

# THE GREAT WAR CENTENARY

1914-1918  2014-2018

# 1917



LED BY IWM

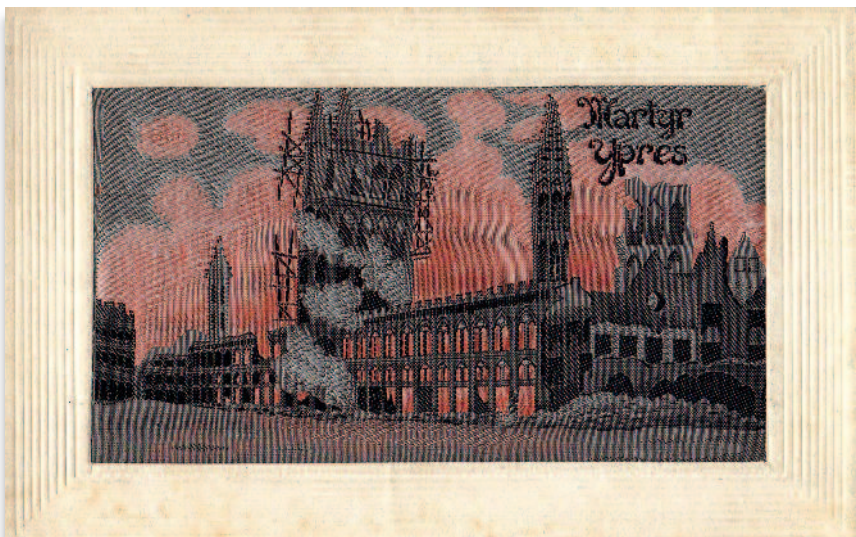
## LEST WE FORGET

REMEMBERED WITH PRIDE IN 2017  
THOSE WHO DIED IN 1917

LEARN  ENGAGE  REMEMBER



*First World War silk postcard depicting the entry into the war of the United States*



*First World War silk postcard depicting the Cloth Hall at Ypres in flames from German shelling*

---

## INTRODUCTION

This year's booklet, the fourth in our annual series remembering those from our predecessor forces of Glamorgan, Cardiff, Swansea and Merthyr, who died during the war, touches upon the events of 1917.

This was a year of terrible loss and hardship, even by the standards of the First World War. Whilst the Battle of the Somme in 1916 is probably the battle which most people now associate with the war, 1917 saw much fierce fighting together with other significant events such as the entry of the United States into the war.

The Third Battle of Ypres, or the Battle of Passchendaele as it is widely known, began on 31st July and went on until 10th November. It was a brutal, attritional battle made even more dreadful by the heavy rains and seas of mud. The images of those conditions have come to epitomise the horror of the First World War.

Major commemorations of the Battle have taken place during 2017 including that at the Welsh National Memorial at Langemark in Flanders and we remember in this booklet police officers from our predecessor forces who died as a result of the fighting in that area.

We also pay tribute to police officers who were recognised for their bravery during the war and it's humbling to recall the dangers that they faced and the determination and fortitude which they showed.

Although these events took place a long time ago, they remain important to us all today. They are a stark reminder of the awful consequences of wars and of the human suffering they cause.

As in previous years we hope that this booklet, and the personal stories it contains, will help us understand what our predecessors went through and will be a fitting tribute to them.

**WE REMEMBER THEM ALL WITH PRIDE.  
YN ANGOF NI CHANT FOD.**

**Peter Vaughan QPM**  
Chief Constable, South Wales Police

---

## FIRST WORLD WAR PROJECT GROUP

The Group continues its work researching the police officers from South Wales who served during the war and especially those who made the ultimate sacrifice. The connection which has been made with families, members of the public and other organisations is a very rewarding part of its activity and the production of our booklets has met with a warm and positive response from them.

A brief summary of what has occurred in 2017 is as follows:

- Attendance at the Welsh Government/Imperial War Museum First World War Commemoration Partnership Day at Builth Wells in January. This was an excellent and worthwhile event.
- An article giving details of the Project was written for the Welsh Government's Commemoration Programme Brochure for 2017.
- Continued attendance at the Welsh Government Commemoration Programme Board, chaired by Professor Sir Deian Hopkin.
- Visits have been made to graves or memorials to remember police officers who

died by the placing on them of remembrance crosses or wreaths from South Wales Police. So far, of the 93 police officers who died during the war, 86 have been commemorated in Wales, England, France and Belgium by visits to their graves or memorials.

As always I wish to thank those who have assisted with the work. They include: the members of the Project Group whose names appear on the rear cover, Dr. Jonathan Hicks, Mr Gwyn Prescott, Mrs. Rhian Diggins of Glamorgan Archives, Mr. Richard Davies, curator of the Regimental Museum of the Royal Welsh, Brecon, and Colonel Tom Bonas, Regimental Adjutant, Welsh Guards, and their archivist, Mr. Christopher Mooney.

Also thanks are again due to the Printing Department of South Wales Police and especially Peter Williams, graphic designer, for their assistance with the production of this booklet.

As occurred last year, two versions of the booklet are being produced: one as an electronic copy accessible in English and

Welsh via the following links: [www.peoplescollection.wales/users/9665](http://www.peoplescollection.wales/users/9665) and [www.south-wales.police.uk/en/about-us/museum/first-world-war-centenary/](http://www.south-wales.police.uk/en/about-us/museum/first-world-war-centenary/) and another, shorter version, in printed form which is also available in English and Welsh.


We hope that our endeavours in recording the lives of police officers from our predecessor

forces who served during the war, go some way towards fulfilling what is contained on the memorial scroll received by the families of those who died:

*“Let those who come after see to it that his name be not forgotten.”*

**Gareth Madge OBE**

Chair, First World War Project Group



*A British soldier stands beside the grave of a comrade near Pilckem, Third Battle of Ypres, 22nd August 1917*

(© IWM Q2756)

---

## 1917 A SUMMARY

### 21ST FEBRUARY

On the Western Front German forces begin their 25 mile withdrawal to their strengthened positions along the Hindenburg Line.

### 11TH MARCH

British forces capture Baghdad from the Turks.

### 15TH MARCH

Russian revolutionary forces capture Moscow and Tsar Nicolas II abdicates.

### 6TH APRIL

As a result of the German declaration of unrestricted submarine warfare and the resulting loss of American ships, the United States declares war on Germany.

### 9TH APRIL

The Battle of Arras begins. This major allied offensive in France makes gains including the taking of Vimy Ridge by Canadian forces. The fighting continues until late May by which time total Allied losses are 150,000.

### 13TH APRIL

PC 319 William Jones Thomas of

the Glamorgan Constabulary dies in hospital of wounds or sickness.

### 4TH MAY

PC Milton Horace Wood of the Cardiff City Police dies when the troopship, the SS Transylvania, is sunk by a U boat off the coast of Italy.

### 21ST MAY

The Imperial War Graves Commission (now the Commonwealth War Graves Commission) is established by Royal Charter.

### 30TH MAY

PC 627 Evan Jones of the Glamorgan Constabulary dies of wounds sustained near Ypres.

### 7TH JUNE

The Battle of Messines Ridge is preceded by the Allies detonating 19 mines under the German lines. It is said that the explosions can be heard in London. The Ridge which commands the high ground around Ypres is captured with the German army suffering significant losses in men and equipment.

### 13TH JUNE

The first major German bombing raid by aircraft on London results

in the deaths of 162 people and 432 are injured.

### 25TH JUNE

The first American troops arrive in France.

### 26TH JUNE

PC 273 Arnold Dickens of the Glamorgan Constabulary is killed in action near Ypres.

### 6TH JULY

T. E. Lawrence (“Lawrence of Arabia”) leads Arab forces in the capture of Aquaba in Jordan as a result of which the Turkish army is isolated in Mesopotamia.



### 24TH JULY

PC 293 William Syphas of the Glamorgan Constabulary is killed in action near Ypres.

### 31ST JULY

The start of the Third Battle of Ypres in Flanders (The Battle of Passchendaele). The Welsh poet, Ellis Humphrey Evans (“Hedd Wyn”), is killed in action during the battle at Pilckem Ridge. Despite some gains the Battle has come to symbolise the attritional fighting in dreadful conditions on the Western Front.



“Hedd Wyn”

### 1ST AUGUST

PC Richard Drew of the Cardiff City Police is killed in action during the Third Battle of Ypres.

### 13TH AUGUST

PC 715 Reginald Charles of the Glamorgan Constabulary dies of wounds probably sustained during the Third Battle of Ypres.

### 15TH AUGUST

PC 30 Frank Coffey of the Swansea Borough Police dies of sickness in hospital in Baghdad.

*T.E Lawrence (© IWM Q 73535)*

#### 4TH SEPTEMBER

PC 59 Percy John Marks of the Cardiff City Police is killed in action during the Third Battle of Ypres.

#### 17TH SEPTEMBER

PS 310 James Robert Angus of the Glamorgan Constabulary dies when he accidentally drowns in a river in Northern France.

#### 12TH OCTOBER

During a further attack at Passchendaele, New Zealand and Australian troops suffer heavy casualties. A combination of heavy rain and the destruction of drainage ditches leads to the battlefield becoming a muddy quagmire.

#### 10TH NOVEMBER

The Third Battle of Ypres ends and the village of Passchendaele has been taken. The human cost is hundreds of thousands on both sides killed, wounded or missing.

#### 19TH NOVEMBER

PC 535 Thomas Thomas of the Glamorgan Constabulary is killed in action in Northern France.

#### 20TH NOVEMBER

The start of the Battle of Cambrai

in which the British attack with tanks in large numbers, the first massed attack by tanks in history. After initial gains the Germans counter attack and re-capture most of the ground they have lost by the end of the Battle in early December.

#### 23RD NOVEMBER

PC 609 Arthur Hopkins of the Glamorgan Constabulary is killed in action during the Battle of Cambrai.

#### 27TH NOVEMBER

PC 704 John Evans of the Glamorgan Constabulary is killed in action during the Battle of Cambrai.

#### 1ST DECEMBER

PC 578 Ronald Evans of the Glamorgan Constabulary is killed in action during the Battle of Cambrai.

#### 9TH DECEMBER

British troops enter Jerusalem ending over 600 years of Turkish rule.

PC 477 Edward Price Evans of the Glamorgan Constabulary dies of wounds in hospital in Northern France.





*Third Battle of Ypres (© IWM E (AUS) 1220)*

## 1917 GALLANTRY AWARDS

The emphasis in our series of annual booklets has, inevitably and properly, been on those from our predecessor forces who made the ultimate sacrifice.

However, we wish to remember as well those who were recognised for their bravery and devotion to duty most of whom survived the war and whose stories might otherwise be forgotten.

Whilst we have touched upon awards in previous booklets, notably in those concerning the Welsh Guards and Richard “Dick” Thomas, we take the opportunity below to include details of those we have established whose awards were announced during 1917. (We have also included two from 1916).

We should mention that whilst there were several categories of recognition for bravery and service during the War, we have limited

what appears below to the awards of the Distinguished Service Order, the Military Cross, the Distinguished Conduct Medal and the Military Medal. These are the ones for which, generally, the most information is available although it must be noted that the awards of the Military Medal were usually simply listed in the official Government publications, The London Gazette and The Edinburgh Gazette, without any detailed citations.

What follows is the best that we have been able to achieve through our researches but we hope that it will be a useful contribution to remembering the bravery of those referred to. We intend to provide a similar section in our final commemorative booklet for 1918.

*The medals of Ernest James Rollings  
(By kind permission of Mrs Anne Day)*



## THE AWARDS



**DISTINGUISHED  
SERVICE ORDER (DSO)**

This was instituted in 1886 and during the First World War it was awarded to commissioned officers in the Army, the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force. It was conferred for gallantry and for distinguished service in the presence of the enemy.



**MILITARY CROSS  
(MC)**

This was instituted in 1914 and awarded to warrant officers and junior commissioned officers of the Army for “gallant and distinguished service in action.”



**DISTINGUISHED  
CONDUCT MEDAL (DCM)**

This was instituted in 1854 as a result of the many acts of bravery during the Crimean War and was effectively the first British gallantry award. It was awarded to non officer ranks of the Army.



**MILITARY MEDAL  
(MM)**

This was instituted in March 1916 and was awarded to non officer ranks of the Army “for bravery in the field”. One of the first two recipients of the medal in April 1916 (backdated to 1914) was PC Frederick William Mallin of the Glamorgan Constabulary (see the South Wales Police booklet for 1916).

## THE RECIPIENTS

**FREDERICK  
WILLIAM SMITH**  
INSPECTOR  
GLAMORGAN CONSTABULARY  
**LIEUTENANT COLONEL**  
**16TH BATTALION**  
**WELSH REGIMENT**

**DISTINGUISHED  
SERVICE ORDER**



Fred Smith, who was born in 1875 at Ross-on-Wye in Herefordshire, had a distinguished police and military career.

He joined the Glamorgan Constabulary in 1895 but resigned two years later in order to join the

British South African Police. He re-joined the Glamorgan Constabulary in 1899 but within a few months he enlisted in the 4th Glamorgan Company of the Imperial Yeomanry and saw service again in South Africa in the Boer War. He was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for his bravery during the conflict.

He then returned again to the Glamorgan Constabulary in 1901 and also retained his connection with the Glamorgan Yeomanry becoming squadron sergeant major and regimental sergeant major.

He was also a notable rugby player. Described in newspaper reports as a “sturdy forward” he played for Cardiff 175 times between 1901 and 1911, including in matches against the touring New Zealand and South African teams.

He was vice captain of the club in the 1908/09 and 1909/10 seasons and later played for Bridgend. He also featured prominently in the Glamorgan Police team and, by all accounts, came close to being capped for Wales.



After the outbreak of the First World War Fred Smith was mobilised as part of the Yeomanry and left the police becoming quartermaster and honorary lieutenant of the 2/1st Glamorgan Yeomanry. He transferred to the 16th (Cardiff City) Battalion of the Welsh Regiment on 2nd December 1914 and became one of its first company commanders.

During the early days after the raising of the Battalion the local press took a keen interest in its activities. The *Western Mail* of 11th December 1914, reporting on the Battalion's training activities at Porthcawl, said, in relation to Fred Smith, that "*The men were delighted to see at their head such a genial, able and diligent officer.*"

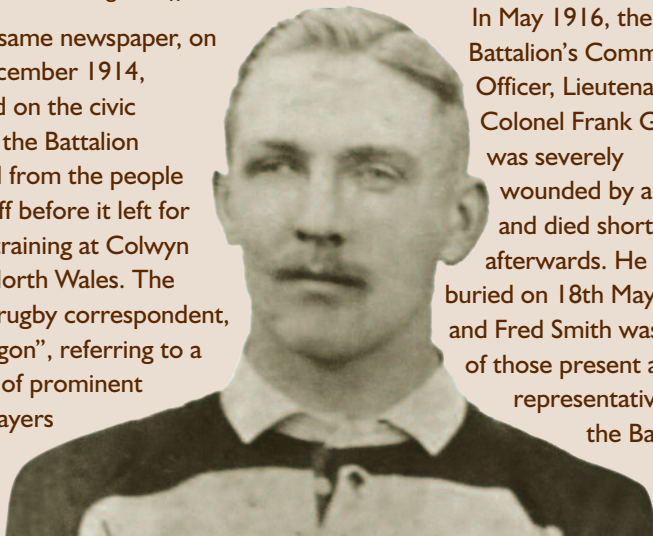
The same newspaper, on 31st December 1914, reported on the civic farewell the Battalion received from the people of Cardiff before it left for further training at Colwyn Bay in North Wales. The paper's rugby correspondent, "Pendragon", referring to a number of prominent rugby players in the

Battalion, described Fred Smith as "*the man of iron strength and iron will.*"

In April 1915 he was promoted Major and became second in command of the Battalion.

He landed in France with the Battalion which formed part of 115th Brigade in the 38th (Welsh) Division in December 1915. He was promoted to Major and on 24th December he was wounded in the face by the accidental explosion of a hand grenade. He spent some time at the Alexandra Hospital, Highgate in London before recovering and returning to the Battalion in France in March 1916.

In May 1916, the Battalion's Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Frank Gaskell was severely wounded by a sniper and died shortly afterwards. He was buried on 18th May 1916 and Fred Smith was one of those present as a representative of the Battalion.



As a result of Gaskell's death Fred Smith was promoted Lieutenant Colonel and took over as Commanding Officer of the 16th Battalion. As such he led the Battalion during its attacks on Mametz Wood on 7th and 11th July 1916 when it suffered over 300 casualties, killed, wounded and missing.

The *Western Mail* of 26th July 1916 reported that, in a letter to a police colleague, Superintendent W. Davies of Bridgend, Smith said:

*"We have passed through a very eventful period the last five weeks, and were in the heavy fighting of the 7th, 10th, 11th, and 12th of July. Our men acquitted themselves well, but many have fallen. I could say much more which would interest you, but the censor must be obeyed. We have lost eighteen out of our old officers, but modern shell and machine gun fire is such that the toll of the attackers must be great. My chaps took a machine gun from the big wood. I have it still on our wagons. Those infernal things are the most to be dreaded of all the modern engines of war, and take the greatest toll when resolutely fought."*

Then, on 28th July, the

*Glamorgan Gazette* carried the following:

*"Longing for Peaceful Day  
With Fishing Rod on The Ogmore"*

*"At Tuesday's meeting of  
Bridgend Urban District Council,  
the Clerk Mr. J.T. Howell, read  
the following letter from Lieut-  
Colonel F. W. Smith, late of  
Bridgend:*

*16th Batt., Welsh Regiment,  
B.E.F., France,  
July 19th, 1916*

*Dear Mr. Howell,-Please thank  
the Council for their kindness in  
sending me congratulations. I so  
much appreciate their  
consideration and yours. We  
have been constantly on the  
move during the last five weeks,  
and have had no opportunity to  
write. We have taken part in the  
heavy fighting, and our men have  
done well. Captain Herdman was  
wounded, and ex- Police Sergeant  
Dick Thomas, of Bridgend, and  
ex-Constable Harris, of  
Aberkenfig, were killed on the  
7th July. Of course, we have lost  
many officers and men, but  
against modern engines of war  
this is inevitable. Captain J.L.  
Williams of Cardiff-whom you  
knew-is dead. Should much like a  
peaceful day with the fishing rod*

*on the Ogmore, and trust I may be spared to come back to Bridgend to live again among my many friends when the strife is over. With all good wishes-Yours sincerely,*

*F.W. SMITH”*

In the event, Fred Smith did return to Bridgend on leave from the front in September 1916. This was the subject of a report in the *Glamorgan Gazette* from which it is clear that he was anxious to provide some comfort to those bereaved by the losses in battle. Its edition on 22nd September said:

*“LIEUT-COLONEL SMITH  
HOME FOR A FEW DAYS FROM  
THE FRONT”*

*“Lieut-Colonel Smith, who with his men, has been in the thick of the fight, is home in Bridgend for a few days, looking in the best of health and in the pink of condition. In an interview, he said it was a source of great satisfaction that his battalion had taken part in the battle of the Somme, which was considered by experts to be one of the biggest battles of the war. The battalion .....did all that could be expected of it. Of course, they had their casualties, as every unit had, and he would*

*like in this connection to assure the relatives of those who fell that their loved ones were reverently buried and a battalion cross placed to their memory. A good many fathers and mothers, he found, feared that their boys were thrown haphazard into a hole, but that was not so. Their boys were often brought back a mile and a half to be laid to rest in a soldiers' cemetery. All the parents of those poor fellows were written to, and, if time had permitted, he would have liked to have visited them, but it was impossible to see many during his short absence from the battalion.”*

The *Western Mail* of 12th December 1916, reported on that month's meeting of the Glamorgan Constabulary Standing Joint Committee. During the course of it the Chief Constable, Captain Lionel Lindsay, had given a full report on the contribution made by Glamorgan policemen to the war effort and particularly those who had been killed and wounded. The committee had also received a letter from Fred Smith:

*“The following letter was read from Lieutenant-colonel Fred W. Smith, in acknowledgement of the committee's letter of*

*congratulations upon his and his colleagues distinguished service with the colours:-*

*'I have the honour of sincerely thanking the members of the committee for their letter of approval of the services of their men with the colours and myself. We deeply appreciate the committee's action, and trust that the conduct of their men now serving in the various units of the Army will be such as to cause the Glamorgan Police Authority no regrets for having so willingly allowed their men to take part in the war.'*

Fred Smith was Mentioned in Despatches three times by Field Marshal Haig for his conduct during the war and in the King's Birthday Honours of 1917 he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order. The award was officially notified in the *London Gazette* of 4rd June.

The *Western Mail* reported on 9th June how his award had been recognised by the people of Bridgend:

*"Lieutenant-colonel Fred W. Smith was presented with a silver bowl on Friday night on behalf of the townspeople of Bridgend in recognition of his having been*

*awarded the D.S.O. The presentation was made at a private meeting at Bridgend Police Station by Mr. J. G. Jenkins, chairman of the district council. Colonel Smith in returning thanks said he regarded Bridgend as his home. Referring to the troops at the front, he said they were an object lesson in attention to duty. In spite of the hardship of the long winter nights they never complained."*

The Standing Joint Committee of the Glamorgan Constabulary at its meeting that month also passed a vote of congratulation. This was, according to the *Western Mail*, "seconded by several members and carried amid applause."

On 23rd July 1917, the same newspaper was, however, unimpressed by the description attached to a portrait of Fred Smith which had appeared in London that month:

*"A good portrait of Lieutenant-colonel Fred W. Smith appears in a London contemporary, but the statement accompanying the photograph, that 'when a boy he was a bottle washer at a brewery,' is about as accurate as some of the London papers' spelling of Welsh names.*



*Cardiff's popular D.S.O. as a matter of fact, commenced life as a clerk in a brewery.....”*

During the Third Battle of Ypres in 1917, the Battalion took part in the attack on Pilckem Ridge and the Battle of Langemark. During the latter, in particular, the Battalion suffered severely from the muddy and wet conditions in which they had to fight, and whilst they reached their objective, out of a total of 400 officers and men the Battalion lost 71 killed and 135 wounded.

Fred Smith remained in command of the Battalion until it was disbanded in February 1918.

He then took command of the 4th Battalion of the Bedfordshire Regiment between May and July 1918 when he was invalided home with sickness.

Throughout his period on the Western Front Fred Smith knew what it was like to see those who served with him, officers and men, dying and being wounded. However, he too experienced deep personal tragedy during the War.

On 13th February 1918, his wife, Esther, died after a long



illness. The *Glamorgan Gazette* for 15th February reported:

*“We regret to announce that Mrs. Esther Smith, wife of Col. F. W. Smith, died on Wednesday at her residence in Coity Road, Bridgend. Mrs. Smith, who was a native of Swansea, had been in indifferent health for some years. During the past few days she got rapidly worse, and on Tuesday, when it became evident that she was dying, a telegram was despatched to Col. Smith, who is serving with his regiment at the front, and to her eldest son, who is also on active service, but she died on Wednesday afternoon before it was possible for either her husband or her son to arrive, even if they had received the telegrams and been able to secure leave. Mrs. Smith was of a quiet and retiring disposition, extremely kind-hearted, and she was held in much esteem by a wide circle of friends. There are three children—two boys and a girl, with whom, and the bereaved Colonel, the deepest sympathy is felt.”*

The same newspaper on 22nd February carried a report of the funeral of Mrs. Smith:

*“The funeral of Mrs. Hester Smith, wife of Col. F. W. Smith, D.S.O, D.C.M, Bridgend, who is now fighting in France, was an event that naturally struck the deepest feelings of the community, whose sympathies went forth to the bereaved Colonel and his children. The last rites at the Cemetery on Monday were very impressive, a sorrowful and unpreventable circumstance being the absence of Col. Smith, who was immediately apprised by more than one telegram of the irreparable loss that had befallen him. The wires did not reach the gallant Colonel until Saturday, and the funeral having been fixed for Monday it was impossible for him to obtain leave in time.”*

Notwithstanding Fred Smith’s enforced absence, it is clear from the remainder of the report that there was a large gathering at the funeral. Amongst the family mourners were their sons, Stanley and Leslie. Also present was Mrs Smith’s sister, Miss Mary Evans, who, it was reported, *“for the last 18 months was in attendance as nurse, having given up a post as sister at an institution to discharge the labour of love.”* There was also

attendance by members of the Glamorgan Constabulary.

Further sadness befell Fred Smith later in 1918 when, on 27th September, less than two months before the Armistice, his eldest son, Stanley, was killed in action in France. He was serving as Private 235227 in the 14th Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. He had, like his father, been born at Ross-on-Wye and had enlisted at Bridgend. He was 19 years of age when he was killed. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Vis-en-Artois memorial in Northern France.

On 26th September 1919, Stanley was remembered by his aunt, his mother’s sister mentioned above, through an “In Memoriam” notice in the *“Glamorgan Gazette.”*

*“SMITH-In ever loving and honoured memory of my dear nephew, Pte. Stanley Smith, Royal Warwickshire Regt. killed in action in France Sept. 27th, 1918, aged 19.-Auntie Mary. “Until the day breaks.”*

After his war service Fred Smith returned to police duties with the Glamorgan Constabulary becoming a superintendent and

divisional Commander of “H” Division in Gowerton. He was also the Force’s Deputy Chief Constable.

He was awarded an MBE and, in the New Year Honours of 1936, the year in which he retired, he was awarded the King’s Police Medal.

## ERNEST JAMES ROLLINGS

PC 597

GLAMORGAN CONSTABULARY

SECOND LIEUTENANT  
TANK CORPS

### MILITARY CROSS

Ernest was a constable stationed at Maesteg before the War. He was awarded the Military Cross for his actions at the Third Battle of Ypres in August 1917. (Ernest is shown in the photograph, endorsed by him, wearing his medal). The award was officially notified in the *London Gazette* of 18th October 1917 with the full citation appearing in the *Edinburgh Gazette* for 11th March 1918:

*“For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. He commanded his Tanks in difficult ground and under heavy shell*

*fire with the greatest courage and perseverance, helping them out of many difficulties and keeping them in action by his splendid personal energy and fearlessness. After he had completed his duties, he went back to assist a seriously wounded officer and several men who were still under heavy shell fire.”*



*(By kind permission of Mrs Anne Day)*

Later in the War, Ernest was awarded a second Military Cross for his actions in leading a section of armoured cars on a raid on a German headquarters in August 1918 at the start of the Battle of Amiens. He recovered secret German documents during the raid and the information contained in them was, it was said, of such significance that it enabled the Allies to bring the War to an end earlier than might otherwise have been the case. In the 1930's Ernest was hailed in the newspapers as "The man who won the War." He received the sum of £5000 in recognition of his efforts from a Lady Houston and was made a Freeman of the Borough of Neath. There will be a detailed reference to Ernest's second Military Cross in our booklet for 1918.

After the War, Ernest resumed service with the Glamorgan Constabulary for a time before transferring to the Neath Borough Police of which he was acting chief constable when he retired in 1943.

## GEORGE HENRY CLARKE

FORMER CONSTABLE,  
GLAMORGAN CONSTABULARY  
BATTERY QUARTERMASTER  
SERGEANT 44408  
ROYAL FIELD ARTILLERY

### DISTINGUISHED CONDUCT MEDAL



George was born in Cardiff in 1889 and joined the Glamorgan Constabulary in September 1912 having

previously served for six years in the Royal Field Artillery. He was a constable stationed at Bridgend until January 1914 when he transferred to the Monmouthshire Constabulary.

The *Glamorgan Gazette* of 8th December 1916 carried the following report in relation to him:

*"A popular Bridgend man is home on furlough in the person of Sergt. George Clarke, formerly in the employ of the City Electrical Department at Cardiff, and in the Bridgend Police Force for 18 months from September 1912. Thence he transferred to the*

*Monmouthshire Constabulary, and as a Reservist, at the commencement of hostilities, was called upon for active service. He was in the first Expeditionary Force, and at Ypres sustained no fewer than eight shell wounds. After being treated in hospital at Norwich, he came to Bridgend on sick leave. Rejoining his unit, he was drafted to the Dardanelles, and was at the landing at Suvla Bay. Thence he proceeded with the 11th Division to France, and in the R.F.A., has been in the operations on the Somme from July up to the present time. Sergt. Clarke is married to the third daughter of Mr. Morgan Stradling, Bridgend.”*

It seems that his father in law was the landlord of the Angel Hotel in Bridgend and a member of Bridgend Council.

The citation for George’s DCM appeared in the *London Gazette* for 18th July 1917. It does not state the date or location of the action giving rise to the award but describes it as being:

*“For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. He extinguished two fires in the gunpits of the battery. The pits were full of*

*ammunition, and were being heavily shelled. His gallant action saved many lives, and probably all the guns of the battery.”*

George survived the War.

## GEORGE EVAN SOANES

FORMER CONSTABLE 530,  
GLAMORGAN CONSTABULARY  
COMPANY SERGEANT MAJOR  
1607 AND 2ND LIEUTENANT  
6TH BATTALION  
WELSH REGIMENT

### DISTINGUISHED CONDUCT MEDAL



George was born at St Hilary near Cowbridge in 1883 and joined the Glamorgan Constabulary in

1904. He was stationed at Gorseinon near Swansea before leaving the police in December 1907. He then became a timekeeper at the Bryngwyn steelworks in Gorseinon.

He was initially a Private in the 6th Battalion of the Welsh Regiment which was a Territorial

Force unit. He went with it to France in October 1914 and subsequently served with it on the Western Front, firstly with the 28th Division and then the 1st Division with which it was the pioneer battalion.

During the course of his service George achieved several promotions and became a Company Sergeant Major in the 6th Battalion before being commissioned as a Second Lieutenant on 26th June 1917.

George was awarded the DCM in the New Year Honours on 1st January 1917. The citation for it appeared in the *London Gazette* of 13th February 1917, but without any detail other than it was:

*“For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. He has performed consistent good work throughout, and has at all times under fire set a splendid example.”*

The Chief Constable of Glamorgan, Captain Lionel Lindsay, in his report to the Glamorgan Police Standing Joint Committee in June 1917 stated that George had been recognised “For his conspicuous bravery in holding a

*trench and returning to rescue his comrades who were cut off.”*

From contemporary newspaper reports it is evident that there was great pride in the Loughor and Gorseinon areas in George’s award. He was the treasurer of Loughor Rugby Football Club, which, according to the *Cambria Daily Leader* of 6th February 1917, had provided 69 playing members to the armed services.

During the same month, George attended a presentation evening in his honour in Gorseinon. The *Cambria Daily Leader* for 9th February reported:

*“A reception meeting was held at the Institute, Gorseinon, on Thursday evening in honour of Sergt-Major George E. Soanes, Welsh Regiment, whose D.C.M. decoration makes the third on the list locally. The gallant Sergeant Major, accompanied by Mrs. Soanes, his four children, and Quartermaster-Sergt. Taylor, was received on the platform by the chairman, Mr. Albert Harding, M.E. who.....then proceeded with the presentation, first to Mrs. Soanes, of a cheque for £20 subscribed by the inhabitants of Gorseinon, Loughor*

*and district, second of a silver mounted walking stick and solid silver cigarette case suitably inscribed to the sergeant-major.*

*He explained that the cigarette case was the gift of the Loughor Rugby Football Club and its supporters, who were proud to think one of their active members had been so honoured. They wished him every further success in his training preparatory for a commission. Sergt-Major Soanes responded on behalf of himself and his wife in a few well chosen words.”*

George survived the War.

## WILLIAM PATRICK FITZGERALD

PC 556

GLAMORGAN CONSTABULARY

SERGEANT 20434

15TH BATTALION

WELSH REGIMENT

### MILITARY MEDAL



William was from Cowbridge where he was born in 1888. He joined the Glamorgan Constabulary in

1908 and was stationed at Tonyrefail.

William joined the army in February 1915 and during the War he served with the 15th (Carmarthenshire) Battalion of the Welsh Regiment with which he went to France in December 1915 as part of the 38th (Welsh) Division.

As for his Military Medal, the *Glamorgan Gazette* for 15th June 1917 reported:

*“Sergt. W. Fitzgerald, of the Glamorgan Constabulary, who, before the war was stationed at Tonyrefail, has been awarded the Military Medal. He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. J. Fitzgerald, of 5 Aubrey Terrace, Cowbridge, and a brother to Corporal D. Fitzgerald. Sergt. Fitzgerald won the distinction for gallantry and efficiency in taking command when his commissioned officers were hit.”*

He was also honoured by the people of Cowbridge as the *Glamorgan Gazette* of 9th November 1917 stated:

*“Recently we honoured another of our heroes who had honoured us and brought honour to the town. Sergt. W.P. Fitzgerald, who for bravery had been awarded the Military Medal, was presented*

*with a gold watch and chain, subscribed for by the inhabitants. The meeting was a representative one, over which the Mayor (Capt. Yorwerth) presided. In making the presentation the Mayor warmly welcomed the recipient. Sergt. Fitzgerald replied with a modest little speech and we quite believed him when he told us before the meeting that he hadn't got much of the "gift of the gab," and would rather fight the Huns than make a speech."*

In addition to the Military Medal, William also received a Silver War Badge in recognition of having been wounded during his service in the army from which he was discharged on 11th January 1919.

## ALBERT EVAN JOHNSON

PC 542

GLAMORGAN CONSTABULARY

SERGEANT 1795

1ST BATTALION

WELSH GUARDS

### MILITARY MEDAL



Albert was originally from Stoke under Ham, near Yeovil in Somerset where he was born in 1887.

He joined the Glamorgan Constabulary in 1910 and at the time of the census of the following year was stationed at Pontardawe in the Swansea Valley.

He was made a merit class constable just before the outbreak of the War in August 1914 when he was stationed at Gorseinon near Swansea. He joined the newly formed Welsh Guards on 10th July 1915 as Private 1795. The *Cambria Daily Leader* of same date reported:

*"At the Swansea Police Court on Saturday morning, the Chairman (Mr. A.H. Thomas) to P.C. Johnson:*

*"I hear that you are about to join the Welsh Guards. You will make a fine soldier, Johnson, and you have the best wishes of the Bench to go with you."*

*Mr. J.H. Rosser (to the officer): If you do your duty in the Welsh Guards as well as you have done it in the Police Force, you will make a splendid soldier.*

*P.C. Johnson thanked the Bench and Mr. Rosser for their remarks."*

Albert was eventually promoted to sergeant in the Welsh Guards.

He was awarded his medal for his bravery in, as a newspaper report of the time described it, "putting an enemy gun out of action



in a charge” whilst police records state that it was for “capturing an enemy blockhouse and prisoners” in October 1917. At that time the Battalion was in the front line near Ypres. The History of the Welsh Guards during the war refers to Albert leading a patrol which on 11th October secured a blockhouse which had been used by the Germans.

Albert was wounded in August 1918 but after the end of the War he returned to his police duties. The *Herald of Wales* referred to his return in its report of 29th March 1919:

*“Police Constable A.E. Johnson, of the Glamorgan Constabulary, has just been demobilised. In the uniform of a sergeant in the Welsh Guards, and wearing the ribbon of his decoration, the Military Medal, he visited the Swansea Police Court on Wednesday, when he was complimented by Mr. J.H. Rosser, the chairman.*

*Mr. Rosser said he had known P.C. Johnson since his entry into the police force, and had always admired the way he had carried out his duties.*

*Mr. J.W. Thorpe (the clerk) said he had always found P.C. Johnson*

*a straightforward and most capable officer.*

*P.C. Johnson suitably replied.”*

Albert was stationed at Pontardulais before he retired at the rank of sergeant in 1945. His son Dilwyn also became a police officer, serving in the Swansea Borough Police, and had a distinguished career as a rugby player with Swansea RFC which he captained, including in the club’s drawn match with the New Zealand “All Blacks” in 1953.

## THOMAS NORGATE

PC 471

GLAMORGAN CONSTABULARY

PRIVATE 1889

1ST BATTALION

WELSH GUARDS

**MILITARY MEDAL**



Thomas was born in Ropley near Alresford in Hampshire in 1887 and joined the Glamorgan Constabulary in 1912. He was stationed at Gowerton, near Swansea, at the outbreak of the War.

He joined the Welsh Guards on 5th August 1915 and during his service on the Western Front was awarded the Military Medal. Police

records state that it was “for bravery and devotion to duty whilst acting as a stretcher bearer” on 31st July 1916. This would have been during the Third Battle of Ypres. The award was published in the *London Gazette* on 28th September 1917.

He was presented with his medal by the Chief Constable of Glamorgan, Captain Lionel Lindsay, at a civic reception for the Glamorgan Constabulary, held in Barry on 11th November 1918, the day the War ended.

Thomas was discharged from the army on 14th December 1918 due to wounds sustained during his service and he was awarded the Silver War Badge in recognition of the fact.

## WILLIAM LEWIS PUGH

PC 726

GLAMORGAN CONSTABULARY

LANCE CORPORAL 19273

3RD BATTALION

GRENADIER GUARDS

### MILITARY MEDAL



William was born at Ynyshir, near Porth, in the Rhondda in 1892. He joined the Glamorgan

Constabulary in 1912 and was stationed in the Aberdare area before the War.

He enlisted in the army at Aberdare on 2nd September 1914 and joined the Grenadier Guards with which he served for the rest of the War. He was wounded during his service and, according to army records, was awarded the Military Medal on 26th October 1917 although the official notification of the award was not published in the *London Gazette* until 30th January 1918. The Chief Constable referred to the award in his report to the Standing Joint Committee of the Glamorgan Constabulary in December 1917 stating that it was for “devotion to duty and good conduct under fire.”

William was discharged from the army on 14th December 1918 and re-joined the Glamorgan Constabulary.

## 1916 GALLANTRY AWARDS

### WILLIAM CHARLES BEAZER

PC 609

GLAMORGAN CONSTABULARY

SERGEANT 193,

1ST BATTALION WELSH

GUARDS

#### MILITARY MEDAL



William was born in Resolven near Neath in 1889 and worked in a local colliery before joining

the Glamorgan Constabulary in 1911. He was stationed in the Maesteg area before the outbreak of the war in August 1914 after which he joined the Grenadier Guards.

When the Welsh Guards was formed in February 1915 William was one of many who transferred from the Grenadiers to the new regiment with which he went to France in August 1915.

The history of the Welsh Guards in the First World War refers to William in relation to an attack which they made on the ruins of an estaminet (cafe) at Mortaldje near Ypres in July 1916.

The Welsh Guards had taken the position from the Germans but had to leave it due to German fire. The Welsh Guards, nevertheless, kept the position under fire themselves to prevent the Germans re-occupying it. The history describes William's part in the action:

*“The Germans attempted a cutting out enterprise against one of (the) posts, and attacked it several times between Minenwerfer bombardments, but Sergt. Beazer, in command of it, kept his men together full of fight, and also, what was harder, kept his Lewis Gun clean and drove them off with loss each time.”*

It's likely that it was for this action that William was awarded the Military Medal. The Battalion's War Diary in its entry for 13th July records:

*“The Corps Commander has awarded the Military Medal to No. 193 Sgt. W. Beazer, 1st. Bn, Welsh Gds.”*

The award was confirmed in the *London Gazette* of 8th August 1916.

William's award was recognised by the people of

Resolven as reported by the *Herald of Wales* on 16th June 1917:

*“The homecoming of Sgt. W. C. Beazer, Military Medallist, of the Welsh Guards, was made the occasion of an interesting presentation service at Resolven on Wednesday morning. Major W. B. Trick...presented him with a handsome wrist watch on behalf of the inhabitants of Resolven.”*

William survived the war.

## JAMES JONES

PC 630

GLAMORGAN CONSTABULARY

CORPORAL 723

1ST BATTALION

WELSH GUARDS

**MILITARY MEDAL**



James was from Aberdare where he was born in 1890.

He joined the Glamorgan Constabulary

in 1915 and was stationed in the Aberdare area. However, he must

have only served for a short period since, on 10th March 1915, he enlisted in the army at Aberdare, joining 1st Battalion, Welsh Guards.

He went with the regiment to France in August 1915 and by January the following year he had been promoted to Corporal.

In September 1916, he took part in one of the actions in which the Welsh Guards were involved during the Battle of the Somme.

On 16th September the battalion, along with other units of the Guards Division, took part in an attack on the village of Lesboeufs. It was raining heavily and in the difficult conditions the battalion suffered casualties amounting to 144 killed, wounded and missing. The gains from the attack were meagre and there had to be a further attack on the village later in the month.

It was during the fighting on the 16th that James distinguished himself resulting in the award to him on 16th November 1916, of the Military Medal. The History of the Welsh Guards in the First World War describes him as *“leading his platoon forward in an*

exceptional manner". In doing so, however, he suffered a serious wound to his right leg and he later had to undergo surgery for its amputation.

A local press report referred to his injuries:

*"GUARDSMAN LOSES HIS LEG- Corporal Jim Jones, who joined the Welsh Guards from the Aberdare Police Force, has been wounded, and has lost his right leg. He is now in hospital in Devonport. The gallant guardsman, who is one of four brothers serving with the colours, and whose widowed mother resides in Wind Street, Aberdare, was leading a platoon in action when he was struck by a bullet in his side. His right leg was riddled by a sniper after he fell. Corporal Jones' brother, Sergt. Dick Jones, of the Scots Guards, was awarded the D.C.M. for gallantry early in the war, and is back in France after recovering from wounds received in action."*

The *Western Mail* of 23rd July 1917 reported on the presentation of the Military Medal to James:

*"At the Prince of Wales' Hospital for Limbless Soldiers, Cardiff, on Saturday the Military Medal won by Corporal James Jones, Welsh Guards, was presented by Lieutenant Colonel J. Lynn Thomas..... Corporal Jones was the first patient to be admitted to the hospital for the fitting of an artificial limb. During the ceremony Colonel Lynn Thomas was supported by Sir Alexander Diack and Mr. A.D. Barley, of the Ministry of Pensions, who added their congratulations to Corporal Jones, and expressed the pleasure they had experienced in visiting the hospital."*

James was discharged from the army on 27th July 1917 and was awarded a Silver War Badge in recognition that his discharge was due to the wounds which he had sustained.

## 1917 ROLL OF HONOUR

**13TH APRIL**

**PC 319 WILLIAM  
JONES THOMAS**  
GLAMORGAN CONSTABULARY  
PRIVATE 1333, 1ST BATTALION  
WELSH GUARDS



William was born on 5th February 1888, the son of John and Ann Thomas of Pantglas Farm, Llanedeyrn

in Cardiff. His father was from Llanedeyrn whilst his mother had been born in Llanishen.

William joined the Cardiff City Police on 1st November 1907 aged 19 and served with it until 13th February 1911 when he resigned.

That year's census shows William was living on the farm with his parents and his three sisters and two brothers. Elizabeth aged 29, Edmund aged 28, and Rowland aged 19, worked on the farm as did William whilst Blanche, aged 13, and Ann, aged 10, were in school.

William then decided to return to policing since he joined the Glamorgan Constabulary on 19th January 1914.

However, he resigned from the force on 23rd April 1915 and joined the army on 3rd May at Bridgend becoming Private 1333 in the 1st Battalion, Welsh Guards. At the time he enlisted he was stationed as a constable in Porthcawl and was one of five of its policemen to do so as the photograph shows.

William went to France with his regiment in August 1915 and served with it on the Western Front. He was wounded in action in October 1915 but was able to resume duty.

In February 1917 William was admitted to hospital in France suffering from trench fever a condition caused by the cold, damp and insanitary conditions in the trenches of the Western Front. On 11th February he was evacuated to England on the hospital ship *Grantully Castle*. He died in a London hospital on 13th April 1917.

One newspaper reported that his death was due to "trench fever and trench foot." The former was



*Glamorgan policemen from Porthcawl who joined the Welsh Guards:  
Back row left to right: PC DC Grant, PC WJ Thomas and PC D Hayes.  
Front row sitting left PC W. Richardson, sitting right PC F Trott.  
Only PC's Hayes and Richardson survived the war.*

an infectious disease transmitted by body lice. His First World War medal records also note the he died of “sickness”. On the other hand a newspaper report of his funeral (quoted below) states that he died as a result of his wounds and this is also recorded in the nominal roll for the Welsh Guards contained in the history of the regiment in the First World War.

William is buried in the churchyard of St Edeyrn’s Church at Llanedeyrn. The following is the account of his funeral which appeared in a local newspaper:

*“Private William John (sic) Thomas, of the Welsh Guards, a former police constable stationed at Porthcawl, who died*

*in a London hospital on 13th inst. from wounds received in France, was interred with military honours on Tuesday near his home at Llanedarne. He was the son of Mrs Thomas, of Pantglas Farm, and was 29 years of age. The funeral was attended by a posse of the Glamorgan Constabulary, among whom the deceased was very popular. A firing party was supplied by the Royal Defence Corps, and the band of the Welsh Regiment played the Dead March. Deceased was an all round athlete, and was a boxer of more than average ability.”*

William’s grave is marked by the customary Commonwealth



*St Edeyrn’s Church where William is buried. His grave is on the right hand side of the path with the white Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone prominent.*

---



War Graves Commission headstone and he is also remembered on the adjacent family grave. The inscription on the memorial on the grave says:

*“William Jones Thomas (1st Welsh Guards) the beloved son of Ann and the late John Thomas, of “Pantglas” Llanedarne who died April 13th 1917 aged 29 years.”*

Also on the memorial stone are the names of his brothers Rowland, who died in 1928 aged 36, Edmund who died in 1960, aged 77, Elizabeth, who died in 1963 aged 82, and Ann who died in 1965 aged 65. Ann appears to have married since her surname is given as Baker. At some point a cross appears to have stood on a plinth on the memorial but now leans against it. Carved on the cross is the emblem of the Welsh Guards.

William is also remembered on the Glamorgan Police War Memorial at Police Headquarters, Bridgend.

#### 4TH MAY 1917

**PC MILTON  
HORACE WOOD**  
CARDIFF CITY POLICE  
**PRIVATE 584 I**  
**ROYAL ARMY MEDICAL CORPS**

Milton was born in Dewsbury, Yorkshire, in 1888.

At the census of 1911, he was living with his parents, Harry and Zilpah (nee Hoyland) in Thomas Street South in Halifax. Harry was from Manchester and was employed as a brassfounders warehouseman whilst Zilpah was from Barnsley. Milton, then 23, was a clerk in a brewery company. Sadly, Zilpah died the following year on 12th May 1912, aged 57.

Milton served for three years in the Royal Army Medical Corps before joining the Cardiff City Police on 2nd June 1914. However, he served for only a short time before, as a reservist, he was called to military duty on the outbreak of war in August 1914 when he re-joined the RAMC. It appears from Corps records that, at least initially, Milton served with Number 3 General Hospital which was in Northern France at Rouen from

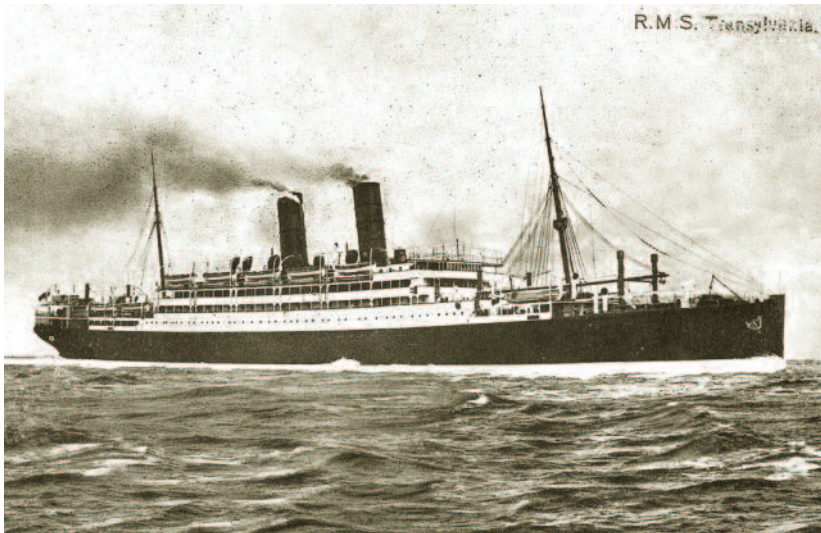
August to September 1914, and at St Nazaire from September to November 1914. Thereafter, until the end of the war, it was at Le Treport on the French coast, which is about 30 km north east of Dieppe. It may be that Milton served at all or some of these locations.

In December 1915 Milton was home on leave and the *Brecon County Times* for 16th December contains a report of his wedding:

*“The wedding took place quietly on Sunday morning last at St. Mary’s Church, Brecon, of Mr Milton H. Wood, R.A.M.C. and*

*the Cardiff City Police (home on leave from France) and Miss Frances May Davies, daughter of the late Mr and Mrs G. Davies, 46 Free Street. The bride, who was neatly attired in a grey costume with hat to match, was attended by her cousin, Miss Annie Wright, as bridesmaid and was given away by her brother-in-law, Mr W J G Wotton, of the King’s Arms Hotel. The ceremony was performed by the Rev H J Church Jones. The happy couple were the recipients of numerous useful gifts.”*

The SS *Transylvania* was a passenger liner operated by the



*The SS Transylvania*

Anchor Line, a subsidiary of the Cunard shipping company. It had been launched in May 1914 and after the outbreak of war was taken over by the Admiralty as a troopship. In its civilian role it could accommodate 1379 passengers but as a troopship its capacity was 200 officers and 2860 men plus crew.

On 3rd May 1917 the *Transylvania* sailed from Marseille to Alexandria in Egypt full of troops. It was escorted by two Japanese destroyers. At 10 am on 4th May the ship was struck by a torpedo fired from a German U boat when it was some two and a half miles off Cape Vado near Savona on the Italian coast.

One of the Japanese destroyers came alongside the stricken ship and began to take troops off it. However, at 10.20 am a further torpedo hit the *Transylvania* which sank immediately. Many of those on board were saved but 10 crew members, 29 army officers and 373 soldiers lost their lives. One of those was Milton.

The bodies which were recovered at Savona were buried in a special plot in the town

cemetery. Others are buried in various cemeteries in Italy, France, Monaco and Spain.

The Savona Town Cemetery contains 83 burials of casualties from the *Transylvania*. A further 275 casualties from the sinking, who have no grave, are commemorated on the Savona Memorial. Milton's name is one of those recorded on it.

In addition to his widow, Frances, according to a newspaper report, Milton also left a child.

Frances had also suffered a loss earlier in the war when her brother, Lieutenant William J Davies, was killed in action in France on 5th November 1916 whilst serving with the Royal Field Artillery.

On 6th March 1919 the *Brecon County Times* carried the following report:

*“WAR SHRINES-Brecon Programme Completed-Dedications at St. Mary’s and the Watton: Brecon now has four war shrines , one at the Mission Chapel in Avenue Road, one in the Struet, one in St Mary’s Church, and one (a large*

*double-panelled structure) at the Infirmary in the Watton. The two first-named have been erected some time; the erection of the other two, we understand, has been delayed through the difficulty of obtaining properly seasoned oak of sufficient size; but they are now in being, and were dedicated on Sunday afternoon by the Bishop of Swansea. They are similar in form to those at the Mission Chapel and in the Struet.....Vases of choice flowers adorned them, and that at the Infirmary was veiled with*

*a Union Jack until the moment of dedication by the Bishop. A large and representative gathering of townspeople watched the proceedings and the Brecon Church Lads' Brigade paraded for the occasion with their band.....”*

The names of Milton and his brother in law, Lieutenant W.J. Davies, were among the 32 men commemorated on the shrine at The Watton.

Milton is also remembered on the Cardiff City War Memorial Plaque in the Cardiff Bay Police Station.



*The Savona Memorial*

30TH MAY

## PC 627 EVAN JONES

GLAMORGAN CONSTABULARY

SERGEANT 34478

10TH BATTALION

WELSH REGIMENT



Evan was from Aberdare where he was born in 1892, the son of David and Sarah Jones both of whom had also been born there.

By the time of the census of 1901 the family was living at 57 Allen Street in Mountain Ash. Also there were Evan's older brothers, John Isaac and Isaac, and his older sister, Lizzie Mary, together with his younger sisters, Maggie Ann and Gwen. The family also had a lodger, Harry Crowther, who was from Huddersfield and, like Evan's father, was employed as a coal hewer.

By 1911 and that year's census the family had moved to 42 Ceridwen Street in Mountain Ash. Evan, his father, and brothers John and Isaac, were all employed as coal miners whilst Lizzie was a

dressmaker and Gwen was still at school.

In 1914 Evan joined the Glamorgan Constabulary and at the outbreak of war he was stationed at Abercynon.

He later joined the army enlisting in the Welsh Regiment . He was a member of its 10th Battalion which was known as the "1st Rhondda", the "2nd Rhondda" being the 13th Battalion of the Regiment.

The Battalion formed part of the 38th (Welsh) Division and Evan went with them to France on 15th December 1915. In July 1916 the Battalion took part in the attack on Mametz Wood on the Somme and by the end of May 1917, with other units of the Division, it was holding the line in Belgium from the Ypres-Pilckem road to Boesinghe. During this time Evan's battalion and others were tasked with constructing new trenches in the area in readiness for the forthcoming Passchendaele offensive. This work inevitably attracted attention from the Germans.

Evan died of wounds on 30th May 1917. The *Western Mail* for 28th June carried the following report:

*“Sergeant Evan Jones, Machine-gun Section, Welsh Regiment, son of Mr. and Mrs. David Jones, 42, Ceridwen-street, Mountain Ash. Before enlisting Sergeant Jones was in the Glamorgan Police Force, and was stationed at Abercynon. His commanding officer, writing to his parents, says: “Your son was shot by a sniper whilst performing a very important duty in No Man’s Land. It was my intention to recommend him for a commission.”*

The war diary of the 10th Battalion contains these entries for 25th, 29th and 30th May 1917:

*“25th 15th Welch Regt dug trench in No Man’s Land. 10th Welch Regt supplied covering party.*

*29th dug and wired new trench in No Man’s Land on left of Lancashire Fm Sector.*

*30th continued wiring new trench dug 30th under very trying conditions. 2nd/Lt J.B. Jones killed in this operation.”*

It may, therefore, be that it was on one of these occasions that Evan suffered the wounds from which he died.

Evan is buried at Bard Cottage Cemetery near Boesinghe. For

much of the war the village of Boesinghe faced the German front line across the Yser canal. Bard Cottage was a house a little behind the line near a bridge called Bard’s Causeway. The cemetery was created nearby in a sheltered position under a high bank.

1639 Commonwealth casualties of the First World War are buried or commemorated in the cemetery. Many of them are, like Evan, from the 38th (Welsh) Division. They include Evan’s colleague from the Glamorgan Constabulary, Arnold Dickens, whose biography follows.

Evan is also remembered on the Glamorgan Police War Memorial.



*Bard Cottage Cemetery*

**26TH JUNE**

**PC 273**

**ARNOLD DICKENS**

GLAMORGAN CONSTABULARY

**LANCE CORPORAL 24186**

**19TH BATTALION**

**WELSH REGIMENT**

Arnold was born at Cadoxton, Barry, on 12th August 1893, the son of Joseph and Mary Jane Dickens. His father was originally from Daventry in Northamptonshire whilst his

mother had been born in Merthyr Dyfan, Barry.

At the time of the census of 1911 Arnold and his parents were living at 83 George Street, Barry Dock. Arnold, then aged 17, was employed in ship repairing as a fitters' helper whilst his father was a dock labourer. Also in the household were Arnold's sister, Dorothy May, aged 8, and his brother, Charles, aged 5, along with his grandfather, Isaac



*Pioneers removing tree stumps in preparation for track laying (© IWM Q 8401)*

Dickens, and his father's brothers Arthur, George and Frank.

Arnold joined the Glamorgan Constabulary on 1st December 1913 and at the outbreak of war in August 1914 was stationed at Mumbles near Swansea.

He resigned from the police on 29th January 1915 to join the army. He became a member of the 19th Battalion of the Welsh Regiment and was, in due course, promoted to Lance Corporal.

The 19th Battalion was designated the "Glamorgan Pioneers", attached to the 38th (Welsh) Division, and Arnold went with them to France in December 1915.

Pioneers were soldiers who provided labour for a variety of tasks such as digging trenches, laying and mending roads, building strong points and so on. They worked in conjunction with the Royal Engineers but also acted as additional infantry if the need arose.

The 19th Battalion supported the Division in its attack on Mametz Wood in July 1916 and by June 1917 it was in position near the canal at Ypres. It was taking

part in the preparations for the great battle which was to begin at the end of July and became known as the Third Battle of Ypres (or Passchendaele). The history of the Welsh Regiment in the First World War describes the Battalion's contribution as follows:

*"The 19th Welsh Pioneers established a great reputation by their skill in draining and making deep communication trenches in our area where this had hitherto been deemed impracticable, and their work was of great assistance during the Third Battle of Ypres in saving casualties during the difficult period of assembly before the final assault."*

Arnold, however, was not to take part in the battle itself since he was killed in action on 26th June 1917 (the Glamorgan Constabulary Roll of Honour gives the date incorrectly as 26th May).

The *Barry Dock News* for Friday 13th July contained the following report of his death:

*"FORMER POLICE CONSTABLE KILLED: Captain O.D. Black, adjutant 19th Welsh (Pioneer) Regiment, has written to Mr.*



and Mrs. J.W. Dickens, 83 George Street, Barry Docks informing them of the death of their son, Corporal Arnold Dickens, of the same Battalion, which occurred on the night of June 26th, when deceased, at his post of duty, was struck by a shell, death being instantaneous. Corporal Dickens, who was 24 years of age, previous to enlisting two years ago was a member of the Glamorgan Constabulary, stationed at Oystermouth, near Swansea. Mr. and Mrs. Dickens have had two sons-in-law discharged from the Army, one having been disabled at Mons, and the other physically unfit”.

The war diary for the 19th Battalion states that from 1st June the Battalion was:

“...working in trenches and parties constructing new dugouts in east canal bank near bridge....and improving existing dugouts at own billets”

Then there are entries which provide confirmation for the content of the newspaper report:

“26th June: H.Q. shelled heavily for 2 hrs with 4.2’s. Casualties 2 OR’s wounded.

27th June: Casualties: 2 OR’s killed. 1 OR wounded. Battn moves to transport lines en route for Proven, after 6 months on the Canal Bank.”

It is likely that Arnold was one of the other ranks (“OR’s”) who were casualties on 26th/27th June.

Arnold is buried at Bard Cottage cemetery along with his Glamorgan Police colleague, Evan Jones. Like him, Arnold is also remembered on the Glamorgan Police War Memorial.



Arnold’s grave at Bard Cottage Cemetery

24TH JULY

PC 293

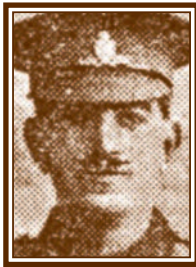
WILLIAM SYPHAS

GLAMORGAN CONSTABULARY

ACTING BOMBARDIER 21519

56TH SIEGE BATTERY

ROYAL GARRISON ARTILLERY



William was a Gloucestershire man having been born in Aldsworth which is in the Cotswolds

and some 10 miles from Cirencester. (His surname is variously given as “Syphas” and “Syphus”).

He was born on 12th April 1885 his father being Daniel Syphas, who was from Chipping Norton, and his mother was Edith Jane, who was also from Aldsworth.

At the time of the census of 1891 the family was living at Wall Farm, Aldsworth where Daniel was employed as a shepherd. Also in the household, in addition to William and his parents, were William’s younger sisters, Florence and Lilian, and his brother,

George, who was just a month old.

By 1901 and that year’s census the family had moved to Stratton, a village nearer Cirencester. William’s father was again employed as a shepherd on a local farm. By then William was 15 years of age and also employed in farming as a ploughman.

At some stage after 1901 it seems that William joined the army since newspaper reports at the time of his death refer to him as being a reservist.

In any event, by 1908 he had moved to South Wales since he joined the Great Western Railway Company on 27th January that year. He was only with them for a short time working as a gateman at Bridgend and a porter at Llantrisant, before he resigned on 29th May 1908.

The following day he joined the Glamorgan Constabulary and subsequently served in the Swansea Valley. At the time of the census of 1911 he was living as a boarder at the police station at Ystalyfera, along with Sergeant Thomas Brown and his wife and three children.

During his service in the Swansea Valley, William's name appeared in reports in the local newspaper *Llais Llafur* (*Labour Voice*).

On 21st March 1914 it was reported that a haulier from Morrision was fined two shillings and sixpence and costs for leaving a horse and cart unattended at Clydach, William proving the case.

In the same edition there was a lengthy report of proceedings at Pontardawe Police Court the previous Friday when 44 cases of people who had failed to take out dog licences were heard. Extensive police visits had been undertaken to premises throughout the Valley. William, with two cases, is one of several police officers mentioned in the report.

The reporter clearly felt that there was a problem with dogs in the area:

*"It has been repeatedly stated that there is more dog to the square yard in the Swansea Valley than in any other similar area in the civilised world. Most cyclists who use the main roads, especially between Clydach and Ystradgynlais, Ystalyfera and*

*Brynamman and Cwmgorse and Gwauncaegurwen will take a solemn oath that this is the truth, and nothing but the truth.'*

Nevertheless, whilst displaying sympathy for the officers who had to perform such duties, the correspondent does not seem to have entirely approved of the actions of the police force:

*"It may be argued that however distasteful it is to the average policeman, who all come from the working class, acting in this manner, they are obliged to do this and other work of a similar nature because they are ordered to do so. On the other hand, it is suggested, that, to obtain a large number of convictions of a "doggy" or any other character, means steps in the ladder of promotion. But that, again, is due to the vicious conditions which govern promotion and the constables are absolutely helpless. The record of convictions in any particular district must be maintained or, if possible, beaten. That is why policemen have formed a Trades Union, the number of members of which has severely astonished the powers that be."*

The reference to a trades union is of interest since, in 1919, as a result of dissatisfaction with their terms and conditions of employment, there was a national strike of police officers.

By the outbreak of war on 4th August 1914 William was stationed at Pentre in the Rhondda and as a reservist he was immediately recalled to the Colours.

William served with the Royal Garrison Artillery and in July 1917 was with its 56th Siege Battery. This unit had been serving in France since February 1916 and was armed with four large howitzer guns.

On 24th July 1917 the battery was stationed near Kruisstraathoek, a village several kilometres to the south west of Ypres in Belgium. Its war diary notes that it fired 400 rounds that day and goes on to state:

*“24.7.17: “Scottish Wood and the fields immediately to the rear were heavily shelled from 12.30pm to 4pm both with H.E. percussion and time. No. 21519 A/Bdr Syphas E (sic) was killed in the wood.”*

The diary entry for the 25th states:

*“No. 21519 Syphas E was buried at..... 10am.”*

The *Llais Llafur* for 8th September 1917 reported William's death:

*“News has been received by his sister residing at Glanrhyd, that Bombardier Will Syphus, of the R.G.A., formerly of the Ystalyfera police force, was killed in action in France on July 24, last. Bombardier Syphus, who was a native of Gloucester, was called up as a reservist at the outbreak of the war. He..... had been in France for over two years. He was due home on leave for a long rest in August, as he would have been a time-expired man under ordinary conditions.”*

William is buried in Dickebusch New Military Cemetery Extension near Ypres. The New Military Cemetery itself was begun in February 1915 and used until May 1917. Thereafter the Extension was used until January 1918.

William is one of 547 casualties from the First World War buried in the Extension. His headstone bears the inscription:

*“In God’s good time we shall meet again.”*

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission records note that he was the son of “Daniel and Edith Jane Syphas, of East End, Fairford, Glos.”

William is also commemorated on the Glamorgan Police War Memorial.



*Dickebusch Cemetery Extension with William’s grave on the left in the foreground*

## **1ST AUGUST**

**PC 43 RICHARD DREW**  
**CARDIFF CITY POLICE**  
**PRIVATE 60557**  
**13TH BATTALION**  
**WELSH REGIMENT**

Richard was from Merthyr Tydfil where he was born in 1895, the son of William and Mary Jane Drew, both of whom had been born in Merthyr.

At the time of the census of 1901 the family lived at 8, Abermorlais, Merthyr. Also in the household with Richard and his parents were Richard’s younger sisters, Florie (Florence) and Gertude, aged four and two respectively. Richard’s father was a coal miner.

By 1911 and that year’s census the family had moved to live at 12 Baden Terrace, Penyard, Merthyr. By then Richard’s father had died and his mother, as a widow aged 38, had five children living with her. Richard was by then the bread winner of the family aged 16 and employed as a collier/hewer. His sisters, Florence and Gertrude, were then aged 14 and 12 respectively, and there were two other children in Dorothy, aged 10, and William John, aged 6.

The records of the National Union of Railwaymen show that in January 1914 Richard became a member of its Merthyr branch as he was employed as a porter on the railways. On 2nd November 1914 he joined the Cardiff City Police before he enlisted in the army becoming a member of the 13th (2nd Rhondda) Battalion of the Welsh Regiment.

By July 1917 the Battalion, as part of the 38th (Welsh) Division, was in the front line near Ypres and on 31st July took part in the Division's attack on Pilckem Ridge, which was the first phase of the Third Battle of Ypres.

The conditions in the area at this time are described in the history of the Welsh Regiment during the First World War:

*“In the afternoon (of the 31st) the weather, which had been dull and cloudy at the commencement of the attack, now broke and heavy rain poured down for three days, turning the shell-torn ground into a mass of sticky, slippery mud, pockmarked with deep shell holes full of water, where many a man and animal were drowned. The only way to get up to Pilckem Ridge from the canal bank was by sticking to the*



*The caption to this picture from the Imperial War Museum states “Battle of Pilckem Ridge. Stretcher bearers struggle in mud up to their knees to carry a wounded man to safety near Boesinghe, 1st August 1917” (© IWM Q5935)*

*duckboard tracks which reserve troops and pioneers commenced to lay as soon as it was known that the ridge was ours. These tracks were, of course, plainly visible from the air, and they were mercilessly shelled by day and night by the enemy, while at intervals enemy planes darted down and swept them with machine gun fire. At the front it was impossible to do anything but lie in shell holes."*

It is likely that it was during the fighting between the 31st July and 2nd August that Richard was killed in action.

Army records show that his death was "presumed". His body was clearly never recovered as he has no known grave and he is commemorated on the Menin Gate Memorial. His is one of over 54,000 names of British and Commonwealth soldiers on the Memorial.

He was 22 years of age and survived by his mother.

Richard is also commemorated on the Cardiff City Police Memorial Plaque in Cardiff Bay Police Station.



*The Menin Gate Memorial at Ypres where Richard is commemorated*

### 13TH AUGUST

**PC 715  
REGINALD CHARLES  
GLAMORGAN CONSTABULARY  
COMPANY SERGEANT  
MAJOR 32501  
16TH BATTALION  
WELSH REGIMENT**

Reginald was born in Newport, Monmouthshire in 1891. He was the son of Francis Charles and his wife Elizabeth, both of whom were also born in Newport.

Reginald was baptised in St. Mark's Church in Newport on 21st May 1891.

At that year's census Reginald and his parents were living at 51 Lyne Road in Newport. Also there were Reginald's brothers, Francis and Henry, aged 8 and 6 respectively, and his sister Lily, aged 1. There were also two lodgers, William and Henry Pantall, who were both tailors.

By the census of 1901 the family had moved to 53 Lyne Road. There were two additions to the family in Reginald's younger brothers, Horace, aged 8, and Ernest, aged 4. By then Francis and Henry had started work. Francis was an assistant meter

inspector and Henry was a carpenter's apprentice.

By 1911 Reginald had gone to live with his brother Henry and his wife, Bertha, in Redland Street in Newport. Henry had completed his apprenticeship and was now employed as a carpenter whilst Reginald was a labourer with a gas company.

Later in 1911 Reginald joined the Glamorgan Constabulary and was in due course stationed at Maesteg.

In 1915 Reginald married Evelyn Hodges in Cardiff and later that year their son, Reginald John, was born.

After the outbreak of war Reginald left the police force and enlisted in the army at Cardiff. He was posted to the 16th (Cardiff City) Battalion of the Welsh Regiment and went with it to France as part of the 38th (Welsh) Division in December 1915.

It's clear that Reginald was highly regarded since he was eventually promoted to company sergeant major and records indicate that he was acting regimental sergeant major at the time of his death.



The Battalion suffered heavily during its attack on Mametz Wood on 7th July 1916 and by the summer of 1917 it and other units of the Welsh Division were in positions ready to take part in the Third Battle of Ypres. It's not clear when Reginald was wounded in action but it may have been during the Battle of Pilckem Ridge between 31st July and 2nd August when the 16th Battalion provided support to other battalions involved in attacking German positions.

In any event Reginald died of his wounds on 13th August at Abbeville which lies on the main road from Paris to Boulogne about 80 kilometres south of Boulogne. It was the site of several military hospitals during the First World War.

A notice announcing his death appeared in the *Western Mail* on 21st August 1917:

*“CHARLES: R.S.M. Reginald Charles, Welsh Regiment, beloved husband of Evelyn Charles, 14 Pugsley street and third son of Mr. Francis Charles, 64 Malpas road, Newport, died on August 13th in France, from wounds received in action.”*

The *Glamorgan Gazette* for 14th September 1917 carried the following report of the death:

*“Police officer killed in action: we regret to learn of the death in France from wounds of Regimental Sergeant Major Reginald Charles, 16th (Cardiff City) Battalion, Welsh Regiment. The news is conveyed in a letter of sympathy to his widow who resides at 14 Pugsley Street, Newport, from the Chaplain of the hospital in which deceased passed away. The deceased leaves one child. He was son-in-law of Mr. and Mrs. Jno. Hodges, Aber House, Pricetown, Nantymoel. He was 26 years old, and when war broke out was in the Glamorgan County Police Force, stationed at Nantymoel. ....he was home on leave in June last.”*

In due course “In Memoriam” notices appeared in the local press:

*“CHARLES-In loving memory of Act. Regt-Sergt-major Reginald Charles, Cardiff City Battalion, who died of wounds in Abbeville, France, on August, 13, 1917. Fondly remembered by his brothers, Ern and Horace (serving in France).”*

There were other notices similar to the above:

*“... They miss him most who loved him best-from dad.”*

and:

*“...A bitter grief, a shock so severe, to part with one we loved so dear.” Sadly missed by his sister Lil and brother-in-law Ern.”*

Reginald is buried in the Communal Cemetery Extension at Abbeville which contains 1754 burials from the First World War.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission’s records note that he was the “...husband of E.M. Charles, of 14, Adare St, Ogmores Vale, Glam.”

The headstone to Reginald’s grave has on it the following inscription from his wife:

*“ The blow was bitter, the shock severe, to part with one we loved so dear.”*

Reginald is commemorated as well on the Glamorgan Police War Memorial.



*Abbeville Communal Cemetery Extension*

15TH AUGUST

**PC 30 FRANK COFFEY**

SWANSEA BOROUGH POLICE

CORPORAL 266406

8TH BATTALION

WELSH REGIMENT



Frank was born in Paddington in London in 1890 and by 1911 he was a constable in the Swansea Borough Police.

That year's census shows that he was based at the Central Police Station in Swansea. Two other

police officers named in the census and based there were also to die as a consequence of the war-PC Jack Randall Birch who was killed in action in 1916 and PC Patrick Shea who died in 1919 of illness contracted during his war service.

In 1911 Frank was one of a contingent of Swansea policemen sent to the Rhondda to assist the Glamorgan Constabulary during the coal strikes there which included the disturbances at Tonypany, as the photograph shows.

In 1915 Frank married Ellen Poole of the Volunteers Arms in St Thomas, Swansea (The photograph of Frank in army uniform is from a postcard addressed to Ellen before they were married and endorsed "With love Frank"). They had one child, a son, William, who was later to go on to serve in the Glamorgan Constabulary and was an officer in the Welsh Regiment during the Second World War.

During his time as a police officer, Frank was mentioned in a local newspaper, the *South Wales Weekly Post*, in its edition of 23rd October 1915. A 32 year old

woman who had sought lodgings with another woman at a house in Swansea made off without paying. The latter (the witness):

*".....went to the door and saw her walking up the street. Noticing that she seemed very bulky around the hips witness got suspicious, and ran upstairs, and found .....blankets missing. She overtook defendant, and asked her for the blankets, and for what she owed her, but the defendant denied having the blankets."*

The defendant was charged with stealing and receiving two blankets valued at 13 shillings and also stealing one blanket from another woman in a separate case.

Frank was the arresting officer and recovered two blankets which the defendant said were her property.

After hearing the case the Swansea Police Court committed the defendant to the next Assizes. The report concluded by stating that the defendant:



*Frank is the second from the right in the second row-the only one without a moustache!*

*“...was offered bail, but said she did not want it.”*

It's not known when Frank joined the army but it seems that initially he served in the 6th (Glamorgan) Battalion of the Welsh Regiment. This was a Territorial Force battalion which in August 1914 was based at Swansea as part of the South Wales Brigade. It went to France in October 1914 serving initially with the 28th Division and after October 1915 with the 1st Division. In May 1916 it became a pioneer battalion with the Division and remained in service on the Western Front until November 1918.

As is clear from the newspaper report referred to above Frank was a police officer in Swansea in October 1915 and, therefore, it's possible he joined the 6th Battalion during 1916 and served with them in their role as pioneers.

At some stage afterwards, possibly at the beginning of 1917, Frank transferred to the 8th Battalion of the Welsh Regiment which was also a pioneer battalion.

The battalion was the first Service battalion of the Regiment, that is to say made up of volunteers who had responded to the call of Lord Kitichener, Secretary of State for War, in 1914

for men to come forward to augment the regular and territorial armies.

It was formed in Cardiff in August 1914 when recruits enlisted at Cardiff Castle and initially they were billeted in stables and other buildings in the Castle grounds. Between then and June 1915 the Battalion was based at various times on Salisbury Plain, near Swindon, Bournemouth and Aldershot.

In January 1915 the Battalion was designated the pioneer battalion of the 13th Division with which it landed at Gallipoli on 5th August 1915. According to the history of the Welsh Regiment in the First World War:

*“The battalion was an extraordinarily fine one by the time it left England, and it was to give a good account of itself shortly in the fierce fighting in Gallipoli.”*

The Battalion moved to Mesopotamia (modern day Iraq) from Egypt in February 1916 following its evacuation from the Gallipoli Peninsula along with other British troops in December 1915.

As we have previously noted in the biography of Arnold Dickens, pioneers provided organised

labour in support of the army and especially the Royal Engineers but on occasions would, if necessary, act as additional infantry.

The Battalion played its full part, both in its pioneer role and as additional infantry, in supporting the 13th Division throughout the campaign in Mesopotamia which achieved great success in March 1917 when Baghdad, the headquarters of the Turkish Army in Mesopotamia, fell to British forces.

After the capture of Baghdad, in the words of the Regimental history:

*“The 8th Welsh had been employed mainly in repairing roads, but had taken part in the successful fight of the 13th Division on 11th April. Summer brought them little rest, as they were working from May til October, laying light railways to the north of Baghdad...”*

The work Frank and his fellow soldiers of the 8th Battalion did at this time and the prevailing conditions are described by K W Mitchinson in his book *Pioneer Battalions in the Great War*:

*“Endurance and courage of a different sort was required for railway work in Mesopotamia. The 8th Welsh spent most of June and July 1917 pulling up one railway and rebuilding it elsewhere. The battalion was split into its four companies, with two pulling up the light railway line between Sindiyeah and Kifu, the third loading the rails and sleepers onto a river steamer while the fourth unloaded and relaid the track.....In Flanders, their fellow Pioneers had mud and German shells to contend with; in the desert, the 8th Welsh had heat, hostile Arabs and Turks and the desolate, ferocious terrain.”*



*Men of the 8th Battalion, Welsh Regiment, on a rifle range in January 1915 (© IWM Q53544)*

On 14th August 1917 the *South Wales Daily Post* reported:

*“Ex Swansea Policeman at Baghdad-Ex-PC Corpl. Frank Coffey, of the Welsh Regiment, is at present lying in hospital at Baghdad suffering from the effects of the terrible heat being experienced there. His wife Mrs. Coffey of the Volunteers Arms, St. Thomas, has received information that he is seriously ill. Corpl. Coffey was a well known member of the Swansea Police force.”*

The terrible conditions in which Frank served are again vividly described in *Pioneer Battalions in the Great War*:

*“With temperatures reaching 126 degrees in the shade, the men had to dig, wire and march across endless expanses of rocky wasteland and build roads through the inhospitable mountain ranges. There were occasional outbreaks of cholera, but the chief killer was sun stroke.”*

In the Mesopotamian campaign 116 men from the Battalion died from causes other than those related to action. Frank was one of them as he died on 15th August.

On 25th August the following

notice appeared in the *Cambria Daily Leader*:

*“COFFEY-At Mesopotamia on August 15th, 1917, Corporal Frank Coffey (from the effects of heat), the beloved husband of Ellen Coffey, Volunteer Arms, St. Thomas. Rest in peace.”*

On 15th March 1918 the same newspaper carried a notice in memory of Frank:

*“In loving memory of Corpl. Frank Coffey, late Swansea Police, who died of fever August 15th, 1917 at Mesopotamia. Forget him no, we never will-From Mam, Dad, Tom, Aunt, Uncle”*

Frank is buried in the Baghdad (North Gate) War Cemetery of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. It was begun in April 1917 and has 4,160 Commonwealth casualties of the First World War commemorated in it. The graves include that of Lieutenant General Sir Stanley Maude, Commander-in-Chief of the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force, who died of cholera in November 1917.

Frank is also remembered on the Swansea Borough Police War Memorial at Swansea Central Police Station.

4TH SEPTEMBER

## PC 59 PERCY JOHN MARKS

CARDIFF CITY POLICE

LANCE CORPORAL 1345

1ST BATTALION

WELSH GUARDS



Percy was a Somerset man who was born at Taunton in 1895. He was the son of Ernest Frank Marks who

had been born in Axminster in Devon and his wife Kate, who had also been born in Taunton.

At the census of 1911 the family was living at the Priory Dairy, Obridge, Taunton. Percy's father was a self employed dairyman and Percy, then aged 15, worked with his father in the dairy business. Other members of the family present in the household, in addition to Percy and his mother and father, were Percy's sisters, Florrie, aged 13, and Gertude Kate, aged 7, together with his brothers Archie, aged 9, and Cecil Tomas, aged 3. Percy's cousin, George William Henry Thorn, aged 21, lived with the family and also worked in Ernest's dairy business.

In 1914 Percy left Taunton and his work in the dairy to become a police officer in the Cardiff City Police which he joined on 6th November. He was stationed in Splott in the City before leaving the police to enlist in the army joining the recently formed Welsh Guards at Caterham in Surrey on 30th April 1915.

Percy went with the Battalion to France on 17th August 1915 and he took part in the contribution which they made on the Western Front in, for example, the Battle of Loos in 1915 and most likely during the Battle of the Somme in 1916. Percy was promoted to Lance Corporal on 15th February 1916.

By September 1917 the Battalion was occupying front line trenches in the Langemark sector in Belgium during the Third Battle of Ypres. As result of offensive action by British forces in the area the Germans responded with artillery fire. The history of the Welsh Guards in the First World War describes the scene:

*“Langemarck therefore came in for some severe shelling, although no advance was attempted at that point. The line was held by shell-hole posts, and they were very scattered.*



*The danger of enemy attack too was ever imminent. Ptes. 2138 J. Lloyd Roberts, 2661 J. Lewis, 2759 Griffiths and 2851 T. Evans were names of men that were noted as having remained at duty though wounded (Lewis in seven places), and to remain at duty meant that they were squatting, wet to the skin, in mud-filled shell-holes.”*

The Battalion’s War diary entry for 3rd September states:

*“... shelling all night was very bad.”*

In contrast the entry for the following day, 4th September, is:

*“A lovely day and not much shelling...”*

The official records show that Percy was killed in action on 4th September 1917. In view of the War Diary entries it’s likely that he lost his life as a result of the shelling on the 3rd.

The *Taunton Courier and Advertiser* for 26th September 1917 carried the following detailed report concerning Percy.

*“CORPL. P.J. MARKS KILLED IN ACTION-Corporal Percy John Marks has been killed in action in France on the 4th September. He was the eldest son of Mr.*

*and Mrs. E. F. Marks of the Priory dairy, and was 22 years of age. As a boy he attended the St. James’s School, under Mr. J. Montague, and will be well remembered as an assistant for a number of years to his father. He was a fine physical specimen of a man, standing over six feet in height, and joined the Cardiff City Police three years ago. He enlisted for service in 1915, and was sent to France in August of the same year with the Welsh Guards. He went through two memorable charges on Hill 70, and was also actively engaged in the important operations near Loos. The following letter has been received from Sergt. Richards, one of his comrades:-*  
*“Dear Mr. Marks,-Just a few lines to inform you of the death of your son. Corpl. Marks and myself were very good chums, because we belong to the same battalion and came together on this job. All the boys miss him because he was so cheerful. He always had a smile on his face, and I miss him very much, because he was one of the best NCO’s I had under me. The way he met his death was by a shell dropping right on top of the dug-out, killing one NCO and three men. They were killed outright*

*and buried beneath the dug-out. I was out digging for him last night and this morning and I shall do my best as a soldier and a pal to see that your son and the others are buried properly. If there is anything you would like to know I shall be only too pleased to help you. Your son was a good soldier and a brave one as well. Please accept the sympathy of all the boys and myself in your great loss.-D. J. Richards, Sergt.”*

Sergeant Richards' efforts, or those of others, to recover Percy's body were clearly successful since he is buried at the New Irish Farm Cemetery. This lies to the north east of Ypres and

was first used as a cemetery between August and November 1917. It was named after a nearby farm which was known to the troops as "Irish Farm". It was used again later in the war and was greatly expanded when graves were brought to it from the wider battlefield near Ypres and from smaller cemeteries in the vicinity.

Today 4719 Commonwealth servicemen of the First World War are buried or commemorated in the Cemetery. 3271 of the burials are unidentified.

Percy is also remembered on the Cardiff Police War Memorial Plaque in Cardiff Bay Police Station.



*New Irish Farm Cemetery*

17TH SEPTEMBER

## PS 310 JAMES ROBERT ANGUS

GLAMORGAN CONSTABULARY

ACTING LIEUTENANT

COLONEL

11TH BATTALION

SOUTH WALES BORDERERS

James Robert Angus was born in Dumfries in Scotland in 1871. (His police record which states that he was born in Brecon in 1872

appears to be incorrect).

His father, also called James, was from Aberdeen whilst his mother, Emma (nee Hopkins), was from Brecon.

By the census of 1881 the family was living at 24 John Street in Brecon. Also at home at that time, in addition to James and his parents, were James' brother Frederick William James Angus, who was two years older than James, and

his sister, Kate, then one year old. Also there was James' grandmother, Ann Hopkins.

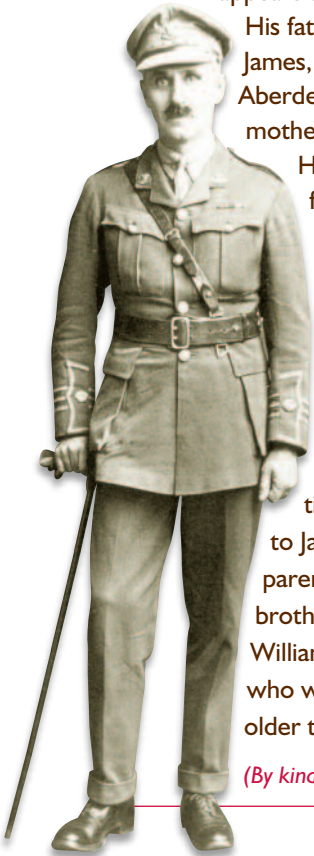
In that census James' father's occupation is given as general labourer. However, it's apparent from subsequent newspaper reports regarding James, that his father had been in the army and was described as a Crimean war veteran. He had also been stationed as a sergeant major at the depot of the South Wales Borderers in Brecon.

Evidently James decided to follow in his father's footsteps in the army and on 16th June 1890 he enlisted in the Grenadier Guards. At that time, and prior to the formation of the Welsh Guards during the First World War, the Grenadier Guards regularly recruited in Wales. On his attestation form James' occupation is given as telegraphist.

At the time of the following year's census, James was at Chelsea Barracks in London with the 3rd Battalion of the Grenadier Guards.

James served for three years with the Regiment before leaving the army to join the Glamorgan

*(By kind permission of the Regimental Museum of The Royal Welsh)*



Constabulary on 5th June 1893. He then served as a policeman for over six years before he resigned on 29th December 1899 in order to re-join his old regiment with which he served during the South African or Boer War (1899-1902).

After his war service he left the army and re-joined the Glamorgan Constabulary on 2nd August 1902. During his police service he was stationed at Barry amongst other places. In 1911, at the time of that year's census, he was a sergeant and living at the police station at Abercynon together with his wife Edith (nee Prosser), who was from Treharris, and his two sons, Stuart Prosser, aged 5, and Colin James, aged two. James and Edith had married in 1903.

In addition to his policing duties James was a member of the Glamorgan Police rugby team when it was first established in 1897. He also played for the police cricket team.

Following the outbreak of the First World War in August

1914, it seems that James' army background was considered of use in Barry where he was then stationed as a police officer, as the *Barry Dock News* of 4th September 1914 reported:

*"A certain number of men have given their names as being desirous of receiving some instruction in drill. Arrangements have been made for drills to start next Monday, at 8 p.m. All those who wish to take part should attend at the Drill Hall at the time and hour mentioned. Police-sergeant Angus, late of the Grenadier Guards, who is an experienced drill instructor, has kindly consented to give instructions. The Drill will last for one hour.*

*At the drill on Monday it will be arranged that subsequent drills shall be held, and those who are unable to join any branch of the Army or Navy are urged to attend these drills, so that they may acquire some knowledge of drill and the use of arms."*

In due course, James resigned from the *James in his rugby playing days*



police and along with many other Glamorgan policemen, joined the 16th (Cardiff City) Battalion of the Welsh Regiment. Whilst his police records show that his resignation from the Force took effect on 19th February 1915, it's apparent that he was granted a commission at the rank of temporary lieutenant in the Cardiff City Battalion on 13th January 1915 as notified by the *London Gazette* of 25th February.

The *Barry Dock News* of 22nd January 1915 recorded the pride felt in the town in James' appointment:

*"The members of the Barry Volunteer Training Corps assembled at the Barry Hotel on Saturday evening last, on the occasion of a presentation to Police-sergeant J. W. Angus, their late drill instructor. The Commandant (Mr. W. Jones-Thomas, J.P.) presided.*

*The formation of the Corps (then the Town Guard), which was one of the first institutions of its kind in the country, was largely due to the untiring efforts of Police-sergeant Angus, whose valuable services have been recognised by the War Office, with the result that he was appointed drill*

*instructor to the Cardiff City Battalion, then undergoing training at Porthcawl, and has subsequently been promoted to the rank of lieutenant, upon which he was warmly congratulated.*

*The presentation consisted of a purse of gold and a gentleman's dressing case to Lieut. Angus, and a lady's dressing case was presented to Mrs. Angus.*

*The Chairman read the following letter, which expressed the united sentiments of the Training Corps towards their popular late instructor:-*

*"Dear Sergeant Angus-It affords me the greatest pleasure to present you, on behalf of the officers and men of the Barry Town Guard (as it was known when you were instructor, but now the Volunteer Training Corps), with the accompanying purse of gold, also a dressing case, as a slight token of the esteem and affection in which you are held by them, and the tangible expression of their appreciation of your valuable services in training the Corps during the initial stages of its existence. Its present proficiency*

*is largely due to your thorough and patient instruction. We also take this opportunity to ask you, on behalf of your good lady, to accept the small gift we have decided to make her, so that whenever it is used by her it will be regarded as a souvenir of her husband's happy association with this Corps, and of the many hours she has spared him to us.*

*We wish you God speed and pray that your future may be as bright and prosperous as your abilities so fully merit. If it be your lot to join our gallant Army in the fighting line, we are confident you will not be found wanting, and we fervently hope you will return home to your loved one laden with honours.*

*I am, dear Sergeant Angus,*

*Your well-wisher,*

*W . J. Jones-Thomas,  
Commandant. ””*

*In fitting terms Lieut. Angus acknowledged the presentation on behalf of himself and Mrs. Angus. He also hoped to have the pleasure of carrying his gift across to France, Belgium and Germany (cheers), and with a trustful razor have a shave in Berlin. (laughter and cheers).”*

James went with his battalion to France on 5th December 1915, as part of the 38th (Welsh) Division by which time he had been promoted to captain and by May the following year he was a major.

During his time with the Battalion, James served with another former Glamorgan police officer, F.W. (Fred) Smith who became the Commanding Officer of the Battalion in 1916 and James would often take command of the Battalion in his absence.. Fred Smith too had been, like James, a member of the Glamorgan Police rugby team.

On 7th July 1916 the Battalion took part in the attack on Mametz Wood during the Battle of the Somme when it suffered heavy casualties, amongst them fellow former members of the Glamorgan Constabulary such as Company Sergeant Major Dick Thomas.

The History of the Welsh Regiment describes the efforts of the Cardiff City Battalion and the South Wales Borderers to reach the Wood:

*“At 8.30am on 7th July, when the guns ceased their bombardment, the front waves of the two battalions moved over the crest*

*and advanced steadily down the slope, followed by successive waves.*

*It was not long before the enemy machine guns smote them hip and thigh, frontally from the wood and in enfilade from Flatiron and Sabot Copses, the 16th Welsh losing more heavily than the 10th SWB, since they were the more exposed. Pushing forward gallantly the foremost waves succeeded in reaching a line of shell holes about 200 yards from the edge of the wood, where they took cover. The enemy had concentrated their fire on the successive waves, as they came across the crest and annihilated them in turn.*

*The attack was definitely brought to a standstill. The guns again bombarded Mametz Wood at 11.15am and twice again the remnants of the two Battalions, some of whom had been withdrawn over the crest, and some of whom had not yet advanced, essayed to support their comrades nearer the wood. Major J. R. Angus personally directed every advance, exposing himself freely and showing a fine example of leadership and disregard of danger."*

Eventually at 4.30pm the exhausted battalions were forced to withdraw.

The 16th Battalion later took part in another attack on the Wood which was eventually captured a few days later.

The efforts of James and Fred Smith were acknowledged by the Standing Joint committee of the Glamorgan Constabulary as reported by the *Cambria Daily Leader* on 12th December 1916:

*"Glamorgan police force holds a record. One its members, Inspector Smith, is in command of a battalion, and Sergt. Angus is a major with him. At a meeting of the Standing Joint Committee on Monday a letter was read from Lieut.-Col. Smith expressing sincere thanks to the members of the committee "for their very encouraging letter of approval of the services of their men now with the colours, and mentioning the names of Major Angus and myself. We deeply appreciate the committee's action, and trust the conduct of their men now serving in the various units of the Army will be such as to cause the Glamorgan police authorities no regrets for having so willingly allowed the men to take part."*



*James (bareheaded) at Pilckem Ridge  
(By kind permission of the Regimental Museum of The Royal Welch)*

In 1917, along with the rest of the 16th Battalion, James took part in the first phase of the Third Battle of Ypres, the Battle of Pilckem Ridge, when the Battalion acquitted itself with distinction.

On 6th August 1917 James transferred to the 11th Battalion of the South Wales Borderers which was also part of the Welsh Division and on 15th August his promotion to Acting Lieutenant Colonel in command of the Battalion was confirmed. He was therefore in command of it during the second phase of the Third Battle of Ypres, known as the Battle of Langemark when, along with other units of the Welsh

Division, the Battalion had to fight in difficult wet conditions.

In early September 1917 the Welsh Division moved from Ypres to Armentieres in Northern France near the Belgian border. It was whilst serving there with his battalion that James, sadly, died.

At about 8 a.m. on 17th September, James went for a swim in the River Lys. He was seen by two soldiers from his Battalion to have got into difficulty but then seemed to recover and began to swim back to the bank from which he had started out. However, he again got into difficulty and, despite the efforts of the two soldiers, he slid



beneath the surface of the river and drowned. A Court of Inquiry was held into the circumstances of his death when evidence was given by the two soldiers who had tried to save him.

The Battalion's War Diary recorded:

*"17/9/17: Lt. Col. J.R. Angus accidentally drowned while bathing in the Lys at 8.15 a.m. Buried in Erquinghem Cemetery at 3-0 p.m. same day. All available officers and senior NCO's attended."*

The Aberdare Leader was one

of the newspapers in South Wales which reported the death. In its edition for Saturday 29th September 1917 it said:

*"Lieut.-Col. J.R. Angus.....has been accidentally drowned in France. Six weeks ago he left the Welsh Regiment, in which he had rendered distinguished service, to take command of a battalion of the South Wales Borderers. The circumstances of his death are briefly told in a letter addressed by his second in command to the widow who lives at Quaker's Yard.....Lieut-col. Angus leaves a widow and*



*The original cross on James' grave (By kind permission of the Regimental Museum of The Royal Welsh) (left) and James' grave in May 2013 with South Wales Police remembrance cross*

*three children. Mrs. Angus is a daughter of the late Alderman David Prosser, J.P., Treharris and a sister to Mr. A.J. Prosser, solicitor, Aberdare. Colonel Angus was in his 46th year. Last Sunday, at the Parish Church, Treharris, where the late Colonel was a communicant, a service was held in his memory, the Vicar officiating.”*

As mentioned earlier, James is buried at Erquinghem-Lys which is a village about 1.5 km from Armentieres. The village was occupied by German forces in October 1914 before being liberated later the same month by the Allies in whose hands it remained until April 1918 when it

was again taken by the Germans. It was finally re-occupied by Allied forces in September 1918.

The churchyard extension contains 558 Commonwealth burials of the First World War and 130 German burials.

James' service during the War was recognised by Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, Commander in Chief of the British Expeditionary Force, who mentioned him in despatches on 9th April 1917 and on 7th November 1917.

James is remembered on the Glamorgan Police War Memorial at Bridgend.

Before it ended the War brought further tragedy to the



*Erquinghem-Lys Churchyard Extension*



Roy Angus

Angus family.  
On 13th  
August 1918  
James'  
nephew,  
Lieutenant Roy  
Angus, son of  
James' brother,  
Frederick

William James Angus and his wife  
May Elizabeth of Newport, died of  
wounds whilst serving with the  
recently formed Royal Air Force in  
France. He was 23 years of age.

The *Western Mail* of 19th  
August reported:

*"News was received at Newport  
on Saturday of the death of  
Lieut. Roy Angus, R.A.F., eldest  
son of Mr. and Mrs. Angus, of  
Trevarth, Cardiff-road, Newport,  
and nephew of the late Col.  
Angus, S.W.B.*

*The late Lieut. Angus was one of  
the first Civil Service clerks  
engaged at the local  
Unemployment Exchanges to  
join up at the outbreak of war,  
and he was very well known and  
extremely popular among  
business men locally. This is the  
second sad loss the Angus family  
has sustained, for Col. Angus  
also made the supreme sacrifice  
in the present war."*

## 19TH NOVEMBER

PC 535  
THOMAS THOMAS  
GLAMORGAN CONSTABULARY  
CORPORAL 32796  
16TH BATTALION  
WELSH REGIMENT

Thomas was from the village of  
Llandegai, near Bangor in North  
Wales. He was born there on 1st  
April 1894, the son of William and  
Elizabeth Thomas. William was  
from the nearby village of  
Llanllechid whilst Elizabeth had  
also been born in Llandegai.

At the census of 1901, the  
family was living at Bryndymchwel,  
Llandegai. Thomas' father is not  
recorded on it as he may have  
been away at the time it was  
taken. However, present in the  
household, in addition to Thomas  
and his mother, were his older  
brothers, Robert, a plasterer's  
apprentice, and Griffith, and his  
older sister, Elizabeth, along with  
his younger sisters Margaret and  
Mary.

At the next census of 1911  
Griffith, Elizabeth, Thomas,  
Margaret and Mary are recorded  
as living at 37 Friar's Road in  
Bangor. There is no entry for their

parents although this is the address subsequently given for them on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's database entry in respect of Thomas's death. At this time Thomas's occupation is given as slateyard labourer.

Like many men from North Wales during the early part of the twentieth century when employment associated with slate quarrying became more precarious, it seems that Thomas at some stage moved to South Wales and became employed in the mining industry since his employment is shown on police records as collier. He joined the Glamorgan Constabulary on 4th May 1914 and was later stationed at Mumbles near Swansea.

On 6th August 1915 Thomas left the Police Force and enlisted in the army at Swansea becoming initially Private 32796 in the 16th (Cardiff City) Battalion, of the Welsh Regiment. They formed part of the 38th (Welsh) Division which went to France in December 1915.

Thomas continued to serve in the Battalion and was, in due course, promoted to Corporal. It

is likely that he took part in the Battalion's actions during the Battle of Mametz Wood in 1916 and the Battles of Pilckem Ridge and Langemark in 1917.

In November 1917 the Battalion was occupying trenches at Houplines near Armentieres in France. The Battalion's War Diary for the 19th of that month records:

*"Battalion in the line. Enemy extremely active. Throughout the day both artillery and TM's (trench mortars). Between 10.30am and 11am a very heavy barrage was put down on the whole battalion front most intense around No 5 post. A fighting patrol of 1 officer and 11 other ranks left our line.....no enemy patrol encountered"*

There is no reference in the diary to casualties but official records indicate that Thomas was killed in action on 19th November 1917 and it is likely that it was during the enemy barrage referred to in the War Diary.

Thomas is buried at the Cite Bonjean Military Cemetery in

Armentieres in Northern France some 14 km from Lille. It contains 2132 Commonwealth burials from the First World War.

Thomas is remembered on the Glamorgan Police War Memorial and on the War Memorial at Bangor.

*The inscription on Thomas' grave reads:*

*“Ei aberth nid a heibio. Ei wyneb annwyl nad a'n ango”  
“His sacrifice shall not pass. His dear face will not be forgotten”*



*Cite Bonjean Cemetery, Armentieres*

23RD NOVEMBER

PC 609

ARTHUR HOPKINS

GLAMORGAN CONSTABULARY

PRIVATE 202671

19TH BATTALION

ROYAL WELSH FUSILIERS



Arthur was born in Cardiff on 9th July 1894, the son of Thomas and Elizabeth Hopkins.

In 1901 the census of that year showed Arthur living with his family at Michaelstone Mill, Michaelstone-Le-Pit, Dinas Powis, near Cardiff. At that time Arthur's father was employed as a butcher. Also in the household together with Arthur and his parents, were his brothers Phillip, James William, Frederick Thomas and Ivor.

The census of 1911 recorded that the family still lived at the same address with the household not having changed since 1910. By then, however, Arthur's father was a farmer and estate bailiff whilst Arthur, then 17, had obtained employment as a

carpenter's apprentice. As for Arthur's brothers, Phillip at 22 was a general labourer, William, aged 20, was a grocer's assistant, Frederick Thomas, aged 18, was a woodcutter, and Ivor at 16 was working on a farm, presumably with his father.

On 8th August 1914 Arthur joined the Glamorgan Constabulary and, in due course, was stationed at Melincrythan near Neath before leaving the force on 25th June 1915 to enlist in the army at Swansea and becoming a member of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers.

He served with the 19th Battalion of the Regiment which was formed in March 1915 as a "Bantam" battalion that is to say one made up mainly of men below the minimum regulation height. It became part of the 119th Brigade of the 40th Division and went to France in June 1916.

The Battle of Cambrai, which began on 20th November 1917, was a major British offensive against German positions in the area south east of Arras in Northern France, Cambrai itself being an important railhead and headquarters for the German

Army. The battle was notable as it saw the first mass use of tanks, 476 of them. Although there were initial successes, by the time it came to an end in early December the German army had managed to recapture much of the territory it had lost. British casualties amounted to about 44,000 men killed, wounded or missing.

During the course of the battle 19th Battalion took part in the attack on Bourslon Wood as part of 119th Brigade. On the morning of 23rd November troops moved forward and attacked through ground mist. There was close and vicious fighting once they reached the wood. As the Battalion's War

diary for that day describes it:

*"The enemy held a series of posts with M.G.'s (machine guns) but these were overcome by...getting in with the bayonet."*

After three hours of fighting the Battalion had reached the northern edge of the wood by early afternoon. Later there were German counter attacks and despite further fighting by other units over the succeeding days, eventually the British had to withdraw.

It was during the fighting on 23rd November that Arthur was killed in action.



*A British tank of 40th Division on its way to take part in the attack on Bourslon Wood on 23rd November 1917 (© IWM Q 6337)*

The history of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers in the First World War has this to say on the battle for the Wood:

*“It had been a desperate battle and the congratulatory messages received by the 19th Battalion were merited. Their right flank was always exposed.....and on the left the village of Bourlon was defended with the greatest valour by the enemy: no doubt if some of the tanks could have remained to picket the village while the mopping up was proceeding we might have tightened our grip and held on to it; but the tanks had to return through lack of petrol, and the infantry, by themselves, were not*

*strong enough to hold on. But the capture of the wood was a great achievement for the Bantam Battalion, under such adverse circumstances.”*

Arthur’s death was reported in a local newspaper as follows:

*“Official information has been received by Mr and Mrs Thomas Hopkins, of Mill farm, Michaelston-le-Pit, that Lance Corporal Arthur Hopkins, Royal Welsh Fusiliers (one of their five soldier sons), was killed in action on November 23rd in France. Mr Arthur Hopkins was 24 years of age, and joined the Army 2½ years ago, when he was at Melincrythan, Neath, as a police constable. In the neighbourhood*



*The Cambrai Memorial*



*of Penarth also he was well known and popular. He served his apprenticeship as a joiner with Mr D.G. Price, builder and contractor, Penarth. This is Mr. Hopkins' second son to fall in action. The first, Willie, was killed in the battle of Loos, when two other sons, Phillip and Fred, were wounded."*

James William ("Willie") Hopkins was Private 12774 in the 9th Battalion of the Devonshire Regiment and was killed in action on 30th September 1915. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Loos Memorial.

Arthur, too, has no known grave and is commemorated on the Cambrai Memorial. This is situated near the small village of Louverval 16 km south west of Cambrai. The Memorial contains the names of more than 7000 British and South African servicemen who died during the Battle of Cambrai and whose graves are not known.

Arthur and William are also commemorated on the Dinas Powis War Memorial and Arthur on the Glamorgan Police War Memorial at Bridgend.

## 27TH NOVEMBER

### PC 704 JOHN EVANS GLAMORGAN CONSTABULARY PRIVATE 603 I 2ND BATTALION IRISH GUARDS



John was born in Ynysybwl near Pontypridd in April 1889. His father, Edward William Evans, was originally

from Machynlleth whilst his mother, Mary Ann, was also born in Ynysybwl.

Edward was a stonemason at the Lady Windsor Colliery in Ynysybwl. This had been opened in 1886 and led to the building of many houses in the area to accommodate mine workers and their families. The colliery continued to produce coal until its closure in 1988.

At the census of 1891 the family was living at Clydach Terrace in Ynysybwl. In addition to John and his parents, the household comprised John's older brother, James, and his younger brother, Owen.

By the census of 1901 the family had moved to live at 24, Thompson Villas in Ynysybwl. By then James, aged 13, was employed as a collier's boy. There had also been two additions to the family in John's sisters, Catherine and Mary.

The census of 1911 shows that the family had moved the very short distance to 22 Thompson Villas. John by then, aged 22, was employed as a collier/hewer.

In 1912 John left coal mining and joined the Glamorgan Constabulary. At the commencement of war in 1914 he was stationed at Llandaff on the outskirts of Cardiff.

On 20th November 1914 John enlisted in the army at Cardiff and became a Private in the Irish Guards which he joined at the Guards Depot at Caterham in Surrey on the following day.

After a period of training he sailed from Southampton to France on 1st April 1915 joining the regiment on 27th April. He spent a short time on attachment to the Royal Engineers during July before returning to the Irish Guards.

John was eventually to serve with the 2nd Battalion of the regiment but as this was not formed until 18th July 1915 and didn't go to France until 17th August 1915 it appears that, at least initially, he served with the 1st Battalion. It's not known when he transferred to the 2nd Battalion.

Army records show that John was wounded in action on 18th September 1916 when the Irish Guards saw action during the Battle of the Somme. It seems that John suffered injuries to his face and, after initial treatment in France, was evacuated to England.

He eventually returned to front line duties in France on 4th November 1917 but, sadly, just over three weeks later he was killed in action on 27th November.

On that date 2nd Battalion Irish Guards, as one of the units of the 2nd Guards Brigade of the Guards Division, took part in an attack on Bourslon Wood and the nearby village of Fontaine-Notre-Dame as part of the Battle of Cambrai (already described in the biography of Arthur Hopkins).

Conditions on the day before the men went into the attack are described in the History of the

Guards Division in the Great War: After carrying out the relief of the 1st Guards Brigade, the 2nd Brigade, including John's battalion, found:

*“The weather.....made matters still more unpleasant as it snowed persistently during the night, and the ground was terribly heavy. The troops, who had already been compelled to lie out in the open for two nights and were drenched to the skin, had to endure, therefore, a particularly trying ordeal on the eve of battle.”*

In the event, the attacking force, although it fought bravely and had reached most of its objectives, was not strong enough, in the face of determined German counter attacks, to hold on to the ground it had gained. It had suffered considerable casualties and was, therefore, eventually forced to retreat. John's battalion found itself virtually cut off from adjoining forces and it was only able to withdraw with great difficulty. It had sustained heavy casualties by the time it got back to its original positions.

The History of The Guards Division summed up the 27th November in this way:

*“In the circumstances.....the results of the day's fighting reflected no discredit upon the Guards Division. Its officers and men went through the ordeal with their customary discipline and courage. If they did not actually win success, they gave their lives ungrudgingly to achieve it. Their failure was nothing of which to be ashamed. The pity of it was that so many brave men were sacrificed in vain.”*

Like Arthur Hopkins, John is commemorated on the Cambrai Memorial and the Glamorgan Police War Memorial.



*Detail from the Cambrai Memorial*

1ST DECEMBER

PC 578

RONALD EVANS

GLAMORGAN CONSTABULARY

PRIVATE 2961

1ST BATTALION

WELSH GUARDS



Ronald was the son of Herbert and Mary Evans. His father was from Braunton in Devon whilst his

mother had been born in Cardiff.

Ronald was born on 10th March 1898 in Cardiff and at the census of 1901 was living in Minster Street in the Cathays area of the city. Also there were his father, then a police constable, his mother, and his brother, Herbert, who was four years older than Ronald. Also living with them was a lodger, Richard Hewison, who was a widower and from Ashford in Kent. He was employed as a fitter.

By the time of the census of 1911 the family had moved to live in Egerton Street in Canton in Cardiff. Ronald's father had

achieved promotion and was now a sergeant in the City Police (It appears that he was later further promoted to Inspector), whilst Herbert, aged 17, was employed as a commercial clerk. Ronald, aged 13, was still at school whilst he now had a sister as well, Brenda Muriel, who had been born in 1903. Whilst living in Canton, Ronald attended Wesley Methodist Church in Cowbridge Road East.

On 25th March 1916 Ronald joined the Glamorgan Constabulary aged 18 and was stationed at Barry Dock. However, he only served in the police for a few months since he resigned on 28th July 1916 to enlist in the army which he did at Barry.

Ronald joined 1st Battalion, Welsh Guards, and by December 1917 was with them during the Battle of Cambrai.

On 1st December the 3rd Guards Brigade, of which the battalion formed part, was ordered to capture the village of Gonnellieu near Cambrai. In darkness and misty conditions, just after 6.30 am, the Welsh Guards attacked on the right with the 4th

Battalion, Grenadier Guards, on the left.

As they attacked the ridge in front of Gonnellieu, the battalion was brought to a halt by heavy machine gun fire coming from the German positions which resulted in considerable casualties.

A lone tank then appeared on the scene and attacked the German positions. As a result the Germans began to surrender and the Welsh Guards then took the opportunity to rush forwards and capture the ridge.

The Grenadier Guards managed to fight their way into Gonnellieu village but they arrived just as the Germans were massing for their own offensive. Faced by superior numbers, the Grenadiers and the Welsh Guards withdrew.

The scene during the attack of the Welsh Guards, and its aftermath, is described in the history of the regiment during the First World War:

*“The men had hardly extended when the order was given to advance, and the two assaulting lines climbed up the railway bank which faced them, and proceeded up the hill,*

*disappearing in the darkness.*

*There was some wire half-way up the hill, which caused a certain amount of bunching while the men got through the weak parts, and, what had not been known before, there was a false crest to the hill, or, to be more accurate, a deep re-entrant in the ridge from the north-west. The enemy occupied the slight depression which lay in front of the apparent crest, and as the first wave of men reached the first skyline star-lights went up from all sides and a perfect hurricane of machine-gun fire broke out. It was devastating. Officers and men fell in a line. ....*

*The scene was beyond anything that had ever been met with. The ground was thick with dead and wounded men; curses and groans and shouts mingled with the hurricane crackle of the machine guns. And then in the weird light of star-lights in the foggy dawn a crowd of men began to stream down the hill..... They were the wounded.....*

*All the wounded were brought in by midday, and **only the line of***

***dead remained to speak for the valour of the men.***

370 men from the Battalion began the attack on the hill. 248 fell in the first few minutes. 57 men died where they fell.

Ronald was one of those who died. He was 19 years of age.

Like so many, too many, he has no known grave. He is commemorated on the Cambrai Memorial along with his colleagues from the Glamorgan Constabulary, Arthur Hopkins and John Evans. He, like them, is also remembered on the Glamorgan Police War Memorial.



*Ronald and John Evans remembered by South Wales Police at the Cambrai Memorial, 17th April 2015*

---

9TH DECEMBER

PC 477 EDWARD  
PRICE EVANS

GLAMORGAN CONSTABULARY

PRIVATE 3704

1ST BATTALION

WELSH GUARDS

According to police records, Edward was born in Old Radnor, Radnorshire on 23rd May 1876, although “*Soldiers Died in the Great War*” gives his birthplace as Pembridge in Herefordshire.

The census of 1901 shows Edward at the police station in Risca, Monmouthshire, where he was a police constable. This is borne out by his Glamorgan police records which indicate that, before joining that force, he had served with the Monmouthshire Constabulary.

In the census of 1901 and that of 1911, Edward’s place of birth is shown as Old Radnor.

On 11th April 1903, Edward joined the Glamorgan Constabulary and the census of 1911 shows him, and other police officers, at the police station at Ogmores Vale.

Edward subsequently served at Tynyandy which is where, in

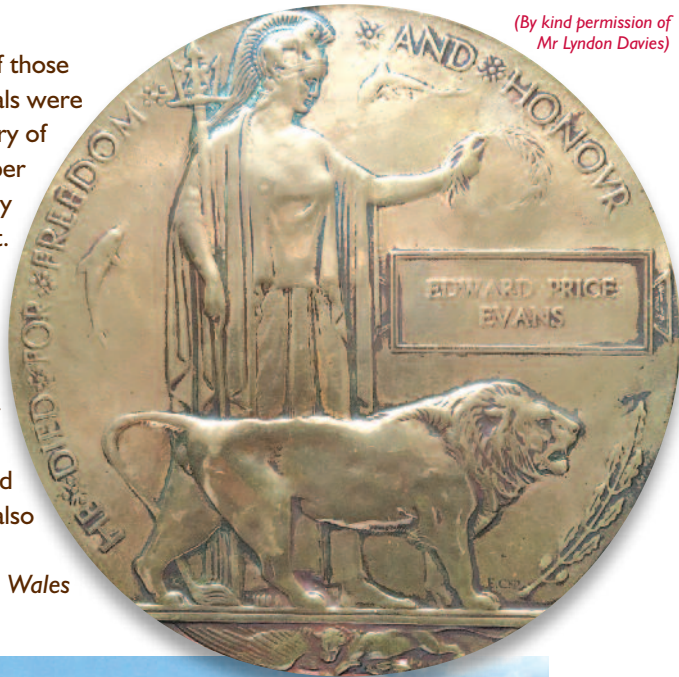
January 1917, he enlisted in the army having resigned from the police force on the 26th of that month.

Edward joined 1st Battalion, Welsh Guards, and it was whilst with them that he died of wounds on 9th December 1917 at Number 5 General Hospital, near Rouen in Northern France. Edward was 41 when he died.

According to army records Edward was wounded in the shoulder on 28th November 1917 when his unit was at Bourlon Wood near Cambrai. The Battalion’s war diary for that day states that, after a patrol had returned having failed to locate three companies of Irish Guards who were thought to have been cut off in the Wood, “*the day passed uneventfully, intermittent shelling, sniping and machine gun fire.*” It may have been that it was as a result of this that Edward was wounded although there is no reference in the diary to casualties for that day.

Edward is buried at the St. Sever Cemetery Extension in Rouen. During the First World War there were many hospitals and other medical facilities based

at Rouen. The majority of those who died in those hospitals were buried in the city cemetery of St. Sever and, in September 1916, it became necessary to build an extension to it. The latter contains 8348 Commonwealth burials from the war. Edward's Glamorgan Constabulary colleague, PC 292 Arthur Pugh, who died on 2nd September 1916, is buried in the city cemetery. He also served with 1st Battalion, Welsh Guards. (See *South Wales Police booklet for 1916*).



(By kind permission of  
Mr Lyndon Davies)



*St. Sever Cemetery Extension*



Edward is also remembered on the Glamorgan Police War Memorial.

The next of kin of soldiers who died during the War received a plaque and a scroll commemorating their sacrifice. They would be accompanied by a letter from the King stating:

*"I join with my grateful people in sending you this memorial of a brave life given for others in the Great War."*

Shown is a photograph of the plaque in respect of Edward and an example of the scroll which his family would have received and which would have been endorsed with his name, rank and regiment.



**H**E whom this scroll commemorates was numbered among those who, at the call of King and Country, left all that was dear to them, endured hardness, faced danger, and finally passed out of the sight of men by the path of duty and self-sacrifice, giving up their own lives that others might live in freedom. Let those who come after see to it that his name be not forgotten.

### Addendum to 1914 Booklet

When our booklet for 1914 was produced, the details in relation to PC Clarke were omitted because it was mistakenly thought that he had died in 1917. Our research has confirmed that he died in 1914 and we, therefore, include his details here by way of an addendum to the 1914 booklet.

### 26TH SEPTEMBER

**PC 86 THOMAS  
JOHN CLARKE**  
MERTHYR BOROUGH POLICE  
**LANCE CORPORAL 8114**  
**1ST BATTALION**  
**SOUTH WALES BORDERERS**



Tom was from the West of England having been born at Westbury on Trym near Bristol in 1886 or 1887 (The records vary as to his year of birth as does the spelling of his surname with or without an "e" at the end. We have adopted the latter for our purposes).

He was the son of Frederick and Louisa Clarke. His father was from Clifton in Bristol and his

mother was from West Harptree in North Somerset.

At the time of the census of 1901 the family was living in Westbury on Trym. Tom had five brothers and two sisters. His father was employed as a bricklayer's labourer and Tom was a gardener's assistant.

Later Tom became a groom which was his occupation when he enlisted in the army on 26th May 1903 and joined the South Wales Borderers whose depot was at Brecon.

It was at Brecon, on 2nd September 1910, that he married Edith Beatrice Williams in the Church of St John the Evangelist (now Brecon Cathedral). Edith was 21 years of age and the daughter of Philip and Mary Ann Williams of 19 Newgate Street, Llanfaes, Brecon.

At the time of the census of 1911 Tom and Edith were living at her parents' home as was Edith's older brother William. Tom was by then a Lance Corporal.

The following year saw the birth of Tom and Edith's son, Frederick.

At some stage prior to the First World War Tom left the army

and joined the Merthyr Borough Police. However, when Britain declared war on Germany on 4th August 1914 Tom was recalled to the Colours as a reservist and re-joined the 1st Battalion of the South Wales Borderers. According to the History of the Regiment in the First World War over 850 reservists reported for duty at Brecon on 5th and 6th August alone.

At that time the 1st Battalion was based at Bordon in Hampshire. It was one of the two regular battalions of the Regiment, the 2nd Battalion being then based in China.

The period of mobilisation and the scene at the Depot in Brecon is described in the History:

*"The issue of the mobilisation orders was almost immediately productive of scenes of the greatest activity and no little excitement at the regimental Depot at Brecon.....and it was on the small Depot staff that the main burden of the mobilisation fell. It was not merely that within a few hours of the issue of the summonses Reservists came pouring in, there was a rush of eager*

*recruits anxious to take their part in the coming struggle-it was one advantage of the delay in the decision to mobilise that it gave people more time to accommodate themselves to the sudden change in the country's situation, so that the actual outbreak of war found the vast majority of men convinced of the necessity of the action the Government had taken. Moreover the Depot was the natural centre to which inquiries of all sorts were addressed, to which men came who wished to offer their services in various capacities. A thousand and one problems had to be dealt with, everyone was snowed under with*

*work, and what was accomplished in a short time was really remarkable."*

The reservists, with Tom amongst them, then joined the 1st Battalion in Hampshire and after a short period of training, they were taken by train to Southampton from where they sailed on 12th August on the *Gloucester Castle* arriving at Le Havre early the following day. Tom was, therefore, amongst the first British soldiers to land in France after the commencement of the war.

The 1st Battalion formed part of the 1st Division of the British Expeditionary Force and during the next few weeks the Battalion



*British artillery advances from the Marne to the Aisne (© IWM Q51496)*

followed the path of that army to Mons in Belgium and the subsequent retreat from it. Whilst other units suffered many losses in fighting at that time the main problem for the 1st Battalion was the intense heat and having to march long distances each day.

Eventually the French and British forces held the German army along the River Marne and the tide turned against what had been seen as the unstoppable German advance. They had got to within a few miles of Paris whose defence was led by General Gallieni. The French described the battle as “The Miracle of the Marne.”

The Allies then counter attacked along the River Aisne and it was during this period that the Battalion suffered heavy casualties.

The Battalion was engaged in fierce fighting between 14th and 16th September. Its war diary for the period has an appendix to it which, unusually, comprises the personal diary of the adjutant, Captain Charles James Paterson. In his entry for the 16th he says:

*“I have never spent and imagine I can never spend a more ghastly*

*and heart tearing forty eight hours than the last.....”*

Then, after describing the fighting in detail, he contrasts the horror of war with the peace and tranquillity that he should be experiencing on a beautiful September day:

*“Here I sit outside our Headquarters’ trench in the sun. The rain which we have had without a break for the past two days has now stopped and the world should look glorious. The battle has stopped here for a bit although in the distance we can hear the 2nd English Army corps guns and their battle generally. As I say all should be nice and peaceful and pretty. What it actually is is beyond description. Trenches, bits of equipment, clothing (probably blood-stained), ammunition, tools, caps, etc., etc., everywhere. Poor fellows shot dead are lying in all directions. Some of ours, some of the 1st Guards Brigade who passed over this ground before us, and many Germans. All the hedges torn and trampled, all the grass trodden in the mud, holes where shells have struck, branches torn off trees by the*

*explosion. Everywhere the same hard, grim, pitiless sign of battle and war. I have had a belly full of it. Those who were in South Africa say that that was a picnic to this and the strain is terrific. No wonder if after a hundred shells have burst over us some of the men want to get back into the woods for rest. Ghastly, absolutely ghastly, and whoever was in the wrong in the matter which brought this war to be, is deserving of more than he can ever get in this world.”*

Early on the morning of 26th September whilst the Battalion was occupying quarries near Vendresse it came under heavy fire as the Germans attacked. Fierce fighting followed when men from the Battalion fought with anything they could lay their hands on. One soldier was said to have defended himself with a table fork. As a result of such efforts the attack was halted.

A further attack by the Germans later in the day was also successfully repulsed with British artillery fire and rifle fire from the Battalion inflicting substantial losses.

It was during the fighting on the 26th that Tom was killed in action.

The stand by the South Wales Borderers that day had played a crucial part in holding the line along the River Aisne. The Regiment's History records:

*“.. the Battalion received many congratulations on its gallant resistance to the odds against it. The Divisional commander, General Lomax, paid a special visit to the battalion to congratulate it, and in addressing it compared its action to Rorke's Drift. Sir Douglas Haig wrote, 'The conduct of the South Wales Borderers in driving back the strong attack on them made by troops massed in the Chivy valley is particularly deserving of praise. Please tell the Brigadier how proud I feel at having such splendid troops under my command.'”*

Captain Paterson in his diary put it like this:

*“The most ghastly day of my life and yet one of the proudest because my Regiment did its job and held on against heavy odds.”*

It was a day, therefore, of pride for the bravery of the Battalion but it had come at great cost. Tom was but one of 194 men killed, wounded or missing that day.

Tom's death was reported in the local press and later, on 8th February, 1915, the following report appeared in the *Western Mail*:

**“LOCAL CASUALTIES-  
TOUCHING EPITAPH OF A  
MERTHYR CONSTABLE**

*‘To dear old Nobby Clarke, from all his friends at Great Bridge. God bless him!’ This is the epitaph of Police constable Thomas Clarke, of the Merthyr Borough Police, who was killed in the early stages of the war whilst serving with the South Wales Borderers. Rudely scrolled by some sorrowing comrade-possibly himself by now a sharer in the same fate-the simple appreciation attracted the attention of a French journalist, who remarked upon ‘the homely tribute on one English grave,’ adding:-‘Some kind friend has appended a translation to this already weather stained card, so that all should know that the dead soldier lying in foreign soil was remembered with affection by his own people.’ General Gallieni was amongst those who paid homage to the brave who lie buried near the Merthyr constable ‘somewhere in France.’*

*Constable Clarke was a great*

*favourite with his colleagues in Merthyr, and was the first of several members of the force to die in the national cause. He was also the first married man to fall in the regiment, and the commanding officer has forwarded a handsome loving cup to his son Fred. It is inscribed simply, ‘Fred Clarke. France, 1914,’ and the covering letter tactfully explained that he was the first boy whose father had been killed on service with the regiment in the war. A brother of police constable Clarke has also given his life at the front.”*

(It has not been possible thus far to identify which of Tom's brothers is referred to in the report).

Tom is commemorated on the memorial at the small town of La Ferte-sous-Jouarre which is 66 km from Paris. The memorial stands in a small park on the south bank of the River Marne. It has on it the names of 3740 officers and men of the British Expeditionary Force who died during the battles at Mons, Le Cateau, the Marne and the Aisne between the end of August and the beginning of October 1914 and who, like Tom, have no known grave.

Tom is also remembered on the Merthyr Borough Police memorial panel at Merthyr Police Station.



Finally, we should not forget Captain Charles James Paterson whose diary contains such a vivid description of what it was like where Tom died.

Captain Paterson of Hook

Cottage, Horndean in Hampshire was born on 28th December 1887 at Whitelee, Roxburghshire, in Scotland, the son of James and Minna Paterson. After attending the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst he joined the South Wales Borderers in 1907.

He was Mentioned in Despatches by Sir Douglas Haig on

8th October 1914 but on the evening of 29th October 1914 at Gheluvelt in Belgium he suffered wounds from which he died at Ypres on 1st November. He is buried at Ypres Town Cemetery. He was 26 years of age.

The Regiment's History contains this tribute to him:

*"...he survived to be taken back to hospital in Ypres but died a few days later after showing the same courage and self control in his sufferings that he had displayed in the face of danger. He was a great loss to the battalion: his calm fearlessness had made a wonderful impression on the men and proved a great encouragement and a steady influence."*

*Captain Paterson*  
(© IWM  
HU116688)



*The Memorial at La Ferte-sous-Jouarre*



*Welsh National Memorial, Langemark, Flanders*



# THE GREAT WAR CENTENARY

1914-1918  2014-2018

South Wales Police is currently gathering information about the many police officers from our predecessor forces of Glamorgan, Swansea, Merthyr Tydfil, Neath and Cardiff who served in the armed forces during the First World War.

We want to ensure we uncover as much information as possible about our proud history, and the many men who served both the force and their country to ensure they are never forgotten.

All the stories and information collected,

including photographs, letters and newspaper coverage from that time will be shared online and on Facebook.

To make a contribution please email:  
policemuseum@  
south-wales.pnn.police.uk

## FIRST WORLD WAR PROJECT GROUP

Gareth Madge (Chair),  
Danny Richards, Robin Mellor, Peter Wright,  
Paul Wood, Daryl Fahey,  
Allison Tennant, Coral Cole, Alan Fry together with Philip Davies of the Western Front Association.



   /swpolice

[www.south-wales.police.uk](http://www.south-wales.police.uk)  
[www.southwalespolicemuseum.org.uk](http://www.southwalespolicemuseum.org.uk)



LED BY IWM