

***Cylchlythyr Cymdeithas Cyn-Ddisgyblion Ysgol Ramadeg y Bechgyn
Aberhonddu
Mawrth 2011***

Brecon Grammar School Old Boys' Association Newsletter March 2011

Last year a questionnaire was sent out to members with the invitation to the annual reunion. This sought to discover your opinions on the Association's activities and future. Responses were received from only 26% of members, of whom the majority were content with the time of year of the reunion, 7% preferring a later date in the year. A Saturday night time was favoured by 74% of members, Saturday lunch by 14%, Sunday lunch by 7% and Friday night by 5%. On the choice of a dinner or a buffet, 78% chose a dinner and 22% either a dinner or a buffet. Regarding possible future mergers, 75% were in favour of retaining the status quo or merging with the Old Girls, and a majority were against a merger with all secondary schools. Everyone enjoyed all or part of the newsletter.

Sadly, as usual the Grim Reaper has continued his work over the last year and we have lost a number of Old Boys, including one of our oldest surviving members, William (Bill) Leonard. He was a long-standing supporter of the Old Boys' Association and a tribute, written by Ken Jones, appears on page 3. An appreciation, written by Glyn Powell, of Dennis Morgan, our chairman until last year, also appears in this edition.

One suggestion for contributions to the newsletter has been articles of the post-school experiences of members, since most contributions received so far have been of the "Recollections of school days" type. In this edition we have the first contributions of this type from Len Pritchard ("*Itinerant Engineer*") and Peter Holt ("*How the years have wings*"). More such contributions are welcome.

The 2011 reunion, on 30th April, will be slightly unusual in that it coincides with the May Bank Holiday weekend because Easter is so late. This will be a great opportunity for members to spend a weekend in Brecon and re-explore areas such as the Beacons or take a trip on a canal boat.

Anfonwyd holiadur allan i'r aelodau gyda'r gwahoddiad i'r aduniad blynyddol llynedd. Amcan hyn oedd darganfod eich barn ar weithgareddau a dyfodol y Gymdeithas. Cafwyd ymateb gan ond 26% o'r aelodau, y mwyafrif ohonynt yn fodlon ar amseriad yr aduniad, gyda 7% yn dweud y byddai dyddiad yn hwyrach yn y flwyddyn yn well ganddynt. Roedd 74% o blaid cinio ar y Nos Sadwrn, 14% yn ffafrio cinio canol dydd ar y Sadwrn, 7% am gael cinio Dydd Sul, a 5% o blaid cinio Nos Wener. Roedd 78% o blaid cinio, a 22% am gael naill ai cinio neu bwffe. Parthed dyfodol y Gymdeithas, roedd 75% am gadw'r sefyllfa bresennol neu uno gyda'r Merched, a mwyafrif yn erbyn uno gyda'r ysgolion uwchradd i gyd. Roedd pawb yn mwynhau'r cylchlythyr neu ran ohono.

Bu'r Medelwr Didostur yn weithgar fel arfer dros y flwyddyn aeth heibio, a chollwyd nifer o'r hen Ddisgyblion, gan gynnwys un o'n haelodau hynaf oll, William (Bill) Leonard. Roedd yn gefnogwr hirhoedlog o Gymdeithas yr Hen Ddisgyblion, a cheir teyrnged iddo gan Ken

Jones ar dudalen 3. Hefyd yn y rhifyn hwn ceir gwerthfawrogiad gan Glyn Powell o Dennis Morgan, ein Cadeirydd tan y llynedd.

Ymhlith nifer o awgrymiadau am gyfraniadau i'r cylchlythyr oedd y galw am erthyglau ar brofiad aelodau ar ôl gadael yr ysgol, gan y bu'r rhan fwyaf o gyfraniadau hyd yn hyn o'r math "Atgofion o Ddyddiau'r Ysgol". Ceir y cyfraniadau cyntaf o'r math hwn yn y rhifyn hwn, sef "*Itinerant Engineer*" gan Len Pritchard a "*How the years have wings*" gan Peter Holt - byddai croeso mawr i ragor o gyfraniadau tebyg.

Bydd cinio 2011, ar 30^{ain} Ebrill, ychydig yn anarferol, gan iddo gyd-ddigwydd â phenwythnos Gŵyl Banc Mis Mai, gan fod y Pasg mor hwyr eleni. Dyma gyfle gwych i'r aelodau gael treulio penwythnos yn Aberhonddu yn ail-ymgyfarwyddo ag ardaloedd megis y Bannau neu fynd ar wibdaith cwch ar y gamlas.

Events of 2010

On Saturday 10th April 88 members and guests attended the 61st **Annual Reunion Dinner** at the George Hotel, and were welcomed by Dennis Morgan who was chairing the reunion for last time since he was resigning after ten years as chairman. He expressed his warmest thanks to members of the committee, especially secretary Tom Protheroe, for their help during this time. President Evan Morgan in his address recalled his first day at Brecon School when form 2A went to Cradoc Road school and form 2W went to the Plough. He was faced with the choice of Latin or French and chose Latin on the advice of the Vicar. One highlight of the first year was the occasion when Welsh teacher Taffy dealt with a miscreant in his class by lifting him up with one hand and cleaning the blackboard with him! In the second year he was faced with another subject choice – History or Physics; he chose Physics. His cohort was unique in that there was a change from four years of study before the O-level examinations to five years. Evan experienced the change of headmaster when Aneurin Rees succeeded Jacob Morgan. One significant change instituted by Aneurin was to introduce rugby football. Evan was not a sports enthusiast and on one occasion he was caught by Giles skiving from sport. His punishment was to clean the sports field. Despite attempts by the headmaster to persuade him to stay on after O-levels, Evan left to join the family farm. He joined the Young Farmers' Club and became district council member in 1963. He has been very active in local affairs and local government, and in considering the future problems faced by Local Authorities he highlighted secondary schools as the biggest problem in Powys. For example some buildings are in very poor condition, and schools are expected to provide a minimum of 30 subjects.



Evan concluded by thanking everyone involved in organising the reunion, and appealed to members to support the Old Boys' Association and make known their views concerning its future.

Vice President David Gittins proposed a vote of thanks to Evan Morgan for his address, to his committee colleagues for their work during the past year, and to the staff of the George Hotel for their excellent service. He then accepted the chain of office from President Morgan (on left in photo).

The **annual prize giving** was held at Brecon High School on 13th July. Actress Sian Williams, a former pupil, was Guest-of-Honour. President, David Gittins and Immediate Past President, Evan Morgan represented the Old Boys Association.

The Cliff Carr sports prize was awarded to Graham Hunt who has represented Wales in Karate. The Meredith Powell senior award went to Joshua Page for his work "a critique of Tennyson", and the Meredith Powell junior award was presented to Eve Murphy.

Due to the atrocious weather on the morning of 11th November fewer than usual Old Boys attended the **Memorial Service** at Brecon High School. This well managed service followed the usual format; after several readings by senior pupils Sergeant Gary Buchanan, representing the military, read out the names of those who died in World War I, and Vice President Shaun Gallagher, representing the Old Boys' Association, read out the names of those who died in World War II. After the reveille wreaths were laid on the memorial plaque by President David Gittins and jointly by the oldest and youngest boys on behalf of the school. Finally the Rev. Michael Hodgson gave a thought provoking address in which he began by asking what the words Memorial Service or Armistice Day conjured up in everyone's mind. Using slides to illustrate his comments, he referred to the horrors of war from the first world war to recent conflicts, and talked of the different ways in which war impacts on society. In a local context he referred to the Epynt clearances in which farmers were forced to leave their farms so that the land could be used by the army during the second world war. Though it was intended to be a temporary measure the farmers were never allowed to return.

The Memorial Service is always held on 11th November and Old Boys are welcome to attend. When the date falls on a Saturday or Sunday the date of the service can be found by contacting any committee member or the school (some contact details are at the end of the newsletter).

Biographical Notes

Shaun Gallagher (1952-59): Vice President

Shaun, a native of Hay, has happy memories of school and especially enjoyed playing competitive sport, which became a major influence in his life. After training as a teacher at Cardiff College of Physical Education, his first teaching post was in East London. This was followed by two more schools before retirement from Haywood School in Hereford where he was Director of Resources. On their retirement, Shaun and his wife Lynette, came home to Clyro near Hay, where he enjoys the great outdoors, reading, travel and meeting friends.

BILL LEONARD

It is difficult to know where to begin when describing Bill's life. So I will take the advice of Dylan Thomas and 'Begin at the beginning'. He was born in Brecon in 1917 and from 1936 lived in Camden Road. After his early education in St. David's Convent he passed the scholarship for the Boys' Grammar School where he became Head Boy. He was a founder member of the Old Boys' Association and served as President, Chairman, Secretary for 15 years, a committee member for as long as anybody can remember and Honorary Life President. So far as I know he never missed a committee meeting or any Old Boys' function. As soon as he was old enough he joined the Boy Scouts and this was the beginning of a life time commitment to the Scout movement. I believe that the 7 Scout Laws guided him for the

rest of his life. For instance the first Scout Law means, always keep your promises and if you agree to do something, make sure that you do it! When Bill promised to do something you could be absolutely sure it would be done and done effectively.

From where he lived in Camden Road he could look down on the railway and he was fascinated by the age of steam. After Dr. Beeching's axe he worked on locomotive overhaul at Hereford and was a keen member of the local Railway History Society. When the former Boys' Grammar School became a youth club he took part in building, in the old Sixth Form classroom, a working model of the Brecon and Merthyr railway.

Bill's father was a somewhat austere figure and to the surprise of many in the late 1930s his father, his brother Peter, sister Sheila and Bill all became involved with the Brecon Little Theatre and soon Bill was responsible for lighting the productions. He was fascinated by the potential and practical application of electrical engineering. So he sat and passed the very competitive examination to enter the Faraday Institute of Electrical Engineering in London. This was not only Britain's pioneer college in electrical engineering but also the first university status college to add practical experience, which in Bill's case was with the West Gloucestershire Power Company.

When World War II broke out Bill volunteered for His Majesty's Forces and was called up in January 1940. As a Graduate of the Institution of Electrical Engineers he attended physics and mathematics courses at University College Leicester preparatory to being posted to the Army Radio and Radar School. At the end of his training he was promoted to Second Lieutenant and put in charge of four heavy anti-aircraft and radar sites in Kent and in 1943 was promoted to Captain. In late 1944 he was in Belgium and following the surrender of Germany in 1945 he went to Lubeck. He remained in Germany for two years as part of the Control Commission in the British zone.

During his period in Germany something happened to change the course of his life but he never talked about it. However, he did tell me that on one occasion he heard the Vienna Boys' Choir sing in a devastated city, and he found this so moving that, from 1946 to the end of his life, he was associated with this choir. I am sure that there are people who will remember this world-renowned choir singing in Brecon on many occasions, but I doubt if they knew that these concerts were not only arranged by Bill but originally were sponsored by him and, later on, in association with the Brecon Lions. I do not know when he developed his love of classical music but I do remember him asking me when I was about 14 whether I preferred Mozart to Bach! I could have answered if I had had to choose between Tommy Dorsey and Benny Goodman but at that time Mozart and Bach were not part of my world.

After the war there were plenty of lucrative jobs for well-qualified electrical engineers but instead Bill decided to devote the rest of his life to working with young people. Although he was not a qualified teacher he was appointed to a temporary position at Ty Mawr approved school for young offenders in Gilwern. His combination of consistency, understanding and discipline made him a successful teacher and of course he started a Scout Troop there as well as becoming ScoutMaster of the Brecon Troop. In 1951 he obtained his Teaching Certificate at Cardiff University College. He now taught for the rest of the 50s in Surrey and Kent, and around 1960 he qualified at Culham College in Oxfordshire to teach maladjusted and, what were then called, Educationally Subnormal children. Brecon and district has always had its share of children with educational problems but until 1962 when Bill was appointed to Mount

Street school there was no specialist teacher for them. He held this position until he retired twenty years later. He must have been very pleased to see the development of Ysgol Penmaes.

Bill had wide interests and gave of his time to many organisations for long periods. But above all he was devoted to the Scouts. When Bill returned to Brecon in 1947 he became Scout Master of the 1st Brecon Troop and while training to become a teacher in Cardiff he still managed to run the Brecon Cubs. During the years he was teaching at Burgh Heath in Surrey he was the leader of the local Cub Pack and at the same time was Group ScoutMaster in Brecon. To list all the positions he held in the scouts, including that of District Commissioner, would take a long time and his great contribution was recognised in the year 2000 when he was awarded the Silver Wolf, the highest award in the movement. Five years later he was presented with a Long Service Award for 60 years involvement **as an adult** with the scouts. His last association with the scouts was in the spring of this year when he unveiled a plaque in the Brecon scout headquarters commemorating the centenary of scouting in Brecon. Those of us who were in the scouts with Bill saw a side of him, which would come as a surprise to many people. An essential part of a Scout or Guide camp is the nightly campfire when songs are sung and stories told. The star event in our campfires was Bill's delivery of the Stanley Holloway monologue 'Alfred and the Lion'. Bill recited this with perfect timing in a wonderful Cockney accent! He was an excellent mimic.

Finally, I want to show, how once Bill enjoyed doing something, he repeated it again and again and again. Once a week Bill and his friend Bill Garnett went out to lunch and in recent years it was to the Three Horseshoes in Groessfordd where the same meal was always ordered. Several of the villagers believed that they could set their watches by the time they arrived! But even more typical of Bill was his devotion to Norway. Some thirty years ago he decided that his annual holiday would be with Norwegian Coastal Voyages whose boats delivered goods as far as the Russian border to the small and large towns located at the head of the fjords. He did this for 25 consecutive years and it is rumoured that in several of the small towns he was so well known that he was almost made an honorary citizen! Bill enriched the lives of many young and older people in this community. He was a good man. We will miss him.

Ken Jones

Mervyn Jenkins honoured by RNLI

Mervyn Jenkins, the virtual "Father of the House" in Old Boys' Association terms, has been rewarded for his 42 years service to the Royal National Lifeboat Institution with the award of a Bar to the Gold Badge. A Dunkirk veteran, he committed himself to the lifeboat charity in appreciation of his having been rescued from the beaches by a crew of lifeguards. It was when he became mayor in 1968 that he nominated the RLNI as his chosen charity and he has continued to support it ever since.

Glyn Powell

Dennis Morgan: Chairman 2000-2010

The retirement of Dennis Morgan from the chairmanship in 2010 brings to a close his remarkable innings as a dedicated office holder within our Association. A doyen amongst

Silurians he was actually one of its founding members in 1950, and from its very inception he has played a leading role in its activities. At a time when we were feeling the effects of an evident thinning out in the ranks of senior members, Dennis stepped into the breach and assumed the mantle of elder statesman. A veritable “Who’s Who” of former pupils, his encyclopaedic knowledge has enabled the committee to trace many who have long since been in diaspora. As linkman between the OBA and the High School he did his utmost to enlarge our profile within the changed scheme of things. By trawling assiduously through the columns, especially “In Memoriam”, of national and local newspapers, as well as “papurau bro”, he garnered news of Old Boys. In cases of bereavement and hospitalisation he personally wrote letters of sympathy and get well messages to families and individuals. A pragmatist, he endeavoured to implement a number of practical ideas to heighten interest and increase support for the OBA.

Off the Talgarth production line, Dennis was a pupil of wartime vintage (1940-1945). Following graduation from Aberystwyth and National Service in the RAF, he gravitated to



Bangor, where as a fresher I encountered him again at weekly college “hops”. Eventually we both moved on - Dennis to Leeds, Michigan and Wolverhampton but on retirement returning to the proverbial “Athens of Wales” becoming a naturalised “Gog” and no mean golfer. Despite the inordinate distances involved he attended our committee meetings with unfailing regularity. Strangely though, or so it seemed, he always scheduled meetings to fit in with either the rugby international calendar or school rugby matches at

Coleg Llanymddyfri. His nomination for Life Membership of the Association is an honour richly deserved. [In the photo Dennis, on left, receives a retirement gift of a painting of a view of Mynydd Troed from Glyn].

Glyn Powell

Pensnett House Boys

by

Dennis Morgan

Pensnett House, located in Bridge Street, Aberystwyth, was well known as lodgings for university students and I lived there for most of my student days in Aber. Recently I had the pleasure of an overnight stay in a fairly new students’ hostel on the main university campus. I enjoyed a very comfortable well equipped centrally heated study/bedroom with full en suite facilities, luxury indeed compared with the rather old fashioned facilities at Pensnett House – open coal fires, gas lighting and a small bathroom with a gas-heated geyser for hot water. Still, at the time, as students we thought it quite comfortable and I enjoyed my days there. Thinking back to those days though, I recalled that there was something more significant about Pensnett House than lodgings – it had a close connection with former pupils of Brecon Grammar School dating from the early nineteen thirties.

I first went up to Aber in early October 1945 as a somewhat naïve sixteen year old, apprehensive as to what lay ahead in my pre-arranged student digs. Who else would be there,

where did they come from, and would I settle with them? However my concerns were soon dispelled when I found two former Brecon pupils already well ensconced there. They were Owen Tom Price from Trecastle and Dyfed Lewis from Cray, who had been there for 3 and 2 years respectively. In 1947 along came another old Silurian following discharge from the Army, namely Walter Price, also from Trecastle. The Brecon connection though did not stop there. In one of the rooms were photographs dating from the nineteen thirties of the following old Silurians: Herbert Price (Trecastle, brother of Walter), Probert Davies (The Vale, Brecon) and Charles Price (Trefecca, Talgarth).

Older members of the OBA who remember them may be interested in the careers of these seven Pensnett House boys. One studied in the Arts Faculty and all the others in Rural Science. All graduated with good honours degrees and proceeded to successful careers:

Herbert Price (Geography) became Head of a Secondary School in Aberdare.

Owen Tom Price (Economics with Agricultural Economics) after further studies at Oxford and Wisconsin became an Economic Advisor to the World Bank.

Walter Price (Economics with Agricultural Economics) worked for some years in the Agricultural Engineering industry and later became Vice Principal of Coleg Hywel Harris in Brecon.

Charles Price (Agricultural Botany) and **Probert Davies** (Chemistry with Agricultural Chemistry) both joined the Ministry of Agriculture's Advisory Service where they became Senior Agronomists.

Dyfed Lewis (Chemistry with Agricultural Chemistry) after further studies at Cambridge and Sheffield eventually became Professor of Agricultural Biochemistry and Food Science at Nottingham University.

Dennis Morgan (Chemistry with Agricultural Chemistry) after further studies at Michigan State University also joined the Ministry of Agriculture's Advisory Service and became a Senior Nutrition Chemist and finally Head of the Agricultural Science Service for the East and West Midlands.

It is also noteworthy that another Brecon Old Boy, John Hopkins (Bronllys), although not from Pensnett House, also studied Chemistry with Agricultural Chemistry, joined the Ministry of Agriculture's Advisory Service and became Divisional Agricultural Officer for the Derby/Notts Division.

Obviously as a group the Pensnett House seven were successful both academically and professionally, as indeed were many other Old Silurians who entered Higher Education. It is not possible to speak for each of them, but as the surviving member of that group, I am confident that each would have agreed that the educational foundations for that success were laid in that small rural grammar school in Cradoc Road, Brecon.

Extract from "Recollections of Adolescence" by the late Iwan Jones (1935-41) The School

Although the school was small its pupils came from a huge catchment area – the most widespread of all schools in Wales. In the west they came from Trecastle and Sennybridge on the borders of Carmarthenshire, from Cray in the south west almost to Glamorgan, from Crickhowell in the east on the border of Monmouthshire, and from Hay in the north east on the edge of Herefordshire. Llew Williams travelled from Trostre farm near the village of

Cantref in the “bosom of the Beacons” to school on the back of a pony, which was left in a pub stable in Llanfaes during the day while its master was at school, and then ridden home after school. With such a widespread catchment area, the children’s accents were very varied, extending from the countryside English of Herefordshire to the Welsh accent of western Breconshire. The Welsh language was very scarce and in a period of 7 years in school I remember three others who spoke Welsh – those from the regions of Trecastle and Cray. Boys and girls swarmed in school buses in the town centre in Wellington Square morning and evening, and the children from Talgarth travelled by train; these were the ones with the reputation for the most trouble!

However there was at least one group of boys and girls who travelled in a lorry with a tarpaulin roof and benches on each side as seats. There were no proper buses for them because they came from the solitary valleys of the Honddu, Yscir Fach and Yscir Fawr, and the villages of Battle, Merthyr Cynog, Upper Chapel and Lower Chapel. A lorry took them to Brecon on Monday mornings, left them in their lodgings in the town during the week, and took them home on Friday evening. Friday was market day in Brecon and a number of parents were fellow travellers on the lorry. I had several friends who lodged in Free Street.

There were only eleven teachers on the staff during my time. Jacob Morgan was the head teacher and it was he who taught Maths to forms V and VI. My grasp of the mysteries of Mathematics was very shaky, and so I had very frequent chastisement from Jake and I was regularly called “wningen”* – his favourite word for someone who failed to do sums. I’m sure he was of the opinion that I was remarkably stupid the whole of my time in school, and what made things worse was that he was deacon and officer in the Plough where my father was minister!

Lewis Lewis, “Lousy” to the children, was deputy head and Geography was his subject; a pleasant teacher in his way and his lessons were thorough. I recall one day he walked through the hall where we were having a Welsh lesson from Prosser Roberts, and Bill Lewis from the Watton was translating very hesitatingly. “What do you think of that Watton Welsh, Mr Lewis?” asked Prosser; “Not Watton Welsh but Rotten Welsh, Mr Roberts” was Mr Lewis’ reply.

(Translated from Welsh by JMW; *cwningen = rabbit)

How the years have wings

Can it really be over 50 years since David (Ginger) Jones and I were having our tea-break one morning, relaxing from our grass-cutting duties at Dering Lines Army Camp, where we spent our summer holidays earning money to see us through university?

Sadly, David is no longer with us, and is very much missed, but I remember that tea break of ours as if it occurred yesterday.

We were discussing our futures.

With a level of maturity and common sense which to this day amazes me, callow youth as I then was, I said I would find the toughest school I could, teach there, and if I survived, make teaching my career. If not, I would emigrate to Canada and become a helicopter pilot. Furthermore, I said, I would teach for the 15 years it took to get from the bottom to the top of the teachers' pay scale. After that, not wanting to become a Mr. Chips, I would use the considerable experience in some other capacity.

William Penn Secondary Modern School for Boys stood defiantly in the middle of a council estate in Slough. At this school, at the end of each day, the Headmaster, whose cane was never allowed to rest idle, would be escorted off the premises by two rugby-playing members of his staff.

It is September 1957. I have obtained the post of English teacher at William Penn. So witness me, a probationary teacher, turning up on the first day carrying an umbrella when it isn't even raining.

I learned later, from the Woodwork master who was to become a lifelong friend, that the staff, who gathered at the window to see me walk across the playground, took bets on how long I would last. A day. A week. A month, with a fair bit of sick leave, was the most offered. There was the fact of my youth, there was the fact that I did not stand six feet four in my cotton socks, but that umbrella was the clincher as far as they were concerned. It might well have been the only rolled umbrella ever to have travelled up the Farnham Road and had the cheek, the nerve, to turn right and infiltrate that estate.

Fortunately, they all lost their wagers, and apart from setting the school on fire in my second week, I survived to enjoy the challenge.

I learned a valuable lesson in leadership from my brief and unsuccessful career as an unwitting arsonist. I stood before the headmaster, Mr Leslie Marchant, the next morning, and confessed that I had begun the fire the previous evening in my own classroom. "No you didn't", said the Head.

"Yes I did", said I.

"No you didn't", said the Head.

"Yes, really, honestly I did Mr Marchant" said I.

"Peter, You-Did-Not" said the Head, spelling his reply out ever so slowly, so that there could be no mistaking his message.

"Now go and teach some classes".

Almost as an afterthought, with a quiet smile, he added: "And in future leave your pipe at home".

So here was a man who believed in, protected, and supported his staff, even raw recruits. My enduring loyalty had been ensured, and I followed Leslie Marchant to his new school at the end of that first year. My only reason for leaving him two years later was a desire to get sixth form teaching.

I learned more valuable lessons in the art of leadership at my next school. It was 1962, and I had been teaching English and P.E. at the Boys' Grammar School, Weston-super-Mare for coming up to two years. One day, during morning break, the Headmaster, D.C. Whimster, called me in to his room. Very soon, the heat I felt from his coal fire, which he kept blazing all year round, was augmented by a different sort of heat, which had me gasping for air.

"Holt, as from today you are in charge of hockey" he said.

"But the school does not play hockey sir" I said.

"You are in charge of it" he said.

"But I have never played hockey in my life sir" I said.

His look, over his spectacles, would have stopped dead in their tracks a herd of wildebeest stampeding over the Serengeti. I left the room and began ordering hockey equipment.

A month later, a bizarre repeat of that conversation occurred. I was called to his room. I stood alongside the roaring fire.

"Holt, you are in charge of the Careers Department" he said.

"But the school does not have a Careers Department sir" I said.

“You are in charge of it” he said.

“But I have never in my life had anything to do with a Careers Department sir” I said. His look, over his spectacles ... I left his room and began ordering careers pamphlets for the school Careers Department, of which I was the sole and founding member. I will not bore you with the third enactment of this little two-handed drama. Suffice it to say that one day I went home the founder, organiser and life-breathing spirit of the school Debating Society.

So here was a man who believed in, stretched, and professionally enriched his staff, even the young ones. For all their differences, and there were many. Leslie Marchant, B.Sc. London, and D.C. Whimster, M.A. Cantab., F.R.S.A., J.P., were natural born leaders.

It has to be said that not many teachers moved on from the Boys’ Grammar School. Weston-super-Mare, and I can give you one good reason why.

On the last day, the headmaster would troop off the stage at the end of morning Assembly, followed by the entire body of staff gathered there. You would be left alone, to say your farewell. You would be facing upwards of one thousand boys, all of whom were salivating at the prospect. They knew that all rules were suspended, and it was their moment.

When my time came, thanks to a mixture of humour which worked, expressions of gratitude for their generosity which were sincere, and not forgetting the silent prayer I sent up as I walked to the centre of the stage, I managed to get out unscathed. The door had not been locked, as my colleagues - many from Wales, and two, I am happy to report, John Llewellyn and John Davies, from Brecon itself - had gleefully threatened.

In the spirit of that Chinese proverb which states that it is a wonderful thing to see a friend fall from a high roof, I think they were a little disappointed to find me in one piece.

I should explain that I felt very privileged to be a member of staff at this school but in the end I left because of a bottom shelf. That shelf, in an open cupboard right next to the staffroom entrance door, had to suffice as the nerve-centre of my expanding operation: teaching English from first form to S level; taking P.E. for the lower school; taking Games every week and most weekends, including hockey of course; Careers work; Debating Society work; school play production - and all I had was that shelf. It was not enough. It was not nearly enough to contain all the books and gear I needed to be to hand.

Space was at a premium you see. Those whose position or seniority qualified them for one of the magnificent desks which lined the staff room walls were happily provided for. The rest of us had to make do with, well, the odd shelf.

By Christmas 1964 I had reached the end of my shelf life at that prestigious seat of learning. I am concerned at the length of this autobiographical contribution, considering that I have two more schools, three more posts and the birth of three sons to mention, so perhaps it would be sensible to end by saying: To Be Continued If Required!

Peter Holt (1946-1953)

Recollections of the late Jonathan Davies (1928-30)

My first memory was as an innocent boy from the small school “Heol Senni” going to take the 11plus exam in Defynnog School. There were similar pupils gathered there from other village schools in the neighbourhood to take the tests for entrance to the Boys’ County School in Brecon. Despite passing the exam I was not amongst the handful of the chosen who won one of the few scholarships to secure a free place. So, for me to attend that school my mother had to pay for the privilege, and that was £5 per term, not counting additional costs of travel

and “digs”. My first direct contact with the school itself was a meeting with the head teacher Dr Woosman, a tall man exuding an air of gentility and respectability. My mother obtained from him the address of approved “digs” in North Road. Then, after the summer holidays came the important day for me to face the new educational challenge that was before me.

It was truly an experience to leave home that first Monday morning with my “portmanteau” and my food for the week. I had to buy bread in the town but the milk was available on the doorstep as ordered. Breakfast, dinner and tea were prepared by the landlady, but no supper was supplied. Bacon and eggs from home were my usual breakfast, roast meat, potatoes and swede for dinner, and a snack for tea, and then bread and butter with cheese or jam for an early supper. After school in the afternoon I was free to go down to the town for a walk before returning to do my homework. We were expected to go straight to bed after 8 o'clock sharp and to get up at 7:30 next morning.

I was a member of Vaughan and Mr Lewis was my housemaster and sports master. Soccer and cricket were the main games – there was no sign of rugby at that time. The town boys were far ahead in sporting skills at first because I was not used to playing. The school field and Pwlllycalch were the main playing fields but the reserves were sent to a field by the Boat House.

We were responsible for all the implements and writing books and so on, and I had to buy a copy of “Hymns Ancient and Modern” as well as the morning assembly booklet. Morning assembly was held in the gym by Lewis Lewis, accompanied by the prefects giving readings. If a boy was seen by a teacher out late at night, he would be named and brought before his betters next morning.

I have a special memory of our old music teacher, Mr Musk, who had to call on another teacher at times to get order in the class. The musical pieces we had from him lesson after lesson were English folk songs.

During my second year John Cartwright, a friend from the next farm, came to school and lodgings were arranged for the two of us in a house at the bottom of Priory Hill near the Wool Factory for a shilling a night. Here it was the custom to have a short time listening to the radio before going to bed. While we had breakfast the landlady would prepare food and water for shaving for our co-lodger, namely no less than Dr Griff Price who also happened to be my class teacher at the time.

I especially remember Edgar Thomas, the Welsh and English teacher who left the school in 1929 to become head teacher of St David’s County School before moving to be head of Llangefni School. In the meantime he won the crown at the National Eisteddfod. A tragedy for we pupils was the cruel, sudden, unexpected death of R. Walter Jones, the Maths teacher who was a pilot during the war. I liked woodwork and as a result there was a close relationship between me and Charlie Price. When I was there John H. Williams joined us as French and P.E. teacher and then came Doug Inglis.

But my school days came to an end much too soon. As soon as I reached 14 years of age I had to leave school to help my widowed mother on the farm. Even now in my nineties I look back nostalgically at those pleasant days and still remember a number of my contemporaries. I

developed an interest in History there, and this more than anything spurred me to write a number of articles on local history and then to compete in the local eisteddfod. I will never forget that I am a former pupil of the old school.

(Translated from Welsh by JMW)

Memories of Brecon County School

John S M Jones (1931-34)

Recently Steve Roderick, who was aware that I had been a pupil at Brecon Boys' County School, kindly gave me a copy of the newsletter of the Old Boys' Association 2010. I was pleasantly surprised to find that many of the recollections of the old boys were so similar to my own after so many years.

I started at the School in September 1931, incidentally contemporary with Tom Evans of Sennybridge. My time at Brecon ended when a family move to Oswestry required that I continue my education at Oswestry Boys' High School. I had already close family connections with the School, my father and his three brothers all having been pupils at Cradoc Road. In fact the oldest of them, Bertram Jones, had been the very first pupil to be admitted and registered at the new School. My brother Deryck, had preceded me under the headship of Dr Woosnam. My cousin Ralph Jones, (later a chairman of the Old Boys' Association), was a class-mate, and another cousin, Ralph Jarrett, who distinguished himself at both cricket and football, was a later pupil. My two aunts and my sister attended the Girls' School.

Memories of school days prominently recall the foibles and eccentricities of members of staff and their various nicknames. "Kaiser", Mr Price (who had not gained his Doctorate in my days), "Colonel" Williams, "Ceffyl" Thomas, "Dragon" Prosser Roberts, "Llew" Lewis, Doug Inglis and "Taff" Evans who taught Mathematics. Mr Evans referred to Geometry as "Euclid" and we called our textbook "Euclid". "Where's my Euclid gone?" Mr Price regularly forgot his gown, an adornment worn by all teachers. He would merely say "Robel!" to a boy in the front row of the class who would dash up to the staff room for the missing article. Mr Thomas, or was it "Colonel", would frequently instruct a boy to run down to "Ma" James's little shop lower down Cradoc Road for a packet of twenty Golf Flake. The price was nominally one shilling but a half penny was enclosed with the packet. The errand boy had the half penny. O tempora! O mores! Mr Price had his own unique method of administering punishment. This he referred to as "slaps and tweaks". For an error in scansion, or perhaps for inattention, he would give a sharp slap to the cheek followed by a quick twist to our youthful sideburns. He left no marks but we were left a little sufficiency of pain. Doug Inglis had a fund of quips and quotes. A favourite, for a faulty answer to one of his probing questions, was to raise his eyes to the ceiling and to intone, "Angels and ministers of grace defend us!" Prosser Roberts presided over activities in the new gymnasium and enlivened proceedings with a liberal use of the dap. We saw little of our respected Headmaster, Jacob Morgan, in the lower forms. My own brief, but memorable, encounter with him was to receive a hearty "six-of-the-best" on the seat. This was just for being late one morning, when Ralph Jones and I had lingered, oblivious of the time, at the Honddu bridge to watch the annual scramble up-stream of the salmon.

So many memories of fellow pupils have faded over the years but I remember well our universally respected Head Boy, Jack Capper. He was the classic all-rounder, academically

successful and an outstanding cricketer and footballer. Jack was killed in Singapore at the time of the Japanese invasion and is buried in the military cemetery there.

The annual inter-house eisteddfod was a welcome interlude in the school year. I was in Siddons House as was my brother before me. We were offered an eclectic programme of activities, including cartoons and limerick competitions. Licence was allowed for the lampooning of both staff and pupils and the wags of the upper school excelled themselves. One limerick I well remember:

“You have all heard of Virgil of Rome
Who lived in the land o’er the foam
Now Virgil is dead
Mr Price reigns instead
And flowery Bwlch is his home”

Mr Price apparently was very proud of his garden and plants in Bwlch.

The accomplished ladies of the Dorian Trio entertained us with their music from time to time, and occasionally, we would squat en masse in the gym to listen to quite brilliant readings from Dickens by a visiting actor, or perhaps to a lecture of some kind.

Even after so many years, my memories of Brecon County School are vivid and nostalgic. My departure from Brecon was premature and abrupt. Consequently, on the first day I arrived at Oswestry Boys’ High School, I wore my County School uniform, including the navy blazer with maroon piping and navy cap with its proud badge. I was an object of interest and a little ribbing at first and felt rather resentful and on the defensive and, at the same time, fiercely proud of, and grateful for, the part that Brecon County School had played in my formative years.

Len Pritchard 1947-54 - Itinerant Engineer

After leaving school I completed a civil Engineering degree in Swansea graduating in 1957. Following a two year graduate apprenticeship in South Wales and on Tyneside I left for my first stint overseas when I worked on road construction projects in Nigeria’s Western Region. Returning to England in 1961 I joined a consulting Civil Engineering firm in London which specialised in Water Supply projects, and this became the main focus for the remainder of my Engineering career.

Whilst on contract supervision work in Bedfordshire I met and married Ann my wife of forty-six years. Ann comes from an agricultural background which included a Diploma from Seale Hayne Agricultural College. My second overseas venture started shortly after our marriage, and included tours in East Malaysia twice and Malawi; we subsequently moved to New Zealand where we settled in Tauranga in the Bay of Plenty in late 1972.

I worked for local government here for six years before getting itchy feet again and there followed work in Papua New Guinea and Hong Kong before returning again to Tauranga in 1984. I more or less gave away engineering at this point when we bought a small orchard property growing mainly citrus and avocados as well as some vegetables in plastic tunnel houses, however it was very much a subsistence operation supplemented initially by some

engineering work and also by Ann selling handcrafted pottery. Pottery at that time was selling well in New Zealand. Sadly, this is no longer the case.

I've been retired for 15 years now. My main activities during retirement have been to help organise the annual book sale for a local Rotary Club. This is one of the largest book sales in New Zealand and a great fundraiser. I also coached English to new immigrants for a number of years. For relaxation I play Bridge once a week and belong to a local snooker school. I was a keen tramper for many years and also played squash, but a ruptured Achilles tendon largely brought those activities to an end. We still maintain our interest in the land having a small property where we run seven goats and two steers.

We have three children. Lesley, our eldest is married to a Dutch man, Aart, who had a plant hire business. After living in Holland for a number of years they moved to New Zealand. They now live on a small farm nearby where they breed Highland cattle and alpacas. Aart is beginning to build his plant hire business here and Lesley pursues some part time graphic design work. They have one daughter. Our son Stephen is intellectually handicapped and lives in a supported home here in Tauranga. He too, loves to travel and has made several trips to Australia and the Pacific Islands. Our youngest daughter Karen lives in Bristol, where she is an accountant working for the Higher Education Funding Authority. Her partner Adam is a Secondary School teacher and they have a son and a daughter.

Brecon School days - a bitter sweet memoir

Like me, a great number of old boys - the majority - never join the OBA. Whilst those that do overwhelmingly write positively about school, I suspect a significant number of non members had less than positive experiences; indeed I have met a number who told me frankly they 'hated' Grammar School days. I am not one of them but I have listened to and shared some of these often long held feelings. This article is especially for them.

For me school does not represent what I learned. In five years I experienced three campuses; I achieved 5 'O' levels and left at sixteen. Over 50 years later I have little recall of anything I learned. Rather, what school days in Brecon - including Mount Street - have left me with is a number of valued experiences, especially friendships. I also acquired a first conscious respect for a minority of teachers - Cliff Jones, Hugh Thomas and the timeless Lou Lewis - who treated boys relatively patiently even when riled. Sadly, I still have residual fears and disrespect for a number of other teachers and even for fellow pupils who in today's parlance would be treated as 'bullies'. Though my learning was probably affected by several episodes of illness, this is also remembered for the loyalty and kindness shown me by class mates and Len Moses, the one teacher who visited me.

It was a few years after leaving school - when I was at Coleg Harlech - that I began to realise the limitations and insular nature of my Grammar School world in Brecon. How much did the relative isolation of this little market town contribute to this? I once compared notes with my uncle who had been at the school in the 1920's. He had been taught by some of the same teachers and despite post war changes and the 'winds of change', much of my education seemed to have changed little from his, which occurred in a very different world of wars, empire and Kings and Queens.

What had largely remained, perhaps even grown stronger, was the 'macho' attitude of staff, especially after the female dominance at Mount Street School. This may be because when I entered Grammar School (1953) the experience of war, war stories and films, etc and the war generation were still omnipresent. Several men had served in the forces. I still sense their ideas of discipline along with their often painful experiences were communicated to us, sometimes physically. At times they intimidated me - more of this later. Then there is the Plough experience...

If a boy's attitudes are shaped during the first year of school mine certainly were. After the solid buildings and sense of community at Mount Street Primary, the Plough Chapel was not an auspicious start to a Grammar School career. I recall feeling there were two schools, not one, and the lads at Plough, the other end of town, had the worst of the deal. All our parents had paid their taxes but there seemed no attempt to spread the pain around. I still bond easier with ex Plough boys than others, and my experience made it even more difficult to integrate into 'main school'. Plough was our Papillon - no one escaped - well, except for a few bright boys promoted to Cradoc Road and lads with parents who soon transferred them to Christ College. The proverbial 'he's going even if I have to scrub doorsteps to pay for it' was something my mother claimed she heard from another mum of a Plough boy

The Plough Chapel had been used since 1948 as an overflow especially for lower stream boys entering after their 11+. One thing we Plough lads all had in common, apart from leaking roofs and steaming grey flannel trousers (often muddy from sliding down banks) were our form initials. X or W seemed to distinguish us from the A's and B's at Cradoc Road. We might just as well have been branded by our teachers. But the disadvantage did not end there.

Separation by the letters of the alphabet, by inferior buildings and locations produced in me a sense of not fully belonging - of being apart. Though less than a mile or so from main school it often seemed as though we inhabited a parallel universe. In fairness certain teachers and a stern but benign Jacob Morgan tried to bridge the gap. He would occasionally visit us, shaking his head as the rain dripped from the rusty roof into buckets. He and they sometimes seemed to me to be rather like Arthur Grimble's blimpish colonial officers that we would read about with Cliff Jones. As though to comfort us the Head once reminded boys the school had started in a chapel hall (Dr Cokes), and also told us he had had to walk miles to school. Possibly some of us wondered what we had done to deserve a repeat of this experience 50 years later - and more so.

Plough boys were the school ramblers. I had already walked a mile or so to school (from Rock and Castle). On double woodwork days (did 'A' stream boys do double woodwork?) we set off for Mount Street as we also did for school dinners. Then sometimes back to school. On games day, we trudged up the hill to the field; in summer to the Watton pitches. And finally the long walk home to cool off or dry out. This was arguably healthy, character building stuff. But in the cold damp winters of Brecon it didn't seem like it, especially when one arrived at Cradoc Road soaked and looked through the window at cosy 'A' boys taught by teachers we never saw. After once being forced to be a spectator on a freezing, wet games afternoon and soaked to the skin, I spent 3 months bed-bound at home and in Cardiff Royal Infirmary with a severe recurrence of rheumatoid arthritis.

In case this sounds like sour grapes I am sure most boys, as boys do, accepted it all and only

later realised what was going on. There was probably even a certain camaraderie to the constant journeying and 'lonc ar clonc'. Breconians were used to this daily raggle taggle of lads winding its way through town in the winter rain with wet gabardine macs and satchels. We may have appeared as defeated foot soldiers of the 7th Cavalry. Just as with Custer's column the journey took on a life of its own; some stragglers never made it and 'bunked off'. Why wouldn't they ?

Today choice is everything. Ron Tucker (a 6th former when I was at school) suggests choice was almost non-existent at Brecon Grammar and liberal arts were thin, even at top school. If so, boys at the Plough got the thin gruel of no choice. Have you ever heard of a Grammar School which did not teach foreign languages? This is a question I have been asked many times in my civil service and university career. I doubt it was in line with curriculum advice even in the early 50's. Could there be a more divisive approach? I know of old boys, even in the A stream, who still feel aggrieved and disadvantaged that they were unable to study Latin and French let alone other modern languages. Our consolation prize was to have been given been given extra maths and Welsh. The latter seemed a misguided attempt to introduce us to our heritage but only through Welsh grammar. I never learned to use Welsh but obtained maths after leaving school. Perhaps I was simply a late developer.

A school friend recently suggested to me we did not receive the best teachers at Plough. True or not, one sensed when frustrated teachers doubted our abilities and treated us accordingly. Boys certainly can be boys, but physical bullying, usually on smaller and vulnerable lads left me feeling petrified, then angry (it still does). This included caning, ear twisting, hair pulling, smacking, punching, hurling chalk, throwing blackboard dusters, etc - and that's just the teachers! All of this seemed normal but would be legally actionable today. Most frightening was a teacher literally cleaning the entire chalk board with a small boy's face. It may sound funny; indeed I can still see that teacher's grimace, but it remains to me a demonstration of brute adult power and that teacher's limitations. We knew this and from talking to other Old Boys it could sour one's attitude to the staff member concerned and prevent one learning. In hindsight perhaps such staff, with painful war experiences, were inadequately trained or just angry and frustrated by stubborn boys who would not, or could not, listen and learn from them.

In my view a further factor in macho-ness was the all male environment at Brecon Boys Grammar. This was coupled with a stratified, rather fake public school ethos. Many teachers still wore gowns and of course still clung to a competitive house system, as though the school was trying to compete with Christ College. The rituals extended to the daily religious morning assembly and the emphasis put on gymnastics, games and the sports field. I don't think I understood the house system nor did I know who David Gam was or what his relevance was for me. Whenever I see Lindsey Anderson's film 'If' I identify with the alienated pupils, though I am a confirmed pacifist.

I understood then and still do why my erstwhile comrades in the 'Sec. Mod.' including my sister, who narrowly missed entrance to Girls Grammar because of an event on the day of her 11+, used to call us 'County Cats' allegedly due to us having poached the better teachers along with our posh uniforms, satchels, single sex set up and a perception of class and elitism. This was not entirely misplaced. By definition 'Sec Mods' were different and less accomplished; they were after all, moved into our old 'cast off' buildings at Cradoc Road

when we moved to a spanking new campus at Penlan. Brecon Grammar had started in 1896 as a fee paying school for boys with free places for only a handful of town boys. This history and public school affectation extended to the school mag - The Silurian. This carried pages of 'Varsity reports' and virtually nothing about the careers of most ordinary lads. In the dying days of my school career the Head sorted us into groups according to his idea for our careers. I escaped the low achievers group since I was not a farmer's son, though many of these boys too did well after leaving school. Since I was to work in an office, we received none of the attention given to boys wishing to go to the 6th and then 'up' to University, especially those into science courses.

How stupid are single sex schools? As the winter 'mob' dances approached at the Wellington I experienced my first and only bitter-sweet visit to the Girls Grammar. Someone (A. B Jones?) had the idea we boys should be civilised. We would learn to dance with real girls but in a strictly controlled setting. Female teachers watched us ('careful with the hands'). Looking back it seemed Victorian; a cringe-making mixture of ritual, embarrassment and secret passion. Whether cause and effect I know not, but after this I embarked on my first girl friend, a complete disaster. We are not boys nor were we then, but we were treated as boys. We were callow youths with all the awkwardness of teenagers wanting, like James Dean, both to conform and rebel. As with maths and Welsh I did not learn to dance properly, and still feel a pang of nervousness on any dance floor as my wife, who attended a mixed grammar school, may confirm. We both oppose single sex schools and grammar schools.

When I made it to Cradoc Road I found we had swapped a set of old huts for more modern ones. Still separate from main school these portable classrooms had the advantage of being able to look down and see the Head and other teachers approaching before they saw us. The huts were lighter, did not leak and had what one old boy has called 'chip fryer' heaters. But since the new Head rarely taught us and seemed more interested in high flyers, not a lot else changed for me and I rather missed the walk and talk days.

I often wonder how Plough boys' achievements compared to others. Several I know confounded their critics. Whatever I learned during school years, perhaps much of it subconsciously or by osmosis, it was only after leaving school and after three years coasting in an office, again making good friends, that I found my glide path. I began to do part time study with the WEA and then went to Coleg Harlech, an adult education college which proved both a remarkable experience and brilliantly rounded radical education. After this, Swansea University was enjoyable but academically an anti climax though I was active in the University newspaper and student politics. A career in personal social services followed by a higher degree led to 12 years in academia. Though I returned to my first love, community development, I enjoyed a later life career as a 'roving' Open University tutor. In retirement I offer talks to adult groups which I enjoy, and it appears so do they. It was through the late, great Phil Evans, that I did some talks for Brecon Family History Society and he urged me to join the OBA. I remember his warm chuckle when I asked him 'will they have me Phil?'

This account of my school days does not claim to be 'balanced' or fair. It is a personal memoir focussing on unfinished business. As such I accept such selective recall must be treated with caution, particularly when coloured by illness and painful memories. Perhaps the most important thing school gave me was a lesson about friendship, life and learning, though

much of it was probably unintended by those who imparted it.

Harley Simpson (1953-1958)

Team Photo

In the 2009 Newsletter a photograph of the school soccer team from 1946/47 was included with an invitation to readers to name an unidentified boy. The photo below, provided by Shaun Gallagher, is the soccer team from 1957/58. Do you know everyone in it? The identities are listed below the photo.



Back row (from left): Evan (Ianto) Lewis, Gerald Curtis, Andrew Thomas, Tony Hiron, Peter Gittins, Ronnie Young, Terry Thomas, Ron Samuels.

Front row (from left): Alan Thomas, David Gittins, Ron Arthur (Head of P.E.), Geraint (Guy) Jones, Aneurin Rees (Head Teacher), Shaun Gallagher, Micky Gallagher.

Shaun comments that at the time all fixtures were “friendlies” and the team was undefeated throughout the season. As a result the school was invited to represent the county in an inaugural Welsh County cup for the under 19s the following season, and the team were drawn against Pembrokeshire in the first round. Incredibly, the team were withdrawn apparently because someone felt that the fixtures were too far removed from the ethic upon which “friendly” fixtures were based! An early example of the undesirability of competition!!

Pupil fee problem in 1909

Today we may take free education for granted but in the early part of the 20th century it was not free. In Jonathan Davies’ article on page 10 he refers to his mother having to pay £5 per term, not counting the cost of travel and digs. Some pupils were fortunate enough to win a scholarship, but even then problems could arise as shown by an article in the Brecon County Times in 1909. At a meeting of the governors of Brecon School, one item on the agenda was

the non-payment of a Talgarth scholarship pupil's fees after that pupil had left school without giving the required term's notice. He had left allegedly because of his father's death and his mother's difficult circumstances. However a committee member reported that the pupil had actually left one term before the death of his father. One committee member representing Talgarth said he did not think the payment was just. In a somewhat acrimonious discussion the chairman stated that, whilst it was a very difficult problem, "the Hay and Talgarth district cannot plead poverty" and that they should be pressed to pay in accordance with the rules. Arguments continued on whose responsibility it was to enforce the rules. Eventually a proposal was made that, unless the fee be paid forthwith, an action be entered for the next County Court in order to show the Talgarth Committee who is right. This motion was carried.
(Thanks to Vivian Parry for the newspaper article)

The Dorian Trio

Among the checklist of nostalgia that I uncovered whilst rifling through my collective memory were the periodic visits of the Dorian Trio, otherwise the "Ladies of Blaenwern". At their concerts they played a romantic type of classical music which, I regret to admit, was suffered rather than enjoyed by pupils suffering from aesthetic malnutrition. Bored Philistine and somewhat Neanderthal boys, locked in giggle-ridden pubescence, sat tortuously on the unforgiving Gym floor with limited attention span and embarrassingly twitchy and fidgety tic. Zoned out with boredom they became incorrigible clock watchers and window gazers.

Generations of children brought up in Wales in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s knew of this musical partnership as the Dorian Trio without any appreciation of their significance as the "Ladies of Blaenwern". In their middle age Pauline Taylor, Enid Lewis and Barbara Saunders Davies turned their attention to farming the 380 acre Blaenwern family farm, Llanarth, Ceredigion, concentrating on Welsh indigenous breeds - Welsh cobs, Welsh Black cattle and Welsh pigs. their most memorable achievement was the transformation of the profile of the Welsh cob and showcasing the breed to the wider world. Their Llanarth stud became world famous whilst their knowledge of genetics added greatly to cob breeding generally. Their legendary stallion Llanarth Flying Comet dominated the 1970s, winning the championship at the Royal Welsh an amazing five times between 1972 and 1978. The farm and stud were bequeathed to the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, in the hope that it would form the basis of a national study for Wales. Regrettably, the College broke faith and sold off their legacy in 1983 because of the economic stringency of the early 1980s.

I suspect that had those of us of rustic inclination been aware of this aspect of their lives we would probably have responded with respect rather than jest, even though we did not know the difference between an aria and an oboe.

Glyn Powell

Letters to the editor

This feature was introduced last year as an experiment to encourage those who wished to submit comment or a short contribution. No letters have been received so instead I am writing the following letter to readers.

Photographing Cradoc Road School

A few years ago at one of our AGMs it was suggested that we should have a nice colour photograph of the school building for the archives before it deteriorated further. I decided I would have a go, but there are problems with this task. First, I don't live in Brecon so I have to use the occasions when I am in Brecon (usually on Old Boys' Association business), and these don't always coincide with fine weather because ideally I would like a blue sky background to contrast with the red brickwork.



Secondly, there are often cars parked in front of the building and I would prefer a photograph without such intrusions. Thirdly, without a wide-angle lens on my camera, it is impossible to get a front view to include the whole building. Clearly I can get everything in if I stand to one side (example on left) but I would prefer a front view. This example also illustrates another problem, namely if it's too late in the day the trees opposite the school cast a shadow on the building.

I've tried taking two photographs and stitching them together on my computer, but because of my proximity to the building there is a distortion in the final result (see example on right). When I get a satisfactory result I intend to remove some of the unsightly signs that adorn the building, but because that process can be quite time consuming I need a good quality photograph to work on.



Does anyone have a good colour photograph of the school?

Michael Williams (Editor)

Obituaries

Ralph Evan Barnet Jones (1934-36)

Ralph on leaving school joined Lloyds Bank and worked in London and Cardiff before serving in the RAF during the war. He became a navigator/observer in the SOE. He resumed his banking career becoming manager. He was a keen sailor and became Yachtmaster Offshore. He was married to Dilys (née Michael) and died in 2008.

K J D Parfitt (1940-1945)

Kenneth, a native of Talybont-on-Usk, was House Captain of Theo. On leaving Brecon he went to Trinity College Carmarthen and trained as a teacher. After service in the RAF he taught initially at Eardisley in Herefordshire and then in Bristol where he became head teacher. After retiring early he worked for a security company.

G R Gough (1941-1946)

A native of Crai (later Senni), Ron, member of Theo, after national service in the RAF, joined the Herefordshire constabulary in 1951. He was one of the founder members of the Hereford Police Choir. On retirement from the Hereford Police he joined the Ministry of Defence and served for 16 years at the SAS Regiment HQ near Hereford.

John Gordon Griffiths (1945-49)

Gordon, a native of Crai and member of Vaughan, was a talented athlete who held the Middle School 440 yards record for many years. He joined the RAF as an apprentice and gained accelerated promotion to sergeant. He was invalided out of the RAF in 1958 after contracting TB and returned to Brecon to work with Knight's Rental.

Eileen Millward (Staff, 1961-84)

Eileen, wife of Charles Millward - an Old Boy, joined the staff of Brecon Secondary Modern in 1961 and transferred to the High School in 1971 in the secondary reorganisation. She eventually took early retirement in 1984 on health grounds. She was mainly responsible for Rural Science teaching and was leader of Penlan YFC.

Rosemary Zoe Lodwick (née Humphreys)

Rosemary, a former pupil of Brecon Girls' Grammar School, qualified as a teacher and was appointed initially to a post at Brecon Secondary Modern School in 1967 to teach RE and Games. On secondary reorganisation in 1971 she was transferred to Gwernyfed High School where she remained until she moved to Pwll, Llanelli.

Peter Charles Pugh (1949-55)

Peter, a native of Talgarth, was a member of Siddons and a keen sportsman; he represented the school at both cricket and soccer. He spent all of his working life in the administrative section of the Mid-Wales (Mental) Hospital at Talgarth. He played soccer for Talgarth as goal keeper and in later life was an enthusiastic bowler.

Philip Gaywood (1947-51)

Philip, a native of Bronllys and member of Siddons, after leaving school became an apprentice compositor with the Brecon and Radnor Express and subsequently worked in London, Hereford and Cardiff where he finally settled. A dedicated family man, his main leisure interest was gardening.

W. Peter Roderick (1949-55)

Peter, a Breconian and member of Vaughan, was an outstanding track athlete who excelled in the 100, 220 and 440 yard races at school and also competed with distinction at the County Sports. After graduating in Economics at Swansea University he eventually attained an elevated position at the former Welsh Office.

Clive Nicholls

Clive was a highly respected caretaker at Brecon High School for many years. He was a qualified football referee who devoted his energies to the encouragement of local talent and often officiated at school games. He was also an active member of Lions International.

Mrs Hilda Mary Jones (staff, 1955-77)

Hilda, the widow of the late Rev Dr E T Jones, became assistant Welsh teacher at Brecon Boys' Grammar School in 1955. In 1957 she transferred to Brecon Girls' Grammar School and was eventually a member of the distinguished Welsh Department at the High School. She played a major role in the County Urdd movement.

Derek Terence (Terry) Boxhall (1954-59)

In his junior years Terry dominated the solo and recitation eisteddfod competitions in both English and Welsh, talents that made him a valuable member of Côr Meibion Aberhonddu. He left school at the age of 15 and progressed from farm worker to owner-occupier when his traditional rustic veterinary skills were in great demand.

Ewan Edwards (1936-41)

Ewan was one of four brothers from Pencelli who excelled both academically and at sport at school. After obtaining his School Certificate he left school and qualified as a doctor at Cardiff School of Medicine. He became a medical officer in the RAF and eventually reached the rank of Squadron Leader before settling in Aberbeeg as a GP.

Sydney (Jim) Hyatt (1940-44)

A native of Hay on Wye, Sydney was a talented footballer and played for the School first XI. Following National Service in the Royal Navy he took up employment with a timber company at Eardisley where he completed forty five years unbroken service ending up as yard foreman.

Graham Harris (Staff)

Graham, a native of Abereynon and former pupil of Mountain Ash Grammar School, graduated from University College of Swansea. In 1974 was appointed Head of Physics at Brecon High School and retired in 2003. A familiar figure on the golf course he was also an impressive squash player.

Contact details

For contributions to the next newsletter: editor, Mr J M Williams, 4, Chestnut Avenue, West Cross, Swansea SA3 5NL; Email: williamsjm@mail.com; Tel: 01792 404232.

For enquiries re Old Boys' Association activities, etc.: secretary, Mr Tom Protheroe, 14, Rookery Drive, Nantwich, CW5 7DD; Email: t.protheroe@talk21.com; Tel: 01270 623525.