

LLANTRISANT RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB



125th ANNIVERSARY OF THE BLACK ARMY

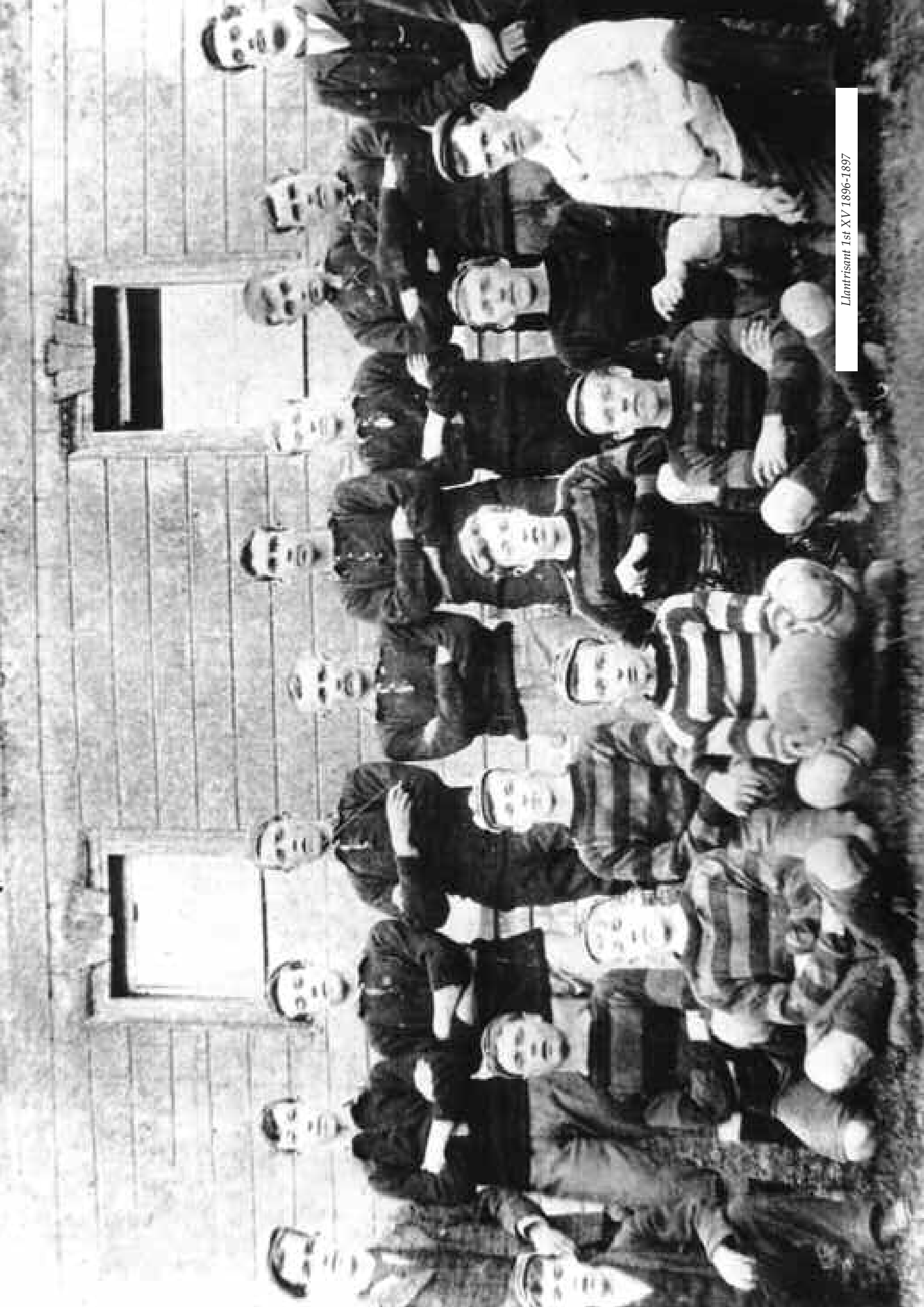
Dean Powell

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Llantrisant 1st XV 1896-1897

FOREWORD



By DENNIS GETHIN
PRESIDENT, WELSH RUGBY UNION

I am delighted to be given this opportunity to congratulate Llantrisant Rugby Football Club on its 125th Anniversary. This is a tremendous milestone and I pay tribute to players, staff and supporters both past and present for all that has been achieved over the decades.

During my time as Chief Executive of Taff Ely Borough Council I had great pleasure in watching the famous “Black Army” for myself and know the pride and passion in which they play.

I have been closely involved with Welsh rugby as a player, an administrator and a passionate fan so I was incredibly pleased to have been elected President of the Welsh Rugby Union. I pledged to use my time in this major ambassadorial role to spread the word far and wide about this great sport of ours and its important place in the hearts and minds of the people of Wales.



However, wherever I go I make it clear that there’s no future for Welsh Rugby unless the grass roots remain strong. That’s why clubs like Llantrisant that have encouraged the game for 125 years in their locality, are essential to the future of our national game.

The Welsh Team has enjoyed a good run of international rugby but none of it happens unless we nurture the talent from our local teams. That’s why it’s vital that sides like Llantrisant continue to flourish.

On behalf of the Welsh Rugby Union may I take this opportunity to congratulate you all at Llantrisant Rugby Football Club on this magnificent achievement.

Llongyfarchiadau!



Llantrisant 1st XV celebrating their win over Ystrad Rhondda at Sardis Road, Pontypridd for the Mid-District Cup 2002-2003

MY BLACK ARMY PRIDE

By BRADLEY DAVIES
Welsh Rugby International



Rugby has been a massive part of my life for longer than I can remember, but what I do know is where it all began, and that's Llantrisant. I've always been proud to call myself a "Black Army" boy and although this sport has taken me all over the world, Llantrisant will always be home to me. That's why it gives me so much pleasure to congratulate the club, its players, members and supporters on this 125th anniversary year.

My earliest memories of Cefn Mabley field goes back more than twenty years when on weekends I would have breakfast at my gran's house and then run over to the club as early as possible before the start of the game. The first one's there could become ball boys for the game and Steve Woodland would pay us £3.00 each for the privilege. That's where the love of the game began, watching the seniors take on teams from all over the area.

I also had a love of football and although my father played rugby for Pontypridd, it was my headmaster, Mr Emmanuel at Coed yr Esgob Primary School who encouraged me to follow in his footsteps. My brother Ashley wasn't happy about it, it meant staying behind school and waiting for me while I trained. I remember he even made me cry!

When I was seven years of age I joined the new mini rugby sides set up by Colin Bowen and Terry Warton and that's where I developed my love of the game. My life became all about sport, watching the

youth train one evening, then the seconds and firsts another evening before watching the game on the weekend. I played football on a Saturday, mini rugby on a Sunday and following a stint in Pontyclun progressed to the Llantrisant Youth XV with my brother. Thanks to them I developed my skills and rugby became my life.

As a boy I would go in the bar of Llantrisant RFC and see pictures of all those players who'd had schoolboy and youth caps and some of the older members would tell me my photograph would be on that wall one day. I don't think I really believed them at the time. But the day I pulled on the red jersey and played my first full cap for Wales was the most surreal experience of them all. There are no words to describe how amazing it is to represent your country and it's always been one of the proudest moments of my career.

Rugby means so much to me and I've enjoyed every moment of it, but I won't forget where it all started and who encouraged me from an early age. Llantrisant is in my DNA. Who knows, maybe I'll get to play for them again one day – if they'll have me!

Have a great 125th anniversary year. I'm looking forward to the celebrations already. Thank you for all you've done for players over the years and in particular the support and encouragement you always gave me.

125th ANNIVERSARY TESTIMONIALS

"May I wish Llantrisant RFC all the very best in their 125th anniversary year. This is an incredible achievement. I'm a president of a similar club to the Black Army and I find it amazing the work these clubs do to keep rugby alive in small communities. It is incredible. Let's keep village rugby going, allowing the local young men to use their energy on the field and go on to better things. Welsh rugby is in a better place today thanks to this type of starting place. Whatever the division you play in, as long as you have Senior Teams and a good young section of promising players then the future is yours. Look after your clubhouse, your spiritual home and make sure you fill it this year with plenty of celebrations. The future of Welsh rugby is about grass roots training at these local levels. It was the making of players from Gerald Davies to Shane Williams. You are the heartbeat of Welsh rugby. Congratulations to you all".
Phil Bennett

"Very many congratulations to Llantrisant RFC on achieving this impressive milestone in their history. For generations the Black Army has been a well known club in the Welsh Rugby Union and I'm sure they will continue to gain further glory in the years to come. I hope you have a successful and enjoyable 125th anniversary season. Llongyfarchiadau!"
Gareth Edwards

"Congratulations and llongyfarchiadau to you all at Llantrisant RFC on this wonderful milestone. Here's to celebrating the 125th anniversary and let's raise a cup to the next 125 years!"
Gerald Davies

"May I take this opportunity to wish all associated with Llantrisant RFC, past and present, my hearty congratulations during this very special year."
Warren Gatland

"I'd like to add my congratulations to Llantrisant RFC who are celebrating their 125th Anniversary, well done!"
James Hook

"It gives me great pleasure to congratulate Llantrisant RFC on reaching their 125th anniversary. This is an excellent record by any standards and I hope the "Black Army" continue to conquer on the field for many years to come. Have a wonderful season".
Barry John

"It's great to see another famous club like Llantrisant RFC celebrating their 125th Anniversary."
George North

"Clubs like Llantrisant RFC are the heartbeat of our sport and congratulations to them on their 125th Anniversary."
Mike Phillips

"Llantrisant RFC's service to the world of rugby has been as long and as true as the longbow of the Black Army. Congratulations! Llongyfarchiadau a phob hwyl am y tymor!"
Clive Rowlands

"The Black Army has bestowed great honour on the famous old town over the past 125 years. From Trevor "Chippo" Davies to Bradley Davies, players have proudly worn the colours of Llantrisant RFC with great distinction on and off the field. It's great to see that from mini and junior to senior level, the "Spirit Of The Black Army" continues to prevail today. Congratulations to all at Llantrisant RFC on the 125th Anniversary!"
Phil Steele

"Congratulations to everyone at Llantrisant RFC for reaching this historic landmark."
Sam Warburton

"Congratulations to Llantrisant RFC on their 125th anniversary. I remember playing in a charity match there many years ago and sustaining a nasty cut above my eye. This was sutured on the spot and I was able to get back on the field. Good luck to all the players and supporters and I hope you have a very successful season!"
JPR Williams

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

By SCOTT ANDREWS
Welsh Rugby International



Looking back on my life I feel as if every day of it has been connected in some way to rugby and it was on the Cefn Mabley field that it all began. As Llantrisant RFC celebrates its 125th anniversary, the club should be proud of the many young players, like myself, who they trained and supported over the years. Without doubt the encouragement, team spirit and camaraderie had a massive effect on me and I learned so much from those coaches and squad members.

It was my grandfather, Alun Jones who inspired me to enjoy the sport and I owe him a massive debt of gratitude for that. He attended all of my matches from mini-rugby games to the present day and it was really thanks to him that I became a professional player.

I first played rugby as a pupil at Coed yr Esgob Primary School where Headteacher, Mr Emmanuel trained the young squad. As I lived in Dancaerlan I saw the pitch at Cefn Mabley just about every day and naturally joined the mini-rugby side at the same time, where Richard Harrison coached us weekly. It was a great time to be training with your friends and we pretty much grew up together and went through to join the Under 16s and the Youth side where Mark Butcher

and Dean Akers were great mentors.

I only played for the 1st XV team for half a season, making my debut against Mountain Ash before joining the Blues Academy and the Glamorgan Wanderers for two years and then onto the Cardiff Blues. I was fortunate enough to have been capped for the Under 11s and through to the Under 16s, 18s and 20s. But nothing really prepares you for the experience of becoming a Welsh international.

I think it was my second full Welsh cap that I'll remember the most, against Australia. It was a really bizarre experience to represent Wales in the Millennium Stadium and the Black Army had been the starting point. The whole day was just like a dream from start to finish. An amazing moment.

I can't thank Llantrisant RFC enough for the encouragement and support they've always given me and continue to give me to this day. My childhood was spent in that club house, watching the older men play darts, skittles, watching the different sides train. It really is a community club and I wish them not only a happy 125th anniversary, but hope for many more years of success ahead for every player.



125th ANNIVERSARY SEASON OFFICIALS

Trustees

Barry Alford
Frank Perry
Anthony Kokkinos

Management Committee

Chairman

Nicholas Bush

Treasurer

Nicholas Wood

Secretary

Dean Evans

Coach Co-Ordinator

Gareth Alexander

Fixture Secretary

Carl Groves

Fixture & Membership Secretary

Alun David

Management Committee Members

Jason Alford • Christopher Green
Jonathon Williams • Matthew Griffiths
Wayne Hurley • Steve Evans
Andrew Bowen • Nicholas Mathews

Club Steward

Tracey Stanton

Head Coach

Huw Jones

1st XV Team Coaches

Robert Davies
Ian Worgan

2nd XV Team Coaches

Owen David
Steve Williams

Youth XV Coaches

Huw David
Neil Evans

First Aid

Richard John

Under 16s Team Coaches

Andrew Griffiths • Andrew Mounter • Chris Gerry • Paul Stark

Mini Rugby Management Committee

Chairman

Jonathan Rogers

Treasurer

Matthew Newland

Secretary

Aled Morgan

Fixture Secretary

Rebecca Newland

Promotions

Matt Barroccu • Steffan Gwynne

Assistants

Wendy Rogers • Melissa Morgan

First Aid

Lee Hayward

Under 10 Coaches

Matthew Newland • Jon Rogers
Aled Morgan

Under 9 Coaches

Matt Barroccu • Peter Smith
Nicholas Huckridge

Under 8 Coaches

Huw Wilding • Dale Danter
Simon Jones

Under 7 Coaches

Huw David • Dean Holder
Steffan Gwynne

125th ANNIVERSARY SEASON TEAM MEMBERS

1st XV Team

Elliot Jones
Josh Daniels
Chris Green
Harry Davies
Scott Bryant
Chris Ritchens
Chris Sharkey
Glenn Holloway
Jason McConnell
Dafydd Israel
Andrew Thomas
Rhys Bain
Paul Morgan
Owain Davies
Matthew Griffiths
Jamie Joyce
Keiron Evans
Jack Bowen
Kevin Oliver
Jamie Medlicott
Jonathan Williams
Dafydd Williams
Dean Lloyd
Huw Williams
Lewys Montague
Owen Osborne
Scott Thomas

2nd XV Team

Matthew Swarfield
Chris Taylor
James McKenzie
Scott Dean
Martyn Griffiths
Chris Pemberton
Gethin Thomas
Liam Roberts
Harvey Moisey
Marc Griffiths
Josh Bowen
Hugh Ritchens
James Giddy
Kyle Austin
Scott Curnell
Wayne Hurley
Rhys Ferris
Guy Griffiths
Alun David
Sean Stephens
Harry Rees
Ian Wharton
Julian Andrews
Owain Thorngate
Richard Wheat

Youth Team

Chris Taylor
Cory Stephens
Jack Davies
Morgan Rees
Sam Pryor
Morgan Phillip
Alun Lawrence
Josh Bridge
Ethan Griffiths
Kai Davies
James Lee
Jack Thompson

Under 16s Team

Rhys Evans
Tom Chamberlain
Jordan Pemberton
Lewis Civil
Sion Collins
Joshua Bridge
Kyle Stark
Calum Parsons (Captain)
Jesse Bailey
Ben Evans
Ciaran Foley
Tomos Roberts
Jamie Gerry
Creagan Griffiths
Tom Evans
Corey Enoch
Jordan Bisb
Charlie Rees
Tristan Warwick
Dafydd Mounter

Under 7s Team

Hari Barnett
Rhys David
Tayla-Lee Griffiths
Luca Thoms
Lewis Davies
Regan Young
Owain Wilson
Iestyn Williams
Rylan Wilmington
Corey Holder
Ellis Williams
Tomos Prys-Evans
Max Prentice-Jenkins

Under 8s Team

Joseph Danter
Llew Gwynne
Rhys Jones
Max Macarthy
Hannah Newland
Jake Evans
Ben Wilding
Lars McIntyre
Jack Blandford
Max Arnold
James Corbett
Jensen Rees
Jules Medcalf-Strong
Cale Pillinger

Under 9s Team

Bradley Barroccu
Mason Cooke
Rhys Beaman
Evan Jones
Rhodri Lloyd-Jones
Iwan Smith
Hayden Thomas
Jac Lockett
Thomas Fry
Dan Huckridge
Elise Peterson
Shaun Davies
Morgan Greedy
Caden Lewis

Under 10s Team

Aled Balman
Max Bradley
Callum Patey
Jake Marszalek
Thomas Williams
Sion Gwynne
James Haywood
Jake Rees
Gethin Morgan
Luke Newland
Geraint Hilton
Cai Prosser
Cai Rogers
Iestyn Thomas
Rhys Wilding
Sonny Williams
Reuben Williams
Owen Harris
James Edwards-Nicholls
Tom Hunt
Katrina Jack
Kaylum Giddy
Rhydian Smith-Wylkes
Tomi Edwards
Myles Giddy

LLANTRISANT HOME OF THE BLACK ARMY

Commanding an outstanding setting on the saddle of two hills, Llantrisant's splendour lies in its enchanting beauty and celebrated past. The glory of what was once a magnificent hilltop fortress, like a dominant city from Biblical times, was crowned by its medieval castle and fine parish church. Those landmarks still exist, surrounded by a cluster of homes, which cling precariously to the steep slopes, scattered throughout the town's charming, cobbled streets. Llantrisant was one of the most strategically important Norman strongholds in South Wales and, as such, has witnessed a colourful history. Today, many of its landmark buildings stand as a testimony to a turbulent history, boasting a tradition of fierce battles, ancient customs, and notorious characters from eccentric druids to captured kings of England.

The vision of the town was once compared to that of Jerusalem by a visiting missionary. It's from Matthew (Chapter 5) which reads, "A City That Is Set On An Hill Cannot Be Hid" that Llantrisant takes its

motto. During the mid 6th Century the Welsh poet Aneurin wrote of the area where "people are courteous and gentle, married women are honoured and the walls are white." However, it's a more contemporary quotation by Rev B.H Malkin of Cowbridge in 1807 that gives an essence of Llantrisant's enchanting location, "The situation of Llantrisant, which fills with its white buildings the lofty pass between two craggy peaks, excites some curiosity and surprise. The ascent is steep, but prospects become more and more striking as you advance, till on gaining the churchyard you comprehend the magnificent whole at one view."

Considering the pre-Christian artefacts discovered there during the 19th century, it wouldn't be unreasonable to believe that a Celtic community existed here as early as the 600 AD. A Roman fort was established in Caergwanaf near Miskin in 80AD with an Iron-Age fort built at Rhiwsaeson where both Silurian and Roman artefacts were found, suggesting

it was occupied as late as 300 AD. A pair of Bronze Age burial mounds were discovered on Mynydd Garthmaelwg. The first settlement of largely timber dwellings, within a wooden fort-like enclosure and following the oval shape of the centre of present Llantrisant, was probably a highly sophisticated, well-organised Celtic society. Situated in the ancient Lordship of Meisgyn and Glynrhondda of which it was its first administrative centre, it was the missionaries of Llantwit Major who brought Christianity to the town, dedicating the parish to the ancient Welsh saints of Illtyd, Gwynno and Tyfodwg and giving the town its name of "Church of the Three

Saints". A Romanesque-style church was built as early as 1096 and was later rebuilt sometime around 1246 when the neighbouring castle was fortified.

Following the Norman invasion, Sir Robert Fitzhamon, (1045-1107) had the duty to spread Norman rule across South Wales. The legend of the "Twelve Knights of Glamorgan" tells of Fitzhamon defeating the



Llantrisant by Henry Gastineau, 1823

Prince of South Wales Rhys ap Tewrder and murdering the Welsh Prince of Glamorgan, Iestyn ap Gwrgan in 1091. His body was allegedly buried sat upright on a horse near present Rhiwbina and a wizard cast a spell that would unleash death and destruction on anyone who dared desecrate his tomb. Iestyn ap Gwrgan may have presented Llantrisant with its first Charter, unrecognised by Fitzhamon, one of the most powerful and wealthy of the Welsh Marcher Lords. The founder of Tewkesbury Abbey he seized control of the lowlands of Glamorgan with strongholds of Cardiff Castle, Newport, Kenfig and Llantrisant.

It was these early Anglo-Norman Lords of Glamorgan who recognised the advantages of further developing Llantrisant as a military base, owing to its elevation between the conquered vale and the barren mountain terrain of the north and overlooking the main route through the Ely Valley. In the hill country, or Blaenau, the Welsh warriors gathered pe-

riodically to raid settlements from the invading Norman armies, only to be overthrown by another Norman garrison.

Rhys ap Tewrder's daughter Nest became the mistress of King Henry I of England and she gave birth to his illegitimate son, Robert Fitzroy (1100-1147) or 1st Earl of Gloucester, better known as Robert Consul. Robert married Mabel, daughter of Robert Fitzhamon no less. Consul's shield is part of Llantrisant's crest. His son-in-law and heir became the powerful Richard de Clare, 4th Earl of Gloucester (1153-1217) who fortified Llantrisant further to hold his hill district. Known as one of the rebel lead-



Llantrisant Castle

ers who opposed King John and his oppressive government, it was Richard de Clare who helped ensure the King signed the Magna Carta and upheld his side of the bargain which led to the First Baronial War.

Under his watchful eye the development of Llantrisant continued with the castle's strategic and commanding position, standing on a flat-topped blunt spur on the edge of a steep drop to the south, guarded the important route through the Ely Valley. His castle was completed on the same site as its original Celtic wooden fort, consisting of a small roughly oval court with a stout wall with two great round towers at the north and south ends. The ground fell steeply away on all sides except the north where there was a curving outer court, presumably also walled. In this area the Guildhall may originally have been a medieval court house. It also offered

protection for a community of smallholdings in an oval design accompanied by the parish church. The castle suffered capture and despoilment in the wars and riots of the closing years of the 13th century and earlier 14th century.

Richard de Clare's son, Gilbert (1180-1230) inherited his lands in Wales and continually ousted the Welsh from Llantrisant during their subsequent uprisings. Imprisoned for championing King Louis of France in the First Baron's War as a replacement to King John, he was later succeeded by his son, Richard de Clare the 6th Earl of Gloucester (1222-1262) who fortified several of the Glamorganshire castles. Coming to Llantrisant in 1246 he made a home at the castle for his family, rebuilding the church and installing the Norman Font that still exists today. In 1252 Richard and his second wife Maud de Lacy had a daughter at the castle named Margaret (1250-1312) who later became the wife of Edmund, Second Earl of Cornwall. The town increased to almost 190 homes by the end of his reign, despite the constant rebellions of the Welsh tribes. Richard was allegedly poisoned at the table of Piers of Savoy and his body laid to rest at Tewkesbury Abbey. Leaving extensive property across numerous counties, a series of inquisitions were held after his death, including lands in Glamorgan and Llantrisant in particular.

Gilbert 'The Red' de Clare, 7th Earl of Gloucester (1243-1295) named for his fiery temper and hair colour, inherited much of those lands, becoming recognised as one of the most powerful and brutal of all nobles. He took the title of Lord of Glamorgan in 1263. Gilbert's wife, Joan was the daughter of King Edward I. One of their own children, Elizabeth, founded Clare College in Cambridge. It was Gilbert De Clare who built Caerphilly Castle as a fortress, led the massacre of the Jews at Canterbury and was excommunicated by Pope Clement IV. As joint guardian of England during the King's absence in the crusades, his power was widespread. During King Edward's invasion of Wales in 1282 and defeat of Prince Llewellyn (The Last), de Clare insisted on leading the attack in the south. He was appointed Commander of the Southern Army, facing disaster at the Battle of Llandeilo Fawr. He died at Monmouth Castle in 1295 and was buried to the left of his grandfather at Tewkesbury. His own heir Gilbert de Clare 7th Earl of Gloucester (1291-1314) was killed at the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314, which inevitably left the de Clare lands to be divided between his sisters including Eleanor.

Llantrisant entered one of its most famous periods, placing it arguably on the world's stage when the

Lordship of Glamorgan transferred to Eleanor's husband, the notorious Hugh Despenser "The Younger" 1st Lord Despenser (1286-1326) and supposed lover of King Edward II. One of the cruellest of the barons his savage greed for wealth, power and tyranny made him one of the most unpopular Lords of them all. One of his greatest enemies included that of Llewellyn Bren (Llywellyn ap Gruffudd ap Rhys) of Senghennydd, the Welsh nobleman and rebel who led his Welsh revolt in 1316, including the siege of Llantrisant which allegedly destroyed the castle and a hundred surrounding homes. The revolt was the last serious challenge to English rule in Wales for almost sixty years. It included the attack on Caerphilly Castle which saw the town burned to the ground and the slaughter of its inhabitants although the rebels were unable to break the inner defences of the fortress. Bren was forced to surrender at Ystradfellta in March 1316, but pleaded only he should be punished and his followers spared. This gallant behaviour earned him the respect of his English captors, particularly Roger de Mortimer 1st Earl of March (1287-1330) who promised to intercede on his behalf. Bren was imprisoned at the Tower of London and Mortimer asked the King for his pardon. However the ruthless Despenser took Bren to Cardiff Castle without the King's approval where he was hung, drawn and quartered. After parts of his body were exhibited around the country he was buried in the Grey Friars at Cardiff.

On becoming royal chamberlain in 1318 Despenser's own greed ran free, claiming lands, cheating others from properties, making enemies, avoiding plots to kill him (with magic!) and even surviving as a pirate in the English channel when his fellow barons forced his short-term exile. Despenser and the King ruled through a period known as "The Tyranny". Remembering his distrust for Roger Mortimer as he had supported Bren years before and grown to become an enemy, Despenser pressed to have him executed. Mortimer was imprisoned at the Tower of London, only to escape and flee to France. A dispute between France and England had broken out over the King's refusal to pay homage to the French King. Edward made the grave error in sending his own wife, Queen Isabella to sooth the waters between both countries. She detested her husband and his lover Despenser on whom he lavished his patronage as he had to Piers Gaveston previously. She even claimed Despenser had once raped her. Isabella, known as the "She-Wolf of France" travelled to her home country under the guise of a diplomatic mission, where she began her affair with Roger Mortimer and

the two agreed to depose King Edward and oust the Despenser family. On 31 May 1325, Isabella agreed to a peace treaty favouring France and requiring Edward to pay homage to her brother, King Charles; but Edward decided instead to send his young son on his behalf. It was another major tactical error for the English King. Despenser supposedly tried to bribe French courtiers to assassinate Isabella, sending barrels of silver as payment. Queen Isabella and Roger Mortimer returned to England with a small mercenary army in September 1326, moving rapidly



Edward of Woodstock, 'The Black Prince'

across England. The invasion soon had too much force and support to be stemmed. As a result, the army the king had ordered failed to emerge and both Edward and the Despensers were left isolated. They abandoned London on 2 October, leaving the city to fall into disorder. The king first took refuge in Gloucester and then fled to Despenser's lands in South Wales.

Despenser's own father was accused of encouraging the illegal government of his son and was hanged and beheaded at the Bristol Gallows. Very few people were prepared to fight for the King, mainly because of the hatred that the Despensers had aroused. Their escape to Caerphilly Castle, followed by Neath Abbey was an unsuccessful one. On 16 November Edward II was guided by a Cistercian monk, (a Mortimer spy) for refreshment at the sacred shrine of Penrhys. Heading for safety, Edward was inter-

cepted in the area later to be known as Pant y Brad - the Hollow of Treason in Tonyrefail. Both the King and Despenser were taken to Llantrisant castle and imprisoned overnight.

Hugh Despenser the younger tried to starve himself before he faced trial on 24 November 1326, in Hereford. He was judged a traitor and a thief, and sentenced to public execution. Despenser was dragged



Beating the Bounds, 1946

behind four horses to his place of execution, where a great fire was lit. He was stripped naked, and Biblical verses denouncing arrogance and evil were carved into his skin. He was then hanged from a gallows but cut down before he could choke to death. Despenser was then tied to a ladder, and in full view of the crowd had his genitals sliced off and burned (in his still-conscious sight) then his entrails slowly pulled out, and, finally, his heart cut out and thrown into the fire. Finally, his corpse was beheaded, his body cut into four pieces, and his head mounted on the gates of London. The government of Isabella and Mortimer was precarious to say the least. Edward II was later imprisoned at Berkeley Castle in Gloucestershire where, it was generally believed, he was murdered. Many thought Isabella had arranged it. Isabella and Mortimer's regime began to crumble, partly because of her lavish spending. In 1330, Isabella's son Edward III deposed Mortimer, taking back his authority and executing Isabella's lover. The Queen was not punished, and lived for many years in considerable style although not at court, becoming a popular "femme fatale" figure in British history. It was during the reign of King Edward III that another famous event took place in Llantrisant. The tradespeople in the community petitioned the 2nd Baron Hugh Despenser (1308-1349) and heir of his executed father's lordship for a Charter to allow them to trade freely within their own town. Other traders wanting to sell their goods at the weekly markets would pay for the privilege to the Lord. Therefore both parties benefited from the Charter,

which outlined a boundary line for the freedom of trading. The presentation of the Charter of 1346 created a new borough, which existed until 1889. In an effort to help it to succeed in a competitive world, its Burgesses or Freemen gathered a range of privileges, giving them a measure of self government, their own courts of law, and control on markets and fairs. The portreeve exercised power over the administration, while the corporation business was conducted by the Court Leet. The boundary of the ancient borough was also sanctified by the Beating the Bounds ceremony whereby they would "perambulate" the boundaries to ensure nobody traded within the borough without paying the toll. Young boys were reminded of these boundary lines by literally being "bumped" on stones to the north and south of the ancient borough.

The decision by Despenser to allow the charter was also due to the fact that he needed to win favour with the longbowmen of the town as recruits for the king's army. The Llantrisant longbowmen were pivotal in the adoption of the English longbow as the missile weapon of choice for the English crown during the Middle Ages. Llantrisant can be proud of the role it played in some of Wales and Britain's most important events in medieval history. Crécy-en-Ponthieu a small town mid-way between Paris and Calais, was the scene of a famous battle on 26 August, 1346

Knights on horseback and heavy cavalry had dominated the battlefield since the latter years of the Roman Empire. This was a period of change. The longbow was introduced by Henry III used by Welsh archers serving Edward I at the battle of Falkirk in 1298 and Edward III against Scottish knights at Halidon Hill in Berwickshire in 1333. But it had never before been used to its full potential. The longbow had taken decades to perfect, maximise its range, power, accuracy and to develop tactics to exploit it to the full. In the hands of these master infantry, the longbow could reach out more than 300 yards if shot upwards in a high trajectory and still kill if it hit. A rate of 10 arrows per minute could be sustained; and up to 20 could be shot for short periods.

Despenser trained, organised and equipped a force of special troops to deliver the whole package of weaponry, ammunition, resupply, marksmanship and discipline. The change Crécy made to warfare, the European balance of power and the social order cannot be exaggerated. The value of the longbow as a long-range killing weapon re-established the importance of skilled, professional foot-soldiers, lead-

ing to mercenary armies. The fame of the Welsh produced a new respect for yeomanry, who have put two fingers up at the gentry and the French – quite literally! On displaying their two fingers to the enemy it showed they had escaped their wrath and not seen both fingers amputated as had been the French way of eliminating the abilities of the longbowmen. The symbol of defiance continues to this day.

The King's army had marched 350 miles since landing in mid-July. Provisions were short. The French had come only from Paris. He displayed his centre on a low hill, a line of dismounted men-at-arms. On either side, so that the position resembled a V with a flattened bottom, he placed cavalry, the Prince of Wales commanding the right and the Earls of Arundel and Northampton the left. Edward placed companies of archers on both wings and they immediately began to protect their positions with ditches and caltrops. King Philip advanced companies of 6,000 Genoese crossbowmen to soften up the English. Outraged by the longbowmen and lightly armoured, they suffered severe casualties. Unable to be effective, they withdrew, forced by arrow shot into the centre of the battlefield, right into the path of the first charge of the French cavalry, who rode over them.

The longbowmen loosed volleys of grey goose feathered arrows to extreme range, ten or more every minute. It was said, "Arrows fell like snow". Men and horses fell. Those reaching the bottom of the V were engaged at shorter range, where the longbow pierced armour. To prevent the break-out of the French, mostly unhorsed, English knights fought on foot, shoulder to shoulder with men-at-arms. Urged to reinforce the sixteen-year-old Prince of Wales, the King refused: "My son must earn his spurs". It was in full black armour and on foot that Edward of Woodstock (1330-1376), the Prince of Wales, or the "Black Prince", rallied his army, held his position and conquered the French, crippling their army for another decade. His performance as a war captain was exemplary. At the end of the battle the blind King of Bohemia, was found as he had ridden into battle, chained between his knights lest they lose him. All were present; all were dead, all clustered around their King. The Black Prince of Wales took his arms and wore his crest, three ostrich feathers girdled in a crown; he and all Welsh Regiments and military units have done so ever since. Edward later became the first Knight of the Garter, and is remembered as an exceptional military leader. He died just a year before his father, becoming the first English

Prince of Wales not to become King of England. His son was the future King Richard II.

Although the charter was not presented to the men of Llantrisant after their victory at Crecy, but rather five months earlier, it is always comforting to imagine those gallant veterans, known as the Black Army, may have been the first to be bestowed with the freedom of the new Ancient Borough of Llantrisant on



Southgate c. 1900

their return to the hilltop town. In 1424 a second charter was issued by King Henry VI, making Llantrisant a Corporate Town which consisted of a steward, portreeve, 12 aldermen, town clerk; Constable of the Castle; sergeant at mace; two overseers of the market; four overseers of the Common, and an indefinite number of burgesses or Freemen. Six hundred years later and the tradition of the Freemen of Llantrisant remains the most unique element of this famous Welsh town.

Following a relatively short and chequered history, Llantrisant castle was of little account from 1404 and was probably demolished by Owain Glyndwr during his raids against the English and struggle for Welsh independence between 1400 and 1406 or possibly fell redundant when a period of greater stability emerged. Certainly by the time of the visit of Henry VIII's antiquarian Leland in 1536, the castle was in ruin. The parish church however underwent a process of rebuilding and by 1490 the west end was added, along with a tower. Sadly the arrival of the Black Death which swept across Europe and took millions of lives, did not leave Llantrisant untouched. The town witnessed a massive death-rate, making it scarcely bigger than it was 200 years earlier and saw much of the traditions and trade fall into a rapid decline. It took a generation or more to overcome the crisis and gradually the farming district grew, dominated by a market town that thrived to become one of the largest in Glamorgan.

During the mid 17th century the Baptist Movement

was first recorded in Llantrisant, opening the way for further Nonconformist religions including Methodism and Wesleyan who built and opened their chapels throughout the town. The Freeman and their Court Leet may have seen the unfortunate decline of their Guild-hall during this period, but they also managed to adopt a true Llantrisant "treasure" with the creation of a specially designed Mace. First used at the Court Leet in 1633, the silver mace is older than the one used in the House



Dr. William Price (1800-1893)

of Commons to this day. It was the Lady Windsor who finally came to the aid of the Court Leet in 1773 by paying £100 towards the rebuilding of the Guild-hall. The old town scales and weights were kept at the Angel Inn, or the Pwysty, where tolls were collected by the Constable of the Castle who imposed a price on goods entering the town for sale - all helping to boost the trading future of the town for a century or more.

Llantrisant has always been recognised as the hometown of many bizarre and eccentric characters and none more so than Hopkin Hopkins, the world's shortest man, was born near Llantrisant in 1736. He suffered from progeria and at the time of his death in 1754 weighed 13lb and was 2ft 7in tall. He visited London in 1751, staying for the winter season, and visited the nobility and gentry. He was introduced to Princess Dowager of Wales and the Prince of Wales who allegedly made him a miniature crown which he wore when entertaining at court.

Sadly public health grew to become a major concern in the town where epidemics were frequent and the growth of paupers reached unparalleled heights. In 1764 more than 40 residents died in 14 days due to smallpox which resulted in the burning of houses and burial of the victims in graves rather hauntingly inscribed, "Not to be Opened". Llantrisant also held a somewhat dubious reputation as the haven of thieves and prostitutes, and was a centre of drunkenness and rowdiness. Terms associated with the town included the "mean and dirty streets of Llantrisant", where people walk up their knees in dung and "pigs roam streets without rings in their snouts." It was the hub of all factions of society, from the ruling gentry and corrupt vicars to quarrelsome families who witnessed incidents of brutality and

nightly brawls owing to the mass of public houses. The drunkenness and debauchery was easily attributed to the opening of twenty seven public houses in just a handful of streets.

Clearly something had to be done and a historic church vestry meeting of December 5, 1783, was called to, 'consult in regard of establishing a workhouse for the poor'. Until then, the 'aged, feeble and weak-minded' were either cared for by a neighbour for a small fee or simply left unassisted in insanitary cottages. In 1784, it was unanimously resolved to open the workhouse in a series of adapted cottages along Swan Street and in the Black Cock Inn on Yr Allt, with the Union Workhouse opening a century later close on the Bull Ring. Eventually the town re-occupied the high status enjoyed during the medieval period and, by the Victorian era, it witnessed a time of splendid refurbishment of the church and the appearance of many landmark houses, shops and inns, which still exist today. Fairs and markets played a central role in its resurrection and the town's reputation as a centre for trade flourished. Four fairs were held annually in the open square, adjoining the Guildhall. By 1827 bull-baiting was disallowed at the Bull Ring due to unruly crowds rather than the welfare of the animals and in 1840 a former member of the Metropolitan Police, Thomas Morgan Lewis, became superintendent of the town with six constables.

During the mid 19th century the South Wales coalfield touched the borders of Llantrisant and attracted workers from Somerset, Cornwall and Bristol who infiltrated the area and brought all the economic benefits of an increased population. The powerful George Insole built his Georgian mansion, "Llantrisant House" and even Thomas Powell Jnr commenced sinking and mining at Llantrisant Common under a licence granted by the Marquis of Bute. The Corporation Land Colliery caused something of a Victorian melodrama in the town, resulting in the Freeman bringing action against the Marquis until work was suspended in 1869.

Llantrisant's certain degree of affluence as a hub of commercial activity was relatively short-lived and, gradually, Llantrisant's authority declined in favour of neighbouring Newbridge. By the late 19th century, a flourishing market was already in place there. The town, later renamed Pontypridd, enjoyed the facilities of the Glamorganshire Canal and Taff Vale Railway. Although Llantrisant Railway Station was opened in 1861 it was, of course, in Pontyclun, three miles away. Ironically, Llantrisant's positioning, once its greatest attraction, was now something of hin-

drance and, although Lord Bute gave freedom for the market tolls, it was not enough to save the town's commercial wealth. Population increased with the emergence of the mines at Mwyndy, along with immigrants who took up work on the neighbouring railway industry and tinplate works. Non-conformism played an active role in the social development of its people, with emphasis on sports, education, music and culture. Welsh remained the predominant language of the inhabitants well into the early 20th Century. Two schools were established in the Guildhall by the Reverend James Harris as far back as 1701 but it wasn't until 1867 that the Llantrisant National School opened on West Caerlan fields, on the property of the Earl of Talbot and Shrewsbury.

The splendid refurbishment of the parish church in 1873 cost £3,000 and was influenced by architect John Pritchard, providing a certain charm of the Victorian Gothic design. By 1894 the west end was restored costing £1,200, with the bells re-hung and a four-foot deep white marble baptistery placed under the floor. The most notable feature was that of the stained-glass east window by Morris Burne-Jones, depicting Christ without a beard, making it one of only a handful in the world, including the cathedral at Copenhagen.

Llantrisant had also become synonymous with another rare depiction. That of the surgeon, archdruid, social reformer, health service pioneer, political activist and founder of Wales's first cooperative movement, Dr William Price who moved to the town from Treforest in the early 1870s. It was here that the flamboyant master scholar of his pagan faith named his baby child Iesu Grist, promising to deliver a new Messiah of the Druidic religion to Britain. When the infant died at five months in 1884 he famously attempted to cremate the body at East Caerlan, causing a public outcry and resulting in the famous landmark court case in Cardiff. On winning his trial, Price was secured in the annals of British history as his pioneering approach gave power to the Cremation Society to pass their Cremation Act through Parliament. Dr Price's own cremation in 1893 saw more than 20,000 flock to the hilltop town to bid a fond farewell to the "Welsh wizard".

His spectacular eccentricities totally outshone the town's celebrated son, David Evans, and his ascendancy to the post of Lord Mayor of London by 1891. Sir David was part of a well-known Llantrisant family, one of whose ascendants was none other than the darling of the West End stage, composer Ivor Novello. Another of Llantrisant's "honest few" included

that of James Taylor of the Wheatsheaf, later to become Lord Mayor of Cardiff in 1927.

It was at Parliament that the Municipal Corporation Act was finally passed, ending the ancient boroughs like Llantrisant. In order to manage the extensive lands and rights of the Freeman, the Llantrisant Town Trust was formed in 1889. Its first Clerk was Evan John, a Member of the Royal Entomological Society who devoted his spare time to the study of insect life. His most striking discovery was a new moth, introduced to the British list and found in Llantrisant. One of their first actions as a Trust was to invest £130 to restore the mysterious 13th century tower on West Caerlan as a folly, believed to have been a windmill or more likely an auxiliary tower to the castle, known as Y Felin Wyt.

Ultimately, further development and industry coming to the region resulted in council-owned estates built in the town, but unable to cope with such a massive influx of population, Llantrisant reached saturation point. One of its most famous industries was that of the Royal Mint, relocated from Tower Hill after more than 900 years to Llantrisant in 1968 with Queen Elizabeth II, the Duke of Edinburgh and Prince of Wales visited the site on December 17.

Llantrisant is a unique, historic town. Each one of us should feel proud to be a resident. We are a unique community and should be grateful to live in a place that deserves to be considered as a jewel in the crown of British history, from its early warriors through its medieval battles, proud tradition of Freeman, home to cremation pioneers and lord mayors to the home of the Royal Mint. Yet the town is more than just a shrine to the many battles fought there, or a memorial to a bygone age of chivalry, tradition and custom to be visited like a museum. It is a living, thriving home to generations of large families, fiercely proud of their town. Llantrisant has survived its tumultuous history because people were filled with a strong desire to reside amongst its many charming, unplanned cobbled streets. They weaved the history of this beautiful little town and became synonymous with its reputation as the home to so many colourful, unique characters.

For more than fifteen hundred years, this town has witnessed a truly fascinating history. For its sons and daughters, Llantrisant's alluring charm can be understood by walking the very streets where these episodes occurred. Quite simply, we are proud to call this unique hilltop town our home.



The undefeated 1st XV for 2006-2007, becoming the WRU National Division 2 East Champions

THE BLACK ARMY WARRIORS



Royston Collins

Welsh Schools Under 15s, Wales Under 19s



Kevin Fox

Wales Youth, Wales Under 19s



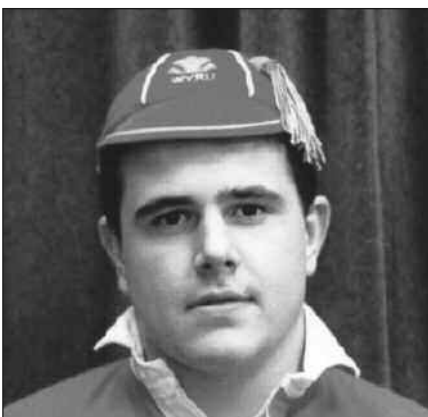
Guy Collins

Welsh Schools Under 15s, 16s



Phillip Davies

Welsh Schools Under 15s B, 16s



Geraint Davies

Wales Under 21s



David Drew

Welsh Schools Under 15s, 18s



Gareth Alexander

Welsh Schools Under 15s, 16s, 18s



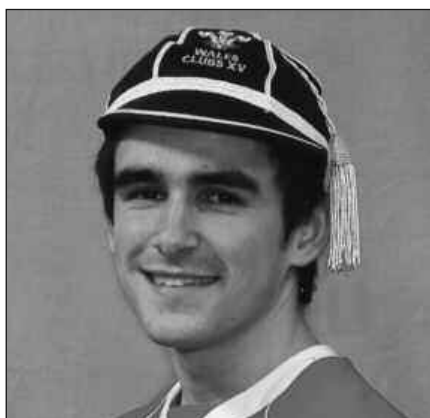
Scott Andrews

Welsh Schools Under 11s, 16s, 18s,
Wales Under 20s (Captain),
Wales National Team



Thomas Botwood

Wales Clubs Under 25s



Glenn Holloway

Wales Clubs Under 25s



Patrick Palmer

Wales Under 18s, 19s 20s



Stuart Griffiths

Welsh Schools Under 11s East Wales



Bradley Davies

Welsh Schools Under 16s, 18s,
Wales Under 19s, 20s (Captain),
Wales National Team



Jevon Groves

Wales Under 18s,
Wales Under 19s
Wales Under 20s (Captain),
Wales Sevens (Captain)



Lewis Morgan

Welsh Schools Under 16s

CAPTAINS LIST

1st XV

1968-1969	J. Williams
1969-1970	J. Clayton
1970-1971	G. Bryant
1971-1972	R. Lamerton
1972-1973	M. Wood
1973-1974	C. Bull
1974-1975	P. Newton
1975-1976	D. O'Neill
1976-1977	K. Morgan
1977-1978	C. Preston
1978-1979	C. Preston
1979-1980	C. Preston
1980-1981	M. Thomas
1981-1982	C. Groves
1982-1983	K. Swarfield
1983-1984	S. Evans
1984-1985	S. Evans
1985-1986	S. Evans
1986-1987	C. Groves
1987-1988	C. Groves
1988-1989	C. Groves
1989-1990	S. Evans
1990-1991	S. Evans
1991-1992	S. Evans
1992-1993	S. Evans
1993-1994	S. Evans
1994-1995	V. Evans
1995-1996	L. Prosser
1996-1997	L. Prosser
1997-1998	K. Jenkins
1998-1999	D. Barnes
1999-2000	S. Jenkins
2000-2001	G. Alexander
2001-2002	G. Alexander
2002-2003	H. David
2003-2004	H. David
2004-2005	H. David / D. Evans
2005-2006	D. Evans
2006-2007	H. David
2007-2008	H. David
2008-2009	H. David
2009-2010	G. Jones
2010-2011	G. Jones
2011-2012	G. Holloway
2012-2013	G. Holloway / S. Gilbertson
2013-2014	S. Gilbertson
2014-2015	K. Evans

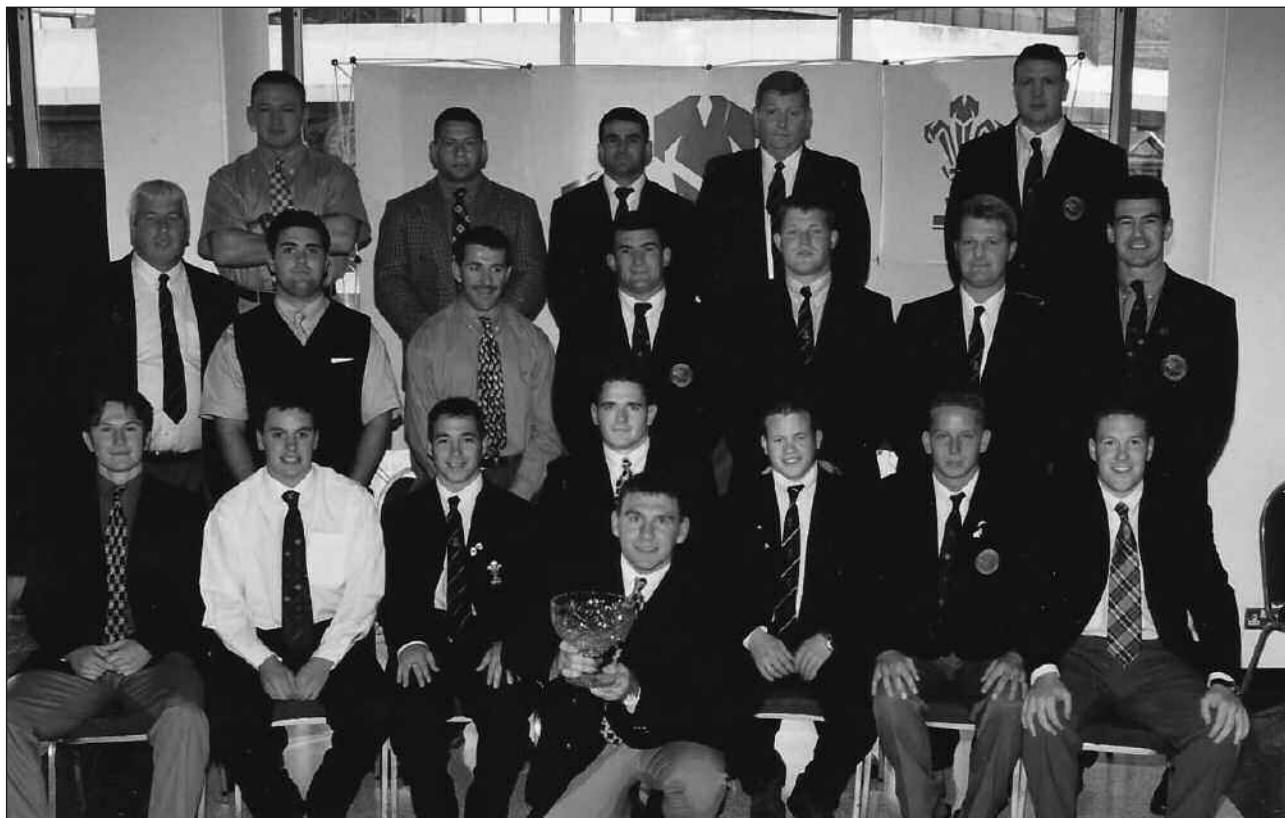
2nd XV

1974-1975	D. Williams
1975-1976	G. Bryant
1976-1977	M. Wood
1977-1978	M. Wood
1978-1979	I Wilkins
1979-1980	M. Wood
1980-1981	M. Wood
1981-1982	L. Kerslake
1982-1983	A. Hopkins
1983-1984	L. Kerslake
1984-1985	B. Doster
1985-1986	A. Hopkins
1986-1987	B. Doster
1987-1988	R. Woodland
1988-1989	S. Griffiths
1989-1990	A. Griffiths
1990-1991	R. Harrison
1991-1992	G. Bryant
1992-1993	G. Bryant
1993-1994	A. Phillips
1994-1995	A. Phillips
1995-1996	A. Phillips
1996-1997	R. Harrison
1997-1998	C. Bowen
1998-1999	J. Lewis
1999-2000	R. Harrison
2000-2001	C. Morgan
2001-2002	V. Evans
2002-2003	N. Bush
2003-2004	D. Holder
2004-2005	D. Holder
2005-2006	D. Holder
2006-2007	J. Medlicott
2007-2008	A. David
2008-2009	A. David
2009-2010	J. Medlicott
2010-2011	J. Medlicott
2011-2012	I. Worgan
2012-2013	A. David
2013-2014	S. Dean
2014-2015	R. Ferris

CAPTAINS LIST

Youth

1966-1967	G. Jordan	1991-1992	G. Spargo
1967-1968	G. Bryant	1992-1993	J. Alford
1968-1969	F. Owen	1993-1994	M. Roberts
1969-1970	C. Bull	1994-1995	O. David
1970-1971	J. Worgan	1995-1996	H. David
1971-1972	D. Hughes	1996-1997	I. Worgan
1972-1973	G. Evans	1997-1998	A. Davies
1973-1974	J. Thomas	1998-1999	A. Davies
1974-1975	M. Thomas	1999-2000	A. Davies
1975-1976	M. Thomas	2000-2001	C. Doster
1976-1977	C. Groves	2001-2002	K. Oliver / B. Coombes
1977-1978	G. Bryant	2002-2003	J. Medlicott
1978-1979	A. Mcintosh	2003-2004	O. Osbourne
1979-1980	S. Evans	2004-2005	G. Holloway
1980-1981	R. Harrison	2005-2006	J. Andrews
1981-1982	A. Phillips	2006-2007	D. Baylis
1982-1983	C. Bowen	2007-2008	S. Dean
1983-1984	P. Davies	2008-2009	K. Evans
1984-1985	V. Evans	2009-2010	O. Rees
1985-1986	C. Evans	2010-2011	C. Pring
1986-1987	I. Thomas / M. Bryant	2011-2012	J. Bowen
1987-1988	P. Bradwell	2012-2013	J. Bowen
1988-1989	P. Bradwell	2013-2014	J. Little
1989-1990	K. Jenkins	2014-2015	
1990-1991	L. Mahoney		



Players attended the WRU Champions Dinner on being made Division 4 Champions 1997-1998

LLANTRISANT RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB

A HISTORY

Celebrating 125 years of rugby in the ancient hilltop town of Llantrisant allows us the opportunity to pay tribute to generations of families who have enhanced their local team by producing dedicated players and lifelong supporters. This is an incredible milestone for any sporting organisation and the town's famous club can feel justifiably proud of its many achievements over the decades. Rugby union has long-since been regarded as the national sport of the Welsh and has become part of the very culture of our nation. Much has changed in Llantrisant and the world around it, but one of the many constants of this proud community of ours is its successful sporting prowess and nowhere has this been better represented than by the town's rugby club.

This is the unique medieval community whose longbowmen famously claimed the victory at Crecy in 1346, allowing the "Black Prince" of Wales to make a trophy of the three ostrich feathers which remain emblematic of the royal position, military organisations and for that matter the Welsh Rugby Union. It is from such an auspicious historic event that the players of Llantrisant Rugby Football Club, like the people of the town itself are fondly regarded as "The Black Army". Although the centuries have passed since those gallant soldiers fought in one of the most pivotal battles in world history, the Black Army players still march onto the field with the passion, pride and determination to succeed, conquer and triumph.

Throughout the 19th century a variety of ball games were played in Wales. The most popular in Glamorganshire in the

early 1800s was "Bando" where teams of 30 or more players participated and also the West Wales tradition of "Cnapan" where whole villages got involved, illustrating the enormous community spirit in a rural society. The first known ball game in Llantrisant itself was that of "Fives", another handball game which derives from the same origins as many racquet sports. In fives, a ball is propelled against the walls of a special court using a gloved or bare hand. Remnants of such a court can still be found at the rear of Swan Street and Y Pwysty on George Street.

The story of William Webb Ellis, disregarding the rules of football by first taking it in his arms in 1823 is now diminished by most rugby historians. It is believed the sport reached our borders in 1850 when Rev. Professor Rowland Williams brought the game from Cambridge to St David's College in Lampeter (where he was appointed Vice Principal) which fielded the first Welsh rugby team that same season. Initially it expanded across Wales through former pupils of the Welsh colleges or from students returning home to the larger industrial towns of the South Wales valleys. Some of the original clubs to embrace the sport in the mid 1870s included the likes of Neath, considered the first in Wales. Welsh rugby continued to develop over the next few years with the "big four" South Wales clubs forming in Newport, Cardiff, Llanelli and Swansea. With the coming of the railways, rugby also spread from the larger towns to the new industrial areas such as the iron town of Merthyr in 1876 and coal mining communities like Penygraig in 1877.



1st XV 1899 – 1900

Back row: D. Owen, Dick Stamp, R. Davies, Evans (Policeman), W. Williamson, Hedges, Warburton, ?, B Prior

Middle row: J. Lewis, J. Barkle, D. Lukey (Captain), Tal Davies, H. Jury

Front row: A. Williamson, D. Francis, H. Lanam, D. Lewis, J. Williams, H. James

One cannot deny the importance of the grammar school system who adopted rugby as their preferred sport. Rugby came to Cowbridge Grammar School as early as the 1870s and a rugby team was formed in Pontyclun over a decade earlier than Llantrisant because of the amount of grammar school boys living in the village coupled with the arrival of a tin plate works, iron ore and of course the railways.

In those days games were either ten or twenty a side depending on the amount of players available. The ball was round and never picked up off the ground but had to be "dapped" if only a few inches. Passing was generally unknown and when a player was collared he would sometimes hand the ball to one of his own side but not throw it. The usual thing to do was put it on the ground and form a scrum. When the ball went into touch there was no lineout but forwards would

form a tunnel and the ball was thrown by a spectator and one of the forwards would then force the ball through! Punting was considered bad form but drop kicking was applauded and tripping was never considered etiquette but clever and fair hacking was allowed usually by hooking the instep of the leg which was in the air.

There was no regulation kit at this period either. Usually games were played in ordinary attire with the players taking their jackets off – but not their bowlers! Scoring was a complicated affair and depended on the venue of the match. Goals were the highest score, far greater than tries, touch-downs or even defensive minors which also had a scoring value. There was no referee but each side would appoint an Umpire and therefore rival teams had as much power as the other. At times games would stop and players and spectators joined the general debate. Clearly there



The young 'Black Army' boys c. 1905

AN ORIGINAL BLACK ARMY CAPTAIN



David Keskeys Lukey (1878-1951) was born in Ruperra Street on December 28th 1878. David was the son of collier Benjamin and Martha Lukey (formerly

Keskeys) from St Hilary, Cornwall. He married Katie Davies and they settled down on High Street where the couple had two children, Ninian (who died at childbirth) and Betty. David was best known as the local school attendance officer as well as being a special constable. He captained Llantrisant RFC from 1899 to 1900 and was Chairman of the Club during the post-war years. He was made a Freeman through marriage in 1913 and also served on Llantrisant Town Trust where he was the prime mover in establishing the Llantrisant Freeman's Golf Club, amid a great deal of controversy. He was a founder member of the new golf club at Lanelay and devoted his time to the upkeep of the greens. He died in his home at Talbot Green at the age of 73 following a fall.

were constant arguments and fist fights on and off the pitch.

The South Wales Football Club was established in 1875 to try and incorporate a set of rules for the game and this was succeeded by the Welsh Football Union in 1881 (renamed the Welsh Rugby Union in 1934) and Wales began competition entries in recognised international matches from that year onwards. The first "golden era" emerged in the early 20th century having already won the Triple Crown in 1893. Wales won the trophy on six occasions between 1900 and 1914 along with three Grand Slams.

It was amid such a background of national sporting prowess that the men of Llantrisant took up the challenge of form-

ing their own rugby team. The town's population had changed considerably from the mid 1850s onwards with the coming of the coal industry to neighbouring Beddau, welcoming families from Cornwall, Somerset and Ireland. Agricultural workers or colliers probably formed Llantrisant's own playing base. It was these young men, filled with a sense of competitive spirit, who decided to transform their ad-hoc team into an established organisation which would thrive over the coming years.

Aside from the established clubs there were also many "scratch" teams populating the valleys such as informal pub or social teams what would form for a handful of games and disband just as quickly.

It was such a tradition that probably came to fruition in Llantrisant even earlier than the formation date of the current rugby club. There was certainly a team associated with the Cross Inn and Miskin Arms for instance where regular matches in each of the hamlets took place prior to 1900. The success of those teams relied heavily on the enthusiasm of the pub landlord. They would usually pay for some sort of kit, or supplied the balls and would have paid for their picture to be taken. Certainly these were not paid for by the local players, most of whom were usually miners or railwaymen rather than college or university boys. Working in such heavy industries meant they were physically fit young men but the hours in which they worked with differing shift patterns made training times difficult. It is of little wonder that although they regularly played rugby, they weren't necessarily a well-trained outfit that performed well as a team. Sometimes these embryonic sides would play just a few games and drift away as another was formed by the local iron ore works or colliery. However what is noticeable is the fact that many of those sides were peppered with names of Llantrisant families during the late 19th century.

Although many of the early teams had something of a "spluttered" history what cannot be underestimated is the undiminished enthusiasm of many key players keen to maintain a regular side. We have no real evidence of an exact starting point of Llantrisant Rugby Football Club but it would suggest that 1889 is the year in question when a more established team was formed in the old town that lasted with only a handful of "barren" periods until the present day. Llantrisant was

going through a time of change. The passing of the Municipal Corporation Act changed the governance of the entire town and put an end to the ancient Court Leet. Instead it saw the formation of the Llantrisant Town Trust, the representative body for the Freeman of Llantrisant who managed their rights and privileges as laid down by the Charter of 1346. It is interesting to note that many of those early team members were Freeman of the town. The connections between both the Club and the Freeman is obvious, from the shared use of its crest, the black and green colours and of course the "Black Army" title. Even to this day many players are Freeman of Llantrisant.

We consider Llantrisant RFC to be a truly family affair with some of today's young players coming from third or fourth generations of former team members. This proud association with the club stimulates the competitive spirit as they wear the jersey with as much pride today as they did over a century ago. Like tribal warfare, there is much at stake including club and town pride when they represent Llantrisant. The honour and the tradition is obvious with every game. With many notable triumphs, this passion for success continues. They share their year of formation with neighbouring teams Bedwas RFC, Blackwood RFC and Llantwit Major RFC as the growth of popularity for the sport increased season upon season.

Llantrisant RFC's formation in 1889 came during a period when the town enjoyed a notoriety all of its own. Resident Dr Price's landmark court case after the cremation of his child in 1884 had put the town firmly into the national spotlight. Later one of its proud sons, David Evans,



became the Lord Mayor of London and made a ceremonial return to Llantrisant in 1891 amid huge acclaim. However, nothing would prepare the people of the old town for the largest spectator event in its history as more than 20,000 walked the steep slope of East Caerlan hill to witness the cremation of the notorious Dr Price in 1893. All 27 pubs in the town ran dry of ale! It was in the shadow of this hill that the original rugby team first trained on the relatively flat expanse of Caerlan Fields and one can only wonder if any of those young players were illegitimate offspring of the philandering Archdruid himself!

One of the most prominent early figures in the history of the club was David Lukey of High Street, later the town's school attendance officer (or "whipper-in"), who captained the side and later became Chairman prior to the outbreak of

the Second World War. Aside from a squad photograph taken of the 1896-97 season, showing a group of men with an unusually large ball and no complete kit, the earliest evidence we have of a permanent rugby team in the old town comes from a copy of the Pontypridd Chronicle in 1896 and refers to the "Llantrisant Stars" rugby team which features David Lukey. It is uncertain as to the background of use of the word "Stars" here. On the one hand it may be a case that the team was being sponsored by The Star Inn which was situated close to the Bear Inn and almost in the centre of the Bull Ring. On the other hand a similar team existed in Talbot Green named as the "Talbot Stars" which makes one wonder whether it was simply a slogan of the local teams, a piece of amateur propaganda which made them sound like "star" players! The 1896 entry is a pre-match listing of the Llantrisant Stars who



CELEBRATING A LLANTRISANT WAR HERO



Arthur Thomas Williamson was born in 1880 in Talbot Green, the son of John, a local carpenter of Llantrisant and Elizabeth Williamson (formerly Harriet) of Llantrithyd. During his teenage years Arthur began playing rugby locally for the Llantrisant Stars, later to become known as Llantrisant Rugby Football Club. He is pictured on the left of the 1st

XV squad photograph from 1900. Arthur was a Freeman of Llantrisant and was enrolled in May 1906.

During World War I Arthur served with the 11th Battalion of the Royal Welch Fusiliers in the Entente Powers' Salonika campaign which comprised British, French and later Italian, Serbian and Russian troops. Its objective was to bring relief to Serbia under attack by Austro-Hungarian, German and Bulgarian army by opening a new front and eventually attacking the Austro-Hungarian Empire from the south, through the Balkans.

Arthur passed away on December 22 1917 at the age of 37 near the small village of Sarigol in northern Greece.

It is not known how he died, but it is certain he languished for some time at the British Military Hospital, probably following a gunshot wound. He was buried in the British Military Cemetery in Salonika.

are about to play Llwydarth and Cilfynydd on the following week. The local team were: "Back, T. Williams; three quarter back T. Wakins, Ithel Evans, T. Durkins and R. John; half backs J. Dooley and T. Davies (Captain); forward H. James, D. Lukey, R. Stamp, R. Davies, A. Hicks, R. Hicks, A. Williamson and J. Durkin."

With few historical records to depend on, one can only rely on recollections of former members, the study of newspapers from the period and mere snippets of artefacts that recall a halcyon time of rugby triumphs and celebrations. Without an established clubhouse for almost eighty years, the players used the Wheat-sheaf, Cross Keys, Shrewsbury Arms,

Butchers Arms, New Inn and the Bear Inn as their recognised "home" along with changing rooms in a variety of local hostelries and even above the Crown Stores on High Street. As for rugby pitches, this was often shared between Caerlan Field, owned by farmer Mr John and also a field on the other side of Cefn Mabley owned by the Rees family. Similarly an area referred to as The Vicarage Field, near the present Coed Yr Esgob, was frequently played on. By the turn of the century the rugby team adopted the title of "The Black Army" which can be determined by an original photograph taken around 1905 of a group of young boys holding a rugby ball with the club

name painted upon it.

Of all the public houses in Llantrisant, which boasted an impressive 27 in total back in 1871, it was the Wheatsheaf that was used more frequently as home of the rugby team. The landlord during the latter part of the 19th century was Roderick Lewis, the executor of Dr Price's Last Will & Testament. Lewis died a bachelor in 1897 and the pub was inherited by his sisters, Margaret Bowen and Ellen Lewis, who sold it in 1910 for £1,310 to Edward Morgan. His brother-in-law, James Taylor became Lord Mayor of Cardiff in 1921 – the same year in which he was listed on the Freeman's Roll by the Llantrisant Court Leet. The Wheatsheaf was the headquarters of the rugby club for several decades, where players used the cellar as changing rooms and the place where tin baths were filled after the game for a quick wash-down.

The club disbanded during the First World War with many young men leaving the locality to fight for King and Country in foreign lands. Sadly, the names of some of those players are now remembered as the gallant heroes who gave the ultimate

sacrifice for our freedom. Amongst them was one of the early founding members of the Llantrisant squad, Arthur Williamson who lost his life in Northern Greece in 1915.

Llantrisant RFC was reformed sometime between 1919 and 1920 as many of those servicemen were demobbed and returned to the safety of their hometown. The Club gained considerable success in the years between both world wars with many well-known characters wearing the Black Army jersey with pride. Some of those that come to the fore include fiery Irishman Charlie Regan who played regularly in the team throughout the 1920s and usually wore a bowler on the pitch, often snatched during a scrummage and used as the ball! One tale to survive of Regan was during a match against Porthcawl in the early 1920s. It turned out to be rather a robust game and always in the thick of things, Regan was sent off for a misdemeanour. When he was leaving the field the crowd gave vent to their feelings about him. Undeterred by the size of the crowd, Regan allegedly stalked up and down the line of spectators calling, "Big

LLANTRISANT CREST



Llantrisant Rugby Football Club shares more than just its black and green colours with the Freeman of the town. The

colours illustrate the "Black Army" tradition and also the "green" of the common lands where Freeman enjoy their grazing rights.

When Llantrisant Town Trust was formed

in 1889 to manage the lands and rights of the Freeman it was agreed to create a seal. This was designed by Robert Drane, a pharmacist in Cardiff and close friend of the first Clerk of the newly formed Trust, Evan John.

The seal represents the coat of arms of the Despenser, de Clare and Consul, all of whom had such a massive impact on the development of Llantrisant.

The seal was also adopted by Llantrisant RFC and latterly by the local Welsh medium school, amongst other organisations.

or small, short or tall, I'll fight any...in Porthcawl!" Apparently there were no takers.

Regan later became Trainer and Club Secretary at a time when so many familiar family names played in the First XV including the Westcotts, Crofts, Harrisons, Rees and Dooleys to name but a few. In his later years, Regan was confined to bed and the team would call to his house near the Wheatsheaf before all home games and he would meticulously tell them how to deal with the opposition. The result was always known to him as soon as the game ended and if they lost he reprimanded them in no uncertain manner.

During this period there was a whole host of great characters including a certain Llantrisant forward, one of the hardest of

the hard men, who was a slow starter. Team mates had a remedy that after the first few lineouts, one of his own forwards would punch him in the ribs as he was going for the ball. With his blood rising he would attack the other side in fine style for the rest of the game. Another of those prominent players included Archibald Thomas, a forward who later joined Pontypridd and is reputed to have played through a Welsh trial despite suffering a serious injury and broken ribs early in the game. Another gifted player of the 1920s was Billy Jenkins whose sporting career saw him play scrum-half for Bridgend and Pontypridd.

For three seasons from 1923, the Secretary of Llantrisant Rugby "United" Football Club was Baden Powell Williams. His



1st XV 1923 – 1924

Back row: W. Meredith, J. Westcott, E. Harrison, P. Dooley, W. Harrison, A. Trewartha, W. Evans, E. Jenkins, A. Thomas, T. Rees, P. Rees, P. Causon

Third row: R. Westcott, W. Phillips, C. Regan

Second row: P. Croft, J. Clay, J. Harrison, L. John, I. Herbert

Front row: W. Wilkins, D. Davies, D. Davies (Captain), W. Jenkins, J. Thomas, J. Jeffries



1st XV 1935 – 1936

Back row: D. Lukey (Captain), W. Roche (Secretary 1934-1935), T. C. Williams (Treasurer), G. Birch, C. Raison, C. O'Neill, R. Hopkins, C. Williams, J. Phillips, M. Birch, D. Williams (Trainer), R. Owen, H. Wyatt (Secretary 1935-1936)

Middle row: W. Hicks, T. Davies, D. Israel, C. Trewartha (Captain), G. Jenkins, D. Morgan, P. Croft

Front row: J. Francis, T. Wilkins

A SOLDIER'S DYING MEMORY



Lieutenant Thomas James Wilkins (1917-1944) was the son of David and Margaret Wilkins of Church Street. Tom was the youngest of seven children and attended Pontypridd Grammar School. He be-

came known as an accomplished tennis and rugby player, becoming a member of the Llantrisant 1st XV team during the 1930s. Two weeks

after marrying Sylvia Preece of Pontyclun, he was called up to serve in the Welch Regiment. On Monday July 3rd 1944, a month after the D-Day Landings in Normandy, he was shot in friendly fire in Caen, France. The medical officer who attended to him was none other than Ruben Jewell of St David's Place. Whilst laying in his friend's arms he told him he was thinking of the rugby boys in the Wheatsheaf singing "Calon Lan". It wasn't until Ruben returned to his hometown that he informed Tom's parents of his death. Thomas Wilkins is buried at the Ryes War Cemetery in Bazenville, France.

early notebooks reveal a list of regular players and committee of the period including Archie Thomas, Reg Westcott, Alec Trewartha, Dai Davies, Jack Foyle, Charlie Kerslake, Ivor Martin, Will Hopkins, Phill Regan, Dan Davies, Will Harrison, Phil Dooley, Will Meredith, Ed Jenkins, Will Phillips, Will Davies, Will Phillips, Percy Rees, Will Wilkins, Jim Harrison, Tom Lloyd, Sam Evans, John Eli Thomas, Percy Causon, Charlie Regan, Lewis John, Ivor Herbert and Tom Rees. According to his figures they all paid 2/6 each to the club, making a balance of £3.12.6 for the coffers in 1923. The list of opposition teams included Talbot Green, Bedwas, Pentyrch, Tynant, Penarth, Pontyclun, Cilfynydd, St Mellons, Taff's Well and Merthyr Tydfil. Referees charged 8/6 to make an appearance which all added to a high expenditure for the year of £55.14.6 and included the hire of the ground, bandages, washing of jerseys, soap and lemons, teas and telegrams. Players often travelled by train or public service buses to their games.

It is also noted that one game against Mountain Ash saw a particularly lively crowd of spectators. As Llantrisant scored more points against the valley team, the crowd became all the more unruly and players feared for their own safety in making a sharp escape to the train station. One of the players suggested taking off their boots, covering their fists with them and if necessary using them to fight any of those who endangered their departure. The player in question was a well known bare knuckle boxer and weight lifter of Llantrisant named Nick Price. Born in 1884, he was the second son of Dr William Price and his housekeeper Gwenllian Llewellyn. Originally named Iesu Grist Price II, the younger brother of the fa-

mous child who Price cremated at East Caerlan, the renamed Nicholas was anything but an orthodox figure. Apparently he never wore socks, sharing his father's belief that fresh air was good for the feet and circulation!

This was a period in Llantrisant history when another sporting pastime was formed with the creation of the controversial Freeman's Golf Club on Llantrisant Common. Such an act of "desecration" in the eyes of the faithful Freeman came at a price – with many ripping flags from the course while their quarrelsome wives sat on the holes to boycott games. Ironically the first president and founder of the club was none other than David Lukey – a Freeman and Town Trust member too, giving rise to the questionable morals of the organisation during this period! There are even reports of a race course planned for part of the Common lands.

Sadly the 1920s was an era when the rugby team often disbanded and re-emerged when popularity for the game increased. What remained unwavering however was the rivalry between Llantrisant and its dominant local opposition of Pontyclun. There was always a determination to make victorious comebacks and ensure the club's continued success when one of the neighbouring teams were ready for a fixture.

Almost mirroring the popularity of national rugby itself, Llantrisant's chequered period was common amongst many other Welsh village and town sides. The 1920s was a difficult time for Welsh rugby. The first golden period was over and the players that made up the teams that won four Triple Crowns had already disbanded before the Great War. The war could not be blamed for the downturn in

Welsh fortunes as all the home nations lost their young talent in equal numbers. In homes where men were the only earners, the decline in heavy labour areas resulted in very stark choices of where the household money could be spent. It was difficult to justify paying to watch rugby, or pay "subs" towards team membership when there was little money for food and rent.

For instance Loughor, which had produced five internationals in the 1920s, were by 1929 begging door to door for old kit. In the valleys the Treherbert, Llwynypia and Nantyffyllon clubs had vanished before 1930. Even clubs of the size of Pontypool were not spared. In 1927 they were playing and beating the

Waratahs and the Maoris. By 1930 they were £2,000 in debt and facing bankruptcy. Another reason for the fall in the Welsh union game can be placed on the improvement of football in Wales. Traditionally seen as a game more associated with North Wales, the success of Cardiff Football Club in the 1920s was a strong draw for many supporters. With two F.A. Cup Finals in 1925 and 1927, Cardiff made the once unpopular sport of 'soccer' very fashionable.

The 1930s began on a high for Welsh rugby, with success in the Home Nations Championship and the emergence of a strong Welsh team. In the 1931 Championship Wales beat Ireland at Ravenhill in a bruising affair that not only gave Wales



1st XV 1946 - 1947

Back row: F. Hurley, C. Williams, C. Harrison, W. Hurley, W. Jenkins, C. Hurley, L. Raison, C. Harrison, D. Griffiths, N. Rees, I. Watkins, D. Montague, F. Martin, L. Williams, G. Rees, O'Neill, C. Doster, W. Hurley, W. Hicks, G. Jenkins

Middle row: N. Doster, D. Williams, B. Bender, G. Rees, C. Davies (Captain), V. Soter, D. Hill, D. Hurley, C. Jordan

Front row: H. Hurley, I. Hurley

Inserts: W. Lamerton, D. Griffiths, W. Jacob, I. Evans

the title but denied Ireland the Triple Crown. This may have signalled a change in fortunes in Welsh rugby but the same problems that dogged Wales throughout the 1920s remained as it was still suffering the effects of the depression and club rugby was struggling. Fortunately the Black Army side survived.

The Llantrisant side enjoyed a “glorious reign” during the 1930s. They were able to run three teams but were having difficulty in finding a suitable pitch. This became all the more necessary as the team began enjoying an unequalled period of success. Between 1931 and 1936 Llantrisant displayed an unparalleled seven losses in five years with a three-year ground record. This ended on the Christmas morning of 1935 when they lost to Cilfynydd by three points to nil. On November 14, 1932 the Llantrisant Town Trust met at the Guildhall and read a letter from First XV player Will Meredith. The entry in the minutes states, “It was agreed that permission be given to Mr Meredith for the boys to play football on the common. A new club application to be reviewed every year.” This probably referred to the youth team whose time on the Common was short lived. The pitch was abandoned when the posts vanished and they were found sawn into short lengths in a local scrap yard. Much to the disgust of the team.

On January 5 1934 the Pontypridd Chronicle stated, “The club is experiencing the most successful season in the history of the rugby in the old town and the present team is judged by many as the best combination that “Llan” has ever had. With a fixture list that includes many strong clubs the Llantrisant team can claim 12 wins, 4 drawn games and 2 defeats. The holiday matches resulted in three victo-

ries; Ynyswen away, the local derby with Pontyclun being won on Christmas Day and a strong Irish team on Boxing Day. Given a little more understanding among the backs we fail to see any reason why any team should defeat the present combination. Much satisfaction was felt at the action of the committee including Mr Vivian Little, son of our genial postmaster, in all of the holiday games.”

During this period Henry Osborne, one of the players of the decade, secured himself in the club’s history by joining a Rugby League Club. Some years later and another player, Dilwyn Rees also “went north” to Leeds and then Halifax. As the triumphant years continued it had a great leader in Club Captains Gordon Jenkins and C. Trewartha with David Lukey as Club Chairman and prominent secretaries in W. Roche and H. Wyatt. According to one report it wasn’t unusual for the former schoolboy team, or “youth” side to walk miles to play in away fixtures and some players remained away overnight, having fallen foul of the hospitality of the opposition!

With the outbreak of the Second World War, rugby diminished once again as young men were called to take up arms. As 1945 drew to a close and many servicemen were demobbed and returned home to Llantrisant, it was agreed to reform the Club. Gordon Jenkins became Chairman with Cliff O’Neill was the Secretary and Treasurer. Early players included members of several large and well known families such the Dosters, Hurleys, Harrisons, Raisons, Evans and Lamertons. There were, at one time, no fewer than seven of the Lamerton brothers playing for the team and also a further seven of the Hurley family alongside them.



The Rugby Field Opening at Cefn Mabley Park, Llantrisant, September 1949. A group of principal guests were present, including Mr D. J. M Peregrine, Arthur Pearson MP, Coun T. W. Roderick JP (Council Chairman), County Councillor Ivor Jacob, Coun Frank Edwards and Aneurin Williams.

Once again the sense of camaraderie and team-spirit from the war years transcended itself into civilian life with many players desperate to return to some form



Cllr. Ivor Jacobs

of normality and agreeing a rugby team was the answer. It was with this in mind that a door to door collection throughout Llantrisant was held to raise funds and clothing coupons which allowed them to create their first kit. Due to the war effort, a permit was also required from the Ministry of Agriculture in order to take a set of posts from the forestry of Garth Maelwg at the foot of the Ely Valley. Although a permit was applied for, the first Saturday of the 1946 season loomed upon them and still no posts had been found. A number of dedicated players set off in one of haulier Lewis' coal lorries with the view to "borrowing" posts until the permit arrived. As they ventured to the Garth Maelwg forestry it came as a surprise that not a forestry official was in site and therefore the "acquisition" of a set of posts was made all the more easier. These were established on the Caerlan Field and when the permit finally arrived a second set of posts was also secured.

Sadly, in line with the national government's call for more council housing to be



1st XV 1949 - 1950 (Mallett Cup Final)

Back row: D. Williams (Assist. Trainer), S. Jenkins (Chairman), Hn. Williams, H. Jenkins, R. Williams, D. Williams, D. Hurley, W. Lamerton, I. Evans, W. Jacobs, Cliff O'Neill (Secretary), Vernon Phillips, W. Hicks (Trainer)

Middle row: I. Watkins, E. Thomas, T. Davies, T. Rees (Captain), Brinley Rees, B. Williams

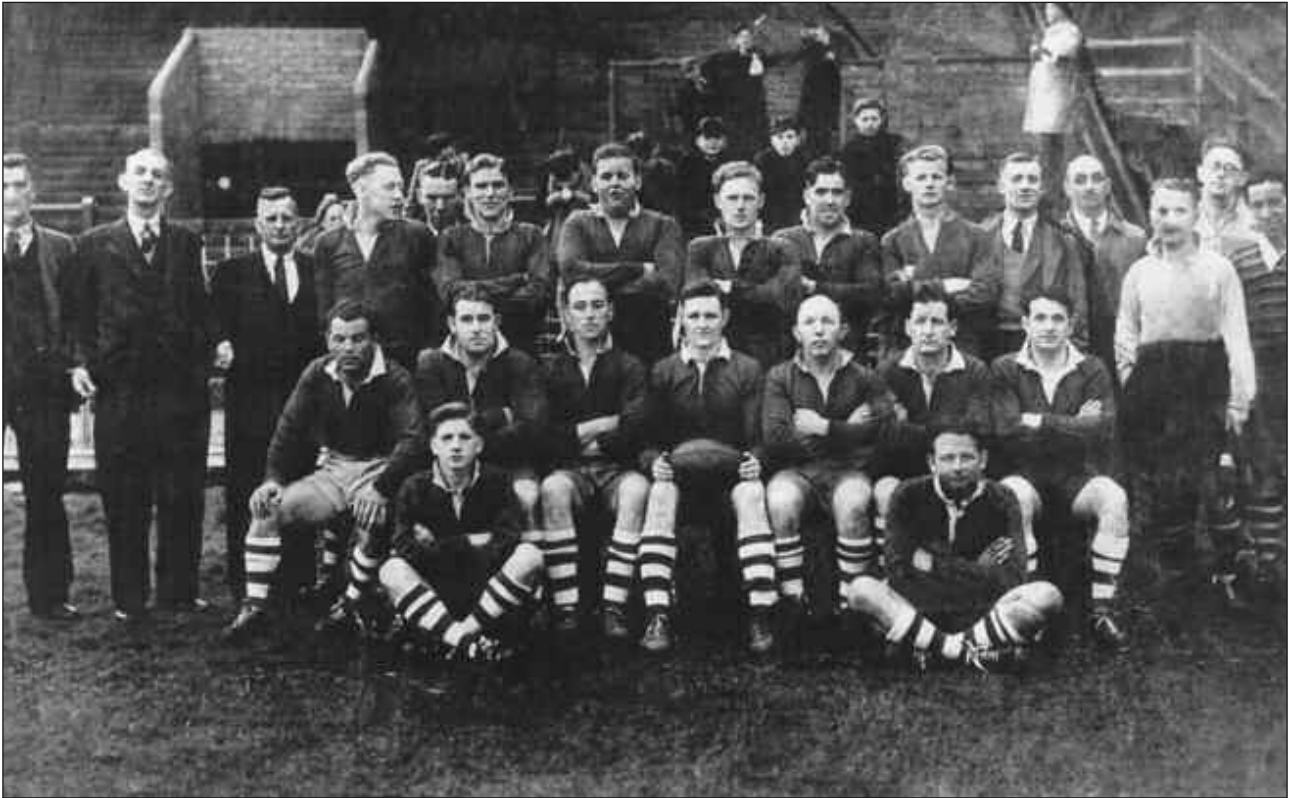
Front row: V. Doster, C. Jordan

erected, Caerlan Field was chosen as a potential site. By 1948 the Dan Caerlan housing estate was built on the field and a more permanent pitch had to be found. The various locations being used by the Llantrisant squad did nothing to improve morale amongst the players. Many recall the times they took posts on the back of a wagon and put a pitch out on a field close to the Lamb and Flag public house. They would mark the pitch on a Friday afternoon and by Saturday the posts were gone.

The post-war period saw local residents supporting the newly reformed club by holding fundraising events, from fetes to raffles. For the 1946-47 season there was an impressive ninety one paid up members and the finance books prove an end-of-year profit of £76.2.5. The "Christmas

Draw" of both 1946 and 1947 saw a fascinating list of prizes, including an ox tongue from Thomas the Butchers, a box of apples from Mr Griffiths the grocer, a bag of potatoes from Viv Rees, plenty of packets of cigarettes and even several pairs of stockings.

In March 1948 they played one of the best games of the season when Llantrisant became the first team to take the Llandaff North ground record. In the first half Dennis Hurley started the scoring with a great try but the kick for goal failed. Then Trevor Rees side stepped a few Llandaff players and showed them how to drop a goal. Llantrisant won 10-3. Following a succession of overwhelming victories it gave the club fresh impetus to be included in the Welsh Rugby Union when a new ground was made available. In No-



1st XV 1949 – 1950 Mallett Cup Finalists (Replay)

vember 1948 Llantrisant RFC returned to playing on the Vicarage field, which was regarded “hardly suitable for the good fare expectations of the team”. An encounter with Cardiff East was “a scintillating game of rugby witnessed by a fairly large crowd. Cardiff East is one of the strongest in the Cardiff and district area. An excellent game. Llan were vigorous and determined in their play and Trevor Rees, full back scored two penalties, helping to beat Cardiff 12-3.”

Such excellent playing was mirrored with successes at Thomastown, Talywaun, Pontycymmer, Kenfig Hill, Tongwynlais and St Athan. The game against Penttyrch was regarded as one of the best played in years and saw rugby heroes in Les Hurley and Trevor Rees in particular. Their high standard of playing was also recognised at the Boxing Day match against Thomastown when the try was scored by Charlie Jordan. The local newspaper remarked

that the Black Army was so good it deserved a far better home ground! They continued to use the Wheatsheaf as a headquarters with Charlie Hicks “water man” who insisted that the players used the tin baths in the cellar for “face and ‘ands” at first, before all other areas of the body were washed! In a game against Abercynon in January 1949 they held a two-minute silence to Mr W.O. Davies, landlord of the Wheatsheaf, who passed away earlier that week much to the teams regret.

Even as early as 1949 the Club made a bid for the campaign to be included in the Welsh Rugby Union and the project was “hastened by the knowledge that the club’s new playing field is fast reaching completion and will be the finest in the vale.” It was local councillor Ivor Jacob, who sadly died soon afterwards, that spearheaded the hopes and aspirations of the team to have their own permanent

field on which they could train and entertain their rivals. No doubt he was influenced in his proposals to the Llantrisant Rural District Council by his own son Watcyn who was one of the Black Army's "star" players of his generation. It is no secret that Ivor and Watcyn both made massive contributions to the success of Llantrisant RFC – one securing a permanent pitch and the other in a leading role to secure a clubhouse over twenty years later.

Although a section had been used as a waste ground and ash tip, Cefn Mabley was recognised as the best site for the new field in the old town. Sadly the sloping pitch was never of the standard required and a complete overhaul of the site came some thirty five years later to try to eradicate the many drainage problems. Some would argue the field remains a concern for the thriving Llantrisant club even to this day. The Llantrisant Observer included almost weekly updates on progress to the Cefn Mabley field stating

in July 1949, that "Hundreds of loads of good soil are coming from the housing site in Talbot and council engineers are soon to put a grass surface at Cefn Mabley". The ground was purchased and excavated thanks to a council grant of £800 and with the support of the Council Surveyor and Engineer Mr. T. Hopkins, work was fast.

In September 1949 Cefn Mabley field was officially opened as the new home of the Llantrisant RFC. The headquarters of course remained at the Wheatsheaf, resulting in a substantial walk before and after games when mud-covered players marched through the town. The ceremony saw speeches by D.J.M Peregrine, Clerk of the Rural District Council and Chairman Coun T W. Roderick JP who congratulated the people of Llantrisant for their endeavour. He paid particular attention to local councillors Ivor Jacobs and Frank Edwards on pushing for the creation of "a splendid field provided for the young people". Arthur Pearson MP was to offi-

BLACK ARMY'S UNFORGETTABLE 'CHIPPO'

Trevor "Chippo" Davies was born in 1917 and received his nickname because his father ran a fish and chip shop on the Bull Ring in Llantrisant. He first played for Llantrisant in 1933 and continued turning out on the field for the hometown side for the next twenty five years. In 1937 he joined Pontypridd RFC and was approached by the successful Cil-



fynydd side in 1938 where he played just one season. The Second World War interrupted his sporting career when he served in the Pioneers at Anzio, Italy and narrowly survived a train crash. He played one more season for Cilfynydd in 1945. An iron ore worker, who lived in Dan Caerlan, he remained faithful to his Llantrisant RFC side and was instrumental in forming the Youth side in 1967. He was twice made club captain along with many official roles in the Committee. "Chippo" died in 2008.





1st XV 1956 – 1957

*Back row: W. Harrison, Referee, J. Williams, L. Harrison, Hurley, L. Groves, G. Ferris, A. Raison, W. Jacob
Front row: G. Doster, V. Rees, T. Rees (Captain), A. Ashcroft, R. Bater, J. Harrison, G. Grother, H. Raison*



1st XV 1957 - 1958

*Back row: Mr C. Shillbeer (Referee), G. Grother, C. Harrison, L. Groves, L. Harrison, W. Williams, J. Hurley, J. Harrison, W. Jacob
Front row: G. Doster, G. Ferris, M. Bendle, T. Rees (Captain), R. Bater, V. Rees, R. Collins*

cially open it but he graciously asked Cllr Ivor Jacobs to do it instead. Cllr Jacobs addressed the crowd in English and Welsh stating, "Here in this delightful home of ours we have never enjoyed the use of a decent football field but a progressive policy has been followed by the local authority and we are now about to reap the benefit of it. My colleague Cllr Edwards and I desire most sincerely to express the gratitude of the Llantrisant residents to all the members of the authority for coming so willingly to the aid of our young people. Llantrisant deserves the best and in this new amenity we possess a ground worthy of our beloved ancient borough".

Llantrisant and Llanharan then played the first rugby match on the new pitch. For the previous 16 years Llantrisant had never beaten Llanharan, but on this day the Black Army finally secured a good win of 15-3 with D. Hill, T. Rees and D. Lamerton kicking a penalty goal. A few weeks later and two bus-loads of players and supporters went to Monmouth for one of the hardest games of the season.

In March 1950 Welsh rugby suffered a terrible tragedy as a privately hired Avro Tudor V aircraft, flying from Dublin following the international game against Ireland crashed at Llandow in the Vale of Glamorgan. Eighty lives were lost in the Llandow Air Disaster and six victims were players of the Llanharan First XV. It was the worst disaster in British aviation history up until that point. At the massive funeral of five fellow players, many of the Llantrisant men appeared as mourners. Only a matter of months before the same men had played against one another on the new Cefn Mabley field.

By 1950 Llantrisant RFC was a member of

the Cardiff and District Rugby Union with the main advantage being the provision of referees for matches. It was a provision that the Rhondda Area Rugby Union hadn't come to terms with at the time. As members the Club was eligible to play in the Mallet Cup Competition and this resulted in one of the highlights in Llantrisant RFC's early history. Named after the Union's President Tom Mallett, the competition had run since 1893 and was a successful local team knockout, recognised as the second oldest rugby cup in Britain which drew thousands of spectators to each final.

One of the semi finals saw Llantrisant take on the Old Sandonians. Local newspaper correspondent D.W.C. Griffiths of Commercial Street, Llantrisant noted, "Llan defeated the Old Sandonians at Ely Race Course Park, playing the Mallet Cup semi final by a drop goal 3-0 kicked after extra time by Bryn Williams, the Llantrisant outside half. The ground was perfect and the game developed into a first class game with neither side giving or taking any quarter. Llan were more superior in the scrummaging and had a bigger percentage of the ball. They were unfortunate on several occasion in failing by a little skip to make an opening score."

The final approached!

It was amid huge excitement that the Black Army reached the final, playing magnificently on the hallowed turn of Cardiff Arms Park. Bryn Lamerton, captain of the team and his players were greatly encouraged by the overwhelming support of the Llantrisant people prior to the game, with telegrams arriving from Dr J.C.R. Morgan and messages of goodwill from Cllr Ivor Jacob. The newspaper noted that the appearance of "the team re-

CLUB SAVIOUR WATCYN HONoured



Wadcyn Richard Jacob (1928-2003) was one of two children born to local councillor Ivor Jacob and his wife Gwendoline Mary of Cefn Mabley Cottage. Wadcyn worked as a carpenter before becoming a motor mechanic at the Town Garage but his career was interrupted by national service and he served in the Royal Signals. He married Dorothy Thomas of Tynant in 1955 and the couple had one son, Tim, who became the senior vice president of the Bank of America in London. Wadcyn was made a Freeman in October 1950, becoming a Taff Ely Councillor for 15 years. He also sang in Llantrisant Male Choir and served on the Town Trust for 25 years. Wadcyn was a staunch member of Llantrisant RFC, helping to rebuild the side

during its darkest days. He also played a major role in the Workingmen's Club. He was a policeman in Barry during the early 1960s before running a shop in Tynant for 23 years.



1st XV 1958 – 1959

Back row: G. Ryley, D. Thomas, W. Thomas, J. Harrison, C. Harrison, R Boundford, A. Davies (Referee)

Middle row: D. Harvey, I. Doster, G. Ferris (Captain), N. Rees, W. Kendall

Front row: G. Grother, D. Jenkins, L. Hurley, G. Doster

splendent in new jerseys and stockings, was indeed most impressive." Llantrisant must have seemed like a proverbial ghost town in May 1950 when residents travelled by bus, train or motor car to the national stadium in Cardiff to see their heroic players take on Pentyrch in the final of the Mallet Cup. The Llantrisant Observer headline of the following week stated, "Thrilling Rugby Cup Final Ended in Draw". The game itself was well documented,

"The match to determine the ownership of the Mallet cup took place at the Cardiff Arms Park on Thursday between Llantrisant and Pentyrch. Some five thousand spectators attended and Llantrisant and district sent many hundreds of supporters. The two finalists have been rugby

rivals for years and a closely contested game was anticipated with each side determined to play for the honour of their respective townships. This spirit was further strengthened by the knowledge that the winners would have the distinction of being the first team to bring the cup from Cardiff for 58 years!

"From the kick off both teams struggled for supremacy and for the first five minutes play kept to midfield with each team using the touch line. An exchange of kicks by the full backs saw Trevor Rees, Llantrisant, a safe and brilliant custodian. From a loose maul just inside the Llantrisant half the ball reached Rees, the outside half, who burst through the Pentyrch defence and running straight and strong, seemed certain to cross the line,





Youth XV 1960 – 1961

Back row: H. Raison (Touch Judge), J. Evans, D. Griffiths, R. Hughes, R. Ware, T. Lewis, B. Honey, M. Taylor, R. Arnold, D. Williams (Trainer), A. McIntyre

Middle row: B. Laskey, F. Taylor, T. Kokkios (Captain), C. Langston, C. Akers

Front row: J. Hughes, R. Shearan, G. Wilde, T. O'Leary

but when still in full stride, amazed everyone by dropping a magnificent goal. The scene followed was almost indescribable. Even the Pentyrch supporters found themselves cheering and the game was only five minutes old! Pentyrch did everything to bring the skill and football ability of Ross Johnson into full use and fine constructive play followed, but the deadly tackling of Trevor Davies stopped many promising movements. Then play switched from the Llantrisant half right to their opponents goal line, where Charlie Jordan made valiant efforts to score. Two penalties in quick succession offered a chance to Pentyrch to level the score but no success attended the efforts of the kicker.

“Through the brilliance of their forwards, Llantrisant again assumed command and it was fortunate for Pentyrch that over-eagerness prevented Llantrisant’s young pack from crowning their attacks with success. Pentyrch’s left wing, Murphy made two splendid efforts to get clear, but again two rousing tackles stopped his progress. The play continued at a tremendous pace and 30 yards from their opponents’ line. Llantrisant were awarded a penalty. Although the angle was a narrow one, Billy Lamerton, with full knowledge of the responsibility placed upon him, made no mistake and Llantrisant were six points up. Back and fore the game went. Bryn Rees (Llantrisant) matched his skill with that of Johnson and emerged from the tussle with credit. Although handicapped by an indifferent service, Rees skilfully kept his line in action and his strong running also proved of great value.

“They were only five minutes to half time when the Pentyrch line almost fell. From a fierce forward maul near their opponents line, Watcyn Jacob and Dennis

Williams took the ball over and diving forward, Jacob collided with an upright, striving to reach the ball, he found himself held back only inches from his objective. Theirs was a lucky jet off for Pentyrch. During the interval it was noted that Haydn Jenkins, Roy Williams, Will Lamerton and their captain, Bryn Lamerton, who had borne the brunt of the hard scrummaging, very wisely took their ease after an amazing first half tussle. The four lighter forwards – Watkins, Evans, Jacob and Williams displayed their impatience for the resumption of this classic game. Following the resumption the Pentyrch backs took command and Llantrisant were hard pressed to keep their opponents cut. Some strong running and good combined play by the Pentyrch three quarters deserve success but Dilwyn Hill stood in the breach and by clever anticipation transferred play to midfield.

“Then came a movement which although marred by a forward pass which went unheeded, saw Johnson, the centre and finally Murphy, the Pentyrch’s left wing, in possession, with a magnificent burst of speed he passed three defenders and scored a try, which gained ground after a round of applause. The kick failed and scrum followed scrum with the Llantrisant hooker, Watkins, giving his side good service. A penalty to Pentyrch placed them in a favourable position and from a loose scrum the ball was worked out to Pentyrch, where Johnson succeeded in crossing for his side’s second try. The angle was too sharp for a conversion and both sides were level.

“Full time arrived, but with the issue undecided, extra time of 10 minutes each way was arranged. Gaining confidence Pentyrch pressed for a few minutes when Trevor Rees again attempted a drop at



Youth XV 1967 – 1968

Team Members: L. Raison, W. Haddock, R. Phillips, J. Davies, H. Raison, P. Aston, C. Harrison, J. Evans, W. Jacob, L. Groves (Vice Captain), A. Rees, R. Llewellyn, T. Ward, D. Williams, D. Edwards, G. Jordan, K. Worgan, D O'Neill, J. Flower



Youth XV 1969 to 1970

*Team Members: Back row: M. Burrows, A. Owen, J. Griffiths, P. Davies, T. Davies (Chairman), D. Davies, J. Flowers, Davies, H. Raison (Committee), D. Edwards
Middle row: J. Smith, M. Evans, C. Bull (Captain), K. Worgan, G. Jordan
Front row: M. Huish, G. Gardner, G. Doster (mascot), B. Beer, F. Mercer*



goal and only narrowly missed. A sharp burst by Hill and Jordan failed to produce results and then the teams changed ends of the last 10 minutes. This period was noted for the continual threat to Pentyrch's goal line. Five yards out saw first Bryn Lamerton hurl himself forward and have the misfortune to put his foot in touch in goal and Len Hurley twice attempting to race through on his own. A drop out for Pentyrch and back on their opponents goal line came Llantrisant's forwards, and the final whistle sounded with play a yard out from the Pentyrch line. The Lord Mayor of Cardiff had come in order to present the trophy to the winners, but his services were not needed as the game ended in a draw of six points each.

"What a game! Tremendously hard and an example of clean, thrilling rugby. Both teams can be complimented for a displayed which, judged by any standard,

must rank very high indeed. When ever the replay takes place rugby enthusiasts in the whole area are assured of a magnificent contest. Congratulations Llantrisant, congratulations Pentyrch."

By the summer of 1950 it was generally agreed amongst the club members that the Black Army were worthy of being included in a higher circle, and the playing record for the season was an impressive one. However, it didn't alter the fact that not all was well within the Llantrisant camp. According to the recollections of one player, the team was prone to its fair share of quarrels and arguments, typical of the community of Llantrisant with its large feuding families. Obviously disappointed by not winning the Mallet Cup in the May of 1950, the team went through a difficult period which was displayed by the replay game a few months later. Less disciplined and under-trained there were also a few changes to the side.

One notable alteration was the inclusion of a fifteen year-old schoolboy from Llantrisant named Royston Collins. One



Llantrisant Parish Offices



1st XV 1970 – 1971

Back row: S. Rees, J. Williams, N. Wood, L. Williams, T. Davies (Chairman), M. Roberts, R. Lamerton, D. Smallman

Middle row: D. Drinkwater, F. Owen, G. Bryant (Captain), D. O'Neill, M. Owen, W. Rees

Front row: D. Williams, P. Newton



1st XV 1971 – 1972

Back row: M. Davies (Referee), J. Flower, J. Clayton, G. Davies, H. Hughes, G. Davies, D. Drinkwater, T. Lloyd, T. Davies (Chairman)

Front row: L. Williams, P. Newton, F. Mercer, W. Rees, R. Lamerton (Captain), M. Wood, L. Worgan, D O'Neill

of eight children (one of whom, Mervyn, would later become the President of Llantrisant RFC), Royston attended Tonyrefail Grammar School and was recognised as a gifted outside half. In 1950 he was capped as a Welsh schoolboy and drew the attentions of the Black Army team who called on his services to play at the Arms Park for the second Mallet Cup game, despite his age. Royston went on to greater glory when he was capped a second time in 1953 for Welsh Secondary Schoolboys under 19s and played against England and Scotland. While serving in the RAF he played for Bath, Exeter and Devon and later coached Llantrisant RFC after becoming a teacher at Pontypridd County School for Boys.

The big day finally arrived on September 13th 1950 when again crowds of spectators – somewhat less than the previous game – ventured to Cardiff for the replay of the Mallet Cup. Around 3,500 people filled the stands to watch Llantrisant and Pentyrch come head to head a second time, but it was a disappointing result for



*J. Glan Jones, President of Llantrisant RFC
1967-1972*

the Black Army. The Llantrisant Observer stated,

“Llantrisant and Pentyrch’s first fifteens provided many thrills. Pentyrch started pressing from the word go, but Llantrisant retaliated with a daring forward rush led by Watkins, wing forward. They were unfortunate on this occasion in not scoring. Pentyrch scored the first try of the game through B. Murphy but his brother, Derek, the opposite Pentyrch wing threequarter, failed to convert it. Then B. Williams, the Pentyrch forward crossed the line to score a magnificent try right in front of Llantrisant’s goal posts. This time Derek Murphy converted it. Then came Llantrisant’s turn when Bill Lamerton kicked a penalty goal, the penalty being awarded for some minor infringement. But fate still frowned on Llantrisant. Bill Lamerton was carried off the field shortly before half time with a cut under his left eye. At half the time the score



*Kingsley Jones, President of Llantrisant RFC
1972-1974*



Youth XV 1970 to 1971

Back row: D R John, T. Worgan, W. Williams, S. Worgan, J. Griffiths, G. Flower, K. Clay, C. Jenkins, D. Hughes, B. Taylor, M. Burrows, Morgan, A. I. Evans, H. Raison, W. Jacob, T. Davies

Front row: G. Evans, J. Williams, G. Gardner, K. Worgan (Captain), M. Huish, A. Beer, J. Smith, R. Morgan, G. Griffiths (Ball Boy)



Youth XV 1971-1972

Back row: D. Griffiths, D. Rowe, M. Rees, R. Morgan, G. Evans, C. Jenkins, J. Howells, P Rosser, R. Bressington, J. Davies, B. Taylor, R. Clay, P.Rowe

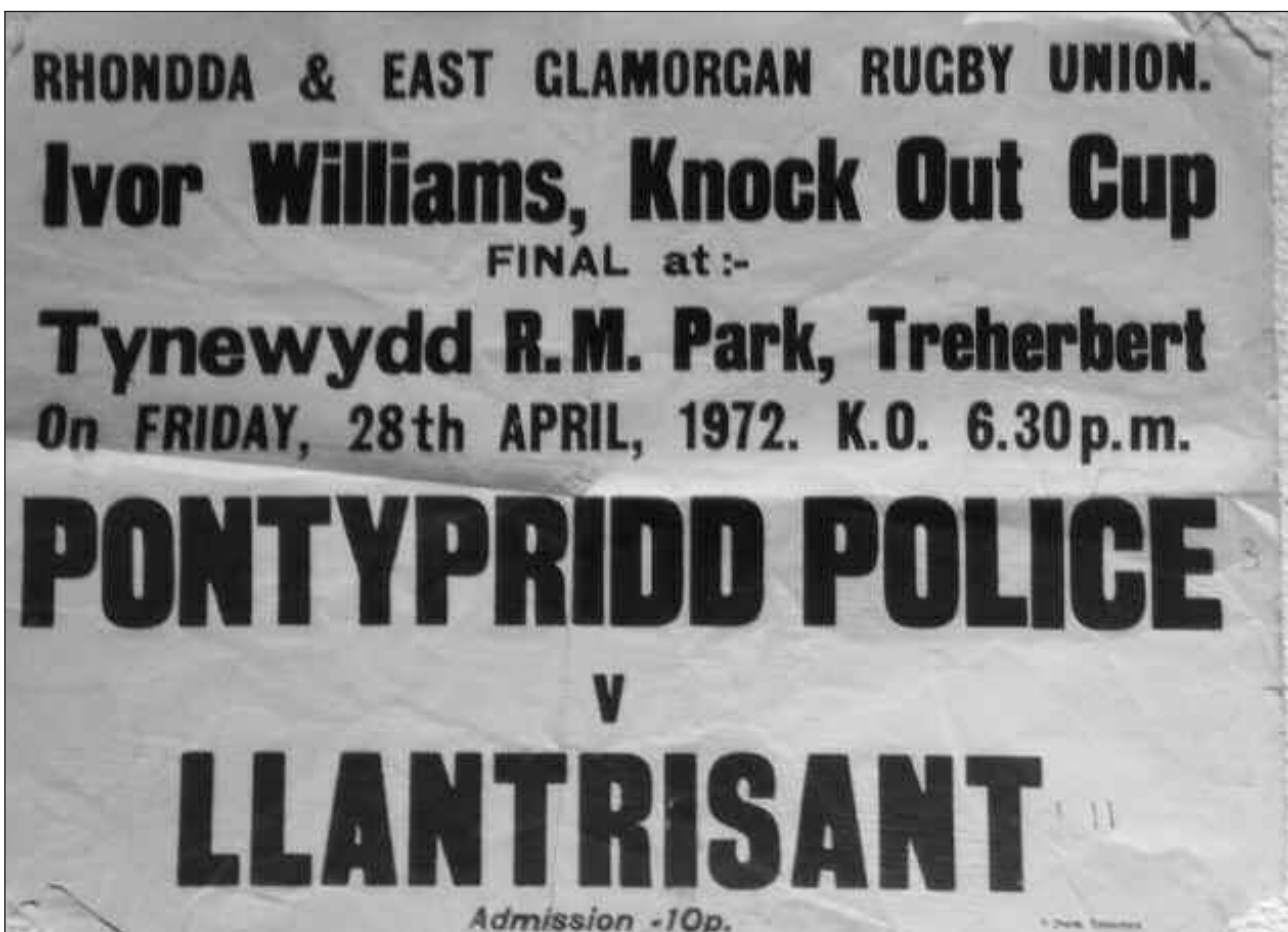
Middle row: D. Hughes (Captain), J.G.Jones (President), T. Davies (Chairman), D. Owen

Front row: J. Williams, J. Smith (Vice Captain), S. Woodland, N. Wiltshire, J. Raison

was Llantrisant three points, Pentyrch eight. "The second half opened with the return of the injured Llantrisant player. Pentyrch were on the offensive time after time, but the sheer skill and fastness of the Llantrisant forward held them at bay. After a series of ping pong manoeuvres, the Llantrisant team began to show signs of strain, probably due to lack of sufficient training. Pentyrch were obviously the superior side, with an outstanding B. Williams. Ross Johnson, Pentyrch's outside half, played a first class game. Llantrisant's best forwards were Watkin (sic) Jacobs and Ivor Evans. T. Rees, the Llan captain, playing at outside half, called to open out the game by his repeated kicks into touch. Many people in the crowd voiced the opinion that the combination of Pentyrch's backs and

Llantrisant's forwards would have produced a fine team. The cup was presented at the close of the game to Ross Johnson, Pentyrch's captain, by Mr Jack Mills, President of the Cardiff and District Rugby League."

Successful games took place throughout 1950 and 1951 as documented by D.W.C.Griffiths who sent his regular reports to the South Wales Echo. His entry for the game between Llantrisant and Hollybush in September 1950 read, "Weather suited the game but the ground was on the hard side. The play swayed to and fro. Both teams giving a good exhibition of clean rugby. One of the most outstanding forwards was Dan Hurley, the Llan hooker. Several other players, Hadyn Williams, Watcyn Jacob, H. Jenkins, E. Thomas, T. Rees the captain and I.





A Boxing Day match between Llantrisant and Pontyclun c. 1971

Evans played quite a good game". Further games of the season included taking on Llantwit Major, Llanharan, Heol y Cyw, Penarth, Barry, Rhymney, Oakdale and local derby rivals, Pontyclun and Beddau. The latter two continue to draw crowds at Cefn Mabley!

Sadly following their considerable period of success some youngsters felt they could not get into the winning side and would no longer play as a youth team. This effectively lost the channel of up and coming players to join the First XV team for future season. It was also noticeable that a number of players were leaving Llantrisant for neighbouring Pontyclun, one of the first being Bryn Rees who was playing for Llantrisant in 1951 but moved to Pontyclun and captained the side in 1952. He was a first-class outside half and

four of his brothers followed him. By 1953 Llantrisant had difficulty fielding a full team, but Watcyn Jacob, David Griffiths and John Eastman came to the helm to try and revitalise the club for the next few seasons at least but sadly a 'barren' era loomed.

For the 1955-56 season the fixture list included Tondy, Nelson, Thomastown, Heol y Cyw, Gilfach, Trebanog and Llanharan. The Club Secretary was William David of Swan Stores on Swan Street whose meticulous record keeping even highlighted the cost of a ball in 1955 amounting to £6-10 while laces were £2-8 and socks came to £7-10-00 for the entire team! Memories are recalled of men meeting on the Bull Ring with the hope of enough players to field a team. If unsuccessful they literally dragged their friends



1st XV 1972 – 1973

Back row: P. Davies, R. Llywellyn, A. Lamerton, D. Davies, J. Clayton, F. Mercer, J. Flower, H. Hughes, C. Bull, R. Lamerton, L. Williams, G. Davies, A. Hopkins

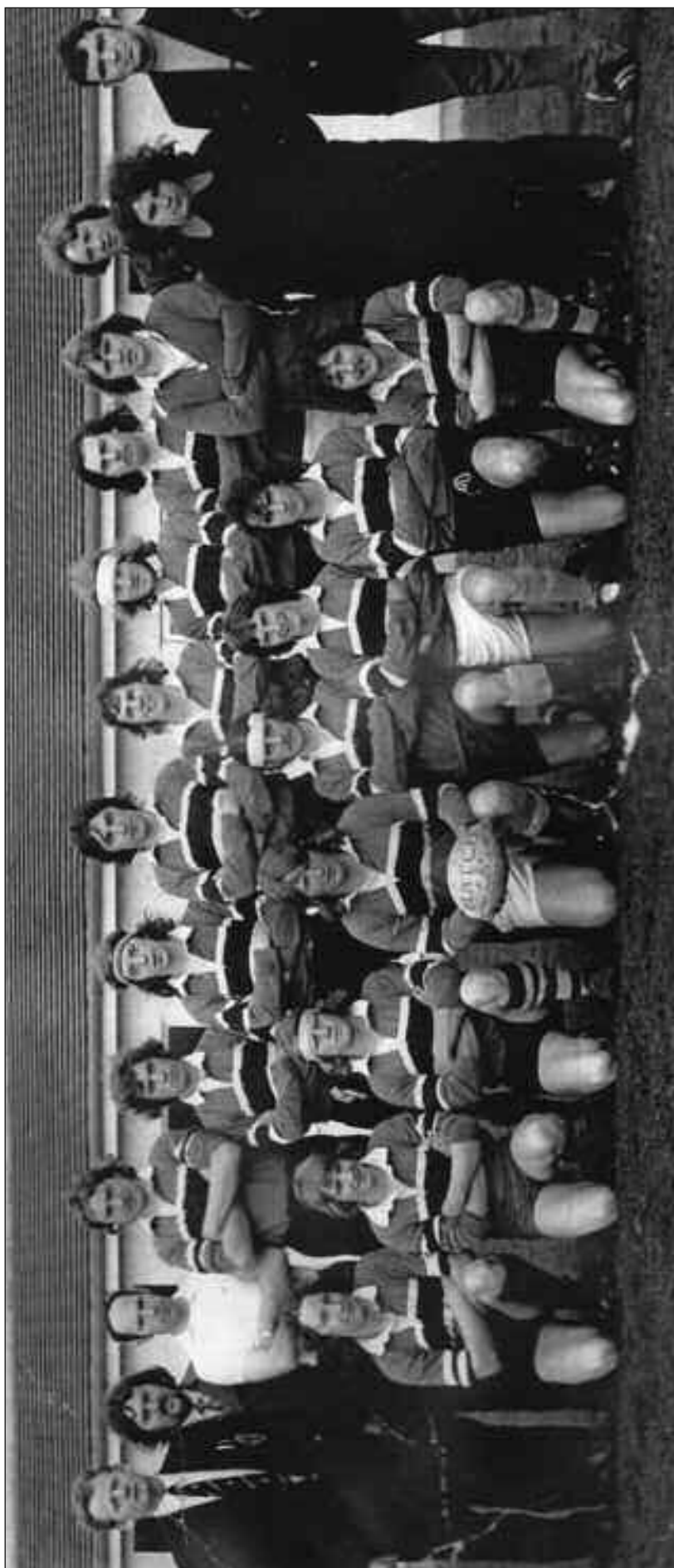
Front row: D. Drinkwater, R. Lee, W. Rees, M. Wood (Captain), K. Worgan, P. Newton, D. Williams, M. Rees



1st XV 1973 - 1974

Back row: J. Clayton, B. Taylor, G. Evans, R. Lamerton, D. Hughes, G. Davies, R. Hopkins

Front row: G. Oliver, D. O'Neill, R. Woodland, C. Bull (Capt.), S. Woodland, M. Wood, J. Flower, P. Newton



Youth XV 1972 – 1973

Back row: I. Evans (Hon. Secretary), P Aston (Committee), H. Elliott (Referee), M. Bressington, M. Ward, D. Griffith, P. Rosser, J. Thomas, B. Taylor, J. Davies, D. Hughes, K. Hughes, J. Williams, T. Lloyd (Coach)

Front row: K. Jenks, B. Doster, S. Woodland, G. Evans (Captain), R. Woodland, M. Thomas, M. Rees, G. Flower

from one of the surrounding pubs just to make up the numbers – hardly conducive to creating a well trained unit of players. Also the name of the club was becoming undependable as to whether they'd be able to find a team for the next match, making several local clubs refuse to play them and soon it was difficult to book fixtures for the season. The future looked uncertain.

As the 1950s drew to a close it was becoming increasingly clear that as the team had a hap-hazard approach, many local players transferred their allegiance to a more dependable club and Pontyclun RFC was the obvious choice. A number of Llantrisant players at the time were grammar school pupils and either following the example of their older brothers or even head boys and prefects, fell prone to peer pressure and followed suit by moving to Pontyclun. It saw the likes of John



Hurley and Hedley Benyon playing for the rival team rather than their own hometown. Hedley, who went on to become President of Rugby Canada, attracted many of the young players to Pontyclun at a time when the Llantrisant side floundered. Trevor and Bryn Rees also went to the rival club and unfortunately many of those players remained with Pontyclun for the rest of their lives, becoming Chairmen or Secretaries rather than returning to their hometown club.

At one time the Pontyclun teams had twenty or more Llantrisant boys in the



Youth XV 1976 – 1977

*Back row: G. Treharne (Coach), F. Bryant (Committee), J. Watkins, A. McIntosh, R. Evans, A. Burrridge, S. Evans, S. Beattie (Committee)
Middle row: M. Williams, C. Hill, P. Lewis, C. Groves (Captain), K. Swarfield, R. Bressington, G. Bryant
Front row: L. Cook (Committee), J. Raison, F. Bryant, S. Williams*



Celebrating the opening of the new Llantrisant RFC Clubhouse at Cefn Mabley, 1973

line-up and a number of them were school friends at Tonyrefail or Cowbridge Grammar School. When comparing the two, it's obvious why Pontyclun was a better option. Although Cefn Mabley was a newly laid pitch, it wasn't without some serious drainage problems and using tin baths in the Wheatsheaf far away from the field was hardly ideal. Pontyclun on the other hand had a good field and used the comparatively modern Athletic Club



Bar staff at the new Clubhouse, 1973

as its headquarters. There was no rough and grime and long walks there. Pontyclun also had its pick of better opponents and had a certain prestige about it. On the other hand the Llantrisant squad had the support of two British Lions in Kingsley Jones and Keith Rowlands who would help organise matches against Glamorganshire Police and then hold dinners in the local Llantrisant Social Hall which was usually patronised by the likes of Llantrisant Observer editor Glan Jones, Tudor John, the influential local councillor and businessman and the local police sergeant Inspector Hitchens.

There was certainly a First XV team in Llantrisant up until 1959 with Gwyn Ferris as Captain and regular players including Gwyn Grother, Len Hurley, Cyril Harrison, John Harrison, Len Hurley, Gwyn Doster and Wayne Kendall, the son of Warren who was Welsh lightweight



Llantrisant RFC Committee

Back row: Gwilym Traherne, Watcyn Jacob, Gordon Jenkins, Allan Watkins, Cliff O'Neill, Nick Woods, David Thomas, David Jenkins, David Owen, Tony Kokkinos, Billy Thomas

Front row: Trevor Davies, Gordon Oliver, Mervyn Collins, Ray Clarke, Wynford Benyon, Ivor Evans

champion from 1944 to 1949. Even as late as 1961 Llantrisant was able to field a Youth side with up and coming player like Tony Kokkinos as Captain. Sadly several years passed before any permanent Llantrisant side existed in the old town. Without a Youth side there was little hope of creating a First XV squad either and this barren period, which lasted around

six years, must be regarded as a dark period in the history of the club. It meant that many young men living in the old town had no choice but to venture further afield to enjoy a game.

Fortunately this

chapter was closed thanks to the efforts of a handful of those stalwart Black Army men, all former players with rugby running through their veins.

With a "dream team" of Watcyn Jacob as Secretary, Trevor "Chippo" Davies as Chairman and Cyril Harrison as Treasurer, a new Llantrisant Youth Team was formed in the early part of 1966 and many of the star players of that early squad included Gareth Jordan, Frank Owen, Colin Bull, Francis Mercer, Leighton Williams, John Flower, George Bryant and Ken Worgan, the son of champion boxer and Llantrisant publican Sid Worgan.

A public meeting was held in the Social Hall off Greyhound Lane on Thursday April 7th 1966 with Leighton Raison addressing the small gathering. Initially there was a poor turnout, but when a second meeting was called by Ivor "Springy"



*Hubert Burridge
President of Llantrisant RFC
1974-1980*

Evans two weeks later the much-improved attendance showed the willingness to form a new Youth Team.

Gwyn Jones offered his services to become Fixture Secretary and in typical "Welsh fashion", a Committee was formed including Bryn Jordan, Bill Haddock, Len Hurley, W. Griffiths and "Springy".

They approached Mrs Bevan at the Wheatsheaf Hotel for use of the dressing room and showers in the cellar of the building, used by the Llantrisant Rifle Club. A charge of £1 per match was requested which included the electricity! A letter was sent to the Rural District Council for permission to use to the Cefn Mabley field for the following season.

Watcyn Jacob was also given the task of finding out whether any funds were still in existence from the "old club" so that a new one could be formed and former Vice Presidents were also contacted for their support – both financial and otherwise.

Within a few short months the Llantrisant Youth Rugby Club was established. They had £24.8.6 in their account at Lloyds Bank by June 1966. The Council agreed to allow them use of the Cefn Mabley field, along with Beddau Youth XV and



"Springy" (who became Secretary) was asked to purchase two rugby balls with a discount! Club colours at the time were black and white (which were washed locally for £2 per week), training took place every Tuesday and Thursday and the balls were kept at Len Hurley's house in Dan Caerlan.



Llantrisant Rugby Football Club, 1977

The growth of the club became an entire Llantrisant venture, with wives and girlfriends holding jumble sales and arranging for prizes for a Christmas draw.

They also organised a cross country run over the Common to Rhiwfeelin Hospital, the Lamb and Flag public house and back to the Bull Ring with prizes for first, second and third place. On August 27th a trial match was held followed by a provisional team game against Tondy at Cefn Mabley on Saturday September 10th. Players paid for the sandwiches themselves and although initially they had problems with stray cattle wandering onto the pitch, the game went well.

They had their first Boxing Day fixture that year with none other than Pontyclun, resulting in many a Llantrisant man playing against another Llantrisant man on the Black Army pitch.

One of the aspirations of this fledgling club was to correct the mistakes of the past and create a first-class headquarters for themselves rather than use rooms in the local pubs. When a deputation of the club approached the Surveyor of the District Council they had their mind firmly set on renting the redundant Parish Offices on Yr Allt as a new "home". Materials for the repair of the building were bought from Gwyn Rees at his ironmongers shop on High Street and shower equipment was purchased from the National Coal Board.

In the meantime they held Committee Meetings in the New Inn thanks to the assistance of landlady Mrs Haddock who even provided them with sausage and mash. At one meeting it was agreed to form a "Ladies Committee" – a big move for 1966 Llantrisant men to deal with! Al-

though naturally it was under the proviso that they couldn't actually approve anything without the jurisdiction of the "Main Committee"!

Slowly the Parish Offices were transformed as the ceiling was re-plastered, the walls were papered and the showers installed. Fundraising took place thanks to members paying 2/6 a year and it was agreed that nobody under the age of 13 could use the club facilities. One tonne of coal was bought, even before they built a bunker and a new fire grate and paraffin heater was ordered too. Local builder Dai "Fat" Griffiths finished the repairs and the building was officially opened as a new clubhouse. The "HQ" also had a strict code of conduct, with no bad language, alcohol, gambling or excessive





1st XV 1976 – 1977

*Back row: S. Woodland, I. Wilkins, R. Flower, S. Fisher, D. Evans, S. Selwood, G. Evans, T. Lloyd (Coach)
Front row: J. Williams, K. Woodland, R. Woodland, G. Boast, M. Wood (Captain), B. Williams, B. Doster, A. Owen*



1st XV 1977 – 1978

*Back row: G. Williams (Committee), R. Clarke (Chairman), H. Rees, H. Evans, M. Burrows, F. Mercer, A. Hopkins, G. Wilkins, C. Groves, G. Evans, L. Groves, R. Flower, R. Evans, M. Wood, R. Woodland, T. Lloyd, E. John, D. Drew (Committee)
Middle row: H. Burridge (President), B. Taylor (Vice President)
Front row: B. Williams, M. Ward, K. Holder, J. Thomas, C. Preston (Captain), K. Worgan, M. Thomas, B. Doster*

noise. Girls were not allowed to use the premises “except for the purpose of helping to make tea and refreshments after a match”!

A games room with table tennis and snooker was installed but the Annual Dance made little profit because it was brought to an abrupt end when fighting broke out in the hall.

The rude words of a song performed by Youth Team members outside Mary Tintar’s fish and chip shop on the Bull Ring didn’t go unnoticed either in the club’s early Minute Books!

Gradually their fixture list filled, with games over the next two seasons against Glamorgan Wanderers, Pyle, Ynysbwl, Tredegar, Nelson, Bryncethin, Tredegar, Beddau, Llanharan and Treorchy. At Cymmer Afan the Llantrisant team received a letter of complaint over allegations as to the conduct of their supporters and one team member was banned from the Parish Offices due to the use of offensive language.

The Welsh Youth Rugby Union also intervened when further bad behaviour was reported at two subsequent games – a record three “black marks” against their name in less than a year! At one Committee Meeting it was agreed to donate £5.5.0 of club money to the Aberfan Disaster Fund. A decision was also made to approach well known fruiterer J. Glan Jones to become the first Club President, a position he duly accepted. He was the first of four influential local men to be elected President of the Llantrisant Rugby Foot-



Reconstruction of the Cefn Mabley Field.

ball Club.

Even as early as January 1967 an Annual General Meeting was called to discuss the opportunity of forming a senior team and “Chippo” Davies said if the Youth side was a success he saw no reason why a first team couldn’t follow in a few seasons. With the growth of the locality following new housing developments at Southgate and Penygawsi, along with the opening of the Royal Mint, an influx of new residents was seen – and many of those young men were eager to join this promising “young” club.

They didn’t have to wait long when a First XV Team, under the captaincy of J. Williams had its first season in 1968. From there the momentum of the club went from strength to strength.

What followed was an immeasurably successful period, resulting in not only the Youth and Senior Team making their mark, but the launch of a Second XV Team in 1974 with D. Williams as the first Captain. The players of this era included John Flower, George Bryant, Leighton Williams, Colin Bull, Frank Owen, Gareth Jordan, Donald Drinkwater, Ken Worgan,



Youth XV 1977 – 1978

Back row: I. Evans (Secretary), S. Griffiths, A. Davies, J. Liddon, N. Thomas, K. Rees, G. Treharne (Coach), C. Williams, A. McIntosh, S. Evans, K. Holder, R. Clarke

Front row: F. Bryant (Trainer), B. Fitzgerald, J. Watkins, M. Williams, G. Daniels, G. Bryant (Captain), S. Williams, A. Bowen, D. Akers



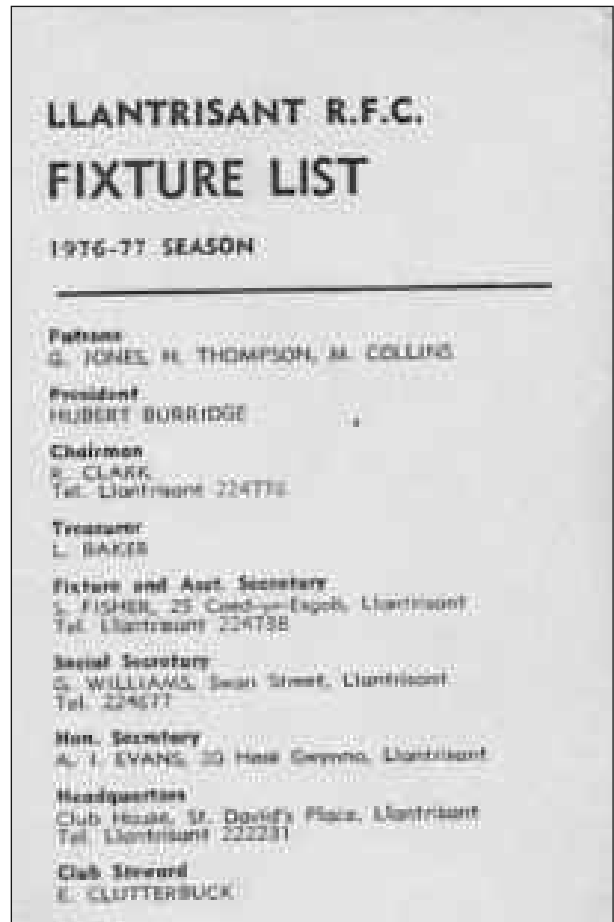
1st XV 1978 – 1979

Back row: Referee, K. Worgan, C. Groves, A. Hopkins, M. Huish, R. Flower, G. Evans, B. Williams, J. Thomas, I. Wilkins (Linesman)

Front row: F. Mercer, R. Woodland, D. O'Neill, C. Preston (Captain), M. Ward, M. Wood, K. Holder, R. Evans

Frank Mercer, Dennis O'Neill, local drayman Roger Lamerton and Mick Woods. As the success of the club grew the enthusiasm to be a part of it strengthened in equal measure. In the early 1970s the local headmaster John Pugh established a mini rugby side. The brother of Vernon Pugh, who was one of the most influential men in international rugby union, John's mini-rugby teams were the starting point of what is today a flourishing aspect of the club's history, providing senior squads of the future.

In 1975 former London Welsh and Newport Scrum Half Gwilym Treharne joined the club as a Youth Coach, winning the total admiration of the players and becoming a worthy successor to Trevor Lloyd as Senior Coach.



The success of Llantrisant mirrored that of the zenith of Welsh rugby with the golden age of the 1970s upon them. As Wales won four consecutive Triple Crowns, the Black Army continued to flourish and the dedication and commitment to succeed was felt by everyone involved in the club. Although the team continued to play at Cefn Mabley the ongoing drainage problems often turned the field into an almighty mud bath, resulting in games being played at the pitch in Lanelay, Y Pant Secondary School or in Yorkdale depending on the wet weather. Behind the scenes work was being undertaken by the Committee and its chief officers, particularly Watcyn Jacob, to build a clubhouse next to the home pitch. The initial problem was finding the owner of a half an acre of land who was a former Llantrisant resident living in Australia. After protracted negotiations the land



1st XV Mike Knill International September 4th 1979

Back row: H. Elliott (TJ), S. Fisher (TJ), D. O'Neill, R. Woodland (Committee), B. Doster, ?, S. McCann, G. Williams, F. Mercer, C. Groves, J. Scott, R. Flower, R. Pemberthy, M. Hutch, I. Robinson, G. Evans, T. David, D. Morris, S. Wallace, D. Jennett, B. Williams. R. Evans, E. Rees, M. Close (Referee)

Middle row: D. Drew, S. Fenwick, D. Williams, G. Davies, R. Woodland, M. Knill, C. Preston, M. Watkins, M. Ward, D. Botcher, J. Thomas

Front row: D. Barry, M. Wood, G. Oliver, M. Thomas. K. Holder, M. Hopkins

ENA'S JOURNEY FROM BAR TO BINGO



Ena Evans was one of the stalwarts of Llantrisant Rugby Club. Born on Newbridge Road in 1935, she was one of six children of Gwen and Evan Rees. The family moved to Dan-caerlan in February 1948. Ena later worked in the Planet Glove Factory on the Bull Ring and spent twenty two years as an assistant nurse at Hensol Hospital. In 1962 she married Elfed "Tex" Evans and the couple had four children. Ena, who passed away in 2014, will long be remembered in the history of the club. She not only spent time working behind the bar during the 1980s and 90s, but led the weekly bingo group with her friends and neighbours. Ena epitomised the strong-willed, fiery comical character for which Llantrisant is renowned

was bought for £708. This achievement was due in no small way to the sterling efforts of Watcyn, "Chippo", "Springy" and Tony Kokkinos. On leaving the Parish Offices for one last time, a loan of £1,600 was secured from Watney's Brewery and £5,000 from the Llantrisant and Llantwit Fardre Rural District Council to finance the construction.

A local company headed by Llantrisant Freeman Alan Rees was awarded the contract to build the clubhouse – which was completed in four months. Handsome donations came from President J Glan Jones and future President, building contractor Hubert BurrIDGE.

In 1973 a new clubhouse was finally opened alongside the sloping pitch of Cefn Mabley, at the foot of St David's Place. Floodlights erected were originally used as railway lights from the sidings in Canton, Cardiff. In fact the unofficial opening was a grand Christmas party at the end of 1972 when Kingsley Jones was appointed as successor to his father Glan for the position of President of Llantrisant

RFC. Kingsley was a Welsh International Prop. He played for Llandovery College and Cardiff RFC and was capped 14 times for Wales between 1960 and 1963. He made his debut against South Africa and was selected for the 1962 British Lions tour.

Also on this unforgettable night the grand veteran Stan Bowes turned out and Cliff Jones (Kingsley's uncle), performed the opening ceremony which was attended by all manner of dignitaries. A Civic Reception followed which saw former chairman David Griffiths quietly weep with emotion. The hard work had finally paid off and the Black Army had a home at last.

However, the clubhouse became more than just a headquarters for the rugby team. For the people of Newbridge Road and Dan Caerlan it was their closest watering hole, rather than walk the steep slopes "up town". Soon events took place in the clubhouse on a regular basis, from weekly shows, dances, dinners and discos, through to bingo evenings, talent



1st XV 1979 to 1980

Back row: E. Clutterbuck (Steward), H. Rees, L. Groves (Committee), R. Flower, G. Wilkins, J. Thomas, K. Holder, F. Mercer, R. Evans, D. Lamb, B. Williams, L. Kerslake, D. Drew

Front row: R. Clarke (Chairman), C. Groves, M. Ward, C. Preston, K. Worgan, K. Swafield, M. Thomas, A.I. Evans (Coach), T. Lloyd (Secretary)



1st XV 1981 to 1982

Back row: D. Drew (Committee), D. Jenkins (Vice Chairman), D. Claridge (Chairman), G. Evans, R. Scaplehorn, G. Bryant, A. McIntosh, J. Grenfell, G. Wilkins, R. Griffiths, A. Hopkins, T. Nash, S. Evans, L. Groves (Committee)

Front row: M. Wood, K. Swarfield, B. Doster, C. Groves (Captain), M. Ward, D. Akers, R. Woodland, J. Alford (Mascot)

shows, skittles and darts. It was also an opportunity to fundraise to ensure the future of the building with an annual carnival taking place on Cefn Mabley with a vast array of events and activities over several days.

The club became the venue for parties to celebrate the Silver Jubilee, Royal Weddings and anniversaries. Of course the annual presentation dinners now had a new home, as did the Court Leet Dinners of

the Freeman who would gather in their hundreds to celebrate ancient traditions.

For many years the club had enjoyed taking a coach filled with players and supporters on trips to Murrayfield, Twickenham and even Dublin to see Wales take on a home nation in the championships. One of the more memorable Irish trips of the early 1970s saw the Black Army boys touch the Blarney Stone for luck, hopefully this signalling the start of

MR RUGBY CLUB'S LASTING LEGACY



Alfred Ivor "Springy" Evans was born in 1929 and will be remembered as "Mr Llantrisant RFC" given his massive contribution to the club over several decades. According to family stories, he took the nickname "Springy" because of the natural spring opposite his house in Southgate and it was a name for which he, and his son, were synonymous. "Springy" was an only child who grew up in Llantrisant and attended the local primary school before undertaking National Service in the RAF. He worked as a miner in the Iron Ore at Llanharry before becoming a member of staff at the Royal Mint where he was remembered as a leading Trades Union representative. He married Joyce after they met in a dance at the Welfare Club in Ty-

nant and the couple settled in Heol Gwynno where they had three children, Gareth, Ann and Helen. It was during his youth that he first developed his love for rugby, becoming a well known wing-forward who played for Llantrisant in their famous Mallet Cup Final at Cardiff Arms Park. For a time he captained a side at Beddau, but was forever a "Black Army" boy who continued to turn out for the team until the 1960s. A true club stalwart in every sense, Springy was widely regarded as the man responsible for taking Llantrisant RFC from the Wheatsheaf or Parish Offices headquarters to the new "home" at Cefn Mabley. Under his leadership as Secretary the new clubhouse was built, the side went on to win the Silver Ball and even hosting the Western Samoa International side. Springy held the Club together for many years and his contribution and commitment to the cause was immeasurable. After retiring as Secretary (a roll later taken by his late son Gareth) he became Club treasurer. Tragedy hit the family when his beloved Joyce died following a heart attack at the Millennium Stadium in 2004. Ivor "Springy" passed away in May 2011 at his Llantrisant home.



2nd XV 1981 – 1982

Back row: M. Huish, R. White, I. Wilkins, R. Harrison, R. Bressington, R. Thomas, S. Griffiths, F. Mercer, C. Preston, M. Williams, V. Doster
Front row: A. Bowen, G. Oliver, K. Worgan, L. Kerslake (Captain), R. Griffiths, G. John



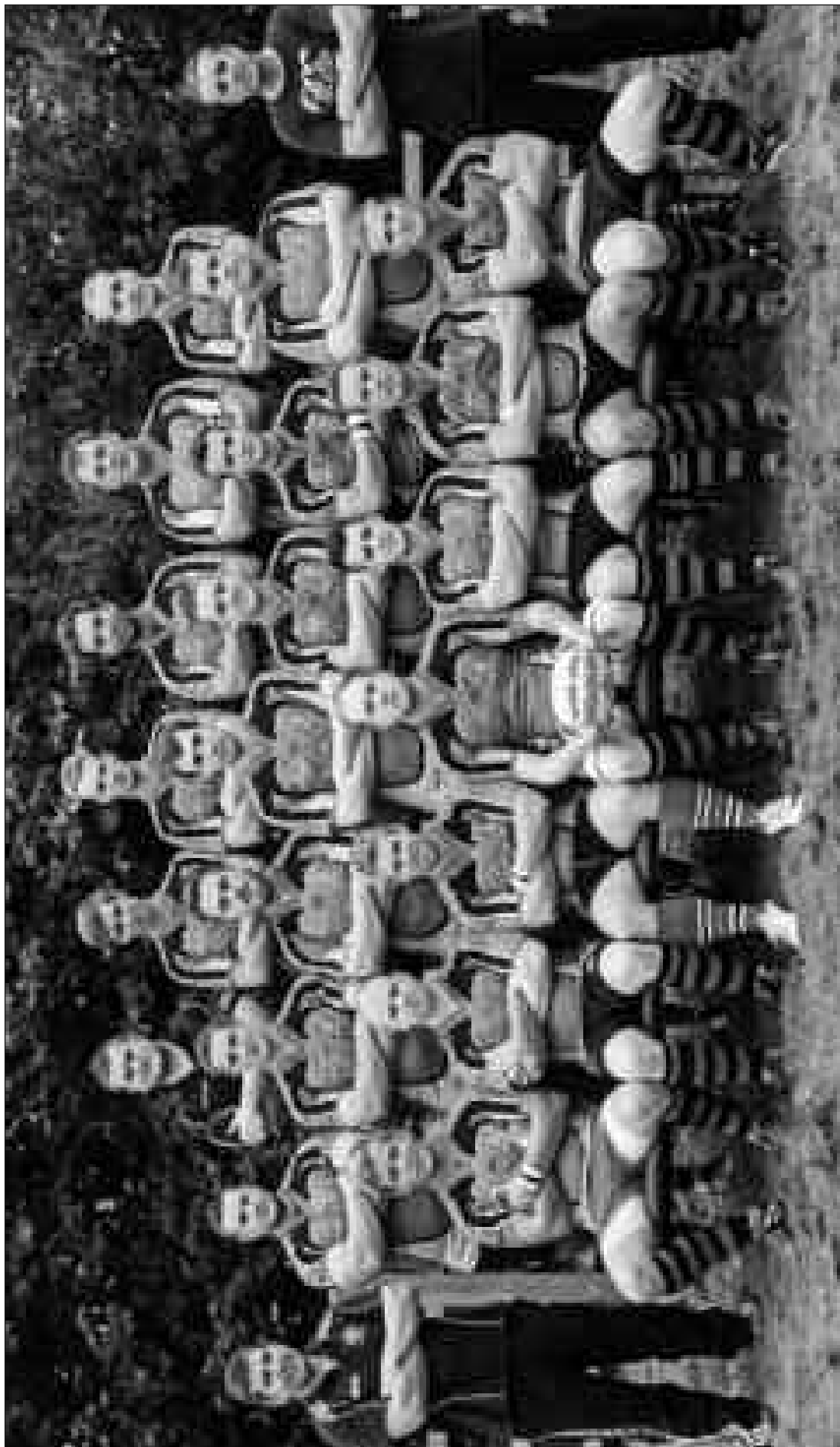
1st XV 2014-2015

Back row: E. Jones, J. Daniels, C. Green, W. Hurley

Middle Row : I. Worgan (Coach), R. Davies (Coach), Scott Bryant, C. Ritchens, C. Sharkey, C. Pemberton, J. McConnell, D. Israel, A. Thomas, R. Bain, P. Morgan, H. Jones

(Head Coach)

Front Row: O. Davies, M. Griffiths, J. Joyce, K. Evans (Captain), J. Bowen, K. Oliver, J. Medicott



2nd XV 2014-2015

Back row: M. Swarfield, C. Taylor, J. McKenzie, S. Dean, C. Pemberton, M. Griffiths

Middle Row: S. Williams (Coach), G. Thomas, L. Roberts, H. Moisey, M. Griffiths, J. Bowen, H. Ritchens, J. Giddy, Owen David (Coach)

Front Row: K. Austin, W. Hurley, S. Curnell, R. Ferris (Captain), G. Griffiths, A. David, S. Stephens



Youth XV 2014-2015

Back row: K. Fowley, C. Taylor, C. Stephens, J. Davies, M. Rees, S. Pryor, M. Phillip, A. Lawrence, C. Parsons, J. Bridge, D. Mounter

Front row : C. Griffiths, E. Griffiths, R. Clift (Captain), K. Davies, J. Bailey, J. Lee, J. Thompson



Under 16s XV 2014-2015

*Back row: D. Mounter, T. Evans, C. Griffiths, B. Evans, J. Pemberton, R. Evans, T. Chamberlain, T. Warwick
Front row: S. Collins, T. Roberts, C. Rees, J. Bailey, J. Bridge, C. Parsons, K. Stark, L. Civil, C. Enoch, J. Morris, J. Gerry.*



Under 10s XV 2014-2015



Under 9s XV 2014-2015



Under 8s XV 2014-2015



Under 7s XV 2014-2015

CLUB PRESIDENT “MERV THE MILK”



Mervyn Collins was born on May 12 1930. He was one of ten children and at the age of 12 he began delivering milk for Southgate trader Harry James whilst still at Llantrisant Primary School. A year later and Mr James handed the business to Mervyn, who ran the deliveries every morning and after school time. With a hand cart and pails, he took to the streets of Llantrisant and Penygawsi. He was in competition with eight other businesses in the area in the days when milk was sold straight from the cow. During his period of National Service in 1948, his brother Leighton kept the business going. Mervyn trained as a physical training instructor in West Kirby, the Wirral and then Bicester in Oxfordshire before returning to Llantrisant. Under his management, Collins Diaries thrived and in 1990, when he retired after 47 years, the business increased sales from 11 gallons to 2,100 gallons of milk delivered per day. Mervyn was a staunch supporter of Llantrisant RFC, becoming President of the Mid District Union. During the 1970s he was a Patron of Llantrisant RFC and from 1980 to 2006 he served as Club President. Mervyn died in 2009.



Yeovil Trip c. 1982

the good fortunes of the “new” side with key players in Gareth Bryant, Frank Mercer, John Flower, Steve and Ronnie Woodland of Ynysmaerdy and Nick and Mick Wood to name but a few.

The dynamic history of the club continued to gain momentum and a number of sponsorship deals were secured. It signalled a successful season for the First XV as they swept all before them including four local trophies in the Coleman Cup, Keith Jones Cup, Ivor Williams Cup and Tom Mitchell Trophies. What a season! What rejoicing! They paid tribute to such success for the excellent coaching of Mick Wood, a local schoolmaster and son of Western Mail Sports Journalist Alan Wood who ensured all the players were fit and versed in all skills. They also drew with Llanharan RFC which came as a major local achievement, particularly as Llantrisant was still a Junior Member of the Welsh Rugby Union. However the stage was set to attain a Full Member status and instrumental in this fight was

members of the Youth Team and recognised “future” of the club with Mike and Jeff Thomas, Mike Ward, “Springy” and Brandon Doster leading the campaign. In 1973 First XV Captain Colin Bull saw his team move up the strata of the union and along with Steve Woodland, W. Rees, Nick Wood, Anthony “Oxy” Hopkins, Phil Newton and Donald Drinkwater, they all played for the District. The Youth XV of the season saw “new blood” in Carl Groves, David Woods, Keith Hobbs, Vaughan Williams, Colin Boast, Alan Burridge, John Legge, Mike Thomas and Keri Grother. Such was the popularity of the Club that for certain cup games it was necessary for the local GP to be in attendance should any injuries take place. The services of Dr Michael Jones were soon called upon and he was a regular feature at Cefn Mabley throughout the 1970s and 80s. Dr Jones, who was a partner with Dr David Morgan at the Talbot Green practice, was a keen sportsman in his own right. His grandfather was Willie



1st XV 1982 – 1983

Back row: Referee, S. Griffiths, D. Jenkins (Vice Chairman), R. Woodland, A. Hopkins, J. Grenfell, G. Wilkins, S. Evans, R. Harrison, R. Evans, M. Huish, R. Clarke (Chairman), G. Treharne (Coach)

Front row: G. Bryant, M. Ward, B. Doster, M. Wood, K Swarfield (Captain), J. Collins, B. Williams, L. Kerslake, J. Alford (Mascot)

Llewellyn who captained Wales and London Welsh. He was a member of the winning Welsh team who beat the 1905 touring All Blacks. With such a rugby pedigree, Dr Jones was certainly welcomed into the club, despite being president of rival Pontyclun RFC!

The clubhouse underwent further extension work as the Black Army grew in size and popularity. A player's bar and new changing facilities and committee room were built under the leadership of Chairman Ray Clarke who secured a loan from Ansell's Brewery in the guise of Reg Pope.

The list of stewards since then include the Jones sisters from The Firs, Norman Rees, David Edwards, George and Angela Bryant, Reg Perkins, E. Clutterbuck, Martin and Cheryl Williams, Jennifer Edwards and Gareth Bryant, Glyndwr "Neda" Price, Nigel Holloway and Tracey

Stanton. The changing rooms were built by local contractor Steve Selwood who dedicated the building to the memory of his late son Paul who passed away in 1974 at the age of just three.

To celebrate the opening of the new club extension in the 1979, Mike Knill of Cardiff and Penarth, who had attended a number of Annual Dinners, arranged for an International XV to turn out against Llantrisant XV. It was a momentous day in the history of the club as Steve Fenwick, Tommy David, Gareth Davies and John Scott turned out to play the Black Army on their home turf.

Also that season a Glamorgan County XV played Llantrisant to much acclaim. The Club now had a firm basis with a strong Management Committee led by Chairman Ray Clarke and Vice Chairman Lyndon Groves, a Patron's scheme headed by Gordon Oliver and David Thomas along



1st XV 1981 to 1982 Welsh Brewers Cup Winners

*Back row: D. Akers, B. Doster, R. Scaplehorn, A. McIntosh, G. Wilkins, J. Grenfell, G. Evans, S. Evans, G. Bryant
Front row: D. Wood, A. Hopkins, K. Swarfield, C. Groves (Captain), M. Ward, C. Preston, R. Woodland, M. Wood*



Welsh Brewers Cup, 1982



with Life Members and Vice Presidents.

A new President was elected in Mervyn Collins, a "Black Army" boy who owned the successful Collins Diaries in Cross Inn.

One of the greatest days in the history of Llantrisant RFC came at Cardiff Arms Park on April 17th 1982. The townsfolk travelled in convoy to the National Stadium – as they had over thirty years before – to see their local side take on the unbeaten Afan Valley side of Glyncorrwg. It was a glorious moment in the history of the Black Army and the entire town seemed to have raced to the capital to cheer on their local heroes.

Under the captaincy of No.8 Carl Groves, the Black Army entered the final of the Welsh Brewers Cup Competition, one of the largest of its kind in the country with more than 220 of the Welsh District Rugby Union clubs taking part. They played with all the pride and passion they could muster.



Having taken advantage of the coaching skills from Gwilym Treharne, the team put up an awesome display of controlled forward play supplemented by secure back play.





Llantrisant RFC celebrating its full membership of the Welsh Rugby Union. Pictured are Mervyn Collins (President), Ray Clarke (Chairman), David Jenkins (Vice President), Ivor Evans (Secretary), Stuart Fisher (Fixture Secretary), Wyndford Benyon (Treasurer), Watcyn Jacob, Anthony Kokkinos, William Thomas (Trustees), Gordon Oliver, David Thomas (Patrons), Trevor Davies, Gordon Jenkins, Cliff O'Neill (Life Members), Gwilym Treharne (Coach), Nicholas Wood, Alan Watkins, Lyndon Groves and Ralph Evans (Committeemen)

The Black Army were to run out eventual victors by 18 points to 9 with a try by Carl Groves and Gareth Bryant kicking the remainder of the points. Gwilym Treharne later became Head Coach for Cardiff RFC, one of the most sought after appointments in Welsh Rugby.

Western Mail correspondent J.B.G. Thomas said of the game, "This ninth final of the Welsh Brewers Cup, deservedly won by Llantrisant, lacked nothing in enthusiasm, endeavour and spirit and the atmosphere was well in keeping with the best of the senior finals. A bright sunny afternoon with a swirling easterly wind provided enough chill to precall the winter's age, but no one on the field spared himself while referee Bill Jenkins

of Aberavon, looked quite capable of officiating at a senior final. The rival groups of supporters, intensely and unashamedly partisan, gave vocal encouragement to their local heroes and had there been marching majorettes present, we would have had all the fun of the fayre. It was enjoyable even if forward play was better than the less adventurous back play, hinting perhaps at the one defect in Welsh rugby at the moment – too much concentration upon forward play at the expense of back play. One appreciates that the wind may have made handling difficult and the high boot up field made catching difficult, but there was rather too much kicking, even though most of it was quite good.



Carl Groves raising the Brewers Cup

"The kickers-in-chief were the two outside halves Gareth Bryant of Llantrisant and Huw Bevan of Glyncoirwg. Bryant, short and dapper, collected 14 points with five kicks as Llantrisant's match winner. Llantrisant were in the lead at 18-9, generally in the Glyncoirwg half with the wind behind them, and yet Gareth Bryant took four kicks at penalty goal and failed with each of them. One appreciates it was a cup final and victory was the vital need, but just a little flow of the ball would have provided even more icing on top of the winner's cake. Forward play was hard but clean apart from Glyncoirwg's tendency to go over the top and kill the ball there was not a great deal in it before the last quarter when Llantrisant got on top and won a great deal of possession. Glyncoirwg began well, full off fire and promise. They actually took the lead with a penalty goal, long kicking outside half Bevan. Llantrisant steadied and Bryant failed his first penalty attempt the forward exerted pressure and Captain Carl

Groves, who had a good match, drove over for a try that Bryant converted.

"Bevan brought Glyncoirwg level with a 45-yard dropped goal after fielding a drop out, but immediately Bryant kicked his first penalty from 48 yards before Bevan again equalised with his second. Then Bryant put Llantrisant in the lead again near the interval and from then on they were generally in charge.

Andrew Mackintosh and Gareth Evans helped groves in the driving but no forward played harder than Paul Bogdan and Cliff Rogers of Glyncoirwg in trying to stem the advancing tide of green and black jerseys. Bryant landed another penalty early in the second half and dropped a 44 yard goal to make it 18-9 and the time was right for concerted attack.

"The Llantrisant forwards did their stuff and Mickey Woods was an industrious scrum half, but they played 10 man rugby



The Evans brothers



Youth XV 1981 - 1982

*Back row: K. Hounter, B. Davies, J. Collins, V. Evans, G. Evans, M. Butcher, C. Griffiths, A. Shaw, A. Mounter
Front row: F. Bryant (Committee), C. Evans, R. Evans, R. Jenkins, A. Phillips (Captain), J. Williams, D. Evans, T. Evans (First Aid)*



Youth XV 1982 - 1983

*Back row: J. Pugh (Coach), Referee, A. Baldwin, P. Davies, D. Evans, Mounter, Griffiths, C. Evans, I. Price, A. Phillips, V. Evans, D. Nicholls, T. Evans (Trainer), A. Griffiths, F. Bryant (Committee)
Front row: A. Shaw, M. Williams, M. Ward, A. Oliver, G. Evans, C. Bowen (Captain), G. Collins, A. Coleman, D. Hallett, J. Alford (Mascot)*

and did it well. Had Wales adopted the same approach, could they have done better perhaps? Bryant kicked three penalties in nine attempts and Bevan two in seven, while each man dropped a goal. So Llantrisant won the cup for the first time and received it from Mr Aubrey Jones, Director of Welsh Brewers.

The competition started in September and 220 district clubs participated and as Llantrisant coach Gwilym Treharne commented, "It was a long way to the final but worth all the hard work".

Sadly triumphs of the 1982-1983 season were overshadowed with tragedy when in the final game Mike Ward, a veteran of the Brewers Cup campaign, suffered a massive heart attack following a tackle against Gilfach Goch. Six weeks later he underwent a heart transplant at Harefield Hospital in Middlesex and within no time he returned

to the club house as a firm supporter of the team he had enjoyed playing for.

Sadly he would never get to pull on the black and green jersey again.

It was acknowledged that something had to be done to try and alleviate the drainage problems associated with the pitch at Cefn Mabley and finally, thanks to a loan from the brewery the work began.

The club celebrated the successes of its junior players Guy Collins and Phillip Davies, who had attained Welsh School-boy caps. However Llantrisant RFC's first Wales Youth Cap went to Kevin Fox in 1985. He gained three further Welsh caps for Wales Youth in the 1986-87 season before undertaking a tour of New Zealand with the Wales Under 19s squad. Kevin's outstanding commitment to rugby saw him play for Neath from 1987 to 1994.



2nd XV 1984 – 1985

Back row: M. Huish, A. Hopkins, P. Montague, G. Thorngate, G. Owen, S. Barry, R. Harrison, R. Griffiths, D. Evans, I. Wilkins, K. Worgan
Front row: M. Butcher, M. Oldfield, N. Evans, B. Doster (Captain), M. Williams, S. Williams, G. Oliver, L. Kerslake, J. Collin, M. Collier (Ball Boy),
N. Worgan (Ball Boy), D. Drew (Ball Boy), E. Drew (Ball Boy)



1st XV 1983 – 1984

Back row: R. Clarke (Chairman), M. Hopkins, P. Davies, G. Evans, A. Phillips, S. Barry, B. Davies, R. Evans, S. Nicholls, D. Akers, K. Mounter
Front row: C. Bowen, A. Oliver, N. Evans, A. Mounter, A. Ward, S. Evans, A. McIntosh, A. Griffiths



1st XV 1984 – 1985

Back row: G. Evans, J. Collins, P. Davies, K. Mounter, N. Thomas, L. Groves (Committee), G. Evans, A. McIntosh, R. Evans, J. Grenfell, G. Wilkins, D. Akers, A. Hopkins
Front row: K. Swarfield, C. Bowen, G. Collins, A. Ward, J. Thomas, Evans (Captain), A. Oliver, g. Bryant, D. Wood

TRAGIC “WARDIE” NEVER FORGOTTEN



Michael Ward was one of Llantrisant RFC's great characters. A dedicated player for his home team, “Wardie” was loved and ad-

mired by friends and family alike.

He was one of four children brought up in Ynysmaerdy and attended Tonysguboriau Primary and Y Pant Comprehensive School where his love of sport flourished.

Initially soccer was his love, having been offered a trial at Bristol Rovers, but the Black Army was his future.

His talent and flair on the pitch was there for all to see and in 1981 he was made Player of the Year and wore the colours of

the Rhondda and East Glamorgan side.

In 1983 the 27-year-old shop manager played for his local team against Gilfach Goch when tragedy struck.

During the game he was crushed under a ruck after going over for a try which severely damaged his heart.

The club winger was rushed to the University Hospital in Cardiff and travelled to London to undergo a heart transplant. As his fellow players feared for his life, “Wardie” showed his colours of being a winner both on and off the pitch.

Within a matter of weeks of convalescing at home he was back at the Cefn Mabley clubhouse to celebrate news of the Black Army achieving WRU status.

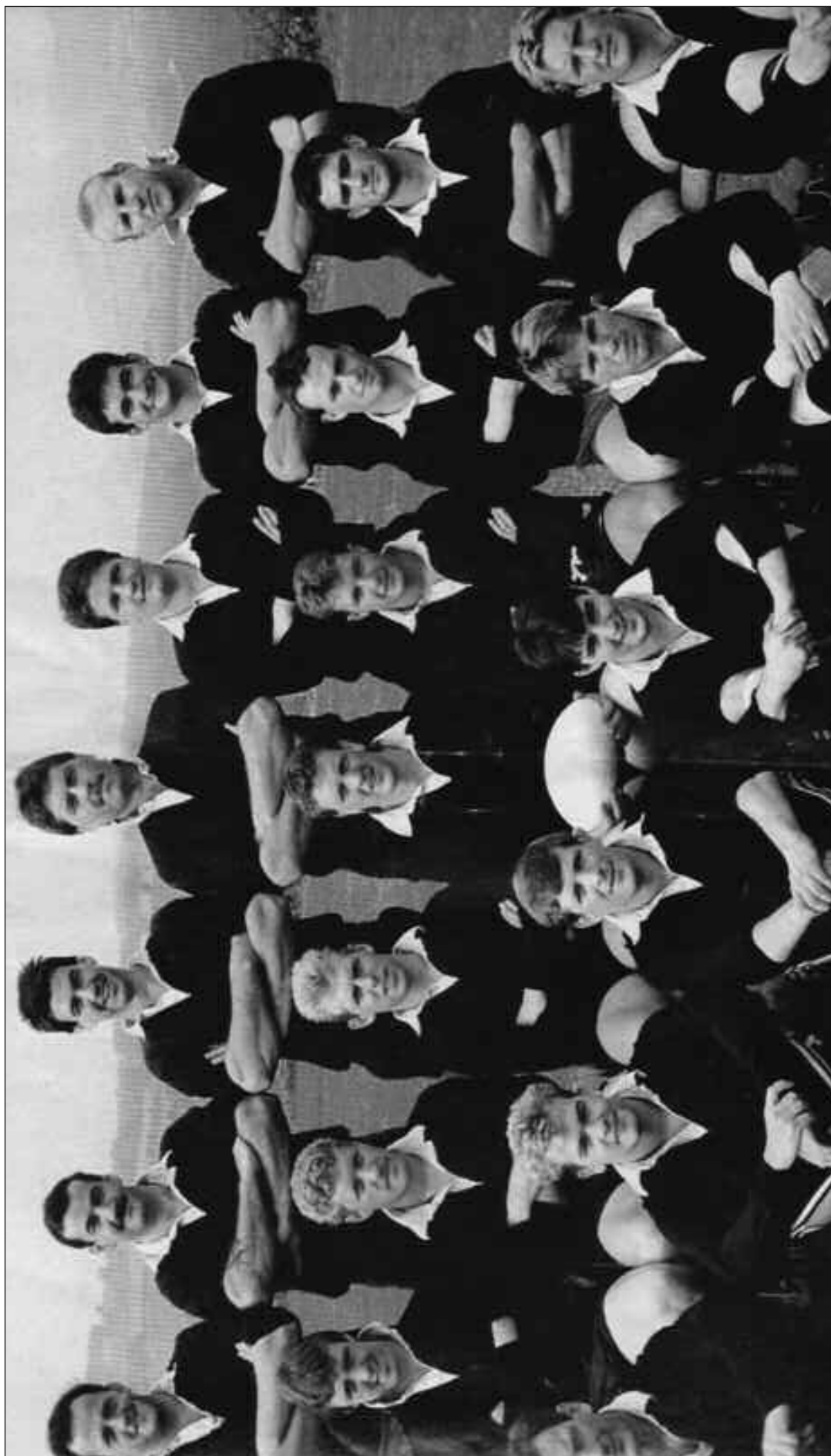
Mike underwent a second heart transplant six years later. Sadly he passed away in 1990 aged just 34.



1st XV 1985 – 1986

Back row: A. I. Evans (Secretary), A. Oliver, D. Akers, S. Griffiths, A. Phillips, J. Grenfell, R. Evans, C. Bowen, P. Davies, K. Mounter, R. Clarke (Chairman), D. Wood, Referee

Front row: A. McIntosh, A. Hopkins, G. Collins, A. Griffiths, S. Evans (Captain), A. Ward, K. Swarfield, G. Bryant, J. Thomas, O. Hopkins (Ball Boy), D. Drew (Ball Boy), J. Alford (Ball Boy), C. Morrow (Ball Boy)



1st XV 1988 – 1989

Centenary Year

*Back row: S. Griffiths, R. Evans, S. Evans, G. Wilkins, A. Phillips, V. Evans, J. Raison
Middle row: G. Bryant, A. Ward, M. Bryant, C. Groves (Captain), S. Morgan, C. Bowen, G. Evans
Front row: M. Thomas, C. Morgan, M. Williams, A. Shaw, G. Collins, D. Akers*



2nd XV 1988 – 1989

Centenary Year

Back row: A. Hughes, S. Nicholls, R. Harrison, R. Clay, G. Owen, A. Phillips, C. Evans, A. Shaw, J. Raison

Front row: M. Butcher, C. Bowen, M. Williams, A. Griffiths, C. McKenzie, S. Griffiths (Captain), G. Griffiths, P. Montague, G. Bryant, J. Thomas (Coach), M. Thomas (Mascot)

In 1983 Llantrisant RFC finally gained full membership of the Welsh Rugby Union, placing them on probation for three years. It was a culmination of many years of hard work and dedication and now entitled them to a status whereby they could access Mid District Leagues and Cup Competitions.

Their links with junior levels were over and no more would they clash with familiar opponents as Glyncorwg or Heol y Cyw. Instead they stepped into the larger rugby arena.

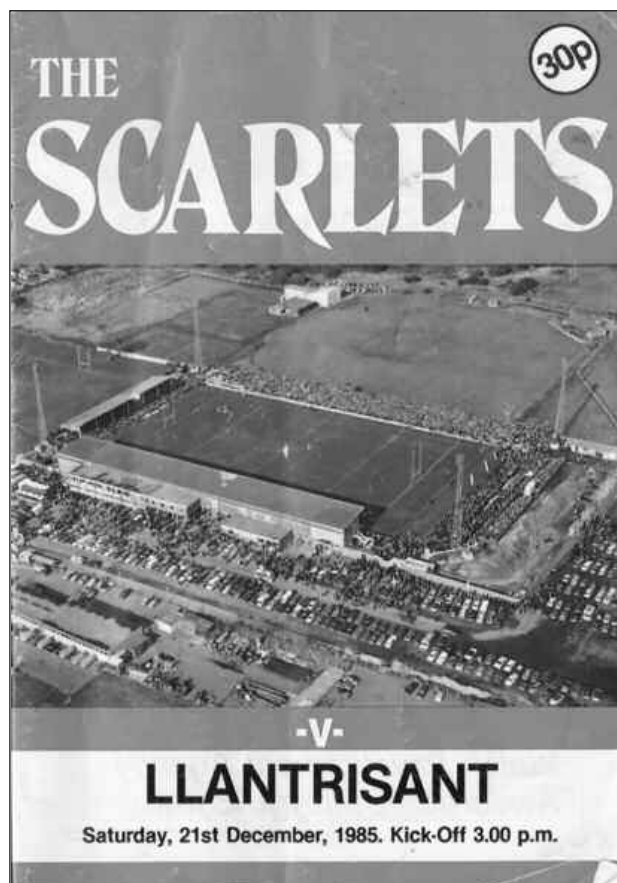
Three years later and “Springy” received the letter from the Secretary of the Welsh Rugby Union Ray Williams which stated, “I have much pleasure in informing you that my Committee, having assessed very carefully your Club’s performance during its three years as a Probationary Member Club of this Union, has now decided that

you should be awarded the status of full membership of the Welsh Rugby Union with effect from 1st September 1986. In offering you my congratulations, I am sure it is not necessary for me to emphasise that with this opportunity comes responsibility and I am certain that your club will measure up to all its responsibilities.” The Black Army ventured to Stradey Park on December 21 1985 to play in the Schweppes Cup and although beaten on the day, the fond memories of that adventure lived long in the memory.

During the early 1980s the Club began a long-standing tradition of undertaking overseas tours.

The first of these included visits to Germany in 1980 and France in 1985 which was especially significant for the Evans family.

Four of the brothers all played in the sen-



ior team in the two games on the Continent. The eldest brother, Ralph, played prop, Steve captained the side, Neil played at either full back or winger while Glen was a hooker. During the tour the youngest brother, Vince, captained the youth team. From the mid-1990s onwards it was the turn of the three David brothers of Swan Street with Owen, Huw and Alun – grandsons of the former secretary - all playing a major role in the success of the club.

With the more cost-effective passenger airlines coming into being the likes of Mike Thomas decided the time was right to fly the Black Army flag around the globe. The first major overseas tour came in 1987 with the visit to Canada and the negotiations were made all the more easier with a close “Black Army” friend in Vancouver. Alan Rees, formerly of Penygawsi, was a former rugby player having represented Cross Keys, Maesteg and

London Welsh. He emigrated during the 1960s and rose to become President of Rugby Canada. His own son, Gareth Lloyd Rees was a Canadian International rugby player who played at fly-half and full back for his country. With the support of Alan and Rugby Canada, the first trip across the Atlantic was a hugely successful one. It was closely followed by the Centenary Anniversary Tour of Florida, USA in 1989. With plenty of sightseeing, drinking and the occasional game, these initial tours set the standard for the many successful journeys that the Llantrisant men would undertake, now including South Africa, Romania, Bermuda, Hong Kong, China and Bulgaria. It was a far cry from their rather primitive weekend in Butlins, Pwllheli!

In 1989 the Club reached its centenary year, a special period to be celebrated in the history of any organisation. Sadly the death of Chairman Ray Clarke brought a shadow of sadness over the initial celebrations. It was the talents of Geoff “Mr X” Davies as coach who helped lead the Llantrisant First XV. Under his leadership they continued to conquer, coming victorious in the Courage Silver Ball competition and a record of ten out of ten wins in the qualifying games, beating the likes of Treorchy and Senghennydd. The Courage Silver Ball, a competition open to all non-premier Welsh Rugby Union clubs in the Glamorganshire area saw the First XV rise through the ranks to take on Bridgend Athletic, coming away as gallant victors with a tremendous 35-12 win. The game took place at the Brewery Field in April 1989.

The South Wales Echo correspondent stated, “Llantrisant came and conquered Bridgend Athletic in the Courage Silver Ball final at the Brewery Field. Spear-

headed by man of the match flanker Kevin Fox whose razor sharp reactions led to three tries, they raced away with the magnificent win, scoring four great tries to one by gallant Athletic. The Athletic could not match the superb skills of Llans' magnificent back row of Fox, Carl Groves and Neil Thomas. The turning point came in the 20th minute. Until then Athletic were leading 9-6 thanks to a penalty by fullback Huw Hathaway and a superb try by Morris after great work by flanker Davies.

"The neat chip in the box by Morris and a wicked bounce which fooled Llan back Adrian Ward, was followed up by Davies who kicked ahead. He collected the bouncing ball and flicked out a short pass to Morris who raced in for Hathaway to convert. But three minutes later Llan struck back following a high kick deep into athletic territory. When the ball went loose, centre Guy Collins was on hand to race in for a corner try. That gave Llantrisant a lead they were not to lose. A penalty by Ward three minutes later followed by an unconverted try from winger Mark Bryant

in the 30th minute after Fox made the most of a fumble by fly half Morris, added to Athletic's misery. Despite a Hathaway penalty shortly before interval.

Llantrisant looked firmly in control at half time, leading 17-12.

"Within seven minutes of the restart Ward slotted over his fourth penalty as Llan began to hammer home their advantage. Skipper Groves set up their third try when he picked up from the base of the scrum and fed across half Mike Thomas who darted through for the touchdown. Ward converted. Another Ward penalty seven minutes later compounded what was becoming an impossible situation for Athletic. But the final nail in the coffin was driven home by Fox. He drove at the heart of Athletic's defence close to their line before slipping a pass to fly half Phil Davies who got the touchdown. Ward added the conversion."

In 1989 the success of the First XV was unprecedented in the history of club. After claiming the Courage Silver Ball trophy, they went on to beat rivals Beddau to become Mid District Cup Champions, re-



1st XV winners of the Courage Silver Ball, 1988



Youth XV 1987 – 1988

Back row: J. Reed, A. Price, G. Williams K. Jenkins, G. Davies, M. Thomas, R. Cook, K. Fox, D. Barnes, D. Clarke, P. Lewis, R. Lloyd, E. Drew, ?, D. Drew (Committee)

Front row: S. Woodland (Coach), K. Richards, H. Evans, A. Snell, P. Bradwell (Captain), J. O'Connor, C. Gibbon, N.Holly, R. Woodland (Mascot)



Youth XV 1988 to 1989

Back row: S. Woodland (Coach), K. Jenkins, D. Clarke, E. Drew, P. Lewis, G. Williams, D. Barnes, C. Gibbon, J. Reed, M. Thomas, G. Davies, F. Bryant (Committee)

Front row: J. Griffiths, N. Holly, L. Mahoney, S. Perkins, M. Newland, P. Bradwell (Captain), J. O'Connor, H. Evans, R. Cook, G. Spargo



Youth XV 1990 to 1991

Back row: J. Spargo (Physio), D. Wood (Coach), P. Salkirk, H. Groves, J. Griffiths, D. Drew, C. Rowley, J. Ling, ?, J, S. Jones, C. Morrow, J. Griffiths (Trainer), ?, ?, D. Drew (Committee)

Front row: G. Cortell, D. Smallman, G. Spargo, J. Alford, L. Mahoney (Captain), M. Collier, R. Wallace, J. Griffiths, D. Holder, L. Phillips, M. Newland



Youth Team 1991-1992

Back Row: S. Woodland (Coach), F. Bryant, J. Ling, R. Woodland, L. Oldfield, C. Rowley, S. James, K. Woodland, C. Morrow, S. Jones, J. Spargo, J. Woodland (Team Manager)

Front row: D. Smallman, P. Salkeld, J. Griffiths, J. Alford, L. Jenkins, G. Rowley, G. Spargo, R. Woodland, G. Catell, M. Weston.



1st XV 1993 – 1994

Back row: L. Prosser, L. Mahoney, A. Mounter, C. Groves, P. Bradwell, G. Williams, A. Shaw, K. Mounter, K. Jenkins, A Kingsbury (Fitness)

Middle row: D. Clarke, J. Alford, M. Bryant, C. Bowen, S. Evans (Captain), G. Evans, K. Woodland, A.Oliver, M. Williams, H. Evans

Front row: M. Thomas (Chairman), L. Hallett (Coach), J. Groves (Mascot), M. Collins (President)



1st XV 1994 – 1995

Back row: G. Bryant, P. Bradwell, A. Phillips, C. Bowen, S. Evans, C. Morgan, G. Williams, J. Raison

Front row: D. Elliott, S. Nicholls, G. Morgan, G. Davies, V. Evans (Captain), G. Evans, N. Matthews



Division Four Champions, 1997-98

ceiving their award at a presentation dinner in Nixon's Workmen's Institute in Mountain Ash. They also won the Glamorgan County Presidents Cup Champions, Llanharan Seven-a-Side champions and Mid District League Division B Champions. Llantrisant RFC was selected as the Whitbread Welsh Bitter Rugby Personality of the Month and Captain Carl Groves received a specially inscribed tankard from the brewery along with 20 gallons of Welsh Bitter for the Club, which needless to say didn't take too long to consume! Throughout the 1980s Carl's contribution to the team cannot be underestimated. With the same dedication as his father Lyndon, Carl has brought great glory onto the club as his own son, Jevon continues to do.

During the centenary season the Youth Team also clinched its fair share of silverware including the Rhondda and East Glamorgan Youth District Cup, Rhondda and East Glamorgan Youth Merit Shield



Mike Thomas holding the Silver Ball



Youth XV 1995 – 1996

Back row: D. Elliott (Coach), C. Groves (Coach), A. Davies, D. Holder, A. David, P. Balman, M. Elliott, R. Woodland, G. Selwood, T. Wharton (Physio)

Front row: R. John, M. Thomas, N. Bush, H. David (Captain), S. Woodland, L. Kerslake, R. Dando, R. Gibbs, J. Wharton (Mascot)



1st XV 1996 – 1997

Back row: G. Jones (Coach), G. Collins, H. Woodland, D. Clarice, R. Gore, D. Barnes, N. Spratt, G. Williams, C. Evans, S. Jarvis, V. Evans, S. Cook, K. Davies, A. Kingsbury (Fitness Coach)

Front row: A. Witts (Team Manager), C. Gibbon, G. Morgan, S. Thomas, G. Evans, L. Prosser (Captain), N. Hill, J. Alford, R. Langmead, D. Williams, P. Donati (Trainer)



1st XV 1997 – 1998

*Back row: D. Barnes, V. Evans, M. Newland, H. Jones, M. Williams, C. David, R. Evans, H. David, M. Ferris
Middle row: J. Gardner, I. Worgan, K. Jenkins (Captain), R. Bore, L. Mahoney, S. Cook, S. Evans, C. Chambers, J. Payne
Front row: J. Alford, K. Evans (Mascot), R. Landgmean*



Youth XV 1999-2000

*Back row: B. Doster (Team Manager), G. Davies, D. Evans, P. Dobbin, R. Jones, B. Coombes, A. Davies (Captain), A. Thomas, A. Evans, C. Coombes, K. Oliver, J. Randell (Coach), S. Hick (Ball Boy)
Front row: I. Watkins (Ball Boy), L. Ferns, M. Griffiths, J. Fletcher, W. Hurley, J. Williams, J. Wright, C. Doster, J. Wheeler, G. Quest*



2nd XV 2000 – 2001

Back row: C. Groves (Coach), I. Griffiths, A. David, P. Bradwell, N. Bush, A. Norton, G. Spargo, P. Lewis, C. Worgan

Front row: G. Gibbs, R. John, R. Harrison (Captain), S. Ball, D. Holder, G. Morgan, C. Bowen, P. Balman



2nd XV 2002 – 2003

Back row: D. Holder, P. Shearan (Committee), C. Young, C. Worgan, M. Ferris, J. Edwards, A. Kingsbury, P. Balman, A. Edwards, A. David, A. Norton, M. Bettison, S. Ball, G. John (Committee)

Front row: C. Bowen (Coach), G. Evans, A. Clarke, T. Lewis, D. Watts, N. Bush (Captain), G. Jones, D. Baldwin

and the Tommy Rees Cup. Steve Woodland was coach of the successful Youth Team when they took Pontypridd Youth's unbeaten record at the neutral ground of Llantwit Fardre. One of the players for "Ponty" on the day was Neil Jenkins.

The season also saw them take Porthcawl Youth's unbeaten three-year record. Llantrisant Youth scored a magnificent 998 points with 158 against. As they hoped for the 1,000 points against Gilfach Goch, James Reed sadly missed the last penalty of the game as the referee blew the whistle! It was only a matter of a year or so later that Steve's wife Janet was appointed Youth Team Manager which came as a shock to the male-dominated Committee as well as that of the wider rugby community!

Throughout the 1990s the Club enjoyed further successes, with another raft of young players claiming international honours. Gareth Alexander and David Drew all claimed Welsh Schoolboy Rugby caps, becoming proud ambassadors for their Black Army. A Freeman of the Town, who didn't actually play for Llantrisant, also attained legendary status in the history of Welsh rugby. In 1991 Neil Jenkins made his debut against England, the start of a career that saw him become one of the Welsh all-time greats.

The clubhouse underwent further redevelopment with a new skittle alley which was dedicated to founder members of the club's skittle side David Smallman and Tom Gillard. Also it saw the creation of new shower and changing rooms and a room specifically for meetings of the Committee. In January 1992 the new floodlights were installed around Cefn Mabley and no longer would the players have to train in semi-darkness! In celebra-

tion the Llantrisant side took on the British Gas Wales RFC Presidents XV on January 31st. Also on the pitch, 1992 was the year in which they famously took on Penygraig who were in their undisputed prime. Nicky Matthews shone that day when Llantrisant's First XV scored five tries.

One of the rather dubious traditions of the club though involved players who were making their team debut, dropped off the coach at Penygawsi and forced to run the streets of Llantrisant back to the clubhouse. Nothing particularly outrageous one would think, before realising the players are stripped naked before they alight the bus. The sight has caused plenty of shocked faces, and one minor car crash outside the Cross Keys Hotel!

The 1990s saw plenty of successes for the First XV when for the second time in their glorious history they won the Glamorgan Silver Ball Trophy at the end of the 1993-94 season. In fact it was a tremendous season all told when the First XV had 15 unbeaten games in a row. In December 1993 they came up against Llanelli for a fierce battle in Stradey Park. Although the Black Army lost 40-5, the Llanelli side included the likes of Scott Quinnell and Nigel Davies to name but a few. However, it was a memorable day for Colin Bowen who scored a quality try that day. As the Pontypridd Observer stated, "For nearly 40 minutes Scarlet supremacy was denied a score by brave tackling which bordered on the kamikaze. Every Black Army foot soldier put his body on the line to soak up constant pressure, but none did better than back row boys Greg Williams and Paul Bradwell who had to cope with Scott Quinnell's titanic thrusts." Colin Bowen came out as a Black Army hero that day when the biggest cheer was heard as he



Youth XV 2000 – 2001

Back row: S. Griffiths (Physio), J. Randell (Coach), M. Shaw, A. Evans, P. Thomas, S. Bosley, G. Wilkins, D. Cross, L. Davies, B. Coombes, R. Jones, A. Thomas, K. Oliver, C. Ward, A. Small, J. Pugh, G. Quest, B. Doster (Team Manager), D. Jenkins (Fixture Secretary)
Front row: P Shearan (Committee), C. Coombes, M. Danco, J. Wright, G. Jones, J. Atfield, W. Hurley, M. Griffiths, L. Harman, M. Griffiths, C. Doster (Captain), J. Medlicott



1st XV 2001 – 2002

Back row: M. Newland, K. Jenkins, O. David, J. Myatt, S. Facey, R. Evans, S. Jenkins, N. Jones, D. Atkins, S. Gilbertson, Sponsor, J. Olding
Front row: G. Davies, H. David, I. Jones, L. Kerslake, S. Allison, I. Worgan, G. Alexander (Captain), D. Evans, R. Davies



1st XV 2002 – 2003

Back row: D. Jones, T. Russell, M. Jones, O. David, S. Jenkins, D. Owen, A. Davies, C. Groves (Coach), R. Davies, V. Evans, J. Alford
Front row: I. Iles, M. Collins, S. Facey, A. Griffiths, H. David (Captain), I. Worgan, D. Evans, M. Collier, M. Thomas (Coach)



1st XV 2005 – 2006

Back row: M. Thomas (Coach), O. David, K. Oliver, S. Gilbertson, M. Wilkins, N. Bush, B. Coombes, A. David, C. Worgan, H. David, T. Lewis, J. Alford, R. John, H. Jones, C. Groves (Coach), L. Kerslake (Manager)
Front row: C. Doster, D. John, M. Griffiths, O. Bater, D. Evans, R. Davies, I. Worgan, G. Holloway, D. Jones, M. Jones, J. Medlicott, Christian Alford (Mascot)

surged past two tackles and outsprinted the Scarlets on a thrilling 30-yard run.

In 1996 Steve Woodland took his Youth side to Ireland for a tour of Wexford on a long weekend. It had its moments to say the least, including missing the ferry home and the afternoon the Llantrisant boys swapped their jerseys with a well established Protestant side. On the following day the Welsh boys took on a Catholic side, unknowingly wearing Protestant jerseys and almost causing a diplomatic incident.

At the end of the 1997-98 season the First XV were Division 3 Champions under captain Kevin Jenkins, moving up the league to Division 2. It was another prize-winning achievement for the senior side. Another of the highlights came with the Rugby World Cup in 1999 when Alan Jones secured players and supporters of

the Western Samoa side to make a visit to Cefn Mabley. They enjoyed a social evening in the clubhouse which appeared to be a dignified enough event at first. However, on handing out the beer checks, the Secretary "Springy" saw the shocking display of one experienced player (and drinker!) who sank ten pints and fifteen whiskeys before the night was out!

It was with great sadness that the Club mourned "Springy's" passing some years later, but nobody could have imagined that within such a relatively short time his son Gareth, his successor as Secretary of the Club, would also pass away. Slowly those stalwarts who had made such a massive impact on Llantrisant RFC were fading away and with the deaths of Watcyn Jacob, Trevor "Chippo" Davies, Mervyn Collins and Lyndon Groves signalling the end of an era of Black Army warriors. None of course would have



Youth XV 2001 – 2002

Back row: B. Doster (Team Manager), M. Butcher (Coach), C. Doster, L. Davies, J. Pugh, B. Coombes, D. Evans, A. Davies, R. Jones, W. Dando, A. Thomas, D. Watts, S. Hopkins

Front row: Martin Griffiths, Mark Griffiths, G. Griffiths, I. Harmon, W. Hurley, Matthew Griffiths, K. Oliver, J. Medlicott, O. Pritchard, O. Butcher

imagined that at such a relatively young age another passing member would be that of former Club Captain Lyn Prosser and player Alan Oliver. Together the memories of these men will live forever as long as there's a Llantrisant RFC.

Hopes of a new future for the Clubhouse had been discussed for some years before the plans were finally revealed in 2000. With a new high-class housing development erected at the rear of neighbouring Cefn Mabley Farm, it was considered that the building contractor wanted to extend the estate onto the rugby field.

In order for this to occur long discussions and plans were produced to provide a new field adjacent to Bull Ring Farm and erect a state-of-the-art two-floor clubhouse nearby. This is a hope that still lingers in living memory and we look forward to any further devel-

opments in this regard.

With the dawning of a new Millennium came a new group of players developing from Youth Days through to the Senior Sides. These included Kevin Oliver, Wayne Hurley, Jamie Medlicott, Sean Gilbertson, Lee "Spud" Kerslake, Huw "Dog" David, Ian "Morph" Worgan, Glenn Holloway, Thom Botwood, Gareth "Urban" Alexander, Dean Holder, Ryan Harrison, Martyn Bettinson and Martin Griffiths to name but a few. For the next decade the First XV was captained by Huw David for five seasons, along with Gareth Alexander and Dean Evans in the role. In the Second XV Dean Holder, Alun David and Jamie Medlicott led their troops as captains. The Management Committee saw the emergence of Guy Oliver as chairman, ably supported by the likes of Paul Shearan and Lyndsey Kerslake to name but a few.



Llantrisant RFC vs Ystrad Rhondda in the Mid District Rugby Union Cup Final on May 7th 2003



Youth XV 2002 – 2003

Back row: B. Doster (Team Manager), S. Griffiths (First Aid), M. Butcher (Coach), S. Hopkins, W. Alford, L. Millard, M. Griffiths, O. Osbourne, G. Holloway, M. Griffiths, A. Thomas, B. Coomes, T. Botwood, O. Pritchard, J. Pugh, R. Griffiths (Committee)
Front row: G. Williams, K. Oliver, I. Harman, G. Griffiths, J. Medlicott (Captain), B. Thomas, W. Hurley, M. Griffiths, C. Doster, O. Bater, B. Davies, K. Bryant (Ball Boy), O. Butcher (Ball Boy), D. Griffiths (Mascot)



2nd XV 2003 – 2004

Back row: R. Griffiths, A. Smith, M. Newlands, A. Davies, C. Worgan, A. Thomas, M. Bettinson, N. Bush, G. Wilkins, A. Norton, D. John, P. Lewis, A. Kingsbury, S. Ball, P. Shearan
Front row: K. Jenkins, A. Marchant, W. Hurley, J. Medlicott, A. Clark, D. Holder (Captain), T. Lewis, M. Griffiths, S. Williams, J. Edwards, M. Raison (Mascot)

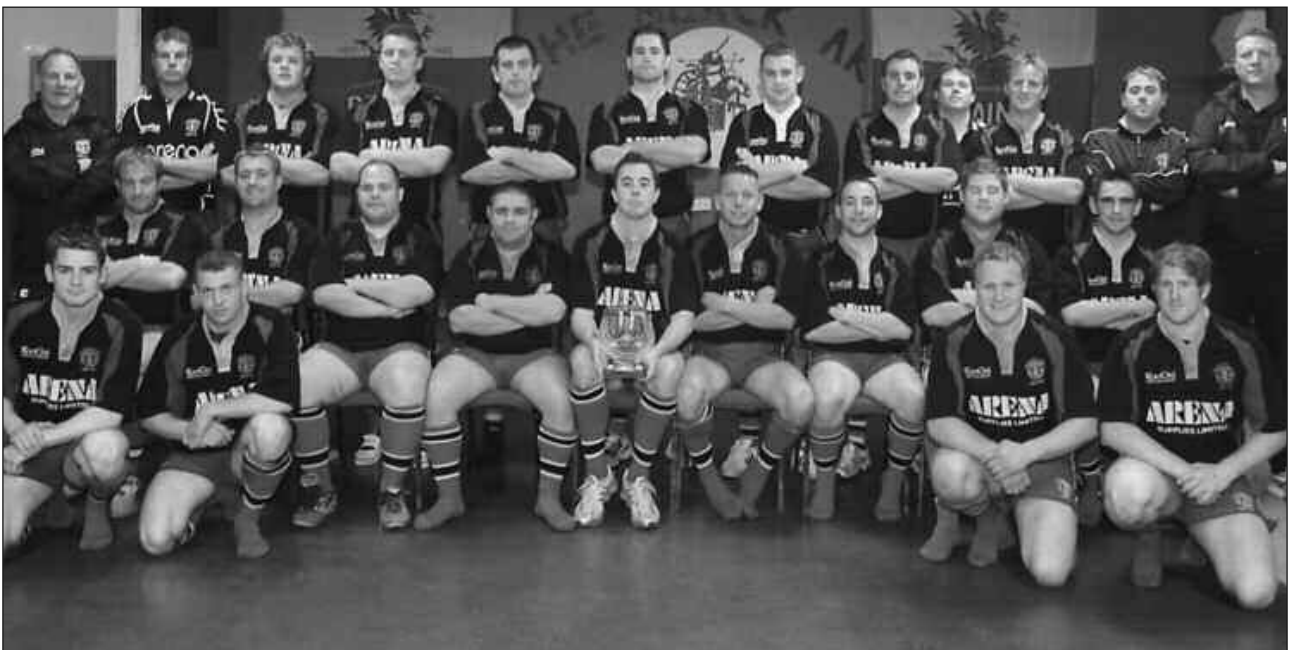
Another of those great stalwart characters whose name is forever secured in the history of Llantrisant RFC is that of Nick Woods whose role as Treasurer and various official titles has won the admiration of all involved in the club.

In May 2003 Llantrisant won the Mid District Cup for the first time since 1989. Despite an indifferent season in Division Two, they survived the meeting with old rivals Ystrad Rhondda at Sardis Road in Pontypridd and narrowly won the encounter 15-14. Having defeated Aberdare and Tonyrefail in the earlier rounds, and Penygraig in an epic semi-final at Mountain Ash, another tough encounter was expected and that was certainly the case. Ystrad presented a formidable battle but the Black Army were there to conquer. A try from Mike Jones followed by a Jason Alford kick brought the scoreboard to a 7-6 lead for the Llantrisant crew. Exerting pressure throughout the second half, Llantrisant Captain and Man of the Match

Huw David stole up the blindside to cross midway between the corner flag and the posts. Jason "Bap" put over a neat drop goal.

Ystrad managed another try and you could have heard a pin drop as Lloyd sent the ball hurtling towards the posts, only for it to strike the upright post and rebound on the pitch! It was indeed an unforgettable finale for the Black Army who certainly celebrated in style.

A sponsorship deal for a new kit was arranged with Clive Pegg of the Wheat-sheaf, resurrecting the old relationship between the pub and team. Sadly it was a period of tragedy for the club too with the premature passing of Lynda Butcher, the daughter of stalwart Fred Bryant and wife of coach Mark Butcher. In her honour the Lynda Butcher Memorial Cup was launched in 2006 and is played every Boxing Day between Llantrisant and Beddau Youth sides as she played such a big part in the Youth Team. During the debut



1st XV 2006 – 2007

Back row: M. Thomas (Coach), A. David, S. Andrews, S. Gilbertson, D. Owen, M. Wilkins, A. Thomas, O. David, D. Jones, G. Groves, R. John, C. Groves (Coach)

Middle row: H. Jones, R. Davies, C. Worgan, D. Evans, H. David, J. Alford, I. Worgan, B. Coombes, G. Holloway

Front row: C. Doster, M. Griffiths, T. Lewis, Martyn Bettinson



1st XV 2007 – 2008

Back row: L. Kerslake (Team Manager) G. Alexander, G. Jones, B. Coombes, D. Owen, C. Allen, A. David, R. King, M. Wilkins, H. Lougher, T. Botwood, C. Groves (Coach), R. John, S. Battle (Physio)

Front row: J. Alford, T. Lewis, I. Worgan, H. David, D. Evans, R. Davies, G. Groves, G. Holloway, A. Thomas



1st XV 2008 – 2009

Back row: M. Thomas (Coach), C. Groves (Coach), H. Lougher, O. David, J. Groves, S. Williams, R. Thomas, G. Jones, G. Groves, C. Worgan, M. Bettinson, R. Davies, L. Kerslake (Team Manager)

Front row: S. Battle (Physio), C. Sharkey, R. King, D. King, A. Davies, H. David, J. Williams, I. Worgan, D. Evans, S. Williams

game there were tries by Scott Dean and Jamie Coleman, a conversion by Jeremy Dessant and a drop goal by Jonathan Williams.

One of the major moments of the decade came in the 2006-2007 season when the First XV went undefeated, beating Abergavenny away with two tries in the last five minutes. Llantrisant First XV were made WRU National League Division 2 East Champions. Regular photographer of their games, Alan Watkins, presented each of the players with a beautifully compiled photograph album, each one featuring the name of the player embossed in gold on the cover. It made for a fantastic memento of an unforgettable season. A tough year in Division 1 faced them of course, beating Pontypool and Bargoed, but losing to Llanelli at a very muddy Cefn Mabley field.

In 2007 the Club embraced modern technology with its own website, allowing their story to literally go around the world. Undoubtedly one of the major moments of the decade came in the 2006-2007 season when the First XV went undefeated, beating Abergavenny away with two tries in the last five minutes. Ian 'Morph' Worgan hit the post with the conversion for the first try and the conversion of the second try was the final play of the match. "Morph" slipped while kicking it but it thankfully managed to go over. Those last five minutes summed up the belief this particular team had. There was a never say die attitude and a belief that no matter what would happen during the game they would finish strongly. As well as the Abergavenny game there were comebacks away to Treherbert and the team survived a scare in the final league match of the season away to Nan-



Youth XV 2005 – 2006

Back row: S. Griffiths (First Aid), G. Griffiths (Coach), M. Butcher (Coach), J. Raja, S. Andrews, O. Thorngate, J. Giddy, M. Griffiths, R. Sergeant, C. Green, I Wharton, M. Bowen, T. Smith, R. Morgan, H. Rees, T. Wharton, D. Akers (Coach)
Front row: J. Dessant, J. Coleman, R. Rees, D. Bayliss, M. Baker, J. Andrews (Captain), S. Dean, G. Griffiths, D. Roberts, R. Harrison, G. Thomas, N. Davies (Fixture Secretary), O. Butcher (Ball Boy), K. Davies (Ball Boy)

tymoel but came out victorious. There was also a growing need to reintroduce a mini-rugby side which had sadly floundered over the few previous years. The Llantrisant Mini Rugby Warrior was re-established in 2008 thanks to Matthew Newland, Aled Morgan and Jon Rogers and now boasts and impressive 70 members in the four teams. So too the success of an Under 16s team was becoming recognised with players having come through the mini-rugby tradition on their way to a Youth or Senior side.

One of the more memorable matches of 2008 came in December when Llantrisant entertained Llanelli once again at Cefn Mabley. Llantrisant lost in a hard fought game at the mud bath which had become the hometown field. Although it was a narrower margin than many would think of only 27-13 to the Scarlets. Such a valiant display by the Black Army was

well reported and players could feel justifiably proud of the way they stood toe to toe to Llanelli on the day as they kept fighting to the bitter end.

The abundance of talent continued as the years passed by. Llantrisant trio Jevon Groves (Captain), Scott Andrews and Patrick Palmer all played for Wales Under 20s in the World Cup Squad for 2007-2008 and a schoolboy cap was awarded to young Stuart Griffiths. In 2005 Thom Botwood and Glenn Holloway both had Wales Club Under 25s caps followed some years later by Lewis Morgan with his Welsh Schools Under 16s call-up.

However, the town of Llantrisant soon roared with the sound of cheering and applause when for the first time in their long history, the Black Army produced a full Welsh International Rugby player. The drinking establishments of the town



2nd XV 2008 – 2009

Back row: D. Holder (Manager), J. Wharton, T. Christopher, T. Smith

Middle row: M. Swarfield, J. Andrews, M. Griffiths, S. Evans (Coach), B. Morton, C. Sharkey, S. Dean, A. Thomas

Front row: G. Thomas, J. Joyce, H. Rees, A. David (Captain) J. Medlicott, P. Francis, R. Harrison, W. Hurley J. Clay (Mascot)



1st XV 2009 – 2010

*Back row: G. Alexander, C. Groves, O. David, J. Alford, S. Gilbertson, S. Williams, K. Evans, D. Jones
Middle row: S. Battle, R. Davies, I. Worgan, C. Worgan, H. Rees, C. Doster, J. Coleman, G. Thomas, H. Williams, D. Evans
Front row: R. John, G. Groves, R. King, G. Jones, J. Williams, J. Andrews, M. Griffiths*



2nd XV 2009 – 2010

*Back row: T. Christopher, A. David, P. Francis, A. Thomas, S. Evans
Middle row: D. Holder, K. Evans, R. Harrison, C. Doster, K. Oliver, C. Sharkey, T. Smith
Front row: M. Griffiths, J. Bowen, D. Jones, J. Medlicott, J. Joyce, M. Griffiths, W. Hurley*



Wales Under 20s (2007-2008) featuring Scott Andrews, Jevon Groves (Captain) and Patrick Palmer

were crowded and the volume of cheering rose to a deafening level the moment that Bradley Davies, son of Pontypridd player Bleddyn, made his debut for Wales as a late replacement for Shane Williams in the 2009 Six Nations Championship against Scotland. He had played for all age group levels for Wales after years of Black Army training and was captain of the under 20s squad when they won the grand slam in 2005. On February 9 2009, a date that will forever go down in Llantrisant history, Brad first pulled on that red jersey and ran out for his country. Llantrisant had waited 110 years for this moment and it was a time to celebrate through the night. Wales won 26-13 that day, beating their rivals on their own home turf at Murrayfield.

The following year and he was named in the 35-man Wales national squad for the 2010 Six Nations Tournament. It was a period mixed with tragedy for young Brad. On February 26 he played in a loss against France and there was a minutes silence in honour of his mother Cheryl who died aged 46 the week before.



Stars of the Black Army Thom Botwood, Glenn Holloway, Scott Andrews, Bradley Davies and Jevon Groves



Youth XV 2008 – 2009

Back row: R. Davies, B. Doster (Coach), R. Boyce, A. Thomas, S. Jones, G. Huish, K. Evans, L. Austin, J. Bowen, H. Moisey, N. Evans, P. Hurley, L. Prosser (Coach)

Front row: J. Williams, L. Marsh, J. Watkins, J. Roberts, S. Wilby, J. Joyce, O. Rees, C. Rees, ?, ?



1st XV 2010 – 2011

Back row: G. Alexander, H. Jones, G. Legge, G. Groves, I. Williams, S. Gilbertson, O. Osborne, I. Wharton, C. Green, J. Andrews, C. Worgan, M. Bettinson, J. Alford (Team Manager), R. John (Physio), C. Groves (Coach)

Front row: S. Morbey, M. Griffiths, O. David, G. Jones, G. Holloway, M. Griffiths, D. King, H. Williams, A. Thomas

Bradley was selected as Wales captain for the two match tour of Japan in June 2013 and now plays for the London Wasps.

Further national glory came to the Black Army with another home-grown rising star in their midst. Scott Andrews was another product of the Llantrisant's mini-rugby system, playing only briefly for the senior team before joining the Cardiff Blues Under 20s. In May 2010 he was added to the Wales national rugby union team standby list for the summer matches due to injury to Gethin Jenkins.

In January 2011 he was named the Wales squad for the 2011 Six Nations Championship. Again the Black Army was close to bursting with pride when he made his full international debut for Wales versus the Barbarians on 4 June 2011 as a second half replacement. The honour both players have brought on the Black Army and their hometown is immeasurable.

The 2010-2011 season saw the Second XV have an outstanding series of matches. They were undefeated for all of their 19 games, drawing only once and winning the rest. Dean Holder's decade of commitment to the Seconds bore fruit as they won the Rhondda and East Glamorgan Division 1 East League and the Mel Davies cup. For the following season they also remained undefeated, illustrating the immense power and skill of the team.

The First XV also secured their status in the Division 2 East League, one of the most competitive in Wales, when they ended the season in fourth place. In the 2011-2012 season the First XV Team had some mixed performances, beating Tylorstown convincingly at home in the league and losing to them the following weekend in the Swalec Cup. They displayed a truly fantastic performance in a friendly against Pontypridd in Sardis Road and then went on to win the Mid District Plate Final, finish-



2nd XV 2010 – 2011

Back row: L. Austin, D. Bayliss, G. Thomas, O. Bater, M. Swarfield

Middle row: S. Williams (Coach), D. Holder (Team Manager), S. Griffiths (Physio), H. Rees, S. Dean, M. Griffiths, I. Williams, I. Wharton, J. Giddy, A. David, S. Evans (Coach), O. David (Coach)

Front row: R. Langdon, G. Griffiths, M. Griffiths, J. Medlicott (Captain), T. Christopher, C. Green, W. Hurley

OLIVER'S ARMY REMEMBERED OVERSEAS



Alan Oliver was born on Christmas Day, 1965. He first entered the Black Army rugby fraternity in the 1970s as one of the very first Mini Rugby Teams formed by former Llantrisant Junior School headmaster John Pugh.

Together with Colin Bowen, Philip Davies, and great friends Vince and Glen

Evans, he continued through the natural route of Youth and Senior Rugby.

Joining the South Wales Police as a Cadet in the early 1980s, he became a local bobby eventually operating as a Police Constable based in Pontypridd.

Llantrisant RFC remained his life, only opting out for a brief period when duty called having him represent South Wales Police RFC on the field.

He remained loyal to the Black Army and would always call around to the club visiting mates who would keep his feet firmly on the ground.

After touring to Canada with the Club in 1987,

he quickly took up the opportunity of a new job in Bermuda which was to become his eventual adopted home.

He would visit home at every opportunity and despite a brief spell back in the UK, when the opportunity arose for a new contract back on the sun-kissed Isle, he jumped at the chance.

Settling down with his new wife Crystal, and after many US and worldwide tours with the Bermuda Rugby community he spent more time on the golf course as opposed the rugby field.

Never losing touch with family and friends back home, he looked forward to those twilight years eventually retiring from the Police Force to take up a security position based in the Bermuda International Airport.

His last visit back home was to take part in the Cardiff Marathon in 2006.

Sadly, it came to an end in 2007 after a freak motor scooter accident claimed him on the way home following a farewell send off to another Bermuda colleague.

Always a true and loyal member of Llantrisant RFC, he would always champion the virtues of the Club, the Town and its inhabitants throughout the world.

Sadly missed, he would have been enthralled to know that in May 2013, the Club decided to tour his adopted homeland as a tribute.

ing 6th place in the league.

The Youth had an outstanding season by winning the league unbeaten and reaching the Merit Table Cup Final which they lost to Treorchy in an entertaining game.

The following season began in rather difficult fashion as a group of 16 senior players enjoyed a week in Ibiza together when the games were already underway. Fortunately the Llantrisant longbowmen of 1346 didn't have the same philosophy or we'd all be speaking French! Poor



Members of the undefeated Second XV for the 2010-2011 season. They won the Rhondda and East Glamorgan Division 1 East League and the Mel Davies cup



1st XV 2011 – 2012

Back row: G. Alexander (Coach), H. Jones (Coach), I. Wharton, C. Sharkey, S. Williams, S. Gilbertson, R. Harrison, O. Osbourne, J. Alford (Team Manager)
Middle row: K. Evans, D. Lloyd, B. Coombs, C. Green, J. Andrews, L. Montague, H. Rees, L. Austin, N. Matthews (Physio)
Front row: J. Williams, I. Worgan, G. Davies, G. Holloway, M. Griffiths, C. Doster, J. Medlicott, E. Alexander (Mascot)



2nd XV 2011 – 2012

Back row: S. Williams (Coach), H. Molsey, D. Israel, S. Dean, O. Thorngate, A. David, J. Bowen, G. Thomas, O. David (Coach)
Middle row: M. Swarfield, M. Griffiths, K. Oliver, P. Francis, M. Griffiths, R. Langdon
Front row: R. Wheat, J. Giddy, G. Griffiths, I. Worgan (Captain), W. Hurley, J. Joyce, I. Williams

weather and international fixtures saw the First XV play 19 games in 12 weeks. However, they had a good run and narrowly lost out on a semi-final place, missing out on promotion by just seven league points. The Second XV also had another great season and won the Rhondda and Glamorgan Division 1 League, narrowly losing to Caerphilly in the Ivor Williams Cup Final.

Finally to the 2013-14 season with seven straight wins for the First XV before a defeat in Mountain Ash, but the squad were undaunted and enjoyed a terrific victory over Senghennydd and beat Rhiwbina twice in the season. Due to restructure the 4th place finish saw the First XV go forward to play in the newly formed Division 1 for the 125th anniversary season with opponents of Beddau, Llantwit Fardre and Gilfach among those that

make up the division, reminiscent of the old Mid District days with plenty of tough competition. The Second XV won the Rhondda and East Glamorgan Premier Division League, narrowly losing 23-20 to Dowlais in the Ivor Williams Cup Final.

For generations Llantrisant Rugby Football Club has been a constant in the lives of the people in this famous Black Army town. Tradition dies hard and with the same passion and determination to succeed in battle as their forefathers had done, the Black Army continues to conquer. On celebrating their 125th anniversary they can look back with immense pride at all that has been achieved, while also remembering the massive debt of gratitude they owe to each and every player, officer and supporter who has gone before them.



Youth XV 2011 – 2012

*Back row: J. Rodgeron, R. J. Little, L. Montague, H. Davies, K. Davies, L. John
Middle row: K. Austin, C. Richens, R. Taylor, C. Stephens, C. Pemberton, J. Franklin, H. Moisey
Front row: J. Nash, S. Bryant, S. Stephens, J. Bunyon, J. Bowen, E. Jones, L. Roach, S. Hill, H. Richens*

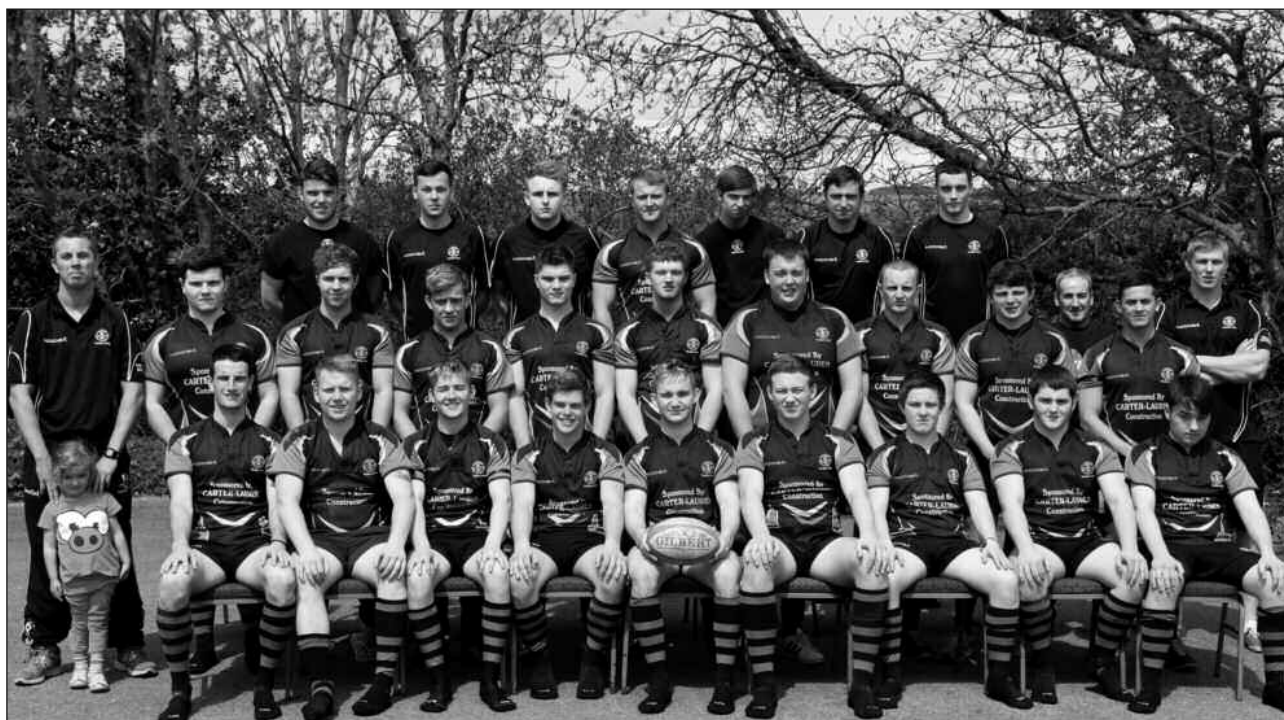


1st XV 2012 – 2013

Back row: S. Gilbertson, S. Williams, C. Green, K. Oliver

Middle row: G. Alexander (Coach), H. Jones (Coach), H. Rees, R. Harrison, L. Austin, H. Davies, A. Jones, D. Lloyd, J. Alford (Team Manager), R. Davies (Coach)

Front row: I. Worgan, M. Griffiths, R. Ferris, G. Holloway, C. Sharkey, J. Medlicott, A. David, H. Williams



Youth XV 2012 – 2013

Back row: M. Rees, K. Wood, R. Clift, S. Stephens, C. Taylor, R. Taylor, J. Bunyon

Middle row: H. David, J. Nash, M. Raison, K. Austin, L. Morgan, C. Stephens, C. Pemberton, L. Wilson, J. Franklin, N. Evans (Coach), J. Chan, J. Groves (Coach)

Front row: L. Montague, R. Griffiths, J. Merry, E. Jones, J. Bowen, J. Little, L. John, K. Davies, E. Griffiths

Today the many teams actually feature sons, grandsons and even great-grandsons of players who devoted their entire sporting careers to Llantrisant RFC. Children have turned international heroes, players have turned coaches, physios have become officers. There is never a shortage of positions for people to fill as the years pass them by. The list of matching surnames throughout the decades clearly illustrates that this is more than just rugby, this is camaraderie of friends. This is family. The Club is almost a way of life for so many past and present and glasses are raised on this anniversary year for all who have come before us. It is a milestone we will celebrate as we look forward with optimism to what the future holds.

The club has long adopted the image of an ancient warrior to emphasise the fight-

ing spirit of the Black Army and has now become an emblem not only on the clubhouse, but even tattooed onto the chest of many players themselves. With a large number of rugby clubs within a ten mile radius of Llantrisant – including two premiership teams, 'The Black Army' depends on home grown talent. Through the years the club has continued to develop and maintain this talent through its Mini-Rugby, Youth and Senior sides. The loyalty shown on the field is well supported off the field by the officers, committee and supporters – many of whom have donned boots and done battle for the cause. It's loyalty on and off the field that epitomises 'The Spirit of The Black Army'.

Long may this continue.



1st XV 2013 – 2014

Back row: I. Worgan (Coach), H. Jones (Coach), J. Bunyon, C. Pemberton, J. Little, K. Evans A. Thomas, L. Montague, G. Legge, D. Israel, D. Williams, B. Harries, J. Medlicott, R. Davies (Coach)

Front row: M. Griffiths, G. Holloway, J. Andrews, S. Gilbertson, E. Jones, J. Williams, S. Bryant, D. Alpin



Llantrisant Veterans who played Ystrad Rhondda, 2014

WHAT GOES ON TOUR – STAYS ON TOUR



Tour of Germany, 1980

Over the years the opportunity to travel overseas on an incredible series of tours has played a major part in the ongoing success of Llantrisant RFC. Spending weeks amongst fellow players and good friends, exploring new countries, cultures and enjoying a whole host of experiences, have been highlights in the recent history of the club. Naturally coming face to face with other teams on foreign lands has been a pleasure for players on both sides. However the Black Army stories of

The question is which player will have an entire chapter named after them and their antics!

The Club was fortunate to tour various parts of Europe during the 1980s. In 1980 they ventured to Cologne and Dusseldorf in Germany, with many of the Llantrisant boys travelling overseas



Tour of Ireland, 1973

their high jinx, free bars, pool parties and night-clubs are not for inclusion in this particular publication! Although undoubtedly it would make a bestselling tell-all book and we look forward to “Black Army: The Untold Story” in years to come!

THE TOURS

1980	Germany
1985	France
1987	Canada
1989	Florida, USA
1996	South Africa
2000	Canada
2009	South Africa
2010	Romania
2011	Hong Kong & China
2012	Ukraine
2013	Bermuda
2014	Bulgaria



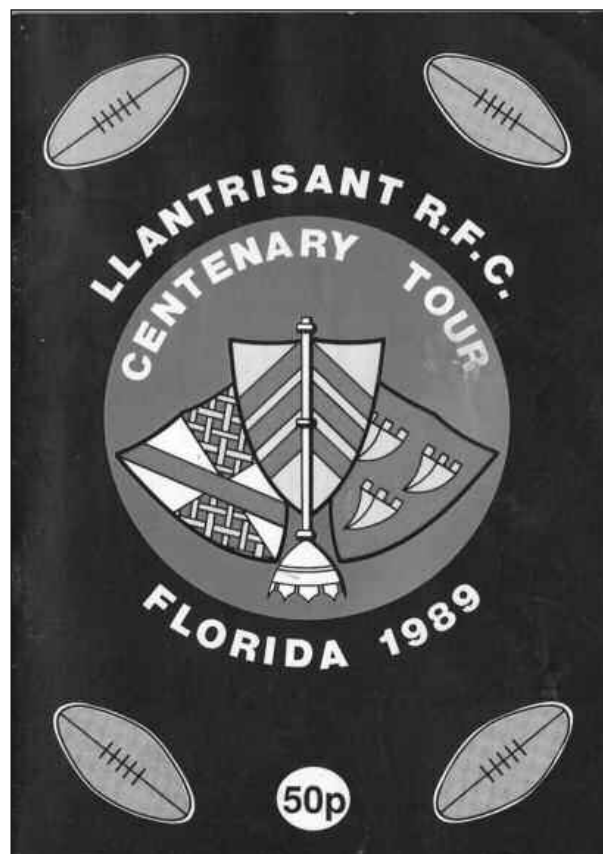
Tour of Florida, 1989

for the very first time. They also continued their spirit of adventure with visits to the South of France and a combined senior and youth tour and both teams won their four-way tournaments against the local opposition of Bordeaux Hospital staff. Those early "Grand Slam" style adventures will be remembered forever!

In May 1987 the Club undertook a prestigious tour of Canada. Organised by Mike Thomas, a party of 45 flew to Vancouver following the culmination of more than two years of planning. On the first day the First XV enjoyed the delights of watching their athletic Veterans XV including Anthony "Oxy" Hopkins and Jeff Thomas being given the run around by the Vancouver Welsh Veterans XV. A fixture against Capilano took place in the shadow of Grouse Mountain. Further games took place in Vancouver Island against Nanaimo RFC with the most incredible hospitality offered by the locals and on to Victoria for an encounter with the James Bay Athletic Association, one of the most formidable teams in western Canada. Although they had a few players on international duty in the World Cup, they were more than a match for a set of tour weary Welshman, who had indulged in local hospitality too much to remain a highly tuned rugby machine that left Llantrisant earlier! A final stop was made in Toronto with a convincing victory against the Toronto Lions Rugby Team, visits to the CN Tower and Niagara Falls. It was with a view of this great natural wonder and the hospitality of the Canadian people in their mind that the party left for their little Welsh town on a hill.

Two years later and the club celebrated its centenary year in magnificent style. Another overseas tour was organised for May 1989, this time to a totally alien climate for the Llantrisant touring party. They left home for the heat and humidity of Florida, flying from Gatwick to Miami and enjoying a relaxing start to the trip in Fort Lauderdale. The Welsh boys enjoyed their first encounter against Fort Lauderdale Rugby Club before travelling north to Orlando for their second match of the tour. On their arrival at Titusville they played the Space Coast RFC and moved on to St Petersburg for their final game of the tour against the Pelicans RFC. A return to Miami allowed them their last few days to enjoy the Florida sunshine and hospitality took place before the ten-hour flight home.

By now the Black Army crew had a taste for



travel, whether a young player or a more experienced veteran (after all Trevor "Chippo" Davies didn't miss a trip!) and when the opportunity came to visit South Africa in 1996 the overwhelming support was obvious. Once again further fundraising events took place to make the visit a financially viable one and sporting impressive touring outfits, the party left for Cape Town. Organised by Mike Thomas, the touring party were kitted out through the services of prop Ralph Evans whose employer, Germac, sponsored the team for their Sprinbok adventure. The group enjoyed accommodation in the Western Cape province of Outdtshoom – the ostrich capital of the world - before venturing to Port Elizabeth where they were able to visit various sanctuaries or play golf and bowls. One of the largest cities in South Africa, Port Elizabeth (or "The Bay") provided an ideal location for the party of hellraisers to enjoy the bars and clubs to escape the boiling heat! On a visit to Durban, the largest city in the province of KwaSulu-Natal they saw the Natal Shark Museum before a game against the Durban Rovers. It was also an opportunity to remember that far away in their hometown churchyard lay the body of one of the Welsh soldiers who died at Rorke's Drift and whose descendants had also played for the Black Army. A special moment in



Tour of Canada 1987

the tour came when Mike Thomas and Alan Jones met with Sprinbok's heroes Chester Williams and Morne du Plessie and presented them with mementoes and a specially made Grogg for Nelson Mandela.

It was a further four years before the team were able to tour overseas again and this time it was to make a welcomed return once more to Canada. Thirteen years after their debut visit they flew to Toronto on May 8th 2000, enjoying a few days at Niagara and the opportunity once more to visit the CN Tower. After enjoying plenty of the local brew they boarded the plane and flew across the country to Vancouver for their first game between the Veterans and the Vancouver Snow Caps. Llantrisant RFC then took on the local side of Capilano and returned to familiar pastures in Nanaimo for another game against the rugby team. At Victoria they played the Presidents XV and enjoyed another end-of-tour party to remember. During the tour it was a pleasure to meet up with former Newport RFC star, fly-half Gareth Rees who would one day become enshrined in Canada's Sport Hall of Fame. The four times World Cup Player was the son of Alan Rees who originated from Llantrisant. Alan played for Cross Keys, Maesteg and London Welsh before emigrating to Canada in the 1960s where his son was born. The final night on this Tour of British



South Africa, 1996 with Chester Williams and Morne du Plessis welcoming Mike Thomas and Alan Jones



Columbia was probably the most memorable of all overseas tours! Such hospitality had never been experienced to this level before. Alan took the time to contact the Club afterwards and said, "Your success on the field was a credit to the club and the manner in which you all departed yourselves after the win was exemplary. Your post game presence made you exceptional ambassadors for Welsh rugby. I am going to write an official tour to the WRU as a member of Rugby Canada, expressing such views, and congratulating you on this successful tour." The tour had cost an impressive £50,900 for the 48 players and club members to undertake the trip, but with hands in pockets and plenty of fundraising, the tour was as financially successful as anyone could have hoped for.

It was another nine years before the Club toured overseas again, although fundraising events and Sunday "tote" clubs helped make the next tour possible following so many "barren" years. The Youth Team did however manage a short tour of Cologne at the end of the 2006 / 2007 season, organised by Nigel Davies. They were under the impression that an Under 21st tournament was taking place, only to turn up and find it was a Veteran's Event instead! Needless to say the Llantrisant youth – literally with youth on their



Tour of South Africa 1996

Back row: R. John, K. Phillips, D. Thomas, A. Phillips, L. Pearce, G. Osbourne, A. Bowen

Middle row: S. Cook, S. Evans, G. Collins, C. Harrison, L. Groves, T. Jenkins, P. Lewis, A. Jones, I. Phillips, S. Nicholls, J. Alford, D. Clark, R. Parker, F. Perry, A. Alford, D. Browning, C. Groves, O. David, H. David, N. Woods, M. Smith, R. Evans, V. Evans

Front row: I. Mahoney, D. Howe, T. Davies, J. Thomas, P. Donati, M. Thomas, G. Fackrell, H. Thomas, K. Holder, A. Alford, C. Evans, D. Hutchings, F. Mercer, N. Coleman

side – won every game and didn't concede a single try! As one news report read, "Saturday 5 May 2007 at the Koelner Rugby Park saw the 2nd International XVs Crusader Cup. Group A was dominated by Llantrisant Colts (Wales), the Black Army's U19 team shown no fear or caution against the senior mens teams in the tournament. As they defended as heroes and attacked like tornadoes., scoring bonus points (4 tries) in their first two matches."

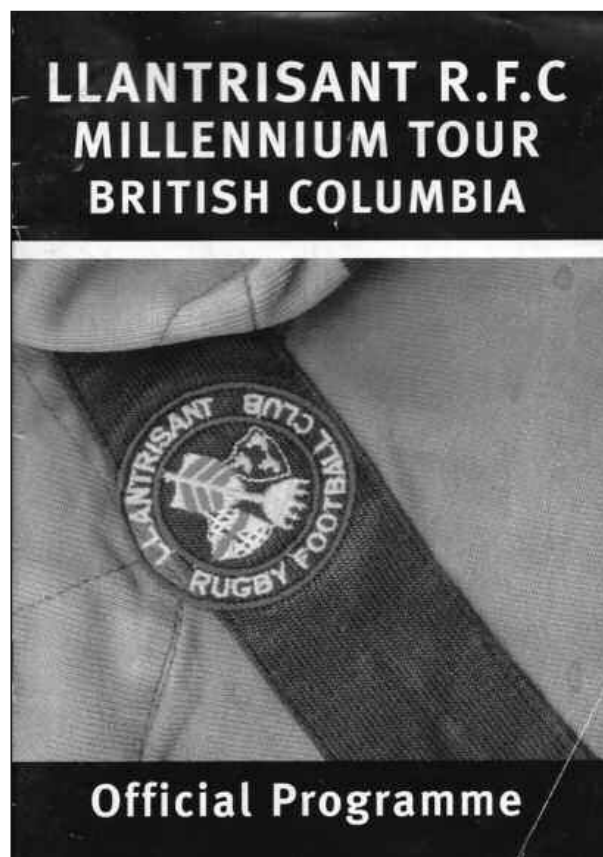
The next major overseas tour open to club members was organised by Dean Evans and Gareth Alexander who set about running a whole series of tours every year since. In 2009 the club made another welcomed return to South Africa, enjoying the many sights and sounds of Cape Town and the surrounding country. They visited Table Mountain, enjoying a wine-tasting day where most of it was swallowed rather than spat naturally! It was the highlight of the trip for Carl Groves who swore he would never touch a drop of vino again! One of the few rugby games was against False Bay RFC, where the Black Army came out as victors, even though Martin "Eggy" Griffiths had to be substituted because he was caught short on the pitch. The Llantrisant touring party had much more enjoyment exploring Robben Island (where Nelson Mandela spent 18 of his 27 years in prison). It was at Gansbaai, the fishing town with the largest known density of



Canada, 2000

white sharks, that some of the bravest members of the squad enjoyed with shark diving. For those not wanting to get so wet or endanger of being consumed, it was karting the grand prix challenge that sparked the imagination.

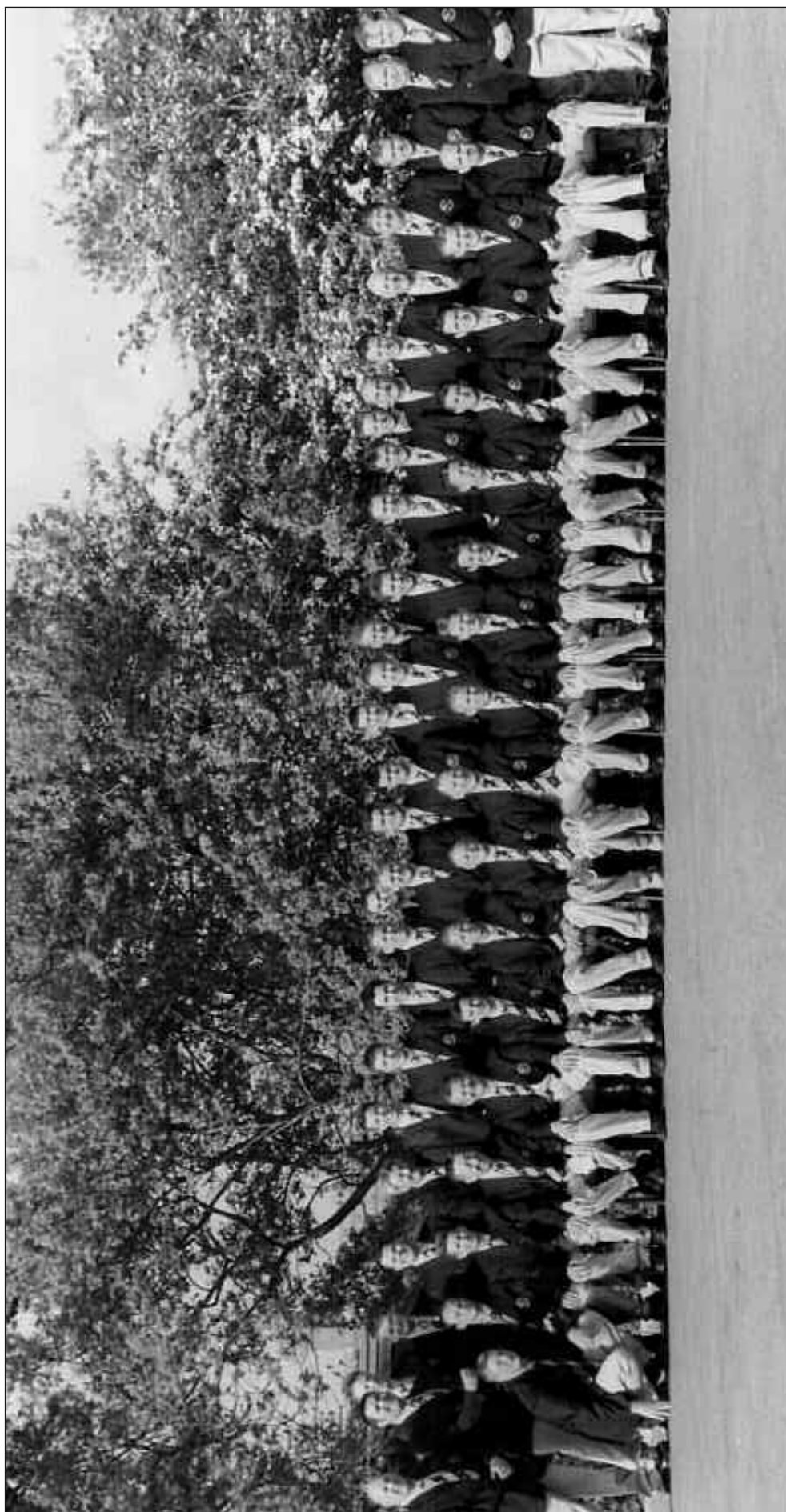
The following year and the experienced travellers decided on a short three-night visit to Romania.



They stayed in Bucharest, enjoying just the one game of rugby on their tour against Grivita RFC. One of the days included a visit to Caeusescu's Palace, the overpowering day of culture ranked as a highlight for Jason "Bap" Alford! Naturally they made up for it with plenty of fun and frolics at the local bars in the evening.

In 2011 the Black Army again invaded new territory with a week-long visit to Hong Kong and China. It was an ambitious tour to Hong Kong where they enjoyed the first game of the tour against the Pot Bellied Pigs. Whilst there they took the opportunity of travelling to the summit of The Peak, journeying on the famous tram which was actually founded the same year as the first Llantrisant RFC team! The venerable Peak Tram is the only way to truly experience the beauty of Hong Kong's natural wonders. Tens of millions of people from every corner of the globe have taken the ride, which affords a uniquely spectacular perspective of the city. Following an overnight train journey they reached Beijing, the capital of the People's Republic of China. Armed with cameras the sportsmen were soon stood aloft the Great Wall of China, a fortification somewhat larger than the Norman castle of their own hometown!

For the third consecutive year the team toured to



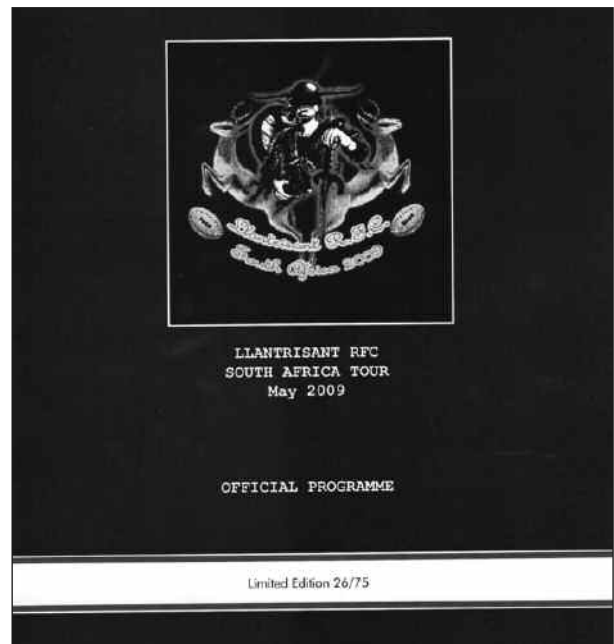
Tour of Canada 2000



Naimonia, British Columbia, 2000

new foreign lands, this time a short trip to the Ukraine in 2012. The group stayed in Kiev, playing against RC Eager on their home ground. One of the most memorable days included the journey to Chernobyl, the site of a catastrophic nuclear accident that occurred on 26 April 1986 at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant. An explosion and fire released large quantities of radioactive particles into the atmosphere, leaving so many buildings in the Exclusion Zone deserted and covered in thick dust. The desolate images of the Joyland Amusement Park resembling the aftermath of a warzone. It had always been an aspiration of Club Chairman Guy Oliver to take the Black Army to the tropical island of Bermuda. His brother, former Llantrisant player Alan Oliver was a police officer in the veritable paradise but tragically suffered a fatal road accident. In celebration of his sporting career, many of his friends in Bermuda held charity golf and rugby matches. Therefore it was obvious that his Llantrisant friends and relatives had to visit Bermuda to commemorate his life with a series of games. The Black Army explored

the island, playing rugby and golf at the Southampton Princess Golf Club. On the rugby pitch they took on the Bermuda Police RFC and Teachers RFC, with further funds raised for charity.



Cologne, 2007

The most recent tour was another three-night visit, this time to Bulgaria in June 2014. They set up camp in the capital city of Sofia where they took on Murphy's Misfits on the rugby field. Other than the one game it was a fun weekend of bars and paintballing to entertain the Welsh tourers. With plans in place to visit the Philippines in 2015, Llantrisant RFC are determined to spread the good name of the Black Army to foreign lands for many years to come!



China, 2011



Romania, 2010



Ukraine, 2012



Bermuda, 2013



Bermuda, 2013



Bermuda, 2013



Bermuda, 2013

THE BLACK ARMY BANQUETS

Throughout the 125 years of Llantrisant Rugby Football Club, one of the highlights of every season has been the annual dinner. Although not all of them are well documented, it goes without saying that presentation dinner and social events were a major ingredient in the on-going success of the club for so many years. Undoubtedly many of those events took place in the public houses that affiliated themselves with the club. In the early days the Wheatsheaf seemed the natural venue for such events and throughout the decades celebratory dinners took place in most, if not all of the hostelrys in this old town.

In 1949 the annual dinner was held in the upstairs room at the Wheatsheaf where a "record crowd" attended. It was a celebratory evening as the new Cefn Mabley pitch was unveiled earlier that year and one of the guests of honour was the Rural District Council Surveyor T. J. Hopkins who had devoted so much of this time to the project. Other guests that evening included local councillors Ivor Jacobs and Frank Edwards. Entertainment was also provided by the local townsfolk.



Annual Presentation Dinner at the Social Hall ("The Hut") off Greyhound Lane, c. 1972. Pictured are David Hughes and Roger Lamerton (Captain 1XV 1971-72) receiving their awards.

During the 1950s Watcyn Jacob secured a series of fixtures with the Glamorgan Police Force. These would often conclude with a celebratory dinner in the New Inn thanks to the support of landlord Mal Bevan. It was usually supported by the "crachach" of local society including councillor Tudor John and Sir Brandon Rhys-

Williams MP of Miskin Manor. There was also a regular RFC dance held in the Social Hall off Greyhound Lane which would occasionally conclude with a few fists flying between inebriated players!

Sadly with the demise of the First XV in the late 1950s came a sharp end to the tradition of an annual dinner. However, when the Youth



Anthony "Oxy" Hopkins and Mick Wood receiving a cup from Llantrisant RFC President Kingsley Jones, 1972

Team was resurrected in 1966 the growth of social events was rapid, largely due to the need to fundraise for the fledgling team. The Annual Presentation Dinner as we know it today became an important date in the calendar of not only the club but the entire town once the Clubhouse opened its doors at Cefn Mabley in 1973. From then on the dinner was the major event of the year for players and officials alike. A new clubhouse included a large hall which could be transformed with long rows of tables to accommodate the quantity of guests, reaching almost 150 without fail.



Even today the annual dinner follows similar patterns to that of the early days, with "Grace" recited by a "respectable" clubman (if one can be found!) followed by the traditional three course meals from minestrone soup and beef dinner to gateaux or trifle, all washed down by several barrels of warm beer. However, modern day-dinners, run so meticulously by Alun David have reached new heights, with a higher class of food served by local caterers on large circular tables. The role of Chairman has changed over the years. At one time the Club Presidents ran many of the evenings with J. Glan Jones, Kingsley Jones, Hubert Burrige and Mervyn Collins all taking on the task in hand. For many years the author himself has had the pleasure of this roll, although the late hours of departure from the clubhouse take their toll. Mischievous and fun-loving, the players and their forefathers enjoy an evening to remember when trophies are given to all manner of individuals. From Youth, Second XV



Anthony "Oxy" Hopkins receiving an award from Watcyn Jacob

and First XV players, coaches and staff alike, they are rewarded for their dedication and over all performance throughout the season. It has also been a tradition for celebrated players who have earned further accolades elsewhere have donated their rugby jerseys or international caps which now adorn the many trophy cabinets throughout the main hall, bar and lounge of the clubhouse. In an effort to raise further funds for the club, the Sponsors are always invited to attend, while everyone is expected to dig deep in their pock-

ets for the raffle or auction to conclude the proceedings.



Ronnie Woodland receiving a presentation cup c. 1974

With late night revelry of communal singing in the lounge, some of the evenings can almost turn into mornings when guests wearily leave the clubhouse, rebounding off the walls of St David's Place en route. Some residents of Newbridge Road will remember with a smile the night that clothes were taken off their washing line and pegged neatly on the line of a neighbour's house – without a stitch of damage to the garments! Such is the fun-loving atmosphere of rugby dinners.

One of the most memorable nights was the Centenary Anniversary Dinner of June 1989 when David Thomas, known locally as "Dai Telly" due to his electrical shop on the Bull Ring, proposed the royal toast. Keith Rowlands, the Cardiff, Wales and British Lions



The Evans brothers with the Courage Silver Ball, 1988

player and Secretary of the International Rugby Board proposed a toast to the team while Cledwyn Jones the former Clerk of Llantrisant Town Trust and Vice President of Llantrisant RFC responded on behalf of the club. The guests that evening included the Chief Superintendent of South Wales Police, Cennydd Thomas.

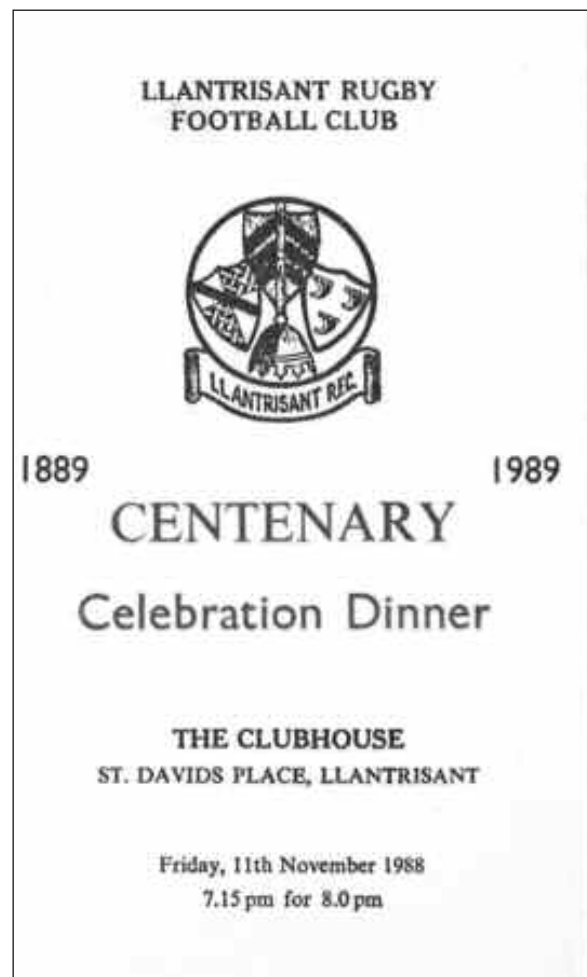
Undoubtedly the most difficult aspect of any presentation dinner is ensuring a first-class guest speaker who can entertain the audience. These have often included rugby legends in their own right, with Phil Bennett as one of the most memorable. It has also been a pleasure to welcome Llanelli and Welsh player and broadcaster Ray Gravell, British Lion John Devereaux, former Welsh flanker and dual-code international Richard Webster and Dunvant RFC President David Vaughan. On two occasions they welcomed an international from beyond the Welsh border with English international Gareth Chilcott and Scottish star Gordon Brown. In 2014 they were delighted to welcome none other than Gareth "Alfie" Thomas to Cefn Mabley for



Robert Wallace, Matthew Newland and Dean Barnes

his first ever guest speaking appearance, a true coup for the Black Army!

Naturally, those speakers haven't always been international players themselves. Few will ever forget the brilliant performance of BBC broadcaster Roy Noble, Irish radio presenter Rick O'Shea, writer Brian Voyle Morgan, comedian Colin Price and former super middleweight and light heavyweight boxer Nicky Piper. The players still admire the commitment of BBC Scrum V presenter Phil Steel either who tragically lost his wife the week of the dinner. Yet despite this terrible period in his life, he not only appeared at the event but gave an unforgettable performance.



Llantrisant RFC Annual Presentation Dinners are mirrored every year by the Annual Court Leet Dinner of the Llantrisant Freemen as both now take place in the clubhouse. Once again the bond of comradeship between both organisations remains strong. Both organisations that have brought so much to the town of Llantrisant, look forward to celebrating their milestones together this year.



Friday 6 JUNE 2014
GUEST SPEAKER : Mr Gareth Thomas
Drinks Reception 6.00pm
Dinner Served at 7.00pm
Pre-bought ticket only event
Tickets : £25 available from Alun David



MIDWIFE SHIRLEY'S TOP TEAM DELIVERY

Midwife Shirley (Wilkins) Penhallurick was born in 1939 on Ceridwen Terrace and enjoyed a lifelong career as a midwife for Llantrisant and its surrounding communities. In 1987 it was realised that during her lengthy career she had delivered more than three quarters of the 70-strong Llantrisant RFC squad of First, Second and Youth teams. She was on call one

Saturday when the Youth Team was catching a bus and she realised that except for one, she had either delivered the entire team or attended to their mothers. In celebration of this milestone, Shirley and several of the team members enjoyed a visit to Birmingham where an award was presented by singer Vince Hill.



A COMMUNITY IN UNITY

Llantrisant RFC is more than just rugby. While it nurtures the talents of young players throughout the old town, it also contributes greatly to the community at large. Not only is the clubhouse used by various organisations and residents use the bar, lounge and hall facilities on a regular basis, they also have great enjoyment from the activities taking place on the Cefn Mabley pitch too. And this isn't always a game of rugby either!

Since the pitch was officially launched more than sixty five years ago, Cefn Mabley has also been the location for a whole host of community events. These have ranged from parties to commemorate Royal Weddings and Jubilees to all manner of festivals, fetes and the annual bonfire on Guy

Fawkes Night which always welcomed huge crowds who gazed at the majesty of the fireworks and flames.

Similarly the clubhouse itself has acted as a real centre of enjoyment for the community at large, having accommodated dinners, parties, dances and shows in equal measure. Many residents will remember the children's concerts and pantomimes during the Festive Season when the main hall was turned into a Christmas grotto in its own right. Not a single child left without sitting on Santa's knee and leaving with an assortment pack of chocolate and "pop".

Aside from the Annual Presentation Dinners and the Court Leet Dinners of the Freeman, the hall has also been the scene of plenty of social

events. These have ranged from the Horticultural Shows organised by Llantrisant Community Council to the black-tie fundraising parties with the likes of Big Mac's Wholly Soul Band on stage. Community activities such as jumble sales, bingo, fancy dress parties, the infamous Bierkeller Night organised by Kevin Oliver or casino evenings have drawn hundreds of guests. From wedding receptions and birthday parties to funeral wakes and Christen-

ing lunches, Llantrisant RFC Clubhouse has been a centre of literally thousands of events over the years.

The Club became so popular with skittle teams that an alley was built especially for the sport. Such was the growth of the Llantrisant Pigeon Club that a building was erected in the



Socialising outside the clubhouse, 1976

car park in 1976 especially for them.

Few will ever forget the popularity of the club's summer trips either, with a convoy of coaches packed with children grasping their bags of sandwiches, crisps and drinks all the way to the funfair at Porthcawl, Barry Island or even the more adventurous Bristol Zoo!

When the club re-established itself in the late 1960s, it embraced the community more than ever before with an Annual Carnival Week. Launched in 1970, it would involve hundreds, if not thousands of local residents with a vast array of activities taking place all week long. This annual event, which continued throughout the 1970s, included the procession of decorated floats complete with residents in fancy dress from Penygawsi to the rugby field at



Llantrisant Ladies Rugby for a 1950's Carnival.

Cefn Mabley. In 1974 they held the Welsh Area Jazz Band Competition to widespread acclaim.

Remembering Llantrisant's reputation as being the home of some rather eccentric behaviour, it is hardly surprising that one of the games that took place that week was a pram race with adult participants dressed as either mother or child. They had to race from the field with two minute intervals around the old town and visit the Wheatsheaf, Church Street, School Street, New Inn, Workmen's Club, Butchers Arms, Bear Inn, Cross Keys and Wheatsheaf. On each visit "they must consume at least a half pint of

beer (both mother and child) and obtain a rugby cub stamped ticket from licensee or steward and return to the rugby field via St David's Place. Then they must complete one lap of the field to finish at the starting point." The wonderful small print reads, "Mother and child may chance places during race. Own pram must be obtained!"

Over the years the field has been the location of many a tug-o-war games with local teams, novelty races and events ranging from children's sack races, three-legged race, egg and spoon race and so on. At one point they would



Llantrisant Ladies enjoying the Cefn Mabley carnival



Llantrisant Carnival 1953 featuring Mrs. Hurley, Mrs. Bushby, Mr. Bushby and Mrs. Holmes.



play "rugball" seven-a-side for the Mervyn Collins Challenge Trophy. Rugby is rugby with a difference - no kicking, just run, run, run! In one year the teams included Beddau, Pontypridd Police, Fram Filters and Permutit.

One of the annual carnivals also included the Grandads vs Youth rugby pitch which stated "if granddads win they will be presented with oxygen masks". There was also a carnival dance with the selection of carnival queens and princesses. At one time a Cowboy Barbeque of bangers and beans was held with all guests dressed as a cowboy or Indian but there was to be "No wagons, horses or shooters allowed inside the ranch house!"

In May 1982 Taff Ely Borough Council organised the first of the major May Day Festivals in Llantrisant old town. The first year coincided with a Beating the Bounds ceremony and the celebrated unveiling of the Dr William Price statue on the Bull Ring. It also allowed the Cefn Mabley field to play its part in the proceedings. Many residents will remember the surprise of seeing both Roundheads and Cava-



liers drinking their own version of mead on the pitch before rushing to the Common for one of their "Sealed Knot" battle reenactments. Similarly the carnivals continued on the pitch throughout the 1990s until a general lack of support and the ongoing threat of Health and Safety rules caused a demise in the annual activities. However, the current club officials hope to reverse the downward trend themselves and plans are in place to resurrect the family fun days at Cefn Mabley in 2015. May they go from strength to strength!



CLUBHOUSE LAUNCHED JEFF'S SHOWBIZ CAREER



An international singing career started in Llantrisant RFC when teenager Jeffrey Hooper of Dan Caerlan took to the stage for his first public concert way back in 1973. It was the start of an incredibly successful musical life that has taken him around the world. A year later he won the ITV talent show New Faces competition outright. Jeff went on to appear on a variety of television shows, gaining a recording contract with EMI. A favourite on the Big Band circuit, he ventured to Las Vegas to perform with the Charlie Shaffer Trio at The Sands hotel before returning to the UK to become the lead singer of the Syd Lawrence Orchestra.

During that time he befriended Matt Monro and worked with Charles Aznavour, Morecambe and Wise, Mel Tormé and Stephan Grapelli. He also represented the UK in the International Festivals of Song at Denmark, Holland and Yugoslavia. Jeff came second in the Star Search USA in Hollywood and was voted one of the top three rising stars in the world by the Frank Sinatra Music Society.

For ten years he had his own BBC Radio Wales show, "Bandwagon", becoming a regular soloist with the BBC Big Band and working with Katherine Jenkins and Chris de Burgh. He had the pleasure of

performing for Diana, Princess of Wales who joined his fan club. Jeff sang with Dame Shirley Bassey and Sir Tom Jones at the official opening of the Welsh Assembly and recently performed with



Sir Cliff Richard at the wedding of Gloria Hunniford, while also making a guest appearance on "Eastenders". A multi-recorded artist, Jeff has worked with some of the all-time greats including Jack Jones, Hal David and Tony Bennett. He regularly appears on the world's greatest luxury liners, having recently performed on the Strictly Come Dancing UK Tour and at the O2 arena before the sell-out shows of Monty Python and Robbie Williams.



The Bierkeller Night, 2013

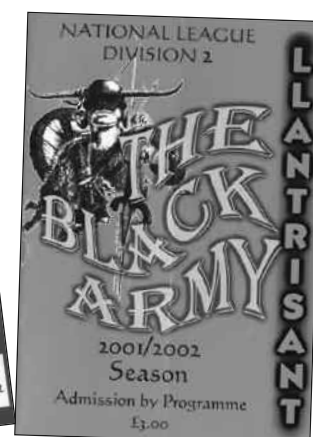
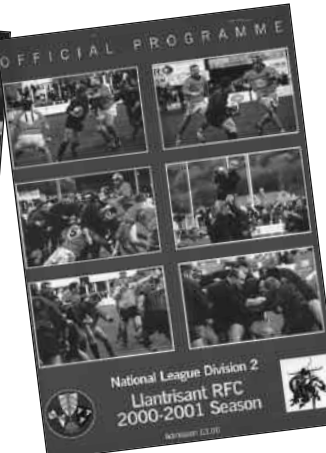
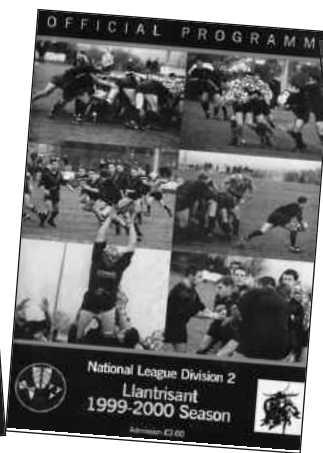
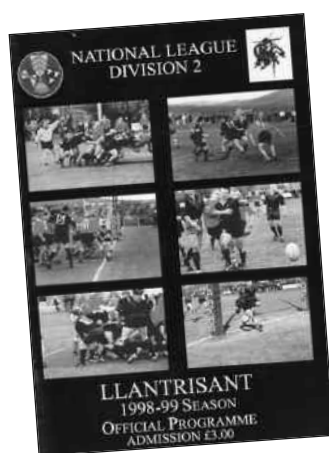
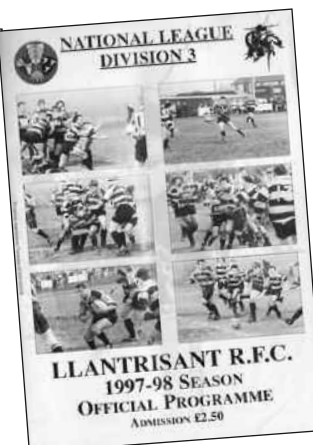
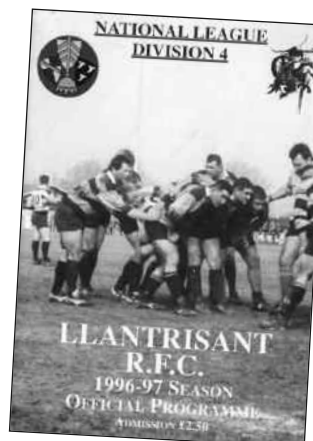
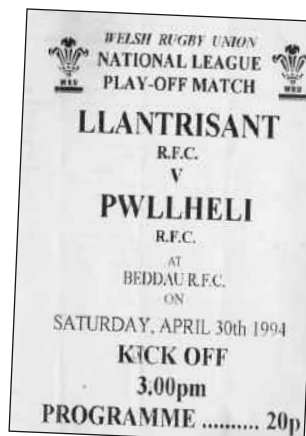
LLANTRISANT SKITTLE TEAMS

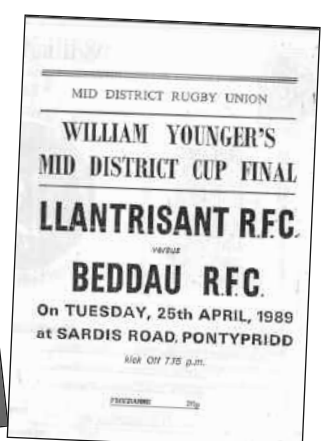
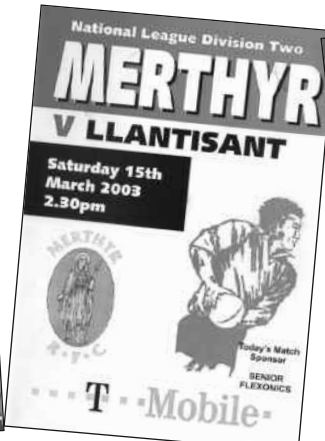
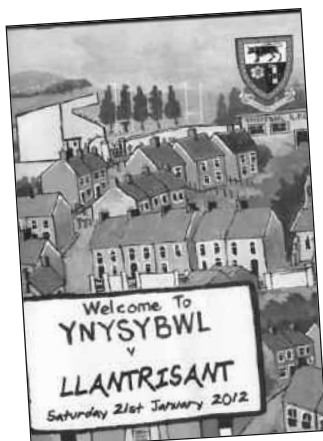
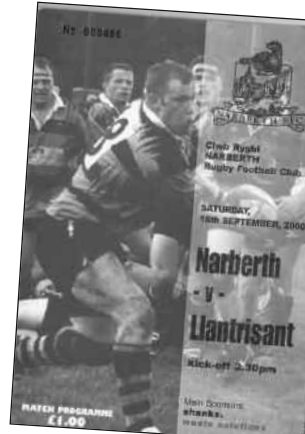
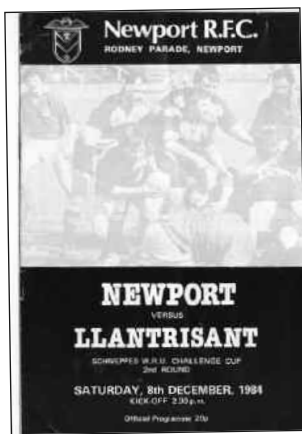
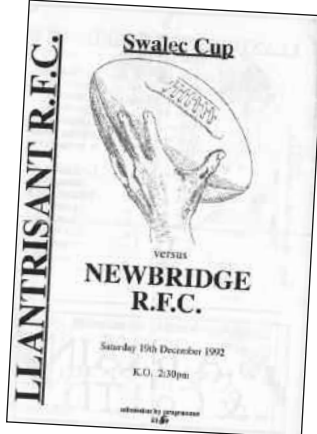
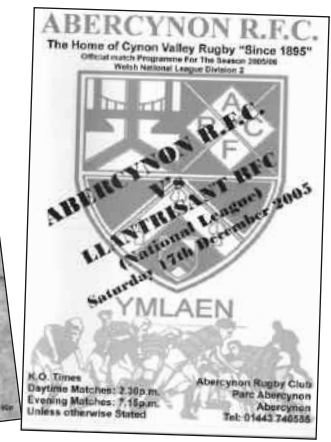
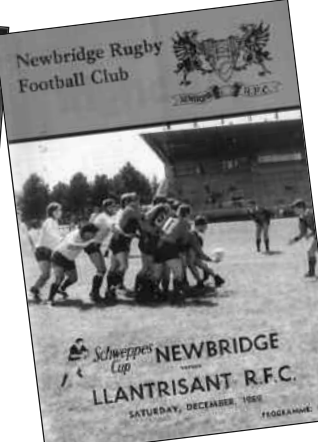
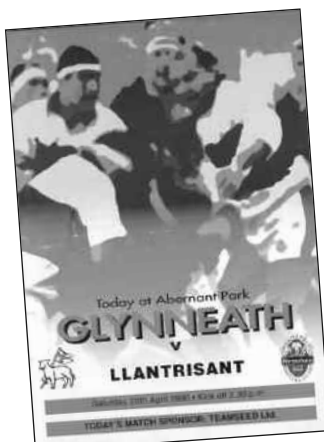
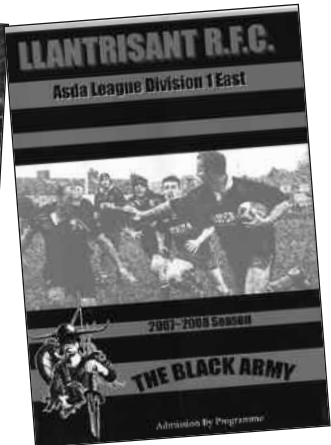
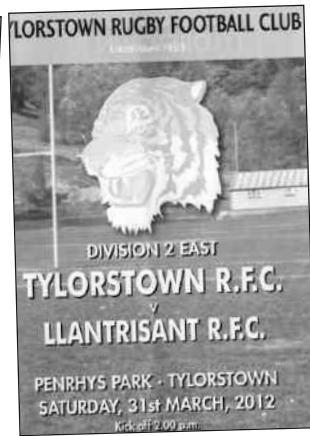
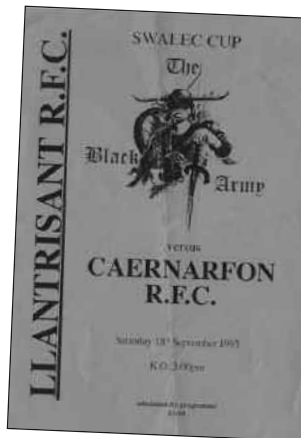


The Black Knights Skittles Team



The Black Army Skittles Team







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