

Bridgend School Log Books
World War 1
Identified Themes

Supporting the War effort. From the autumn of 1914 schools took up the challenge of supporting the war effort with enthusiasm. Initially their efforts were directed towards practical activities including making “comforts” for soldiers and raising money for local and national charities. In addition, a number of schools took in the children of Belgian families driven from their homes by the war in Europe and relocated to South Wales.

“Five Belgian refugee scholars were admitted to school this week. These young refugees are natives of Aarschot and were previously under instruction in that town....These scholars and their parents are the guests of the inhabitants of Pencoed.” EM42/1 Penybont Mixed Infants.

“Ever since the week ending Sept 4th my boys have subscribed to some military fund. Up to Nov 13th the school including the staff had collected the sum of £7-19-8 and sent it to the Prince of Wales Fund. (This together with other subscriptions was used to purchase cigarettes, woollen mufflers and chocolates and sent to old boys stationed in Scotland. Letter received from Serg Major Miles thanking the boys for their Happy Christmas box).” EM10/11 Bridgend Penybont.

“The parcel of knitted garments made from Government wool by the children and friends has been sent to the depot in Cardiff.”EM37/1 Merthyr Mawr Mixed Infants.

“Admitted two boys (Belgian Refugees) to the school – Francois Lambrechts and Frans Lambrechts from Antwerp.” EM38/2 Nantylfyllon Mixed and Infants.

“About 50 of my upper standard boys will be taking part in a concert this evening for the benefit of the friends of “The Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Families” EM10/11 Bridgend Penybont.

“A collection made at the close of the (St David’s Day) performance in aid of the fund inaugurated by Mrs Lloyd George for the comfort of the Welsh Troops. The sum of £2-10-7 was taken and as many of the boys had been selling flags during the day the school I believe will contribute a fairly good sum to the Fund.” EM10/11 Bridgend Penybont.

“Admitted two Belgian refugee boys – one of whom was brought by Mrs Turberville, Ewenny Priory School.” EM9/8 Bridgend (Oldcastle) Boys.

“Miss Nellie Evans was granted leave of absence this afternoon in order to assist at a pageant in aid of a war emergency fund.” EM9/4 Oldcastle (Bridgend) Infants.

Schools often made strong and ongoing links with military hospitals in their area.

“This week we have sent our second consignment to the Red Cross military hospital in Merthyr Mawr Road. (Boys brought in eggs, fruit chocolates and cigarettes). Cordial letters of thanks were sent to the boys by the matrons of the respective hospitals. Last week we sent nearly 40 eggs and a large basket of fruit.” EM10/11 Bridgend Penybont

“Children who could brought each a potato for wounded soldiers. The soldiers came down to fetch them and the teachers gave them tea.” EM32/1 Llwynderw, Maesteg, Infants

“Mr A Steel late of Pencoed and now of Bristol visited the school on Thursday morning to thank the scholars for having contributed 16 dozen eggs for 300 wounded soldiers who had returned to Bristol from the Front to receive medical or surgical treatment.” EM42/1 Penybont Mixed Infants.

Bridgend did not follow the example of local authorities, such as Merthyr, that encouraged schools to raise funds for specific projects (e.g. in Merthyr this took the form of the Lord Mayor’s Appeal for funds to provide an Ambulance Car for the Front). However, by 1917 the authority was an active supporter of the national campaign to promote War Savings Associations in schools. At a conference organised by the authority in June 1917 all schools were encouraged to set up an Association. National campaigns, including the visit of Tanks to towns in south Wales in the summer of 1918, were also used to encourage and promote the purchase of War Savings Certificates. Schools that performed well in the sale of Certificates were awarded additional holidays by the authority.

“The Nantymoel Council Schools War Savings Associations have now purchased over 1000 War Savings Certificates. The Education Committee having been informed of this fact granted the schools a holiday. This was taken today and a most enjoyable day it proved. We hope that it will stimulate the children to greater efforts to save and invest their savings in War certificates to help our country in this crisis.” EM39/2 Nantymoel Boys.

“There will be no school on Monday next. The holiday has been granted on account of the three schools at Blaengarw having sold over 1300 War

Savings Certificates to the scholars. Over 530 certificates have been bought at this school.” EM6/2 Blaengarw Mixed.

“The tank Egbert paid a visit to our town on Tuesday and Wednesday 18th and 19th inst. The huge sum of £230,500 was invested in the tank by the people of Bridgend and the surrounding district. As the population of the town is now only about 7,500 the above sum represents a sum per head of over £30. One of the best contributions in the Kingdom. The proceedings in front of the Town Hall where the tank was stationed were characterised by great enthusiasm and patriotic fervour. The choir of our school occupied the stage in front of the tank on two occasions and sang numerous patriotic and national songs to the evident pleasure of the great assemblage which completely filled the square. Our School Association, the Penybont Boys War Savings Association invested in the tank on Wed afternoon the comparatively large sum of £2,100” EM10/11 Bridgend Penybont

“I took depositors in Tank War Loan to visit the Tank “Egbert” bearing bomb holes inflicted by the Huns. The children’s certificates were stamped at the tank.” EM32/1 Llwynderw, Maesteg Infants

“A whole day was given as a holiday because of the tanks visit to Pontycymmer. The school’s contribution was 54 certificates and one £5 bond.” EM4/1 Bettws National Mixed and Infants.

“The school will be closed tomorrow owing to the visit of the tank. The school children of the valley will form a procession and march through the villages to Pontycymmer.” EM6/2 Blaengarw Mixed.

“No school today – visit of tank “Julian Junior”. The sum of twenty pounds invested in tank certificates by the scholars.” EM1/3 Aber (Ogmore Vale)Mixed and Infants.

Life in school. There is no mention in the log books of schools in Bridgend being requisitioned for use as military hospitals as in Cardiff. However, schools and particularly boys’ schools staffed almost entirely by men, were hard hit as staff volunteered or later in the war were called up, for military service often at very short notice. As the war progressed those identified initially as medically unfit or as holding reserved occupations were frequently reassessed and passed fit for active service.

“We resumed duties after the summer holidays under the shadow of the terrible war which has broken out between Germany and Austria on one side and England, France and Russia on the other. This has already disorganised

my staff as Mr Brown has rejoined the Colours..." EM10/11 Bridgend Penybont

"Mr Frank Jacques has to join the Royal Welsh Fusiliers on Sat 17th at Wrexham. I have acquainted the Chief Education Official ... that I shall be again three teachers short from Monday next week unless Mr Jacques is promptly replaced." EM9/8 Bridgend (Oldcastle) Boys.

"JW Northing TCA has not turned up today - I hear that he has been taken for military service." EM28/1 Kenfig Hill (Pyle) Mixed and Infants.

*"I forgot to make a note in connection with the departure of Mr E Griffiths. On behalf of the staff I had the pleasure of presenting him with a pocket wallet. He is an excellent young fellow and very promising teacher and I trust he will resume his duties in this school at the termination of this terrible war."
EM10/11 Bridgend Penybont.*

"Albert Jones left to join Welsh Cycle Battalion of Kitchener's Army." EM38/2 Nantyllyon Mixed and Infants .

"Finished duties here at 4 today. Joining the Colours on Monday. I began my duties here as acting Head Teacher in place of Mr Williams who left at 4pm to join the colours – Edward J Evans." EM4/1 Bettws National Mixed and Infants.

"Mr Luther Stephens CA and Mr WW Stone CA both leave today to join the University and Public Schools Battalion of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers at Rhyl. The school boys are intensely enthusiastic and example of loyalty to the King and love of country set them by the three members of staff will not be easily forgotten." EM6/2 Blaengarw Mixed.

"The Head Master left school at 3pm in order to appear before the local tribunal. He has been placed in Class 2 – field service at home and he claimed in the national interest he was more usefully employed in his present occupation than he would be in the Army. Six months temporary exemption was allowed by the tribunal." EM6/2 Blaengarw Mixed.

"Mr Edgar J Phillip, CA has been called up under the Derby Groups. He leaves us this afternoon. The boys gave him a hearty send off. I shall feel his loss very much as he has been here nearly 8 years." EM39/2 Nantymoel Boys

“School reopened today with good attendance. Mr W D Morgan has not returned to duties being now engaged in a munitions factory.” EM6/2 Blaengarw Mixed.

Throughout the war the Board of Education took an active role in encouraging male teachers of military age to enlist in the armed forces or, if unable to do so, to join local volunteer organisations. The Board also took a very keen interest in the range of fund raising planned in schools.

“ Mr Bryn Davies called this afternoon and made inquiries as to the position of affairs under the Derby scheme of recruiting so far as this department was concerned. It was pointed out that seven men had enlisted direct from the school and that of the five remaining four were attested men the other being over age.” EM6/2 Blaengarw Mixed.

“A laurel wreath was paced over the Roll of Honour – teachers and boys of the school who had gone to War. Brigadier General Owen Thomas’ letter was read but so far nothing done to collect towards the Welsh National Fund for safeguarding the interests of Welsh soldiers and sailors and their dependents, in as much as the Education Committee have forbidden a collections of this nature in schools.” EM6/2 Blaengarw Mixed.

All teachers not in the Armed Forces were expected to “do their bit” to support the war effort both through giving their time for additional work and supporting the war effort through financial contributions.

“A deduction of three pence in the pound was made from the salaries of the staff today by the Headmaster (with the consent of the parties concerned) and the amount handed over to the treasurer of the local branch of the Prince of Wales Fund in connection with the War now on.” EM6/2 Blaengarw Mixed.

The war forced a shift in the status and opportunities afforded to women in schools . Although often seen as a temporary measure, women were increasingly employed in boys’ schools. In addition, it was accepted that to meet the chronic shortage of trained teachers dispensation be given for married women to continue to teach for the duration of the war. In other areas women were increasingly taking leading roles on the home front for example in the munitions industry and in support functions for the Armed Forces.

“The staffing has been very weak since the War commenced. Four male certificated assistants have been replaced by two women temporary assistants – one an untrained certificated and the other provisionally certificated. It is with great difficulty that the work of the school is being

conducted and the boys already are showing signs of the lack of adequate staffing.” EM6/2 Blaengarw Mixed.

“Miss Katie Griffiths, Compton House has been appointed temporarily CA on my staff in place of Mr Edgar J Phillips who joined the Army on 29 April last.” EM39/2 Nantymoel Boys .

“On Monday Miss Enid Eason Cookery Teacher visited the school for the last day.... She has been offered the Superintendence of a cookery department in one of the military camps and will in a month’s time sail for Salonika.” EM42/1 Penybont Mixed Infants.

“Miss Adams was absent today by consent in order to attend an examination for entrance into the Administration Dept of the RAF.” EM10/11 Bridgend Penybont.

Although rationing was not introduced until 1918, schools along with the general population experienced shortages of fuel and food and were expected to “economise”. As head teachers recorded, by 1918, food shortages impacted very directly on school attendance. In addition there was intense pressure to release children from school before the leaving age of 14 to compensate for the shortage of labour.

“Three scholars owing to the shortage of agricultural labour in consequence of the War have been exempted from school attendance. This exemption is granted until the boys attain the age of fourteen or the war is over whichever is the earlier date.” EM42/1 Penybont Mixed Infants.

“A letter received from the Mr E Preece Clerk to the School Managers that Glyn Roberts, aged 13yrs 6 months , a boy of Standard 6, was exempted from school attendance. This boy is the eldest of four children and his father has made the supreme sacrifice in the battlefield in France.” EM42/1 Penybont Mixed Infants.

“Coal has been ordered but as the coal is contracted from the International colliery we may have to wait for it. Admiralty orders take preference.” EM47/4 Pontyrhyl Mixed and Infants.

“The number of children kept at home to hunt for food supplies is not diminishing and this affects the regularity of attendance.” EM47/4 Pontyrhyl Mixed and Infants.

“A large number of latecomers – the great excuse is “after butter etc in the shops” EM50/3 Pyle and Kenfig (Bryndu Colliery School) Mixed.

“The numbers are lower as several have left, one family of five having gone to Manchester. Families of men who have joined the colours are going back to their native homes pending the return of the soldiers.” EM47/4 Pontyrhyl Mixed and Infants.

“Christmas holiday. In consequence of the war and many calls it has entailed upon the pockets of the people who generally subscribe to our Christmas Prize Fund I haven’t had the face this year to beg for subscriptions.” EM10/11 Bridgend Penybont.

“The annual trip to the sea side has been abandoned in consequence of the state of the country due to the terrible war now raging.” EM42/1 Penybont Mixed Infants.

Schools were also required to help pupils and families find ways and means of coping with food shortages. Schools often used their own land to create or expand gardens that could be used to produce food.

“I delivered a lecture to Stds 3,4,5 and 6 on “Food Economy “ as requested by County Council” EM4/1 Bettws National Mixed and Infants.

“Conference held at Garw School this afternoon at 3.15 for the purpose of considering the availability of establishing War Savings Associations and to take steps to promote Food Economy.” EM47/4 Pontyrhyl Mixed and Infants.

“Demonstration on War Time Cookery to be held today and Friday.” EM7/1 Blaenllynfi (Caerau) Girls.

“Whenever the weather favours garden operations some of the bigger boys will be encouraged to do garden work to assist to make up for the shortage of food stuffs in the country. “ EM9/8 Bridgend (Oldcastle) Boys.

Keeping up morale. The War led to the production of the first Government sponsored propaganda films. Bridgend does not seem to have followed the trend in Merthyr and Cardiff of encouraging schools to see the films, although all schools were expected to use the opportunities provided by Empire Day and St David’s Day to promote patriotism. In addition, a string of national campaigns were used to promote the Allied cause. A small number of schools used stories based around figures such as Nurse Edith Cavell and Jack Cornwell to praise the heroism of those who fought against the Germans and their allies.

“All classes accompanied by their respective teachers left school at 2.55 to attend an educational lecture on the war at the Hall. The lecture was delivered

by Dr Howard Beron, War Correspondent for the The Times and Daily Mail. The Upper Class will write compositions on same while conversational classes will be taken in Stds 2 and 3." EM55/8 Tynewydd (Ogmore Vale) Girls.

"Being Empire Day I gave a little talk on it and on Queen Victoria and our British and overseas gallant soldiers and sailors." EM5/1 Blackmill (Melin Ifan Du) Mixed and Infants.

"St David's Day half holiday. Morning lessons suspended for special patriotic programme." EM3/1 Aberkenfig Mixed and Infants.

"A short lesson was given by each teacher on "The British Empire". Before the school was dismissed on Wednesday morning the 25th May the scholars were taken into the playground . The scholars in double file marched past the Union Jack and saluted the flag as they did so. The Head Teacher delivered a short address on "Patriotism" before the scholars dispersed." EM42/1 Penybont Mixed Infants.

News from the Front. News from the front was provided largely by national and local newspapers with extensive coverage of the military campaigns. However, it was supplemented by the frequent visits of former teachers and pupils. Schools in Bridgend also record visits made by Belgian refugees relocated to south Wales.

"Lieutenant Stanley Thomas a former pupil of this school paid a visit here this morning. He has risen from the ranks having displayed conspicuous ability and bravery in action. He has been wounded three times..." EM6/2 Blaengarw Mixed.

"On Tuesday afternoon Quartermaster Sergeant Thos G Thomas paid the school a visit. Sergeant Thomas was on the staff of this school as a pupil teacher and UT for a period of eight years. He was returning to the front on the following day." EM42/1 Penybont Mixed Infants.

"An old boy Enoch James who is on HMS Impregnable called here this afternoon and had a most hearty greeting from the scholars and staff." EM50/3 Pyle and Kenfig (Bryndu Colliery School) Mixed.

"Private Harvey Powell of the Somerset Light Infantry paid a visit to the school on Tuesday and Friday. Chief Stoker Jasper Page (HMS Nessus) also paid the school a visit on the 23rd Nov." EM42/1 Penybont Mixed Infants.

“Today was marked by the visit to the school of M et Mdme Deschamps, a Belgian tenor and his wife. M Deschamps had fought at Liege and Antwerp against the Germans and had been wounded. “EM6/2 Blaengarw Mixed.

The level of casualties at the Front also had an ongoing and significant impact on the lives of many staff in schools.

“Miss SD Taylor left school this morning to visit her brother who has arrived at Whitchurch from France severely wounded.” EM6/2 Blaengarw Mixed.

“Miss E M Rogers is absent today having heard that her brother has been killed in the Dardanelles.” EM38/3 Nantyyfyllon Girls .

“Mrs MM Anderson absent yesterday and today her husband being home on draft leave prior to his departure for India.” EM58/3 Wyndham (Nantymoel) Mixed.

“Mrs Walker will be absent today, tomorrow and Thursday by permission of Dr James in order to spend a little time with her husband who is on furlough from the Western Front after an absence of fifteen months.” EM10/11 Bridgend Penybont.

“Miss Eva Beynon is absent today having had news of her brother’s death in Egypt.” EM38/1 Nantyyfyllon Infants

The log books often contain a considerable list of local war heroes. Although the level of detail provided is very variable. Many schools set up a Roll of Honour to record the names of staff and former pupils who had joined the armed forces.

“Charlie Lawrence (old boy) of Newcastle has been awarded the DCM for distinguished conduct in the field. The other day townspeople presented another of my old boys with a gold watch for winning the Military Medal. I had the honour of presiding over the meeting and of presenting the hero with the watch. The old boy’s name is Fred Quinlan of South Street. Another old boy won a Military Medal, Harry Bushnell now living in Treorchy. Yet another Frank Howells who has been awarded the Military Medal and it is rumoured that he has been recommended for a VC. My own son also, T Steve Jenkins has recently received a commission at the Front for meritorious service in the field.” EM10/11 Bridgend Penybont.

“News of the death of Wm Morgan ... has been received. He trained as a PT at this school and was a student at Cardiff University when he joined the HAC last year. It appears that he was killed in action of Nov 13th. I held a very high

opinion of him as a young man of pleasing manners and a thorough gentleman and a true noble character.” EM39/2 Nantymoel Boys .

“I think it only fair since I have recorded the successes of old boys of this school, I should make a note of my son’s success. His CO on the Western Front sent him an official communication which Steve received yesterday informing him that he had been awarded the Military Cross. This is the first MC that has been awarded to a Bridgend boy.” EM10/11 Bridgend Penybont.

Celebrating the End of the War. Schools often simply recorded the signing of the Armistice and the short school holiday that followed. This may be because schools in south Wales were in the grip of an epidemic of Spanish Influenza at the time. However, many did record the celebrations that followed the end of the war.

“News of the great armistice with the belligerent nations in the Great War came this morning about 11 o clock. I immediately organised a procession of the boys thro’ the principal street of the town headed by their school banner, we cheered the King, Lloyd George, Foch, Haig and Beatty and sang Rule Britannia in front of the Town Hall and then returned to school. Half holiday this afternoon. Staff and children and most townspeople half delirious with joy.” EM10/11 Bridgend Penybont.

“On the occasion of the signing of the Armistice by Germany the boys were assembled in the playground to witness the hoisting of the Union Jack. After the salute had been taken the boys cheered vociferously and cheers were then given to those men who had done so much during the war and brought peace. In the afternoon they were assembled in the hall and the National Anthems together with other songs were sung.” EM6/2 Blaengarw Mixed.

“In view of the fact that no holiday was granted ... the head teachers of the boys and girls schools took upon themselves the responsibility of closing the schools to give teachers and children a chance to take part in the thanksgiving services and celebrations which were everywhere being held on the greatest day in history.” EM7/1 Blaenllynfi (Caerau) Girls.

“Peace celebration day – a general holiday proclaimed – but schools have to be kept open. Just 50% of children came.” EM1/2 Aber (Ogmore Vale) Infants.

“In view of the excellent news received from the War Office the Education Committee decided to close the primary schools from Nov 13th to 18th.” EM3/1 Aberkenfig Mixed and Infants.

However, a series of celebrations were held in 1919 and 1920 to commemorate the end of the war.

“A Children’s victory Party has been arranged in the town to commence at 3.30 this afternoon.” (Jan 1919) EM 44/5 Plasnewydd (Maesteg) Girls.

“First anniversary of the Armistice. At the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month for two minutes there was complete suspension of all activities in order that everyone could pay silent tribute to the glorious dead.”(Nov 1919) EM 42/5 Pencoed Council School Infants Dept.