

**Rhondda School Log Books**  
**World War 1**  
**Identified Themes**

**Supporting the Troops** From the autumn of 1914 schools took up the challenge of supporting the war effort with enthusiasm. At first their efforts were directed towards practical activities such as making “comforts” for soldiers and, in some cases, for teachers and former pupils (old boys) serving in the armed forces. Schools also raised money for local and national charities set up to help the war wounded and their families.

*“A collection was made today in school for the purpose of sending cigarettes and tobacco to our soldiers.” ER18/1 Graigddu Girls.*

*“This day was given by our teachers and some scholars to selling “Picture Post Cards” the proceeds to be devoted to purchasing “Comforts” for the Welsh soldiers.” ER36/2 Ton Boys*

*“The boxes of money collected during Saturday Feb 27<sup>th</sup> were opened and it was discovered that upwards of £12 had been collected towards Mrs Lloyd George’s Flag Day Scheme to provide the Welsh Regiments with comforts.” ER14/5 Dunraven Boys.*

*“A charity concert organised by the teachers was held on the 9<sup>th</sup> June at the Workmen’s Hall Ferndale, the proceeds being devoted to St Dunstan’s Hostel for Blinded Soldiers and Sailors. Mardy’s contribution towards this was £28 11s. Other recent “War Activities” in which the teachers were the principle workers were the YMCA Hut ... Campaign held in March and the Russian Flag day held in April.” ER23/5 Mardy Boys.*

*“The sum of £36 was collected by the school children on Xmas Day towards the Belgian Relief Fund.” ER15/1 Dyffryn Mixed.*

*“The staff organised a Flag Day for the Russian wounded soldiers. £15 10s has been handed to the Honorary Treasurer as a result of our efforts.” ER22/2 Llwynypia Colliery Infants.*

*“Received circular from EC inviting distribution of envelopes and leaflets before Xmas. The appeal is made on behalf of the children in Belgium among whom tuberculosis and other diseases, as a result of underfeeding, are now making alarming inroads.” ER41/3 Trealaw Girls.*

*“The children of this school collected £3 8s 6d towards the fund – St Dunstan’s School for the Children of Blinded Soldiers and Sailors.” ER28/2 Penygraig Infants*

*“Owing to the absences of teachers, the shortage of staff and the many calls upon Head Teachers time in organising street collections for Comforts for the Welsh Troops etc it has been found impossible to complete the terminal exams and issue the reports.” ER11/5 Cymer Boys*

**Helping Military Hospitals.** As the number of war wounded mounted many were brought to hospitals in south Wales. Schools often made links with local military hospitals and occasionally hospitals further afield e.g. Netley Hospital in Southampton – one of the largest hospitals in the country.

*“Sent two sacks of mixed vegetable – potatoes, carrots etc to Llwynypia Hospital the result of a collection amongst the school children. There are at present about 40 wounded soldiers at the Homes. The collection towards the YMCA Huts amounted to £20.” ER41/2 Trealaw Boys.*

*“The afternoon session begins at 1 o’clock. Each department leaving correspondingly early. This is done because of the sports to be held at Treherbert. The proceeds from the sale of tickets for the above goes to fund comforts for the wounded soldiers at the Red Cross Hospital at Ystrad.” ER6/1 Blaenycywm Infants.*

*“A collection of fruit and eggs was made by the scholars for the wounded at the local Red Cross Hospital. The collection consisted of 59 eggs, 143 oranges, 26 apples, 31 bananas, 1lb of rice, nuts, chocolate and 2s 7d in money.” ER3/2 Blaenclydach Boys School.*

*“Two days holidays granted by the Council on account of three concerts given by the scholars for the up keep of the Ynyswen bed at Netley Hospital ....” ER50/4 Ynyswen Girls.*

*“A potato collection was made in school this afternoon in aid of Llwynypia Wounded Soldiers Auxiliary Home Hospital and 1 ½ cwts were collected. ER10/3 Cwmclydach Boys.*

*“A letter was received from the Netley Hospital Authorities asking us to keep up the “Dunraven Bed” at Netley for another year.” ER14/5 Dunraven Boys.*

*“A potato collection for the wounded soldiers at the Llwynypia Auxiliary Home Hospital was made today among the scholars and 180 lbs were received and*

*sent to the hospital . The teachers also sent 30 packets of Woodbine cigarettes (their value £3 11s 2d). ER22/5 Llwynypia Mixed.*

*“This week proved very successful for the War Savings scheme, a sum of £120 having been received. A sack of 200lbs of potatoes were brought by scholars towards the wounded soldiers of Llwynypia Hospital. Ten pairs of socks are being knitted this week by the scholars for the Red Cross Society.” ER47/5 Tylorstown Girls Council School.*

**War Savings.** Rhondda did not follow the example of local authorities, such as Merthyr, that encouraged schools to raise funds for specific projects (e.g. the Mayor’s Appeal in Merthyr raised funds to provide an Ambulance Car for the Front). However, schools frequently banded together to support specific projects including the work of the YMCA in providing facilities for troops in Britain and France. In addition, the authority was an active supporter by 1917 of the national campaign to set up a War Savings Association in every school. Children were encouraged to make regular contributions and a number of national campaigns were used to encourage and promote the purchase of War Bonds. This included a visit by Tanks to towns in south Wales in 1918 and the display in some towns of captured German guns. Schools played an important role in raising money and promoting the savings campaigns. The authority awarded additional holidays to the most successful schools based on the amount raised per pupil. The National Savings campaign was continued after 1918 as the country attempted to address the costs of the war.

*“A cheque for £7 10s was sent to the Secretary of the YMCA in Cardiff this sum having been collected by the boys and girls of Ton Schools towards the erection of a “Rhondda Hut” for our soldiers at the Front.” ER36/2 Ton Boys.*

*“The leaflets re War Savings were distributed today. Every scholar in school received one. In each class the need for savings was explained.... All scholars were asked to take leaflets home and explain to their parents that they had been strongly advised to save in this way. It was found that some had already done so. Others promised to do so.” ER3/3 Blaenclydach Girls School.*

*“A holiday was granted for today to allow the children to visit the Tank that had been sent to Treherbert in connection with the National War Savings Association.” ER5/2 Blaenrhondda Infants.*

*“Tank Day. Procession of the scholars formed to march to Tonypany to see the tank. Before going a few words addressed to the scholars on the tank. 1. What is it? 2. What has it done? 3. Symbolic of crushing tyranny.4. Is it a safe or bank. 5. A word on thrift.” ER10/3 Cwmclydach Boys School.*

*“Today was Tank Day at Treherbert. The children were marched down in procession to see the tank. The children of the five schools were massed into one choir and sang the National Anthems under the conductorship of the Head Master of Dunraven School. £719 came through the Dunraven School War Savings Association.” ER14/5 Dunraven Boys.*

*“School dismissed for the day by order of the Director to enable the children to see the Tank at Tonypany. Three divisions of 1<sup>st</sup> Class were taken by Teachers but the children were disappointed as the Tank was not a real one.” ER48/2 Williamstown Infants.*

*“In order to give the scholars an idea of the vast amount subscribed to the War Loan -£700,000,000 – the time taken to count this money, £1 every second , was given as a problem to Stds 4 ,5 and 6.” ER3/2 Blaenclydach Boys School.*

**Life in school.** The war had an immediate impact on schools. Air attack and the movement of children around the country were primarily a feature of the Second World War. As recorded in Mardy School records many children had not seen an aeroplane before 1914. However, Rhondda schools did take in a number of refugee children from Belgium. In addition, while the large scale requisitioning of school premises for use as military hospitals was largely confined to the Cardiff area, by 1918 plans were being put in place for the conversion of a number of school in the Rhondda.

*“A teacher taking physical exercise in the yard sent word to announce an aeroplane flying across this place at about 4.15pm. Three of the classes were out taking drill so it could be easily arranged to muster the others. The children were naturally very excited and delighted for very few had seen one previously . There seemed no evidence of fear in any of them although some of the youngest seemed to think the visitor belonged to the Germans.” ER23/5 Mardy Boys.*

*“This afternoon I entered the name of one of the Belgian refugees on the books, Kornelius Sarents. Two big boys of over 15 year of age have been receiving instruction here for some weeks.” ER14/5 Dunraven Boys.*

*“Admitted four Belgian scholars this week.” ER44/3 Treorchy Girls.*

*“The staff were on duty preparing materials for removal to temporary premises at Llwyncelyn Welsh Congregational Hall and Bethany Vestry. The school premises is being converted into a Convalescent Hospital for Soldiers.” ER21/1 Llwyncelyn Infants.*

*“School visited by JE Hooson Esq. HMI re arrangement of premises for the accommodation of the scholars of the Infants Department. The Infants School has been taken over by the Red Cross Society for the use of wounded soldiers.” ER50/4 Ynyswen Girls.*

**Teachers and Military Service.** Boys were taught almost exclusively by male teachers and ,therefore, boys’ schools were particularly hard hit as staff volunteered or later in the war were called up for military service - often at very short notice.

*“Mr D K Richards left at 4.30 today having joined the University Corps for Military Service. He was presented with a small dressing case, a pound of tobacco and a pound sterling by the teachers.” ER22/4 Llwynypia Boys.*

*“Mr G A Lewis, CT, the senior assistant leaves for the Army this afternoon. He is the 8<sup>th</sup> of the staff to join the Colours.” ER29/1 Penyreglyn Boys.*

*“Mr Gruar, CT, the senior assistant of the school and the last of the school’s pre war staff has been called up for active service. The quality of the staff is very materially weakened by his departure.” ER29/2 Penyreglyn School.*

*“Mr W O Twiny was granted leave this afternoon to go to Hirwaun to speak to his Mother re “enlisting” and go afterwards, if agreed upon, to Aberdare to enlist.” ER22/5 Llwynypia Mixed.*

*“Mr Benjamin Williams has been accepted as a recruit in the Cycle Corps of the 7<sup>th</sup> Welsh and will not resume school duties until the end of the War.”*

*“Mr B Williams discharged from the Cycle Corps owing to defective eyesight – to resume his position as CT.” ER15/1 Dyffryn Mixed.*

*“Mr W R Morgan has been enrolled as a Private in the University Unit of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers. He expects to be called up to service on Oct 10<sup>th</sup>.” (Oct 6 1914) ER20/3 Hendrefadog Boys.*

The Derby Schemes for recruitment and formal conscription were introduced from 1916. There is no evidence in the log books that Rhondda followed the tough line taken in Cardiff with those identified as conscientious objectors. The schemes led to a further wave of teachers joining the armed forces. Those conscripted had the right of appeal and a number took this option.

*“Messrs T B Rees and Dr Thomas Morgan are leaving this afternoon. In accordance with Lord Derby’s Scheme they join the Colours tomorrow Feb 9<sup>th</sup>. This now leaves one class teacher and the Head Teacher out of the seven at the opening of the school three years ago. Five members of the staff will now be serving with the Colours.” (Feb 8<sup>th</sup> 1916) ER20/3 Hendrefadog Boys.*

*"Mr Emrys Hughes CT terminated duties here this afternoon having been called to the Colours under the Military Service Act." ER19/4 Hafod Boys.*

*"Mr H J Evans absent to appeal for exemption from military service." ER10/3 Cwmclydach Boys School.*

*"Mr L Hughes absent in the afternoon appearing before the Porth Tribunal on his appeal for exemption from Military Service. ER17/3 Gelli Mixed.*

*"Mr Penry Lewis, Certificated Assist Teacher, commenced duties here today after an absence of nearly four months. He left this school at the commencement of December 1915 and joined the Devon Regt having now been discharged on medical grounds." ER19/4 Hafod Boys.*

**Teachers supporting the war effort.** Schools and teachers were also expected to "do their bit" on the Home front. This included military training for men, helping with the registration of volunteers and, in the later years of the war, the establishment of a rationing scheme. As confirmed in the school log books the local authority frequently closed schools or extended holiday periods so that teachers could undertake work to support recruitment and rationing.

*"Instructions received from Director to cancel attendance of scholars this afternoon so that teachers may be free to assist in clerical work connected with the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee." ER27/4 Pentre Girls.*

*"Mr Salway and myself have been selected amongst others to act as canvassers during this week in Lord Derby's scheme for recruiting for the Army." ER32/4 Porth Boys*

*"This afternoon immediately after assembly the children were dismissed as the services of the staff were required for the clerical work in connection with the Derby Scheme of recruiting." Dec 13 1916. ER21/1 Llwynceilyn Infants.*

*"School closed for a week by order of the Council – teachers to undertake registration work. Tea, meat, cheese, jam, butter and margarine cards to be distributed and collected." ER50/4 Ynyswen Girls.*

*"The school was closed this afternoon for a week to reopen on Monday Feb 11<sup>th</sup> in order that all staff should be released to distribute and collect the Food rationing Form and Cards." ER19/4 Hafod Boys.*

*"Rationing Form and Cards were distributed this week by the teachers hence closure of the school." ER30/4 PontRhondda Boys.*

*“School closed to enable staff to undergo a course of 48hrs Military Training.”  
ER3/2 Blaenclydach Boys School.*

**Women and the war.** Although seen as a temporary measure, women were increasingly employed in boys’ schools to fill the gaps left by recruitment to the armed forces . In addition, given the shortage of teachers across all sectors, dispensation was given for married women to continue to teach for the duration of the war. Many combined teaching with work in local hospitals.

*“Miss Tabatha Jones, UA, has been transferred to the Boys Department for the duration of the War.” ER44/1 Treorchy Infants.*

*“Mrs Neish, Mrs Blackwell and Mrs Fraser terminate their engagements today. All these ladies left school many years ago and a great credit is due to them for the manner in which they have helped to “carry on” during the absence of the men with the Colours. They have been industrious and conscientious in the preparation and performance of their duties and they have exercised a good influence over the boys.” ER20/3 Hendrefadog Boys.*

*“Miss James absent from school from today until next Wednesday – nursing the wounded soldiers at the Red Cross Hospital, Llwynypia.” ER48/4 Williamstown Girls.*

**Schools and coping with shortages.** Although rationing was not introduced until 1918, schools along with the general population experienced shortages of fuel and food. Applications to the local authority for children to be released from school before the age of 14 were commonplace. They were driven by the need not only to provide extra hands but also to release others to take up employment in industry and agriculture.

*“Received a letter from the Director of Education intimating that Clause 8 of the Education Act was not to be enforced until after the War. Boys who are thirteen years old and who have made 350 attendances each year for five years are therefore allowed to leave school if they have obtained permanent employment.” ER14/5 Dunraven Boys.*

Shortages, particularly following the introduction of rationing, impacted directly on attendance with children kept at home to queue for food. Head Teachers did what they could to provide direct help to those in need and to provide advice to families in finding ways and means of coping with the shortages.

*“During needlework lessons we hope to make some garments suitable for distribution during the coming winter among the poorer class whose fathers*

*are now serving with the Colours. At a Committee meeting held at Porth, the Director said that a quantity of material would be supplied for the purpose and all head teachers willingly consented to give their services to assist in making.” ER3/3 Blaenclydach Girls School.*

*“List of the most urgent cases of soldiers’ children requiring boots forwarded to Director.” ER17/3 Gelli Mixed.*

*“Garments finished and distributed to all necessitous children whose fathers are soldiers. (Material provided by the Council). ER47/5 Tylorstown Girls Council School.*

*“Potatoes brought by each child in 3 Departments to assist the Belgian refugees in Trealaw.” ER41/2 Trealaw Boys.*

*“The HT was away from the school from 10.10 to 11.30 making provision for the Belgians who had been rendered homeless by the fire at the New Inn Hotel, Clydach Vale.” ER3/2 Blaenclydach Boys School.*

*“The attendance is suffering on account of the children being compelled to attend shops to obtain weekly rations.” ER47/5 Tylorstown Girls Council School.*

*““The attendance is unsatisfactory owing to children being away shopping and going for rations and lack of shoes.” ER49/4 Ynyshir Boys.*

*“Attendance seriously affected by the scholars searching for butter at the various shops.” ER50/4 Ynyswen Girls.*

*“During the week ending on this date lessons were given on potato growing. Pamphlets bearing on the subject were obtained from the Board of Agriculture and given to the children.” ER3/2 Blaenclydach Boys School.*

*“Leaflets from the Food Economy Department distributed for school children throughout the school area. These leaflets were 1. Thirty ways of cooking potatoes. 2. Delicious soups. 3. All about stews.” ER3/2 Blaenclydach Boys School.*

**Keeping up morale.** The War led to the production of the first Government sponsored propaganda films. Schools in many local authority areas were encouraged to attend the films made in the early years of the war including “Britain Prepared”. The local authority also expected schools to use the opportunities offered by Empire Day and St David’s Day to provide lessons on “patriotism”. Throughout the war a number of national campaigns were used to promote the Allied cause.



Schools often 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.

*“The following was substituted for ordinary lessons.... (1) Patriotism (especially emphasising the duty of national service) in order to stimulate the children to greater effort, preparing them for sacrifices and emphasising the supremacy of deeds over words, the duties of the present over the glories of the faded past.” ER19/4 Hafod Boys.*

*“During the week special attention has been given to the heroism of Jack Cornwell and a collection has been made towards the endowment of the memorial ward.” (Sept 22 1916) ER20/3 Hendrefadog Boys.*

*“Nelson Day. By instruction of the LEA addresses were given on the work of the Navy.” ER29/1 Penyrenghlyn Boys.*

*“Empire Day. The boys assembled in the play ground and sang several National Anthems – Russian, French, English, Welsh and Belgian then we had a march past and saluting the flag.” ER36/2 Ton Boys.*

*“The sale of stamps towards the “Jack Cornwell” wing of the Star and Garter Home resulted in securing £1 6s 3d.” ER23/5 Mardy Boys*

*“At 5.50 Mr Pryke (the South Wales Representative of the Army and Navy League) delivered a lecture on “Our Navy - Men, Ships and Guns” to Standards 4-7.” ER22/5 Llwynypia Mixed.*

**News from the Front.** News from the front was provided primarily by national and local newspapers. The newspapers provided extensive coverage of the military campaigns . This information was supplemented by the frequent visits of former teachers and pupils to their schools when home wounded or on leave.

*“Cpl WR Morgan, who is in the Chemical section of the Royal Engineers and who has been in France for about eight months, is visiting the school this afternoon. He has been injured while preparing a gas attack and has been in hospital for some weeks. He has given an address to the pupils of Std 5. They have been very interested in the series of letters they have received from him describing his life since he left England and they were very pleased with his address.” ER20/3 Hendrefadog Boys.*

*“Mr D Isaac of HMS Eclipse visited the school and gave the assembled school a short address on “The War” from a naval man’s point of view. He exhibited a*

*Ghurkha knife and the new life saving India rubber collar.” ESEC71/1  
Llwynceilyn County Secondary School.*

*“We had a visit from an Old Scholar ... – Pte DT Evans, No 15340 2<sup>nd</sup>  
Grenadier Guards. He was present at the battle of Mons and the Aisne in the  
Great Franco- Belgian- British- German War in Oct of this year. The boys and  
girls were delighted to see an old scholar back safe and sound. His is a fine  
fellow, 6’ 2” high and passed through all the standards in school. He said that  
he was an abstainer from alcohol and drink. He went to recover and bandage  
a German who in return for his kindness dastardly shot him in the shoulder.”  
ER36/2 Ton Boys.*

The rapid increase in the size of the armed forces and level of casualties at the Front had an ongoing and significant impact on the lives of many pupils and staff in schools.

*“Mrs Bamford ... is not at school today having received news of the death in  
action in Egypt of a brother who served in the RAMC.” ER47/2 Tylorstown  
Boys.*

*“Mrs Daniel is absent this afternoon with Head Teacher’s permission, visiting  
her husband who is lying ill at Howard Gardens Military Hospital.” ER27/4  
Pentre Girls.*

*“Head Teacher absent in the afternoon. His son is employed at the Kentish  
Powder Works (Faversham) where a serious explosion took place last  
weekend involving 200 casualties. No means of communicating by wire from  
Porth owing to the lines being down , so had to go to Cardiff for the purpose.”  
ER11/5 Cymer Boys.*

*“This afternoon three members of the staff with myself will be absent to attend  
the funeral of Thos Algar Jones who left us only on 19<sup>th</sup> October.”(6 Nov  
1917). ER47/2 Tylorstown Boys.*

*“Miss Royall is absent today news having been received this morning that her  
brother has been killed in action.” ER30/2 PontRhondda Girls.*

*“Miss H J Griffiths absent this afternoon. Received bad news during the  
morning concerning her brother at Salonika.” ER20/3 Hendrefadog Boys.*

*“All staff present with the exception of Mrs R A Davies who has been granted  
permission to be absent. Her husband is leaving for Egypt.” ER20/3  
Hendrefadog Boys.*

*"It was with great regret that we learn of the death in action of Lieut Gwilym Jones in France on the 11<sup>th</sup> inst – late teacher of this school." ER32/4 Porth Boys*

**War Heroes.** The extent to which the names of servicemen awarded medals and/or died in the war were recorded in log books was variable. Nevertheless, the log books contain a considerable list of local soldiers and sailors and many schools maintained a Roll of Honour listing former pupils and teachers killed in the war.

*"Mr Gordon Thomas, MM, old pupil of this school was present today. For conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty he has been awarded the Military Medal and to show our appreciation of his gallant work under shell fire the pupils and staff presented him with a fountain pen, a razor and strop. Advantage was taken of this opportunity of pointing out to the pupils that we, although far removed from the Front, can do our little bit for our Country. Three rousing cheers were given to him. In response he made a very happy little speech. He is returning tonight with our best wishes." ER36/2 Ton Boys.*

*"During this morning also a simple ceremony in honour of "Old Boys" who have fallen in the War took place. To date the following are known to have been killed or to have died of wounds or fever – Thomas Martin, Ernest Hughes, David Lloyd Williams, Henry Arthur Morgan, Lewis Richards and Henry Marsh." ER11/5 Cymer Boys*

*"News has been received that a former member of staff, Captain Idwal Evans has been killed in action while leading his company in Bournon Wood. His loss is sincerely mourned by his colleagues here for he was a young man of excellent qualities. His work was always thoroughly done in a quiet spirit and he was much admired by the boys for his skills as a footballer. His death occurred on Nov 24 1917." ER23/5 Mardy Boys*

**Celebrating the End of the War.** Confirmation of the signing of the Armistice was received in most schools on Nov 11<sup>th</sup> 1918. It resulted in spontaneous celebrations and schools were closed for the rest of the week to mark the occasion. By the early months of 1919 many teachers were being discharged from the armed forces and returning to school life. In addition, in 1919 there were national celebrations to mark the signing of the Treaty of Versailles and to commemorate the signing of the Armistice.

*"There was tremendous excitement in the in school this morning when the colliery horns were heard signalling the signing of the Armistice Terms by Germany. Without any hint the classes spontaneously cheered and showed their extreme joy at the probable termination of the Great War. The whole*

*school was assembled in the yard in the afternoon and a few patriotic songs were sung.” ER23/5 Mardy Boys.*

*“On the 11<sup>th</sup> of the present month the glorious news was received that the Great War had come to an end. Great rejoicings took place in the locality and a general holiday was observed.” ER14/5 Dunraven Boys.*

*“News of the signing of the Armistice came about 11.15am. The timetable was deviated from for the rest of the morning and the children marched around the Hall singing patriotic songs. We closed for the afternoon and Tuesday.” ER20/1 Hendrefadog Infants.*

*“About 10.30am received news of signing of the Armistice. Time table suspended for remainder of the morning and time devoted to singing of patriotic songs by the pupils and address by the teachers. Every endeavour was made to ensure the spirit of rejoicing and thankfulness in the pupils. School closed at noon for the remainder of the week.” ER20/3 Hendrefadog Boys.*