



# THE BEVIN BOYS ASSOCIATION

FOUNDED 1989

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

## SECRETARY

D. Elizabeth Todd,  
"The Chalet",  
24 Oldfield Way,  
Heswall, Wirral,  
Merseyside.

CH60 6RG

Tel. 0151 342 3703

Website: [www.bevinboysassociation.co.uk](http://www.bevinboysassociation.co.uk)

## TREASURER & ARCHIVIST

Barbara McElroy,  
37.Danforth Drive,  
Framlingham,  
Suffolk.

IP13 9HH

Tel. 01728 724533

## MEMBERSHIP, SALES, & NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Anne E. Lane,  
Snipelands,  
Bourton Combe,  
Flax Bourton,  
Bristol. N.Somerset.  
BS48 3QL  
Tel. 01275 463703.

email: [bevinboys1943@gmail.com](mailto:bevinboys1943@gmail.com)

## NEWSLETTER FOR SPRING 2022.

### Chairman's Message.

**Welcome to Spring 2022**, goodbye to a very wet and windy winter and of course hopefully a better year ahead and maybe a holiday?

We are going to try using Zoom for our AGM this year, a 'dummy run' which will be just a social get together on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> October with the **AGM on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> October** both at **11am** in the morning. Perhaps you can ask your family if they can help you with this? So email me with your email address and I will send you the log in details nearer the time.

It is with great sadness I have to tell you that Harry Parkes, who was our Treasurer for a number of years, sadly died on 8<sup>th</sup> March. He was always so supportive of the Association.

I was talking to Dave, one of our members last month, and he was telling me how when he was working for the GPO as a Telephone Engineer he had to drive to Exmoor and the only way he could get his Morris Minor van, (which only had three forward gears) up Porlock Hill, which is very steep with a 1 in 4 gradient, was to reverse all the way up with the door open and his head out to see his way!!! Of course back then there was very little traffic on the roads, thank goodness!

I wish you all a Happy and Healthy 2022,

**Anne. (Lane)**

### MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY.

I hope you and your family have kept safe and well during the pandemic. All restrictions have now been lifted but we still need to be vigilant and take care. We now have the pleasure of seeing the snowdrops and daffodils in the Spring sunshine.

Now something more to celebrate. The National Coal Mining Museum Wakefield will by the end of March, have officially opened the Miners Memorial Garden. Here visitors can view the sculpture holding our donated glass check, inscribed '**Lives Lived, Lives Lost**' to which we contributed on behalf of all Bevin Boys.

Anyone able to visit there would I am sure find the trip worthwhile.

Always here to help in whatever way I can. To everyone keep safe, keep well, warmest wishes,

**D. Elizabeth Todd (Liz)**

### MESSAGE from the TREASURER.

There has not been a great deal of movement on our account so not much to report. We still have a healthy balance which should cover any further expenditure. Thank you to all those who continue to send donations.

Some time ago we purchased a glass disc in remembrance of all Bevin Boys who served during the period 1943-1948. The memorial wall containing these discs is now complete and is situated in the Miners' Memorial Garden at Caphouse English Coalmining Museum,

Wakefield. The garden will be open from 26<sup>th</sup> March if either you or any of your family wish to visit at any time.

Barbara McElroy.

### ARCHIVIST

As life begins to return to some form of normality the number of phone calls and emails have diminished so again there is very little to report. I have had a couple of enquiries but nearly always we have to say we cannot help with individual histories as so many records were destroyed.

I have finally managed to send off all archive material to the Imperial War Museum. For a long time they were either closed or not accepting donations. If you watched 'Secrets of the Imperial War Museum' on television recently you may have spotted the archive store at Duxford which now houses all our Bevin Boy Archives. Your donations have been so important, because as I have already stated so many official records have gone.

I hope that you are all keeping well and that you are able to enjoy the sunshine as Spring boots out Winter.

Best Wishes, Barbara McElroy.

### MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT.

Sadly we now have 1842 names in the Book of Remembrance.

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 widows, partners or any relatives or friends 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. See above for my address and Telephone number.

Anne Lane.

### Sales.

For all Sales, please apply to Mrs Anne Lane, Snipelands, Bourton Combe, Flax Bourton, Bristol. BS48 3QL. Tel: 01275 463703. for details of how to pay. We are thinking of changing our Bank, because of charges being made by HSBC.

**Please add £1 for the lighter items & £2 for the book, as it is expensive to post.**

Blazer Badge @ £10.00 Digging Up the Past @ £10.00

Miners Lamp Keyring @ £6.00 Bevin Boy Lapel Badge @ £5.00

Bevin Boy Banner Postcard, 1 Black & White postcard & 2 colour & 1 black & white prints of A4 size all from A Bevin Boy Remembers. **ALL POSTCARDS & A4 PRINTS @ £0.20 each.**

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

*Anne Lane.*

### AGM 2022

The decision was made at the 2021 AGM that because of age and difficulty travelling the next AGM will be 'virtual' computers. Please see the details already given in my section. It would be

really good to have more of you attending from home so please do ask someone for help if you need it.

### AREA REUNION's for 2022.

I would like to thank the Area Reps, for all their hard work in arranging lunches etc. **All these Reunions are dependent on Coronavirus restrictions.**

**Cheshire, Lancs & North Wales.** Ring Liz Todd 0151 342 3703 for details and if you would like to join us, all are welcome. Liz will contact recent attendees.

**SOUTH WEST.** - Maybe we can meet in May and/or October. Please ring Anne Lane on 01275 463703 if you would like to join us. We usually meet at 12 noon.

**ESSEX & NE LONDON :** Barbara McElroy will contact those who have attended recent area reunions if it goes ahead.

### Bevin Boys Association Website.

Just to remind you all that we have an **Official** Bevin Boys Association website.

Please go to:- <http://www.bevinboysassociation.co.uk> or to email [bevinboys1943@gmail.com](mailto:bevinboys1943@gmail.com)

Thank you to everyone who has submitted items for the Newsletter.

Any other memories and experiences of your time as Bevin Boys I am happy to print.

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.

### From The Tribute to Max Morgan.

On January 11<sup>th</sup>1943 Max commenced work with Morris Marshall & Poole at the age of 16½ and was with the firm for 1 year and 8 months up to 25<sup>th</sup> August, 1944.

During that time war had broken out, and on the 28<sup>th</sup> August, 1944, Max was one of 48,000 men conscripted to the mines. They were ordered by Labour Minister Ernest Bevin to work as miners when the country was in danger of running out of coal, and they were known as the Bevin Boys. They were conscripted from all walks of life and some were destined to become household names such as:-

Eric Morecambe, Nat Lofthouse (Bolton and England centre forward) and Lord Brian Rix.

Local names in the Newtown area were George Owen (the coal), Alf Boswell (Park Street), Don Evans (Cwmtwl, New Mills), Nort Lloyd (Abermule), Cyril Jones (Cefn Y Coed, Llandyssil), Ifor Bound (Llandinam), Gordon Evans (Manafon), Emyr Owen, Pontdolgoch and The Reverend John Jenkins, Mochdre.

All conscripts had no right of appeal. It was either the mines, or prison.

In 1945, the total number of collieries in Wales, England and Scotland was over 1,600.

Max began a month's training at Oakdale Training Colliery near Blackwood, Monmouth, and lodged at Oakdale Miners Hostel. Near the end of training, he went on his first pit visit to Ferndale Colliery in the Rhondda Valley. It was a 2' 6" seam of coal and Max used to say it was the first and only time that he felt a sense of claustrophobia.

At the end of his training, Max commenced work at Penallta Colliery, Hengoed, in the Rhymney Valley on 25<sup>th</sup> September, 1944. Penallta Colliery started sinking shafts in 1906 and No's 1 and 2 shafts were 783 yards and 750 yards deep respectively and were both completed in 1909. The colliery's manpower reached a peak figure of 3,208 in 1931.

It was one of the few collieries in South Wales to install in the late 1940's, the Meco-Moore Cutter Loader and this was one of the first to be adopted in British Mines. Max lodged at Ystrad Mynach Miners' Hostel for 3 years and 2 months. Before being discharged after the war had finished, officials begged Max to stay on and make mining his career and to take exams. But Max decided he was coming home to God's fresh air, and home he came, finishing in the mines on 25<sup>th</sup> November, 1947.

The colliery has since closed on November 1<sup>st</sup> 1991.

One of Max's most prized possessions was his Miners' Veterans Badge which he received on April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2008. This was awarded in recognition of his valuable contribution to the War effort some 61 years before, presented by the Minister of State for Energy. Another prized possession was presented to him by his son and daughter on his 82<sup>nd</sup> birthday. This was a silver Bevin Boy Medal with his Name and Penallta Colliery embossed on it and also showing winding gear and cages.

Max recommenced work with Morris Marshall & Poole on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1947, one week after returning from Penallta Colliery.

One of his treasured memories was when he attended the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire on Sunday, 27<sup>th</sup> June, 2010. The Arboretum comprises 150 acres of memorials and trees and is the primary focal point for remembrance outside London. Max took the Salute in the big parade behind the Bevin Boys Association Banner, along with his colleagues, wearing his old Bevin Boys helmet. He returned to the Arboretum on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2013 to be present for the unveiling of the Bevin Boys Memorial Stone by the Countess of Wessex.

Sadly Max died October 24<sup>th</sup> 2021.

### **Eric Long**

My father, Eric Long, was born in 1926 and lived in the heart of Portsmouth during the early war years. He joined the Air Training Corp and was keen to join up when he came of age which I believe was 18 years old in those days, 1944. Dad relayed to my brother and myself many times how disappointed he was, after years in the ATC he wanted to do his part for the war effort. He did not anticipate being sent down the mines for I believe was a good 3 or 4 years. He often spoke as we got older, how much hassle the Bevin Boys were given when away from the mines, as the general public would question why they were not at war and post war, he tried to avoid the subject of 'what he did in the war' because nobody had heard of the Bevin Boys, just assuming that dad had been a conscientious objector. He did tell me that whilst there was no animosity between those boys conscripted and the conscientious objectors, that different coloured helmets were worn and the two groups in his colliery at least, kept themselves apart. Dad also explained that after the war had finished, typically the Bevin Boys were impatient to get on with their lives but he had to stay down the mines for another year or so. My dad was at Olgivie Colliery in Wales. He always said that the Welsh valley 'folk' as he described them were the kindest and most down to earth people he had ever met in his long life. Dad did not have any photos of those days.

Dad was thrilled to hear about the Bevin Boys Association a few decades ago and it meant a lot to him when the Bevin Boys were able to join the Cenotaph parade on remembrance days. Dad never forgot though his days in the mines, which no doubt brought on such poor hearing which he suffered dreadfully with all his life. Dad did tell us once that

in the last year, he was part of a night survey team and in the middle of the night, he put his sandwich box on top of a wooden strut that was part of the tunnel. After he and his group had sat for a while having their middle of the night break, he reached up to retrieve his tin sandwich tin and it was completely squashed/flattened. He realised in an instant that the ground above them was moving and they ran for a safety shaft, rockfall came behind them and they spent all night in a safety shaft, pitch black quite accepting that they would probably not make it out, not least because nobody would notice their absence until the morning and there was only a limited amount of oxygen in their 'hole'. I recall asking whether he was frightened and he said not, they were all calm, submitting to the inevitable. It seemed in those days, people did not assume that they would be around for long. It was with great delight the next morning (or so they assumed as they had no idea of telling the time in the pitch black), that they heard a tapping/knocking and they returned 'the signal'. They were dug out and dad spent a few days in hospital having his minor injuries patched up and then it was back down again. I am sure that many of the Bevin Boys relay such stories to you. Perhaps this story can be shared, it may bring back memories to the surviving Bevin Boys, maybe one of them was with dad in Oligivie on that lucky night?

Dad carried on with an interest in mining and in the 1970's he formed the Cornish Mines Research Group, which comprised of half a dozen fellow interested souls who liked to spend their weekends exploring addits and mine shafts.

My fathers' interest in mines was passed down to my brother who works in environmental monitoring which at times, includes monitoring the mineral surface water from Cornish mines, during heavy rainfall. I recall myself, as child, having a hard hat and a battery pack strapped around my waist and crawling in a few dark and wet addit with dad excited at some rock/mineral that he found.

Whilst dad kept his Bevin Boy days to himself, for the reasons explained above and if I was to honest, held onto many years of frustration at being 'sent down' the mines for so many years, the recognition that the Bevin Boys received in later years gave dad some peace. For that, I am sure that I can speak for my brother and myself, that we are very grateful to the Association for advocating the importance of receiving recognition over many years. My dad was active and mentally alert until his last year, which sadly ran parallel with Covid. He just made Christmas with his family and we all miss him terribly but what a life! It's impossible to explain to my teenage son that at age 18 my dad was up at dawn and spending all day down a mine in the dark. Thank you all at the Association, the support and collaborative reaching out to dad, meant a lot to him over the years.

By Erica Peck (Eric's daughter)

Sadly Eric died December 29<sup>th</sup> 2020.

### **Do You Remember?**

This year marks the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary when there was a crisis in the coal mines. Many Colliery workers were leaving the industry to join the armed forces. Consequently there was a drastic shortage of labour to get the coal out of the pits. The Minister of Labour and National Service, The Rt.Hon.Ernest Bevin did his best trying to persuade the miners to return to their collieries without any success. He also made radio broadcasts appealing to young men between the ages of 18 and 25 to volunteer to work down the mines – again no

success. He even went as far as writing to Headmasters of boys schools proposing that boys aged 16 or over worked down the mines on leaving school – that, of course, met with severe objections from the Headmasters.

His final plan was to compulsory conscript young men from the ages of 18 to 25 to be conscripted to the mines and this, being passed by Parliament in September 1943 came into force on 2<sup>nd</sup> December the same year. And so the name of Bevin Boys came into being, named, of course, after Ernest Bevin.

The ballot lasted until April 1945 when the war in Europe was about to end. Naturally the name of Bevin was very unpopular by those conscripted, but quite honestly he had no choice.

At reunions, naturally the ballot came up in discussions and I was on the side that, although the jobs were difficult at times, we were helping our country in a time of crisis and it was important to get the coal out of the pits for various reasons and as one Bevin Boy said “If we were in the armed forces at that time we could have been killed in action (D-Day for example where as we were helping our country doing an important job”. Many of us agreed with him. The only ‘sting in the tail’ was that it took the government over 60 years to officially recognise the Bevin Boys and to present them with a badge.

**Phil Yates.** (ex- Bevin Boy)

### **Ernies Underground Army by Frank Reed - Bevin Boy 1944 to 1947**

Miners at Clifton looked after Bevin Boys well and shielded us from the worst rigours of pit life. We were initiated generously and completely into their own wonderfully solid fellowship, which was born of the eternal impending doom below and the closeness of the tightly knit community above.

The Government that had been so glad to pay for my travelling when they called me up, refused to give me a ticket back home. And there was no recognition at all. No demob suit, no gratuity, no guarantee of a job back, no medals, not even a letter from the King such as the Home Guard received. And officially there had been only unpaid leave for a week and a day yearly. Truly we had been more forgotten than the 14th Armv who had spent a terrible war in Burma. I could see the difficulties in allowing some of these benefits, for why should not regular miners with forty and fifty-year sentences receive them also? Theirs was a much greater claim. After all, I had spent years in comfortable lodgings with nobody actively trying to kill me. There had never been an enemy plane or prisoner of war camp on the horizon. My free time had been my own. I was alive. I had survived a great war with hardly a scratch. Courtesy of Mr Bevin and the miners, God bless them, I had come through the greatest and most formative experience of my life. Finally, and overwhelmingly, I had met the girl with whom I was to experience a happy friendship and marriage, with family and grandchildren to come. There could be no greater gratuity. With mixed feelings I packed my few belongings and took the meandering cross- country train home. 'Out of the hat' had served me well.

Dad's diary noted, '7 May 1947. Frank home for good.'

The family, led by brother Colin, held a party for me in the Church Room, with a large poster which said 'Welcome Home.' I felt a fraud. I had experienced a much easier war than most of my friends. Some of them would never come home again.

*Excerpts from Pages 74 & 130/131*

### Bevin Boys, a Christmas Poem.

My dad he was a Bevin boy, reluctantly he dug,  
When all he really wants to do is kill the krauts above.  
His call up papers sent him down, The deep dark pit to work,  
His war was spent in fighting coal, Alone and in the dirt  
A young man wants to fight for king, He doesn't want the job,  
But someone had to do this task you know, The man we now call Bob.  
Those boys were all the bravest kind, The dangers all around,  
Alone and in a 3 ft seam, Dragging coal from out the ground.  
No uniform, no way to show That you are doing your bit,  
A young man walking down the street, Without his service kit.  
Some People thought it was a cushy job, No gun to fight the Bosch,  
But they've not been down a deep coal pit so they're just talking tosh.  
Sometimes these brave young men were called, All sorts of horrid names,  
By folks who's men were far away, It hurt them all the same.  
'Cos bevin boys were all called up, Just like the forces men,  
Sent down because there was no coal, No choice for One in ten.  
The war had gone, the medals sent, But no one spared a thought,  
For this small band of brave young men, Who coal, they'd ably fought.  
No service medal, or DFC, They toiled away for coal,  
Till recognition came too late, For many long gone soul,  
No Bevin boys, no war machine, no hope for this fair land,  
So I must toast my father's kind, and offer them my hand.  
Without their toil we'd not be here to celebrate this day,  
So Bevin boys all o'er this land, we thank you if we may.

Written by Lee Reed (Frank's son)

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

