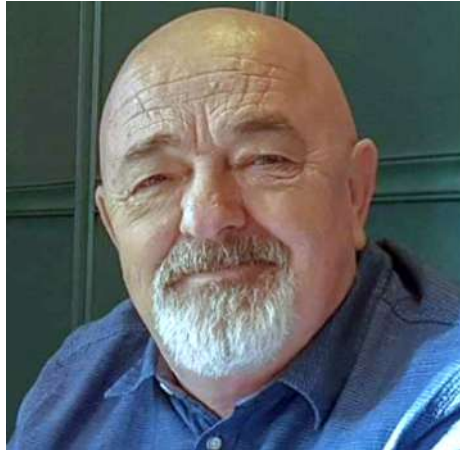


900 Years of Kidwelly



Graham Tudor Emmanuel



I am a dedicated historical researcher and digital curator; I am passionate about preserving and sharing our past's rich tapestry. My work involves uncovering historical data from sources such as archaeological reports and books and curating it into comprehensive digital formats. By integrating maps, images, and interactive elements, I create immersive experiences that allow individuals to explore history in a personal and engaging way.

My research spans a diverse range of subjects, including religious sites, World War I and II memorials, RAF crash sites, local history, and family heritage. Through meticulous linking of specific items, I strive to bring history to life, enabling meaningful and interactive connections with the past.

To support my research, I utilise a variety of technologies, including mobile phone applications for scanning historical documents, AI tools for editing and translation, and specialized apps for documenting grave memorials and collecting historical data during site visits. I share my findings through platforms like Findagrave and Ancestry, aiding others in connecting with their heritage and uncovering valuable information. Additionally, I create custom Google My Maps that complement specific topics, providing an interactive and visual exploration of historical locations and events.

While my approach to historical research embraces modern technology, a departure from traditional methods, I believe it is essential for making history accessible and engaging. I am committed to leveraging digital tools to share historical treasures with a wider audience, as exemplified by my contributions to The People's Collection of Wales.

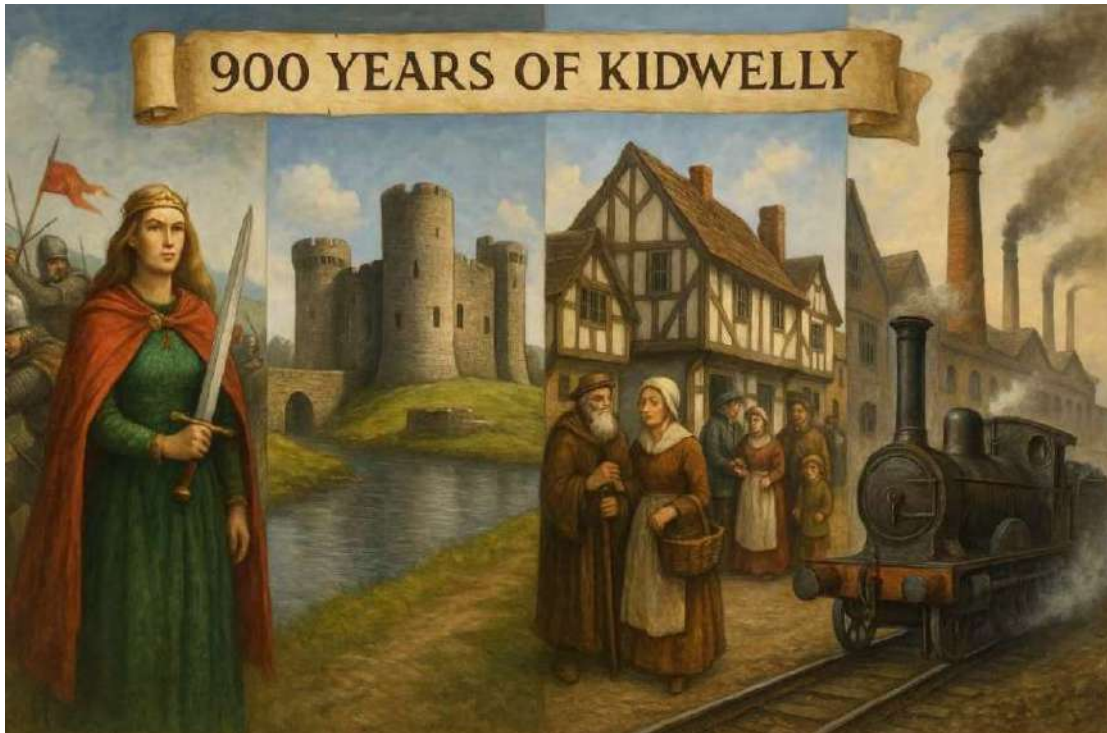
Through my work, I aim to inspire others to explore and engage with the past in new and immersive ways.

<https://tinyurl.com/Graham-T-Emmanuel-Profile>



Cydweli–Kidwelly

A Journey Through Nine Centuries of Welsh History



"Kidwelly's 900-year story unfolds beneath the shadow of its Norman castle—where Princess Gwenllian's defiant stand in 1136 still echoes across Maes Gwenllian.

From medieval market town to industrial hub, Kidwelly has weathered conquest, commerce, and coal, emerging as a proud symbol of Welsh resilience and heritage."

<https://tinyurl.com/900-Years-Kidwelly-Master>



900 Years of Kidwelly: A Personal Reflection

When I walk through the streets of Kidwelly, I don't just see a town I feel its history in the stones, the fields, the chapel walls, and the air itself. It's a place that has quietly carried the weight of 900 years of human struggle, triumph, loss, and resilience. And for me, uncovering that history hasn't just been a project it's been a journey of connection, identity, and discovery.

I wasn't always drawn to history. In fact, it began with a simple question one that led me down a path I couldn't have imagined. From researching a wartime plane crash to stumbling upon the stories of Polish airmen in Pembrey, I found myself looking closer to home. That's when Kidwelly opened to me in a new way. It wasn't just a place I lived near—it became a story I felt I had a responsibility to tell.

But to truly understand Kidwelly, I realized I had to look back even further than the castle walls back to the very dawn of the Welsh spirit. Long before the first Norman stone was laid, there was **St Teilo**. In the mid-500s AD, while the Roman world was crumbling into myth, Teilo walked these ridges and marshlands. He wasn't just a figure from a stained-glass window; he was a leader who stood at the edge of the Gwendraeth Fach, establishing the "Llan" at sites like Mynydd y Garreg and the now-lost Capel Teilo.



His presence is the "first layer" of our story a 1,500-year-old echo that still vibrates in the holy springs and the ancient circular churchyards. He taught us how to endure through the "Yellow Plague" and how to find sanctuary in the landscape. When we talk about the resilience of Kidwelly, we are really talking about a tradition that Teilo began when this was still a wild, untamed frontier.

As I explored the names on the memorials in St Mary's Church, I began to wonder: who were these people? What lives did they lead? I realized many in Kidwelly walk past these markers every day, unaware of the depth of history beneath their feet. And that's what drove me to look further back—not just to the wars, but to the beginning.

To Gwenllian ferch Gruffydd, a warrior princess who led a Welsh army into battle here in 1136. Her story tragic, brave, and fiercely human made me feel something deeper about this place. And it didn't end there. From the power of the Norman castle to the rise of coal and tin that fuelled the industrial age, to the religious revivals that stirred the hearts of ordinary people, Kidwelly has played a part in nearly every chapter of Welsh history.

What strikes me most is how much of this history is hidden in plain sight. The castle still towers over the town, but few know how many times it changed hands. The chapels still stand, though their pews may be empty. The industrial sites are quieter now, but they were once full of life and purpose.

So, this isn't just an article series it's a reflection on what we inherit, and what we owe to the people who came before us. **From the wandering 6th-century saint to the 20th-century airman**, I hope, as you read through the story of Kidwelly, you'll come to see, as I have, that history isn't something in books or behind glass. It's here. It's ours. And it's still being written.

St Teilo: A Light in the Early Dawn of Welsh Faith

A Kidwelly Moment in Time



Long before Kidwelly's castle cast its shadow across the Gwendraeth, before Gwenllian's courage echoed across the hills, and centuries before tinsplate smoke curled above the valley, Wales was shaped by quieter hands. These were the saints who walked the land when our history was still being written in whispers rather than stone. Among them was St. Teilo, whose feast day we mark on 9 February. Though he lived nearly fifteen centuries ago, his story still threads through our landscape reaching even to the Mission Church at Mynydd y Garreg. There, his name rests gently on the chapel sign, a reminder that faith here is older than any fortress.

Teilo was born around AD 500 in a Wales without castles, borough charters, or market squares. Roman rule had faded, leaving behind scattered kingdoms trying to find their footing in a world that felt both fragile and full of possibility. Into this uncertainty stepped a generation of remarkable leaders. Teilo was shaped at Llantwit Major, the great monastic "university" of St. Illtud. There, he studied alongside giants of the faith: David (Dewi Sant), his cousin; Samson; and Padarn. They were not yet icons then—just young men learning how to guide a people searching for meaning in the ruins of an old empire.

His journey carried him across South Wales, stitching together the early fabric of the Welsh church. Llandeilo Fawr bears his name still, as does Llandaff, where he served as one of the earliest bishops. More than twenty-five churches across Wales and Brittany honour him a map of footsteps left across a land learning to pray in its own tongue. These were not grand cathedrals but *llanau* simple, enclosed communities where faith grew from the ground up. In that sense, Teilo's world feels closer to the humble spirit of Mynydd y Garreg than to the great medieval structures that came later.

When the *Pestis Flava* the Great Yellow Plague swept through Britain, Teilo acted as a true shepherd. To save his community, he led them to Brittany (Armorica). Tradition says he stayed for seven years, famously planting a three-mile-long grove of fruit trees with St. Samson, known as the "Bosc Teilo." When he returned to Wales, he found a wounded land. Communities had been thinned and confidence shaken. Teilo's homecoming became a moment of healing a quiet rebuilding after a storm. It is a pattern Kidwelly knows well: fall, rebuild, endure.

Like many early saints, Teilo's life is draped in wonder. He is often depicted with a bell, said to have miraculous healing powers, or riding a bell-collared stag. The most famous legend occurred upon his death. It is said his body miraculously tripled so that three different churches Llandaff, Llandeilo, and Penally could all claim his relics. While we might view this as folklore, the poetic truth is clear: his influence was too large to be held by one place alone.

Teilo died around AD 570, but his legacy is not confined to the vellum of ancient manuscripts. It lives in the rhythms of Welsh tradition and the quiet mission church at Mynydd y Garreg a place where faith is still shaped not by grandeur, but by community. In a town like Kidwelly, where history is often told through battles and sieges, Teilo reminds us that not all foundations are built of rock. Some are built of learning, compassion, and the steady work of guiding people through uncertain times. Long before Kidwelly's 900-year secular story began, St. Teilo helped shape the spiritual landscape that would cradle it.

The Sacred Footprints: St Teilo's Legacy in the Landscape

To look for St Teilo in the landscape of modern Wales is to look for a foundation that predates almost everything we see. Before the stone keeps of the Normans and the vaulted arches of the great abbeys, there was the *Llan* the humble, enclosed sanctuary where the spirit of the Celtic church first took root.

The sites gathered here represent a "sacred geography." They follow the path of a man who was a scholar, a survivor of plague, and a founding father of the Welsh identity. From his birthplace in the coastal air of Penally to his great seat at Llandaff, and into the quiet, local corners of Kidwelly and Mynydd y Garreg, these locations are more than just ruins or parish churches. They are the markers of a 1,500-year-old conversation between a people and their faith.

As you explore these sites, you will find a recurring pattern: holy wells that offered healing, hilltop chapels that acted as beacons, and "mission" churches that prove Teilo's legacy was never trapped in the past but continues to breathe in the communities of today. Whether standing by the "lost" stones of Capel Teilo or the living altar at Llandeilo Fawr, you are walking where the dawn of Welsh history began.

St. Teilo's Mission Church, Mynydd y Garreg

If Kidwelly Castle is the town's stone fist clenched against centuries of siege, rebellion, and rule then the Mission Church at Mynydd y Garreg is its quiet, enduring heart. Raised in the Victorian era to serve the quarrymen and hill farmers of the ridge, this modest sanctuary carries a name that refuses to fade: **Teilo**.

Though the present building is a Mission foundation, its roots reach far deeper into the soil of memory. In the medieval period, Kidwelly's spiritual landscape was a mosaic of chapels, wells, and sacred places. While the great church of St Mary watched over the borough below, the people of the mountain turned to their own place of prayer. Among those lost foundations stood **Capel Teilo** vanished in stone, but not in significance. The Mission Church is its inheritor, a living successor that affirms this community was shaped not only by labour and endurance, but by a devotion stretching back over fifteen centuries.

Teilo's presence here is no coincidence. He was among the foremost architects of early Welsh Christianity: bishop, teacher, healer, and organiser of communities. His influence extended from Llandeilo Fawr to Llandaff, and outward across the wider Celtic world. His feast day, **9 February**, still marks the church's rhythm of remembrance, where bilingual worship honours not only his faith, but the Welsh language through which he helped knit an emerging church and people together.

This is not a relic behind glass. It is a living place. The Mission Church remains a sanctuary where prayer is spoken in two tongues, where history is not confined to plaques or archives but carried forward in weekly gatherings, shared remembrance, and quiet acts of care. It stands as a reminder that history is not written solely in castles, charters, or conflicts but in continuity, belonging, and the faith of ordinary people.

And perhaps this is the truest measure of Teilo's legacy: that in a town shaped by conquest, industry, and change, his name still shelters the mountain folk; that on this ridge above Kidwelly, the church endures not as a monument to the past, but as a promise carried forward.

The Sacred Geography of St Teilo: A Legacy Across Two Nations



The story of St Teilo is the story of a civilization in transition. Living in the 6th century the vibrant "Age of Saints" Teilo was far more than a monk; he was a master of the *Llan*, a pioneer of diplomacy, and a symbol of cultural survival. His legacy remains etched into the very bedrock of Wales and Brittany, marking a time when faith was the only bridge between the ruins of the Roman Empire and the dawn of the medieval world.

Teilo's influence was defined by his ability to lead through crisis. Whether navigating the terrors of the "Yellow Plague" or the expansion of Saxon kingdoms, he established centres of learning and sanctuary that have endured for over a millennium. To follow the pins on this map is to trace the footsteps of a man who transformed the rugged coasts of Pembrokeshire and the marshes of the Gwendraeth into a sanctified, organized geography. From the "Alpha" of his birth at Penally to the "Beta" of his exile in Brittany, this map reveals a 1,500-year-old trail of resilience that still breathes today.

<https://tinyurl.com/St-Teilo-Legacy-Kidwelly>



Cydweli – Our Kidwelly: A Living Legacy

Look around you. The same river that once carried Norman longships still flows past our castle walls. The same stones that echoed with Gwennllian's defiance now hear our children's laughter. Kidwelly isn't just a place where history happened—it's where our story lives.



That hulking silhouette of Kidwelly Castle isn't just a tourist postcard. It's our fortress. Every time we pass it, we walk in the footsteps of giants—like Gwenllian ferch Gruffudd, the warrior princess who dared to challenge an empire here in 1136. They say her last breath near these walls became the first breath of Welsh resistance. Her memorial isn't just a plaque; it's a challenge to remember who we are.

And oh, how we've answered that challenge! When the Industrial Revolution roared through Wales, Kidwelly didn't just watch—we built. Our great-grandparents' sweat turned riverbanks into tinsplate workshops, their calloused hands fuelling an empire of steel. You can still feel that grit in the air near the old works, where the ghosts of industry whisper: "We made something here."

This town's magic. It's not frozen in time. It's in the way castle shadows stretch across schoolyards, how the smell of the Gwendraeth mixes with chip shop vinegar, and why a rugby match at Mynydd-y-Garreg feels like a bard's tale. Kidwelly's past isn't behind glass—it's the ground we stand on, waiting for us to add our chapter.

St. Mary's and the Soul of Our Town



At the heart of Kidwelly, where the centuries kneel in quiet reverence, St. Mary's Church stands as more than stone and stained glass—it's the keeper of our collective memory. For 700 years, its spire has watched over us like a steadfast sentinel, bearing witness to every chapter of our story: the clash of swords, the roar of furnaces, and the whispered prayers of generations. This is where we've christened our children, buried our loved ones, and sung our hopes into the Welsh sky.

St. Mary's Church in Kidwelly stands as a monument to centuries of faith and architectural evolution. Its origins trace back to pre-conquest times when it was likely dedicated to St. Cadog. By the medieval period, it had become part of the Deanery of Kidwelly, and between 1107 and 1115, it was granted to the Benedictines of Sherborne Abbey, transforming into a priory.



Despite its monastic status, the priory remained humble, with records from 1377 noting only a single monk in residence. Its dissolution in 1539 marked the transfer of its patronage to the Crown, but the church itself endured, its stones whispering tales of resilience.

The present church rises from the foundations of an earlier structure, possibly a temporary building erected after Prince Llewelyn's destruction of Kidwelly in 1222. Unlike many monastic sites, St. Mary's survived the suppression of the monasteries, echoing the fates of Brecon and Monkton priory churches in the Diocese of St. David's.

Dedicated to St. Mary, the church is a masterpiece of the Decorated Gothic style, its grandeur earning it a Grade I listing and the distinction of being the largest parish church in southwest Wales.

Architecturally, St. Mary's is a study in harmony and adaptation. The original 13th-century church was lost to fire, and the current structure, built primarily in the mid-14th century, showcases intricate detailing like ballflowers and wave mouldings. The nave served as the parish church, while the chancel functioned as the monastic priory.

The tower, added around 1400, is among the earliest in the region, its imposing presence a testament to the skill of medieval masons. Over the centuries, restorations have carefully preserved its character, such as the 1884 renovation that introduced a new font, pews, and belfry clock.



Sir George Gilbert Scott's 1854 report offers fascinating insights into the church's design. He noted the nave's unusual 33-foot span, the absence of aisles, and the elegant simplicity of its transepts and spire. Scott argued persuasively that the entire church, despite stylistic variations, was likely constructed in a single campaign during the early 14th century.

The tower's lancet windows, for instance, reflect not an earlier epoch but a deliberate austerity, possibly due to budgetary constraints. Inside, the vaulted lower story of the tower and the nave's bold arches speak to a unified vision, while the chancel's flowing tracery adds a touch of refinement. Within the church, history lingers in every corner.

Four staircases wind through the walls, their purposes as varied as the rituals they once facilitated access to rostrums, the rood loft, or even an anchoret's cell. The chancel arch, unusually low, hints at the presence of a now-lost rood loft above. Six sepulchral recesses, some empty and others holding 15th-century effigies, line the walls, their silent occupants a reminder of the generations who have passed through these doors.

A mutilated but exquisite alabaster Virgin and Child, once venerated in a niche above the south porch, now awaits restoration in the sacristy, its survival a small miracle of preservation.

The church's treasures extend beyond its architecture 1552 inventory lists silver chalices, a censer, and four bells, though only a splendid Elizabethan chalice from 1574 remains today. The parish registers, dating back to 1626 with earlier Latin excerpts, offer glimpses into the lives of Kidwelly's inhabitants, including a poignant 1481 entry lamenting the steeple's collapse during a storm.

Later restorations, like the 1884 repairs after lightning struck the tower and the 1902 recasting of the bells, underscore the community's enduring stewardship. Today, St. Mary's stands not just as a place of worship but as a chronicle in stone—a bridge between Norman ambition and Gothic artistry, between monastic solitude and parish vitality.

Its spire, rising defiantly against the Welsh sky, invites visitors to step inside and trace the echoes of a thousand years.

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 tinsplate 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 Gwennlian. Her spirit lingers not just in Maes Gwennlian'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 Llŵchwr 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 Llŵchwr 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 Gwenllïan 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 Llŵchwr 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, Gwenllïan—a figure who would come to hold a profound place in Welsh memory.

Encouraged by the success at Llŵchwr, Gwenllïan 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. Gwenllïan 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, Gwenllïan'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 Llŵchwr gave hope to a people under pressure, inspired Gwenllïan'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 Llŵchwr 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.

Llŵchwr 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 Llŵchwr 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, Gwenllïan'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.

[Graham T Emmanuel 2026](#)

Kidwelly under Siege, 1403



**SIEGE OF KIDWELLY CASTLE
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.

The Battlefields Beneath Our Feet

What's extraordinary isn't that these battles happened—it's that their echo thrums through Kidwelly still:

In our **stubbornness**—the same fierce refusal to yield that burned in Gwenllïan lives on in every fight to save a library, a leisure centre, a way of life.

In our **loyalty**—like Maredudd, we might grumble amongst ourselves, but let an outsider threaten one of ours, and you'll feel the old, unbreakable pull of Welsh kinship.

In our very **land**—those "Historic Field" signs aren't just for show. The soil remembers. Plough a field near the castle and you'll still turn the past over with the sod: an arrowhead, a nail, a fragment of time.

So next time you're waiting at the traffic lights by the castle, look past the cars. See it: Norman sentries peering into the torch-lit valley. Welsh warriors, silent, wading the moon-silvered river. Seven centuries collapse into a single, breathless heartbeat.

This is why we keep telling these stories—not to live in the past, but to remember the metal we're made of. In Kidwelly, history isn't confined to books. It's the ground we walk on and the fire in our bellies. And God knows, we'll need that fire for whatever battles lie ahead.

1757: When the Granaries Broke



The summer of 1757 brought more than sunshine to our quiet market town. Beneath the hum of trade and the clatter of carts, something was stirring. Britain was deep in the Seven Years' War, and the cost of conflict was being paid not just in distant fields, but in the bellies of ordinary people. Grain prices soared. Families tightened belts. And in Kidwelly, patience snapped.

It began with whispers that merchants were hoarding oats, that farmers were selling outside the district while neighbours went hungry. Then came the crowds. Colliers, forgers, labourers. They didn't come to burn. They came to demand justice. And when the granaries wouldn't open, they broke them.

A hundred quarters of oats. Barley. Oatmeal. Taken not in greed, but in desperation. The next day, the protest spread to Carmarthen, where the mayor — wise to the mood — calmed the crowd with promises and price controls. Seven Kidwelly men were sent to gaol. But the riot had already made its mark.

This wasn't chaos. It was a cry for fairness. What historians now call the "moral economy" — the belief that communities have a right to regulate survival when the system fails them. The people of Kidwelly weren't rebels. They were regulators. They didn't loot. They corrected.

Magistrates knew this. They read the Riot Act, yes. But they didn't crush the movement. Only a few were punished, and even then, the sentences were light. Most returned to their homes once the grain flowed again. The law had flexed, not snapped. And in that moment, a tradition was born.

Because Kidwelly remembered. And when the Rebecca Riots swept through south-west Wales nearly a century later, the echoes were unmistakable. Once again, the poor rose up — not with slogans, but with purpose. This time, it was tollgates. But the spirit was the same. Collective action. Targeted protest. A demand for fairness when fairness had fled.

Rebecca's daughters didn't invent resistance. They inherited it. From places like Kidwelly. From moments like 1757. From the belief that when the granaries are locked and the tollgates rise, the people will find a way to speak.

So when we walk past the old storehouses, or read the faded court records, we're not just looking at history. We're looking at a heartbeat. A moment when Kidwelly stood up not to fight, but to be heard. And it was.

From Granaries to Tollgates: The Long Echo of Protest



When the Rebecca Riots swept across south-west Wales between 1839 and 1843, the cries of protest were not new. They were echoes shaped by memory, sharpened by hardship, and rooted in a tradition that stretched back to places like Kidwelly.

Nearly a century earlier, in 1757, our town had already shown what collective action could look like. Faced with rising grain prices and wartime scarcity, the people of Kidwelly didn't riot for chaos they rose for fairness. They broke open granaries not to steal, but to feed their families. They demanded a "just price," believing that food was not just a commodity, but a right.

Rebecca's followers carried that same torch. Their battle was against tollgates — symbols of economic burden that choked the roads and drained the pockets of farmers and labourers. But

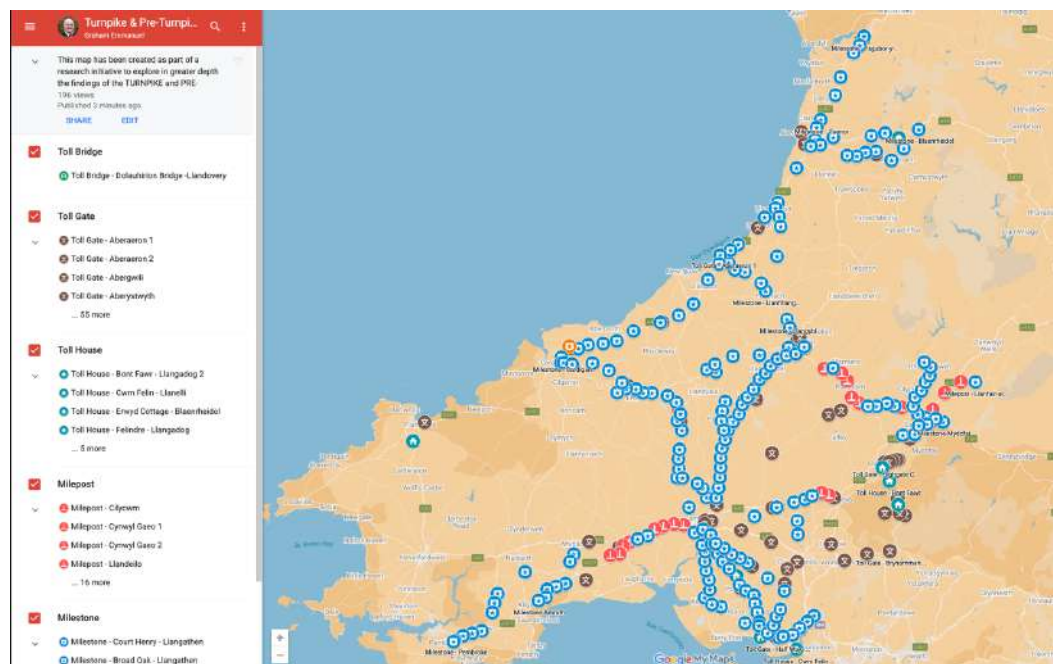
like the Kidwelly rioters, they acted together, targeted injustice, and justified their actions through shared moral conviction, not political ideology.

The methods were strikingly familiar. In 1757, the people regulated grain. In the 1840s, they regulated tolls. Both movements emerged when official systems failed, and communities stepped in to restore balance. Both were grounded in what historians call the **moral economy** a belief that fairness must be defended, even if the law lags behind.

Seen through this lens, the Kidwelly riots were not an isolated flare of anger. They were the first verse in a longer song of resistance. From food shortages to tollgates, the people of rural Wales showed again and again that when livelihoods are threatened, collective action becomes both a shield and a signal.

And Kidwelly was there at the beginning not just watching history unfold, but helping to write it and it did.

Turnpike & Pre-Turnpike Map



As part of this journey through Kidwelly's past, I've created a living map one that traces the bones of our old transport network, from tollgates and turnpikes to milestones and forgotten toll houses. It's not just a visual aid. It's a tool for understanding how movement shaped memory, and how the roads we travelled were never just about distance they were about access, control, and community.

<https://tinyurl.com/DAT-2014-Report-Map>



The map is structured around five key categories:

- **Toll Bridges** — like Dolauhirion Bridge near Llandovery, where trade once crossed the water.
- **Toll Gates** — over fifty marked locations, from Aberaeron to Abergwili, each a checkpoint in the daily lives of rural families
- **Toll Houses** — small but significant, these buildings once held the power to permit or deny passage.
- **Mileposts and Milestones** — scattered across the region, they marked not just miles but moments in time.

Each icon on the map represents a story — a place where someone paid, passed, protested, or paused. Together, they form a network that helps us see how the Rebecca Riots weren't just about tolls, but about the lived geography of injustice.

The map is dynamic and will continue to grow as new findings emerge. You can explore it here:

Conclusion: A Town That Remembers

The Kidwelly Riots of 1757 were never just about grain. They were about dignity, survival, and the quiet power of collective action. In a time of war and scarcity, our town didn't erupt it responded. It regulated. It remembered.

From the granaries of Kidwelly to the tollgates shattered by Rebecca's daughters, the thread of protest in rural Wales runs deep. It's a tradition not of rebellion for rebellion's sake, but of communities stepping in when systems fail guided by fairness, not fury.

And now, with the Turnpike & Pre-Turnpike map unfolding in real time, we can trace that tradition across the landscape. Each tollhouse, milestone, and gate is more than a marker — it's a witness. A reminder that history lives not just in books, but in roads, walls, and memory.

Kidwelly has always stood at the crossroads of change. And as we move into the next chapter, we carry forward the voices of those who walked before us — not just in protest, but in purpose.

Their story is ours. And it's still being written.

Acknowledgement to: - Garry Smith and Kidwelly Local History Society for the contribution to your article.

<https://www.kidwellylocalhistorysociety.org.uk/>



A HARSH AGE, A NARROW ESCAPE: KIDWELLY AND THE SHADOW OF THE BLOODY CODE



In the spring of 1757, when tempers flared in Kidwelly and a handful of townsfolk found themselves dragged before the magistrates, few among them could have understood just how narrowly they stood from the edge of ruin.

For this was the age of the **Bloody Code 1688-1830**, a time when the law bit hard and seldom let go, and when a single misstep could end a life not with a quiet reprimand but with a rope, a brand, or a ship bound for the far side of the world.

Across Britain, the courts were busy. The newspapers of the day the *Gloucester Journal* among them read like grim catalogues of human misfortune. One such report, printed not long after the Kidwelly disturbances, listed the fates of ordinary men and women with a coldness that still chills the modern reader. Eight condemned to death. Dozens more sentenced to transportation. Others whipped, pilloried, or branded before the watching crowd.

And these were not hardened villains. Some had stolen horses; others a handful of coins; one, merely a hat and wig. Yet the law of the land cared little for the scale of the offence. Property was sacred, and the punishment for violating it was often final.

It is difficult now to imagine the atmosphere of fear that hung over such proceedings. The gallows were not distant symbols but familiar landmarks. Every town knew the stories. Every child grew up hearing the warnings. And every adult understood that mercy was a rare and unpredictable visitor.

Transportation, too, was no gentle alternative. To be sentenced to seven or fourteen years was to be torn from family, home, and country, and cast into the unknown. Many never returned. Those who did came back changed, marked by distance and hardship.

Then there were the punishments meant not to kill but to shame. The pillory, where the crowd's anger became part of the sentence. The whip, cracking across the back in the marketplace.

And worst of all, the branding iron the red-hot letter pressed into the flesh, leaving a scar that no time could erase. A **T** for thief. An **F** for felon. An **M** for manslaughter. A mark that followed a person into every tavern, every hiring fair, every doorway for the rest of their days.



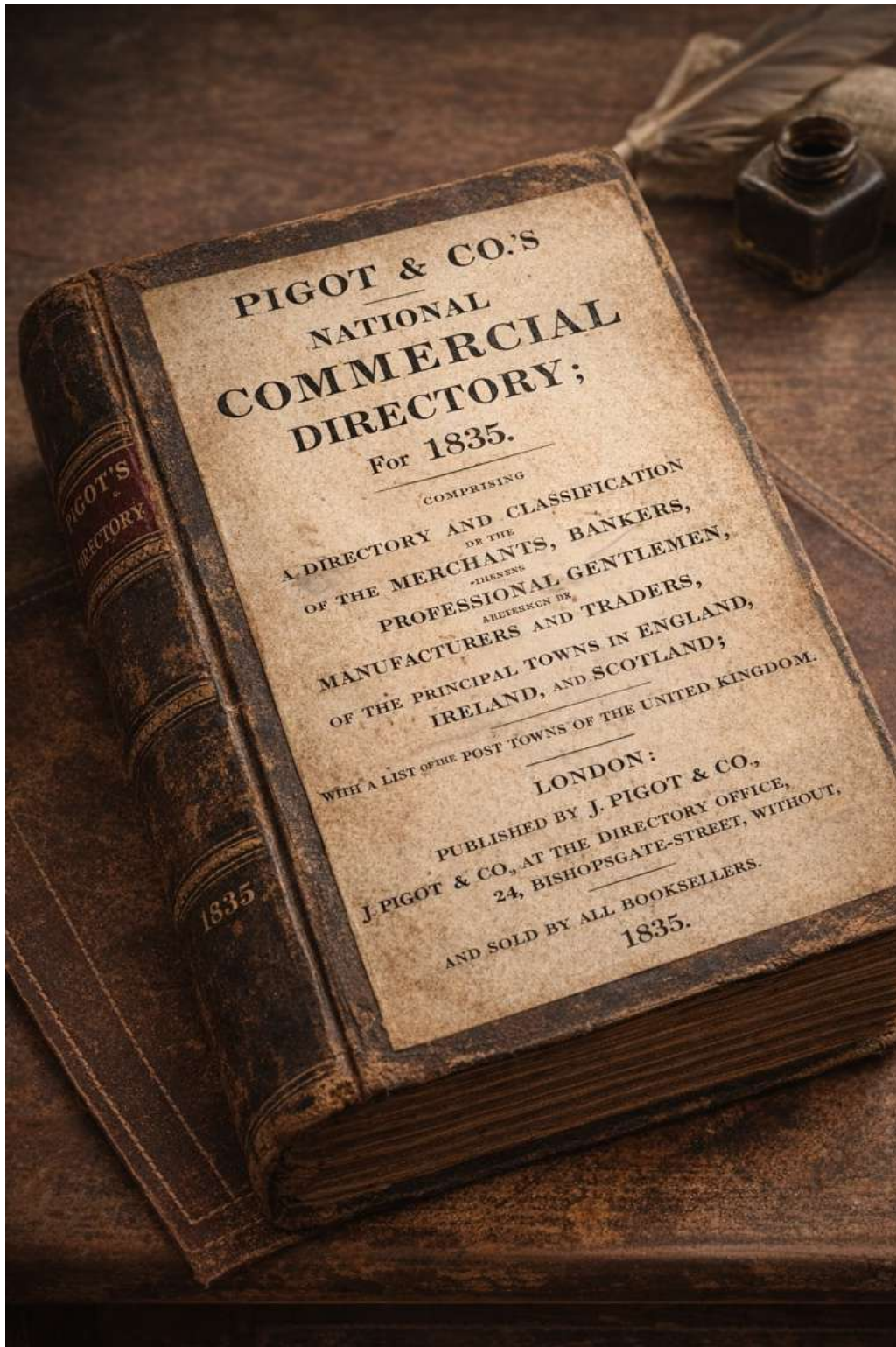
This was the world in which the Kidwelly rioters found themselves. A world where the law was sharp, and justice was often more spectacle than fairness. Yet, somehow, they escaped the worst of it. Whether through local sympathy, the good sense of the magistrates, or the simple luck of timing, they were spared the punishments that befell so many others.

Their story, when set against the wider backdrop of the Bloody Code, becomes something more than a local disturbance. It becomes a reminder of how fragile life could be in eighteenth-century Britain, and how easily a moment of anger or desperation might have ended not in a fine or a reprimand, but in a noose, a ship, or a lifelong scar.

By the end of the century, voices across the country were beginning to question the cruelty of the system. Branding fell out of favour. Transportation was reformed. The long list of capital offences began, slowly, to shrink. But in 1757, none of that was yet certain. The shadow of the Bloody Code still lay long across the land.

And Kidwelly, like every town in Britain, lived beneath it.

Kidwelly, 1835: A Town in Miniature



The ancient market town of Kidwelly presented, in 1835, a portrait of tidy self-sufficiency. Pigot's Business Directory for that year captures a community of 1,681 souls, not as a list of names, but as a living tapestry of interdependent lives—a snapshot of a Welsh town balancing its medieval heritage with the practical rhythms of the early Industrial Age.

The town's "clean and neat" principal street was the stage for a remarkably complete local economy. From the forges of blacksmiths like Isaac Bartlett Nash and the nail-maker William Griffiths, to the workshops of carpenters, tailors, and bootmakers, most daily needs were met within the town. Grocers and drapers—Ann Jones, Jane Thomas, Walter Williams—supplied households, while a constellation of taverns, from the *Pelican Inn* to the *Wheat Sheaf*, served as social hubs. The rhythms of commerce were punctuated by the weekly Friday market and the annual October fair.

Yet Kidwelly was more than just a collection of trades. It was a governed society, with a Mayor, twelve Aldermen, and a Town Clerk administering justice in regular courts. Its social fabric was woven from familiar local families—David, Nash, Maliphant, Stephens, Mansell—names that echo in the area to this day.

This structure was supported by the gentry and clergy and underscored by a clear emphasis on education and religion, with its Parish Church, dissenting chapels, and several schools including the National School under James Collins.

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The Heart of Communication: The Post Office

At the head of the directory's professional list stands a significant figure: **Ann Davids, Post Mistress**. Her prominent listing speaks volumes. In an era before telegraph or train, the post office was the town's vital synapse, connecting it to the wider world. The arrival of the London and Carmarthen mail each morning at nine was a daily event, bringing news, government dispatches, commercial orders, and personal letters.

The post office was also a commercial linchpin. Often a hub of community activity, it offered secure money orders in a time of limited banking, and through mail-order, began to widen the horizons of consumer choice. The role demanded immense trust, handling both confidential information and citizens' money. For Ann Davids, it conferred a position of public influence and respect decades before women would gain formal political rights, highlighting a rare avenue of female authority in the early 19th century.

A Town Connected

Kidwelly's outlook was far from insular. Its quay, safe for vessels up to 400 tons, connected it to coastal trade. The famed "best in the kingdom" coal from nearby Pembrey works was shipped from here to Ireland and the English West Country. Copper, lead, and local tin works hinted at industrial activity, while the daily *Picton* coach linked the town to Swansea and Carmarthen.

Pigot's Directory, in its meticulous detail, thus preserves more than a directory. It captures the essence of Kidwelly in 1835: a compact, orderly, and resilient community. It was a place where the butcher, the vicar, the mason, and the Post Mistress each played a part in a system that was both deeply local—sustained by generations of families and skilled hands—and consciously connected to the currents of trade, governance, and ideas flowing through the harbours and post-roads of Britain.

GENTRY & CLERGY

Notable Residents:

James Brogden, Esq.
Rev. Watkin Herbert
Rev. David Humphrey
Rev. David Jones
Henry Keft, Esq.
Thomas Lawfort, Esq.
Richard Maliphant, Esq.
John Morris, Esq.
Rev. Edward Picton, Iscoed
Edward Rees, Esq.
Mrs. Ann Roberts
John Roberts, Esq.
Evan Stephens, Esq.
Mr. David Williams (Surgeon)
Rev. Richard Williams

ACADEMIES AND SCHOOLS

Independent Schoolmasters:

Thomas Griffiths

John James

David Jones

Institution:

National School: Master, James Collins

POST OFFICE

Post Mistress:

Ann Davids

Postal Schedule:

Mail Arrival: From London and Carmarthen, every morning at approximately nine o'clock.

Mail Dispatch: Every afternoon at about half-past four. Thus, Pigot's Directory freezes in time a moment of poised balance for Kidwelly. It reveals a community firmly rooted in its own soil and history governed by its own mayor, sustained by its own artisans, and bound by familiar family names yet simultaneously reaching outward.

Through the letters handled by Ann Davids at the Post Office, the coal shipped from its quay, and the passengers of the daily *Picton* coach, the town was stitched into the broader fabric of a nation on the cusp of transformation. This snapshot from 1835, therefore, is more than a historical inventory; it is the portrait of a self-reliant town quietly navigating the threshold between a timeless, local way of life and the accelerating currents of the modern world.

Bricks & Grit: The Kilns That Built Industrial Wales

Let's talk about the real foundations of Kidwelly not the castle's Norman stone, but the millions of fire-baked bricks that built the Industrial Revolution in South Wales. While the tinplate works get the glory, it was our four mighty brickworks—temples of industry—that kept the furnaces of Wales burning. Walk the old sites today, and you tread on the ashes of a vanished empire of heat and sweat.

The Silica Kings

At Dinas Silica Brick and Cement Works, they didn't just make bricks; they forged the backbone of heavy industry. These weren't your garden-wall reds—these were golden-yellow silica bricks, engineered to withstand blast furnace infernos without flinching. Every ton produced here lined the bellies of Wales's iron giants, from Dowlais to Ebbw Vale. This was heat-resistant alchemy, turning Kidwelly clay into industrial gold.

A mile east, Stephens Silica Brickworks took the science further. That 1937 aerial photo in the Industrial Museum reveals a sprawling complex where men in leather aprons—if you look closely, you can still find their discarded clay pipes in the rubble—perfected bricks of such precision they were shipped to steelworks as far as Sheffield. Today, those same bricks likely still line some forgotten furnace, quietly outlasting the empires they served.

The Small Giants

Up at **Alexander Young's brickworks** near Penymynydd Farm, the game was diversification. Between 1900-1927, they didn't just fire bricks—they fed lime kilns that turned local limestone into mortar, literally cementing Kidwelly's place in Wales's building boom.

You can still spot their legacy in the brick courses of Edwardian houses across Carmarthenshire—that russet hue is Young's signature.

And let's not forget Kymer's Canal—the unsung hero. While it hauled coal to the docks by day, by night it floated barges stacked with Kidwelly bricks down to Llanelli's docks.

Every brick that rattled along those tracks was a tiny piece of Kidwelly sailing off to build docks in Cardiff, factories in Swansea, even London's Underground tunnels. The Ghost Kilns

What's left? More than you'd think:

The Dinas works' chimney still stands like a brick lighthouse, its weathered sides bearing the scars of a hundred thousand firings. Stephens' drying sheds, now home to nesting kestrels, their timber bones bleached silver by time.

The canal's stone edges, where bricklayers once sharpened their trowels on the coping stones, leaving grooves you can still run your fingers over. Most poignant are the rejects—the misshapen bricks tossed into spoil heaps that now dot the countryside.

Kids today dig them up, these warped relics stamped with "KIDWELLY" in bold Victorian lettering, and don't realize they're holding the DNA of industrial Wales. Why It Matters

Those brickworks weren't just factories—they were universities of hard knocks. Generations of Kidwelly boys learned thermodynamics the hard way, shovelling coal into kilns hot enough to melt modern health-and-safety manuals. The women who packed bricks into straw for shipping could tell you about friction burns that no wage packet could heal.

Yet this was our golden age of making. When Wales moved the world, Kidwelly moved the materials that moved Wales. Next time you pass a surviving brick terrace on Water Street, knock on the wall—you're hearing the heartbeat of a town that built things to last.

The kilns are cold now, but their lesson burns bright: Kidwelly's never been about the size of its industry, but the quality of its craft. From Gwenllian's defiance to those perfect silica bricks, we've always punched above our weight.

The Tin Works: Where Kidwelly's Heartbeat Rang Loudest

Listen close when the wind blows from the river, and you might still hear it—the rhythmic clang-clang of the tinplate rollers, the hiss of steam in the annealing sheds, the shouts of men calling across the yard in three languages.



For nearly 200 years, the Kidwelly Tin Works wasn't just a factory; it was the town's pulse.

The Forge of Fortunes (1737-1941)

When the first tinplate rolled off the lines in 1737, it sparked a revolution. Kidwelly's secret? Geography as destiny:

Our Gwendraeth coal fired the furnaces hotter than Satan's front porch.
The river and Kymer's Canal carried finished sheets to global markets—from London biscuit tins to New Orleans roofing.

Welsh craftsmanship turned base metal into art; workers could gauge thickness by the song the rollers sang.

By Victoria's reign, the Works employed one in three Kidwelly men. Whole families owed their bread to its chimneys—grandfathers, fathers, and sons working the same mills, their calloused hands passing down tricks of the trade like heirlooms.

The tinplate stamped "MADE IN KIDWELLY" became a mark of quality across empires.

The Slow Fade (1941-1981)

War came, and with it, the cruellest irony: the 1941 closure wasn't due to bombs, but economics. Cheaper foreign tinplate flooded markets, and suddenly, our pride was "redundant." The silence that fell over the Works was deafening—no more 6 a.m. whistles, no more soot-smudged workers flooding Bridge Street at shift's end. For forty years, the abandoned site became Kidwelly's ghost limb—rotting buildings where kids dared each other to enter, rusted machinery slowly sinking into the earth like fallen warriors.



The Museum That Almost Saved Us (1981-2020)

Then came the dreamers. Local historians—many sons and daughters of tin workers—fought to turn ruin into remembrance. The Kidwelly Industrial Museum opened in 1981, its crowning jewel the restored rolling mill, where visitors could feel the floor tremble under simulated production.



For a glorious stretch, it worked:

Schoolkids gasped as guides demonstrated how ingots became gleaming sheets. Grandfathers pointed out their old workstations with misty-eyed pride. The annual Tinsplate Festival brought the site roaring back to life with blacksmith demos and brass band marches.

But museums run on money as much as memory. By 2020, the grants dried up, the roof leaks multiplied, and the painful notice went up: CLOSED INDEFINITELY.

What Remains

Walk the overgrown site today, and the past whispers at every turn: The weighbridge office, where workers clocked in, still bears graffiti from 1897—a tally of football bets scratched into the brick.

In the pattern shop, sunlight filters through broken roof slats onto century-old blueprints curling at the edges.

Down by the old canal spur, rusted chains still dangle where barges loaded finished tinsplate for Swansea docks.

Most heart-breaking? The unfinished exhibits—a 1920s worker's lunch tin left on a half-curated display table, a video screen frozen mid-interview with retired tinsmith Gwyn Thomas (RIP 2019).

The Fire Still Burns

Yet here's the truth: The Works never really dies while:
Stories survive—like the 1889 strike when women workers pelted strike-breakers with rivets.
Skills live on—local artisans still craft jewellery from salvaged tinplate.
The fight continues—the Friends of the Museum group quietly fundraises, waiting for their moment.

That's Kidwelly's lesson. We've always been a town of second acts—from Gwenllian's defeat birthing resistance to tinplate's collapse birthing preservation. However dark the Works' future seems, remember furnaces cool, but community endures.

Kymer's Canal: A Reflection on the Waterway That Transformed Kidwelly

There are places in a town's story that mark a before and after—turning points that shape what a community becomes. For Kidwelly, Kymer's Canal was one of those turning points.



Though the water today flows quietly, watched over by trees and time, this canal was once the artery of a thriving, ambitious town. In the late 18th century, as the Industrial Revolution swept across Britain, our quiet medieval settlement stood on the edge of great change. And it was Thomas Kymer, a local entrepreneur with foresight and determination, who set that change in motion.

In 1768, Kymer's vision became reality with the completion of the canal that would bear his name. It stretched from Kidwelly to Carmarthen Bay, becoming one of the earliest canals built in Wales. More than a feat of engineering, it was a bold step into the future—a link to the sea, to opportunity, and to the wider world.

For the people of Kidwelly, Kymer's Canal quickly became a lifeline. It powered the rise of industry, carrying coal from the Gwendraeth Valley to our ironworks and tinplate factories. These industries flourished because of it. Iron ore came in, iron goods went out. Tin and coal passed through the canal's waters, feeding furnaces,

and fuelling a booming economy. The Kidwelly Tinplate Works, one of the largest in Wales, owed much of its success to this vital waterway.

We remember how the town expanded in response—how new homes, shops, and roads grew alongside industry. Families moved in. Work was steady. A sense of purpose filled the air. The canal didn't just carry materials; it carried hope, livelihoods, and the rhythm of everyday life. It reshaped not just our town, but our identity as a hardworking, forward-looking community.

Eventually, progress moved on. The arrival of the railway in the mid-19th century signalled a decline for the canal. Trains were faster, more efficient. The waters that once bustled with barges and workers began to quiet. But the change it had brought was already done—and lasting.



Today, what remains of Kymer's Canal is a monument to the past. Its stonework, its curves through the land, are reminders of what was once possible through vision, collaboration, and effort. It stands as a tribute to the people who built it, worked it, and built their lives around it.

We don't walk those paths without thinking of what came before—the industry, the noise, the energy of a town on the rise. Kymer's Canal was more than just a waterway. It was a catalyst. A connector. A symbol of a time when Kidwelly stepped onto the stage of history with confidence and purpose.

And though the barges no longer glide through its waters, its legacy flows on—in the stories we tell, in the foundations of our town, and in the enduring spirit of those who came before us.

Kidwelly's Crucial Role in D-Day

Preparations: American Forces Gear Up for Operation Overlord

As the world commemorates the 80th anniversary of D-Day, it is essential to remember the vital preparations that took place far from the beaches of Normandy. The town of Kidwelly played a significant role in the lead-up to Operation Overlord, hosting American forces as they readied themselves for the monumental invasion that would turn the tide of World War II at Broomhill House near Parc Y Bocs.



In the months leading up to June 6, 1944, Kidwelly and its surrounding areas became temporary homes to thousands of American soldiers. These troops, part of the extensive build-up for the Allied invasion of Nazi-occupied Europe, were billeted in various locations around the town. Local fields, barns, and community halls were transformed into makeshift barracks and training grounds, while the soldiers prepared for the most significant military operation in history.

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.

<https://tinyurl.com/Kidwelly-War-Memorials-WW1-WW2>



The British American Optical Company Ltd.:
A Post-War Catalyst for Economic Revival in Kidwelly

Kidwelly, Carmarthenshire - The establishment of the British American Optical Company Ltd. in Kidwelly represents a pivotal post-World War II initiative aimed at stimulating economic growth in economically depressed regions. This endeavour, part of the British government's plan to promote light industries in "special areas," marked a significant shift from traditional industries to more diversified economic activities in the area.



In 1946, the ambitious project began with the turning of the first sod on farmland known as "Greenfields." This development was part of a broader strategy to modernise and rejuvenate the local economy, providing much-needed employment and reducing the region's reliance on coal mining and agriculture. The post-war period saw many areas like Kidwelly struggling with economic hardships, and the government's intervention through such industrial projects was crucial for regional development.

The factory began its operations in June 1950, producing optical goods such as lenses and precision instruments. This not only created numerous job opportunities but also significantly enhanced the skills of the local workforce. The introduction of such a specialized industry required training and skill development, leading to a more skilled and versatile labour force in the region.

The economic activity generated by the factory had a ripple effect, benefiting local businesses and services. Shops, restaurants, and other service-oriented businesses experienced increased patronage from the factory workers and their families, contributing to the overall economic health of Kidwelly. This growth helped stabilise

the local economy and provided a buffer against the volatility of the traditional industries that had previously dominated the region.

The British American Optical Company Ltd. is a prime example of a successful post-war industrial policy, illustrating the government's efforts to create balanced and resilient regional economies. Its establishment and operations played a key role in the economic revitalization of Kidwelly, leaving a legacy in the region's industrial history.

The factory's presence not only diversified the local economy but also showcased the potential of strategic government intervention in fostering long-term economic sustainability.

In addition to its economic contributions, the factory also had a significant social impact on Kidwelly. The influx of workers and their families brought about demographic changes, leading to increased demand for housing, education, and healthcare services.

This, in turn, prompted improvements in local infrastructure and public services, enhancing the overall quality of life for the residents.

The success of the British American Optical Company Ltd. in Kidwelly also served as a model for other regions facing similar economic challenges. It demonstrated that with the right support and investment, even areas heavily reliant on declining industries could transition to more diverse and sustainable economic bases.

This strategic approach helped to ensure that the benefits of post-war prosperity were more evenly distributed across the country, preventing economic stagnation in vulnerable areas.

Today, the legacy of the British American Optical Company Ltd. continues to be felt in Kidwelly. The skills, infrastructure, and economic stability it brought to the region have had long-lasting effects, proving the enduring value of targeted economic interventions. As Kidwelly looks to the future, the lessons learned from this post-war initiative remain relevant, offering insights into how regional economies can adapt and thrive in changing economic landscapes.

Celebrating Notable Figures from Kidwelly:

A Legacy of Passion and Perseverance

Kidwelly is not only rich in industrial heritage but also boasts a legacy of notable individuals whose contributions have left an indelible mark on Welsh culture and history. Among these figures are Ray Gravell, a beloved rugby icon; the Reverend Peter Williams, a dedicated minister and scholar; Hugh Williams, a passionate activist in the Chartism and Rebecca Riots movements; as well as George Ernest John Powell, a philanthropic landowner; Arthur Mee, an influential educator and writer; Sir Thomas Stepney, a significant political figure; and Nigel Owens, a renowned rugby referee.

Ray Gravell: A Rugby Legend

Ray Gravell, born in Kidwelly in 1951, is a name synonymous with Welsh rugby. Known for his fierce play and passionate spirit, Gravell became a celebrated figure in the rugby world. He earned 23 caps for the Welsh national team and was a key player in the Llanelli RFC team, which famously defeated the New Zealand All Blacks in 1972.



Beyond his rugby career, Gravell was a respected broadcaster and actor, contributing significantly to Welsh media and culture. He was known for his warmth, charisma, and deep love for Wales, qualities that endeared him to many. Gravell's legacy lives on, inspiring future generations both on and off the field.

Gordon Hale Lewis: A Legacy of the Land and the Game

To understand the journey of Gordon Hale Lewis, one must look to the 900-year history of the Kidwelly area a landscape defined by endurance, community, and an unwavering sense of duty. Born on 23 June 1936 at Mynydd-y-Garreg, Gordon was a son of the soil, raised in a village that, while distinct, was forever tethered to Kidwelly through shared schools, labour, and a fierce passion for rugby. He grew up in the shadow of a town whose identity had been forged through centuries of industry and resilience, qualities that Gordon would eventually carry with him to the professional arenas of the North.



In the years following the Second World War, the Kidwelly region was a breeding ground for a specific type of athlete: tough, disciplined, and uncompromising. The local playing fields and school matches were Gordon's first classrooms, where he honed a physical style of play that was deeply rooted in Welsh union traditions.

His early senior years with Swansea Rugby Union Club, where he made 25 appearances and scored four tries between 1956 and 1958, marked him as a centre of exceptional promise. Yet, like many men of the Kidwelly area who had crossed borders before him in search of work and advancement, Gordon looked toward the professional opportunities of the north.

In October 1958, he made the life-changing move to join Leigh. His arrival became an instant piece of club folklore, appearing in a trial match under the pseudonym "A.N. Other," he scored a stunning hat-trick of tries that forced the club's hand to sign him immediately. For the people of Mynydd-y-Garreg and Kidwelly, watching Gordon's ascent was a point of immense local pride.

His rise was meteoric: within four months of his debut, he was wearing the Great Britain jersey in Toulouse against France, a remarkable transition for a young man who had so recently been playing amateur rugby in Wales.

The 1960s saw Gordon become a cornerstone of the sport. He was a fixture in the great Leigh sides of the era, amassing 386 appearances and scoring 112 tries. He graced the turf of major finals, including the 1963–64 Lancashire Cup and the 1967–68 BBC2 Floodlit Trophy, but it was on the international stage where his legacy truly deepened.

He became a bridge between nations and eras, representing the "Other Nationalities" side in 1965 to inaugurate the floodlights at Knowsley Road a moment that signaled the modernization of the game he loved.

Perhaps the crowning achievement for the boy from Mynydd-y-Garreg was his leadership of his country. Earning five caps for Wales between 1959 and 1970, he eventually rose to become the 27th Captain of Wales.

Whether leading his countrymen in the European Championships at Salford or facing the fierce heat of a Test match in Perpignan, he played with a quiet authority and a defensive reliability that Leigh fans believed was forged in the rugged fields of Carmarthenshire.

His career reached a peak of recognition in August 1965, when he was selected for the decisive third Test for Great Britain against the touring New Zealand side. The *Bolton News* noted at the time that his selection was "especially well received" by those who had watched his steady, professional rise.

When Gordon finally retired after a brief period with Swinton, he chose to settle in the Leigh area with his wife, Pamela, and their children.

Yet, he never truly left home behind. In the long timeline of Kidwelly's 900 years, Gordon Hale Lewis stands as a quintessential figure: a man who carried the strength and values of his village into the international spotlight, ensuring that the name of Mynydd-y-Garreg would be remembered far beyond the borders of Wales.

Acknowledgments: - Arthur Lewis Collection, Garry Smith and Kidwelly Local History Society for the contribution to your article.

Jacob Chivers (1815–1885):

Industrial Pioneer and Devoted Philanthropist

Jacob Chivers was a transformative figure in the industrial and civic life of Kidwelly during the mid-19th century. Born in 1815 in the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire, he rose to prominence as the owner of the Kidwelly Tin Works, a position he held from 1858 to 1877.

Under his leadership, the tin works underwent a period of remarkable modernization, most notably through the introduction of steam power — a technological leap that significantly enhanced productivity and efficiency.



Industrial Innovation and Civic Progress

Jacob Chivers' contributions extended well beyond the factory floor.

A visionary civic leader, he championed public infrastructure improvements that elevated the quality of life for Kidwelly's residents.

Among his most impactful initiatives was the introduction of a piped water supply — a ground-breaking advancement for the era that greatly improved sanitation and public health.

Timeline of Jacob Chivers (1815–1885)

Year	Event
1815	Jacob Chivers is born in the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire.
1858	Becomes owner of the Kidwelly Tin Works, initiating a period of industrial modernization.
1866	Funds and oversees the construction of Trinity Methodist Church in Kidwelly to serve English-speaking nonconformists.
1877	Retires from his role at the Kidwelly Tin Works after nearly two decades of leadership.
1880	His wife, Elizabeth Chivers, passes away at Woodfield, Ross-on-Wye, aged 66.
1885	Jacob Chivers dies at Rheola, Cinderford, aged 68. A commemorative tablet is erected by their children in remembrance.

Faith, Philanthropy, and Linguistic Inclusion

Though he spent much of his life in Wales, Chivers never learned to speak Welsh. His deep Methodist faith and commitment to inclusivity led him to address the spiritual needs of English-speaking nonconformists in a predominantly

Welsh-speaking community. In 1866, he personally funded and oversaw the construction of Trinity Methodist Church in Kidwelly — a chapel where services were conducted in English, offering a vital space for worship and fellowship to those otherwise excluded from local religious life.

This act of generosity was more than a personal expression of faith; it was a bold gesture of cultural bridge-building. At a time when Nonconformist movements, particularly Methodism, were flourishing across Wales, most services were held in Welsh.

Chivers recognised the isolation felt by English-speaking residents and workers drawn to Kidwelly by its industrial growth, and he responded with compassion and conviction.

Trinity Methodist Church quickly became a cornerstone of English-language worship in the town. It stood not only as a religious sanctuary but also as a symbol of integration — a place where shared belief transcended linguistic barriers.

Legacy and Remembrance

Jacob Chivers passed away on 31 March 1885 at Rheola, Cinderford, aged 68. His wife, Elizabeth Chivers, had predeceased him, dying on 9 October 1880 at Woodfield, Ross-on-Wye, aged 66.

A commemorative tablet, erected by their children, bears the simple yet poignant inscription:

Their lives — marked by industrial innovation, civic generosity, and spiritual leadership — continue to be remembered with admiration and respect.

Today, Trinity Methodist Church still stands as a lasting testament to Jacob Chivers' enduring legacy. His vision helped shape the industrial and spiritual character of Kidwelly, and his influence remains woven into the town's historical and religious identity.

"In loving and affectionate remembrance."





Jacob Chivers was more than an industrialist — he was a man of vision, faith, and enduring community spirit.

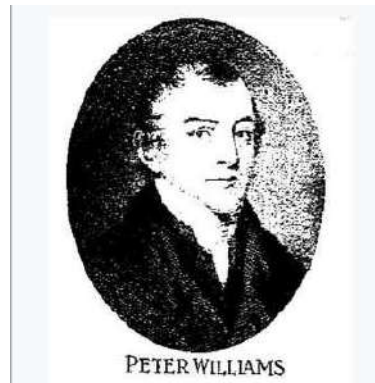
Through his leadership at the Kidwelly Tin Works, he helped modernise local industry and improve the lives of townspeople with innovations like steam power and piped water.

As a devout Methodist, he championed religious inclusion by founding Trinity Methodist Church, ensuring that English-speaking residents had a place to worship.

Though not native to Wales, his legacy is firmly rooted in Kidwelly's history — a testament to his deep commitment to progress, compassion, and faith.

Reverend Peter Williams: A Faithful Scholar and Minister

Another illustrious figure from Kidwelly is the Reverend Peter Williams, born in 1723. Reverend Williams dedicated his life to the ministry and scholarly pursuits, becoming renowned for his significant contributions to Welsh religious literature. He published three editions of a Welsh Bible with explanatory notes, one in octavo format, as well as a concordance and numerous pamphlets in Welsh.



Despite his scholarly achievements, Reverend Williams faced persecution and ingratitude for his work. However, he remained steadfast in his faith and dedication, continuing as a laborious minister of the gospel for 53 years. He passed away on August 8, 1796, at the age of 74, finding joy in his faith until the end.

Reverend Williams is buried in St Maelog's Church, Llandefaelog, remembered for his unwavering commitment to his faith and his invaluable contributions to Welsh religious literature.

Hugh Williams: A Voice for Justice and Reform

Hugh Williams, another notable figure, played a significant role in the Chartism and Rebecca Riots movements in the 19th century. These movements were crucial in advocating for political reform and addressing the grievances of the working class in Wales.



Williams was deeply involved in the struggle for justice and better living conditions. His activism during the Rebecca Riots, where protesters disguised as women destroyed toll gates in protest of unfair tolls, highlighted his commitment to social justice. His efforts in the Chartism movement also underscored his dedication to securing political rights and representation for all.



Hugh Williams is buried in St. Ishmael's Church in Ferryside, leaving behind a legacy of activism and advocacy that continues to inspire those fighting for justice and equality.

George Ernest John Powell: The Philanthropic Landowner

George Ernest John Powell, born in 1842, was a prominent figure in Kidwelly's history. A landowner and philanthropist, Powell is best known for his significant contributions to Welsh culture and education. He was deeply involved in the National Eisteddfod, a festival celebrating Welsh literature, music, and performance, where he promoted the arts and supported local talent.

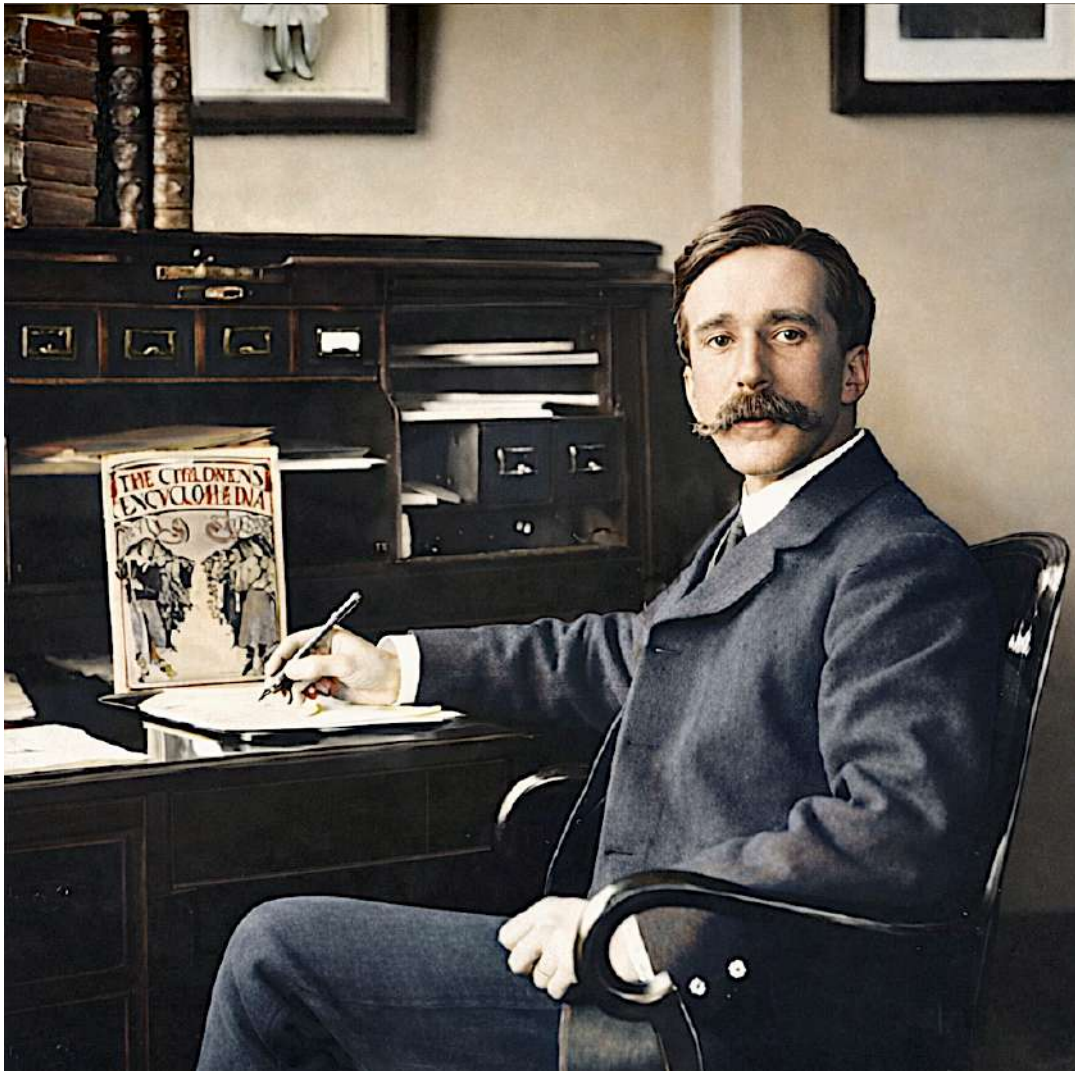


Powell's dedication to education was evident through his generous donations to schools and scholarships, enabling many young Welsh people to pursue higher education. His legacy of philanthropy continues to benefit the community, underscoring the importance of supporting cultural and educational initiatives.

Arthur Mee: The Educator and Encyclopaedist

Arthur Mee, born in 1875, was an influential educator and writer who spent part of his life in Kidwelly. He is best known for his work on "The Children's Encyclopaedia" and "The King's England," a comprehensive guide to the counties of England.

Mee's works were pioneering in their time, making knowledge accessible and engaging for children and the public.



His connection to Kidwelly adds to the town's rich literary heritage, highlighting its role as a nurturing ground for intellectual and educational pursuits.

Mee's contributions to education and literature have had a lasting impact, inspiring generations of learners and readers.

Sir Thomas Stepney: The Influential Baronet

Sir Thomas Stepney, the 7th Baronet, was a prominent figure in the 18th century with ties to Kidwelly. As a landowner and politician, he played a significant role in the local and national political landscape. Sir Thomas was an advocate for agricultural and economic development, supporting innovations that benefitted the local community.

His involvement in politics and development projects helped shape the economic foundation of Kidwelly, fostering growth and prosperity in the region. Sir Thomas Stepney's legacy is remembered for his contributions to public service and community.

The Story of Kidwelly's Steam Bakery

"Rise and Aroma: The Steam Bakery of Kidwelly in the Mid-20th Century"



In the bustling town of Kidwelly, during the early 20th century, the aroma of freshly baked bread wafted through the air, tantalising the senses of the locals.

This delightful scent originated from the Steam Bakery, a cherished establishment run by John and Bessie Pugh-Jones, the Great Uncle and Aunt of Seimon Pugh-Jones. Their bakery was an integral part of Iscoed Bakeries Ltd, which also operated a similar bakery in Llanelli, with its headquarters situated in Pontyates. Seimon Pugh-Jones, fortunate to be nurtured amidst the enticing fragrance of baked goods, held cherished memories deeply rooted in the stories and experiences tied to these family-owned bakeries. The recollections of his upbringing were interwoven with the tales of these historic establishments.

The artistic portrayal of the Steam Bakery during the early 1940s or 1950s, depicted in a painting by E.A. Read, offers a glimpse into that era. E.A. Read, affiliated with the Kardomah gang, captured the essence of the time through his artistic lens, immortalizing the essence of the bakery and its surroundings. Adjacent to the Steam Bakery, a Chemist operated, further enriching the local community's lifestyle.

The juxtaposition of the bakery and the Chemist not only embodied the thriving business environment but also symbolized the interconnectedness of various trades in the town. The Steam Bakery was conveniently located beside the River Gwendraeth Fach, with a bridge spanning the river nearby.

The landscape and river played a crucial role in the daily operations and aesthetics of the area. The 1940s was a time of turbulence, with the world engulfed in the throes of World War II. It was a time when resilience and fortitude were paramount.

During such challenging times, the Steam Bakery continued to serve the community, providing sustenance and comfort, even as the world grappled with the uncertainties of war. The Steam Bakery of Kidwelly, run by John and Bessie Pugh-Jones, remains a fond memory in the hearts of those who were fortunate enough to experience its warmth and the delectable scents that lingered in the air.

Today, the painting by E.A. Read and the stories passed down through generations pay homage to this historic bakery and its significant place in the tapestry of Kidwelly's past.

A Final Thought on Kidwelly's Journey Through Time

From Gwenllian's defiant stand to the clatter of tinsplate machines, from the whispers of American GIs to the quiet resilience of a post-industrial town—Kidwelly's story is not one of relics gathering dust, but of a living, breathing community that has always refused to be defined by any single era.

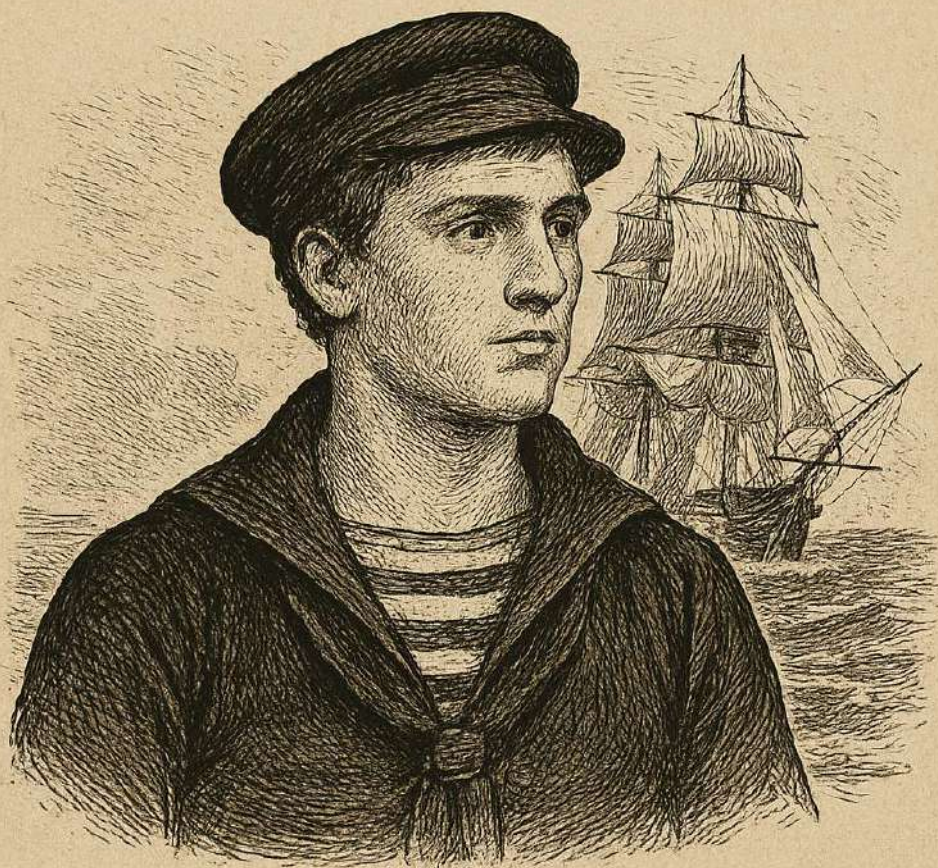
Our castle keeps watch. Our river still finds its way to the sea. And though the factories have fallen silent, the spirit that built them—that same stubborn, inventive, fiercely proud spirit—still courses through these streets. Kidwelly has been a Norman stronghold, an industrial powerhouse, a wartime training ground, and now, a keeper of stories that refuse to be forgotten.

As we look to the future, we carry this truth: towns like ours aren't chapters in a history book waiting to be closed. We're manuscripts still being written. Every child kicking a ball near Maes Gwenllian, every volunteer preserving our museum fragments, every new voice adding to Kidwelly's song—they're all proof that our greatest legacy isn't in the stones of the past, but in the hands that shape tomorrow.

The next time you walk past the castle or pause by the canal, listen closely. Beneath the modern hum of traffic and laughter, you'll hear it—the steady heartbeat of a town that has weathered centuries by knowing this simple truth:

We endure. We adapt. We remember. And above all, we continue.

**A KIDWELLY MAN
AT TRAFALGAR**



**THE STORY OF
THOMAS JOHNS
OF HMS VICTORY**

The Story of Thomas Johns of HMS Victory

A Kidwelly Man at Trafalgar

Amid the long sweep of Kidwelly's 900-year history marked by princes, castle garrisons, Flemish settlers, industrial workers, farmers, and miners—there stands one voice that links the town directly to one of the defining moments in British naval history. That voice belonged to **Thomas Johns**, a young sailor from Kidwelly who served aboard **HMS Victory** under Admiral Lord Nelson at the **Battle of Trafalgar** on 21 October 1805.

His remarkable letter, addressed to his parents **David and Mrs. Johns of Kidwelly**, survives today through the Alwyn Evans Collection. Few Welsh towns can claim such a vivid, personal account from a native son who not only witnessed Trafalgar but stood in the very heart of its fury.

A Kidwelly Seaman on the Most Famous Warship in British History

That a Kidwelly man should find himself on *Victory* Nelson's flagship and now the most iconic ship in the Royal Navy places Thomas in a uniquely distinguished position. Of all the thousands of seamen who fought at Trafalgar, only a handful left detailed first-hand accounts. Fewer still were Welsh. Rarer again are those who wrote home to small towns and villages like Kidwelly.

Thomas begins his letter with relief and gratitude, aware how close he came to death. His description of the battle is not second-hand romanticism, but the direct testimony of a man who stood on Nelson's deck as broadsides from Spanish and French ships tore into the *Victory's* hull:

"We was so involved in smoke and fire, not to be seen... having no less than 5 ships on us at a time."

This is not the language of an officer safely on the quarterdeck, but of a lower-deck seaman—one of the men who loaded the guns, carried powder, fought fires, and hauled away the dead. Kidwelly's contribution to Trafalgar was not from afar: **it was lived through the hands, sweat, and courage of one of its own sons.**

Bearing Witness to the Death of Nelson

Thomas gives one of the most direct and human descriptions of Nelson's mortal wounding:

"Our brave and gallant commander, Lord Nelson, was wounded early in the action... His death will be ever lamented."

He even notes the cheering of the crew as more enemy ships struck their colours—cheering Nelson could hear as he died.

Very few ordinary sailors wrote about the death of Nelson while serving on *Victory* itself. That makes Thomas's letter not just a Kidwelly treasure, but a nationally significant historical document.

Life and Family Connections

Thomas signs the letter:

“Your dutiful and affectionate son, THOS. JOHNS.”

He mentions seeing his brother **George**, and refers to **John Evans**, likely another Kidwelly man also serving in the Navy. This suggests a small but notable maritime tradition within the town during the Napoleonic period one easily overlooked in favour of Kidwelly’s agricultural and industrial narratives.

Even though later censuses do not list the Johns family, the surname remains present in the Kidwelly area, raising the possibility that descendants of this Trafalgar family still walk the same streets today.

A Hard Life at Sea – and a Human Ending

Thomas’s naval service did not end in triumph. Records reveal that he **“ran from the service”** at Plymouth in 1809, a fate shared by many sailors of the era. This does not diminish his bravery; if anything, it rounds out his story. The Royal Navy of the early 19th century was harsh, often brutal, and many men especially those pressed into service eventually fled when opportunity allowed.

His desertion transforms him from a faceless historical name into a real human being: a Kidwelly lad who endured battle, danger, hardship, and exhaustion, and who, like many, simply wanted his freedom back.

A Kidwelly Legacy Worth Celebrating

The tale of Thomas Johns deserves recognition within Kidwelly’s 900-year story. It connects the town directly to the greatest naval battle in British history and places one of its own on the deck of *Victory* at the very hour Britain’s fate was being decided.

His letter is not only a military account—it is a voice from Kidwelly carried across the centuries:

- A local man in the most famous battle of the Royal Navy
- A witness to the fall of Nelson
- A survivor of the fiercest action of Trafalgar
- A son writing home to reassure his parents.
- A Kidwelly sailor whose words still speak today.

In celebrating 900 years of Kidwelly, the story of **Thomas Johns of HMS *Victory*** deserves a proud and permanent place. His courage and his letter stand as a reminder that even in the greatest events of world history, people from small towns like Kidwelly played their part—and sometimes stood at the very centre of it.

Hen fenyw fach Cydweli



***Hen fenyw fach Cydweli
Yn gwerthy losin du,
Yn rhifo deg am ddime,
Ond unarddeg i mi.
Wel dyma'r newydd gorau ddaeth i mi, i mi,
Oedd rhifo deg am ddime,
Ond unarddeg i mi.***

***Mi es i Faes y Croesau,
Mi ges i groeso mawr,
Afalau wedi'u pobi
A stôl i eistedd i lawr.
Wel dyma'r newydd gorau ddaeth i mi, i mi,
Afalau wedi'u pobi,
A stôl i eistedd i lawr.***

***Mae gen i fegin newydd
A honno'n llawn o wynt,
Mae'r byd yn gwenu arnaf
Fel yn y dyddiau gynt.
Wel dyma'r newydd gorau ddaeth i mi, i mi,
Mae'r byd yn gwenu arnaf
Fel yn y dyddiau gynt.***

<https://tinyurl.com/Kidwelly-Cydweli-Living-Legacy>



Graham T Emmanuel 2025

The Legacy of Kidwelly Charlton Cinema and Ballroom.

From Silver Screen to Dance Floor



In the heart of Kidwelly once stood a building that embodied the changing rhythms of 20th-century life. Known first as the Charlton Cinema and later as the Charlton Ballroom, this unassuming venue bore witness to war, peace, fire, and cultural transformation. Its history is not only the story of a building, but of a family's devotion, a community's changing tastes, and a nation in flux.

Origins and Wartime Role

Although acquired in 1943 by Mr. E. Charlton, the cinema's early years coincided with one of the most turbulent periods in modern history—World War II. During the 1940s, cinemas across Britain played a vital role in sustaining public morale, offering films, newsreels, and shared escape from the anxieties of war. The Charlton Cinema likely served this same function for the people of Kidwelly.

More notably, during the build-up to **Operation Overlord** and the **D-Day landings**, American troops were stationed in Carmarthenshire and surrounding parts of South Wales. Many such troops passed through Kidwelly and other nearby towns. Local oral history suggests that the Charlton Cinema provided entertainment to some of these servicemen, contributing—if briefly—to the wartime social life that connected civilians and foreign troops alike.

Rebirth by Hand: The 1954 Renovation

Though Mr. Charlton owned the cinema from 1943, he and his wife did not assume full management until 1954. Recognising that the building needed modernisation, they opted to renovate it themselves—a rare feat of family dedication.

With tradesmen prohibitively expensive, Mr. Charlton, his son Tommy, son-in-law Colwyn Morris, and family friend Mr. J. Thorburn undertook the heavy construction work. His wife and daughter, Kathleen, carried out the interior decorating and painting. “Kathleen handled as many bricks as I did,” Mr. Charlton later remarked, a testament to the shared effort.

The project took seven months of daily labour, including weekends. When the cinema finally reopened, it had been transformed. Capacity was expanded from 180 to 550 seats, and a new screen was installed. The community responded with enthusiasm—former patrons returned in numbers, and newcomers followed. For a brief time, cinema in Kidwelly flourished.

Fire and Determination: The 1958 Disaster

Disaster struck on **Friday 12 December 1958**, when smoke was seen rising from the building shortly after 5 a.m. The fire brigade arrived promptly, but the cinema sustained significant damage. Despite the setback, Mr. Charlton remained resolute: “We will rebuild again,” he declared.

Once again, the family undertook the task themselves. After eight months of reconstruction, the building reopened on **14 August 1959**, reborn as **The Charlton Ballroom**. The structure now included a polished dance floor large enough for 400 dancers, with 250 additional seats in the balcony. Although films were still shown four nights a week, the era of cinema in Kidwelly was waning.

The Rise of Dance and the Decline of Film

The late 1950s brought another profound shift: the widespread adoption of **television**. In December 1958 alone, 50 televisions were installed in Kidwelly, causing cinema attendance to drop by over 200 patrons. Mr. Charlton announced that film screenings would end, and the focus would shift to dancing.

It proved to be a wise decision. The Charlton Ballroom quickly became a hub for local and regional dancers, with regular Wednesday and Saturday night events drawing 200 to 400 attendees. Mr. Charlton expressed hopes that Kidwelly would become “the Mecca of West Wales dancers” and aimed to attract major dance bands to the venue. At a time when small-town cinemas were closing across Britain, the Charlton was again adapting—this time to the beat of swing, foxtrot, and waltz.

A Cultural Touchstone

Beyond its structural history, the Charlton building was woven into the fabric of local memory. One former patron recalled how children were ushered outside during a wartime Pathe newsreel showing the liberation of concentration camps—deemed too distressing for young eyes. The usherette, Hilda, who also served in the local chip shop, ensured the children were taken out and brought safely back in once the footage had passed.

Saturday matinees in the 1940s remain vivid in memory for many—serial adventures, cartoons, and local chatter echoing through the aisles. The building stood not just as a place of entertainment but as a communal hearth, where generations grew up, courted, and celebrated.

End of an Era: From Ballroom to Bar and Beyond

By the **late 1960s**, the Charlton Ballroom ceased operation as an entertainment venue. For years the building stood largely unused—an echo of its past. Then, in **1990**, it reopened as the **Salt Rock Pub**, designed with cinematic nods and community spirit. Though short-lived, the pub preserved the building's social function.

In **2008**, the property was repurposed yet again—this time into a branch of **The Original Factory Shop**, marking a transition from cultural venue to commercial outlet. While this adaptation stripped away much of the internal character, it ensured the structure's preservation and continued relevance on Kidwelly's high street.

"Who Helped Build the Ballroom?"

- Mr. E. Charlton – Owner & Designer
- Tommy Charlton – Son
- Colwyn Morris – Son-in-law
- Mr. J. Thorburn – Family friend
- Mrs. Charlton & Kathleen – Decorators and painters
("Kathleen handled as many bricks as I did," remarked Mr. Charlton.)

Fire Crew on 12 December 1958

L/fm S.J. Williams, f/f J. M. Williams, f/f W. J. Jones, f/f C. L. Morris, f/f A. S. I. Rowlands, Lf/f W. J. Charles

Call-out: 05:25 | Returned: 08:04

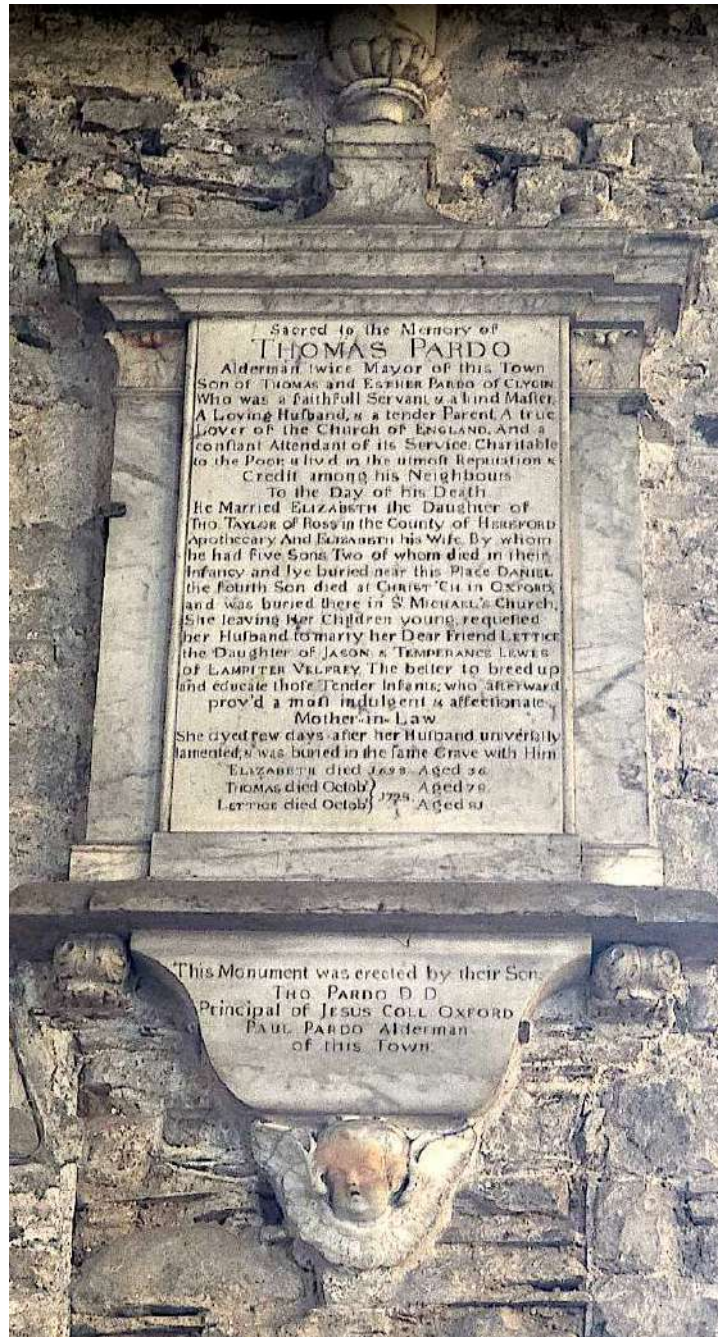
Conclusion

The story of the Charlton Cinema and Ballroom is more than a tale of bricks and screens. It is the story of resilience, reinvention, and the profound cultural shifts that marked post-war Britain. From its role during the war to its fiery near-end, and its rebirth as a dancehall, it mirrored the changing needs and tastes of its community.

Though the building itself no longer stands as it once did, its spirit endures in the memories of Kidwelly's residents—and in the legacy of a family whose determination helped shape a cornerstone of local life.

Sadly, its future now uncertain with the closure of the Factory Shop.

THOMAS PARDO



Alderman twice Mayor of this Town

Sacred to the Memory of
THOMAS PARDO
Alderman twice Mayor of this Town
Son of THOMAS and ESTHER PARDO of CLYGIN
Who was faithfull Servant va innnd Mafter
A Loving Husband, & a tender Parent, A true
Lover of the Church of ENGLAND. And a
confant Attendant of its Service Charitable
to the Poor, & livid in the utmoft Reputation &
Credit among his Neighbours
To the Day of his Death
He Married ELIZABETH the Daughter of
THOMAS TAYLOR OF Ross in the County of HEREFORD
Apothecary And ELIZABETH, his Wife, By whom
he had five Sons Two of whom died in their
Infancy and lye buried near this Place DANIEL
the fourth Son died at Christ Church In OXFORD
and was buried there in St MICHAEL'S Church,
She leaving Her Children young requefied
her Husband to marry her Dear Friend LETTICE
the Daughter of JASON & TEMPERANCE LEWES
of Lampiter Velfrey, The better to breed up
and educate thofe Tender Infants, who afterward
proved a morfi indulgent & affectionate
Mother-in-Law
She dyed few days after her Hufband, univerfally
lamented & was buried in the fame Grave with Him
ELIZABETH died 1698 Aged 36
THOMAS died October 1728 Aged 78
Lettice died October 1728 Aged 81
This Monument was erected by their Son
THOMAS PARDO DD
Principal of JESUS COLLEGE OXFORD
PAUL PARDO Alderman
of this Town

Thomas Pardo married Elizabeth, the daughter of Thomas Taylor of Ross in Hereford, an apothecary, and his wife Elizabeth. Together, they had five sons, though two of them died in infancy and were buried near their home. Their fourth son, Daniel, passed away while studying at Christ Church in Oxford and was laid to rest at St. Michael's Church.

Before her death, Elizabeth made a poignant request that her husband marry her close friend, Lettice, the daughter of Jason and Temperance Lewes of Lampeter Velfrey. This arrangement was intended to ensure that Lettice could provide care for Elizabeth's young children, whom she believed would benefit from the guidance of someone she trusted deeply. As a result, the children found in Lettice an indulgent and affectionate mother-in-law. Lettice passed away a few days after her husband, and she was buried in the same grave as him. Elizabeth had died earlier in 1698 at the age of 36, while Thomas

Pardo died in October 1728 at the age of 78. Lettice, too, passed away in October 1728, at the age of 81.

In memory of their parents, a monument was erected by their son, Thomas Pardo, D.D., Principal of Jesus College, Oxford, and Paul Pardo, an Alderman of the town.

Thomas Pardo, D.D., was an important figure in the 18th century, having held the prestigious position of Principal at Jesus College, Oxford. This role marked him as a distinguished religious scholar and an influential leader in both academic and ecclesiastical circles. As a Doctor of Divinity, Thomas Pardo's position at Jesus College would have involved overseeing the education of scholars in religious and classical studies, playing a significant role in shaping the intellectual landscape of the time.

The Pardo family had deep ties to both the Church of England and local governance. In addition to his religious influence, the family was prominent in civic life. Paul Pardo, Thomas' brother, followed in the footsteps of their father, also named Thomas, who had served as both Alderman and Mayor of Kidwelly, a town in Carmarthenshire, Wales. The title of Alderman, which Paul also held, was a distinguished position within the town council, second only to the Mayor, and carried considerable influence in town governance. This title reflected the family's longstanding leadership and commitment to the welfare of Kidwelly.

The role of an Alderman in 18th-century Wales, particularly in towns like Kidwelly, involved overseeing public works, maintaining law and order, and participating in local court proceedings. Aldermen were responsible for regulating trade, managing public infrastructure, and ensuring the enforcement of laws. In addition, they played a key role in representing the interests of the town's residents to higher authorities, advocating for resources and improvements on their behalf. In market and port towns such as Kidwelly, Aldermen were also heavily involved in managing trade, particularly agriculture and goods distribution, which were crucial to the town's economy.

Paul Pardo, like his father, was a key figure in Kidwelly's public life, representing a legacy of civic service that spanned generations. His connection to his brother, Thomas, the Principal of Jesus College, further elevated the family's status, linking their local governance efforts with broader religious and academic influence.

Kidwelly in the 18th century was a town of historical significance, home to Kidwelly Castle, which symbolized its medieval heritage and strategic importance. Though not a major urban centre, Kidwelly was regionally important for trade and governance, and families like the Pardo's were instrumental in its administration. The family's deep involvement in both local governance and religious scholarship ensured that their influence was felt both within the town and beyond.

The Pardo family's legacy reflects a strong tradition of public service, with both Thomas and Paul playing prominent roles in their respective fields. Their leadership in local governance and religious education marked them as key figures in the 18th-century life of Wales, and their impact on Kidwelly and Oxford continues to be remembered through the monument erected in their honour.

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Thomas Pardo emerged from a family where duty, faith, and quiet resilience were woven into the fabric of their lives. The son of a twice-serving mayor—Thomas Pardo the Elder—and Elizabeth Taylor, a woman of Ross-on-Wye's respectable apothecary class, he inherited both his father's civic-mindedness and his mother's intellectual grounding. Her early death in 1698, when Thomas was still young, could have fractured the family. Instead, it led to an act of remarkable foresight: Elizabeth, on her deathbed, urged her husband to marry her closest friend, Lettice Lewes, so that their five sons—two already lost in infancy—might have a mother's guidance. Lettice, as the family's memorial would later attest, became more than a stepmother; she was the steady hand that shaped Thomas and his brothers into men of standing.

For Thomas, that standing would be carved not in the guildhalls of his father's world, but within the storied walls of Jesus College, Oxford. His ascent to Principal in 1716 was no accident.



The college, with its historic ties to Wales, may have felt familiar to a man rooted in the borderlands of Herefordshire. Yet his tenure was anything but tranquil. Twice he was unseated—first in 1722, when the Bishop of St. Asaph briefly claimed his post, and again before his final reinstatement in 1724—a testament to the quiet political undercurrents of academic life. Through it all, he served with the same unflinching steadiness that had defined his family for generations.

When he died in 1733, he left no grand reforms or fiery treatises, but something subtler: the enduring weight of a name upheld. It was Thomas who commissioned the poignant memorial to his parents and Lettice, ensuring their stories—and through them, his own—would outlive him. In that act, he honoured the legacy of the Pardo family: not with flourish, but with fidelity.

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Thomas Pardo, D.D., the Principal of Jesus College, Oxford, was born in 1687. He served as Principal of Jesus College from 1727 until his death in 1763. Unlike his father, Thomas Pardo did not die in Kidwelly. He passed away in Oxford on March 31, 1763, where he had spent much of his life in academic and ecclesiastical service. He was buried in the chapel of Jesus College, Oxford, rather than in Kidwelly, where his father had been an Alderman and prominent figure.



The Pardo Family: A Legacy of Service and Stewardship

The Pardo family left an enduring mark on Kidwelly, Oxford, and the Church of England through their unwavering commitment to faith, learning, and civic duty.

Thomas Pardo, twice Mayor of Kidwelly, and his wife Elizabeth Taylor established a lineage defined by resilience. After Elizabeth's early death, her final wish—that Thomas marry her friend Lettice Lewes—ensured their children would be raised with love. Lettice became a devoted stepmother, embodying the family's strength in adversity.

Their sons carried this legacy forward. Thomas Pardo, D.D., rose to prominence as Principal of Jesus College, Oxford, shaping religious scholarship in 18th-century England. His brother Paul Pardo upheld the family's civic tradition as Kidwelly's Alderman, overseeing the town's governance with the same dedication as his father.

Though time has faded their portraits, the Pardo legacy endures—in Kidwelly's history, Oxford's halls, and the quiet virtues they championed: service to community, devotion to family, and steadfast faith. Their story reminds us that true impact lies not in grandeur, but in lives lived with purpose.

May their memory continue to inspire.

Graham T Emmanuel 2025.



Mystery of the Hole in The Clock:

On Saturday, May 20th, 1944, before the D-Day Landing, an incident occurred involving an American soldier stationed in Kidwelly during World War II. While stationed at Brookfield Mansion Kidwelly, the soldier discharged a firearm towards the town's church clock tower. The event suggests that the soldier, allegedly a little worse for wear from drink after leaving a local pub, fired a shot, at the Church clock on the tower.



The soldier's identity remains unknown, but some details of the event became known after Alan Wray from Trimsaran had a conversation with Len Coniff in 1974 while working at the Copperworks in Llanelli at the time, he recalled the event occurring approximately two weeks before the D-Day landings on June 6th, 1944.

According to Mr. Coniff's account, the American soldier was armed with a Remington Rifle used by the United States during World War II.

Lenard Coniff, mentioned in the historical account, is currently buried in St. Mary's Cemetery. It was also noted that troops were engaged in training exercises along the beaches of Amroth and Wisemans Bridge during this time, preparing for the D-Day assault.

Also, during a visit to the church in the 1990's a heartfelt message was left in the visitors' book, expressing remorse for the bullet hole in the clock tower. The visitor, identified as Kenneth Johnson, who was not the perpetrator but rather a tourist from the Southern United States, offered an apology on behalf of his American compatriot.

The soldier in question may have been a GI serving with the 38th Regiment 2nd Infantry Division during World War II.

This incident stands as a historical testament to the events that unfolded in Kidwelly during the tumultuous years of World War II.

Lenard Coniff is now buried in St Mary's Cemetery.

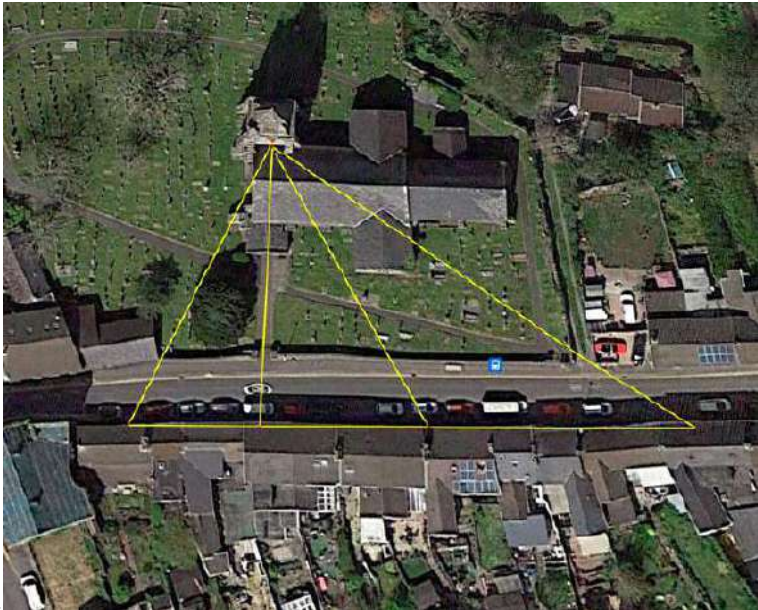
<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/211535105/leonard-washington-conniff>

We are still trying to find out where he fired the shot from and have come up with four possible firing points, each a potential clue to where he shot from.

The investigation is ongoing as we try to gain access to the bullet hole in the clock tower. We hope to try and assess the trajectory angle of the bullet's impact, which will help us determine the point of origin of the shot.

Assisting us in this is my granddaughter Leila Emmanuel, currently at Cardiff University. Once we have this crucial piece of information, we hope to unlock the answers we seek.

Possible Firing points



Clock Tower





Cydweli – Kidwelly

A Town Built on Honour, Strength, Courage — and Faith



The town's spiritual landscape

Celtic Christianity, Norman monastic foundations, later parish churches and chapels.

- ***Early Christianity (7th–11th century):*** The area was influenced by early Welsh saints like David, Cadoc, and Teilo, who helped establish Christian communities.
- ***Norman Influence (12th century):*** Around 1110, Bishop Roger of Salisbury founded a Benedictine priory, which played a central role in religious life.
- ***Medieval Worship (14th century):*** St. Mary's Church became a focal point, housing a revered alabaster statue of the Virgin Mary, attracting pilgrims.
- ***Reformation & Decline (16th century):*** The priory was suppressed in 1539, but St. Mary's Church remained active as the town's parish church.
- ***Nonconformist Chapels (18th–19th century):*** The rise of Methodism and other nonconformist movements led to the establishment of chapels, reflecting shifts in religious practice.

Through it all, faith has been at the heart of Kidwelly — in St Mary's Church, in the chapels that once filled our streets, and in the everyday lives of those who called this town home. It's that spirit, passed down through generations, that has made Kidwelly the place we know and love today.

The Early Christian Churches

Cunedda Wledig, an influential figure in the Cymric race, played a crucial role in shaping the early British Church, which evolved from its Romano-British predecessor. As both a Christian leader and a foundational figure in Welsh history, his legacy extended far beyond his own time. His descendants further cemented his influence, notably St. David, the revered bishop of the see bearing his name.

Tracing his lineage, St. David was Cunedda's great-grandson on his father's side, reinforcing the deep family connections within the religious and cultural framework of medieval Wales.

St. Cadoc's genealogy, though somewhat elusive, suggests a noble heritage. He is believed to be the son of Cuneglasos (Cynlas), lord of Glamorgan, and the grandson of Einion, a son of Cunedda. Another prominent figure, St. Teilo, descended from Ceredig, one of Cunedda's sons, making him a great-nephew to St. David.

Their intertwined legacies were particularly evident in their shared studies under Paulinus at Ty-gwyn-ar-Dâf (Whitland), where they refined their theological education and contributed to the shaping of the British Church's foundations.

Kidwelly parish holds significant traces of this rich past. The remnants of St. Teilo's Chapel, known as Capel Teilo, and Llangadog,

Capel Teilo.

Capel Teilo is believed to have functioned as a chapel of ease, serving the mountain-dwelling population of the Kidwelly parish. Historically, the parish was known to have five such chapels: Llanfihangel, Coker Cadog, St. Thomas, and Capel Teilo.

The chapel is thought to date from the 12th or 13th century, although the earliest documentary reference to it appears in 1593. The name Capel Teilo continued to be mentioned several times throughout the 17th century but had disappeared from maps by 1750. By 1762, it was reported to be in a ruinous state.

Capel Teilo is depicted on both historic and modern Ordnance Survey maps; however, it is only named on the first edition map of 1888. This depiction is believed to refer to a ruined farmhouse of the same name, noted in 1905 as lying approximately 200–300 yards west of the original chapel site. It has been suggested that a field hedge to the northeast of the chapel may have originally formed part of an enclosing bank.

A holy well, known as *Pistyll Teilo*, is located to the south of the chapel site, and in the 19th century, a flight of steps reportedly led to it.

By 1905, only the south wall of the chapel remained standing, rising to a height of 7–9 feet. The remains of other walls were still discernible. The structure measured approximately 26 feet in length by 15 feet in width. Remarkably, the interior plasterwork was noted to be well preserved at that time.

Between 1966 and 1969, the Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society conducted archaeological excavations at the site. These revealed that the building was aligned on an east–west axis, with the ground sloping significantly downward toward the west. Evidence of an earlier structure was uncovered, including a cobbled surface beneath the current floor of irregular stone slabs.

Remains of an earlier wall were found partly overlain by the later north wall. On the south side of the altar, an earlier wall—about two feet thick—ran just inside the course of the later south wall. All walls were constructed of rubble stone and measured around 2.5 feet thick. Outside the east wall, the possible trace of an earlier apse wall was also identified.

Interestingly, no structural division was found between the nave and chancel of the existing building. Remains of a slate roof were discovered and are thought to date from the 13th to 15th century. These were found alongside a crude step of white stones—located approximately 8 feet from the east wall and extending 3 feet from the north wall. This footing suggests an altar width of around 7 feet.

Several burials were also identified during the excavation. The skeleton of a male, approximately 15 years old, was found in a shallow grave east of the chapel, aligned east–west with arms folded across the chest. A single copper button, dated to the 18th century, was found on the chest area.

In the southeast corner of the building, the skeletons of three or more infants were discovered. These were buried close to the surface and without any clear orientation. Since burial outside the main parish church was uncommon prior to the 19th century, it has been suggested that these remains may represent un-consecrated burials.

The Church of Cadoc, serve as historical markers of their contributions. A preserved area called Waunadogog, or Cadoc's meadow, further attests to the deep roots of these figures in the region. Maurice de Londres, a powerful noble, granted twelve acres of land surrounding the Church of St. Cadoc—adjacent to St. Mary's lands—for the salvation of his soul and ancestors.

The undated charter, housed in the Public Record Office, was addressed to David, Bishop of St. David's, likely placing the transaction between 1147 and 1176, during Bishop David Fitzgerald's tenure.

The origins of ancient Welsh churches, often named after their founders rather than canonized saints, continue to spark debate. The ruins of St. Teilo's Church in Kidwelly suggest a modest structure, possibly serving as an oratory, challenging long-held assumptions about its significance.

Moreover, Kidwelly's position along inter-tribal roads and a major Roman communication route suggests an advanced settlement far removed from primitive conditions. This perspective reshapes historical narratives, highlighting a more sophisticated civilization than traditionally believed.

As Welsh saint foundations declined in the 8th century, religious sites transitioned towards parish and diocesan establishments. One such site, Llandydoch, located in

the parish of Maenllwyd-mawr, reportedly featured stone foundations and a well named Ffynnon Ddewi, later known as St. Michael's Well.

Over time, dedications to St. Michael gained prominence within Welsh religious tradition, reflecting broader shifts in ecclesiastical practices.

The Priory of Kidwelly

The Priory of Kidwelly, founded in 1130 by Roger, the Bishop of Salisbury, belonged to the Benedictine order and served as a monastic establishment for a Prior and two monks. Roger, a notable ecclesiastic of his time, played a significant role in the history of England during the reign of Henry I. Initially a priest in Caen, he later became Chief Justiciary, Treasurer, and eventually the bishop of Salisbury. His involvement in State affairs and capable administration earned him the confidence of the monarchy.

Roger's connection with Kidwelly began with his expedition to Gower and his journey along the coast through Carnwylion to Kidwelly. Kidwelly, with its unconquered and resistant inhabitants, seemed to hold a special attraction for him. It is suggested that he secured a grant of the district from his sovereign, establishing his possessions at Kidwelly in the early 12th century.

In the Taxation of Pope Nicholas IV in 1291, it is documented that the Prior of Kidwelly possessed one carucate of land with associated rents and perquisites, valued at £2 10s. The temporalities of the Priory in the 26th year of King Henry VIII were listed in the 'Valor Ecclesiasticus,' indicating a total worth of £38, with deductions for various payments, leaving a clear income of £29 10s.

A document from 1428, preserved in the Public Record Office, reveals an ecclesiastical proceeding where the prior and convent of Kidwelly claimed two parts of the tithes, including those from wool, milk, cheese, and lambs, on specific lands within the parish of St. Mary of Kidwelly. The prior and convent were awarded these tithes as rectors through a legal judgment.

This historical overview showcases the Priory of Kidwelly's foundation, its connection to Roger, and its economic aspects as documented in historical records.

THE SITUATION OF THE PRIORY

Persistent claims have been made suggesting that the ancient ruins at Penallt, located between Kidwelly and the mouth of the river Towy, approximately a mile from the former, are the remnants of Kidwelly Priory. However, this assertion must be regarded as conjecture, lacking supportive evidence. Documents refer to the 'Church of Penallt,' but no mention of the Priory of Penallt is found.

The 'Church of Penallt' is consistently distinguished from Kidwelly Priory and its associated churches, such as St. Ishmael and Pembrey. Hence, the actual situation of Kidwelly Priory demands consideration elsewhere.

Thankfully, abundant evidence, both documentary and otherwise, supports associating the priory with the extant ruins on the left bank of the Lesser Gwendraeth, adjacent to the east boundary wall of the present parish churchyard.

Historical documents indicate that the monks were granted land by Norman landowners for monastic purposes, usually barren and unfertile tracts. Kidwelly's monks, however, seem to have received a more generous grant, likely due to the ecclesiastical status of the donor, Roger, Bishop of Salisbury.

Roger's careful consideration of the priory's requirements, including proximity to the existing church and access to a stream, speaks to his thoughtful allocation of land.

The religious community's real property consisted of a carucate of land, equivalent to a plough-land ploughable with one team of oxen in a year—a term introduced by the Normans. The present-day gardens in Lady Street were once known as 'the priory fields,' indicating the extent of the priory's holdings.

Court Rolls from the Prior's Court held at Kidwelly provide insights into social life, property tenure, and dispute resolution during that era. They also reflect an intermingling of Welsh and foreign settlers.

The records of the Prior's Court in the early 14th century reveal legal disputes and transactions involving tenements in Lady Street. These transactions provide a glimpse into property ownership, fines for entry, and the intricacies of life in medieval Kidwelly. St. Mary Street (now Lady Street) is specifically mentioned, emphasizing its ownership by the prior.

In addition to some priory land remaining under cultivation, parts were let out for tenements, potentially increasing the property's overall value. This income, coupled with the monks' frugality, may have contributed to the construction of the present Parish Church as an expression of their devotion.

A List of the Priors of Kidwelly is provided, offering the names and years of service for eight priors. Although the list covers 236 years, it is acknowledged that Prior Galfridus de Coker likely succeeded others whose details are difficult to ascertain due to the priory's earlier foundation in 1130. The last prior was John Godmyster, serving at the time of the Dissolution.

The Dissolution of the Priory occurred during the suppression of monasteries, resulting in the merging of the priory into the Crown's possession. In 1544, certain individuals leased the monastic properties, as detailed in a document available in the Public Record Office.

The leased possessions included the priory's site, buildings, cemeteries, and other features. Notably, a yearly pension of £8 to the vicar was exempted from the lease.

CONSECRATION OF AN ANCIENT CEMETERY

Three days after the execution of the deed through which Roger, Bishop of Salisbury, granted certain lands to Sherborne Abbey, the same benefactor took steps to set aside and consecrate a cemetery in Kidwelly. This action occurred "with the license and consent of Wilfrid, Bishop of St. David's.

While the exact date of the document is unspecified, the inclusion of the bishop's name aids in approximating both the land grant and the cemetery's consecration. Wilfrid, also known as Griffri, Jeffrey, and Gryfyth, was the final Welsh bishop of St. Davids before Norman rule, and he appears in the official list under his Welsh name Griffri.

His tenure spanned from 1096 to 1112, and he passed away in 1112, succeeded by Bernard, the first Norman bishop of St. Davids. Consequently, the document and the cemetery's consecration likely predate 1112. Given that Wilfrid held the position from 1096 to 1112, the consecration must have taken place between these years.

Considering that Henry I ascended the throne in 1100 and Roger gained prominence during his reign, these local transactions likely occurred between 1100 and 1112. The cemetery in question likely corresponds to the area numbered 760 on the Ordnance Map of 1880 and 62 on the 1907 map. This site is situated adjacent to the Llansaint road, approximately 300 yards from the castle where the initial land deed was executed. Notably, this enclosure is still commonly recognized as Mynwent Domos or St. Thomas's Cemetery.



St Thomas Chapel was reportedly one of the five chapels of ease serving Kidwelly parish, with the other four identified as Llanfihangel, Coker Cadog, and Teilo.

The cemetery occupied a field to the north of Kidwelly, which retained the name Mynwent Domos into the early 20th century. Human remains were reportedly disturbed in adjacent gardens during the 19th century. It is presumed that the chapel building was situated either within the cemetery or in close proximity to it.

It is plausible that an oratory was established in conjunction with this burial ground, which aligns with the tradition asserting the presence of an ancient chapel on the site.

THE VICARIATE OF KIDWELLY.

The allocation of a yearly pension of £8 to the Vicar points to the existence of a Vicariate at Kidwelly during the priory's dissolution. The ecclesiastical suit mentioned earlier also lends support to the idea of a vicariate, as it can be assumed that the third portion of the tithes, not claimed by the prior and convent, belonged to the vicar.



There is compelling evidence for the existence of the vicariate during the priory's dissolution. It is also likely that the vicariate of Kidwelly was established at the beginning of the 14th century. In a Court Roll an entry from the Court of the Prior of Kidwelly, held on the day of S. Kalixtus, Pope and Martyr, A.D. 1310, reveals an interesting note: 'Nicholas Kyngman excuses himself against Thomas Cas on plea of debt by Thomas, the Vicar.'

While vicarages are commonly believed to have been established in the eighth year of Henry II (A.D. 1162), 'Alwyn' might not have been a vicar according to the general understanding of the term. However, he is specifically denominated as 'the Priest of the town' in the deed whereby a grant of land was made by Roger, bishop of Salisbury, to Sherborne Abbey, probably within the first decade of the 12th century (see Appendix A).

John Griffith's appointment was made subject to the condition that 'an annual pension of 26s. 8d. be reserved to the previous Incumbent (John Chayny) until he is appointed to a cure' - Bishop's Register.

Roger Prichard was a Fellow of Jesus College, Oxford.

Vicarage House: This residence was constructed in 1895, based on plans prepared by Mr. Thomas Arnold, architect, Llanelly. The total cost of the building was £1,804.

The provided information was extracted from the book "A History of Kidwelly" by The Rev. D. Daven Jones, B.A., Vicar in 1908.

Exploring Religious Influences in Kidwelly: A Compilation of Research Findings

This compilation represents my investigation into the rich tapestry of religious influences that have shaped Kidwelly over the years. I invite you to delve into the enlightening discoveries I've made, offering insights into the diverse religious landscape that has left an enduring mark on this community.

St Mary's Church



St. Mary's Church in Kidwelly is a historically rich and architecturally significant place. Situated approximately 50 meters south of the Gwendraeth Fach estuary, the church has a long history dating back to pre-conquest times, believed to be dedicated to St. Cadog in its original form.

During the medieval period, the church was part of the Deanery of Kidwelly. It became a priory between 1107 and 1115, granted to the Benedictines of Sherborne Abbey by Roger, Bishop of Salisbury, and the lord of Kidwelly. The priory, despite its location west of the church, remained relatively poor throughout its existence, with only one monk recorded in 1377. After its dissolution in 1539, the patronage transferred to the Crown.

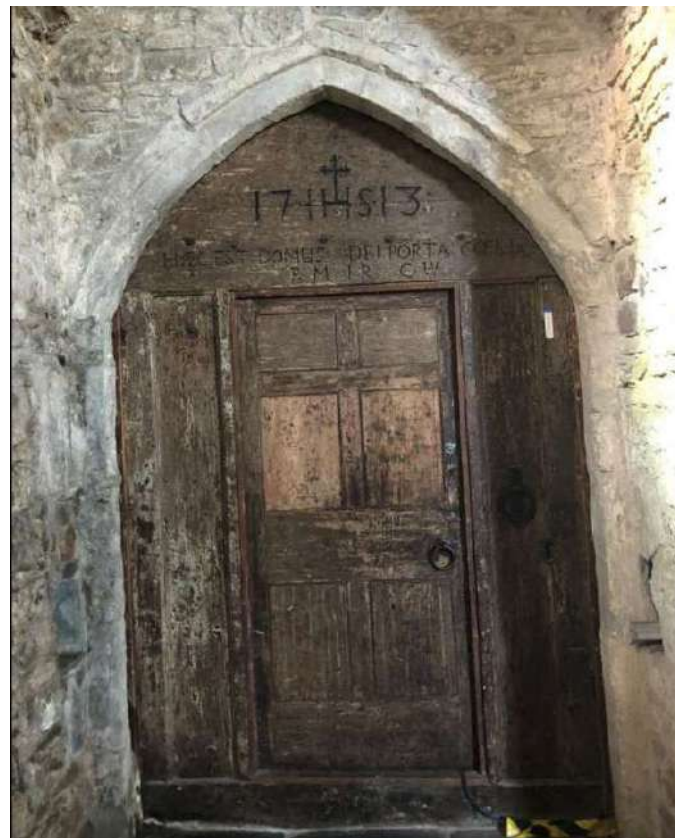
The church itself is an impressive Grade I listed building, recognized as the largest parish church in southwest Wales. Its exceptional features include a striking broach spire and intricate Decorated Gothic detailing. The construction incorporates mixed rubble stone with yellow oolite and Old Red Sandstone dressings.

The original church was reported to have burned down in the thirteenth century. The existing structure, with its distinctive features, such as ballflowers, wave-mouldings, and tablet-flowers, dates primarily to the mid-fourteenth century. The nave was the main parish church during medieval times, and the chancel served as the monastic priory church.

The tower, one of the earliest in the region, dates to around 1400 and is believed to have been added to the existing nave north door. Over the centuries, various additions, alterations, and restoration efforts have taken place, preserving the church's historical and architectural integrity. The church was restored in 1884, introducing elements like the oolite and Portland stone font, free-standing pews, and a new belfry clock.

St. Mary's Church stands as a remarkable symbol of religious and historical heritage, drawing visitors to appreciate its intricate design and immerse themselves in its storied past.

St Mary's Memorial Links. <http://tinyurl.com/StMary-Memorials>



The current parish church stands upon the foundation of its predecessor, likely a temporary structure built after the church, along with the town, was reportedly destroyed by Prince Llewelyn in 1222. A rare exception to the widespread suppression of monasteries, it survived and became the parish church, similar to Brecon and Monkton priory churches in the diocese of St. Davids.

Dedicated to St. Mary, the church exemplifies the Decorated Style in the diocese, featuring a spacious nave, short transepts, and a lofty tower topped by an elegant spire. Described by Archdeacon Bevan as a notable example of Norman influence, Marian dedications were prevalent, especially in towns and near Norman castles or Cistercian monasteries.

Sir George Gilbert Scott's 1854 report, prepared for a potential restoration, notes the church's remarkable characteristics. The nave, with an unusual 33-foot span, lacks aisles, while the chancel, small north and south transepts, tower, and spire form a simple cross. Originally, the tower and porch were midway between the western angles and the transepts, but the nave has since been shortened.

Despite initial impressions, Scott suggests the entire church, except for later alterations, was likely built around the end of Edward II's reign or early in Edward III's. Although the chancel exhibits rich flowing tracery and the tower features severe lancet windows, Scott argues this is a stylistic choice rather than indicative of distinct construction periods. Similarities in the mouldings of doorways, including those in the tower, and the arches into the chancel and transepts support the conclusion that they are all of the same era.

With the absence of window tracery in the nave, an objection could arise, suggesting the nave, along with the transept and chancel arches, predates the chancel. However, two features counter this notion. First, a loophole on the south side of the nave aligns with the style and age of the chancel. Second, a staircase in the tower, featuring an ogee arch, also points to the same period. These findings, coupled with the overall unity of the plan, lead to the conclusion that the entire structure is of one date, and the lancet windows in the tower result from an economy-driven decision.

Despite its severe simplicity, the tower is a grand structure, marked by its considerable size and a plain, unperforated spire. Externally, it combines the typical features of its era with those distinct to the region, notably the high battering basement common in Welsh towers. Internally, the lower story of the tower is vaulted, featuring rough stone facing, creating a uniquely picturesque character.

The nave, both inside and out, maintains a straightforward character. The windows, now reduced to arched openings due to the loss of mullions and tracery, include a late perpendicular west window, a product of the nave's shortening. The remaining internal features include three bold and well-designed arches and simple yet good

doorways. The transepts share a similar condition with the nave, and the south transept contains a window retaining its mullion, likely not from the original date. Several arched recesses for tombs are found in this transept, with sepulchral slabs discovered in both transepts.

The chancel, from the outset, was the most finely finished and retains much of its original beauty. The east window, once boasting five lights, has lost its mullions and tracery. Nevertheless, surviving windows on the south side showcase excellent tracery, while the north side's windows, although blocked, hint at near-perfect preservation. The sedilia and piscina in the chancel remain intact and exhibit very good design.

The vestry has been mostly rebuilt on the old foundation, previously consisting of two stories. The stairs to the upper story remain, featuring a perfectly preserved traceried loophole opening into the chancel. On the opposite side of the vestry door are well-moulded octagonal brackets for lights.

The chancel arch is segmental and very low, not rising above the height of the side walls of the nave. A blocked rood-stair entrance suggests that it might have opened over the chancel arch, possibly extending over it, offering an explanation for the arch's low height.

The roofs are of a later date, with the chancel roof likely dating back to the time of James I, and the nave roof probably from the 18th century, displaying signs of decay in several areas.

Despite the late date of the roofs, the walls, characterized by their massive thickness, remain generally sound. However, the parapet of the tower is mostly gone, and the upper part of the spire has been poorly rebuilt, compromising its symmetry.

After the calamity that struck the parish church in 1884, when lightning struck the spire, causing top masonry to damage the nave roof, restoration work was carried out under the direction of Messrs. Middleton and Prothero, Architects. The spire, previously poorly rebuilt after a similar incident in the 19th century, was restored to its original symmetrical proportions. In 1904, during another renovation, the spire was also pierced. The west window, criticized for its rudimentary style, was replaced with a perpendicular window of superior style and workmanship. The other windows in the nave received new mullions, though not retaining the original tracery. The nave roof, impressively supported by massive walls, stands as a testament to the skill of the designers.

While Sir Gilbert Scott suggested a construction date "about the end of the reign of Edward II, or early in that of Edward III," this view faced challenges. Dr. Freeman argued that the church featured a 14th-century nave added to a 13th-century tower,

while Mr. Edward Laws identified certain chancel elements as early English in style during a visit in 1906. Sir Gilbert Scott, after a more thorough examination, concluded that the entire church belonged to one age, emphasizing the resemblance between the tower doorways' mouldings and those of the chancel and transept arches.

The second point of similarity is observed between the loophole in the south wall of the nave staircase and another in the tower staircase. Both exhibit similar arches, suggesting their contemporaneous construction. The transition from the Early English to the Decorated style is recognized as gradual, making it challenging to establish a clear demarcation between them. The styles are often subdivided into early, middle, and late, with early stages sometimes blending with the previous style and later stages extending into the subsequent one. Given the consensus placing this church in the incipient stage of the Decorated period, around the late 13th or early 14th century, there's reason to believe that Early English elements might have persisted during the transition to the Early Decorated style.

Architectural Features:

1. Numerous staircases within the walls.
2. Unusually low chancel arch.
3. Segmental character of the main arches.
4. Broad nave with the absence of aisles.
5. Abrupt terminations of the transepts.
6. Numerous sepulchral recesses.

The building accommodates four staircases within its walls. The south wall staircase in the nave may have served as an approach to a rostrum for reading the Epistle, while the one accessible from the north transept likely led to a similar rostrum for reading the Gospel. A spiral staircase near the chancel and south transept arch pillars likely led to the rood loft. Adjacent to its entrance is a stoup, possibly used for ablution before ascending to the rood loft. Another staircase is situated in the sacristy or vestry wall, starting from what was originally the first floor. The traceried loophole in this staircase served as both a window and potentially a squint, suggesting that the first floor might have been used as an anchorite cell.

Circular loopholes with tracery resembling a wheel were often indicative of anchorages attached to churches. These cells were occupied by anchorites, voluntarily bound by a vow of seclusion, sometimes for life. Female recluses, seeking protection and religious advantages, often resided in such cells. Typically, these cells had three shuttered windows: one to a chamber for the anchorite's attendant, another for necessary communication with the outside, and a third, like the mentioned loophole, offering a view into the church's sanctuary.

The unusual low position of the chancel arch may be explained by the assumption, supported by the height of the spiral staircase, that the rood loft extended above the arch. The segmental formation of this arch, along with other main arches, creates an angle with the pillar abruptly and lacks continuous impost or capitals to the shafts. The corbels supporting the canopy over the loft remain preserved in the wall. Dr. Freeman notes that the change of mouldings at the junction is rare in England and resembles later French work.

The extraordinary breadth of the nave without aisles is also believed, by Dr. Freeman, to be reminiscent of some South Gaulish churches. The transepts directly start from the nave, not from a central tower as commonly seen in monastic churches. Their unsymmetrical abruptness supports the earlier contention that they are mere annexations to the main building.

There are a total of six arched sepulchral tombs, two each in the chancel, south chapel, and nave. The chancel and nave tombs lack monumental slabs, while one in the south chapel holds a recumbent effigy and another a slab with an incised cross, believed to be from the 15th century. The sepulchral arch in the north wall of the sacarium might have been used as a recess for entombing the rood or Crucifix in the rood-loft during the interval between Good Friday and Easter Day. Additionally, a monument, now placed in an upright position in the south chapel, commemorates a civilian from the 14th century, clad in the tunica talaris.

The church boasts a unique figure of the Virgin in pure white alabaster, crowned and bearing the infant Saviour and a bird. Despite considerable mutilation due to Puritanical times and rough handling, it remains a good specimen of 15th-century art. The figure was once positioned in the niche above the south porch door, where parishioners curtsied to it. Removed in 1875, it is now in the sacristy awaiting restoration, but its original place was likely the niche on the south side of the east end of the nave, beneath the rood-loft and above the spiral rood-stairs' approach.

The Church Plate - The inventory of goods belonging to the church, returned by the Commissioners appointed during the beginning of the reign of Edward VI (1552), listed various items, including 2 chalices of silver, partly gilt, a small cross of silver, partly gilt, a censer of silver, a pyx of silver, and 4 bells, great and small. Additionally, one chalice was noted to be in the possession of Morys ap Rhys, Gent. Unfortunately, there is no current information available about these items. The oldest surviving vessels are a silver chalice and paten, both from the reign of Queen Elizabeth (1574). The chalice, considered by experts to be one of the finest examples of Elizabethan ecclesiastical plate in the diocese of St. Davids, is inscribed in Latin with 'Poculum * Ecclesie * de * Kydwelly * 15 * 74.'

The Registers - The parochial records date back to 1626, with apparent extracts from a previous register dating from 1586. All entries until 1733 are in Latin and are presented in bold and legible calligraphy. The systematic registration of baptisms, marriages, and burials was established at the end of Henry VIII's reign. A royal injunction issued by Thomas Cromwell, Vicar-General, on September 29, 1538, mandated every parish incumbent to maintain a register. This register, to be taken forth every Sunday in the presence of the churchwardens, documented weddings, christenings, and burials from the preceding week. Initially, register books were made of paper, but in 1597, a law required each parish to acquire a parchment book for transcribing entries from paper registers. This explains the entries at the beginning of Kidwelly's earliest parchment register, believed to be copies from a prior record book.

One particularly noteworthy entry in the local registers recounts an unfortunate event and reflects an antiquated atmospheric idea. It states:

"On the 29th day of October 1481, the steeple of Kidwelly fell down by lightning and a clap of thunder between one and two o'clock in the afternoon. - From lightning and tempest; from battle and murder, and from sudden death, Good Lord, deliver us."

Church Restoration - Following the lightning disaster of 1884, a comprehensive church restoration plan was implemented, costing £1813 8s. 1d.

Church Bells - Kidwelly's parish church belfry has housed a peal of bells for many years, with a local saying that "Kidwelly bells were heard at Swansea." Tradition suggests that the bells intended for Kidwelly were mistakenly taken to Swansea by sea. Despite this, Kidwelly later acquired a splendid pipe organ in 1907 from St. Mary's Church, Swansea. An excerpt from *The New Monthly Magazine* (March 1820) mentions the revival of church bellringing in Kidwelly after years of deprivation, with new bells replacing broken ones.

The present peal comprises six bells, fixed for chiming only to preserve tower masonry safety. Recast by Charles Carr, Ltd., Bell-founders, Smethwick, in 1902 at a cost of £140, they were dedicated, along with a new altar and reredos, by the Lord Bishop of St. Davids on May 3rd the same year.

Town Clock - Housed in the church steeple, the town clock, which had stopped after lightning damage in 1884, was restored in 1902. The dials were elevated, at the expense of the municipal corporation, in commemoration of the Coronation of King Edward VII.

Siloam Chapel in Cydweli/Kidwelly: A Historical Architectural Gem

Siloam Chapel, nestled in the heart of the picturesque town of Kidwelly, Wales, stands as a testament to the intersection of history, faith, and architectural prowess. Its origins trace back to the year 1821 when the first foundations of this sacred edifice were laid, marking the beginning of a spiritual journey that would endure for centuries.



83A Siloam Bapt. Kidwelly. 1991.

The Baptist movement in Kidwelly traces its roots back to 1796 when an old brewery in Alstred Street became its first meeting place, complete with a pulpit and benches. As the number of worshippers steadily increased, the original brewery became inadequate, leading to the construction of a new chapel at the current site in 1821.

In 1892, the chapel underwent a significant reconstruction, costing £1500, resulting in a spacious facility with seating for 550 people. When Rev. H. R. Jones assumed the ministry of Siloam in 1902, the membership stood at 104. By 1935, under his leadership, the congregation had grown to 200 worshippers. Siloam Chapel holds the distinction of ordaining not only members of the Reynolds family but also three other locals into the Ministry: Rev. Ben Jones (Maesteg), Rev. Richard Vaughan Jones (Aberbargoed), and Rev. Glyn Williams (Aberdare).

List of Ministers:

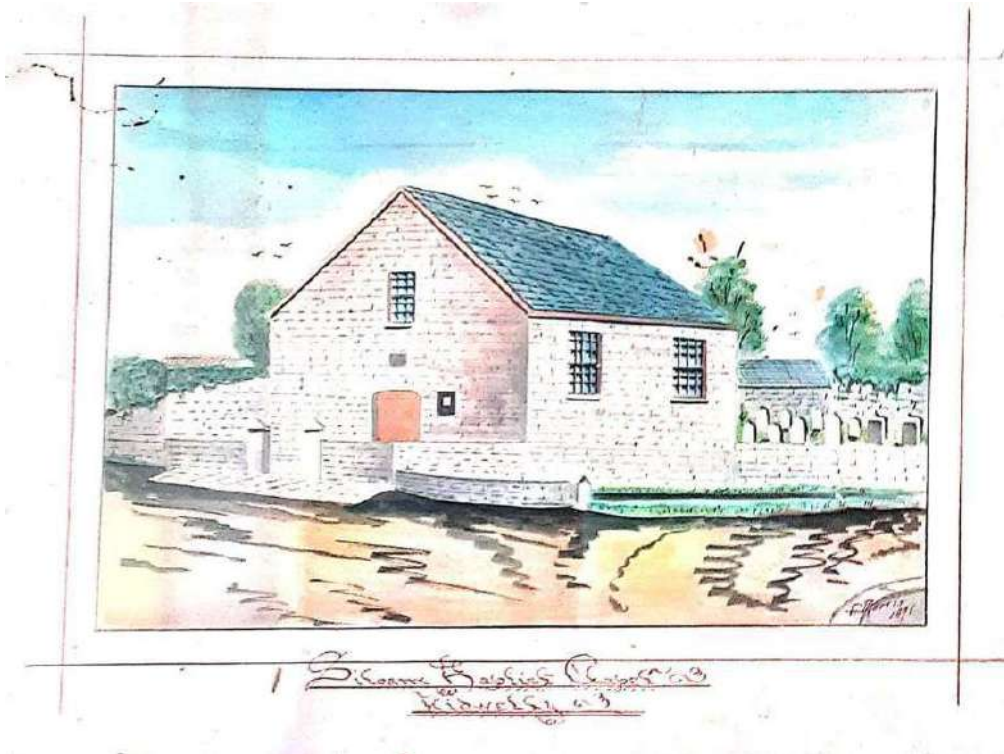
- John Reynolds Sn (1834)
- George Reynolds (1860-1861)
- John Reynolds Jr (1860-1861)
- Hugh Robert Jones (1902)
- W. O. Williams (1941)
- Meurig Thomas (1966)

The present trustees include Mrs. Rosemary Brookman, Mr. Iorwerth Davies, Mr. Dyfrig Evans, Mrs. Eirlys Jones, Miss Mair Jones, Mr. Anthony Lewis, Mr. John Morgan, and Miss Mair.

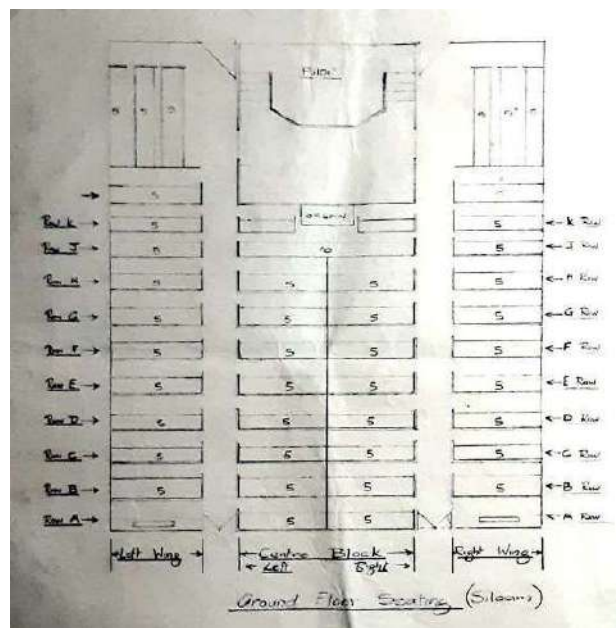
Original Chapel.



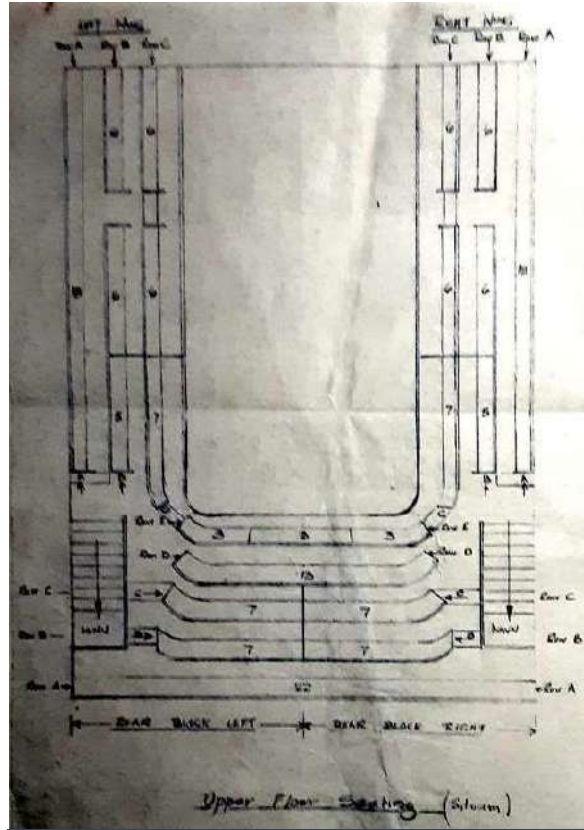
Original proposed Design



Ground Floor Layout



Upper Floor Layout



The chapel underwent a profound transformation in 1892, a period marked by a renewed interest in religious architecture. Guided by the visionary design of the esteemed architect George Morgan of Carmarthen, Siloam Chapel emerged in all its splendour, embodying the Romanesque architectural style.

Architectural Splendour in Romanesque Style

The Romanesque architectural style, evident in the chapel's design, captivates with its distinctive features. The robust and solid appearance, characterized by round arches and substantial walls, reflects an era where craftsmanship and dedication to detail were paramount. Siloam Chapel stands as a proud exemplar of this style, a timeless structure that transcends the boundaries of time.

Gable Entry Grandeur

Dominating the landscape with its gable entry type, Siloam Chapel presents a striking facade to the world. The prominent triangular gable, facing the street with an air of

majestic simplicity, beckons all who pass by to witness the sanctuary within. This architectural choice not only serves a practical purpose but also contributes to the chapel's aesthetic allure, defining its presence in the historical tapestry of Kidwelly.

Architect George Morgan's Legacy

The visionary behind Siloam Chapel's rejuvenation was the esteemed architect George Morgan of Carmarthen. His artistry and meticulous planning are evident in every facet of the chapel's design. George Morgan's influence has left an indelible mark on the architectural landscape of Kidwelly, and Siloam Chapel stands as a living testament to his creative genius.

Cydweli/Kidwelly: A Cultural Haven

Situated in the charming town of Kidwelly, also known as Cydweli, Siloam Chapel has been more than a place of worship. It has been a cultural and spiritual epicentre, weaving itself into the fabric of the community. The chapel's walls resonate with the echoes of prayers, hymns, and communal gatherings that have defined the town's history.

In conclusion, Siloam Chapel in Cydweli/Kidwelly stands not only as a place of worship but as a living chronicle of architectural evolution and community heritage. Its enduring presence invites all to appreciate the harmonious blend of history and faith encapsulated within its walls.



Siloam Baptist Choir 1913



Kidwelly Group 1933





POST CARD

THE ADDRESS TO BE WRITTEN ON THIS SIDE



Top L to R

Archie McNally, Edna Walters (Haig), Richard Vaughan Jones (Row)
Doris Harris, ?

Bottom L to R

Robert James, Rachel Nicholas, ? Lloyd (Producer-Transactor)
Elizabeth James (Sis) Ed. Vaughan Jones, Gwen Walters/Doris

Siloam Baptist Church Ministers: A Legacy of Faith

The history of Siloam Chapel in Kidwelly is intricately woven with the spiritual tapestry of , whose presence and influence as ministers have left an indelible mark on the town's religious landscape.

Rev. John Reynolds (1798–1878): The spiritual journey commenced with the esteemed Rev. John Reynolds, born in Kidwelly in 1798. A dedicated minister, he served as a beacon of faith in Siloam Baptist Church. Rev. John Reynolds married Anne Henshaw Reynolds in 1816, and together they raised five children over 14 years. His long and impactful life concluded on 22nd November 1878 in Kidwelly.

Rev. John Reynolds, Baptist Minister to Kidwelly, passionately preached the Gospel of Christ for 60 years. He served as the pastor of Siloam for 44 years and the church at Ferry side for 35 years.

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/262908823/john-reynolds>

Rev. George Reynolds (1824–1895): Continuing the family legacy, two of Rev. John Reynolds' sons followed in their father's footsteps. Notably, Rev. George Reynolds, born in 1824, emerged as a prominent figure in the Siloam Baptist Church. His devotion to ministry was matched only by his commitment to family. George married Margaret Hughes in 1845 and later Mary Edwards Reynolds, with whom he had ten children. Reverend George Reynolds passed away on 29th March 1895, leaving behind a lasting impact on the community.

Rev George Reynolds



<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/262909501/george-reynolds>

Mary Edwards Reynolds



<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/262909637/mary-reynolds>

A glimpse into his final moments reveals his unwavering faith, captured in the poignant verses written by him at the time of his passing. Despite a prolonged illness, his spirit remained resilient, finding solace in the lyrics penned during his Room of Affliction.

PENILLION O YSTAFELL CYSTUDD

GAN Y DIWEDDAR

BARC. GEORGE REYNOLDS, CYDWELI.

Bu farw Mawrth 29ain, 1895, yn 71 oed. Claddwyd ef yn Mynwent Siloam Ebrill 2il, 1895.

Yn ei gystudd hir a phoenus, a phan wedi colli archwaeth at fwydydd, methodd ddal yr olyyfa a hir garai mewn iechyd, sef, ei deulu lluosog ar adeg lon y Nadolig wrth y burdd gartref. Tafiodd gadach dros ei wyneb, a chanodd fel y canlyn.—TALMAI.

'R WY'N cau fy llygaid rhag i'm weld
Amrywicl fwydydd bras,
Rhag imi gael fy nhentio'n awr
I brofi peth o'u blas.

Pe gwnawn ond profi gronyn bach
O'r bwydydd mwyaf pur,
Nid hir y buaswn cyn cael poen,
A phrofi brathol gur.

Wrth feddwl am fy nghyflwr tlawd
'Rwy'n wylu lawer tro,
Am na chawn brofi hyfryd flas
Danteithion bras fy mro.

Mae'm teulu wrth y burdd yn iach,
Mewn mwyniant eithaf llon,
A minau'n gorfod cadw draw—
O I dyma loes i'm bron.

Pe cawn wybodaeth gan ryw un
Am gyffêr i'm iachau,
Mi roddwn iddo glod didwyll
Tra'm dyddiau yn parhau.

Tystiolaeth y meddygon oll
Nad oes dim ganddyn: hwy
I wella un sydd 'nawr mor wan,
Ac i iachau fy nghlwy'.

Gan fod meddygon enwog ryw
Mor ciddil a diwerth,
Mi drof fy ngwyneb at fy Nuw
Am adnewyddiad nerth.

Cydweli, Nadolig, 1894.

"O I Iesu mawr, y Meddyg gwell"
Na holl feddygon llawr,
Rho imi brawf ar hyn o bryd
O'th Ddwyfol allu mawr.

"Os ewyllysi, gelli Di"
Fy ngwella'n rhwydd a rhad;
"O I d'wed y gair," a digon yw,
Ac yna caf iachad.

Ond os na cha' fy nghorph iachad
Yr ochr hon i'r bedd,
O I Dduw, cymhwysa'm, enaid tlawd
I fyn'd i wlad yr hedd.

Lle nad oes gofid, poen, na chur,
Yn blino neb o'r saint,
Ond moli'r Oen ag uchel lef
Am eu rhagorol fraint.

Henffych i'r dydd y bydd y corph
A'r enaid byth yn rhydd
Oddiwrth effeithiau pechod bliin—
O I hyfryd, ddedwydd ddydd.

Fe fydd rhyw dyrfa lawr ddirif
Yn iach, heb friw na phoen,
Ac wedi 'u gwneud yn berffaith lân
Drwy rinwedd gwaed yr Oen.

GEORGE REYNOLDS.

Poems from the Room of Affliction

By the Late Respected George Reynolds, Conversation

George Reynolds passed away on March 29th, 1895, at the age of 71, and found his final resting place in Siloam Cemetery on April 2nd, 1895.

In the throes of a prolonged and painful illness, during a time when his appetite had waned, George lamented the inability to partake in the cherished view he once enjoyed during the Christmas festivities with his large family gathered around the table at home. In a poignant moment, he covered his face with a cloth and expressed his feelings through song, which follows:

TALMAI, I close my eyes so that I don't see various coarse foods, lest I be tempted now to experience some of their taste.

If we only tried a small particle of the purest foods, it wouldn't be long before I had pain, and experienced a bitter bite.

When I think of my poor state I weep many times, Because I don't get to experience the wonderful taste of my heart's rich delicacies.

My family at the table is healthy, In quite happy enjoyment, And I have to stay away- Oh! this hurt my breast.

If we should receive information from someone For the purpose of healing me, I would give him sincere credit While my days continue.

The testimony of all the doctors That they have nothing to heal one who is 'now so weak, and to heal my disease'.

Since some famous doctors are so frail and useless, I turn my face to my God for renewed strength.

Kidwelly, Christmas, 1894.

"Oh! Great Jesus, the better Doctor
Than all the floor doctors,
Give me proof right now
Of your great Divine power.

"If you will, you can"
Heal me easily and cheaply;
"Oh! the word says," and that's enough,
And then I will be healed.

But if my body does not heal
This side of the grave,
Oh! God, enable my poor soul to go to the land of peace.

Where there is no sorrow, pain, or beating,
Tires any of the saints,
But praise the Lamb with a loud voice
For their excellent privilege.

Hail to the day when the body and the soul will never be free
From the effects of grievous sin-
Oh! lovely, happy day.

There will be a large numberless crowd
Healthy, without wound or pain,
And made perfect through the virtue of the blood of the Lamb.

GEORGE REYNOLDS.

Rev. John Reynolds (1828–1899)

Born in 1828 in Kidwelly, Carmarthenshire, John Reynolds was the son of John and Ann. His father, John, was 30, and his mother, Ann, was 36 at the time of his birth. In April 1849, he married Anne Morris in Llanelli, Carmarthenshire, and they were blessed with six children during their marriage.

John Reynolds, a devoted minister, served as a beacon of faith at Siloam Church for 17 years. Following the passing of his father in 1878, he shouldered the responsibility of ministry for several years, not only at Siloam Church but also at Baptist churches in the vicinity. His unwavering commitment to his faith and community marked him as a pillar of strength.

He departed on November 21, 1899, in Carmarthenshire, leaving behind a legacy of dedicated service. The following words, penned in a moment of reflection, capture the essence of his enduring faith:



"REV JOHN REYNOLDS SERVED AS A MINISTER AT
SILOAM CHURCH FOR 17 YEARS.
AFTER HIS FATHER'S DEATH IN 1878,
HE TOOK ON THE MINISTRY FOR SEVERAL YEARS AT
BAPTIST CHURCHES IN THE VICINITY AND ALSO
AT THIS CHURCH UNTIL HIS PASSING.
HE DEPARTED ON NOVEMBER 21, 1899,
AT THE AGE OF 71.
'THIS HOUR, O LORD, IS THE LORD'S,
THE BLESSING IN A SPECIAL WAY,
OF RECALLING TO MEMORY,
THE DEAR ONES OF THE PAST
WHOSE EYES SAW THY SALVATION.
OH, FOR A FRIEND LIKE JESUS TO STAND BY ME
WHEN I'M IN NEED.
IN THE GOLDEN SWEET BY AND BY,
HE WILL BE MY GUIDE TO SING HIS PRAISES ETERNALLY."

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/262993328/john-reynolds>

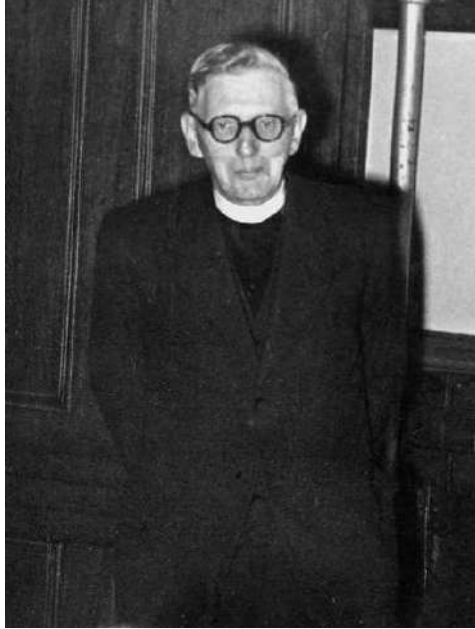
Rev. Hugh Robert Jones (1875–1939)

Born in Carnarvon in 1875, Hugh Robert Jones, son of Morgan and Margaret, married Mary Vaughan in 1900. With six children over 14 years, he passed away in 1939 in Kidwelly at the age of 64.

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/262825121/hugh-roberts-jones>

Rev. Henry Mostyn Jones (1883–1962)

Born on 10 May 1883 in Ffynnongroyw, Holywell, Flintshire, Rev. Henry Mostyn Jones, son of Evan and Jane, had a son and a daughter with **Emily Kate Reynolds** the daughter of the **Rev George Reynolds (1823 – 1895)**. His ministry concluded on 13 December 1962 at the age of 79.



<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/262958601/henry-mostyn-jones>

These ministers, through their dedication and spiritual leadership, have left an enduring legacy at Siloam Chapel, shaping the religious fabric of Kidwelly.

Memorials

The documentation of memorials at Siloam Cemetery is an ongoing project, accessible through the following link. Clicking will direct you to the Findagrave website, where names have been preserved for posterity. This resource is invaluable for present and future genealogists seeking information.

<http://tinyurl.com/Siloam-Cemetery-Memorials>

A Time to Remember

By Nesta Thomas

Siloam Baptist Chapel: 1796 to 2021

Regrettably, Siloam closed its doors at the year's end, marking the conclusion of a worship and witness that spanned over 200 years.

The journey began in 1796 when a group of non-conformists gathered in an old brewery on Alstred Street, led by the Reverend Josiah Watkins. This historical note prompts us to acknowledge that many early non-conformist congregations, including Siloam, met in pubs and taverns—well before the mid-Victorian temperance movement, some 50 years later.

Initially, Siloam functioned as a branch of Penuel Carmarthen and Salem St Ishmaels. Its membership flourished, leading to the establishment of its own chapel in 1834. Mr. Harries of Castle Farm generously invited members into his home for worship, eventually donating the orchard land in front of his farm. Contributions from members, in the form of weekly donations of 1p, 3p, and 6p, facilitated the completion of the chapel in 1892 at a cost of £1500. It could accommodate 400 people, and since then, the chapel has been sustained by a succession of distinguished ministers, notably the Reynolds family—John, and his sons George and John—who ministered at Siloam from 1834 to 1861.

In 1902, Reverend HR Jones, hailing from Staylitttle, North Wales, was ordained as a minister at Siloam. The membership at that time was 104, and the chapel was burdened with a £1200 debt. The new minister and the members successfully cleared this debt by 1920. Special services of thanksgiving were held on September 26th and 27th, 1920. In 1928, a vestry seating approximately sixty people was built at a cost of £600, and the membership rose to 200.

During Reverend HR Jones's ministry until 1939, Siloam continued to flourish with performances of dramas every Boxing Night, children's operettas every Good Friday, and well-attended Sunday school sessions. Eisteddfodau were held between various Baptist chapels in Carmarthenshire, and Cymanfa Ganu took place on Easter Monday, shaping much of the town's social life around the chapels.

In 1941, Reverend WL Williams from Merthyr became the next minister and served until 1963, contributing significantly to the life of the borough. In 1966, Reverend Meurig Thomas was ordained, staying until 1973, marking the end of the ministerial line.

Since then, Siloam has welcomed visiting ministers and lay preachers. In 1977, Reverend Richie Vaughan Jones retired to Kidwelly, being the son of HR Jones, and

ministered at Siloam regularly for many years. While we mourn the loss of our chapel, let us also remind ourselves that the earliest members of our congregation found it more important to worship our dear Lord together, wherever that may be.

History of Siloam Baptist Chapel

By Anne (Reynolds) Thomas (1928–2000)

Second youngest daughter of Charles Henshaw Reynolds (1873–1942) and Sarah Matilda (Rees) Reynolds (1884–1966).

Charles Henshaw Reynolds was born on October 12, 1873, in Kidwelly, Carmarthenshire, to George (50) and Mary (33). In September 1909, he married Sarah Matilda Rees in Swansea, Glamorgan, and together they had nine children over 17 years. Charles passed away on November 26, 1942, in his hometown at the age of 69. Initially employed at the BEN EVANS shop in Swansea, Charles resided in the rooms above, situated in what was known as the "Harrods of South Wales." Unfortunately, this establishment fell victim to a bomb during the Second World War in 1942. Undeterred by adversity, Charles took charge of the draper shop business at Corner House, Kidwelly, which he ran for the remainder of his life, leaving an enduring mark on the local landscape.

The transcription of Anne's notes on the Reynolds family history is provided below.

Following the old Celtic Reynolds tradition of storytelling, the following facts have been gathered by the descendants of John Reynolds (1798–1878) and George Reynolds (1823–1894), corroborated by papers and pamphlets held by the family. They were regaled with the history of Siloam Baptist Chapel from its beginnings in 1797. Descendants gathered in the back kitchen of Mr. Harries of Castle Farm to attend meetings and prayers. When the congregation increased in numbers, Mr. Harries generously donated land in front of the farm, previously his orchard, to erect the First Baptist Chapel in Kidwelly in 1823. We believe the name of the first minister was Mr. Morris, and the second minister was Mr. John Reynolds (1798–1878), who began his ministry around 1830. The congregation grew, and consequently, it was decided to build a larger Chapel. In 1878, a building fund was instituted, with members contributing weekly donations of 1p, 3p, and 6p, which were voluntary.

Reverend John Reynolds had been raised to be a faithful member of the church. However, at about 16 years of age, he heard a dissenter preaching at Carmarthen. When he returned home, he was jubilant in his newfound faith, which horrified his father. His father probably gave him a beating, and in retaliation, he informed his father that in time, he would be converted. John Reynolds became an ardent follower of the Baptist movement and became a minister of the faith around 1830. In those days, it was customary for ministers to pursue another occupation to make a living.

He was a builder and constructed many houses around Kidwelly, which was rapidly expanding in population due to the growth of the tinplate works and Kymer's Canal. The area around the castle was known as Old Town, and from the bridge, Newtown. Reverend George Reynolds (son) followed in his father's footsteps, and together they ministered at Coed y Brain, Ferryside, Llanstephan, and Trimsaran. Rev. George Reynolds conducted services at Ferryside and Llanstephan, walking to the ferry then crossing the river to Llanstephan, with the times of services depending on the tides. After the death of Rev. John Reynolds in 1878, Rev. George Reynolds administered all the chapels with the aid of his brother David, who was a lay preacher and choirmaster. George Reynolds was the chairman of the Baptist Union in 1893 for the three counties: Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, and Cardiganshire. The foundations of the existing Chapel were laid in 1892. Unfortunately, George Reynolds died before its completion, but his brother David carried on the work.

History of Sioam Baptist Chapel
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In 1902 a new minister was⁶
installed Rev. H. R. Jones who hailed
from North Wales.

During his ministry
the chapel continued to flourish -
dramas were performed at the
Town Hall on Boxing Night, a
children's Operetta was performed
every Good Friday, Sunday school
was well attended, Christmas
party held, and an outing
during the Summer.

Eisteddfods were held
between the various Baptist
Chapels in Carmarthenshire,
Gymaufa Gronu on Easter
Monday, so much social life
revolved around the Chapel.

Siloam Chapel First Wedding

The first couple to be married at Siloam were Rev. William Rees, the minister of Caersalem Baptist Chapel in Ebbw Vale, and his wife, Matilda Arthur. Matilda, the daughter of a former local grocer named John Arthur, was born in Carmarthen and raised in Kidwelly. William, originally from Craig Trewyddfa, Treboeth, had been a member of Caersalem Newydd. Their wedding took place on 15th August 1905, officiated by Rev. J. Edwards of Caersalem Newydd, with assistance from Rev. Hugh Robert Jones of Siloam.

Wedding Notice in *The Carmarthen Weekly Reporter* on 18th August 1905

Local Weddings.

REES-ARTHUR.

The inaugural wedding at Siloam Baptist Chapel, Kidwelly, took place on Thursday morning. The Reverend William Rees, the pastor of Victoria Baptist Chapel in Ebbw Vale, Monmouthshire, exchanged vows with Miss Matilda Arthur, the fourth daughter of the late Mr. John Arthur of Pinged Hill, Kidwelly (the original proprietor of the Tynywaun Colliery, Pontyates).

The chapel was adorned with tasteful decorations of flowers and foliage for the occasion. The ceremony was officiated by the Reverend J. Edwards of Caersalem Newydd Baptist Chapel, Swansea, with assistance from the Reverend H. R. Jones of Siloam, Kidwelly, the Reverend Mr. C. Jenkins of Sul, Kidwelly, and the Reverend Rees of Meinciau, Kidwelly.

The charming bride, dressed in a cream silk aeoline adorned with chiffon and Maltese lace, complemented by a matching hat, was given away by her uncle, Mr. T. Arthur of Carmarthen. The bridesmaid, her sister Miss S. J. Arthur, wore a Tuscan hat adorned with roses and foliage. Both the bride and bridesmaid carried bouquets, gifts from the bridegroom. The bridesmaid also wore a gold and pearl brooch, another gift from the bridegroom.

The Reverend J. Evans of Newport, Mon., served as the best man. Following the ceremony, a celebratory breakfast was enjoyed at the bride's home. Subsequently, the joyous couple embarked on their honeymoon, which was slated to be spent in Devonshire and Cornwall.

The information above was kindly donated by Nini Morgan.

Translated Letter to the Bishop of St David's – 7 December 1822

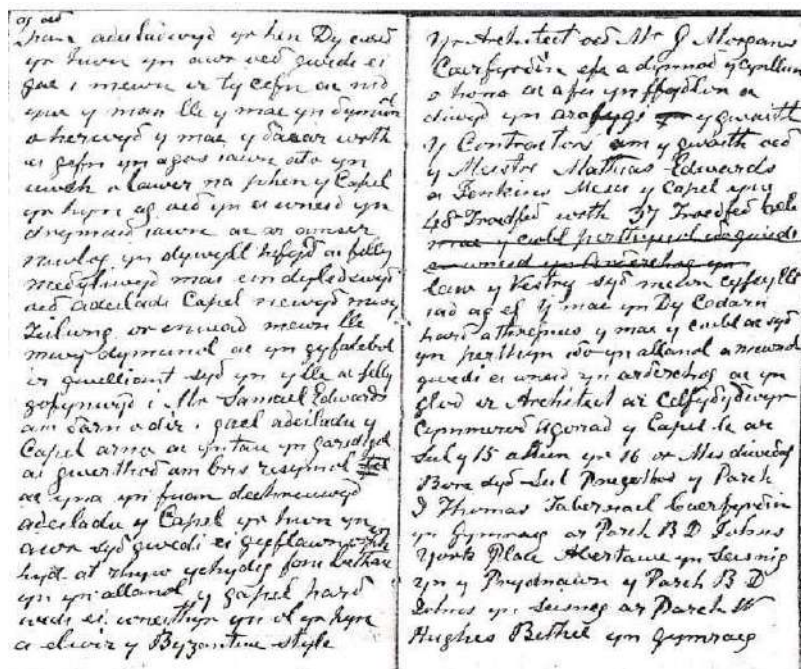
To the Right Reverend Lord Bishop of St David's and His Registrar,

I, James Pritchett, of the borough of Kidwelly in the county of Carmarthen, a gentleman, hereby confirm that a certain building known by the name of Siloam, situated in the parish of Saint Mary's in the borough of Kidwelly in the said county, is soon to be utilized as a place of religious worship by an assembly or congregation of Protestants. I formally request you to register and record the same in accordance with the provisions of an act passed in the 52nd year of the reign of His Majesty King George III, titled "An Act to Repeal Certain Acts and Amend Other Acts Relating to Religious Worship, Assemblies, and Persons Teaching and Preaching Therein." I further request the certification of this matter, as witnessed by my hand on this 7th day of December 1822.

James Pritchett

Witness: John Davis

I, Charles Morgan, Registrar of the Court of the Bishop of St David's, hereby affirm that a certificate, of which the above is an accurate copy, was presented to me on this day to be duly registered and recorded, in accordance with the Act of Parliament mentioned therein. Dated this 7th day of December 1822.



[Link to Letter.](#)

<http://tinyurl.com/Bishop-St-Davids-Letter>

Siloam Baptist Chapel, once a cornerstone of the community in Kidwelly, has left an enduring legacy spanning over two centuries. From its humble beginnings in an old brewery on Alstred Street in 1796, the chapel grew to become a place of spiritual guidance and fellowship for generations of worshippers.

The reconstruction in 1892, with seating for 550 people, marked a significant chapter in its history, symbolizing the congregation's strength and dedication. Under the leadership of Reverend H. R. Jones, the membership flourished, and the chapel became known not only for its worship but also as a beacon of ministry, ordaining several members into pastoral service.

The Reynolds family, along with others like Rev. Ben Jones, Rev. Richard Vaughan Jones, and Rev. Glyn Williams, played a crucial role in shaping the spiritual and social fabric of the town.

Siloam's history is steeped in moments of resilience, devotion, and community spirit. The ordination of ministers from within its congregation and the expansion of its membership through challenging times reflect the unwavering faith that characterized the chapel's mission.

From the early days of gathering in makeshift spaces to the building of a substantial chapel that served the community for over 200 years, Siloam's presence was more than just bricks and mortar—it was a testament to the power of faith and community in Kidwelly.

Though the chapel has now closed its doors, its story lives on in the hearts and memories of those who were part of its journey. The legacy of Siloam Baptist Chapel, with its rich history of worship, ministry, and community, stands as a fitting tribute to all who walked through its doors, reminding us that while buildings may fall silent, the spirit of those who worshipped together endures.

Graham T Emmanuel 2024

Trinity Methodist Church 1761

Foundation & History



Wesleyan Methodism took root in Kidwelly, Wales, in 1761 as part of the broader Methodist revival led by John Wesley. This movement sought to renew the spiritual life of communities through evangelical preaching, personal holiness, and organized societies. Early Methodist meetings in Kidwelly were likely held in homes or simple meeting places, as was common in the movement's early days. Despite opposition from the established Church and local authorities, the Methodist presence grew, with lay preachers spreading Wesley's message of salvation through faith. Over time, a more formal Methodist congregation was established, contributing to the rich religious heritage of the town.



Trinity Methodist Church Kidwelly

Trinity Church Centenary Brochure 1866-1966



This Version of the Trinity Church Centenary Brochure 1866-1966 has been reformatted for clarity, consistency, and readability.

WESLEYAN METHODISM IN KIDWELLY IN 1761

Thomas Taylor, a Yorkshireman, was appointed by the Wesleyan Conference to travel in Wales, which at this time formed one vast circuit. He travelled only in the South-West and was, according to his own testimony, the first of Wesley's preachers ever to enter Carmarthenshire. However, he did not expend much effort in preaching in this county. He knew no Welsh, and the people were largely Welsh speaking. Not surprisingly, he concentrated his labours on South Pembrokeshire and Gower, where there were communities who spoke only English.

Here, he reported some success in setting up societies. Conference sent him back to Wales in 1762, and he spent the winter—a severe one—traveling between Pembrokeshire and Gower, fostering the growth of his little societies.

To shorten his journey, he made use of the ferries across the Loughor, Towy, and Taff rivers, but this route often proved hazardous. Unfamiliar with local conditions and traveling alone, he was several times nearly trapped by rising tides. On one occasion, after landing at Llanstephan in darkness, he lost his way but was unable to obtain help from the country

people who, he reported regretfully, "would or could not speak English." Straying helplessly, he blundered into a deep bog from which he extricated himself and his horse only by the most strenuous efforts. "Wales," he wrote to Wesley, "is not the most pleasing part of the world for a stranger to wander in, especially on the errand which I was upon."

The following year, he was sent to Ireland, and Wales knew him no more. Many years later, after a lifetime of itinerancy, he became President of Conference. His valiant, pioneering work was followed up by Wesley himself, who, in August 1763, made his first journey into Carmarthenshire, entering it by way of the Towy Valley. After a brief stop at Carmarthen—during which he preached on the Green, an open strip of ground at the end of the castle courtyard—he pressed on to Pembrokeshire, where he spent about four days. Intending to include Gower on his return, he was advised to use Llanstephan ferry but found the tide out and made for Carmarthen. After three or four miles, he recollected being told of a ford across the Towy and, with the willing help of an old man, crossed safely.

He had scarcely resumed his journey when his mare dropped a shoe, and by the time this was rectified, the rising tide made it impossible to attempt the crossing of the sands of the Burry estuary—a route that would have taken him through Kidwelly. He was forced to go inland and, after a tedious journey, arrived in Swansea at dusk. In the summer of the following year (1764), he was back in Pembrokeshire, having entered it from Cardiganshire. On his return, he again made for Gower, the other main center of his activities in West Wales.

This time, he succeeded in using Llanstephan ferry, although enduring much discomfort from the mud, and so came to Kidwelly between one and two on a Tuesday afternoon (July 31st). The road he followed over the hill from Ferryside, "the Portway," was an ancient one, used by the saints of the Celtic Church, medieval kings and their armies, pilgrims to the shrine of St. David, and by Archbishop Baldwin and Gerald the Welshman seeking recruits for the Third Crusade. Kidwelly itself retained much of its medieval character in Wesley's day.

The original township, founded by Roger of Salisbury in the early 12th century as part of the defences of his castle, was still enclosed by its fortified walls, gateways, and ditch, although the focus of town life now lay outside it. Just across the river stood the 14th-century parish church dedicated to St. Mary, and close by it, the crumbling walls of the Benedictine priory of Black Monks, established by Roger as a cell of Sherborne Abbey. Since the Middle Ages, the town's importance as a trading centre had declined, but its prosperity was being revived by several industrial undertakings: a tin works, an iron works at "The Forge," and the mining of anthracite in the Gwendraeth Valley by Thomas Kymer, who, two years after Wesley's visit, started to build a canal for the more convenient shipment of coal from a quay at Kidwelly. Wesley did not pause to preach here. He was bent on reaching Gower by the shortcut across the Burry sands and, being unfamiliar with the route, wanted ample time for the crossing.

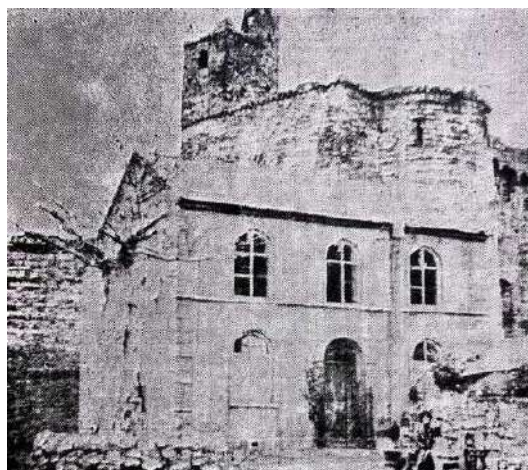
Thus, although he had eaten nothing since leaving Pembrokeshire and had already endured seven hours in the saddle, he and his companions pressed on, having been assured by "an honest man" in the town that the crossing offered little difficulty. After using the ford across the Gwendraeth Fawr at a point about a quarter of a mile below the present bridge, he followed a road—now long forgotten and buried under many feet of silt—which crossed the marsh, skirted the sand dunes, and brought him close to Penbre village. From here, they took to the wide expanse of the Burry estuary. Unaided, they would have been in serious difficulties, but a guide who had volunteered his services shortly after leaving Kidwelly

skilfully negotiated the treacherous patches of quicksand and brought them safely to Oxwich between five and six o'clock in the evening.

Of the people of Gower, he wrote warmly that they all spoke English and were "ready to receive the word with all readiness of heart." Within a few years of this visit, a West Wales circuit was formed, covering Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire. In 1769, Conference stationed the first men, James Dempster and William Whitaker. The membership was given as 80 in 1770 and 112 in the following year. By 1775, the circuit was called the Pembrokeshire Circuit but included Carmarthenshire as before. In their travels through Carmarthenshire, Wesley and his preachers paid most attention to Carmarthen and Llanelli—places where they could expect to make headway because they contained small but often influential groups of English-speaking people.

Wesley, who early in his ministry had determined "not to strike one blow in any place where I cannot follow up the blow," received encouragement at Llanelli from Sir Thomas Stepney. The first of his eight visits was in 1768, and in the following year, a society was established, the leaders of which were Sir Thomas's butler, Wilfred Colley, and two brothers called Deer. The death of Sir Thomas in 1774 and the departure of Colley threatened to break up the society, but fortunately, Colley's loss was made good by the arrival of Lieutenant Cook, who came to manage the estates of Colonel St. Leger residing at Trimsaran. In Carmarthen, although his success was not as marked as in Llanelli, Wesley preached several times, once in Peter Williams's chapel, and a society was set up.

Kidwelly, however, did not offer such favourable prospects for success. It had a tradition of hostility to Dissenters and Methodists alike. Howell Harris, in the 1740s, had been so roughly handled by the inhabitants that he feared to pass through it and, whenever possible, skirted its boundaries. None of the local gentry, such as Thomas Kymer and Lewis Rogers, the owner of the tin works, offered any encouragement. Many members of the Common Council of the Borough were actively hostile, and the officers of the Borough courts, by resorting to legal "technicalities," made it difficult for Dissenters to obtain licenses to register their meeting houses. Despite these challenges, Wesley's preachers persevered, and over time, their efforts bore fruit.



BETHESDA WELSH WESLEYAN CHAPEL
(View taken shortly before its demolition in December, 1962)

This was in August 1779, fifteen years after his first visit. The third and final time he visited was in 1788, near the end of his long ministry. He recorded spending a pleasant night in Carmarthen before preaching in Kidwelly at nine o'clock the following morning (Tuesday, August 26th). Between these widely spaced visits, a society had been established, but unfortunately, the names of its members have not survived, nor can the house in which they met be identified.

By the close of the 18th century, Wesleyan Methodism in Carmarthenshire was confined to societies in Llanelli, Carmarthen, and Kidwelly. Up to 1794, they remained part of the Pembrokeshire circuit, which at that time had a total membership of 162. The following year, the Haverfordwest circuit was established, incorporating these societies until 1805, when the new 'Carmarthen circuit' was created with William Thoresby as Superintendent.

These societies remained outposts of the English cause within a predominantly Welsh-speaking community, largely beyond the reach of Wesley's preachers due to the language barrier—what Wesley lamented as 'the heavy curse of the confusion of tongues.' The community was, according to one missionary, 'passionately attached to the Welsh tongue, looking upon English as a poor, dry, insipid language.' However, this barrier was soon overcome. In 1801, Dr. Thomas Coke, a Brecon native, persuaded Conference to introduce Welsh preaching. Under his direction, a Welsh mission was established, which made rapid progress throughout Carmarthenshire within a few years. Inspired by Edward Jones of Ruthin and William Davies—who would later settle in Kidwelly—societies were formed in the Towy Valley. By 1808, a Welsh society had been established in Carmarthen, and Edward Jones became Superintendent of the 'Carmarthen (Welsh) Circuit.' The mission then spread eastward.

Preaching took place in Penbre, and societies were established in Mynydd Bach (1813), Llannon, and Pontyberem (1814). In Kidwelly, a 'Wesleyan Brotherhood' emerged, which, along with the existing English cause, soon grew strong enough to consider building a chapel. On March 20th, 1816, the Common Council of the Borough received a petition from Thomas Jones, William Lloyd, and John Morris, representing the brotherhood, to construct a place of worship on Corporation land 'between the dwelling house of Mr. Arnold Evans and Bank Shobart,' near the castle's main gateway. The Council received the petition favourably.

The old hostility toward Dissenters was fading, and several Council members were themselves Dissenters. A committee recommended leasing the site for 99 years at an annual rent of one shilling. A lease was drawn up in the names of Thomas Humphreys of Dan y Lan, St. Ishmael, and William Mansell of Kidwelly, as trustees for the society. These men were well-respected; Humphreys was a merchant and part-owner of the brig 'Margaret,' built in Kidwelly in 1815 by William Raynor, a Council member. Mansell, a former Mayor, owned town property and had a stake in the sloop 'Eliza.'

The chapel, Bethesda, a simple, box-like structure, was completed in about three months and ready for worship on June 9th, 1816. Some Council members contributed to its construction and hosted visitors for the opening services. The Welsh Wesleyan ministers present included John Davies, John Jones, Morgan Griffiths, and Owen Rees, while representatives from the English circuit also participated. The collection raised nearly £20. Bethesda greatly strengthened Wesleyanism in Kidwelly, though the English society appears to have continued using its original meeting house for some time.

Within sixteen years, the chapel required renovation. The opportunity was taken to extend it, and on June 6th, 1832, David Gravell, a shopkeeper, petitioned the Council for a new lease, including additional land. The Council granted the lease for 999 years, increasing the rent to 2/6 per year. The rebuilding, completed in about seven months, included two new galleries. Contributions totalled £51/6/10, with Carmarthen giving £12/5/0, Llanelli £3/7/2, and St. Clears £1/19/3. The reopening services on December 9th, 1832, were conducted by Revs. John Davies, William Evans, and John Williams (the First), along with two English circuit ministers, including James Bond, Superintendent at Carmarthen.

By the 1850s, Wesleyanism in Carmarthenshire continued to grow. A Circuit Plan from 1855/56 lists Kidwelly as one of eight churches in the Carmarthen (Welsh) circuit, alongside Carmarthen, Llanelli, Penbre, Mynydd Bach, Pontyberem, Llanstephan, and St. Clears, with a total membership of 458. In 1857, the resident minister, Thomas Morgan, was granted a lease of Bethesda. The following year, the property was assigned to ten trustees. A Trust Schedule from 1859, signed by Treasurer David Nicholas—who operated a private school in the chapel—shows Bethesda's total cost, including the 1832 rebuilding, at £270. The annual income was estimated at £10/16/9, but a significant debt remained, and the building was in poor condition.

In 1860, the prospects for Wesleyan Methodism in Kidwelly improved when Jacob Chivers, a Herefordshire Wesleyan, purchased the idle Tin Works and began renovations. His presence attracted English-speaking workers, increasing demand for English-language services. By 1865, Bethesda had become too small, and Chivers decided to build a larger chapel at his own expense.

A faction, led by David Nicholas, favoured the English influence, believing it would enhance education and broaden the community's horizons. In 1866, they requested to join the English circuit. Chivers secured a site near the town bridge and financed a new chapel, designed by local architect T.W. Angell Evans. Construction, carried out by Francis Randall, used Bodmer's patent stone brick with Gloucester brick accents. The chapel, completed for £650, seated 200 and included a gallery for the choir. It was dedicated on October 19th, 1866.

The appointment of English minister Joseph Higham caused a split. Older members remained at Bethesda, while younger members, including most officers, joined the new English chapel. The division, described by Rev. David Young as mishandled, left lasting bitterness between Welsh and English Wesleyans.

By 1869, Kidwelly's English Wesleyan society had grown to 32 members, reflecting the influx of English workers. A trustee body was established, including Tin Works employees and local professionals. Congregations flourished, and the chapel gained influence, attracting figures like Astley Thompson of Glyn Abbey.

Methodist societies thrived not only through Sunday worship but also through Class Meetings, fostering spiritual fellowship. Members contributed weekly to sustain the society, receiving quarterly membership tickets as part of their commitment to the church's mission.



TRINITY METHODIST CHURCH, c. 1900

Membership in the class always carried with it membership in the Society. The first leaders were David Nicholas and John Morgan, both schoolmasters. In 1872, Nicholas formed a 'juvenile male' class, and later that year, a 'female' class was created with Mrs. Shrimpton, the minister's wife, as leader. Instruction primarily focused on the Bible, but Nicholas, with a passion for music, trained a chapel choir that became one of the finest in the district. He and John Morgan also oversaw the Sunday School.

Once a year, the scholars paraded through the town, and Nicholas noted that on one Whit Monday, 112 participated. Their annual 'treat' often took place at Velindre House, where the Chivers family hosted them for tea on the lawn, followed by games at Broadford Farm. On July 18, 1870, an excursion was held at Garreg Lwyd on Pembrey Mountain, with expenses including the purchase of an ensign for 15 shillings. Another key community-building event was the 'Congregational Soirée,' first held on Monday, January 10, 1867.

At that inaugural soirée, Rev. Joseph Higham chaired the event, giving an address on 'The Essentials of a Successful Christ,' followed by speeches from Jacob and Thomas Chivers, David Nicholas, John Morgan, and George Boulter, a lay preacher from Llanelli. The meeting featured solos by Miss Chivers and Miss Combie, daughter of Hugh Combie, a mining engineer in Kidwelly. Members of Nicholas's Singing and Bible Classes presented him with eleven large volumes on Biblical Exegesis, Ecclesiastical History, and Poetry.

Public meetings were also held to promote Home and Foreign Missions, aligning with the renewed evangelistic enthusiasm in Methodism at the time. Charles Prest, an administrator of the Home Mission Fund, visited in 1870 to advocate the cause. Jacob Chivers was deeply

involved in all Society activities, serving as Chapel Steward with his son Thomas, later becoming a Circuit Steward and frequently addressing trustees on spiritual matters.

Beyond his religious contributions, Chivers was active in municipal affairs. Elected a Burgess in 1864 and serving as Mayor during the chapel's construction, he held office for three consecutive years and again from 1872 to 1874. As Mayor and Justice of the Peace, he worked alongside predecessors like Dr. John George Roberts and Edmund Blathwayt to bring order to a town previously criticized for incompetence and corruption. Chivers played a role in establishing a slaughterhouse, a Town Hall, and a piped water supply.

During this period, Kidwelly's population grew from 1,600 in 1861 to approximately 2,000 in 1877, experiencing prosperity largely tied to the Tin Works. However, by 1891, the British tinplate industry faced challenges due to competition from the U.S. and the Mackinley Tariff. This downturn led to declining employment and financial hardship for many families.

The economic downturn had a severe impact on chapel membership and finances. By 1899, the annual income had dropped from £18 in the early 1890s to just £6/5/11d. The Tin Works closed in 1896, forcing many skilled workers to emigrate in search of employment.

A glimmer of hope arrived in 1904 when the 'Kidwelly Tinplate Company' revived local industry, leading to a gradual increase in chapel membership. By 1906, renovations were undertaken, including the installation of gas lighting, costing £122. By 1914, annual income had risen to £34, and new trustees were appointed to support the chapel's future.

The chapel celebrated its Jubilee in October 1916, with a full account published in the *Carmarthen Weekly Reporter*. Speakers reminisced about early days, including T. J. Hughes of Swansea, who recalled Mary Williams, the devoted chapel keeper of the 1880s. The event featured hymns and recitations, reinforcing the community's deep-rooted faith and resilience.

Despite facing challenges during the interwar years and the requisitioning of chapel premises during World War II, the congregation persevered. By 1946, the closure of the Tin Works led to further hardship, but membership later rebounded, standing at 78 in the post-war years.

Though the Welsh Wesleyan cause declined, and the chapel was demolished in 1962, the English congregation endured. The Kidwelly Methodist community, despite its small size, has maintained a strong, close-knit identity, committed to its faith and future. The ongoing renovation of the chapel stands as a testament to their dedication, ensuring that the legacy of Wesleyan Methodism in Kidwelly continues for generations to come.

Church Officers & Trustees Records

1880-1966

1880: Enoch Biscombe, James Etchells, Nathaniel Stevens, James Etchells.

1879-1881: Nathaniel Stevens, Edward Bowman.

1882: Sampson Cocks, Robert W. Pordige.

1883-1884: Sampson Cocks, George Gibson.

1885: George Gibson, James C. Brewer.

1886-1887: James C. Brewer, J. Hetherington Cleminson, Arthur Aldington.

1888-1890: Thomas Kirkby, J.

1891-1893: James Shearman, James Picot.
1894: William Hunter, William May.
1895-1896: William Hunter, Reuben R. Simons.
1897-1898: Thomas Pinfield, F. H. Hooper Labbett.
1899: Thomas Pinfield, A. Perry Gill.
1900-1901: Edward A. Wain, A. Perry Gill.
1902: Edward A. Wain, Edwin Owen, Clement A. West.
1903-1904: John Crawshaw, Edwin Owen, William J. Hannam.
1905: John Crawshaw, T. Nevison Phillipson, Thomas Roberts.
1906-1907: William J. Britton, T. Nevison Phillipson, Thomas Roberts, John H. Newby, Sydney P. Jacoby.
1908: James Bryant, Christopher Whitfield, Robert F. Atkinson.
1909-1911: John V. Sutton, John H. Newby, Thomas Roberts.
1912-1913: James Bryant, Christopher Whitfield, Robert F. Atkinson.
1914: James Bryant, Vincent Taylor, B.D., Robert F. Atkinson.
1915-1917: Thomas C. Hilliard, B.A., Vincent Taylor, B.D., William E. Thomas.
1918: Thomas C. Hilliard, B.A., Ernest W. Fitch, William E. Thomas.
1919: J. Albert Dixon, Ernest W. Fitch, John B. Lee.
1920: J. Albert Dixon, Garnham G. West, John B. Lee.
1921: W. Oliver Lake, Garnham G. West, John B. Lee.
1922-1923: W. Oliver Lake, David C. Griffiths, G. Rowland Owen.
1924: Thomas W. Bray, David C. Griffiths, G. Rowland Owen.
1925: Thomas W. Bray, William G. Jones, Harold A. Bishop.
1926-1927: Thomas W. Bray, William G. Jones, James L. Smith, R. H. Colwell, Ph.B., Reginald C. Stonham.
1928: R. H. Colwell, Ph.B., David J. Williams, B.A., Reginald C. Stonham.
1929: R. H. Colwell, Ph.B., David J. Williams, B.A., Thomas Metcalf.
1930: W. R. Roberts, W. Horace Dowling, John R. Peniston, B.A.
1931: W. R. Roberts, W. Horace Dowling, William J. Roberts.
1932-1934: W. R. Roberts, J. T. Jones, M.A., William J. Roberts.
1935: E. Ivor Humphreys, B.A., B.D., J. T. Jones, M.A., Goronwy Jones-Davies.
1936: E. Ivor Humphreys, B.A., B.D., W. George Griffiths, Goronwy Jones-Davies.
1937-1939: E. Ivor Humphreys, B.A., B.D., W. George Griffiths, Wilfred Trinder.
1940: E. Ivor Humphreys, B.A., B.D., W. George Griffiths, Goronwy Jones-Davies.
1941: E. Ivor Humphreys, B.A., B.D., Donald A. Davies, E. Clifford Hind.
1942-1943: E. Ivor Humphreys, B.A., B.D., Donald A. Davies.
1944: H. Ingamells Powell, Donald A. Davies.
1945-1947: H. Ingamells Powell, Ivor Trigg.
1948-1949: G. Stuart Cann, Donald V. P. White.
1950-1951: Alexander C. Blain, Donald V. P. White.
1952: Alexander C. Blain, Donald A. Davies.
1953-1955: Donald L. Collings, Donald A. Davies.
1956: Donald L. Collings, Maurice Cartledge, B.D.
1957: Harold Evans, Maurice Cartledge, B.D.
1958-1959: Harold Evans, George Lovell, B.D.
1960-1961: Wilfrid J. Hill, M.C., B.Sc., H.C.F., George Lovell, B.D.
1962-1965: Wilfrid J. Hill, M.C., B.Sc., H.C.F., Lewis J. Hayward.
1966: F. Peacock, Hedley Huxtable.

Church Officers - 1966

Society Stewards: Mr. G. W. Jones, B.E.M., Messrs F. Menghetti, W. L. Watkins, A. C. Morris.

Poor Stewards: Messrs. F. Hart, H. Burt, T. Davies.

Trustees' Treasurer: Mrs. A. Lewis.

Trustees' Secretary: Mr. A. C. Morris.

Sunday School Superintendent: Miss R. James.

Organist: Mr. W. L. Watkins.

Class Leaders: Mrs. A. Lewis, Miss R. James, Miss J. Chubb, Messrs. G. W. Jones, W. L. Watkins, A. C. Morris, F. Menghetti.

Chapel Stewards: Messrs. T. J. Evans, W. Johns.

Guild Secretaries: Miss J. Chubb, Mr. I. Jones.

Home Missions Secretary: Mr. H. Burt.

Trustees Appointments

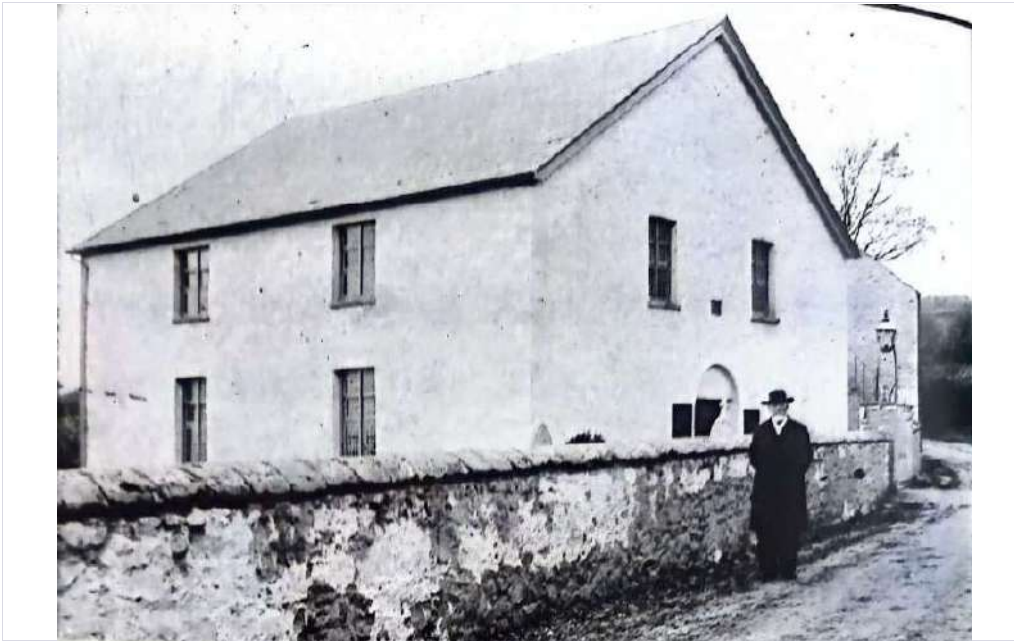
16th June 1930: Thomas Arthur Morris, David Randall Hughes, Edgar Harries Stephens, Gerard Wilfred Jones, Bertha Isaac, Lily Ann Walters.

13th August 1948: Ernest Harold Cole, Thomas John Edwards, Frank Hart, Albert Charles Morris, John Pearce, Beatrice Irene Evans, Maria Isaac, Rosalie Margaret James, Margaret Nicholas Morris.

22nd October 1957: Thomas John Evans, Cromwell George Edwards, Margaret Myra Gravell, William Hill Morris, Elizabeth Ann Lewis, Frederick Menghetti, William L. Watkins, Henry William Burt, David William Johns.



Capel Sul Welsh Independent Chapel



Capel Sul Congregational Chapel which once stood in Ferry Road.
The chapel was built in 1785 and was demolished around 1930.
The chapel house continued to be used as a domestic dwelling until it too was
demolished in the 1960s.



The history of Capel Sul Chapel in Kidwelly unfolds as a narrative woven through time, marked by successive constructions and architectural transformations. Initially erected in 1787, the chapel underwent a process of rebuilding and enlargement in 1831, adopting the Sub-Classical style with a distinctive square plan.

In a remarkable turn of events, a new chapter in the chapel's architectural saga unfolded in 1862. At this time, a structure named Rumsey House emerged, crafted by the skilled hands of architect T.W.A. Evans in the elegant Italianate style. However, the evolution did not cease there. In 1924-6, under the design expertise of J Harold Morgan of Carmarthen, Rumsey House underwent a metamorphosis, being converted into a chapel. This conversion resulted in the relocation of the chapel to the first floor, above the schoolroom, while the original Capel Sul was sadly demolished.



The architectural essence of Capel Sul Chapel, with its Italianate influences, reflects the aesthetic finesse of T.W.A. Evans and J Harold Morgan. The chapel's elevated position on the first floor adds a unique dimension to its presence, creating a space of reverence above the remnants of the demolished Capel Sul. The graveyard, a silent witness to the chapel's evolution, stands as a testament to the passage of time and the enduring spirit of this sacred site.



In summary, Capel Sul Chapel in Kidwelly narrates a compelling story of architectural evolution, from its humble beginnings in 1787 to the Italianate grandeur of Rumsey House, ultimately transformed into a chapel by J Harold Morgan. The blend of styles and the architectural transitions encapsulate the rich history of this site, where the graveyard remains as a poignant reminder of the enduring legacy of Capel Sul Chapel.

Capel Sul Memorials. <http://tinyurl.com/CapelSul-Memorials>

Though time has worn away many of its sacred sites, the legacy of faith in Kidwelly endures. From early places of worship to the quiet ruins that remain, these institutions reflect a deep and lasting spiritual heritage. Together, they tell the story of a community shaped by belief — a legacy still felt in the spirit of the town today.

<https://tinyurl.com/Kidwelly-Spiritual-Legacy>



Graham T Emmanuel 2025

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.

Kidwelly Town Crucial Role in D-Day Preparations American Forces Gear Up for Operation Overlord

Kidwelly, Carmarthenshire - As the world commemorates the 80th anniversary of D- Day, it is essential to remember the vital preparations that took place far from the beaches of Normandy. The small town of Kidwelly in Carmarthenshire played a significant role in the lead-up to Operation Overlord, hosting American forces as they readied themselves for the monumental invasion that would turn the tide of World War II.

In the months leading up to June 6, 1944, Kidwelly and its surrounding areas became temporary homes to thousands of American soldiers. These troops, part of the extensive build-up for the Allied invasion of Nazi-occupied Europe, were billeted in various locations around the town. Local fields, barns, and community halls were transformed into makeshift barracks and training grounds, while the soldiers prepared for the most significant military operation in history.

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.

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.

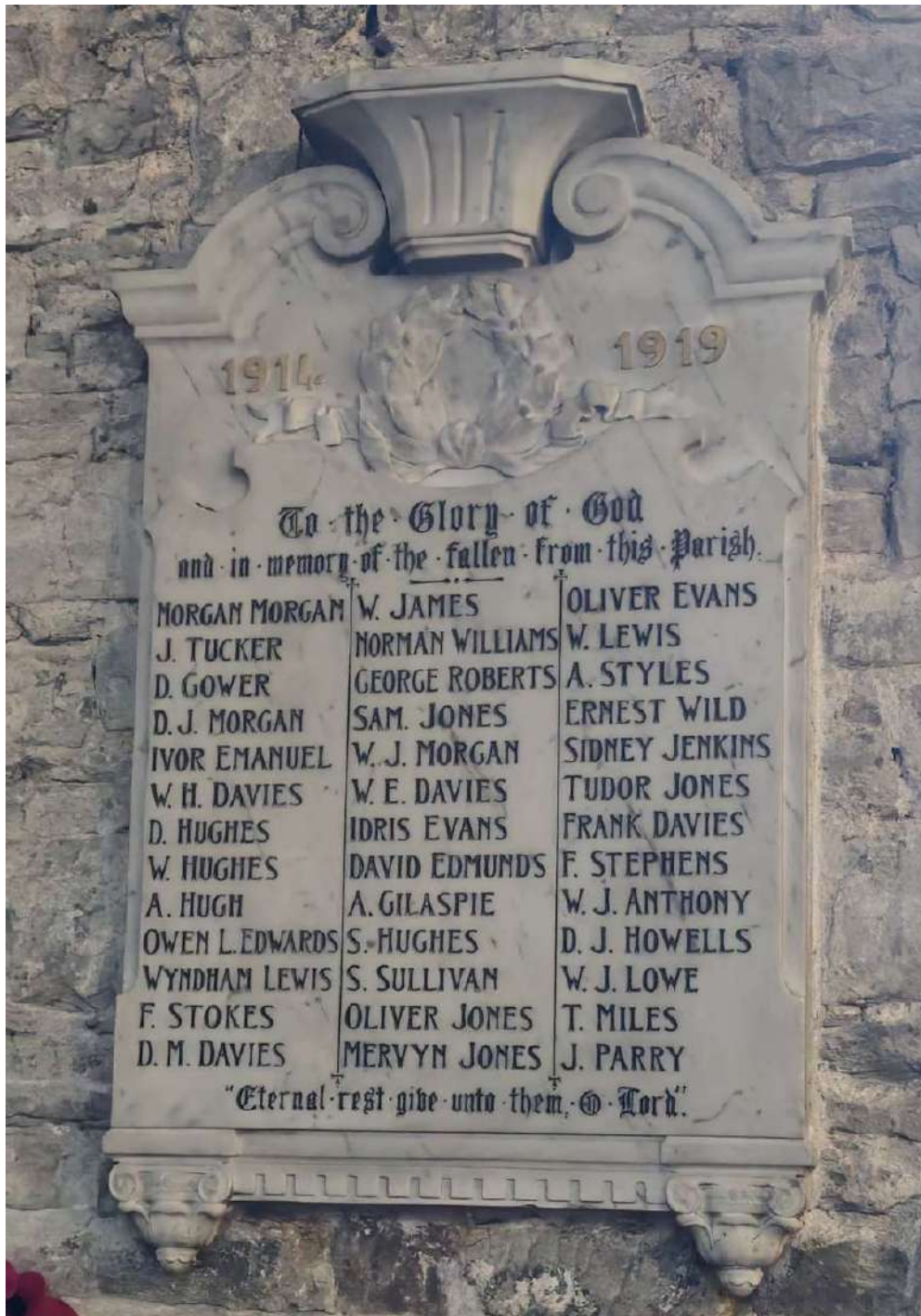
David Hughes

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 Ynisedwen Tinsplate 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 July 1915, 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 years 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-Thillois, 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 Boisselle 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 Boisselle 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 Idris 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 Boisselle 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 Broulton 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 Gravelle 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 Gravelle 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-gravelle>

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 Alton 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	Guardsmen 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.

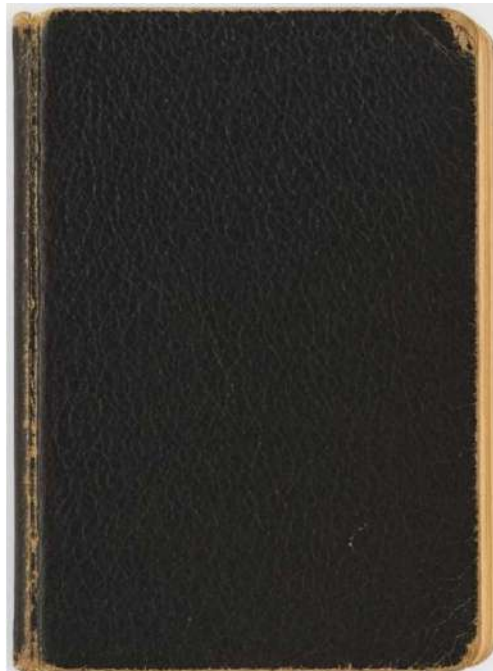
The Crucial Role of the Home Guard

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 Mynydd Y Garreg—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

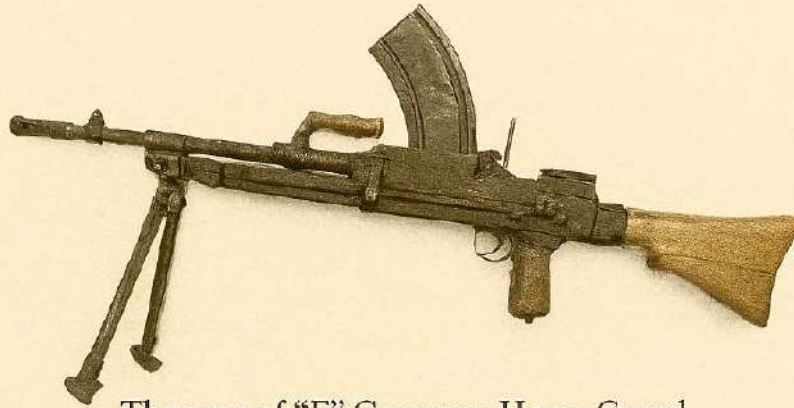
On the eve of D-Day, the tension in Kidwelly was palpable. The soldiers departed for the ports of Southern England, leaving behind a community that understood the immensity of the task ahead. The rigorous training and preparation conducted in the fields, roads, and quarries around Kidwelly contributed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

A TRIBUTE TO THE HOME GUARD



The men of "F" Company Home Guard
were not called to the front. They
were the front line of their community.

Mynydd y Garreg and Kidwelly lay in
their charge, protected by
vigilance and courage.

1942
BREN MK1
MYNYDD Y GARREG & KIDWELLY

In Honour of the Mynydd y Garreg Home Guard 1940 – 1944

Ordinary men, farmers and workers, stood watch over their community. Armed with rifles, improvised weapons, and the Bren, they guarded bridges, quarries, and coastlines.

Not on the front line abroad, but the front line at home. Their vigilance and duty kept Carmarthenshire safe.



<https://tinyurl.com/MYG-Home-Guard-WW2>



Graham T Emmanuel 2025



<https://tinyurl.com/900-Years-Kidwelly-Master>

