

Background information about Ellis Humphrey Evans (Hedd Wyn) the Welsh poet who was killed during the First World War.

This is to provide context for those studying the craft of the film-maker (for the film 'Hedd Wyn' - a set work for study at the Welsh Second Language exam at AS level) - but would be of use for the study of the First World War from a Welsh perspective at a range of educational levels.

Slides are images ONLY - so require mediation by the teacher.

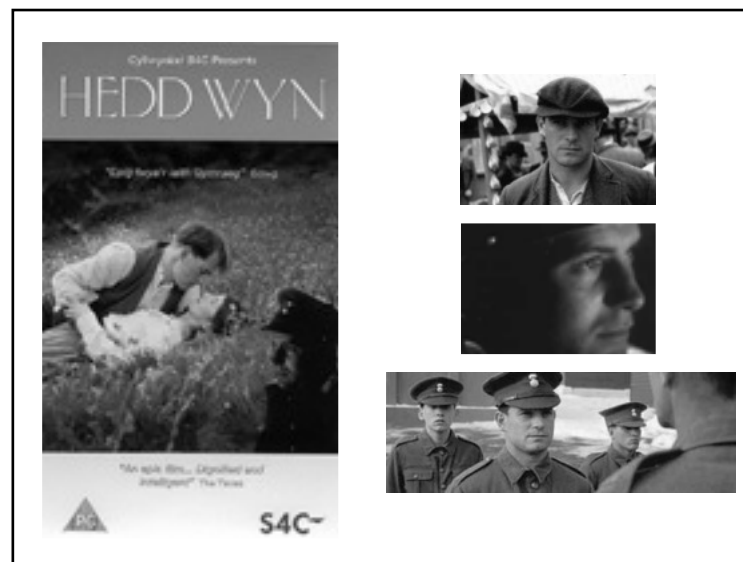
Hedd Wyn

Images for contextual information:
Ellis Humphrey Evans (Hedd Wyn)
the Welsh poet who was killed during
the First World War



Hedd Wyn

Photo reproduced with kind permission of the Royal Welch Fusiliers Regimental Museum



The film Hedd Wyn is a set work for study at the Welsh Second Language exam at AS level. It is available from the examining board on VHS and DVD see

<https://www.wjec.co.uk/index.php?nav=shop&pID=3&langID=1>

and

<https://www.wjec.co.uk/index.php?nav=shop&pID=703&langID=1>



In 2007 on the 90th Anniversary of Hedd Wyn's death BBC Wales transmitted from his graveside. The footage is available on 'YouTube' and is a particularly good introduction to the subject
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6VUPV_fJR8



'Yr Ysgwrn' a small hill-farm about a mile to the east of the village of Trawsfynydd where Ellis lived almost all his life until he was called up by the army.

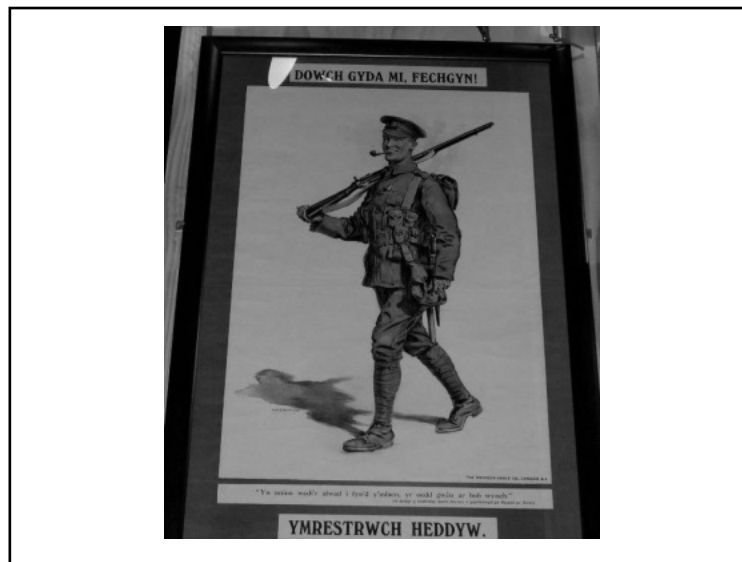
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<http://www.flickr.com/photos/ha5e/3350627177/>



Image scanned from the pages of 'Cerddi'r Bugail' 1918, sourced copyright-free from Wikimedia
[http://cy.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delwedd:Hedd_Wyn_01\(a-dg\).JPG](http://cy.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delwedd:Hedd_Wyn_01(a-dg).JPG)



Kitchener recruiting poster, just one of the freely available - downloadable - resources on the First World War Poetry Digital Archive website
Photo from The First World War Poetry Digital Archive, University of Oxford (www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/); © The Imperial War Museum <http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/collections/item/3764?REC=38>



Ymrestrwch Heddyw (a Welsh language recruiting poster)

Photo from The Great War Archive Flickr Group, reproduced with the kind permission of Alun Edwards

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/ha5e/2670655303/in/pool-800965@N21>



Newspaper photo (1914) of young men posing on the steps at Llandrindod Wells railway station after volunteering to join the army.

This photo is from The Great War Archive, University of Oxford (www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/gwa); © reproduced with kind permission of Mrs MJ Jones <http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/gwa/item/4760?REC=37>



Royal Welsh Fusiliers take a break during training

This photo is from The Great War Archive, University of Oxford (www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/gwa); © reproduced with kind permission of Mr Williams <http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/gwa/item/6956?REC=29>



Men of the 15th Royal Welsh Fusiliers (London Welsh) in the trenches in winter. This was the Battalion Ellis later joined in January 1917.

Photo from The First World War Poetry Digital Archive, University of Oxford (www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit); © The Imperial War Museum <http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/collections/item/3661?REC=14>



Reality of the Battle of the Somme July-November 1916

Photo from The First World War Poetry Digital Archive, University of Oxford (www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit); © The Imperial War Museum <http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/collections/item/3498?CISOBX=1&REC=1>



Dragon Memorial commemorating the loss of Welsh soldiers during the battle for Mametz Wood on the Somme in July 1916

Photo from The First World War Poetry Digital Archive, University of Oxford (www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit); © University of Oxford <http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/collections/item/5457?REC=40>



Meanwhile the cultural traditions continue back home, Hedd Wyn won second place in the Welsh National Eisteddfod (1916), bardic procession is from the British Film Institute's official channel on YouTube
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-VY7s-vXWE>



With need for men in the armed services many jobs were taken on by women such as farming (the Women's Land Army). Conscription in 1916 meant that despite farming being work of national importance Ellis like many others was forced to join the army.

Photo from The First World War Poetry Digital Archive, University of Oxford (www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit); © The Imperial War Museum <http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/collections/item/3739?REC=27>



<http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/gwa>

Ellis' story is similar to many other conscripted farmers, such as Evan Phillips from Maesmawr, Montgomeryshire (now Powys), Wales - which you can read about (along with much more) in the Great War Archive website.

This photo is from The Great War Archive, University of Oxford (www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/gwa); © reproduced with kind permission of Mrs MJ Jones <http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/gwa/document/9154?REC=18>

Hedd Wyn's letter from the Front

Publication date: 1/11/2007

A 'Letter from the Front' written by one Wales' best known 'fallen heroes' who died during the First World War, can be seen at Bangor University Main Arts Library this month.

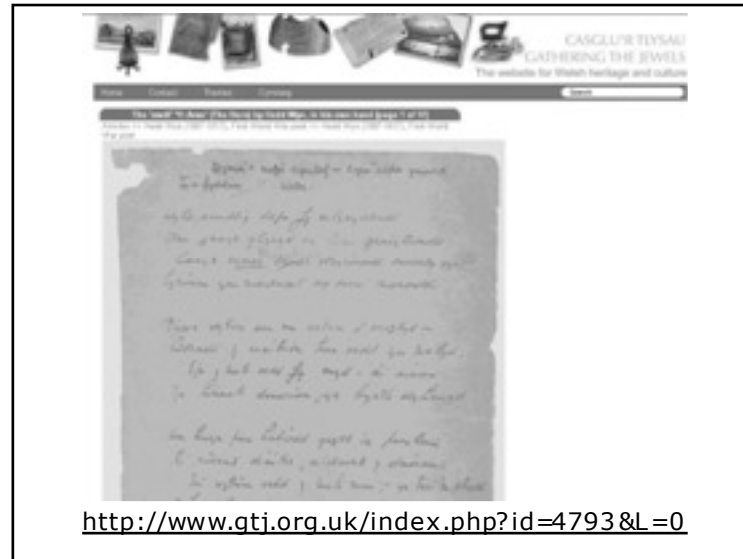
Ellis Humphrey Evans is better known by his bardic name, Hedd Wyn. In a poignant ceremony at the 1917 National Eisteddfod, which has been known ever since as the 'Black Chair Eisteddfod', Arddafn Dafydd announced that the winner of the Chair was Rhysa E. H. Evans - Hedd Wyn, who had been killed a month earlier in the war, after which the Chair was draped in black. That Eisteddfod became known as the 'Black Chair Eisteddfod' and Hedd Wyn's story has come to typify the heroic loss of life during the First World War.

An exhibition of material relating to Hedd Wyn currently on display at Bangor University's Library (Shankland Reading Room, Main Arts Library) until the end of November. In contrast, among other related items, a draft of the Eisteddfod Chair winning poem 'Yr Arddafn', in the poet's own hand and a fascinating letter by the bardic poet 'From somewhere in France', written in close hand covering every part of the paper. The letter provides a poet's view of the life 'behind the line' and yet heroically does not reveal the actual horrors of the trenches, but focuses on the few small moments of beauty that the poet finds to contemplate and share with the reader. He focuses on trees and flowers, saying the most beautiful thing he's seen is some flowers put to grow out of an empty shell. In a piece which almost predicts the optimism of the Remembrance Day poppy, he says France's flowers will be dotted in the future and a cool wind will blow over her acres because the colour of blood will be in one and the sound of sorrow in the other. ('Sioedau gwddi fydd blodeu Ffrainc yn y dyfodol a gwynnau trwm fydd yn clystyddu droed a harnau achos fydd llaw gwynnau yn-un a sŵn gŵdd yn y fôr').

Professor Gwynn Williams, head of the School of Welsh, who specialises in the unique connection with the poem. It's an excellent example of the treasures in

<http://www.bangor.ac.uk/news/full.php?Id=385>

A fascinating letter from Ellis written "From somewhere in France" is in the collections of the Archives and Welsh Library, Bangor University <http://www.bangor.ac.uk/news/full.php?Id=385>



You can view a manuscript draft of Hedd Wyn's poem 'Yr Arwr' (from the University of Bangor archives) on the Gathering the Jewels website. <http://www.gtj.org.uk/index.php?id=4793&L=0>

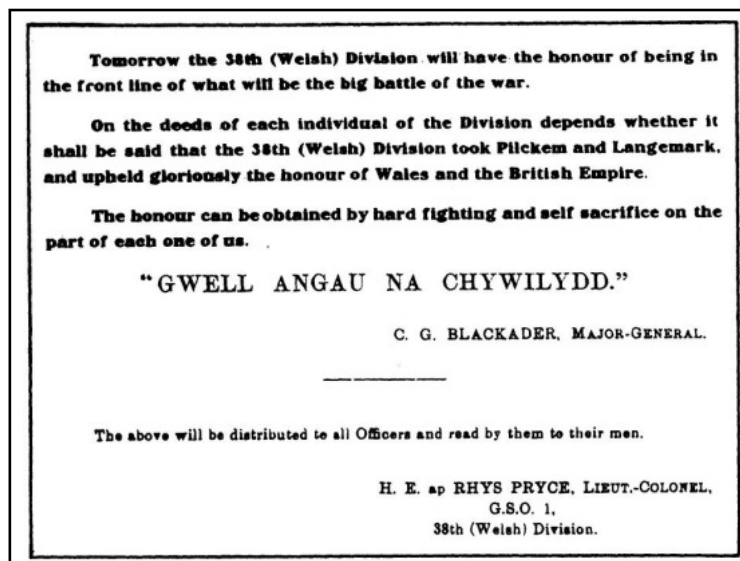


An online version of some of the poetry of Hedd Wyn is available on Wikipedia
http://cy.wikisource.org/wiki/Categori:Hedd_Wyn



On the 15th July 1917 (the same day he posted his entry for the National Eisteddfod) Ellis and his Battalion moved towards the Front Line in readiness for the major assault which would be known as the Third Battle of Ypres or simply as Passchendaele.

Photo from The First World War Poetry Digital Archive, University of Oxford (www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit); © The Imperial War Museum <http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/collections/item/3495?REC=10>



General Blackader's message to the troops before the battle.
Image reproduced with the kind permission of Andrew Tweed.



Photos from top of the 'hill' at Pilkem Ridge.

Top: the British troops including Ellis attacked up the 'hill' from the distance

Bottom: the attack continued from Pilkem Ridge towards Langemark (church spire visible in the bottom right photo)

Photos from The First World War Poetry Digital Archive, University of Oxford (www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/); ©

University of Oxford <http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/> Search for pilkem ridge



Stretcher bearers bringing back the wounded through the mud of the battlefield during the Third Battle of Ypres, when Ellis was mortally wounded

Photo from The First World War Poetry Digital Archive, University of Oxford (www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit); © The Imperial War Museum <http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/collections/item/1269?REC=2>



The interior of an advanced dressing station during the Third Battle of Ypres, similar to the one Ellis was carried to. Photo from The First World War Poetry Digital Archive, University of Oxford (www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit); © The Imperial War Museum <http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/collections/item/5297?REC=7>



The Black Chair, Y Gadair Ddu won posthumously by Hedd Wyn at the National Eisteddfod, 1917. It is now on display at Ellis' home Y Ysgwrn, Trawsfynydd. The Eisteddfod Chair that year had been carved by a Flemish carpenter Eugene Vanfleteren.

Ellis' nephew - the son of his youngest sister Mary - still owns the farm 'Yr Ysgwrn' where Ellis lived, and it is possible to make arrangements for a visit there. He has a lot of memorabilia, and tells visitors the story of his uncle. One teacher reports "I called there recently with a small group of people and found being in Mr Williams' company hearing all about the history and times of the family was an experience in itself." There is a visitors' book which lists many famous people. Ellis' Bardic Chairs (including the Birkenhead National Eisteddfod Black Chair of 1917) are on display in the parlour. To visit Hedd Wyn's home contact Gerald Williams, Yr Ysgwrn, Trawsfynydd, Gwynedd, LL41 4UW.

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<http://www.flickr.com/photos/ha5e/3351450326/> and <http://www.flickr.com/photos/ha5e/3389913564/>



Ellis' grave is at Artillery Wood Cemetery, Boezinge, near Ypres in Belgium. He is buried at section II, row F, grave 11. His headstone was to read simply E.H. Evans, but after the War a petition was submitted to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, and it was granted that his grave could also read 'Y Prifardd Hedd Wyn' (The Principle Bard, Hedd Wyn). The website of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission includes a certificate for Ellis' burial <http://www.cwgc.org/search/certificate.aspx?casualty=100906> as well as details about the history of the Cemetery, a list of the burials, and a plan of the plots

http://www.cwgc.org/search/cemetery_details.aspx?cemetery=9700&mode=1

EH Evans' grave photo from The Great War Archive Flickr Group, reproduced with the kind permission of Andrew Tweed <http://www.flickr.com/photos/ha5e/3389720635/>



Another poet is also buried at Artillery Wood, Francis Edward Ledwidge, who died the same day. As well as his grave there is this memorial near the entrance to the cemetery next to the Irish tricolour flag. You can find out some more about Ledwidge, an Irishman, <http://www.francisledwidge.com/>

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There is a modest but sincere memorial to Hedd Wyn's memory St. George's Memorial Church in Ypres.
Photo from The First World War Poetry Digital Archive, University of Oxford (www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit); ©
University of Oxford <http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/collections/item/4027?REC=16>



Visit this museum to find out more about the regiment Ellis served in, and their other famous soldiers who included the authors Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves, both officers, as well as David Jones and Frank Richards. Address: Royal Welch Fusiliers Regimental Museum, The Castle, Caernarfon, Gwynedd, North Wales, UK LL55 2AY
http://www.rwfmuseum.org.uk/nb_heddwyn.html



Bangor University's Memorial Arch - Elis Humphrey Evans is one of over 8,500 soldiers, sailors, and airmen from North Wales, who fell in the First World War see <http://www.bangorcivicsociety.org.uk/pages/arch/index.htm> The arch can be visited: North Wales Heroes Memorial, Deiniol Road, Bangor, Gwynedd.



Trawsfynydd

* Town centre - In 1923 a bronze statue of Hedd Wyn as a shepherd was unveiled in the village by his mother. The inscription is verse which Hedd Wyn wrote in memory of a friend who lost his life in the Trenches: Ei aberth ni â heibio - ei wyneb / Annwyl nid â'n ango / Er i'r Almaen ystaenio / Ei dwrn dur yn ei waed o (Roughly translates as 'Neither his sacrifice nor his dear countenance are forgotten, though the Hun has stained his fist of steel in his blood').

Photo by Oosoom http://cy.wikisource.org/wiki/Delwedd:Hedd_Wyn_statue.jpg For the satnav - coords are 52° 54' 9.36" N, 3° 55' 23.52" W

* Llys Ednowain (top right) - is a small museum with exhibits about Ellis and other famous inhabitants, the Chair on display was the prize for the competition to write a poem in honour of Hedd Wyn for the Trawsfynydd eisteddfod, 1921. The museum is also a hostel. The address is Llys Ednowain, Trawsfynydd, Gwynedd, LL414UB (telephone 01766 770324, email llysednowain@btconnect.com).

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<http://www.flickr.com/photos/ha5e/3350624821/> and
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/ha5e/3351490384/>
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/ha5e/3351448242/>



A roll of honour for the village of Trawsfynydd, from Llys Ednowain

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