

BRYNMAWR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWS UPDATE

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www.brynmawrhistoricalsociety.org.uk

e-mail brynmawrhistsoc@gmail.com

Already April and we have not been able to meet as we all hoped before the summer recess. This means it's been 13 months since we last managed to get together to listen to a talk, the last one was by Brian Davies (past curator of Pontypridd Museum), his topic was The Welsh Paintings of "Julius Caesar Ibbotson" and I thoroughly enjoyed it. Looking through the programme for 2020 and there were so many good talks planned. In the meantime 19 issues of the News Update have been sent out to try and keep you all up to date. I hope you've enjoyed them. On a brighter note, we have received a donation of £100 from Blaenau Gwent BC for which we are extremely grateful.

I received a very interesting email about a Captain Blondel Rhys Bevan Jones who lived his later life at Crawshay House in Brynmawr and it appears that the Captain is a lost hero in many ways. He was born in Myddfai but the family moved to Blaenavon during the 1890s when R.P. Jones (his father) was appointed headmaster of the Garn yr Erw Board School. He was later transferred to Hillside Primary School following its opening in 1906.

By 1911, the family were living at 5. Middle Coed Cae before later moving to Oak House, Cwmavon Road. Rees and Elizabeth had ten children by 1911, one of whom had died. By this point, Blondel was employed as a colliery pay clerk for the Blaenavon Company. A number of the sons signed up to serve in the First World War. Two did not come home. Thomas H Jones drowned at sea in June 1917, whereas Claudius Wynford Jones died of illness whilst on active service shortly after the armistice in early 1919. Captain Blondel though was commissioned into the 11th (2nd Gwent) Battalion South Wales Borderers in 1915. He went with the battalion to France in November 1915 and later transferred into the Machine Gun Corps. He joined the 31st battalion Machine Gun Corps in May 1918 and won a Military Cross:

Gazette Issue 31158. M.C. His Majesty the King has been graciously pleased to approve of the following awards to the mentioned Officers and Warrant Officers in recognition of their gallantry and devotion to duty in the Field. Awarded the Military Cross.

On the 28th/29th September, 1918, during the attack on Ploegstreet Wood, this officer was in charge of four machine guns, and when the officers of

two companies of infantry, whom he was covering, became casualties, he at once assumed command of the remainder of the infantry, and throughout the action, though subjected to heavy artillery and machine gun fire, he organised the defence, and eventually led them forward in the attack with the greatest courage and fine leadership.

He retired from the army in 1922 and went as a merchant to China.

He died at Crawshay House in 1966. (Information supplied by Mark Collins and Nathan Matthews)

A much fuller report on the life of Captain Blondel Jones can be found on the B.G. Heritage Forum website; visit www.blaenau-gwent-heritage-forum.co.uk

Another email received that is very interesting is about Pte William John Morgan 2813, 2nd King's Shropshire Light Infantry. He was a Lance Corporal and was serving in South Africa 1899-1902 Boer War and at some time in early 1900 contracted Enteric fever (typhoid fever) and was sent home to England. He was looked after at Netley Victoria Hospital where he died in early June 1900 and his body was conveyed to Brynmawr for burial. (*Netley Hospital was a military hospital near the town of Netley in Hampshire. Queen Victoria laid the foundation stone on 19 May 1856. Building was not completed until April 1863. A large military cemetery was established too. The hospital remained in use until World War II after which there was no demand for such a large establishment. Demolition began in 1966 and the grounds are now the Queen Victoria Country Park*).. Prior to serving in the army he had played rugby for Brynmawr and he was married to Emily

Morgan. I wonder if there any family still around in the Brynmawr area. Thanks to some detective work and the help of Mr Brown the sexton, we were able to pinpoint where the grave is but as you can see from the photo it's in a thicket and since it was raining heavily we decided to leave it for a better day. You can just see the top of the gravestone but we will clear a way to it on a dry day.



The monumental inscription reads:
WILLIAM JOHN MORGAN WHO BEING
INVALIDED HOME FROM THE SOUTH
AFRICAN WAR DIED IN NETLEY
HOSPITAL JUNE 11th 1900 AGED 22
YEARS ----- IN THE MIDST OF LIFE WE
ARE IN DEATH ----- "THY WILL BE
DONE" ERECTED BY THE FRIENDS OF
BRYNMAWR AND DISTRICT DEEPLY
REGRETTED BY HIS DEAR WIFE EMILY
MORGAN.

Would "The friends of Brynmawr and District" be the Quakers from Worthing (or is that too early)? Not sure when the monument was put up.

Many thanks to Phillip Morris from Shrewsbury who provided the information.

Keep Safe. (Secretary)