

## **Kenneth Davies 1930-. British Army Llanelli, Carmarthenshire**

West Wales Veterans Archive, National Library of Wales

Date of interview: 19.11.19. Llanelli

### **Description**

Kenneth Davies was born near Blackwood in 1930 and at the age of 17yrs enlisted in the Army, serving in the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Welch Regiment, with whom he was a mechanic and driver. Part of his service with the Regiment was spent in Hong Kong where remarkably, he got to sing with Bob Hope and Angela Lansbury. After 6yrs of service, Kenneth went onto the Reserve until 1963 making it a total of 16yrs served in the Army. In civilian life, Kenneth was employed chiefly as a long-distance lorry driver until retirement and today lives in Llanelli.

### **Early Life**

Kenneth Davies was born on 26.1.1930 in Oakdale, near Blackwood, and he refers to himself as being a *'Western Valley Boy'*. Kenneth's father was a miner who had been caught in a mine flood in 1933 and was adamant his sons would not follow him down the mines, so he moved the family to Barry in South Glamorgan. At this point Kenneth was 14yrs old and three years later he enlisted in the Regular Army, and into the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of The Welch Regiment. It was just before Christmas 1947 and Kenneth found himself immediately posted home to Barry on leave.

### **Regular Army**

Basic training for ten weeks was then undertaken at the British Army's 'Dering Lines' camp in Brecon. Kenneth was then sent to Newbury, Berkshire, to learn his trade as a mechanic. 'Trade' training lasted eighteen weeks before he learnt that his posting with the Regiment was to be to the Far East. They were shipped out from Liverpool Docks to Hong Kong where Kenneth recalls that the barracks was provided with a Chinese servant. Kenneth spent 12months in Hong Kong during which time he received injuries to his foot before being posted back to England. A particularly notable recollection from his time in Hong Kong was when an American troop ship berthed in Hong Kong's Victoria Harbour carrying a concert party. Invitations went out to the British Army and Kenneth and his fellow Welch Regiment soldiers went on board to see the show been given by Bob Hope and Angela Lansbury.

*"Bob Hope said 'I know there's a lot of Welshmen here – can anybody sing'. My mates shouted 'Yes – he can' pointing to me and pushed me up onto the stage. I was as nervous as hell in front of a whole ship of American and British troops. I sang 'I'm looking over a four-leaf clover with Bob Hope and Angela Lansbury'".*

On return home Kenneth was posted to be based at the Drill Hall in Llanelli continuing to work as a driver on military transport vehicles. With the rank of Lance Corporal he left the Army on 23.3.1953 to spend the next 12years on the Reserve. In 1957, Kenneth was called

up for the Aden conflict and reported to the Maindy Barracks in Cardiff, only to be 'stood-down' just before departure. He finally left the Army for good in 1963.

### **Post-War**

Kenneth continued his 'trade' with transport for the remainder of his working life, spending 18yrs with one heating contractor, and throughout was mostly engaged on long-distance lorry driving. He married on three occasions and today lives in Llanelli.