THE clinking of medals and the rustling of the ribbons the medals hung from, sparked his interest in collecting military medals, Geoff Blake told fellow members in a talk to Kyrle Probus Club, entitled 'Bits About Medals.'

His father had seen service in the two world wars and Geoff said whenever he sees characters wearing medals in films or on television, such as Lord Grantham in Downton Abbey, or Cpl Jones in Dad's Army, he always looks to see if they have them on properly.

Geoff said it was up to the individual to decide what medals to collect They might want to collect regimental medals, or campaign medals or gallantry medals, or any combination. He said he did not like to collect medals where the name had been erased.

With the support of excellent photography, Geoff took his audience through the history and the stories behind some of the medals in his collection, focusing on some that had local interest.

He referred to the Battle of Waterloo on June 18, 1815, that was over by nightfall. Everyone who served in that battle was given a silver medal and so began the recording of service with a medal. A medal had been issued for Trafalgar in 1805, but it did not come out until the 1840s, he said.

Geoff showed a picture of the Balaclava Bugle recovered from a wounded bugler in the Crimean War when Lord Cardigan led the ' Noble 600' in the charge of the Light Brigade into the Valley of Death in October1854.

He mentioned that the Crimean Medal had a bar decorated with oak leaves and acorns. A bar indicates the recipient has won the medal for a second time. During the Crimean War, Queen Victoria wanted to reward bravery and so the Victoria Cross was instituted in January 1856, 'For Valour.'

In the Natal and Zulu Wars of the 1870s, the 24th Regiment of Foot, later to become the South Wales Borderers, won seven VCs in one battle at Rorke's Drift. One of them went to Robert Jones, who is buried in Peterchurch churchyard and the Regiment's colour, later recovered from the battle scene now hangs in Brecon Cathedral.

The Boer War (1899-1902), and World Wars 1 and II saw further medals awarded and in 1940 King George V1 instituted the George Cross, equal in status to the Victoria Cross and awarded for gallantry outside a battle situation.