

Cylchlythyr Cymdeithas Ysgolion Ramadeg Aberhonddu Mawrth 2025

Brecon Grammar Schools' Association Newsletter March 2025

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Another low attendance at the 2024 Annual Reunion was a disappointment but it was pleasing to see more former pupils of the Girls' School.

Thanks to a good response to my appeal for more contributions from members and some articles from the late Glyn Powell, I have been able to produce the longest newsletter yet!

I'm pleased that we now have our first lady President elect in Kathryn Easton. Her biographical notes can be found on page 4.

Remember that you can access all the Silurian magazines on our website: www.brecongrammar.org
The website was used 555 times in 2024; this compares with 405 visits in 2022.

Contributions for the 2026 newsletter would be appreciated, especially from those who were in school in the 1960s.

Roedd presenoldeb isel arall yn yr Aduniad Blynnyddol yn 2024 yn siom ond roedd yn braf gweld mwy o gyn-ddisgyblion Ysgol y Merched.

Diolch i ymateb da i'm hapêl am fwy gyfraniadau gan aelodau a rhai erthyglau gan y diweddar Glyn Powell, dw i wedi cynhyrchu'r cychlythyr hiraf eto!

Dwi'n falch bod gyda ni ein Llywydd benywaidd cyntaf - Kathryn Easton. Gellir dod o hyd i'w nodiadau bywgraffiadol ar dudalen 4.

Cofiwch y gallwch darllen y cylchgrawnau Silurian i gyd ar ein wefan: www.brecongrammar.org

Defnyddwyd y wefan 555 tro yn 2024; mae hyn yn cymharu â 405 o ymweliadau yn 2022.

Hoffwn gael cyfraniadau ar gyfer y cylchlythyr 2026, yn enwedig o rai oedd yn yr ysgol yn y chwedegau.

Events of 2024

The year began with the funeral of Glyn Powell at Defynnog Church on January 13th. The influence that Glyn had in his life was illustrated by the large number of mourners, including a number of Old Boys. Many had to stand outside the church. After a service that included an emotional eulogy which referred to Glyn's many contributions to his community and country, Glyn was buried in the church cemetery, not far from his birthplace in Crai.

Former pupils of the Boys' and Girls' Grammar Schools assembled at the Cradoc Golf Club on Saturday, 27th April for the **Annual Reunion**. Due to a double booking for lunch, which had been overlooked by the Golf Club, our meal had to be moved to 5 o'clock, as explained in the Chairman's letter of 13th March 2024 sent to all members.

Chairman Allan Lloyd welcomed everyone to the reunion and thanked in particular several former pupils of the Girls' School for attending. He explained that he was wearing two hats as Chairman and President because of a lack of volunteers to act as Chairman. He said it had been a great honour to be President in the year when the decision was made to change the constitution to include former pupils of the Girls' School. It was a year when we experienced the loss of our most eminent and influential member, Glyn Powell, who was by far the biggest contributor to the newsletter. He especially thanked the newsletter editor, Michael, for producing the longest edition yet. Amongst his recollections of school were his visits to the Girls' School for History lessons in the sixth form. On one of these visits after a snowfall he was pelted with snowballs by some of the girls. He responded likewise but later, despite not being the guilty party, he was reprimanded by Headmistress Jarvis for throwing snowballs at her girls!

He depicted himself as a troublesome lad and claimed (tongue in cheek!) that the decision to plan the new school at Penlan in 1954 was because he was leaving the School in that year. However, when Jacob Morgan retired in 1954 Allan was invited to thank Jacob for his long service at a meeting attended by the Governors and Councillors. The replacement head was present and Allan welcomed him but embarrassingly referred to him as Aneurin Thomas instead of Aneurin Rees! After qualifying as a teacher at Carmarthen Training

College he said he was not head hunted to teach at Brecon Grammar School, but he did get appointed at Lady Hawkins' Grammar School, Kington where he taught for forty years, becoming Head of Geography and Upper School.

He concluded by saying he was proud to represent the Association at Glyn's funeral wearing the chain of office which bore Glyn's name as a former President.

Allan then invested Win Griffiths with the Presidential Chain of Office and, in a change of practice, invited him to give his Presidential address. Win (on right in photo) began by saying that at school he struggled with languages and dropped Latin and French but persisted with Welsh. After graduating from Cardiff University College in History he gained a Diploma in Education and took up a teaching post in Mzumbe,

Tanzania, in response to a request from the Ministry of Overseas Development for graduates to teach in East Africa. During the two years there with his wife Ceri, he learned Swahili. Back in the UK he taught at Birmingham, Barry and Cowbridge schools until 1979 when he was elected to the European Parliament where he was the Socialist Group's Spokesperson for Regional Affairs and a Vice-President from 1984 to



1987. In 1987 he became MP for Bridgend, a seat he held until his retirement in 2005. He was Shadow Minister for the Environment, Education and Wales from 1990 to 1997, and after Labour won the 1997 general election he was junior minister in the Welsh Office, covering a wide range of responsibilities. Before retiring from Westminster he was involved in three important overseas events, one being a challenging visit to Iran to see two political prisoners being held in Tehran (for more details see Win's article on page 4). On retirement he chaired three Health Trusts/Boards and was honoured to receive an OBE in 2012 for services to health. He was chair of the Wales Council for Voluntary Action from 2006 to 2013 and is currently treasurer, Senior Steward and Safeguarding steward for Cefn Cribwr Methodist Church. Vice Chairman Charles Lewis then proposed a vote of thanks to the President.

At the **Awards Evening on 16th July 2024** President Win Griffiths was accompanied by Tom Protheroe and Allan Lloyd and the President presented the Association prizes to the winners, who are listed below.

Subject	Prize	Amount £	Pupil Name
Most Improved Business Studies	The D.J. Powell Cup	25	Jack Celant Leach
Most Improved History	The Evans Most Improved History Prize	25	William Millichap
Year 10 Art	The Evans Art Prize	25	Lisa Wu
Year 10 Business Studies	The Evans Business prize	25	Jessica Simmons
Year 10 Geography	The Evans KS4 Geography Prize	25	Sam Standing
Year 10 Mathematics	The Evans KS4 Maths Prize	25	Henry Johnson
Year 10 Physical Education	The Letton Shield BGSA R.Malcolm	50	Matthew Williams
Year 12 English	Senior Geoffrey Meredith Powell Prize	50	Not awarded*
Year 12 Mathematics	The Evans KS5 Maths Prize	25	Not awarded*
Year 12 PE	Cliff Carr Memorial Prize	100	Not awarded*
Year 12 Welsh Baccalaureate	The Evans Intercultural understanding Prize	25	Not awarded*
Year 8 Modern Foreign Languages	The Evans KS3 Languages Prize	25	Lacey Lane
Year 9 English	Junior Geoffrey Meredith Powell Prize	50	Caleb Buiok
Year 9 Mathematics	The Evans KS3 Maths Prize	25	Evie Cavenagh
Year 9 Modern Foreign Languages	The Evans KS3/4 Languages Prize	25	Ellis Havard
Year 9 Art Prize Most potential	Shirley Jones Art Prize	n/a	Emilia Downtown
Best cadet contributor	Mike Peters Silver bugle	n/a	Not awarded
All years. Best academic achievement	Lewis/Dr Price	25	Rhianna McGuire
All years. Greatest contribution community/ school	Glyn Powell Prize	100	Louis Rooza & Olivia Thompson Richards

*Not awarded because there was no year 12 last year

Two new prizes were awarded for the first time; the Shirley Jones Art Prize was an Art Book donated by Ken Jones, and the Glyn Powell Prize was donated by Gwenllian, Glyn's widow. The following photos of prize winners were provided by the High School.



Emilia Downtown.



Henry Johnson.



Jack C. Leach



Jessica Simm



Lacy Lane



Louis Rooza.



Rhianna McGuire.



Sam Standing

The **Memorial Service**, held at the High School on 11th November, was attended by several members of the Brecon Grammar Schools' Association. Acting Head, Mr Edwards, introduced the event which began as usual with several readings by pupils. The names of those who fell in the first World War were read by Major Donna Greaves and those who fell in the second World War were read by Vice President Kathryn Easton. After the Reveille President Win Griffiths laid a wreath on the plaque of the fallen followed by the wreath from the oldest boy and youngest girl. Vice President Elect, Liz Poraj-Wilczynska, has written "we would sincerely like to thank all the pupils for the dignity and respect they showed throughout the service. The seven readers, the orchestra and the cadets were outstanding in their respective roles. A special mention goes to Daniel Southgate (year 11) and Mr Bell whose playing of the Last Post and Reveille was so poignant. A sincere thank you to Mr Rob Edwards, your Staff and the Rev David Thomas for organising such a wonderful service. Well done Brecon High School Pupils, you were exceptional today!" Our contact for this event is now deputy head Mr Matt Hirst.

Biographical Notes

Kathryn Easton - President Elect

Kathryn was born and raised in Brecon and attended the Grammar School from 1959 - 65. After completing her A-levels she went to UCNW Bangor, graduating with a degree in History and Biblical Studies followed by a Postgraduate Certificate of Education. Her first teaching post was in Corby and her last teaching post was as director of studies at Educational Guardians. She has travelled widely visiting sites of archaeological and historical significance, and worked with two local charities helping people with disabilities - Brecon Advocacy and Brecon Disability Group.

Win's Presidential address - 2024

(Editor's Note: after hearing Win's Presidential address in which he gave a fascinating account of his life in public service I suggested he submitted an article for the newsletter for the benefit of those who were absent)

My language skills in school were missing in action. I gave up Latin and French and only passed 'O' level Welsh after a third year in the 6th form. It turned out to be a blessing in disguise as at the first University students' 'hop' in October 1962 I met, Ceri, my wife of 58 years, and danced to Tommy Scott and the Senators a few years before Tommy Scott hit the big time as Tom Jones!

In my 4 years at Cardiff University (1962-66) I gained a B.A.(Hons) in History and a Diploma in Education. During my final year the Ministry of Overseas Development were doing the rounds encouraging graduates

to teach in East Africa: either in Uganda, Kenya or Tanzania. I went to Tanzania having opted to let the Ministry to decide where to place me.

Ceri and I married in August and were in Tanzania - Mzumbe Secondary School (150 miles west of Dar es Salaam) - by early September. We were there from 1966 to 1968. I taught history, some geography and two lessons of religious education a week. The government stipulated two lessons a week of religious education but each faith had to provide its own teachers. I taught all the Protestants in their 'O' level year.

In addition to teaching I organised the sports activities, and was in effect the careers master, and with Ceri organised the school timetable. This proved to be useful when our daughter was born in minimising the overlapping of our lessons and the need for childcare. We had a multi-national staff that included Tanzanian, Russian, East German, American, Canadian, Danish, Irish and several from the UK.

While there we took the opportunity to go on safari and I climbed Mount Kilimanjaro. I also, amazingly, took to learning Swahili and became quite proficient, passing the written and oral exams, the only one to do so in our class. You may remember that whenever we failed to answer a question in Welsh Mr. Williams would say 'Anyone would think you were learning Swahili.' I was hoping to give him the good news when I got back, but unfortunately he suffered an early death from cancer. It would have given him a good laugh!

Back in the UK I taught for 18 months in Birmingham at George Dixon Boys' Grammar school. The school had been set up by George Dixon, a local industrialist. George Dixon of Dixon of Dock Green fame was named after the school as Sir Malcolm Balcom, Head of Ealing Studios and mentor of Alfred Hitchcock, went to the school. Apart from teaching History and English I sang in the Peers' Chorus in Gilbert and Sullivan's *Iolanthe*.

From 1970-76 I taught History at Barry Boys' Comprehensive School. This was a time of local government reorganisation and I won a seat for Labour in Dinas Powys for the newly created Vale of Glamorgan Borough Council (still the only Labour Councillor for Dinas Powys at this level). I was Chair of the Leisure Services Committee.

In 1976 I became Head of History at Cowbridge Comprehensive School. In 1979, surprisingly, I became the Labour candidate for the South Wales Euroconstituency - 9 Westminster constituencies from Cardiff to Neath - in the first directly elected European Parliament. I served in the European Parliament for ten years. I was the Socialist Group's Spokesperson for Regional Affairs and in 1984-87 I was a Vice-President of the European Parliament (a two and a half year stint akin to a Deputy Speaker at Westminster).

In 1987 I won the Bridgend constituency from the Conservatives and held it till my retirement in 2005.

In Parliament I was a Shadow Minister for the Environment in 1990-92, Education in 1992-94 and Wales in 1994-97. When Labour was elected to government in 1997 I was appointed Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Welsh Office, responsible to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Services, Local Government, the Countryside, the Voluntary Sector and Disability Services. I was also the first Minister for Children in the UK. During this period the Secretary of State, Ron Davies, Minister of State, Peter Hain. (now Lord Hain), and myself took the legislation through Parliament creating the Welsh Assembly (now the Senedd).

When I returned to the back benches after the Assembly legislation was passed in 1998 I had several interesting encounters on Government or individual missions abroad. The first was in 2002 when I was asked by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy to represent the UK at a conference in Freetown, Sierra Leone, aiming to ensure that there would be peaceful elections in Sierra Leone after the Civil War. Apart from speaking about the politics of democracy in the UK, I had the task of getting the leaders of the 13 political parties contesting the elections to sign up to a Memorandum of Understanding accepting the outcome of the elections being held in May. I succeeded in getting them to sign up to accepting the outcome of the elections, but without including the specific election date. It worked. Over the last 20 years there have been peaceful changes of Government.

In 2003 I was asked by the Government to represent the UK at the Asian-African Sub Regional Organisations Conference (AASROC) 50th anniversary in Bandung, Indonesia. I could only imagine that the Government did not feel comfortable sending a Minister to represent the UK but did not want to be seen snubbing this conference of the non-aligned countries entirely.

In 2004 I went on an individual mission to Iran to visit two political prisoners who held British Refugee Passports granted some years previously after fleeing from the wrath of the Ayatollah. They were members of the National Council of Resistance of Iran. In 1978 their group was part of the Ayatollah's successful campaign to overthrow the Shah. They wanted a secular state with freedom of religion. This did not sit well with the Ayatollah and soon they were in conflict. The Ayatollah won and so the main body of the group moved to Iraq, when Saddam was a friend of the West. Its military wing was declared a terrorist organisation in 1997 but was delisted in 2013.

The two I went to see in Evin prison, Tehran, were UK residents with British refugee passports allowing them to visit any country except for Iran. (While in Syria they had been imprisoned by Assad and then sent to Iran). To cut a long story short I was accompanied by the late Teddy Taylor MP, who was regarded as a friend of the regime and couldn't understand why such a reasonable person as myself could support the NCRI which had a military wing listed as a terrorist organisation. Part of my defence was that a similar situation had applied to the late Nelson Mandela and the military wing of the ANC. While there I also had to point out in several meetings, when challenged about the deaths inflicted on Iranian citizens during the conflicts with the NCRI, that the Iranian Government had killed thousands of NCRI supporters in Iranian prisons. On my last day I was told an Iranian official wanted to speak to me that evening. I said we could speak over dinner in the hotel but was told he wanted a private meeting. After dinner I met this official who accused me of being a 'naughty boy'. He alleged I had secretly passed a message to one of the prisoners I had come to see at a meal where about 20 people were present including this official. He claimed the prisoner on his return to the prison voluntarily offered up the message to the authorities. I pointed out that I had passed the message across above the table and that he could have seen it. I didn't tell him that the next day this prisoner had warned me to pass the message I had for the other prisoner under the table when I met him the following day! I was allowed to return to the UK! When I got home, however, I had to write a 5 page rebuttal of the Iranian Government's account of my visit!

On retiring from Westminster in 2005 I was appointed Chair of the Bro Morgannwg NHS Trust, and remained Chair as it went through two organisational changes. In 2008 Swansea and Bro Morgannwg came together to form the Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University NHS Trust. In the following year the commissioning boards were integrated into the Trusts and I chaired the ABMU Health Board until I retired in 2012. During my time with Bro Morgannwg I established a link with the Ola During Children's Hospital in Freetown, Sierra Leone - the only one in the country. Bro Morgannwg and later ABMU staff volunteered to work with staff in Freetown to develop better childcare practices. During this time I chaired or was involved in several committees or working groups the most notable of which was the Access to Justice working group. I chaired the working group which produced guidance for dealing with people with learning disabilities caught up in the criminal justice system. I was honoured to receive an OBE in 2012 for my contribution to health services.

Between 2006 and 2013 I chaired, as a volunteer, the Wales Council for Voluntary Action. Between 2010-2016 I was the volunteer Welsh Trustee for the Royal National Institute for the Deaf, and between 2016-23 I was one of the RNID's volunteer trustees of their Pension Fund.

Currently I am Treasurer, Senior Steward and Safeguarding steward for Cefn Cribwr Methodist Church.

Win Griffiths OBE

My Nipponese Adventure

Part 2

Very soon after I settled in Japan it became evident that sports, both Western and native, play their part in the sphere of mass entertainment. Of the native sports sumo wrestling was the most important along with judo, kendo and kyudo. However, as a result of the occupation baseball had already become universally popular especially with the young. In the back streets it was not unusual to find groups of young boys playing baseball excitedly with their shouts of “strike.” What surprised me above all else was that the Japanese were a rugby playing nation.

With a whole range of Commonwealth military units in Kure there were a surprising number of rugby teams. For my rugby I was adopted by an Australian Signals unit. Much to my surprise I was selected to play for the BCFK team, undertaking a rugby tour of Japan. Captaining the squad was Padre Gary Murphy who was subsequently to play at fullback for Ireland. For the tour we travelled by train being provided with reserved sleeper carriages. What was to surprise us was the enthusiasm for rugby in certain areas as much as the playing standards generally. Our tour started with the games in Kokura and Yawata before moving on to Osaka on the main island of Honshu, bypassing Kyoto. Tokyo was the next location on the schedule where we played the powerful Ellis club XV at the Prince Chichibu stadium. It was here that we suffered a singular defeat despite the strength of our team with imposing Maori second rows and number eight and two Maori internationals in the backs. It was incredible to what extent Tokyo had been resurrected after the devastation caused by mass bombing and the subsequent fire storm. The casualty rate had been higher than either Hiroshima or Nagasaki. From Tokyo we travelled to Yokohama for the next game. This was the second, next to Tokyo, of the great industrial centres which had suffered 85% devastation. Following a return journey to Tokyo we headed north on the twelve hour journey to Akita, a city famous for the traditional Japanese dolls. It was here that we witnessed the unchanged Japan, unaffected by the westernising influence of the occupation.

On our return to Tokyo we were allowed three days free furlough in the city. I was fortunate in that my interpreter had arranged for me to stay at her home in the Netagayaku district. This gave me a hands on experience of the tastes, flavours and traditions of Japan. It meant sleeping on a “futon” laid on a “tatami.” My diet had a rice and fish base (but no sushi) supplemented by a range of vegetables especially “daicon,” but very little meat. What surprised me was the Japanese dislike, even revulsion, to milk, butter and cheese. They believed that these products caused the strange odour of foreigners. Actually the Japanese word “batakusai” means both foreign and smelling of butter. High value was placed on personal cleanliness with regular use being made of the mixed sex bathhouses. A particular feature of the Japanese people is as inveterate gift givers. We were recipients of presents wherever we went.

Evenings in Tokyo were spent exploring the Ginza quarter, a digest of world influences. Evoking much of the USA there were hints of London and Paris as well as a touch of Germany and Switzerland. However, integrally it reflected the ethos of Japan, its heart, its dreams and its core. What I did miss out on was the formal tea ceremony with Geisha Service. A compensating experience was a visit to Ryogoku, the historic district of Tokyo which was the centre of Japanese wrestling (“rihishi”). Here were located the dedicated “sumo” stables where the wrestlers lived and trained.

The Japanese are the inheritors of an ancient and highly formalised civilisation based firmly on ancestor worship, filial piety and an ordered society. The Occupation Era was to instigate significant changes, although many of these were to turn out to be superficial. Ingrained social habits cannot be uprooted “*nen com*” in a decade, and from my observations Japan had become divided socially into two separate worlds. There were those who observed the old social models and forms as well as racial inhibitions, conforming to traditional allegiances. Then there was the post-war generation whilst observing old social taboos revealed a Western influenced outlook and mode of living. However, what was remarkable above all else was the pace and extent of postwar reconstruction, which was to give the kickstart to what was to become the “economic miracle” of the 1960s.

On completion of my tour of duty with BCFK I sailed across the Inland Sea on board HMS Asturias bound for Malaya. As I looked back I felt a genuine regret that I had not made a conscious effort to have learned more than a limited number of phrases of Japanese. However, a few of these phrases did come in useful years later when the manager of the Yuasa Battery Company in Brynmawr brought his daughter for admission to the school. He was somewhat surprised when I addressed him with “Ohayo gozaimasu” (“good morning”) and “do itashimashita” (“welcome”). I then asked the girl “dozo yoroshike” (how do you do). I took advantage of her stay in school to practice what other bits and pieces I could recall. Looking back, it's strange to think how it is the smallest details that can have the greatest impact.

The Late Glyn Powell

BALLS and BOOKS

Part 2

Early in the 1960s I became interested in golf. Playing the game presented a fresh challenge to me as my soccer playing days were coming to an end. I was eager to improve and, as I have mentioned, the playing fields backed onto the garden of our house so the opportunity to practice was very close at hand.

When, in 1971, I gave up teaching PE I introduced golf as a lunchtime activity and this developed until the time came when there was a sufficient number of players to hold Match Play and Stroke Play Championships. These were held on the school sports field on which I had designed a nine hole course which the ground staff maintained. The greens were not pristine but it was the same for everyone and some of the boys became proficient fairly quickly, and so I had to introduce a system of handicapping to give everyone a chance. After a time it became very popular and yearly competitions were held. I made contact with other schools in the country to see if inter school matches could be arranged but nothing came of my enquiries.

During the 1970s and 1980s the Dunlop Masters golf tournament was held intermittently at St Pierre Golf Club at Chepstow. This was an ideal opportunity for the boys to see world class golfers playing in the flesh, so each time the championship was held there I organised a trip to the tournament which was always well supported. Whilst there the boys would buy programmes and were able to ask the famous players to sign them. Some did, some didn't, and it was eye-opening that the really famous players, Jack Nicklaus, Gary Players, Ian Woosnam, Steve Ballesteros, Nick Faldo, Greg Norman, were all prepared to sign autographs and even chat to the boys whereas the lesser-known, who shall be nameless, would ignore their attempts.

So life in the 1980s trundled on with days spent in the classroom (which had a whole wall of windows overlooking the tennis courts through which I was constantly reminded of my outdoor time spent there), my lunch hours on the playing field teaching golf to the schoolboy enthusiasts, and my evenings dealing with our family and marking endless editions of essays, literally and otherwise, and grammar and comprehension exercises. On Sundays I would play golf at Brecon golf club where I was successful in winning several competitions over time when I reduced my handicap to 6.

At the onset of the 1990s Powys Education Committee were eager to provide those who wished to do so the opportunity to retire early. Hence in May 1991 after 30 years of teaching I walked out of Gwernyfed High School for the last time to join the happy band of retired teachers.

Throughout the period 1960-1991 Hay-on-Wye was developing as a book town, and whenever I had the opportunity to do so I would visit and spend my time scouring the shelves of Booth's Bookshop to begin with and then many others which appeared as the town blossomed. I had become a golf book addict!

Golf has a huge literary history taking in many avenues - biographies and autobiographies of famous players, histories of courses and equipment, novels and short stories, humorous tales, descriptions of famous tournaments; the list is endless and I was hooked!

Over the years I became well known to the owners of the shops throughout the town, eventually having taught some of them! They were very kind to me and generously allowed me discounts knowing that I would continue collecting!

Eventually I became more computer savvy and began to buy and sell books myself on-line, which enabled me to purchase hard to find expensive books which did not appear very often on the shelves in Hay.

In 1992 as I had some knowledge of buying and selling books I was recruited as a volunteer in the Hay-on-Wye Oxfam shop and so began a long association with the charity. My wife, who had retired from her post at Welsh Water in the Brecon office the year before me, was already a volunteer.

In 1993 Summerhill golf course was opened on the outskirts of Hay-on-Wye. This was very convenient for me as it was closer than Brecon and was in a delightful spot. I became a member and spent many happy times playing there. At this time I would play there at least three mornings a week, one of which would be followed by my afternoon in the Oxfam shop sorting and pricing books. So life passed uneventfully until one day in 1995 a friend of mine, a fellow Mason, asked me to assist him in the setting up of a new bookshop which he was intending to open. I was happy to do this and so, after the shelving was erected, the shop opened and I began working one afternoon a week which very soon became two. So at that time I was playing golf in the mornings and working in the shops, Oxfam and my friend's, in the afternoons. The remainder of the week I spent scouring the other bookshops in Hay to find any elusive golf books.

At that stage 'Balls and Books' were still alive and well until 1999 when having played too much golf I injured my back and took myself off to the Priory Hospital in Birmingham where I underwent spinal surgery which was not highly successful. This event sadly put an end to my sporting days. In the meantime my friend from the bookshop died and the shop closed. I did return to Oxfam for a few years but eventually called time on my activity there.

So the sequence of Balls and Books was broken but I continued the books side of the equation by persisting in my hobby of golf book collecting, until I decided to sell my collection which I did for a good price. I did keep a few of my favourites to remind me of the time when Balls and Books held sway!

Parry Richards

My Career in Academia

As described in my article "My Experience of America, 1960-62" in the 2023 newsletter, after I completed my PhD in Birmingham University my wife and I went to the United States where I had a job in a government research lab. In 1962 we returned to Britain and my hope was that I could secure a lectureship in a university. Early in 1962 Les Hough, who was a Reader in the Chemistry Department at Bristol University, visited the lab where I worked. I was familiar with his research and asked whether he had any opportunities for research fellows in his team in October of that year. He said there was a good chance provided he could organise the funding. Sometime later he sent me a letter offering me a research fellowship and describing the research project. Although I would have preferred the type of fellowship where there was no restriction of the topic, I was happy to accept. The aim of the research was to investigate how glucosamine was formed in living cells.

It involved using a radioactive compound that Les had postulated might be the precursor of glucosamine, which is the constituent of many key compounds such as hyaluronic acid and many glycoproteins. The first step was the synthesis of the precursor labelled with a radioactive carbon isotope, ^{14}C , which is a low energy beta emitter. This labelled precursor was then fed to a fungus, *Aspergillus Flavus*, after which chitin, a glucosamine polymer, was isolated from the fungus. This was then hydrolysed to form glucosamine whose radioactivity was measured. It was an interesting project which involved my working with a microbiologist in a local College of Further Education. During the three years of the project I kept track of lectureships which were advertised in universities and early in 1965 I began applying for lectureships. My first interview

was at the University of St Andrews. A local candidate got the job; I was not disappointed because I didn't really want to be so far from my mother in Carmarthen who had become a widow in 1962.

When I had my interview in Swansea I already had several other interviews lined up. I told the Head of Department, Professor Hassall, about these other interviews. At the end of the interview the Chairman said that, if I was offered the position, I would need to decide that day! I was offered the position, so what to do? I was already familiar with the department having visited a research fellow who was on the staff and who was a contemporary of mine at Birmingham University. It was a well equipped department, housed in a new building with excellent funding from the University Grants Committee, so I accepted.

What attracted me about a career in academia was that it combined teaching able students with research. However, a key question was would I be able to pursue my own research interests, because often a new member of staff is asked to become a member of the Professor's team. So, in my first meeting with Professor Hassall to discuss research, I was pleasantly surprised when he made it clear that he did not expect me to join his research group! He asked me what research I wished to pursue. I explained that I wanted to exploit a simple reaction, deamination, to break a bond in compounds, such as glycoproteins, as an aid to studying their structure. He was happy with that.

However, to conduct research one needs research students, or better still post-doctoral fellows. Most departments were awarded a number of research studentships by the Research Council, but these were usually taken by the professors. So my first challenge was to get a grant to fund research. I had an early success when I won a grant for a post-doctoral fellow from an American organisation which funded research in the UK. However, my application was for a project on flavour enhancers which would interest my former employer. Then, in my second year I got a pleasant surprise. I was asked to supervise one of our first class graduates who had been awarded a Research Council studentship. The head of department clearly wanted to give me an opportunity to start my research on deamination. The student, Frankie, was from Mauritius and had completed his A-level studies in the UK.

Then I got grants from the Medical Research Council, Science Research Council and the Wellcome Foundation for research on glycoprotein structural studies which would enable me to use my idea for breaking selected bonds using deamination. This reaction was part of the O-level Chemistry course and involves the reaction of primary amines ($R-NH_2$) with nitrous acid at room temperature and under weakly acid conditions. The reaction is rapid and forms diazonium ions, $R-N_2^+$ which are unstable and rapidly decompose to release nitrogen and form carbonium ions. The evolution of gas (nitrogen) was used as a test for primary amines in A-level practical chemistry. The carbonium ions are also very reactive and react further. It's these further reactions which have the potential to break neighbouring bonds (they are too complex to explain here). One of the students, Tang, I engaged on this project was from Hong Kong. He graduated from Bradford University with the top first and I was very lucky to have recruited him. He was the best postgraduate student I had.

Most staff rooms, including mine were equipped for experimental work. There was a fume cupboard and plenty of storage space for equipment and I was one of the few members of staff who carried out their own research. Other grant applications were successful, including grants from industry. When the European Erasmus Scheme started I benefitted from having several students for one year research projects; most were from France.

Collaborations are often necessary in research and my main collaborator on glycoproteins was Professor John Clamp of Bristol Medical School. He supplied the glycoprotein samples I worked on.

Keeping up to date with research required much reading of journals and many evenings were spent reading scientific papers. Regular attendance at conferences was also necessary to keep abreast of recent developments in one's research field.

In the end the increasing pressure of administrative chores (I had ten) and my wife's illness caused me to retire early.

Why don't you dear reader write about your career?

Michael Williams

A Sucker for Punishment & Crisis Tourism

Mike Peters (1951-56) writes of a lifetime of taking risks



Part 1

LIFE IS A CHALLENGE - and especially so at the age of 84. Hardly a profound statement, but as I knelt in a quiet Saxon era chapel a few miles from the sea in West Sussex earlier this year I was thinking hard of the man who lay in front of me.

My great friend Captain John Price, Royal Navy, had passed on. I recalled that rather awkward, and stubborn, lad from the Defynnog area who was usually among the quiet ones at the back row of the Brecon Grammar School classroom, yet that day he was filling the church with a crowd who knew just what he had achieved in his long life.

JJ, or J Squared as he was known in class, had left school almost immediately after we had all sat what were then known as our O-levels. Without a word, John disappeared from our lives. Where had he gone? John had chosen to spend his life in the Royal Navy as a marine engineer.

How strange you might say for a young man brought up amidst a large family on a Mid Wales farm! Yet, there in front of me was his story - in a large portrait. Resplendent in the full-dress uniform of a four ring Captain of the Royal Navy, John had not only made it, but he had also more than doubled his expectancies.

Only in recent times I learned that we had once sat together, separated by three concrete floors, in the Main Building of London's Ministry of Defence. And during the Falklands War, he was hard at work as the Defence Attache to Brazil fighting a diplomatic battle to support the Task Force while I was battling the world's press who were asking what the hell was Britain up to trying to send a Task Force thousands of nautical miles to fight a short but brutal war. There was no doubt, John had made a success of his life. At one time he commanded HMS Bulwark during her major refit - a huge aircraft carrier, no less. John had proved his worth and justified his time at Brecon Grammar School.

On the drive home to Surrey I mused, and have done so many times since, on what happened to the other 28 young lads who sat with me through five years at Cradoc Road. Where are they now?

I know that some were more than successful; my near neighbour in Llanfaes, Winston Griffiths became a consummate politician; my cricketing chum, Gareth Thomas became an information technology professor; my partner in so many teenage ventures, Roy Parry, who showed no aptitude for languages in class, had become so fluent in French he translated for the ceremonies of twinning with a French city and was a much sought after cricket umpire.

Geraint Jones had a short life but became the scientist we all knew he would and, tragically, my other great friend from Llanfaes, who often helped me struggle through maths homework, Ed Trimm died young in a motorcycle accident, but not before he too had gone to sea in the merchant marine.

What happened to all the others? I wish I knew, and I hope this short story will encourage more of my classmates to tell their tales in our own journal which each year is read so avidly.

So, here is part of my still busy life. I should have retired a quarter of a century ago, but I am still gainfully employed. Consultancy work has kept me active in my latter years and I have advised many a company, more than a handful of business entrepreneurs and politicians as well as generals, admirals, and air marshals. Indeed, I have travelled far and on three separate occasions journeyed to central USA to advise and teach the arts of dealing with the media.

For the last 15 years I have also devoted my time to voluntary work. I am one of the Surrey Military Members for the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association but mainly I am a leading light and one of the founding members of The Pen & Sword Club.

“The Pen” is an exclusive, by invitation only, 500 strong band of international defence communicators who aim to bring together all sides of the defence community dealing in facts. In this era of fake news and disinformation and a ghastly, angry social media that distorts rational debate it is much needed. It also keeps me writing and I edit a monthly magazine entitled Scribblings, which has sometimes reached 100 plus pages an issue in its attempt to capture truth.

Speaking truth to power.

My schoolboy ambition was to join the Royal Navy and “drive” a motor torpedo or gun boat in Britain’s coastal forces. My maths was just not good enough. Though I managed something similar after earning my Royal Yachting Association ticket to take my twin diesel powerboat out into the Channel.

But it was not to be, and my Grammar School staff put me on a new fast track when the Brecon & Radnor Express asked headmaster Aneurin Rees for a recommendation. There was a vacancy for an inquisitive junior reporter with English skills who knew Brecon backwards. Journalism was to be my new path. From reporting on the daily life of the town I was to go on to make an award-winning career in journalism - eventually standing in front of the TV cameras, later recording down the telephone line from a variety of phone boxes and booths, for British Forces Broadcasting and, always, learning to telephone in a story straight from the shorthand notebook with a deadline to meet.

Then it was into strategic communications and my task was speaking truth to power. Analyse, debate, advise and create narratives that send the right messages whether in media, industry, or government. And to keep my principals on the straight and narrow and out of trouble and certainly not to make a vital national statement while standing in pouring rain amid a baying crowd without even a simple umbrella. What a way to earn the description “wet.”

I have told many a tale many a time. Often, in the middle of the night, sometimes soaking wet, or shivering in a snowstorm or enduring a desert sun, all living up to the principles established by my first editor, Christ College boy, John F Morgan. It is one of my great pleasures today to mix in London society with Christ

College pupils at their old boy functions. My entrée includes the fact that my uncle, cousins, and many Brecon friends were all Old Breconians.

Mike Peters (1951-56)

Cutting the Turf Ceremony at Penlan, March 1956

The photo below shows the cutting of the turf by County Councillor David Lewis M.B.E, Chairman of the Education Committee.



In the group left to right are:

T. Jestyn Williams L.R.I.B.A
Aneurin Rees M.Sc.
C. Price
W.J. Bevan J.P.
J.V. Like J.P.
A.H. James J.P.
B.R. Gibbins J.P.
C.M.S. Wells M.A.
Penry Davies

County Architect
Headmaster, Boys' Grammar School
Contractor
County Councillor
Chairman of County Council
Chairman of Hay U.D. Council
County Councillor
Clerk to the County Council
County Councillor

Having left the Brecon Boys' Grammar School Cradoc Road in 1954, and inspired by the article by Michael Williams in the 2009 newsletter about the early days at Penlan, I delved into the records of that period and found the photograph of the Cutting the Turf Ceremony, dated March 1956 including the names of those portrayed.

It's good to appreciate that a past pupil, David Lewis M.B.E., was given the honour of cutting the first and ceremonial turf.

Eight of the nine invited guests shown in the photograph are closely viewing this historic moment, with the exception of the Headmaster Aneurin Rees whose attention seems to have been distracted. I am at a loss as

to why A.H James, Chairman of Hay Urban District Council was invited while other Chairmen of councils within the catchment area were not.

From a personal point of view, I am somewhat disappointed that the long standing and loyal member of staff, and designated Deputy Head Master of the new school, J.H. 'Colonel' Williams, was not at the ceremony. He gave 43 years of his professional life to the Brecon Boys' Grammar School and the Penlan Boys' Grammar Technical School.

The participants were naturally and rightly looking towards a long, bright future for the proposed new school building. In the event the school only lasted until the arrival of Comprehensive Education in 1971.

Allan Lloyd

Olwen Muriel Rees (1942-46)

My introduction to attendance at the School was being directed to Form II classroom to join a form of 35 pupils consisting of 30 scholarship boys supplemented by a number of evacuees and resits. All the seats had already been taken with the exception of one alongside a town boy who was good at being wild and free. As a country boy, awkward in my adolescence and on the wrong side of social privilege, I found the initiation process disorientating and confusing to the point of bewilderment. In a form with a high percentage of Mount Street pupils I was in the unenviable position of not knowing a single one of my new classmates. Also surprising was to find our form tutor was to be a female teacher, Mrs Olwen Rees, who was also timetabled to teach us Maths and Chemistry. This represented but the initial impact of the matrilineal tendency of my early years at the School. Mrs Rees was to continue to cover Maths and Chemistry through forms III and IV. The gravity of the war-time staffing situation was reflected in the fact that she was actually a graduate in French with only a minimal qualification in Mathematics. Her mission was to replace the Maths teacher, Benny Bolton who had been called up for military service, and she was consequently obliged to teach Maths up to form IV, Science to form III and so-called PT to Junior forms.

Pupils generally considered her to be something of an uptight school marm; the victim of her own rectitude she always seems to make it her business to be shocked and displayed ill-tolerance in dealing with wayward and turbulent pupils. Some thought of her as some prim Brownie, a pack leader with an auntish expression. However, on personal reflection this unsympathetic picture has patently tarnished the reputation of a teacher who was really quite empathetic, resilient and resourceful in fulfilling her teaching commitments. There can have been no surprise that she should have occasionally revealed some grumpy old woman tendencies, given to finger wagging and lecturing, when some pupils in the form resorted to irritating and uncouth behaviour such as flicking ink as she passed by in the aisle between the desks.

In 1946 her husband John Trevor (Jack) Rees joined the staff on his release from the RAF to teach Maths, Chemistry and Singing. Jack was recalled for his bluster and threats to dispense RAF discipline on miscreants. Full of sound and fury with his thumbs in his braces, he would pronounce "when I was in the RAF" and intimate that he would dispatch the victim through the window! However, during his two years at the School he contributed greatly to raising the standard of cricket and singing. On leaving Brecon he joined his wife on the staff of Ebbw Vale Grammar School where both spent the remainder of their teaching careers. Jack was to become a long-standing conductor of Ebbw Vale Male Voice Choir.

The late Glyn Powell

Upper VIth Form Photo from 1967

This photo was placed on Facebook in 2023 by Paul Geehan. Are all these men still alive? They will be around 75 years old now. We would like to hear from you. Where are you and what are you doing in retirement?



From left:

Back Row: Michael Griffiths, Alan Perry, Paul Geehan, Clive Ralph, Werner Schuler, Robert Davies;
Front row: Mr Donald Davies, Julian Glidden, Jeff Sage, Chris Brown and Mr Aneurin Rees.

Michael Williams (thanks to Paul for the photo)

Poor Little School?

Poor little school. One form entry. Tiny sixth form. Few staff. Limited subjects taught at A Level. None of the space and equipment and facilities and clubs and societies and teachers available in bigger schools. Its cleverest pupils big fish, but in a tiny pond. First Eleven soccer and cricket teams having to be chosen from the handful of the able and the not-quite-so-able pupils on offer. Dear me - what a pale imitation of a thriving, thrusting centre of educational provision. Even the Girls' Grammar school has a two-form entry. Poor little Brecon Boys' Grammar school.

No. Not really. Not at all.

What Brecon Boys' Grammar school had to offer could not be measured in space and equipment and facilities and so on. It offered something far more valuable than any of that. It was a school in which everybody was somebody. It was a school in which no pupil could be lost in the crowd. It was a school which offered even the modestly-gifted the chance to play in its First Eleven teams, and have the treasured team photos at home to prove it.

It was a school, in short, which produced pupils who were known and nurtured - and so had the confidence to go out into the big wide world with their "selves" intact, knowing who they were, even if they had no idea what awaited them.

What price could anyone put on that? Small can be beautiful in ways that really matter.

I doubt if any Old Boys - even us Very Old Boys - have only a hazy memory of their time at Brecon Boys' Grammar school. For me, Doug Inglis and Ewart Davies and Lousy Lewis and Kaiser and Dragon and the tiny cloakroom and the cold showers and the magical gym and the milk bottles awaiting us in their crates at morning break and the birds-nest sixth form room and the steps up to the front door and the winding staircase and the pocket-handkerchief playground and ... well ... all these things and more - are burned into my memory. They can be taken in as one total picture. As will be the case with all of the school's alumni, I'm sure.

No. Not poor little school. Rich little school.

Peter Holt

My Diaries

How many of you readers keep a diary? I began keeping a diary in 1948 when I was 13 years old and in my first year at Neath Grammar School. I have a complete set up to the present time.

I've been looking through my diaries for the years 1951-1954 when I was at the Cradoc Road school. In 1951 my father was transferred by his employer, The Pearl Assurance Company, to Brecon as Manager and for several weeks he lodged in Brecon while searching for a house. He returned to our home in Cilfrew, near Neath each weekend and sometimes brought a treat, slices of battenburg cake, with him from the Italian Cafe in Ship Street Inferior. Then, after finding a house my parents moved to Pendre just above the primary school on 29th June. I was left to lodge with our next door neighbour so that I could complete the Summer term at Neath School.

The following diary entries, in bold type, appeared; on 4th September, 1951:

Started school, school lousy, no Biology; went to see Lewis after school; decided to stay on.

The last entry is interesting; what was the alternative? I suppose I was thinking I might go back to Neath Grammar so that I could continue with Biology, which was my third favourite subject after Chemistry and Maths.

Many days are blank. The next entry of interest is on 18th October:

Theo beat Gam 2nds 6-0. I was captain of Theo 2nd team and was put in goal as I was used to handling the ball in the Neath rugby team! On 15th November Gam got their revenge: **Gam beat us 4-2 on heavy pitch.**

Occasional comments are in code and I can't remember the code rules! On 17th December the entry reads:

Girls' School Party, very good. On 18th December: **Church Youth Group Party, very good.**

1952: 8th January: **beetle drive** (at the Church Youth group). One thing sticks in my mind about that evening, namely the following risqué joke that a girl told us: a milkmaid fell asleep under a cow after milking. When she woke up the first thing she saw was the cow's udder. She said, "steady on boys, one at a time." I was shocked!!

17th January: **keeper for Theo first team; snowed at half time.** I had been promoted to the first team following a spectacular save for the 2nd team the previous week. I was back in the 2nd team the next week after the captain discovered that I couldn't kick the ball very far!

11th September: **first Chemistry lesson at Girls' School.**

11th November: **dancing lessons started at Girls' School.**

16th December: **Girls' School Party, very good.**

1953: 11th March: Phippen caught us playing cards. Interview with Head.

3rd July: **Group of Germans arrived, very sociable.**

7th July: **Farewell social. Very good speeches by Germans**

8th July: **Germans left.** (This was an exchange visit)

9th July: **I'm extremely enthusiastic to go to Germany next year.**

10th November: **dancing class at Girls' School.**

1954: 11th January: **Caught train to Oxford, not feeling very confident.** (Jacob Morgan had encouraged me to apply to his Alma Mater, Jesus College).

12th January: **learned there were 26 candidates, several were in the 6th Form for a 3rd year, and 2 already had State Scholarships!**

13th January: couldn't answer some of the questions because the topics had not been covered in school.

14th January: returned home convinced I had not won a scholarship.

20th January: **new head chosen, Aneurin Rees from Bridgend, keen on rugby and cricket.**

27th January: **drove to Birmingham for interview at university.**

5th February: **heard from Birmingham, provisionally accepted.**

3rd April: as Head Boy I was invited to the Old Boys' Dinner to give a speech. **After the dinner, due to the numerous congratulations, I went home in a contented mood.**

27th May: **Practical Chemistry exam, nasty spot, contained As, Al, and Cl; found last two radicals in last 10 minutes.**

9th August: **A-level results, three distinctions.**

12th August: **Peter Twist and I heard we had State Scholarships.**

One interesting thing about the diaries is that there is no reference to my girl friends during these three years. There were two; the first unexpectedly dumped me after one year for an older man, probably because because she felt there was no future for our relationship because I was obviously going to go to university. Then Jill Bray, my favourite dance partner in the Church Youth Club discos from Llanfaes, almost became my second girl friend as described in an earlier article. The second was Dolores Richardson, daughter of the Regimental Sergeant Major at the Barracks.

Dear readers, have you any interesting things in your diaries that you could write about?

Michael Williams

A life in anecdotes

After leaving school and University College Swansea, and after a short career in metallurgy, I became a medical representative. May I share a few memories of that period with you. One of the first GPs I visited gave medical reps afternoon tea. I was invited into the sitting room and the tea was brought in. "Before you start telling me of your products let me tell you that you and I are in the wrong job," said the GP.

"Really – why," said I.

"You and I are under the illusion we work for a National Health Service. It is a National Sick Service. Until pharmaceutical companies and the government think about healthy people and we find ways to keep people healthy from birth we are doomed to a continuous loop. Now what are you going to talk about." There has been a slight move in that direction methinks.

Part of my territory was the pit villages of south Yorkshire. One surgery was held in a local theatre. Not in separate rooms but two doctors with separate tables sat on the stage. The patients went up to each table to explain their symptoms whilst the remaining patients heard every word. It was Doncaster race week and many patients were miners seeking a sick note. Around 11am one of the doctors was replaced by a young Chinese hospital doctor.

An older man went onto the stage and said he had a bad chest and could he have a sick note and prescription. The young doctor asked to listen to his chest. Off came his mack, his coat, his muffler. He was

asked to open his shirt and lift his vest. With a certain hesitation the miner did. The doctor began to examine him and said that he would refer him to Doncaster hospital for further tests. During this period the doctor on the opposite side of the stage had issued 10 sick notes and prescriptions. The remaining 70+ patients were getting restive and began shouting phrases like “get on with it,” “give him his note” and other south Yorkshire phrases.

Eventually I spoke with the two doctors and lunch beckoned. Being unfamiliar with the area I asked a passing man if there was a café nearby. He said that the only place to eat was the pit canteen. He gave me directions, security let me through and a hearty lunch was enjoyed.

The east end of Sheffield in the mid sixties consisted mainly of steelworks and rows of back to back houses and just a few GP surgeries. One on Attercliffe road was run by an Irish man with a huge scar running down his face. After a few visits I knew him well enough to ask how he got the scar. The conversation went thus “Oh well I was driving the car and decided to go over a roundabout rather than round it.” And that is how you got the scar?

“No, I was so drunk I stepped out of the car with a smashed windscreen, fell down and cut my face on a broken shard of glass on the grass!”

A year later we reps had to inform all GPs of a rare serious side effect which had been discovered before discussing the benefits of the product. I duly informed this Irish GP and asked what he would do if one of his patients had developed the side effect. His reply was “I’d double the dose and bury the bastard.” Being a rep certainly gave an insight into GP humour. There were never less than 100 patients queuing down the street before the GP dropped the latch took the name of the last person queuing and restarted the surgery. Further along the road was another very busy GP who was reputed to hold sex and drugs parties. His wife, the receptionist, explained that she could earn more money on the street as a prostitute than her husband could as a GP. Thus, she had persuaded him to hold these parties which involved some sort of payment. I did not enquire further.

Finally, I went to see a doctor who operated from a council house on Bluebell road. I sat in the front room, which served as the waiting room whilst the surgery operated from the kitchen. The last patient to go into the doctor was a middle aged, slim woman. After 15 minutes I heard her running down the corridor before slamming the front door closed.

I rose and went into the kitchen. The doctor was head down sobbing . The conversation went:

“Oh I’m so sorry doctor should I leave?”

“No, sit down I’ll be ok in a few minutes.”

The GP explained the circumstances of the last patient and his emotional response to her desperate situation. “May I take you to lunch as you have been so upset?” said I.

“No join me,” he said and pulled out a large bottle of whisky and two large tumblers. It seemed impolite to refuse and a somewhat unsteady rep drove home after several tumblers of whisky. Subsequently I learned that the GP was an alcoholic, loved by his patients banned from driving and regularly drying out in the local hospital. He was able to do his home visits because a rota of medical reps volunteered to drive him to his patients. A good bunch of brothers. Having been brought up in Brecon when a visit from Dr Jenkin Davies or Dr Ken Price to our house in Ffynnon Dewi was second only to a visit by the Queen I had seen a different side of being a GP.

Tom Protheroe

School Soccer Team, 1953-54

(This photo is from the collection of photos of the late Bill Leonard)



Back Row (from left)

Mr H C Jones, Winsor Griffiths, Bernard Pritchard, Gerald Williams, Robin Lucas, Peter Pugh, Billy Vincent, Jacob Morgan

Middle Row. Tony Ottewell, Garfield Powell, Parry Richards (Captain), Vince Sullivan, Tony Went

Front Row Phillip Evans B T Williams

According to the 1954 Silurian this team won 8, drew 3, lost 2 (one of which was to the Old Boys); 3 matches were cancelled. Top scorers were V Sullivan, 24; G Powell, 15; and Tony Ottewell, 9.

Michael Williams

Recollections of Roger Young

My route to the Grammar School was from Mount Street C.P. School in Brecon, which I attended from 1955 to 1962. During that time I recall being an “Ink Monitor” and in my final year the important role of “milk Monitor”. For those of you not au fait with the Mount Street School of the 1950’s it was an imposing building which was over 100 years old then, and still retained most of its original fittings. Infants were downstairs and juniors upstairs. Two concrete staircases, one on the left for the boys, and one on the right for the girls, windows were set high up the walls, the desks were iron framed double, with slopping hinged tops with storage for your books etc. with an aperture for your ink well, loads of ink stains, grease from

generations of sweaty hands, and the initials of many previous users, with drop down seats, that were defiantly one size fits all. The teacher's desk was quite tall, with a chair to match, and of course a double sided swivelling black board. The last year in the juniors was aimed solely at the 11 plus entrance exam to the County Schools, to the exclusion of almost everything else. Previews of the new school were unheard of then, and my first experience of the Grammar School was the day of the 11 plus exam, when all those taking the exam were marched up the hill and taken into the school gymnasium with rows of well-spaced out desks where we would be sat for the day.

For my first term in the Grammar School, I travelled from Talyllyn daily by steam train, walking up "The Hospital pitch" with dozens of other pupils in all weathers from Brecon station.

Starting in the then almost brand new school on Penlan was quite a culture shock. Classrooms had polished individual modern desks with matching chairs, a table and arm chair for the teacher, and a "Hi tech" roller chalk board, and low level windows along all one side of the building that you could look out of. It was also a novelty having lessons in purpose made laboratories, and rooms for art, woodwork, geography and music, all helped to make the subjects more interesting, one could say "state of art," I was duly impressed.

My own children went to Llangors C in W Primary School, followed by Gwernyfed High School. My grandchildren were taught in Ysgol y Bannau in Brecon, and continued their education as far as was possible in Welsh in Brecon High School, so allowing me to re-connect with my old school building. I was deeply saddened to hear that they were going to replace my "NEW" school, and found it hard to understand why it was necessary. I did take the opportunity to attend an open evening at the new High School, and marvel at the amazing modern hi tech facilities available, and the openness. The children were given two weeks at half term to allow the transfer from the old building to the new, and so I took the opportunity to have a last look around my old school. The reason for the new building became obvious; looking beyond the scruffiness and general decay, I saw most of the desks had been replaced with computer benches, cabling ran everywhere, some rooms had been divided up, others opened up into larger areas, but the science labs still seemed to be as they were in my day.

It was a sad day when the Demolition contractors moved in and started to systematically dismantle the two schools, the Secondary Modern School was still less than 60 yrs old and I had spent hours watching them build it from our school. I made several visits, getting to know the foreman quite well, and monitoring progress. The buildings were steel framed, and I realised that they had not been built to last for ever, as I had assumed, and that they had out lasted their design life.

I noticed that on the Brecon Boys' Grammar Technical School, the plaque commemorating the opening of the School on the 24th September 1958, by County Alderman Garnet Morris, was still in situ on the wall adjacent the main entrance. I asked the friendly foreman if he would mind salvaging the plaque, which he did, and I notified Brecon Museum, I'm disappointed to learn that nobody now at the museum is aware of the sign, and all my enquiries have unfortunately drawn a blank.

Roger Young (1962- 67)

Another Brecon Walk

I've written several newsletter articles about walks in and around Brecon in an attempt to persuade members to combine a visit to our reunion with an overnight stay and a walk. I now describe another relatively short walk to Pen y Crug (331m), the site of an Iron Age hill-fort. You can either leave your car in the central car park, or the Cathedral car park (to shorten the walk), and then walk up to the top of Pendre where you turn left into Maes y Ffynon (see map). Continue to skirt the northern edge of the housing to the mini roundabout near the Maendu Well. From here you can access a faint path leading north-west across fields towards Pen y Crug, which is surmounted by the ramparts and ditches (see second map).



When I first visited this site in 1952 I was intrigued to observe the behaviour of a mare with her foal who kept trying to mount his mother. He couldn't quite reach, and the mare continued grazing unconcerned by the antics of her foal. It made me wonder whether similar behaviour occurs in other animals. Perhaps the vets amongst our members know the answer.

On returning to the cathedral car park you could visit the pleasant cafe in the cathedral close for a coffee or lunch.

Our reunion in 2025 will be in late April (26th) and with luck we will have a fine weekend.

Michael Williams

Hay of the 40s

The people of Hay always thought it was a very Special Place and it has, of course, become famous for its exceptional place in the world of books. Recollections of growing up there, during the Second World War, abound with happy memories.

Wartime Hay was peppered with unusual activity. There were 2 large army camps nearby and these came to have considerable influence on the town and its people.

The intake of evacuees from London also made its mark.

Hay was a sleepy little border market town, which suddenly came alive with different cultures.

The main army camp was at The Moor estate, just over the border, in England, and the second camp was in the village of Whitney on Wye, just 4 miles away.

The Moor was initially used as a base for British troops coming back from duty in Iceland, but it was used as a base for a large contingent of white Americans, whilst Whitney hosted black Americans.

The US military operated with complete segregation at this time.

Hay was host to a large contingent of evacuees. Children from London were billeted in many family homes around the town and a separate school was established for their use at St Johns Chapel and The Village Hall, in Lion Street. A whole support system, which was built after their arrival, included teachers and welfare staff. The adults also had to be accommodated locally. The people of Hay had to adjust quickly to great changes, but it was all seen as "The War Effort", which was more embraced by some than others.

A distinct memory of the time was being fitted with gas masks and vaccinated, by needle in the upper arm.

Food was restricted by a rationing system, which required the use of Ration Books. These were in operation until 1951, 12 years after the war had started.

Many local young men had been "called up" to serve in the forces, and after the "Dunkirk Retreat", I can remember going to Hay railway station at the time of many injured soldiers arriving to be billeted and treated.

I can clearly recall the day in which the Moor Camp was vacated by the Americans who travelled in convoy for the D Day embarkation.

The trucks, loaded with soldiers together with all their support vehicles passed by our house most of the day in a continuous file.

We of course hadn't a clue what was happening at the time.

My family, consisting of parents and 3 children, hosted a British soldier's wife from Bristol, 3 generations of a family from London (grandparents, daughter and grandson), and an evacuee from the East End (Elephant and Castle). They were all squeezed into a small cottage, with no inside toilet, no hot water, no telephone and a very small kitchen. A young American serviceman, from the camp, also spent a lot of time with us. His mother sent me a box of cookies from the USA as a "thank you" for the family's hospitality shown to her son. Sweets were a cherished memory at the time. We never heard from him afterwards and often wondered if he had survived the conflict.

We lived opposite the Drill Hall, which served as the local dance hall on Saturday nights. It takes little imagination to picture the scenes witnessed from my second storey bedroom, overlooking events. This kept me occupied well into the night as a 7 year old.

From the British School in Heol y Dwr, I was launched into arrival at Brecon Boys' Grammar School. The year was 1948, and the British School had attained the zenith of its achievements with the placement of 18 pupils in Brecon. There were 10 boys (Bryn Morris, Bernard Pritchard, Eric Pugh, Luther Jones, John Meredith, David (DOP) Jones, Rob Smith, Bobby Wood, Jackie Lewis and myself) and 8 girls (Clarice Price, Maureen Davies, Rita Lloyd, Wendy Like, Rosemary Symonds, June Williams, Julie Lewis, and Jane Simiscar). Two pupils also passed the 11+ from the Church School in Brecon Road (Bobby Jenkins and Ken Porter). We were hailed as local heroes after the announcement of the results in the Brecon and Radnor Express, and the headmaster, Alan Davies, must have celebrated the highlight of his career with these achievements.

The Western Welsh bus, driven by my father, from Hay to Brecon served as our transport in the early years, but later we were conveyed by LMS and GWR trains to school. The LMS left Hay at 8.00 am for Three Cocks, where we changed to GWR to travel from Three Cocks to Brecon. Many friendships were formed on these journeys with pupils from other years at school, and those who lived in different areas. The train took on pupils from all the stations along the line, Glasbury, Three Cocks, Talgarth, Trefeinion, Llangorse and Talyllyn Junction. After arriving in Brecon about 8.40 am there was quite a rush to get to school on time, walking from one end of the town to the other. The return journey after school ended with arrival in Hay at about 5.00 pm.

A new culture and expectation awaited us in stepping up from Junior School to the Grammar School. Homework, after a long day of school and travel, was a chore, and some children lived in circumstances that were not conducive to studying.

Many families must have found it challenging to meet the demands of the school, in the form of uniforms, satchels, pens etc., although textbooks and stationery were supplied by the school. Even football boots and gym wear were an extra cost which was essential. I had a secondhand pair which were too big for me, and as I was mad about football, they became a bit of an embarrassment. Many family incomes would certainly have been stretched, and this was the new dawn of education after the Second World War, and most parents would not have enjoyed the experience their children were encountering.

The question of career choice soon appeared on the horizon of these young lives, but there were few who enjoyed seasoned advice on the way forward. However, advice in Brecon was available and I had great support from Gerald James at the Careers office. He took my request for a grant, to support a Civil Engineering course at Technical College, to the education committee, to no avail.

He later went on, from membership of the Llyn Saffaddon Players, to become a well know television actor. Many opportunities must have been lost for all the talent that was available, mainly due to money shortages, and lack of experience and direction.

Nevertheless, time is a great healer, and most pupils will have enjoyed happy and fruitful lives.

The choice of subjects at school was often difficult to decide and coloured by the connection between pupil and teacher. I liked History and Doug Inglis who taught us and was also our senior housemaster in Gam.

Consequently, I chose History over Physics, but this militated against my subsequent goals.

Whilst seeking to follow a career in Civil Engineering, under the influence of my grandfather, who was a surveyor and architect, I found the way forward blocked. So, I settled on accountancy in a private practice in order to get into a profession, after dithering about for a while after leaving school.

This was very enjoyable and successful period with an opportunity to develop new skills, and see the world of business at work, and interacting with other professionals in banking and law and commerce.

However, a turn of fate presented an opportunity to enter a pupillage for 3 years in civil engineering, with the Highways Department in Hereford. I jumped at the opportunity to follow a long journey to Membership of the Institution of Civil Engineers. Serious study, in association with full time work, was a hard, but very enjoyable, slog.

I was fortunate, because this proved to be a very special time in highway construction in the UK. My early pupillage included a period of highway and bridge design, followed by site supervision on the building of the M50 motorway in Herefordshire. This was the first motorway to be completed in UK although M6 had commenced earlier with Preston Bypass in Lancashire. The excitement and elevation of this experience was remarkable, and a very positive uplift in my career opportunities. At Ross, which was our operational headquarters, I worked under the direction of some of the major talents of the profession. These people had worked at places throughout the world, and many had amazing experiences overseas during the War. Much of this was relayed during lunches at the site restaurant in Ross, together with many evenings in the pub. I was on a very steep learning curve, which led me into Civil Engineering projects throughout the remainder of my career.

Looking back over the years, I am happy to celebrate many very fortunate circumstances, especially growing up in Hay and arrival at Cradoc Road.

A.J. (Tony) Crook (1948 - 53)

We couldn't have been properly educated!

The school curriculum is subject to constant adaptation by the whim of politicians and so-called educators. Each generation amongst us would have in our turn experienced some change or other purported to be the “Holy Grail” of the educative process. The publication on 30th April, 2019 of the schools’ curriculum prompts one to reflect on earlier curricula. It heralds the implementation of the biggest innovations for generations. Initially it was rolled out in the primary sector but was extended to year seven and eight in the secondary sector for the 2023-2024 academic year.

Its aim is supposed to help pupils to better apply that acquired knowledge. The current “key stages” in schools are to be replaced by teacher assessed “progression steps” for each area of learning (Aol) and experience (Es). This new curriculum was designed to reverse the tradition of subject disciplines with specialist teachers. It was designed to replace what the Welsh government described as a “prescriptive, narrow and outdated curriculum.” Each Aol and Es will set out expectations for what learners at ages five, eight, eleven, fourteen and sixteen should be achieving. The curriculum was not to be “overtly prescriptive or specific” for the areas of learning and experience. So teachers and schools have been given more freedom over what is taught in the classroom but following the framework of Aol and Es. Teachers were to carry out continuous assessment intended to give learners as well as their parents/carers a clearer picture of the areas where improvement was required taking into account their individual abilities, experiences and rates of learning and understanding.

Reflecting on the curriculum for the intermediate school set by the Breconshire County Governing Body in 1896 would indicate that it was remarkably comprehensive. Interesting to note is that from the beginning the science and technical subjects were well represented. Mathematics, Physiology, Geometrical Drawing and the Principles of Agriculture figured prominently in the early timetable while Practical Surveying was added

in 1897. At the first school prize day in that year the headmaster could report that the 80 boys at the school were taught Scripture, English, Welsh, Latin, French, History, Mathematics, Geometrical and Freehand Drawing, Physiography, Chemistry, Principles of Agriculture, Shorthand and Bookkeeping, Music, Drill and Physical Exercise. To have described it as a comprehensive and well balanced curriculum was self evident and it was covered, initially, by the headmaster and his deputy. The exception, Music including instrumental music, was taught by Mr Musk whilst Captain Dickie undertook the prescriptive drills sessions, both on a part-time basis.

Decades later the system of subject disciplines with specialist teachers evolved. This was the traditional system with which we were familiar in our grammar school days. To many ultra traditionalists it would seem that idiotic ideas are in the process of taking over large swathes of academic life. With a constant blurring of the distinction between core and foundation subjects and the diminishing of subjects specialisms special subject teachers will be lost. To those of us of the Old Brigade who subscribe to this narrative, rich in anecdote, controversy and personalities it would be strange without the roll call of academic heavyweights, a coterie of gowned graduates and many holders of masters' degrees and doctorates

The late Glyn Powell

In Another Time

The old grammar school stood like a monument to its Edwardian post. A red-bricked, ornate building with yellow bricks surrounding the windows, it had the style and dignity of a very elderly gentleman, spirited and ever independent but bowing to the cares and wear of passing time. Inside, huge wooden struts supported the main staircase and large, heavily framed windows lined each classroom. One day the chain supporting one window suddenly snapped and the complete window fell. I was busy writing at my desk immediately beneath it. The heavy frame caught me fully on the head and I was taken to hospital for an x-ray. Nothing was found, as my classmates noted gleefully.

But it was the upstairs corridor that was most steadfastly set in the past. Always dark and gloomy as if to lure the unwary. Teachers walked the blackness on their way to and from the common room, almost invisible in sombre gowns. Classes disappeared into its shadows on their way to the chemistry laboratory. Here it was a quite different world. In the laboratory Mr Sutherland held sway. Everything about him and his surroundings spoke of efficiency and the future. He ran a physics laboratory as well, full of strange angular equipment. Nothing was out of place, and our exercise books had to reflect this. A man of interminable patience, he took us, meticulously, step-by-step, through every experiment, every chemical reaction until we could recite the stages by rote and carry them out blindfolded. It seemed amazing to us to pass every time through an ancient benighted passageway and emerge to find ourselves in such a bright and clinical atmosphere. No fairytale characters, no travellers through time could have been more struck with the miracle than we.

The corridor had one more surprise to restore the balance in favour of age and tradition. Just before the staffroom there was another door, usually kept significantly closed. Any passers-by might well hear soft thuds, hushed conversation, brushing or rubbing noises. And if the door were ajar they might indeed smell earth on the heavy aromatic odour of linseed oil. There was no notice on the door, but every boy worth his salt knew that here was the heart and soul of the school. For the school sports storeroom, for that is what it was, was above partisanship and rivalry. It represented the noblest feelings we could aspire to. If sport were our religion, then this was the cathedral containing the holiest of our relics. There were rows of scarred, business-like footballs, stacks of corner flags, tottering piles of cricket pads, scattered stumps rolled untidily into far recesses, and cricket nets bundled in great piles on the floor. There were also long, empty cricket bags waiting to be filled and carried out into the bright sunshine and onto the green grass. They sagged with age and experience and although clean and well brushed, the canvas frowned importantly and the leather straps were rubbed and frayed with age. Faded, lumpish cricket balls sat beside bright new red ones. Score

books lay in sad piles on the shelves, but when opened, they brought back summers of long ago and names that were part of the hallowed past. We poured over the pages in endless musing, while rubbing down cricket bats with linseed oil, and tracing the seasons of heroic batsmen and fierce determined bowlers.

It seemed that the room either had a very small window, or it was so full of clutter that only a chink of light could get through from outside. I remember that if you passed it when the door was open, a single beam of sunshine could occasionally be seen. It then looked like an attic in an old country house full of treasures and memories of years long gone. They lay in shapeless, sad mounds beyond the light, while in the solitary ray of sun, motes of dust hung still and mist-like.

Bill Gallagher (1942-44) Article submitted by the late Glyn Powell

“More than just a classroom teacher” - John Meurig Edwards

John was appointed as assistant master at Brecon Boys’ Grammar School in 1970 to teach Geography, Welsh and Games. Trained at Coleg Dewi Sant, Llanbedr Pont Steffan, he was to teach in Cardiff for six years before moving to Brecon from Ysgol Hywel Sant. He helped to establish Clwb Cwm Rygbi Caerdydd in 1963 and played for them for six years. He was subsequently to play for 11 seasons for Clwb Rygbi Gwernyfed as well as in representative games for the Breconshire County XV.

In 1980 John was appointed the first headmaster of Ysgol y Bannau, the new Welsh medium primary school in Brecon. He had been amongst the early campaigners for Welsh medium education within the extended catchment area. It was in his sitting room in 1971 that arrangements were made for the setting up of a “cylch meithrin.” A Welsh stream was then established in an English medium school before there were sufficient numbers to justify the establishment of Ysgol y Bannau. The initial roll was 59 but by the time of John's retirement in 1997 there were 131 pupils there. The rapid growth and success of the school was due in no small measure to the personality and exceptional leadership of John as head teacher. Apart from the academic work emphasis was also placed on games, drama and music. John actually wrote plays and pantomimes, which were performed to a high standard by the pupils. He fully deserved the heading in “Golwg” of “Y dyn a gododd ysgol Gymraeg, Aberhonddu.”

In an even wider field he is highly respected as a poet and prose writer of national repute. A remarkably successful “eisteddfodwr,” he had won 20 awards at the National Eisteddfod between 2002 and 2019, eleven for poetry and nine for prose entries. He has a dozen or so eisteddfodic chairs with a number of crowns including ones from the prestigious “eisteddfodau of Sir Fon, Pontrhydfendigaid, Powys and Llanbed. In 2006 he was elevated to the “Gorsedd y Beirdd.”

Even in his retirement John is extremely active within the community especially in connection with Yr Urdd, local eisteddfodau, Cymdeithas Gymraeg Aberhonddu and Clwb Darllen Cymraeg. He is also a member of two local choirs namely Cor Meibion Talgarth and Cor-y-Ffynnon.

Welsh speakers will appreciate the following few excerpts from his winning entry “Wyth o dribannau” (eight triplets) from the 2008 National Eisteddfod in Cardiff.

I athro

Os prin yw'r ddawn a'r gallu
Rhwing cluste'r annwyl Wil
Er treulio d'esgryn hyd y mor
yn offer y llafari.

I ddyn sydd dan y fawd

Os wyt yn teimlo'n dila
A'r wraig yn bythol gega
Fe deimli'n gadarn fel y wraig
Ym breichie'r wraig drws nesa.

The late Glyn Powell

Girls' 1955 Form 5 West Photo

The following photo was supplied by Kathryn Easton, who also supplied the names.



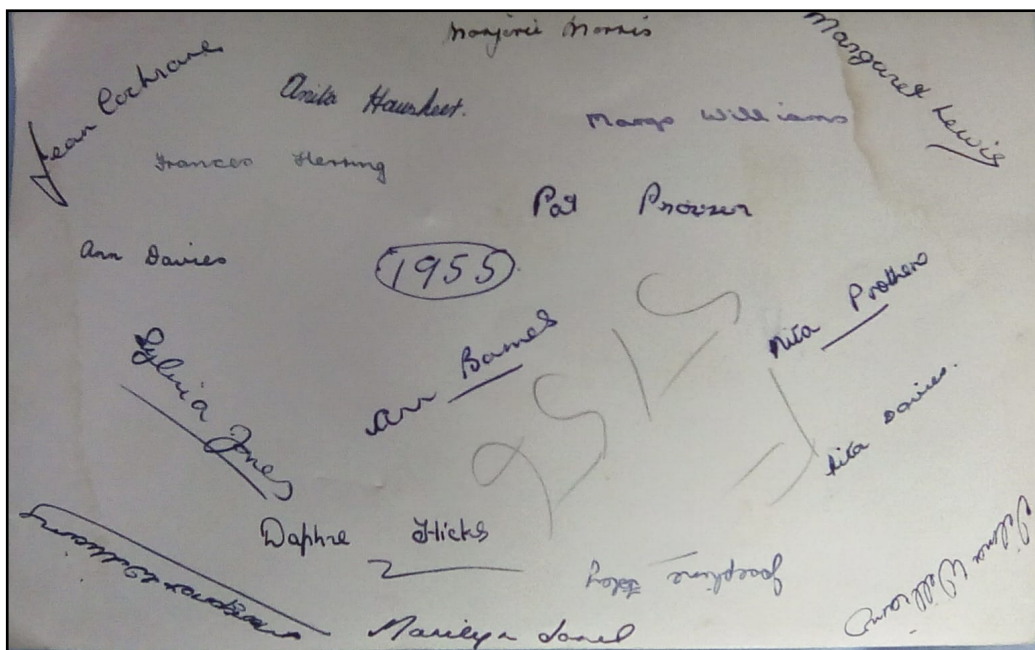
Top row from left:

Marilyn Jones, Margo Williams, Josephine Foley, Daphne Hicks, Mrs Jones, Margaret Williams, Vilma Williams, Jean Cochrane, Margaret Lewis

Bottom row from left:

Marjorie Morris, Ann Davies, Pat Prosser, Sylvia Jones, Ann Barnes, Rita Davies, Francis Henning, Nita Protheroe.

One girl, Anita Hausleet, is missing but signed the photo later as shown below.



A Promise Fulfilled

At the Brecon Boys' Grammar school the late Glyn Powell was my senior and hero. I first realised that I was in his presence while playing football at his side on the sloping pitch at the top of Cemetery Road. All the team seemed to be aware of Gambo's skill, as Doug Inglis blew his whistle as he scored yet another goal.

In later life, when I had the privilege of catching up with Glyn again, it became very apparent that he commanded widespread respect and admiration. Among many other things, Glyn Powell was a true historian with an insatiable appetite for information. The history of the old brick built Brecon Boys' Grammar School on Cradoc Road is such an example. His book *Brecon Secondary Schools 1896-1996*, and the wealth of articles in our newsletters over the years, indicate his depth of knowledge on this subject. Glyn's pen portraits of the headmasters prior to the much respected and remembered by all Jacob Morgan are informative and delightfully written.

However, on several occasions Glyn expressed concern as to the whereabouts of the original portraits of these past headmasters, especially as no copies were apparently in existence. Personally, I took up the challenge to discover the location of these apparently lost photographs as a promise to Glyn's memory.

As the Old Boys' Association representative on the board of the charity Cymryd Rhan, I had ready access. Thorough search proved negative; there was no sign of any framed portraits of the headmasters in question. My next and obvious search was among the schools memorabilia officially stored in the Guildhall. The memorabilia, religiously collected by past members of the Old Boys' Association, is considerable, but no images of the early headmasters could be found.

Eventually I discovered where they were located, hence this article and my promise to Glyn realised. The original photographs are now safely stored with all the other memorabilia in the Guildhall. Their quality is somewhat surprisingly poor as the copies illustrate, but they are reproduced here as evidence of my own respect and admiration for Glyn. After a short background history of the school, each portrait is accompanied by a short biography.

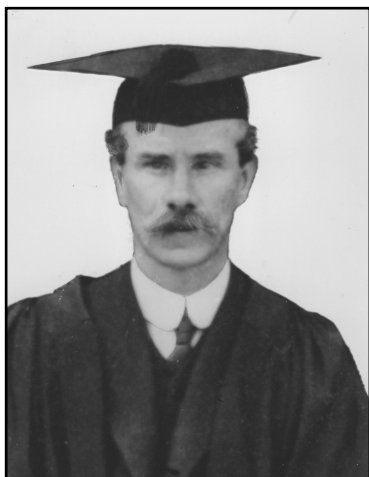
The story begins on 22nd September 1896 when the Brecon Boys' Intermediate School, progenitor of the first County and then Grammar School was opened with two masters and 47 pupils. They occupied Dr Coke's Memorial Hall in Lion Street as temporary accommodation. It was in 1901 that they were transferred to the new brick building in Cradoc Road, and that is where future pupils were housed until 1958 when on 24th September Brecon Grammar Technical School was opened on Penlan.

Nathan John BA ACP 1896-1909



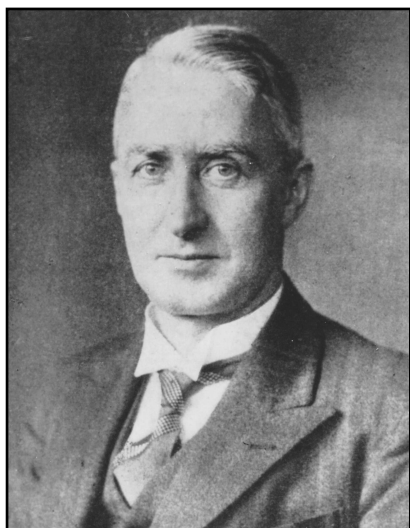
Pembrokeshire born 1848; privately educated; held external degree from London University. Unmarried, lived with his sister at 1 Camden Villa, Brecon. Controversial appointment; his pupils were mainly absorbed from Thomas Butcher's Maintained Commerce Academy of 20 years standing, sited at Bethel Hall, Saint Mary's Street and later at the Oddfellows Hall. Butcher was a leading figure in the community, a popular man commanding a high status. He was appointed Second Master in 1896 as only degree candidates were considered for headship. He died in 1905 aged 64. Nathan John was not generally popular, a weak personality; however, he was on favourable terms with the school governors. He became a Freemason in January 1901. He died of heart failure at 60 years of age.

Percy Morton MA 1909-1923



Percy was to prove a formidable headmaster. He possessed a wide reputation as a scientist. Educated at Manchester Grammar and Exeter College, Oxford. He had been science master at Christ College Brecon for 24 years. He gained the respect of the staff as a teaching head, instituting a firm disciplinary code. He supposedly claimed: *give me a Latin Grammar and a cane and I'll make a school*. He strongly believed in the inviolate independence of the school, and the unquestionable authority of the headmaster; this brought him into direct conflict with the governors. He steered the school through the exceptional circumstances of World War I, and played a prominent part in the social and cultural life of Brecon. He died in 1923 of double pneumonia, leaving a widow and nine children.

Llewellyn Woosnam MA DPhil. 1923-1929



Educated at Llanidloes County School, University of Bangor, Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, he was an intellectual heavyweight; a progressive and innovative Headmaster. He held high teaching standards assigning himself to lead Latin, English, History and Mathematics. He introduced the School House System and the annual Saint David's Eisteddfod. He was highly praised by Counsellors and Governors alike.

Tenure was bedevilled by financial constraints of the 1920s. He left evidently wanting a greater challenge, becoming Headmaster at the Municipal Secondary School, Howard Gardens, Cardiff.

Thereafter followed Jacob Morgan 1929-1954 and Aneurin Reese 1954-1975.

Allan Lloyd

What happened to the Boys' School logo?

Before the Boys' Grammar School building in Penlan was demolished a request was made for the demolition team to preserve the logo. The photo below left was taken in January 1970. Unfortunately the



intact logo did not survive the demolition and the pieces are stored at the new school. The school has shown no interest in reassembling it and mounting it somewhere on their site. The second photo shows the school badge.

Michael Gittins has made the following comments about the meaning of the logo on the Brecon Boys' Grammar School Facebook group:

“An educated guess comparing this with the Town Council’s crest;
top a dragon rampant - from the Welsh flag;
castellations refer to a walled town;
sheaves of corn/wheat describe Brecon as an agricultural town, bottom floor of the Guildhall was once a corn market;
the 3 wavy lines refer to the rivers Usk, Tarell and Honddu;
the book refers to the Cathedral and Book of St John the Evangelist;
Bid Ben Bid Bont - Be a leader be a bridge.”

This sounds reasonable. Anyone have other interpretations?

Michael Williams

Memories from Brecon in the 1950s

(This is an edited version of an article written by Gwyneth Morris (née Jenkins) and published by the Breconshire Local & Family History Society in June 2023)

Recently a BLFHS member, David Jenkins, shared a photo showing the Camden Road Coronation tea party held at the Laurels, Brecon in June 1953. Contemporaries will recognise 18-year-old Janet Richards (circled) in the back row, holding a child. Gillian, her sister, stands in the front row (circled).



The Girls’ Grammar School made a valuable contribution to the educational and cultural life of Britain 70 years ago. The picture below shows Prefects in the Rose Garden in July 1952. Lifelong friendships continued over the years.



**L-R Gwyneth Jenkins, Gillian Powell, Eiry Davies, Mr Aneurin Williams (English teacher),
Margery Hargest, Marion Evans and Julie Tuthill**

In June 2014 Margery Hargest Jones and I wrote the following obituary of Janet, which conveyed our deep sense of loss.

Fond Memories of Janet

It is with treasured memories that we celebrate the life of Janet Yendole (née Richards), who died in June 2014 at her home in Guildford, Surrey after a short illness. She was the elder daughter of the late HMI for schools in Breconshire, Mr Idris Richards and the late Mrs Richards. They lived in Camden Road. Janet was a pupil of the County Grammar School for Girls, Brecon in the early 1950s. She was in the form below us and excelled in all aspects of school life, especially sport and music. She was in Tydfil House and won many points in the annual school Eisteddfod on Saint David's Day. She was a strong and powerful player, both in hockey where she played left or right back and also on the tennis court. The school magazine for 1949-1950 shows her in the first Rounders Team and the Netball Team first VII for the Autumn Term 1950. In 1951-52 Janet was a Prefect.

1951 was Festival of Britain year. There was a special performance of Handel's "Messiah" in the Market Hall arranged by the Music Advisor for Breconshire, Mrs Ogwen Thomas on Wednesday, 27th June. Reginald Jacques. Conductor of the famous Bach Choir, was due to conduct but at the afternoon rehearsal he fell from the rickety box he was standing on to conduct, broke his leg and landed in Brecon Hospital. As senior music students of the school, we took him a bunch of roses from the rose garden. The evening performance was then conducted by Charles Clements, Professor of Music at UCW Aberystwyth, who had been due to accompany. Mrs Ogwen Thomas accompanied instead. Nine girls, including Janet and Margery, were selected from the school to sing in this performance.

Janet and Margery played piano duets together for concerts, both at school and in concerts with the Youth Choir in the market hall. Their favourite items for performances were Handel's "Sheep may safely graze" and "The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba." As an encore they invariably played a lively piece called "Schwanda the Bagpiper" by the Czech composer Weinberger. They also played piano duet arrangements of Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven symphonies. This stood them in good stead when they were both at the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire, Cardiff. They knew all the themes when they were studying Analysis and Form as part of their Music degrees!

Janet went to Cardiff in 1953 with a State Scholarship. She and Margery then had the opportunity to sing again in the same choirs. They were in the Choral Society, a very large choir which performed such works as “Fauré’s Requiem.” There was also a small choir which performed Madrigals and shorter works such as Benjamin Britten’s “A Ceremony of Carols.”

Janet was a spirited and loyal friend, lived a wonderfully full life and we were fortunate to have her valuable friendship and inspiration.

*“Music, when soft voices die, vibrate in the memory”
(P. B. Shelley)*

Obituaries

John J Price (1951-1955)

Defynnog boy John (“JJ”) left school after his O-levels to join the Royal Navy as an Engineering Artificer and was commissioned, eventually becoming Captain of HMS Hermes. He was later appointed Defence Attache to Brazil at the time of the Falklands War. On retirement he formed a successful building company near the Solent. His final years were spent working hard on the restoration of the Arun & Wey canal.

Robert Alban Dowell Jones (1956-64)

Talgarth boy, Alban, was a reserved but quietly confident person and a popular member of the school community. He was a capable all round sportsman who particularly shone at cricket and played for the school for several years. He also represented the school at rugby and soccer. After his teacher training at Cardiff Training College he took up a career in teaching and retired as a primary school headmaster.

Ken Lloyd (1943-50)

Brecon boy, Ken, was Captain of Vaughan, played for the school’s Soccer and Cricket teams and represented the school in athletics. On leaving school he served his military service in the RAF, most of it in the Persian Gulf. When demobbed he went to Carmarthen Training College and then taught in the Birmingham area. He and his wife, Marilyn, retired to Bwlch where he joined the Abertillery male voice choir.

J Muir Butler (1938-45)

Talgarth boy, Muir, on finishing school served his military service in the Intelligence Section of the Welsh Guards in Germany and Palestine. When demobbed he worked at Talgarth hospital for a short time before becoming a Hospital Administrator at St Georges in Stafford where he met his future wife, Holly. In the 1950s he joined Abbott Laboratories as a pharmaceutical rep, becoming Regional Manager in 1974.

Mike Troake (1952-?)

Mike went to Cradoc Road school from Llanfaes Primary School and on leaving school he joined the old Swansea Police Borough force and became a sergeant in the merged South Wales force. There is no mention of him in any of the Silurian magazines so he must have left school without taking any exams.

Russell Rees (1952-?)

On leaving school Russell joined the Post Office in Brecon where he eventually became branch manager before taking early retirement. He then worked in the Tourist Information Office in Brecon and was a volunteer warden in the Brecon Beacons. This involved checking whether walkers to Pen y Fan and Cwmdru were OK. He was a keen hill walker. He was a member of the Old Boys’ committee for several years.

Bryan Leonard Jones (1958-1965)

Len (“Billo”) had a good academic record and was a member of the first teams in cricket and football. After qualifying as a teacher his first teaching post was in Coventry. He later moved to South Wales, working as a Special Needs teacher in Neath. He and his wife Mary settled in in Ashington with both working at the local High School. In the late 90s they moved to Thailand where Len taught a range of subjects before retiring.

Mairwen Morgan

Biology teacher at Girls Grammar School and High School.

John Davies (1939-1946)

After going to Carmarthen Training College, John's National Service took him to several places overseas. He taught at schools in Redditch and Stratford upon Avon and then, after gaining a B.Sc. in Maths from London University, he taught at Bedstone College in Shropshire. In 1959 he joined the Grammar School for Boys, Weston-Super-Mare where he became Head of Maths and then at Broadoak Comprehensive in 1971.

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