

Brecon Grammar School Old Boys' Association

Newsletter March 2004

An important part of this annual Newsletter should be information about former pupils of our old school. As stated in the first Newsletter that objective "...can only be achieved if members of the Association's Committee are given the information." During the last year we have received no such news about Old Boys. So this is another appeal to let us know of any news, sad or happy, about any of your friends who attended the Grammar School. If you are not in touch with any of the Committee Members please send the information to:

Ken Jones, Byddwn Uchaf, Llanhamlach, Brecon, LD3 7SU,
e-mail: ken.jones3@ukonline.co.uk.

Future of the Association

Last year it was reported that your Committee had decided that steps should be taken to bring about a closer relationship with the informal Old Girls' Association. Progress has been made in this regard. At their annual luncheon Old Girls were asked if they wished to attend our annual dinner. The result was that seven of them, in addition to those who regularly attend with their partners, came to the dinner and twelve have expressed a wish to be informed about all the future functions we may arrange.

A further encouraging development is that several Old Girls, as well as 24 Old Boys, participated in the Remembrance Day Service in the High School and Anne Davies (née Richards: 1947-54) read one of the lessons. If you can come to Brecon on November 11th please attend this dignified service when we remember not only the Old Boys of our school but all those from this community who died in the Two World Wars and more recent conflicts.

A considerable effort has been made to involve more of the Penlan Old Boys in the Association. It is pleasing to be able to report that an increasing number of these Old Boys are now attending the annual dinner and that both last year's President, Alan Phillips (1963-69) and our current President, Bryan Davies (1960-66) spent all their Grammar School years at Penlan. Our new Vice-President, Brynach Parri (1955-62) had experience of Cradoc Road, a building once described by Aneurin Rees, Headmaster from 1954-75, as "a structural monstrosity", during its final years of decrepitude. The future of the Association depends upon our convincing more of the Penlan boys to become involved in its activities and to join the Committee, the majority of whom are entitled not only to free Bus Passes but also to free Television Licences!

Cliff Carr Memorial Prize

This annual prize of £100 in memory of Cliff Carr is awarded to the pupil in the High School, nominated by the Head Teacher, who is proceeding to a course of higher education, preferably in physical education. Last July the prize was presented to Christopher Trott from Brecon who is now a student at Trinity College, Carmarthen where he is studying for a Teaching Degree specialising in Physical Education. Christopher played for the Welsh SchoolBoys' Golf Team and his ability is such that he was given the opportunity to spend a year in the USA developing his talent. However he opted to take up his place at Trinity College where he continues to improve his golfing

technique and now plays off a handicap of 2! He could well become the second Old Boy to achieve Senior International Honours as a golfer.

The First Old Boys' Association and the First School Magazine

1926 will always be remembered as the year of the General Strike and during that turbulent year Copy No.1 of the School Magazine, the price of which was the approximate equivalent of £2 today, was produced. The Editorial of the magazine states that, "The recent formation of an Old Boys' Association (December 1925) stressed still further the need for something that would serve as a medium for interchange of opinions between past and present pupils." The membership subscription for Old Boys in 2002 value was £4 and £2 for boys leaving school.

The magazine contains articles by both pupils and Old Boys. In addition to the not unexpected collection of poems and sports results it includes articles on "The construction of a Simple Crystal Set", "How to Become a Dental Surgeon" and an intriguing piece by Ifor B Powell, "So this is America." Ifor Powell was a native of Llangors and after he completed his Honours Degree in History at the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire, as Cardiff University was then called, was granted a scholarship to Ann Arbor, University of Michigan. Later on many Old Boys attended his lectures on "American History" at Cardiff. An intriguing piece of information to emerge from this magazine is that the school motto in 1926 was, "Bydd Bur, Bydd Eirwir, Bydd Iawn" (Be Pure, Be Truthful, Be Just) which for some unknown reason, was later discarded for, "Bid Ben, Bid Bont" (To be a Leader, be a Bridge) - maybe the aspirations declaimed in the original motto were judged to be unobtainable by boys from Breconshire!

In spite of successful launches both the magazine and the Old Boys' Association sank without trace the following year. But like the Phoenix they arose again from the ashes in 1950 and this time the membership subscription for the Old Boys was the equivalent of £3.50 today. The membership subscription was abolished in 1971 and the financial health of the Association now depends on generous donations both by Old Boys who attend, and by those unable to come to the dinner.

2003 Annual Dinner

This was judged by those present to be an exceedingly successful occasion by the 130 who were present. The revised format for the evening in which less time is devoted to speeches, and therefore more time allowed for informal discussion, has proved to be very popular. It should be noted that the maximum capacity of the Bishop's Meadow function room is 140 so you are advised to make your 2004 booking as soon as you can.

Biographical Notes

Roy Davies (1914-2003)

Roy was born near Crickhowell and as a child suffered from spinal TB which confined him to a wheelchair. Little is known about his time in our school (1927-34) but he must have achieved good academic grades as in 1939 he qualified as a solicitor. After World War II he established the legal firm of R.George Davies in Abergavenny where he continued to work until his semi-retirement in 2000. He was past President of the Monmouthshire Incorporated Law Society, an elder of Crickhowell Presbyterian church, a founder member of the town's Liberal party and a passionate local historian. His history of Tretower Court was published just before his death. In 1950 he was one of the founder members of the resuscitated Old Boys' Association.

Bryan Davies – President

Bryan was born in Brecon and attended the Grammar School from 1960-66 where he was a member of Gam House. He joined the Mid-Wales Constabulary as a cadet and became a PC in 1968. He transferred to the Gwent Police Force in 1974 and was promoted to Chief Superintendent in 1988. After completing a two-year secondment as Deputy Commissioner for the Royal Turks and Caicos Islands Police in the Caribbean he returned to the Gwent Police and in January 2001 was appointed Deputy Chief Constable. He holds a B.Sc. in Social Science, a Diploma in Applied Social Sciences and is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Management. He has a wide variety of interests including Chairperson of the Gwent Scouts Association

Les Bevan - Vice President

Les was born in Llanfaes, Brecon and attended the Grammar School from 1945-52 where he was a member of Theo and the school soccer and cricket teams. He graduated from Cardiff with a B.Sc. in Mechanical Engineering and later attended Queen Mary College and received a Ph.D. (London) in Materials. After working in the aircraft industry, he lectured at West Ham College of Technology and led his subject group in what is now the University of East London. His publications include a contribution to the Encyclopaedia of Polymer Science and Engineering. He has held visiting research posts at the Fraunhofer IWM (supported by a fund for distinguished scientists) and the Universities of Kassel and Erlangen.

Mervyn Jenkins - Hon. Life President

Born in Brecon in 1916 Mervyn attended the County School (as it was then known) from 1927-33 where he was a member of Vaughan. On leaving school he joined the family firm of building contractors. He served with the Royal Engineers in France, Egypt and Italy from 1940-46 and then returned to Brecon to run the family business. Elected to the Brecon Borough Council in 1962 he became Mayor in 1968. His service to the community includes Treasurer of St. Mary's Church for 45 years, Chairman of the Trustees of Brecon AlmsHouses and President of Brecon Abbeyfield Society. He was one of the Founder Members of the Old Boys' Association and has been a committee member almost since its inception. He has served as Chairman and President. In 1984 he was awarded the C.B.E. for his services to the community.

Bill Leonard - Hon. Life President

Bill entered Brecon County School in 1928 where he became Head Boy and House Captain of Gam. After leaving school in 1936 he entered the Electrical Standardising Testing and Training Institution, London where he graduated as a C. Eng. MIEE. He enlisted in the army in 1939 and was commissioned in 1942. He retired from REME in 1952 and then studied at University College Cardiff for post-graduate Teacher Training and eventually took up the post of teacher in charge of the Special Needs Class in Mount Street school. As boy and man he has been associated with the Scout movement. He became scoutmaster of the 1st Brecon Troop in 1949, was District Commissioner from 1972-77 and since then he has been President of the Brecon District. He has served as President of the Association and for 15 years was its Secretary.

ALL OLD BOYS WHO ARE INTERESTED IN THE HISTORY OF OUR SCHOOL SHOULD PURCHASE A COPY OF GLYN POWELL'S EXCELLENT BOOK "BRECON SECONDARY SCHOOLS 1896-1996 – A HUNDRED YEARS OF SECONDARY EDUCATION". COPIES, AT THE REDUCED PRICE OF £2 WILL BE ON SALE AT THE DINNER AS WILL THE ASSOCIATION TIE FOR £9-50p.