

***Cylchlythyr Cymdeithas Cyn-Ddisgyblion Ysgol Ramadeg y
Bechgyn, Aberhonddu
Mawrth 2023***

Brecon Grammar School Old Boys' Association Newsletter March 2023

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The continued high incidence of Covid in the country, together with illness, had an effect on the attendance at our Annual Reunion Dinner, which returned to its regular slot for the first time since the pandemic started. The record low attendance at that reunion has prompted urgent discussions about the future of the Old Boys' Association. See my article on the future of the OBA on page 4. The questionnaire to members about the possibility of extending the membership to other groups produced a disappointing 14% response.

My article on the future of the newsletter on page 10 shows that its future is also uncertain.

Glyn Powell's portrait is now complete and will be unveiled at 3pm on 15th April at Brecon High School. A photo of the portrait will appear in next year's newsletter.

Mae'r achosion uchel parhaus o Covid ynghyd a salwch wedi cael effaith ar bresenoldeb yn ein Cinio Aduniad Blynnyddol, a ddychwelodd i'w slot rheolaidd ers i'r pandemig ddechrau. Mae'r presenoldeb isel erioed yn yr aduniad hwnnw wedi

ysgogi trafodaethau brys am ddyfodol Cymdeithas yr Hen Fechgyn. Gweler fy erthygl am ddyfodol yr OBA ar dudalen 4. Cafwyd ymateb siomedig o 14% yn yr holiadur i aelodau ynghylch y posibilrwydd o ymestyn yr aelodaeth i grwpiau eraill.

Mae fy erthygl ar ddyfodol y cylchlythyr ar dudalen 10 yn dangos bod ei ddyfodol hefyd yn ansicr.

Mae portread Glyn Powell bellach wedi'i gwblhau a bydd e'n cael ei ddadorchuddio ar Ebrill y 15^{fed} yn yr Ysgol Uwchradd. Bydd llun o'r portread yn y cylchlythyr nesaf.

Events of 2022

On Saturday, 23rd April, Old Boys and partners gathered at the Castle Hotel for the **Annual Reunion Dinner**. There were just 29 of us, our lowest number; 33 had paid for the meal but four did not turn up. Several Old Boys had told Tom that they were concerned about Covid, so hopefully our attendance will be better in 2023. Our new President, Andrew Thomas, had withdrawn just a few days before the reunion because of illness. Robert Breeze, President for 2021-2022, had sadly passed away a few weeks before the reunion. He had already given his Presidential address at the rearranged 2021 Reunion in September as reported in the 2022 newsletter. So at our 2022 Reunion Charles Lewis presented his Presidential address, which had been cancelled in 2020 because of Covid. He said it was a privilege to have been President and that he had been supported by a very efficient committee. He applauded the OBA for their efforts in supporting the High School's Prize Day. The Remembrance service was also a moving experience that was well organised by the school. He recalled one service at which an actual WWI whistle was blown. This was an eerie sound and should remind us never to forget those who gave their lives in two world wars and subsequent conflicts.

In referring to his school days he said the senior pupils were excellent role models in terms of demeanour and character. Rugby was a new sport for boys at Brecon in the mid 1950s, having been introduced by the new headmaster, Aneurin Rees, and the newly installed head of PE, Ron Arthur. He recalled the enthusiasm of some of his fellow pupils for the game, which offered new social experiences travelling to many new locations south of Brecon.

He had fond memories of the school eisteddfodau, the showpiece of the school calendar, organised splendidly by Harvey Williams and Dewi Davies. He was one of several pupils who were able to progress to the Urdd Eisteddfodau at county and national levels.

The move to Penlan had a great impact on school life. There were huge improvements in accommodation and sports facilities. Not surprisingly, greater achievements were made in all sporting activities and the school was able to host the Welsh Secondary Schools Athletics Championships within the next few years.

After training as a teacher he served most of his teaching career abroad in Africa and subsequently in Germany with the Service Children's Education Authority. On returning to the UK he qualified as a Special Needs educator which he found very rewarding.

Together with the support of Liz, his wife and soulmate of 56 years, his experiences as a Silurian provided for a very happy career professionally and socially. He concluded by proposing a toast to the Old Boys' Association.

Vice President Alan Lloyd then proposed a vote of thanks to Charles for his address and to the staff of the Hotel. In an amusing address, he said he was not suitably qualified to be President and gave examples of his deficiencies. He speculated that he may have been nominated because of the impact of his recent book "Standing on Abersycir Hill," and he took advantage of the opportunity to thank those who had bought the book, which had provided over £3000 for the St Michael's Hospice in Hereford. He thanked members of the committee for their work for the Association, mentioning in particular Michael for his bumper 2022

newsletter and especially secretary/treasurer Tom.



For those members who have never attended a reunion at the Castle Hotel I include two photos. The first shows diners chatting before the meal in the magnificent function room overlooking the Beacons. The second shows some of the memorabilia which are always

displayed at reunions.

Because of the limitations of the sports hall accommodation, there was no **Awards evening** for the **Annual Prizes**. Instead, prizes were presented in several short assembly meetings at the High School, and parents were not able to attend. Vice President Allan Lloyd presented all the prizes to year 7 prize winners on Monday, 11th July, and on Tuesday, 12th he was accompanied by Barry Hicks when he presented the prizes to years 8 and 9 winners. Winners in other years received their prizes at other assemblies.

The winners of the Old Boys' prizes were:

Jessica Williams	D.J. Powell Cup	Most Improved Business Studies
Harri Dummett	Evans History Prize	Most Improved History
Awena John	Evans Art prize	Year 10 Art
Caitlin Jones	Evans KS4 Geography Prize	Year10 Geography
Francesca Thompson	Evans KS4 Maths Prize	Year 10 Mathematics
Luke Dawson	The Letton Shield	Year 10 Physical Education
Tejay Hampton	Senior Geoffrey Meredith Powell Prize	Year 12 English
Finn Channing Davies	Evans KS5 maths Prize	Year 12 Mathematics
Oliver Pitt	Cliff Carr Memorial Prize	Year 12 PE
Gwenni Kenchington	Evans Intercultural Understanding Prize	Year 12 Welsh Baccalaureate
Seren Edwards	Evans KS3 Language Prize	Year 8 Modern Foreign Languages
Olivia Ellis	Junior Geoffrey Meredith Powell Prize	Year 9 English
Jac Kenchington	Evans KS3 Maths Prize	Year 9 Mathematics
Blue Willis	Evans KS3 Languages Prize	Year 9 Modern Foreign Languages



Caitlin Jones
with the Head



Francesca Thompson



Harri Dummett with
Vice President Lloyd



Gwenni Kenchington



Luke Dawson



Olivia Ellis



Blue Willis with
Barry Hicks



Alwena John



Oliver Pitt



Tejay Hampton

The above photos show the prize winners for whom we have consent for their inclusion.

Several Old Boys and Old Girls attended the **Memorial Service** at the High School on 11th November. The service differed from the usual format in that there were no hymns. A power point presentation at the start aimed to explain the meaning of “service” and was illustrated by reference to former pupils who had given exceptional service in their careers. After the usual readings and hanging of wreaths on the memorial board, the Reverend David Thomas highlighted the sacrifices made by so many former pupils in the two world wars and many subsequent conflicts. He referred to the poppy as a symbol of lives lost and also a symbol of hope. After the service 11 Old Boys and Old Girls gathered at the Castle Hotel for lunch.

Biographical Notes

Allan William Lloyd (1947-54) - President Elect

Allan, a pupil from Aberyscir, trained as a teacher at Trinity College, Carmarthen. He taught for almost forty years at Lady Hawkins’ 11-18 School, Kington, where he was Head of History, Head of Careers Education and Guidance, and Head of Upper School. An author and broadcaster, he has been very involved in the affairs of Kington, as founder of the history society and museum, and main activist for the town’s bypass. He campaigned successfully for Cancer Treatment Units at Hereford hospital and is Grand Officer in the Freemasons. A family man, he has thirteen grandchildren and eight great grandchildren.

The Future of the Old Boys’ Association

The future of the Old Boys’ Association was first raised by the Rev Geraint Hughes in his Presidential address in 2001. At the time, the Association was flourishing with over 100 attending the Annual Reunion Dinner every year. An attempt several years ago to extend the membership was rejected by the committee, but more recently the issue has become pressing because of the fall in membership and a steep decline in attendance at the Annual Reunion Dinner to 35 in 2021 and 29 in 2022. Covid may be partly to blame for this but the decline in membership will obviously continue as shown by the obituary column of the newsletter.

Glyn has argued strongly in committee and at the AGM for an extension of our membership, and this led to the decision at the AGM to use a questionnaire to test the opinions of members. The response of the membership was a disappointing 14%. Such apathy makes me wonder if we should continue devoting our time to maintaining our activities. The result of the questionnaire was close to a tie between Old Boys and Old Girls only and Old Boys, Old Girls and High School. I initially voted for the latter but have on reflection changed my mind. As I stated in committee the tendency today is for people to socialise via social media. A survey of my grandchildren found they used Facebook, Tik Tok, Instagram, Snapchat and Twitter, and that none would be interested in a reunion of the whole school but they would consider joining a reunion of their year group. References to year group reunions can be found on Facebook. One year group of the Girls’ Grammar School began holding reunions of the class of 1953 in 2003. Then in 2018, when their number had fallen to 24, they held their last reunion as described in an article, with photos, in the Brecon & Radnor Express on 20th September. Another mixed year group of Grammar School Old Girls used to meet for an informal lunch after Easter, but last year they too decided to stop because of declining numbers.

A Google search for Brecon Secondary Modern School alumni produced no hits, but included a link to the Alumni section of the High School. This makes no reference to any reunions but just to a list of famous alumni.

Even Christ College alumni, “The Old Breconian Association,” which has over 2,500 members, have no annual reunion. On their website under Events there are no reunions of any kind. The only community event listed is the “2041 Mountain Challenge,” which will take part every year up to 2041, the 500th anniversary

of the College, and aims to raise funds for the Christ College Brecon Foundation and the Brecon Mountain Rescue Team.

Here's my final observation; in the 51 years since the opening of Brecon High School there has been no reunion. That says it all!

Since the above was written there have been two committee meetings. On 11th November it was agreed that we would move forward with members from both the Boys and Girls' Grammar Schools and consider the title of the Association and membership of the High School at a future meeting. It was also agreed, but not minuted, that we would continue our attempts to recruit new members using Facebook. At our meeting on 27th January it was decided to defer voting on a proposal to extend the membership of the Association until the AGM.

Michael Williams

Aneurin Rees MSc, A. Inst. P. (1954-1975)

(This is the sixth and final article of the series on Brecon headmasters)

Aneurin Rees was appointed to the headship in September 1954 in succession to Jacob Morgan. His appointment opened up a new chapter in the history of the school with a marked transformation in its ethos. As the long established senior members of staff, some of the World War I generation, left the stage they were replaced by a team of younger teachers, mainly ex-servicemen. They shared in the aspirations and enthusiasm of their headmaster.

Mr Rees was a native of Casllwchwr (Lougher). He was educated at Gowerton County Intermediate School and the University College of Wales, Swansea. He gained a First in Physics and, after completing his Teaching Diploma in 1934, he proceeded to undertake two years of research in the Physics Department for his Master's (1936). In 1943 he became an associate of the Institute of Physics. His first teaching post, in 1936, was as Senior Physics Master at the County Grammar School for Boys, Bridgend, a post to which he returned after war service. He served at the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough on secondment from the RAF to the Radar Research and Development Branch.

Mr Rees brought with him a reputation as an outstanding sportsman with an impressive physical presence. At the University he distinguished himself at rugby and cricket. During the vacations he assisted Llanelli as a forward and whilst at Bridgend and he was to captain the cricket XI. It is no wonder, therefore, that he was to collude in establishing rugby at Brecon, an innovation greeted with mixed feelings in some quarters. He continued exercising his passion for cricket by playing regularly for Brecon Sports Club. He lost some of his popularity with Crai boys by his turning out as one of three guest players for the Brecon Motors XI, which edged the Crai team out in the final of the Sports Club knockout competition!

During the early years of his headship he was to oversee numerous important changes with the addition of three prefabricated classrooms permitting an intake of 60, and the extension of the curriculum with the addition of new subject disciplines. However, the most challenging task was the transfer of the school from Cradoc Road to the Penlan site. The opening ceremony was held on Wednesday, the 24th September 1958. In a forward to the programme, County Councillor David Lewis MBE (Crai), Chairman of the Education Committee, wrote, "with a young and energetic Headmaster and a well qualified staff covering a full range of subjects, we look forward to generations of young men coming from the school". The Penlan Secondary Grammar Technical Boys' School was the first of a group of educational institutions to be built on a site of 51 acres.

In 1971 Aneurin Rees was called upon to undertake an even greater challenge with secondary reorganisation. He was appointed Headmaster of the new co-educational comprehensive of some 1500 pupils and 90 plus staff, a post he held until his retirement in 1975.

Glyn Powell

The Vicissitudes of Old Age

As grammar school educated people, readers of this newsletter will be familiar with the word “vicissitude”, but in case anyone is not familiar with it, the dictionary definition is “a change of circumstances, typically one that is unwelcome.”

Old Boys are, by definition, old, so I thought it would be interesting to write about this subject. How have you been affected by the ageing process? Probably the most common affliction is declining memory. How many of you have had the experience of walking into a room in your house and then wondered what you wanted or intended doing? Failing to remember the name of an object is another common experience. For example recently, when writing my shopping list before going to the supermarket, I couldn't remember the name of a dark green oval shaped fruit. Several minutes later I remembered; it was “avocado.” I have a lovely definition of the four stages of ageing in men. This was related by a former university colleague some years ago at a lunch to celebrate his 70th birthday. He described the four stages as follows:

in stage 1 you forget peoples names;

in stage 2 you forget peoples faces;

in stage 3 you forget to pull your zip up;

in stage 4 you forget to pull your zip down!!

I have on occasion forgotten to pull my zip up, but thankfully I've not yet reached stage 4!

Another vicissitude I've become aware of in the last year or two is **sarcopenia** (loss of skeletal muscle), which is reflected in increasing difficulty in getting up out of a low chair. This can be countered by exercise.

A decline in **proprioception**, also known as kinaesthesia, also occurs as we age, and it has affected me. Proprioception is the awareness of the position and movement of the body. It enables you to cope with variations in the ground, for example when walking along a mountain path strewn with boulders and tree roots. A decline in proprioception can result in difficulties in maintaining balance and a susceptibility to falls. I've had a couple of falls in the garden which I attribute to my decreasing proprioception. Fortunately, there are exercises which can help. This healthline website (<https://tinyurl.com/f6pc5nha>) describes 10 exercises which can improve proprioception, and I've started using them.

I invite you, dear reader, to write about your experience of ageing and tips to counter any difficulties.

Michael Williams

Recollections of Lyn Roberts

I recall my early days in Brecon with great affection. My mother, with her only source of income being from cleaning other peoples houses, successfully brought up three small children of whom I was the youngest. I doubt if my childhood was idyllic but I was unaware of the poverty of the 1930s, and I recall with pleasure my childhood after happy years at Mount Street school with teachers like Miss Hargest, Mrs Stubbs, Miss Armstrong, Mr Adami and Miss Davies. I ended up in the County School in Cradoc Road in 1939. Any young men were called up to the forces, but for Mr Jacob Morgan and the staff at the school I have nothing but admiration. “Lousy” Lewis, Doug Inglis, Dragon (Mr Prosser Roberts), John Sutherland and Jacob Morgan all taught me well, but the three to whom I feel most grateful are Ceff (Mr Elwyn Thomas), Colonel (Mr John Williams) and Jake himself. Their kindness to me, who would nowadays be considered as a disadvantaged child, was considerable. In about 1943, when Colonel and his wife moved into a new home he employed me to dig his garden. I recall with pleasure the lemonade made by Mrs Williams to refresh us.

In 1944, when I was selected to represent Brecon 1540 ATC Squadron in a Hyde Park march, Colonel (knowing that I had no money of my own) made the kind gesture of giving me some cash for my first visit to London.

Ceff was kind when I met him in the higher forms. He was disappointed when I dropped the arts subjects in favour of Science in the sixth form. I had enjoyed all subjects and accepted Jake's advice that I should pursue the sciences. Nevertheless, I took subsidiary A-level English. I shall never forget when Ceff took an English lesson after a dinner time break he asked the class to say something of interest. In that dinner time break the 1 o'clock news had been introduced by a solemn but, to me, beautiful piece of music to announce the death of Dr William Temple, the Archbishop of Canterbury. I said in Ceff's lesson hour how beautiful I had found the music; Ceff was delighted. As a result I was invited to an evening of classical music recordings at Ceff's home.

In 1945 when I was senior prefect (we did not use the term Head Boy) I was approached by a former pupil who gave me a ticket to the wartime soccer international in Cardiff. He had been asked not to tell me where it was from, but I later discovered it was from Ceff. He knew that the school soccer team had been provided with tickets by the school, but I, as the linesman, had not received one. It was kind of him to think of me.

It is probably to Mr Jacob Morgan that I should be the most grateful. When I obtained my school certificate, he visited my mother to persuade her to let me go on in the sixth form. I often think she must have been given some financial support to do this. Throughout my six form career Jake would often say to me "you were born to be a teacher." He ensured I was a teacher when, after I obtained my Higher School Certificate, he had already got Mr Watts, a local businessman, to pay for my two years training at Trinity College, Carmarthen.

After those two years I was fortunate to get a letter from Canon Halliwell, the college principal, to tell me that I had the year's best results and I was being offered a post at Llangollen. With that letter came my call up for National Service. C'est la vie.

So ended my youth.

[Editor's note: In April 2022 Lyn visited Brecon for a few days having been influenced by Topophilia (see my article on Topophilia in the 2020 newsletter). Whilst there he had the misfortune to fall and ended up in hospital in Merthyr from where he telephoned me for a chat. When he said he was bored I suggested that he used the opportunity to write an article for the newsletter. I was delighted to receive his contribution with so many nice comments on the kindness of members of staff]

Recollections of Christmas in Brecon in the 1950s

I have happy memories of Christmas in Brecon as a teenager. The period leading up to Christmas included the Nine Lessons and Carols service in the cathedral where I was a member of the choir. My favourite carol was "In Dulci Jubilo" which I enjoyed singing. I and my friend David ("Ginger") Jones were also members of a group of carol singers who sang in the town centre. Ginger had an excellent voice and often sang solos.

Some years I got a part time job working for the Post Office on deliveries, which in those days continued late into Christmas Eve, when I was often offered a celebratory drink!

One Christmas my parents bought a turkey which was too large for our oven, so my dad arranged to have it cooked in the baker's oven in town. I forget the baker's name but remember going with dad to collect the cooked bird.

This was a time of dances of course, but the highlight was always the New Year's Eve Ball, and my first such Ball, at the Wellington Hotel, involved an embarrassing experience. As midnight approached my partner and I took the floor for the last dance, and when the clock struck midnight all the couples immediately began kissing. Whilst I looked around in amazement, a young man grabbed my partner and

began kissing her. Then a lady, whose name I forget (she was the younger daughter of the hotel owner), started kissing me enthusiastically. My partner was not best pleased! Needless to say I was prepared for action at the next New Year's Eve Ball!

Is anyone else prepared to confess to an embarrassing experience?

Michael Williams

My Recollections of Doug Inglis

It was interesting to read Glyn Powell's article about Doug Inglis in last year's newsletter. It brought back good memories of his History lessons when standing in front of the class, immaculately dressed - with trousers sharply pressed and his shoes, glasses and his bald head shining brightly he dictated notes whilst at the same time fiddling with a piece of chalk ready to attack the blackboard to emphasise any point he wished to make. I am sure this is how many of his ex pupils will remember him. However there is one occasion I remember which indicates what a singular teacher he was!

One morning during my first year in the Grammar School I was part of a class seated in what I think was called the Day Room - next to the Woodwork Room adjacent to the school gates- all facing the front and silent ready for a History lesson. There was a general buzz until someone whispered that Doug was on his way down the steps. Immediately silence reigned as we anticipated his arrival, all facing the front. We could hear his footsteps approaching but surprisingly, at the threshold of the classroom the footsteps went silent to be followed by a strange scuffling sound. Like the rest of the class I was afraid to turn round in case I caught his eye and was chastened for doing so. With eyes to the front we awaited his arrival at the desk at the front of the classroom. The scuffling noise had ceased but we could all hear laboured breathing and from where I was seated, in the middle of the classroom, I was aware of movement high up on the windowed wall of the classroom. So glancing sideways, not daring to turn my head, I was aware of a bat-like shape high up in front of the windows hanging from the heater pipes that ran the length of the classroom! To my amazement I realised that it was Doug, wearing his black gown, swinging hand over hand, like Batman, along the heating pipes which ran the length of the classroom! He continued, hand over hand, until he reached the front of the classroom where he dropped to the floor and proceeded to fulminate about the pile of rubbish in the doorway which had prevented him from entering the classroom like any civilised person. He then ordered the whole class to go to the back of the room to observe the obstacle which had upset him! When we had all gathered at the back, to my astonishment, all that could be seen was a small sweet wrapper which he immediately ordered to be removed and placed in the waste paper bin! This done we all returned to our desks and the lesson began with all of us wondering whether what we had experienced was real!

Parry Richards

"Then there were ten"

The Three New Life Vice Presidents

David Gittins (1952-59)

David as chairman along with Tom, Michael and Shaun form the cockpit crew that pilot the OBA. On admission to the Grammar School he was much the junior member of the intake. A native of Hay, David was one of the inspiring cohort of both boys and girls who were secondary pupils at the time. A true blue devotee of Vaughan, he also represented the school at soccer, rugby and athletics. David was particularly proud of being a half back, midfield in modern parlance, in the wonderful 1957-59 XI. He continued with his soccer passion, playing for Hay Saint Mary's and later for the Welsh Civil Service Team.

David completed his O-level exams in 1957 as one of the tranche to take this new examination format, which included proficiency in Welsh. Then, on leaving school he joined the civil service initially in Brecon and later in Swansea and Cardiff. After several promotions and transfers he ended up in central London in Whitehall in the Department of Works and Pensions. This high-profile position involved his rubbing

shoulders with the great and the good of the political world (but there is no mention of his spying Number 10's cat!)

In 1995 he took early retirement and moved back to his early stomping grounds where he played out his youthful exuberance and struck a chord with his contemporaries of both sexes. Spiked by the political theatricals of the London scene, he was prompted to venture into local politics as a town councillor in Hay. More recently he has moved to Hereford where he is happily settled and able to pursue his abiding passion for classic competition motorcycles about which he has written two books: "The Rickman Stories" and "The Metisse Story." The former is out of print and a copy commands a "pretty" price on the American market.

David's great interest is walking accompanied by his colleague Shaun Gallagher. Assistant secretary of the OBE initially, he was vice president in 2010, president in 2011 and currently an extremely positive and effective chairman, who gives the association a sense of both vivacity and gravitas.

Shaun Gallagher (1952-59)

Shaun is a native of Hay where his name is imprinted in the soccer annals of the town. From an early age he showed exceptional ball skills and he enjoyed playing competitive sport, which became a major influence on his life. He played for the school XI from a young age, later captaining the undefeated team of 1958-59. As a senior in the school sports of 1958, he won the javelin event, was second in the pole vault, and third in the mile race, which showed his all-round athletic talent. He completed the O-level exams in 1957 at the end of the newly instituted five year rather than four year course. With solid credentials he entered the Cardiff College of PE to train as a teacher. His first teaching post was in East London as a PE head sports master followed by posts in two more schools before returning to Hayward School in Hereford, where he was Director of Resources. On retirement he came home to Clyro where he was able to enjoy the great outdoors, reading, travelling and meeting friends. Wherever Shaun was during his career he was always in demand as a footballer from Hay Saint Mary's to Ilford, Hereford and around the Midlands league. President in 2012, he also assumed the thankless task of archivist, in which capacity he has earned well deserved accolades as master of his particular brief.

Lyndon (Lyn) Roberts (1939-45)

Senior amongst the new life vice presidents is Lyn, a member of the 1939 intake and whose secondary school period was spent during wartime. He was admitted to the County School on a scholarship from Mount Street Primary School. He was successful in his school certificate examination in 1943 and proceeded to his higher in 1945. During his last year he was Senior Prefect (Head Boy). I recall Lyn as a highly respected senior pupil, and also his close sixth form colleague, John Davies, who is also a life vice president of the Association.

Lyn proceeded to Trinity College, Carmarthen in September 1945, completing his course in July 1947 when he was congratulated by the Principal, Canon Halliwell for being the top student of his year. He was offered a teaching post in Llangollen but was unable to take up the offer because of the call of National Service. During his senior year at Trinity he was one of the 10 students who were monitors responsible for student welfare and discipline as well as being secretary of the college soccer committee.

The first six weeks of his National Service were spent training in Dering Lines, Brecon followed by a further six weeks at Park Hall Camp, Oswestry. He subsequently underwent training for the RAEC at Swindon before being sent in February 1948 to Greystoke Castle, Cumbria to assist in conversation classes for very senior officers of the Polish Reassessment Corps. There were about 12 officers with families and some 100 soldiers with Lyn as the only British soldier, which meant his having to stay in civilian lodgings for some 9 to 10 months.

In December 1948 he was transferred to number No2 PEC (Preliminary Education Centre) at Manor Park, Preston. When his national service ended in 1949 he was persuaded to sign on for 12 months, but when the Korean War broke out he was refused release and eventually had to serve a further 2 1/2 years at Saighton

Camp, Chester, The Citadel, Dover and Shorncliffe Barracks, Folkestone, where he was when demobbed in March 1952.

Back in civvy street in Brecon he was invited to fill in for a few months at Pendre school. Planning to apply for the Civil Service, his best intentions were scuppered when he noted an advertisement in the TES for someone to fill a one year vacancy at the King's School Chester. Whilst there, he by chance met the headmaster of Nantwich and Acton Grammar School. Subsequently he was appointed to the staff of the school and was to teach there until his retirement in 1984.

Glyn Powell

The Future of the Old Boys' Newsletter

Because so few Old Boys offer articles for the newsletter I'm always looking for ideas for articles which I can write myself. For this year's newsletter I have written ten articles, but I am running out of ideas for new articles. So, this year's newsletter may be the last bumper edition unless several Old Boys (or Old Girls) offer contributions.

Why don't you, dear reader, write about your experiences of some of your teachers. Although many have written about our teachers, there are always new things to learn about them. For example, did you know that **Doug Inglis once swung, like a monkey, from the overhead heating pipes** which ran the length of the room in the ground floor of Cradoc Road school (see article by Parry Richards). Other possibilities for articles include unusual careers, hobbies, holiday experiences, retirement activities or even a fellow pupil's outstanding achievement.

Snippets, brief comments exemplified by the two by Mike Peters and myself in the 2015 newsletter, are also welcome. Here's another example.

Snippet

Last year's newsletter included photos of staff and prefects in 1954, and I identified those prefects who were no longer with us. One, on whom I had no information, was H. Evans. I later received a nice letter from David Davies, who is in the photo and was Head Boy in 1955. He said that Haydn Evans was a Welsh speaker from Cray. He didn't go to university but passed the Civil Service exam and joined the Executive Branch of the Civil Service based in the Welsh Office in Cardiff. David added that the 1953-54 year was a good one for the school cricket team. Six of the prefects were members of the "most successful cricket team ever to represent the school. We even beat Ystradgynlais that year."

Michael Williams

John Hopton Williams

My first encounter with J. H. Williams was as a rather insecure and nervous pupil in the opening lesson in Form II, when he entered the classroom with his customary gown-swishing flourish. He was our designated teacher of English for the year and with my faulty spelling, poor written expression and rather puerile handwriting, it was not to transpire to be a particularly commendable year's performance. When I first entered the classroom virtually every desk had been taken so I was directed to sit by Joey Matthews, who had a good line in jokes which had a purpose beyond flippancy. But he only displayed a minimal propensity for learning. Yet he had a beautiful turn of written phrase and his compositions were often quoted to the class by John Williams. Despite my own personal initial weakness in English, his example inspired me to read extensively and refer constantly to the Oxford concise dictionary to compensate for the basic deficiency in such a core subject.

John Williams joined the staff of Brecon Boys' County School in 1928 at the age of 22. It was his first and only post throughout his 43 years in the teaching profession. During his final 13 years of service he acted as deputy head, retiring in 1971 on the eve of secondary reorganisation which led to the establishment of

Brecon High School. In this capacity he worked with patience, intelligence and good manners. One of no nonsense and resolute pragmatism, he respected pupils' intellectual and emotional grasp. He saw no point in making rules that could not be properly implemented because they only left the rule maker looking silly. Showing great tenacity of purpose, he achieved considerable success in reflecting the traditional deference of the idyll of the benign teacher.

Having chosen to do Latin rather than French, I have never been in a position to assess and comment directly on his teaching of his special subject in the subsequent years of my attendance at the school. However, I did have a marginal connection with him as a member of Theo, of which he was the long-standing housemaster. As a keen if modest performer in a range of house activities, I was afforded muffled praise by him. During his early years on the staff he spent two lengthy periods in charge of games and PE facilities, which were expanded in 1931 with a construction of the gymnasium ("Bevan's Folly"). It is said that it was because of his enthusiasm that the House system took firm root in its early stages. In my school days he was supported in his House duties initially by Elwyn Thomas and subsequently by Ewart Davies.

Interestingly, I did have a rather tentative connection with John Williams through his father-in-law "Evans y Gôf." Evans transpired to have been my grandfather's partner in a highly successful singing duet, the former a tenor and the latter a bass. During my first two years in the school and until my voice broke, I would go to Evan Evans for singing lessons in preparation for local Eisteddfodau.

John Williams had a deep rooted love of teaching which he approached with resilience and an equitable temperament. However, his distinguished teaching career was interrupted by two lengthy periods of forced absence on medical grounds. His dignified bearing and gentlemanly manner earned him the well deserved nickname of "The Colonel." As a teacher of French he had a wide knowledge of his subject which he taught with enthusiasm. He introduced the wonders of Paris on five occasions and of Ostend twice to generations of his pupils. He was demanding and stern but fair even though on occasions he resorted to the apocryphal "Black devil," generally quite gently. From his appreciative students the salute was with more than conventional expressions of gratitude. This was a fitting tribute to a discerning and exacting teacher who was a stickler for proper formalities.

Glyn Powell

Snippet: my Eisteddfod Success

In my article "My retirement activities - Part 3" in last year's newsletter I referred to my unsuccessful attempts to win a prize at the National Eisteddfod. Last August I finally succeeded by winning the Science & Technology Prize for an article entitled "Problem Ymwrthedd Gwrthfotig" (The problem of antibiotic resistance). I was especially pleased about this success because it's an open competition which means that was competing against native Welsh speakers! I've submitted another article for the 2023 Eisteddfod, hoping for another success!

Michael Williams

"The Guiding Light" - Leslie Williams, 1931-37

Making its appearance on the bookstall at Brecon Show last year was "The Guiding Light" by Leslie Williams, first published in 2005 to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the Breconshire Agricultural Society. Impressively produced in hard cover and on superior paper, its contents are structured and expressed in very readable form. Born in 1919 at Arbercynrig Mill, the family home for over 100 years, he was the nephew of another Old Boy, the eminent Professor William Rees KStJ, MA DSC FSA FR History Society, historian and cartographer.

Presently a centenarian of several years Leslie, as an Old Boy, is the “Father of the House.” First and foremost a highly respected farmer through his diverse achievements, Leslie promoted the interests of his native area. However, during World War II he served with the RAF (VR) as a flight-lieutenant navigator in bomber command taking part in over 30 operations. Settling back to farming, undertaking a whole range of official roles within the industry and public life generally, as a Nuffield scholar he undertook a study of agricultural practice in the Low Countries and Scandinavia. A board member of the RWAS he played a significant role in the establishment of a home for the Royal Welsh at Llanelwedd in 1962. Brecon Show has also been high on his priority list; he was its president in 1977. Llanelwedd became the permanent home of this Show from 1982, with Leslie becoming one of the Show Site Trustees. As a dairy farmer he first showed Friesian Cattle at Brecon show in 1951. As a notable dairy farmer, he served as a representative on the Milk Marketing Board and on NFU committees and the CAEC (County Agricultural Executive Committee).

Leslie was appointed a magistrate in 1971 becoming a member of the Probation and After-care Committee of the Brecon Bench. In 1959 he began broadcasting a series of programs for BBC radio called "From the Farm", a diary of events in the agricultural calendar. The feedback from listeners was such that he was invited by the BBC to present the first agricultural TV programme from Wales, from Ffostill, Talgarth. His producer at the BBC in Cardiff, Hillary Phillips, described Leslie's style as having "a very nice air of informed informality". He became Wales' favourite voice of farming.

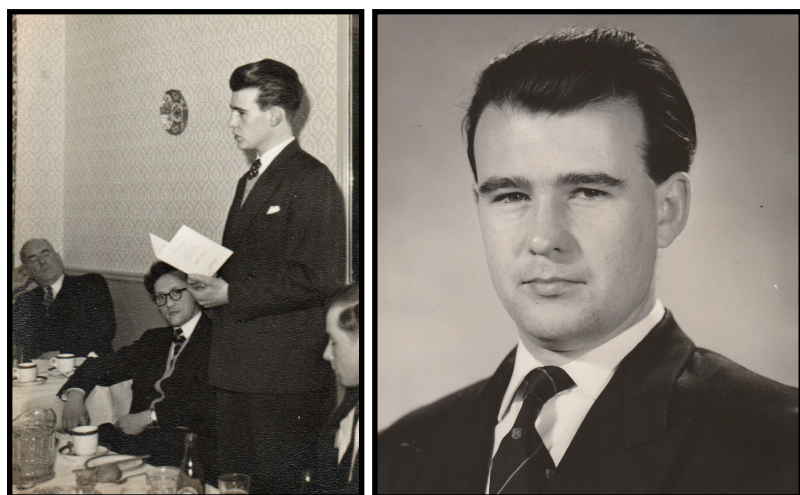
An avid reader and writer, his special delight is cooking. Leslie is a man known for his love and respect for the area he has lived in all his life and the traditions of its heritage. He was at one stage Governor of Brecon High School and the former Coleg Howell Harris. Interestingly, when pressed for any regret he admitted that it was his inability to speak Welsh. All things considered Leslie Williams ranks as one of the most remarkable, though so modest, Old Boys.

Glyn Powell

What I did during the pandemic lockdown

When the country was locked down in March 2020 my first thought was now's the chance to do something that has been on my to-do list for some time, namely to create a scrapbook entitled “My Life in Photos and Documents”. I had already bought the scrapbook which contained 80 pages. I was going to create a book as opposed to an electronic document, which would have no size limit. My first task was to review my photos and decide which ones to include. This was a challenge because I had over 20 thousand photos dating from the 1950s, many of them being colour transparencies. After listing the photos to be included I began with some photos from my early years and all my school reports. The whole task took seven weeks with me working seven days a week. It was emotional and enjoyable because it brought back so many happy

memories. The scrapbook contains the two photos on the left, which show me, as Head Boy, addressing the Old Boys at their Annual Reunion in 1954, and me in 1960 after I had taken up my first job in the USA following graduation.



My next activity was to write some Welsh articles for a new newsletter for Welsh learners. This was introduced by Rob Evans, former chairman of Cylch Cinio, Abertawe, of which I am a member. He was keen to encourage Welsh learners who were missing out on classes because of the pandemic restrictions. One of my articles

was entitled “Diolch Gwyddonwyr” (Thank you scientists) and refers to the magnificent response of British scientists to the challenge posed by Coronavirus. The rapid creation and testing of a vaccine and the equally important development of testing procedures were key achievements. The newsletter is entitled “Y Wennol”; if anyone is interested in receiving copies let me know and I’ll forward your name to Rob.

Thankfully, I was not missing my bridge because sessions were quickly organised on line. In addition of course, I was busy trying to solicit articles for the next Old Boys’ newsletter and writing my own articles.

Why don’t you, dear reader, tell us what you did during the lockdown.

Michael Williams

Dr O. T. W. Price - from Cradoc Road to the World Bank (1937-42)

Owen Tom W Price was brought up at Nantgward, Llywel, a 400 acre livestock hill farm, which gave him a lasting interest in agriculture generally as well as scientifically, and the persistent problems of marginal land farming. At Aberystwyth he was a student of the eminent Professor A W Ashby and graduated with a first in Agriculture and Agricultural Economics. I recall Jacob Morgan announcing his academic success along with that of Dyfed Lewis (1937-43), Crai, in morning assembly. Both subsequently proceeded to Oxford for their masters. In the period 1947-50 OT was granted a Ministry of Agriculture postgraduate scholarship at Oxford and Wisconsin, emerging with a MSc (Wisconsin) in land economics, and a MA and D Phil (Oxon) based on a thesis on the economics of land use in England and Wales. For the next three years he lectured on land economics at the Agricultural Economics Research Institute, Oxford University. Between 1953-67 he was employed by ICI in various positions, ending as market investigations manager at their Agricultural Division.

In 1967 OT was employed by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development at Washington DC. Eventually he progressed to become deputy chief of the Economic Division of the Agricultural Projects department in 1969. In 1971 he was appointed Chief of Commodities and Trade in the Economic Department in the Bank. From 1973-76 he led an advisory mission to Iran, working on agricultural and Rural Development and devising an investment program. Returning to Washington in 1976, he became division chief in charge of the General Agricultural Division for East Asia and the Pacific. In this capacity he was responsible for helping the governments in this region to identify and prepare projects for submission to the World Bank. He was then to appraise the projects and submit them for approval to the Bank Board.

In his capacity within the World Bank he observed the problems of agricultural investment in the developing countries. His was a challenging role and a long-term mission. Dr Price was one of the earliest to have seen the world food balance as one of the major problems of the second half of the 20th century. He realised that the World Bank had a major and vital part to play in allocating its limited capital resources for investment in the developing world.

OT’s attainment of a position of international standing seems far removed from his upbringing on the Welsh hill farm and his days as a pupil at Brecon boys county school. He never forgot those early experiences which gave him a recurring interest in agricultural economics. Personally, I have been trying to get hold of an early paper of his on agriculture in Cwm Senni but regrettably without luck as yet.

Glyn Powell

Walks in and around Brecon

In previous newsletters I’ve described activities which Old Boys could try when attending the Annual Reunion. My first suggestion, in 2015, was a bike ride along the Taff Trail between Brecon and Merthyr via Talybont. In 2019 I suggested a less physically demanding activity, namely a bike ride along the (flat) canal path towards Talybont, or an even less demanding walk.

There are many great walks in and around Brecon and I describe two in this article. The first is a short walk to Slwch Twmp, an Iron Age hill fort, which is accessed from Cerigochion Road. The first photo shows the lane entrance. It's a deep stony lane which has been worn down over several centuries. The second photo



shows the stile which provides access to the field and a short cut to the top, from where one has excellent views of the town and the Beacons. The day I was there it was too cloudy to get a good view of the Beacons.

The second walk is along the path of the old Brecon-Hay railway near Llanfihangel-Talyllyn. This is a site of considerable historical interest because it was the route of the Hay-Brecon tramway.* This was the result of a campaign by enterprising Hay citizens, who were concerned about the problem of transporting heavy goods to Hay. This involved either boats on the river Wye or the canal to Brecon, from where wagons were used on unmade roads to Hay. Approval for the tramway was given by parliament in 1811 and it was opened in 1816. The changeover point for the horses was thought to be at Glasbury, where stables with oak stalls survive close to the route of the tramway.

The first photo below shows the old tramway; this section of the tramway was too curved for the train track and an alternative route was built a short distance to the east for the trains (second photo). The third photo



shows the site of the old Llangorse halt, which is visible from the road but not accessible because it's private property. I was disappointed not to be able to walk towards Talyllyn and see the site of the junction because it too is in

private hands.

An extension to Eardisley Wharf was completed in 1818, and when a link to Kington was added in 1820 the length of the tramway was 36 miles. This was described as the longest railway in the world at the time by Roger Young in his address to the Llyn Syfaddan History Group in April 2022. After 50 years of operation the tramway was replaced by steam trains.

Attempts are being made by the charity "The Brecon to Hay Greenway" to create a traffic free route between Brecon and Hay which will use, where possible, the old railway site. You can read more about this charity on their website here: <https://brecontohay.org>

*A print of the tramway at Hay (circa 1830) can be seen here:
<http://history.powys.org.uk/history/hay/tram1.html>

Michael Williams

Crai - an unlikely Hitler Target

Crai gets a strange mention in a recently published book entitled "Spying for Hitler" by the former Western Mail editor, John Humphreys. It tells the astonishing and untold wartime story of Gwilym Williams, a former police inspector, who became a double agent. There is some doubt over his Christian name, an issue that has not been resolved from the tranche of documents about the events released into the public domain in October, 2014. Recruited by MI5 for counter-espionage, he posed as a political fanatic within the ranks of a Welsh extremist group prepared to sabotage the British war effort. Amongst the plots which he tipped MI5 about was the one planned by German agents based in Spain to poison the waters of Crai Reservoir. The Germans also discussed the feasibility of dropping explosives by parachute onto the Black Mountains for use by possible fifth columnists.

Swansea was to prove to be a primary bombing target for the Luftwaffe. From the night of February 19th, 1941, Swansea was subjected to three terrifying nights of blitz as the German bombers aimed to destroy the docks and railway transport system. The blitz brought the atrocities of war into a ghostly close-up. It proved that the physical and mental attrition inflicted by war was equally traumatic in the dark hinterland away from the battlefields. The water from Crai reservoir was a vital resource for Swansea's industrial and domestic continued functioning, so a scheme to disrupt this supply does not seem so far-fetched after all.

In a synthesis of my memories of adolescence in the 1940s there are mundane but unforgettable background noises of life. I seem to recall from my primary school days how a fellow pupil, Alan Thomas, Waterworks House, brought a dead incendiary bomb case, found around the reservoir periphery, to school, an episode fraught with retrospective guilt on grounds of health and safety concern. German bombers which failed to release their payloads on target would often jettison their bomb loads indiscriminately before heading for home. There is no wonder, therefore, that the members of the local Home Guard on sentry duty at Y Grawen site ruins would take cover as the bombers droned overhead. Much to the awe of fellow pupils, Gwyn and Alun Harris, Waunewydd, also brought fragments to school from a crashed aeroplane which had been found scattered on open land above the farm.

Other recollections of school days in the war years include the gas mask which was issued to all pupils in the box provided. The box, with its strap for carrying over the shoulder, meant that we carried the traditional bag with homework and lunchtime sandwiches and the gas mask bag daily to and from school. The teachers would check regularly to you see that the gas mask fitted, and adjusted the straps over the head as necessary to make it comfortable, and also insured that a pupil was able to breathe. When put on, the vision window steamed up at the start and it was difficult to see where one was going. Probably in the summer of 1940, when the fear of invasion was the greatest, the pupils were asked to find a secure place to hide in the hedgerows on the roads in the vicinity of the school. This was quite an exciting task when one would find some sort of security in the butt of the hedge, particularly if one was lucky enough to find a stout stump to wrap oneself around. Rural boys enjoyed this kind of activity without realising the gravity of the situation.

Should invasion happen the Church bell would ring to let the public know. One morning, however, there was a continuous whistle from the Post Office area (Aelybryn now), and the Headmaster was clearly very concerned as this might be some kind of warning of imminent danger. However, he returned to the school having found that the constant whistle blowing was caused by a youngster out playing with his new toy.

The school was closed for two days in 1940 in connection with the reception of evacuees from London. The London pupils did not stay for long but pupils from Cardiff remained for months with one staying for years. The school windows were strengthened as a precaution against air raids and flying glass. An hour of Summer Time was introduced in 1941 with school starting at 10 am and parents complaining that they couldn't get the children to bed until midnight because it was not dark.

As the German submarines were badly interfering with the shipping cargoes, home food production became very important with schools being granted a fortnight's holiday to help with the potato harvest. "Warship Week" and "Wings for Victory Campaign" were held in successive years when pupils bought savings certificates to aid the war effort. There was a Day of National Prayer in 1942 with a short service being held at the school. At the conclusion of the war in Europe in May 1945 the school was granted a two day holiday for the V.E. Day celebrations.

The war years meant that educational visits were understandably very modest affairs. There were no visits to zoos or museums. We would accompany the headmaster to the bus stop and board the 10.10 am Brecon-Swansea bus. The bus driver would stop conveniently at the foot of Fangyhirych and we would energetically climb to the peak. We would see Swansea and other features in the distance and observe the plants that grew at that altitude. We sat and had our sandwiches and then made our way slowly down to the road to meet the 2.10 pm Swansea-Brecon bus back to Crai.

Glyn Powell

The Scethrog Explosion

How many of you remember the explosion on the A40 at Scethrog on 11th October 1957? The photo* was taken by Bill Lowe, the father of Barrie Lowe who posted it on the "Memories of Old Brecon" Facebook page a few years ago. The explosion happened when a lorry carrying three and a half tons of TNT explosive blew up, creating a crater 15 feet deep by 42 feet wide. This required 200 tons of stone to fill it.



The driver and his mate survived because they had stopped to clean the windscreen and discovered that one of the tyres was on fire. Realising the danger to passing motorists they ran up the road to stop approaching traffic. They had only gone a short distance when the lorry blew up. Windows were shattered, water mains disrupted and telephone lines put out of order. Martin Hurst, who lived a quarter of a mile away reported that all the windows and doors in his house were damaged.

The County Surveyor of Breconshire County Council (R.H. Daniels) had the hole filled, road re-surfaced and open to traffic the SAME DAY!

*Photo reproduced by permission of Barrie Lowe.

Michael Williams

Handel Jones 1955-61

Journalist, newsreader, broadcaster, author, translator

Under the academic regime that existed at the Boys' Grammar School, those who completed their A-level examinations were expected to enter college or university courses. Career prospects then seem to range over a somewhat limited field of choice, with teaching in one form or other being a common option. Occasionally one independent spirit would break the mould, viewed by the headmaster with an element of disdain. Such a

one was Handel Jones, who on successfully completing his A-levels in 1961, bypassed university entrance to become a journalist on the “Carmarthen Times.” He then joined the BBC in Cardiff, initially as a studio manager before becoming a regular contributor to radio and television programmes. With Welsh being his linguistic matrix, he became a program presenter and intermittently over the years he acted as a newsreader. Subsequently, as a freelance agricultural journalist, he presented farming programs and “Cefn Gwlad”, the highly popular programme about rural life. It so transpired that Handel recorded one program in the series “Ffermio” at Cefn-fedwr Ganol, my farm in the Senni Valley where the dam for the proposed reservoir was to be constructed.

From his earliest days of the Grammar School Handel was a regular contributor to the Silurian in both verse and prose. Since then he has established himself as a researcher and writer on local history ensuring that his articles always have a popular appeal. These articles have appeared in a wide range of publications including local papers such as “Y Fan a’r Lle” and “Lloffwr.” A major work of his, “A Family Affair” (“Teulu’r Tir”), in English and Welsh versions, is a history of the Farmers’ Union of Wales (FYW) 1955-92, in which he recounts its early struggle to gain governmental recognition and provides a fascinating glimpse of a crucial period in the history of Welsh agriculture. His most recent publication is “Diferion Dyfri” (March 2021), a work which has taken three years of research and the proceeds for which are being contributed towards the fund for the Urdd National Eisteddfod to be held in Llanymddyfri in 2023. Subtitled “Llên a Llun,” it contains a selection of the work of 150 local poets and rhymesters (“beirdd a rhigymwyr”) with biographical notes and photographs, where available, of each in turn. There are also artistic contributions from the works of local artists and photographers alongside the poems. A major opus for which he has been researching for over 20 years is “Gwasg y Tonn,” The Tonn Press” of William Rees (1808-1873). At one time he was the leading publisher and printer in Wales. Handel is working on his diaries which were among some 7000 books, weighing seven and a half tons, that were moved from Llanymddyfri to Cardiff in 1892. However, it is hoped that in the meantime he will find time to provide another article for the newsletter. In 1983 Handel and his family moved to Rhandir-mwyn, since when he has been earning a living as a writer and translator.

Glyn Powell

The Old Boys’ Website

Several years ago someone suggested that the Old Boys’ Association should have a website. After a year during which no one stepped forward to offer to create such a website, I volunteered. First I needed to learn how to use software to create a website, so I registered for a course on website design at Swansea University. This course taught me how to use Joomla.

My first task was to find suitable photos of the Cradoc Road and Penlan Schools for the welcome page. I described my first attempts to get a photo of the Cradoc Road building in my article in the 2011 newsletter. I eventually got a photo by entering a garden opposite the school (with the owner’s permission), as described in the 2012 newsletter. I spent some time enhancing the digital image to remove unsightly signs from the facade. The Penlan school was attached to the High School extension which was opened in 1971, and I was fortunate to obtain several photographs of the Penlan school from Bram Humphreys. I stitched two such photographs together to create the one which is on the website.

Having designed the website, I wanted to highlight different sections of the text on the Newsletter page by creating coloured backgrounds. To do this I used a Joomla Extension, which is a software package used for special effects. There are many such extensions available.

Eventually I demonstrated the website at a committee meeting in 2011 and it was announced in the 2012 newsletter with an invitation for Old Boys to provide feedback and comment. One member suggested a gallery of photos be added. This was done using another Extension; two galleries were created, one of committee members and one of local scenes.

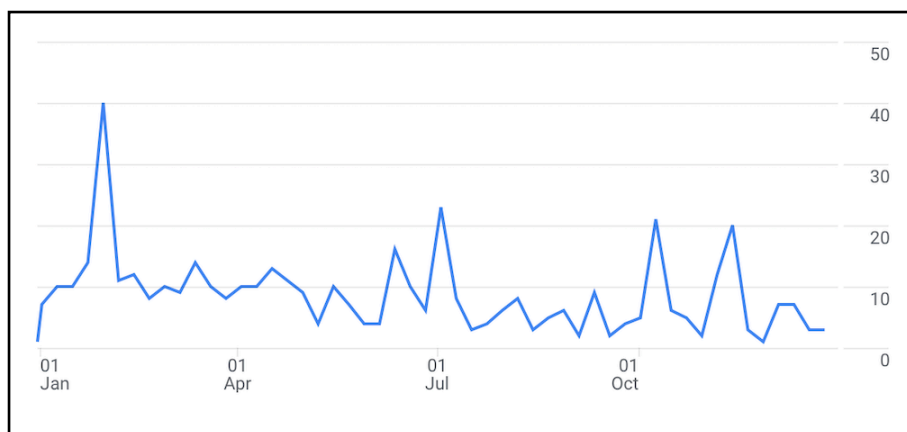
The cost of the website has two elements; there is an annual fee, currently £22.94, payable to GoDaddy, the company that provides the Domain Name, and the hosting of the website which costs nothing because it is hosted on my son's company server at no charge.

Of our members of the Association, 46% don't use email and receive their newsletters etc by mail, so I assume they don't use the internet. I decided to start monitoring the use of the website at the beginning of 2022. During that year there were 405 visits, most in the UK. A small number would be due to my visits to update the site and look for information from old newsletters. Three were in Russia and 50 in China and these are of some concern because the website was hacked a few years ago, though it was not a malicious attack. However, they may just have been due to bots, automated software which scans websites for email addresses or other information which might be used for fraudulent purposes. Wikipedia reports the astonishing statistic that **more than half of all web traffic is generated by bots!** This is why the email addresses in the Contact Us section of our website contain the letters XYZ, which have to be removed before they are used. Other information about users is listed below.

The graph shows the visits to the website throughout the year, and the spike of 40 at the end of January followed the posting of a message on the Memories of Old Brecon Facebook page in which I invited former pupils to join the Association. We recruited just one new member. The smaller spike in July followed a message on the Brecon Boys' Grammar School Facebook page.

Main users by country were: UK 245, USA 75, China 50, Ireland 4, Slovakia 4, Australia 3, Canada 3.

Main users by city were: London 41, Brecon 24, Columbus 18, Cardiff 16, Ashburn 13, Swansea 13, Portsmouth 9, Birmingham 6, Hemel Hempstead 6, Ferndown 5, Worcester 5, Abergavenny 4, Dublin 4, Llanelli 4.



Members who don't have Internet access should note that most public libraries have computers with internet access, and staff are usually available to help users. So, if you haven't looked at the Old Boys' website*, try it in your local library. On the newsletter page you can access all the newsletters.

*www.brecongrammar.org

Michael Williams

J. E. M. (Beti) George

Beti was born in Coed-y-Bryn near Llangranog and taught Welsh at the Boys' and Girls' Grammar Schools for a period of some 18 months from 1962. Although her stay was comparatively short she did nevertheless leave a distinctive impression on her pupils. Graduating from Cardiff University, she subsequently attended Aberystwyth University for her teacher's training qualification. On leaving Brecon for Swansea she was given a post with the BBC as editor of the programme "Bore Da" presented by T Glynne Davies, who tutored her on the art of broadcasting. Later she introduced S4C News with Glyn Llywelyn and a series of music programs. She was one of the presenters of a series called DNA Wales. She broadcast a special program on Saint David's Day in 2015 and showed a series of four programs between November and December 2015. Since 1985 Betty has presented a programme on BBC Radio Cymru called "Beti a'i

Phobol” where she talks to a selected guest each week. I was honoured to have been invited to be one of her guests in my former capacity as Deputy President of the FUW (Farmers’ Union of Wales).

Her partner was the writer and broadcaster, David Parry Jones, a relationship which lasted until his death from Alzheimer's disease in 2017. Beti raised awareness of the condition through the Welsh media. She presented “Un o Bob Tri” for S4C and “The Dreaded Disease”, David’s story on BBC Radio Wales. These programmes received universal acclaim and confirmed her standing as a broadcaster of television and radio of the highest calibre.

Glyn Powell

Y Gaer

The Old Boys’ website has kept you informed (in the news section) of the development of the new library at the 177 year old Grade II listed museum site, now renamed “Y Gaer.” Originally expected to open in 2017, the project was hit by cost over runs and delays, and the opening eventually took place in December 2019. The site includes the museum, which has been reconfigured and updated, the public library, which was in Ship Street, and a cafe. The cafe was incomplete when “Y Gaer” was opened but has since been completed.

A year ago “Y Gaer” website contained some interesting features, including a fascinating 6 year time lapse sequence showing the extensive work on the site. There were also several broken links but since I reported this to Powys Council the site had been updated (<https://www.storipowys.org.uk/y-gaer>). Disappointingly the time lapse videos are no longer available. A Google search for “Y Gaer” generated over 57k hits, many of them duplicates; I only read the first 4 pages, none of which contained the correct website. Some of the hits contained a link to the original website which now requires a password to enter. So finding the website is not straightforward.

Recent exhibitions have included “Matter of Identity” by Pip Wolff. This included installations developed through a period of intense drawing and making, informed by conversations with people living with dementia, scientists and activists involved with dementia-friendly communities.

The collections include a lovely engraving (*circa* 1800) of Brecon Castle plus the bridge over the Honddu. Another even older engraving, dated 1785, is shown on right. These can be accessed via the link to “Collections”.

In the museum section you can explore a 360 degree virtual tour of the whole building. I’ve been disappointed that the cafe has remained closed since it was completed, but the Brecon & Radnor Express announced on 22nd December 2022 that it will open on 16th January; about time!



Michael Williams

Arwyn Evans - 1960-82

Arwyn was born in Penlan, Cynghordy on the Carmarthenshire border with Powys and attended Llandoverly College before graduating from St David’s College, Lampeter. He then proceeded to Edinburgh University followed by Glasgow University, where he was for a period a lecturer in the Celtic Studies Department. Returning to Wales in 1960 he was appointed Head of the Welsh Department at the Boys’ Grammar School in succession to Harvey Williams, who had been appointed to the headship of the Secondary Modern School. Whilst at Edinburgh, during the harvest season he would accompany his fellow lodger, Douglas

Macintyre, to the latter's home, a farm near Dundee, to assist with the soft fruit harvest. Douglas' girlfriend, Gaelic speaking Fiona McLeod from the Hebrides, would type Arwyn's poems for submission for competition at eisteddfodau, in particular the poem which won for him the chair at Llandoverly Semi-National Eisteddfod in 1956.

Arwyn was a poet of some distinction being a master of "cynganedd" with the "englyn" being his particular forte. A National Eisteddfod winner, he was also in possession of a number of eisteddfod chairs of which he was extremely proud. A testament to his poetic legacy was delivered by Twm Morys, son of the late world renowned literary figure, Jan Morris, who was one of Arwyn's sixth form students. He credited Arwyn with being his mentor putting him on the path to national eminence as a poet, chaired bard at the 2003 National Eisteddfod, and Breton scholar.

Arwyn retired to the family "tyddyn" or smallholding occupying his time with his passion for fishing, walking and general rural activities until his recent death.

Glyn Powell

My Experience of America: 1960-62

When I was in the final year of my postgraduate research at Birmingham University finalising my PhD thesis, the Head of Department asked me one day if I would be interested in a job in Massachusetts. The head of Organic Chemistry, Dr Louis Long, at a government lab there, had contacted the Professor to say he was looking for a research chemist to work on a new project. He wanted someone with a good knowledge of carbohydrates. Birmingham University had an international reputation for excellence in carbohydrate chemistry, its most famous member being Professor Norman Haworth FRS, who led the team that worked out the structure of Vitamin C, and was awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1937.

At the time it was common practice for newly qualified PhDs to look for postdoctoral fellowships overseas before settling down in a permanent job, and I had already applied for a fellowship which would enable me to join an eminent chemist at Berkley University in California. The Massachusetts job sounded interesting so I said I would be interested. Some weeks later Dr Long visited the department to meet me. He was a pleasant man and we got on well. A week later I received a telegram offering me the job at a handsome salary. The job was described as "temporary pending establishment" and I would have to obtain an immigrant's visa. Since I had arranged to marry my fiancée, Anne, in July, she had to apply for a visa also, and we had to go to the US Embassy in London for an interview.

Some weeks later, after I had passed my PhD oral examination, I was offered a fellowship in the department at Birmingham. This was a considerable honour but I was so excited at the prospect of working in the New World that I declined the offer.

We planned to travel to the USA by boat which was cheaper than flying, and we selected the Holland America Line.

After a very happy wedding and honeymoon in Torquay, we spent a final weekend with my parents in Carmarthen before embarking on the SS *Statendam* in Southampton. We spent the first two days in our cabin feeling very sick! When we found our sea legs we enjoyed the novelty of life on a liner with a theatre, swimming pool, and excellent food. I had my first taste of filet mignon!

Our arrival in New York was magical. It was very early morning and the lights were still on in the skyscrapers as we slowly sailed up the Hudson River. We docked at Hoboken, New Jersey and on disembarkation we were alarmed to find that our tin trunk lid had come loose. It was repaired by a helpful worker, and after arranging for its dispatch to our address in Massachusetts, we travelled to Manhattan to catch a train in Grand Central Station, a very impressive building. My boss had instructed us to get off the train at the Route 128 station where he would meet us. He took us to his home where we met his family and

enjoyed a delicious meal. We were then taken to our hotel in Natick, the town where my place of employment was located.

Our first task was to find an apartment and a local estate agent drove us to several possible apartments, but one stood out from the rest. It was a self-contained flat attached to a private house where the owner, an elderly lady, lived. It was ideal and, though expensive, we chose it. Our second task was to buy a second hand car since there was no public transport which would take me to the research centre. We bought an old Rambler station wagon (estate car). Since Anne didn't drive she would have to learn; the fact that the Rambler was automatic made the job easier.

At my first day at work I met another chemist, Derek, who was also working on the same project. He was a Bristol University graduate and had obtained his PhD at Kingston University, Ontario. On our first weekend, Derek offered to take Anne and me on a trip to New Hampshire to see the famous Fall colours.

Derek was an excellent cook and he regularly invited Anne and me to dinner where we always began with a cocktail. We soon became familiar with Manhattans, Whiskey Sours, Daiquiris, etc.

Not many weeks had passed before we had a car problem - a cracked cylinder head, which required a major operation! This would not be the first car problem we would encounter.

After searching for employment Anne found a job as a clerk with a finance company which she was able to travel to by bus. Then, after mastering the Rambler, her next step was the driving test. Our American friends told us this would be a doddle, since it was not as thorough as a UK test. So it proved to be because our examiner was from Eastern Europe and throughout the test he chatted to me (I was in the back seat) about life in the UK.

A reflection of the international tension at the time was the fact that not far from where we lived there was an outlet selling fallout shelters. In 1961 we witnessed the election of the charismatic President John F Kennedy, who was famously responsible for averting a nuclear war with Russia in October 1962 during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Most weekends we spent exploring New England, including Cape Cod where we visited the landing site of the Pilgrim Fathers in 1620. Our nearest city, Boston, contained many sites of historical interest including the site of the Boston Tea Party. We also visited Concord, the site of battles in 1775 between British troops and locals which triggered the War of American Independence.

In our first year, trips to Chemical Conferences took us to Montreal and Washington DC, where I met a distant relative who spoke Welsh, having been brought up in a Welsh community in Pennsylvania.

A significant change in our lives occurred during the summer of 1961 when Anne learned that Wellesley College, a local Liberal Arts College for women, was looking for someone to teach European History and Religious Education. Although she had graduated in Geography, Anne had studied History to A-level and it was one of her first year subjects at University. She applied and to our delight she got the job, which she loved!

Half way through our second year we decided to return to the UK in September 1962, because Anne's father had died suddenly from a heart attack and my father was not in good health due to circulation problems. We decided that we would undertake a "Big Trip" around the whole country using our small tent, which we had bought for camping in New Hampshire. The trip was carefully planned with most stops in National Parks or National Forest campsites, with occasional stops in a motel so that I could charge my razor and enjoy the comfort of a real bed! We were able to spend up to 7 weeks on the trip because I had accumulated extra holiday time from the occasions when I went to work after a snowfall when others could not do so because they lived too far from the Research Centre.

A few weeks before our start date we had a major problem! Our car was very sick and needed new piston rings. The work was done a week before our departure, and in mid August we set off with instructions to

limit our speed for the first 100 miles and change the oil to remove swarf. We drove west passing through the Badlands of South Dakota, and the Black Hills where we encountered our next car problem. After a long climb up a hill in the Black Hills, the car started overheating and a hose pipe split. A friendly passer by helped us effect a temporary repair with tape, and we coasted back down the hill to a small town where they had a suitable hose in stock! Then it was too late to reach our planned campsite so we stayed in a cabin nearby. This was a huge stroke of luck because that night there was a bad storm that caused a lot of damage which we witnessed the following day when we resumed our journey.

As we journeyed westward, we noticed an unpleasant smell and discovered that we had a vacuum pump leak which required a replacement pump. Thankfully, the next town (population 3,000) had one in stock! After traversing Big Horn Mountain (elevation 9,600 feet) we arrived at Yellowstone National Park the following day. This wonderful park contained a huge variety of geysers, including the famous “Old Faithful” (photo on



left) and wild life including the ubiquitous bears, which often caused bear jams when people stopped to take photos. When we left after two days there, it was snowing. Our next major target was Glacier National Park followed by the beautiful Banff National Park in Canada. We then drove to Seattle where the World Fair was in progress. This contained many fascinating exhibitions including the General Electric Living Exhibit, which included a coffee table with a master control panel and a wall mounted computer.

We then turned south towards San Francisco and as we approached the city it was covered in fog. After the usual tourist activities such as riding on a tram to China Town, crossing the impressive Bay Bridge to Berkley, and having a meal on Fisherman’s Wharf, we drove south along the coast. To avoid Los Angeles we turned East on route to the magnificent Yosemite National Park. After visiting various attractions in the area our next major challenge was the drive across the Mohave Desert, which we were concerned about because of the high temperature and the car’s tendency to overheat. So we set out on the journey at 3:30am and drove through the Mohave with our heater on to try to keep the engine temperature down! After an uncomfortable journey we reached Las Vegas at 12:15, found a motel and dived into the pool. Las Vegas (photo on right) was fascinating, full of casinos, theatres, hotels, and chapels for quickie weddings.



The rest of our journey back to Massachusetts included visits to the stunning Bryce Canyon and the Grand Canyon, which was breathtaking. We reached Natick after a trip of just under 12 thousand miles in six and a half weeks. It was a holiday of a lifetime that would never be bettered.

Michael Williams

Mary Richards - “One of the few of ’71”

In retrospect it is difficult to believe that it was just over half a century ago that our alma mater lost its independent status with its integration with the Girls’ School and the Secondary Modern in a comprehensive High School. The 11+ scholarship examination had become unpopular in certain quarters and generally viewed as being divisive. “Parity of Esteem” between the grammar school and its counterpart, the secondary modern school, intended by the 1944 education act was rarely achieved. Consequently the central government decreed by circular 10/65 that selective schools should be replaced. Within the ranks of the Old Boys there continues to be a difference of opinion and entrenched standpoints on this issue. Accepting the *fait accompli*, the one abiding regret is that there does not appear to be a photograph of the staff at the time of reorganisation in 1971. From memory, only five members of that period survive, namely D R Morris (1957), P O J Rowlands (1958), John Meurig Edwards (1969), Vernon Davies (1970), and, of special interest, Mary Richards who was also a former pupil of the Girls’ Grammar School.

Mary was born in Conway Street, Brecon, the daughter of David Cadwan Richards, a police officer and Matilda, from a small holding in Rhigos. David was related to the wife of Deputy Head, Lewis Lewis. Mary attended Mount Street school for 4 years and then Brynmawr primary school when her father was transferred there, but returned for her final year at Mount Street school. She passed the 11+ scholarship examination and was admitted to the Girls' Grammar School. The family resided at Aelybryn, 8 Alexandra Road, a property owned by E I R ("Ivor") Morgan, an Old Boy (1909-11) of the school and former President of the OBA. The house had been the residence of Miss Margaret Davies, the first headmistress of the Girls' School (1896-1924). According to Mary, Miss Davies kept pupil boarders and their clothes' hooks were still in place upstairs. Downstairs there still exist the bells for each of the rooms.

From the outset of her grammar school education Mary's name appeared regularly on the school prize list and in particular the special 6th Form Maths prize. She completed her High School Certificate in 1947 in Latin, French, and Pure Maths before proceeding to Aberystwyth University College (1947-52). She resided at Carpenter's Hall where she was later to be joined by Mairwen Morgan. Mary graduated in Pure Maths but had to complete an additional year studying Applied Maths, not included in previous studies, to qualify for Honours. Then in the academic year 1951-52 she completed her Teaching Certificate. Her first teaching position was as Maths mistress at Treorci Grammar School. Already on the staff was another former pupil and Aberystwyth graduate, Olwen Lewis (1941-48), daughter of David Lewis, who was to become the long term chairman of Brecknock Education Committee.

Mary was appointed Maths mistress at Brecon Boys' Grammar School in place of A. Brian Winstone, a Brecon Old Boy (1944-51), who had been appointed Physics master at Neath Girls' Grammar School. Brian had been at the school for a year replacing Carwyn Roderick, later MP for Brecon and Radnor. With Gwyn Angell, Head of the Maths Department, Mary was to form a remarkably successful team. The reputation of the Maths and Science Departments was such that many pupils from other institutions transferred to the school to take advantage of the excellence of the 6th form tuition. On secondary reorganisation when Gwyn was delegated to an administrative position within the management team, Mary became Head of Department, a position she held until her retirement in 1988. Friendly, warmhearted and revered, Mary had given some 30 years of dedicated service to the school. A loyal team member she was a popular member of the staff room and was ever ready to assist with school activities. She undertook the scoring for the Eisteddfod and athletics meetings. In the performance of her teaching commitments Mary was a consummate professional and is remembered with nostalgia by her former pupils.

Mary was not the only mistress to have taught former pupils of the Boys' School over the decades. In my early years I was taught Maths by Mrs Olwen Muriel Rees (1942-45) who substituted for R W ("Benny") Bolton whilst he was on military service. In September 1951 Mrs M Timothy was appointed and remained on the staff until 1956 when she left for Aberdare. Then, Mrs Margaret Jinks took over from Graham Roblin in 1968 and continued at the High School until her retirement. It is not surprising that former pupils should have been complimentary of the standard of their Maths tuition at Brecon Boys' County Grammar School over the generations.

Glyn Powell

Another low calorie sugar

In my article "My retirement activities - Part 1" in 2020 I referred to the artificial sweetener Sucralose, which is 400 times sweeter than sugar (sucrose). During my career as an academic one of my research interests was carbohydrates, in particular sugars, and I now report another sugar, psicose (allulose), which is a low calorie substitute for sucrose. It has 90% fewer calories than sucrose and has 70% of the sweetness of sucrose. It is natural with small quantities being present in fruits such as figs, kiwi, raisin and mandarin oranges. Tate & Lyle manufacture psicose from fructose using a microbial enzyme.

In my article “Yet More Chemistry” in last year’s newsletter I wrote about the successful development, by a Mexican student for his father who had diabetes, of a method for producing xylitol. Xylitol has a low glycemic index, which does not cause a spike in blood glucose or insulin levels, and is a good sugar substitute for diabetics. Since then I’ve read about the successful use of inositol (another type of carbohydrate) in weight reduction. This was publicised on social media such as Tik Tok (which I don’t usually read) and was highlighted in the daily press last March. One lady, who was suffering from polycystic ovary syndrome, lost 7 stone in six months and the before and after photos were impressive. This news prompted a big rise in demand for inositol, but some medics have sounded a note of caution in view of possible side effects such as diarrhoea. So, if you are tempted to try it to reduce weight, do your own research first.

Michael Williams

I passed the Scholarship

Part 1

It was with resigned credulity that, as a rather inconspicuous 10-year-old from a small rural school, that I was granted one of the 30 places on offer at Brecon Boys’ County School in 1943. Although the certainty of things remembered breaks down with the factual failings of the mind, I assume that passing was enveloped in self congratulation more so than winning prizes at either an eisteddfod or a Sunday School “arholiad.” The so-called scholarship, pre11+ days, insured a selective procedure that resulted in the majority being denied secondary education. There was no concept of either equal work or equal deserving. The segregation of the minority of supposedly “bright ones” implied the rejection of the majority with the stamp of failure. So admission into the ranks of the 30 successful candidates automatically insured a privileged status over contemporaries, joining a *corps d’elite* of the cohort of boys at the *locus classicus* of traditional academia. One was given to believe that he was joining a tightly knit clique with the right of entitlement and superiority. On reflection I can recall the words of a comic song popular on the stage at our local “nosweithau llawen.” ‘Rydyn ni’n proud o Tomi ni whath mae’r crwt yn y Cownti Scwl” (we’re so proud of Tommy because the boy is in the County School.”) The obvious educational dissension against the majority was the consequence of the mitigating and aggravating circumstances of the deadly weight of tradition. To what extent the situation was accepted, as in the words of Saint Paul “I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances,” is subject to considerable doubt. What is more, the traditionary strong bias in favour of extended elitism was built into the culture and ethos of the County School.

Being an analog among digital natives viewing the past through 2022 eyes and sensibilities, I feel the narrative is wincingly anachronistic. The past is another planet and it was L. P. Hartley who famously began his novel “*The Go Between*” with the line “the past is a foreign country, they do things differently then.” In this context I am reminded of the Japanese saying “to know the present you must first journey to the past”. Judgement on the education provided at the County School is generally tinged with nostalgia, but surely perspective stretches and shrinks with fine details becoming blurred. What is evident is that the story is riddled with paradoxes.

I was obliged to reassess the significance of my passing the scholarship by TK (Ken Jones), who intimated that had we lived in a more populous area it is doubtful that even 10 of us would have succeeded in gaining a place in a secondary school (Ken and myself included!). Yet an inconsistency was that the Girls’ County school had a 60 pupil entry from 1937 following the construction of the new building, which provided extra classroom accommodation and additional facilities such as the superb assembly hall and gymnasium. As an interim arrangement at the Boys’ School a 60 pupil entry was implemented every three years. Such was the case in 1941, 1944 and 1947. This arrangement was made possible by using the Central Hall as a classroom. Prior to the building of the gymnasium complex in 1931, the hall had been used for assembly and drill

purposes. At the same time the former cloakroom and washroom was converted into a classroom for Form V5.

Use of the central hall as a form base was more than a little inconvenient as it provided constant disturbed access to the classrooms housing Form II, Form IV and Form VJ behind the partition. Should a pupil require to leave his classroom for any purpose, he was obliged to excuse himself to the staff member teaching in the hall. I can recall only too well on that first morning nervously pushing open the double glass-paned doors below the wall clock and having to hurry past the staring eyes and smirks of seasoned 4th formers. It was with awkward innocence and feeling rather puzzled that I entered my classroom to find only one unoccupied seat. I knew no one and was obliged to move in alongside a rather sharp tongued Maendu Terrace boy, who enlivened conversation with an astonishingly rich and varied lexicon of truly graphic expletives. As I panned the classroom I became somewhat disorientated and confused to the point of bewilderment.

Until the passing of the 1944 Education Act the disadvantaged majority were condemned to remain within the elementary sector mainly in the so-called All Age Schools. There was the occasional late entry into the third form of the County School, but the only alternative was in the public schools sector, where admission depended on payment of fees. Christ College and Coleg Llanyddyfri afforded opportunities for boys whilst many girls entered Brecon and Abergavenny Convents as well as Cheltenham Girls' College. There was, however, some concern about the seemingly inconsistent admission procedures to the County Schools. My classmate failed to get a place with the score of 115, whilst a girl in our class entered the Girls' School with a score of 90! Furthermore, a number of local boys were under the impression that evacuees had been given preference and had taken their places.

To compensate for the non-availability of secondary education a surprising number of boys from Crai and the neighbouring area, mainly farm boys, attended the so-called Hampton Grammar School, Glasbury. Here the curriculum content of mathematics, business studies, book-keeping, accountancy and written expression were of more practical value in the pursuit of their particular enterprises. A few attended Clark's College Swansea, where there was a similar pragmatic provision. Interestingly, the prospectus for the college for 1941 intimated that air raid shelter provision was available. However, there had been growing concern from numerous quarters from the beginning of the 20th century about the education of adolescents. This was reflected in particular as early as 1919 in H.A.L. Fisher's Education Act, a venture that perished in the gloom of the post-war depression. Developing the theme further was the intention of both the Hadow Report of 1926 and more significantly the Spens Report of 1939. The doctrine enshrined in the Spens report was reaffirmed in the Norwood Report of 1943 and then embodied in the 1944 Act.

There had been an attempt to resolve the issue within the Defynnog and Crickhowell Education Districts with the establishment of Senior or Central Schools at Sennybridge and Crickhowell. The latter was opened in 1939 but the opening of the former was delayed until 1940. Although a headteacher had been appointed the possibility of the building being converted into a military hospital was being considered at the same time as the acquisition of the Epynt for military training and the building of Sennybridge Army Camp. The two schools had significant facilities unavailable in the all age schools. At Sennybridge Senior School there was an impressive hall with stage and gymnasium equipment such as wall-bars, ropes and other apparatus. There was also a woodwork room, a cookery room, canteen and extensive garden. However, it was not a secondary school but a senior elementary school. The opening of the school was not plain sailing as it had to accommodate pupils from Halstow Road Senior Girls' School evacuated from Greenwich London from 23rd October 1940 until the end of 1942. Their presence meant the use of the stage and practical rooms as classrooms. Then, with the closure of Defynnog Endowed elementary school in 1947 and the amalgamation of its pupils, the Senior School had to revert to the status of an ordinary all age school called Defynnog Primary School.

Glun Powell (Part 2 will appear next year)

Obituaries

Gareth L. Davies (1949-55)

His Honour Judge Gareth Davies resided at Bronllys Castle and was associated with Honey Cafe, Bronllys. He started his career as a local solicitor in Brecon before moving to St Albans, where he was one of the founder members of the local Welsh Society. He was one of very few solicitors to be appointed a Circuit Judge, and often sat at Merthyr Crown Court. He retired to Bronllys Castle and enjoyed sailing and skiing.

Peter O. Massochi (1943-46)

Born in London, Peter professed to be a Welsh Cockney to his fellow pupils. In 1946, prior to taking his School Certificate exams, he auditioned successfully for Stefani's Silver Songsters, the nationally acclaimed boys' ensemble. When his voice changed he left and attended a bakery college. After National Service he worked in the family business in Sennybridge. He starred with the Welsh Opera Company for 30 years.

Roy Owen Powell (Staff: 1974-?)

Roy, a distinguished painter, was born in Chepstow. He attended Monmouth School followed by Cardiff College of Art. He joined the strong Art Department at Brecon High School. After retirement he flourished as an artist, influenced by the works of Cezanne. His work appeared at numerous exhibitions and in 1997 he and his father featured in a joint exhibition at the National Library. He was a church warden at the Cathedral.

Robert ("Bob") Breeze (1941-47)

Bob, one of our most loyal Old Boys, was honoured as President and Life Vice President, having attended our functions regularly over many years. He died within but a month of his completing his Presidential year. Rather than awaiting the Higher Certificate exams, he embarked on training with the Met Office, following in the footsteps of Vernon Farr and John Winstone, two of his contemporaries. After National Service in the RAF he remained at Upavon until his marriage in 1953, when he resigned from the Met Office. He moved to Hereford where he worked with Sullivans, utilising his special knowledge in the storage of vegetables and fruit. He ended his career with Guest as Director of Quality Assurance at Newport Docks.

Jean Willis (née Thomas) (1947-1954)

Brecon girl, Jean, attended the Boys' Grammar School at Cradoc Road for her Physics and Chemistry classes in the sixth form. She graduated in Chemistry at Nottingham University where she met and married fellow student Martin Willis, who became reader in Chemistry. Jean taught Chemistry in a range of secondary schools, and after early retirement she taught in a local FE college and at Derby University. [For more information about Jean's life read her article in the 2009 newsletter]

Geoffrey Evan Thomas Bevan (1940-44)

Geoffrey left school early following an eye injury and took up a post with the War Ag. He then served for three years in the Royal Engineers and joined Elston's garage on demobilisation. He had a successful career in the motor business and eventually joined the Nissan motor company. Prior to retirement he joined the Hyundai company for 4 years. Ill health obliged him to decline the invitation to be president of the OBA.

Ronald Denis Byewatere Rees (1943-46)

Den had to leave school at the age of 14 to join Walter's Builders. Excused National Service on medical grounds, he spent a period in the Civil Service before joining the motor industry. He built up a successful garage business before retiring to Llandysul. Dan was a motorcycle enthusiast and his clay-pigeon shooting interest led to his captaincy of the Welsh team. He became a fluent Welsh speaker and adult class tutor.

Elizabeth Elaine Jones (nee Humphreys) Staff

Elaine moved to Brecon when her father joined the staff of the National Provincial bank. She attended the Girls' Grammar school and after her A-level exams in 1956 she entered college in Bath qualifying as a needlework teacher. After teaching in Ewenni she was appointed to the staff of her old school. She played a leading part preparing costumes for various productions. She was a member of Watergate Baptist Chapel.

Gwyn Percy Griffiths (1954-61)

Talgarth boy, Gwyn, completed his A-level exams in Chemistry, Biology and Zoology and then read Agricultural Chemistry at Nottingham University. He spent most of his working career in Rutland with a firm testing plant production chemicals. He retired to Talgarth and enjoyed his interest in vintage machinery and horticulture. A member of the school 1960-61 soccer team he also played for Talgarth.

Gwilym Lewis Griffiths (1940-44)

Gwilym was admitted to the County School along with John Spencer, an evacuee hosted by his family. On leaving school he worked as a clerk for W M Davies, Sennybridge before serving his National Service in the RAF. On demobilisation he joined the Education Department of Breconshire CC. After a temporary post with Jeffreys and Powell he became bursar at Coleg Howell Harris. He was a dedicated Presbyterian.

Mike Davies

Despite extensive enquiries details of Mike's school days remain inconclusive. However, on leaving school he worked for Breconshire County Council in the Weights and Measures Department. He subsequently set up his own Driving School business in Rhaeadr.

Whyndham Perkins (1950-55)

Crai boy Whyndham's first job after school was in the Weights and Measures Department of the Local Authority. After his National Service in the RAF he returned to his previous post until 1964, when he became Assistant Bursar at Christ College. He was a talented rugby player for Brecon, a keen golfer with a handicap of 4, and was active in the scouts and Rotary, being treasurer and one time President.

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