

***Cylchlythyr Cymdeithas Cyn-Ddisgyblion Ysgol Ramadeg y  
Bechgyn, Aberhonddu  
Mawrth 2014***

***Brecon Grammar School Old Boys' Association Newsletter March 2014***

**Introduction**

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This year is the 100th anniversary of the start of World War I in which several Brecon Old Boys lost their lives. Their names are reprinted in this issue.

Readers are invited to submit contributions for the newsletter; these can range from a short letter or paragraph to an article of up to three pages on any topic which you think might interest Old Boys. Photos and news items can also be submitted for inclusion on the website (contact details are on the last page). The website is at [www.brecongrammar.org](http://www.brecongrammar.org).

Note that OBA ties are still available at £12 each (p&p £1.30) and copies of Glyn Powell's book "Brecon Secondary Schools, 1896-1996" at £2 (p&p £1.20) are still in stock. Both ties and the book will be on sale at the next reunion

dinner.

Some Old Boys' email addresses no longer function. **If you have changed your email provider please let secretary Tom Protheroe know.**

Eleni yw canmlwyddiant dechrau'r Rhyfel Byd cyntaf, pan gollodd nifer o Hen Ddisgyblion Aberhonddu eu bywydau. Ail-argaffir eu henwau yn y rhifyn hwn.

Gwahoddir ein darllenwyr i anfon cyfraniadau ar gyfer y cylchlythyr; gallant amrywio o lythyr neu bwt byr i erthygl o hyd at dair tudalen ar unrhyw destun a all fod o ddiddordeb i Hen Ddisgyblion. Hefyd, cewch anfon lluniau ac eitemau o newyddion ar gyfer y wefan (manylion cysylltu ar y dudalen olaf). Mae'r wefan ar <http://www.brecongrammar.org/>

Dylech nodi bod tei y Gymdeithas ar gael o hyd am £12 yr un (cludiant £1.30) ac mae gennym gopïau o lyfr Glyn Powell "Brecon Secondary Schools, 1896-1996" am £2 (cludiant £1.20). Bydd y tei a'r llyfr ar werth yn y cinio blynyddol nesaf.

Mae'n debyg bod nifer o gyfeiriadau e-bost Hen Ddisgyblion ddim yn gweithio bellach. **Os newidiwyd eich darparwr e-bost, byddwchystal â rhoi gwybod i Tom Protheroe.**

## Events of 2013

On a beautiful sunny afternoon on 6th April 2013 77 members and guests assembled at the George Hotel, Brecon for the 64th **Annual Reunion Dinner**. After standing for a minute's silence in memory of Old Boys who had passed away during the past year, Chairman Glyn Powell gave a warm welcome to everyone. He had graciously succumbed to pressure at the AGM to continue as Chairman to everyone's delight. After an excellent meal, which drew many favourable comments, Glyn invited President Wyndham Jones to give his address. The President began by saying he wanted to talk about what a grammar school education had done for him. He confessed to having no nerves at his 11+ exam (a sign of confidence?) and was very pleased to be admitted to what seemed to him to be a large red brick building in Cradoc Road. The first big event he experienced was a trip to Stratford on Avon. Places were limited but thanks to an unknown benefactor he and other boys were able to go, and the theatre made a big impression on him. As a result he retained a life-long interest in amateur dramatics. The next big event was a trip to Ostend when he experienced for the first time an express train, the London underground, a cross Channel ferry and a foreign country. He then described his career successes, the first being getting a job at British Nylon Spinners despite the fact that he was not the best qualified candidate - clearly a result of being a product of Brecon Grammar School! He reviewed a succession of career changes which led to management



and a company in the south of England where he met a local headmaster who was an Old Boy of Brecon Grammar School. Finally he returned to Wales to join his son and family.

He then presented the chain of office to the Vice President Tom Protheroe (on right in photo) who in his vote of thanks praised Wyndham for his work as treasurer and his nurturing of the Society funds, including those which provide the prizes (referred to below) for pupils at the High School. He commented that Wyndham had represented the Association as President with a quiet dignity at the various events at the High School.

Tom also thanked Glyn Powell for agreeing to continue as Chairman; his encyclopaedic knowledge

of Old Boys and his enthusiasm for the well being of the Society were greatly appreciated. The staff of the George Hotel were once again thanked for the excellent meal.

During the last two years members of the committee have organised, as an experiment, **informal gatherings** of local Old Boys and Old Girls who don't enjoy formal dinners and prefer more informal meetings. The meetings have been held during the winter in the RAFA club in Brecon, and Old Boys who are interested in attending such events are asked to contact Russell Rees (tel: 01874623856) or send your name and contact details via the website: [www.brecongrammar.org](http://www.brecongrammar.org).

President Tom Protheroe, President elect Arwyn Davies and editor Michael Williams attended the **Brecon High School Awards** evening on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> July 2013.

An evening of awards and entertainment included our President elect winning one of the raffle prizes organised by Friends of the school

The Flower Duet sung by two accomplished student singers and the String ensemble's performance were highlights in the music sphere. The drama, outlining the worst fears of primary school children

preparing for the transfer to secondary school only to have them confounded by the reality of the joy of the transfer, having been written and performed by the students, was particularly enjoyable. President Tom presented the OBA Prizes including the Cliff Carr Memorial Prize, the Geoffrey Meredith-Powell Prizes and the Evans series of Prizes. Some of the prize winners are shown in the photo below (from left: Conner Cox, Cerys Price, Adam Wothers, Joe Sissons, Sian Lloyd, Ffion Denley, Erin Blackburn and Khim Ijam).

The new head teacher Rev Morris gave the address and in a somewhat self deprecating talk encouraged the students to “try their best”, and “take the wonderful opportunity education offers”.



Interestingly he commented that education had to help young people prepare for jobs that did not yet exist. Who, he asked, had forecast the huge growth in software 20 years ago and the jobs associated with the internet which have blossomed? What jobs will exist in 2030?

On what was a very warm evening OBA support for the young people attending Brecon High School hopefully, in some small way, has encouraged young people

to take fuller advantage of the opportunity the school offers.

### Winners of Old Boys' Prizes

Cliff Carr Memorial Prize	Ffion Denley and Joe Sissons
Geoffrey Meredith Powell Prize - Senior	Harriet Stephens
Geoffrey Meredith Powell Prize - Junior	Erin Blackburn
Evans KS3 Prize Mathematics Prize	Conor Cox
Evans KS4 Prize Mathematics Prize	Abi Wyatt
Evans KS5 Prize Mathematics Prize	Khim Ijam
Evans Art Prize	Sian Lloyd
Evans Science/Business Prize	Adam Wothers
Evans KS3 Language Prize	Jorja Lewis and Rewash Ale
Evans Intellectual Understanding Prize	Lukasz Kakolewski
Evans KS4 Geography Prize	Tom James
Evans Most Improved History prize	Isabella Maar

### **(Report on Awards Evening by Tom Protheroe)**

Several Old Boys attended the **Memorial Service** as usual on 11th November 2013 at Brecon High School. After readings from senior pupils, the names of those who died in the First World War were read out by Sergeant Money and those who died in the Second World War were read out by Vice President A Davies. Then, after the Last Post, a minute's silence and the Reveille, wreaths were laid by President Tom Protheroe and Deputy Headboy Andrew Pike and youngest pupil Matthew Guerin. There followed an address by the Reverend Michael Hodgson who invited Old Boys to give some of their recollections of the war. David Williams spoke about his classmate Bert Wesley

(Llanfaes) who joined the army the same time as him but was killed in 1944. Mervyn Jenkins was part of the Dunkirk evacuation and spoke of spending three days in the water until being rescued, and then finding later that half of his Brecon classmates had died in the war. Len Davies joined the RAF and survived over 30 missions as a gunner on Liberator aircraft, and David Tait spoke of the part played by his uncle, Morgan Jenkins, in the assault on St Nazaire (for more detail on this see page 18).

### **Biographical Notes**

#### **Arwyn Davies (1954-61) - Vice President**

Arwyn entered school in 1954 by transfer from Llandovery after the 11plus exam. A member of Siddons, he managed to display some talent at athletics (high jump and sprint). He graduated in veterinary science from Bristol University in 1965, and worked in Kington and then Oxford. Following marriage to Lavinia in 1967 and 2 years in Brecon, he made a series of career moves including 3 years in the civil service, eventually in 1977 setting up a veterinary practice in Hay on Wye. He retired in 2007; still acts as deputy chief veterinary officer to the Royal Welsh Agricultural Society, and keeps busy as a "hobby farmer".

#### **Roll of Honour of Former Pupils of Brecon Grammar School who gave their lives in the First World War**

Baker L.	Isaac C.	Prosser T.W.
Davies C.	Jenkins W.J.	Prytherch R.T.
Davies D.	Jones D.	Quarrell A.G.
Davies D.S.	Jones E.D.	Rees D.S.
Davies I.G.	Jones M.T.	Rees T.
Davies J.	Jones W.	Thomas B.
Dehalaye D.W.C.	Musk F.A.I.	Thomas C.G.
Dempster H.S.D.	Pettifor W.M.E.	Thomas R.
Edwards J.V.	Powell C.J.	Turner W.
Elston W.B.	Price A.J.	Webster D.G.
Fitton E.	Price J.E.R.	Williams W.
Greenway E.L.	Price J.R.R.	Winston C.
Griffiths B.G.		

**Note** Steve Morris (1964-71) is preparing a compilation of information on Old Boys who lost their lives in WWI and intends to publish it. He has kindly agreed to provide brief summaries for the Old Boys' Association since some current Old Boys may well be related to those listed above. Steve's task has been greatly aided by files from the extensive research by Glyn Powell on the topic. These summaries will be distributed later this year.

### **The Cadet Corps**

Those of us who regularly attend the Annual Armistice Service at the High School are accustomed to being welcomed and escorted by pupils who are uniformed members of the ACF. Although such an open expression of a military flavour within the school does not meet with universal approval there are precedents. During WW II ATC Flight 1540 was established at the school for senior pupils

instructed in the main by members of staff. However, in the formative years at the beginning of the last century there was an actual Cadet Corps incorporating the whole school, of whom there is an excellent photograph (see below). The Cadet Corps was formed in 1901 by the headmaster, Nathan John, who had a penchant for aping Christ College, where a Cadet Corps had been established in 1894. Both Corps came within the orbit of the 1<sup>st</sup> Brecknock Rifle Volunteer Corps and were officered by staff members. The senior master, Thomas Butcher, was the first captain in command, and was replaced on his death in 1905 by Ithel Thomas, a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. On leaving the army in 1918 he became a lecturer at Carmarthen Training College. R. T. Jenkins, who was to become one of the most eminent historians of his age, was gazetted a lieutenant on the 12<sup>th</sup> January 1904, and was subsequently commissioned in the Territorial Army.

Apart from the basic khaki tunic the cadets were equipped with slouch hats with school badge, belts and haversacks. Drill was performed with dummy rifles although there were actual rifles stacked in racks located in the corridor upstairs. The cadet corps was not favoured by Percy Morton who became headmaster in 1909 and it was decommissioned in 1910. The rifles and uniforms were returned to the military authorities, the only legacy remaining of the Corps being the rifle cupboards standing outside the staff room door. These were subsequently used to store the school stationary.

**Glyn Powell**



### **Len Davies - Profile of a Veteran of WWII**

Len was recently honoured with the highly deserved award of the recently instituted Bomber Command Clasp for service during WWII. After decades of lobbying in high places, plans to introduce the award of the specially designed clasp to air veterans were announced in February 2013 in recognition of the singular bravery of the aircrews of Bomber Command. Len actually completed over 30 missions, during day and night raids, over Germany and Western Europe as an air gunner in B24 Liberators of 223-Squadron. On occasions Len's aircraft was involved in early

electronic diversionary missions dropping metallic strips to mislead enemy radar as well as transmitting confusing engine noises or jamming frequencies to disrupt German fighter ground control. As a committee we are fortunate that, with Len as President of the local branch of RAFA, we are able to use their club facilities for our meetings.

Len is a Talgarth boy, a member of a family to whom sport was a veritable religious opiate. A pupil of Brecon County School from 1937 to 1941, he is remembered by his contemporaries in his junior years as something of a cheeky chappie persona, progressing to scholastic respectability, with a penchant for Latin and considerable sporting and athletic prowess. On leaving school he worked in munitions prior to volunteering for the RAF on reaching his 18th birthday. When he was demobbed he trained as a teacher at Trinity College, Carmarthen and his initial teaching post was at Mount Street School, Brecon. In 1970 he was appointed to the headship of Talgarth CP and Infants' School, remaining there until his retirement in 1987. In 1950 he and Dulcie (née Jones) were married at Abercrâf Church, and they have worked in tandem on a whole range of community and cultural activities ever since.

As a real stalwart of the OBA Len is widely respected, richly experienced and a highly professional colleague. A long term member, office holder and former President, he is eternally perky at committee meetings where he regularly reopens the broad and bright horizons of his youth. Gregarious by nature his bonhomie bursts from his every gesture. Having survived 35 missions unscathed, it was somewhat perverse that it was a horrific soccer injury that almost cost him his life.

On receiving the special Bomber Command Clasp Len Davies said he was accepting it not for himself alone but also in memory of those of his friends and fellow airmen who did not return. Amongst these were a number of former pupils of the school (listed below), many of whom lost their lives serving with Bomber Command.

**William John Bayley:** Sgt (Pilot) RAF (VR) aged 19, pilot of aircraft Halifax II R 9379 of 103 Sqn Heavy Conversion Flight which crashed at Eltham Woods on 1 Aug. 1942

**William Douglas Vernon Cable:** Pilot Officer RAF (VR) aged 23; killed on 20 Dec. 1942 when his aircraft, Halifax V LK732 MP-F of 76 Sqn was shot down by a night fighter on a raid on Frankfurt.

**Frederick Verdun Dacey:** Sgt (Rear Gunner) RAF (VR) aged 25, was a member of the crew of Lancaster Mark I R5902 VN-T which was shot down on raid on Wisar on 12 Oct. 1942.

**Garnet Wilfred Morris, DFC:** Flying Officer RAF (VR) aged 29 had completed some 60 missions over enemy territory in Europe with 103 Sqn before being posted to Canada for specialised advanced training where he was killed in an air crash on 3 July 1945.

**Edward Douglas Panniers:** Flight Sgt (Wireless Operator/ Air Gunner) RAF (VA) aged 27, killed on 14 June 1944 when a member of the crew of Lancaster III JB483 GT-M of 156 Sqn, a pathfinder with 8 Group.

**Daniel Ivan Parry:** Sgt (Wireless Operator/Air Gunner) RAF (VR) was a member of the crew of aircraft Whitley V P5004-G of 10 OTU, which was involved in a raid on Bremen and crashed near Lingen-Ems on 26 June 1942.

**Bertran David Shepperson:** Flight Sgt RAF was a member of the five man crew of aircraft Whitley V N1405 MH of 51 Sqn, which was shot down by flak during a raid on Homum seaplane base and crashed in the sea off the northern tip of Sylt on the 19 March 1940.

**Vincent Leslie Stapleton:** Sgt (Pilot) RAF (VR) aged 21, whose aircraft Wellington IC Z8842 BU of 214 Sqn was lost over the sea on 1 April 1942 on Operation Hannau.

**Edgar Tonge:** Sgt (Wireless Operator/Air Gunner) RAF (VR) was killed on 3 June 1944 when his aircraft Halifax III LK783 MP-C of 76 Sqn crashed at Treon.

**Rees Davies Williams:** Flight Sgt (Pilot) aged 24 was killed when his aircraft Ventura I AE760 of 21 Sqn crashed on 15 Oct. 1942 at Hillborough, Norfolk on making a single engine approach to the airfield.

**James Philip Vaughan Hargest:** Sgt (Bomb Aimer) RAF (VR) aged 26 of Stirling aircraft EF367 of 218 Sqn which crashed on return from a raid on Bochum on 14 May 1943.

**Ernest James Emrys Jarman:** Sgt (Air Bomber) RAF (VR) aged 21 was killed when his aircraft Halifax II JD272 ZA-F of 10 Sqn was shot down during a raid on Hanover on 27 Sept. 1943.

**William McLafter Lomax:** Sgt (Observer) RAF (VR) aged 34 was killed when Wellington R1597 of 23 OTU on a training flight struck trees on a mountain spur and crashed near Troedyrhiw farm in the parish of Penbuaillt on 8 April 1942.

The following Old Boys were not members of Bomber Command.

**John Leslie Newell:** Sgt (Pilot) RAF, was killed on 22 Dec. 1941 while piloting a MkII Martlett fighter on board HMS Audacity, an escort carrier sunk by submarine U-751.

**Lionel Douglas Stoddart:** WO (Pilot) RAF (VR) whose Mosquito VI fighter bomber intruder LR346 of 245 Sqn Coastal Command was set alight on a shipping strike in the Gironde Estuary.

**Percival James Samuel Evans:** Flying Officer (Navigator) RAF whose Mosquito VI HJ782 of 705 Sqn Fighter Command failed to return from operations on intensive intruder duty on 3 Aug. 1943.

**George Lock:** Sgt (Pilot) RAF (VR) aged 21 was killed on 26 Feb. 1943 when his Spitfire X4918 on an experimental flight collided with a Tiger Moth near Worcester.

**Glyn Powell**

### **Rev. Rhys Thomas Prytherch, BA, BD**

Rhys was in the very first intake of pupils into the newly established County Intermediate School for Boys in 1896. From Y Wern, Talgarth, he was placed at the outset in Form IV along with Jack Kennedy of Talgarth and Bertram Jones of Brecon. Having graduated from the University of Wales with an Honours degree in Welsh, he proceeded to Carmarthen Theological College, gaining his B.D. He entered the ministry of the Calvinistic Methodist Church and received his initial call from

Argyle Chapel, Swansea, and subsequently moved to Priory Wood and Hay in the Brecon & Radnor Presbytery in 1913.

Rhys did not prove to be a conventional minister and assumed the role of unpaid chaplain to tramps and “down-and-outs”. At the outbreak of WWI he volunteered for service in the army but was initially rejected as a soldier because he suffered from a TB hip or a leg injury. He persisted in his quest and was offered a chaplaincy which he refused because he wanted to serve in the ranks alongside private soldiers. He was eventually permitted to join the Pioneer Battalion of the King’s Liverpool Regiment working as a “navvy” in the trenches where he felt that he was able to identify himself with the men more so than as a chaplain. Rhys did not seem to have shared either the reservations of conscientious objectors or the alternative of service in a non-combatant role through religious conviction. In “A Comrade’s Eulogy”, T. Senni Davies, his schoolmate and comrade, concludes that Rhys was convinced of the justice of the Allied cause. Rhys lost his life on active service and was buried in Longuenesse (St Omar) Souviner Cemetery, France, Plot 4 Row B, Grave 40. He is commemorated on the School Roll of Honour as well as on the Moriah CM Chapel memorial, Pengefnffordd, Talgarth and Llanelien War memorial and the family gravestone in Llandilo’r fân churchyard.

**Glyn Powell**

### **The school bus, caps and other recollections**

The school bus dominated my life for some years. The Western Welsh service from Hay to Brecon started collecting pupils at Bronllys and then at various points onwards. Pupils from Hay and Talgarth used the train about which we heard horrific stories, which meant of course that we would have much preferred that form of travel. We had one advantage at the end of the school day because there was not sufficient time for us to leave school at the end of lessons and catch the bus home. We were allowed to leave ten minutes early every day but on each occasion had to ask the teacher for permission to leave. That led to irritation when my raised hand was taken as an indication that I was about to make some significant contribution to the current subject under discussion. In the Welsh class I had to make the request to leave in Welsh and following my hesitant ‘a gaf i fynd i ddal y bws’ and I can still hear ‘Dragon’ Roberts booming ‘Cewch, cewch’.

When pupil numbers increased was replaced by private hire coaches. On entering an empty coach there was a race to get to the back seats to reserve a place or two for the girls who joined us at the later stop by their old school. This meant, of course, that the girls could choose whether or not they took the vacant seats next to us in the back or coldly ignore us. On occasions I recall snowy days when we had to push (hopefully) to assist it out of some difficulty, and in turn this led to snowballs flying outside and inside the coach. School caps had to be protected from being thrown out of the window usually by girls.

School caps were the subject of strict discipline in the wearing of them en route to and from school but NOT in school. Because they had to be worn there were great efforts to wear them as far back on the head as possible - I found that a small size cap with the lining removed had a stronger attachment to the head than one with lining and could be worn so far back that it was hardly visible. I still wonder why such an achievement gave me so much pleasure.

We started our school life in the 'dungeon' which was an apt name for it. Water pipes ran along the ceiling and could be reached by jumping up off the desks. A competition developed for the fastest boy to pull himself up and then hang upside down with the legs over the pipes.

The first significant happening in class was the exercise of the choice of studying French or Latin. I particularly wanted to study French as the only modern language available and with 28 out of the 30 boys in the class put up my hand for French. This obviously caused a difficulty which was solved by either 'Colonel' Williams or Dr Price walking around the classroom tapping boys on the shoulder and specifying which language each one should study. Apparently the preference for French was a regular problem and each year the two masters tried different 'lottery' methods to resolve it. Hence there were no real subject choices at that stage. At the time I was not pleased but Latin was quite useful in my later study of law - not so relevant in these days.

When I arrived in the fifth form to study 'O levels' (which replaced the 'school certificate') there was a curious rule that a pupil had to be aged 16 before he could sit the examination. I would be 14. I spent two years in the fifth form and faced a third year of largely repetitive work when Jacob Morgan, the headmaster, suggested that I went into the sixth form and sat 'O levels' at the end of my first year and 'A levels' at the end of my second year. This was a very kind suggestion but following 'O levels' I almost had a nervous breakdown and decided to carry on with only two of the three 'A level' subjects. I reluctantly gave up History, which did not please Doug Inglis, at which point Dr Price pointed out that if I did not sit three subjects at 'A level' I would not be entitled to a local authority student grant for university. I did not have to pass in three subjects, only to sit the examination. The very kind Dr Price suggested that I sit the Greek and Roman History paper ( a subject which he had studied). He gave me two books, one on Greek History and one on Roman and I did better in that paper than in any other. that meant that after National Service I could go to university. I wonder if caring teachers like Dr Price ever fully appreciate the good that they do for later generations. the requirement of being 16 before sitting the examination was dispensed with in the year I sat the examination!

John Phippen who taught maths came to the school like a breath of fresh air as the first (I think) of teachers returning from the war. With no disrespect to the admirable older teachers, there was a significant difference in attitude and energy. John Phippen showed me that I could succeed in maths which gave me confidence to do much better in other subjects. Having worked away from this area for years I lost touch with school matters but eventually attended about the last of the dinners at Bishop's Meadow when I mentioned to an old classmate that I was sorry that I had failed to thank Phippen for all that he had done for me. He told me that I could still do it because he was present at the dinner. I approached him and expressed my thanks but he had difficulty in remembering me and said I had the wrong teacher. I was able to persuade him against that by reminding him of his AC sports car. He protested that although he had an AC car he had not been at Brecon School when he had it. I told him that after both he and I had left school he had seen me in Bronllys, had sopped the car and had taken me for a ride to show it off.

Punishment seemed to vary greatly. 'Lousy' Lewis used his map pole on the backside (fairly gently!). Colonel used a 'dap' (not too viciously). Dr 'Caesar' Price used a small cane on the hand but when really cross would apply a backhander across the face with his withered hand. Cliff Giles believed in numerous lines and Jacob Morgan applied 'six of the best'. I cannot recall how Doug Ingles punished but I do recall his reaction if anyone dared to respond to a question by saying 'I don't know'. He would say 'you don't know' two three times in disgust and then say 'you stand

there like the New Brighton pier with the tide out and mean to tell me that you don't know. You soft toot'.

My memory is of teachers who could be fearsome but all of whom seemed to have a sense of humour which was never far away. When the first lady teacher arrived during my time at the school she needed a sense of humour. On one occasion she was walking along a row looking over the shoulder of each pupil in turn. One boy she had just passed produced a mirror behind her to look up her skirt. To the horror of the observers he touched the lady's leg at which she turned round and said coldly 'please be careful of my nylons'.

Football was played with a wet muddy ball (not properly laced) on a field with a slope suitable for a skiing black run but still amply covered in pools of water. Heading the ball required more courage than skill. No weather that I recall caused any cancellation of these games and I loved it all.

In cricket (played on the same field) a ball hitting the ground, with no magic finger work applied, would react in completely unpredictable ways. Unbeknown to me this was good training for dealing with skilled bowlers on perfect pitches later in life.

In odd ways an education which could be said to have been very limited in many ways proved to be very advantageous in for me later life when associating with mostly people from 'good schools'. In simple terms they seemed to expect things to happen for them, whilst I expected to have to make things happen for me which was much more satisfying (when it worked).

**Gareth Davies (1947-54)**

#### **Brecon Grammar School Soccer Team: 1944-45**



How many of these team members can you identify? Dennis Morgan, who provided the photo, has also given brief details about each person.

**Back Row (from left): Mr A. Barnes**, a war-time evacuee who came to Talgarth from a London Primary School and was later transferred to Brecon Grammar School where he taught English and History and was Form Master for the Vth Remove class.

**Lyn Roberts**, native of Brecon, left school to train at Trinity College, Carmarthen; became a Maths teacher at Nantwich Grammar School, and still lives in Nantwich.

**H.E.G. (Bill) Holmes**, native of Talgarth, joined RAF and on release enrolled at U.C.W. Aberystwyth to take an honours degree in Economics; taught at Bishop's Stortford, Brecon High School and finished as Deputy Head at Crickhowell High School. Now deceased.

**Mr Elwyn Thomas**: native of Dowlais, Senior English and Welsh Master. Left Brecon in late 1940s and joined BBC at Bangor as Director of Schools Radio Broadcasts.

**D.C. Morgan**: native of Talgarth, left Brecon for U.C.W. Aberystwyth and studied Chemistry with Agricultural Chemistry. Had a career in Ministry of Agriculture Advisory Service as a Nutrition Chemist finishing as Head of Agricultural Science Service for East and West Midlands. Retired to Bangor.

**Gordon Evans**: native of Talgarth, born into a family of builders, left school in 1945 to learn building trade. Recently deceased; see his obituary in this newsletter.

**Mr Jacob Morgan**: headmaster.

**Second Row: Ken Smith**: native of Brecon, brilliant athlete. Worked for local authority; died quite young.

**K.J.D. Parfitt (Vice Captain)**: native of Talybont; left Brecon in 1945 for Trinity College, Carmarthen; after military service in RAF he taught at Eardisley and then became head of a Bristol school. Retired early and became an administrator in a security firm. Now deceased.

**P.J. (Peter) Prosser (Captain)**: native of Talgarth, left Brecon for Trinity College, Carmarthen; became Head of a special school at Portsmouth after initial training in a similar school in Birmingham. Retired to Talgarth and was secretary of the OBA for some years. Now deceased.

**John Davies**: native of Brecon. left in 1945 for Trinity College and after military service he taught in Birmingham while also studying for an external London degree in Maths. Became head of Maths at Weston-super-Mare and chief examiner (Maths) for the Southern Examination Board.

**Howard Edwards**: native of Pencelli, farmer's son who trained as an Auctioneer and Estate Agent. Took over his home farm. Now deceased.

**Front Row: Aubrey Pritchard**: native of Hay-on-Wye, left Brecon for U.C. Cardiff where he graduated in English and History. Became a highly regarded teacher in Bradford-on-Avon. Now deceased.

**Billy Letton**: native of Brecon, left school to serve as a railway clerk followed by National Service in RAF. After working for the local authority in Brecon and Llandrindod Wells, he became a postman in Brecon and district. Was a committee member of the OBA for many years.

**Jim Hyatt**: native of Hay-on-Wye, on leaving school he worked for a local timber contractor and later for the Thames Timber Company at Eardisley, Hertfordshire where he became Yard Foreman. He retired after 48 years at Thames Timber. He was a keen gardener and card player. Now deceased.

**Roy Perry**: native of Brecon, worked for Brecon Town Council of which he was Clerk. Now deceased.

### **“Error 404 - Not Found” or “Is your memory failing?”**

Computer users may have encountered the Error 404 message when trying to access a web site. Sometimes a similar error occurs when we try to access our brain. Let me explain. At the last reunion when chatting to an Old Boy I mentioned that I couldn't remember where the railway left Brecon for Neath. I was told it emerged from the town near the prom on the north side of the river and ran towards Cradoc. I later consulted the 1903 Ordinance Survey map which showed the railway crossing The Avenue near the intersection with Maendu Street, not far from the Cradoc Road school. This came as a shock to me because I have no recollection of this bridge despite the

fact that I must have walked under it several times a week on the way to the Girls' Grammar School for Chemistry classes. I remember the railway station and have vague recollections of the viaduct over the Honddu, but the bridge over the Avenue is a blank. The wonderful book entitled "The Neath and Brecon Railway: a history" by G B Jones, D Dunstone and T Watkins (Gomer, 2005) contains lots of photos including the two below\* of Brecon Station and the Honddu viaduct.

For train enthusiasts the locomotive on the viaduct is Number 3652, and at the station the left hand train is Neath-bound and drawn by locomotive number 3768; the right hand train, drawn by locomotive number 46510, has just arrived from Three Cocks Junction.

It's well known that the human brain starts losing cells in early adulthood, but I'm intrigued by the thought that maybe seeing a photo of the bridge over The Avenue might trigger my memory. So, does anyone have a photo of that bridge? Does anyone remember the Honddu viaduct being dismantled? This happened after my family left Brecon in 1958, and the train service between Brecon and Onllwyn stopped in October 1962, although the Onllwyn-Neath service continued until



1964.

(\*Photos reproduced by permission of photographer John Davies and Gomer Press)

J Michael Williams

### **My 50 years as a plant physiologist**

As a continuation of my life after school in Brecon and my graduate studies at Cornell University in New York State, I have been asked to put the next 50 years into about three pages, Wow! I will divide my activities into three groups; family, work and play.

**Family.** When my wife Estelle and I moved from Cornell to Hawaii in 1963, we were accompanied by my mother and my youngest brother, Robin, who had come to Cornell for my graduation. My dad had passed away a year earlier. We headed to Hawaii for a few weeks of relaxation and some job hunting. Both were successful, and on August 1, 1963, I joined Castle and Cooke, the parent company of Dole. Mother and Robin decided to stay in Hawaii, and soon the rest of the Hepton family moved there too.

Then we started our own family, having Jason, Patrick and Tina in quick succession. When they were 2, 1 and 2 months old, Dole asked us to move to the Philippines for a four year assignment. Our little family was spoiled with four maids in a big house in Southern Mindanao. At the end of that four year stay, we returned to Hawaii, enrolled the children in school, and it was back to family chores and no more maids.

Our family activities included coaching all the children's football teams, ferrying them to games and practices and serving on their school Parent/Teacher Association, while Estelle and I each held

full time jobs. Tina, in her early teens modeled professionally in Japan for a while. Eventually they all went on to collage. Tina studied at the Academy of Art Collage in San Francisco, got married and has two beautiful girls. She uses her skills teaching in the inner city school where her girls are students. Patrick followed in his uncle's footsteps and joined the Honolulu fire department. He has four children, the eldest, Haley, is headed this month to study at the University of California in Monterey. Jason, our eldest, along with his wife Kathy, got his degree from the University of California in Santa Barbara, he works for CBRE, a commercial real estate company. He has two children and lives just a ten minute ride away from us.

Having all our children well established with careers and loving families of their own is one of our greatest pleasures. We visit with them often and when we are together we share in the things that make their lives special.

**Work.** It is not fair to call the forty years I spent being paid for something I enjoyed doing "WORK". I joined Castle and Cooke as a Management Trainee. The first three months I was with one of the three sugar plantations belonging to the company. I learned about the diversity of the people living in Hawaii, a new way of speaking pidgin English, and the fun of being part of the Manager's Annual Luau! My second assignment was with the Royal Hawaiian Macadamia Nut Company on the Island of Hawaii. In the middle of the Panaewa Forest, we grew one of the world's most delectable nuts. I learned all the secrets of growing, cracking and roasting. Taste tests were daily happenings. and solving some tricky pest and cultural problems were personal rewards.

My last six months as a trainee was with Dole Pineapple Company. They assigned me the task of finding the cause of a mysterious disease known as "Interfruitlet Corking" My high school and university scientific training paid off, even after seasoned plantation staff had offered skepticism that this "college kid" could bring anything of value to a crop he had never seen before in his life! A fungal infection was found, identified and proved to be the cause. My findings were published, scientific papers were presented and the skeptics became friends for life!

At the end of my trainee year I was asked to join Dole as their Plant Physiologist. I was given a free hand in setting up experiments, gathering data to fully understand this interesting plant, allowing me to recommend new agricultural practices in planting, fertilizing, pest control. irrigation and harvesting. This did not seem like work, it was what I had always wanted to do, and often after work Estelle and I would drive to Waikiki beach to watch the sun go down.

In 1970 the family moved to Southern Mindanao in the Philippines where I was the Director of Technical Services. This position covered Agricultural Research and Quality Assurance, plus the technical and analytical laboratories, I learned the art and craft of can making, box making, canning, juice extraction etc. On my recommendation we converted the entire 25,000 acre plantation to a new variety of pineapple by propagating hundreds of millions of new plants. This was a major project which showed the trust management gave to my judgment. A few years later, I became V.P. Quality Assurance for the whole food company, now known as Dole Foods, which had expanded to cover a whopping 90 types of fruit and vegetables, grown and marketed around the world.

My responsibilities took me to many parts of the globe. Estelle said that my office was really on "United Airlines", and she made a point of joining me when I ventured to a new location she found intriguing - China, Japan, Finland, South Africa, Switzerland and New Zealand to name a few. The problem with this diverse responsibility was that there was no end to each day. Environmental Affairs had been added to my list of responsibilities resulting in time requirements that were impossible to meet. In 1999 I tendered my resignation to take early retirement, but agreed to continue to provide technical support during the transition of my responsibilities to new people. It was a gradual withdrawal for me and allowed me time to write two chapters for the book "The Pineapple". I eased into retirement with a sense of accomplishment and ready for a new beginning.

**Play.** Retirement - it was not! I joined the Ventura County Master Gardeners and was soon installed as the co-chair of an organization that has grown from a couple of dozen volunteers to about 200 trained individuals. They provide home gardening expertise on behalf of the University of California. I am still involved, giving talks on a wide range of gardening topics and overseeing projects that enhance our community.

My sports life was not neglected during the many years. I continued my love of cricket when I first moved to Hawaii. This ended when my left knee would take no more pounding from pace bowling. I switched to 10 - pin bowling and golf, and as I approached age 50, I tackled the marathon. Five were completed, with my best time of 3.46 being clocked in London in 1986. I am still playing golf and though my handicap is rising, my desire to win is not diminished.

Gardening has always been an integral part of my life. Today we have a lovely site overlooking Lake Sherwood in the Santa Monica Mountains. That's the good news! The local deer however have found that I grow roses. These were my pride and joy and offered many a passerby a photo-op in front of the lake. Now, however, the roses are late night snacks or an early breakfast for the deer, as are all the low branches of my fruit trees and everything else they find tasty.

To nourish my creative side, I joined a craft group, The Ventura County Gourd Artists. We use hard shell gourds as a medium. I started this hobby about five years ago with a gourd I grew in my garden. Since then I have created more than 40 finished pieces including a cobra, lemur, Canada goose, tortoise and a swan. Two examples of my creations are shown in the photos below. As you can see I have an eye for seeing animal shapes in the gourds. But I also make lamps, covered bowls, Chinese antique designs and other items that satisfy my creative juices.

Estelle and I continue our happy retirements with frequent visits to our children and grand children, an occasional cruise for relaxation, exploration of the great American National parks with my cousin and her husband from York, and trips back to Wales when the longing overpowers me. It's been a great journey that started for both of us with very humble beginnings. So, many thanks to all who have contributed along the way!



**Tony Hepton (1946-54)**

### **A Towering Effort**

In the mid 1980s the company I worked for (The Wellcome Foundation) volunteered me, as part of their corporate responsibility programme, to help the parish church of St Mary in Nantwich fund

raising. The early years revolved around restoration of the south entrance and my invitation to chair the fundraising committee rather than just give marketing advice. A few years later when leaving church I remarked to the rector that the 100 foot tall, octagonal tower might need looking at as there was a sapling growing out from between the stones as well as various weeds. He replied "It has only recently been done". I said "I have lived here nearly twenty years I have never seen anyone working on the tower". He said "Well, it was completely restored in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century around 1860". At that point I realised that time scales when referring to churches were different to my definition of "recently".

The church's 14<sup>th</sup> century octagonal tower had begun to lean outwards at the top and the architect had put in a temporary measure of stainless steel struts on the roof to prevent it collapsing. Eventually he stated that this temporary measure should not continue and a permanent solution needed to be found. Following an external examination, it was agreed that the pinnacles and parapet should be taken down and reset. This would cost around £280,000.

The committee agreed a fund raising programme. It consisted of several phases: first, a major blast of publicity to raise awareness of the need, secondly, asking individuals to commit a certain amount of money per month, and at the same time sending applications to grant giving bodies. The final phase was to be a series of fund raising events.

Eighteen months later we had more than enough money to allow the contractor to start. You can imagine the scaffolding required with one section reinforced to lower these huge stones to the ground so they could be redressed. The pinnacles came down, the parapet came down and then a telephone call seared into my mind. It was the architect. "Tom I have bad news and really bad news" Sitting down, I heard him say that, on removing the parapet, cracks radiating from the centre



of the remaining stones meant that they too would need to be replaced. This had resulted from the Victorian restoration using iron dowels to try and correct the leaning outward tower syndrome! The really bad news was that a further £250,000 would be required.

For those who have fund-raised you know it is not possible to go back to the original donors so quickly and say "can you double the money you are giving us please?" Work came to a halt as discussions on how to raise the money took place. My committee's recommendation was to apply to the National Lottery as English Heritage, who had contributed handsomely to start, were now out of cash and the PCC, who had promised a large sum, were also running low on cash. I was invited to speak to the Parochial Church Council. Those members of the PCC who had Methodist tendencies were set against applying for money which had been raised by gambling, i.e. the Lottery. After an hour or so the alternatives were, close the church, take the tower down, the PCC raise the money, or apply to the lottery.

The Lottery won through and, with English Heritage verbal support, I completed the application. At that time the sheaf of pages ended with "please indicate that the purpose of the building will remain as currently stated as any change may result in the money being returned!! The Rector and PCC agreed that the church was unlikely to close and

signed the application. Over £130,000 was granted by The Lottery and along with a surplus from the first appeal and a significant bequest the work restarted.

Approximately the next forty feet of the tower was removed and replaced. The press release at the end thanking all contributors shows a very tired Tom Protheroe (I was still working full time) and a pleased Rector.

If you are ever in or passing through Nantwich in Cheshire do give me a ring and I will show you the skilled stonemason work, which now stands proudly over the centre of the town (see photo above) as it has for the last seven hundred years.

**Tom Protheroe (1954-61)**

### **Mervyn John Jenkins CBE (1916-2014)**

Mervyn was educated at Mount Street Primary School and Brecon Boys' Grammar School, after which he joined the family firm of building contractors in 1933. At the outbreak of the Second World War he enlisted in the Army, serving in the Royal Engineers between 1939 and 1945. As a member of the British Expeditionary Force he fought in France and was one of those who in 1940 spent four days on the beaches of Dunkirk before being evacuated in a small pleasure boat for 30 people on which 300 soldiers were crammed. This had a lasting effect on Mervyn as the crew of the boat were members of the RNLI. As a result Mervyn became a life long supporter of and fundraiser for the RNLI, becoming the first Chairman of the Brecon Branch. In 2010 he received the gold badge and Certificate from the Council of the RNLI in recognition of his service. After his evacuation from Dunkirk Mervyn went on to serve in North Africa, Sicily and Italy where he was awarded a Mention in Despatches. After the war he went back into the family firm retiring in 1985.

The family firm of B Jenkins and Sons was established in Brecon by Mervyn's grandfather in 1880 after the family moved here from Carmarthen. Possibly the most significant building built in Brecon by the firm is the Plough Chapel. Whilst it isn't the most attractive building on the outside the interior is truly outstanding, and Mervyn was rightly proud of the fact that it was his family who had built it. The firm was also responsible for building the old Mount Street School as well as the offices of the Brecon and Radnorshire Express and a large number of significant houses and the first council estate in Brecon.

Away from his business interests Mervyn had a full and diverse life. From 1962 until 1976 he was a Borough Councillor, serving as Mayor of Brecon in 1968/9 and chairman of various committees of the council. He was appointed a Justice of the Peace in 1965 and was Chairman of the Bench from 1978 to 1983 as well as Vice President of the Magistrates' Association. He was a Governor of the High School and a founder member of the Old Boys' Association of the Boys' Grammar School and a former President and Life Vice President of the Association. He was a long standing supporter of the OBA committee and the Armistice Day service at the High School. He was also Chair of Governors of the Priory School. His interests even extended to national bodies where he served as Chairman of the Lord Chancellor's Advisory Committee. His interests were so widely spread that he was also President of Brecon Town Band and Vice President of the Aberhonddu Male Voice Choir.

As well as all of this he was a stalwart of the Church. He was Churchwarden of St Mary's in Brecon many times and was treasurer for over 45 years as well as being Clerk of Works, something which he also did for the Cathedral up until 2004. No one knew St. Mary's better than him and up until relatively recently he could be seen climbing ladders and scaffolding when most people of his age

would find it difficult to climb a staircase. He was a member of the Church in Wales' Governing Body for thirty years between 1960 and 1990 and he was also a member of a number of other Diocesan and Cathedral Committees.

He was intimately involved in setting up Relate in Brecon of which he was Chairman. He devoted a great deal of time to Abbeyfields sheltered accommodation as a fund-raiser, clerk of works and president right up until the end. Mervyn's commitment to the community of Brecon was nothing short of remarkable. So much so that in 1984 he was honoured by the Queen and appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire.

Mervyn was full of energy and compassion until the end of his long life. Until recently he was involved in planing another Abbeyfield home and further developments in St. Mary's Church. A man blessed with good health so much so that the medics were incredulous when he was admitted to Neville Hall after his stroke to hear that a man of 97 years was not on any medication. Yet when he was young he was a patient for nine months in the Bronllys T.B. Hospital.

The death of Mervyn was a sad occasion and a shining light in the Brecon community has gone out.  
**Ken Jones (with much information provided by Father Steven Griffith)**

### **Reflections on my career at BGS in the 1950s - Part 2**

This time last year I wrote of my experience at the Plough Chapel School Rooms. This was the place for those of us who had not figured in the first 30 places in the County Scholarship Examination at the age of eleven. I now think that such a situation was inevitable because a total of 50 boys could not all be accommodated at Cradoc Road for lack of space.

The solution, however, was not without unfortunate consequences in curriculum terms for those of us who would have appreciated a wider choice of subjects. For one thing no boy at the Plough had access to French or Latin. In addition it was necessary to traipse through the town to the Main School for the use of the Chemistry and Physics Laboratories, to the sports field and to the Gymnasium. For some this was a class recipe for the creation of second class individuals. However, having come 3rd in the class at the end of my second year, I was offered the chance to spend the following year in the hallowed 4a! For me this was a huge boost to morale, and the opportunity to join old primary school friends of mine who had already been 2 years in the 'A' stream.

At the beginning of the next term half the class gathered up their books and disappeared upstairs to join Dr Price for their Latin class. Mr John Williams, the French teacher, had noted the presence of the recently arrived boys from the Plough 'Academy'. He suggested that these boys get on with other school work since attempting French two years behind would be too difficult a task. Speaking for myself, I asked if I might try this subject, whatever the difficulties. Reluctantly Mr Williams agreed. I cannot recall the details by which I came to grips with this new subject without any special tuition, but I obtained an extremely good pass in the space of two years. At last, I felt I might have some academic potential; might I now consider the possibility of the Sixth Form after my poor start?

I spent two years in the Fifth Form collecting four 'O' levels in the first and three more in the second. The following year I proceeded with some trepidation to the Sixth Form, my subjects being

English, French and History. More difficulties were about to appear with respect to my French studies. Unfortunately Mr Williams soon took leave from the school for a year's rest owing to a recurrence of a previous illness. During his absence I was taught by several different French teachers who were, from memory, Mrs Stace, recently retired from the Girls' School, Miss Michael, very attractive but young and inexperienced, a Mr Whitfield, also young and inexperienced, and finally Miss Cynthia Culpek, of Czech origin. Each of these taught whichever part of the course they fancied, often to the confusion of the few of us doing the subject. At last on the return of the now recovered Mr Williams, I managed to get my 'A' level pass in French at the first go.

I then went to Cardiff University taking up Italian from scratch in the first year, and some Philosophy in the second. The following year I graduated with my degree in English and French. I then set off for France where I was appointed English Assistant in an Ecole Normale in Normandy. This was the equivalent of a College of Education in England and Wales. On my return to the UK I was a highly fluent speaker in French.

After a few years teaching in a Bristol Grammar School, followed by a spell in a College of Further Education in Buckinghamshire, I was accepted on a year's intensive Russian course at the Polytechnic of Central London. Before this course was over I was appointed Lecturer in Modern Languages at Filton College (once more in Bristol) where we taught French, German, Spanish, Italian, Russian and occasionally Welsh. A few years later I was seconded to the University of London where I obtained the degree of M.A. (in the teaching of Foreign Languages and Literature in Education). Almost immediately afterwards (I must have been mad!) I completed an M.Sc. at the University of Aston in Birmingham in French and German Contemporary Studies. At this point I applied for the post of Senior Lecturer in French Studies at Bristol Polytechnic (now the University of the West of England) where I taught mainly on the French B.A. (Hons) course in the Department of Modern Languages.

So what conclusions have I now come to in my retirement about my time at Brecon Grammar School and what influence did these days have on the years that followed? I think it is fair to say that my experiences at the school were a very mixed bag. Maybe a bad start was to drive me later to reach the goals I was not expected to reach. Things may have been easier later at the Brecon High School, which started after I left. Who knows? Either way, the majority of my school days were reasonably happy despite the difficulties I sometimes encountered. If there are any boys still around who remember the fifties at the Grammar School I wish them All the Best, and hope to see a few of them at the Old Boys' dinner in the not too distant future.

**A. R. (Roy) Parry (1951-8)**

### **My Uncle – Morgan Jenkins**

Morgan was the sixth of seven children born to Morgan and Mary Jenkins in 1915. His father was a plate layer at the Ynisfeoi Mine, Treherbert, South Wales. Morgan attended local schools in his younger years. Being a bright pupil he achieved a place at Brecon Boy's County Grammar School for his secondary education. Morgan's death at St Nazaire is recorded on the School's War Memorial.

This was the time of the Great Depression and, following his leaving school, Morgan, with many of his family moved to London to secure work. Unfortunately, due to all of Morgan's immediate relatives having since died, I have little information on this period of his life. However, Morgan's

military record shows that he was a buyer for what I believe to have been a wholesale drapery company when he joined the Territorial Army (The T.A.). I should explain that in the United Kingdom the Territorial Army is voluntary and for civilians who wish to take military training during evenings, weekends and holiday periods.

Morgan joined the London Rifle Brigade of the T.A. in 1937 when it began to appear that war with Germany was possibly on the horizon. At the outbreak of war he joined the Army. Over the next five months he was promoted from Private to Sergeant.

In April 1940 Morgan was posted to the No. 5 Independent Company and joined them, with French and Polish troops, on the ill-fated operation in Norway. He subsequently returned in June 1940. Following his return he was posted to the No. 1 Special Services Battalion, which in turn became part of the newly formed Commando Force. In August 1940 Morgan married Doris Pooley.

Morgan was now part of No. 2 Commando commanded by Charles Newman. Clearly Newman had a high regard for Morgan and arranged for him to be promoted from the ranks to 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant, Welch Regiment.

I understand Morgan revelled in the Commandos, where a man was judged by his skills and courage rather than his family history or which school he attended. His Captain, Michael Burn, records in his book “Turned Towards the Sun” that on occasions Morgan would remove his officer’s insignia, become *one of the boys* and join his old comrades for a night in the pub.

Whilst discipline within the Commandos was more relaxed than might be expected within the army, training was exceptionally hard and only the most proficient were retained. Much of the training took place in the West of Scotland. Morgan could perhaps be over zealous for Peter Stanley recounts in his book “Commando to Colditz” that on refusing to be captured during a training exercise, Morgan was inadvertently shot in the thigh by the opposing team.

The Commandos waited, not always patiently, for action, and finally it arrived with the raid on St. Nazaire. As is well known the prime object of the raid was to destroy the “caissons” (chambers) of the “Forme Ecluse Louis Joubert” and associated machinery. Additionally, Commandos were to destroy the bridges linking the town of St. Nazaire with the dock area. Morgan’s role was to lead a troop of men to defend the party designated to destroy “Le Pont de la Douane”.

The majority of Commandos were transported to St. Nazaire by small wooden motor launches, “ML”. Morgan was being carried by vessel ML 268 and on its approach to the “Ancienne Entree” it was struck by German fire. ML 268 burst into flames and exploded, resulting, unfortunately, in Morgan and his men being killed. Of the five, three are buried at Escoublac La Baule Cemetery. Two, including Morgan, have no known grave, but their deaths are recorded on the Brookwood Memorial, Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, England.

**David Tait**

### **The value or the cost!**

The recurrent financial problems which seem to bedevil secondary education almost eliminated our Alma Mater as a separate institution in the 1920s. At an Educational Committee meeting on 3rd December 1920 the discussion on the Report on Secondary Education, proposing the introduction

of free secondary education, led inevitably to the issue of costs, which always worried councillors in the context of Brecon schools. There was an evident envy among the county councillors that Brecon should have been favoured with two single sex secondary schools whilst elsewhere in the county there were mixed secondary schools. A good deal of the discussion, therefore, centred on the staffing and the cost of maintaining the two separate schools in Brecon. Councillor W M Lloyd claimed that it cost an extra £1000 to run two schools instead of one. Rather surprisingly even the chairman, Prof. Joseph Jones, an eminent educationalist, was concerned that this meant a penny on the rates and involve overstaffing in comparison with the other county secondary schools. Principal Lewis of the Memorial College also expressed some exasperation at being unable to resolve the issue of two schools, but the problem was compounded by the proposed extension to the girls' school as the site had already been purchased by the Governing Body on the condition that it was to be used exclusively for a girls' school. It was explained that a good price had been paid for the land and it might be possible to get a release from the covenant in question. Rev. E Rowlands and others could not understand how the Governors had allowed such a clause to get into the deeds in the first place. Councillor Idris Davies proposed a general enquiry be held into the position at Brecon, that the conveyance of the Girls' School site be precluded, and that the question of scrapping one of the schools with a view to amalgamating the two departments be considered. How this single mixed school was to be housed was not considered at this stage as the proposer's main concern was the saving of three members of staff and the attendant costs. The motion was seconded by Councillor Lloyd, another of the arch critics, and carried despite the voice of reason from Councillor W S Miller of Forest Lodge, Libanus. He explained that initially the establishment of the schools, the funds and the appointment of Governors had been a local matter prior to the County Council's assumption of responsibility under the 1902 Act. There had been two separate Intermediate schools because the original contributors had specified that they were contributing to either a boys' or girls' school only. So the two school pattern that emerged in Brecon was unique in the county.

**Glyn Powell**

### **The John Elwyn Davies Prize**

Known to his contemporaries as "Cilhowey", Elwyn was marginally too young for military service in WWII. A talented pupil, he won a classics scholarship to Cardiff University where he gained a 1<sup>st</sup> class degree in Greek.

He came to prominence in Thailand where he was asked to develop the Faculty of Modern Languages in the new Chulalonghorn University, and was offered the Professorial Chair. His wife, Sara Watterson Davies MA, taught the royal children of Thailand. John Elwyn died there at the age of 39 at the outset of WWI when the Japanese overran the country. I recall his sister, Mrs Eluned Stroud, and her husband writing to the (High) school in 1982 enclosing a cheque for £200 to be devoted to the establishment of an annual John Elwyn Davies memorial book prize for Classics or Welsh if this was considered to be more appropriate.

**Glyn Powell**

### **Obituaries**

#### **Howard Edwards (1941-46)**

Howard was known as "Little Jumbo" to distinguish him from his eminent elder brother "Big Jumbo". He gained school colours at soccer and cricket; his commanding presence on the field of play was particularly evident in house matches. On leaving school he returned home to the family farm at Pencelli Castle where he subsequently farmed in partnership with his younger brother.

**Donald Meurig (“Mick”) Evans (1942-46)**

On leaving school Meurig undertook an apprenticeship as a motor mechanic before completing his national service with REME. He subsequently returned to Elston’s firstly as a mechanic and then as store manager. Following a period working in South Africa and then the United Arab Emirates he returned once more to Elston’s taking up residence in his home village of Llanfrynach.

**Henry Ieuan (“Ieu”) Evans (1944-48)**

Supplementary entry. A brother to Meurig Evans, Henry spent his National Service in the Army Dental Corps before entering the Police Service with the West Midland Force. On retirement he continued to work with the Police Force in a civilian capacity from his home in Stourbridge.

**Anthony Whiley Headmaster (1989-94)**

A former pupil of Cowbridge Grammar School and graduate of Queen Mary College, Aubrey taught for five years in England before being appointed to a Head of Department post at Cyfarthfa in 1968. From January 1978 he was Deputy Headmaster at Brecon High School and became Headmaster in 1989 on Dr W S K Thomas’ retirement. He continued to revisit the area as a lay preacher.

**Len Evans Staff (1958-86)**

Len attended Maesydderwen before returning home to assist in the family business. After National Service in the RAF he worked for some years at Smith’s “Tic-Tock” factory before entering Trinity College, Carmarthen to train as a teacher. He was appointed to head the Maths department at the Secondary Modern School and then as Maths teacher and careers master at Brecon High School.

**Roger Norman Welsh (1964-69)**

The son of a policeman, Roger moved several times prior to settling in Brecon. Though rugby had supplanted soccer as the main sport he stuck to soccer, playing to a commendable standard. He was a pop music enthusiast, participating in a rock group with fellow pupils. He joined the Personnel Dept. at Police HQ at Llangunnor prior to promotion in an administrative capacity at Newtown.

**John Jones (1945-49)**

John, a native of Llanddew, had to cycle to school before there was an extended transport system. He left school early to help on the farm and eventually became a highly respected farmer in his own right. A talented sportsman at school his interest continued into adulthood; he played cricket for the Talgarth Hospital team. He was a top class table tennis player and a loyal member of Talgarth choir.

**Ray Boxhall (1961-65)**

A former pupil of Llanfaes C.P. school, Ray entered the Grammar School in 1961 and is remembered by his contemporaries as an active and lively pupil. On leaving school he was apprenticed to Bulwark Radio and specialised in television. He subsequently set up Builth Electrics with Jeff Thomas, continuing in business until ill health forced him to retire and return to Brecon.

**Walter Glyn Jones (1949-53)**

Walter was born at the isolated homestead, Y Login, at the foot of the Beacons but with his mother’s death at his birth he was brought up at Llwynbedw. After National Service in the RAF in Telecommunications and Air Traffic Control, he established a dairy business in Hay with Trevor Thomas. He retired to Brecon where he enjoyed playing skittles and darts for the RAFA Club.

**Glen Davies (1949-53)**

Glen left school early and after National Service as a radar operator in the RAF he joined the West Mercia Police Force, attaining the rank of detective sergeant. He then worked as group security manager at Furrows for a further 25 years. He was founding member of Shrewsbury Police Choir and organising secretary for 20 years, being instrumental in raising more than £230,000 for charity.

**John Williams (“JW”) Jones (1944-47)**

John, a native of Llanhamlach, on leaving school at the age of 14 worked on the railway line at Llanfihangel-Talyllyn. He then joined the South Wales Constabulary and returned to Brecon with the Dyfed Powys Force in 1966 as a sergeant. After retiring in 1987 his life revolved around his family and his numerous interests as member of Brecon Golf Club, Bridge Team and U3A.

**Gordon Allan Evans (1941-45)**

Gordon, also known as “Blackie”, was a native of Talgarth and a member of Siddons House. He played for the school 1st Soccer XI where he was an accomplished full back (see school photo on page 10). He also played for Talgarth youth. He left school early to joint the family building business and eventually established his own firm.

**Alan Forward (staff)**

Alan, a native of Penywaun, was a pupil at Abercynon Secondary School, after which he took up an apprenticeship in engineering, and then attended Bolton Technical College. He taught at Brecon High School for a period, then at Llangynidr and Llanfaes primary schools before becoming a supply teacher in Merthyr. He was an all round sportsman with interests in soccer and badminton.

**William (Bill) Pritchard Thomas (1936-40)**

Born at the Forge, Aberyscir, on the early death of his father he and his mother moved to Llanddew where he remained for the rest of his life. On leaving school Bill worked for a local auctioneering firm before joining the RAF, serving part of his service in Canada. Following demobilisation he joined the Civil Service as a valuer, in which capacity he travelled extensively throughout Wales.

**Samuel Edward (Ted) Rees (1948-54 and staff member 1970)**

Ted attended Sennybridge C.P. School and Brecon Grammar School before graduating from University College, Cardiff in History. His father taught Chemistry at the Girls’ Grammar School. After teaching in Somerset and Newport, he moved to care for his mother at Llanfihangel Nantbran, and in 1970 he returned to teaching as head of history at the Girls’ Grammar school.

**David Martin Thomas Jones (1966-1973)**

David was known as “Dyna”, a nickname derived from the word “dynamite” because of his performance on the sports’ field. A highly talented soccer and rugby player and an all-round athlete, he won the Victor Ludorum award on three occasions. Although rated the best ever craft pupil, he chose a career in farming with interests in creating fishponds and duck and pheasant shoots.

**Thomas Glyn Winstone (1937-41)**

Glyn attended Mount Street Primary and the Boys’ County School and at age 15 he joined the Tax Office. An active boy scout, he joined the Air Training Corps in 1944 and then the RAF. On demobilisation he studied dentistry at Bristol University, and set up in practice at Brecon in 1954. His interests included sailing, mountain walking and the local Mountain Rescue Team.

**Mervyn John Jenkins CBE (1928-33)**

Senior Old Boy, former President, Honorary Life President, committee stalwart, an eminent citizen of the town, a former local mayor, Mervyn was honoured with the CBE for political, community and charitable services. A leading businessman, he was still a managing director of the timber and builders' merchant, established by his grandfather. A dedicated churchman, he was active in several local charities. A Dunkirk veteran, he saw active service in N. Africa, Italy, France and Germany.

**David A ("Dai") Jones (1940-47)**

Dai's only claim to sporting fame was as a High Jumper for Vaughan and scorer of the 1st. Cricket XI. He was a lifetime lover of Jazz and achieved some notoriety by playing boogie on the piano in the school eisteddfod. A graduate in Economics and Industrial Relations of Cardiff University College he devoted his life to working with disadvantaged youth, the majority of whom were from ethnic minority groups, in the East of London where he was also a magistrate for over 20 years.

**Nigel Keylock (1954-59)**

A member of a long established butchery in Hay, on leaving school Nigel started his trade as a slaughter-man before taking over as the local family butcher. A former player with Gwernyfed RFC, his real passion was golf; he played off single figures. A very sociable person Nigel was also a top class darts player. He also enjoyed many years with the Talgarth Male Voice Choir.

**John C King MBE (1938-44)**

John was a prominent and dominating figure as a pupil, known as "Bomber". He was a talented soccer and cricket player despite having to wear a spinal jacket. On leaving school he joined the Civil Service, and became Deputy Head of DHSS at Glyn Ebwy. He was honoured with the MBE for his services. John was a loyal member of the committee for many years, a former President and an Honorary Life Vice President. He was also a strong supporter of the visually impaired.

**[If you know of any Old Boys who have recently died and are not mentioned in the obituaries, please let secretary Tom Protheroe know]**

**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](mailto: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](mailto:t.protheroe@talk21.com); Tel: 01270 623525.