



THE BEVIN BOYS ASSOCIATION

FOUNDED 1989

CHAIRMAN Anne.E.Lane. Tel: 01275 463703.

SECRETARY	TREASURER	NAT. REUNION	ARCHIVIST	MEMBERSHIP, SALES, NEWSLETTER
D. Elizabeth Todd, "The Chalet", 24 Oldfield Way, Heswall, Wirral, Merseyside. CH60 6RG Tel. 0151 342 3703	Harry Parkes, 12 Stonesby Vale, West Bridgford, Nottingham, Notts. NG2 7UR Tel. 0115 8465354	Margaret Rose, 4. Cambria Close, Sidcup, Kent. DA15 8BW. Tel. 0208 3004511	Barbara McElroy, 37.Danforth Drive, Framlingham, Suffolk. IP13 9HH Tel. 01728 724533	Anne E. Lane, Snipelands, Bourton Combe, Flax Bourton, Bristol. N.Somerset. BS48 3QL Tel. 01275 463703.

NEWSLETTER FOR SPRING 2016.

Chairman's Message.

We would like to know of any forthcoming 90th birthdays, we know a lot of our Bevin Boys will be celebrating this event this or next year. Please send names and dates to myself or the Secretary, Liz Todd.

It is with great pleasure I am able to announce that Harry Parkes, our Treasurer, was awarded the British Empire Medal (BEM) in this New Years Honours List!! A Very well-deserved honour which recognises his commitment to establishing a permanent Bevin Boys Memorial at the National Arboretum, Alrewas. I am sure you will all join me in sending him MANY Congratulations!! Well done Harry!

You will notice that there is a piece about Dick, a Pit pony from South Wales. Roy Peckham of the Fforest Uchaf Horse and Pony Centre. Charity No 1002933 Registered address. Fforest Uchaf Farm, Penycoedcae, Pontypridd, Rhondda, Wales. UK CF37 1PS Tel: 01443 480327. Would welcome you to visit or if you would like to donate. You can shop on-line and help the Ponies without any cost to you at www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/pitpony or go to www.visitpitponies.co.uk

Also, if anyone has any written or oral memories or any documents, which perhaps the family don't wish to keep, could they be forwarded to our new Archivist, Barbara McElroy please? They will then be added to the boxes at the Imperial War Museum. These are very important as it is part of this country's history.

I wish you all a Happy and Healthy 2016,

Anne. (Lane)

MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY.

We have been fortunate in a mild but very wet winter. Easier to get about; but I hope you have not been affected by the floods!

Do you remember the notes on the P.L.U.T.O. Project in the Autumn Newsletter? Judy Caine sends this update.

"The HLF funded project PLUTO, 'How Corby men & women helped with the Second World War,' is now nearing completion. This is, the story of how the flexible HAMEL pipe made in Corby, plus HAIS, the cable supplied 1 million gallons of fuel per day to 55,000 allied vehicles for D Day. The project consists of 12 podcasts – each of 3 to 5 minutes duration available free of charge to groups & individuals on the 'Our Corby' website. These will be, plus an exhibition and model, on display at the Corby Heritage Centre from 29th March".

The project will be launched in the Council Chamber at the Corby Cube Friday 13th May at 7-9pm For details and to attend the launch (including tea or coffee) please contact Judy Caine (Project Manager) on 01536744070.

Dr Joel Morley a social historian at Essex University, has been interviewing Bevin Boys about their

attitudes to their service in the war. He makes the following comment. The interviews so far have provided a fascinating insight into how varied Bevin Boys attitudes towards their war-time service were, how different their war time experiences, and how they feel about the remembrance of Bevin Boys today. He is happy to hear from anyone else prepared to be interviewed. Ring him on 07875 621 629 if interested.

Henry Daniels has sent an interesting account of his service as an optant, different than those experiences of many Ballotees. We are only able to print extracts, due to space, but his account will go to the Imperial War Museum to be added to the memorabilia.

Here is a very small part of his story.

'Due to a perforated ear-drum I failed the medical for both Royal Navy & Royal Air Force, but could opt to go down the mine; which was my choice. I got my call up papers to report to Creswell Colliery for a months training after which I was given a choice of colliery I chose Pilsey in Derbyshire. It was very old and well behind the times. Men wore cloth caps, no helmets, and took water down the pit in a glass water bottle. I started work at pit bottom, after a few hours I was sent to pit top with a broken wrist. When I returned to work I was standing by a tub of coal - a black pony called Sweep came running towards me. There was just not room for the two of us, so I dived onto the tub of coal. Unfortunately I landed on a big lump of coal and injured my ribs in a second accident!

Henry told me he had always intended to put his experiences down for his family to read and only started the task after I encouraged him, as I am always pleased to receive stories and different accounts of your experiences which we can send to the Imperial War Museum.

We have two family members wanting anyone who might remember their father / husband during their service to contact them. If any thoughts come to mind, ring the number given below.

Maggie North would like any memories of her father GEOFFREY ALLSOPP who came from Silby, Leicestershire where his father and grandfather had a butchers shop. He also lived at Mount Sorrel at one time. Tel 01572 723635

Mandy Wood is hoping someone may remember her husband GRAHAM AUBREY TUCKFIELD from Huddersfield, who was in digs in Chesterfield. Tel 01865 390317 mob 07703501265. Finally, an interesting inquiry from Maureen Kennedy in Scotland. She is a local historian and has a map dated 1947, showing a barrack type building as Bevin Boys /P.O.W. Hostel .as no official document exist to verify this, Maureen would hope someone may remember something about the use of the buildings at that time ? Any information would be appreciated. Please leave your name and phone number on her answer phone 01383 610800 -she will always return your call. Or write to her at 14, Thistle Street, Cowdenbeath, Fife, KY4 8NF. Here's hoping the mystery of dual use, Bevin Boys and Prisoners of War, both using the same building can be solved!

Sadly so many Bevin Boys did not talk about their time down the mines and now family members want their stories for the family archive. If you haven't recorded your experiences do so now.

See Barbara Mc Elroy our Archivist's section. Do ring me if I can be of help 0151 342 3703.

With all good wishes for the year ahead,

D. Elizabeth Todd (Liz)

MESSAGE from the TREASURER.

Bevin Boys Association General Fund Half Year Financial Report.

In the period from the beginning of this financial year we received donations to offset all of our expenses up to January 2016. Since then our income has declined.

The Newsletter Subscriptions will be able to cover the cost of production and postage

As the second half year traditionally involves less expenditure there could be a small outgoing from our bank balance which we are well able to accommodate.

Harry Parkes BEM.

ARCHIVIST

Thank you for voting me in as archivist at the last AGM. Since then I have been busy! I have now sent copies of all the mine pictures I had in Derby to Anne and these will be put onto our website.

In March Harry Parkes and I visited the Imperial War Museum met the curator Anthony Richards and had an interesting talk with him. We then viewed the Bevin Boy Archives which amounted to nine boxes of varied contents including many photos and one box of about a dozen memoirs of Bevin Boys which leads me to ask "Have you told your Bevin Boy story to anyone and is it written down?" The one thing I have learnt in attending Bevin Boy reunions for the last four years is that you all have very individual stories to tell as you were posted all over the UK, in varied lodgings and mines. Your story is of course important to your family but it is important to the nation and needs to be preserved for future generations and historians although you may not think so!

The Imperial War Museum welcomes any further Bevin Boy photos and memories which we can pass on. If you give your permission we can also put it on our website. If you prefer your name not to be included please say so. At The AGM I got talking to John Smilie and he had some fascinating tales of his time clearing a disused mine. I asked him to send any further memories and he sent me four pages about his time in the mines. These have been duly typed up and will form part of our archives. I am happy to do the same for anyone else and if you feel you can no longer write things down at length and have no-one else to do it on your behalf, please give me a ring and I will endeavour to make notes whilst on the phone.

My next task is to return to the Museum to make a full inventory of contents. Anyone can view these archives upon request, so if you or your family are interested please contact the curator mentioned above.

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. With, of course, your subscription of £5 to continue receiving the twice yearly Newsletter! I would also like to thank so many of you who have also enclosed a little extra for the general funds!

If any Bevin Boys wives, 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, e-mail address is alananne2749@gmail.com

Best wishes,
Anne.

Sales.

Total Sales for the year 2015 were £136.79p. 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	Blue Enamel Badge	@ £2.00
Miners Lamp Keyring	@ £4.00	Digging Up the Past	@ £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

Time creeps up on us and the year is well underway. Whatever your circumstances may be, I hope that the year has brought hope and a peaceful, healthy year ahead. Looking ahead, we must first note that the reunion this year, 2016 is booked for **SEPTEMBER** and not the usual month.

Date Monday September 12th to Friday September 16th 2016

Venue The Clarendon Hotel, Blackheath, London SE3.

The AGM day has not yet been confirmed, because we are waiting for our special guest to name the date of their visit to us. However, the week will follow the usual pattern of meeting our friends, relaxation, eating! visiting glorious Greenwich, the Thames Barrier and much more. Remember, that with your English bus pass the bus from outside the hotel will take you to Greenwich, etc.

I know that this reunion will be as happy as the previous visit. Staff and Hotel Manager, Mr Milton are eagerly waiting to greet you again, still saying that the Bevin Boys are the best bunch ever – so – keep up the good work!

At this stage I cannot give an exact cost detail, but the Hotel Manager has pegged your hotel cost as it was in 2014. That is a very kind gesture on his part. The Committee looks forward to meeting new Bevin Boy friends and family. The invitation is for anyone with Bevin Boy connections to join our happy group.

Recently, Geoff and I visited Norfolk to join the celebration of a Bevin Boy's 90th Birthday. It was a lovely occasion with Sunday lunch for Bevin Boys and family. We could not stay on for the open house on the Wednesday but felt that the journey had been worthwhile – one little hic-cup though – because just five minutes before reaching our destination, we were involved in a three car crash which wrote off our car and on a wet night, left us stranded! What lovely people there are about, we were taken to a house where Geoff gave a potted history of the Bevin Boys!

The saying is – that a friend is someone you have yet to meet – how true! I hope that we use our reunion time to prove the truth of that saying.

The Committee and I with Geoff, very much look forward to meeting you again on September 12th 2016.

It would be helpful to have a rough idea if you have an interest in the 2016 reunion. Please send to me a stamped and addressed envelope and as soon as the details have been finalized I will send to you the appropriate form.

PS.

We are not planning to be locked in the Houses of Parliament, as in 2014, - but it did add spice to our outing!

Return address:-

Mrs M Rose,

4 Cambria Close,

Sidcup,

Kent. DA15 8BW

Telephone: 0208 300 4511

With all good wishes,
Margaret.

AREA REUNION's for 2016.

If any Area Representatives would like to send in news of their Reunions or Activities - I would be pleased to publish them in the Newsletter. I would also like to thank the Area Reps, past and present, for all their hard work in arranging reunions, etc.

Cheshire, Lancs & North Wales. June 8th - A lunch.in Heswall, Wirral. Please ring **Liz Todd** for details if not on the usual list.

EAST ANGLIA - Sunday June 12th a lunch in Norwich - please ring **Margaret Rose** for details. Bevin Boys family and friends, all are welcome.

ESSEX & NE LONDON : The reunion this year will be on Tuesday July 12th. from 11am. at the Mersea Vineyard, Rewsalls Lane, East Mersea. CO5 8SX. Just give me (**Eric Johnson** Area Rep) a quick phone call on 01206-384077 to let us know you are coming.

SOUTH WEST. - Monday 20th June a reunion lunch at The Star, with bus stops outside! Hope to see everyone again. Please ring **Anne Lane** if you wish to attend.

National Service Conscripts Annual Reunion

If any members would like to take part in The Annual National Conscripts Reunion and march at the National Memorial Arboretum Alrewas, Staffordshire on Sunday 24th June 2016.

Please contact Harry Parkes **as soon as possible**, so he can make arrangements with the organisers for seating etc. for you and your family/ friends, before the end of April.

Harry Parkes BEM. Tel: 01158 465354

The Last Pit Ponies.

Dick was one of the 1990's Pit Ponies and he last worked at one of the mines we regularly visited high up overlooking Glynneath. He lived and worked in deplorable conditions and with his friend Jake hauled coal in a "journey" of coal drams from the underground coalface through the pitch-black tunnels to the daylight of the Colliery yard. There they tipped their load. We became aware of the Colliery when we heard of the death of Pit Pony "Sam" there. We monitored Dick, Jake & Yanto for several months and were able to use their plight to get the media to listen. No help came and Yanto disappeared without trace one weekend. We tried our best to find out where he had gone but to no avail. The HSE would not help either, despite our evidence of Yanto's malnourishment and therefore protection under the 1956 Act as a pit pony being kept in an unfit condition. Our size, and the fact that we could not shout too loud until we had hard evidence of abuse left us vulnerable. Jake has been sold on and we don't yet know where he is.

Dick is 30 years old and was rented out to numerous small collieries by his owner, who specialised in providing rented Pit Ponies to mines. He is about 13:2hh a Piebald gelding and now seems in reasonable health, he has worked so hard all his life and certainly deserves his retirement. At Upper Rhas Bryn Oer, South Wales he was the only pony there bringing coal from the 2'9" Elled seam. He lived around the yard with an old British Rail covered van for shelter. He has a coal dust cough and we keep him away from dusty situations as much as possible. He will move into the new Pit Pony Stable block when it's finished. This Centre offered to buy them from the owner with other Pit Ponies he had, Unfortunately, Dick was sold as a riding pony but the family said Dick did not suit, so we were able to buy him for £450:00 from the family before they offered him for sale. He is settling in very well. You should see Dick & Steel together. They are so grouchy with each other, like two Victor Meldrews! Dick was such a mild natured and easygoing pony. Jake was much more difficult to work and often Dick would work and Jake would be left in the stable, as he tended to wander off, so he was generally left shut in.

The conditions were appalling. Apparently Sam died when exhausted, the coal drams he was pulling ran away with him and eventually crushed him to death. We put such effort in to highlight the plight of these to the HSE, RSPCA and other organisations that we hoped would help. Thankfully the colliery closed after a prohibition order put on by the HSE following a diesel spill.

Roy J Peckham of Fforest Uchaf Horse & Pony Centre.

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

Many thanks,
Anne.

Memories of a Bevin Boy.

My name was balloted to work in the Coal Mines in August 1944. I had been at the University of Glasgow for over two years studying Mechanical Engineering and was waiting to be called up to the Royal Navy, having had an interview, a medical and been accepted. I appealed against the ballot but to no avail, as Ernest Bevin seemed to allow no one to win. I chose to go to South Wales as it was nearer to my home in Hertfordshire and I had relations in Gloucester. So off to the Training Centre at Oakdale I went for four weeks. I made friends with an optant of eighteen who slept next to me in the dormitory, who came from Merthyr. I learnt later that he was killed in an accident to a cage. After training I was assigned to stay on and work at Oakdale Colliery, living in the village with the family of an ex-miner who had pneumoconiosis and worked in the pit baths.

I found the conditions at the coal face horrible! The dark, the dirt, (mostly stone) and dust (mostly coal) for a complete shift just tolerable; the smell of coal for a shift, and of bodies which tended to go, with the passage of air, along the face; the privation of body functions (paper was forbidden in the mine and water was for drinking only), finally the only place for rest at break time, for nourishment, was on the stone floor with your back against some support. These were the bad points.

The good point was the MINERS. They were always kind to me and sympathetic to the Bevin Boys. Of course there was plenty of good natured banter and they gave me a nickname. I have and will always defend them against verbal antagonism. They are a happy breed of men, certainly amongst themselves. I was amazed at their euphoria when Labour won the convincing election victory in 1945. At last, they assumed, that the disliked coal owners would be people of the past. I wondered!

In May 1946 I was released from the Mines for medical reasons and had to complete my National Service in the Army (Royal Engineers) which lasted until October 1947 when I returned to University. I was treated better on leaving the Army than on leaving the Mines.

From the time of starting work in the Mines, I began to understand the hardship of the Miners and the Mining communities in the 1920s and 1930s. This led me to become politically conscious and I still am. I have always tended not to trust politicians. This is exemplified by the destroying of the Bevin Boy records in 1948 when someone in Government must have known that this was wrong and again the reactions of the Government at and after the Aberfan Disaster.

It has always surprised me that no one seemed to look after the Bevin Boys once they were working, either individually or as a group, not even the Union (NUM) who had our membership subscriptions from our pay packets. Our thanks should go to those of us who formed this Association in 1989, so at last we were an entity and the public saw this. May the Association continue as long as necessary.

These are my memories of a South Wales Coal Mine. I believe that Bevin Boys from other British Coal Fields have similar but not the same experiences as mine. (pun not meant).

Donald R Goode.

Les Raymond's memories of being a Bevin Boy Part 1

His father, a veteran of, the First World War also served in India in the regular Army after the war. He was also doing his bit for the Second World War and had become an officer in the Home Guard. Les had joined the Army cadets at 15 being strongly influenced by his father's example. Les would parade twice a week and at weekends there would be a church parade. Additionally he undertook training .The expectation was that should the war still be on then he was bound for the Army.

Then came the fateful letter, 'The Government's decided that the essential man power requirements of the coalmining industry should be met by making underground coalmining an alternative to service in the Armed Forces.... your name is amongst those selected'. The shock for Les was enormous as it was for virtually every Bevin Boy who received a copy of this letter. He had never even considered the possibility of being called up to be 'sent down'. His was a very rural background and this was an alien environment and concept.

Like so many other Bevin Boys he did appeal and still has a signed letter from R.A.Butler (then Minister of Education and local M.P) saying 'of course the young man is bound to be disappointed that he cannot continue the training which he has received as a cadet... but one could quite see how difficult it would be for the Ministry if they started making exceptions.' Many Bevin Boys would have received a similar response.

A further letter (dated 7th November 1- his birthday was on the 10th) stated that he was to report to Cresswell Colliery in Nottinghamshire for 4 weeks training. He was 18 on the Friday and off on the Monday joining many others like him and unlike him. Young men truly from all walks of life at Cresswell Training Centre the curriculum was a 44 hour week of which Physical Training accounted for 25% or twelve and a half hours per week. It wasn't popular and because many of the recruits were reluctant to be there, was not always well attended defying the authorities to try to do something about it. Les recalled a first session where they had to turn up in vests, shorts and pit boots, none having anything else to suitable to wear. No kit was provided. It was mid November and snow was on the ground, some choice words were uttered by the reluctant pupils and there was rebellion. After that they wore warmer outfits.

After a month at Cresswell colliery Les was moved to Glapwell Colliery in Derbyshire and moved to the Mansfield Hostel located just over the border in Nottinghamshire. Les knew he needed to pay heed to his lessons in order to survive in this dangerous environment. The fortnight of further training was a continuation of the initial training such as how to shackle up the tubs, the dangers to be aware of and so on. There was a lot of training centred upon the gas in the mines as this was an ever present danger. This training was more intense and more 'hands on' as they learnt how to put into practice what they had learnt in the classroom. There was a great deal of emphasis on Health and Safety- understandably as not only was this a dangerous environment but 'green' recruits could endanger the lives of others. The Bevin Boys were exhorted to keep their hands tucked in like they were in a pram if they didn't want to lose them when in the trucks going on rails.

Up at 4 am catch the 5 am bus and down the pit to start work at 6am for the day shift. Les would have to go through the pit head baths taking off his clean clothes, stowing them in the locker and putting on his clothes for working in. He was somewhat luckier than Bevin Boys in other pits as Glapwell was a more modern pit. In some there were no pithead baths and miners had to leave their better clothes hoisted up on a pulley. When they returned to the surface they had to put their cleaner clothes over their dirty bodies and walk back to have a bath at their lodgings or hostel.

So Les put on his working clothes (not many as the pit was so hot) and reported for duty. A miner was showing a group of Bevin Boys a pit pony and asked how old the pony was- Les being the young lad he was said 'I had to go and open my big mouth and said you can tell from the teeth and proceeded to go and look and pronounce the age of the pony'- that was it- He was allocated to work with a pony which wasn't quite what he had anticipated. However his was called Tackle and was a docile hard working pony- unlike some of the others. Les would go down the pit and exchange a disc for a lamp, collect his pony and walk the 2½ miles to the heading. The ponies in Glapwell were well treated and examined for any scrapes or injuries upon return to the underground stables but memories of other Bevin Boys show this wasn't always the case in other mines.

Les had been spotted as a hard working strong young man and a few of the local regular miners, but one in particular Frank Wragg, befriended this country boy. After about three months Frank asked for Les to be moved to his gang from being with his pony. Les was to be a ripper on this gang and he stayed there for the rest of the war. It was hard physical work but much better paid and Frank was to become a life long friend.

The Bevin Boys only had one week off per year plus Christmas day. As many Bevin boys lived far away from home a trip back for anything other than the yearly holiday meant absenteeism. For Les the trip from Mansfield to Sudbury could take as long as 24 hours each way if connections were missed. Even today he can reel off the stations – each one a stop. Sudbury to Glemsford, Long Melford, Cavendish, Clare, Stoke, Stummer? Haverhill, then change for Cambridge then to March and Ely then to Peterborough. Mainline to Grantham the cross country to Nottingham and then to Mansfield. One way of getting some extra time Les was advised was to go to the doctor with a bad back. This would result in a week off to 'rest' and thus the Bevin Boy could get home to see his family. However for one Bevin Boy this backfired badly as he decided to create his own illness and went to the doctor complaining of pain in his abdomen. Before he knew it he was in hospital and was minus his appendix. He only wanted a few days off but ended up with 6 weeks out!

Part 2 will be in the Autumn Newsletter.

Editors comment.

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