

*Cymdeithas Cyn-Ddisgyblion Ysgol Ramadeg y Bechgyn
Aberhonddu
Cylchlythyr Mawrth 2005*

*Brecon Grammar School Old Boys' Association
Newsletter March 2005*

The youngest Old Boys of the Brecon Grammar School are those who commenced their secondary school education on the Penlan site and unfortunately few of these attend the dinner or express any interest in the Association. The average age of the Committee is around 70 and unless younger Old Boys are prepared to assume responsibility for the three key roles of Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer the Association will wither away. If those who receive this Newsletter know any of the Penlan Old Boys please encourage them to attend the dinner and some of them may then become more involved in the running of the Association.

Consideration has been given to attempting to establish a new Association of all former pupils of all the various state secondary schools, which existed and exist today in Brecon. It is possible that eventually an Old Pupils' Association of the former pupils of the High School will be formed and then some sort of loose relationship can be created between the various groups of former pupils of Brecon schools until the time arrives when there will be only former pupils of the High School! On a more cheerful note, in the meantime we are delighted that the number of Brecon Grammar School Old Girls attending not only the annual dinner but also the Remembrance Day Service in the High School is gradually increasing - long may this development continue.

The 55th Annual Reunion Dinner 17th April 2004

This was another happy event attended by 108 with the usual mix of Old Boys, their partners and former pupils of the Girls' Grammar School. Everything proceeded smoothly because of the stalwart work of Mrs. Rozena Isaac, our secretary's wife.

In his short address, Bryan Davies (1960-66), the Deputy Chief Constable of Gwent commented upon the various social, economic and educational changes, which had occurred since he had attended the Grammar school almost 40 years ago. Whilst many of the changes, especially the widening educational and job opportunities, had been for the better, there had been unfortunately an increase in anti-social behavior, an increase in selfishness and an escalation of the drug culture.

Before, during and after the meal there was plenty of time for talking to old friends and this, naturally, is the main reason why Old Boys attend the dinner.

Cliff Carr Memorial Prize and the Annual Awards Evening at the Brecon High School

This was the first Annual Awards Evening conducted by Mr. Steve Perks, the new Head Teacher. As usual, it was a combination of presenting awards for a very wide range of activities, varying from contributions made to the wider community in the Brecon area to academic and sporting achievement, and musical items. During the course of the evening the Cliff Carr Memorial Prize of £100 was made for the first time to one of the female pupils, Miss Sian Young, a talented swimmer who was the East Wales breaststroke

champion. She is now a Physiotherapy student at the University of Coventry. With such a distinguished athletics coach as Head (for those who do not know, Steve Perks was the coach of the British 100 metre, gold medal, relay team at the Athens Olympics) we all anticipate even more competition for this award.

High School Remembrance Day Service

Around 25 Old Boys and several Old Girls attended the High School's Remembrance Day Service. Once again it was conducted with exemplary dignity and solemnity. However, some of the pupils present were likely to have been from local families who have suffered fatalities during military conflicts since 1914 but since these young men had not attended the Grammar School their names are not included in the Roll of Honour read during the service. Consideration is to be given by Mr. Perks and the Committee of the O.B.A. as to how this omission can be rectified and whether other changes should be made to the service.

Nicknames

From time immemorial schoolboys and girls have provided nicknames for staff who had the good fortune or misfortune to teach them. Below, thanks largely to information from Bill Leonard, are some of the sobriquets given by boys to the staff of the Grammar school.

The Nark

Jacob Morgan. Headmaster from 1929-1954. A fine scholar who taught Pure and Applied Mathematics to the upper forms and even introduced Trigonometry to mystified 4th formers. The origin of the nickname is doubtful since had there been any "narking", it would have been to him, and not from him.

Caesar (Pronounced as "Kaiser").

Dr. Griff Price. One of the most distinguished Old Boys. The first person in Wales to gain the degree of Doctor of Law by examination. He served on the staff for 39 years. Latin master throughout the school and economics and law to the VI form when required.

Colonel

John Williams. Taught French throughout the school for 43 years. He also introduced the wonders of Paris to many boys. As a young man, he had the military bearing, dignity, authority and gentlemanly charm of a much older man. A well deserved nickname.

Tiger

Tommy James. Taught maths and science in the upper forms. Was a brilliant pianist who played for the morning hymns, during the singing of some verses he would improvise, playing a melody which was not the hymn, but fitted in!

Ceff

Elwyn Thomas. Taught English and Welsh. Origin of the nickname unknown but it might have been because of his expression - "ceffyl" Welsh for horse! Later became Education Officer for BBC Wales in Bangor.

Sparrow

Dr. Ken Thomas. Author and historian who was successively, Head of History in the Boys' Grammar School, Headmaster of Brecon Secondary Modern Technical School, Deputy Headmaster and finally Headmaster of Brecon High School.

Nysho

Aneurin Williams. An Old Boy and distinguished scholar. He taught English throughout the school. Was a Captain in the Royal Artillery during World War II. Great supporter of the Old Boys' Association and was our first treasurer.

Three short pen-portraits of Doug Inglis (1929-54)

"Perhaps the most colourful personality to have taught at the school. A clinically correct and impassioned teacher he endeavoured to transmit the academic discipline of History to his often unresponsive charges. Despite his eccentricities he was generally admired and highly respected by his senior pupils who found his teaching inspirational and his lessons enlivened by his ability to evolve the spirit of History. As a very firm disciplinarian he never resorted to corporal punishment but tended to inflict hurt through ridicule and sarcasm. He also had a habit of denigrating Welsh History, with which he never seems to have come to terms." (Glyn Powell, 1943-50)

"He would take a starched, white linen handkerchief out of his pocket, immaculately folded. As he dictated, he would hold the handkerchief up, flick his wrist with a foppish delicacy, and allow it to unfold. This act of disassociation marked him out as belonging to a world of daily baths and abundant fresh linen which the majority of us certainly did not inhabit. It was a dismissive signal, indicating that he realised he had before him a very modest bunch of working class/lower middle class chaps. Despite it all he went deep into our lives, even as he called us 'guttersnipes' and mocked the Welshness of our English syntax and phraseology." (Peter Holt, 1947-53)

"Doug was a very complex character and to me he seemed a very shy, lonely vulnerable man who found it difficult to form a deep relationship with anyone. He never spoke about his home, his family nor any friends. He was a scholar with a phenomenal memory which was a gift for a history man but he could also remember names of characters and places in novels which he had read decades before. I know that several past pupils remember him fondly for his kindness. He gave boys books from his vast collection if they needed them to further their education." (Glenys Evans who taught at the school 1941-5)

Deaths

Des Isaac (1950-1953)

After a long period of ill health Des died on 18th December 2004 and many of the Old Boys attended his memorial service in Llandrindod Wells on 22nd January 2005. The Association will sorely miss him. Des performed his duties as Secretary not only with great efficiency but also with irrepressible enthusiasm.

Duncan Jones 'Kite' (1947-53)

An ex-Captain in the Royal Signals he joined the school after World War II to teach Physics, Mathematics and Elementary Science and later he taught in Reading, Llandoverly College and Nottingham. He died in October 2004.

Wyn Jones (1934-1939)

When he left school Wyn worked for the National Provincial Bank in Merthyr Tydfil. After serving in the Royal Navy during World War II he became manager of the N.P. Bank in Lampeter. Wyn died in September 2004.

Jimmy Lawton (1955-60)

After school Jimmy worked for the National Westminster Bank in Talgarth and later in London. He left the Bank to become the chief Administrator of the Social Services Department of the Salvation Army. Jimmy died in August 2003.

Jack Messer (1936-40)

Jack served as an aircrew wireless operator in Bomber Command during World War II. When he was demobilised he joined the police force in which he completed 30 years service. He retired as a sergeant in Builth Wells. Jack died in April 2004.

Richard Price (1929-36?)

On leaving Trinity College, Carmarthen Dick taught in Talgarth. He served in the army as a sergeant from 1939-46 and then returned to his pre-war position. From 1950 until his retirement he taught at Gwernyfed Secondary Modern. Dick died in September 2004.

Michael Styles (1947-1951)

Michael was a notable sports man and possessed of considerable academic ability. He passed the highly competitive examination to enter Dartmouth Naval College in 1951 and rose to the rank of Captain (RN). Mike died in the autumn of 2004.

Biography

Brynach Parri : Is- Lywydd

Mynychodd Brynach Parri - brodor o Aberhonddu - yr Ysgol Ramadeg rhwng 1955 a 1962. Graddiodd yn yr Almaeneg (o Gaerdydd) a bu'n athro ieithoedd yn Jersey, Caerfyrddin a Cheredigion, a dysgodd Saesneg yn yr Almaen rhwng 1979 a 1982. Daeth yn ôl I fod yn Bennaeth Ieithoedd yn Ysgol Gynfun Llanhari, ac yna newidiodd gwrs I sefydlu cwmni cyfiethu 'Drudwy' ym 1985, gan symud I Aberhonddu ym 1995. Mae Brynach hefyd yn gyfiethydd llys am y Gymraeg, yr Almaeneg a'r Ffrangeg ar Gylchdaith Cymru a Chaer a llysoedd ynadon yng Nghymru ac yn Lloegr. Bu'n ymgeisydd Plaid Cymru ym Mrycheiniog a Maesyfed mewn etholiadau San Steffan a'r Cynulliad Cenedlaethol, ac ar hyn o bryd mae'n Gadeirydd Pwyllgor Rhanbarth y Gorllewin a'r Canolbarth ei Blaid.

Brynach Parri : Vice President

Brynach Parri was born in Brecon and attended the Grammar School in Cradoc Road and Penlan between 1955 and 1962. He graduated in German from Cardiff, and taught in Jersey, Carmarthenshire and Cardiganshire, and then English in Germany from 1979 to 1982. He was Head of Languages at Llanhari comprehensive, then left teaching to set up his translation company 'Starling' in 1985, relocating to Brecon in 1995. Brynach is also Court Translator for Welsh, German and French for the Wales and Chester Circuit and Magistrates' and County Courts in both England and Wales. He has stood as Plaid Cymru Candidate for Brecon and Radnorshire in both Westminster and the National Assembly

elections, and is currently Chairman of his party's Wales Mid and West Regional Committee.

The Newsletter

This is intended to be a short document which gives a brief account of the few activities which the Association organises or in which it participates, some recollections of the Grammar School **plus** very short notes about Old Boys. I would be surprised if there were any births to be reported but if any Old Boy gets married and he wants to inform old friends, with whom he has lost touch, I would be very happy to include that information. Inevitably, most news will be about the death of Old Boys and if you do have such information please let me know. It would be particularly helpful if you could include such basic facts as the dates when he was in school, what he did when he left school and when he died. It is not easy to ask recently bereaved widows for such information.

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