

‘To the Sons of Wales who gave their lives for their Country in the War of 1914-1918’¹

A study into how the communities of Briton Ferry and Neath commemorated their fallen following the Great War.



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¹ Extract taken from the inscription on the Welsh National War Memorial, Cathays Park, Cardiff. The memorial at Cardiff is described as being "a small temple in honour of the dead, and a place of rest and remembrance for the living" [see Appendix 13].

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Abstract

This dissertation will focus around the acts of commemoration within the two communities of Neath and Briton Ferry, and how they challenge and support previous conceptions regarding the art of memorialisation in Wales. This will assess how the use of language reflects individual communities, and how memorials were constructed to promote politics on unveiling day, rather than emphasising the sacrifice of individuals and their families. In order to properly assess the role that memorials play within communities, we will discuss the changes in historiography surrounding how willing the Welsh were to go to War, and how this new argument can alter our perception on what memorials were to represent, emphasising that pride was not on the minds of the bereaved but rather grief. We will also discuss how memorialisation and commemoration was not new, but rather a continuing and evolving concept and style of remembrance outdating most modern memory. The issue of modern day commemoration can lead many to believe that little care is given to memorials, as they are vandalised consistently around the nation. Yet see examples of monuments representing key moments in Welsh history and culture. However, we understand that it is not the fact that no one cares but rather their role has changed in society, instead of being sites of mourning and despair they are now physical reminders of the price paid in war and we look upon them with pride and with thanks. Overall, commemoration is as important today as it was to the same communities almost one hundred years ago, with these two memorials fulfilling needs for the communities both in physical and emotional terms. Even though elements of pride and rivalry may have been present during their unveiling, this meant little to those families that were finally given a place to grieve and reflect on their loved ones who will never return.

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Introduction & Aims and Methodology

When the armistice was finally declared on the 11th November 1918,² it signified the end of a long and bitter four-year conflict, a war that H.G. Wells and Woodrow Wilson described as a “War to end all Wars”.³ With an end finally reached, it allowed nations to come to terms with, and begin to assess, the extensive mass destruction that was brought about by a more modern style of warfare. What made it so modern was the rapid development of technology and weaponry. Leaving behind the Wellington era of cannonade and musket and introducing the time of machine gun and chlorine gas. Along with the advancement of weaponry, the scale in which war could be waged increased drastically. This can be seen with the Great War being fought across varying theatres of combat, stretching as far east as Japan across to Belgium, as far south as Africa and delving down into the depths of the Atlantic Ocean by the means of submarine warfare.⁴

The result of a war being fought across the globe, with tactics and weaponry never really seen before, was the inevitably high fatality rate. Of course, some countries experienced greater losses than that of others, with Britain alone losing an estimated 750,000 sons, fathers, uncles and brothers to the cause.⁵ The sheer intensity and ferocity of fighting lead to a scale of loss that Britain had never seen by this point, in terms of men killed in service to King and Country.

Alongside all of these war-time developments, it was only after the War had ended did Britain experience a slow but imposing change in public and national commemoration, and how this large wave of commemoration visually impacted towns and cities across the United

² A.J.P. Taylor, *The First World War: An Illustrated History*, [originally published by Hamish Hamilton in 1963], (London, Penguin Books, 1966) p. 249.

³ Originally penned by H.G. Wells, *The War that Will End War*, (F. & C. Palmer, London, 1914), accessed via the following link: <https://archive.org/details/warthatwillendwa00welluoft>, last accessed on 06/02/2018.

- Later rephrased by Woodrow Wilson, US President, 1917.

⁴ H.P. Willmott, *World War I*, (Great Britain, Dorling Kindersley Ltd., 2015), pp. 90-94, 100, 176-177.

⁵ A. Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 253.

Kingdom forever. It was left to the communities that had raised these men, to discuss and decide the most appropriate way in which to remember all those who never came back.

What makes commemoration following the Great War more personal to communities is how there was no wrong way in which the towns and villages could gather and mourn. Communities could be free to grieve and memorialise in any manner of their choosing, and in ways they felt would allow the people to properly grieve. Gaffney discusses a similar notion, stating that “the emotional reaction of the British public... was a testament to the overwhelming need for a visible representation of their grief”.⁶ Now with the ability to commemorate in a way that they deemed fit, communities were able to construct varying types of memorials. These ranged from plaques erected within churches,⁷ memorial hospitals in which the community could use, and to the more iconic ‘Tommy’, an iconic image which many people would link to the war and remembrance.⁸ By representing the ordinary soldier rather than single military heroes, classical allegory was ultimately transformed.⁹ Though some memorials may share similar styles and designs, it is important to remember that there was little chance of any two memorials being established under similar circumstances for whatever reasons. This allows us as historians and as members of the public to acknowledge how every community throughout Wales had its own personal needs and factors that would have influenced their final memorial.

This study will be looking into the ways in which the communities of Neath and Briton Ferry chose to memorialise, and commemorate, their fallen following the Great War. The opening

⁶ A. Gaffney, *Aftermath: Remembering the Great War in Wales*, (Cardiff, Cardiff University of Wales Press, 1998), p. 26.

⁷ An example of such a memorial can be found within the chapel at the University of Wales Lampeter, listing names of students who had died during the Great War. We would be safe to assume that the men on this plaque would have been memorialised in their home towns. But what is significant is that the University wished to remember them as their students.

⁸ There are many examples of these types of memorials across Wales, most notably the war memorial in Lampeter shows the Tommy almost at ease with his rifle slung across his shoulder. The designs vary depending on the sculptor and the atmosphere the artist wished to present.

⁹ L. Mason, ‘Is it nothing to you, all ye who pass by? Commemorating the Great War in Ammanford 1920-1937’ in *Llafur: Journal of Welsh People’s History*, Volume 11, No. 1, 2012, 49-62, p. 49.

quote used in the title was taken from the inscription on the National War Memorial in Cathays Park, Cardiff. It eloquently summarises why these memorials were constructed and embraces the main characteristics that every memorial across Wales shares with one another, and that is to remember those who would never return home. This will involve assessing the pre-war attitudes behind Wales going to war in the first place, understanding if those feelings do come back to the forefront of people's minds when the war is over and whether this affects the overall meaning of the memorial within the community. Then we will address the ways in which Wales decided to commemorate the dead, and whether the impact of grief and loss was as sudden as the wars end, or whether there was a slow progression that increased in pace as the war drew to a close.

We will then assess the decisions made by the memorial committees in regards to the Briton Ferry and Neath War Memorials, and whether they reflect their respective communities in a positive manner. This investigation will hope highlight whether these memorials had followed a similar pattern to other memorials within Wales by comparing my finding to the scholarly works of Dr Lester Mason and Angela Gaffney. We will also be assessing the use of language within memorialisation, and whether their choice of inscriptions and language reflects the towns in terms of their people and their occupations. Finally, we will look at whether the unveiling ceremonies were more centred around the people or more so the politics, the latter being an influential and constant factor within Memorial construction, just the level of influence was a variant.

In my final chapter, I will be assessing the significance of Great War commemoration today, assessing whether they are indeed valued and maintained as well as they would have been almost one hundred years on. It will be important to finish the case study with an assessment of memorials in a more modern context, primarily because those that were responsible for their construction, and the surviving veterans, are all but gone. Meaning that many people today may not fully understand the memorials significance and meaning. This can be put down to younger generations living in a time which has not seen such suffering and loss on such a large scale, yet people from older generations may recall from stories or seeing the wars first hand.

The purpose of this dissertation is not to say whether the communities of Briton Ferry and Neath memorialised their fallen correctly or incorrectly. Its purpose is to understand why these communities made the decisions that they did, and highlight the individual significance and influence that these memorials hold within the lives of their respected communities.

Where the Welsh Willing to go to War?

Before addressing how the communities of Briton Ferry and Neath memorialised and commemorate their fallen, we first need to understand the feelings the Welsh people had expressed when war was declared in 1914. Being able to address the historical debates that surround whether the nation was willing to fight, allows us to understand why war memorials became an important symbol to communities and families when the war finally ended. This assessment will involve looking at the historiography of whether the Welsh were willing to fight, looking at two major arguments surrounding the reasons and feelings the Welsh people had expressed towards the war in the first place. I will then present my own suggestions as to whether the Welsh were willing to go to fight.

The first major view posed by Welsh historians is one of the Welsh people being completely behind the idea of going to war. This view, headed by Welsh historian Kenneth Morgan dating back to the 1980's, paints a picture that "the Welsh people cast aside their political and industrial divisions, and threw themselves into the war with gusto."¹⁰ This is a bold claim, however he does not have any form of evidence in which to back up these strong, patriotic notions which he suggests were flooding Wales when war was announced. Morgan makes further claims that Welshmen had "enlisted in such vast numbers that the proportion of the male population engaged in the armed forces... outstripped that for either England or Scotland."¹¹ Again, Morgan makes strong rash claims about the nations involvement, with little to no evidence to support his claims. What is more concerning is Morgan is not alone when it comes to these views. Historians and writers, such as Angela Gaffney,¹² J. Graham

¹⁰ K.O. Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation: A History of Modern Wales*, [originally published in 1981], (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 159.

¹¹ Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation*, p. 160.

¹² Gaffney, *Aftermath*, p. 9.

Jones and D. Gareth Evans,¹³ either mention Morgan's work without criticism, or present similar arguments that support Morgan's ideology of a 'pro-war Wales'.¹⁴

Contrary to this claim, a more recent argument has come to light from the earlier half of this decade. Higher Education advisor Robin Barlow, based in Aberystwyth University, has begun to challenge these claims that have been so heavily implanted into Welsh culture and society, turning the discussion surrounding the willingness of the Welsh to fight on its head. His writing, as part of a nation-wide campaign to throw "new light on the history of Wales",¹⁵ wishes to challenge the folk memory that has been deeply rooted over the past decades, and wishes to construct a more accurate depiction of Welsh involvement and feeling. He wishes to make clear that Welsh involvement in the First World War was indeed important, and their successes in the war should not be dampened,¹⁶ but he highlights important factors regarding the level of their willingness to indeed fight the war.

Barlow counters the claims of the Welsh "marching away happily..." by highlighting that the "vast majority of the population of Wales was unable to comprehend the reasons for this course of action", and "had no perception of the nature of the war that was to come".¹⁷

With emotions like these being present in the Welsh people before men had even began to board the trains for the front, it is easy to understand why such feelings of an incomprehensible war, were once again flooding back to people's minds in 1918 when the war was over.

We also need to understand that the most 'modern' war that Britain had fought around that period was the Boer War of 1899.¹⁸ This was a war that was fought under very different

¹³ R. Barlow, 'Did Wales go willingly to the First World War?' in *A New History of Wales: Myths and Realities in Welsh History*, ed. by H.V. Bowen, (Ceredigion, Gomer Press, 2011), [150-158], p. 150.

¹⁴ Barlow, 'Did Wales go willingly to the First World War?' in *A New History of Wales*, p. 150.

¹⁵ Editor H.V. Bowen highlights the reasonings behind the collaboration of academic historians and the national newspaper in his introduction to *A New History of Wales: Myths and Realities in Welsh History*, (Ceredigion, Gomer Press, 2011), p. 9.

¹⁶ Barlow, 'Did Wales go willingly to the First World War?' in *A New History of Wales*, p. 158.

¹⁷ Barlow, 'Did Wales go willingly to the First World War?' in *A New History of Wales*, p. 152.

¹⁸ Barlow, 'Did Wales go willingly to the First World War?' in *A New History of Wales*, p. 151.

circumstances, using a form of warfare that could be viewed as primitive when compared to the Great War. The town of Briton Ferry only sustained one casualty during the entire Boer War campaign, with a plaque commemorating his life currently residing inside the Briton Ferry Library today.¹⁹ For a small town in the South Wales valleys to go from sustaining one casualty in one war, to then go on to lose one hundred and sixteen men in the next, suggests that the British public, and indeed the government, were never prepared for the unfathomable casualty statistics that Barlow suggests. It was this uncertainty that “ensured the bereavement became a shared experience throughout” according to Gaffney,²⁰ which is understandable, as many people were impacted either directly or indirectly by the loss of life in the Great War. By having this shock dealt to everyone at the same time across Britain, it indeed brought everyone together in a collective mood to remember and memorialise those who would not come back.

What we gain from Barlow’s extensive argument is that Wales was not as willing to go to war as many historians have led people to believe for so long. So, I agree that Barlow presents a more accurate assessment as to what the Welsh feeling was towards the war. I believe that this misrepresentation of a nation’s willingness in the war has clouded what these war memorials were built to represent, and in fact can completely alter their meaning of representation. Of course, the families of those lost would have some feelings of pride for what they gave for victory. Yet these memorials are not constructed to display a willingness to go to war, in fact quite the opposite. War Memorials are a physical testimony to the sacrifices made by families and soldiers, there to serve as a reminder of what modern-warfare costs rather than focus on the glorification of death.

Another factor to consider is the industrial role in which the Welsh were to play in this conflict. Prior to the wars outbreak, Wales had a booming industry in areas such as zinc [with around 75% of Britain’s zinc coming from the Swansea area] and most notably coal,

¹⁹ Imperial War Museums War Memorials Register, *Pte M. Whelan Memorial Details*, [publishing date unknown], accessed via the following link: <https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/36895>, last accessed on 08/05/2018.

²⁰ Gaffney, *Aftermath*, p. 1.

with South Wales coal contributing approximately one third of coal exports in the UK.²¹ So with this wealth of work and prosperity that was residing in South Wales, large numbers of migrants from outside of Wales were coming to work. So, when we see statistics regarding Welsh recruitment, all might not be as it seems. Barlow suggests that more migrants were recruited into the British Army within the South Wales Valleys more so than actual Welsh citizens because of their migration to find work prior to the outbreak of war.²² This leads us to assume that the 'Welsh' recruits published in statistics may not have been truly Welsh to begin with, further supporting Barlow's argument that Wales may not have been as willing to go to war as previously believed.

Contrary, with a high concentration of miners in one area, we can argue that there was some form of willingness to support the war effort, as roughly 1 in 5 miners joined the Army across Britain,²³ This meant that large swathes of men remained in the pits. The country depended upon its capability to mine coal to fuel ships and trains to transport goods, vehicles and men to the front. Without colliers working hard across Britain, the country and the war machine would have ground to a halt, so most men would remain as an essential contribution to Britain's war effort. So, although the Welsh may not have fully supported the idea of war, and perhaps less willing to become involved, their actions underground show that men were willing to contribute towards the war through indirect means.

Although miners did sign up to join the army, I would argue that the need for miners to remain has influenced national averages to portray Wales as being less willing to fight than Barlow suggests. Gaffney estimates that the county of Glamorgan, where Briton Ferry and Neath were situated at the time, raised an expected 50,000 men to join the New Army, with two battalions of miners and mining officials coming from within the Rhondda Valleys

²¹ G.E. Jones, *Wales 1880-1914*, accessed via the Open University as a .pdf, [publishing date unknown], accessed via the following link: http://www.open.edu/openlearn/ocw/pluginfile.php/59855/mod_oucontent/oucontent/369/c823f970/73c20f54/wales1880_1914.pdf?forcedownload=1, last accessed on 03/03/2018.

²² Barlow, 'Did Wales go willingly to the First World War?' in *A New History of Wales*, p. 154.

²³ J.F. Martin, *The government and control of the British coal industry 1914-18*, (J.F. Martin, 1981), p. 17.

alone.²⁴ Using the 1911 census, we can estimate that the county of Glamorganshire had a population close to 1.2 million people before the outbreak of war,²⁵ with approximately 220,000 men being of age to go enlist in the war,²⁶ working out at around 22% of the population of Glamorgan were able to enlist. Considering that the county of Glamorgan included many mines and steel works within its borders, we can suggest that highly industrialised areas would have a negative impact the national average. This can be seen with the national recruitment average being over 21%, according to a report published by the War office in 1922,²⁷ stressing that it would take almost every man in Glamorgan to enlist just to meet the average. Highlighting that it was nearly impossible for industrial counties such as Glamorgan to meet the national average of recruitment, merely because of their importance to constructing and fuelling the war machine.

There is further evidence that supports Barlow's assessment of Welsh willingness, by comparing voluntary recruitment in Wales to that of other countries within Britain. Taking the national figure at 21%, it is suggested that roughly 5.83% of Welsh people voluntarily enlisted to fight. This figure is lower than both England and Scotland, but only by .8%.²⁸ This supports Barlow's claim, showing that yes Wales was not as willing to fight in the War as once thought, but taking into account that the difference in volunteers in England and Scotland was less than 1%, it can be argued that most nations did not wish to fight willingly in the war.

²⁴ Gaffney, *Aftermath*, p. 96.

²⁵ Find My Past, *Results for 1911 Census For England & Wales*, accessed via the following link: <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/results/world-records/1911-census-for-england-and-wales?keywordsplace=glamorganshireutf002c%20wales&county=glamorganshire>, last accessed via the following link: 18/03/2018.

²⁶ Find My Past, *Results for 1911 Census For England and Wales*, accessed via the following link: https://search.findmypast.co.uk/results/world-records/1911-census-for-england-and-wales?keywordsplace=glamorganshireutf002c%20wales&county=glamorganshire&gender=male&yearofbirth=1883&yearofbirth_offset=10, last accessed 18/03/2018.

²⁷ The War Office, *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War*, held in the British Library, p. 365, accessed via the following link: <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/statistics-of-military-effort-of-british-empire>, last accessed on 02/03/2018.

²⁸ Barlow, 'Did Wales go willingly to the First World War?' in *A New History of Wales...*, p. 153.

In summary, we have seen how historiography has altered over the last few decades, leaning away from this perceived notion that Wales was willing to march off to war, but more recent arguments addressing that there were feelings of unwillingness within the people. We can stress that Barlow presents a stronger case as to why Wales was not as willing to fight as previously discussed by Morgan, and that these previously established myths should be addressed in more detail to accurately display Welsh feeling. We have also highlighted that Wales held many highly skilled men, who were needed at their workplace to support the war effort indirectly. It has also been suggested that a large majority of workers within Wales were not Welsh but in fact migrants, further suggesting that published figures may not tell the whole story of Welsh involvement. Overall, we have seen that changing attitudes towards the Welsh and their involvement in the war allows us to properly understand the role that these war memorials would play within communities than previously thought. Leaning away from pride and nationalistic feeling, to feelings revolving around grief and mourning, with thoughts of nationalistic pride not being their main priority.

Memorialisation in Wales

Wales as a nation was not new to the concept of commemoration and memorialisation. Britain itself has been commemorating victories in conflict dating as far back as the Napoleonic Wars in the early 1800s according to Mosse.²⁹ Such evidence exists in the classical allegory of important and heroic wartime figures, monuments such as Nelsons column in Trafalgar Square, London. A monument that was constructed to celebrate and immortalise the successes of one man following his death for his country.³⁰ Since then, some elements of commemoration have remained similar,³¹ but I would argue that the meaning and importance of war memorials had shifted over the centuries. We see with the memorials dedicated to the Boer War that there was little focus on the achievements of the individual man, and more attention was drawn towards the sacrifice that individual men made in order to achieve victory. There has also been a shift in who should be represented on such memorials. Lester Mason emphasises that classical allegory has transformed to represent the “typical” soldier rather than single military figures.³² Although we can see examples of such changes in allegory appearing on memorials following the Boer War,³³ we also see an increase in the number of local and communal war memorials at the same time. King notes that “many monuments” were erected in response to the loss of life that was sustained in Africa.³⁴ This concept of more localised groups taking it upon themselves to

²⁹ G.L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the memory of the World Wars*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 46.

³⁰ The British Library, *Nelson’s Column under construction*, [publishing date unknown], accessed via the following link: <http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/pointsofview/themes/beginnings/column/index.html>, last accessed on 21/03/2018.

³¹ A. King, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain: The Symbolism and Politics of Remembrance*, (Oxford, Berg, 1998), p. 40.

³² Mason, *Commemorating the Great War in Ammanford 1920-1937*, p. 49.

³³ Swansea’s Boer War Memorial has two sculptured figures placed on the top of the pillar, none are of any military hero but ‘typical’ soldiers. See Plate 11.

³⁴ King, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain*, p. 40.

commemorate their own dead can be seen here, and the ways in which communities began to take responsibility and pride in displaying a monument that is relevant to them. However, Mason states that “The intensity and scale of loss following the Great War resulted in a collective display of bereavement and mourning unprecedented in British history”, and he argues that it was these factors that heavily contributed to the constructing of the “countless war memorials dedicated to the fallen”.³⁵ Although these points offer some form of understanding as to why memorialisation became an integral form of collective memory, I feel that there were other factors that influenced why memorials became as important and as widespread as they did within Wales.

Gaffney suggests that one reason why war memorials became far more relevant and significant to the Welsh people, was as a result of the “decision... to ban the repatriation of bodies” back to Britain in 1915.³⁶ I would have to agree with Gaffney, as being able to bring men back to their home town in order to be interred would have offered some form of peace to family’s and indeed the community. However, by separating the man from his home in such a way, disallowing families the right to bring them home, emphasises how crucial it was to find a suitable and appropriate way for people to mourn and grieve in the way that best suited them. Although there was nothing to stop families from going out to the military graveyards dotted across the different battlegrounds, it would only be open to people with wealth behind them, as the cost of such an excursion was well out of reach for many working-class families.³⁷ We can also argue that the decisions behind the banning of the repatriation of bodies was a positive mood in emphasising collective memory, as the “Imperial War Grave Commission was guided by the principle of equality of sacrifice and therefore equality of commemoration.”³⁸ As a result, every man regardless of rank and creed received the same headstone and same internment as the next, removing the class barriers that perhaps would have remained in place if bodies were interred at home.

³⁵ Mason, *Commemorating the Great War in Ammanford 1920-1937*, p. 49.

³⁶ Gaffney, *Aftermath*, p. 25.

³⁷ Gaffney, *Aftermath*, p. 25.

³⁸ Gaffney, *Aftermath*, p. 25.

So, in reaction to the banning of repatriation, the next suitable option would be to construct a site in the community which could fulfil the role of a grave. A place in which the community could gather and contemplate what these men gave for their country, and indeed begin to question why it needed to happen as many public speakers had during memorial unveilings.³⁹ In turn, the war memorials that were to be constructed disestablished any sort of class difference between those who died, upholding the War Grave Commissions principle. There were no divisions placed on the memory of sacrifice that these memorials were there to represent, meaning that a working-class miner could have his name above that of a well-off banker. This removal of the class structure on war memorials reflects the lives that these men led in their final years in the trenches, they all were to suffer the same fate as one another in conditions where even bullets and artillery shrapnel did not judge on class.

The act of commemoration during the Great War is a topic that is discussed little, but only by a selection of historians when looking at memorialisation in Wales. However, some historians do not emphasise that memorialisation and commemoration was a process that occurred whilst the war was still being fought, and that grief was not this sudden expression that fell on the nation as has been hinted towards. It suggests that grief was an emotion, a feeling that grew gradually in direct correlation to the increase of casualties. Alex King talks about how churches held services to remember those that had died within their parishes. Although King is referring to these acts as a collective within Britain, it supports the notion that Wales was not met with this sudden wave of grief as can be easily assumed by reading other works about the post-war mood within Britain. In fact, the opening paragraph of Masons article into the commemoration of the dead in Ammanford does not hint to any inter-war commemorations taking place.⁴⁰ Gaffney presents a striking summary of Welsh involvement, “war was about death and dying. Men from Wales enlisted, fought and died in

³⁹ One such example is Major Gwilym Lloyd George’s critique of the war at the unveiling of the Clynderwen War Memorial in September 1922 as used in a lecture by Dr. L. Mason titled *Addressing the Great War: War Memorial unveiling speeches in West Wales 1919-25*, lecture held 21/03/2018.

⁴⁰ Mason, *Commemorating the Great War in Ammanford 1920-1937*, p. 49.

their thousands whilst at home families waited, grieved and consoled each other.”⁴¹ What is noticeable to me is the use of the word ‘waited’, this could have connotations of people waiting to receive any news regarding their loved ones whether good or ill, hinting towards this idea that emotions of grief were present during the inter-war years, as many families were to receive the worst news as the war was fought. On the other hand, it can to some extent support the previous thought that there was indeed a pause in grief. An image can be formed of the country holding its breath, waiting the war out and finally being able to exhale when the war was over, letting out all the bottled-up grief and emotion in one concentrated outburst.

What is of equal interest is how these mid-war ceremonies were conducted, Alex King discusses how these commemorative services were not just to memorialise the dead but what was of equal importance was the involvement of the men who were still fighting, with the lifting up of prayers for their safety.⁴² What we begin to see is how those who were still living began to play an active part within the commemorative process, but as time progressed and the war drew to a close this structure began to shift and reorganise itself to the reflective mood that we would link with memorial day today. King notes that these prayers given for the safety of the living were to maintain morale at home, which I would agree was of great importance to the nation, as it would offer some peace to those families who said goodbye to loved ones for the sake of the country, was somehow worth the possible sacrifice. Yet when men did return home after the war, those prayers were no longer needed for their safety, hence why communities became encompassed in displaying their emotions of grief when the war ended. It marked a clear point that would allow people to finally come together in the collective display of mourning that Mason refers to.

⁴¹ Gaffney, *Aftermath*, p. 10.

⁴² King, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain*, p. 44.

Case Study: In What Ways Did the Communities of Briton Ferry and Neath Commemorate their Fallen?

Although the towns of Briton Ferry and Neath are situated within close proximity to one another, their separation of only a few miles takes us from an area close to the heart of steel production in South Wales, to one at the centre of urban living that provides a vital lifeline to the towns and villages surrounding it. Yet how do the memorials at both Briton Ferry and Neath reflect their communities and their needs? Alex King opens his first chapter with outlying what he determines as the two main principle activities in commemoration following the Great War, listing them as the “performing ceremonies and making memorials”.⁴³ Note how King does not mark the making of memorials as the first principle, instead highlighting that memorials in their physical state were not the primary concern of their communities, but the act of commemoration was of greater importance to the people. I will be using these two principle activities as guidance to better analyse both war memorials but altering them slightly, taking the performing of ceremonies as an end-product of the erecting of these two memorials.

Briton Ferry had a well-established memorial committee that was set up during the war. Aptly titled *The Ferry Boys at the Front Fund Committee*, their objective was to “look after the interests and welfare of Briton Ferry boys serving under the colours”.⁴⁴ It is made evident that the people who were left at home were adamant to undertake such work as a testament to the courage and sense of duty that was being displayed by these men. The committee was composed of “representatives of the employers and employees of the various industries, the residents generally, the various trades and other organizations, together with those of the Discharged and Demobilised Soldiers and Sailors Federation”.⁴⁵ Having residents on the committee, who were to be involved in making large decisions was

⁴³ King, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain*, p. 20.

⁴⁴ *Letter addressed to Earl Douglas Haig, 1921*, West Glamorgan Archive Service, see Appendix 2.

⁴⁵ *Letter to Sir Douglas Haig*, see Appendix 2.

not uncommon across South Wales. Lester Mason emphasises the importance of having “the involvement of working-class interest” and how an increasing level of involvement “was at the forefront” of the Ammanford memorial committees minds.⁴⁶

Neath did not begin to address the need for a local war memorial till much later. A public meeting was held in the July of 1922, “and it was then unanimously resolved to set up a Memorial or Memorials”.⁴⁷

There is no clear reason as to why the town itself did not request a memorial sooner, but I would suggest that it came about to boost the pride of the town and also challenge other memorials in the area, possibly leading to subliminal feelings of rivalry. Lester Mason discusses the issues that can arise when communities begin to rival one another, they begin to lose touch with what the intended purpose of the war memorial was. I would argue that there were some hints of pride emanating from the Neath memorial committee, but also undercurrents of rivalry that can be seen in the letter distributed to the public to begin subscriptions. It reads “...so that the Memorials may be worthy, not merely of the Town of Neath, but of those gallant heroes who made the great sacrifice” [see Appendix Five]. The initial phrase regarding the worth of the town does not need to be mentioned, but it gives a hint that this war memorial was to best the surrounding sites and make Neath stand out, yet still paying their respects in the process. I am not saying that this was indeed the case, but you can sense the mood that the memorial was going to be a centre piece in the community, but maybe went about describing it in the wrong manner.

Having discussed the establishment of the memorial committees and the needs for a memorial addressed, the first sub-chapter will address the decisions made by these committees and look at how they affected the overall commemoration process on unveiling day. This will address points such as the use of language and how the funds were raised to construct these memorials. However, this will not delve into generic correspondence between committees and their suppliers, as this is of little relevance to my study.

Catherine Moriarty describes that the “ultimate objective” of war memorials “was to mould

⁴⁶ Mason, *Commemorating the Great War in Ammanford 1920-1937*, p. 53.

⁴⁷ *Public letter to the people of Neath in regard to setting up a memorial subscription, 2nd August 1922*, WGAS, see Appendix 5.

and control the latter [being private memory] as a specific stabilized narrative which served to unify national memory”.⁴⁸ However I would argue that this is not the case, I suggest that memorials were constructed to serve individual needs within their communities. Acting as a site to memorialise those who gave everything, rather than their main priority being to support a stabilised narrative. King offers a similar thought, writing that “commemoration of the dead did not simply encourage people to remember who they had been and what had happened to them, but to remember them in a particular way”.⁴⁹ Although King is hinting at a particular form remembrance, it could take the form of a community’s ideal way to commemorate, as he is not specific on whether or not it should conform to a unified national memory as Moriarty suggests.

Language and Commemoration.

The use of language on a war memorial can tell a great deal about the area in which it is situated, capturing a small snap-shot of Welsh history in just a collection of lines upon a stone or metal plaque. Briton Ferry was such a town that used only English on both its memorial and on its unveiling day programme. We would assume that this would present some sort of issue, however the purpose of these memorials was to provide a place in which the public could come and reflect on the memories and the lives of the men who never came back. The language decided to pen a quote was purely down to preference, more so in the South Wales Valleys where English played a more crucial role in industry and trade than say more Northern and rural parts of Wales. Angela Gaffney supports this to some degree, arguing that “debates over the place of a language in remembering the fallen were invariably consensual rather than confrontational”.⁵⁰ This is further supported by the location of Briton Ferry within the industrial heartland of South Wales, being on the border of the vibrant Port Talbot Steel Works, and also the local Steel Works based in Briton Ferry

⁴⁸ C. Moriarty, ‘Private Grief and Public Remembrance: British First World War Memorials’ in *War and Memory in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by M. Evans & K. Lunn, (Oxford, Berg, 1997), [125-143], p. 125.

⁴⁹ King, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain*, p. 173

⁵⁰ Gaffney, *Aftermath*, p. 133.

itself. The use of English within work was of the utmost importance, as English was the language of industry across Great Britain, meaning that areas more removed from industry would not be as reliant on the amount of English they needed to use to get by in their day to day lives.

Although Neath was not a major industrial centre like its surrounding neighbours of Swansea and Briton Ferry, it still relied heavily on the use of English. Neath is situated at the mouth of the Neath Valley, meaning traders would travel down the valley with a guarantee of trading in the prominent farmers market in the town centre,⁵¹ or to purchase and sell animals at the local farmyard auctions. It also meant that the inhabitants of Neath would travel up the valley in the pursuance of work on the local farms or in the countless mines in the valley. Despite this prominent use of English, Welsh was still used between the locals in Neath, but also used prominently by farmers and those on the towns outskirts. With the Neath memorial committee producing a bilingual memorial, it reflects the diverse community in which it was designed to commemorate. After analysing primary documents regarding the mottoes to be used on the memorial gates, councillor Philip Thomas made several suggestions, most were produced bilingually to reflect the use of both English and Welsh in the borough [see Appendix 3]. We can assume that he is a part of the main war memorial committee, however we cannot be sure as there is one piece of evidence in the form of a list of attendees at a committee meeting dated May 27, 1924, and his name is not amongst those present [see Appendix 4]. We would be safe to assume he was on the main committee as he would not have held such influence otherwise, and the Neath borough council was heavily involved in the process, with further strengthens his position. The layout of the text hints at the possibility of Welsh being the prominent language, and would be translated into English rather than vice versa, perhaps hinting towards feelings of nationalistic pride. However, physical evidence shows the motto was to be placed next to one another, with the English being on the left and Welsh on the right [see Plates 5 & 6], perhaps reflecting the equal importance that both Welsh and English played within the community.

⁵¹ Neath Port Talbot Council, Neath Indoor Market, [publishing date unknown], accessed via the following link: <https://www.npt.gov.uk/7721>, last accessed on 08/05/2018.

Originally, I thought the committee opted for a different motto for the memorial gates, as looking at the English and Welsh translations they did not, at first, align. After closer analysis we can see that they opted for the fifth motto, yet the English translation was altered from '*They gave their lives for Liberty*' [see Appendix 3] to '*These poured out the sweet red wine of Youth*' [see Plate 3], the latter being the more accurate translation according to a Welsh Government approved website.⁵² The change in translation offers two different meanings to the memorial, the first presents a more nationalistic element of pride, whilst the latter expresses more of a real understanding of what the war had cost. The altering translations almost highlighting the changes in historiography itself: first the expressions of pride, altering to boast a more emotional and grieving feeling. What is most notable is that this motto is an extract from the Welsh National Anthem, Gaffney alludes to moves such as these as Wales expressing "its coherence and identity as a nation... a desire to communicate pride in the Welsh contribution to the empire's cause" and being "a nation at ease with its own position within the British state and empire".⁵³

Community Involvement.

Community involvement was the heart of the whole commemoration process, both in the making of the memorials and indeed the crucial to the performing of ceremonies, as without the support of the community then local commemoration would have taken a heavy toll. In most cases it would be members of the community who would indeed request their memorials. On the other hand, what we see with the Briton Ferry Memorial is that it was the *Ferry Boys at the Front Fund Committee* who had instilled the initial drive to construct the memorial, which was also not uncommon. Of equal, if not greater, significance was the role that the community played in raising the necessary funds to go towards paying for their respected memorial. Both towns had quickly resorted to raising funds via subscription, where individuals or companies would donate however much they could

⁵² Wales, *Facts about Wales: Welsh National Anthem*, [publish date unknown], accessed via the following link: <http://www.wales.com/national-anthem>, last accessed on 06/04/2018.

⁵³ Gaffney, *Aftermath*, p. 168.

afford in aid of the memorial fund, supporting the sensation that these were to be community memorials, and therefore the community should contribute. *The Ferry Boys at the Front Fund Committee* produced a public letter, explaining the proposed amount to be raised and how it would be used, it reads:

“It is proposed to raise the sum of £5,000, of which £1,500 will be expended in erecting a Memorial Column, and the remainder be devoted to the purpose of rendering financial assistance to the widows and children of those fallen in the war...”.⁵⁴

The committee was dedicated to both those who had lost their lives in the Great War and their immediate family who were left behind as their focus demonstrates, reflected in the committees aims of the subscription process. The breakdown of costs makes evident the two main needs of the community: the first, and greatest, of these needs was to support the immediate families of those that had lost loved ones during the war itself, which is made evident through the larger proportion of the funds going to towards the families. The second of these needs was to supply the community with a more permanent and appropriate site in which people could gather and remember, replacing the “temporary shrine near the Council Offices” that was set up following the end of the war.⁵⁵

The costs for the high quality solid bronze memorial, the inscribed plaques and stonework for the memorial to stand on and the area around the memorial was to equate to around £1500 according to the committee, with the final cost being £200 over the suggested costs according to receipts [see Appendix 7]. Unfortunately, there is no evidence of how much was actually raised via subscription, so we cannot say for certain if the target of £5,000 was indeed reached or even surpassed, but by looking at the costs that the committee was facing for the construction etc. it would be fair to assume that this target would have been reached. What is interesting to note is that a large sum of the subscription amount, approximately £2,000, had come from the Briton Ferry Steel Company whose owner was a Mr Herbert Eccles, the then chair of the *Ferry Boys at the Front Fund Committee*. There is no

⁵⁴ Extract of public leaflet titled: *Briton Ferry War Memorial*, [date unknown], WGAS – NL BFBF 2/4, 2018. See Appendix 6.

⁵⁵ Extract from public leaflet titled: *Briton Ferry War Memorial*, see Appendix 6.

clear indication as to why Mr Eccles would donate almost half of the subscription amount, as there is no evidence on the plaques that he had lost someone close which would present an obvious reason behind someone donating so much. We can only speculate that he was personally affected somehow by how the Great War had impacted the community of Briton Ferry, or perhaps employed and had befriended many of those who never came back.

The Neath War Memorial Committee went down the route of purchasing the rather large Gnoll Estate, located at the eastern side of the Neath Town Centre,⁵⁶ which was to be handed over to the Neath County Council on Memorial Day [see Appendix 12]. Alongside the purchasing of the estate, which was to include the now demolished Gnoll House and grounds, the committee was to construct a memorial gate that would be used by the public to access the estate. Records of the accounts kept by the committee's treasurer, Mr B.W. Davies, indicate that the committee were to "purchase the Gnoll mansion and the surrounding grounds of about 250 acres" at a cost of "£25,000 and a further sum of about £2,000 will be required for an Arch of Honour".⁵⁷ In order to make this possible, they successfully applied for a grant of £15,000 from the Ministry of Health to help purchase the property [see Appendix 8]. What makes the Neath Memorial one of the more unique utilitarian style memorials within South Wales is that it did not serve much of a practical role as say a memorial hall or hospital. In fact, it plays the role of both a utilitarian and monumental style of memorial, being practical in the form of a working gate, but in fact possesses the high walls of names that reflects a more monumental style of memorial. It allowed people the ability to escape from the noises and disruption of the town and to venture up into the more peaceful estate, a place for the bereaved themselves to come and grieve and find something of peace. Yet the purpose of this memorial presents itself as an opposite of what the men at war were facing, who left their lives of peace to climb down into the chaos of war. What is not made clear is whether the people of Neath wanted the

⁵⁶ Neath County Borough Council, *Gnoll Estate Country Park: History*, [publishing date unknown], accessed via the following link: <http://www.gnollestatedcountrypark.co.uk/2483>, last accessed on 12/04/2018.

⁵⁷ Extract of *Document stating cost of estate and how funds were to be acquired regarding the Neath War Memorial*, [c. 1923], WGAS, 2018. See Appendix 9.

Gnoll estate to be purchased and used as public grounds, but we can assume that the Gnoll estate serves as a living memorial garden, with the Arch of Honour serving as the entrance.

Neath relied heavily on subscription to raise the funds necessary purchase the land and memorial. The committee had also arranged for a “War Memorial Week” to be held, where every house within the borough of Neath would be visited and an appeal for donations would be made [see Appendix 15]. Although this would have secured some amount of money, there would have been a great deal of pressure on those in the house to give. Through this extensive involvement of the community, the Neath memorial committee managed to raise close to £14,000 in subscriptions. Using the Western Mail newspaper to publicise those that donated the largest amounts, encouraging wealthier members to subscribe and indeed show off, further reflecting elements of pride and rivalry [see Appendix 17]. To put that into some form of context, Briton Ferry raised roughly £5,000, and the country raised approximately £25,700 to help towards the National War Memorial in Cardiff [see Appendix 16]. Gaffney highlights that there was a difficulty in raising funds for a national memorial across Wales, because other counties and areas were in the process of building their own.⁵⁸ However, the fact that one town in South Wales could raise over half of that amount in less than a year as opposed to a whole country within two years is outstanding.

Unveiling Day.

The second of Kings principle activities in commemorating the Great War is the performing of ceremonies,⁵⁹ which I would argue is the more important of the two as it was one of the rare moments where the public played a significant role in the commemorative process, as opposed to playing a minimal role in the decision-making process. The importance of linking commemoration back to the community during the unveiling of memorials is emphasised by King, who points out that the act of “commemoration emphasised the moral rather than the

⁵⁸ Gaffney, *Aftermath*, p. 45.

⁵⁹ King, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain*, p. 20.

military aspects of war death”,⁶⁰ seeing as the public had little involvement in the decisions of war, this way of commemorating ensured that the public could relate to their lost loved ones in other ways, primarily focusing on what their lives were given for, “in the form of loyalty and service to one’s community”.⁶¹ Gaffney even highlights that “congregations and individuals throughout Wales... sought to commemorate their dead in a way that would both honour the sacrifice and provide a degree of solace”,⁶² further supporting how important performing ceremonies would be to the bereaved.

In order to assess whether the unveiling day ceremonies were conducted with the community at the focal point, I will be analysing their respective unveiling day programmes and posters if possible. Although newspapers will offer additional insight into the ceremonies, I feel that looking at the programmes alone will present a more accurate understanding of what was meant to occur on those days without receiving additional bias that “opinion-formers in the press” would convey,⁶³ as King so eloquently puts it.

A large poster displaying the arrangements for the unveiling day ceremony at Briton Ferry indicates that the bereaved families were the main focal point for the whole ceremony [see Appendix 10]. The committee had ensured that there were reserved seats for them, even drawing up plans ahead of time to ensure that the relatives were central and at the forefront of events [see Appendix 11] to ensure they would be the first members of the public to lay their wreaths and view the memorial up close. Although there was some sort of formalised structure that was to be adhered to, there was no indication that the ceremony was made about anyone else apart from those who had suffered the greatest losses of the war. The point was even made to close all businesses at the time of the unveiling ceremony, allowing all members of the public the chance to attend the ceremony and pay their respects accordingly.

⁶⁰ King, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain*, p. 195.

⁶¹ King, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain*, p. 195.

⁶² Gaffney, *Aftermath*, p. 131.

⁶³ King, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain*, p. 208.

Neath, on the other hand, seemed to have taken a different approach, the contents of their programme suggests that a great deal of emphasise was placed more on the important figures who were attending [see Appendix 12], and put more time and emphasise into the formalised unveiling and handing the keys of the gates over rather than greater emphasise being placed on the families. There is no indication that the families were at the forefront of concern at this ceremony, as the only indication of their involvement or even attendance is at the end of the programme, where they were to lay their wreaths “After the Ceremony” was conducted [see Appendix 12.]. Although the actions that took place do not adhere to King’s two suggestions as to why politics became a part of commemoration,⁶⁴ it still suggests that the unveiling ceremony in Neath was one more centred around ceremony rather than commemoration itself.

By incorporating King’s two principle activities of commemoration into this study, we see how different both of these communities really were. What we see is a small yet powerful industrial centre in the form of Briton Ferry constructing a memorial that reflects what the need of the community was following the war: a more permanent site in which to gather and commemorate their dead. With their steel and tin works being used to smelt and construct materials for the war effort, the depiction of the “typical British ‘Tommy’” became a symbol that reflected not only the community’s sacrifice in regard to its dead,⁶⁵ but also served as a reminder of what the community brought to the war effort in terms of raw materials.

Yet down the road we see a vibrant urban community, reflecting both its Welsh roots and its British standing. The needs for this community were made clear when the demand for a memorial was made, but this community were given more than just a memorial constructed of bricks and mortar, but in addition an estate full of the signs of life and light. The estate reflected that although great sacrifices were made, it was not the end.

⁶⁴ King, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain*, pp. 209-210.

⁶⁵ Mason, *Commemorating the Great War in Ammanford 1920-1937*, p. 49.

Is the Act of Commemoration Still Significant?

With the construction of the Cenotaph completed in 1920, the nation has held a national day of remembrance annually,⁶⁶ commemorating the sacrifices made by those who have died in conflicts since the First World War, with most eyes focussing on national leaders and the royal family paying their respects in a moving service.⁶⁷ However, is this one annual service as far as modern-day commemoration extends? Having addressed the efforts and actions that the communities of Briton Ferry and Neath went into in order to commemorate their dead, I feel it is important to see whether these efforts were in vain.

I am not suggesting that the world would have forgotten of the devastation and destruction that the war brought to the world, but rather question whether the war holds equal sentiment and displays the same level of importance in these communities today. Britain is currently in the process of commemorating the centenary of the Great War, with the next Memorial Day marking one hundred years since the guns eventually fell silent across the front. The nation has taken a fascination to the events of the war, and indeed many television programmes and documentaries have been produced since 2014 that highlight the battles and decisions one hundred years on. Yet do we as a nation still commemorate and truly understand the sacrifices made, or do we just follow a nationalised act of remembrance because it is a part of modern day culture? This chapter aims to look at whether war memorials are still as relevant within society today, or since the death of all British World War One veterans and the majority of their families, has their purpose been lost to history.

We can be quick to assume that war memorials no longer convey the same emotions and feelings that they did almost one hundred years ago, due to the constant vandalism of monuments across Britain. In 2015, war graves were desecrated by vandals in a cemetery in West London, with the Metropolitan Police describing the crime as “‘wrong’” according to a

⁶⁶ Gaffney, *Aftermath*, p. 44.

⁶⁷ Gaffney, *Aftermath*, p. 44.

BBC report.⁶⁸ Although this may be an incident regarding war graves, we must remember that war memorials were constructs designed to fulfil the role of a grave for those bereaved families to visit, and vandalising just one memorial is essentially desecrating as many graves as there are names. Bringing things closer to the field of study, in the August of 2009 both the Gnoll memorial gates and the Briton Ferry war memorials were targeted by vandals, but this time it was for their financial value.⁶⁹ Both memorials, and a third in the area, had their bronze plaques ripped from their fixtures to be sold for scrap. The act of vandalism was not performed by drunken youths who just happened to stumble to the site, instead this was a pre-meditated action with a group knowing exactly the cost of bronze at the scrapyards and intended to make some quick cash. This is a clear and relevant example as to how memorials today are seen by some for their materialistic value than perhaps their spiritual and emotional value. Almost ten years since the incidents, one of Briton Ferry's bronze fixtures has not been replaced, perhaps it is out of fear that it would happen again, or it had been replaced along with the rest of the plaques but recently removed again [see Plate 5]. After sending emails to the Neath Port Talbot Council as to whose responsibility it is to replace damaged plaques on war memorials I have received a reply. Delyth Lewis, the Environmental Design and Heritage Officer for the Council, informed me that the council have recently received a grant from Cadw and the War Memorials Trust to complete the work to restore all the memorials damaged back in 2009 [see Appendix 14]. She also made it known that the work would hopefully be finished by the 2018 Memorial Day processions, so they are aware of how important the anniversary of the conflict is, however they estimate that the work would not be completed till June 2019 so there is no guarantee.

On the other hand, there is evidence that supports the notion that memorials are still an integral part of their respective communities, and indeed the history of Wales. At the St Fagans National Museum of History, they have reconstructed the Newbridge War Memorial in 1995 after being originally constructed in its home town back in 1936 [see Plates 6 & 7].

⁶⁸ BBC News, *War graves 'desecrated' in west London*, [published 22nd Nov. 2015], accessed via the following link: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-34895308>, last accessed 18/04/2018.

⁶⁹ BBC News, *War memorial vandalism 'insult'*, [last updated 14th Aug. 2009], accessed via the following link: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/8202365.stm>, last accessed on 18/04/2018.

In order to understand how important this is, we need to first understand the ethos of the museum itself. When the museum was first opened in 1937, its main task:

“was not to create a museum which preserved the dead past under glass but one which uses the past to link up with the present to provide a strong foundation and a healthy environment for the future of their people.”⁷⁰

What this shows is that every building and object within this museum was to perform an instrumental role in upholding the main ethos of the museum, and thus identifies the role that war memorials have played within the lives of the Welsh people and their history is worthy of such a place here. What may be recognisable to most, is that the task of the museum captures the embodiment of what war memorials are designed to represent. Not to separate the dead and the living by this ‘pane of glass’, but to provide a necessary link that supports and strengthens the future of the community. St Fagans also conduct their memorial services at the site, meaning it plays an active role within the museum rather than being reconstructed to just lay in the shadows of other buildings. I would say that this form of active preservation and maintenance of buildings and monuments plays an important role in emphasising how influential the war was within Wales, and these monuments are one of the only physical reminders left within towns and cities across Wales that offers some form of link with the past. One would assume that the memorial was donated to the museum because it was in a state of disrepair, as a large proportion of exhibits have arrived as such, however Newbridge was building a new memorial garden in the town centre. This is most intriguing, as although the community were replacing the memorial with a design that was more suited to their needs today, they decided that the original memorial should go to St Fagans, as the monument was still a significant piece of their history.

Another argument that suggests memorials still play a crucial role in commemoration within Wales, is the fact that memorials are still constructed today in order to commemorate past conflicts and events that have happened in recent years. Close to the Neath Memorial Gates are two, recently erected, war memorials [see Plate 10]: One dedicated to the men who

⁷⁰ St Fagans National Museum of History Webpage, *A Brief History of St Fagans*, accessed via the following link: <https://museum.wales/stfagans/stfagans-history/>, last accessed on 29/04/2018.

died during the conflict in Burma [see Plate 9], and one to those that have died whilst on active service following the Second World War [see Plate 8]. Although memorialisation may still be used, it does not occur without debate. Gaffney highlights that the “debate about the most appropriate way to remember the fallen in Wales became part of a wider debate on social, political and national identity in the post-war years”.⁷¹ Gaffney does stress that this is in regard to more of a collective British identity, rather than a Welsh identity, and regards issues with Ireland as the cause of debate. However, I would argue that the use of memorials as a form of national collective memory is an integral part of Welsh, and indeed British, identity. This can be supported by the fact that St. Fagans have indeed reconstructed a war memorial that did not need to be saved, but did anyhow, highlighting that this form of collective mourning is a characteristic and integral form of memorialisation within the lives of the Welsh people that needs to be remembered as well as utilised today.

Going back to the Briton Ferry war memorial, the community has shown in past public events that the war memorial is still a crucial element in what makes Briton Ferry what it is today. Prior to the 2012 Olympic games held in London, there was an Olympic torch relay of the country that was aimed at giving around 95% of the British public the opportunity to view the torch.⁷² After talking to several people about the subject of this dissertation, it was brought to my attention that the Briton Ferry War Memorial was used as the point in which the Olympic flame would be exchanged between the two runners. When looking at the main road that Briton Ferry is ultimately built around, we note several key and historical buildings along the torches route, such as the Briton Ferry Library and countless long-established churches,⁷³ any one of them being a contender to be an exchange point. Yet out of the many options they were presented with, the organisers had decided to use the War memorial as the exchange point.

⁷¹ Gaffney, *Aftermath*, p. 174.

⁷² Olympic Games, *London 2012 Torch Relay*, [publishing date unknown], accessed via the following link: <https://www.olympic.org/london-2012-torch-relay>, last accessed on 29/04/2018.

⁷³ Briton Ferry Library was constructed in 1901. British Listed Buildings, *Briton Ferry Library including attached Library House*, [published May 2000], accessed via the following link: <https://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/300023307-briton-ferry-library-including-attached-library-house-briton-ferry#.WvCPGIgvzIU>, last accessed on 07/05/2018.

Although this event did not directly involve the memorial in any way, it is somewhat a subtle acknowledgement to the importance that the memorial has within the community. By using it as an exchange point it offers photographers an unlikely background in which to capture the moment, forever acknowledging that the role of the memorial may not be one that is at the forefront of the 21st century, but is still presented with opportunities where it can be put under the spotlight for role it has played in the community over the last hundred years. One could almost compare the war memorial as playing an acknowledged yet reserved role within the town, to the way we remember the Great War itself. Although it may not convey the same emotions and be at the forefront of everyone's minds as it would have been back in the early 20th century, it is still an influential moment in our history that will never be forgotten because of the sacrifices that were made.

We have seen several examples as to why it can be assumed that war memorials may not play a role as important and respected today as it did almost a century ago, being that of acts of vandalism and desecration. However, we have seen countless ways in which war memorials still play an influential role in communities, being recognised by the Welsh National Museum as an integral part of our nation's history and should not be lost to time but rather educate people as to what memorials represent. We have also seen how memorialisation is still a common method in which communities commemorate losses during conflicts, highlighting how effective memorials are in emitting emotion and allowing people to grieve and mourn in their own time, hundreds of years after they were first introduced.

I still believe that War memorials play a role within communities, yet suggest that the role has somewhat altered in some respect. Where war memorials were once a sight of grieving and heartbreak, today they are used as sights in which to commemorate and for thanks to be given, since those who would have grieved at such sites have since passed. Today they sit within the backgrounds of their respective communities, yet they are never forgotten. You will always find a new cross or wreath has been placed at both the Neath and Briton Ferry memorials, signifying that people still acknowledge the sacrifices that were made almost one hundred years ago, sacrifices that allowed us to live the way we do today.

Conclusion

Throughout this dissertation, I have been highlighting the many factors that have influenced collective memory and remembrance in Wales over the course of the century, having brought these factors closer to home by analysing their influence on memorialisation within the communities of Briton Ferry and Neath. We have seen first-hand how the recent developments in the historiography regarding the willingness of the Welsh people to involve themselves can alter our perception on what memorials were built to commemorate in the first place. We have seen how one historian declared that Wales was avidly willing to go off to war, and the nation had committed itself fully to the cause. Whilst on the other hand we have seen Barlow indicate that this was indeed far from the truth. Primary source material has shown that Wales had indeed raised less troops than the rest of Britain but have seen that the south of Wales was an industrial hub, requiring a large proportion of men to remain at work, indirectly supporting the war effort. Overall, I agree that Barlow presents a more accurate assessment of what the real feelings were towards the war in Wales, factors that were a combination of avid support but also incidents where people were not as willing to partake as once believed. This change in historiography has also offered a more accurate understanding of what war memorials were really built to represent, where before there were elements of nationalistic pride being emitted by those building these memorials, instead, we can see that these monuments were a physical reminder of what the war had cost families who lost everything and became only sites of mourning.

We have also seen how Wales was not new to the concept of memorialisation, but rather the act of commemorating the ordinary man in military uniform was a continuation of what communities did after the Boer War but on a far larger scale. We have seen that the art of commemoration became an integral form of upholding memory when bodies were no longer allowed to be repatriated, changing the role of the memorial to act as a grave. This action by the government ultimately allowing those fallen men to be remembered as equals rather than classes, both at home and abroad where they rest today. We have also argued how the act of commemoration was not as sudden as historians have made out, but in fact

started when the war did, but then gradually increased in pace as the war progressed and then peaked when the war ended. Death was a constant during war, as would have been the act of remembrance by families.

When looking at the towns of Briton Ferry and Neath, we have seen how Kings two principle activities of commemoration have highlighted how individual and unique both communities were. We have discussed what the needs of the communities were, and how the memorial committees established their plans in order to compliment them. We have also stressed the importance that the role of language had, and how the use of language mirrors the type of society and the main occupations that were present within their communities. We have highlighted how the change in quotation on the Neath memorial aptly reflected the historiographical argument around willingness, well before such arguments had risen. We have discussed how crucial subscription was to constructing memorials, as without the financial support of the community perhaps there would be no monument, or a cheaper one sitting in its place. We have seen how the committees at both Neath and Briton Ferry succeeded in pointing out the needs of the community, working towards those needs through memorialisation. However, we have seen that the Neath committee was more focussed around the politics of the day rather than expressing their sympathies. Briton Ferry on the other hand making the entire event about the men who died and their families, making the whole day about community.

We have assessed the ways in which memorials are viewed and used within their communities today. Looking at the sensitive topic of vandalism in the country, but also the lack of care that is shown by those that destroy them in order to benefit financially, which I believe to be the worst form of vandalism. We have focussed on how communities still use memorials as part of the commemoration process today, constructing monuments to remember those who have died since the First and Second World Wars up to more modern-day conflicts, and how they still play a role in conserving memory and being places of mourning. Although we have highlighted that the people these memorials were originally built for have since passed, the act of memorialisation is still a prominent form of commemoration that is significant in Welsh life and culture, being highlighted in the National Museum of Wales.

Overall, we have seen how important the construction of memorials were within the communities of Briton Ferry and Neath, and how each of the towns histories are represented and displayed in the little things such as text, style and location. We have seen that although there may be elements of pride, rivalry and a clouding of who these memorials were intended for, we have seen that both communities handled the process with care, attention and compassion in order to provide what the community needed. We have also seen that memorials are still integral in displays of commemoration, with members of the public still leaving messages of thanks and gratitude to men they may never have known before. Although Great War memorials may not be used as sites of mourning today, they are still prominent sites of reflection and contemplation, with the National Museum of Wales emphasising this by placing a reconstructed memorial to highlight their importance in Welsh culture and life.

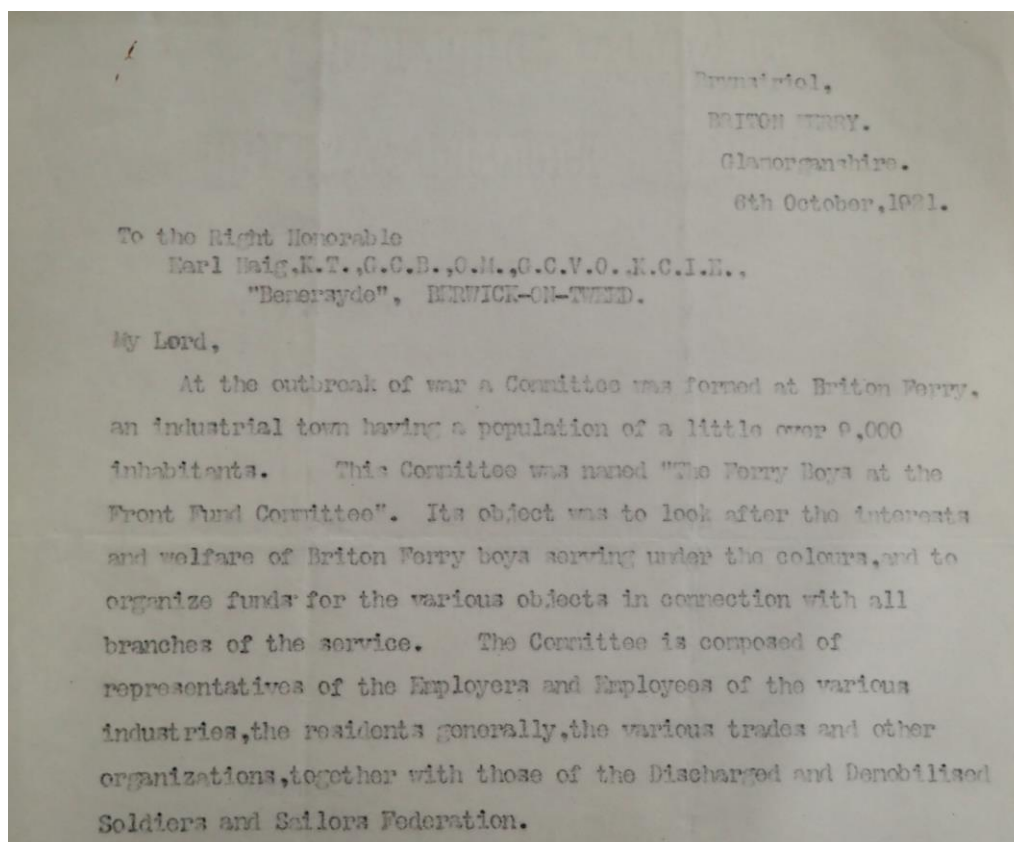
Appendices

Appendix One:

Country	Estimated male pop. In July 1914.	No. of recruits for the Territorial Force during First quarter of the war. (ending Nov. 4th, 1914)	% total of volunteers (to 3 decimal places)
England	16,681,181	203,517	1.220
Wales	1,268,284	12,724	1.003
Scotland	2,351,843	36,954	1.460

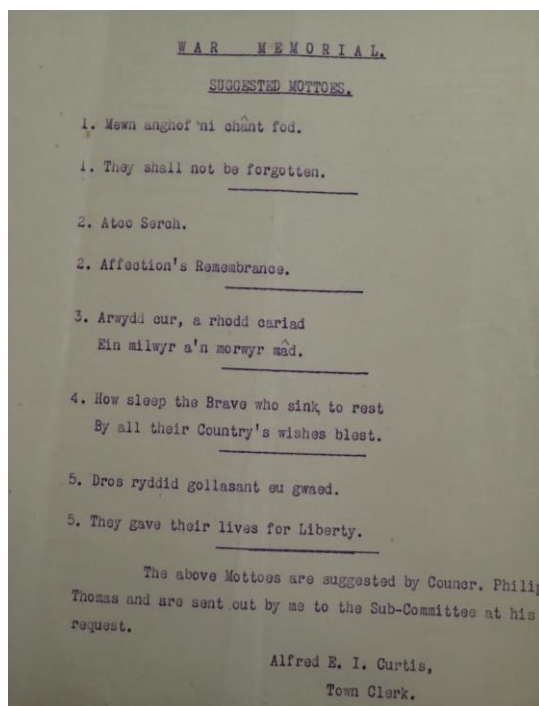
[Source: *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War*, The War Office, (HMSO, London, 1922), pp. 363 & 365., accessed via the following link: <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/statistics-of-military-effort-of-british-empire>, last accessed on 02/03/2018.]

Appendix Two:



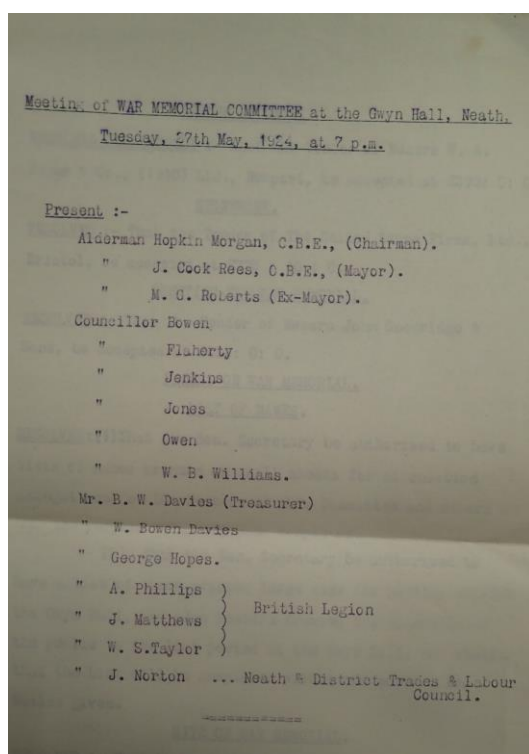
[Letter addressed to Earl Douglas Haig, 6th Oct. 1921, West Glamorgan Archive Service, 2017.]

Appendix Three:



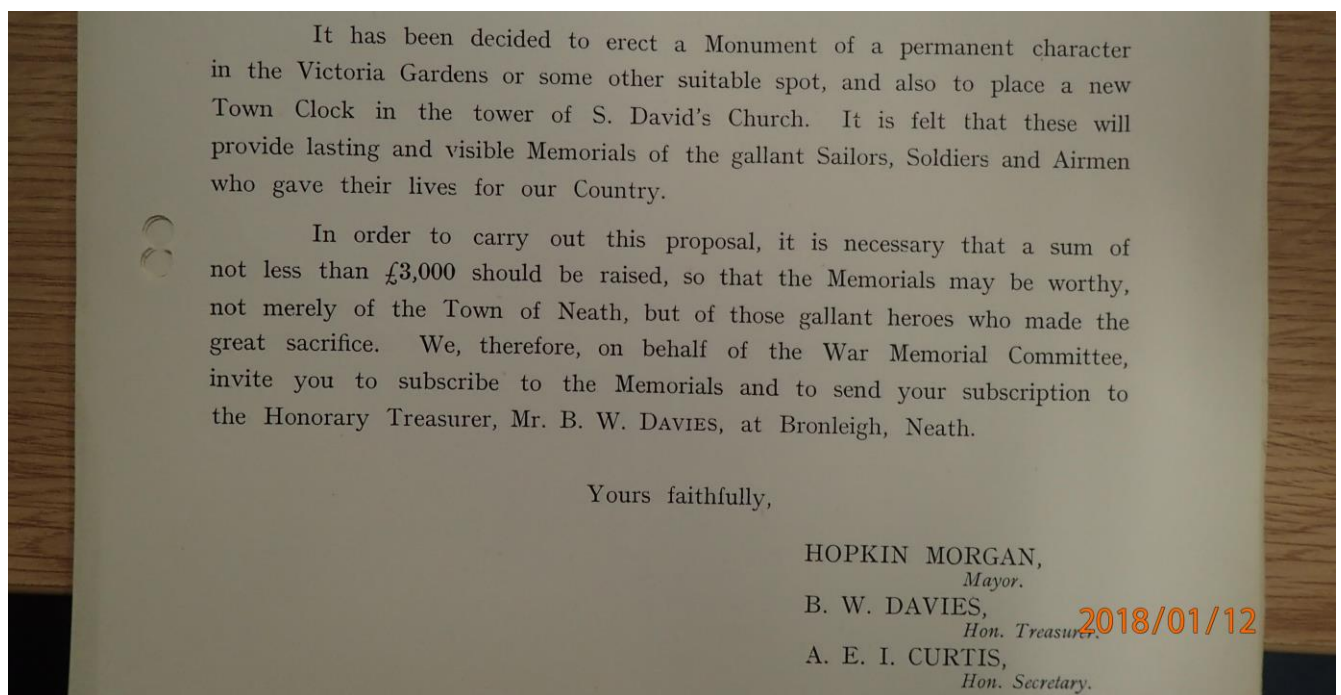
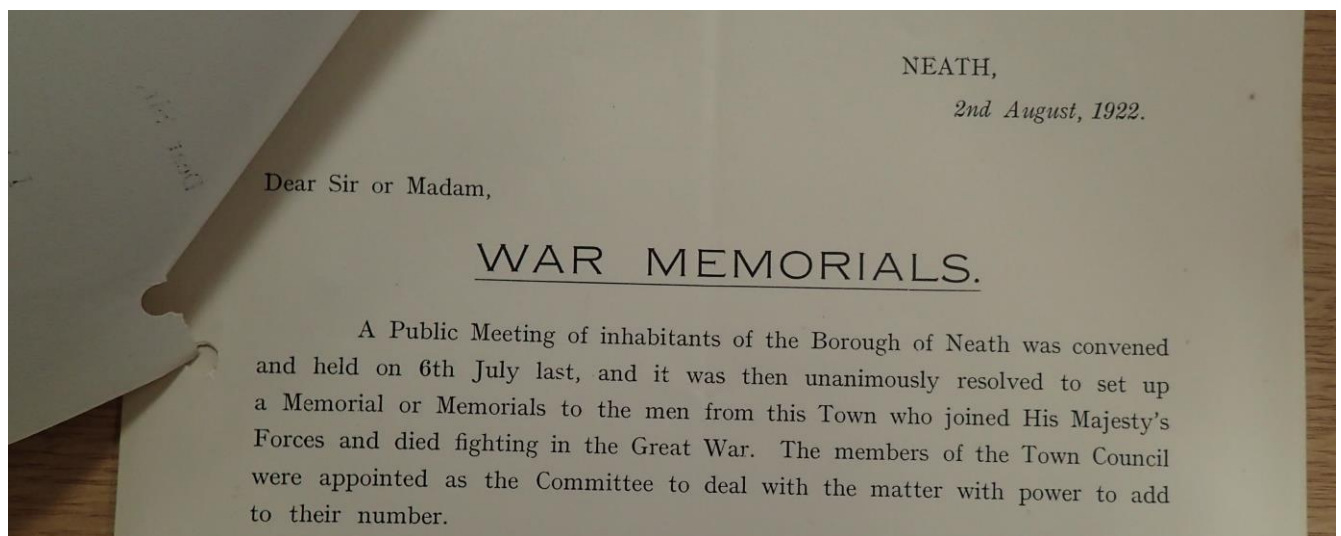
[Neath War Memorial Suggested Mottoes, WGAS, 2018.]

Appendix Four:



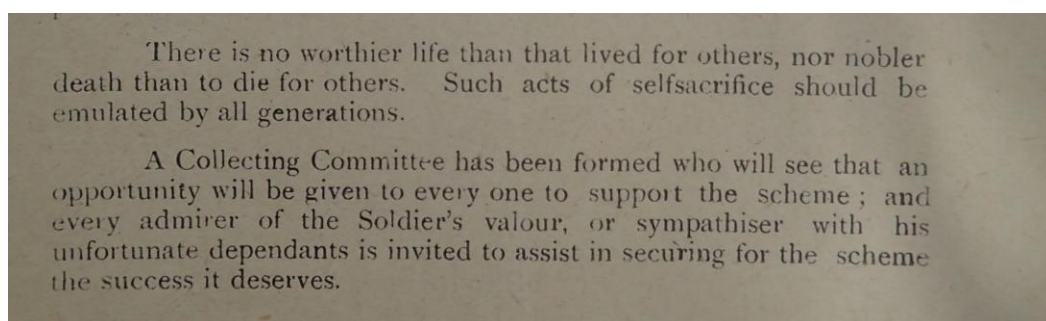
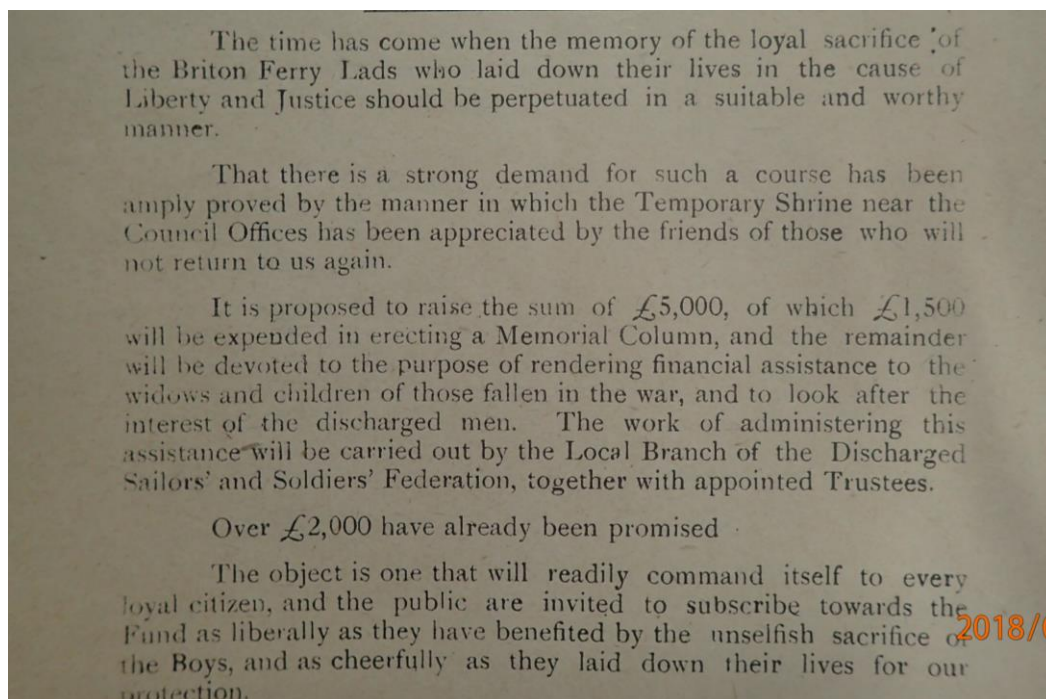
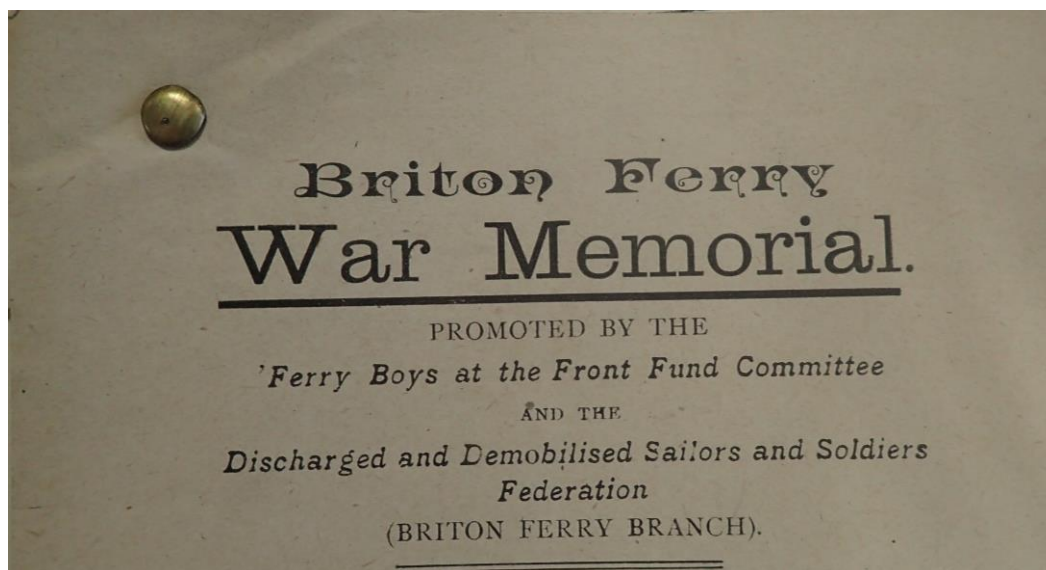
[Meeting of War Memorial Committee at the Gwyn Hall, Neath, 27th May 1924, WGAS, 2018.]

Appendix Five:



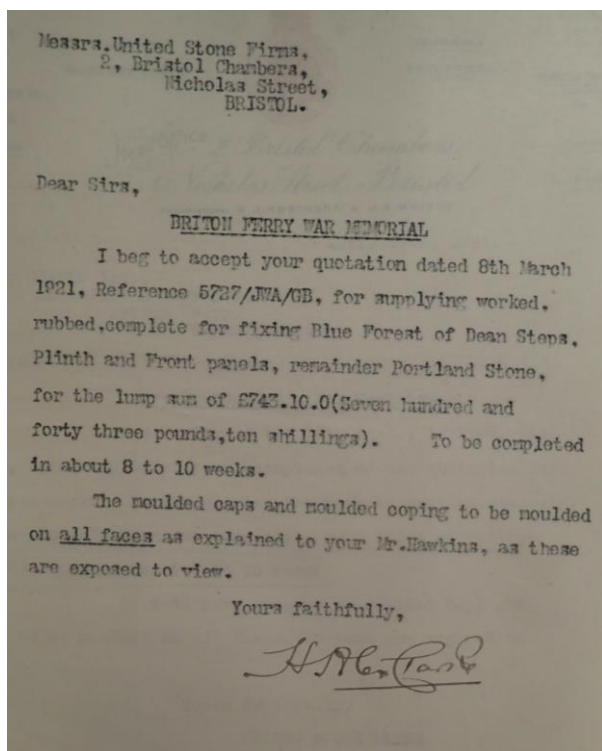
[Public letter to the people of Neath in regard to setting up a memorial subscription, 2nd August 1922, WGAS, 2018]

Appendix Six:



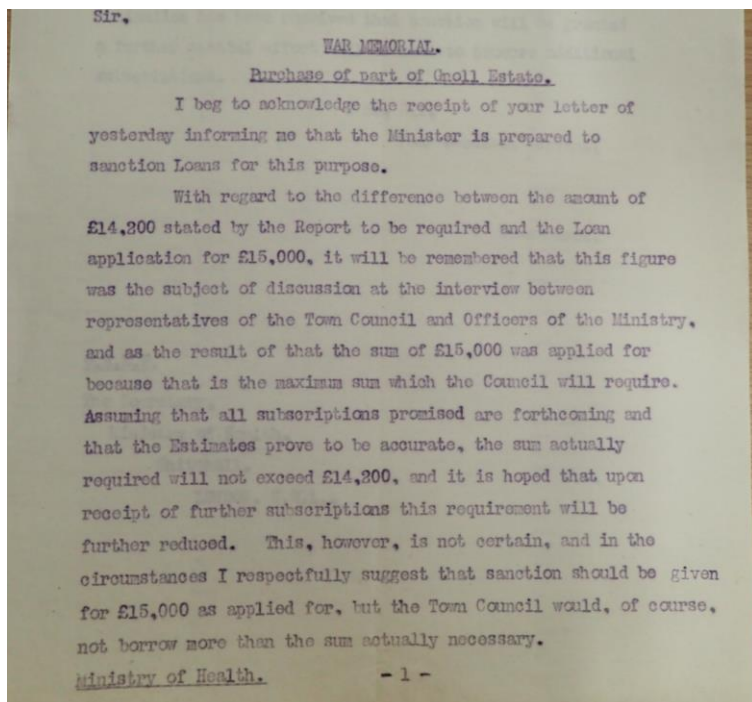
[Public leaflet titled: *Briton Ferry War Memorial*, [date unknown], WGAS, NL BFBF 2/4, 2018.]

Appendix Seven:



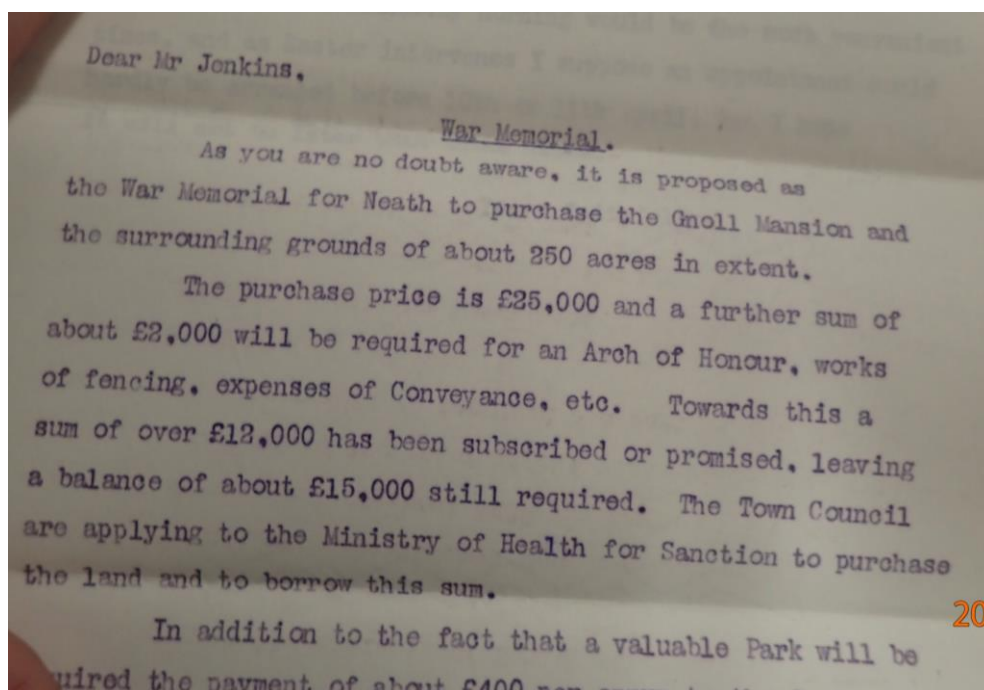
[Letter of confirmation for Stone Work on B.F. Memorial, WGAS, 2018.]

Appendix Eight:



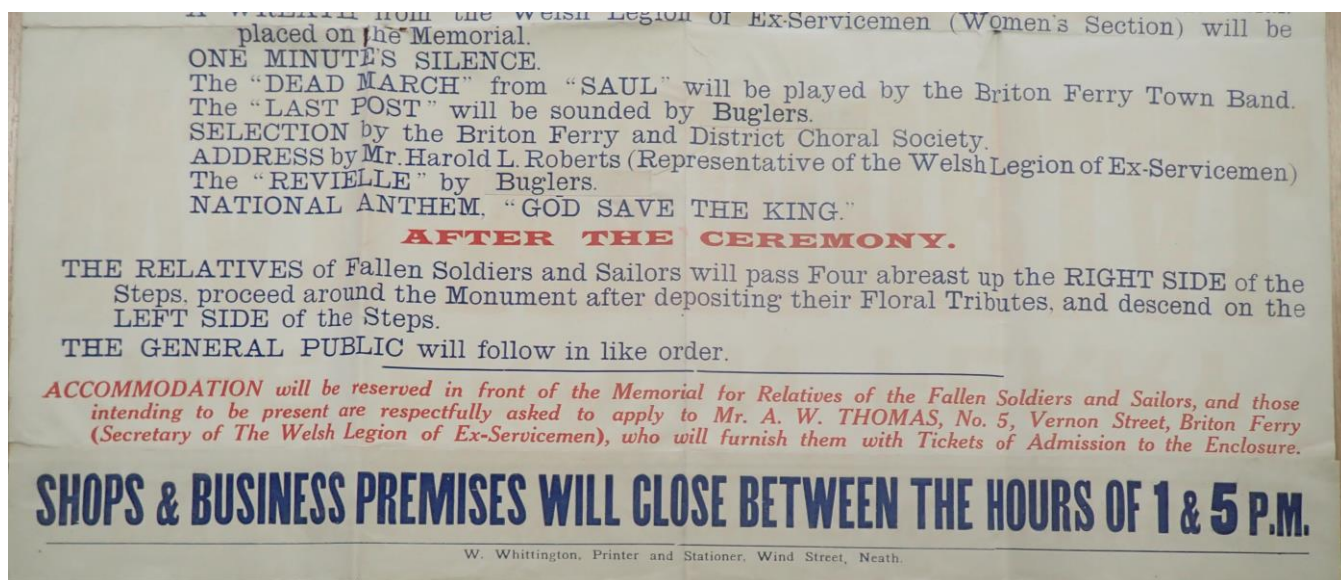
[Letter regarding loan request by Neath War memorial committee, date unknown, WGAS, 2018.]

Appendix Nine:



[Document stating cost of estate and how funds were to be acquired regarding the Neath War Memorial, [c. 1923], WGAS, 2018.]

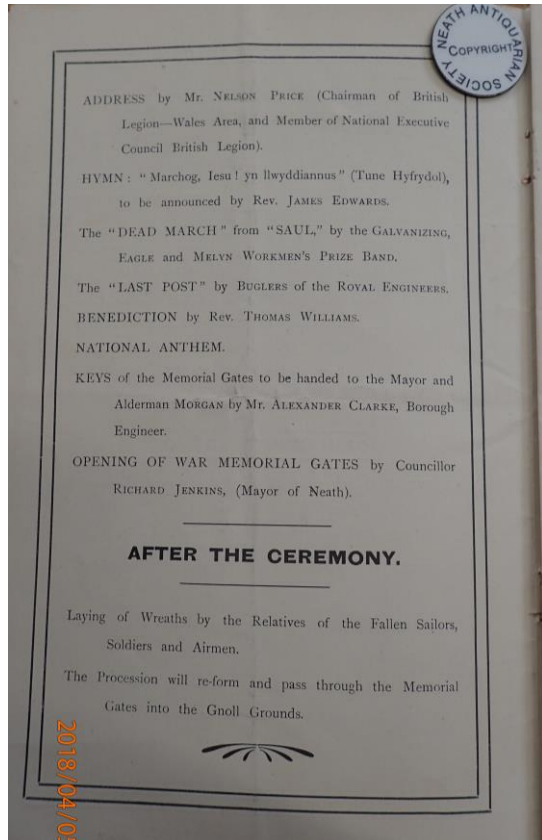
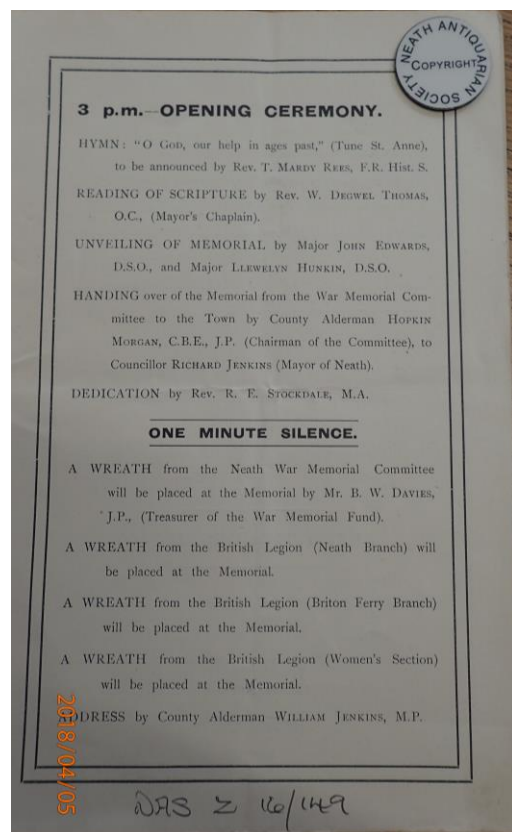
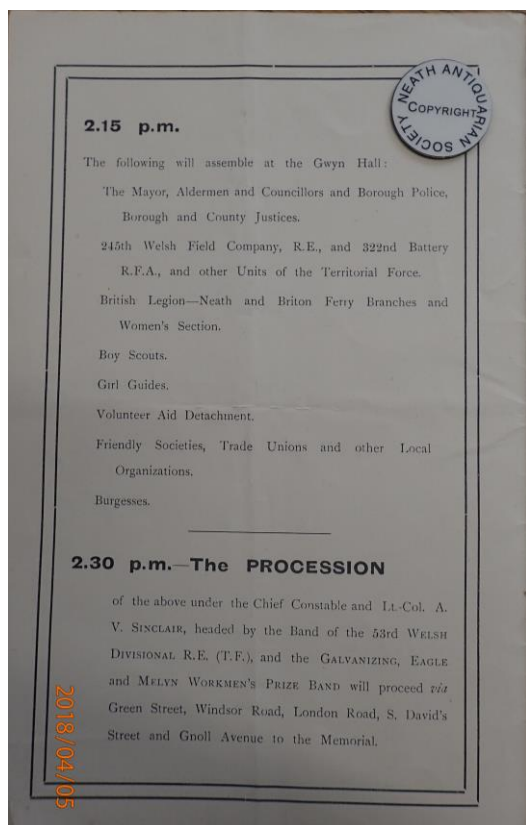
Appendix Ten:



[Lower section of Briton Ferry unveiling day poster containing arrangements for the unveiling of the Briton Ferry War Memorial, 1921, WGAS, 2018.]

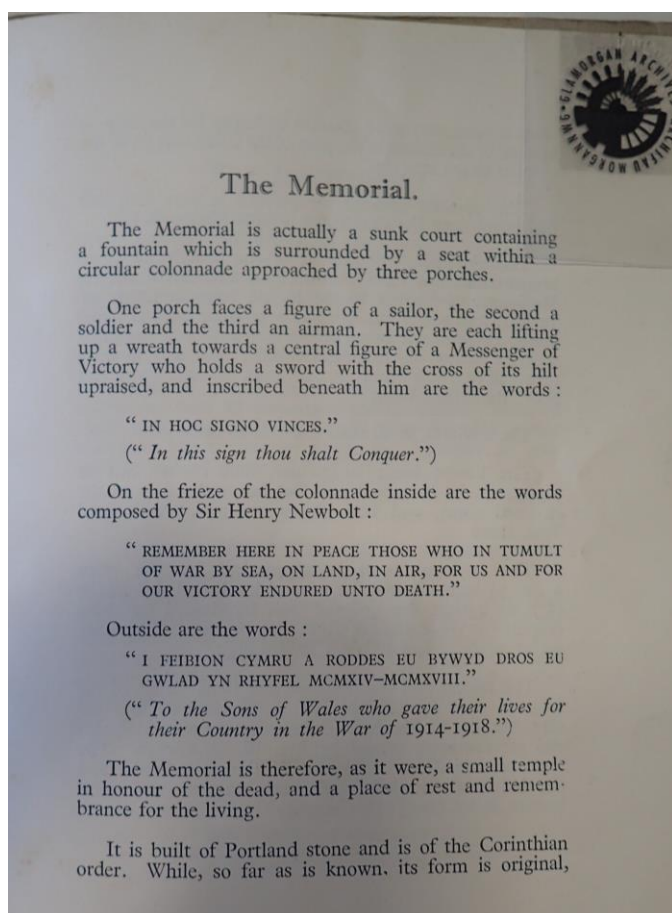
Hand-drawn architectural plan of the interior of the Balaclava Barracks. The plan shows a large central hall with a central staircase and a central area labeled "N. Hall". To the left of the hall are three rooms labeled "16. Mess", "15. Mess", and "14. Mess". To the right are three rooms labeled "13. Mess", "12. Mess", and "11. Mess". At the bottom of the hall is a large area labeled "REAR OF THE HALL" with "seating accommodation" and "1000". The plan also shows various corridors, doors, and a central staircase. The drawing is on a piece of paper with a vertical crease down the middle.

Appendix Twelve:



[Neath Memorial Programme, Schedule for the Unveiling Ceremony, 1921, NAS Z 16/149, 2018.]

Appendix Thirteen:



[Page from the Order of Service at the Ceremony of Unveiling and Dedication of the Welsh National War Memorial with the inscriptions used on the memorial, June 12th, 1928, Glamorgan Archives, D/D X 684/1, 2018.]

Appendix Fourteen:

Dear Zach,

We have recently secured Grant funding from the War Memorials Trust and Cadw to do repairs, including replacement of the missing bronze work, at Briton Ferry, Gnoll Gates and Taibach War Memorials. The contractor should be starting work soon and works completed by June 2019, some sites will hopefully be complete before the November 11th 2018 processions, but this is dependent on the contractors programme.

Delyth Lewis

Environmental Design and Heritage Officer/ Swyddog Dylunio a Threftadaeth Amgylcheddol

[Email response from Delyth Lewis at the Neath Port Talbot County Council in regards to repair work on the War Memorials at Briton Ferry, Neath and Taibach, reply received 19th April 2018.]

Appendix Fifteen:

Dear Sir,
 Alfred E. I. Curtis,
 TOWN CLERK.

War Memorial Week, 12th - 17th February, 1923.

It has been decided by the War Memorial Committee to hold a "War Memorial Week" during which a Collection will be made at every house in the Borough. It is proposed to leave a short circular of appeal at each house on the 12th of February with a Subscription form and an envelope for Collections, and on Saturday, 17th February, the envelopes will be called for.

It is proposed to divide the old Borough into 49 Districts, as was done for purposes of National Registration. The Canvassers would work in pairs two Canvassers, or, in all, 98 Canvassers will be

2018/01/12

[Extract of Letter regarding a 'War Memorial Week' in Neath, 1923, WGAS, 2018.]

Appendix Sixteen:

GLAMORGAN ARCHIVES

WELSH WAR MEMORIAL FUND

HON. TREASURER'S RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT

Dr.

To Subscriptions Received	25,656	17	3		By Expense
" Balance of South African War Memorial Fund	174	10	2	25,831	" Payment
" Interest from Bank				2,743	Publ
" Dividend from Exchequer Bonds				3,013	F. D
" Dividend from War Stock				314	W. R
" Income Tax Recovered				720	G. L
" Profit on Sale of Bonds				584	" Expense
					G.W.
					Car

2018/05/01

[Amount raised in subscriptions towards Welsh War Memorial, Glamorgan Archives, 2018.]

Appendix Seventeen:

Western Mail.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1922.

Public Notices.

BOROUGH OF NEATH. WAR MEMORIAL.

The following Subscriptions have been received or promised towards the proposed purchase of part of the Gnon Estate and the erection of an Arch of Honour at the Gnoil-avenue Entrance. A sum of approximately £17,000 is required, and the Committee trust that all who have not yet given will send their subscriptions promptly to the Treasurer, Mr. B. W. Davies, at Bronleigh, Neath:—

	£	s.	d.
Llewelyn Evan-Thomas, Esq. ...	5,000	0	0
E. Evans Bevan, Esq., J.P.	5,000	0	0
Melyn Tinplate Co. (Ltd.)	1,000	0	0
Eagle Tinplate Co. (Ltd.)	250	0	0
Theodore Gibbins, Esq.	100	0	0
J. E. Moore-Gwyn, Esq., D.L., J.P.	50	0	0
Admiral Sir Hugh Evan-Thomas	50	0	0
Henry Evan-Thomas, Esq.	50	0	0
F. W. Gibbins, Esq., J.P.	25	0	0
Mrs. Shirres	21	0	0
Hopkin Morgan, Esq., C.B.E., J.P.	20	0	0
B. W. Davies and Co.	20	0	0
A. E. I. Curtis	20	0	0
Mr. and Mrs. George Williams Collection by the late Thomas Jones, Esq.	18	14	10
Jonah Arnold, Esq.	10	10	0
Mervyn Hill, Esq.	10	10	0
Dr. L. Lewis, J.P.	10	10	0
Llewellyn Morgan, Esq.	10	10	0
J. Richings	10	10	0
W. J. Stockham	10	10	0
John Rees, Esq., J.P. (Penydre House)	10	10	0
J. C. Rees, Esq. O.B.E.	10	10	0
W. Gordon Jones	5	5	0
Mrs. T. J. Osborne	5	5	0
H. H. Kimble	5	5	0

2018/01/12

[Cutting from the Western Mail Newspaper, publishing subscription amounts towards the Neath memorial fund, 11th November 1922, WGAS, 2018.]

Plates

Plate One:



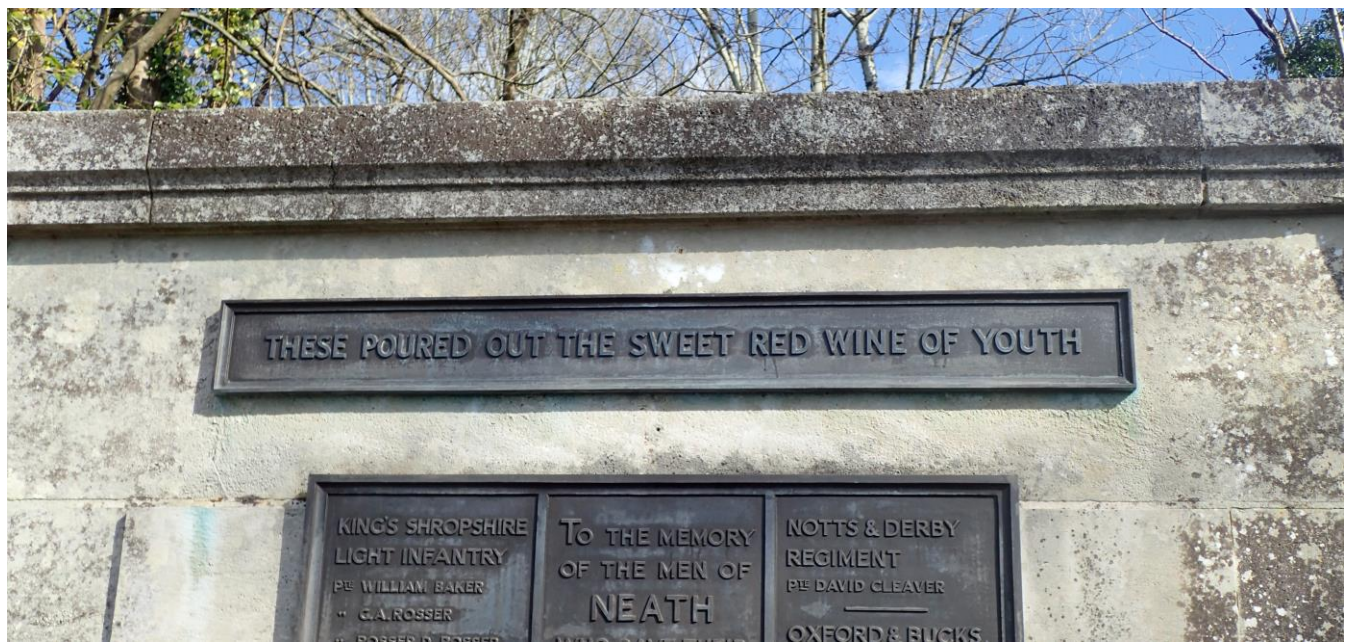
[*Briton Ferry War Memorial*, Z. Bridges, 2017.]

Plate Two:



[*Neath War Memorial Gates*, Z. Bridges, 2018.]

Plate Three:



[Neath War Memorial Gates motto in English, Z. Bridges, 2018.]

Plate Four:



[Neath War Memorial Gates motto in Welsh, Z. Bridges, 2018.]

Plate Five:



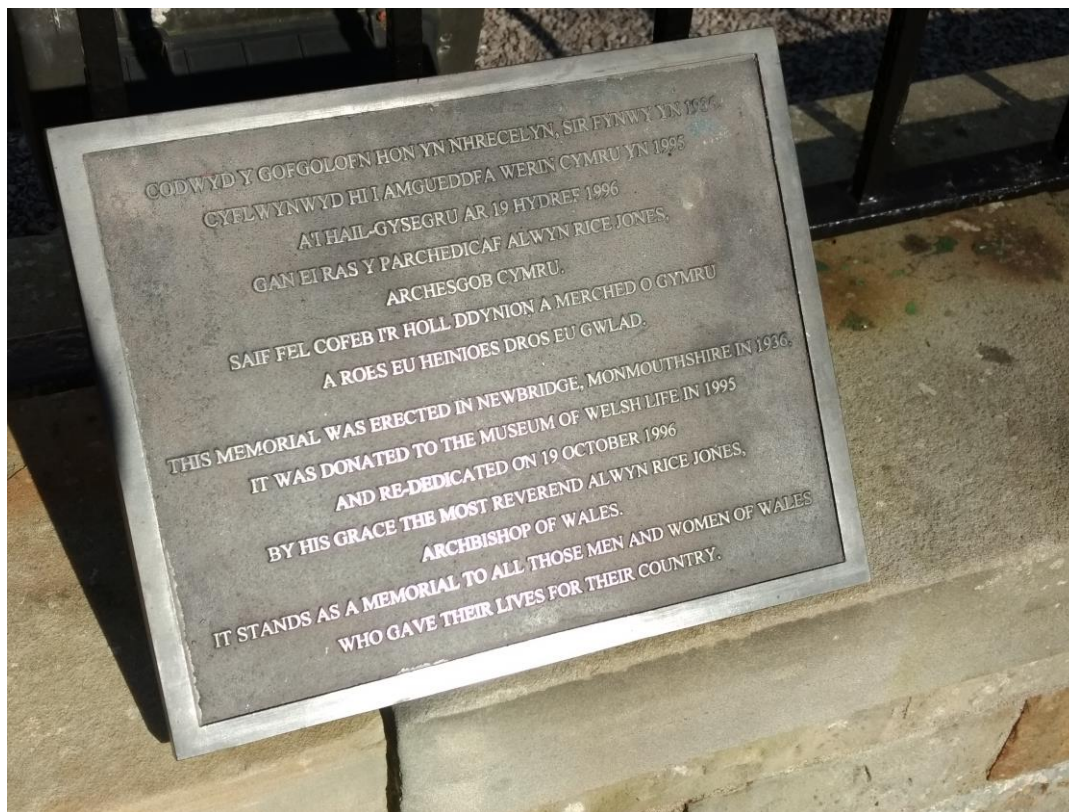
[Damage to the rear of the Briton Ferry War Memorial, Z. Bridges, 2018.]

Plate Six:



[Newbridge War Memorial, 1936, re-erected in St Fagans, 1995, Z. Bridges, 2018.]

Plate Seven:



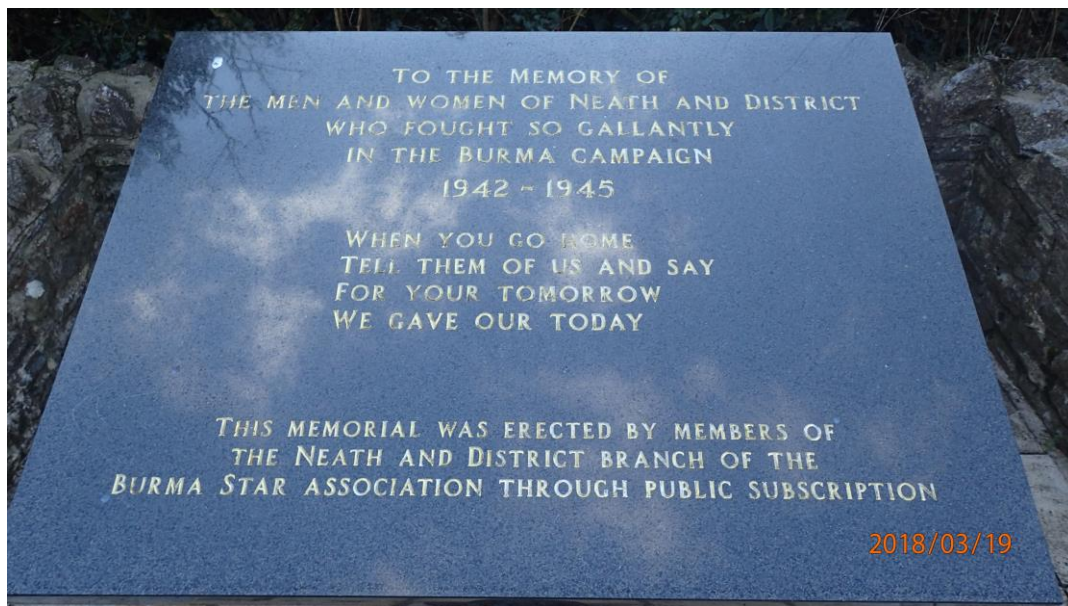
[Newbridge War Memorial plaque describing its origins, Z. Bridges, 2018.]

Plate Eight:



[Neath Memorial to those that have died in service since 1945, Z. Bridges, 2018].

Plate Nine:



[Memorial dedicated to those that lost their lives in the Burma Campaign, Z. Bridges, 2018.]

Plate Ten:



[Memorial Plaques in Situation of the Neath memorial gates, Z. Bridges, 2018].

Plate Eleven:



[Swansea Boer War Memorial, Z. Bridges, 2018.]

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Primary Sources

All Primary Source material has been appropriately referenced in the Appendix. All primary source data was gathered either from the West Glamorgan Archives, Neath Antiquarian Society or the Glamorgan Archives, fully referenced in the Appendices. Any images of the War Memorials were taken at their current locations in Neath and Briton Ferry by myself, fully referenced in the Plates.

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