



THE BEVIN BOYS ASSOCIATION

FOUNDED 1989

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NEWSLETTER FOR AUTUMN 2014.

Chairman's Message.

WONDERFUL NEWS!! On Monday 11th August 2014 Harry Parkes and I travelled to Stoke-on-Trent Museum to collect the Bevin Boys Association Banner! It has been almost two years since W.Taylor resigned, due to ill health and on the advice of his Doctor Then refused to return the Banner to your Committee. I would like to thank everyone for their help in retrieving the Banner, particularly Liz Todd, who has written many letters on behalf of the Association and also for the advice received from Geoff Rose's son, for the Banner's recovery. It was displayed with pride at our Annual Reunion & AGM in October in London. I would like to thank members for their confidence in appointing me as Chairman of the Association and for the support of the Committee.

With great pleasure I am able to tell you that Barbara McElroy, the daughter of Les Raymond, has kindly offered her services on the Committee, which we have happily accepted!

It is with great sadness I have to report that Harold Gibson, our Independent Examiner for many years, died at the end of April. Brenda Thomas, the wife of Ken Thomas, who was Secretary for a time and was in charge of Sales and served on the committee for a number of years, died 19th April. Gill Holloway died 14th April. She was the wife of Ted Holloway, who drew so many pictures of life underground. Gill then compiled these into a book called A Bevin Boy Remembers. So along with Alan Lane, George Owen and Doreen Brigden, wife of Les, who attended every national reunion, we have lost these and many other of our loyal supporters this year.

Regards,
Anne. (Lane)

MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY.

Once again it is time for the Autumn Newsletter, after a good summer for a change, although we are not used to such high temperatures and perhaps prefer slightly cooler days.

Background to the Banner Fiasco!

We have received a number of questions from members about Bigbury Mint donations, and the retention by former chairman, W Taylor, of the Book of Remembrance and our Banner

As reported in the Spring Newsletter I had written twice to W. Taylor, who as Chairman had custody of the Banner and Remembrance Book, to return both once he had decided not to seek re-election as Chairman, at the 2012 AGM, and to provide an update of the Bigbury Mint donations, (from the sale of each medal we receive a donation of £3). These donations had all previously been sent to W.Taylor. In November 2012 he informed Bigbury Mint to redirect their donations to the Imperial War Museum. We have since arranged for all future donations to be sent to our Treasurer.

There is still a £189 donation which is untraceable. Bigbury Mint remains fully supportive of our Association (see Treasurer's report).

His second reply to the repeated request to return the Banner was surprising, he said he was keeping the Banner for Formal Occasions!

At the October AGM 2013 our members instructed the Committee to "pursue the recovery of these items by all means possible". In reply to my third letter, dated December 2013 W.Taylor ignored the request to return the original Remembrance Book, but stated he had bought a second book of which he claimed ownership, and as such he would decide on its final destination!

With reference to the Banner he said he had sent it to Sylvia Wood to be repaired, adding it would not be returned to him. Obviously, he had not asked for it to be returned by her to the Association, after repair. Previously he had said it was **not** in need of repair, although he had contacted Reg Hall to do just that, following "a minuted Committee meeting instruction". We have the letter from W.Taylor to Reg Hall to confirm this.

The late Chairman, Alan Lane, wrote to Sylvia Wood early in January 2014 thanking her for any repairs she had carried out on the Banner and asking for its return, adding that members wished to have it, for its continuing use at Annual Reunions and other symbolic occasions.

Her reply was equally surprising. She had donated it to the Stoke-on-Trent Art and Potteries Museum, without the agreement of, or discussion with, the elected BBA committee. Her justification was that she had designed, made and owned the Banner. The first two facts are true the third **not**. In the June 1995 Committee meeting minutes, Phil Wood proposed that his wife would make a Banner. Sylvia was commissioned to do just that, at a cost of £45. In the December AGM 1995 Treasurer's Report "Purchase of Banner £48" is recorded, confirming that the Bevin Boys Association, **is** the owner.

Contact was made with the Stoke-on-Trent museum disputing Sylvia Wood's claim and requesting the return of the Banner. Copies of letters, records and Committee meeting minutes were submitted to substantiate our claim to ownership. After much negotiation it was agreed that the Banner be returned to the Association.

Where Are You Now?

Do any of the following jog any memories? If so, please ring the telephone number given, or me on my number on the newsletter heading.

Alan Beale asks does anyone remember **Meredith Owen** who worked in Oakdale colliery.
Tel: 01633 856967

William Bury's family (aka Bill) often talked about looking after the ponies; he came from the Newcastle area. Tel 01204 861 476

Next I had an interesting enquiry from Mr Tangen. His brother who lives at 15 The Poplars; Hersden near Canterbury, has a photograph showing two Bevin Boys **Albert Swaisland** who died 2002, and **Richard Kent** entering no:15. Apparently the former had been studying languages, the latter sciences and was also a musician. He wonders if either is still alive or could find any information about them. He would be happy to pass on the photo to them or a family member. Another interesting call was from **Sudha Vinjamuri**, who is an academic tutor at the University of Sunderland London Campus. She is researching the part played by Indian war - time immigrants mainly from Bombay, many settled in the Wembley area, and were sent to Wales under the Bevin Boy scheme **Raja Ram** was one such young man. Can any one remember working with him or any Bevin Boy of Indian origin? Please contact me so I can pass on any information to add to her research.

One further enquiry was from **Martin Sugarman** Archivist of AJEX a Jewish Association. He is researching the contributions made by Jewish young men as Bevin Boys during the war. He would be interested to hear from any with Jewish names e.g Cohen or anecdotes from members who may have worked with them.

Members will recall that last year we were able to confirm the story of Betty Nunn, a young secretary who drew out the first card bearing the number 9 to indicate the conscripts who would

be balloted to do their national service in the mining industry .Sadly she died on May 4th.Betty was an important part of the Bevin Boy story, We were pleased to record her story and take photographs of her with a Bevin Boy badge, and Geoff Rose in his Bevin Boy blazer and tie. It gave her some pleasure as she had worried for years that she had "Sent those poor boys down the mines". We reassured her that she was only following government policy! Margaret & Geoff Rose were able to attend her funeral on behalf of the Association. Their attendance was much appreciated by the family.

**Here to help,
Best wishes,**

D. Elizabeth Todd (Liz)

MESSAGE from the HON.TREASURER.

Our main fund bank balance remains healthy, the deficit of last year has been reversed. This year we will show a small surplus of £186 which includes a £60 donation from Bigbury Mint. The Newsletter remains fully funded despite understandably fewer subscribers, giving a small saving in postage cost.

Setting up our Bevin Boy Association website and the successful return of our Banner has involved some additional expenses, including the purchase of replacement poles for the Banner, which were never returned to us.

You will recall that the AGM 2013 agreed the Bevin Boys Association give a donation to the Bevin Boys Permanent Memorial Campaign. They were responsible for the funding and production of the Bevin Boys National Memorial sited in the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas, Staffordshire. They are still fundraising to pay for a paving slab bearing a carved replica of the Headstock design of our Government issued badge. This will be laid alongside other Commemorative slabs from all the fighting services to form an open air paved area for ceremonial occasions.

As this project is still at the planning stage I will be recommending to the AGM we ring fence this donation to remain in our bank account until payment is requested.

I thank our committee and you the members, your families and friends, for your continued support.

Harry P.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT.

We have again received a great many letters of support and saying how much you all look forward to reading the Newsletters.

We would like to ask if any Bevin Boys sons, daughters, grandsons or granddaughters would like to join the committee or help in any other way? The committee usually meets twice a year, once at the AGM and Reunion, and this year near Alrewas before the Forces Day.

PLEASE, do consider this.

Please would you write, telephone or e-mail me, to notify me of Change of Address and/or Telephone numbers and if you hear of any Bevin Boys, members or not, who have sadly passed away. My address and Telephone number is at the top of this Newsletter, e-mail address is alananne2749@gmail.com

Best wishes,
Anne.

Sales.

Total Sales for this year are £61.10p. For all Sales, please apply to Mrs A. Lane, Snipelands, Bourton Combe, Flax Bourton, Bristol. BS48 3QL. Tel: 01275 463703. All cheques to be

made payable to **THE BEVIN BOYS ASSOCIATION**. Please add **£1** for the lighter items & **£2** for the books, as they are expensive to post.

Blazer Badge	@ £7.50	New Blue Enamel Badge	@ £2.00
Miners Lamp Keyring	@ £4.00	Ladies Brooch	@ £5.00
Digging Up the Past	@ £10.00	The Forgotten Conscript	@ £10.00

Bevin Boy Banner Postcard, 2 different Black & White postcards of prints from A Bevin Boy Remembers & 2 colour & 2 black & white prints of A4 size from A Bevin Boy Remembers
ALL POSTCARDS & A4 PRINTS @ £0.20 each

Many Thanks to all our 'customers', as always!

Anne.

National Reunion & AGM

Another excellent reunion organized by Margaret Rose! The Clarendon staff were so helpful to everyone. The General Manager, Ken Milton displayed our Banner and a short précis of who the Bevin Boys are, on a notice board at reception, on which several people commented.

On the Wednesday we first went to the Houses of Parliament and had a most informative tour in two groups. We then had a snack in the canteen, before we left to go to the London Eye. As I left with seven stragglers of our group, to walk to our coach pick-up point, we were stopped at the gates and padlocked in by the policeman who was on duty, as there was an IS demonstration taking place!! We were then escorted by two police to the underground and eventually to our coach. Where, luckily, Steve the driver, had spoken to the police and was still there waiting for us all!

Off we drove to the Eye and all had a pleasant time in our two pods! The Eye moves so slowly you are hardly aware it is moving, and the views were magnificent all across London, picking out all the landmarks! The Shard, the Gherkin, Big Ben, Buckingham Palace, to name but a few.

In the evening on the Thursday, we had the 26th Grand Reunion Dinner in the company of the Mayor of the Royal Borough of Greenwich Councillor Mick Hayes and his Lady wife Gill, The Mayoress.

Perhaps some of you will join us next year?

Anne.

AREA REUNION's in 2014.

If any Area Representatives would like to send in their accounts of any Reunions or Activities- I would be happy to publish them in the Newsletter.

SOUTH WALES: To coincide with the 70th Anniversary of the Coal Mining Call-up, it was appropriate to hold a Bevin Boys Association Reunion in Cardiff. This was held on the 30th April 2014 at the Whitchurch Golf Club. Thirty members and friends enjoyed an excellent meal in a convivial atmosphere.

However, there was a note of sadness when, since posting the invitations, two Bevin Boys had died and Veronica, the wife of Derek Warren of Morriston. The two Bevin Boys were Alan Lane, Chairman of the Bevin Boys Association, and Harold Gibson of Cwmbran. Members were so pleased to welcome Anne Lane and Derek Warren, who bravely attended so soon after their loss.

Was this the final Reunion? Only time and health will tell.

Alan Jennings.

Cheshire, Lancs & North Wales. The meeting convened at 11.30 on Wednesday 11th June at The

Grange Hotel, Thornton Hough in the Wirral, for coffee and biscuits and perhaps the odd touch of alcohol, followed by an excellent lunch, which I'm sure we all enjoyed. Liz Todd organised the whole thing with her usual panache and of course had to cope with the sad absence of her husband Gordon due to his death. His vivacious character is always missed on such occasions, specially as he always bought me a pint. There were approximately twenty members, relatives and friends in attendance, although every time we meet our numbers diminish so an appropriate mark of respect was given for those who had passed away.

After the meal Liz brought us up to date regarding the regretful situation concerning Warwick Taylor and Lady Finsberg. I felt particularly sad about Lady Finsberg as I consider I knew her quite well in our earlier days and attended her husband's funeral. She used to be so supportive, and I wondered whether she had been influenced by anyone.

Liz brought up the subject of our attempts to reclaim our banner from Mrs Wood and spoke of the lengthy time spent on this and similar matters and of resulting correspondence with the museum at Stoke on Trent.

It was very obvious from the details she gave us that in Liz and other committee members, we have a very active group. Needless to say, as a newcomer to the committee I had been unaware of all the time and work which had gone into these matters.

The meeting ended at about 3pm when some of us adjourned to the lounge for reminiscing about old times. It proved to be a very happy and successful day.

Denys Owen.

SOUTH WEST. A reunion lunch was held on Monday 23rd. June at The Star on the A370, with bus stops outside! Lovely to see everyone again and have a chat!
Anne Lane.

ESSEX & NE LONDON: A reunion lunch on 16th July at the Red House in Ilford was attended by thirteen members. An excellent meal together with a friendly natter was enjoyed by all. Unfortunately there were three cancellations. One due to a family funeral and one member sat on his glasses and could not drive!!
Eric Johnson.

Bevin Boys Association Website.

Just to remind you all that we have an **Official** Bevin Boys Association website. This contains information about the Association, pictures of the Bevin Boy's plot at Alrewas, the contact details for all the Committee. Also the Newsletter, Rules and Regulations which are password protected and only accessible to Bevin Boy members who have paid their yearly subs. Please go to:- <http://www.bevinboysassociation.co.uk> or to email the committee bevinboys1943@gmail.com
Thank you to everyone who has submitted items for the Newsletter.

If you prefer to have access to the Newsletter online or email or have any input or news items for publication please contact me on Tel: 01275 463703 or e-mail: alananne2749@gmail.com

Anne.

National Service Conscripts Annual Reunion

The Armed Forces Annual Remembrance Weekend takes place nationally on the last weekend in June. On Sunday 29th June 2014 the National Memorial Arboretum hosted a ceremony to remember all National Service Conscripts who served during and after the 1939 – 45 conflict. The Bevin Boys are always invited and encouraged to take their place. I organized a

representative group of our members, our National Committee, many accompanied by family and friends to take part.

After a showery morning, the rain held off for the ceremony. Veterans and Standards assembled at 2pm. in front of the Saluting Base. A message from the Queen was read followed by

a short Service of Remembrance, Last Post, and Two Minutes Silence, ending with reveille and laying of Wreaths.

I was privileged to lay a wreath of red poppies inscribed to 48,000 Bevin Boys.

The Welcome address given by Air Marshall Sir G.A.'Dusty' Miller KBE who added his pleasure at seeing the white helmets worn by the Bevin Boys. The band then played 'Sunset' and the Union Flag was lowered.

To end the day, eight of our members formed up to march, with other veterans from the fighting services, a short distance to pass the saluting base to loud applause from the onlookers lining the route.

My thanks to everyone who attended and made our presence noticed. Well done!

NB. As I walked to the march assembly point, an elderly lady called my name. She said her name was Nora and she had been a Land Army Girl. Being alone, could she march behind the Bevin Boys. I suggested she didn't march behind us – her face fell – but, I added, she march with us, which she did with evident pride.

Harry Parkes.

Interview by the BBC of Denys Owen for Remembrance Week.

I had received several phone calls in the previous few weeks, from a charming young (to me!) lady, named Bethan Davies, from BBC Wales and from her director Dave Jones, asking many searching question about my BB career and to the lead up to the call-up. They visited me 11th September, spending much of the day talking and filming me as I spoke. They certainly taxed this aged memory. They needed access for camera work - space! So we tried several different rooms.

I had been asked to produce any documents, photographs etc I had, for them to examine. I did go to a lot of trouble photocopying them, but they wanted the originals. At first finding these papers was quite a problem, although I knew that SOMEWHERE I had a few. My ex-"live in girlfriend" who has a remarkable memory, reminded me where to search, so with some misgiving I scabbled around in my "tool room" on the third floor, and amongst the dust I found payslips, call-up letters and other letters, etc, one of which referred to the original address of my lodgings which was 18 Council Houses, Pandy. The BBC needed accurate confirmation of this as they were unable to find it in their search engine. That's because it now has quite a salubrious address, no longer "Council Houses". The next morning Bethan arrived, and after some more checking of facts she drove me to Pandy near Wrexham which was the main pit village for Gresford Colliery, to see the monument erected in memory of the 266 miners killed in "my" colliery in 1934. Awaiting me was Dave Jones plus another cameraman and two strangers. Much to my complete astonishment the strangers were children of the two pals with whom I shared the whole BB experience and who had been my friends before the call-up. How on earth they managed to trace them remains a mystery, one of their "trade secrets" I think. I'd tried hard for many years to trace the two men, Dave Randall and John Pepper without success, although I knew that Dave had died; I knew nothing of John. The man they found is the son of Dave and the lady Pauline Strachan is the daughter of John. Neither of them knew of the Bevin Boys Association and they are both going to contact Harry to see if they are entitled to the BB badge. Pauline is particularly keen on that, as she is (rightly) annoyed that so little recognition was ever given to us all.

We did several interesting visits that second day, including going to the house where all three of us had lived. Going to a kind of survey point and marking the precise spot where the main shaft had been, plus a rough trip to the remains of the once very large slag heap. They also gave us a

first class lunch and I was driven home by taxi, John Randall was taken home to South Wales by the crew, and Pauline had arranged for her sister to fetch her. **Denys Owen.**

PLEASE NOTE!!

Please don't forget to send your £5 subscription to continue receiving your twice yearly Newsletter in 2015 to Anne Lane. Cheques payable to The Bevin Boys Association.