

# *Cylchlythyr Cymdeithas Cyn-Ddisgyblion Ysgol Ramadeg y Bechgyn, Aberhonddu Mawrth 2017*

## *Brecon Grammar School Old Boys' Association Newsletter March 2017*

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Due to the unexpected closure of Bishops Meadow last summer we have been forced to make another change of venue for our reunion dinner. We shall sample the service at the Castle Hotel for the first time. It is a very pleasant venue which we have enjoyed twice now for our lunch time reunion in early October. The future of this reunion will be decided at the AGM which precedes the reunion dinner as usual.

Our Secretary/Treasurer, **Tom Protheroe**, works hard for the Old Boys' Association but he also has worked hard for his community in Nantwich over many years. His work was recognised by his award of the MBE in the Queen's New Year's Honours list; the citation read "for services to Science Education and the Community in Nantwich". Congratulations Tom for this well deserved Honour!

Once again I am indebted to the newsletter contributors, without which there would be no newsletter. This year you have some real treats in store, e.g. a revealing confession from Glyn Powell about his sins in the "Dungeon" and you can learn how Peter Holt got out of his difficulty at the Education Committee meeting. Contributions for next year's newsletter are welcomed; they can be brief snippets, photographs or articles up to three pages in length. Remember that previous newsletters can be accessed on the Old Boys' web site: [www.brecongrammar.org](http://www.brecongrammar.org).

Gan i fwyty Waun yr Esgob - Bishop's Meadow – gau'n annisgwyl yn yr haf, bu rhaid inni newid lleoliad cinio'r aduniad blynyddol. Byddwn yn arbrofi'r gwasanaeth yng Ngwesty'r Castell am y tro cyntaf. Mae'n cynnig cyfleusterau dymunol iawn y mae rhai ohonom wedi eu mwynhau ddwywaith yn barod ar gyfer ein cinio canol dydd yn gynnar ym mis Hydref. Byddwn yn bwrw penderfyniad ar ddyfodol yr aduniad hwnnw yn ystod y Cyfarfod Blynyddol a gynhelir yn arferol cyn cinio'r adduniad.

Mae ein Trysorydd/Ysgrifennydd, Tom Protheroe, wedi gweithio'n ddygn dros Gymdeithas y Cyn-Ddisgyblion, ond mae hefyd wedi gweithio'n galed dros ei gymuned yn yr Heledd Wen dros nifer

fawr o flynyddoedd. Cafwyd cydnabyddiaeth o'i waith trwy ddyfarniad MBE iddo yn rhestr Anrhydeddau'r Frenhines ar gyfer y Flwyddyn Newydd: geiriad y dyfarniad oedd "am wasanaethau i Addysg Wyddonol a'r Gymuned yn yr Heledd Wen". Llongyfarchiadau iddo ar yr Anrhydedd haeddiannol hwn!

Unwaith yn rhagor, rwyf yn ddyledus i'r cyfranwyr i'r cylchlythyr: hebddynt, ni fyddai unrhyw Gylchlythyr o gwbl! Mae nifer o danteithion arbennig yn aros amdanom yn y rhifyn hwn: e.e. cyffes ddadlennol gan Glyn Powell o'i bechodau yn y "Ddaeargell" a chewch ddarllen sut y llwyddodd Peter Holt i ymwared o'i anhawster mewn cyfarfod o'r Pwyllgor Addysg. Croesewir cyfraniadau ar gyfer y cylchlythyr nesaf : gallant fod yn bytiau bach, lluniau neu erthyglau hyd at dair tudalen. Cofiwch bod modd ddarllen cylchlythyrau blaenorol ar wefan y Cyn-Ddisgyblion ar: [www.brecongrammar.org](http://www.brecongrammar.org)

### Events of 2016

On a beautifully sunny evening on 2nd April, 59 Old Boys, Old Girls and partners assembled at Bishops Meadow for the **67th Annual Reunion Dinner**. Many said it was good to be back at our former venue and the function room did indeed look good, with its splendid view of the Beacons in the distance (see photo). Our new chairman, David Gittins, welcomed everyone and paid tribute to



the former chairman Glyn Powell who has done so much for the Association. He invited Glyn to say Grace and this was followed by dinner. Then David Powell gave his Presidential address in which he referred briefly to his time first at the Cradoc Road school and then Penlan. He studied Veterinary Science at Bristol University and became interested in diseases in horses. He chose three examples of the challenges he met during his career, the first being in the Newmarket area where there was a problem involving infections in mares after mating. A previously unidentified organism was

identified as the cause and appropriate antibiotics were identified for treatment. A code of practice was developed to keep mares and stallions free of the infection.

His second example involved a respiratory infection amongst racehorses in Hong Kong. The disease developed rapidly and with the help of local scientists an influenza virus was identified as the cause. The question was how had the infection got into the indigenous population, and a study of records identified horses imported from UK with similar symptoms as the likely source. New quarantine facilities were built, the vaccination programme was changed, and there were no more outbreaks.

The third example was one of abortions in horses in Kentucky when David was working at the University of Kentucky. Some of the affected horses developed blindness and pericarditis, and it was noted that there were lots of caterpillars on the affected farms. Eventually a link was established to the caterpillars, which were ingested by the horses. The solution was to spray with insecticides the wild cheery trees in the horse pasture to remove the eggs from which the caterpillars emerged in late April. David then identified two principles, learned at school, which had helped his career. One was the importance of an enquiring mind which was inculcated by his

teachers, and the other was the importance of leadership and team spirit which he learned on the playing field.

Vice President Glan Pritchard then proposed a vote of thanks to the President and members of the committee, and highlighted the key contribution of our secretary/treasurer, Tom Protheroe. Finally David passed the chain of office to Glan who is on the right in the photo.



On 12th July 2016 the **Brecon High School Awards Evening** was attended by David Gittins (Chairman), Tom Protheroe (Secretary/Treasurer), David Powell (Past President) and Michael Williams (Newsletter Editor) and in the absence of President Glan Pritchard, David Gittins presented the Old Boys' Association prizes. The entertainment consisted of performances by a guitar group, a vocal solo, duets by two guitarists of their own compositions, readings, and a dance by year 9 girls. The address was given by Councillor D. Meredith, who said he had a long association with the school having been a first year pupil when the school opened in 1971. After becoming a school Governor several years ago he later became Chairman. He referred to difficulties experienced by the school in the last few years, and said that examination results in 2015 (the best in Powys) showed that the school was doing well. Some of the work of the students was displayed around the hall and included some striking art work.

The Old Boys prizes included one new one, namely the Bill Letton Football Shield which was awarded for the first time. The OBA winners were:

Cliff Carr Prize	William Prosser and Sophie Pritchard
The Geoffrey Meredith Powell Prizes:	
Senior prize	Bethan Adams
Junior prize	Aleksandra Falara
Evans Languages prize	Aleksandra Falara and Zachary Morgan
Evans KS3 Maths prize	Beth Wood
Evans KS4 Maths prize	Jessica Parry
Evans KS5 Maths prize	Sarah Hughes
Evans Art prize	Isha Gaha
Evans Science/Business prize	Jac Powell
Evans Intercultural Understanding prize	Isha Gaha
Evans KS4 Geography prize	Lowri Aplin*
Evans Most Improved History prize	Dylan Matthews and Amy Martin
The Lewis/Price Cup	Erin Blackburn
The D J Powell Cup	Anna Herring
The Letton Shield	Bob Kear*



Photo (from left)

David Powell, Zachary Morgan, Sarah Hughes, Beth Wood, David Gittins, Erin Blackburn, Jac Powell, Bob Kear, William Prosser, Tom Protheroe.

\*A letter of thanks from Lowri Aplin is reproduced below, and Bob Kear's comment on his soccer activities is included in the article on the Bill Letton Shield.

### **From the recipient of the Evans KS4 Geography Prize - 2016**

I am Lowri Alpin, a second year A level student at Brecon High School and the proud recipient of the above award, sponsored by Mr & Mrs Evans of the Brecon Boys' Grammar School, Old Boys' Association. I am also the granddaughter of the late Ieuan Gwyn Morgan of Penfai Farm, a pupil at Brecon Boys' Grammar School in the early 1940s.

I received the award in recognition of my positive work ethic, achievement and enthusiasm for the subject. I am currently studying for my full A Level in Geography having achieved a B Grade at AS Level together with Business and the Welsh Baccalaureate. The generous prize accompanying this award has enabled me to purchase a personal copy of essential text books which has allowed me to continue my studies at home and further expand my knowledge.

I am hoping to continue to study Geography at University next year. I am extremely fortunate to have been born and brought up in the heart of the Brecon Beacons National Park, an area renowned for its natural beauty. As one of the custodians of the countryside I understand the importance of preserving the environment to ensure its future. I am hoping that my studies will lead to a future career that will help to achieve this aim.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Brecon Boys' Grammar School Old Boys' Association and in particular Mr & Mrs Evans for their generosity in funding these annual awards. I have also been able to include this accolade as one of my achievements in my Personal Statement produced as part of my University application.

On Friday 11th November 2016 several Old Boys and Old Girls attended the **Memorial Service** at Brecon High School to remember the former pupils who died in the two world wars. The Reverend David Thomas had to withdraw at a late stage and the headmaster Rob Broadbridge took his place with aplomb. Although I've attended many of these Remembrance Services, the reading, by Warrant Officer M Parry and Vice President Mike Peters, of the names of former pupils who died in the two wars is still chilling to hear. The school cadets, who efficiently shepherded the visitors, can be seen in the photo below.





## Biographical Notes

### W Michael Peters (1951-57) - Vice President

Mike joined the Brecon & Radnor Express on leaving school. His chosen career in journalism and communications took him worldwide with UK blue chip companies, in Government service and the Reserve Army. He commanded the Army's Media Operations Group, rising to the rank of Colonel, and worked for the Ministry of Defence in Germany, Northern Ireland, Sinai, the Falklands and war-torn Beirut. A specialist in crisis communications he remains active in media, Whitehall and Westminster circles.

### The Bill Letton Football Shield

Bill Letton who died in 2014 was a staunch supporter of the Old Boys' Association and was a keen sportsman. After his death Dennis Morgan suggested that the Association might create a Memorial



Shield that could be offered to an outstanding sportsperson at Brecon High School each year, and he offered to contribute to its cost. The committee agreed and sounded the school for its opinion, and after a positive response, and an offer of a contribution by Chairman, David Gittins, the Shield (pictured) was ordered. The first recipient of the Shield at the July 2016 Awards Evening was Bob Kear and he has kindly provided (following article) a brief pen portrait of his soccer activities. To provide a monetary prize each year the Committee is launching an appeal for funds in support of the Bill Letton award (details are included in the reunion invitation).

### My Soccer Activities

I have played football since the age of 7, and this will be my 11th season of club football. During this time I have enjoyed much success with Monmouth Town and Northcote for whom I still play.

Much of our success was achieved in junior football. It was our dominance at this level that convinced our coach Huw Owen to enter us into the Mid Wales south senior division. This was a huge step up that was matched by the talent and attitude amongst the group. In two seasons of senior football, we have finished 11th and then 5th last year. A remarkable achievement given the age of our squad. Whilst we haven't quite hit the heights that we did in junior football where we won the Clive Nicholls memorial trophy 3 times and the South Powys football league twice, I've no doubt that success awaits our senior team, so long as we stay together and keep the team spirit that has been so important to us.

By comparison I've had slightly less success with the school. I have been a regular in the senior side from year 11 and captain from year 12 onwards, but have achieved little besides the odd local tournament win. We managed to reach the last 16 of the Welsh Cup in 2014, only to be knocked out by Aberdare High School, which has over double the number of students and far more advanced facilities. Nevertheless, we established ourselves as a strong outfit, particularly amongst our nearest rivals. We regularly beat Crickhowell and Builth High School and have never lost to Christ College.

**Bob Kear**

### **How the years have wings: Part 3**

*"Mr. Holt will now take you through the plans for the new school."*

You might remember that my last contribution to the Old Boys' newsletter drew to a close with that pronouncement from my boss, whom I sat beside at my first Education Committee meeting.

The slow bell-toll of those funereal words, signalling the death of my hardly-begun career as an education officer, echoed in my mind as I descended the steps to the back of the committee room where the plans were displayed in mocking prominence. I had the full attention of the Education Committee of the Eton Divisional Executive, an august Body comprising not only the usual District and County Councillors, but also representatives of Eton College itself, one of whom was the charming and beautiful wife of a Housemaster at the College, a woman reckoned to be the cleverest in England. Some audience!

What I didn't have, you might also remember, was any knowledge whatsoever of those plans. I did not know they existed. They had never been shown to me. I had never seen them. I had no idea where they had been lodged nor who had brought them to the meeting. I had not the faintest idea what I would find when I got to them.

Gradually my faux-confident steps brought them into view. They seemed to be the plans for a small primary school. As far as I could make out, there seemed to be a collection of classrooms arranged around a central hall. Maybe I could weave a few words around that, I thought. Then - then - I saw something which made my heart leap up like Wordsworth's before his rainbow, something which made me want to plant a huge kiss of gratitude on to the unsuspecting head of the architect, something I knew I could weave more than a few words around. I saw a turning circle. The architect, God bless him/her, intended to give the new primary school a *turning circle*.

Those of you who know something about primary schools will appreciate the enormous benefits of such a feature. Such a feature would enable the armada of cars ferrying pupils to and from school every day to float up, and to sail away, safely and effortlessly, without having to cause hold-ups, flare-ups, three-point turns or dangerous congestion. Sadly, very, very few primary schools boasted such a circle - and here was I, looking at one! Did I make a meal of that! I especially trumpeted the fact that the Authority *had listened to the concerns of parents and the public*. That made me feel good, almost virtuous, and brought smiles and nods from all the elected councillors. I hardly needed to turn my attention to the school itself, but I did. The lay-out was so simple - a plan off the peg I guessed - that even I, a secondary man, could see its advantages.

The matter was never ever discussed back in the Education Office. What my boss intended to achieve I will leave you, dear Reader, to conclude. For me it remains a mystery.

**Peter Holt (1946-53)**

### **Sinner scrubbed up a Saint - A Confession**

After I overcame the obstacle of the so-called elitist 11+ as a ten year old, entering Brecon Boys' County School as an immature raw country boy with urchin haircut, short trousers and hob-nailed boots was a traumatic leap into the dark. As my only previous visit to what was to me the "metropolis" of Brecon had been to attend the pre-admission appointment with Jacob Morgan and then being obliged to enter "digs", the process of initiation and adaptation was a real trial. However my scholastic progress in Form II was steady if somewhat modest.

On returning from vacation for my second year I was to experience a real shock to my system with Form III being committed to a year's incarceration in the "Dungeon", euphemistically referred to as the "Day Room", where conditions were really spartan. Here for no rational reason other than lack of close supervision a class of impressionable pupils became a veritable levée en masse of feral boys, primal terrors, odd balls and misfits. The actual classroom became an aboriginal enclave, an indoor version of the Glastonbury festival full of high octane thrills, with a choral cacophony of dozens of the half formed larynx of screaming banshees. The whole place was fizzing like a runaway Catherine wheel.

In retrospect I am fraught with guilt over complicity in this behaviour outside civilised cultural norms. In mitigation I have the excuse that all class members, with one distinctive exception, acted with a human herd mentality following the arch culprits like doped lemmings. Pupils seem to have elected for a self-destructive educational course displaying a minimal propensity towards learning as they rebelled against the school regime. All this chaos was happening without staff intervention. Even Charlie Price, simmering on auto-pilot in his woodwork room next door and not averse to wielding a piece of wood with considerable dexterity, took no notice. It seems inconceivable that the staff in their lair could have been deaf to the howling anguished falsetto emotions and vocal incantations from the grotto below.

Yet these mad capers, the explosive catharsis of pent up emotions, and absurdly vigorous calisthenics, were obvious to passers-by on the highway. The sophomoric gurning of a gallery of moral grotesques and social gargoyles peering through the iron-railings must have presented a comic scenario. The passing public looked on with shocked incredulity, girls would be embarrassed, and Christ College boys taunted by what must have appeared to them to be adolescents with gross behavioural problems. It must have seemed to be the biggest orgy since Caligula took off his toga.

In the cycle shed an illicit big bucks fag trade was conducted by wheezing smokers with fumes wafting from cupped woodbines. The classroom itself became a veritable casino with the large wooden table at the back of the room being netted up for sessions of table tennis, desk tops levelled up for push penny, and the blackboard being targeted as a dart board for flighted pen nibs. The more boisterous would seek to demonstrate their gladiatorial aspirations in youthful pugilism. The really outrageous would engage in chases over the desks like intergalactic pirates, swinging on the overhead water pipes like latter-day Tarzans.

My end of term report indicated that I had been in danger of committing educational hara kiri which would have meant early termination of my secondary education and a return to the land as a labourer. Fortunately, as with other classmates, I soon realised that being clever was different from being a clever Dick. On entering Form IV I was to experience a Damascene conversion, and like others became civilised out of savagery. Interestingly some four of the most disruptive of our members were to become upholders of the law as senior police officers! Such was the transformation in my case that I was to succeed in topping the form list by the end of the 4th year. In retrospect, therefore, I may well have appeared to the staff as a sinner scrubbed up as a saint!

**Glyn Powell**

### **Recollections of D Gwyn Griffiths OBE, 1955-1962**

I was born in the middle house at Y Felin Crai (Cray Mill) in 1944. However, the most noticeable thing on that day was the roar of shells passing over the house. The troops were training for D Day and the range of the guns meant they had to be taken outside the Eppynt Range and fired back in.

When I was six weeks old, my parents moved to Pipton Cottage, Three Cocks, where we stayed until I was almost 17. Between then and going to University at 18, I lived in Bronllys, where my parents stayed for the rest of their lives. Because I left Cray so soon, I'm best remembered in Cray as the baby brother of my older, late, twin sisters, Jean and Joyce who had been born there in 1937.

I attended Glasbury VP Primary School, then sat a somewhat nerve wracking 11 plus exam in Gwernyfed School, with just two other girls who'd also been prevented from attending the original exam because of mumps. I passed and entered form 1A which was situated off the West corner of the old hall at Cradoc Road, and whose register started: Adami, Adams, Bastable.....

Getting to Grammar School involved the daily excitement of travelling by steam train from Three Cocks Junction to Brecon, and the 10 minute "forced march" via the Cattle Market, Bethel Arch, Lion Street, Castle Street and Cradoc Road. Later, my move to Bronllys condemned me to 18 months of the even more exciting journey on the Davies Talgarth 28 seater Bedford Duple "Llandefalle Flyer".

I studied "A" levels in Combined Maths, Physics and Chemistry. They were the subjects for which I had some aptitude. Furthermore, I was being taught by that great triumvirate of Cliff Giles, Gwyn Angell and John Morgan. In Physics, John Morgan was fairly serious (not having been amused by me titling some out-of-school electrical examples as "Ohm work"). However, he was very thorough. Gwyn Angell was equally thorough but had a lighter and more cheerful approach in Maths. Cliff Giles, with his industrial experience, often brought greater relevance to what we did in Chemistry.

After "A" Level, I entered Swansea University to study Mechanical Engineering but switched to Civil Engineering at the end of year one. However, lack of effort resulted in me failing year two. I worked for Engineering Consultants for a year, then re-entered University to take two more years to graduate. During 1966, we undergraduates were used as lab fodder to help test many of the soil samples from the Aberfan Disaster, so helping to provide technical data for the Aberfan Tribunal.

Having graduated, I worked for Engineering Consultants who specialised in Drainage, Sewerage and Sewage Disposal, then after four years I moved to The Monmouthshire Land Reclamation Joint Committee, to design and run Land Reclamation projects. In 1974, I became Principle Drainage Engineer to Torfaen. Poor timing! I was in that role on 24th September 1976 when the great drought broke, dumping 5" of rain over the area in about 8 hours, with consequent liquid mayhem.



I joined the Land Reclamation Department of the recently formed Welsh Development Agency (WDA) in 1977, and was promoted to Land Reclamation Director for Wales from 1984 until I retired in 2004. The work fitted my skills and knowledge well. Most construction projects start with closely prescribed requirements such as size, capacity and function along with rigid design criteria, whereas the first question on a derelict site is usually "What's the best you can do with that?" This leaves plenty of scope for lateral thinking, largely unhindered by tightly set design criteria. Ideal for my grasshopper mind!

As an emerging science, land reclamation also used many of the influences and experiences which I'd met as a child at Pipton Farm. Sitting as it does in the floodplain of the Wye, it contained many of the facets of a reclamation site. Amongst these were river flooding and management, drainage, fisheries, erosion control, cultivation and vegetating of land, woodland, hedge and tree management, and lastly dealing with heritage features. Whilst I lived at Pipton, its neolithic burial mound was excavated, there were two nearby cottages of medieval industrial origin called "The Forge and Maesdu", and Harvey Williams made me aware of the Motte and Bailey Castle on the adjoining Great House Farm. This background, coupled with a formal engineering training helped me in my roles in reclamation, regeneration and environmental improvement.

Prior to the Aberfan Disaster, Wales had seen 4 sites reclaimed. They covered approximately 40ha (100 acres) and had cost £28k in grant aid. The disaster changed all that and by the time of my retirement in 2004, Wales had reclaimed over 1,200 sites covering over 12,000 ha (30,000 acres). My peak budget had been £40m pa. About half of the sites had arisen from the coal and steel industries, and the others included docks, railways, factories, gas works, slate quarries, non ferrous metal mines, military installations and chemical wastes.

About 200 of those sites have been used for industrial and retail development, and over 100 for housing. Other uses have included schools, hospitals, 10 marinas, numerous road improvements, many playing fields, recreation areas and 18 country parks along with a police station and Lampeter cattle market. Reclamation has also contributed to the discovery and conservation of numerous heritage sites and features. The most notable discovery was probably that of the bronze age copper mine on the Great Orme, Llandudno. In addition to the removal of numerous eyesores, the most telling impacts are probably the stabilising or removal of many unsafe tips and structures, the reduction of flood risks and the elimination of risks from contamination and pollution of rivers by eroded spoil. Such problems existed on hundreds of the sites reclaimed. It should also be noted that development of every reclaimed site has avoided development on a green field site.

The impetus provided by the Aberfan Disaster put Wales at the forefront of Land Reclamation, particularly in terms of having removed more of its legacy than almost any other country, but also in restoring some particularly difficult sites in novel ways. The Lower Swansea Valley extended to many hundreds of acres of acute contamination and now houses a wide variety of business and recreational facilities including the Liberty Stadium, home to The Swans and Ospreys, and Barry Waterfront was the first public/private Joint Initiative.

My role was to head a small central team who managed the Welsh budget for Reclamation and Environmental Improvement, and to oversee the technical and financial integrity of all of the projects. It also fell to us to identify, promoted and run research into particular Land Reclamation problems. We carried out regular reviews into the durability and effectiveness of reclamation techniques, and liaised with and shared best practice with practitioners around the world.

I must stress that our role, although a key one, was successful only because of the skill, expertise and commitment of the many designers, managers and contractors throughout Wales. It is therefore to them that I owe a debt of gratitude as I drive around Wales, checking which sites now pass that ultimate reclamation test of being indiscernible from the rest of the landscape.

In the later years of my career, whilst still working for The WDA, I made short working visits to France, Belgium, Poland, Mainland Italy, Sicily and China. I also worked extensively in the Czech Republic, carrying out 7 contracts in the field of reclamation and regeneration. The first of these involved co-writing their Land Reclamation Strategy. Overseas appreciation of one's abilities did much to off-set the sadness of facing growing, but largely undeserved, political and press assaults on one's employer and colleagues.

Since retirement, I've taken up golf. I have also taken on the role of Greens Chairman at The Glamorganshire Golf Course here in Penarth, where I've lived since 1977. Other Breconian residents who I sometimes see in the distance are David Hales and Mike Gittins. I also bump into Charlie Lewis. He and his wife Liz are often in the Golf Club.

To occupy the rest of my time, I sit on the Industrial Advisory Board of the Cardiff University School of Engineering and am a Trustee of The South Wales Institute of Engineers Education Trust, and I give advice to The Prince's Regeneration Trust on preservation of old industrial buildings. My six years spent on the Wales Advisory Board of the National Trust failed to get them involved in the immense industrial heritage of South Wales. They run John Lennon's house, but have nothing in Merthyr!

I have continued to work as a private consultant, mostly in conjunction with ERM Ltd, the world's largest Environmental Consultant. The last report which I co-wrote was for the Wales Government. It was entitled "Research into failure to restore opencast coal sites in South Wales." It deals with one result of the poorly conceived and managed privatisation of the British coal industry.

I give talks on my Work, on South Wales Industrial Heritage, upon a famous fourth Cousin, Gareth Richard Vaughan Jones and about the Aberfan Disaster. Its 50th anniversary approaches on 21st October this year. Sadly there are now relatively few left of those of us that were involved technically in the event or its aftermath. I feel a need to remind people of the grave lessons to be remembered.

My four children are spread in Toronto, Isleworth, St Albans and Penarth and I try to visit them as frequently as possible. I have an uneasy feeling that their departure from Wales reflects the weakness of its economy and employment prospects, which my work was intended to help address.

Despite having lived in the warm climes of Penarth and close to sea level for almost 40 years, I find that every few months I veer back to the altitude and clean air of Breconshire, where I invariably buy a Brecon and Radnor to see what my peers, their children and grandchildren are up to. These visits sometimes involve driving past Cradoc Road, which now looks so much smaller than it did on that first day in September 1955.

I found Grammar School studying to be a somewhat relentless but necessary burden, but now look back at it with some fondness and great gratitude, particularly to those teachers with whom I developed particular empathy and from whom I gained so much.

### **Latest on Powys School Reorganisation**

In last year's newsletter Glyn Powell's article "A Constant State of Flux" referred to the changing plans to reorganise secondary schools in Powys. The plans announced in January 2015 involved the closure of Gwernyfed School and the establishment of a Brecon Learning Campus on the site of the existing High School. There followed much opposition and uncertainty during 2016 as indicated by some of the headlines shown below.

#### **"Plan to close four Powys secondary schools"**

26 January 2016

This referred to proposals to close Brecon High and Gwernyfed schools and replace them with a new school at Brecon.

#### **"Councillors launch last ditch bid to stop school closures"**

26 May 2016

An extraordinary general meeting was called to consider a motion to transfer decisions on school closures from the cabinet to to members of the council.

#### **"Your guide to Powys council's latest schools decisions"**

28 September 2016

Plans to close Brecon High and Gwernyfed Schools are to be dropped and funding will be sought for a new 11-18 building at Brecon and improvements at Gwernyfed. Plans were also announced to close Builth and Llandrindod High Schools and replace them with one school to operate at both sites.

#### **"Major boost to plan for new school in Brecon"**

12 October 2016

A £28 million plan to build a new secondary school in Brecon and fund improvements at Gwernyfed High School has cleared its first hurdle - approval by the Welsh Government.

In an article entitled "Progress belies careless talk of a failing school" in the Western Mail on 19 September 2016 Rob Broadbridge, Head of Brecon High School, said controversial plans to reorganise secondary education in Powys will not go away. But schools should not get caught in the crossfire. He is angry at the use of the word "failing" by some individuals in reference to Brecon High School, but so much has been achieved since the school was placed in special measures. He cited the improvements in examination results; in the summer of 2015, 8 months after he arrived at the school, 64% of pupils achieved the "gold standard" of Level 2+ with A\* to C GCSEs, an increase of 9% compared to 2014. Then in 2016 75% of pupils achieved this standard, a further increase of 11%. He said "our buildings are not in a good condition, but that does not make us a failing school".

The Estyn Report of November 2016 removed the school from the list of schools requiring special measures as a result of the progress following the inspection of 2012.

### **Street Games**

Thinking back to the years that I lived in Brecon, before the commencement of World War 11, and comparing that time with how children conduct themselves in their early years today, the singular feature for me is that in those days when the daily schooling was done, the streets became alive with children playing all sorts of games whereas today such activity is rarely to be seen. Why this should be is because of the advent of the technological age with its multi media activities and a changing society's outlook on the safety of children.

As a child my safety never seemed to be questioned by my parents. We roamed the town and its immediate rural areas without fear always returning home for food and bed. Within the home was a variety of activities; book and comic reading, listening to the wireless, pursuing a hobby, playing board and card games and homework. Such pursuits were followed when it was dark or the weather was not very good. Otherwise we were out in the street playing.

I lived in a side street, Charles Street in the Watton, and little, if any, traffic came to disturb our recreation. We waited for the morning milk cart, horse and milk float, to come and go and the baker's van, which was garaged in the street, usually drove out onto the Watton ready for bread distribution quite early - and was never put away for the night until twilight. The rest of the day the street was empty of vehicles and full of playing children. Their ages were between early walking age (their participation in any game was thanks to an older sister or girl friend who carried them around in a running game or held them in their arms in a skipping game) and for boys 11 -12 years (for they then disappeared down the gasworks field to play football) and for girls up to age 15/16 when they went off to work and pursued more grown up activities.

There was no fixed order as to what game was played first or at what time, it really depended on the number of children who were out of the house in the street and the surrounding area, for those living nearby in the Watton were part of our group. Football and cricket were played in their season, but not for very long at each session for the girls, whose number outweighed the boys, soon got fed up with these activities and dropped out...it's not much fun playing cricket with only three boys and kick and rush football grew tiring very quickly with a small number. Although I am recalling my own personal memories for the Charles Street centered activity I am aware that at the same time as we were engaged in street games many areas of Brecon were also being used by its local children; Llanfaes had a number of playing centres, so too Watergate, and Maendu, and the Struet, and Bridge Street and Mount Street..well most places where a number of children lived.

The two activities that really encompassed most of the children were skipping and rounders. Someone had a very long rope that stretched from being tied to a down pipe across the street to the opposite pavement where it was turned by someone who was able to do that. The width of the rope enabled a number of children to skip at the same time and many games were devised because of this. Simple games such as 'all in and all out' where the last one to leave the rope was out until a winner was declared and a new game was started or to more complicated games depending on the speed of the rope being turned and the point of entry, whether you entered straight in or 'over the moon' when you entered from the wrong side. Skipping was a great favourite and because of it many children in their teens became known for their jumping and athletic ability. We also held individual skipping races up and down the street which gave great coordination to many of them.



Rounders was a straight forward four base affair played by two teams of equal number. The batting area was on the pavement with a brick wall behind, the first base on the same pavement some 10-20 feet away. From there straight across the road to a down pipe then along the pavement to a point passed the batting base opposite and, for the run into home, back across the street to a selected point usually a house door knob or the like. A tennis ball was used and the batter used his hand to hit the ball into play. Can you imagine the stress caused by deciding if the player was in or out when the ball arrived at a base? At such times it was not unusual to abandon that game and take up another.

For the boys there was the game of marbles played in the gutter up and down the street whereby if you hit your opponent's marble then it became your property. Another version was a number of marbles from each player was put in a drawn ring and you took turns to hit them out of the ring. All you hit out you kept.

Another game was played with cigarette cards for at that time a packet of cigarettes had in it a card which illustrated some aspect of life usually in a series of 50 which were collected and placed in an album. At that time most boys had in their pocket a number of these cards to use as a swop for a card not yet acquired or a possible win in the game of 'flickers'. This game was played by flicking the card forward to a pre agreed point and the nearest to the point won and collected both cards or a variation of this was that the thrower nominated how many hand spans his card was distant from the agreed point. If his assessment was correct he won.

While these games were being played the girls had turned to tennis ball games which started off as a juggling affair with two tennis balls from the hand and progressed to a complicated routine whereby the balls were bounced on the floor, or against a wall or thrown into the air as the player turned around, or stooped to touch the ground, or clapped their hands and at the same time they chanted a number of rhyming couplets or doggerels as their game progressed. These ball games were also conducted in pairs or even more and the girls became very adept at their routines.

If the teams had been chosen and there was no more room to accommodate any late entry there was always hop scotch to fall back on. The pitch was drawn in chalk on the road surface and the scotch, a sliding stone, was taken from its hiding place (a hole in the wall of the bakery) and away you went. This game seems to have weathered the seventy years or so since our time for the pitch seems to be painted on every school playground at the present time.

Then there were the seasonal games such as the conker season when the nut from the horse chestnut tree was strung on a piece of string and offered up to be split and ruined by the winner. Two players taking it in turns to hit each others conker. Many methods of hardening the conker before offering it up to play were used. I remember baking them in the oven until they were rock hard, and soaking them in vinegar or other fluids to attain a champion conker. The season would last some time until as if by some powerful decree the conker time finished until next year. It could be followed by the whip and top season when within a few days of the conker being relegated to bin the little wooden top, decorated with circles of differing coloured chinks, was being whipped along the road to keep it spinning. Or it might be the hoop bowling season when you ran up and down the street bowling the hoop with hand or stick to see who could get their hoop performing the longest. What was interesting was the movement away from one game to take up another...if the Llanfaes children changed then within a few days the Watergate and Maendu, the Struet and Belle Vue and the Watton had changed. This shift of activity also held true for the occupational recreation; the mushroom season, the blackberry season, the nutting and the sweet chestnut collecting. At such times, given good weather, very little street game activity took place all of us were intent on the collection of the fruits which became a source of income.

One last street game needing no equipment was the game of chase or 'on it'. This was simply a running game where you chased each other to touch them and thus they became 'on it'. If there was any winner it was he or she that had not been caught during the session.

On the hot days of summer (and there were quite a few) activity moved down the river Usk and the island fields. Here we played in the water, learned to swim near Big Rock which was the deepest part, and sat around a blazing fire cooking potatoes in the ashes until they were blackened without and succulent within. Wintertime not all that much activity took place outdoors, but Monopoly, other board games like Ludo and Snakes and ladders and card games were played indoors in small friendly groups. With the arrival of the winter snow then outdoor activity was centered on Slwch Tump where one of its fields was ideal to sledge or toboggan down and many happy hours were spent there before returning home wet through and starving..

All that young activity took place almost eighty years ago. For many their time with us has ceased, but the memory of them is still strong with those who are still with us.

#### The Charles Street Gamesters.

As it is very true that when young the difference in years and months can show a great deal of development in ability so I have decided to place the gamesters into three age ranges. I have taken the 3<sup>rd</sup> September, 1939 as the pivotal date and so the 'Seniors' would have been in the 11–13 years, the 'Middle' from 7–11 years and the 'Junior' from 3–7 years. Remember that in their play there was no accounting for age; you just performed as well as you could, but saying that the very young were helped in many ways by those more able.

##### Senior

Betty Perry and her brother Roy, 12 The Watton  
Margie Morgan, 57 The Watton later married Reg Southcombe  
Joyce Hellard, 60 The Watton later married Pritch Winter  
Rosemary Hargest, The Blue Boar, an occasional player later married ? Duffy  
Cyril and Elton Williams, occasional players, 77 The Watton  
Lynne Roberts, 6 Charles Street

##### Middle

Denzil Griffiths, 53? The Watton  
Molly Williams, her sister Jean and brother Barny, 55 the Watton, (later 66 The Watton)  
Colin Morgan 57 The Watton  
John (sometimes Jack) Hellard 60 The Watton who later married Jean Williams  
Mary Perry, 12 The Watton  
Maureen and Shirley Chatfield, 7 Charles Street  
David and Margaret Morgan, 9 Charles Street  
David Chatfield, 13 Charles Street  
Gaynor and Vera Thomas, 14, Charles Street  
Yvonne Powell, 1 Ashbrook Terrace off Charles Street  
Susan Arnold, 3 Ashbrook Terrace off Charles Street

##### Junior

Wendy Perry, 12 The Watton  
Malcolm, Ieuan and Ian Williams, 3 Charles Street  
Elaine and Pat MaHoney, 4 Charles Street  
Joan, Jean and John Summers, 5 Charles Street  
Vera Chatfield, 7, Charles Street  
Jeffrey and Jimmy Chatfield, 13 Charles Street

**David Morgan**

## **Recollections of Jim Evans**

I went to Brecon Grammar School in 1955 from Hay Junior School. We travelled by steam train from Hay station - boys one end, girls the other, no corridor! In the Winter the train never got warm until we neared Brecon! High jinks through Tallyllyn tunnel when the naughty boys from Glasbury, Three Cocks, Talgarth etc. took out the light bulbs!

At Brecon we had the trek to the Plough. Who remembers the punishment for jumping off the wall into the cattle market!!!

Later there was the move to Cradoc Road, even a longer journey from the station!  
Also, the trek every day at lunchtime across to the canteen and for Woodwork lessons at Mount Street!

Memories of football on the sloping pitch above Cradoc Road and cross country around The Grove!

One of my odd jobs for a time was to ring the change of lessons hand bell! One of my last memories was helping to move books etc. from Cradoc Road to the new High School and attending a Commercial Course down at the girls school with Mrs. Herbert. That led to a brief job at the Midland Bank in Brecon, then on to College in Bristol and to Birmingham to spend my teaching years there until I retired.

Old boys I remember from Hay are Richard Lloyd, Ralph Spencer, Gary Mitchell, Brian Webb, Barry Price, Trevor Price and many more from villages and farms in the area.

Those were the days!

## **2nd Lieutenant Gwilym Williams, FS1 SWB**

Despite the care taken in compiling the Roll of Honour for WWI for the 2014 Special Edition of the newsletter, certain omissions have been uncovered, the latest being 2nd Lt Gwilym Williams. He was the only son of Jenkin Williams JP, Trephilip, Sennybridge who was the chairman of the Brecon Rural Tribunal deciding on appeals against conscription. Gwilym had his early education at Defynnog Endowed School before proceeding to Brecon Intermediate School on a county scholarship. On leaving school he was articled to Mr T Trevor Williams, Engineer and Surveyor to Swansea Rural District Council. On completing his articles he was engaged as an engineer to Mr Ben Jones, Public Works Contractor, Swansea before being appointed Assistant Engineer to Swansea RDC, a position he held until he was called up for military service in 1915. He was commissioned initially into the Brecknocks, his gazetting as a 2nd Lt appearing in the London Gazette on 30.12.1915. During 1916 he contracted TB and was discharged from the army in 1917 on the grounds of ill health. He died at home on 22.5.1918, aged 28 after suffering a prolonged illness and undergoing surgery in London.

**Glyn Powell**

**Photo: Form IVL 1940**



**Back row** (from left): L Powell, A Thomas, A O L Price, J Davies, O T Price, G Slater, I Morgan

**Middle row:** K Wheeler, D Lawrence, D Perrier, G James, P Williams(NZ), R Priday, D P Jones, L S Davies

**Front row:** J Whitney, D Williams, C Duroe, P Bolton, A Ward, C Jones, E Davies

This photo was found amongst the papers of the late Bill Leonard. Len Davies, our committee member and Life Vice President, is on the right in the middle row. How many other members of this class are still alive?

### **A Headmaster's Headache**

Military service during both World Wars caused considerable disruption to the school's staffing arrangements and caused the headmaster many a headache. At the outset of WWI Ithel Thomas, the English master, was obliged to report for duty with the Brecknocks SWB, the unit in which he held a commission. After war service he did not feel inclined to resume his protected post and joined the staff of Carmarthen Trinity College in 1918. John Davies, the Maths and Games master was conscripted into the RAMC and set to work on "gas testing", the result of which was to result in his death in 1918. Albert Smedly (1910-1914), the third of five masters, who taught French, Drawing and lower form subjects, was recorded in September 1914 as having been dismissed by the governors "to reduce expenses". This meant that R T Jenkins, Classics and Welsh, and the headmaster, Percy Morton, Science, were the only permanent members of staff left in post. In 1916 it became RT's turn to be called up, but as a result of further medical examination at the Brecon Barracks he was declared "totally unfit for any form of military service". However the recruitment authorities did not give up on him and in 1917 he was recalled for further consideration, only to be exempted once more. In September 1917 RT left Brecon to take up a post at Cardiff High School for Boys. Yet in 1918 unrelenting the military authorities tried once more to conscript him only to find his still being classified C3, the lowest category and therefore totally unfit even for duty on the



home front. By 1918 only the headmaster remained of the staff members featured in the 1914 school photograph.

Stop-gap temporary replacements were not always particularly effective and according to R T Jenkins “deuent atom yn rhes drist; clwyfedigion bywyd - gwyr a drwyd allan gynt am ddiffig effeithiolrwydd; yn crwydro’n anobeithiol o job i job, am unrhyw gyflog. Ymadawel â ni, yn rhes eto, i ailgychwyn, gobeithio rhywle arall”. “They joined us in succession; the casualties of life - men already rejected as ineffective; wandering aimlessly from job to job for any remuneration. They left as they came to start hopefully somewhere else”.

During WWII two masters were enlisted, namely Prosser Roberts and R W (Benni) Boulton. Glenys Evans (1941-45), for whom T K Jones wrote a worthy tribute in an earlier newsletter, replaced Prosser Roberts to teach Welsh and English to junior forms as well as “Glyn” to both junior and senior forms. When Benny Boulton was conscripted other members of staff had to cover until a replacement Maths teacher could be found in the person of John Edwyn Davies. A native of Cefncoed he was born in 1880 and was consequently rather elderly. In the words of a former pupil who settled in Australia as a country surgeon “he was ancient in years and long retired, but more importantly had never taught Maths”. However he had passed the Board of Education Certificate in 1903 and subsequently graduated BSC (London) in 1913. Yet according to the un-named former pupil “his teaching methods were to prove not only odd but in truth disastrous”. He was assessed by the late Billy Letton and others of the ’41 intake as a teaching disaster partly due to his age but more so because of his lack of pedagogical skills. He acquired the pseudonym “Poacher” because of his proclivity to scrounge produce, especially rabbits, from pupils to supplement the meagre war-time rations. There could have also been a connection between his nickname and his penchant for wearing a hacking jacket with overlarge pockets. The late Jim Powell (Defynnog) intimated that it was the late Gwyn Morgan (Penfai, Trecastell) who curried special favour by supplying him with choice rabbits from his weekend ferreting sessions. Billy Letton expressed his suspicion about a form member who though deficient in basic numeracy skills seemed to have been propelled to the top of the class list in Maths with a singularly brilliant mathematics pupil in the same form. Rabbits were thought to have produced this magical transformation in attainment. “Poacher” taught from 1/1/14 to 31/8/42. The termination of his appointment was precipitated when Jacob Morgan finally realised the gravity of the situation. He was replaced by Mrs Olwen Muriel Rees (“Ma Rees”, 1942-46). Her appointment as a Maths teacher reflected the gravity of the staffing situation as she was a graduate in French, yet she was assigned to teach Maths up to Form IV, Science to Form II and “Gym” to the lower forms. She was a rather uptight schoolmarm who always made it her business to be shocked. Rather waspish, her finger-wagging and lecturing often ended in unedifying tantrums. However, looking back one realises that the behaviour of the backward and turbulent pupils of our form would have driven any female teacher to distraction. Although she may have shown the whole gamut of dramatic emotions, in retrospect ours has been a rather unkind and unsympathetic picture of her. An additional stop-gap arrangement to alleviate the situation for the academic year 1944-45 was the secondment of Arthur Edwards Barnes, a London County Council evacuee teacher at Talgarth as a temporary appointment to teach English and Maths to form II and English, History and Geography to Upper Remove. A former pupil confirmed that he remembered him well, stating “he was ideal for a timid lad like me from the country. He was lively and humorous. If one was a bit slow in Maths, he would say ‘Oh come on, my six year old could do that!’”

There are certain recollections that one sees through a glass darkly and about which one is reluctant to put pen to paper. However after a conversation with Ken Jones I felt it imperative that I should recall the shameful treatment which we meted out to our temporary replacement Chemistry master for John William Sutherland (1931-1947), who was highly respected. He notified the Authority on 31st October 1944 that he was applying for secondment to a new post, and left on 1st January 1947 to take up the post of lecturer in Science in the Emergency Training College for teachers at Alsager, Cheshire. This was a critical time for our Form VJ with the CWB examinations in the offing, and for me personally the prospects had been very positive, having had 100% in a number of terminals. In this context perhaps I should reflect on the words of Bill Clinton: “when our memories outweigh our dreams we have grown old”. It is inexplicable how a generally well behaved Form V could descend into feral mode that was the antithesis of intelligence and reason. Naturally by the nature of the intake we were a mixed bag of town and country boys, lively and high-spirited though lacking somewhat in finesse and rather socially awkward. Yet this was the excuse for what transpired to become a term of mayhem, bedlam and indefensible laboratory havoc. The victim of this disruptive behaviour was one who appeared to us to be an elderly gentleman so dodderly that he ?? invited a class merry-go-round. Yet he was in fact no one less than Colonel Henry (“Harry”) Davies aged 70 who had had a distinguished military career, winning the MC and Bar, the French Legion of Honour and the Royal Cross of Rumania. The source of this information was Ken’s father who was friendly with the Colonel. Yet his military distinction was not respected by the pupils who traditionally were never given to missing an opportunity to take advantage of a teacher’s fallibility. Believed to have been a Brecon boy, he was an eminent scientist based in Belgium at the outset of WWII; he was interred by the Germans only to be released under an exchange arrangement. He was in fact the only applicant to take charge of Chemistry and Physics which explains the reason for his appointment.

Within weeks Sutherland’s Chemistry laboratory became a veritable aboriginal enclave with pupils acting like hyenas on acid and screaming banshees. The exploding hydrogen preparation and the fizzing of concentrated sulphuric acid in sand buckets should have been sufficient warning of the ensuing blitz. Chemical bottles were adulterated and compounds tampered with to such an extent that it could have resulted in complete disaster. In conversations with classmate Ken Jones I have often questioned why we had not acted more responsibly and taken a more positive stance in moderating the excesses of the prime culprits. However, personally it was some satisfaction to have it confirmed by Steve Roderick that his fellow pupils in Form IV had also acted in similar vein, although they did show some remorse on the departure of Mr Davies by presenting him with a gift of tobacco. Steve’s perspective assessment of the situation was that Mr Davies “seemed to have no concerns despite boys of our age taking advantage of him”. A Lower Sixth pupil of the time said that they had to plough their own furrow as he spent the lesson time recalling his war experiences.

On reflection what seems to be more astonishing was the failure of other members of staff to intervene and salvage the situation. However they seem to have elected to remain inactive, incarcerated next door in their smoke-filled, tea-fuelled Staff Room. A measure of sanity was restored when John Trevor (“Jack”) Rees (1946-48), ex RAF and husband of Mrs Q M Rees, who was appointed late in 1946 to teach Maths, Lower School Chemistry and “Singing”, was upgraded to take responsibility for Chemistry. Then J Duncan E Jones (1947-53, “Flying Officer Kite”), an ex Captain in the Royal Signals, joined the Staff to teach Physics, Maths, Elementary Science and some PE (no longer termed “gym”!). There followed a period of Staff stability with the appointment of a new generation of masters from the ranks of ex-servicemen.

**Glyn Powell**

## **Sir John Pryse (Prise) - a famous 16th Century Breconian**

When I read recently about the life of John Prise (1502-1555) of Brecon I wondered whether there were any of his descendants amongst the Old Boys. He had 10 children, 5 of them sons so if your name is Pryse or Prise or Price might you be a descendant? In 1537 Prise obtained the lease of the Priory of St John in Brecon (the site of the present cathedral) and became owner in 1542. It was for a time his personal residence and was occupied by his descendants over many generations.

John Prise's parents were members of the Welsh gentry who had lived in the borough of Brecon for several generations according to Professor Ceri Davies in the introduction to his translation of Prise's Latin text "Historiae Britannica Defensio". This was Prise's *magnum opus* in which he criticised the attacks of the Italian scholar, Polydore Vergil, on Geoffrey of Monmouth's famous work "Historia Regum Britanniae".

Prise attended Oxford University and trained as a lawyer. He became an influential administrator during the reigns of King Henry VIII, Edward VI and Queen Mary I, and also worked under the aegis of Thomas Cromwell. He was involved in the dissolution of the monasteries and, because of his interest in literature, he saved many documents from the libraries of religious houses. Amongst his many activities Prise was secretary of the Council in the Marshes, sheriff for Breconshire, bailiff for Brecon, justice of the peace, member of parliament, and Commissioner for Chantries in north and south Wales. He was responsible for publishing, in 1546, a small book "Yny Llyfyr Hwnn", which was the first book to be printed in Welsh!

In his will Prise left a bequest of £20 (a significant sum) for the poor householders of Brecon and £10 for mending Brecon Bridge!

(To learn more about Prise's life read Professor Glanmore Williams' lecture to the Brecknock Society and Museum Friends in Brycheiniog, Vol.31, 1999, 49-63 or on-line here:

<http://tinyurl.com/nr2usev> )

**Michael Williams**

## **Reunion - "Two Cultures"**

The dwindling in the ranks of Old Boys is patently obvious with a corresponding decline in the numbers attending both the Annual Reunion Dinner and the Armistice Service. One is therefore tempted to question whether or not there is any further mileage in the continuation of the Association and its Annual Reunion Dinner. To many former pupils the tradition of reunion holds no fascination and their recollections of school life have long since faded in a haze with the passage of time. One finds them to be forthright in their rejection of approaches to join in our activities, intimating that they have no wish to relive memories that to them were not great to begin with. So many seem anxious to forget the noises of school life and in some instances the agonies of their adolescent humiliations. Some who have fallen by the way say that they were soured by the format of formal dinners where, in Robin Day's words, they found "the speeches were worse than the food"!

There continue to be a considerable number of "sleeping" members on Tom Protheroe's distribution list but there is only a modest hard core of loyal members who attend both major functions. It could

be that some are afraid of revealing a sobering sense of a life well lived and are self conscious about their different “shades of grey” and possibly paunches resembling badly stuffed duvets. I know from personal experience that descent into late middle age is not a pretty thing, embarrassed by what the inexorable march of time does to one’s body. On the other hand, there is perchance a temptation for some to attend from a perverse curiosity, lusting after by-gone lustre and embracing an anti-dote to ageing. The reunion dinner does, in one respect, enable one to observe that others have suffered from the ravages of time more profoundly than oneself!! What is often patently evident is that in the main the rebelliousness of their youth has solidified into dull respectability. The dinner can be an occasion to recall hilarious tales of adolescent pranks, of fellow pupils and sporting triumphs. Occasionally, however, one finds that fact fuses with fiction with embellishments of flights of fancy. Recollections can often be a mixture of memory, myth, anecdote and half truth. However there is no respect for anyone peddling prejudice riddled observations as infallible truths. It is however accepted that remembering can be an act of creative reconstruction rather than simple replaying. To me there is something special and uplifting about the socialising at the Annual Dinner that enables me to come to terms with my identity as an Old Boy. The main concern of the Association now is that without greater support the days of the Annual Reunion Dinner could well be numbered as there has to be a basic number of diners to make the function viable. In anticipation of the forthcoming dinner my thoughts turn to those stalwarts who have attended the function over many years but who now find it physically impossible to continue to do so. Pob hwyl a bendith i bob yr un ohonoch.

**Glyn Powell**

### **Brecon Remembers World War I The Men who Died**

In the WWI Special Edition of the Old Boys’ newsletter in 2014 we included brief summaries of the Old Boys who had died in World War I. These were provided by Steve Morris who was a member of a team engaged in the task of writing a book with the above title. The task was undertaken by the Family History Group of the Brecon U3A. The book, which includes details of all the Brecon men who fell in World War I, was launched on 6th December 2016 in Brecon, and can be read on-line or downloaded from the website [www.breconremembers.co.uk](http://www.breconremembers.co.uk). For members who don’t use the internet you can obtain a free copy of the book from Elaine Starling, The Elms, Bronllys Road, Talgarth, Brecon LD3 0AA. This would be an excellent resource for anyone researching their ancestors who died in WWI.

### **Obituaries**

#### **Tecwyn Lewis**

A senior old boy and Life Vice President, Tecwyn was a pupil in the years leading up to WWII. He was a Talgarth boy. During the war he served in the RAF as an engineer/navigator. On demob he chose the teaching profession and studied at Llandrindod Training College. He subsequently taught in schools in the London area, eventually becoming head of Featherstone Junior School, Southall.

#### **Jeffrey Torger James (1961-?)**

A native of Llanfihangel Talyllyn Jeffrey, after his GCE exams, left to take up an apprenticeship as a plumber with the Water Board. In 1967 he was nominated the top Building Apprentice for Wales and won the cup presented by the Modern Building Society. Apart from his work, Jeff was also a highly proficient mechanic with a special interest in motor cycles and hover craft.



**Anthony Russell (“Sam) Snee**

Sam on leaving school entered the bank and was to spend the rest of his career in finance. He was subsequently to take up his final residence at Crickhowell. In school he distinguished himself as a sportsman, being captain of both the rugby and cricket Under 15 teams, eventually gaining full colours in both sports. A regular playing member of Brecon RFC he was captain in 1967-68.

**Martin Rowland-Thomas (son of Rev Eifion Thomas)**

Reported to Tom by widow Gina Rowland Thomas in Feb 2016

**J C (“Jeff”) Morgan (1955-64)**

After a low key secondary school period Llanfaes boy Jeff left to join the Fleet Air Arm. On leaving the Forces he gained employment with Palethorpes, the food chain which specialised in sausages, at different locations throughout the UK, eventually retiring to Taunton in Devon.—

**Dai (“Rocky”) Lewis (1948-54)**

Rocky, from Llanfaes, was a popular character and familiar figure in Brecon circles. When he left school he undertook a craft apprenticeship in the building trade. Following National Service he was employed for the whole of his working life as a bricklayer and general tradesman with the County Council. He was regularly engaged on maintenance work at the Penlan school site.

**Gareth John Morgan (Dates?)**

Gareth, who was killed in a tragic accident on the M50, was an ex-pupil of the High School and son of two former teachers. His mother, Mairwen, was Biology teacher at the Girls’ Grammar School and then Senior Mistress at the High School. His father, John (“Jack”) initially taught at Crickhowell before moving to Brecon, eventually teaching Rural Science at the High School.

**Robert John Lallu (1959-64)**

Robert was recalled by his former classmates as a reserved and unassuming boy with a passion for bicycles. On leaving school he joined his father’s cycle business in Hay. He later set up business on his own, initially in a unit on the market before taking over the premises of a former cycle proprietor at the bottom of Ship Street.

**David William Howard Parton (1945-50)**

Howard was one of those country boys who were obliged to spend the school week in digs. He left school before taking any external exams to return home to the farm at Y Grafog. The family later moved to Canolfryn where Howard was later to take over the enterprise. He was a highly respected farmer in the area, his main interest being in farming and its associated activities.

**David Kenneth Pugh (? - 1961)**

Dave was 15 and in Form 5 when he left school in 1961 to emigrate to Australia with his family. When he completed his education he first worked in a bank but then joined the Victorian Police force. He later transferred to the Federal Police and became a lecturer at the Canberra Police Academy. He was tragically killed in a road accident in 1982 aged 38.

**(Editor’s note:** this information is taken from a summary of David life recently given to us by his sister Sheila. If anyone would like a copy of this, which includes a photo, let me know)

**Gwyn Harries (1942-46)**

Gwyn entered the County School from Crai and lodged at Monmouth House. In 1946 he was obliged to transfer to Pantycelyn School when the family moved to the Llanymddyfri area. After a period at Pirbwlwyd College he returned home to the farm before farming on his own account finally at Cwmllech, Llandeilorfân. Though not a team player he figured prominently as an athlete.

**Philip Morgan (1942-47)**

Phil was a member of a large family brought up on a small farm with a milk round in Talgarth. His elder brother David ("The Vet") was a legend in the annals of school sport, and Phil himself was a talented sportsman, gaining his colours in soccer and cricket as well as being a tough competitor in a Vaughan jersey. He is believed to have spent most of his adult life as a sales representative.

**Colin Hawker (1946-51)**

A Talgarth product and enthusiastic member of Gam, Colin belonged to the first year group to sit the GCE Examination in 1951. He was a talented footballer and played for the School XI during seasons 1945-51. Following National Service he joined Jeffreys and Powell Solicitors as an accountant, a position he held for the whole of his working career.

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