



# THE BEVIN BOYS ASSOCIATION

FOUNDED 1989

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## NEWSLETTER FOR AUTUMN 2018.

### Chairman's Message.

Welcome to your Autumn Newsletter.

We now have 1587 entries in our Book of Remembrance, including Past Vice President Warwick Taylor MBE, who died on 4<sup>th</sup> October. He had contributed much to promote the recognition of the Bevin Boys in the past, including the award of a Badge from the government in 2007. Unfortunately despite his and the Committees efforts it was not awarded to **ALL** Bevin Boys, only those still alive on June 20<sup>th</sup> 2007.

I wish you all a Happy, Prosperous and Healthy 2019,

**Anne. (Lane)**

### MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY.

I hope everyone has been able to enjoy this lovely Autumn. We have been receiving a number of inquiries asking where the Remembrance Book can be viewed. Names are still being entered so until the Association closes it is not possible at the moment.

Barbara Garland, widow of Charles, was concerned that when recently visiting the Imperial War Museum, that there was no mention of the Bevin Boys and the young man on duty seemed unaware of their contribution to the war effort. Did you see the article on the Bevin Boys Eric Crowch and Phil Robinson featured in the Daily Telegraph in May? Unfortunately mention of the Bevin Boy.Association was left out during editing, but the result was interesting and well received.

Cedric Nimmo tells of his reception down the mines when the miners learnt of his previous occupation- at the Stock Exchange, a longer account follows.

Megan Walsh is writing a novel around the central character of a Bevin Boy. She is in touch with five members to assist, but sends her apologies for her lack of contact at the moment as she is struggling with house alterations and a 15 month old baby!

Christine Madder wrote with a copy of a letter of reference given to her Uncle, Bevin Boy Colin Thomas Thompson, for a future employer on completion of his service in October 1947. I doubt many men received one of those, many did not even have acknowledgment of their existence let alone contribution to the work in the mine. Colin had also responded to a local newspaper article from Muriel Hawthorne who had been trying to find information about her brother Leonard Marvin, also a Bevin Boy.It appeared they had been pals during their service. Christine enclosed a photo of the two pals in their 'uniforms' of old clothes and

mining helmets. Her uncle was proud to have been a Bevin Boy and led an interesting life as a fireman on the 'Flying Scotsman'.

Susan Stewart has given her email address for any of her fathers friends who may still live in the Potters Bar area and wish to contact her, he was Ronald Frederick John Lentz who died last December.

Phil Yates records that his friend Leslie (Les) Wilcock also of Winchester, died in July, "We met in 1993 and became great friends attending many B.B. events together. He was very modest and I enjoyed being in his company"

Inquiries still arrive about family members. We can only trace those who have been members, but often the information we can provide on the background to the balloting of Bevin Boys, does give some help.

As always I am happy to help in any way; and wish everyone well.

D. Elizabeth Todd (Liz)

## **Treasurer's Report.**

The biggest change to report is that as Margaret Rose could no longer undertake the Annual reunion, we took the decision to close the Social Account and put the balance into the main account. There are still some outstanding expenses on the account but even so it put the main account in a good healthy position. As the balance of our main (and now only account) had this overall boost we felt that as many members as possible should benefit and to this end the Association has paid for all the area reunion lunches this year.

If we were to discount the Social fund and the expenditure associated with it, then we would still have a positive balance over last year's carry forward. This is mostly because the committee has not met during the year as there has been no need, unlike last year where we were seeking solutions to the future of the Association.

It was decided that as Harry Parkes, Treasurer and Margaret Rose, Reunion organiser had given such long and hardworking service that we would present both with a retirement gift in the form of vouchers. This expenditure is an occasional one, not a yearly expense.

Our main income is still from Donations and Newsletters, so our thanks to all who have donated. The postage spend this year has been high because of the postal vote on whether to continue with the Association.

Barbara McElroy.

## **Archivist's Report.**

It has been an interesting year with many enquiries from relatives trying to find the story of their loved one. The most important thing we can do is to expand their knowledge so they can carry on the 'Bevin Boy story'. To that end I have completed more work on the archives and a copy of this will be on our website. I hope that all of you will have got your stories noted down and lodged with either Caphouse Mining museum or the Imperial War Museum. If you need any help let me know as we can do this over the phone.

Caphouse National Mining Museum sent their curator Anne Barnes and assistant Rebecca on the Thursday of our reunion, to record Bevin Boy stories for posterity. Their voices will be part of their archive and be available for exhibitions and films etc in the future about the Bevin Boys - helping to keep your experiences alive.

We continue to have requests from various branches in the media for information, photographs and interviews which is why we felt the Caphouse visit was so important, as we know some of you have given interviews in the past which have not resulted in any tangible result.

Have you anything at home that needs to be lodged with one of the museums? If so please make sure someone knows that they need to pass things on. I continue to receive stories, photos and documents and I lodge these with the Imperial War Museum. They do not take objects however, but these can go to Caphouse. If you have anything from your mining days then please try to include a little bit of information about your Bevin Boy experiences to make your object more meaningful if displayed,

In April I met Phil Yates at the IWM as he had several albums of photos to hand over. It was a great privilege to sit over lunch chatting about his memories and looking at his albums before lodging them with the museum. The Curator of Documents Anthony Richards met us and chatted and we had a lovely photo to mark the occasion which found its way with an article into the Hampshire Chronicle. Thank you Phil for a fascinating day.

Finally just to tell you that our archives have now moved to Duxford Imperial War Museum- the archives can still be viewed in London, but anyone wishing to see them need to book at least a two to three weeks in advance.

I continue to give talks about the Bevin Boys and collect anecdotes so thank you to those who have contacted me. I am currently working on a Bevin Boy leaflet to hand out when people enquire, this will be ready for Easter next year when we do hope that we will be able to attend a WW1 and WW2 re-enactment in Wales, to which we have been invited to have a stand. There are a couple of projects in the pipeline - more of that in the next newsletter.

Thank you to all of you who continue to share your experiences.

Barbara McElroy

**NB.The Imperial War Museum now insists on Original Documents and DO NOT accept copies.**

If you have friends or relatives who would like to view the Bevin Boy archives then please be aware that you have to make an appointment with the London Research Room and this should be done via the Imperial War Museum website. [www.iwm.org.uk/research/research-facilities](http://www.iwm.org.uk/research/research-facilities).

The particular reference number for the Bevin Boy Association collection is **Documents 6335** but due to the size of the collection, the first couple of boxes are likely to be retrieved initially. There are sadly no Bevin Boy documents on display, which is why it is important to support the Caphouse initiative.

Barbara McElroy.

#### **MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT.**

It is lovely to receive so many letters of support for the Association and saying how much you all look forward to reading the Newsletters. If any Bevin Boys widows, partners, sons, daughters, grandsons, granddaughters, nephews or nieces would like to receive the Newsletters do let me know.

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 as above.

Anne.

## Sales.

Total Sales for the year 2018 were £29.00p. 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	@ £10.00	Blue Enamel Badge	@ £2.00
Miners Lamp Keyring	@ £5.00	Digging Up the Past	@ £10.00
Forgotten Conscript (1 only)	@ £10.00		

Bevin Boy Banner Postcard, 2 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

We had a successful Reunion at the Mercure Shakespeare Hotel in Stratford, with the AGM on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> October. We had six Bevin Boys who attended with a total of eighteen, including friends and family.

### AREA REUNION's for 2018.

All the Area Reunions were happy get togethers, if reduced in numbers. Unfortunately Margaret Rose had to cancel her East Anglia Reunion.

#### Area Re-union for London and NE Essex.

Nine of us met for lunch at Mersea Island Vineyard, including Sheila Johnson. Eric sadly was too poorly to attend. We had a good time catching up with news and were pleased to welcome family members and a friend.

Barbara McElroy and Les Raymond

#### North-West Area Reunion.

Was held as usual at The Red Fox, Thornton Hough, Wirral in June. A happy time was had by the eight members, including family and friends, who enjoyed a happy get together for lunch.

Liz Todd.

## Caphouse Museum.

We are considering Caphouse or Wakefield area for our AGM & Reunion in 2019, which will also be the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the start of the Association.

### A VISIT TO CAPHOUSE COLLIERY MUSEUM, WAKEFIELD

On Saturday, 25<sup>th</sup> August, 2018 I (Emrys Hughes) accompanied by my wife, Pauline, daughter and son-in-law, Rhian and Paul, and granddaughter, Charlotte, was treated by my daughter and son-in-law to a visit to the Coal Museum in Wakefield.

On our arrival, we were met by a member of staff who directed us to where the underground tours began. This tour had previously been booked by Rhian. We were met by

our guide and all fitted out with helmets and lamps for our visit underground. We then had our photograph taken. The five of us, plus about seven other folk, descended in the lift some 140 metres underground. This was quite an incredible feeling. Our guide for this visit was a very articulate and entertaining man by the name of Trevor. We all spent at least an hour underground moving from one area to another and receiving an account of what life was like through the ages. There were life-sized models of miners and horses. This certainly brought back memories of my time down the pit thanks to Ernest Bevin!

**This is an excellent museum and very well worth a visit.**

After we all surfaced, we went to the café for a cup of coffee and then we went on a little train ride around the grounds which was followed by a picnic we had brought with us. There were plenty of picnic tables and the whole area was well thought out.

After our picnic, we walked to see the Pithead Baths. No privacy here! We then went to see some of the Pit Ponies and Stable Yard. Afterwards, took a long tour of the inside of the Museum and there was so much to see. It was unbelievable that we spent five hours in this Museum and I cannot recommend it more highly for anyone to visit.

**Emrys Hughes**

### Bevin Boys Association Website.

Just to remind you all that we have an **Official** Bevin Boys Association website. This will now include an Inventory of items held by the Imperial War Museum. 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 of £5. Please go to:-

<http://www.bevinboysassociation.co.uk> or to email the committee [bevinboys1943@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:alananne2749@gmail.com)

Anne.

### Experiences of Angus Winter.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> November 1944 I received my notice from the Ministry of Labour, saying I had been conscripted into the coal mines and gave me details of my training at the Morrison Old Pit Training Centre, Annfield Plain beginning on the 27<sup>th</sup> November 1944. Conditions of labour were all specified as were my travelling arrangements. After about four weeks I was to be employed by Throckley Coal Company at Blucher Colliery.

Blucher Colliery was a small colliery with narrow seams of coal, which were hand hewn by hewers and the coal transported from the face to the landing by pony, tub and 'putter'. Very, very hard, difficult and dangerous work. My job was on the landing dealing with the tubs and making sure they were sent in the right direction. It was cold and very poorly lit. One day, when I was into my second year, there was an accident when two tubs came together with my hand in between and damaged some of my fingers. On seeing the doctor, he treated the hand, examined me, asked me some questions about how I felt, and suggested that I should see a medical board. This I did and was found to be unfit for coal mining and medically down graded. After about six weeks I was again conscripted, this time into the Army, here

I served first in Scotland and then later to Germany during the start of the Cold War, until I was demobilised in October 1948.

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**“The Forgotten Conscripts” by Mark Nadin**

A Re enactor from Sittingbourne in Kent.

My call up papers came through the door  
I wondered where I would spend the war  
In the Royal Marines or Navy at sea  
In the Army oh where would that be

I might be a pilot or rear gunner too  
A “Brylcreem” boy in RAF blue  
So off I went to ask where I’d go  
‘Twas then I was told “your going below”

Your number my son is one in ten  
You’re going to be with colliery men  
Down to the pit to dig out the coal  
With lamp and a pick you will enrol

Overalls blue and hard hat of black  
The boys in the cage all watch your back  
What you are doing is essential to all  
For without the coal our country may fall

Not all those enlisted became fighting men  
Instead they dug coal again and again  
Keeping the fires burning ever so bright  
And helping our country to win the fight

So that’s where I spent my time in the war  
Miles beneath with the rich and the poor  
Bevin Boys was the name we were given  
Many long gone and to Heaven have risen.

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**George Morton’s Memories**

Firstly, I was praying that I would be called up as an indentured apprentice. I worked from 6.30 am until 5 pm for 49 hours per week, plus three night school attendance, also ARP messenger duty, during the air raids etc.

When I attended for my medical I opted for the Fleet Air Arm, I passed all the engineering exams and then waited for the papers to arrive. Which were to report to Creswell, and from there to Langworth pit. (I think that’s in Notts.) After tramping at a loader point, I was then put on the market i.e. Doing a job anywhere they wanted. This educated me, regards to the working of a coal mine.

One morning I was sent to work on the tension end that is where the face belt is pulled tight by the chains bolted to the ground. My job was to sit there and shovel coal that came to me on the lower belt and on the floor, back onto the top belt. No

air to speak of, dusty and hot. I received 18/1d for the shift (coal face wages)12/1d on the roads. I landed a permanent job dogging on at the pit bottom, that is hooking the tubs together as they came down empty two at a time. With 80 drawers an hour and a junction to keep clear, plus the fact I had to control the speed of the tubs via a wooden pointed lockers by dropping them either the back or front of front wheels, life was busy but clean and airy and I was getting paid 18s1d a shift!! This went on for a month or more until a wage clerk rumbled me. I was called to the manager's office and told I was being transferred to Glapwell (same company).

There I was introduced to night work heading a new seam out 2 miles from the pit bottom, you arrived there by riding downhill on a paddy wire rope, it held four men who sat back to back we embarked half way and then walked down a long drift (49 steps) and on to the face where I was introduced to packing and drawing off. i.e. Knocking props out in the gob.(waste) and building a wall with the roof dropping. When finished you had continuous strips of the wall packed with waste to prop the roof up when the weight came on. I considered this work to salvage the steel props and bars to be the most dangerous work in the pit. To hear a prop ring when you hit it with a hammer was a bit shaky you knew it had weight on it.

The smell of the day men when walking to the face, as we were passing them on our way back to the Nissan huts, was nectar to the nose.

On arriving at the surface, one would walk to the baths, discard the dirty clothing in the locker, walk through to the shower - where someone would wash your back, then you followed him to his shower and did the same. Then to the clean locker and back to the hostel at Mansfield and sleep in your bed. There were ten men in a hut. Lunch was always fish paste sandwiches, one rock bun, that lived up to its name, and a Dudley of water..

It was a union agreement that once a man had worked on the coal face he received that rate of pay all the time, hence my experience was one I will never forget.

### **Cedric Nimmo's Experiences.**

It was just seventy three years ago that I was on a train to Pontefract, not having any idea who would meet me. I need not have bothered, because there was no one to advise me where to go. All I remember is someone pointing a way for me to go to the hostel.

A day later I was introduced to the training, but not ready for the boxing ring. I took a bit of a beating before my opponent realized I had never raised a fist to anyone. He was a very nice young man and apologized to me, he was given to understand that I had not to defend myself.

My life started with the first cage ride with apparently the usual misty water hitting your face. Then thirty minutes to the coal face to find what my immediate future was to be. After one month I was told I was going to be a pony driver.

When the miners asked my name – Cedric – it was too posh and I was good fun for them. When I was asked where I worked and answered 'The Stock Exchange'. The lads roared with laughter, 'What have we got here', and so it went on, a 'toff' working with tough miners. After being ridiculed for taking grass down to

the pony, it seemed to be the last straw as they were inclined to give me stick, but I got used to it.

Then everything changed, one of the miners asked what was I doing at the weekend, suggesting I needed a girlfriend, but when I told them I had gone to see Sheffield play football they were different again. They started to bring bits of food, because of the poor rations at our hostel. Every Monday they wanted to hear about each game I had been to see. After that they were fantastically kind. So eventually the North got on with the South!

When I got back home after the war, I made two or three visits to Yorkshire and got to like the people. I still hope that the north and the south could be closer and friendlier.

### **My Father was a Bevin Boy.**

My name is Sue Tallentire and I am a retired teacher from County Durham. When I retired I began doing voluntary work for "Durham at War", transcribing WW1 diaries etc. My interest developed to investigating my family tree and discovered my Paternal Grandfather was in the WW1 Army Cyclist Corp. I always knew my Father was a Bevin Boy. He was called Nathaniel Smith born January 30<sup>th</sup> 1927 and originally came from Birkenhead about 1947. He trained at Easden Colliery and then the Morrison, Annfield Plain, Stanley, Co Durham. It was while he was at The Morrison, he met my Mam, Lily Morris and they were married 26<sup>th</sup> February 1949.

My Dad continued to work in the Mines and as a member of St. John's, we have medals from 1951 to 1961, 5yrs and 10 yrs Honour Medals. Unfortunately he died 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1969 from a Coronary Thrombosis while on a training exercise at Craighead Mine, Stanley, Co. Durham. He was only 42 years old.

Well, to get to the point of this article. I entered the 'One Show' ballot to be a member of the Nation's Thanks Group and walk in the parade on Remembrance Sunday in London. I was accepted and await further details of the day, for my Partner and I.

I am so thrilled and made it even better by buying tickets for the Albert Hall the day before. Can't wait for that weekend, how special!

Unfortunately my Mam is not eligible to have a Veteran Bevin Boy Badge but I can buy a pin ( or 2 ) from the Bevin Boy Association I can also wear an Army Cyclists Corp badge / pin.

Well, that's it readers and thank you to the Association for your help. My Dad can now have his name in the Book of Remembrance.

Sue Tallentire. 28/8/18

### **STOP PRESS**

A magazine called 'Britain at War' is featuring an article on Bevin Boys by Steve Roberts. Two of our members were interviewed. The magazine is due out at the end of November.

Editors comment. Please note that we do not edit contributions and as some are based on recollections there may be alternative views and information.