

***Cylchlythyr Cymdeithas Cyn-Ddisgyblion Ysgol Ramadeg y  
Bechgyn, Aberhonddu  
Mawrth 2021***

***Brecon Grammar School Old Boys' Association Newsletter March 2021***

**Glyn Powell honoured by the Gorsedd**



After the National Eisteddfod at Tregaron was postponed last year because of the coronavirus, the Gorsedd later announced the names of those who were to be honoured on the Maes in 2020. These included our Glyn Powell, who was to be honoured with the Blue Robe. He will be admitted as Honorary Druid at Tregaron in 2021. The announcement is reproduced below.

“Glyn Powell, Sennybridge, is a scholar, writer, teacher, farmer, leader and recorder of his people’s history. He spent his career in education, and campaigned for Welsh-medium education in an area where the number of Welsh speakers was low, successfully gaining the support of the community as a whole and regaining respect for the language. He contributed extensively to agriculture, leading the campaign for Epynt during the challenging times of foot and mouth disease, and when the Senni Valley was under threat of drowning. His

contribution, both locally and nationally, has been substantial for many years, and we are delighted to honour him this year”.

We offer our congratulations to Glyn for this well deserved honour.

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In 2020 the word “unprecedented” was heard many times in relation to the corona virus pandemic. It led to the cancellation of our annual reunion in April for the first time, but as explained later we did hold the Annual General Meeting in April.

The year was also important for another reason, namely the abandonment of the old High School building, including what was the Penlan Boys' Grammar School, after the new High School building opened in December 2019 (see my article on the two schools on page 4).

There is good news about the future of the Cradoc Road School. See the article on page 24.

I've made a minor change to the layout of the newsletter; I've reduced the margins so that more words can be accommodated on each page.

Clywid y gair 'digyffelyb' yn aml iawn yn 2020 yng nghyd-destun y

clefyd byd-eang. O'r herwydd, bu rhaid inni ganslo ein cyfuniad blynyddol ym mis Ebrill am y tro cyntaf erioed, ond, fel yr esboniwyd yn ddiweddarach. cynhaliwyd ein Cyfarfod cyffredinol Blynyddol yn ystod y mis hwnnw.

Bu'r flwyddyn yn un bwysig am reswm arall, sef amddifadiad hen Adeilad yr Ysgol Uwchradd, gan gynnwys adeilad hen Ysgol Ramadeg y Bechgyn, ar ol agoriad adeilad newydd yr Ysgol Uwchradd ym mls Rhagfyr 2019 (gw. fy erthygl ar y ddwy ysgol ar dudalen 4).

Cafwyd newyddion da am ddyfodol yr hen ysgol yn Heol Cradog. Gweler yr erthygl ar dudalen 24.

Rwyf wedi gwneud newid bychan i gynllun y Cylchlythyr: rwyf wedi lleihau'r ymylon fel bod modd cynnwys mwy o eiriau ar bob tudalen.

(Welsh text by Brynach Parri)

## Events of 2020

Because of the government edict that all meetings should be banned and citizens, except for key workers, should remain at home, the **Annual Reunion Dinner** was postponed in the hope that it could be rescheduled later in the year. However, as the date of the Reunion (18th April) approached it occurred to me that we could hold an on-line meeting for the AGM using the programme “Zoom”. Although few members had expressed interest in attending the AGM on their returned forms for the invitation, Tom sent invitations to members on email (we assumed that those not on email would not have the equipment to access Zoom) and an encouraging 13 members replied that they would join the meeting. In the event two failed to join for technical reasons. One member joined us from Arizona; hopefully others will join us from overseas in 2021.

## Report on AGM 2020

An on-line meeting using "Zoom" was held on 25th April 2020 with the following members in attendance:

David Gittins (Chairman), Tom Protheroe (Secretary/Treasurer), Michael Williams (Newsletter Editor), Glyn Powell, Professor Andrew Thomas, Muir Butler, John Burgess (Arizona), David Jones, Les Bevan, Allan Lloyd. President Charles Lewis was a late arrival due to technical problems.

1. Apologies: Meredydd Jones, Ken Jones, D G Powell, Jim Evans, Win Griffiths, Colin Lewis, Arwyn Davies, Mike Peters and Colin Crook.
2. Minutes of the 2019 AGM were accepted with the Chair stating there was a date missing on minute 9b.
3. Matters arising - none not covered on the agenda.
4. Treasurer's report - outlined below was accepted and the final minute agreed pending the end of the "lockdown" when cheques can be paid into the bank.

<b>Balance</b>	<b>27/11/18</b>	<b>1879.15</b>
Michael Williams	Newsletter print and mailing for 2019	-364.93
BACS transfer for dinner		85.00
BACS transfer for dinner		19.50
Credit for dinner and donations		2239.00
Dinner payment to Castle Hotel		-1473.50
Cheque to TEP for Hotel gratuity, balloons, stamps, cards		-205.42
Credit for Shaun ties		20.00
Credit		80.00
Credit for dinner		25.00
Credit for dinner		40.00
<b>Balance</b>	<b>14/6/2019</b>	<b>2318.80</b>
Cost of Prize vouchers to TEP		-525.00
Cost of registered letter including prize vouchers		-8.40
TEP buying vouchers not used		75.00
David Gittins flowers for Jacob Morgan's grave		-25.00
<b>Balance</b>	<b>16/9/2019</b>	<b>1692.10</b>
24/2/20 BACS for dinner from Philip Brown		38.00
16/3/20 Michael Williams Expenses - not yet on the bank statement, Newsletter printing and distribution 2020		-222.90
14/4/20 Cheque to Philip Brown		-38.00
14/4/20 Cheque for Philip Brown, he also paid by cheque		-33.00
<b>Provisional balance</b>	<b>20/4/20</b>	<b>1436.20</b>
Monmouthshire BS	14/4/2020	£7467.05
Awaiting banking is		
16/3/20 Expenses JMW for newsletter		-222.90

5. Election of Officers for 2020 - 21
  - a) President - Meredydd Jones
  - b) Vice President - proposed for 2020 - R. BreezeThe following have agreed to stand again:
  - c) Chairman - Mr David Gittins
  - d) Vice Chairman - Mr Shaun Gallagher
  - e) Secretary - T.E. Protheroe
  - f) Treasurer - T.E. Protheroe

g) Newsletter Editor - J.M. Williams

h) Committee Members as above + Glyn Powell T.K.Jones, D.G.Powell, JAO Davies, Colin Lewis, M Peters and Allan Lloyd.

6. Nominations for Life Vice President. We have 9LVPs. Existing LVPs are:

Mr L.S.Davies, Mr T.K.Jones, Mr J.Short, The Very Rev G.Highes, Mr J.Davies(Weston), Mr A.Breeze, Mr J.M.Williams, Mr T.E.Protheroe, Mr Glyn Powell.

It has been agreed at Committee that 10 should be the maximum number of LVPs and it was proposed that the next committee meeting should consider various names put forward by Glyn Powell and others.

7. Sandwich reunion will take place on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2020 following the Remembrance Service at the High School. As V.E celebrations have been cancelled and V.J day celebrations are in limbo it was proposed and accepted that the regular committee consider what special commemoration might take place at the Remembrance service. This to be agreed with Ms Gibbs, deputy head at the High School.

8.A.O.B.

a) The OBA normally award £550 in prizes at the award evening. We should consider what we might do if the event is cancelled. The secretary was asked to communicate with Ms Gibbs

b) Mr Burgess and Mr Jones had during the meeting given a few details of their lives and were asked to put this information in articles for the Newsletter.

c) Michael Williams was thanked for setting up the meeting.

9. Date of 2021 Annual General Meeting: April 10<sup>th</sup> 2021

The coronavirus also caused the cancellation of the **Awards Evening** at the High School in July, so no Old Boys' prizes were awarded in 2020.

The first **Memorial Service** to be held in the new High School took place on 11th November and was attended by only three Old Boys, President Meredydd Jones, Michael Williams and Clive Price, because the coronavirus-induced travel restrictions prevented Old Boys living in England from travelling to Wales. The hall in the new school is much smaller than that in the old school, hence only a proportion of the pupils were present and social distancing was in operation. There was no singing; otherwise the format was as usual except that, in the absence of Vice President Breeze, Michael read the names of the fallen in WWII. In the absence of a PA system it was very difficult to hear the readings by senior pupils and the address of the headmaster, Mr Jenkins. A large part of his presentation consisted of a short film of the VE Celebrations in 1945 and reminiscences of two ladies aged 100 and 87.

### **Biographical Notes**

#### **Robert William Breeze (1941-47) - Vice President**

After passing Physics in his first year Higher Robert left school to join the Meteorological Office. Trained in London, he was then posted to Brize Norton and completed his National Service in the RAF during 1948-50. He returned to the Air Ministry and worked there until 1952. After resigning from the Met Office he was employed as First Banana Ripener for a wholesale firm in Hereford until 1984. He then became Senior Quality Assessment Officer for banana importers in Newport Docks until 1995. He remained as Banana consultant until March 2000 when he finally retired.

### **New and Old Schools**

In December 2019 the new Brecon High School opened and the old dilapidated building was abandoned. This £22 million school caters for 750 students from age 11 to 18. The Old Boys' committee members were fortunate to be shown round the school a month after it opened and were impressed by the design. Some impression of the interior can be obtained from a one minute Youtube video here:

<https://tinyurl.com/wuulnuo>

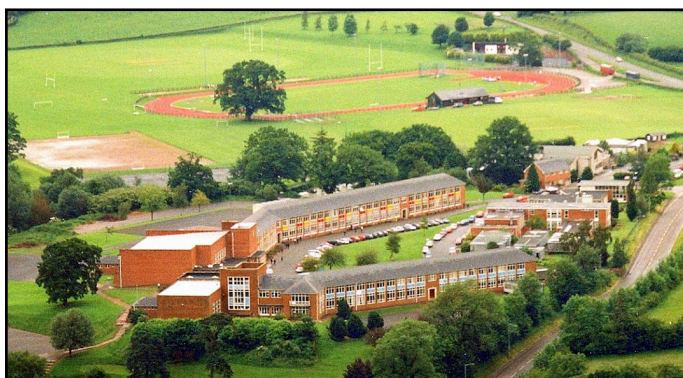




The official opening of the new school occurred on 5th February and was attended by Kirsty Williams, Wales' education minister and Powys council leader, Rosemary Harries.

The first building in this area was the Penlan Boys Grammar School which was opened in 1958. This was extended to form the High School which opened in 1971 when Comprehensive Education was introduced. The aerial photo\* below left

shows this school before the Leisure Centre was built on an adjoining site in 1995. The photo\* below right shows the path connecting the Penlan Boys' Grammar School and the Girls' Grammar School before the High School opened.



The committee members had a nostalgic visit to the old building, and the photo (on left) shows the interior of the old Chemistry lab of what was the grammar school. Demolition had already started!

\*Photos reproduced by permission of Barrie Lowe

**Michael Williams**

### **An Historic Footprint**

With the site excavations for the new High School building I was somewhat intrigued as to whether they would uncover prehistoric remains as they had done on a previous occasion on Penlan. When they were laying out a playing area for the Boys' Grammar School in 1961 a burial of the Bronze Age was uncovered by bulldozing. It came to light by chance and not by planned excavation. What was unearthed was a fine example of a cist with the badly inhumed remains but not with the expected "beaker". Dr H. Savory, Keeper,

Department of Archeology, the Maritime Museum of Wales examined the site as did Dr Ken Thomas and pupils of the school. Dr Savory was of the opinion that the cist had been disturbed before his arrival. Such disturbance could have been the reason for the apparent absence of any grave goods, and the human bones which he was able to retrieve were few. At most it could be said that the remains belonged to an adult but they were believed to have been retained by the police and do not seem to have been examined by a specialist. The capstone of the cist, measuring 6' 3" by 3' 6", had been split at the time of the disturbance which had evidently not been particularly gentle.



I was fortunate in being able to make photocopies of the original photographs in the possession of the late Dr Ken Thomas. From his record the internal dimensions of the cist measured 4' 4" long by 3' 6" wide and from 2' 3" to 2' 6" deep. The cist, as is evident from the photograph, was of irregular pentagonal form, aligned roughly north-south. It had five upright sandstone slabs of which two, on the east side, were set at a slight angle to one another. When I enquired of Dr Thomas as to what had happened to these stones he said they were deposited in Coleg Howell Harris but that their subsequent fate was unknown.

**Glyn Powell**

[Editor's note: does anyone recall visiting this site in 1961?]

## **Jacob Morgan: Headmaster 1929-1954**

### **Part 1**

[This the fourth of a series of articles on Brecon headmasters]

On a speaking engagement in Llangadog, Carmarthenshire, I chanced upon relatives of Jacob Morgan who was still regarded by them with a continuing sense of awe. My first encounter with Jacob Morgan was at the pre-admission interview when, as a raw ten year old country lad with urchin haircut, short trousers, woollen jersey and heavy boots, I entered his sanctuary with innocent trepidation. It also happened to be the first occasion on which I had ventured to the Brecon "metropolis".

Jacob Morgan was born at Highgate, Llangadog in 1889, the son of John Francis Morgan (1865-1944), a native of Llandybie and Mary Ann Morgan (1865-1924) from Brynaman. His father was headmaster of Llangadog Board School and then as an Elementary School from January 1886 until August 1928, a period of nearly 43 years. Jacob was the second of six children, four boys and two girls, the eldest boy dying at a young age.

From 1892-1902 Jacob Morgan attended his father's school before being awarded the Eleanor Williams Exhibition enabling him to enter Coleg Llanymddyfri in 1902. The scholarship had been founded by Sir John Williams, physician to Queen Victoria, himself a native of Llangadog. During his seven years at Llanymddyfri he distinguished himself academically and on the sports field, playing for both the rugby and cricket first teams as well as participating actively in athletics. After obtaining his Oxford and Cambridgeshire Higher Certificate with distinctions in Mathematics and French, he was awarded an open Mathematical Scholarship to Jesus College, Oxford in 1908.

At Oxford he gained further distinction in his studies being awarded the Goldsmith Exhibition in Mathematics and Divinity (1909), First Class honours in Mathematical Moderations (1909), a University Mathematical Exhibition (1910) and a second class in the Final Honours School of Mathematics and Physics (1912). He was also a "chess master".

According to Lewis Lewis, his long term deputy head, Jacob Morgan fully intended going to India, a not unusual career choice for the period. As a stop gap he took up temporary appointments at Coleg Llanymddyfri and Darlington Grammar School. Having eventually decided against the India venture, he obtained a permanent appointment as Senior mathematics master at Barry Grammar School (1913-14) and subsequently at Grove Park Grammar School, Wrexham (1914-15) where he was prior to undertaking military service. In the immediate post-war period he returned to Grove Park from April to December 1919 before taking up an appointment at Taunton School (1920-29). Whilst at Taunton School he was a Junior House master for four years and a Senior House master for the remaining five years, before being appointed to the headship at Brecon in 1929. On 1st January, a term before Jacob's appointment, Doug Inglis had joined the staff from the same Taunton School.

Jacob Morgan had a distinguished war career from 1915 to 1919. Initially he joined the prestigious Artists' Rifles, a rather select regiment in August 1915, before being commissioned in the 10th Battalion London Regiment in 1916. He subsequently served in the 11th Battalion in Egypt, Palestine and Syria from 1916 to 1919. At one stage he acted as regimental Quartermaster (QM) and according to anecdotal reports he served as a staff officer on General Allenby's HQ in the rank of substantive Lieutenant. He was to use his military experience again at the outbreak of WWII while serving as an officer in the 1st Brecknock Battalion of the Home Guard. He also initiated the establishment of a Flight of the Air Training Corps (ATC) at the school for senior pupils, many of whom were to become aircrew in the RAF.

Mr Morgan succeeded Dr Llewellyn Woosnam as headmaster on 1st April 1929. At a special sub-committee consisting of representatives of the LEA and Governors it was reported that there had been 41 applicants for the post with six being short-listed to appear before the Education Committee for interview. All six were highly qualified academically with four Oxford and one Cambridge graduate. A notable candidate was Percival G Davies MA BSc (Oxon), then on the staff of Port Talbot County School. He was later appointed to the headship at Builth County School (1929-1956). (On his retirement he was replaced as head by our own J Ewart Davies). The voting was by ballot with the result that Jacob Morgan obtained a clear majority over the other applicants. He was 29 years old at the time and commenced his duties on a fixed salary of £600 per annum.

Jacob Morgan married Greta Armstrong MA, daughter of the Rev Sir Herbert Armstrong Watson DD and Helen Harriot Watson, the eminent novelist. Dr Watson had been assistant master at Manchester Grammar School and Headmaster of the Royal Grammar School, Lancaster before becoming a lecturer in the University of Cambridge in 1915. Greta Armstrong was a graduate of Girton, Cambridge, where she obtained her MA degree with first class honours. Afterwards she was Senior Mistress at Perse Girls' High School, Cambridge where there is currently a Greta Armstrong Morgan Memorial Prize for Geography.

Mrs Morgan had resided in Brecon for some seven years before her death in 1936 at the age of 41 at her Alexandra Road home. During her period in Brecon she participated in a wide range of community activities especially in the education field and had endeared herself to a large circle of friends. She was survived by her husband and infant daughter, Elizabeth. Her father took part in the funeral service at the Cathedral. Mr Morgan subsequently had the services of Miss Meredith, a native of Llangadog, to assist with the child care and housekeeping.

In addition to his duties as a headmaster Jacob Morgan derived great satisfaction from teaching his subject, assuming responsibility for Maths teaching to forms V and VI. It was indeed an experience to have been taught by him in VJ, although the facility and speed with which he made the calculations on the black board could at times be mind-boggling and bemusing unless one was a Chadwick or John Kiely. The unfortunate duffer at "sums" would suffer the rebuke of being a "rabbit"! In my form Trevor Jones of Llanddew was the only one who could at least keep up with his "countdown" style calculations with some measure of success. Yet the form results in the School Certificate examination was surprisingly satisfactory in the end. In 1937



Macmillan published Jacob Morgan's "A First Trigonometry for Fourth and Fifth Forms" with a reprint in 1955. The terms sine, co-sine and theta still haunt me.

Jacob Morgan was an academic head supported by a team of highly qualified long serving team of masters who emphasised the work ethic and cultural ethos. Whether his managerial regime and the teaching methods of the staff would find favour with Estyn today is another matter! Wise, prudent and courteous, he was sympathetic to staff and pupils alike. His primary concern was the well being and progress of his pupils, and he took a genuine interest in former pupils. Jacob Morgan was very sensitive and empathetic as was evident when he announced the latest war casualties in morning assemblies. Soon after entering the school in 1943 I recall his being deeply moved when announcing that Peter Jarman had been lost over Hanover. Doug Stoddart is another name I remember his mentioning, possibly because the Aberhonddu Male Voice Choir presented a silver cup in his memory to be competed for in the Annual School Eisteddfod - the Stoddart Cup. It was only natural that Jacob Morgan would be deeply affected by the loss of so many young RAF aircrew, not only as former pupils but as members of his ATC Flight. Particularly poignant was the case of Bertie Wesley, 2nd Mons, a mere 19 year old former pupil who was killed in the battle for Falaise. I recollect clearly the morning that Mr Morgan called Joey Mathews (alongside whom I sat in class) to tell him that his brother had been killed at the battle for Caen.

A particular tragedy which caused great heartbreak was the death of A D Grant (1939-44) as a result of a climbing accident in the Brecon Beacons. He was the son of the headmaster of Mount Street school at the time and had been head boy. After service in the Royal Navy he entered Lincoln College, Oxford, where he was an undergraduate at the time of his death in 14.8.49.

**Glyn Powell**

### **My Retirement Activities - Part 2**

In writing last year about cooking I forgot to mention one key advantage about cooking for oneself, namely you know exactly what you are eating. That may not be true when you buy processed foods and prepared meals. Food manufacturers are now well aware of the dangers to health of trans-fats, which are associated with cardiovascular disease. They are banned in several countries but I was surprised to discover that they are not banned in the UK, where a voluntary agreement with food manufacturers to remove them from their products has led to a decline in the levels of trans fats in our diets since 2007. They are present in partially hydrogenated fats, so if you see that on a label, avoid it. You are less likely now to find biscuits and cakes containing trans fats, but they are more likely to be used in deep fat friers because the oil does not need to be changed so frequently. If you don't know about trans-fats read about them here: <https://tinyurl.com/y22umjdx>. Food labelling is much improved nowadays, but if you don't carefully read the labels you may miss a high salt content, or the presence of nitrite preservative, or glucose-fructose syrup (also known as high fructose corn syrup).

Nitrite is converted by stomach acid to nitrous acid which can react with secondary amines to form nitrosoamines and these are highly carcinogenic. For this reason I stopped eating bacon, which contains nitrite, several years ago. However nitrite-free bacon, often labelled nitrate-free (nitrate is converted into nitrite in the body) is now available. Why am I worried about glucose-fructose syrup and high fructose corn syrup? The reason is that sugars react slowly with amino groups in proteins and this can modify their function. The reactions lead to products called Advanced Glycation End Products (AGEs) and fructose is ten times more reactive than glucose in such glycation reactions! These glycation reactions are the reason why it's important for diabetics to control their blood sugar level. Glycation of haemoglobin in the blood forms modified haemoglobin (HbA1c), which is used by clinicians to assess the blood glucose level of diabetics over the previous two to three months.

Whilst I cannot describe myself as a keen walker, when I watched Julia Bradley's TV series on Wainwright's Walks, in which she climbed several peaks following routes described by Wainwright in his writings, I



thought to myself - if she can do that I can! So, some 10 years ago I went to the Lake District and stayed in a B&B in a remote farm on the west side of the District. My first walk was an undemanding one across the Muncaster Fells with an easy return on the Ravenglass Railway to the terminus at Dalegarth Station just a



few miles from my B&B. My main target was to climb Haystacks which was Wainwright's favourite climb; his ashes were spread at the summit. However I made the mistake of starting this climb after lunch. On the last part of the climb the path was not well defined and at times I was crawling on all fours over rocks. Then I became concerned about the time after 2 hours when clouds were building in the West, so I decided to quit. I resolved to return the following year to complete the task. This time I started in the morning with a packed lunch in my haversack. The photo shows me at the summit. It turned out to be a 5 hour walk, since I returned by a different path and I ended the day with a sore big toe!

I could not repeat that climb today, but walking is my main physical activity which is an important component of a healthy life style. Each week I aim to get a minimum of one significant walk, which means at least a 45 minute brisk walk. My favourite is the walk along the cliff path from Bracelet Bay (Mumbles) to Langland Bay; this has the advantage that the path faces south west and hence is ideal for a winter walk in the sunshine. It also includes a steep incline which is long enough to get my heart pumping at well over 100 beats per minute!

Another activity which has consumed a great deal of time is genealogical research. When I began I had as my starting point a partial family tree belonging to a distant relative who hailed from a Welsh speaking region of Pennsylvania before he retired. He had assembled a huge family tree which contained cousins, second cousins etc from around the world, and after retirement he and his wife used to travel around the globe on cargo vessels to search for and visit said relatives! I made rapid progress using the usual sources of information such as census returns, parish records, Bishops' transcripts (accessible in the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth) and graveyard headstones, which often contained information about other members of the family who were in the same grave. Finally, wills were an excellent source of information on the extended family and property. So, to summarise my findings, all my ancestors were farmers, in Carmarthenshire on my father's side and in Shropshire on my mother's side. But my progress ended in the 18th century. Going further back is difficult!

Then my interest was stimulated further after I received as a Christmas present from my son a DNA test kit. This involved placing a small amount of my saliva in a bottle and sending it to Ancestry for analysis. A few weeks later I received the results which consisted of a long list of persons related to me. At the top of the list were 3rd and 4th cousins. Shortly afterwards I received a message from a man, Jim, who had seen my results, and he gave me some information about his family. This information rang several bells, the main one being a reference to a large farm near Llanwinio in Carmarthenshire, where my Williams ancestors lived for several generations. Also living there was a servant carpenter named Davies who was an ancestor of Jim's mother. What was intriguing was the fact that when the Williams family left this farm to move to another near Meidrim, the Davies family took over the Llanwinio farm! It was surprising that a servant's family took over a large farm, so we concluded that the two families must be related. We are still searching for the link by researching the side branches of our respective family trees.

I've still not described all my activities, but that's enough for this year!

**J Michael Williams**

## John Thomas Griffith Price

(4/10/1919 - 31/8/1958)

Few schools can claim to have had a master and an Old Boy of such academic distinction as Dr Price. Born on 16/2/1895, he was the son of Thomas Price, a blacksmith of Mount Pleasant, Bwlch. After attending Cathedine National School he proceeded to Brecon Boys' County School on 17/9/1907, having been placed 6th in the order of merit of the County Entrance Exam. According to the B&R Express issue of 24/10/07 he gained 388 marks out of a maximum of 516. Despite what would appear to have been a modest start, he was soon to be distinguishing himself as a scholar of high potential. In 1910 he passed the Junior Certificate of the CWB with 5 distinctions, the Senior Certificate in 1911 again with 5 distinctions, the Higher Certificate in 1912, and finally the Honours Certificate in 1913. On his own admission he had been taught by an outstanding master in the person of no-one less than R T Jenkins, eminent classical scholar and outstanding historian who was fluent in French.

Dr Price left school on 15/7/1913 to join Cardiff University on a County Scholarship of £35 per annum. In the final entry in the School's Admission Register Percy Morton wrote that he was an "earnest, reliable boy" and indicated that he was now an undergraduate at UC Cardiff. As a marginal aside the headmaster wrote "intends to be a journalist". All in all the comments were hardly an unreserved paean of praise in respect of a pupil who was subsequently to be described as "un o'r disgleirïaf o blant Cymru". On graduating he achieved the feat of a 1st in Latin and High Honours in Greek in the same year. During his subsequent teaching career he undertook advanced study of law gaining the degree of Doctor of Laws, the first in Wales to do so by examination and producing authoritative works on maritime law.

Dr Price gave the outward appearance of being a rather timid figure as he walked briskly to and from school with a briefcase and rolled up umbrella. Whenever I passed his house in St John's Road in my junior days I always experienced a sense of awe. Initially those zoned out with boredom tended to find his teaching to be dull and tedious based on the repetitive "*Elementa Latina*". Yet personally I found his method, achingly intense involving strict order and constant repetition, actually suited my rote tendency of learning at that age. After a modest start the language eventually clicked enabling me to head the form list in successive terminal examinations. Although I did not proceed to study Latin at Higher I was fortunate in having sufficient proficiency in the language to qualify to read Honours History at UCNW Bangor which required the ability to partially translate Medieval Latin documents.

At a time when sixth Form numbers could be counted in single figures Dr Price never seemed to be without his complement of students. Sitting A level in 1951 were L G (Lionel) Jones and H A J (Jim) Butter, followed in 1952 by A R (Alan) Thomas, who eventually got a personal chair in Linguistics at Bangor. In 1953 there were three including R G (Ron) Tucker, who went on to read Latin and Greek at university, M R (Marcus) Shellard and the Rev Geraint Hughes. In 1954 there was G J (Gareth) Davies with D Davies and W E P Price in 1955. There was D J Wallis in 1956 with T B Gwynne and A J ("Chick") Jones in 1957. "Chick" (Alun) was awarded his Masters in Latin at Aberystwyth. G S Porte was to be Dr Price's final student prior to his retirement.

However it was not only on his selective academic scholars that he had a lasting effect. There can hardly have been a single former pupil of his who could not recall his oft repeated "the master strikes the *'mensam'*". Whenever I met Brian Davies ("Brer Rabbit"), a former classmate, I was always impressed by his ability to repeat the declensions, Latin phrases and even quotations from Caesar's "*De Bello Gallico*" and Vergil's "*Aeneid*" Book IX, a set book. He would open up with the initial sentence from the latter with "*At que ea diversa penitus dum parte gerunter . . .*" or such duly scanned. Brian had been obliged to leave school before sitting his School Certificate in order to become a farm worker. It was always an experience to meet Brian (king of the cucumber growers), who could imitate Dr Price's mannerisms, comments and tone

of voice. Surely he was not one of those who would claim that Latin was as dead as dead could be, and that it had killed the Romans and was now killing him.

Dr Price's very mannerisms and unique enunciation lent themselves so easily and invitingly to mimicry which gave him the aura of eccentricity. His nickname of 'Caesar', pronounced "Kaiser", was familiar and used by decades of pupils. However he did not present the authoritarian air of his illustrious historical namesake. Actually he was an instinctive sympathiser for his pupils and occasionally he allowed himself a sly joke. Disruptive behaviour and the annoying persistent sniggering did invite his distinctive punishment of "tweaks" and "slaps". He also dispensed modest portions of "lines" but these had to be completed in large hand with every letter touching double tramlines both top and bottom. In retrospect I hoped that "*conticuere omnes intentique ore tenebant*" - "that all were silent and kept their gaze upon him", but such was not always the case. This was particularly so when we had to take Form III Latin lessons in a room on the left in the outbuildings at Court Farm adjacent to the school. The environment here was not conducive to effective teaching or learning of the subject. I'm sure that my contemporaries can recall Johnny the Court on his bike delivering milk out of tin cans whist Dewi did likewise on foot.

As a timetable filler Dr Price was obliged to teach what was termed Scripture to us in Form IV; that was the precursor to the days of RE under the Agreed Syllabus. The lessons involved both silent reading and reading aloud from well worn copies of the Bible, and as far as I can recall there was never any Sunday school style discussion or commentary on the text. Readings were often punctuated by serial infantile giggling of childish minds over certain references already pencilled in by earlier readers. Then in the 6th Form we were privileged to have had lessons by Dr Price on the basics of law. I learnt that British common law began as a collection of Anglo-Saxon customs and traditions homogenised by the Normans and modified by Parliament and countless court decisions. He explained the difference between Statute and Common Law as well as the principles of Constitutional Law, which was to become an element in my Honours History course. It was not unknown for him to have given occasional lessons in Economics to earlier 6th formers. Dr Price remained a student throughout his life and won the respect, admiration and affection of his colleagues during his 39 years in post.

Dr Price and Lewis Lewis were appointed in 1919 under the headship of Percy Morton and both retired at the end of the summer term in 1958. Initially Dr Price was appointed temporarily for one term. This was similar to the position in which R T Jenkins had found himself in 1905. Yet in both cases the tentative beginning was to lead to extended periods of exceptional service. In his tribute to Dr Price on the occasion of his retirement, Mr John H Williams ("Colonel") spoke of his modesty and integrity, emphasising that he never sought the limelight and scorned any form of self advertisement. Mr Williams found it a privilege to have worked with such a loyal colleague and to have had him as a trusted friend for so long. These years later I can still visualise this soberly dressed gentleman, in grey burberry and hat with umbrella and brief case walking with distinctive deliberate step to and from school past my "digs".

**Glyn Powell**

### **The Senior School Soccer Team, 1958 - 59**

My copy of "The Silurian" (remember "The Silurian"? ) for May 1959 contains a detailed report of the activities of the senior school team for the 1958-59 season. Led by captain, Shaun Gallagher, it records what I feel was an outstanding performance by a tightly knit group of young men all eager to demonstrate that, despite the increasing popularity of rugby, the senior football team still had a point to prove.

However, the report, as it should, concentrates on the facts of that very successful period without even a brief reference to another, much more significant, aspect of the season.

The record shows that the team finished the season unbeaten having played nine games, won six and drawn three. This include wins at home against Bulth G.S., Presteigne G.S. and Llandrindod G.S., away wins against Bulth and Presteigne, plus draws against Llandrindod (away) and Presteigne (home).

The boys who helped us achieve this desirable state of affairs were; Terry Thomas, John Jones (Sennybridge) and Gordon Eckley (Llanhamlach), who all scored 5 goals each, plus Mickey Gallagher (Brecon) and Alan Evans (Talgarth) who chalked up 4 each.

The team were undefeated. Even the aggressive efforts of a very strong Old Boys team failed to topple the school team (a draw 1 – 1), while the Staff XI were sent packing with a fine 6-1 win.

But, dear reader, the most important result of our endeavours was the fact that we had finished our season as the top school in Brecon & Radnorshire. As I recall, that entitled us to progress to the next round of the Welsh Secondary Schools football competition, something that the school had never achieved before. I seem to remember we were drawn against the winners from Pembrokeshire.

Sadly, it was not to be. For reasons I don't remember, we were not allowed to continue. Nobody seemed to protest or establish why this opportunity was denied to us. A team member, with whom I recently discussed this, felt (perhaps with the benefit of hindsight?) that the Head (the late Aneurin Rees), who was very much a Rugby and Cricket fan, felt that we should be concentrating on the oval ball and not the round one! It also coincided with the appointment of a number of new staff at the school who came from, without exception I think, rugby backgrounds and interests.

This is speculation on my part maybe, but as I have got older the memory of what might have been still rankles with me – and all this happened over 60 years ago!

The two codes could have been combined – and were (one term rugby, one term football) but thereafter football (soccer that is) in school seemed to lose much of its kudos and appeared to take second place behind rugby.



**SOCCER TEAM, 1958-59.**

Mr. R. Arthur, G. P. Gittins, W. A. Evans, M. Waters, J. Jones, T. Thomas,  
D. Morris, G. C. Curtis, D. A. Gittins, The Headmaster, S. J. Gallagher (Capt.),  
M. Gallagher, R. G. Brown, G. Eckley.

The photograph, copied from the Silurian, shows:

L to R (back row): Ron Arthur (PE teacher), Peter Gittins (Brecon), Alan Evans (Talgarth), Mark Waters (Bwlch), John Jones (Sennybridge), Terry Thomas, David Morris (?).



L to R (front row): Gerald Curtis (Talybont), David Gittins (Hay-on-Wye), Aneurin Rees, Shaun Gallagher (Hay-on-Wye), Micky Gallagher (Brecon), Bob Brown (Hay-on-Wye), Gordon Eckley (Llanhamlach).

## David Gittins

### More Chemistry!

I know that you, dear reader, realise that Chemistry is the key science, since the world is made of chemicals and chemical reactions fuel our cells to keep us alive. In my last article on chemistry, “Chemistry revisited” in the 2016 newsletter, I described a recently discovered material - graphene - which has many commercial applications. I now describe more fascinating chemistry of two toxic gases.

Everyone knows that carbon monoxide, CO, is a dangerous toxic gas which is responsible for many deaths when boilers malfunction. In the UK an average of 50 people die each year from CO poisoning. The CO binds strongly to the blood protein, haemoglobin, and this prevents the haemoglobin from binding oxygen and distributing it around the body. Death by asphyxiation results.

However at low concentrations CO functions as a signalling molecule in all living cells. Each day the body produces about 10ml of CO, which interacts with heme-containing proteins that have a wide range of beneficial effects, such as reducing inflammation, and defending tissue from oxidative stress. Evidence has been reported that CO can help treat sepsis, sickle cell disease, complications of organ transplants, lung fibrosis, ulcerative colitis, cancer and heart disease. According to lung disease expert, A M K Choi of Weil Cornell Medical College, “there is no molecule that’s been shown to be this cytoprotective in just about every organ tissue injury”.

The second toxic gas which plays a key role in certain processes is nitric oxide, NO, not to be confused with nitrous oxide (“laughing gas”). It is produced in the body in very low concentrations and is a vasodilator, i.e. it relaxes the inner muscles of the blood vessels, and hence increases blood flow and lowers blood pressure. A deficiency in NO production can cause impotence. Inhaled NO is used as a selective vasodilator of blood vessels in the lungs, and is used to treat adults and the newborn suffering from lung problems. Because NO reacts with oxygen to form toxic nitrogen dioxide, the treatment has to be carefully managed. Very low doses, typically 5-20ppm of NO are used; to achieve this the NO is diluted with nitrogen. The NO diffuses into the blood stream where it is rapidly deactivated by conversion to nitrate which is excreted in urine. A recent randomised placebo-controlled study showed that 7 days of NO inhalation prevented chronic lung disease in premature infants.

Even more interesting is the fact that NO can help with the treatment of **patients suffering from a virus attack**. Dr Lou Ignarro, who was awarded the Nobel Prize for nitric oxide research, said in an interview that inhaled NO was used to treat some patients during the SARS virus outbreak in 2003, and there were two reports last year of successful treatment of COVID-19 patients with NO. A controlled clinical trial was started in Boston, USA in March 2020 with an estimated primary completion date of April 1, 2021.

For anyone interested in NO inhalation therapy the following paper, published in the journal “Circulation”, provides an excellent summary:

<https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/full/10.1161/01.CIR.0000134595.80170.62>

Michael Williams

### My Impression of the Boys’ Grammar School

(We don’t often get contributions from Old Girls; here’s one that Glyn has found in “The Daisy”)

For many years the Boys’ School has been referred to in Prize-Giving and the increasing need of a new one firmly stressed. At long last an imposing-looking building dominates the scene just above us, and before it is eagerly taken over by its occupants I think it would be fitting to describe that place which is to be deserted.



I shall always remember my first day there. As I trudged out of the town up the winding hill into Cradoc Road I did not know what to expect. I was looking for a school, but I had no idea what it looked like. Perhaps it was surrounded by a park with a drive leading up to it, or perhaps it was a beautiful mansion with lovely wrought iron gates bearing a brass plate. Finally, I stood outside a small three-storeyed brick building, which looked anything but a Grammar School. However, there were many boys' bicycles propped inside the gate, and rather self-consciously I felt that eyes were peering at me through the windows. They belonged to black-blazered boys and bravely I walked into a school of males for the first time.

During the following weeks I heard of an 'orchard', 'dungeon' and 'tower'. The latter two were such things that one reads of in schoolgirl stories and I was absolutely thrilled. However, the 'dungeon' turned out to be one of two classrooms on the ground floor which was accessible by well worn stone steps. The 'tower' was also a disappointment. Rickety wooden stairs led the way up to a room which smelt strongly of leather. It was the games' store where the footballs and other apparatus were kept.

The 'orchard' was not an orchard at all, but satisfied my longing for the unusual. This was a wide, pitch black passage on the third storey leading from the prefects' room to the staff room. The only entrance was a small cupboard door through which I was told many a prefect had crept to hear the Derby or a football game on the staff radio, but I have my doubts.

The rest of the school consisted of very small classrooms, some of which hardly saw the sun, and a separate gymnasium which was never built to hold an assembly of three hundred or so squashed boys. Three new classrooms had been built to solve the overcrowding problem.

Yet, however dark, dreary and dodderly the old school is, the high spirits of the teachers and pupils have provided ample sparkle to make up for it. I am sure we should all like to wish them happiness and fulfilment of hopes when they move into the new school which they deserve so much.

**Sheila Havard, VIA** (from "The Daisy", 1958) [Submitted by Glyn Powell]

### **Ras Al Khaimah (R.A.K.)**

In the mid 1990s my wife and I decided to relocate after spending fourteen years living and working in the tropics on the Island of Borneo. I needed a teaching job a little nearer home to escape the draining humidity we experienced in Brunei. After a series of interviews I succeeded in securing a post at the Ras Al Khaimah College of Technology in the most northerly Emirate of the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.).

Due to the logistics of moving possessions and family between countries, I took up my post a few months ahead and waited for the family to arrive. While enjoying my enforced bachelor status I kept fit by running with colleagues in the cool of the evening, a weekly jog along the R.A.K Corniche. After completing our exercise the conversation always gravitated to the annual "Wadi Bih Run", an event I was not yet familiar with but soon to become involved in.

The Emirate of Ras Al Khaimah has the Arabian Gulf on its west coast and is separated from the Indian Ocean in the east by the Hajar Mountains running down the spine of the peninsular and into Oman. The Wadi Bih Run is a relay race from west to east through the mountains, traversing the Musandam Peninsula, climbing over 2000 feet, then descending down through Oman territory to the east coast of the U.A.E. at Dibba in the Fujairah Emirate. Residents of the U.A.E. at that time were free to criss cross this particular border without immigration checks, etc.

The Wadi Bih event is a road relay race for a team of five, each to include one female and one runner over the age of 50 years – me! The 72 km race is divided into 24 check points separated by distances anywhere between 2 and 4 km. All five members must run the first and last leg together, therefore each running around 15 km in total. One team member running two legs at the start and another two at the finish. The

course at that time consisted mostly of a dry river bed, with steep zigzags on either side of the mountain climbing to the highest point of the track. Not the easiest of surfaces to run on.

Race Day arrived. Five of us piled into the back of a Land Rover Discovery 4WD and headed for the start line. Team start times were staggered to avoid congestion, and off we went. My first individual run was the fourth leg and therefore had some recovery time. As the day progressed, the air temperature rose, the route got steeper, runners tired, and the down hill sections came into view. It quickly became apparent that running down hill was just as painful as tackling the up hill sections. Eventually we arrived at the penultimate stage, my turn, which meant two consecutive stages as the last had to be completed by the whole team. Finally, we all staggered exhausted across the finishing line, and our time recorded. While waiting for all teams to complete the course a lorry arrived loaded with suitable refreshment. Curry, rice, ice cold alcoholic and non alcoholic drinks. We had finished a respectable twelfth out of twenty six teams.

Recovery in the following days was slow and painful and I did not feel very motivated to continue to keep up the same level of exercise. I also started to experience a pain in my groin and a visit to a local doctor confirmed that I had developed an Inguinal Hernia requiring surgery. I was booked into the local hospital and operated on the following day.

After the procedure I woke up to find myself in a room with one other patient. In my postoperative state I had not noticed very much about this fellow. He was not European, did not speak English but kept smiling and giving me the “thumbs up”! As I regained my senses I became aware of a third person in the room, sitting on a chair, wearing a Police uniform and holding a rifle! I then noticed my bed-ridden friend had a plaster cast on one leg, with his other good leg chained to the bed! It transpired that he was Iranian and had somehow made his way on a boat across the Strait of Hormuz, landing in Khasab on Oman’s Musandam Peninsula. He had then proceeded on foot across the mountains separating Khasab from R.A.K. hoping to find a more lucrative form of employment in the U.A.E.. Unfortunately for him he had been spotted by a R.A.K. Border Patrol and then shot! Later I was told that this was the usual procedure taken by U.A.E. Border Forces when coming across an intruder. Shooting them in the leg facilitates arrest, making escape more difficult! The “thumbs up” signal I later learned had meant that for the first time in his life he had slept in a bed with a mattress and fed three meals a day! He felt like “royalty” but was unaware that he faced a long time in prison for illegally entering the U.A.E., followed by deportation back to Iran.

After two days in hospital I was discharged. By this time my wife and daughters had joined me with schools and accommodation sorted. We had been allocated a villa, one of four in a secluded street with a shared swimming pool. The other three were also occupied by employees of the College, a Canadian family, a couple from New Zealand and a family from the U.S.A.

Some months later when life had settled down into the routine of school, work and weekends at the Sailing Club racing dinghies or just relaxing and socialising over a drink, a proposal was made that the four neighbouring families should organise a “Progressive Party”, with their own national theme. Each family would cook a course representative of their nation, dress in national costume, decorate their villa appropriately, offer their guests national drinks and then play games associated with their home nation. The challenge was accepted.

On the allocated weekend, preparations were made and a “progressive dinner party” set in motion. We kicked off the evening with Welsh fare, as far as was available in the local supermarkets, dressed appropriately and ended with a game of darts. We then relocated to our immediate neighbours for a typical “Kiwi” main course and entertainment, followed by desert and games with a Canadian flavour. Finally ending the evening with coffee, liqueurs and games hosted by the Americans!

Retiring to our villa in a very jolly and slightly inebriated state, we collapsed into bed and slept in late the next morning, a non-working day. Close to midday we finally surfaced, ate a late breakfast and decided that a trip to the local supermarket was required. On leaving we thought it seemed unusually quiet and noticed

military vehicles, including tanks, parked up at the end of our street! Our road was blocked and we were not going anywhere.

A mini coup had taken place during the night. The Crown Prince and Deputy Ruler of R.A.K. had been removed from office on the orders of the Ruler, his father Sheik Saqr, and implemented by the Army from the Abu Dhabi Emirate. He and his family were given the choice, leave the Emirate or undergo house arrest. He chose the former, left R.A.K. immediately and the military convoy returned to Abu Dhabi. The Crown Prince had been deposed by his half-brother, who still rules the Emirate to this day.

We had been oblivious to the whole episode!

### **D L Jones (1954-62)**

#### **The Jacob Morgan Prize**

On his retirement in 1954 after a quarter of a century as headmaster, Jacob Morgan very generously endowed the school with a gift of money to provide for what was to be known as “The Jacob Morgan Prize”. The award was to take the form of books to be awarded annually to the boy who rendered outstanding service, socially and academically, to the school. This was a pleasant change from the tradition of purely sporting trophies, although many of the recipients of the award transpired to be outstanding sportsmen and athletes as well. A review of the gallery of recipients over the years indicate an array of ex pupils who attained remarkable success in a varied range of careers.

1956 The first recipient was Ronald Tucker who proceeded to UCNW Bangor.

1957 Brynmor Like

1958 T Lindsay Powell

1959 For the first time the prize was awarded jointly to two boys both of whom came from Crai, namely Geraint Jones and Andrew Thomas

1960 D G Powell

1961 Terry Thomas

1962 D M T Kendrick

1963 D J Jones

1964 ?

1965 H Gwynne Giles

1966 Awarded jointly to P I Hudson and D W James

1967 Gerald T Williams

1968 D G Morris

1969 Jointly awarded to Robert Davies and Paul Geehan?

1970 No record

1971 Final year of the Grammar School - no record.

### **Glyn Powell**

#### **The plan to pipe water from mid-Wales to London**

The flooding of areas of Wales in the early 20th century to provide water for Birmingham is well known. Four reservoirs in the Elan Valley were opened in 1907 and involved the flooding of two mansions, Nantgwyllt and Cwm-Elan, a Baptist chapel and 20 farms. Then, after the severe drought in 1937 a fifth

much larger reservoir was built in the Claerwen Valley and opened in 1952 by the newly crowned Queen Elizabeth in one of her first official engagements.

Then came the controversial flooding of Tywern near Bala in 1965 to provide water for Liverpool, followed by the proposal by the Usk Water Authority at Newport that the Usk and Senni Valleys be flooded. Breconshire County Council opposed the dam proposed for Llanspyddid, which would have flooded the Usk Valley towards Sennybridge, but did not object to the flooding of the Senni Valley. The latter plan was vigorously fought against and one man who was very active in the campaign was our former Old Boys' Association Chairman, Glyn Powell. Local MP and Old Boy Caerwyn Roderick, in his maiden speech in the House of Commons debate on the Senni Valley Reservoir on 11th November 1970, argued that the Usk Authority should investigate alternative sources of water such as the extension of the Brianne Dam. A hard fought campaign, which involved blocking contractors from entering the area to take borings, eventually caused the proposals to be dropped.

However, I was shocked to learn last year from an item posted by Arwyn Evans on the "Memories of Old Brecon" Facebook page, that the London County Council had asked their Chief Engineer, Sir Alexander Richardson Binnie, in 1894 to explore the possibility of obtaining water from Wales. Binnie proposed in 1898 that **major river valleys in Breconshire and Radnorshire be dammed** and the water from 11 new reservoirs be piped to London. The rivers Towy, Irfon, Wye, Ithon and Edw were to be tapped, and the main reservoirs would be at Irfon, Edw and a large expansion of Llangorse Lake. The map below shows the catchment areas in pink; the large Llangorse reservoir is at bottom right. The latter would involve moving a railway line and junction at Tal y Llyn. The plan involved a 168 mile long aqueduct to London, and it was envisaged that the work would take until 1945 to complete at an estimated cost of £38.7 million (that's just over £5 billion in today's money). The LCC decided to support Binnie's scheme and commissioned a



detailed survey. However the Government set up a Commission to investigate the proposal. Before the publication of the Commission's report there was support for the plan in the House of Commons and the Bill went to the Committee stage. In December 1899 the Commission published its report which opposed the plan. It was concerned that the estimate of £38 million could be a significant underestimate (does that sound familiar!). The Bill was defeated at the second reading, and the threat of the destruction of a significant area of Wales affecting many thousands of people was thus avoided.

That was not the end of attempts to draw water from Wales. As recently as 2018 the GMB Congress passed a resolution highlighting the problem of

water shortage in London and the south east of England. The GMB said the current restoration of the Cotswold canals should be seized as an opportunity to transfer water from the Craig Goch reservoir in the

Elan Valley to the Thames. The Welsh Government said it would need to be consulted. A Welsh Water spokesman has confirmed that there are no current plans to act on this suggestion.

**Michael Williams** [I am indebted to Mike Peters for finding sources of information on the London plan and to Richard Rees, who has conducted detailed research on the plan; he provided the above map and an article he recently wrote about the scheme]

### **Teenage Angst in Brecon in the 1950s**

My family moved to Brecon in 1951 and, after four years in a large grammar school (Neath) of over 400 pupils, I joined form VP of Brecon Grammar School. I was a shy boy especially with the opposite sex, but I was sufficiently strongly attracted to a girl (who shall be nameless) I met at a church youth function in Llanfaes to ask her out. Our “courtship” involved walks along the prom and regular visits to the cinema where we often enjoyed the comfort of a double seat!! However after about a year I was dumped in favour of an older man, possibly because my girl “friend” could see no future in the relationship when it was obvious that I would be going away to university.

In those days there was a very active church youth club which regularly met for dances and other activities such as beetle drives. These meetings helped my shyness enormously, and my favourite activity was dancing with another attractive girl named Jill Bray, who lived in an estate behind St David’s Church in Llanfaes. Our favourite dance was the quickstep, and these days whenever I hear a recording of Glen Miller’s band playing “In the mood” - or indeed any of his other famous songs like “Moonlight Serenade”, “Chattanooga Choo Choo” or “Pennsylvania 6-5000” - I immediately visualise whirling around the dance floor with Jill. At the dance lessons at the girls’ school I got into trouble for repeatedly dancing with Jill instead of changing partners!

One night, when I had the use of my father’s car, I drove Jill home after a dance and we enjoyed a delicious osculatory embrace in the car after which she said “will we meet again?”. I said “Yes”. However my shyness meant some time passed before I plucked up the courage to make contact. One day I walked to her house in Llanfaes and knocked on the door. No one was home! What would the future have been had we met on that occasion? I then went to university where I met the lovely girl who became my wife. I wonder what happened to Jill. Does anyone know?

**Michael Williams**

### **Are there any Old Boys or Old Boys’ Widows in your area?**

When stuffing envelopes with newsletters and invitations to the Old Boys’ reunion, I’ve noticed that there are some towns and villages with more than one, sometimes several, Old Boys. I wondered whether, in such cases, you were aware of the existence of other Old Boys in your area. I’ve reviewed the membership details of the Association, and I list below those towns and villages with more than one Old Boy. There is also a significant number of female members, presumably widows of Old Boys, though some could be Old Girls, because we have always welcomed Old Girls to join us. So the numbers listed for each town/village include female members.

Unsurprisingly the largest number of members is in Brecon, but would you have thought that there were as many as 11 in Llandrindod Wells, and there are two in the hamlet of Battle?



## OBA member locations

Location	Number		Location	Number
Brecon	36		Droitwich	3
Cardiff	16		Newport (Pemb)	3
Sennybridge	15		Aberystwyth	3
Hay on Wye	12		Blackwood	3
Llandrindod Wells	11		Libanus	3
Hereford	10		Battle	2
Swansea	9		Trecastle	2
Bwlch	5		Defynnog	2
Crickhowell	5		Felinfach	2
Penarth	5		Tywyn	2
Abergavenny	4		Crai	2
Talgarth	3		Kidderminster	2
Talybont on Usk	3		Nottingham	2
Ystradgynlais	3		Nantwich	2
Bronllys	3			

If anyone is interested in making contact with other members in your town/village/hamlet let me know\*. I cannot give you any names and contact details because of Data Protection Legislation, but I could, with your permission, give your contact details, e.g. telephone number or address (and your years at school), to the other members in your area with the message that you would like to make contact. They would not be obliged to respond. One possible benefit of such contact might be that you arrange to car share on a visit to a reunion!

\*Contact details at end of the newsletter

**Michael Williams**

## Ar ôl Crai (After Cray)

I was sat on my patio looking out over the garden in enforced lockdown when I should have been playing bowls. Instead of the green I was enjoying a glass of Mumbles Brewery Hopkick when I began to reflect on what impact my early years in Cray had on my life. The trigger for this was the request from my local U3A (University of the Third Age) for me to give a talk to their monthly meeting. It wasn't the first time I had spoken to them, and this time I had chosen the topic "Byw yn Crai". It was about my life as I grew up living in the upper Cray valley. The U3A is in St Albans, a city of about 65,000 inhabitants, very different to the village of Crai.

### **My background**

Not many people in Crai will know or remember me. My name is Andrew Thomas and I spent the first 18 years of my life living in Reservoir House where my father was the Reservoir Keeper. The nearest neighbours were, and still are, about half a mile away. In a way my life in Crai was a superb apprenticeship for enforced isolation today.

My father kept 40 sheep and had a good relationship with the local farms, Cnewr to get them dipped and sheared, and the Clun and Blaencrai for haymaking.

### **My education**

I went to Cray Primary School and then Brecon Grammar School. When at the Grammar School I had to live in digs, catching the number 28 bus at 8 on a Monday morning and returning on the 6:15 bus on a Friday evening. In my later years I had to go back again on Saturday to play Rugby, Soccer and Cricket for various school teams.

After I left the Grammar School I went to the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire (now Cardiff University) to study Maths and Physics. I enjoyed the practical side of the studies and for my final

year I switched to study the first two years of the Electronic Engineering degree, something much more interesting than Pure Maths. I intended to stay for a fourth year to complete my Honours but the Professor, an ex-miner, said “Mr Thomas you have a degree, go out and get yourself a job. It will be much better for you to earn money than do an extra year’s study”. So I did.

In this final year one of my Physics lecturers asked me if I would like to work with a computer. I don’t know why he asked me and I had no idea what a computer was and did. So in October 1960 I started using a Stantec Zebra computer. I didn’t realise at the time what an opportunity it was. I have worked with computers or computer systems ever since for almost 60 years.

### **After University**

I left Cardiff and headed for the smoke taking a job as a Systems Engineer with Elliot Automation in Borehamwood whilst living in North London. I worked on the central computer system for the TSR2 aircraft and for a short period on Concorde. After 2 years I joined Enfield College as an Assistant Lecturer on digital systems. I continued at the College as it merged with others to become a Polytechnic and then a University. My status changed as I progressed to be Head of Department or, as the institution modernised, a Senior Manager. My final title was Director of Regional Economic Development where I was involved in developing links with the north London community and led the University in bidding for funding from UK and European community sources. I was awarded a Chair with the title of Professor of Telematics.

My real interest was applying computer technology outside of academia, and in the 1980s I developed a series of retraining programmes at Certificate and Diploma levels to benefit local industry in north London. During this time two opportunities arose, the first from the UK Government through its Manpower Services Commission, who decided to invest money in retraining graduates in digital technology. These graduates came from a range of disciplines including the Arts and Social Sciences. There was a range of Master’s programmes that included artificial intelligence, computer graphics, and computer systems. Some of the programmes included Italian and Spanish in combination with digital systems. In these programmes the students spent a minimum of three months working in either Italy or Spain. This ‘overseas’ concept developed into one programme where the students studied in two countries selected from Universities in Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, or more correctly as the university colleagues would say Barcelona in Catalunya, Bilbao in the Basque Country and Lund in Sweden. I found myself travelling widely across Europe and in the process taught myself sufficient Spanish and Italian to survive. Unfortunately, the time since my retirement has seen language skills disappear.

The second opportunity was in 1989 when the European Community launched the PHARE programme. This was to prepare east and Central European countries, who wanted to join the Community, by enhancing their skills. I became the coordinator and contractor for 3 major programmes from 1991 to 2000. The partnerships were European wide. Partner Universities were Middlesex University, London, Swedish University of Helsinki and Espoo Vantaa College, Helsinki, the Technical University of Berlin, Dublin City University, the Universities of Caserta and Napoli, Napier University Edinburgh, University of Zaragoza, and Swansea Institute. The Eastern Central Europe partners were Kalman Kando College, Budapest, University of Miskolc, and Veszprem University all from Hungary. There were secondary partners from Slovakia and I was also involved in programmes with Bulgaria and Yugoslavia.

### **What did I learn during travels across Europe?**

It was a very quick learning curve and I soon realised that the critical element in developing effective partnerships was an understanding of a country’s culture and history. Progress was much easier if you had an empathy with the people you were visiting. I had something that helped in building successful relationships - my Welsh background. Culture and language were the key. My rusty Welsh was a starting point in any presentation and set me apart from my colleagues. I compromised by moving to English but my Welsh background opened many doors. Here are three examples.

## **Hungary**

When I first visited Hungary in 1989 my only real knowledge of the country was what I had read of the uprising in the autumn of 1956. Walking through Budapest you could still see the bullet holes in the walls. The uprising failed but Hungary did finally leave the Warsaw Pact in 1991. Prior to leaving they held their first free elections in 1990 with Russian troops still on their soil. I was in Budapest just before the election and all lampposts and other such structures were a sea of red, green and white. There were 26 parties and all their flags were based on the 3 national colours. To an observer they all looked the same but my Hungarian colleagues could identify each flag and political party. How much simpler our system is with just a few parties to consider.

Discussing the political situation over a glass of Eger wine I learned about the Treaty of Trianon signed in 1920 that concluded the first world war for Hungary. This was, and still is, to many Hungarians a very significant sore. Hungary lost two thirds of its territory and its population dropped from nearly 21 million to 7.62 million. They blamed the French. Sometime later I was given a copy of a poem where one of the verses read:

Your Majesty Wales is the fairest jewel  
You have in all your crown  
River and field and valley and hill  
Are the best you may come upon

This is from a poem entitled The Bards of Wales written by the Hungarian poet Janos Arany in 1857. The poem tells of the fate of 500 Welsh bards executed by Edward I for not singing his praises at a banquet held in Montgomery Castle. In reality it was criticising the Habsburg rule of Hungary after the revolution of 1848. The Hungarian people couldn't criticise their rulers so the poet compared their situation to the English King and his attitude to the Welsh in 1277. Amazingly the message conveyed in the poem is still considered powerful and all Hungarian school children still study and learn this poem.

## **Vizcaya - The Spanish Basque Region**

One of the Postgraduate training programmes was called Communication in Computing and included the Spanish language. I had strong links with Deusto University in Bilbao and they arranged for me to address an organisation which represented Basque industries. The objective was to get 5 student placements in Basque industry. I started in Welsh then compromised in English and spoke only of the Basque nation and did not mention Spain once. I got my placements, and more, and spent a morning discussing Basque Welsh links. Briefly the conversation involved the problems of small nations, each with its own language and culture entrapped in a much larger country followed by all the Welsh Basque links from shipping coal and iron ore, between South Wales and Bilbao, Basque workers going to work in the south Wales mines, and a Welsh sea captain breaking the siege of Bilbao during the Spanish Civil War. This conversation was repeated many times on my visits to Vizcaya.

## **Helsinki**

Finland has two official languages, Finnish and Swedish. Swedish is recognised as one of the country's two official languages. Ten percent of the population of Finland speak Swedish as their mother tongue. One of the institutions I worked with was the Swedish University of Helsinki. There was an immediate empathy including culture, language and their position within the wider community both politically and economically. Suffice to say that whenever I visited the University the Welsh flag was flying. It was also flown every St David's Day, an appreciation of both our cultures and languages.

## **Life after University**

In 2000 I took early retirement from the University and became Chief Executive of the Teleregion Company. This was a company supported by European Structural funds. Like large areas of south Wales, the Lee Valley in North East London had objective 2 funding. The Teleregion Company connected small and



organisation to offer vigorous opposition to the plan was the Committee for the Defence of Welsh Culture (CDWC), who sent a telegram to Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, and a deputation, including MPs, representatives of Breconshire County Council, senior members of the CDWC, and representatives of the farmers, was also sent to London. This was received by Lord Cobham, Assistant Secretary of State for War, but was not successful.

When the departure started Iorwerth Peate of St Fagan visited the area to take photographs. He met one lady aged 82 who was sitting outside her house where she had been born and also her father and grandfather. She commented “Mae’n diwedd byd yma” (it’s the end of the world here). Those words were used as the title of a book about the clearance by Herbert Hughes.

Some farmers had not found accommodation by the end of April and had to move into temporary accommodation. Compensation was paid to the landowners, but shepherds who had no property lost their livelihood and received no compensation.

Although some farmers hoped that they might be able to return to the area after the war was over this turned out to be impossible and the area, known as the Sennybridge Training Area, SENTA, is still used year round. Members of the public can drive across part of the area along the B4519 from Upper Chapel to Garth apart from occasions when long range artillery firing is taking place.

**Michael Williams**

#### **Status of Plans for Cradoc Road School**

A meeting of the Old Boys’ committee, held via Zoom last November, was attended by Nick Evans, CEO of the Cymryd-Rhan charity; he updated us on the status of his plans for refurbishing the Cradoc Road School. Powys Council had planned to use part of the ground at the rear of the site for a facility for disadvantaged children in the area, but the application for planning permission failed because of concerns about increased traffic. Instead agreement has been reached for Powys Council to use part of the building in partnership with Cymryd-Rhan. The restrictions caused by the coronavirus have slowed progress, but plans have been drawn up for the refurbishment and Nick has control of the building. Contracts have yet to be exchanged and the funding, which includes an approved grant from the Lottery, has to be finalised. It is hoped that contracts will be exchanged before the end of the financial year and that the refurbishment will be completed by the end of 2021.

The committee thanked Nick for his work and looked forward to a successful outcome. For more information about Cymryd-rhan visit the website: [www.cymryd-rhan.org](http://www.cymryd-rhan.org) Committee member Allan Lloyd has joined Cymryd Rhan as Old Boys’ representative.

**Michael Williams**

#### **Jennifer Conway (née Brookes) Hon RMS “Our Associate Member”**

It may surprise readers to find a tribute to Jennifer Conway (1935-2020) in our newsletter, but not officers and members of the committee with whom she had worked closely over many years until she became debilitated by a cruel turn of fate. As an intermediary she represented the Old Girls in the deliberations over the suggested amalgamation of the Associations, and was a ready supporter of all of our activities. A Brecon girl she was a member of the eminent Brookes business family. As a pupil of the Girls’ Grammar School (1947-1954) she distinguished herself both academically and as a sportswoman. From the outset her name featured regularly among the form and subject prize lists. Being appointed Miss A B Jones’ (1953-71) first head girl exemplified her standing within the school community. However, sport was her special forte; she was captain of the school and county hockey XI, netball VII, the tennis VI, and the athletics team. In the AAA meetings she always distinguished herself in the sprints and relays.



Jennifer entered Bedford College of Physical Education (1954-57) where she found life “active and strenuous and not, as commonly believed, a rather easy-going mixture of gym, games and dance” (The Daisy Vol. XLI). She undertook the final part of her teaching practice at a Secondary Modern School in Luton, a real challenge. At the end of her course she qualified with Distinctions in Art and Biology in the Diploma of the Cambridge Institute of Education, and was then appointed to replace Miss Pringle as PE mistress at Brecon Girls’ Grammar School (1957-67). During this period the standard of performance of games teams generally, and athletics in particular, reached a new high level of proficiency and achievement.

After the birth of her son Mathew in 1967 she retired from teaching and took up painting in a professional capacity, having previously pursued it as a hobby. Her daughter Emma was born in 1969. In 1979 she was elected a full member of the Royal Miniature Society (RMS). She was then the only Welsh member and was subsequently made an Honorary member. She is listed in “Who’s Who in Art”, “The International Who’s Who of Women”, “The Royal Academy Exhibitors 1971-1989 and “Welsh Crafts”. In 1982 she worked on a series of projects for the world famous Franklin Mint, Philadelphia. In 1990 she and her husband Jon’s illustrated book about Brecknock wild flowers and countryside entitled “ A Pocketful of Posies” was published. In 1993 Jennifer designed “Brecon in Summertime”, the limited edition plate produced by Royal Doulton to commemorate the 900th anniversary of the foundation of Brecon.

Jennifer exhibited at the Royal Academy, Paris Salon, Washington Arts Club, Miniature Arts Society at Clearwater, Florida, the Mall Galleries (for twelve consecutive years), the Westminster Gallery, Woburn Abbey and Brecknock Museum. She also held one person shows in 1980, 1989 and 1993.

I personally had reason to be thankful to Jennifer for designing the cover for the short history of the secondary schools entitled “From Intermediate to Comprehensive” and for the selection of photographs. So those who have a copy can claim to have a piece of Jennifer’s art work in their possession, surely a joy in itself.

**Glyn Powell**

## **Obituaries**

### **Michael Christopher Smith (1956-62)**

Michael, who died in March 2019, became a state registered nurse and worked in a number of hospitals including Hereford and North Wales, returning to the hospital in Talgarth following the death of his father.

### **David Gwyn Griffiths OBE (1955-1962)**

Crai born Gwyn graduated in Civil Engineering from Swansea University College and after various projects he specialised in land reclamation becoming Director for Wales from 1984. He worked on the Aberfan Reclamation Scheme and was a member of many external bodies. In retirement he enjoyed walking, bird watching, photography and golf, often playing against former Old Boys.

### **Frederick Ernest Morris (1943-47)**

Fred impressed as a pupil with his physicality and athleticism, being a veritable Adonis. The family left Brecon for Borehamwood, and Fred worked for the Gas Board before joining British Waterways Board. A keen sportsman, he starred as the Siddons goalkeeper, joined a running club, and took up hockey, becoming treasurer of the local club and also the New Mill Scouts.

### **Terry Thomas (1953-60)**

Terry was noted for his outstanding performance on the sports field and athletics track. He was the top points scorer in rugby with his place kicking and a county player at cricket. As a javelin thrower he participated in the Welsh Games and represented Wales against Scotland in 1960. After gaining A-levels in Geography and History he was admitted to Caerleon Training College.

**Glyn Ifor Price (1946-51)**

Glyn, from Pipton Farm, Aberllynfi, left school after his O-levels to return to the family farm, and after farming for several years, in 1986 he sold the farm retaining a portion of some 20 acres. He moved to Hereford, where he worked as a driver for a local coach firm for 27 years, taking coach parties all over Europe. On retirement he moved to Braintree, Essex, where he died in November 2019.

**Sarah Kathleen (Kath) Harrington - Staff**

Kath, a native of Godre's Graig, attended Ystalyfera Grammar School before graduating in Welsh from University College of Wales Cardiff, where she was proud to have been a student of the eminent Saunders Lewis. Following periods teaching in Pontypridd and being peripatetic teacher at Mount Street and Llanfaes schools she joined the Girls' School to teach Welsh, French and English.

**Eirahueille Jones (née Greet) - Staff**

Born in Bwlch, Eira attended Monmouth Girls' School and, after a period teaching in London, she was appointed to the English Department at Brecon. She subsequently became head of department, and was popular with senior pupils. A dedicated churchwoman, she was closely involved with Cancer Research Wales for which service she was recently honoured. She was a keen bridge player.

**John Albert ("Otty") Ottewell (1937-43)**

In 1943 John signed up for military service and was involved in the liberation of the Dutch city of S-Hertogenbosch. After the war he worked on the Western Welsh buses. In 1955 the family moved to Canada and then to Las Vegas, returning to Brecon in 1962. He was a fisherman par excellence, author, poet and painter. In the 1960s he appeared on Blue Peter with his popular mare Hoppity.

**Eric William Smith (1940-44)**

Breconian Eric on leaving school joined the National Provincial Bank at Builth Wells before his National Service in the RAF. On demobilisation he returned to the bank working at Birmingham, Cardiff and Barry. He attended the Old Boys' Reunions, staying with his brother Jeff in Llanfilo, until illness prevented this. After retirement he enjoyed fishing, golf and playing bowls.

**Len Davies (1937-42)**

Len, a stalwart of the OBA, was a regular supporter of its activities. He was captain of Siddons and the school soccer XI. In 1943 he joined the RAF and completed 32 bombing missions. On demobilisation he became a teacher and taught first at Mount Street CP School and later became head of Talgarth Junior & Infants School. He was honoured as Life Vice President of the OBA.

**John Coombes (1941-48)**

After a successful school career John trained as a teacher before undertaking his National Service with the Army Dental Corps. After teaching posts in Kenilworth and Llanfaes CP School, he later became head of Penrhos CP School. He was a scouter and one time Commissioner, a member of Côr y Gyrlais? and a deacon and secretary of Bethlehem Chapel, Abercrave.

**Edward Morgan (1960-65)**

Edward left school early to assist his father on the family farm. He became very involved with Brecon YFC, Brecknock and Royal Welsh Agricultural Societies, RWAS Advisory Committee and the 200 Club. He was awarded Life Vice Presidency and the Society's silver medal for outstanding service. He was a magistrate. A keen rugby supporter, he was also an active scouter in his youth.

**John Short (1938-44)**

On leaving school John studied at Trinity College, Carmarthen. During National Service he served in Northern Ireland, Egypt and Libya. After teaching appointments in local primary schools he moved to Winchester, and returned to Wales in 1968 as Deputy Head of Middle School in Tredegar Comprehensive. As Life Vice President of the OBA he had acted as treasurer for over 40 years.

**D J Anthony (“Tony”) Parry (1951-57)**

An all round sportsman, Tony played both soccer and cricket for the school 1st XIs and he did well at athletics. He sat his O-levels in 1956 and subsequently joined the Gloucestershire Constabulary. Terminating service prematurely he returned to take up employment at Talgarth Mental Hospital where both his father and brother were also employed.

**Arthur Ieuan Jones (1947-54)**

Ieuan, on leaving school, returned home to assist on the extensive sheep, cattle and grain family farm. He took every opportunity of self education, mastering a wide range of rural skills. To expand his agricultural knowledge he spent an extended period of work in the USA. On returning home he settled down to become a leading figure in his community and played a prominent role in the YFC.

**W E Davies**

Worked in Watts (clothiers); Nat. Service in RAF; bachelor, worked in Inland Rev all his life.

**Bert Jones (1940-44)**

After school Bert joined the Electricity Board as an apprentice, qualifying as an electrician and remaining in their employment for the whole of his career. In his youth he was a keen scouter and enjoyed playing table tennis with the Young Wales Club. However it was as a drummer that Bert made a name for himself, initially with an eleven piece band and subsequently with the Cordettes. He was a member of Brecon Town Band.

**Owen Gareth Morgan (1954-59)**

Rather than following his brother into farming Gareth joined the Highways Department of the then Breconshire County Council, where he continued for the rest of his career as Highways Inspector. A leading member of Pontfaen YFC, he was particularly active with their highly successful drama group. A qualified FA referee, he was called up regularly to officiate at soccer games over wide area. A later interest was bowls.

**Dyfrig Davies (1952-56)**

A member of an extended Crai family, Dyfrig returned home to the dairy farm on leaving school. A committed Presbyterian, he was a regular Sunday school and chapel goer before being appointed a deacon of Horeb, Crai. Dyfrig was struck down with a debilitating ailment at a comparatively young age and became confined to a wheel chair.

**Contact details**

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

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