

Llanwrtyd Wells Community Transport

Heart of Wales Coffee Club



**Souvenir of the
75th Anniversary of
Victory in Europe Day
May 8th 2020**

World War Two or the Second World War began on September 1st 1939 and ended on September 2nd 1945, however it is May 8th 1945 that we are currently celebrating, the 75th anniversary of VE (Victory in Europe) Day. This was the day that there was a formal agreement signed by Field Marshall Wilhelm Bodewin Johann Gustav Keitel in Berlin to confirm the surrender of Nazi Germany's armed forces.

Keitel, (22 September 1882 – 16 October 1946) was himself not only a German Field Marshal but a war criminal during the Nazi era who served as Chief of the Armed Forces High Command and was very much a 'yes' man to Hitler himself. In this capacity he signed a number of criminal orders and directives that led to a war of unprecedented brutality and criminality. He was executed by hanging after the Nuremberg Trials.



Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel
signing Germany's surrender in
Berlin on 08/05/1945

The war was a bitter war, following only 20 years after WW1, the Great War, or War to end all Wars as it was at that time considered, yet, how little the world had learned. According to the National Archives *'More than one million British military personnel died during the First and Second World Wars, with the First World War alone accounting for 886,000 fatalities. Nearly 70,000 British civilians also lost their lives, the great majority during the Second World War'*.

Most likely the reason for the Nazi German forces surrendering was the death of their leader, Adolf Hitler who had committed suicide on April 30th during the Battle of Berlin and Germany's surrender was authorised by his successor, Reichspräsident Karl Dönitz. The act of military surrender was first signed on May 7th in SHAEF HQ at Reims, and a slightly modified document was signed on May 8th in Berlin.

Women during WW2

Women played a big part in WW2, having previously been housewives or doing 'women' type work such as shop assistants, domestics, or nurses, they took up much more exacting work.

Women were called up for war work in March 1941 and filled many of the jobs previously done by men who were then away fighting. These jobs included

mechanics and engineering, driving tanks, ship building, working in munitions factories, train and tram driving and conducting, driving fire engines and ambulances as well as the more traditional roles of nurses.

Initially only single women were called up but by mid-1943 almost 90% of single women and 80% of married women were working for the war effort. Many of them, around 640,000, signed up and joined the armed forces, with 55,000 serving with guns and providing essential air defence, 80,000 in the Land Army plus many who flew unarmed aircraft, drove ambulances and worked as nurses behind enemy lines in the European resistance.

Rationing

For the women left at home not only was there all this to contend with without the support of their menfolk, but rationing which alone made everything difficult trying to feed and clothe a family on small amounts.

Although there is much talk today about how much food we import and carbon footprints etc., apparently this was happening before WW2 began with us being heavily dependent on foreign imports. In 1939 only around 30% of everything Britain's ate was produced domestically - the rest was shipped in from producers and suppliers around the world.

The government announced that rationing would be imposed and this began with petrol in 1939, and was extended to foodstuffs in January 1940. This was extended to meat in March 1940, and the public were reminded to bear in mind that our fighting forces consumed a large proportion of our supplies.

In January 1940, every individual was issued with a ration book and registered at their local shops. Shopkeepers were then supplied with sufficient food for everyone



Monument to the Women of WW2
situated on Whitehall in London

registered. Ration books worked on a coupon system, so people could only purchase their entitlement and no more.

A typical person's weekly ration allowed them 1 egg, 2 ounces each of tea and butter, an ounce of cheese, eight ounces of sugar, four ounces of bacon and four ounces of margarine. Meat wasn't rationed immediately, but when it was, its availability was decided by price rather than points, meaning cheaper cuts quickly became the most popular for many housewives. Catchy phrases like 'go easy with bread, try potatoes instead' were devised and circulated by the Ministry of Food to urge housewives to be frugal.

The contrast between cities and the countryside rankled some because while those in the city had one egg per week, and meagre milk and margarine rations, those in more rural areas had far more access to eggs, milk, butter, cheese and anything that could be hunted, trapped or poached from the local area.

Clothes rationing came in June 1941 along with the catchphrase 'Make do and Mend'. This encouraged people to repair rather than replace their clothing and other goods, creating a generation of domestic innovators, excellent at repairing even the most damaged garment.

Minister for Food Lord Woolton's 'Dig for Victory' initiative encouraged every Briton to turn all of the green space they could into allotments so that they could grow enough to feed their own family, as well as raise their own pigs and chickens to provide meat and eggs. Rationing continued until July 4th 1954.

Celebrations for VE Day

Upon the defeat of Germany, celebrations erupted throughout the western world, especially in Great Britain and North America. More than one million people celebrated in the streets throughout Great Britain to mark the end of the European part of the war. In London, crowds massed in Trafalgar Square and up the Mall to



Buckingham Palace, where King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, accompanied by Prime Minister Winston Churchill, appeared on the balcony of the palace before



the cheering crowds. Can you believe that Princess Elizabeth and her sister Princess Margaret were allowed to wander incognito among the crowds and take part in the celebrations? That would never be possible in this world today unfortunately.

In the United States, the event coincided with President Harry Truman's 61st birthday. He dedicated the victory to the memory of his predecessor, Franklin D. Roosevelt, who had died of a cerebral haemorrhage less than a month earlier, on April 12th. Flags remained at half-mast for the remainder of the traditional 30-day mourning period. Truman said of dedicating the victory to Roosevelt's memory and keeping the flags at half-mast was that his only wish was "that Franklin D. Roosevelt had lived to witness this day". Later that day, Truman said that the victory made it his most enjoyable birthday.

Tempering the jubilation somewhat, both Churchill and Truman pointed out that the war against Japan had not yet been won. In his radio broadcast at 3pm on May 8th, Churchill told the British people that: "We may allow ourselves a brief period of rejoicing (as Japan) remains unsubdued" In America, Truman broadcast at 9am and said it was "a victory only half won".

(Information mostly from Wikipedia).

Raiders Dawn

Softly the civilized centuries fall,
Paper on paper, Peter on Paul.

And lovers walking from the night --
Eternity's masters, Slaves of Time --

Recognize only the drifting white
Fall of small faces in pits of lime.

Blue necklace left on a charred chair
Tells that Beauty was startled there.

Poem by **Alun Lewis**, born in 1915 near Aberdare, South Wales. He fought in WW2 initially with the Royal Engineers, then in 1942 he joined the South Wales Borderers and was sent to India. He died in March 1944 in Burma aged 28 years old. He was a teacher, writer and soldier and wrote many poems and short stories.

VE Day Service of Thanksgiving, Cathays Park May 1945.



To My Wife

Charm and wit, and beauty fair, figure trim and lovely hair,
All of these are yours My Dear but let me whisper in your ear.
Tis not these youthful charms alone that make me love you so, My
Own;
In years to come these charms must fade as beauty's toll to age is
paid.

And something deeper must be there. An understanding, loving care,
A unity of hearts and minds that man and wife forever bind.
And this deep love I now enjoy that ageing time can ne'er destroy.

And though your beauty charms me yet, in fact, I never shall forget,
And to mine eyes you'll always be the same as when you promised
me
That you'd be mine my Love.

I know deep down within that I shall love you, Darling, till I die.

This beautiful poem, dedicated by **Jim Harrison**, a British soldier to his young wife while fighting in World War II has been discovered in the back of a book given to a charity shop. When sorting through the black hardback prayer and hymn book, titled The Book of Common Prayer, the shop assistant noticed a personalised wartime poem and a handwritten note saying: 'With love. To Nancy, in remembrance of our wedding day 14th Sept 1938'.

The couple lived in Ryedale, North Yorkshire, however the book turned up in West Sussex. The shop assistant and her husband are hoping to reunite the book with its owner's family.

The soldier was fighting in the North African Campaign of the Second World War, which took place between June 10th 1940 to May 13th 1943.

Local things you might find interesting:

Air Crashes

Four British aeroplanes came down locally during WW2, a Taylorcraft Auster on 14/03/1942 in Garth, a Vickers Wellington on 08/04/1942 in Llangammarch Wells after being struck by lightning, a Miles Master on 04/10/1942 in Abergwesyn, and an Avro Lancaster on 10/04/1944 in Llanwrtyd Wells.

Seventeen year old Alan Davies was on duty with the Observer Corps when he saw the Lancaster in trouble and heading for a crash. He jumped on his bicycle and rode as quickly as he could to the site of the crash, but could do nothing to help as the crew were all dead. The bodies were initially transported by David Davies, grandfather of Jim Davies, on his motorised lorry to what is now New Hall on Victoria Road, where temporary coffins were made by Mr Evans, the local Undertaker who lived further up Victoria Road. The bodies were later collected by the RAF and returned to their families for burial. Alan Davies now lives in Llangammarch Wells and clearly remembers the tragedy of 76 years ago.

There is a plaque in St Cadmarch's Church in Llangammarch Wells in memorial of the crews who died so tragically. They were Captain Francis L Rogers, Sgt Desmond Walter Dowling, Sgt Frederick Thomas Ellington, Sgt Jack Matthew Kennedy, Sgt William Haylett Lacey, Sgt William McLafter Lomax, Sgt Neville Griffin, Sgt William Smith. Pilot Officer J Chinery, Sgt T F Hyndman, F/Lt John L Sloper DFC, Wing Commander John Dale Green, Sgt Stanley J Warrener, W/O2 Albert P Malzan, Sgt Gordon J B Shields, Sgt Harry Johnstone, Sgt John H Cleminson-Passey and Sgt William Walter Farmer.

The Taylorcraft Auster had been taking part in an exercise with 76 Medium Regiment at Charlborough. Upon examination of the crashed plane, it has been suggested that the plane broke up in the air before crashing in Garth.

(With sincere thanks to Chris Prichard and Tony Egan for much of the information on the above plane crashes.)

Ten American airmen were killed when their aeroplane crashed in thick fog on Upper Cilgee Farm at Llanyre. The Sonda Kay, a B17 Flying Fortress brought down 15 trees and crashed to the ground on 16/09/1943. In 2003 memorial plaques were erected on the Llandrindod Wells War Memorial and at the farm where the tragedy unfolded.

On 25/04/1942 a German plane, a Junkers Ju 88A-6 crashed in Builth Wells at Llan-haylo Farm. The Pilot and the Gunner were both killed, but the Navigator and Radio Operator were both taken prisoners of war.

The Pilot and Gunner were buried in the Church Yard in Glascwm initially, then moved with other German war dead to Deutsche Soldatenfriedhof at Cannock Chase, here is the headstone to them both.



Epynt Clearances

It is 80 years since 219 people had to leave their homes and farms on the beautiful Mynydd Epynt. In March 1940 the War Office decided that the area was needed for training military personal, and that all the civilians living there would have to move out. Fifty four homes, Cilieni Primary School, Babell Chapel and The Drovers Arms Inn were all left to become derelict.

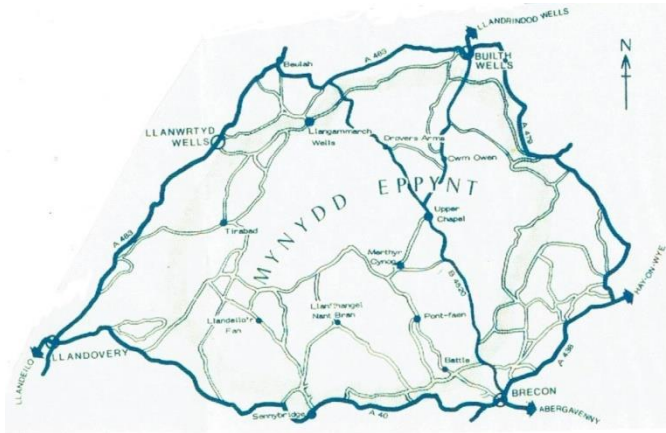
Graveyard at Babell Chapel



There was much opposition from the Welsh speaking community and from Welsh MPs and other national bodies, but all to no avail. By June all the farms were empty and the residents and animals gone. The military took over the 12,000 hectares of land, paying very

little in compensation to the residents, and formulated the Sennybridge Training Area (SENTA).

People were devastated, they had been a close community who had all gathered at one chapel, and who helped each other out in times of trouble. If a farmer was having trouble, he would lay out a white sheet on the hillside and his neighbours would ride over to assist him.



Many of the farmers who left would have been middle aged and died at a relatively young age, indeed one farmer was said to have cried himself to death after being forced to leave the farm which had been in his family for generations.

The farmers and their families received no practical assistance from the War Office to move, find accommodation and work or to relocate their children to other schools. Some were fortunate and found accommodation nearby others had to move away. The teacher at Cilieni School went to work at Llanddulas, now known as Tirabad. Rev. William Jones, who had been the Pregethwr (Minister) at Babell chapel since 1909, took retirement.

Babell Chapel has fallen into ruin and only the foundations and graveyard remain. On the site of the chapel is a plaque bearing a quotation from the Bible, Isaiah chapter 2 verse 4. 'And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more'.

An excellent book to read is Mae'n Ddiwedd Byd Yma, Mynydd Epynt a'r Troad Allan yn 1940 by Herbert Hughes, this translates as 'It's the end of the world here, Epynt Mountain clearances in 1940'.



The ruin of the Drovers Arms Inn, once an important stopping place for drovers on their way to London.

Evacuees

Bromsgrove School - From September 1939, until Sept 1944, the people of Llanwrtyd Wells welcomed the pupils of Bromsgrove School into their community and into their hearts. The school's buildings had been requisitioned by the War Office, and with the bombing of major towns and cities throughout Great Britain, it was thought the children would be safer in a more rural area.

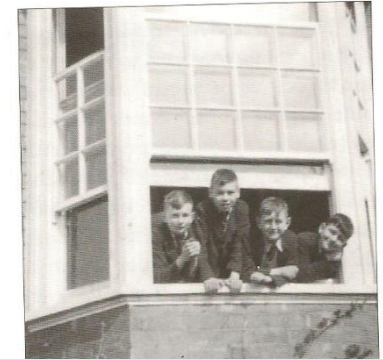
The boys attending this 400-year-old senior school were housed and taught in the Abernant Lake Hotel (now owned by Manor Adventures), and other buildings around town including Ardwyn House, Lasswade Country House Hotel, the Granary Warehouse behind the Bakery and the Sulphur Water Spring House at Dol y Coed to name but a few.

The parents of some of these pupils were also gravely concerned for the safety of their younger sons, and at their request, Bromsgrove Junior School was founded in Llanwrtyd Wells in 1940 and has grown into the thriving prep school of today.

In 1990 - as a gesture of thanks - the Old Bromsgrovian Club donated a sum of money towards the building of the Bromsgrove Community Hall in Llanwrtyd Wells, and in 2007 Bromsgrove School's staff and pupils past, present and future were given the Freedom of Llanwrtyd Wells to mark the close association between the school and the people of the town.

Czech Free State School - Kindertransport (German for "children's transport") was an organised rescue effort that took place during the nine months prior to the outbreak of the Second World War. The first left Berlin in December 1938, and the last one to leave Prague on September 3rd 1939 was turned back because the Nazis had invaded Poland.

In November 1938, the British Government agreed to waive certain immigration requirements to allow unaccompanied children, from infants to 17 year of age, to



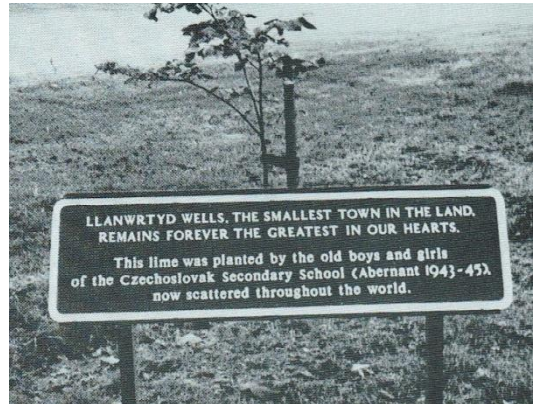
Adrian Vale (2nd Head Boy) looking out of Lasswade with his pals. Left to right; A W B Walters, A M Vale, P W Arthur and Alan Freeman.

enter Britain. Almost 10,000, predominantly Jewish children, were evacuated to Britain from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland and the Free City of Danzig. Many of these children returned home after the war to find their family and friends had perished in the holocaust.

Many brave people risked their own lives to help rescue these children, perhaps the most well-known over recent years is the late Sir Nicholas Winton who found homes for 669 children. Sir Nicholas acknowledged all others who helped to make this possible, people in Prague who had worked to evacuate the children, and people in the UK who had helped to set up hostels and other accommodation.

In 1940 the Free Czech School was set up so the children could be taught in their native tongue. The first school was in Camberley, then moved to Whitchurch and finally to Llanwrtyd Wells. The boys from Bromsgrove School had left, so all was still in place for the Abernant Lake Hotel and other buildings in town, to continue to be used as a school and accommodation for the children.

Český Krumlov is one of the twin towns of Llanwrtyd Wells, so associations between the two towns are still strong. Several reunions have taken place; both in town and elsewhere over the years, and as a thank you, Llanwrtyd Town Council was presented with a Town Mayor's pendant, and the people of Český Krumlov were given the Freedom of the Town.



The Abernant Lake Hotel is now owned by Manor Adventures; however there is a lime tree, which is the Czech National Tree, planted outside the hotel with a plaque inscribed with 'The smallest town in the land but forever the greatest in our hearts'. This was planted during the first very well attended reunion in 1985 (40 years after the end of the war), and all former pupils agreed and were moved by the inscription.

The Train

The platform was crowded with people,
Their faces were etched deep with strain
The doors of the wagon slammed open,
They pushed forward to climb on the train.

The young boy had boarded quite early,
He carried his small battered case.
He looked down from the wagon's doorway,
And searched for his mother's loved face.

The boy helped her into the wagon,
Then looked in the crowd once again,
He smiled as he helped his old father up,
Who was clearly in considerable pain.

The wagon was now overcrowded,
The boy struggled to find them some space,
But eventually he stood with his parents,
In at least, the most comfortable place.

The guard locked the door shut behind them,
Humming an old Schubert refrain.
He signaled all done, then walked away,
From the Poland bound 'Resettlement Train'.

Written by Clive Sanders, Somerset Landscape Artist and Poet

Tom Edwards	Bill Price	Hugh Jones	Sid Price	Tudor Thomas	Tom Davies	Gwyn Edwards	Rhys Parry	Dan Parry
Albert Evans	Lesley Jones	Prosser Bowen	Dennis Jones	Charlie Smith	Ellis Mathias	Avan Price	Ken Jones	Alex Pearce
	Idwal Jones	Gerard Jones	Jim Evans	Mr Swan	Cyril Price	Tom Thomas	David Price	

Beulah Home Guard 1943 taken outside The Reading Room, Beulah.



Assembling for morning prayers outside Victoria Hall at Llanwrtyd 1939. Bromsgrove Boys.



Bryn Jones, the mayor, being presented with the chain of office

This booklet has been researched and printed by Pat Dryden on behalf of Llanwrtyd Wells Community Transport to commemorate the 75th anniversary of VE Day, May 1945 to May 2020.

Sincere thanks to the following people who proffered information, loaned documents and photographs for use in this project and to display on the walls of Llanwrtyd Community Centre over the celebrations:

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Wynne Price

Llanwrtyd & District Heritage & Arts Centre

For more information on the children that were evacuated to Llanwrtyd Wells during WW2, there are two books for sale at the Heritage Centre, one on the Bromsgrove children, the other on the Czech children.

Other good books are;

Bromsgrove in Exile by D J Walters

Pearls of Childhood by Vera Gissing