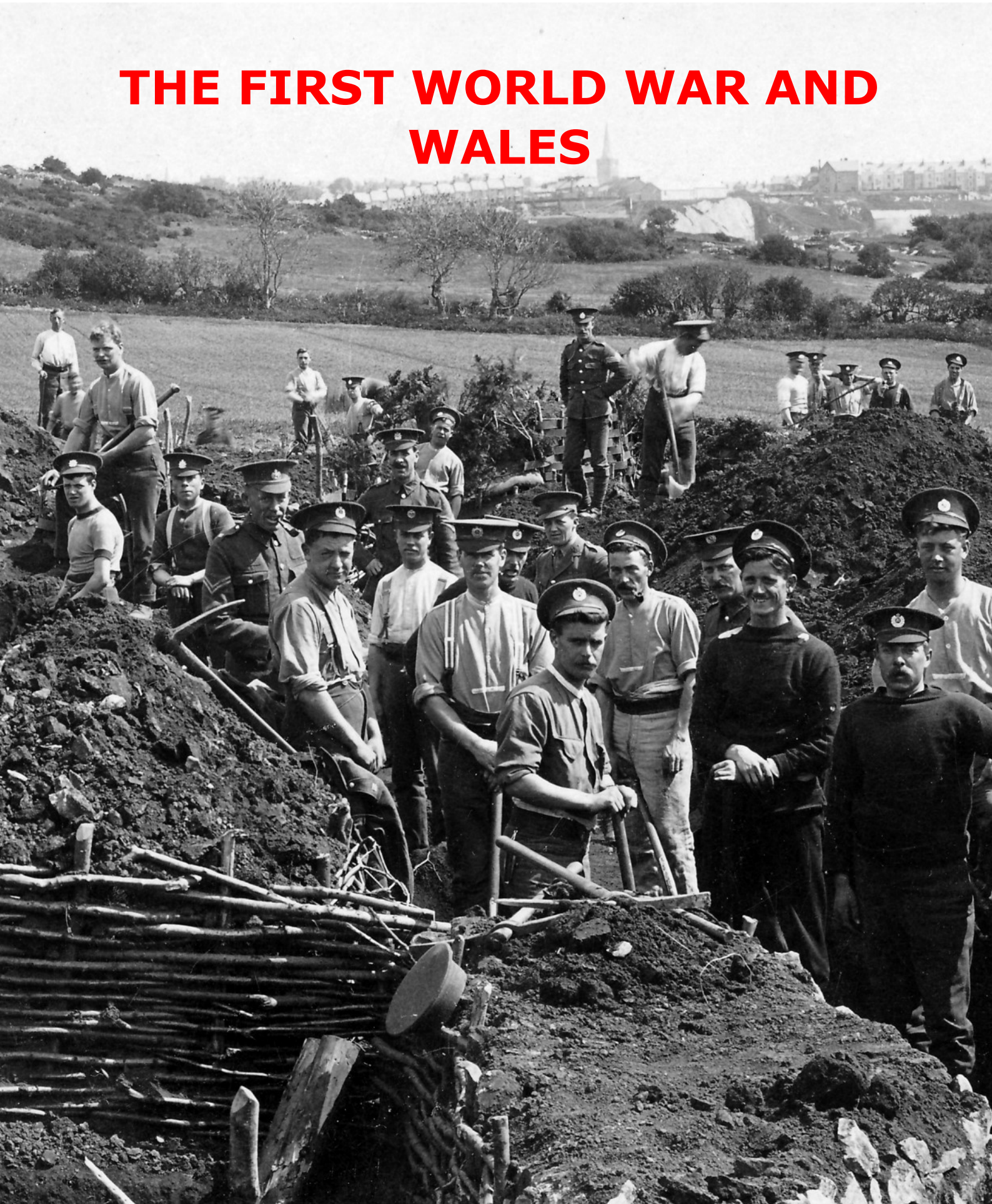
REMAINS OF CONFLICT

THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND WALES



The text for this booklet was prepared by the staff of Dyfed Archaeological Trust with input from the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust and Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, and is based on reports produced by the four Welsh archaeological trusts between 2013 and 2020. Roger J C Thomas provided additional information. The Trusts are grateful to those individuals and organisations that provided copies of illustrations and permission to reproduce them.

Cadw grant-aided the four Welsh archaeological trusts to investigate the remains of the First World War in Wales and funded the production of this booklet. The Heritage Lottery Fund, the Brecon Beacons Trust and the Defence Infrastructure Organisation grant-aided the investigation on specific sites.

Cover: Soldiers digging practice trenches at Penally, Pembrokeshire (Roger J C Thomas collection).

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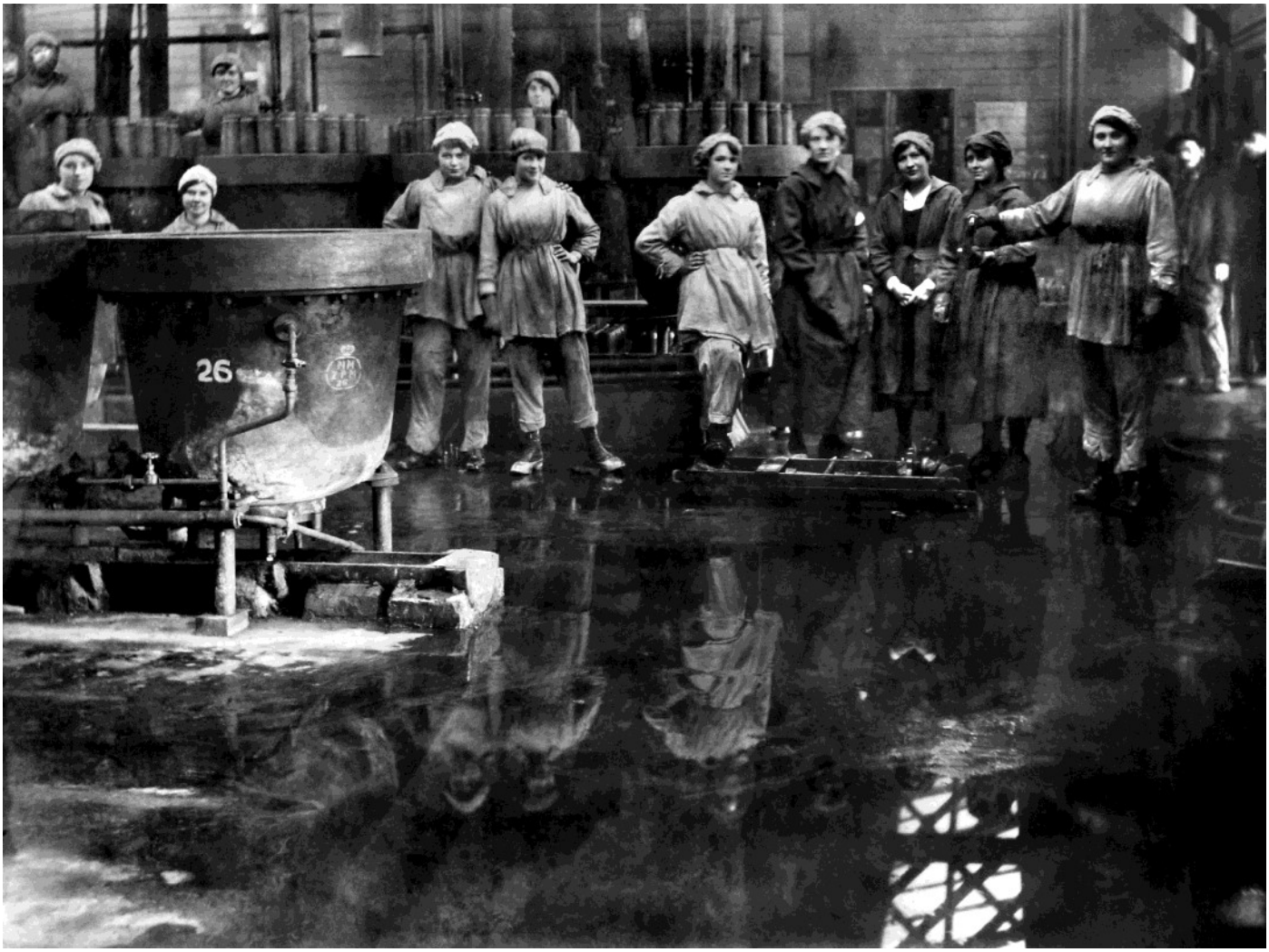
Foreword

The First World War was an overwhelming event which had widespread effects across Wales – no area was left untouched as the whole country geared up to contribute to the war effort. Over one hundred years on the generation that witnessed it has gone, and what we are left with are historical records and physical evidence - buildings, landscapes and artefacts. Many buildings and facilities were demolished soon after the war, having served their purpose, some reverted to their pre-war function and others were put to new uses.

Given that many buildings and structures were temporary, built to serve the war effort, it is remarkable that anything survives. However, in 2013 with the hundred-year anniversary of the war looming no-one knew exactly what did survive. Cadw thus funded the four Welsh archaeological trusts to research, investigate and record the camps, ranges, defences, factories and memorials in Wales. This short booklet summarises the work undertaken by the trusts and demonstrates the profound impact the war had not just on the lives of the people of Wales but also on the landscape of Wales.



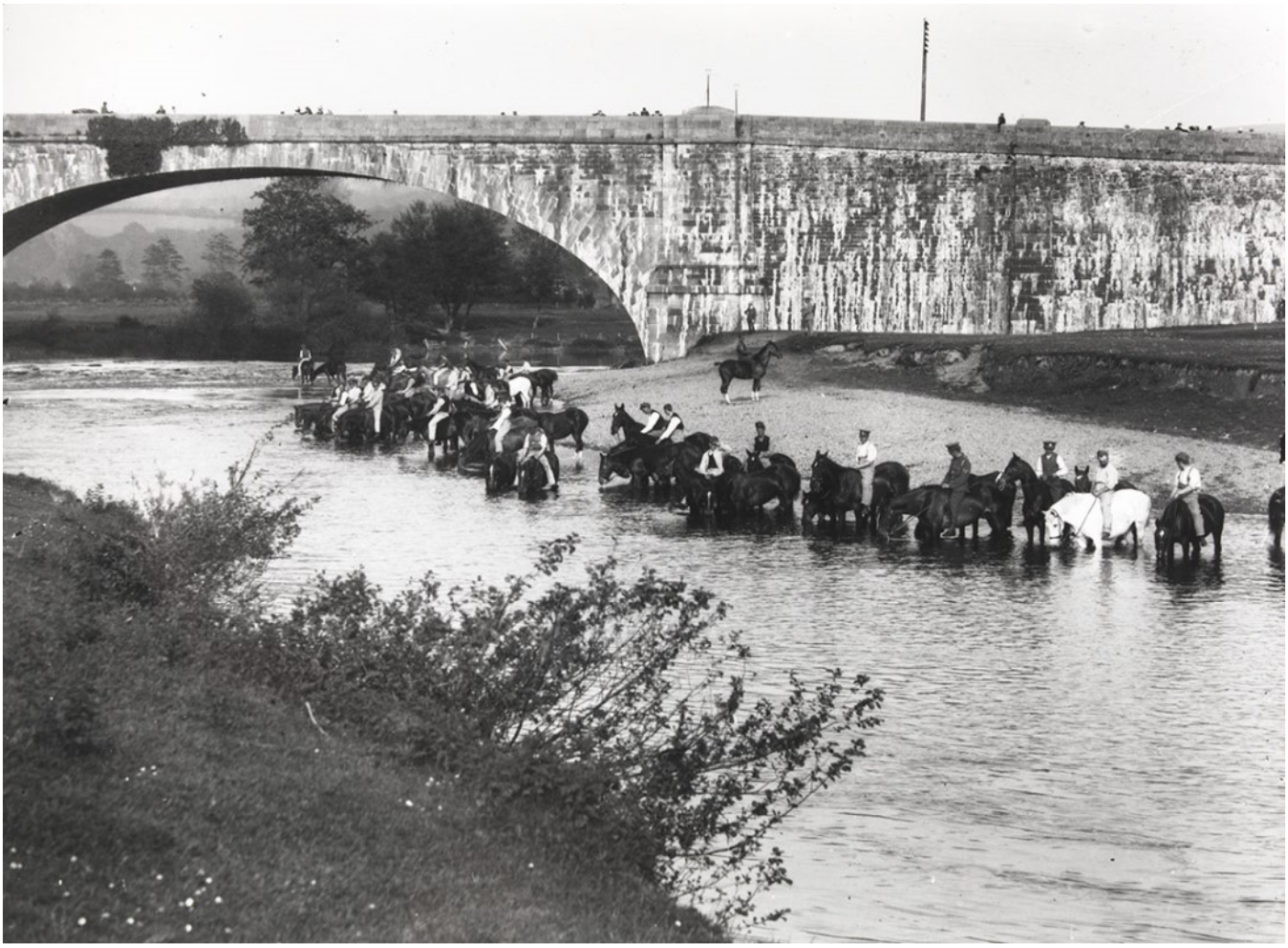
Women munition workers melting down high explosives out of shells (National Archives)

Introduction

Wales may seem a long way from the battlefields of the First World War, the names of which still resonate over a hundred years later - the Somme, Ypres, Verdun. But the lives of all in Wales were touched by the conflict. Forty thousand Welsh soldiers died in the war and the whole country was mobilised to support the war effort.

There is a vast amount of literature on and about the war. Books on military history abound. There are biographies of generals and studies of individual bravery and courage. Investigations into social change and economic development and decline in the post-war years have been published and in recent years there has been a focus on researching the lives of the common soldiers who fought and died for our country. One thing that is sometimes neglected is the impact the war had on the landscape of Wales. This was considerable and some of the physical remains of mobilisation are still evident and influence how we live our lives today. This short booklet explores the home front in Wales and the impact mobilisation had and still has on our towns and on our countryside.

Prior to the outbreak of war in 1914 the military had been in a high state of readiness. For many decades military barracks such as those at Maindy in Cardiff and Raglan in Newport had housed regular troops, and camps such as at Penally in Pembrokeshire and Kinmel Park in Denbighshire were used for training. Drill halls and temporary camps were used by the Territorial Force, founded in 1908, often using facilities used by earlier militias. Defences of key ports – Milford Haven, Cardiff, Swansea – were in place.

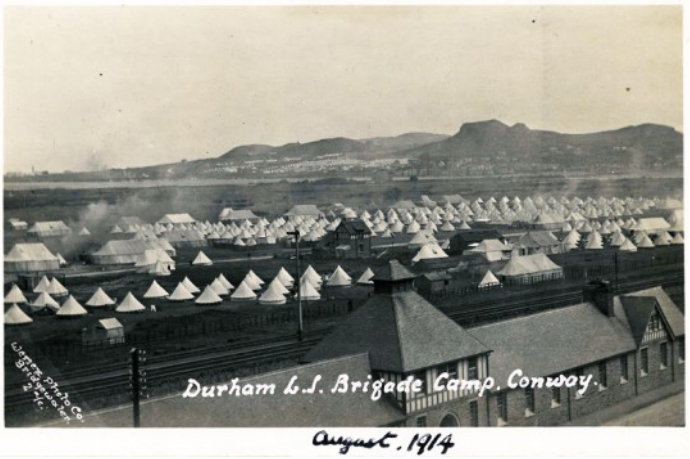


This photograph taken by D C Harries before the war shows members of a local militia watering their horses in the River Towy at Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire (National Library of Wales)

During the course of the war existing industries across Wales geared-up to feed the voracious appetite of the war machine and new factories were constructed to supply weapons and ammunition. Labour was in short supply and so for the first time women worked in these heavy industries. New dwellings were quickly built to accommodate the expanding workforce. The British army increased from 700,000 soldiers in 1914 to over 3.5 million in 1918 resulting in the rapid expansion of existing camps and ranges and the construction of new ones. Strategic facilities were defended against enemy attack, forts rearmed and new gun emplacements constructed. Warfare was changing rapidly; three airship stations were built, two in south-west Wales and one in north-west Wales, to protect shipping from submarine attacks. Houses and institutions were converted to hospitals to care for injured soldiers. Captured enemy soldiers were housed in adapted and purpose built camps or put to work on farms and in industries.

Conway Town Council set up Conway Morfa Camp for local volunteer units in the nineteenth century. This plan shows the camp in 1910 with annotations of 1912. The area had been used, and is still used, as a golf course since 1868. The plan shows golf greens amongst the tent pitches. At the outbreak of war 7000 men were at Conway Morfa and the associated camp at Deganwy. The camps were used for training throughout the war (Courtesy of Conwy Archive Service CP/Maps and Plans/23/2/287).

A postcard showing Morfa Camp In 1914 with Deganwy camp in the background.



Training for war

Above: Interior of a 60ft standard hut. South Wales Borderers (Roger J C Thomas collection).

Below: Hut purchased from Kinmel Park Camp and erected in 1921 next to a toll house on land donated by Lord Anglesey to provide a permanent meeting hall for the Llanfairpwllgwyngyll WI (Gwynedd Archaeological Trust).

The military constructed large numbers of temporary camps and expanded existing camps to provide newly enlisted and conscripted soldiers with some training before being sent overseas. By far the largest was Kinmel Park Camp in north Wales. Built in late 1914, it was initially planned for the training of the Welsh Army Corps. It measured over 2 km in length and consisted of twenty sub-camps. In 1919 it was the scene of one of the most serious riots in British military history when 15,000 Canadian troops who had served the British Empire during the war and were being held waiting to be repatriated mutinied, having had enough of the appalling conditions and delays in sending them home. The camp was demolished in 1920, at least in part as a consequence of the riots, and very little evidence for it survives, although some of huts were sold and re-erected elsewhere in north Wales, a few of which still stand.

Penally in Pembrokeshire was originally a musketry camp erected in 1860 to provide training for troops following the Crimean War. Accommodation was initially under canvas, but during the First World War huts were provided as the demand for year-round training increased. Soldiers were trained in digging trenches and other aspects of warfare before being sent to the front. Remains of these trenches are some of the best preserved in Britain and are designated a scheduled monument. The military still use the camp, including buildings erected during the First World War, and train on the attached rifle range.

Top: Penally Camp in the early twentieth century (Roger J C Thomas collection) *and as it is today, left (Dyfed Archaeological Trust).*

Below: Low level aerial photograph of Penally practice trenches taken in low evening sunlight, June 2019 (Tim Fletcher, Geoscope).

Rifle ranges were a vital training facility. Many had been established adjacent to camps in the mid-nineteenth century for volunteer training, were modified and continued in use during the First World War and again during the Second World War. The exact number of rifle ranges in Wales is unknown, but twenty-three have been identified in north-west Wales dating to the First World War or earlier. Rifle ranges consisted of targets, behind which was a stop-butt to catch bullets. Markers, individuals who recorded the entry of the bullet into the targets, were positioned in a gallery constructed from brick or concrete in front of the targets protected by an earthen bank called a mantlet. Firing positons were located at 100 yard intervals from the targets. Many, but not all, ranges are marked on old published maps and field examination indicates that physical evidence for them often survives. However, without specialist knowledge it is difficult to know whether what survives dates to before the First World War, to the war, or later, and on occasions archaeologists have misidentified the remains of rifle ranges as something other than of military use, such as rabbit warrens.

Above: The mantlet and stop-butt at Aber on the Gwynedd coast are obvious landscape features but were not recognised as part of a First World War rifle range until recently. Further investigation has revealed the firing positions in salt marsh (Gwynedd Archaeological Trust).

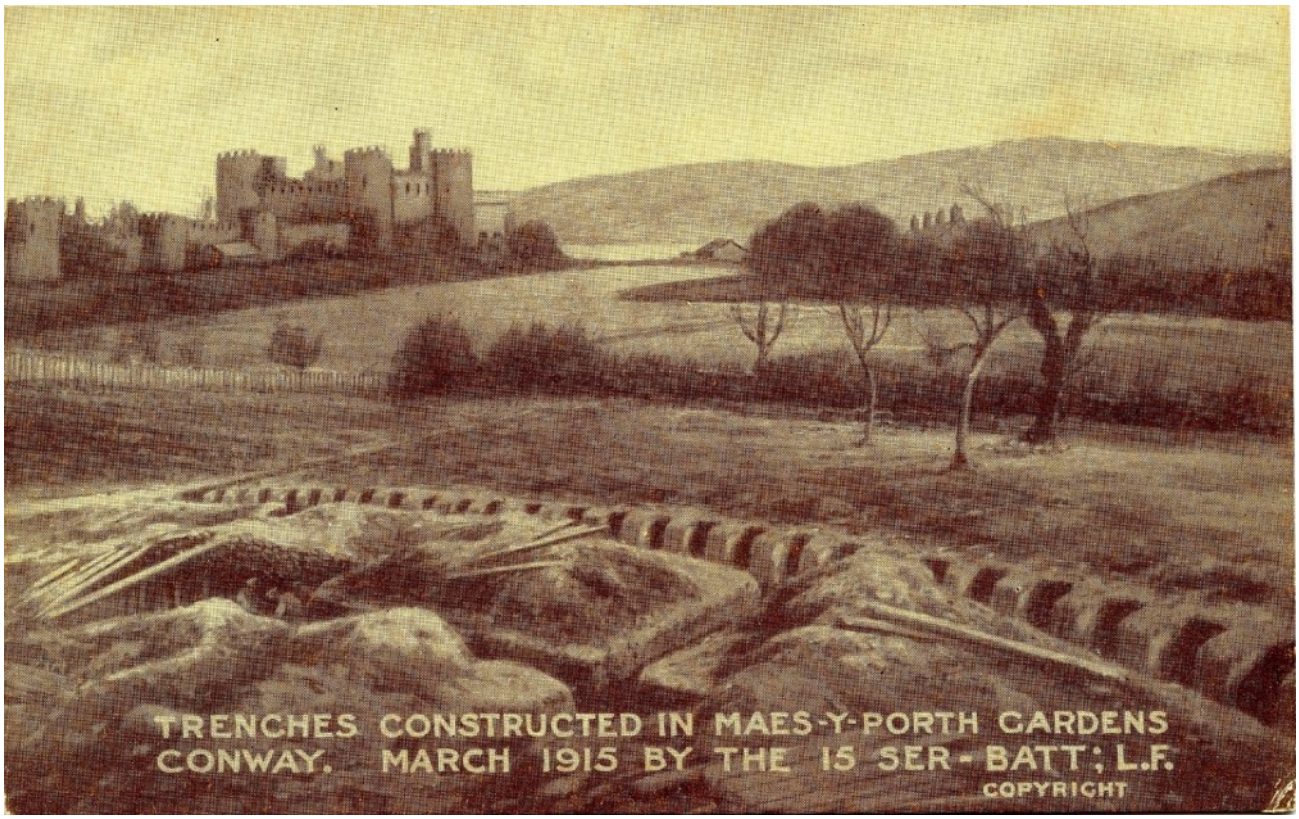
Below: Penmaenucha rifle range south of Dolgellau in Gwynedd is a particularly well-preserved example. Unusually the target frames survive. These are of the Hythe pattern, and when comparing them to the blue-print for the frames it can see that very little is missing from them. Three even have a metal arm from which a paste-pot was hung used when replacing targets Gwynedd Archaeological Trust).

Trench warfare was the most defining, most horrific aspect of the First World War. Before being sent to the front some soldiers were given instruction in trench digging and experience, as far was as possible, in trench warfare. Evidence in the form of earthworks for these practice trenches survives at Bodelwyddan Castle Park and the adjacent Kinmel Park in north Wales and at Penally in Pembrokeshire. Recent research has revealed other examples close to other camps, but often in a poor state of preservation.

It is presumed that the Bodelwyddan Castle Park examples were created initially for instruction and later for training. Several different phases of construction, rebuilding and re-use have been identified. Firing or frontline trenches are identifiable from their crenelated shape (traverse) with zigzag communication trenches linking them to support and reserve lines parallel to the firing lines. Dugouts for command posts and first aid stations survive as do passing bays and saps (trenches dug out from the firing trench into no-man's land). Opposing groups of trenches can be recognised, and over much of the area circular craters were created by exploding charges to replicate the type of shell-marked landscape the troops could expect to encounter in France or Belgium.

Soldiers digging practice trenches in Yeomanry Field, Penally. The location of these trenches can be identified but no surface evidence for them survives (Roger J C Thomas collection).

Above left: In this aerial photograph taken in 1946 low winter sun highlights the full extent of the Bodelwyddan Castle Park trenches. Note the ridge and furrow agricultural landscape predating the trenches and the park (RAF 3G/TUD/UK/33). Above right: A cartoon by Sapper Bernard Handley, who was stationed at Kingsbridge Camp, Anglesey, showing trench digging tools. Kingsbridge near Beaumaris predated the First World War. It was used for specialist training in trench building and deployment of barbed wire (courtesy of Anglesey Archives XR 939). Below: Postcard of trenches at Maes y Porth Gardens, Conway, 1915. It is assumed that soldiers from Conway Morfa and Deganwy Camps practised in these trenches.

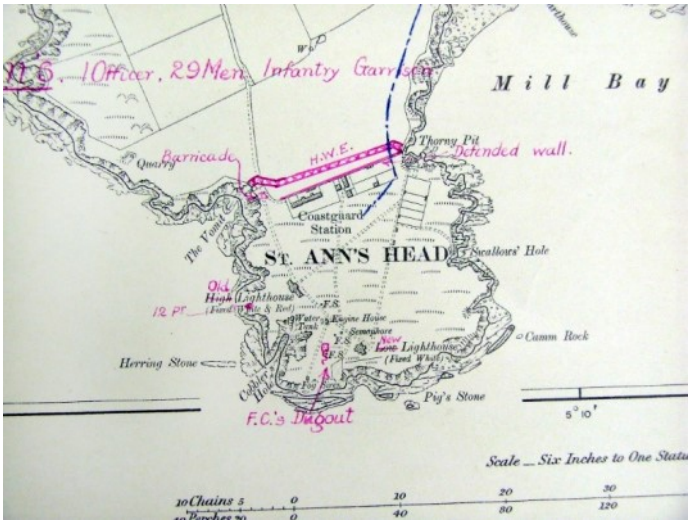


Defending the country

During the first years of the war there was a very real fear that Germany would invade Britain; it was considered that an invasion could be mounted while the Royal Navy and the German fleet were engaged in a major battle elsewhere. Defences were therefore strengthened. Coastal gun emplacements were added to existing facilities and defences constructed to protect key installations against a landward attack. Only after the naval battle of Jutland in the summer of 1916 did the fear of invasion subside.

Authorities considered Milford Haven waterway with its deep water port and Royal Navy dockyard at Pembroke Dock at particular risk of attack. In the mid-nineteenth century the British Government ordered the construction of a series of massive stone forts to protect the waterway. Several were not built until the end of the century and due to advances in technology others were virtually redundant before completion. Nevertheless, five were rearmed in the first decade of the twentieth century and served during the First World War with the addition of new facilities such as searchlight batteries. Several of these forts were reused during the Second World War and all survive today. Complexes of defences to protect the dockyard from attack from the land were quickly raised at the beginning of the war, including camps, redoubts, trenches and barbed wire entanglements. These are shown on contemporary plans, but it is not now clear which elements already existed, which were planned and subsequently built and which were planned but never constructed.

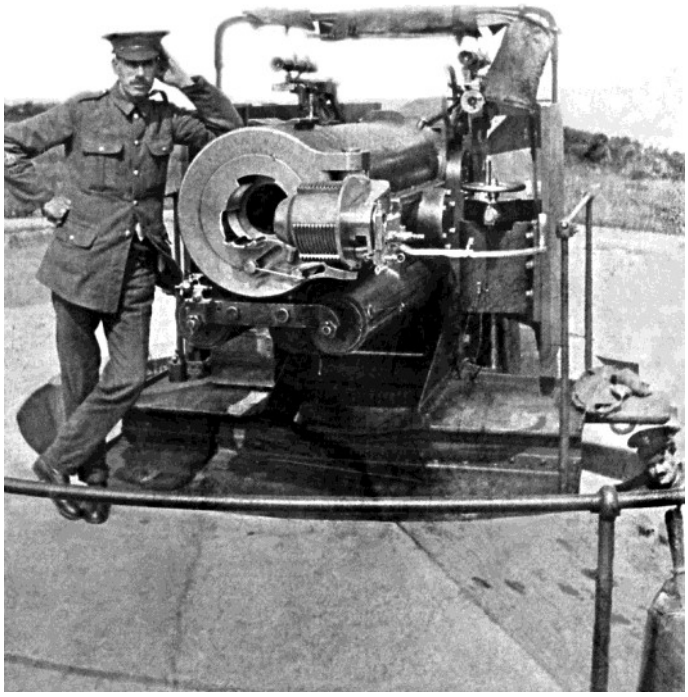
Evidence of these land defences that were constructed is rapidly disappearing, but occasional buildings survive, usually converted to other uses.



Above: An extract from a 1916 map showing the defences to St Ann's Head at the entrance to Milford Haven Waterway. The landward defence consisted of a high wire entanglement (H.W.E) and a defended wall (WO78/4399).

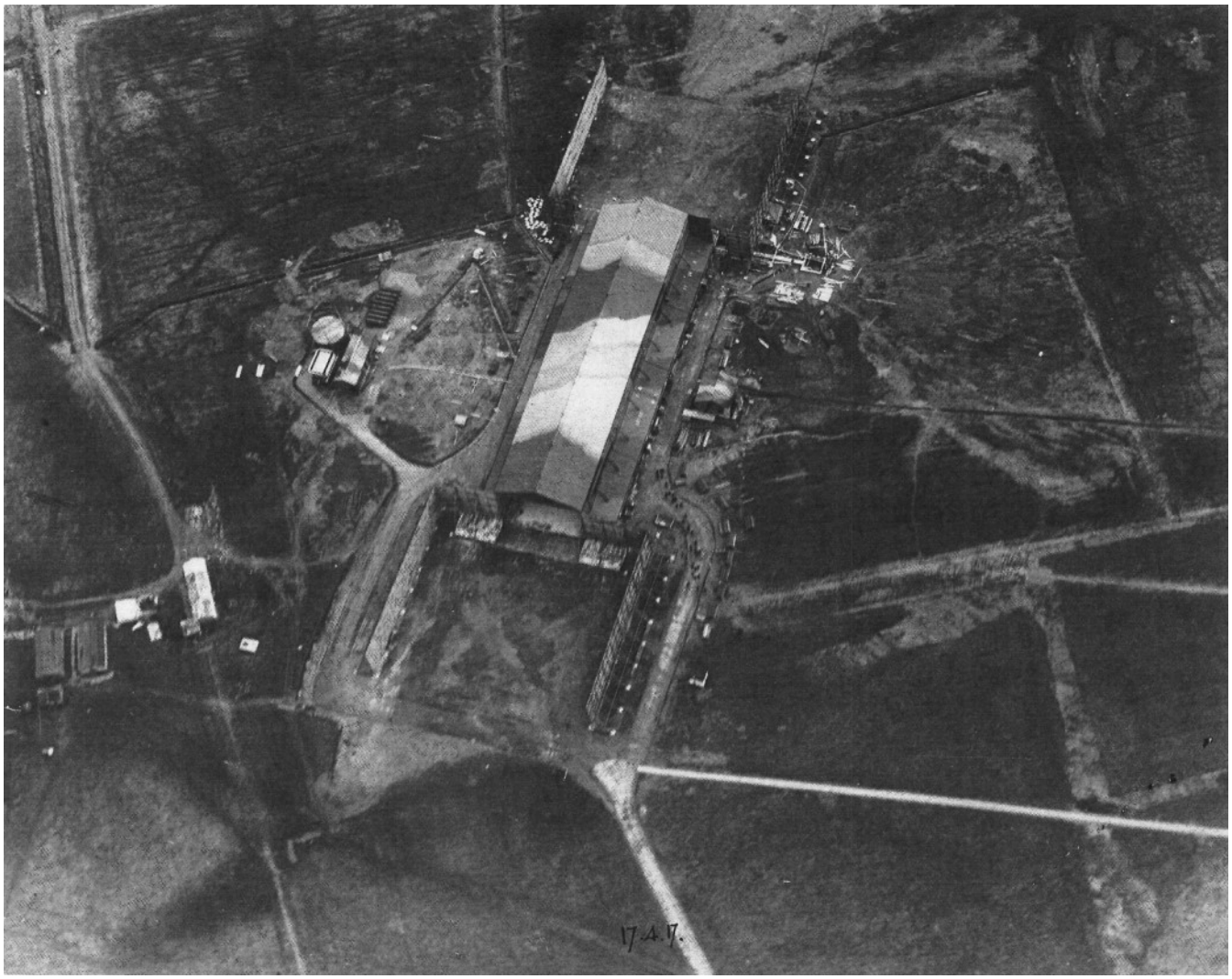
Below: St Ann's Head defended wall – gun loops were added to an existing stone wall (Dyfed Archaeological Trust).

Since the eighteenth century it has been recognised that the industrial ports and harbours along the South Wales coast were vulnerable to attack and were provided with gun batteries such as Penarth, Lavernock Point, Mumbles and Flatholm Island on the Welsh side of the Bristol Channel. Most were rearmed in the years before the First World War, played a vital role in protecting the ports during the war and were recommissioned before the Second World War.



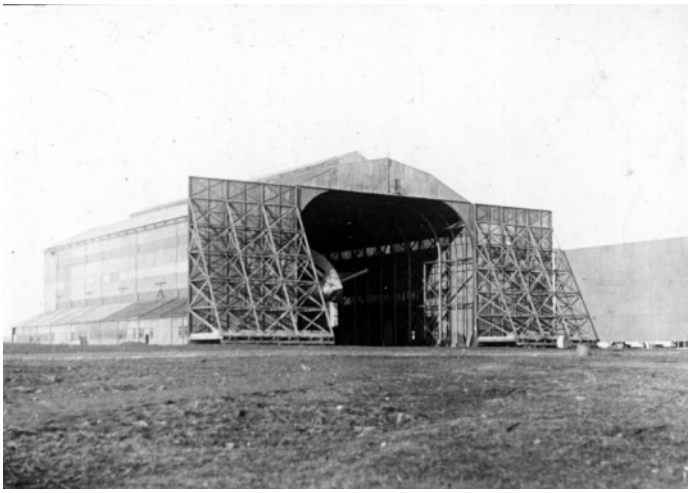
6-inch Mk VII CPII gun, in emplacement B3 at Chapel Bay Fort, Angle, Pembrokeshire (Daphne Russell)

Below: The redundant gun emplacements on Flatholm Island are visible on this aerial photograph taken in 2008 (© Crown copyright: RCAHMW).



View of RNAS Llangefni taken from an airship in 1917. Note the windshields at the ends of the shed and the gas plant to the left (Courtesy of Anglesey Archives).

As the war progressed defences became more proactive to protect against new weapons and new ways of waging war. The air became a battleground for the first time. In Britain this was carried out under the direction of the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) and the Royal Flying Corp (RFC); they merged in 1918 to form the Royal Air Force (RAF). The threat to shipping from German U-boats became an increasing threat as the war progressed; by 1917 the naval blockade by the Germans brought Britain close to running out of food. A combined air and sea effort was devised to counter this threat, with airships used to spot U-boats and destroyers and other vessels used to attack them. The Royal Navy constructed three airship stations in Wales, RNAS Llangefni on Anglesey, RNAS Milford Haven and RNAS Pembroke at Carew in Pembrokeshire. From these stations and from Luce Bay in Scotland airships patrolled the Irish Sea. There was a need for additional naval support to guard the approaches to Liverpool and so in 1915 the Navy established a base at Holyhead. The commander at Holyhead controlled RNAS Llangefni enabling coordination of air and sea patrols across the whole of the northern Irish Sea. Later in the war aeroplanes based at an airfield near Bangor in the north, at RNAS Pembroke and at a sea-plane base at Fishguard in the south, assisted in spotting U-boats, but their usefulness was limited by their range.



Above left: An airship with escort vessel (Adrian James collection).
Above right: The airship shed at RNAS Pembroke (Adrian Janes collection).
Below: Toby Driver of the RCAHMW took this aerial photograph of RNAS Pembroke in 2013. The remains of the First World War airship station are now only visible as archaeological features. Grass has parched over the foundations of the airship shed and windshields – the latter visible as two parallel lines of pale-coloured circles. One of the heavily engineered Second World War runways slices through the airship shed (© Crown copyright: RCAHMW).

Marconi's Wireless and Telegraph Company began construction of a long-rage wireless station in north Wales in 1912 to communicate with shipping, with the first test transmissions taking place in August 1914 just as war broke out. Due to problems with interference the Waunfawr Transmitter Station, often called the Caernarfon Station, was located on the western side of Cefndu Hill and the receiving station at Hafod y Bryn, just outside Tywyn, 30 miles to the south. A landline linked the stations. The Waunfawr transmitter aerial was supported on 300 ft high steel masts and extended for over a mile across the hillside. Station buildings included a residential block and a transmitter hall. As the station was of high strategic importance a deployment of troops guarded it, housed in purpose-built blockhouses. At the beginning of the war the Post Office took over the running of the stations, later this responsibility was transferred to the Admiralty; the stations were returned to Marconi at the cessation of hostilities. The Tywyn Station closed in 1923 but the Waunfawr Station continued in service until 1939.

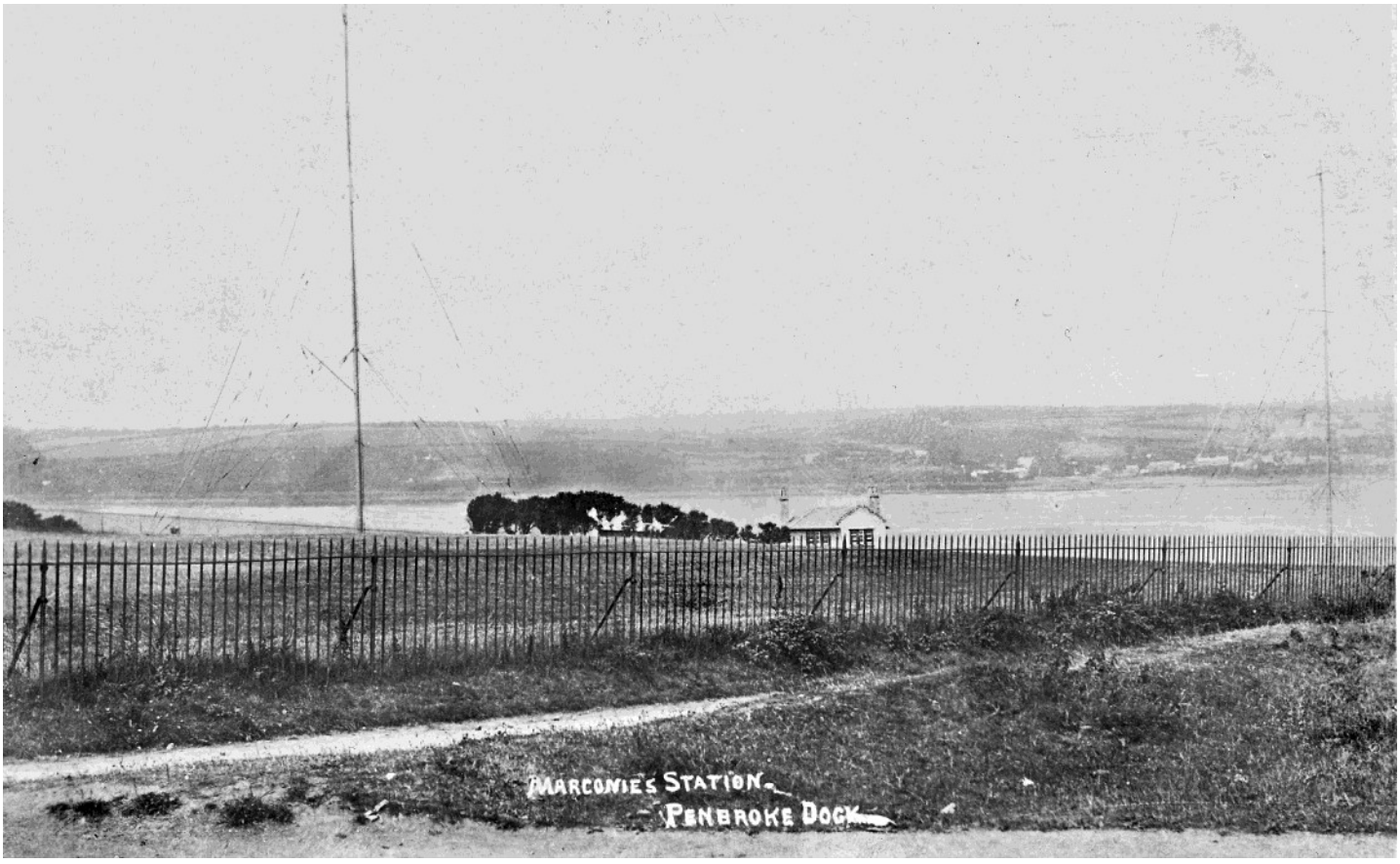
Top: Waunfawr Transmitter Station probably taken in 1914 (©The Marconi Company Ltd).
Above: Waunfawr Transmitter Station blockhouse and causeways or railway track-beds in the foreground (Gwynedd Archaeological Trust).
Below: Waunfawr main transmitter building and former power house in 2015 (Gwynedd Archaeological Trust).

A similar Admiralty wireless station to Caernarfon was in operation at Llanreath, Pembroke Dock, which was used to communicate with shipping and aircraft; it was also used for monitoring German wireless transmissions. Marconi also built a wireless station near Amlwch, Anglesey, to communicate with airships operating out of RNAS Llangefni. The exact location of this station has been recently determined, although nothing above ground survives.

All shipping approaching a defended port was controlled by the Royal Navy from a Port War Signalling Station (PWSS), using visual and wireless communication. Merchant Shipping had to be anchored in an Examination Anchorage under the guns of an Examination Battery. Any vessel failing to heed instructions would have a 'bring-to' round fired across its bows. If it continued the guns would engage with live ammunition. At the port of Milford Haven the PWSS was at St Ann's Head and the Examination Battery at Chapel Bay Fort.

Below: Llanreath Admiralty wireless transmitter station (Roger J C Thomas collection).

Bottom: Postcard franked 1914 of Llanreath wireless station (Roger J C Thomas collection).



Left: Traditional means of detecting U-boats were used in addition to newly developed techniques. The Admiralty Coast Watch Service could see ships and boats rounding Strumble Head from in this small observation post located in the Iron Age fort of Garn Fawr in north Pembrokeshire (Dyfed Archaeological Trust).

Below: Hydrophones greatly assisted the detection of U-boats. These were portable devices used by boats patrolling for submarines. A land-based hydrophone station was constructed on St David's Head, Pembrokeshire. There is very little documentation on how this station would have operated and this photograph taken from an airship in 1917 is one of the few contemporary pieces of evidence for its existence. It was reused during the Second World War and survived into the 1970s when it was considered an eyesore and demolished (Adrian James collection).

Supplying the war machine

In 1915 the Chancellor David Lloyd George founded the Ministry of Munitions to coordinate Britain's military and industrial economy. The definition of munitions was quite loose, resulting in the new Ministry's involvement in virtually every industry to some extent. The Ministry of Munitions required firms to expand and modify to meet specific requirements, such as building new production lines for armaments or providing facilities for the expanding female workforce. Separating these wartime expansions from pre-war and post-war developments is not easy. However, some purpose-built facilities can be identified. The following examples provide an insight into the huge amount of resources required to service the British war machine.

Britain developed government-owned shipyards in 1917 as a result of growing concerns over the increasing rate of merchant ship losses following the German introduction of unrestricted submarine warfare. Three sites on the Bristol Channel were selected close to steelworks: Chepstow, Beachley and Portbury, with capacity to build 78 ships a year. By April 1918 two slipways had been built at the Chepstow yard, known as National Shipyard No.1, but progress was slow and the war ended on 11th November 1918 without a single ship having been launched from a National Shipyard. Twenty-two ships were eventually built at Chepstow, but in 1925 the yard was sold and subsequently largely dismantled. The local authority at Chepstow was aware that there was insufficient housing to accommodate the new workforce at the National Shipyard and so they petitioned the government to provide support for the building of 'garden towns' consisting of 423 houses on two sites: Hardwick Village and Bulwark Village. Royal Engineers and German prisoners of war built the houses. The street layout and houses survive, though more properties have been added over the years confusing the original design.

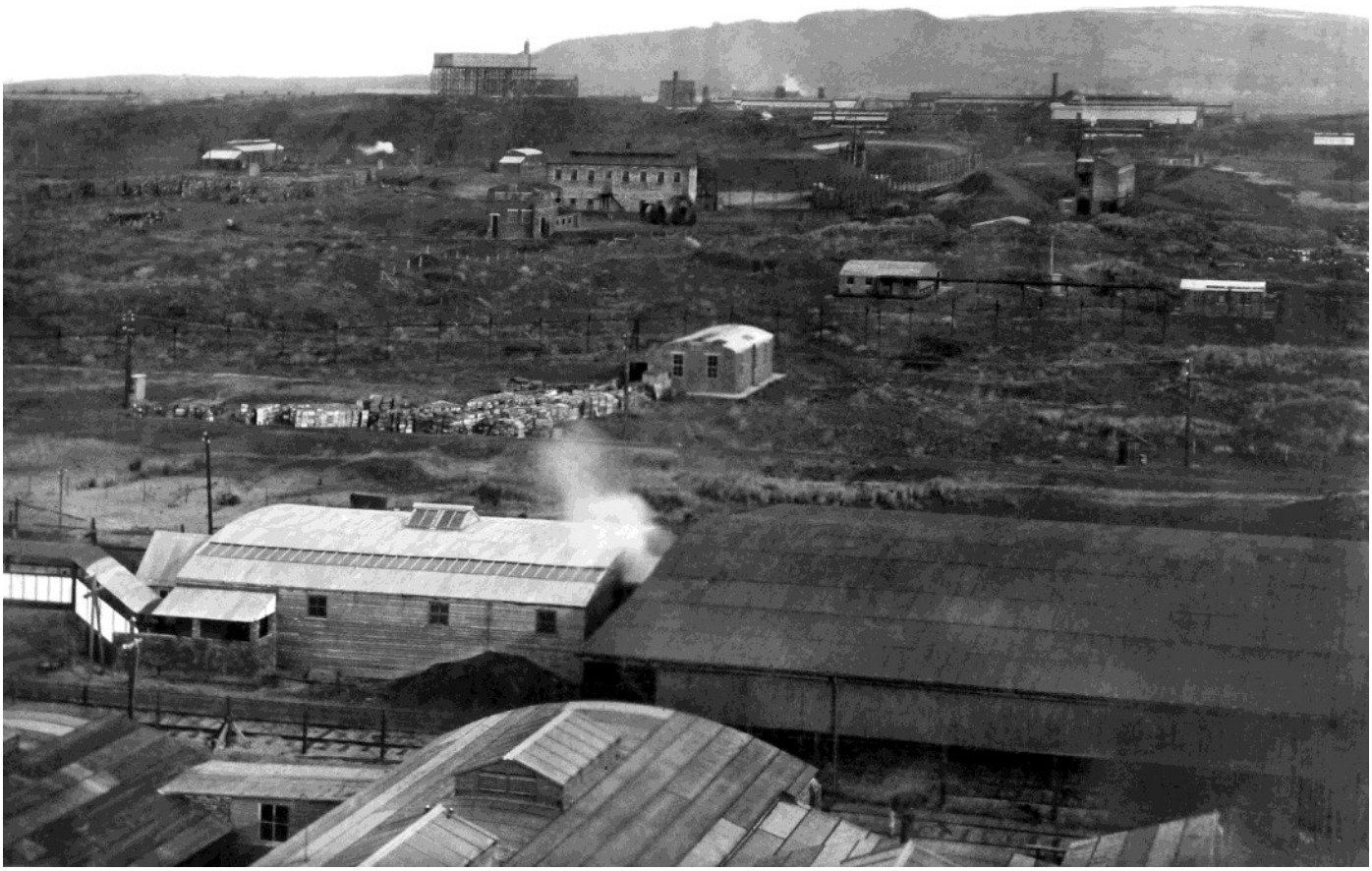
Top: National Shipyard No. 1 in 1919 (Claire Fields Collection).

Above: Aerial photograph taken in 2019 showing housing built to accommodate workers in the new National Shipyard No. 1 (© Crown copyright: RCAHMW).

At the outbreak of the war Nobel's Explosives Company erected a TNT factory at Pembrey in Carmarthenshire. In 1915 a filling factory was added producing shells, torpedoes and mines. At its peak the factory produced over 200 tons of explosives a week and in less than two years over 1.1 million shells had been sent to the battlefields in Europe. Over 6000 people from Llanelli, Swansea and Carmarthen worked at Pembrey, mostly women. In 1917 the factory was nationalised and came under the direct control of The Ministry of Munitions and was used for the dangerous job of breaking-down, recovering components and the disposal of surplus shells. The government closed the factory in 1926 and sold it. In 1938 with war again looming the government built a new ordnance factory on the site which continued in use until 1963. The local authority then acquired the site, cleared it and established a country park, opening it to the public in 1980. However, the government and local authority did not erase all remnants of the First World War factory, and recently Cadw designated surviving remains a scheduled monument in recognition of the role they played in the country's history.

Below: These surviving remains of Pembrey munition factory are where nitroglycerine was made. It was too dangerous to pump or carry so it would flow by gravity to the next manufacturing process (Dyfed Archaeological Trust).

Bottom: Pembrey munition factory during the First World War.



Buildings constructed in 1917 for the National Cartridge and Box Repair Factory on the dockside in Newport survive, converted to other uses. The factory salvaged and repaired, 'rectified' in the language of the war, shell cases and shell boxes brought from France on a dedicated line of ships and once rectified forwarded them on to filling factories, such as the one at Pembrey. At its height the factory employed almost 4000 workers, and, as at Pembrey most were women. The only other repair factory in Britain was at Dagenham and the two factories combined could repair three-quarters of a million shell cases and 175,000 ammunition boxes a week.

In additional to new facilities built to serve the war, exploitation of existing resources was vastly increased. Large tracks of woodland were felled across Wales supplementing Britain's dependency on imported timber. Canadian lumberjacks and female volunteers worked from forestry camps established close to woodland. Although the impact woodland clearance on the Welsh landscape was immense, it has not been possible to find any physical evidence for these forestry camps.

Left: One of the surviving buildings of The National Cartridge and Box Repair Factory. The gable-end has been remodelled and the ventilation chimneys are additions (Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust).

Below: Aerial view of Newport in 1930. The National Cartridge and Box Repair Factory is located on the South Dock and was used as a general warehouse at this time (© Crown copyright: RCAHMW).

Back to Blighty

A horrifying number of casualties resulted from the war. Soldiers were disabled by bullets, shells, shrapnel and bayonet, suffered hideous injuries during gas attacks, were debilitated by diseases and infections and were racked with neurological illnesses. Over 2.5 million British servicemen were wounded during the course of the war. At the outbreak of war in 1914 existing military hospitals could provide about 7000 equipped beds. These included in Wales Llanion Military Hospital and the Royal Naval Hospital Pembroke, both at Pembroke Dock. As the number of causalities surged during the first months of the war it was evident that existing military facilities could not cope and so the War Office took over existing civilian hospitals. At Bangor and Caernarfon in North Wales these were poor law hospitals and had just been built to meet modern standards. At Bangor the aim was to provide 200 beds, but this was quickly found to be insufficient and by 1915 tents in the grounds were being used to increase the number of beds. By the end of War beds in British military hospitals alone had increased to over 364,000.

Above: Llanion military hospital (Adrian James collection).

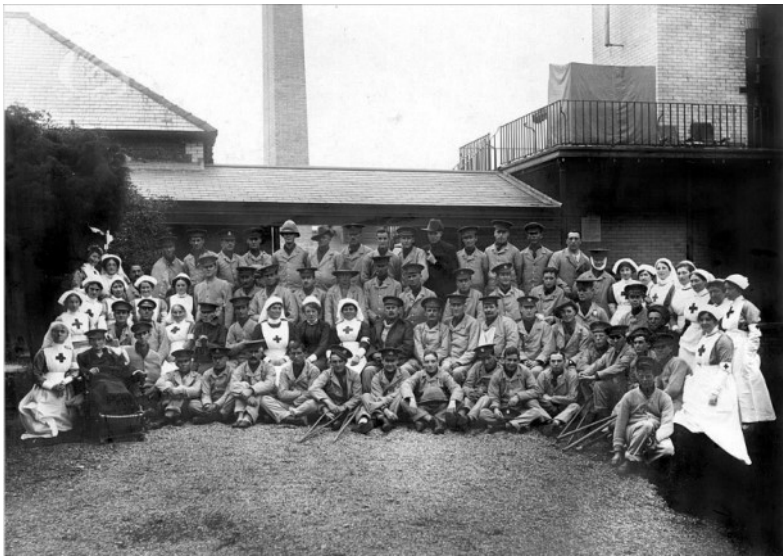
Below: 1915 Postcard of the Military Hospital, Bangor showing tents erected in the grounds.

Hospitals in Wales, as elsewhere, were at the end of a long chain of medical facilities that began at the frontline. Wounded soldiers would pass through a First Aid Post and then to an Advanced Dressing Station, both within the field of conflict, before being taken to a Casualty Clearing Station, usually tented behind the lines, and then onto a Base Hospital, the first established facility. Hospital ships then provided transport back to Britain. Patients were then transported to hospital treatment, which could be to a hospital for the treatment of specific injuries, or for the less seriously wounded to an Auxiliary Home Hospital. Those that had received treatment and were in need of convalescence would be moved to an Auxiliary Home Hospital.

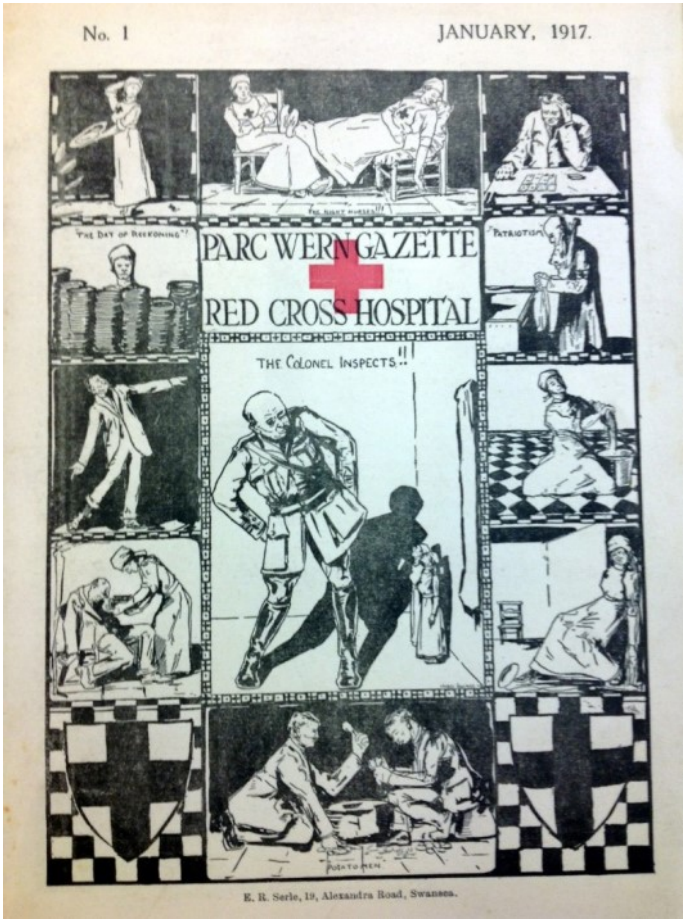
The Red Cross and the Order of St John, formed the non-governmental Joint War Committee in 1914 in order to pool their resources with the principal function of organising and staffing Auxiliary Home Hospitals. Owners offered their properties free of charge for use as hospitals, or the Committee could requisition buildings. Hospitals were established in public buildings loaned by local authorities, private homes, church and chapel properties. It is not known exactly how many were established, as some were short-lived, but Red Cross alone administered over 3000 across Britain. Although the administrators of these hospitals could, and did, congratulate themselves on bringing health back into the lives of hundreds of men, the main purpose of these hospitals was to nurse soldiers back to health so that they could be returned to the front.

Above: Staff and patients of the "Somme" concert party outside Ash Hall, Ystradowen, Cowbridge. Ash Hall was an early eighteenth century country house used as an auxiliary hospital. The first batch of Commonwealth soldiers arrived in May 1915 (Image courtesy of www.ystradowen.org.uk).

Below: Staff and wounded soldiers pose outside Aberdare and Merthyr Red Cross Hospital. This hospital was established in Merthyr Board of Guardians' Industrial Training School, Llewellyn Street, Trecynon (Rhondda Cynon Taff Photographic Library Item No.07/008).



After the War Auxiliary Home Hospitals, such as Scolton Manor near Haverfordwest, returned to their original owners and reverted to their pre-war use, or were converted to other uses. Most of these buildings still stand. Hospitals requisitioned by the military were turned back to civilian use. Many of the buildings used for hospitals survive, but architectural and other physical remains of their use during the war have been expunged. Only documents and photographs attest to hundreds of thousands of wounded men who passed through their portals.



Right: The first edition of the Parc Wern Gazette, a magazine produced by officers recuperating at Parc Wern Red Cross Officers' Hospital, Swansea. After the war the building was renamed Parc Beck and became a nurses' training school. It has been converted to residential use and renamed Rembrandt Court (With permission of West Glamorgan Archive Service SL WL 3/7/1).

Below: Horse drawn carriage converted to an ambulance to transport wounded servicemen (With permission of West Glamorgan Archive Service D/D RMD1/42).

Prisoners of war

At the outbreak of war 100,000 people classified as enemy aliens were interned. These were soon joined by a small number of captured soldiers and sailors. It was not until after the war turned in favour of the allies in 1917 that a rapidly increasing number of captured military personnel had to be accommodated. By the end of the war over 160,000 prisoners were held in Britain.

Officers were not obliged to work: enlisted men were required to do so if requested, for which they were paid a wage. By the summer of 1917 a 70,000 strong prisoner of war army worked in quarries, forestry, repairing roads and, as there were fears that crops would not be harvested, in agriculture. Prisoner of war camps were administered in a pyramidal structure, with Parent Camps at the top, of which there were two in Wales, Dyffryn Aled near Llansannan, Denbighshire and Frongoch in Gwynedd. Below these were Working Camps and Agricultural Depôts; these were responsible for Agricultural Groups and Migratory Gangs, the latter two being groups of about ten men housed in farms or country houses. At the end of the war former training camps were used to house the sudden but temporary increase in prisoner numbers. At Kingsbridge and in other former training camps prisoners were put to work filling in the old practice trenches.

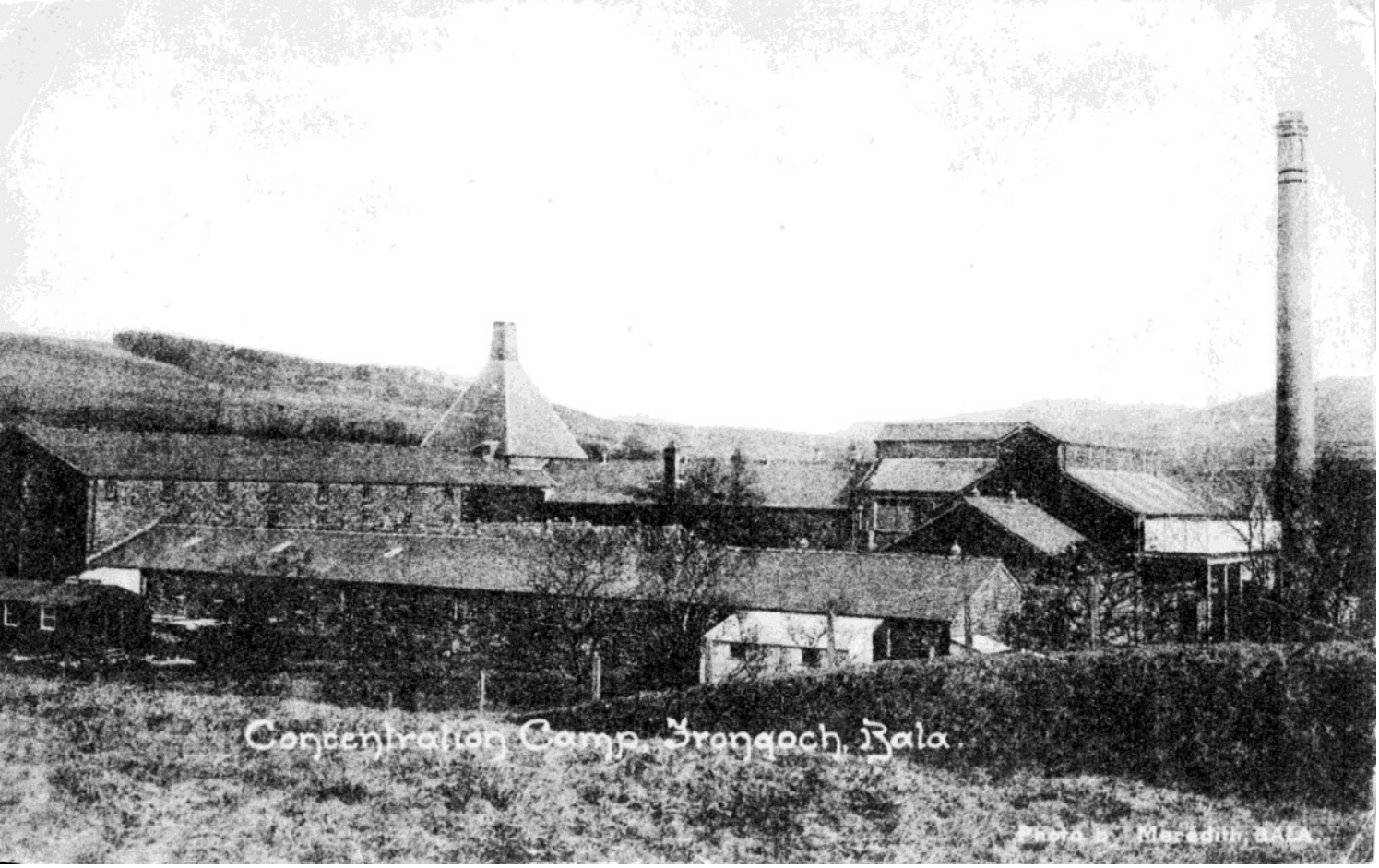
There were thirty-three prisoner of war camps in Wales. Surviving remains are slight or non-existent. One of the few and unusual surviving physical features of a prisoner of war camp is at Graiglwyd, Penmaenmawr, Gwynedd. Here Austrian and German prisoners were held in Graiglwyd Hall and worked in the nearby quarries. They constructed a path to enable them to go to work without having to pass through the village. This unremarkable feature survives as an earthwork and would now pass unnoticed if it were not for Samuel Hazzledine Warren describing it in 1921 as 'a comparatively new path … for the use of German prisoners of war working in the quarries' and marking it on a sketch map during his researches into prehistoric archaeology. It remains one of the few landscape features in Wales that can be directly attributed to German prisoners.

Samuel Hazzledine Warren's sketch map showing the 'German prisoner's path' underlined in red.

Black Hall near Kerry in Powys has to have been the most unusual prisoner of war camp in Britain. Prisoners at this Agricultural Depôt worked in forestry and were initially accommodated under canvas. Before the outset of winter, the commandant, inspired by his time in South Africa, got the prisoners to build their own accommodation in the form of a kraal; traditional African huts enclosed by a stockade. Huts were roughly circular, built of upright timber covered in wattle and daub and topped with a conical thatched roof. Photographs believed to have been taken by John Wilkes Poundley of Black Hall show at least 24 African-style huts, flat-roofed buildings and garden plots. There appear to be two or three compounds, presumably for guards, non-commissioned offices and men. The exact location of the camp has been identified and during a site visit in 2016 it was noted that with the eye of faith low earthworks were visible, which could be interpreted as the platforms for the huts built by the prisoners of war.

Frongoch Camp near Bala in Gwynedd was set up in 1915 to take German prisoners, but it was destined to play a key role in the fight for Irish independence. In 1916, British authorities moved out German prisoners and replaced them with 1800 Irish prisoners interned following the Easter Rising. Internment was short lived; many prisoners were released in August 1916 and the remainder in December 1916. One of the reasons for this was that the authorities realised their mistake in allowing the prisoners to mingle freely, to discuss political objectives, recruitment, tactics and methods of bomb making. Internment led to the creation of the Irish Republican Army and Frongoch became known in Ireland as the 'University of Revolution'. The Concentration Camp was composed of two parts, the southern camp in a former distillery building and the northern camp of huts. The distillery buildings were demolished in 1934 and nothing survives of the northern camp apart from a collapsing wooden hut.

Black Hall Camp.



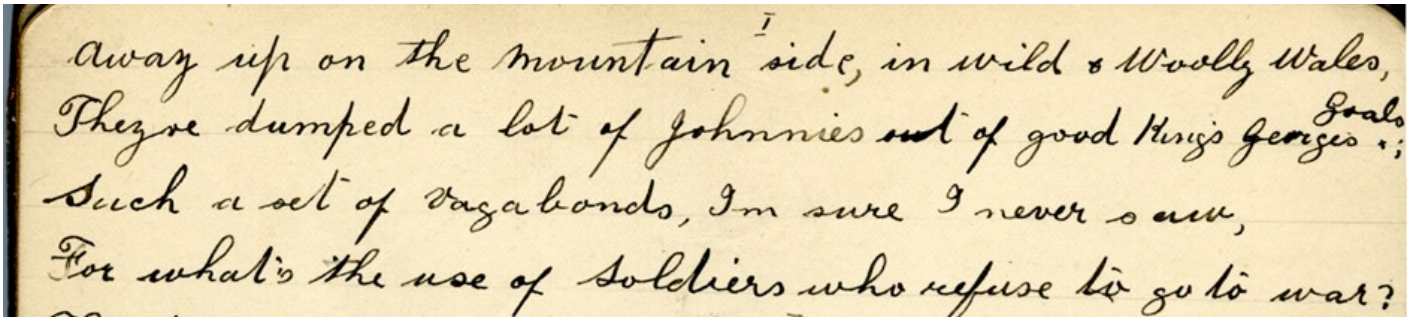
Above: Postcard of Frongoch Concentration Camp (Roger J C Thomas collection).
Left: Two prisoners with spades believed to be at Frongoch (Roger J C Thomas collection).
Below: The last surviving element of Frongoch Camp. This hut was designated a listed building on account of the importance of the site. However, some authorities dispute its authenticity, believing it was moved to Frongoch from Capel Celyn prior to the construction of a dam and the flooding of the Tryweryn valley in 1965 (Gwynedd Archaeological Trust).

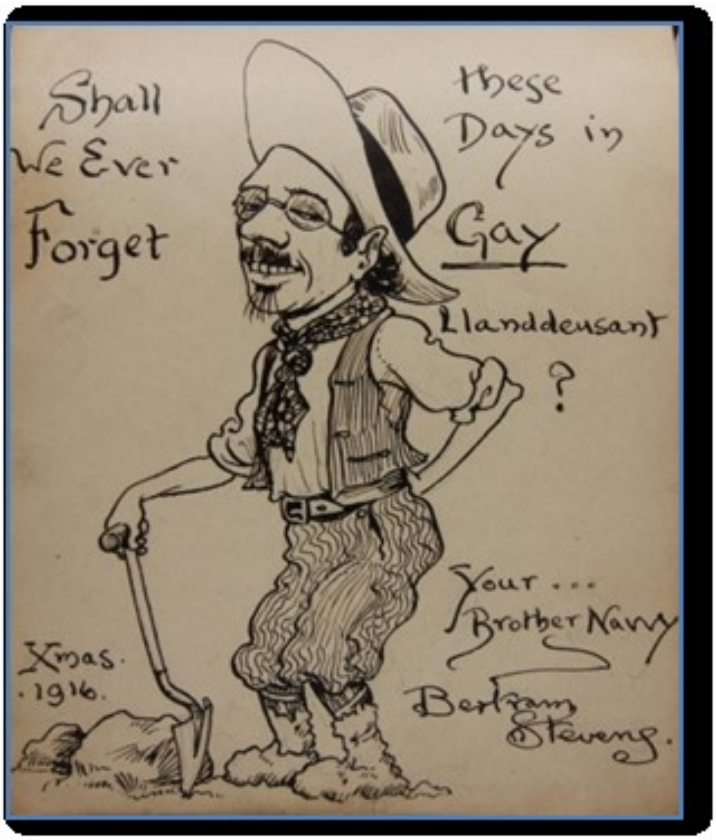
Refusing to fight

As causalities escalated it become clear that a compulsory scheme of military service was necessary to supplement professional soldiers and volunteers. The Military Service Act of 1916 compelled all men of military service age to enlist or provide a certificate of exemption from a local tribunal. Individuals could be exempted on the basis of doing work of national interest, health or infirmity, serious hardship or conscientious objection. About 20,000 conscientious objectors refused to take up arms on either religious or political grounds. Many took on non-combatant roles; the alternative was to work on a Home Office Scheme, such as building roads, quarrying and land reclamation, usually in what was considered out-of-the-way places.

Llyn y Fan Fach filter beds as they are today (Dyfed Archaeological Trust).

In Carmarthenshire a Home Office Scheme consisted of constructing a reservoir and filter beds at Llyn y Fan Fach on the western edge of the Brecon Beacons and a pipeline to the industrial town of Llanelli 30 miles to the south. Work started in 1914 using Irish workmen, but conditions were reported as difficult and in 1916 Llanelli Council first sought German prisoners of war as replacement labour and then conscientious objectors. Around 200 objectors from across Britain worked on the scheme, housed in barracks at the foot of the Black Mountain or lodged with local families. The objectors left a remarkable legacy of photographs, sketches and poetry documenting their time in Carmarthenshire. Llyn y Fan Fach is now popular with walkers, and although some are familiar with the legend of the 'Lady in the Lake' few are recognise the small but significant role the area played during the First World War.


away up on the mountain side, in wild & Woolly Wales,
They've dumped a lot of Johnnies out of good King's Georges Goals
Such a set of Vagabonds, I'm sure I never saw,
For what's the use of Soldiers who refuse to go to war?



Above: Extract from the Llyn y Fan Fach autograph book (Peter Davies collection)

Left: Cartoon by Bertram Stevens of a fellow conscientious objector at Llyn y Fan Fach (The Record Office for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland).

Below:
Llyn y Fan Fach filter beds under construction (Peter Davies collection).

Commemorating the dead

The slaughter of soldiers in the First World War was on an unprecedented scale: the wave of commemoration was equally unprecedented. Today, memorials represent the most obvious physical and poignant reminder of the war; since their erection they have increased in stature, becoming the focus of all conflict memorialisation, not just of the First World War.

In 1915 the decision was taken to ban the repatriation of bodies of soldiers killed during the war, as a consequence bereaved families had no grave to provide an acknowledgment and acceptance of death and for them to start the grieving process. Although not a substitute for individual commemoration, communal memorials and the rituals around the unveiling ceremonies did provide succour for mourning families and relatives

Even before the Armistice of 1918 towns and parishes had established committees to determine the most appropriate memorial for their community. As with all committees there were disagreements: should the memorial be a monument, a plaque in the parish church, a communal hall or a garden? If a monument, should it be placed in the churchyard or prominently in the village or town centre, should the names of the fallen be recorded and what about those who served, would Christian symbolism be appropriate or something neutral, and what about the language – Welsh or English?

Many thousand, if not tens of thousands, memorials survive in Wales – the exact number is not known – with smaller memorials and rolls of honour in chapels, churches, institutions and places of work. They have become part of our landscape and although they continue to act as the focus for communal commemoration some are now also recognised as important historic features, with many having listed building designation.

Unusual, if not unique, personal memorialisation can be found in a subway running beneath the railway near Berwyn Station, Denbighshire. David Gepp has researched the names and messages written on the subway walls with indelible pencils issued to First World War soldiers. One reads 'Berlin last stop' and another is a signed A J Candy – an Alfred James Candy is named on Llangollen's war memorial having fallen in action, as do four of the others who wrote their names on the walls.

Celtic crosses as at Llandissilio West in Pembrokeshire were a popular choice for memorials in Wales. Some architects considered this type of cross vulgar and would only tolerate simple, austere latin crosses for memorials (Dyfed Archaeological Trust).

Above: It is likely that a group of archaeologists investigating the prehistory of Marros parish in Carmarthenshire before and after the First World War provided the design for this unique memorial, clearly based on a Stonehenge trilithon (Dyfed Archaeological Trust).

Above left: Eric Gill created this memorial to the 66 men from Chirk, Denbighshire, who died in the war (Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust).

Below left: The North Wales Heroes' Memorial commemorating the 8500 people from the region who died in active service (Roger J C Thomas collection).

Below: Memorial halls ranged from the ornate, such as the large Arts and Crafts style building at Pembrey in Carmarthenshire to this more modest timber and metal hall at Llangybi in Ceredigion built in 1926 (Dyfed Archaeological Trust).

Aftermath

Did immediate post-war government policies and initiatives have an impact on the landscape of Wales? Unlike after the Second World War there was no immediate imperative to provide new housing following the destruction of British cities. Some local housing schemes were implemented, such as Pembrey Farm Settlement, Carmarthenshire where twenty houses had been erected by 1920, but these were modest in scale compared to those post Second World War, and David Lloyd George's promise made eighteen days after the Armistice that his party would 'make Britain a fit country heroes to live in' was never fully realised, although it did eventually lead to the building of council houses.

The establishment of the Forestry Commission in 1919 was a result of the First World War and has resulted in a profound change to the Welsh landscape. During the war Britain was heavily dependent on imported timber, for general building work, pit props and, importantly for the war effort, to manufacture cordite from wood alcohol. Private woodland felled during the war was replanted and new forests created. As a result 15% of Wales is now woodland.

The enormous economic and social effects on post-war Britain are acknowledged, researched and documented. These too, less overtly, have had an impact on the Welsh landscape. The following are just two examples. Women being less inclined to enter domestic service following their empowerment and suffrage was just one factor in the decline, abandonment and demolition of many large country houses and the breaking up of large estates. Britain could not exert its imperial power in the way it had before the war. During the war Pembroke Dockyard employed over 4000 people, but in 1926 the cash-strapped Admiralty closed it. As the Royal Navy required fewer ships, the demand for high quality steam coal from the South Wales coalfield declined, and this, with the depression of the 1920s and the general strike of 1926 exacerbated, the long decline of the coal mining industry, resulting in a profound change in the South Wales landscape.

Further information

Further information and reports on the research and survey done by the four Welsh archaeological trusts can be found on their respective websites:

Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust

www.cpat.org.uk/

Dyfed Archaeological Trust

http://www.dyfedarchaeology.org.uk/ww1/index.html

Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust

http://www.ggat.org.uk/cadw/first_world_war/index.html

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

http://www.heneb.co.uk/ww1/index.html

Information on The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales's **U-Boat Project Wales 1914-18: Commemorating the War at Sea** can be found at https://uboatproject.wales

Records of all historic environment sites in Wales can be found on the Archwilio website—**www.archwilio.org.uk**

The website **www.coflein.gov.uk** provides a catalogue to archives on historic environment sites in the National Monuments Record.

Cof Cymru provides information on designated historic environment assets in Wales including scheduled monuments and listed buildings—**www.cadw.gov.wales/advice-support/cof-cymru**

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