



THE BEVIN BOYS ASSOCIATION

FOUNDED 1989

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NEWSLETTER FOR AUTUMN 2019.

Chairman's Message.

Welcome to your Autumn Newsletter. We recently had our 31st AGM and Reunion at Caphouse Colliery, near Wakefield. There were seventeen of us in all and we were so well treated by all the staff there. It was decided at the AGM that our Banner would be donated to the Coal Mining Museum for England at Caphouse, as it would be displayed for about six months of the year with other Mining Banners. The remaining time it would be kept in a humidity controlled environment. We have had a plastic replica made, which can be used in future, even if outdoors. The Book of Remembrance will also reside in the Mining Museum, when it has been closed. We have had to make this decision as the Imperial War Museum, now housed at Duxford, no longer accepts artefacts only original papers and photographs. We have also moved to a Management Committee this means we can carry on the business of the Association, although we still have to call an AGM and to present the Accounts.

Would you please be sure to advise us of any changes of address. Could you ask wives, partners, sons and daughters to inform us, when you sadly pass please?

I wish you all a Happy, Prosperous and Healthy 2020,

Anne. (Lane)

MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY.

By the time you read these notes summer will be over and we will have said goodbye to some of the extreme weather we have had these last few months. I hope you were able to enjoy some of the more moderate days?

Looking back at the Spring Newsletter, I had hoped to have some positive news to report on attempts to enable members to attend the Remembrance Service at the Royal Albert Hall in November. Unfortunately I had no response to my further emails or phone calls to the British Legion, for that to happen. As no members contacted either Anne or myself with a request to attend, we decided not to pursue the matter any further. Harry Parkes our past National Treasurer has also made efforts to attend as a past conscript - see his separate report. Many years ago in the 1980's Gerald Kauphman M.P. spent much time and effort trying to get recognition for Bevin Boys, entitlement to membership of the British Legion, as did the Bevin Boys committee in the 1990's, without success. Unless anyone out there wants to take up the cause perhaps we should draw a line under the matter. The sticking point is always that the conscripts were not in uniform! Perhaps if some one can prove that boots and a helmet were government issue that would be a long shot.

Earlier this year we received a C. D. of a recording of a song entitled 'The Bevin Boys', which had been written and played by Steve Jones from Ilford Essex. He is aware that last December was the 75th Anniversary of the first ballot and wanted to celebrate the Bevin Boys history in a song. It can be played/accessed via his web site

<http://www.stevejonesmusic.net>. We wish him well in his attempts to get funding from the Art's Council and Performing Rights Society, to make a music video.

David Angliss, a county councillor from South Derbyshire contacted me about a forthcoming event in Eureka Park, Midway Village near Swadlincote. An installation to celebrate the 'invisible heritage' of Eureka Park, has been secured with Heritage Lottery Fund money. The park occupies the site where the 'Owd Shoddy' Pit once stood and which sits above the Eureka coal seam which was mined during the war. The installation, a two piece artwork of a pit boy carved from a lone oak tree that once stood near the entrance to Cadley Hill mine, and an accompanying pit pony, will be put in place in time for the November Remembrance Day celebrations. It is the intention that one of our Bevin Boy members will be a guest of honour at this event.

Richie Hunter contacted me originally to ask about a James Deane who may have been a Bevin Boy. I have had a communication from Richie Hunter about an Apprentice Strike on Tyne-side against the Bevin Ballot scheme in January 1944. He had come across this in letters from a James Deane's archive in Warwick University. His mother's sister, Ann Kean, was jailed for her part, it was alleged, in assisting apprentices on Tyne-side to strike against the Bevin Ballot scheme. Apparently Ann Kean's tapes on this are in the Imperial War museum. Has anyone heard about this? Do let me know. It is an interesting item - new to me.

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

D. Elizabeth Todd (Liz)

Treasurer's Report.

Those who were at the AGM last year will no doubt remember that we merged the Social Account that Margaret Rose held to facilitate running the Re-Unions. As she stood down from this, the monies were merged but some of this was set aside for her outstanding expenses.

Despite this our balance is healthy and we have sufficient funds to fund our activities. We still continue to receive income from newsletters and donations including a small amount from The Bigbury Mint. Upon my advice we had a planned deficit this year and we will continue a policy of planned deficit in order that as many members as possible can benefit from funds. As this is planned we know that we will still have sufficient to carry on. The main expense continues to be the AGM but the committee kept down expenses by only meeting once and conducting business through email and telephone.

Barbara McElroy.

Archivist's Report.

I am afraid due to personal circumstances I haven't been very active in this role this year. Anne and I worked out a display as we had been invited to represent the Bevin Boys at a WW11 re-enactment. A replica plastic banner was produced but the group changed venue and date and we were unable to go. The proposed booklet was put on the back burner but I will still do this. If invited again we will be ready. I have a sizeable folder of archives to pass on to IWM but haven't been able to get there this year. Thank you to those who have passed on documents and memories. Please note the IWM only takes originals now.

However, since the re-union at Caphouse Mining Museum, there is a possibility they will be interested in some document copies and they are also willing to take artefacts. Keeping on

the subject of Caphouse you will be pleased to know they now have a permanent Bevin Boy exhibition. I am trying to make a list on our website of where Bevin Boy exhibits and archives can be found. I know there is a display at the old Plesley Pit as we visited it recently, but have just been alerted to possible archives at Kew. If you have donated items elsewhere or know of any Bevin Boy displays please let me know so relatives can be directed when researching family history.

I have had a few enquiries this year. A notable one being from a musician called Dave Collins who wanted to know the tune to the Bevin Boys song, he had the words but needed to put it to music as he had been commissioned to write a piece. By good fortune I had recorded a group singing this at Blackheath about three years ago so was able to pass this on. He was delighted and promised to send me a copy.

It seems to be the year for your story to inspire poems. Bill Charlton sent me a poem which is being included in the next newsletter and we were sent a song inspired by the Bevin Boys. I do wish however that some of these folk would check facts with us first but it is good to continue to get your stories out there.

Finally, Albert Baker sent me some copies of his photos of the Miners' Hostel. These photos are quite rare, especially the interior shots. They are much better quality than those I have seen. This only happened because we were chatting at an area re-union. If by any chance you have any photos such as these of your times in the hostels or indeed your time as a Bevin Boy I can copy and return your originals if that helps but I would be pleased to have them. Originals can be passed to the museum but with your permission I do use copies in my talks.

Barbara McElroy.

Sales.

Total Sales for the year 2019 are £61. 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	Digging Up the Past	@ £10.00
Miners Lamp Keyring	@ £6.00	Bevin Boy Banner Postcard	@ £0.20p
2 Black & White postcards of prints, 2 colour & 2 black & white prints of A4 size from A			
Bevin Boy Remembers ALL POSTCARDS & A4 PRINTS @ £0.20 each.			

Anne.

AGM & Reunion 2020

It has been proposed that this should take place next year from Monday 5th October until Thursday 8th October 2020 and in Stratford, as this is more central for everyone.

All the Area Reunions in 2019 were happy get togethers, if reduced in numbers. Unfortunately Margaret Rose had to cancel her East Anglia Reunion, but hopes to hold it towards the end of this year. Geoff Rose sadly passed away in August.

Area Re-union for London and NE Essex. Nine of us met for lunch at Mersea Island. Eric Johnson had sadly recently passed away, but his widow Sheila joined us. It was such a successful get together that an additional re-union has been planned for Thursday December 5th. (West Mersea again) Barbara will shortly contact attendees with menus to choose from but if anyone else would like to join us please contact Barbara. Friends and families are always welcome.

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 get together and lunch.

Liz Todd.

Gordon Waterhouse's Return Journey.

My companion Eileen and I were returning home to Formby in Lancashire, after spending the day travelling by train to attend the Bevin Boys Association, Reunion and A.G.M, at The National Mining Museum Caphouse Colliery, Wakefield. on October 9th this year. On our return journey after problems with 2 hour train cancellations, we were settled at last in the carriage when to my surprise a well dressed official looking man wearing a King's Regiment Liverpool tie, stood up and started to tell everyone in the carriage that he was just coming back from a most important occasion, which he thought every one should know about. He then went on to give the following information.

A 100year old Jamaican man, Oswald Dickson, a R.A.F. veteran who had come over to this country to enlist and fight in the Second World war, had died in a nursing home in Salford outside Manchester. As he had no remaining family or friends the staff at the home had appealed to the public to attend his funeral. As a result people had come from all over the country to attend. Draped in a Union flag his coffin was carried into the chapel past an RAF. guard of honour watched by the Veterans minister, Johnny Mercer. Also in attendance was a man claiming to be Dickson's estranged son who thought his father had died years ago, before reading about the appeal for mourners last week. Edward Aspin, a 42year old bus driver who travelled with his family from Dublin to the service, says his parents had separated and he had lost touch with his father. 'I'm overwhelmed to be here' he said. (It was later reported on local and national T.V. including an article in the Daily Telegraph.) This man then turned to me and asked if I was at the funeral as he had noticed that I was dressed representing an organization. I was pleased to tell him 'No.' but I was a Bevin Boy and returning from our annual reunion, hence the Bevin Boy blazer badge and tie. At this he launched into a potted history of the Bevin Boys. When he had finished everyone broke into applause. I then told him that the British Legion refused to accept us as members, or to take part in the Remembrance Service at the Albert Hall in November, as we were not in Uniform, even though we were conscripted by ballot, and have become known as the 'Forgotten Conscripts'. He was astounded at that news! When people left the carriage, they came and insisted on shaking my hand. What an experience! To complete the day, on making our way out of Lea Green station, a man came along side us and asked how would we be getting home? and continued 'I will take you where ever you want to go' I reassured him we had our car in the car park, but thanked him anyway. What a wonderful end to a very special day!

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, and also the Newsletters, 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.

Message from Harry Parkes. (Ex Committee member and Treasurer.)

I was interested to read our Secretary's report in the Spring 2019 Newsletter concerning the failure of the BBC to mention Bevin Boys in the broadcast from the Cenotaph Armistice Service or the Royal British Legion to include Bevin Boys in the Royal Albert Hall Armistice Remembrance Service and her efforts to change that.

I have for many years organised groups of Bevin Boys to take part in the Annual National Service Day Remembrance ceremony which is held in the National Memorial Arboretum, Alrewas, the home of our Bevin Boys National Memorial.

Last year 2018 I was the only Bevin Boy to attend. I laid a wreath and carried a banner in the march past. My intention to attend this year on the last Sunday in June, was dashed because on the 17th anniversary I did not receive the usual invitation or reserved seating for Bevin Boy members.

My efforts to contact the Royal British Legion have also failed. Their Communication Information and Advice Centre took my phone calls, but always "There is no one in the office, leave my telephone number for a call-back." They never called me back! On the 10th June I wrote to the Head of the Royal British Legion Events Department. No reply.

There may still be time to get a mention in the Armistice Day Cenotaph Broadcast and to take part in the Royal Albert Hall ceremony.

Do I continue to campaign?

If I succeed I will be the one wearing my 'uniform', helmet and carrying my bucket lamp!

What's in a Name?

In the whole of the three years I was a Bevin Boy (March 1945 to March 1948), working in the West Yorkshire Coalfields, I was never known by my real Christian name of Phil or Philip. Both in the hostel at Castleford and at The Prince of Wales Colliery, Pontefract I was called 'Win' (from Winchester). But when I was transferred to Ackton Hall Colliery, Featherstone I was called Sid. I don't know why. In our dormitory at the hostel I became friends with Charlie, a Bevin Boy from Flamborough, North Yorkshire; (he worked at another pit); we attended dances and went around together.

At Ackton Hall I got chummy with another Bevin Boy, Rex, who only lived 'down the road' at Pontefract. On occasions he would invite me over to his house for Sunday lunch with his parents. When we were 'demobbed' I promised to keep in touch with Charlie and Rex (they didn't know one another) by correspondence (no email in those days!).

This form of correspondence lasted for sixty nine years until by coincidence, they both died in the same year, 2017, Charlie in the February and Rex the following December. I had to be careful in writing letters to them as Charlie would start 'Dear Win' whereas Rex started 'Dear Sid', so I had to sign off 'Win!' to Charlie's letters and Sid to Rex's letters. Very confusing!

I only met up with them once in all those years. My wife and I spent a holiday in 1965 at Scarborough and there Rex brought his wife and children over to our hotel. A few days later Charlie fetched us to take us to Flamborough where his parents ran a farm - there we met his brother and was shown around the farm. I still keep in touch with Roland, the brother, who has only moved a few miles away to Buckton. A strange world, isn't it?

Phil Yates.

70 Years on - A 'Bevin Boy' Remembered. (Part 1)

In 1943 there was a serious shortage of labour in the coal-mining industry so a scheme was introduced by the then Minister of Labour, The Right Honourable Ernest Bevin, whereby every tenth man registering for National Service would be directed to work in the coal mines instead of the armed services. The system of ballot was by drawing a number (0-9) each month and those men whose registration

number ended with the number drawn were placed in the coal-mining industry - there was no choice. The Emergency Powers Act was in place and so the 'Bevin Boy' scheme was born. This is the story of one reluctant conscript miner.

On 17th October 1944 I was instructed by letter from the Ministry of Labour and National Service to submit myself to a medical examination on 24th October for National Service. I duly attended, and being of sound mind and body, was passed A1.

As I had been a member of the 1925 Squadron Air Training Corps and wishing to train for the Royal Air Force I returned home to await my call up. It arrived just before Christmas 1944 in the usual brown OHMS envelope with a rail travel warrant, instructing me to report to Creswell Colliery for four weeks training, starting on 15th January 1945 after which I would be posted to another colliery for the rest of my service - duration not specified.

On Monday, 15th January, I boarded a train at Northampton station and after several changes, arrived at Creswell along with other 'Bevin Boys'. We were then taken to the hostel which was to be our home for the next four weeks.

The hostel consisted of Nissen huts, each containing twelve beds and lockers. A canteen was provided and other facilities included a snack bar, library and rest room.

After breakfast on the first day we were given one hour of physical training (P.T.) after which we were taken to a classroom and shown photographs and diagrams of the workings of a colliery by our instructors - retired mine workers who had been called back to try and turn a group of disinterested conscripts into miners!

After a few days of P.T. and classroom lessons our attention was beginning to wane, as shown by the number of trainees nodding off during the afternoon classes! It was then decided by our instructors that the next day would be the time for us to go down t'pit. After our morning P.T. session we were taken to the pithead where, ten at a time, we entered the cage (lift car) and were lowered gently to a sanitized pit bottom with whitewashed walls and bright lighting where we were introduced to the technicalities of coal mining.

We were shown such interesting (?) things as how to erect a pit prop and how to build a pack of stone to stop the roof falling in. We were also taken on a walk into the mine and shown the workings of the haulage system. To those of us from an engineering background it all seemed very Heath Robinson.

The training continued six days a week for the rest of our stay at Creswell. Our only respite was on the Sundays when we were free to explore the surrounding countryside - Creswell Craggs and Welbeck Abbey were within walking distance. Two of my fellow conscripts at this time were film star Harry Fowler and pianist Ivor Raymonde.

On the last Friday of our month's training we were told which colliery we would be going to on the following Monday and given our travel warrants for home and our new colliery - in my case Swanwick in Derbyshire.

After a relaxing weekend, fortified by my mother's home cooking, I set out on the Monday morning to travel north. After several changes of train I arrived at Derby and caught a bus and alighted at Swanwick in pouring rain, where I discovered Swanwick colliery was in Alfreton! I carried on walking to Alfreton - still in pouring rain - with my suitcase and eventually found Swanwick colliery where I was directed

to a small brick built building with the legend "Manager" on the door. I knocked and entered to find the manager sitting by a roaring coal fire (perks of the job?). When I informed him of the purpose of my visit he replied "Report to the bank and see the Training Officer at 8.00 am tomorrow". He then returned to warming himself by the fire. Having just completed four weeks training, learning all the technicalities of mining, I knew that 'the bank' was not just a place for keeping money, but the term also meant the area around the pithead.

Before leaving I asked about accommodation and he informed me that if I went to the Council offices 'they have a list'. After leaving the manager's office I asked a passing miner where the Council offices were. He said he was going home that way and would show me. This was the first of many friendly faces I met during my stay in the area. On arrival at the Council offices I was given an address where I could be accommodated in Byron Avenue. Here I met the Woodfield family who would provide full board accommodation for thirty shillings (£1.50) a week. The family consisted of Mr & Mrs Woodfield, one daughter of fourteen, a son of ten and a younger daughter. Also living with the family were two other lodgers who worked on opencast sites - all these in a three bedroom Council house!

Next morning I set off with my packed lunch box (snap tin) and water bottle (Dudley) and met the Training Officer who, after a short question and answer interview, took me to the pithead baths where I was given a key for my two lockers, one of which was for working clothes and the other for my 'best'. I was then taken to the 'screens' where I was to work for the next few weeks on day shift (6.00am - 2.00 pm) before transfer to underground work. The screens were an area where the coal was washed and graded before being loaded into rail wagons for despatch to customers.

My job was to stand at the side of a moving conveyor belt and remove any stones or other debris from the coal as it passed slowly by. A very boring job!. To do this task I wore an old pair of gloves to protect my hands and was ridiculed by the other workers as 'soft' - not something that would happen in today's health and safety culture! Halfway through the shift the belt stopped and we all went to sit in a wooden cabin to eat our 'snap' (lunch) and drink from our 'Dudley' (water container).

Most of the older workers smoked pipes or chewed tobacco, so with fourteen men cooped up in a hut approximately 12ft x 14 ft with the door closed, it soon became thick with smoke and not conducive to eating! I moved outside and sat on some baulks of timber alongside the railway tracks. Fortunately it was dry although cold, but the time soon passed and we all went back to the belt and finished our shift.

This was the pattern of my work for the next few weeks until it was felt that I was sufficiently 'trained' to be allowed to work underground. That day came and I boarded the cage with other workers for a very fast drop of a quarter of a mile to pit bottom - very different to the gentle trip at Creswell!

Ken Peasgood.

Memories from Martin Wood.

I had an unusual start to my working life, and I think this is why I feel as fit and ready for work as I do. I was called up when I was 18, just after the 1939 - 45 war ended. "Call up" into the services carried on for a while after the war finished, and I

didn't feel like sitting around and doing rather silly pseudo-military marching exercises in a big open yard, so I opted to do my national service in the coal mines. A contact in the mining world recommended going to the "Deep Duffryn" Colliery, in the Aberdare Valley in South Wales - this lasted until from about May 1945 - December 1947. I chose the Deep Duffryn colliery as it had quite modern pit-head baths - a friend told me that one could get much nicer 'digs' if one returned washed and clean from the pit every day! If one came home black all over with coal dust, which had stuck to one's body with sweat down underground, one was provided with a large towel to stand on, in front of the fire in the living room, to have a 'head to toe' wash to get all the coal off, before dressing in normal daily clothes. Landladies who prided themselves on the state of their houses, didn't welcome such lodgers! I remember it as a particularly interesting, educative and rewarding part of my life, having come from a totally different, university-oriented environment, centred in a substantial country house, where everything was a little bit more prim and proper. I was placed, as a collier's boy, together with the experienced collier to whom I was allocated. We loaded about 20 tons of coal per day into steel wagons each holding about a ton when full. We would scribble our allocated number, with white chalk on the sides of these tubs, so that the 'weighman' near the pit head, could allocate the weight of "our" coal into his records, before they were then drawn away by pit ponies to a big rail yard, re weighed ready to be sent down underground again.

You might find that hard to believe, coming as I did from a totally different section of society - academic philosophy and medical - but I have always veered to engineering and have welcomed any activities which broaden my horizon. I enjoy physical labour and have a strong and mobile body, and the years I was mining were not only quite a pleasure but added a great deal to my general knowledge about the world and how it all works. I still look back on my days in the mine with genuine pleasure.

Working at the coal face in the Deep Duffryn Colliery in Mountain Ash, Glamorgan, was not only extremely interesting to me, but pretty tough going. I enjoyed getting to know a section of society I had never mixed with before. I've always been interested in geology and I have a sound body and have always enjoyed quite hard work. I found that what I saw at the coal face, and on the roof above the actual coal, was fascinating - fossils and all - but I am bound to say that I did not often tell my working colleagues that this was so, because they would have thought I was bonkers! But I was born with an outlook on the world, in which I liked to 'achieve', and learn anything and everything I could from the world around me. I was born the youngest - the 5th - in my family, and we were all the same. Alas my eldest brother, who had trained as an architect, and volunteered for the navy at the beginning of the 39/45 war, was killed during the retreat from the Adriatic. The rest were all medical so I was rather on my own when it came to anything to do with materials and construction - and hard physical work in difficult surroundings every day - but I really enjoyed it.

This is just a gentle reminder to ask you to pay your subscription of £5 for your twice yearly Newsletter to be sent to you, to me at the address above please.

With Many Thanks,

Anne.