

***Cylchlythyr Cymdeithas Cyn-Ddisgyblion Ysgol Ramadeg y Bechgyn
Aberhonddu
Mawrth 2008***

Brecon Grammar School Old Boys' Association Newsletter March 2008

At the last AGM of the Association last April Ken Jones resigned as editor of this newsletter. His sterling work in presenting concise accounts of Association news and events in the first five newsletters has been much appreciated. Everyone is invited to send any information that might interest Old Boys to the new editor, Michael Williams at 4, Chestnut Avenue, West Cross, Swansea SA3 5NL, (e-mail: williamsjm@mail.com).

Ymdeolodd Ken Jones fel golygydd y cylchlythyr yng nghyfarfod Blynyddol y Gymdeithas fis Ebrill llynedd. Gwerthfawrogwn yn ddirfawr ei waith gwyh wrth gyflwyno cofnodion cryno o newyddion a digwyddiadau'r Gymdeithas yn y pum rhifyn cyntaf. Gwahoddir pawb i anfon unrhyw wybodaeth o ddiddordeb i'r Hen Fechgyn at y golygydd newydd, Michael Williams, 4, Chestnut Avenue, West Cross, Abertawe SA3 5NL, (e-bost: williamsjm@mail.com).

Events of 2007

For the first time the venue of the Annual Reunion Dinner (the 58th) was changed to the George Hotel, Brecon because of planned refurbishment at Bishop's Meadow. Ninety three guests, of whom fifty six were Old Boys, enjoyed the food and service, which were of a high standard. After the introductory remarks by the Chairman and devotions led by the Very Rev. Geraint Hughes, the President, Mike Balding, regaled the assembly by recounting stories of various episodes during his life in school, college, workplace and family. Several of these were colourfully illuminated by recitation of some of his poems. The Vice President, Michael Williams, then moved a vote of thanks to the President, the committee and the staff of the George Hotel.

Next the President presented two books to Bill Leonard, a stalwart of the Association, in celebration of his 90th birthday. To end the formalities Michael Williams was installed as President.

There was a sad aftermath to the reunion. In the following week, the new Vice President, Anthony (Tony) Ottewell, died suddenly at home. His obituary appears later. At the June committee meeting David Morgan, nominated by the President, was approved as the Vice President.

New head of Brecon High School: Mrs Ingrid Gallagher

Mrs. Gallagher, the new Head of Brecon High School from April 2007, was previously deputy head at Perry Beeches School and Technology College in Birmingham, where she achieved a substantial increase in academic standards. Mrs Gallagher has a wide range of experience in her 29 years work in education. She has been an OfSTED inspector, and has worked with the DfES on many aspects of education including Study Support, Curriculum Development, Accelerated Learning, Teaching and Learning and Healthy Standards. Her interests include walking, reading and family.

Prize Day at Brecon High School: 17 July 2007

Tom Protheroe and Bill Leonard represented the Association at the Awards Evening where the Prize Giver and principal speaker was Sarah-Jane Davies of the English National Opera company. The giving of over a hundred prizes was interspersed with a fashion show by pupils and contributions from the school orchestra, drama group, choir and dance group. The "Alice

Robertshaw window” was also unveiled in memory of Alice, the deputy head girl who sadly died in a road accident in 2005. At the unveiling Leonard Cohen, a seventeen year old pupil, gave a moving rendition of Hallelujah.

The Cliff Carr Memorial Prize

No prize was awarded in 2007 because the nominee did not satisfy the conditions of the award. Since the inception of this prize eight awards have been made, and we have information on seven recipients. One opted out of Higher Education to become a locally employed carpenter. Three graduated successfully in Sports Science, Land Management and Physiotherapy. The first of these three also completed an apprenticeship as a carpenter. The second is an estate agent and the third a physiotherapist at a local hospital. The remaining three are completing degree courses at Swansea, Cardiff and Loughborough universities. At the latter, the recipient is a member of the ladies Rugby First XV.

Remembrance service: 9 November 2007

Seventeen Old Boys and Old Girls, the Mayoress, and representatives of the school governors and the military attended the service held at Brecon High School. It was conducted by the Very Rev. Geraint Hughes, and the reading of the names on the Roll of Honour was, as always, a solemn and moving experience. After the service Mrs Gallagher, in a new departure, had a photograph taken of guests, senior pupils and cadets (see below).



Friends of Terry Ottewell

In 2007 the Association made a small donation to the Friends of Terry Ottewell fund, which supports his preparation for international competitions in blind archery. Terry was discharged from the army in 1961 because of his impaired vision, and becoming a St Dunster in 1997 made a big change to his life because it introduced him to archery. His discovery that he was competitive in this new activity encouraged him, and he has had many successes. He has shot for Great Britain many times, his greatest achievement to date being winning the gold medal at the European Championships for the disabled in 2006. After a setback last year Terry is now preparing to defend the European titles he holds this year.

Geoffrey Meredith Powell Memorial Prize

The sons of Geoffrey Powell, whose obituary appears later, contacted the Association last year to express the wish to establish an annual prize for the “Best contribution to English Literature” at Brecon High school in his memory. The school have gratefully accepted this gift and it has been agreed that two prizes can be awarded, one for junior pupils and one for senior pupils. The sum of £3000 has been received by the Association who have agreed to administer the fund.

Biographical Notes

David (Scitch) Morgan (1941-46): Vice President

After David’s first job with the Met Office and National Service in Pakistan, he entered Caerleon College in 1954 to train as a teacher. He taught in England before taking up a post at Dunvant Junior School, Swansea where he became Head after continuing his training with a Degree in Education. He has written History programmes for the BBC, and his local history publications lead to his being elected as fellow of the Royal Society of Arts in 1991. In 2007 he received an illuminated scroll from the British Association of Local History. He is a reader in his local church.

T Glenville (“Glyn”) Powell (1943-50): Vice Chairman

At school Glyn was a stalwart of Theo and gained both soccer and cricket colours. On leaving school he read History and Political Philosophy at Bangor and then, after National Service in Korea and Japan, he transferred to RAEC on a short service commission as a staff officer in Kuala Lumpur. After teaching at Brecon for 31 years he retired early and became a full time farmer. He was Deputy President of the Farmers’ Union of Wales. He has wide interests being active in, inter alia, the Wales Rural Forum and the National Eisteddfod. He often broadcasts on radio and TV.

Ken Jones (1943-50): committee member

Ken modestly described himself as an indifferent footballer, even worse cricketer but a reasonable athlete. After studying for six years he was a teacher for three years and then a lecturer at University College in Cardiff, University of London Business School and Berkeley, California. He then switched to administrative posts first as Social and Regional Policy Manager in the British Steel Corporation for nine years and then as Head of Personnel in Reuters for eleven years. He has been chairman of the Brecknock Society and Museum Friends for ten years.

David Gittins (1951-59): committee assistant secretary

David was a member of Vaughan and represented the school at soccer, rugby and athletics. On leaving school he joined the Civil Service and after several promotions and transfers he ended up in Central London in a Whitehall job rubbing shoulders with the great and good of the political world. In 1995 he took early retirement and moved back to his roots in Hay-on Wye. More recently he has moved to Hereford.

Philip Evans (1947-54): committee member

After completing his A-levels Philip started his military service and was trained as a surveyor. He served in Germany where he played soccer in regimental competitions and for a local German club. After studying at University College, Cardiff and the London School of Economics he worked in Personnel Management for Clarks Shoes, and then in various human resource posts in Metal Box, Tube Investments, finally ending up with Welsh Water at Brecon. He has enjoyed the last thirty years living on a small holding on Llandefalle Hill.

1960 School Trip to XVth Olympiad in Rome

The school trip of 1960 was to be different; a party of pupils would be taken abroad, to the Olympic Games in Rome with a stop on the way to view the treasures of Florence.

The cost of this 10 day excursion was £40, several weeks' pay for an ordinary working man. The trip would be in August 1960, as this was September 1959 we had a whole year to save. Those who I remember going were Brynach (Tich) Parri, Lee Davies, Keri Thomas, Tom Protheroe, John Bryant and Richard Bastable. The teachers accompanying us who spring instantly to mind are "POJ" Rowlands, convinced that his Latin would be of great help with Italian and "Jet" Morgan, I can still picture him standing with very large Italian banknotes over his arm, almost as big as tea towels.

We travelled to Dover via Newport, Paddington and Charing Cross. The ferry crossing to Calais was not without incident as one of our party proved to be a bad sailor and spent most of the crossing sprawled out in a sorry state on the deck. I wonder if that unfortunate member of our party will remember the crossing.

Calais was different in all respects, the smell, the cars, the people were all different. Listening to the workmen calling to each other in French, their language seemed to bear little relationship to the French that the "Colonel" had taught us - it was different. It is difficult today to convey this feeling of difference; Renault, Peugeot and Citroën are now familiar, and television has brought us so many street scenes from France that we do not see them as being in any way unusual, but in 1960 they were seen as being quite exotic.

Our journey south continued by train, packed meals had been arranged for us, our first taste of "foreign food". Our train was not taking us all the way to our first destination of Florence, we would have to change in Basel. As our train would be travelling through the night we had "couchettes" to sleep on, these we quickly named "cowsheds". We slept, to wake up far into Switzerland, now we really were travellers. Oh yes! We'd been to France and were now in Switzerland. Apart from the mountains, bigger than Pen y Fan, and the cows, they actually did wear bells, the most memorable thing for me was the sudden change in the air temperature as we left the mountains of Switzerland and approached the plains of Northern Italy, it was as if we had turned a corner to be met with a rush of hot air.

In Florence our accommodation was in a small hotel where a number of us found that our table for meals was not situated in the dining room with the rest of the party; we had a separate table just outside the kitchen. This for us was a definite benefit and greatly added to the holiday experience. The waitresses took a truly maternal interest in us, and I believe that we benefited greatly from it, not every one can claim to have been taught by an Italian lady how to eat spaghetti with a fork and spoon and not to get those unruly lengths of pasta spread all down the shirt front.

Think of a group of boys away from home for the first time in an environment where there seemed to be little restriction on the sale of alcoholic drink, where drink was relatively cheap; the temptation to sample was to some irresistible and led to the incident involving "the brandy". The brandy was to take its effect on a group of boys sharing a room. The teachers accompanying us were not best pleased and soon they felt it advisable to seek assistance from the local medical services. No comment, but milk shakes were to be the usual tippie for the rest of the holiday.

In Florence there seemed to be a lot of time to wander around and to do our own thing and indeed to practice the one or two words of Italian that we had learned, Mr Rowlands had said that our knowledge of Latin would be of use to us; well it wasn't. We crossed the Ponte Vecchio, the ancient bridge with all the small shops built on it, we visited the Uffizi Gallery and saw outside it perhaps one of the world's most famous statues, Michelangelo's statue of David. A feature of the city which will for ever remain in my memory is Il Duomo, the cathedral church of Santa Maria del Fiore, one of the largest churches in the world. Perhaps we missed some of the touristy things, but using our one or two words of Italian, "*dove*" being most useful, we were able to find a statue

of Garibaldi. I'm sure we would like to think our search for him was connected with his being a sort of Italian Owain Glyndwr and not for his biscuit connection.

After Florence we went on to Rome where we stayed in school dormitories. As with our stay in Florence there was plenty of free time, and some of us stayed in the city and did all the tourist things – Coliseum, Catacombs, Vatican and of course The Trevi Fountain. We threw in our coins with the wish to return to Rome; it was 45 years before I was to visit Rome for a second time. We had by this time discovered an acceptable milk shake, "*frappe monte rosa*". I remember one of our group insisting on negotiating in totally fractured Italian with the street salesman to purchase some of these, only to be asked to "*please speak English*". The degree of freedom that we had to wander around on our own in both Florence and Rome still fills me with surprise when I compare it with today; we were after all just country boys, not at all used to a city's traffic and streets. Remember that in 1960 there were no traffic lights or zebra crossings anywhere in Breconshire; there seemed to be no thought of any danger in this freedom to roam. In 1960 we were allowed to make our own mistakes and learn from our experiences.

One of the main reasons to visit Rome was to attend the Olympic Games. We visited the Stadio Olimpico and witnessed Italy's Livio Berutti win the Gold Medal in the 200 metres race. It was an extremely hot day and I remember converting the Centigrade temperature displayed on a public thermometer to the more understandable Fahrenheit; it was 104°F. After this race there was a tremendous rain storm, but we were very lucky to be under a covered part of the stadium. The competitions in the arena had to come to a stop. What does a group of Welsh people do in such circumstances? There is only one thing they can do; that is to hold a cymanfa ganu, and of course to sing Welsh hymns. I don't recall who started but soon the words of Calon Lân seemed to fill the whole stadium, more voices than we could muster in our group. We had been augmented by a school from Barry, also on a school holiday and standing not far from us. Had there been medals for community singing I'm sure we would have taken the gold.

Within a few days we were to return to Wales. We were told that we would have to declare to the customs everything that we had purchased and how much the various items had cost as the customs at Dover were certain to ask some to open their cases before marking them with the official chalked "X". We prepared lists of key rings, ashtrays, little models of Romulus and Remus. I had half a bottle of Chianti; it cost me 200 lira which converted to 2s/4d or 12p in today's terms. I remember that the usual practice with a straw covered wine bottle was to put a bulb holder in the top and make a lamp; such lamps were all the rage in the 1960s.

The XVth Olympiad was opened on 25th August and the athletics events at which we were present were held on 31st August. We were therefore back in school a few days after the new term had started. We were back late enough to have missed some homework and I can remember giving as my excuse in one of Gwyn Angel's mathematics classes; "*I was in a train travelling across Europe, sir, I didn't know that we had any homework*".

Tom Thirgood,
Vaughan 1955 – 1962

Obituaries

A B (Tony) Ottewell (1947-54)

Tony Ottewell, an outstanding athlete at school, spent most of his career in the army. After commissioning at RMA Sandhurst he served in Germany, the Far East, Ulster, Thailand and Gibraltar. He retired in 1991 with rank of major. He then took a degree in Theology at Oxford University and was later appointed Eucharistic Assistant by the Bishop of Swansea and Brecon.

Roland Parry (1943-47)

On leaving school Rowland worked for the War Ag before his call-up for National Service. He served with the Royal Artillery in Singapore and Malaysia, and on demobilisation he worked for the Land Agency at the Barracks and then moved to the Motor Taxation Office. His interests were music (as accordionist with Brecon Town Band), the West Enders and the Bowls Club.

Keith Horner (1937-43)

After gaining his Higher School Certificate Keith began an English degree course at Lampeter University, but his studies were interrupted by his call-up. After military service in the Royal Corps of Signals he completed his studies, and then taught in schools in Cardiff, Merthyr (where he settled) and the Rural Technical College Brecon. His main leisure interest was hillside walking.

Denzil Cartwright (1942-45)

Denzil, a Breconian from the Struet, attended the Church Primary School in Pendre before entering the Grammar school. He left school early to work in the family bakery in Brecon. Apart from a brief sojourn in Swansea he spent all his life in Brecon. His main interests were his dogs and shooting. Within months of his death his widow, Brenda (nee Davies), also died.

Dr W L L (Lyn) Williams

Lyn, a product of Maesydderwen Comprehensive school, achieved high academic credentials, BSc (Wales), MSc (Nottingham) and PhD (Cornell, USA). In 1958 he was appointed Head of the newly created Department of Biological Sciences at Brecon Boys' Grammar School, where he remained for the rest of his career. He died at Talgarth on 25 February, 2007.

David (Dai) Powell (1937-41)

David was a native of the Llangynidr area and on leaving school he initially worked on the family farm and then moved to a farm at Gilwern. He was a leading figure in the area's farming industry and was highly respected throughout his community. He was a faithful supporter of the Old Boys Association and, until recently, he was a regular attender at the Annual Reunion.

Anthony Tuthill (1940-44)

On leaving school Tony worked for the Brecon WAEC and then joined the RAF where he trained as an engineer. He worked on the Sunderland Flying Boats with postings to the Far East, and he then transferred to the Air Sea Rescue in Cornwall. He later became Assistant Transport Manager for his local authority (Restormel). His interests included Welsh Rugby and malt whisky.

Geoffrey Meredith Powell (1926-1930)

After passing his School Certificate Examinations with credits in six subjects Geoffrey joined the National Provincial Bank in Ross on Wye and pursued a career in banking, finally becoming Regional Manager in Manchester. In 1940 he was commissioned in the Royal Army Service Corps and achieved the rank of Acting Lt. Colonel before being demobbed with the rank of Major.

Douglas Morgan (1936-39)

Douglas, a native of Talgarth, left school in 1939 to enlist as a boy-sailor in the Royal Navy. He experienced a very active wartime service especially in the Mediterranean. He was commissioned from the ranks and served for over twenty years before retiring as a Lieutenant Commander. He then settled in the Worcester area and spent some years working in the Life Insurance Industry.