. **Standard Issue:** By mid-war, Home Guard battalions were issued Bren guns to give them credible defensive firepower. The 6th Carmarthenshire Battalion would have had an allocation, with likely one or two assigned to "F" Company covering Kidwelly and Mynydd y Garreg.
2. **Training Necessity:** A complex weapon like the Bren required regular training. The secluded quarry provided a perfect, safe location for the local Home Guard to practice loading, firing drills, and clearing jams without alarming the wider community.
3. **Defensive Logic:** In the event of an invasion, this Bren would have been deployed to a key position—likely one of the **pillboxes on the Kidwelly Stop Line**—to cover the canal or a road junction with lethal, sustained fire.

Conclusion

The "Mynydd Quarry Bren" is more than just a rusted gun. It is direct archaeological evidence of the Home Guard's presence and their level of preparedness. Dave Grower's discovery and donation have secured a powerful symbol of local defiance for posterity. It now stands in Mynydd y Garreg Hall as a permanent tribute to the volunteers who trained with it, ready to defend their corner of Carmarthenshire against an enemy that never came.

Collaboration with the GIs

The value of the Mynydd y Garreg Home Guard extended far beyond local defence. For the American GIs billeted at Broomhill House, these local volunteers became indispensable force multipliers. Their intimate, granular knowledge of the area's terrain, roads, and waterways proved invaluable, turning the Welsh countryside into a more effective training ground for the challenges of Normandy. This collaboration took the form of guided reconnaissance, joint field exercises, and shared security duties, creating a unique fusion of local expertise and Allied military might.

Royal Observer Corps – Kidwelly

They stare out from a photograph: a row of men in uniform, standing stiffly for the camera, expressions composed and purposeful. The image surfaces online decades later, a digital echo from a community page, simply captioned **"Royal Observer Corps – Kidwelly."**

Picture – With kind permission of Allison Williams

Names begin to surface, as they always do. But before that before identification and certainty they are simply men. Fathers, brothers, sons of the town. Their faces carry the familiar, solemn patience seen in so many photographs of those who served, not posing for glory, but answering a duty.

This service, however, was different.

They were not soldiers bound for foreign shores, but sentinels of the home front. This photograph almost certainly dates from the Second World War, when the Royal Observer Corps formed a vital human network across Britain. These were the men who stood on cliffs and hilltops, in wooden huts and exposed posts, binoculars raised to the sky. Their enemy was not an army advancing across fields, but the distant drone of engines tiny specks that grew into the dark silhouettes of bombers.

When radar coverage failed or was incomplete, they became the human alternative: the eyes and ears of Fighter Command. Calm, disciplined voices carried over field telephones, reporting aircraft type, height, speed, and direction information that helped guide Spitfires and Hurricanes into the fight. From quiet Welsh hills, they played a direct role in the defence of Britain's skies.

Then the story deepens.

A comment beneath the photograph shifts the scene forward in time:
"So these are the guys underground in a field close to the Kidwelly bypass, ready to monitor nuclear blasts."

The uniforms may have remained, but the war had changed.

The threat moved from the visible to the unimaginable. Wooden observation posts gave way to a concealed concrete hatch, hidden in a hedgerow between the Co-op and the Trimaran turning *"still there,"* someone notes, *"just hidden by all the brambles."* A metal ladder descended fifteen feet into the earth. New observers, now part of the Cold War generation, were taught a practical first lesson: hold the sides of the ladder, not the rungs—because this was a field, and it would be muddy.

https://tinyurl.com/ROC-Bunker

The Royal Observer Corps evolved into the UK Warning and Monitoring Organisation. Their role was no longer to identify aircraft, but to survive a first strike and report what followed. From cramped underground bunkers, they would peer into a device called a **Ground Zero Indicator** a pinhole camera designed to capture the blinding flash of a nuclear detonation. They would measure blast waves, monitor radiation with Geiger counters, and relay the first fragmented signals of catastrophe up the chain of command.

It is difficult to overstate the humility and the courage of this duty.

The men in the photograph faced the immediate danger of the air war. Those who followed trained to face a theoretical, cosmic violence, armed with clipboards, hand-cranked telephones, and an unshakeable sense of responsibility. They were local volunteers: shopkeepers, farmers, teachers. Ordinary people who accepted that they might be among the first to know—and report—the worst thing imaginable.

Looking back at the photograph now, the faces seem to hold both histories. They are the watchful eyes of the Battle of Britain, and the forebears of the silent Cold War sentinels beneath the fields of Kidwelly. Through them, this quiet town—dominated by its ancient castle—connects directly to the vast and terrifying narratives of the twentieth century.

Their post was not a castle wall, but a grass-covered hatch.
Their weapon was not a rifle or a bow, but calibrated instruments and a clear line to headquarters.

Today, traffic flows along the bypass where they once watched and listened. The field above the bunker lies quiet, the brambles steadily doing their work of forgetting. But the photograph interrupts that silence. It asks us to remember—not only the men, but the weight of the watch they kept. A watch over Kidwelly. Over Wales. Over Britain itself.

They were our observers.

And in their steady, ordinary faces, we see the extraordinary readiness of a community standing between peace and the unthinkable.

Royal Observer Corps (Post 62) – Kidwelly (1948)

Photo Identification (as currently known)

Back Row (left to right):

- Ernie Lowe
- Tommy Eldred
- Arthur Jones
- Ken Hobden
- Willie John
- Ray Anstee
- Gwyn Charles
- (partially unidentified)
- Tom Nicholas (not yet confirmed)

Front Row (left to right):

- Officer (name unconfirmed)
- Richie Worboy
- Gerald Jones
- Officer (name unconfirmed)

The importance of the Kidwelly post lay not only in who served there, but in where it stood and what it became. From a simple wartime observation hut scanning the skies for enemy aircraft, the site evolved in 1960 into a hardened underground monitoring post, built to face the nuclear age.

Designated a **Master Post**, Kidwelly was more than an outpost; it was a hub, equipped with radio communications to coordinate and relay information from surrounding satellite posts across the area.

Today, that bunker still survives. Perched above the cutting of the **A484 Kidwelly by-pass**, it is easy to pass without knowing it is there, screened by brambles and time. The new road came close to cutting through the site but narrowly missed it, leaving the post stranded above the carriageway, hidden yet intact.

An overgrown rectangular compound marks the surface remains, where the ventilation shaft capped with its distinctive metal dome, identifying it as a Master Post—and the access shaft still stand. The access hatch has been rebuilt and enlarged, and although the paint flakes and the structure shows its age, the site endures.

Below ground, the bunker tells its own quiet story. Damp now, with water on the floor, it nevertheless retains much of its original fittings: cupboards, tables, shelves, seating, battery boxes and switching equipment, cluster maps, logs, notices, wiring, and communications cabling.

Even everyday items remain kitchen sink and draining board, kettle, teapot, utensils, cleaning materials alongside the instruments of Cold War duty, including the **Bomb Power Indicator mount**.

It is disordered, time-worn, and unmistakably human. Opened in 1960 and finally closed in 1991, the post appears almost frozen at the moment it was left behind.

The photograph, then, does not depict an isolated group of volunteers. It captures the human presence behind a strategically vital site one that bridged two eras of existential threat.

From the roar of bombers over Wales to the silent anticipation of the Cold War, the men of the Royal Observer Corps at Kidwelly stood ready to watch, to measure, and to report.

The bunker may now lie dormant, but their watch has not vanished. It endures in memory, in landscape, and in images like this asking us to look again at the ordinary faces of those who once stood between their community and the unimaginable.

https://tinyurl.com/Kidwelly-Royal-Observer-1948

Broomhill House

The arrival of the American forces brought a unique dynamic to Kidwelly. The town, which had been relatively untouched by the direct impacts of the war, suddenly found itself at the heart of a crucial military effort. The presence of the soldiers was a constant reminder of the impending invasion and the critical role that Kidwelly would play in its success.

The preparations in Kidwelly were comprehensive and intense. Soldiers engaged in rigorous physical training, honing their skills in marksmanship, tactics, and amphibious operations.

The surrounding countryside, with its diverse terrain,
provided an ideal setting for the kind of exercises that would be crucial during the landings in Normandy. Training also included the use of mock-ups and simulations. to prepare troops for the specific challenges they would face on the beaches of France.

Beyond the physical preparations, the presence of American forces in Kidwelly also required extensive logistical support. Supplies had to be stored and transported, equipment maintained, and communication lines established. The local population played a crucial role in supporting these efforts, often interacting with the soldiers, and providing hospitality.

The bond between the American troops and the people of Kidwelly grew strong, creating a sense of camaraderie and mutual respect. Despite the secrecy surrounding the specifics of Operation Overlord, the townspeople were aware that something monumental was underway.

The increased military activity, combined with the presence of high-ranking officers and the visible build-up of men and material, left little doubt that a significant operation was imminent.

On the eve of D-Day, the tension in Kidwelly was palpable. Soldiers wrote letters home, polished their gear, and steeled themselves for the daunting task ahead. The local community, too, felt the weight of the moment, understanding that the success of the invasion could hinge on the readiness of the troops that had been among them.

As the American forces departed Kidwelly for the south coast of England and then across the English Channel to Normandy, the town's role in the grander scheme of the war became clear.

The rigorous training and preparation conducted in Kidwelly contributed to the success of the D-Day landings, a pivotal moment in the fight against Nazi tyranny. Today, as we reflect on the bravery and sacrifice of those who stormed the beaches of Normandy, we also remember the critical contributions of places like Kidwelly. The town's support and the training it facilitated were integral to the success of Operation Overlord.

The legacy of this period remains a proud part of Kidwelly's history, a testament to the town's role in one of the most significant military campaigns of the 20th century.

* Local Intelligence: The men of Mynydd y Garreg acted as guides and liaisons, helping the GIs familiarise themselves with the surrounding roads, terrain, and obstacles—sharpening the troops' field training before they faced the unfamiliar landscape of France.

* Joint Exercises: It is highly likely the Home Guard participated in joint exercises with the GIs, often acting as 'enemy' forces for mock ambushes and defence scenarios. This boosted morale and improved interoperability, with the Americans providing access to more advanced equipment and training methods.

* Security and Support: The Home Guard also assisted in managing the civilian impact of large troop movements, guarding American camps, and aiding local policing efforts.

Family Memories of the Mynydd y Garreg Home Guard

Shared by Angela Morgan, based on her father's memories (b. 1930, turning 95 next Monday)

Angela's father recalled several men who served in the Mynydd y Garreg Home Guard during the war:

- **William David Gravelle**, known locally as *William Davy*, a coal man from 4 Newtown.
- **Walter Owen**, known as *Watt Llyn Fach* (after the place he was born), a later of Mount Pleasant who worked for the Council.
- https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/230481933/walter-thomas-owen
- **David John** (surname unknown), a retired officer from *Pen-y-back Farm*, who acted as their main trainer.

He remembered that when his brother **John** came home on leave from the regular army, the Home Guard would ask him to help train them.

Training took place near a small bridge opposite where Richard Bebb now lives, cutting through what is today, Ray Gravelle Road. That path led to the quarry, where they practiced firing.

Angela's father recalled that **before rifles were issued, the men carried pitchforks, brushes, or whatever they had to hand** to simulate weapons during drill. It was a vivid reminder of the resourcefulness and determination of ordinary volunteers in those uncertain times.

The men would march down from the mountain, past the area where the hall now stands (then just a field), across to Penygroes, and up to the Prince of Wales pub. He didn't think they went as far as Four Roads.

In the early days, before proper equipment arrived, they trained with **brushes, brush legs, and pitchforks** — anything they could use to simulate rifles.

He doesn't recall the Home Guard hut, but he does remember a **brick building** up on the mountain track, which may have served as a base.

Angela's mother also shared a memory: she lived briefly at **Broomhill House** after the American GIs had left. From a photo, she was able to point out the rooms they had occupied the top right front windows and around to the right.

Family Memories: Friendships Made Out of Adversity

In 1939, **Fay Morgan** moved with her family to the Isle of Man, where her father was serving in the army. He was assigned to guard "enemy aliens" at the **Sefton Internment Camp** on Douglas promenade. The camp housed German and Austrian men, later joined by Italians and Finns — a total of 307 internees. Fay remembered

the promenade being sectioned off with barriers and soldiers on guard, the internees sitting outside or dangling their feet from the upper windows as they read.

One day, while Fay's mother had taken her and her siblings to the beach, two internees attempted to escape down the sands. Warning shots were fired, and they were swiftly returned to the hotels. Despite the seriousness of the times, Fay remembered her childhood years on the Isle of Man fondly.

The family returned to **Kidwelly in 1944/45**, where they were temporarily housed at **Broomhill** along with ten other families. Broomhill had earlier been used to billet American troops, and on VE Day the children celebrated with a party in one of the huts left behind. Fay's first job, at just 14, was making camouflage nets in a building next to HSBC in Llanelli.

Her husband, **Vernon Morgan**, born and raised in Mynydd y Garreg, carried his own vivid wartime memories. Around 1940/41, he and his friends discovered a long length of silk material in a field near the limekiln. They hauled it back to Mynydd y Garreg School, where it was identified as a target used by trainee Spitfire pilots — trailed behind aircraft for live-fire practice. A teacher contacted the RAF at Pembrey, and an officer came to collect it, expressing his gratitude.

At the same time, four young brothers were evacuated from London to the area. Two stayed at Four Roads, one on Meinciau Road, and another — **Pat Driscoll** — lodged with two elderly sisters at The Croft in Mynydd y Garreg. Pat, however, preferred the lively company of Vernon and his many siblings, often sneaking into their farmhouse until he was eventually allowed to move in. At 15, Pat had to return home to work, but he remained close to the family, visiting often. He and his relatives attended Vernon's mother's funeral and his sister's wedding. More recently, contact has even been made with Pat's grandson, continuing the bond across generations.

Linking to the Home Guard

These recollections echo the spirit of the Home Guard. Fay's memories of soldiers guarding internees, Vernon's story of improvised vigilance, and the children's celebrations at Broomhill all reflect the same resilience shown by the volunteers of Mynydd y Garreg.

Like the Home Guard, families improvised with what they had — pitchforks, brushes, or even silk targets stumbled upon in fields — and stood watch over their communities in uncertain times. The friendships forged with evacuees, such as Pat Driscoll, remind us that wartime service was not only about defence, but also about compassion and solidarity.

Together, these memories remind us that the spirit of the Home Guard was not only found in uniformed patrols, but in the everyday resilience of families and communities. The Bren Mk1 now displayed in Mynydd y Garreg Hall stands as a symbol of that spirit: ordinary people, extraordinary duty, and a legacy of courage that endures.

The Departure and Legacy

On the eve of D-Day, the tension in Kidwelly was palpable. The soldiers departed for the ports of Southern England, leaving behind a community that understood the immensity of the task ahead. The rigorous training and preparation conducted in the fields, roads, and quarries around Kidwelly contributed directly to the combat readiness of the troops who stormed the beaches of Normandy.

Today, as we commemorate the bravery and sacrifice of D-Day, we also honour the critical and often overlooked contributions of places like Kidwelly and its dedicated Home Guard, whose support and local expertise were integral to the ultimate success of Operation Overlord. The legacy of the Mynydd y Garreg Home Guard Unit transcends mere military history; it is a profound testament to local duty.

These were our fathers, grandfathers, and neighbours' men who guarded the bridges, drilled in the quarry, and shared their unparalleled knowledge of the land with the American GIs at Broomhill House. They were the ultimate expression of community resilience. As we walk our lanes and view the hills around us, let us always remember that our quiet corner of Wales was once a crucial staging post for freedom, and the contribution of the Mynydd y Garreg volunteers remains an indelible, proud chapter in the history of our village.

RAF Pembrey 1937-1957

Life and Times of RAF Pembrey

Since the outbreak of the Second World War, RAF Pembrey has played a pivotal role in Britain's aviation history, with a legacy marked by both combat and training excellence.

Construction of the airfield began in 1937, and by September 1939, it became home to No. 2 Air Armament School—the first unit stationed at Pembrey.

By June 1940, amid Britain's "finest hour," Fighter Command utilized Pembrey as a strategic base for numerous fighter squadrons engaged in the Battle of Britain. The airfield earned the distinction of being a Battle of Britain Airfield, with an estimated 25 confirmed enemy aircraft shot down by fighters operating from Pembrey during the war.

From 1941 to 1945, the RAF Air Gunnery School was stationed at Pembrey, training aircrews in vital aerial combat skills. As the war ended, the airfield transitioned into a holding unit for battle-weary aircrews awaiting demobilization.

Fighter Command resumed control in 1946, maintaining operations until the airfield's final closure on 13th July 1957—aside from a brief period between 1949 and 1952, when the RAF Regiment was based there.

Today, RAF Pembrey's legacy endures as a reminder of its invaluable contributions to British aviation history.

A Remarkable Capture: The Story of Oberleutnant Arnim Faber

Among the many noteworthy incidents at RAF Pembrey, one of the most extraordinary occurred on **23rd June 1942**, when Oberleutnant **Arnim Faber**, Adjutant of III. Gruppe, Jagdgeschwader 2 (JG2), unwittingly delivered the Royal Air Force an intelligence windfall.

After engaging **Spitfires** over the south coast of Britain, Faber, disoriented in the heat of battle, mistook the **Bristol Channel** for the **English Channel**. Running low on fuel and believing he was safely over occupied France, he made a fateful decision—he landed his aircraft at **RAF Pembrey**, convinced it was a Luftwaffe airfield.

As his **Focke-Wulf Fw 190A** rolled to a stop, the Pembrey Duty Pilot, **Sergeant Jeffreys**, wasted no time. Armed only with a **Very pistol**, he sprinted from the control tower, leapt onto the wing of the taxiing aircraft, and single-handedly took the bewildered German pilot into custody.

The significance of Faber's mistake was immediately apparent. The **Fw 190A** was the Luftwaffe's most advanced fighter at the time, and until that moment, the RAF had only seen it in action over France—never up close. The fully intact aircraft was a **priceless** prize.

Overcome with despair at inadvertently handing his enemy such an asset, Faber later attempted **suicide**. However, the damage was done. Fighter Command quickly dispatched pilots to **photograph and examine** the aircraft before it was flown to the **Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough** for intensive study.

The RAF finally had an **Fw 190**, a turning point in their efforts to counter one of the Luftwaffe's most formidable fighters.

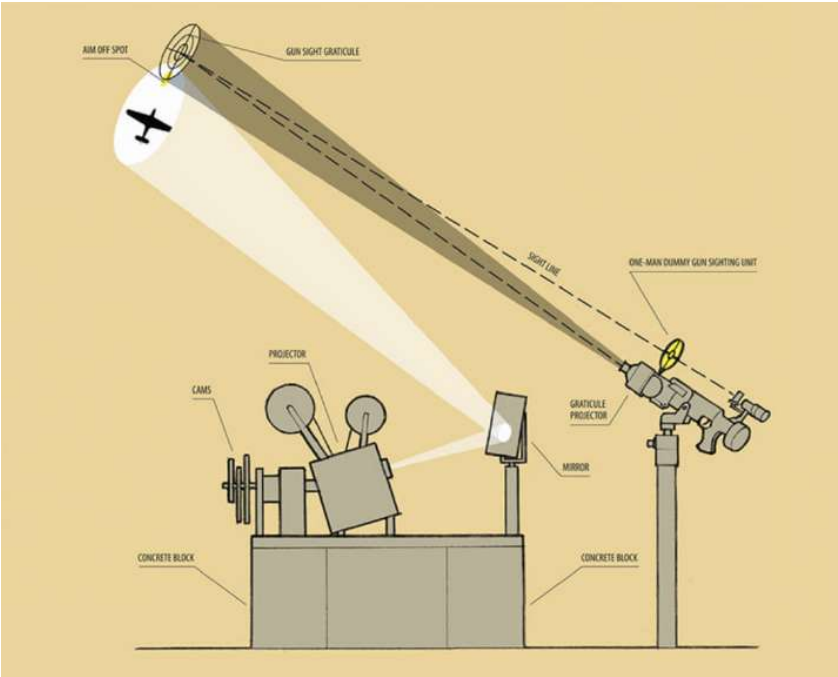
The Dome Trainer: Innovative Gunnery Training at RAF Pembrey

At RAF Pembrey, training methods evolved to prepare aircrews and anti-aircraft gunners for the realities of aerial combat. One particularly innovative tool was the **Dome Trainer**, a unique simulation system designed to train **anti-aircraft gunners** in target tracking and accuracy.

Inside a specially designed **dome**, a **film projector** displayed moving images of enemy aircraft on the curved interior surface, creating a realistic, immersive training environment. Gunners would fire a **simulated weapon**, which projected a **point of light** onto the screen to indicate where their bullets would have struck in a real engagement. This setup allowed instructors to assess aim, reaction times, and accuracy without the need for live ammunition.

The Dome Trainer provided a **safe, cost-effective, and highly effective** method of refining gunnery skills, ensuring that trainees could engage fast-moving aerial targets with greater precision when deployed in combat.

Equipment Configeration



RAF Pembrey Battle Headquarters: A Command Centre of Defense

Located just outside the modern **Pembrey motor racing circuit**, the **RAF Pembrey Battle Headquarters** served as the nerve centre for the airfield's defence during the Second World War. This reinforced **bunker**, strategically positioned on **high ground**, provided a commanding view of the entire airfield, allowing officers to coordinate responses to enemy attacks efficiently.

During the war, the headquarters played a crucial role in directing **air raid defenses**, ensuring that RAF Pembrey remained operational despite the frequent threats posed by the **Luftwaffe**. From this vantage point, commanders could oversee fighter operations, monitor incoming enemy aircraft, and relay critical instructions to ground and air personnel.

While today the bunker is surrounded by **trees planted long after the war**, its presence remains a tangible link to Pembrey's wartime legacy—standing as a silent sentinel over what was once a vital **Battle of Britain fighter base**.

Barber, Shoemaker & Tailors Shop: Essential Services at RAF Pembrey

Beyond its role as a strategic airbase, **RAF Pembrey** also catered to the everyday needs of its personnel. Among its essential facilities were the **Barber, Shoemaker, and Tailors Shop**, which provided vital services to keep airmen well-groomed and properly outfitted.

The **barber** ensured that servicemen maintained the short, regulation haircuts required by the RAF, while the **shoemaker** repaired worn-out boots—crucial for those spending long hours on the airfield. The **tailor** was responsible for altering and repairing uniforms, ensuring that aircrew and ground staff remained smartly dressed and presentable.

These services, though often overlooked, played an important role in maintaining **morale and discipline** at RAF Pembrey, allowing personnel to focus on their demanding duties while upholding the standards of military life.

Latrine and Shower Block: Everyday Life at RAF Pembrey

Amid the high-stakes operations at **RAF Pembrey**, the **Latrine and Shower Block** provided essential sanitation and hygiene facilities for aircrew and ground personnel. These facilities were a crucial part of daily life, ensuring cleanliness and basic comfort in an otherwise demanding military environment.

The **latrines** were simple but functional, designed to accommodate the large numbers of personnel stationed at the airfield. The **shower block** allowed servicemen to freshen up after long hours on duty, particularly for mechanics and aircrew working in harsh conditions.

Maintaining hygiene was vital not only for **health and well-being** but also for **discipline and morale**. Despite the challenges of wartime operations, RAF Pembrey's infrastructure ensured that those stationed there could carry out their duties with a sense of normalcy and routine.

Bomb Store: Safe Storage with Blast Protection

The **Bomb Store** at **RAF Pembrey** was a vital facility designed to securely house the airfield's stock of **bombs and munitions**. Given the inherent dangers of storing high explosives, the structure was carefully engineered with **triangular blast walls** to **minimize damage** in the event of an accidental detonation.

These reinforced walls were strategically positioned to **direct the force of an explosion upward and outward in only two directions**, rather than allowing the blast to radiate in all directions. This design significantly **reduced the risk** of secondary explosions and protected surrounding personnel, equipment, and buildings.

Such **blast-resistant storage methods** were a critical feature of wartime airfields, ensuring that RAF Pembrey's bombing operations could be conducted with both **efficiency and safety**.

Double Gas Decontamination Centre: Prepared but Never Used

The **Double Gas Decontamination Centre** at **RAF Pembrey** was a critical facility designed to protect airmen and women from the devastating effects of chemical warfare. In the event of a gas attack, personnel would enter the building through the **front doors** and proceed to specially designated rooms where they would **remove all clothing** before undergoing a **decontamination process**.

First, they would **shower thoroughly**, and if any traces of the chemical agent remained, they would be required to wash in a **bleach solution** to neutralise it. Once decontaminated, **wounds could be treated** on a **first-aid basis**.

To ensure complete isolation from contaminated air, the **building was sealed from the outside atmosphere**. It was equipped with **air conditioning** to maintain **higher internal air pressure**, preventing toxic gases from seeping inside. A **heating plant** provided ample **hot water** for the decontamination process, ensuring that those affected could be treated efficiently.

Although the RAF took extensive precautions to safeguard personnel, **gas warfare was never used during WWII**. As a result, these decontamination centres were repurposed as **storage facilities for gas masks and other non-essential equipment**, though they were maintained in **pristine condition throughout the war**, ready for immediate use if needed.

After the war, the buildings found a new purpose, serving as **gas attack training facilities**, ensuring that future generations of airmen remained prepared for chemical threats.

Squash Court, Tennis Court, and Leisure at RAF Pembrey

RAF Pembrey was not just a place of intense military activity but also one where airmen and women could enjoy moments of respite during their off-duty hours. On the airfield, the **squash court** stood on the left, providing a venue for exercise and competition, while the **tennis court** on the right offered another space for friendly rivalry and recreation.

In the **1950s**, **young student pilots** stationed at Pembrey made the most of their downtime. On sunny days, they would remove the nets from the tennis court and head to the nearby beach to try their luck fishing for **dabs** or whatever else they could catch. Their **catch of the day** would then be taken back to the **Officers' Mess**, where one of the **RAF cooks** would prepare the fresh fish for their meal, either immediately or saved for a later time.

Even some of the **senior instructor pilots** found time to indulge in outdoor activities. **Early morning mushrooming** became a popular pastime, with instructors heading to the local woods to forage for mushrooms. In those days, the **RAF shops** had limited offerings, and even **junior officers** could often only afford to buy the **mushroom stalks**. The more **senior men** would treat themselves to the prized **mushroom heads**—a rare indulgence that made for a special treat.

These small but cherished activities offered a welcome break from the pressures of military life, fostering camaraderie and connection among both junior and senior officers during their time at RAF Pembrey.

WAAF Institute: A Hub of Activity and Memory at RAF Pembrey

The **WAAF Institute** at RAF Pembrey served as an important hub for the **Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF)** personnel stationed at the airfield during World War II. The tower chimney, a prominent feature of the building, housed the **boiler room**, which provided vital heating to multiple structures, including buildings and huts across the base, ensuring warmth for the airmen and women in what could be harsh conditions.

Bob McHope commented he had the privilege of meeting and speaking with a **former WAAF** in **2002**, who attended our reunion as our **Guest of Honour**. She had worked at RAF Pembrey as a **sparkplug cleaner and tester**, an essential role in the maintenance of the airfield's aircraft. Beyond her technical duties, she was also a talented musician and played the **trumpet in the WAAF camp band**, which provided entertainment for the personnel during their downtime.

Over the years, we shared many conversations about her time in **Wales**, reminiscing about the fun and camaraderie she and her friends had while stationed at RAF Pembrey. It was clear that despite the pressures of wartime service, the women found joy in their friendships and leisure activities. She lived a long and full life, passing away at the age of **101**, having enjoyed a **remarkable innings**.

Interestingly, although the **WAAF Institute** was the main recreation building, the women were **billeted in West Camp**, located on the other side of the airfield. This arrangement added an extra layer of separation from the rest of the base, but it didn't diminish the strong sense of community the WAAF formed during their time at Pembrey. Their memories, laughter, and contributions to RAF Pembrey remain an integral part of the airfield's history.

Boiler Room: The Heart of RAF Pembrey's Heating System

The **Boiler Room** at **RAF Pembrey** played a critical role in ensuring the comfort and functionality of the airfield during the challenging wartime years. Located within the **WAAF Institute** building, the tower chimney housed the **boiler** that provided essential heating to multiple buildings, including the **huts, recreation areas**, and other key structures across the airfield.

In the cold and damp conditions often found in Wales, the Boiler Room was vital in maintaining a liveable environment for both the men and women stationed there. It not only kept the living spaces warm but also helped maintain the overall operational readiness of the airfield, ensuring that personnel could focus on their duties without being hindered by the elements.

Although often overlooked in wartime narratives, the Boiler Room was one of those essential behind-the-scenes components that helped keep the airfield running smoothly, contributing to both morale and efficiency.

Bulk Petrol Installation Type A1: Fueling RAF Pembrey's Operations

The **Bulk Petrol Installation Type A1** at **RAF Pembrey** was an essential facility designed to ensure a constant and reliable supply of fuel for aircraft, vehicles, and equipment. In the context of wartime operations, having a well-established and secure fuel supply was crucial to maintaining the **airfield's operational readiness**.

This facility was equipped to store large quantities of **aviation fuel** in **bulk tanks**, providing the necessary resources for the airfield's fleet of fighters and bombers. Given the strategic importance of RAF Pembrey, the installation was built to **handle fuel safely and efficiently**, with strict safety protocols in place to mitigate the risks associated with handling large amounts of flammable liquids.

The **Type A1** configuration would have included **underground tanks** or **above-ground storage** with robust protection against leaks or accidents. Its placement and design were intended to support the airfield's activities, ensuring that **aircraft could be refuelled quickly** and that fuel for other operational needs was always readily available.

As RAF Pembrey's aviation and ground operations depended on a steady fuel supply, the **Bulk Petrol Installation Type A1** played a critical, albeit often unseen, role in the **airfield's wartime functions**.

Fuel Compound: Essential for Heating RAF Pembrey

The Fuel Compound at RAF Pembrey played a crucial role in maintaining warmth and providing heat for the camp's numerous buildings during the cold months. It stored coal and coke, which were used to fuel the pot-bellied stoves and cookers found in mess halls, institutes, dining rooms, and other key areas around the airfield.

As RAF Pembrey operated in cold, damp conditions, particularly in the winter, reliable heating was vital for both the comfort and wellbeing of personnel. The coal and coke supplied by the Fuel Compound helped ensure that airmen and women could work, eat, and rest in warmth, even as they carried out demanding duties across the airfield.

This humble yet essential facility was at the heart of the camp's day-to-day operations, ensuring the smooth running of both cooking and heating systems while maintaining morale and comfort for everyone stationed at RAF Pembrey.

Main Gate: A Personal Memory of RAF Pembrey The

Main Gate at RAF Pembrey holds not just historical significance, but personal memories for those who lived or visited the airfield.

Back then, the area was a lot cleaner, and the airfield had a few more buildings, giving it a different character compared to later years.

The layout of the area around the **Main Gate** was well-organized. On the **right** of the **oval path**, you would find the **SHQ (Station Headquarters)**, the central hub of administrative operations for the airfield. On the **left**, stood the **Guardroom**, where security personnel would monitor and manage access to the base. In the **centre** of the grassy area stood a **flagpole**, a symbol of pride and authority, which often displayed the RAF's distinctive flag, standing tall amidst the greenery.

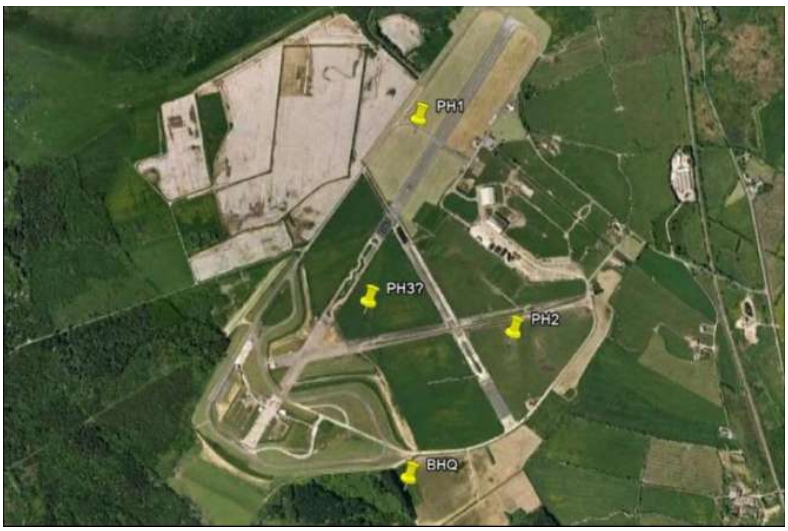
These memories evoke a time when RAF Pembrey was not only an operational military base but a community where families, like his, could enjoy the beauty of the surroundings and the simplicity of life on a working airfield.

Aerial View of RAF Pembrey as it is Today

An aerial view of RAF Pembrey, showcasing its current transformation. Once a bustling military airfield, it now hosts several facilities, including Pembrey Airport, Pembrey Country Park, and a motor racing circuit. The nearby Pembrey Sands also serves as an air weapons range, while the surrounding landscape reflects the historical and present-day usage of the site.

Local Defence Positions Shown on the Map

The map highlights the **local defence positions** at RAF Pembrey during its operational years. These positions were strategically placed around the airfield to protect against enemy attacks, particularly during World War II.



They included **anti-aircraft batteries**, **observation posts**, and other defensive installations designed to safeguard the airfield and its personnel. The positions reflect the importance of RAF Pembrey in the broader context of Britain's air defence network during the war.

Airfield View, Mid to Late 1980s

This aerial view of RAF Pembrey from the mid to late 1980s shows the airfield after the racetrack had been laid out and surfaced. At this stage, the track was clearly defined, but the pit lane and start area had not yet been constructed.

The image captures the early stages of transformation, where the airfield, once a military hub, began to evolve into a venue for motorsport events, laying the groundwork for the Pembrey Circuit as we know it today.

Last Spitfire to leave RAF Pembrey

Group Captain A.V.R. "Sandy" Johnstone's Spitfire Vb

The painting depicts **Group Captain A.V.R. "Sandy" Johnstone's Spitfire Vb, BL450**. As **Officer Commanding (OC) RAF Fairwood Common** from **October 1943 to May 1944**, Sandy flew this aircraft, which was part of the station flight until it was **Struck Off Charge (SOC) in July 1945**.

Spitfire **XVI aircraft** continued operating from **RAF Pembrey** until **August 1951**, marking the final chapter of Spitfire operations at the airfield.

Special thanks to RAF Photographer Ron Bevan for sharing this photo.

Painting by Ieuan Layton-Matthews GAvA

A depiction of what was likely the **last open day at RAF Pembrey** before flying operations ceased at the **Carmarthenshire airfield in July 1957**.

Scenes from the Past

Spitfire Mk I GR-A Landing Accident – RAF Pembrey, 22 July 1940

Ground crew attend to **Spitfire Mk I GR-A** following a **landing accident at RAF Pembrey** on **22 July 1940**. The aircraft, piloted by **Sergeant Ronald H. "Ronnie" Fokes**, had just returned from a **night sortie** when the **port undercarriage leg collapsed upon landing**.

Despite the mishap, Sgt. Fokes emerged unharmed, and the incident became a testament to both the resilience of the Spitfire and the dedication of RAF ground crews in keeping these legendary fighters operational during wartime.

A day at the Airfield

RAF Pembrey in World War II: Units and Their Roles

Timeline of RAF Pembrey (1939–1945)

1939–1940: Establishment and Early Operations

- RAF Pembrey was established as a fighter station in 1939, shortly after the outbreak of World War II.
- Initially, it functioned as a training base and satellite station, supporting operational squadrons and providing air defence for the region.
- It played a key role in coastal patrols and the protection of shipping routes in the Bristol Channel.

1941–1942: Fighter Command and Operational Squadrons

- In 1941, RAF Pembrey came under the control of Fighter Command and became an active fighter station.
- The airfield hosted squadrons equipped with **Supermarine Spitfires** and **Hawker Hurricanes**, providing air cover and patrolling the Welsh coastline.
- Pembrey also served as a forward operating base for squadrons conducting offensive sweeps over the English Channel and occupied France.

1943: Role Expansion and Training

RAF Pembrey expanded its role to include training, becoming home to **No. 53 Operational Training Unit (OTU)**.

- The OTU specialized in advanced fighter tactics and ground-attack training, primarily using **Hawker Hurricanes**.
- The airfield also supported **air-sea rescue operations** and **anti-submarine patrols**, leveraging its strategic coastal location.

1944: Support for D-Day and Allied Invasions

- As the Allies prepared for **Operation Overlord (D-Day)**, Pembrey hosted fighter and reconnaissance squadrons.
- It provided air cover for convoys and took part in **anti-submarine operations** in the **Bristol Channel** and **Western Approaches**.
- The airfield was also crucial for training and preparing aircrew for deployment to the European front.

1945: Transition to Post-War Operations

- As World War II neared its end, RAF Pembrey gradually shifted to peacetime roles.
- The airfield continued its training programs, though combat operations were scaled back.
- It became home to **No. 595 Squadron**, which specialized in **target towing** for anti-aircraft training.

Post-War RAF Pembrey

Following the war, RAF Pembrey's operational role declined, and it was eventually repurposed for military and civilian uses. It later served as a **weapons range** and **training facility**, maintaining its historical significance beyond the wartime years.

RAF Pembrey's wartime contributions were extensive, evolving from defensive air patrols to offensive operations and advanced training, making it a vital part of Britain's air defense network during World War II.

Role During World War II

During the war, RAF Pembrey served primarily as a Fighter Command base, with a variety of fighter squadrons stationed there over the course of the conflict. These squadrons were tasked with defending the South Wales coast and intercepting enemy aircraft that attempted to bomb key industrial targets in the region.

One of the most significant squadrons to be based at RAF Pembrey was No. 92 Squadron, which flew the iconic Supermarine Spitfire. The Spitfire's speed and

agility made it the ideal aircraft for intercepting enemy bombers and engaging Luftwaffe fighters. RAF Pembrey's Spitfires were frequently scrambled to protect cities like Swansea and Cardiff, which were targets due to their industrial importance.

Transition to Fighter Command – The Battle of Britain

With the collapse of France in 1940 and the urgent need to bolster Britain's air defences against the Luftwaffe, RAF Pembrey was transferred on 20 June 1940 to No. 10 Group RAF

of Fighter Command. Its relatively quiet location in South Wales made it an ideal resting and re-equipping station for frontline squadrons after intense operations over southern England.

Several fighter units rotated through Pembrey during the height of the Battle of Britain:

- **No. 92 Squadron RAF**
  From 18 June 1940, No. 92 Squadron – operating Supermarine Spitfires – was based at Pembrey. Their presence provided a crucial defensive cover while allowing the unit's pilots to recuperate from the rigors of combat. The squadron later redeployed to RAF Biggin Hill on 9 September 1940 once operations intensified in the southeast.
- **No. 79 Squadron RAF**
  Shortly after, from 8 September 1940, No. 79 Squadron took up station at Pembrey. Their operations contributed to the overall air defence of the region, safeguarding convoys, and supporting anti-invasion efforts.

Formation of Polish Units and Further Fighter Operations

RAF Pembrey also played a role in the expansion of the Polish contribution to the Allied air effort:

- **No. 316 Polish Fighter Squadron**
  In early 1941, the airfield became the formation site for No. 316 Polish Fighter Squadron. This unit was part of the wider effort to integrate experienced Polish

pilots—many of whom had already seen combat in the 1939 campaign and the Battle of France—into RAF operations. Although No. 316 later moved to RAF Colerne, its brief stay at Pembrey highlights the airfield's role as a versatile platform for rapidly deploying new units.

- **No. 256 Squadron RAF**
  Between January and March 1941, No. 256 Squadron operated from RAF Pembrey. Their presence further underscores the airfield's importance as a staging and resting point for fighter units during a period when every available resource was critical to the defence of the British Isles.

Transition to a Gunnery and Flying Training School

As the intensity of the Battle of Britain waned and the air defence responsibilities in South Wales shifted to other airfields (notably RAF Fairwood Common and RAF Angle), RAF Pembrey was reallocated to training roles under RAF Flying Training Command. From mid-1941 onward, the airfield was transformed into an RAF Gunnery School. Here, pilots and aircrew were trained in ground attack and air-to-air gunnery techniques, with Spitfires serving as target aircraft for simulated enemy engagements. This training was vital not only for improving individual combat skills but also for enhancing the overall operational effectiveness of Fighter Command.

Legacy

RAF Pembrey's varied wartime career—transitioning from a training centre to a front-line fighter base and back to a specialized training facility—reflects the adaptability demanded by the war. The airfield's role in hosting both British and Polish units contributed significantly to the overall Allied air effort, particularly during the critical early years of the conflict. Its history remains a testament to the strategic importance of flexible airfield operations in wartime Britain.

Recalling RAF Pembrey's Past.

Acknowledgment

This account, originally recorded by Hugh Morgan Lewis, has been kindly shared by Michael V. Williams.

In mid-June 1940, as the Battle of France concluded with Germany's victory in mainland Europe, the Royal Air Force activated Pembrey as an operational airfield. It was designated a sector station for No. 10 Group. The first aircraft to arrive were Mk II Spitfires from 92 Squadron, a unit that had already seen significant action defending the evacuation at Dunkirk. The pilots were sent to Pembrey for rest in what was considered a quieter sector, though many found it frustrating to be stationed away from the escalating conflict over southern England.

92 Squadron was assigned patrol duties along the South Wales coastline and tasked with protecting convoys in the Bristol Channel, with their operations extending as far west as the Irish coast. They soon adapted to their new surroundings and frequently spent their evenings

at the Stepney Hotel. The hotel's landlord, William Maloney, attempted to lift their spirits by promising a free bottle of champagne for every enemy aircraft they shot down. According to Squadron Leader Stanford Tuck, the pilots initially dismissed the offer, doubting they would have many opportunities to claim a victory.

However, German aircraft soon began probing the Bristol Channel in search of convoys. On July 4th, 92 Squadron achieved its sole aerial victory while stationed at Pembrey, when a Spitfire intercepted and shot down a Ju88 bomber over Wiltshire. That same month, Stanford Tuck had an unfortunate encounter with another Ju88. While engaging the enemy aircraft, the bomber offloaded its bombs near St Donat's Castle before fleeing. Tragically, the falling bombs struck the boundary of an army camp, killing Private John King Spark—Tuck's own brother-in-law.

On September 9th, 92 Squadron received orders to relocate to Biggin Hill, where the Battle of Britain was reaching its climax. Tuck would go on to establish himself as one of Britain's most celebrated fighter aces.

By early 1941, Pembrey saw the arrival of detachments from two Boulton Paul Defiant squadrons. These turret-armed fighters were being repurposed for night-bomber interception. In August of that year, they were replaced with Bristol Beaufighters, and around the same time, No. 79 Squadron arrived with Hawker Hurricane IIbs. A few months later, on April 12th, 32 Squadron also deployed to Pembrey. Both Hurricane squadrons engaged German bombers before the responsibility for defending South Wales shifted to the newly established airfield at Fairwood Common in June 1941.

One of the most extraordinary incidents in Pembrey's history took place on the evening of June 23rd, 1942. During an aerial battle over Exeter, Oberleutnant Armin Faber, a Luftwaffe pilot flying a Focke-Wulf 190, mistakenly shot down a Spitfire before becoming disoriented. Running low on fuel and ammunition, he attempted to return to his base but inadvertently flew north instead of south. Mistaking the Bristol Channel for the English Channel, he spotted an airfield and landed—unaware that he had arrived at an RAF base. The ground crew at Pembrey swiftly took him into custody before he could sabotage his aircraft. The captured FW190 was transported to Farnborough for analysis, providing valuable intelligence that influenced the development of the Spitfire Mk 20.

Though Pembrey's frontline combat role diminished over time, the airfield remained instrumental in testing airborne depth charges—technology that played a crucial role in countering the U-boat threat in the Atlantic.

No. 256 Squadron RAF at RAF Pembrey

Formation and Early Role

No. 256 Squadron RAF was reformed on 23 November 1940 at RAF Catterick as a night-fighter unit, initially equipped with Boulton Paul Defiant aircraft. The squadron was part of the broader effort to counter the growing threat of German night raids on Britain, and its primary role was to intercept and destroy enemy bombers under the cover of darkness.

Deployment to RAF Pembrey

In January 1941, No. 256 Squadron was relocated to RAF Pembrey in Carmarthenshire, Wales. This move was part of a strategic redistribution of air defence assets to provide better coverage over southwestern Britain. At Pembrey, the squadron became operational in February 1941 and played a crucial role in defending the South Wales coastline and vital shipping lanes in the Bristol Channel.

RAF Pembrey served as an important outpost during this period, offering both a staging ground and a defensive hub. The airfield's location made it an ideal base for night-fighter operations, ensuring that enemy aircraft attempting to strike industrial and military targets in the west of England and Wales faced interception.

Combat Operations and Transition

Operating primarily with the Defiant, a turret-armed fighter designed for nocturnal engagements, No. 256 Squadron pilots engaged in defensive patrols against Luftwaffe bombers attempting to penetrate inland. However, the Defiant was already proving inadequate against more advanced enemy aircraft, leading to a gradual transition to the more effective Bristol Beaufighter. This twin-engine fighter offered greater firepower and superior radar capabilities, significantly improving interception success rates.

The squadron's presence at RAF Pembrey, though brief, underscored the station's role as a critical air defence facility. The experience gained in night-fighter operations at Pembrey provided essential tactical knowledge that would benefit the unit as it moved to other stations.

Relocation and Further Service

In March 1941, No. 256 Squadron moved to RAF Squires Gate near Blackpool to bolster the air defences of Liverpool and the Merseyside area, which were frequent targets of the Luftwaffe. The squadron continued its transition to the Beaufighter and later the de Havilland Mosquito, further enhancing its effectiveness in night-fighter roles.

Over the following years, No. 256 Squadron expanded its operational scope, conducting night defence, convoy escort missions, and intruder operations across multiple theatres, including the Mediterranean. Its adaptability and resilience allowed it to remain a formidable force until the end of the war.

Legacy at RAF Pembrey

Though their tenure at RAF Pembrey lasted only a few months, No. 256 Squadron's presence highlighted the airfield's importance during World War II. Pembrey provided a secure yet strategically vital location from which fighter units could launch operations to protect Britain's western airspace and shipping routes.

The squadron's time at Pembrey contributed to the broader effort to refine night-fighter tactics and proved instrumental in shaping future engagements. Today, the history of No. 256 Squadron's service at Pembrey remains a key chapter in the story of this important wartime airbase.

Notable Pilots of No. 256 Squadron RAF

No. 256 Squadron RAF, formed as a night-fighter unit during World War II, not only played a vital role in defending Britain's skies but also became home to several pilots whose courage and skill left an enduring mark on the history of aerial warfare. Among these, two names stand out: Air Commodore John Watson "Ian" Allan and Sergeant Lincoln John Ellmers.

Air Commodore John Watson "Ian" Allan

Air Commodore John Watson "Ian" Allan was one of No. 256 Squadron's most distinguished pilots, known for his exceptional skill in night-fighter operations. Born on 6 May 1918 in Cathcart, Scotland, Allan joined the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve in 1938. He initially flew Spitfires with No. 266 Squadron, where he gained valuable night-flying experience. This expertise led to his posting with No. 256 Squadron as a night-fighter pilot, where he operated the Boulton Paul Defiant in the challenging role of intercepting enemy bombers under the cover of darkness.

Although Allan was unsuccessful in claiming enemy aircraft while flying from the UK, his career took a decisive turn in July 1943 when he led a detachment of No. 256 Squadron to Malta. There, alongside his observer, Flight Lieutenant Harold James Davidson, he built an impressive combat record. Between 12 July and 31 August 1943, he was credited with destroying 14 enemy aircraft, an extraordinary achievement. His most notable engagements

included the night of 15/16 July, when he brought down five enemy planes, and further successful interceptions on 16/17 July and 25/26 July, where he accounted for two enemy aircraft each night. His outstanding performance during this period earned him the Distinguished Flying Cross, adding to his growing list of commendations.

Following his successful tour in Malta, Allan took a well-earned rest in September 1943 before joining No. 151 Squadron, where he conducted night ranger operations over Northern Europe. He later transferred to No. 29 Squadron and, in December 1944, assumed command of the unit. He remained with the squadron until the end of the war and beyond, demonstrating his leadership and tactical acumen.

Post-war, Allan continued to excel in his RAF career. He held various staff positions before taking command of the all-weather fighter wing at Coltishall in 1950. In 1953, he led a flight of Vampire NF Mk 10s during the Coronation Review flypast, further cementing his reputation. His subsequent assignments included a period at the Joint Warfare Establishment and several key positions at the Air Ministry. His final posting was as Commandant of The Officers and Aircrew Selection Centre at Biggin Hill.

Allan retired with the rank of Air Commodore, having built a remarkable career characterized by bravery, leadership, and an extraordinary combat record. He passed away on 9 July 1988, leaving behind a legacy that continues to inspire those in the field of military aviation.

Citation for the award of the Distinguished Flying Cross:

"Acting Squadron Leader John Watson ALLAN, D.S.O. (89617), Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, No. 256 Squadron.

As observer and pilot respectively, these officers have displayed rare skill in night operations. In two recent nights, they have destroyed 3 enemy aircraft, bringing their victories to 13, all of which have been obtained in July 1943. Their record is outstanding and worthy of the highest praise."

Sergeant Lincoln John Ellmers: A Tale of Valour and Tragedy

While many stories from No. 256 Squadron celebrate the triumphs of Allied airmen, some are marked by heart-breaking tragedy. Sergeant Lincoln John Ellmers, a fighter pilot from the Royal New Zealand Air Force who served with No. 256 Squadron, is remembered both for his exceptional skill and for the catastrophic circumstances of his final flight.

Ellmers, a 24-year-old pilot originally from Gisborne, New Zealand, had been flying with the Royal Air Force since the previous year after training in his homeland. He quickly qualified as a fighter pilot and was engaged in night-fighting operations—a role that demanded exceptional precision and composure under the cover of darkness.

On 27 August 1941, during a routine training operation over Blackpool, four Boulton Paul Defiants of No. 256 Squadron were conducting formation flying practice at about 2,000 feet. Simultaneously, three Blackburn Bothas from the General Reconnaissance School, based at Squires Gate, were flying nearby at a lower altitude of approximately 1,500 feet. In a fateful turn of events, the leader of the Defiant flight ordered a formation break. While the first two Defiants executed the manoeuvre without incident, the third aircraft failed to clear the formation properly and collided with one of the Bothas—specifically, the bomber bearing the serial L6509.

The collision was devastating. The impact cut the fuselage of the Botha in half, removing a motor and part of its wing. The damaged Botha plummeted and crashed into the booking hall of Blackpool Central Railway Station, where it exploded in flames. The explosion claimed the lives of the entire crew of the Botha—three men—as well as 14 civilians present in the station.

Tragically, the Defiant piloted by Sergeant Ellmers also suffered severe damage; it lost a wing in the collision and spiralled downwards. The aircraft crashed onto a house at 97 Reads Avenue, bursting into flames and demolishing the structure. Although two occupants of the house miraculously escaped injury, the incident proved fatal for those aboard the Defiant. The air gunner attempted to bail out, but his parachute failed to deploy in time, and his lifeless body was later seen on Regents Road. Sergeant Ellmers himself was found dead in the burned-out wreckage in the basement of the house.

The loss of Sergeant Lincoln John Ellmers serves as a stark reminder of the perils inherent in night-fighter operations. His life, though marked by promise and determination as he flew from New Zealand to the United Kingdom and earned his place among the brave pilots defending Britain's skies, was tragically cut short on that day over Blackpool. His sacrifice—and the tragic chain of events that led to the loss of additional aircrew and civilian lives—epitomizes the heavy price paid in the relentless fight against the enemy during World War II.

Ellmers' story endures as both a tribute to his personal valour and as a sombre account of the risks and sacrifices borne by the night-fighter pilots of No. 256 Squadron. Their legacy, forged in both moments of brilliant combat and devastating loss, remains an enduring part of the history of the Allied air effort.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/22095212/lincoln-john-ellmers

Echoes of History: Air Crashes From Pembrey Airfield"

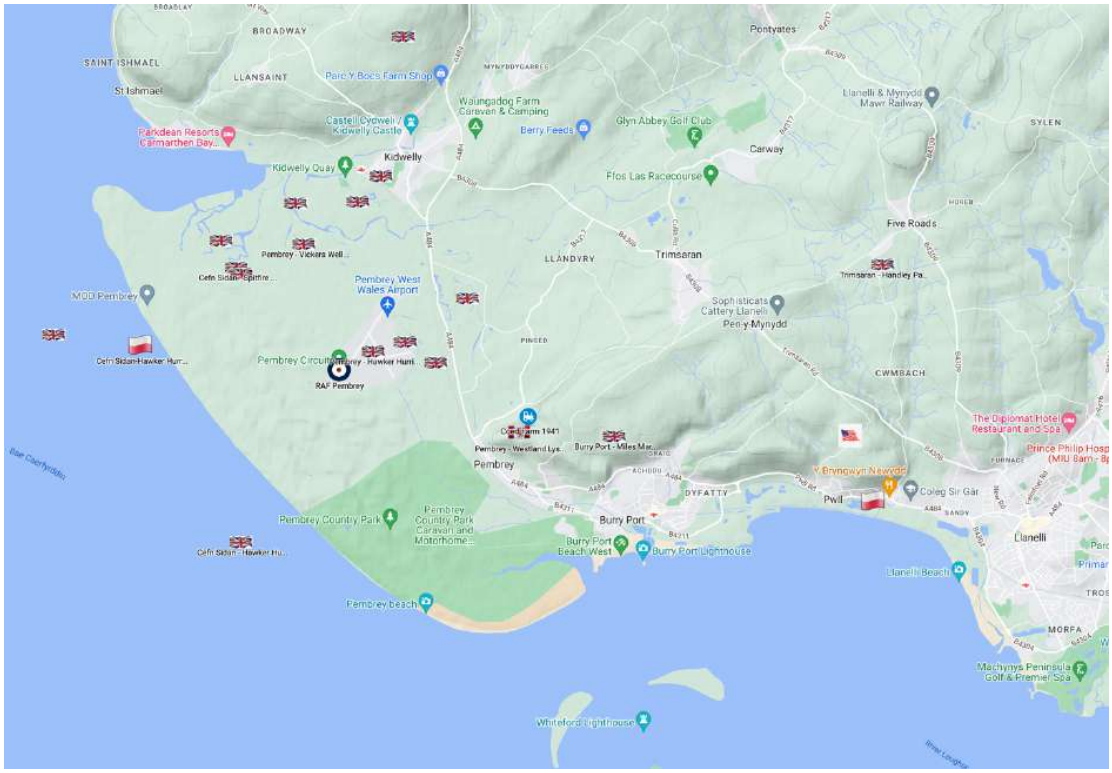
This article will focus on the untold stories of the airmen who tragically lost their lives during training operations at RAF Pembrey. Many of these individuals were not engaged in direct combat but played an essential role in the broader war effort. Their contributions were critical to shaping the future of the RAF, as the harsh realities of training accidents led to significant advancements in wartime aviation.

The incidents often occurred in the context of preparing pilots for battle, underscoring the inherent risks of mastering new technology and aircraft in challenging conditions. RAF Pembrey, primarily a training base, posed a high level of danger for both inexperienced pilots and seasoned trainers. Accidents were frequently caused by technical failures, poor weather, or inexperience in performing complex aerial manoeuvres. Despite these tragedies, each event brought important lessons that contributed to the refinement of safety protocols, improved aircraft design, and more effective pilot training programs.

The long-term impact of these training accidents cannot be overstated. The knowledge gained from these unfortunate incidents helped reduce future accident rates and ultimately increased the RAF's effectiveness in its wartime air campaigns. While the airmen lost during these missions were not always recognized as war heroes, their sacrifices were crucial to the overall success of the RAF during World War II.

By sharing these stories, the article aims to honour their memory and recognise the critical role that training, and preparation played in securing victory during the war.

Map of Carmarthen Bay Crash Sites



This map highlights key crash sites around Carmarthen Bay while paying tribute to the legacy of the Polish 316 Fighter Squadron, which served with the RAF at Pembrey during the Second World War. It documents incidents like the 1941 Lysander crash on Mynydd Pembrey and others, weaving together the history of local aviation tragedies and the heroism of Polish pilots. The map combines geographical details with archival research to preserve the memory of these events and honour those who served.

Penrhyn Farm Martin B-26 Marauder Plane Crash 4th June 1943

The weather ceiling and visibility were both zero, with a solid overcast and light rain. Investigators summarized the cause of the loss as an instrument let-down over hills with clouds in unfamiliar territory, with no radio or blind approach facilities available. The aircraft was flying level at quite a high speed when it hit a tree with its left engine, then struck a hayrick with its right engine, glanced off a bank, shed the left outboard wing panel and the left horizontal stabilizer, and dropped over a second bank on the other side of the field, dropping the left engine near the bank. It then crashed in the centre of the field, bursting into flames. The path of the main parts of the plane could be clearly followed. None of the control pedestal could be found to allow a check of the control positions.

Martin Marauder's Last Mission

By Fred Lyne, March 1988

In early January 1943, world leaders convened in Casablanca, North Africa, to strategies on how to bring World War II to a close. A significant focus was the proposed strategic bombing of Germany and occupied Europe. This led to the establishment of a combined bomber offensive, involving Bomber Command and the United States 8th Air Force, aimed at

A Martin Marauder's LAST MISSION

The chronoscope from the crash site

by Fred Lyne

Heads of world powers met at Casablanca, North Africa early January 1943 to discuss ways of ending World War II.

The main discussion was the proposed strategic bombing of Germany and occupied Europe. A combined bomber offensive, bomber command and the United States 8th American air force was created to conduct a series of raids, some of which would be to the heart of the third reich.

It was the wish of Sir Arthur 'Bomber' Harries that 'Area Bombing' of war torn Europe would bring about an early and progressive destruction of the German Forces, industries and morale of the German people.

'Bomber' Harries's main concern was shortage of aircraft, especially bombers and trained crews.

The Italians and Germans had been cleared from North Africa and with surplus aircraft available it was inevitable that the deployment to other theatres of war was of immediate importance.

RAF Pembroy was expecting the arrival of aircraft from North Africa. One such aircraft was a Martin Marauder B26B medium bomber being ferried in by a crew of four. Normal complement marauders would be seven, two pilots, one navigator, one radio operator, two gunners and one flight engineer. The crew on this aircraft consisted of three officers and one staff sergeant. All American.

The aircraft was by no means small, wing tip to wing tip measured 71ft, length 58ft 3ins and 21ft high. Power was produced by two Wrights radial engines producing 282 mph and a range of 1150 miles at 214 mph.

The weather for Pembrey was poor. The mountain range was enveloped in a thick wet mist, visual navigation from 500ft was bad. Ground control at RAF Pembrey made radio contact with the aircraft sometime between 1400 hours and 1500 hours (2.0pm – 3.0pm). The aircraft at this time was flying on an East South East course somewhere above the A484 Trimsaran to Llanelli Road in the direction of Llanelli.

Receiving the new course over their radio the aircraft banked to starboard bringing it dangerously lower and directly over Penrhyn farm.

Penrhyn during this time – 5 June 1943 – was being farmed by Mr and Mrs Griffin Bonnell with their son Hugh and daughter Katie. Preparations were under way for afternoon milking, no sooner had this begun when the drone of an aircraft turned into a frighting nightmare for the family as Katie (now Mrs Eynon) recalls over fourty-four years later.

"The weather was very bad, it was foggy and wet. We had just started our milking when there was this terrific crashing noise, I rushed out from the milking shed to see what had happened, the first thing that I noticed, was the hayshed had been completely demolished with its railway girder frame, uprooted, badly twisted and in places sheared by the forceful impact of a crashing aircraft.

My mother went up the field to see if there were any survivors. Seeing three dead crew she assumed that this was the total but on the following day a fourth crew member was found further up the field behind a hedge. At this time Hugh had his bike out and pedalled down to Pwll Police Station to report the accident.

Later on just after the crash I noticed the fields were littered with aircraft parts, emergency food rations, towels, suitcases, clothes and among other things a yellow rubber dinghy. The aircraft had completely disintegrated on impact, with its grizzly remains spread not only over Penrhyn farm property but that also of Barclay farm. One of the engines had careered on towards and came to rest, close to Pant farm – some 300 yards from the point of impact.

Within the hour the area was attended by crash tenders and other services of the RAF, including civil police, ambulance and local fire fighters. RAF personnel stayed at Penrhyn farm using an outbuilding from which they conducted their investigation into the crash.

When the RAF completed their investigation during those war years of June 1943, the aircraft remains were removed and the area restored. The dead crew were conveyed to Cambridge and it is believed from there to the United States of America. Two years later the American Government paid compensation to Mr and Mrs Bonnell for damage caused to their property.

Receiving permission from the farmers concerned I visited the site of the crash to see for myself the area first hand. Viewing the hayshed which had been rebuilt and the high bank and hedge where the Marauder had made its impact all those years ago, one would never have guessed that anything had ever happened here! Inspection with the help of a metal detector showed that a considerable amount of metal still remained in the ground.

The crash of the aircraft carried pieces of the fuselage, etc in the intended direction of travel, scattering its broken assemblies over several fields.

Through the bare soil of a stubble field protruded a stainless steel hose clamp with the makers name 'Witten Mfg Co', Chicago, USA. Further on and closer to the hedge, exposed pieces of plexiglass glinted in the sun. Ammunition of various calibre, some of which had exploded on impact came to light, the bases of these brass shells displayed letters and numbers RA41 meaning made by the 'Remington Arms Company' USA 1941. On others DM43, 'Des Moines Plant', USA 1943 and SL42, 'St Louis Ordnance Plant' USA 1942. This ammunition along with some .30 were used in the aircraft machine guns. The .45 ammunition were used for the personal arms which most American air crews carried. Other items were instrument facial panel surrounds displaying instruction of how to increase and decrease the rpm of an engines propellors, another was from an inboard camera with the maker 'Universal Camera Corp', New York USA 1942 WPB.

Torn from engines

Just below the surface in another field were two brass uniform buckles, some engine spark plugs. Torn from engines as they careered across the fields, including some unused spark plugs still in their protective plastic covers, probably carried as spares, a small hand ratchet from a socket set, a bomb aimers 'Elgin' chronoscopa, minus glass and hands and many other artefacts.

Future farming generations in this area may wonder what the metal pieces are that the plough turns up and not know of the World War II plane crash or the airmen who came from afar only to die on a lonely Welsh mountain top.

Today Penrhyn is farmed by Mr R J Evans and son Wyn, Barclay owned and farmed by Mr and Mrs B Samuel of Ty-Gwyn farm. Pant was farmed during the war years by Mr Jack Evans now retired and living in Pwll-Llanelli.

Remains of instruments

Martin Marauder spark plugs

Ammunition and spark plugs

conducting a series of raids on the heart of the Third Reich. Sir Arthur "Bomber" Harris believed that area bombing of war-torn Europe would hasten the war's end by targeting German industries and demoralizing the German populace.

Harris's primary concern was the shortage of aircraft, particularly bombers, and trained crews. With the Italians and Germans cleared from North Africa, surplus aircraft became available for deployment to other theatres of war. RAF Pembrey anticipated the arrival of several aircraft from North Africa, one of which was a Martin B-26B Marauder medium bomber, being ferried in by a crew of four. Normally, a Marauder would carry a complement of seven: two pilots, one navigator, one radio operator, three gunners, and one flight engineer. However, this aircraft was manned by only three officers and one staff sergeant, all American.

The B-26B Marauder was a sizable aircraft, with a wingspan of 71 feet and a length of 58 feet 3 inches. It was powered by two Wright radial engines, capable of producing a top speed of 282 mph and a range of 1,150 miles at 214 mph.

On the day of the incident, weather conditions at RAF Pembrey were poor, with the nearby mountain range enveloped in thick, wet mist. Visual navigation at an altitude of 500 feet was challenging. Ground control at RAF Pembrey made radio contact with the aircraft sometime between 1400 and 1500 hours (2:00 PM - 3:00 PM). At this point, the aircraft was flying on an east-southeast course above the A484 road from Trimsaran to Llanelli.

After receiving new instructions, the aircraft banked to starboard, descending dangerously low and passing directly over Penrhyn Farm. At that time, Penrhyn Farm was managed by Mr. and Mrs. Griffith Bonnell, along with their children, Hugh, and Katie. As they prepared for afternoon milking, the drone of the aircraft suddenly transformed into a terrifying roar.

Katie, now Mrs. Eynon, recalls the incident vividly more than forty years later: "The weather was very bad; it was foggy and wet. We had just started our milking when there was this terrific crashing noise. I rushed out from the milking shed to see what had happened. The first thing I noticed was that the hay shed had been completely demolished, with its railway girder frame uprooted, badly twisted, and in places sheared by the forceful impact of a crashing aircraft."

Initially, Mrs. Bonnell saw three dead crew members and assumed that was the total. However, the next day, a fourth crew member was discovered further back in a field behind a hedge. At that moment, Hugh pedalled down to Pwll Police Station to report the accident. Shortly after the crash, Katie noticed the fields littered with aircraft parts, emergency food rations, towels, suitcases, clothing, and, among other items, a yellow rubber dinghy. The aircraft had completely disintegrated upon impact, scattering it remains not only across Penrhyn Farm but also onto Barclay Farm. One of the engines had careened off and come to rest about 300 yards from the point of impact, close to Pant Farm.

Within an hour, crash tenders and other RAF services, including civil police, ambulances, and local fire brigades, arrived at the scene. RAF personnel remained at Penrhyn Farm, utilizing an outbuilding as they conducted their investigation into the crash. By June 1943, when the investigation concluded, the wreckage was removed, and the area was restored. The deceased crew members were transported to Cambridge, from where it is believed they were sent back to the United States. Two years later, the American government compensated Mr. and Mrs. Bonnell for the damage inflicted on their property.

After receiving permission from the farmers involved, I visited the crash site to see the area first-hand. The hay shed, which had been rebuilt, stood alongside the high bank and hedge where the Marauder had met its fate so many years ago. Today, one would hardly guess that anything had ever occurred there. However, an inspection with a metal detector revealed a significant amount of metal still buried in the ground. The crash had scattered pieces of the fuselage in the direction of travel, spreading debris across several fields.

Among the findings, a stainless-steel hose clamp with the maker's name, "Witten Mfg. Co., Chicago, USA," protruded from the bare soil of a stubble field. Further along, closer to the hedge, pieces of plexiglass glinted in the sunlight. Various calibres of ammunition, some of which had exploded on impact, were unearthed. The brass shell casings bore markings indicating their origins: "RA41," from the Remington Arms Company, USA, 1941; "DM43," from the Des Moines Plant, USA, 1943; and "SL42," from the St. Louis Ordnance Plant, USA, 1942. This ammunition, along with .30 calibre rounds, had been used in the aircraft's machine guns, while the .45 calibre rounds were for the personal weapons that many American aircrew carried. Other items discovered included instrument dials—one indicating how to adjust the RPM of an engine's propellers, another from an onboard camera manufactured by "Universal Camera Corp., New York, USA, 1942."

Just below the surface in another field lay two brass uniform buckles, some engine spark plugs that had been dislodged during the crash, including unused spark plugs still in their protective plastic covers, likely kept as spares. Among the debris, I also found a small parachute, a socket set, a bomb, an Elgin chronoscope missing its glass and hands, and numerous other artifacts.

Future generations of farmers in this area may uncover these metal pieces while ploughing, unaware of the World War II plane crash and the airmen who travelled from afar, only to meet their fate on a lonely Welsh mountaintop.

Today, Penrhyn Farm is managed by Mr. R. Evans and his son Wyn, while Barclay Farm is owned and managed by Mr. and Mrs. B. Samuel of Ty-Gwyn Farm. Pant Farm was operated during the war years by Mr. Jack Evans, who is now retired and resides in Pwll-Llanelli.

The crew members who perished were:

- **Lt John Reiss**, Pilot
- https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/56293661/john-w-reiss
-
- **Lt Eugene Carby**, Navigator
- https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/202854355/eugene-manning-carby
-
- **Sgt Raymond Shoemaker**, Engineer
- https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/40704568/raymond-john-shoemaker
-
- **Lt William Shoop**, Passenger

Pwll – Hawker Hurricane W9231 May 1941

The Story of F/Lt Waclaw Wilczewski and Hurricane W9231

On a stormy day in May 1941, a dramatic event unfolded in the skies over Pwll, a small village near Llanelli in Carmarthenshire. It was wartime, and brave pilots from various Allied nations were putting their lives at risk daily in the battle against Nazi forces. Among these pilots was Flight Lieutenant Waclaw Wilczewski, a Polish airman flying with the Royal Air Force's No. 316 Polish Fighter Squadron, stationed in the UK at Pembrey. His story, one of courage and quick-thinking, is remembered as a testament to the resolve and bravery of the Polish pilots who fought for freedom in a foreign land.

F/Lt Wilczewski was flying the British single-seat fighter, **Hurricane W9231**, a reliable aircraft used extensively during World War II. On May 17, 1941, however, his mission took a perilous turn. While navigating through the skies near Pwll, his Hurricane developed serious engine problems, leaving him with no choice but to attempt an emergency landing. But this was not just any routine landing – it became a race against time and circumstance, with the lives of civilians and his own hanging in the balance.

As his aircraft lost power, Wilczewski began searching for a safe place to land. His first option was the playing fields at Penyfan in Llanelli, but he quickly abandoned the idea. The fields were crowded with people, and a landing there would almost certainly have led to a tragic disaster. His second attempt was aimed at the cricket grounds at Stradey, but once again, there were too many civilians in harm's way.

Things went from bad to worse when his Hurricane struck power cables near Stradey, increasing the difficulty of controlling the damaged aircraft. Despite the mounting

danger and the additional obstacles, Wilczewski remained calm, fully aware that crashing in a densely populated area could cause catastrophic loss of life. It was then that he made a decision that highlighted his exceptional skill, composure, and heroism.

Spotting a small, vacant field behind **Isfryn and Bethlehem Chapel** – now home to the Pwll Cricket Ground – Wilczewski saw his final opportunity. The limited space in the field and the already critical state of his Hurricane made a regular landing impossible. In a moment of sheer expertise, the pilot intentionally brought the plane down on its wing, using the angle of impact to slow the aircraft's forward momentum. By the time it hit the ground, the Hurricane was traveling at just 70 mph, a dangerously low speed but slow enough to avert a full-blown catastrophe. The wreckage came to a stop within the small field, sparing both Wilczewski's life and the lives of Pwll's residents.

The pilot’s cool-headedness and precise actions undoubtedly prevented an unthinkable disaster. Had he lost control or been unable to direct the aircraft away from the village, the consequences could have been deadly for the people living there. Thanks to Wilczewski’s actions, no civilians were harmed, and the heroic pilot himself emerged from the crash with no life-threatening injuries.

The wreck of Hurricane W9231 was a sobering sight in the field that day, but the man who piloted it lived on to fly again. The courage and skill he displayed on that fateful day in May 1941 were later acknowledged in official records, including the **316 Squadron Operational Record Book**, and he was forever remembered as a hero who risked his own life to save others.

Today, Pwll has changed, but the memory of that day lingers on. The field where Waclaw Wilczewski crash-landed is now part of the Pwll Cricket Ground, where games are played in peace—a far cry from the crisis that unfolded there during World War II. The name Waclaw Wilczewski, once known only to the RAF and his comrades in the **316 Polish Fighter Squadron**, is now remembered and honoured in Pwll as a symbol of bravery and selflessness.

F/Lt Wilczewski's actions remind us of the immense sacrifices made by Polish pilots during the war. They had left their homes behind, fought for the freedom of nations not their own, and became part of the fabric of Allied efforts to bring peace to war-torn Europe. To this day, we salute their courage, and we remain grateful for the cool-headed decision-making of pilots like Wilczewski, who on that day in 1941 ensured that no lives were lost in the small Welsh village of Pwll.

Five Roads - Handley Page Hereford I L6036 September 30 1940

On the evening of **September 30, 1940**, a significant aviation incident took place near **Five Roads**, a small village in South Wales. The aircraft involved was a **Handley Page Hereford I** (L6036), one of 100 planes delivered to the **Royal Air Force** (RAF) by Short & Harland of Belfast between 1938 and 1940. Although never used in active combat, the Hereford was a crucial part of RAF training, particularly with Hampden training units, and was assigned to the **14 Operational Training Unit**.

On that day, **Flight Lieutenant N.W. Timmerman** was flying the Hereford on a routine ferry mission from **RAF Cottesmore**. The flight was uneventful until the aircraft approached **Pembrey Airfield** just after 7:00 PM. Suddenly, one of the engines failed, leaving Flt. Lt. Timmerman in a dire situation. Flying alone, he had no assistance from other crew members and had to make quick decisions to avert disaster.

With the aircraft rapidly losing power, Timmerman made the critical decision to attempt a forced landing. He scanned the landscape below and identified a small grove of trees near **Caerbigyn Farm**, just outside the village of **Five Roads**, around four miles northwest of Llanelli. His options were limited, and a successful landing seemed increasingly difficult. Nonetheless, Timmerman expertly guided the Hereford toward the trees, doing his best to reduce the severity of the impact.

The aircraft crash-landed into the coppice of trees, suffering severe damage in the process. L6036 was a complete write-off, its wreckage scattered across the field. Remarkably, despite the violent landing and the destruction of the aircraft, **Flight Lieutenant Timmerman** emerged from the crash unscathed. His skill and composure in the face of danger had saved his life.

The crash site, now a quiet grazing field near the **Tir John bungalow**, bears no visible marks of that event. The Hereford's remains were cleared, and the land was returned to farming. Today, only the memory of that near-tragic day remains, a testament to the dangers faced by RAF pilots even in training flights during the war.

This incident occurred just two weeks after the loss of **Hampden P4311**, another RAF aircraft that crashed nearby, underscoring the hazards faced by both trainee and experienced pilots during World War II. Though **L6036** never saw combat, its crash serves as a reminder of the bravery and quick thinking of pilots like **Flight Lieutenant Timmerman**, who survived a potentially fatal event with his life intact.

Miles Martinet HP366 November 20 1943

On **November 20, 1943**, tragedy struck near **Ty Newydd Farm**, just north of **Burry Port, Wales**, during a routine training mission. The aircraft involved was a **Miles Martinet HP366**, which was being used for simulated air gunnery practice, a common sight in the skies above the sparsely inhabited areas of **Mynydd Pembrey** during the war years.

The incident unfolded at around **09:35 hrs**, when two aircraft were seen flying in close formation over the farm. **Glyn** and **Irfon Davies**, who were working on the farm under the supervision of their grandfather **Tom Davies**, were accustomed to the sight and sounds of planes overhead. However, on that morning, the familiar noise of aircraft engines was shattered by a distinctive thud—a mid-air collision.

Looking up, the Davies family saw the **Martinet HP366** begin to spin uncontrollably. The aircraft spiralled downward, crashing into a hedge near the farmhouse. Upon impact, the Martinet burst into flames.

Acting swiftly, **Tom Davies** grabbed a billhook and rushed to the crash site to break open the aircraft's canopy and rescue the crew. Unfortunately, the heat from the fire was too intense, forcing him to abandon his rescue efforts. Despite the quick arrival of emergency services, they were unable to save the two airmen aboard the aircraft.

Both men perished in the crash, despite the brave attempts to save them. The crash site, with stunted undergrowth and traces of molten aluminium where the Martinet burned, remains a solemn reminder of the incident.

The crew of the Martinet HP366

Sgt. Richard Williamson Rigby - Pilot
https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/89467246/richard-williamson-rigby

LAC Harold "Lal" Egerton - Tow Operator
https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/32674482/harold-egerton

The site, now quiet, is marked by the presence of scattered aircraft debris. The nearby **Carmarthen Bay Power Station** chimneys, once visible from the crash site, have since been demolished, but the memory of the two airmen remains intact. The wreckage and the events of that day continue to stand as a poignant reminder of the perils faced by RAF crews, even during training missions.

This crash underscores the significant risks involved in wartime training exercises. Despite not being on active combat missions, RAF crews like **Sgt. Rigby** and **LAC Egerton** faced constant danger as they honed the skills necessary for the war effort. Their sacrifice is commemorated, and their memory lives on through accounts of their bravery and the lasting impact of their loss.

Pembrey Mountain - Westland Lysander (Lizzie) V9361

NAME: Westland Lysander V9361 TYPE: Air crash site NGR: SN4005 COMMUNITY: Cefn Sidan COUNTY: Carmarthenshire SITING: Terrestrial

A Day of Tragedy and Bravery:

The Crash of Lysander V9361 and the Heroic Actions of William Howells

On May 21, 1941, the serene landscape of Mynydd Pembrey was shattered by the fiery crash of Lysander V9361. The accident, marked by tragedy, loss, and extraordinary bravery, would leave an indelible mark on the lives of those involved and the community surrounding Pembrey. At the heart of the story is the remarkable courage of farmer William Howells, whose selfless actions amid chaos saved a life and inspired generations.

The Crash on Mynydd Pembrey

The Lysander aircraft had been flying a routine operation when disaster struck. Shortly after 5:30 PM, the aircraft crashed into the steep hillside near Coed Farm, Pinged, at the foot of Mynydd Pembrey. The crash ignited a ferocious blaze, with flames engulfing the entire aircraft and setting off .303 ammunition in a relentless series of explosions.

William Howells, a farmer from Coed Farm, heard the impact and rushed up the steep incline to the scene. Confronted by the inferno and the constant danger posed by the exploding ammunition, Howells displayed extraordinary bravery. He managed to pull Sgt. Cyril Cave clear of the burning wreckage, saving the wireless operator's life. Tragically, attempts to reach Flying Officer Peter Lochnan, trapped inside the twisted cockpit, were unsuccessful. Lochnan succumbed to the flames, adding a poignant note of loss to the harrowing day.

Remembering F.O. Peter Lochnan

Flying Officer Peter Lochnan was a man of remarkable talent and determination. Born in Canada, he was a skilled athlete, excelling in skiing, wrestling, football, and tennis. Before joining the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), Lochnan studied medicine at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. He served with distinction during the Battle of Britain as part of 1 (Canadian) Squadron, earning recognition for his growing tally of enemy aircraft shot down.

Flying Officer Peter William Lochnan,

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/17664838/peter-william-lochnan#add-to-vc

In February 1941, he transferred to 400 Squadron, a Canadian Army Co-Operation Unit based at RAF Odiham. Volunteering for air-sea rescue duties, Lochnan arrived at Pembrey just days before the crash. May 20, the day prior to the accident, had marked his first wedding anniversary, adding a layer of heartbreak to the tragedy.

A Chain of Tragic Events

The crash of the Lysander was not the only tragedy of that fateful day. Later that evening, news arrived of a missing Tiger Moth aircraft that had run out of fuel and crashed into the River Severn, killing its two crew members.

On May 22, a third accident occurred on the Gower Peninsula. Flight Lieutenant William Rider, a close friend of Lochnan and fellow Canadian from 400 Squadron, crashed his Tomahawk aircraft in poor weather while attempting to reach Pembrey. He, too, perished. Lochnan and Rider are buried side by side at Brookwood Cemetery near Woking, a sombre testament to the shared sacrifices of the war.

The Legacy of William Howells B.E.M

William Howells' actions on that day did not go unnoticed. Despite suffering burns to his hands, he managed to save Sgt. Cave and remained steadfast in his attempts to rescue F.O. Lochnan. For his bravery, Howells was awarded the British Empire Medal (BEM). The scars on his hands bore silent witness to his heroism for the rest of his life.

Howells' story is a reminder of the courage displayed by ordinary individuals in extraordinary circumstances. Though life at Coed Farm continued much as it had before, the events of May 21, 1941, would forever be etched in local memory.

A Place Marked by History

Even today, the site of the crash on Mynydd Pembrey bears evidence of the tragedy. Pieces of aluminium embedded in tree trunks and scattered .303 rounds among the undergrowth serve as haunting reminders of the events that unfolded nearly 75 years ago.

The bravery of William Howells and the sacrifices of those who perished stand as enduring testaments to the human spirit in the face of adversity. This story of courage and loss reminds us that even amid the darkest moments of war, acts of heroism can shine a light of hope and humanity.

The events of May 21 also linked to the death of Flight Lieutenant William Rider on the Gower Peninsula, a close friend of Lochnan.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/17666059/william-albert-rider#add-to-vc

The hill where the Lysander crashed still holds traces of the incident, with scattered 303 rounds and aluminium fragments serving as reminders of the tragedy. For his bravery, William Howells was awarded the British Empire Medal, though he lived with burn scars for the rest of his life.

Bristol Blenheim Z6348 May 11, 1943

On May 11, 1943, a tragic incident unfolded at Pant Teg Farm in Pinged, near Pembrey, Carmarthenshire, when a Bristol Blenheim Z6348, assigned to the 1 Air Gunnery School, crashed during a routine training mission. The aircraft, an essential part of the Royal Air Force's operations during World War II, was designed for versatility and was commonly used for reconnaissance and light bombing missions. However, on this fateful day, the Blenheim was being used in gunnery training, and a malfunction led to catastrophic consequences.

The accident occurred when the aircraft experienced a possible flap failure while flying in a circuit above Pant Teg Farm. Flaps, critical for controlling an aircraft's speed and

manoeuvrability during landing or take-off, are essential to safe flight. Their malfunction can lead to a loss of control, and, tragically, this seems to have been the case with Blenheim Z6348. As the plane spiralled out of control, the four-man crew on board had no chance to regain stability. The aircraft plummeted to the ground, crashing into the farmland, and killing everyone on board.

The crew of the Blenheim included Warrant Officer Frederick John McDaniel, who was the pilot of the aircraft. His responsibility for the operation and navigation of the Blenheim reflected his high level of training and experience as a senior non-commissioned officer. Alongside him were three air gunners under training: Leading Aircraftman John Charles

Noble, Leading Aircraftman Kenneth Taylor, and Leading Aircraftman Reginald R. I. Smythe. All three were in the process of mastering the skills necessary to become air gunners, learning to operate the aircraft's defensive weaponry and protect the crew from enemy threats.

This incident serves as a stark reminder of the dangers that RAF personnel faced, even during training exercises far from the frontlines. Though these men were not engaged in combat, they were participating in vital preparations that would eventually ensure the effectiveness of the Royal Air Force's operations in World War II. Training flights were an essential part of the RAF's strategy to ensure that crews were fully prepared for the challenges of war, but they were not without risk, as this crash tragically demonstrated.

Despite the valiant efforts of the crew, the malfunction proved insurmountable, and the aircraft's final moments were spent in a doomed descent. The community around Pant Teg Farm was shaken by the event, and the loss of these four young men left an indelible mark on those who witnessed the aftermath. Their sacrifice, though occurring far from the battlefields, was no less significant. They died in service to their country, performing the crucial work of preparing for the larger war effort.

Today, the site of the crash stands as a quiet testament to the lives lost. The memory of Warrant Officer McDaniel, Leading Aircraftman Noble, Leading Aircraftman Taylor, and Leading Aircraftman Smythe continues to be honoured. Though their mission was tragically cut short, their dedication to their roles and the ultimate sacrifice they made in service to their country are remembered with great respect.

Crew.

Warrant Officer Frederick John McDaniel, the experienced pilot of the aircraft, served under service number 335302. His expertise and responsibility as the aircraft's leader reflected his high-ranking status within the RAF.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/24333060/frederick-john-mcdaniel

Leading Aircraftman John Charles Noble was one of the air gunners under training. His work in mastering the Blenheim's defensive capabilities was crucial to the operation of these aircraft.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/167811817/john-charles-noble

Leading Aircraftman Kenneth Taylor, another air gunner trainee, was dedicated to becoming a fully-fledged member of the RAF's defensive air teams.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/147215270/kenneth-taylor#add-to-vc

Leading Aircraftman Reginald R. I. Smythe, the third air gunner in training, was focused on developing the skills necessary to protect his crew in combat.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/70293691/reginald-r_i-smythe

Bristol Blenheim L1218 May 24, 1942

On May 24, 1942, a Bristol Blenheim L1218, part of the Air Gunnery School at RAF Pembrey, tragically crashed during a training exercise near the village of Pinged, just a mile east of Pembrey Airfield in Carmarthenshire, Wales. The crew of four was conducting a camera gun exercise, a standard training flight designed to simulate combat scenarios.

The flight seemed to be proceeding normally until a catastrophic event occurred. Residents, including Percy Jones, witnessed the aircraft in distress, with flames pouring from its

starboard side. Jones was on a bus near the Pinged Post Office at the time and recalled the moment when the Blenheim began its rapid descent.

In a horrifying series of events, the Blenheim L1218 narrowly missed the Pinged Post Office, crashing through a hedge and landing in flames. The violence of the impact was so severe that one of the engines was torn from the aircraft and came to rest near a nearby house. Fire quickly consumed the wreckage, and further explosions from the ammunition aboard made any rescue attempts perilous.

Percy Jones and other bystanders rushed to the scene, desperately trying to help. Jones himself attempted to pull one of the crew members from the wreckage but was unable to save him as the man had already succumbed to his injuries. Rescue services arrived shortly after, but there was little they could do to prevent the devastating outcome.

The investigation into the crash could not definitively conclude the cause, but there were suggestions of a fuel leak that may have ignited on the hot exhaust of the aircraft, leading to the fatal fire. All four crew members lost their lives in the crash, marking a tragic end to a routine training flight.

Crew Members:

- Pilot: Sergeant Kenneth Ramsdale
  - Service Number: 566865
  - Role: Pilot
  - Age: 25 years
  - Burial: https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/60092480/kenneth-ramsdale
- Crew: Leading Aircraftman Harold George Henry
  - Service Number: 625978
  - Role: Air Gunner (under training)
  - Age: 20 years
  - Burial: https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/98180501/harold-george-henry
- Crew: Leading Aircraftman Edward Cecil Pledger Moore
  - Service Number: 625842
  - Role: Air Gunner (under training)
  - Age: 20 years
  - Burial: Barking (Rippleside) Cemetery, Essex, England
- Crew: Leading Aircraftman George Arthur Layton
  - Service Number: 624269
  - Role: Air Gunner (under training)
  - Age: 21 years
  - Burial: https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/98180505/george-alfred-layton#add-to-vc

Hawker Hurricane P3871 January 12, 1941

The skies over Carmarthenshire witnessed yet another tragic incident during World War II, as one of Britain's most iconic fighter planes, the Hawker Hurricane, was involved in a fatal mid-air collision. The aircraft involved, Hurricane P3871, was assigned to 79 Squadron of the Royal Air Force, a squadron that played a crucial role in the defence of Britain during the early years of the war.

On the fateful day of January 12, 1941, Flying Officer Alec Cyril Chapple was leading a practice formation flight of three Hurricanes over the airfield near Cefn Sidan. At approximately 11:35 a.m., the flight was being conducted at an altitude of 1,000 feet as part of a routine exercise designed to sharpen the pilots' manoeuvring skills. The mission quickly took a tragic turn during a manoeuvre to change positions within the formation.

Sergeant Boucher, a new pilot flying in Hurricane P3716, approached the leader, Flying Officer Chapple, too quickly during the position change. Unable to avoid contact, Boucher's Hurricane collided with Chapple's aircraft, striking the wing of P3871. The collision caused Chapple's aircraft to flip onto its back, sending the Hurricane into an uncontrollable descent. Tragically, Flying Officer Chapple's Hurricane crashed on the airfield, resulting in his untimely death.

This incident was part of a broader pattern of Hurricane losses at RAF Pembrey in the early months of 1941. The airbase saw significant action and training activity during this period, and several Hurricanes from various squadrons were lost in accidents. Just a few weeks after Chapple's crash, RAF Pembrey would become the home of the newly formed 316 (Polish) Squadron in February, followed by the arrival of 32 Squadron between April and June.

The crash of Hawker Hurricane P3871 remains a sombre reminder of the risks and sacrifices made by RAF pilots during World War II, even during training exercises. Flying Officer Alec Cyril Chapple's death adds to the long list of airmen who gave their lives in the line of duty while preparing to defend Britain from the looming threat of the Axis powers.

Hawker Hurricane I V6958 Crash - June 13, 1941

The Hawker Hurricane I V6958 was among the many aircraft delivered to the Royal Air Force (RAF) by Gloster Aircraft between August 1940 and January 1941. Serving with both 249 and 316 Squadrons, it was a vital part of Britain's defence during a critical time in World War II. However, on June 13, 1941, this aircraft met with disaster near the town of Kidwelly, Carmarthenshire, after a mid-air collision.

The Hurricane V6958 collided with another aircraft during a training flight. Though the exact identity of the second aircraft remains uncertain, it is thought to have been another Hurricane,

possibly designated as V9523. The collision forced the pilot of V6958, Pilot Officer Stanley Gordon Hillman, to abandon the aircraft. The Hurricane was left to crash near Kidwelly, where its remains were found abandoned against a hedge.

Remarkably, the wreckage of the Hurricane did not go unnoticed. During ditching work on a farm, the engine, a Rolls-Royce Merlin, was discovered by a local farmer. Further investigations led to the discovery of substantial parts of the aircraft, including the fuselage, which was still intact enough for the Abergavenny Air Training Corps (ATC) to retrieve them from the hedge a year or two after the crash. One of the more significant discoveries was the aircraft's maker's plate, which confirmed its identity as Hurricane V6958.

The recovered engine was housed at the 2478 Squadron ATC Museum for many years. After the museum closed roughly 15 years ago, the engine was saved and eventually placed on display in Kidwelly, where it serves as a relic of the area's wartime aviation history.

Though details about Pilot Officer Stanley Gordon Hillman, the pilot involved in the crash, are scarce, the incident and subsequent recovery efforts underscore the importance of preserving these fragments of history. Artifacts like the engine of Hurricane V6958 serve as tangible reminders of the risks and sacrifices faced by RAF pilots during the war, as well as the vital role such aircraft played in defending Britain during its darkest hours.

Vickers Wellington LN553 Crash - January 6, 1945

On January 6, 1945, a devastating air disaster occurred on the mudflats just outside the boundary of Pembrey airfield in Carmarthenshire, resulting in the loss of six airmen's lives. The aircraft involved was a Vickers Wellington LN553, which was part of the training operations conducted by the airfield's gunnery school. This day became known as the worst air disaster in Carmarthenshire's history.

By 1945, the Wellington had become the primary training aircraft used by Pembrey's gunnery school. With its larger crew capacity compared to the Anson and Blenheim, the Wellington carried more risk during accidents, leading to greater loss of life. On this tragic day, Wellington LN553 was engaged in a routine air firing exercise.

At 13:55 hrs, the aircraft took off from Pembrey with a crew of seven, including five trainee gunners. The exercise proceeded uneventfully, and the gunners were likely eager to learn how well they had performed. Upon returning to Pembrey airfield, the pilot, Flying Officer Beverley John Wentworth Thomson, encountered a north-westerly breeze. He opted to land on the shorter NW/SE runway to accommodate the wind conditions.

The initial touchdown was heavy, prompting the control tower to instruct Thomson to overshoot and go around for a second attempt. As the Wellington gained height over the Gwendraeth Estuary to reposition, it suddenly entered a nosedive from around 300 feet while turning across the wind. Tragically, it never recovered and crashed onto the marshes at 15:00 hrs.

The crash resulted in the deaths of six crew members. Flying Officer Beverley John Wentworth Thomson, the pilot, was a 21-year-old member of the Royal Australian Air Force. He was the son of Harold Wentworth Thomson and Madge Thomson, and the husband of Mary Thomson of Llanelly. Alongside him were several trainee gunners, all of whom paid the ultimate price during this routine training exercise.

The victims of the crash were:

- **Flying Officer Beverley John Wentworth Thomson**

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/98180519/beverley-john_wentworth-thomson

- **Warrant Air Officer (AG) Cecil Gordon Dear**
  https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/125512301/cecil-gordon-dear
- **Aircraftman 2nd Class John Frederick Bartholomew**
  https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/59701814/john-frederick-bartholomew
- **Aircraftman 2nd Class Peter Hixon Cain**
  https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/142270604/peter-hixon-cain
- **Aircraftman 2nd Class Cecil Maurice Field**
  https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/44815680/cecil-maurice-field
- **Aircraftman 2nd Class Barry Campbell Hay**
  https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/59790402/barry-campbell-hay

Handley Page Hampden I P4311 Crash - September 17, 1940

On September 17, 1940, a Handley Page Hampden bomber, P4311, met a tragic fate when it crashed onto the Gwendraeth marshes near Kidwelly, Wales. The incident occurred during a training exercise, claiming the lives of all seven crew members on board.

P4311 was part of a small detachment of Hampden bombers stationed at RAF Pembrey, a fighter station during the Battle of Britain. The Hampden, nicknamed the "flying suitcase," was a vital component of Bomber Command during the early years of World War II.

The crash occurred as the aircraft was returning to base after an air-to-air firing exercise. A combination of engine failure and strong crosswinds contributed to the loss of control, leading to the fatal impact. Despite efforts from emergency services, the crew members were unable to survive the crash and subsequent fire.

The remote location and difficult terrain hindered rescue efforts. Local resident Bill Wright recounted the events of that day, describing the frantic response of those who witnessed the crash. Despite their best efforts, the crew members were tragically lost.

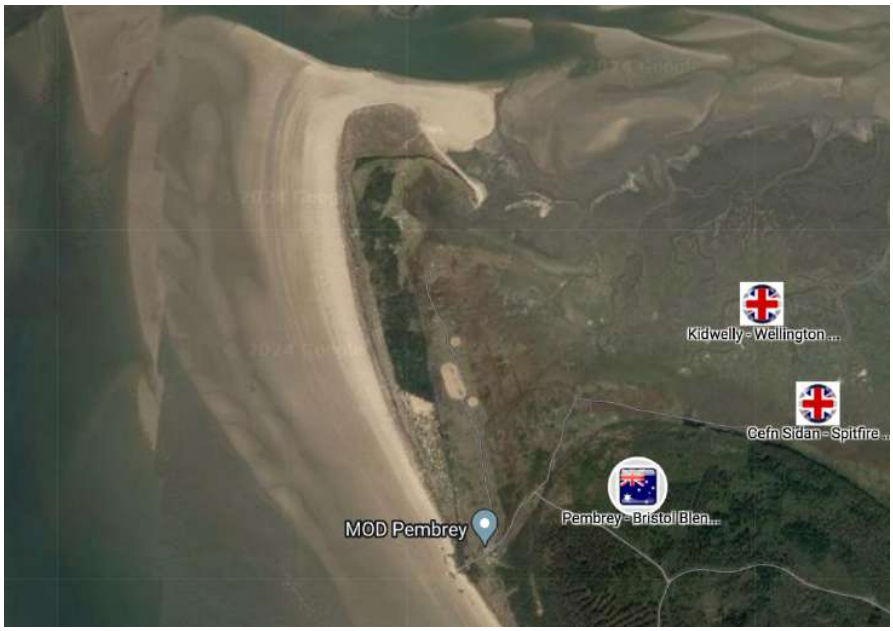
The Hampden P4311 crash serves as a poignant reminder of the dangers faced by aircrews during wartime. It highlights the sacrifices made by those who served in the Royal Air Force and the tragic consequences of accidents in the skies.

Bristol Blenheim Z6187 *February 16th, 1942*

Pembrey, Wales - February 16th, 1942: A routine fishery protection patrol over the Irish Sea ended in tragedy for the crew of Bristol Blenheim Z6187. The aircraft, stationed at RAF Carew Cheriton with No. 254 Squadron, RAF, crashed near RAF Pembrey in Carmarthenshire, Wales, during its return flight.

Mission and Disorientation:

On the afternoon of February 16th, Blenheim Z6187, piloted by Pilot Officer John Tully of the Royal Australian Air Force, embarked on a patrol of the Irish Sea alongside another Blenheim. They monitored the waters off the southern coast of Ireland for over two hours before setting course back to base at approximately 6:10 PM.



However, as darkness descended and weather conditions worsened, visibility deteriorated significantly. While navigating over Carmarthen Bay, Pilot Officer Tully lost his bearings. Fortunately, at around 8:25 PM, the crew managed to locate RAF Pembrey's runways using radio signals.

Fatal Miscalculation:

During the landing approach, Pilot Officer Tully determined a go-around manoeuvre was necessary. However, a critical error occurred. The aircraft's flaps were retracted prematurely, at an altitude too low to maintain safe flight. This resulted in a sudden loss of lift, causing the Blenheim to plummet towards the ground near the airfield. The impact ignited a fiery explosion, destroying the aircraft.

Crew

Crew Details:
* Pilot: Pilot Officer John Leahy Tully (Service No. 404189), Royal Australian Air Force
* Status: Injured
* Observer: Flight Sergeant Reginald Fenney, Royal Air Force
* Status: Seriously injured, died two days later (buried in Hoylake, near Liverpool)
* https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/180216714/reginald-fenney
* Air Gunner: Sergeant H. Carey, Royal Air Force
* Status: Injured

Crash Investigation:

An official investigation cleared Pilot Officer Tully of any blame for the accident. The inquiry revealed a malfunctioning altimeter in the Blenheim, potentially contributing to the pilot's difficulty in maintaining proper altitude during the landing attempt. However, the premature retraction of the flaps was identified as the primary cause of the crash.

Pilot Officer Tully's Fate:

Following his recovery from the crash, Pilot Officer Tully was assigned to No. 1 Photographic Reconnaissance Unit (PRU) at RAF Benson. Tragically, his story took another turn on July 30th, 1942. While on a reconnaissance mission over Norway in his Spitfire AA800, the aircraft vanished over the North Sea. Pilot Officer Tully was presumed lost in action.

The crash of Bristol Blenheim Z6187 serves as a poignant reminder of the dangers faced by aircrews during World War II, even on seemingly routine missions. It highlights the importance of proper equipment and the split-second decisions made under pressure that can determine the outcome of a flight. The sacrifice of Flight Sergeant Fenney and the bravery of the crew will not be forgotten.

Pilot Officer John Leahy Tully (Service No. 404189), Royal Australian Air Force

D.O.B 4/8/1913 – 30/7/1942

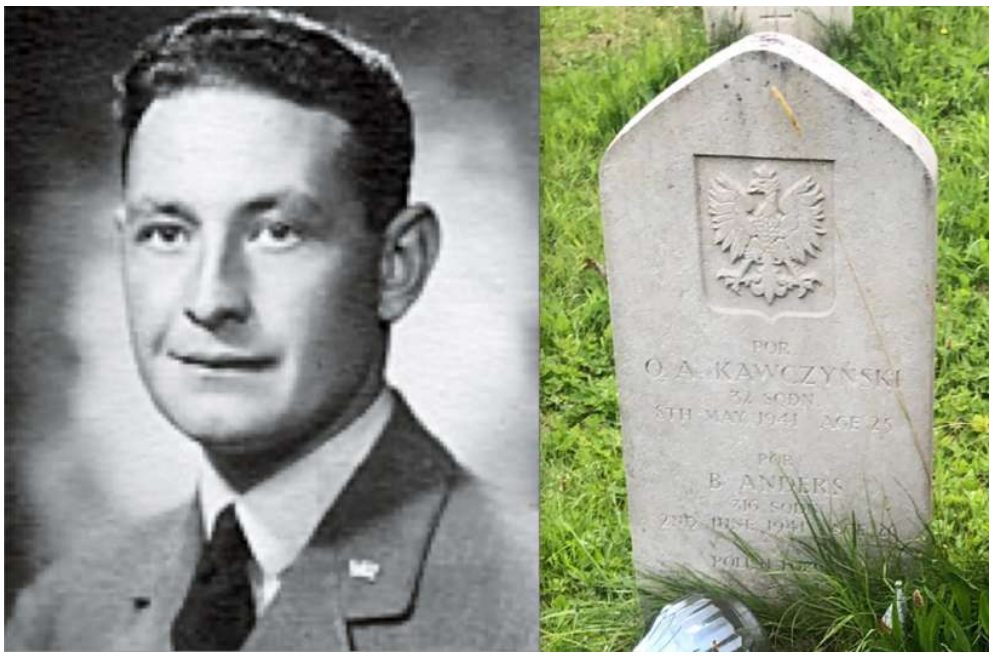
https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/P11029131

Hawker Hurricane, Z2324 May 8, 1941.

Tragically, Olech Antoni Kawczyński's service was cut short on May 8, 1941. While on target practice over Cefn Sidan Beach, his Hawker Hurricane, Serial Z2324, crashed, resulting in his untimely death. The exact circumstances of the crash remain a poignant reminder of the perils faced by those who took to the skies in defence of freedom.

Olech Antoni Kawczyński was born on February 20, 1916, in Wudzyn, Poland. His early life in Poland was marked by a strong sense of duty and patriotism, leading him to join the Polish

Army, where he rose to the rank of Lieutenant. With the outbreak of World War II and the subsequent invasion of Poland, Kawczyński, like many of his compatriots, found himself compelled to continue the fight beyond his homeland's borders.



After Poland's fall, Kawczyński made his way to Great Britain, where the Royal Air Force (RAF) was integrating experienced Polish pilots into its ranks. Kawczyński joined the RAF and served with distinction as a Pilot Officer, initially with No. 32 Squadron. His skills as a pilot were critical in the defence of Britain, contributing to the efforts to thwart the Luftwaffe's relentless attacks.

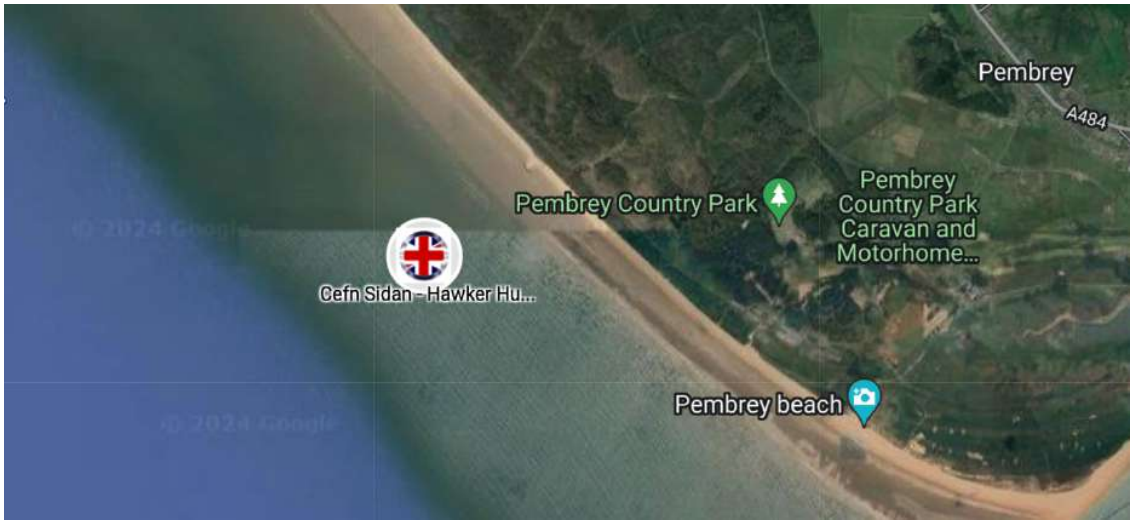
Kawczyński later transferred to No. 79 Squadron, continuing his brave service in the skies. No. 79 Squadron was actively involved in various operations, and Kawczyński's role as a pilot was vital to the squadron's missions. His aircraft, a Hawker Hurricane, was a formidable fighter that played a key role in the RAF's defensive and offensive operations.

Tragically, Olech Antoni Kawczyński's service was cut short on May 8, 1941. While on target practice over Cefn Sidan Beach, his Hawker Hurricane, Serial Z2324, crashed, resulting in his untimely death. The exact circumstances of the crash remain a poignant reminder of the perils faced by those who took to the skies in defence of freedom.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/228015273/olech-antoni-kawczynski

Hurricane Mk I P3122 February 24, 1941

Cefn Sidan Beach, Wales - February 24, 1941: A routine training exercise for the Royal Air Force turned into a tragedy when Hawker Hurricane Mk I, P3122, crashed on the shores of Cefn Sidan Beach in Carmarthenshire.



Training Gone Wrong:

Sergeant Charles Albert Venn, a young pilot who had earned his wings just three months prior, was participating in an air-to-ground strafing practice session. With only 12 hours of flight time on Hurricanes, Sergeant Venn was honing his skills in attacking ground targets.

During the exercise, Sergeant Venn descended lower than intended while firing his guns. This critical misjudgement left him with insufficient altitude to pull up safely before

encountering an obstacle on the beach, likely an anti-invasion pole. The Hurricane, unable to clear the obstruction, plunged into the sea.

Solemn Loss:

The investigation concluded that pilot error, specifically Sergeant Venn's miscalculation during the strafing dive, was the cause of the accident. Sadly, Sergeant Venn, at the young age of 26, perished in the crash.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/98180520/charles-albert-venn

RAF Pembrey Long Lost Fliers Virtual Cemetery.

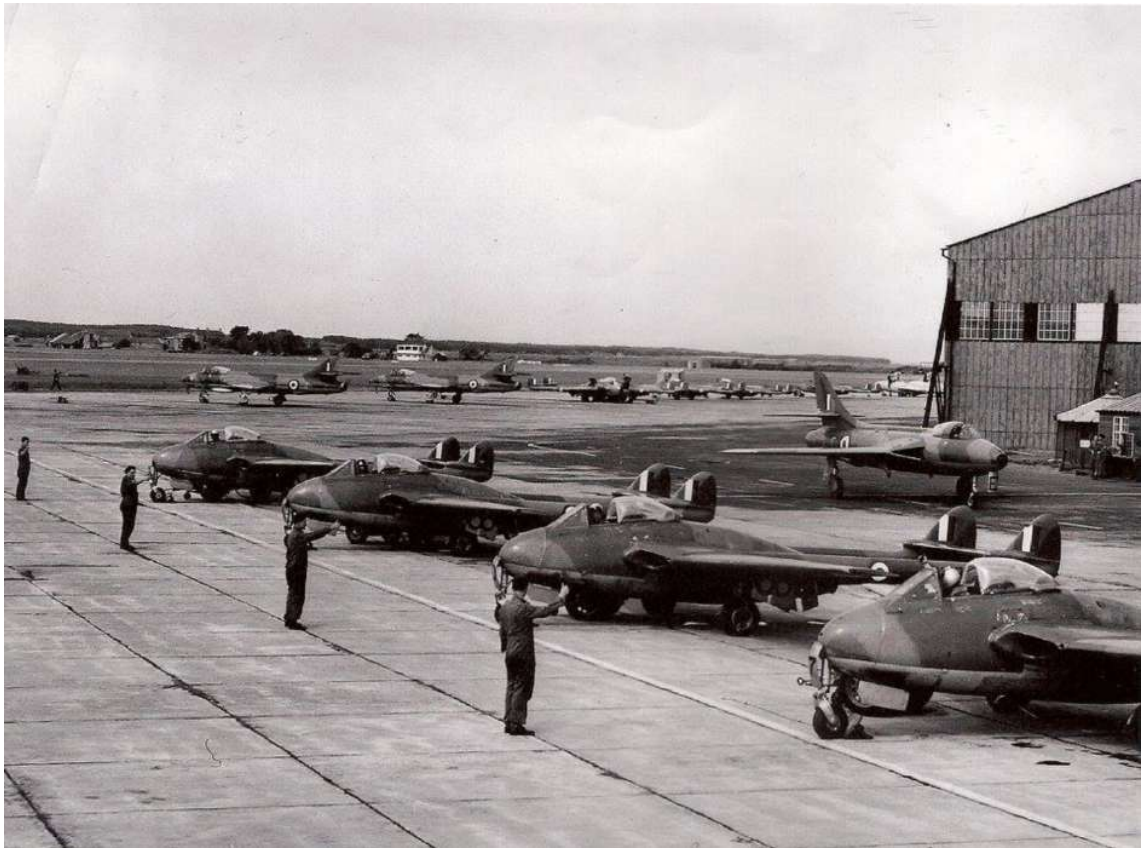
Life at RAF Pembrey After the War

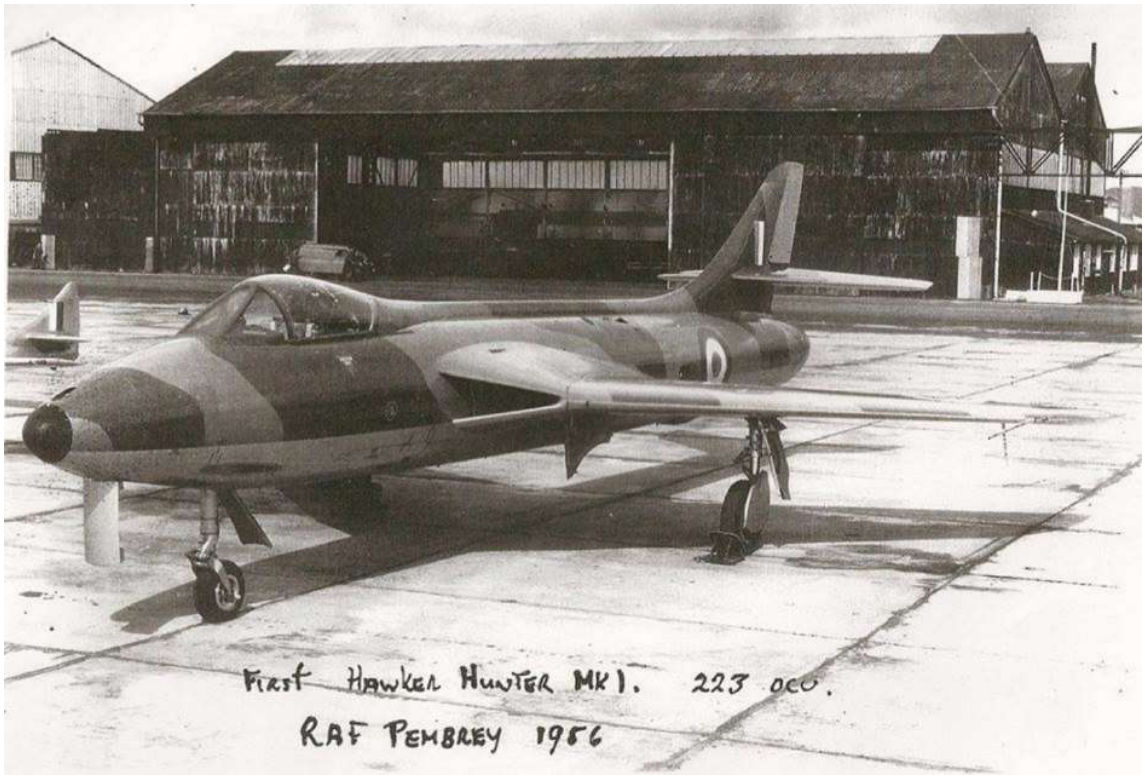
With the end of World War II, RAF Pembrey took on a new role. While the urgency of wartime training had passed, the base remained an essential hub for military aviation, adapting to the challenges of the post-war era. Between 1945 and its closure in 1957, Pembrey continued to train pilots, test new aviation technology, and serve as a crucial part of Britain's air defence network.

Life at Pembrey evolved significantly during this time. The tense atmosphere of war gave way to a more structured and methodical approach to training. The pilots who passed through its gates were no longer preparing for immediate combat but were instead honing their skills for future conflicts and peacekeeping missions. The airfield was a place of discipline and duty but also camaraderie, where young men and women found purpose in service.

Through the lens of history, we are fortunate to gain an insight into this era, thanks to the generous contributions of local historian Michael V. Williams. His collection of photographs captures the essence of RAF Pembrey in its post-war years—the aircraft on the tarmac, the personnel going about their daily routines, and the changing landscape of a base that was adapting to peacetime operations.

These images provide a rare glimpse into a time of transition, preserving the memory of those who lived and worked at Pembrey during this final chapter in its active service.



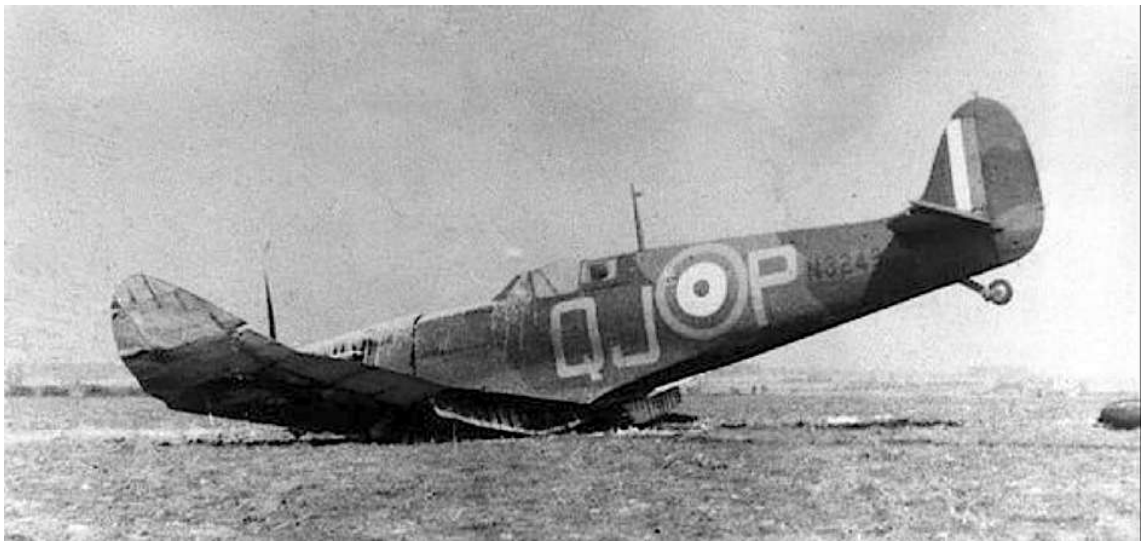


First Hawker Hunter MK1. 223 OCU.
RAF Pembrey 1956


"Wog" Sumner & self.


'Ham' RAF Publicity Shot
RAF Pembrey 1956

Ted. Grantham, John Thomas, Nick Ginger, Doug. Creighton


QJ P

The Sky Comes Alive: A Day at the RAF Pembrey Battle of Britain Week

Saturday, 15th September 1956 • 1:30 PM to 6:00 PM

The crisp autumn air over **RAF Pembrey** hummed with anticipation as crowds gathered for the **Battle of Britain Week at Home** event. The souvenir programme, priced at *1/-* (with all proceeds supporting RAF Charities), promised a thrilling spectacle—and the pilots were ready to deliver. The year was 1956, a time when jet engines roared into the future, yet the legacy of wartime heroes still soared in the skies.

The Flying Display Programme

1. **Hawker "Hunter" – High-Speed Opening**
   Time: 2:30 PM
   The display erupted to life as **four Hunters** from Pembrey streaked across the sky in a thunderous, low-level fly-past. Their sleek frames glinted in the sunlight, setting the tone for the day.

2. **Gloster "Meteor" – Aerobatics**
   A lone **Meteor**, usually tasked with target towing, took centre stage. Piloted by a Pembrey instructor, it twisted and rolled, demonstrating the agility of Britain's first operational jet fighter.

3. **Hawker "Sea Hawk" – Naval Fly-Past**
   Eight **Royal Navy Sea Hawks** thundered overhead in perfect formation, their naval blue silhouettes passing swiftly—gone as quickly as they arrived.

4. **De Havilland "Venom" – Speed Demon**
   A **night-fighter Venom** showcased its dual nature: slow, precise manoeuvres followed by a sudden burst of speed, leaving trails of awe in its wake.

5. **Boulton-Paul "Balliol" – Piston Power**
   The **Balliol**, a piston-engine trainer, defied expectations with a graceful aerobatic routine, proving that propellers still had a place in the jet age.

6. **Avro "Lancaster" – Bomber Tribute**
   Three **Lancaster's**, the legendary bombers of WWII, flew in solemn formation. The crowd fell quiet—many remembered the "Dam Busters" and the thousand-bomber raids that changed history.

7. **Air Race – Pembrey's Grand Prix**
   A thrilling **four-aircraft race** featuring a **Balliol, Vampire, Meteor, and Hunter** tore through the skies. The course: Pembrey → Worms Head → Fairwood Common → Pembrey. Two laps, handicaps adjusted—the Hunter's speed versus the Vampire's agility made for a nail-biting finish.

8. **Westland-Sikorsky "Dragonfly" – Helicopter Rescue**
   The **Dragonfly** helicopter, a marvel of versatility, demonstrated rescue techniques before surprising the crowd with playful manoeuvres—hovering, spinning, and even "dancing" mid-air.

9. **De Havilland "Vampire" – Aerobatic Solo**
   A Pembrey instructor flung the **Vampire** through loops and rolls, its distinctive twin-boom design slicing through the clouds with precision.

10. **Gloster "Meteor" – Formation Drill**
    Four Meteors, flown by Pembrey's finest, performed a synchronized aerial ballet—tight turns, crossovers, and a heart-stopping near-miss pass.

11. **Percival "Provost" – Trainer's Triumph**
    The **Provost**, the RAF's elementary trainer, proved its worth with a spirited aerobatic display, endearing itself to the crowd.

12. De Havilland "Sea Venom" – Naval Precision
Four **Royal Navy Sea Venoms** roared past in flawless formation, their delta wings cutting a sharp profile against the sky.

13. **Hawker "Hunter" – Supersonic Spectacle**
A lone **Hunter**, piloted by a Pembrey instructor, unleashed a blistering aerobatic routine. The announcer's voice crackled: "*Remember—this aircraft can break the sound barrier!*"

14. Short "Sunderland" – Flying Boat Drama

Three **Sunderland** flying boats lumbered into view, their hulls skimming the air. Then—a gasp—as they shut down engines mid-flight, gliding effortlessly on remaining power.

15. English Electric "Canberra" – Bomber's Climb

The **Canberra**, a sleek light bomber, stunned with a vertical climb after takeoff, its engines screaming defiance at gravity.

16. Gloster "Javelin" – Secret Star

The **Javelin**, still on the "secret list," performed high-speed twists before slowing to a near-hover—a rare glimpse of Britain's cutting-edge interceptor.

17. Hawker "Hunter" – Formation Finale

Four Hunters returned, this time in a diamond formation, executing high-speed passes and splits that left vapour trails streaking the sky.

18. Bristol "Britannia" – Height Contest

The **Britannia**, a new troop/civil transport, cruised past—its altitude the subject of a crowd guessing game (with prizes detailed on page 21 of the programme).

19. Vickers "Valiant" – Cold War Icon

The display closed with the **Valiant**, Bomber Command's thermonuclear bomber, gliding low and slow—its "sinister gracefulness" a stark reminder of the era's tensions.

Epilogue: A Day to Remember

As the last engine faded, the crowd erupted in applause. The 1956 RAF Pembrey Flying Display had delivered—a mix of nostalgia, cutting-edge technology, and sheer spectacle. Pilots waved from cockpits, children clutched programme sheets as souvenirs, and veterans nodded approvingly at the Lancasters' tribute.

"*Should weather prevent flying, alternative displays are arranged,*" the programme had warned. But on this day, the skies had cooperated—and history had taken flight.

—The End—

(Note: This story is based on the extracted programme from the 1956 RAF Pembrey Flying Display. While the event details are factual, some narrative flourishes have been added for immersion.)

As the war ended and peace settled over Britain once more, RAF Pembrey continued its mission, training pilots for future conflicts until its closure in 1957. By then, its runways had seen thousands of men come and go—some to glory, some to tragedy, all to history. Today, little remains of the airfield's wartime presence. The echoes of aircraft engines have long since faded, the control towers stand silent, but the stories remain. They are found in the memories of those who trained there, in the families of those who never came home, and in the skies where once, the heroes of Pembrey took flight.

Today, the quiet landscapes around Pembrey stand as silent witnesses to their sacrifices. Though the roar of aircraft has long faded, the memory of those who served and trained at RAF Pembrey remains etched in the heart of the community and the nation.

The Legacy of RAF Pembrey

There was a time when the skies above Carmarthenshire roared with the sound of engines, when young men took to the air with dreams of defending their country, and when the land beneath them bore witness to both triumph and tragedy. This was RAF Pembrey—a place of learning, sacrifice, and quiet heroism.

As war loomed in 1937, Britain knew that victory would depend on the skill of its airmen. RAF Pembrey was born out of that need—a training ground where raw recruits would be transformed into the fighter and bomber pilots who would take the fight to the enemy. For many who arrived, the airfield was their first step into an unknown world. Young men, often fresh out of school, found themselves standing on its runways, staring up at the machines that would soon carry them skyward. The thrill of flight was intoxicating, but behind it lay the harsh reality of war. Each flight brought new lessons, new challenges—and for some, their final moments.

The instructors at RAF Pembrey were seasoned men, many of whom had already faced combat. They knew that every lesson could mean the difference between survival and death. Their voices, firm yet steady, guided their students through the intricacies of aerial combat, navigation, and emergency landings. Flight Sergeant James Davies, a veteran instructor, once recalled watching a young cadet struggle to land his aircraft during a crosswind. "You wanted to run out there, wave him off, tell him to try again—but you had to let them learn. That was the hardest part. Some of them, you never saw again after that day."

The aircraft themselves—Tiger Moths, Miles Masters, Spitfires—were both teachers and taskmasters. They punished mistakes harshly. Engine failures, misjudged landings, and mid-air collisions were an ever-present threat. The men who perished in training never fired a shot in anger, yet they gave their lives just the same. Their sacrifice was just as vital, their courage just as great.

Not all who served at Pembrey climbed into a cockpit, but each played their part. The mechanics worked through cold nights, their fingers numb as they tightened bolts and checked fuel lines. The radio operators, the medical staff, the cooks—each one contributed to the war effort in their own way. Mary Llewelyn, a nurse stationed at Pembrey, recalled the weight of her role. "You did what you could, but sometimes it wasn't enough. You'd see a young lad carried in after a crash, and you knew, just by the way they looked at you, that they were scared. You held their hand; told them they'd be alright—even when you weren't sure they would be."

As we reflect on the tragic losses sustained around RAF Pembrey during World War II, it is important to remember that not all sacrifices were made in combat. The airmen who lost their lives during training exercises, often far from the front lines, played an essential role in the success of the Allied war effort. Their dedication, perseverance, and bravery ensured that those who went on to fight in battle were well-prepared and ready to defend their country.

These men, who gave their lives in service to a cause larger than themselves, are remembered not just for the tragedy of their loss but for the vital part they played in the overall victory. The lessons learned from these accidents helped refine the skills of future airmen and ultimately contributed to the success of Britain's air defence.

As the war ended and peace settled over Britain once more, RAF Pembrey continued its mission, training pilots for future conflicts until its closure in 1957. By then, its runways had seen thousands of men come and go—some to glory, some to tragedy, all to history. Today, little remains of the airfield's wartime presence. The echoes of aircraft engines have long since faded, the control towers stand silent, but the stories remain. They are found in the memories of those who trained there, in the families of those who never came home, and in the skies where once, the heroes of Pembrey took flight.

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900 Years of Kidwelly: The Final Reflection

As we close these pages on nine centuries of Kidwelly's military history, we are left not with a sense of finality, but with a profound realisation of continuity. This "stubborn, glorious town" we walk through today is the collective sum of every shield raised, every aircraft tracked, and every name carved into the local stone. It is a place where the echoes of the past are never truly silent.From the warrior spirit of Gwenllian which still lingers in the town's defiant character—to the silent Cold War sentinels who once kept watch beneath our fields, the story of Kidwelly is one of perpetual readiness and quiet resilience.

We have seen how this community served as a crucible for global liberation and a sanctuary for those displaced by the horrors of war. It has played a role far larger than its geographical size might suggest, proving that local history is often the very foundation of global events.

Kidwelly's military past is not a distant, dusty archive; it is a living legacy that still vibrates beneath our feet. The shadows of the castle walls fall over the same ground where children now play and families build their futures, often unaware that they are the latest caretakers of a nine-century vigil. The "continuous thread" mentioned at the beginning of this journey remains unbroken.As the sun sets over the Gwendraeth, illuminating the fortress that once served as a weapon of conquest and later a symbol of endurance, we remember those who marched to foreign fields and those who stood watch at home.

Their sacrifice has shaped the freedom of our present and provides the permission for us to write our own chapters in Kidwelly's enduring story.

Nine hundred years of history is a heavy mantle, but Kidwelly carries it with the steady, ordinary grace of a town that has always known how to stand its ground. We honor those who came before us, knowing that while the nature of conflict may change, the spirit of this place remains constant.

Virtue Lives On After Death

https://tinyurl.com/Kidwelly-Military-Heritage