

*Cymdeithas Cyn-Ddisgyblion Ysgol Ramadeg y Bechgyn
Aberhonddu
Cylchlythyr Mawrth 2006*

*Brecon Grammar School Old Boys' Association Newsletter March
2006*

This is the fourth Newsletter and in each one an appeal has been made, to those who receive it, to encourage the younger Old Boys to take an interest in the Association. Our Chairman has made a similar appeal at our annual dinners. There have been some positive developments, for example, this year's President, Brynach Parri was a pupil at both Cradoc Road and Penlan, and the number of Penlan Old Boys at the annual dinner has increased during the past five years. But the basic problem remains. The functioning of the Association largely depends on a small number of Old Boys who attended the school either before or during World War II. This year John Short, 1938-44, who has been our Treasurer for 25 years, is retiring from this important position and it must be anticipated that most of the other officers and members of the Committee will retire during the next few years. So if the Association is to continue, younger Old Boys must be prepared to take on the responsibility for running the Association and to attend, at least, the annual reunion dinner.

During the last year there has been one very interesting development which should give us cause to think about the future of the Old Boys' Association. Brynach Parri and some of his former classmates decided to make a special effort to contact all the boys who joined the school in 1955. It required a lot of research but the outcome was far better than anybody could have anticipated. Rather than try to describe what happened I am reproducing the account he has written about the occasion. Brynach and his colleagues will be happy to share their experience of how they organised this happy reunion.

Fifty Years On

Fifty years after they first walked up the hill to the old Boys' Grammar in Cradoc Road, fifty former classmates gathered in Brecon last September for a reunion they will all remember for years to come.

Five flew in from overseas to join the celebrations: Lance Billington, Canada, John Burgess, USA, Jeffrey Davies, New Zealand, Royston Lewis, Australia and Tom Thirgood, Ireland. Others came from all parts of Wales, and from London, the Midlands and Southern England to catch up on half a century's worth of news.

"It took a huge effort to find everyone: many of us hadn't seen any of the others for more than forty years, but thanks to local connections and a combination of networking and dogged research, we managed to trace more than sixty of our classmates from the fifties," said Phillip Malham, of Brecon, who was described as the 'chief sleuth' by his fellow members of the unofficial 'committee'.

"Sadly, but inevitably, we have lost some companions along the way, two of them - Robin Day and Richard Bastable - only months before the reunion, after they had been in touch and were looking forward to the event," said Brynach Parri, one of the instigators of the reunion. "We held a minute's silence in honour of all absent friends before moving on to happier memories, and it was quite astonishing to see who we still recognised - as you may imagine, many of us have changed a great deal in fifty years, so we were very pleased at the identification badges Phil had produced from old school photographs and magazines."

Said Peter Powell, originally from Battle and now Cardiff: "We failed to find three or four classmates, who seem to have disappeared without trace, but are very pleased that we managed

as many as we did. Our success is largely due to Phillip's untiring efforts - he deserves a job with the Pilkington Detective Agency!"

Gwyn Griffiths, originally from Three Cocks, and now living in Penarth, said: "It was a delightful evening, just the right combination of formality and catching up on years of news".

Said John Price, of Blaenbrynich, near Brecon: "Many want us to keep up links in future, and everyone voted in favour of a further reunion in three years' time."

While the Boys were chatting over their buffet in the George Hotel on Saturday night, some of their partners enjoyed a buffet at Cantre Selyf, Lion Street, and on the Sunday, 26 of the boys with partners and guests met for lunch at the Castle Hotel to continue reminiscing.

The Grande Finale turned out to be an informal Cymanfa Ganu under the enthusiastic direction of our New Zealander, Jeffrey Davies - Alun Frame, now of Epsom, Surrey said: "It's amazing how much Welsh I could remember when it came to singing!"

Hanner Canrif Ymlaen

Hanner canrif ar ôl iddynt gerdded i fyny'r rhiw i'r hen Ysgol Ramadeg yn Ffordd Cradog am y tro cyntaf, daeth hanner cant o gyn-ddisgyblion at ei gilydd yn Aberhonddu ym mis Medi llynedd am aduniad y byddant yn ei gofio am flynyddoedd i ddod.

Daeth pum ohonynt o dramor i ymuno yn y dathliadau: Lance Billington, Canada, John Burgess, Efrog Newydd, Jeffrey Davies, Seland Newydd, Royston Lewis, Awstralia a Tom Thirgood, Iwerddon. Cyrhaeddodd 'bechgyn' eraill o bob cwr o Gymru, Llundain a De a Chanol Lloegr i ddal lan ar hanner canrif o newyddion.

Dywedodd Phillip Malham, Aberhonddu: "Roedd yn ymdrech anferth i ddod o hyd i bawb: roedd llawer ohonom heb weld ein gilydd ers dros ddeugain mlynedd, ond diolch i gysylltiadau lleol a chyfuniad o rwydweithio ac ymchwil ddygn, llwyddwyd i ddarganfod mwy na chwe deg o'n cyd-ddisgyblion o'r pum-degau. Phillip wnaeth y gwaith caled o olrhain pawb, a chafodd y teitl anrhydeddus o brif-dditectif gan aelodau eraill y 'pwyllgor' answyddogol.

Ychwanegodd Brynach Parri, un o ysgogwyr yr aduniad: "Mae'n drist cofio inni gollu nifer ar hyd y daith, dau ohonynt - Robin Day a Richard Bastable - eleni, ar ôl iddynt ddweud eu bod yn edrych ymlaen at ddod i'r achlysur. Parchwyd nhw ag ennyd o ddistawrwydd cyn inni droi at atgofion hapusach, ac roedd yn wyrthiol i weld pwy oedd yn dal yn adnabyddus ar ôl cymaint o amser - gan yr oedd llawer ohonom wedi newid ein golwg (chwech yn swatio y tu ôl i farf, mwstas ar bum gwefus, a llawer llai o wallt ar bennau'r mwyafrif!) roedd y bathodynau a greuwyd gan Phil o hen luniau a chylchgronau'n amhrisiadwy."

Dywedodd Peter Powell, yn wreiddiol o'r Batel a bellach o Gaerdydd: "Methwyd â dod o hyd i dri neu bedwar sydd wedi diflannu'n llwyr, ond roeddwn yn falch i ddod o hyd i gymaint o'n cyd-ddisgyblion. Gwaith diflino Phillip sydd yn bennaf gyfrifol am hyn - mae'n haeddu swydd gyda Pilkingtons!"

Yn ôl Gwyn Griffiths, yn wreiddiol o Aberllynfi, bellach o Benarth, roedd y cyfan "yn gyfuniad hyfryd o ffurfioldeb a dal lan ar newyddion yr holl flynyddoedd."

Ategodd John Price, Blaenbrynich: "Mae llawer ohonom am gadw mewn cysylltiad yn y dyfodol, a chododd pob un ei law o blaid aduniad arall ymhén tair blynedd."

Tra'r oedd y bechgyn yn sgwrsio dros eu bwffe yng Ngwesty'r George, bu rhai o'uartneriaid yn mwynhau bwffe yng Nghantre Selyf, ac ar y Sul daeth 26 o'r bechgyn a'uartneriaid a gwesteion at ei gilydd am ginio yng Ngwesty'r Castell i gnoi'r cil yn bellach.

Uchafbwynt a diwedd glo'r noson oedd Cymanfa Ganu anffurfiol dan arweiniad brwd ein Ciwi, Jeffrey Davies. Rhyfeddodd Alan Frame, bellach o Epsom at faint o Gymraeg a ddaeth yn ôl iddo wrth ganu!

Events of 2005

One hundred and ten guests from all corners of Wales and England attended and greatly enjoyed our 56th Annual Reunion Dinner at Bishops's Meadow. It is encouraging that each year former pupils of the Girls' Grammar School now attend the dinner. After the dinner, Dr. Les Bevan (1945-52) gave a short, interesting and amusing address and Brynach Parri (1955-62), the Vice President, a thoughtful and entertaining vote of thanks to the Committee and staff of Bishop's Meadow, was installed as President for 2005/6.

At the annual Celebration Evening held at Brecon High School on 12th July, Emily Gibson of Llanfrynach was presented with the Cliff Carr Memorial Prize. Cliff (1937-42) was a distinguished sportsman and Chairman of the OBA for twenty-five years. The prize is awarded to the pupil who the school consider has made a major contribution in one or more sports. Emily was a regular member of the Powys County Hockey Squad and competed for Wales in cross-country running.

On 11th November twenty-five Old Boys and Old Girls attended the dignified Remembrance Day Service in the High School. The Very Rev. Geraint Hughes (1947-53) conducted the service and then names of the 69 former pupils who had died in armed conflicts since 1914 were read out. If anybody knows of any Old Girls who died in the armed forces, as nurses or in any form of conscripted service during any of the wars since 1914 please let me know.

The Golfers - The Never Ending House Rivalry!

Peter Holt (Vaughan - residing in King's Lynn, Norfolk), David Lewis Jones (Siddons - Wellingborough, Northamptonshire) and John Llewellyn (Gam - Oakland, Rutland) annually play golf house matches at each of their respective golf courses. House colours are very much in evidence in golf caps and other clothing - David has even been known to wear a pair of maroon shoes!). The three are unanimous that these hugely enjoyable matches are very much the highlight of an active golfing year. John and Peter have been close friends since leaving school, and both were delighted when John 're-found' David, after a forty-five year gap, during a club match some eight years ago. They have not revealed which is the 'champion house'!

Excerpt from the diary of a former pupil (1928-36)

Form VB

A geography lesson is in progress with Lew Lewis taking it. We are being told the names of the rivers in Portugal, the Guadiana, Tagus, Douro, etc., when there is an unusual sound coming from the outside. Crossing the window is an aeroplane! Without a moments consideration for the rivers of Portugal, the entire class rushes to see what is going past - most of us have never seen an aeroplane before and this biplane is the talk of the class for weeks to come.

Mile Balding : Vice President

Mike was born in Canterbury but his family moved to Abertillery in 1945 and in 1950 to the Brecon area where he became a pupil of the Grammar School - it was his fourteenth school in eleven years! After leaving school and national service he studied at Alsager Training College which led to a lifetime of teaching. During his teaching career he taught at six different schools and for two years in the approved school system. A major interest of his has been writing poetry. The following short poem will bring back memories for the keen cricketers:

THE PHOTOGRAPH

Look at us smiling,	Not on a Saturday morning anyway
Peacock proud in Persil whites.	Those were the happy days,
We laughed better than we played,	And regular,

Losing more matches than we won.
It rained a lot,
I never seemed to get a knock,

Rain at Builth,
Wind at Brynmawr,
And sandwiches at Brecon.

Former teachers

Glenys Evans

At the age of 22 Glenys was the wartime replacement for Dragon and from 1941-1945 she taught Welsh, English and, to the surprise and delight of the older boys, Physical Education. On hearing of her recovery from a worrying illness the OBA presented her with a bouquet of flowers. In her letter of thanks she was very complimentary about the school and its pupils.

John Phippen

An ex-Captain in the Indian Army John Phippen primarily taught Mathematics at the school from 1948-54. A keen supporter of the Old Boys' Association he attended many of the annual dinners. To mark his 90th birthday a print by Jennifer Conway was presented to him by Philip Evans at his birthday celebrations as a token of the esteem in which he is held by the O.B.A.

Obituaries

Harold Norbury (1928-32)

After leaving school Harold worked for the Prudential Assurance Company until he enlisted in the RAF during World War II. He was posted to the RAF Regiment and rose to the rank of sergeant. After the war he worked in local government and later became an auditor in the NHS. His immaculate appearance and bearing justified his schooldays' nickname of 'Major'.

Tom Prothero (1929-34)

A Brecon boy, in school Tom was one of Colonel's star pupils in French. Apart from seven years in the Welch Regiment Tom spent his life in Brecon working for the Western Welsh Omnibus Company. Initially as a clerk, then conductor and for forty years as driver. Many of the boys at school in the 50s, 60s and 70s would have been driven to school by him.

Brenig Thomas (1937-41)

Apart from his years at school Brenig's life was devoted to farming. His father was the tenant farmer on Cwmcamlais on the Abercamlais estate and when he died Brenig assumed the tenancy and later became the owner-occupier. He was active in the Young Farmers' Club, was prominent in the grassland movement and was very well known as a progressive dairy farmer.

Alvin Miles (1937-41)

A pupil of Weymouth and Brecon Grammar Schools he trained in Birmingham to be a teacher after his service in the RAF. His first job in 1949 was in Llanfaes Primary School but after a few years he moved to Brecon Secondary Modern School. He was then Head Teacher of Llanfaes School from 1968-1987. A devout Christian he became a Diocesan Lay Reader.

Billy Davies (1940-44)

Billy, or Iami as he was known in school, was one of the many boys educated in Trecastle Junior School who passed the scholarship for the Grammar School. After his National Service he obtained a clerical position at the Steel Company of Wales, Port Talbot and then became a clerical manager at the Llanwern Works, Newport where he stayed until he retired.

John Trimm (1942-49)

On leaving school in 1949 John became a science student at University College, Cardiff but he left sick at the end of his first year. He was highly respected in Brecon and worked intermittently in the Youth Employment Service. A devout member of St. David's Church John was also a member of the Brecon Bellingers who were the pallbearers at his funeral.

It would be most helpful if Old Boys who have news about former pupils would send it to:

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