

PHYLLIS DAVIES – LOOKING BACK OVER THE YEARS



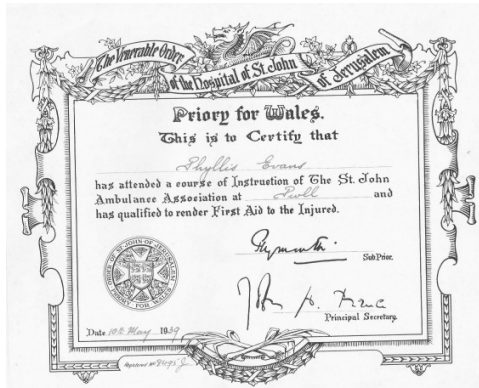
A Bônau Cabbage
Patch Supplement

Phyllis Davies née Evans was born in Pwll in 1919. She lived in the family home in 31 Stepney Road until 1963 when she moved next door to number 33. She lived there until recent years and later moved to Llanelli. Her father and mother were William and Jane Evans, and she was the youngest of six children - David, Mary, Jack, Gwyneth, and Rachel. She proudly said that her grandfather Michael Evans, although he was a coal miner, built houses for each of his six children in Stepney Road using the stone from Pwll quarry.

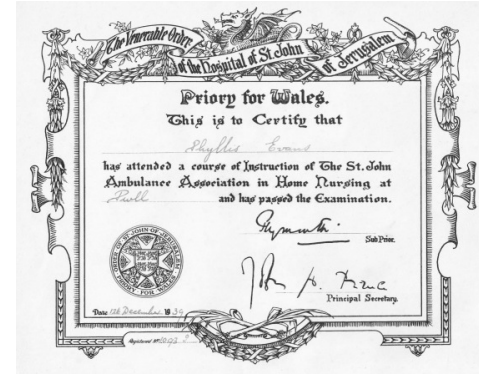


Phyllis showed me a photograph of a group of women who were members of the Voluntary Aid Detachment in Pwll. The Detachment was run by the St. John Ambulance Association and members met in the Old School more familiarly known nowadays as the old Community Centre. She remembers all the names of the young

women who attended the meetings and they all worked diligently towards gaining their certificates in home nursing and first aid. The team leader was May Daniels née Morris who was a trained nurse. They learned to bandage, do simple dressings, and the basics of invalid cookery and hygiene. They also spent time as volunteers in the old hospital in Marblehall Road, Llanelli. In May 1939 and December 1939 Phyllis gained her qualifications in first aid and home nursing respectively within twelve months of joining.



Phyllis recalls her memories of her time spent away from home during World War II. She joined the Auxiliary Territorial Service as a WAAF (Women's Auxiliary Air Force) when it



was her age group called up to do military service. She attended RAF Innsworth Gloucestershire for WAAF training which was very intensive indeed. She later moved to RAF Morecombe, Blackpool for further training.

Travelling by train to her first posting in RAF Wythall, she vividly remembers the "train stopping at Crewe where on the other line the carriages were filled with German prisoners of war, with their blond hair and blue eyes, on their way to Scotland". RAF Wythall was the Headquarters of No.6 Barrage Balloon Centre with responsibility for the balloon defence of the southern part of Birmingham and Coventry. She worked in the tailor's shop repairing uniforms, barrage balloons and any other type of sewing that was required.

Phyllis was transferred to Bletchley Park, the Headquarters of the secret British code breaking activities during WWII and the birthplace of the modern computer. There she met Catherine Hill with whom she became very friendly and kept in touch with for many years. Phyllis is a very accomplished tailoress and she made Catherine's wedding dress and the bridesmaid dresses, however the groom who was a gunner tragically died before the wedding day. Phyllis' chapel and Welsh upbringing was very important during these times spent away from home. She attend chapel services and one time she excitedly told me that she saw Kathleen Ferrier the renowned contralto singer perform in a concert and she had such a beautiful voice. Phyllis herself loved playing the piano and singing. Many a time she and her friends were invited for a cup of tea by neighbours near the base. There she would play the piano and sing Welsh hymns such as 'Calon Lân' reminding her of her upbringing and



at the same time giving pleasure to other people.

Phyllis can vividly recall her time stationed at Bletchley Park. She and other colleagues would wait for an aeroplane to land at the airfield in Leighton Buzzard bringing back home ex prisoners who had escaped from STALAG, the German prison camps. This was a very emotional time as she recollects "the men would come off the plane and salute us but we should have been saluting them because they had been through such an ordeal as prisoners of war". Her role was to greet the men off the aeroplane and take them to the reception before settling them back home. Many of these men had been part of RAF Bomber Command and were captured by the Germans while they took part in air raid sorties over Germany. Phyllis continued by saying that at one time a photograph of her and other WAAFs was taken with the ex prisoners and appeared in an edition of "Picture Post - Face of you during the war". Picture Post was a very popular weekly magazine especially during the war. Out of her own pay she would send telegrams to families of these men. The message in these telegrams only said "Back to Blighty". This was a common sentimental reference suggesting a longing for home by soldiers in the trenches in WW1 and so this sentiment was popular by military personnel during WW11. Phyllis and her colleagues wanted to let the families know that

their loved ones were safe, many of whom had lost contact and their whereabouts.

In 1945 Phyllis was demobbed from RAF Bletchley and returned to the family home Tandderi in Stepney Road, Pwll. From 1946 she worked in the kitchen in Pwll School for six years and she said "she was interviewed for the job by Lady Howard Stepney". She remembers the headteachers Mr. Aubrey and Mr. Edwards. Phyllis herself attended the old school in Pwll Road as a pupil and then moved to the new school in 1930. She then worked in Morfa Infants and Cilymaenllwyd. In Cilymaenllwyd she used to entertain the residents with her singing and playing the piano. Phyllis was never able to read music but always played the piano by ear. She recalls how she used to walk as a shortcut up the Graig, Pwll and across the fields owned by the farmer Mr Clements to get to work in Cilymaenllwyd.

She remained single and lived at home looking after her parents and then married later in life to Cyril Davies from Llandysul. They knew each other when they were younger, but Cyril went into the RAF and they lost contact. Many years later in a chance meeting, a friend of Phyllis met Cyril in London and he said that he knew a girl from Pwll. From then on Phyllis and Cyril wrote to each other and later married. This story was made into an article and printed in the Cambrian News.

Phyllis loved sewing and as already mentioned she was a very accomplished tailoress. She still has her sewing box at her side filled with all the sewing equipment she has used over the years. She loves singing and was in the Children's Choir - Côr y Plant, performing at the Eisteddfod held in Llanelli in 1930 in Peoples' Park. She remembers all the children in the choir attending a tea party and were all given a celebration enamel mug. She still has this mug which was made locally in Llanelly Stamping and on the underneath shows the world famous 'Goat brand - Llanelly'. She was also in the Choir when the Eisteddfod came to Llanelli in 1962 in Llanerch fields.

Phyllis has been a longstanding and faithful member of Libanus Chapel in Pwll where she also played the organ. She recalls the time when she went on a Sunday School outing to Porthcawl with family and friends. The photograph on the last page, was taken with Mrs Cunningham the Sunday School teacher and all the girls were wearing hairnets.



She explained that "it was so windy in Porthcawl they bought hairnets to keep the hair out of their eyes". Her father was also a deacon in Libanus Chapel. Phyllis is much loved by all the members of Libanus Chapel and all who know her. It is well known that she was often the last to get to Chapel on a Sunday and it is said with affection "Close the doors, the service can start, Phyllis has arrived".

I wish to thank Phyllis for giving me the opportunity to spend time with her to listen to her memories, which she retold with so much passion, emotion and humour. Special thanks must go to her niece Eileen and Des Bessent for arranging for me to visit Phyllis.

I hope through reading Phyllis' memories it will inspire others to share their own lifetime experiences.

*Dymuniadau gorau
 I'r Bawb yn y pentre.
 A cofion Cynnes
 I'r Bawb ar Wasgar.
 Phyllis*

Article by Anne Messer



Back row left to right: Jane Evans, Mary John, Gwyneth Rees
 Middle row left to right: Gwyneth Evans, Gwyneth, Mrs Cunningham, Marion Jenkins, Edna John, Mary Davies with Beryl Jones née Davies on lap
 Front row left to right: Rachel Evans, Gwyn Evans and Phyllis Evans
 c1926

**PWLL VOLUNTARY AID DETACHMENT
 "OLD SCHOOL" PWLL
 The St John Ambulance Association**



Standing: Betty Lloyd (nee Davies) : Phyllis Davies (nee Evans) : Eileen Richards (nee Lewis) : Eirwen Evans (nee Lewis)
 Seated: Gertie Evans (nee Morgans) : Gertrude Davies : May Daniels (nee Morris) Team Leader : Clarice Marshall (nee Rees)
 Betty Davies from Garnant