

*Cylchlythyr Cymdeithas Cyn-Ddisgyblion Ysgol Ramadeg y Bechgyn  
Aberhonddu  
Rhifyn Jiwbili: Mawrth 2009*

*Brecon Grammar School Old Boys' Association Newsletter  
Jubilee Edition: March 2009*

Welcome to this Jubilee edition of the newsletter. This year we will hold the 60th reunion of the Old Boys' Association, since the inaugural reunion dinner took place on 26th May 1950 at the Cafe Royal, Brecon. Coincidentally the first edition of the school magazine, *The Silurian*, was also published in 1950. This edition reports that the headmaster, Mr. Jacob Morgan, called a meeting of Old Boys on 6th January 1950. At that meeting, attended by about fifty Old Boys, it was decided to form an Association, which would have as its objectives "the renewal of friendships, the welfare of the School, and the formation of a bond of union between past and present pupils".

The officers elected were: President, Mr. Garnet Morris; Vice-Presidents, The Headmaster and Mr. Stanley E. Jenkins; Honorary Secretary and Treasurer, Mr. H. Prosser Roberts, with the following committee members: Messrs. W. I. Jones, F. B. Jones, F. M. Thomas, E. B. Powell, H. S. Morgan, R. G. Davies, H. J. Leonard, D. J. Jones, A. J. Thorogood and J. I. Golesworthy. It would be interesting to know how many current members of the Old Boys' Association were at the inaugural meeting and the first reunion dinner.

Croeso i Rifyn Jiwbili ein cylchlythyr. Eleni, byddwn yn cynnal aduniad trigain mlynedd Cymdeithas y Cyn-Ddisgyblion, gan i'r cinio aduniadol cyntaf ddigwydd ar 26ain Mai 1950 yn y *Café Royal*, Aberhonddu. Ymddangos rhifyn cyntaf cylchgrawn yr ysgol, *The Silurian*, ym 1950 hefyd. Yn y rhifyn hwnnw nodwyd i'r Prifathro, Mr. Jacob Morgan, alw cyfarfod o Gyn-Ddisgyblion ar 6ed Ionawr 1950. Yn y cyfarfod hwnnw, gyda thua hanner cant o hen ddisgyblion yn bresennol, penderfynwyd ffurfio Cymdeithas, gyda'r amcanion o "adnewyddu cyfeillgarwch, meithrin lles yr ysgol a ffurfio dolen o undod rhwng disgyblion y gorffennol a'r presennol". Etholwyd swyddogion fel a ganlyn: Llywydd: Mr. Garnet Morris; Is-Lywyddion: y Prifathro a Mr. Stanley E. Jenkins; Ysgrifennydd a Thrysorydd: Mr. H. Prosser Roberts, gyda'r canlynol yn aelodau'r pwyllgor: y Mri. W I Jones, F B Jones, F M Thomas, E B Powell, H S Morgan, R G Davies, H J Leonard, D J Jones, A J Thorogood a J I Golesworthy. Byddai'n ddiddorol cael gwybod faint o aelodau presennol Cymdeithas y Cyn-Ddisgyblion oedd yn bresennol yn y cyfarfod cychwynol a'r cinio cyntaf.

### **Events of 2008**

The **Annual Reunion Dinner** (the 59th) was again held in the George Hotel, Brecon and 88 old boys and old girls and guests enjoyed the food and service and opportunities to catch up with old friends. The Chairman, Dennis Morgan, in his introduction announced that 2009 would be the 60th reunion, and it was hoped to hold one or more special events to celebrate this milestone in the Association's history. President Michael Williams then gave a short address in which he first reminisced about his enjoyable time at the Cradoc Road School, some of the highlights being the annual Eisteddfod and learning to dance at the girls' school. He then speculated about the three things that had most influenced every day life in the last five or six decades before proposing a toast to the Old Boys' Association. Finally, in the absence of Vice President Morgan, Mr. Mervyn

Jenkins proposed a vote of thanks to the President, Secretary and Committee members and the Manager and Staff of the George Hotel.

As reported in the special edition of the newsletter distributed last October, Mr. David Morgan took up the position of President and received his chain of office from Michael Williams at the committee meeting on 29th May 2008.

The **Annual Awards Evening** at Brecon High School on 15th July 2008 was attended by the President, Secretary and Treasurer of the Association, and the President presented the Old Boys' prizes. The recipient of the Cliff Carr Prize was Jessica Allen, who cycles for Great Britain and is planning to study Physical Education at university. The junior recipient of the Meredith Powell prize was Josie Sinnadurai and the senior recipient was Lewis Owen. The event featured music of a very high standard and an inspirational address entitled "Following your dream" was given by the Brigadier General Libbey i/c Army Wales.

Representatives of the Old Boys and Old Girls attended the **Remembrance Service** at Brecon High School on 11th November 2008 as usual. Appropriate readings were provided by pupils, and the Very Rev. Geraint Hughes lead prayers and gave a short address. The names of those who fell in World Wars I and II were read out by Lance Corporal Selena Justice and Vice President Evan Morgan. Finally wreaths were laid by pupils and President David Morgan in memory of the fallen.

## **Biographical Notes**

### **Evan Morgan JP - Vice President (1952-57)**

Evan was a member of Theo and left school at the age of 15 to work on the family farm near Sennybridge. He has been active with the Young Farmers Club at Club, County and National level as a competitor and trainer. He has been deeply concerned with community affairs, and entered local government in 1967. He has been Mayor of Brecon, Chairman of Powys County Council, Chairman of Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, member of Mid and West Wales Fire Authority, and is currently Adult and Youth Court Chairman. He retired in 2002 but continues to support the community as Governor of Brecon High School and in many other activities.

### **Memories of Games Day - recollections of David Morgan (1941-46)**

Nowadays it is so much a natural thing to do that sometimes it even becomes a chore, but in the 1940's to me it was one of the highlights of my school week. On the afternoons of Wednesday and Friday school finished at twenty to four, the other days at ten to four. The reason for this change was that on Wednesday afternoon the Form 4 class and upwards was on Games and the Forms 2 and 3 played their games on Friday. Games were football in the Autumn and Spring terms and cricket in the Summer term with a slight pause for athletics at some time that fitted in with the C.W.B examinations. Football was played on the School Field opposite the cemetery and on a field behind Pwlllycalch farm a little above the school field. After the game was over the players made their way back to school as fast as they could in order to take a shower.

This was the icing on the cake. The game of football was exhilarating and exciting and tiring and muddy, and then to stand under a stream of hot water was sheer bliss. That school shower was the first ever shower I experienced. I lived in a terraced house, two up and two down, and the bathing experience was in a tin tub set in front of the fire on a Saturday night. The water was carried in buckets from the bakery that was opposite our house. The school shower liberated me from all that and I made the most of the whole experience.

There was an unwritten code as to using the school shower and that was that the first people to use it were those whose buses left the Bulwark first, and so it was the Crickhowell boys, back road and front road, with the Sennybridge boys in hot pursuit, who ran in and bathed themselves and quickly dressed and left. The Talgarth and Hay boys were able to take their time for their bus did not leave until a quarter to five, whereas the Brecon boys stood under the water until the hot water ran out. During this activity the game recently played was analysed – poor old Gam last again, but Siddons managed a draw against Theo, next week it's Vaughan against Theo and that is going to be a really good game etc. etc. - stories were told and songs were sung. It was a complete social occasion and one I remember with pleasure, and later, as I became a member of the School team playing on a Saturday morning, I had two showers a week. O Joyo!

### **Recollections of Alun I Bannister (Theo) 1936-1939**

In 1936 I entered a run-down, decrepit elderly red brick building with moss and fungi flourishing on some of its walls. The pungent smell of animal glue emanating from a heated iron pot in the basement woodworking shop would permeate the upper levels of our school in Cradoc Road. First impressions can certainly prove faulty and I was to spend my few years there enjoying tremendous fun with never-forgotten friends and a teaching staff who were ever kind, considerate and mostly laconic.

There was the happy-go-lucky Mr Lewis who taught Geography, munching his way through packets of Marie biscuits while dictating notes of diverse countries of both hemispheres. On occasion he presented one word answer tests, and by displacing the answer sheet by one desk would instruct the recipient pupil to assess the answers and then indicate the score for his Class Record.

Mr Sutherland was one of Nature's gentlemen and was so much in his element when teaching Chemistry. Unfortunately he was to break his leg whilst playing soccer for a combined Staff and Old Boys XI against the school.

To guide us in History we had Mr Inglis. He always made an energetic entrance into our form room with a black gown billowing around him like an aura of doom. Every lesson was the same. After registering he would start writing with chalk at the top left hand corner of the black board and continue without pause until reaching the bottom right hand corner when he erase the top half of the board and commence writing again. We copied everything into our note books. Any question would be answered by the monotonous response - "Can't stop now, must go on!"

Mr Bolton did try his utmost to teach mathematics. A fair headed angular person with a pronounced Adam's apple he found instructing the use of logarithms and the wonders of trigonometry a trifle beyond his brief. We were to develop an understanding of any esoteric maths by instruction from the Headmaster, who will always be remembered with respect and affection. I have a particular reason for recalling Mr Jacob Morgan.

Our form room had an entry through heavy swing doors with inset glass panels and fitted coffin handles. One rain soaked lunch hour I joined with my classmates in playing a game of football inside the classroom. Someone kicked the ball against a glass panel which disintegrated into lethal triangles of glass. The mess was miraculously cleared and all the pupils were angelic when Jacob Morgan later visited us to investigate the damage and find the culprit. Not one boy volunteered a reason for glass breakage. Accordingly Jacob Morgan asked each boy the simple question: "Did you play with a ball in this room during lunch time?" Every boy answered no - until he came to me. There was never an easy way for me to speak an untruth - probably because of a Welsh Calvinistic upbringing. With the admission that I had played football at that time, Mr Morgan rose to his full height, a good ten inches less than mine, and commanded "Right, go to my study for six

cuts!” Whilst bending over a chair I experienced six gentle taps on my backside. There was no physical hurt, but how my pride suffered!

My heroic fellow pupils were all jolly good friends especially Arthur Perry, Bill Thomas, Dai Jeff, Vincent King, Ron Thorogood, Walter Price, Jack Messer, Glyn Jones and others including Johnny Jones, John Evans and “Gracie” Fields. Some of us played soccer for the cup winning Brecon Juniors XI in 1939, in addition to the school XI.

Other teachers who were real characters were Messrs Williams and Thomas who shared the teaching of English and Mr Roberts who taught Welsh.

Memories of those few years include the Dorian Trio classical presentations at the Girls Grammar School in their pristine hall, Eisteddfod competitions in our school gym and being shanghaied into singing for House “standards”. I have never forgotten singing my test piece - “Sweet Lass of Richmond Hill” to gain a point for Theo.

Nearly seventy years have passed since those days, nearly sixty of which have been with my lovely wife Annie. As Annie Mary Price she is an old girl of Brecon Grammar School for Girls. We tried to cement a proposed amalgamation between the old pupils of both schools some years ago. Annie also represented her school at hockey and tennis. As well as being parents we are grandparents and great grandparents and look forward to a continuing happy future. Annie and David Morgan were colleagues when teaching at Dunvant Junior School, Swansea during the sixties.

After 1942 I served with the Royal Navy in the western approaches and also in both the North and Baltic seas. I was a Midshipman prior to being a Lieutenant on demob. During this time I met Mary Churchill (now Lady Soames) and her father Winston Churchill aboard HMS Bellona, and later during VJ day, I had the pleasure of waltzing with Lady Astor.

From 1947 to 1955 I was employed by the National Coal Board as the Area Plant Efficiency Officer and became a Chartered Mechanical Engineering 1953 and a Fellow in 1967. In 1955 I joined the West Glamorgan Institute of Higher Education (now the Metropolitan University) eventually becoming Head of the School of Mechanical and Production Engineering, before establishing a new School of Industrial and Materials Engineering prior to retirement in 1985 as sub-Dean of the Faculty of Technology.

### **Recollections of a female student in the Boys’ Grammar School (1951-1954) Jean Willis (née Thomas)**

I made the mistake of choosing History for O level instead of Physics. My chemistry master, Mr Rees was sure I was going to be a mathematical scientist and should be studying Physics. He arranged for me to drop History and Music and take extra Physics lessons at the Boys’ Grammar School so that I could take the exam in one year. He was correct and looking back I realise I have a great deal to thank Miss Jarvis and Mr Morgan for. Would head teachers these days be so accommodating?

I started walking to Cradoc road in September 1951 and with Mr Duncan Jones’ help took extra lessons and passed my Physics in one year. I then returned for Maths and Physics A- level. As the Chemistry class was at the Girls’ School the timetable was arranged so that we could walk between schools at break or lunch time., which gave us a convenient coffee break . One of the many things I remember was having no form room and no where to sit between lessons. Margaret James (née Evans) and I used to prop up the window sill at the top of the stairs. It was a convenient way of getting to know the boys and made our job as postman between the two schools very easy!

Being one of three girls in most classes was difficult at first as the boys were convinced that we knew nothing. This was to my advantage when I went on to Nottingham University to study

honours chemistry. The male students also thought the same. They soon found out that I wasn't overawed. I'd been there before!

After graduation I trained to teach Chemistry and Maths. I became head of chemistry in mixed, single sex, grammar, independent and comprehensive schools and after taking early retirement returned to teach part time on the A level course for international students in a local FE college and to lecture at Derby University. My wide experience and my gender made me popular as an examiner for both O and A level chemistry.

I married a fellow student who became a university lecturer in physical chemistry. His research interests meant that he was visiting professor in Japan on many occasions, often for three months at a time. I was able to go on eight of these visits and I taught English conversation to many Japanese science students. My first visit to Tokyo in 1975, accompanied by two small boys was quite an experience. On that occasion I was able to watch Wales play rugby in Tokyo. Singing the national anthem in Welsh accompanied by a record of Treorchy Male Voice choir was an experience I won't forget. Both my sons have returned to Tokyo many times, the elder one on business and the younger one as a pilot flying in to Narita.

I was very pleased to meet up with five of the class of 1952 at the last reunion dinner.

Tony Hepton and I are both Nottingham graduates but we hadn't met since leaving university. We had a lot of catching up to do.

At present I still live in Nottingham and despite my husband's death I still keep in touch with the University and all our friends in Japan.

### **Can you identify the boys in this photograph?**



This photograph of the Brecon Grammar School Soccer Team for the 1946-47 season was submitted by David Morgan, who has identified all but one of those present. Can you name the unidentified boy in the centre of the back row? See end of the newsletter for the names according to David. Has he got them all right?

## Recollections of Ron Tucker (1949 - 1955)

In many ways I was fortunate in my experience of secondary education. For the six years I experienced it, the system was constant, the teaching staff settled and the location unchanging. Though 'O and A Levels' had only recently replaced 'School Certificate' and 'Higher', it seemed they had always been there and the staff dealt with them in a confident, well ordered fashion. The whole system was geared towards these examinations.

Choice was almost non-existent. We were taught eight subjects for four years and these were the ones in which we sat examinations. We paid but token regard to music, art and religion. The main basic subjects had priority. The result of this was that one was ready on entry into the Sixth Form to follow an arts or science course. The simple recipe was complemented by a restricted number of staff contacts. In my three main subjects for example I had the same three teachers for most of the six years. Ewart Davies taught me English, Doug Inglis History and Doc Price Latin. They were supplemented a little by Cliff Jones and Hugh Thomas in the later stages. The result of this must be that something of the psyche of these people lives on in my subconscious. Certainly they became established characters in our lives and we could determine their every mood. Most of the staff had served in the war so that this tended to colour their approach. On to this primitive arrangement was grafted a veneer of the traditional grammar school, itself culled from the public schools. We had caps and ties, our only sops to uniform, and a House System which was useful to keep the competitive-spirit going in games and eisteddfodau. The masters wore gowns, we had a magazine, a sports day, a prize day, and a cohort of prefects to rule the roost.

I have already hinted that one of the strengths of the school was in the wide experience of its teachers, who still rejoiced in the term 'masters'. We knew choice pieces of information about most of them which they let slip in their less guarded moments. Jacob Morgan, the headmaster, was generally regarded as a kindly soul who taught A Level and Scholarship Maths. He walked to school daily from the other end of town. He was also a deacon at one of the chapels. He had little truck for the softness which was already creeping into life, quoting how in his youth he had to walk five miles to school in all weathers. He ruled with a firm, steady hand, certainly used the cane and glowed red in anger at times. He may to some have seemed old-fashioned, but if nothing else he was astute and made the most of the very stringent resources which came his way. As pupils we never knew who made the decisions or how much discussion took place or where, and in those days parents had no say whatsoever in what was decided. My mother's sole visit to the school was the day she delivered me for my interview for entry. I suspect that most of the organisation fell on Jacob's broad back.

To give the flavour of what we imbibed a few character impressions of our masters might not go amiss. First, one by the name of Phippen. He arrived in our first year and despite a moustache and service in the RAF seemed to be young and, though portly, somewhat dashing. At least he listened and seemed plausible. He taught us Chemistry, Music and Maths. I think Maths was his speciality since I recall that it was he who propelled me into the intricacies of quadratic equations and log tables. He actually made use of film strips to demonstrate such things. His Music lessons were given over to singing and once again the strains of the 'Jolly Roger' came into my life. This time they were already somewhat nostalgic.

And so to Doc Price. He was known to four or five generations of pupils and must have created the idea of permanence and continuity. I knew him from 1949 when I entered the school until 1959 when I taught his subject to a later generation when learning to be a teacher myself.

But he himself had been practising back in the 1930's. He was a legend and from my conversations with succeeding generations of pupils an unchanging legend. He taught Latin and his grasp of the subject was solid. What impressed us most about him was his degree about which he often spoke. Apparently, he had been one of the few and last people to be granted the degree of PhD by the University of Wales as the result of examination. His degree was in Maritime Law but he taught us Latin. He often inflicted some of the niceties

of Maritime Law upon us in order to impress. He had a brown briefcase and walked to school with an umbrella. His hair was white, his head bald except for a forlorn lock of hair which doubled around his pate. We pitied him because of the fact that one of his arms seemed to be crippled from polio or some similar disease. We all thought he was at least 70 but at most he could have only been ten years younger. This was borne out when years later we learnt that he had taken a second wife after his first wife's decease. Doc appeared to be one of the weaker brethren in terms of health yet he lived to a ripe old age. I could write a chapter about Doc but for the moment enough is enough.

For Geography we had Mr. Lewis Lewis, commonly known to succeeding generations of pupils as 'Lousy Lou'. I always thought that it was particularly cruel to grant such a name to one who obviously knew his subject and was such a knowledgeable person. His privilege as a geography teacher was that he had a map pointer which doubled up as a cane. 'Bend over Boy!' was his usual refrain. To maintain strict discipline a boy called Wilberforce was used as a martyr; he was duly caned at the start of each lesson to serve as a deterrent for the rest of the miscreants. After he retired he took a trip to Canada to check that the Laurentine Shield was just as he had described it to so many classes. Unhappily he did not enjoy a long retirement.

Welsh was compulsory for all and was serviced by two masters, Prosser Roberts and Harvey Williams. Harvey was ex-navy and hailed from a mining community. Of large build, he must have played rugby in his youth. He was a fund of stories particularly about the tortures applied to pit ponies. One of his specialities was to clean the blackboard with small boys. Despite his physique, his features were streamlined and his straight black hair brylcreamed back to reveal receding temples. He was destined to die in early middle age.

Prosser was in charge of Welsh. He had been the tyrant who had turned up to conduct our 11+. To generations of pupils in the Thirties, Forties and Fifties he was known unashamedly as the 'Dragon'. His occasional roar was sufficient to keep his minions in order and this allowed him to take rather a detached view of his teaching. He had the exam requirements sown up so that for most of the time he appeared to be on auto-pilot, significant when you consider he had been in the RAF during the War. He lived near the school and walked home for lunch. His existence seemed idyllic, for at about 2 o'clock after lunch each day he could be seen striding with umbrella as walking stick and pipe in full smoke back to school for the afternoon session. He had a green Morris car but this was a private pleasure. One felt as he gazed out of the window and waved to passers by that his mind was on other things. Eventually he moved into Youth work on a County level. He had the ruddy complexion of the 'dragon', he was fiery by nature yet a fund of good humour and really quite soft of heart. He devoted his energies to the 'Old Boys' Association and retained his links with this until his death. This occurred all too soon but long enough for him to have enjoyed many years of retirement.

If I chose, I could write a book on Doug Inglis. He professed to be English through and through, yet to my amazement I discovered years later that he and his wife had actually been on close terms with Prosser and his family. This I found to be most pleasing, considering the stance he adopted in school. Doug talked of Liverpool a lot and of his own education which I assume had been in Liverpool University. He also talked much of his brother. He always harked back to a golden age and bemoaned the standards of current times. Standards in Brecon never lived up to what he had grown up with. Doug taught me for over five years, yet in that time he never asked me a question orally or discussed a point. He was totally unapproachable. In his lessons he lectured incessantly, from the first year onwards. He had a conception of Utopia and we were not part of it. From the point of view of scholarship he had one redeeming feature and that was the fact that every week he set a rigid timetable of reading which he tested with equally rigid intensity. This got us into a steady reading habit which was no bad thing. He had a love of books, ran the library in after school hours, and made us aware that 'there are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy'. Outside school his abiding passion was golf and one read of his prowess in this in the local press. He left the Grammar School to spend his last days at the local public school, Christ College. One felt that this is where he was meant to be. Whether he found peace there I know not, but it certainly fitted the desires and goals he had expressed to us. Doug lived on his nerves, demonstrated by the tight unrelenting control he had over us. I suspect that in the end this tight control led to his premature demise. He should have been allowed a mellow old age in which to reflect and come to terms with the way in which his life had turned out. For me his rigidity of posture was borne out by a statement he made in our first year at Grammar School when one Bernard Charles Beverley Jones had

dared to say that his name was Bernard Charles Beverley Jones but his mother preferred to call him 'Tony'. To this Doug had responded, "I don't care what your mother or your best girl friend calls you, 'Fish Face, Cod Clock, Slobberchops', to me you are **B.C.B.Jones** and nothing else!" In a way that summed it up and that was the attitude for the next five years.

My next character slot is for Cliff Giles. He came from Barry and seemed to have an industrial background which endeared him to us. He came when we were in our first year and stayed until his retirement. He came as an outsider but with his connections with the Baptist Church and his organ playing skills he quickly fitted into the Brecon circuit. Countless pupils must lay their MScs and PhDs at his feet.

These are but a sample of the masters who crossed my path. There were others but their acquaintance was but marginal. Of all it might be said that they were authoritarian. All were blessed with the gift of humour, yet all were different. Most were cynical and contributed to my own suspicious view of the universe. Though but a transient phase in one's development their influence nevertheless was a lasting feature in our lives. In a sense we would still expect them to be where we left them despite the fact that in ten years they had all gone their separate ways. They seemed to us to represent firm, fixed standards in knowledge and behaviour. Is this the same in all generations? In short, they were all 'rounded' individuals. They were many-sided, they could teach, they could referee, they could act as adjudicators in eisteddfodau.

Something ought to be said about the building. It was probably built in the 1880s following on from the 1872 Act. As such it was built of red brick and typically Victorian in many of its features. It rose to three floors and had a tower on top. The ground floor was really a basement, fondly referred to as 'the dungeon', but it contained the workshop and a large classroom. Here I spent three of my six years in Cradoc Road! The top floor, which housed the science labs and staff room, together with the library in a corridor, was built into the roof. The main body of the school was on the first floor, which housed four classrooms and a much larger space, which in the early days had served as a hall, but could also be divided by a partition into two further classrooms. A precarious stairway clung to the wall and connected the three floors. The toilet facilities were outside; each room had a fireplace but in our time the building had an adequate central heating system; the door knobs were brass; everything was painted green or cream. A Gym, cloakroom and shower block had been built after the First World War. The Gym was the scene for daily assembly, examinations, eisteddfodau and occasional visiting entertainments. It was here that once a term we were seated on the floor to listen to the 'Dorian Trio', a group of elderly ladies who played violin, piano and cello. The intention was that they should give us a regular injection of culture. Lunch was taken at another school, known as Mount Street, almost a mile away. The playing fields were also distant. The result was that we were kept fit largely by the exercise gained in travelling between sites.

For my final year a new Headmaster had been appointed and this sent a fresh wind blowing through the establishment. His name was Aneurin Rees and he was a Physics specialist, appointed presumably to give the school a shunt in the direction of science. It was an extremely busy year, one in which several new ideas were set in motion and many of the constraints of the post-war era began to be eased. Curriculum changes did not affect me since I was well and truly set on my goal, but I was caught up in the new Head's enthusiasm for extra-curricula activities. Generally there was a welcome softening up of the previous strict regime. I was appointed Deputy Head Boy, an accolade which was very useful to append to University applications but which entailed much extra work. I found myself involved in several of the new societies that had been set up from chess to debates, to Cymdeithas Gymraeg and at Christmas as a Sixth Form we were expected to entertain the rest of the school. For this a satirical play on school life was specially written and performed (I played the part of Mrs. Smith, the school secretary), and I also put together a conjuring routine for the occasion. Looking back on the year I find it difficult to appreciate how I fitted everything in with my A-Levels. It was however good practice for what lay ahead of me in later years. One of the rather quaint traditions with which we were charged as prefects involved the wearing of school caps. Despite the fact that school uniform was almost non-existent all pupils were expected to wear caps. Prefects had to ensure that this was so at all times and it was expected that pupils would 'touch their caps' to acknowledge a prefect or master in the street. It was all a bit like saluting officers in the Forces and either a hangover from the war era or an attempt to drag everyone up to the level of Eton. To the new Headmaster it was all a part of discipline and an excuse for exercising authority.

## **A few random memories from Andrew Thomas (1951 – 1958)**

### **Digs with Mrs Hatton**

The boys from Cray travelled daily but I lived by the Reservoir, 2 miles outside the village hence I lodged in the town with Mrs Hatton. What a change from life in the mountains around Cray. Moving from the village to the cities of Cardiff, London and finally St Albans has been simple compared to that first week with Mrs. Hatton.

### **Limited subject choices**

The curriculum was limited with two options. In year 1 it was a choice of either Latin or French and in year 2 History or Physics.

### **Two other early memories**

- Shove halfpenny on the desk in the hall.
- Lunchtime walks to the canteen at Mount Street and the semolina pudding.

### **Three sporting memories**

- Playing in the schools first ever rugby match. It was against Cyfartha on the Borderers pitch. We were in posh new kit – light blue and maroon hooped shirts and navy shorts. Ron Arthur and Gwyn Angell coached us. All the School was forced to watch us lose narrowly.
- Beating a Maesydderwen ‘A’ team that included half their first team. The sloping pitch was our sixteenth player and we won. We had beaten Maesydderwen, a proper rugby school that did not play soccer. To the team - what a result!
- Playing against the Old Boys in the annual soccer match on the Rich Field with its nets, stand, and changing rooms. The opponents were the ‘gods’ of previous years. In my time we always lost narrowly – but we gave them a good game and we always had the home dressing room.

### **Chemistry in the Sixth form**

Six lads waited in expectation because five girls from the Girls School were to join us for our Chemistry lessons. What an expectation. Knees knocked and we waited in awe and trepidation. Giles defused the tension by lining the girls up and calling the staff out *to look at my harem*. Not PC today. I am sure he remembered, for many years, the sticky rum and butter toffees that the girls plied him with.

**My final memory** is with me every day of my life because since 1963 I have been married to Mary, one of ‘Giles’s’ chemistry girls. The marriage of Lindsay Powell and Ann Gronow, two other members of the chemistry class, has also survived over 45 years. I can personally say – what a result for the Grammar Schools in Brecon.

Professor Andrew Thomas, Emeritus Professor in Telematics, Middlesex University, London;  
Honorary Professor of Engineering, University of Miskolc, Hungary

## **Atgofion Bachgen o’r Wlad: Handel Jones (1954-62)**

Cefais fy magu ar fferm yng Nghwm-Wysg, ger Trecastell, cwm o ffermdai gwasgarog, pentrefan bychan, capel ac ysgol. Ac yno, yn Ysgol Gynradd Sirol Aberpedwar y cefais f’addysg gynnar. Nid oedd byth mwy na rhwng pymtheg ac ugain o ddisgyblion yn yr ysgol ag un ystafell

ddosbarth, lle roedd y brifathrawes, Miss M.M. Parry, yn cyfuno'i sgiliau addysgu â chadw'r stôf lo ynghyn a gweithredu fel nyrs a gweinyddes awr ginio.

Câi'r bwyd ei gludo o Bontsenni – ysgol fawr mewn cymhariaeth ag Aberpedwar. Roedd f'ymweliad cyntaf ag ysgol Pontsenni ym mis Mawrth 1954, ychydig cyn fy mhen blwydd yn ddeg oed, i sefyll yr arholiad i fynd i'r Ysgol Ramadeg. Roedd yn brofiad brawychus i mi. Doeddwn i erioed o'r blaen wedi bod yng nghwmni cynifer o blant – pob un yn ddieithryn – mewn un ystafell.

Roedd symud o Aberpedwar i Ysgol Ramadeg y Bechgyn yn Aberhonddu ym mis Medi'r flwyddyn honno yn fwy brawychus byth. Yn y dyddiau hynny nid oedd modd teithio bob dydd o lefydd anghysbell fel Cwm-Wysg. Felly, roedd yn rhaid i ni, fechgyn y wlad, letya yn Aberhonddu o ddydd Llun tan ddydd Gwener.

Ychydig cyn dechrau'r flwyddyn ysgol newydd, gwahoddwyd fy rhieni a minnau i gyfarfod â'r prifathro a oedd newydd ymddeol, sef Mr Jacob Morgan. Bu'n ddigon caredig i gynnig ychydig eiriau o gyngor ac awgrymodd y dylwn letya gyda Mr a Mrs Smith yn Lion Street.

Roedden nhw'n bâr cyfeillgar – gyda phlant tua'r un oed â mi. Yn sicr, roedd fy mam yn fodlon y cawn y gofal gorau yno. Ond ar fore cyntaf y tymor ysgol, cyrhaeddais Aberhonddu i dderbyn y newyddion fod Mrs Smith yn sâl ac y byddai'n rhaid i mi letya gydag un o'i ffrindiau, Miss Evelyn Williams. Roedd hi'n byw ym Mhorth-y-dŵr gyda'i mam a oedd yn tynnu at ei chant oed ac yn gwbl ddall. Roedd Miss Williams yn garedig ond yn llym. Roedd yn aelod ffyddlon o'r Eglwys yng Nghymru ac yn ymfalchïo fod neb llai nag Esgob Havard wedi lletya yn y tŷ pan oedd yn ddisgybl yn yr Ysgol Ramadeg.

Pan gyrhaeddais i, roedd fy nghyd-letywyr yn cynnwys Ken Jones o Lanfihangel Nant Brân, a fu'n llyfrgellydd yn Aberhonddu yn ddiweddarach. Yna, ymunwyd â ni gan frawd Ken, Vincent, a fy nghefnder, Glanville Davies.

Er fy mod yn sôn am 1954, doedd dim trydan gennym ar y fferm yng Nghwm-Wysg. Roedd gallu astudio ym Mhorth-y-dŵr yng ngolau trydan – yn hytrach na gorfod dibynnu ar fflam anwadal lamp olew – yn foethusrwydd pur.

Ychydig yn ddiweddarach, trawsnewidiwyd ein bywydau ym Mhorth-y-dŵr pan gyrhaeddodd coedwigwr o'r enw Jack Preece. Roedd ganddo set deledu, a osodwyd yn yr ystafell eistedd. Roedd gan bawb yr hawl i'w gwyllo, ond roeddem ni'r plant yn cael ein cyfyngu i raglenni penodol, sef rhaglenni newyddion, *Panorama* Richard Dimbleby a *Sportsview* Peter Dimock.

Erbyn i mi gyrraedd yr Ysgol Ramadeg, roedd ganddi brifathro newydd, sef Mr Aneurin Rees. Rhaid i mi gyfaddef fy mod yn ofnus iawn o Mr Rees, ond roedd yr ofn hwnnw'n deillio'n bennaf o barch tuag at y dyn. Roedd yn wyddonydd a fu'n gweithio yn Farnborough, a bu'n chwarae rygbi dros Lanelli. Ac yn bwysicaf oll, gan gofio fy magwraeth dan ddylanwad y capel, roedd yn Annibynnwr Cymraeg.

Roedd cael f'anfon i'w stydi yn gosb ofnadwy. Gallaf hyd heddiw deimlo'r cywilydd o orfod treulio prynhawniau hir y tu allan i ddrws y stydi am anghofio fy nillad rygbi. Ac ni fedraf anghofio'i gynddaredd â'r gansen ar ôl i mi fod yn yfed seidr yn ystod ymweliad â Maesydderwen i weld drama ysgol yno. Ond nid poen corfforol oedd y gwir boen a deimlais. Roedd rhaid i fy rhieni gael gwybod fy mod yn cael f'atal o'r ysgol am gyfnod. Roedden nhw'n llwrymwrthodwyr. Yr unig alcohol a ganiateid ar y fferm oedd potelaid fach o gin, a gâi ei defnyddio at ddibenion meddyginiaethol, sef dadebru wŷn a oedd yn dioddef o'r oerfel.

Pan ddechreuais yn yr Ysgol Ramadeg, roedd disgwyl i mi fyw ar arian poced o hanner coron yr wythnos. Roedd lwfans ychwanegol i brynu pysgod a sglodion - a gostiai 1/3 y gyfran - i swper ddwywaith yr wythnos. Rhaid i mi gyfaddef fod peth o'r arian hwnnw'n cael ei ddargyfeirio. Ni wnaeth y siop sglodion cystal ag un neu ddwy o'r siopau melysion a'r siop symudol a alwai heibio i'r ysgol.

Er i mi dderbyn f'addysg gynradd drwy gyfrwng y Saesneg, Cymraeg oedd iaith yr aelwyd, iard chwarae'r ysgol gynradd a'r capel. Roedd Saesneg yn dal i fod yn ail iaith. Roeddwn yn

ymwybodol iawn fy mod, o ran iaith, yn wahanol i'r rhan fwyaf o ddisgyblion eraill yr Ysgol Ramadeg. Roedden nhw'n sgwrsio'n rhwydd yn Saesneg, ond roedd hynny'n golygu cryn ymdrech i mi.

Diolch byth, roedd yr athro Saesneg yn deall f'anhawster. Ni wnaeth Mr Ewart Davies erioed fy nwrddio. Yn hytrach, chwiliai am unrhyw rinweddau a chynnig canmoliaeth ac anogaeth. Rhoddodd gymorth i mi ennill hunan hyder a dysgodd fi – ac eraill – sut i werthfawrogi a mwynhau iaith a llenyddiaeth. Gallwn droi at Mr Davies i drafod unrhyw broblem drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg, fel y gallwn ag amryw o'r athrawon eraill yn ystod fy nyddiau cynnar yn yr Ysgol Ramadeg.

Doeddwn i ddim yn hoffi'r daith - drwy'r glaw yn aml - i'r gwersi gwaith coed yn Mount Street. Roeddwn i'n anobeithiol yn y pwnc, ond nid bai'r athro hynaws Mr Len Moses oedd hynny. Roedd Mr Caerwyn Roderick yn fwy na goddefgar pan fethais dro ar ôl tro i arddangos unrhyw fflach fathemategol. Anobeithiodd Mr Huw Thomas, yr athro Hanes, ymhen fawr o dro. Daeth yr athro Cymraeg, Mr Harvey Williams, hyd yn oed i'r casgliad nad oedd gobaith i'r iaith Gymraeg pe bai ei dyfodol yn dibynnu ar ddisgyblion fel fi.

Er gwaethaf caredigrwydd a goddefgarwch y prifathro a'r staff, rwy'n gorfod cyfaddef fy mod am y flwyddyn neu ddwy gyntaf, yr un fath â bachgen Shakespeare, wedi cropian fel malwen yn anfodlon i'r ysgol. Ond cyn gynted ag y llwyddais i ymgynefino, gwawriodd un o gyfnodau hapusaf fy mywyd.

Darganfûm nad yr oedd yr ysgol mor fawr â hynny, wedi'r cyfan. Roeddem yn deulu, mewn gwirionedd, a oedd, heblaw eithriad neu ddau, yn fintai o fechgyn disgybledig a chwrtais. Ar ôl symud i'r safle newydd ym Mhenlan, ni allem chwennyh gwell cyfleusterau nag amgylchedd mwy dymunol.

[**Editor's note:** this article by Handel recounts his experience as a lodger in Brecon, the luxury of electricity, etc. Anyone wishing to have an English version can obtain one from Brynach Parri via Email: [bparri@btinternet.com](mailto:bparri@btinternet.com) or post: The Lodge, Tregynter, Brecon LD3 0RA, or from the internet at <http://www.brecknockociety.co.uk>]

### **PARIS 1952: Roland Jenkins (1947-54)**

Memories are much like jig-saw puzzles but always with pieces missing. Can anyone help with a few pieces towards the 1952 trip to Paris with Mr. Williams? The long train journey was an adventure in itself with that slow climb over to Dowlais Top and then down to Newport and on to Newhaven for the ferry to Dieppe.

I can remember only a few names of the group. Were you one of the 19 strong party? We visited many of the tourist sites:

the Louvre, Hotel des Invalides, the Eiffel Tower (where, at the top, I first tasted Coca-cola), Arc-de-Triumph, Sacre-Coeur, Notre-Dame etc.

Another first for me was to row a boat when a few of us took to the lake at the Palace of Versailles. Thankfully I made it back to shore successfully.

I remember our accommodation in Avenue Sainte Marie; Saint Mandé was not exactly five-star but it was a wonderful experience for a 16-year-old in those days.

I have recollections of seeing Mr. Williams, who I think taught French and English, relaxing outside the café as we made our way out for an exploratory evening stroll.

Other memories of schooldays:

the visits by the classical musicians (The Dorian Trio) who gave us a welcome change from routine; the mobile tuck shop, which stopped outside at morning break time;

then there was the daily walk to and from the canteen, which must have been good for us.

## **BRECON INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL DISGRACEFUL STATE OF AFFAIRS**

The above headlines appeared in the County Times on 9th April 1909, and the article that followed showed that problems with the Cradoc Road building, which opened in 1902, appeared early in its life!

At a meeting of the governors of the Brecon County Schools Ald. Lewis Williams reported on the deliberations of a special committee on the purchase of new fittings for the boys' school. He said the condition of the building was so bad that the committee ought to meet at the school. The playground needed to be asphalted or concreted because in wet weather mud was carried in throughout the school. Headmaster Percy Morton (who had not been in post for long following the death of his predecessor, Mr Nathan John in January 1909) said the day room was "like a pig sty", and "some of the outbuildings were practically falling down". The Rev. T C Richards said that the rooms were very damp and unhealthy for masters and children. The Chairman asked how the condition of the buildings could be explained, and Ald. Lewis Williams in reply said: "bad bricks, bad architecture, and bad workmanship".

[**Editor's note:** thanks to Vivian Parry who submitted the newspaper cutting containing this article]

### **Old Boys in World War I**

**Captain Thomas (Tom) Rees** (admission no. 392, 1907-13) from Defynog had a very successful scholastic career worthy of special comment by his master, the eminent Welsh scholar and historian R T Jenkins, in his autobiography "Edrych yn ôl". Tom Rees had the unenviable distinction of being the Red Baron's first aerial "kill" when his aircraft was shot down on 17<sup>th</sup> September 1916. Von Richtofen landed his plane alongside the wreck and removed the machine gun as a trophy. He was to perpetuate this macabre and rather morbid habit of collecting souvenirs of his "kills" by scavenging whenever possible the wreckage of the downed aircraft of his victims. He adorned the Officers' Mess with these trophies of war and even had a room in his parental home dedicated to the display of his collection. In celebration of his first aerial victory von Richtofen wrote to a Berlin jeweller to order a silver cup engraved with the details including the date, time, place, type of aircraft and Tom Rees' name.

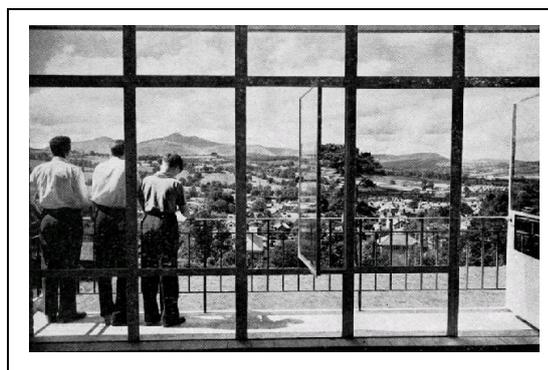
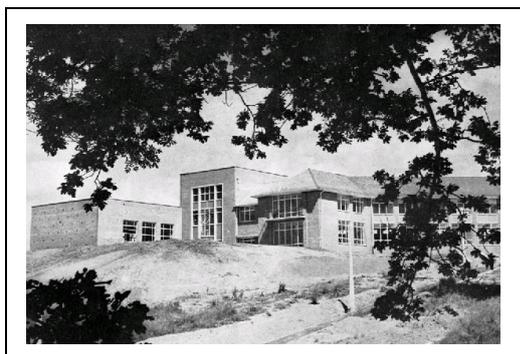
**Lietenant Ernest (Ernie) David Jones** (admission no. 500, 1911-12) from Llanfaes joined the Royal Flying Core and later the RAF and whilst piloting aircraft RE8 NO3868 of 52 Squadron on a bombing sortie over the front lines on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1918 he was shot down by the Red Baron flying his red Fokker Dr 1 No. 477/17. He was von Richtofen's 75<sup>th</sup> victory out of his final tally of 80 and his first against the recently reconstituted RAF. From von Richtofen's own combat report we have a full account of the air action in which he commends the bravery of his adversary.

**Captain (Rev) William (Bill) T Havard** from Defynog was another outstanding pupil to whom R T Jenkins makes reference in "Edrych yn ôl". He was the first pupil from the school to sit the Higher examination in Welsh, subsequently graduating in Welsh and becoming the first graduate of the University of Wales to be a bishop. He served with distinction as a Chaplain in the trenches. Before the war he was a curate at Llanelli and played rugby for the Scarlets, gaining an international cap for Wales against New Zealand at Swansea on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1919. He was subsequently appointed Chaplain to Jesus College, Oxford, and played in the Varsity match. After a period as Bishop of St Asaph he moved to the diocese of St David's. His portrait hangs in the library at St David's cathedral.

[**Editor's note:** thanks to Glyn Powell who submitted these three accounts]

## The move to the Boys' Grammar Technical School, Penlan

In 1958 the Cradoc Road school, once described by Aneurin Williams as “a monument of masonic morbidity”, was finally abandoned for a brand new building at Penlan. The opening ceremony for the new Boys' Grammar Technical School was held on 24th September by County Alderman Garnet Morris, Chairman of the Governors of Brecon County Secondary Schools. The new site, at 600 feet above sea level, had a splendid outlook over Brecon town and the Beacons as shown by the photograph (below right) which shows the view from the Geography Room. The building was designed as a two form entry school for about 350 pupils, and in 1958 there were 21 staff including Headmaster Aneurin Rees and Deputy Head J H Williams. It must have been an exciting time for those boys who made the transfer from Cradoc Road to Penlan.



[Photographs reproduced with the kind permission of Powys County Council]

## Request for copies of the Silurian and Daisy Magazines

Vice-chairman Glyn Powell would like to assemble a complete set of the school magazines for the archives. The first issue of The Silurian was published in 1950 with David Candy and Colin Watkins as co-editors. Publication of the magazine ceased in 1971 on secondary school reorganisation. Glyn holds a copy of each edition of The Silurian except for Volumes XI (1960), XIII (1962), and XV (1964). An earlier attempt to produce a school magazine resulted in a one-off issue in 1926, which we are also seeking for the archives.

The Daisy was first published in 1912 and past copies appear to be extremely rare, although a number of former girl pupils are suspected of holding treasured single issues. Glyn has salvaged the 1923 and 1926 issues. None were published during the war years 1942-1945. If anyone would like to donate copies of Daisy or the Silurian please contact Glyn Powell at Glansenni, Castell Du, Sennybridge LD3 8PS.

## Obituaries

**Correction:** in the last newsletter **C. Gerald Curtis** was incorrectly described as a native of Talgarth; that should have been Talybont.

**Donald Yeoman Saunders (1933-37)**

Donald developed an early interest in sport and was a talented wicket keeper and boxer at school. He served in India in the Suffolk Regiment during the war. He then took up journalism, and became the sports correspondent for football and boxing for the Daily Telegraph. He was regarded as a model professional, strong on fact, accuracy and deadlines.

**Gareth Prytherch (1951-56?)**

Gareth died in September 2008 aged 68. He followed his father in having a career in farming (at Wernddu), and had several interests outside farming. He was a member of the Brecon Motor Club and was an enthusiastic supporter of the Gremlin Rallies. He was also captain of the Honddu Valley Shoot and a rugby enthusiast.

**Denzil Griffiths**

Denzil left school early to join the family bakery in the Watton. He was called up for military service and served in the army. He later moved to the bakery opposite St Mary's Church. He was a keen sportsman but his main interest was local politics. He was held in considerable esteem as an effective counsellor and was Mayor of Brecon.

**Douglas Jones**

Douglas joined the staff of Brecon High School at a mature age as a teacher of English. Before taking up residence in Brecon he had taught at Aveley Technical High School and Gray's Technical School. He lamented the absence of Classics from the general school curriculum.

**Malcolm Morris (1957-64)**

On leaving school Malcolm joined the South East Brecon Water Board, later incorporated into Welsh Water. He was a Borough Councillor for 4 years, and, as a wheel chair user himself, he was a founder member of both Brecon Disabled Club and Dial-a-Ride. A member of Elim Church he appeared with Harry Secombe on the TV programme "Highway".

**Elfed John Williams (1947-53)**

Elfed was a native of Cray and spent a lifetime in agriculture and allied occupations. He was involved in many of the local activities, particularly the village cricket team, the glee club, the Young Farmers club and drama. He was a long standing member of the Aberhonddu Male Choir and occasional soloist. He was also a Church Warden and faithful member of St. Ildid's Church.

**John P Williams (1943-47)**

John left school to help on the family farm before setting up on his own account as a very resourceful farmer. He was very successful in competition with his stock and farm produce, which was virtually organic before such products became fashionable. An active member of Defynnog Agricultural Society, he was also for a period Vicar's warden at Defynnog Church.

**Peter Culpith Evans (1958-86)**

After joining the staff in 1958 Peter established a fully fledged Art Department with an 'A' Level complement for the first time. In 1971 he became head of the extended department at the Brecon Comprehensive school. An eminent artist in his own right he undertook numerous commissions and helped with stage design and artistic direction of numerous school productions.

**Brychan Davies (1945-47)**

Brychan left school to work as a shepherd, then as farm bailiff, and finally as the groundsman on Pendre playing fields. He also assisted as green-keeper for Brecon Golf Club. Blessed with a rich bass voice he was a prominent member of Talgarth Male Voice Choir. As a boy soprano he had regrettably been obliged to turn down an offer to join the famous Steffani's Silver Songsters.

**Len D Davies (1948-52)**

Len trained as an electrician in London prior to National Service in the RAF. He joined South Wales Electricity Board, ending up as engineering foreman. A founder member of Talgarth Male Voice Choir in 1969, he was its president for some years. He played football for Talgarth and was also a member of Talgarth Bowls Club and a single handicap golfer with Brecon Golf Club.

**John (Jack) Trevor Rees (1946-48)**

Jack was appointed to the staff on his demobilisation from the RAF in 1946 principally to teach Chemistry and Maths with some Music. On leaving Brecon Jack took up an appointment At Ebbw Vale Grammar School where he and his wife, Olwen Muriel, were to complete their teaching careers. Jack had a life long interest in music and was conductor of the Ebbw Vale Ladies' Choir.

**Soccer Team Photograph (see page 5): names**

From Left:

Back row: Derek Evans, Brian Richards, ? , John Coombs, Ron Hopkins.

Seated: Mr Inglis, Derek? Tiddley, Howard Edwards, Ken Smith, Vernon Farr, David Morgan, Mr Jacob Morgan.

Front row: David Rice Sean Gallagher

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**2010 Newsletter:** contributions for the next newsletter should be sent to the Editor, Michael Williams at 4, Chestnut Avenue, West Cross, Swansea SA3 5NL; Email: williamsjm@mail.com.