



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

TREASURER

Harry Parkes,
12 Stonesby Vale,
West Bridgford,
Nottingham,
Notts.
NG2 7UR
Tel. 0115 8465354

NATIONAL REUNIONS

Margaret Rose,
4. Cambria Close,
Sidcup,
Kent.
DA15 8BW.
Tel. 0208 3004511

MEMBERSHIP, SALES & NEWSLETTER

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

NEWSLETTER FOR AUTUMN 2015.

Chairman's Message.

Welcome to the Autumn Newsletter. I hope you have all had a good summer, although wetter than 2014 it has still been quite warm at times. What a lovely 'Indian Summer' we are now having! We have heard that W.T. continues to state on his website that the Association no longer exists. Our members clearly show this to be untrue, with all the appreciative feedback from the News/letters, we continue to receive. **Whenever possible refute this claim!**

It is with sadness I have to report that Peter French, who took so many of the photographs at Association events, has died quite suddenly at the beginning of July. He and Rosalind were stalwarts at many of our AGM's and Reunions.

After quite a long illness Alan Jennings also died in July. He was the Area Representative for South Wales and organized their Area Reunions after Peter Jackson retired.

We have just returned from another very successful AGM and Reunion in Derby. I have great pleasure in informing you that Barbara McElroy, the daughter of Les Raymond, has been elected to the Committee and she is now our Official Archivist. We had a great time in Derby visiting Alrewas and then Bakewell, a delightful place with lots of shops in the main street and where we, of course, sampled the famous Bakewell Pudding, which was delicious and very filling!

Wishing you all a Very Happy Christmas and a Healthy 2016.

Anne. (Lane)

MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY.

Where Are You Now?

After some very hot summer days we are now enjoying seasonal Autumn weather. We continue to receive enquiries about family members who were Bevin Boys but who spoke little of their experiences. If they can give some details of name, training and/or mine at which employed, the N/Letter can still provide some answers. Otherwise we suggest their name and date of death be recorded in The Remembrance Book, which Anne Lane our Membership Secretary & Chairman keeps. Often this provides some consolation that their name and contribution to the war effort will not be forgotten. How many remember 'the Pluto Project'? Not the Disney character or the planet as many younger friends say -- 1944 P.L.U.T.O. Pipe Line Under the Ocean. It was the Stewarts and Lloyds steelworkers in Corby, Northants who built the pipe line to carry fuel under the channel. Without this D Day may have failed. There was a Pumping Station for the fuel near the canal behind Chester Zoo. Apparently the fuel for the project was sent from America, to be refined at Stanlow, Ellesmere Port in the Wirral, it was then pumped the length of England via other stations to the Isle of Wight.

Paul Balmer (writer/ director) & Judy Caine (producer) in George Corby, Northants, aim to preserve the heritage documentation of P.L.U.T.O. They interviewed George Ralston, one of our

members three years ago for his part in the project, sadly we can no longer contact him. Does anyone have any memories or information they could contribute? Please contact Judy Caine at Tel 01536 744070 or judy@hdmediacic.co.uk a multi-media production company now in their 21st successful year.

We have had many appreciative comments about the Radio 4 programme on 27th May which went out at 11 am (The Underground Army) featuring Peter French, Harry Parkes and Geoff Rose, talking about their experiences as Bevin Boys. Sadly Peter French died three weeks later.

Anyone able to visit the Newcastle Cathedral in November will be able to see portraits of Bevin Boys taken by John Cogan to commemorate Remembrance Week. Also we have been contacted by Ariane Mak, a young lady who is a French researcher at Sorbonne and at School for Advanced Studies in Social Sciences, Paris. Her PhD thesis concerns the history of the British Coal Mining industry during the Second World War. She has now interviewed a number of Bevin Boys here, and has been encouraged by French historians and the French Mining Museum after giving a paper at an international conference organized by the museum to research further. The audience were surprised and interested to hear of the part played by Bevin Boys, as they were unaware of this episode in mining history. The paper will be published in French as part of a volume edited by the Mining Museum. The 'Bevin Boys Story' continues to spread beyond these shores!

Isabelle is trying to find details of her husband's time as a Bevin Boy. He was **Peter Graham Glover** born 6th December 1927. He worked in Ashington Colliery in Northumberland and lived in the Miner's hostel until he moved to Somerset for his last few months. He was with his friend Brian Wilson. He seems to be one of the few people who enjoyed his time as a Bevin boy and would tell her lots of stories about it.

Finally I received a poem by Doreen Mah, who belongs to a creative writing group. She had read, and been touched by the Bevin Boys plight. The poem encapsulates 'The Unsung Heroes' of whom she writes. I am sure you will appreciate her words.

UNSUNG HEROES

1. A plea was made, but few accepted,
720,000 were needed, but few accepted
Shame and stigma arose, so few accepted,
A role unwanted , so few accepted.
2. Their battle ground, so disappointing,
No uniform issued, so embarrassing,
No medals awarded, so humiliating,
No rank, no status, so belittling.
3. Through a random system,
Call up was made,
No commissions given,
to these fighting men.
4. Undervalued these men felt,
Labelled a 'conchie', these men felt,
Police questioning, these men felt,
Seeing no action, these men felt.
5. No release until 1948,
No medals awarded,
No jobs to return to
No recognition 'till 1995.
6. Acknowledgement finally given,
2007, honour finally came,
2008 Veterans' Badge finally awarded
60 years too late?
7. 2013 a memorial unveiled,
Bevin Boy Harry Parkes the designer,
Kilkenny stone a fitting reminder,
of the precious coal extracted.
8. 48,000 robbed of fighting
48,000 served for 5 years,
48,000 went down the mines,
48,000 Bevin Boys gave so much.

Remember I am always here to help with any queries or inquiries.

Best wishes for the year ahead,

Elizabeth Todd. A K A (Liz)

MESSAGE from the HON.TREASURER.

Earlier this year I received a number of comments from members concerned about the alleged illegal actions by the Swiss section of our bankers – HSBC.

Although our funds are protected under The FINANCIAL SERVICES COMPENSATION SCHEME, there is concern about their ethical behaviour.

I investigated the possible change to another bank and concluded this had difficulties.

At the June meeting of our committee they agreed to remain with HSBC until any changes in their policy warrants further consideration.

Although Bigbury Mint medal sales are down on last year, they have added a complimentary sum to bring their donation up to the 2014 amount.

Our general income and Newsletter subscriptions remain on a par with 2014.

I am pleased to present a healthy financial report for the period 01/09/2014 to 31/08/2015.

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

Harry P.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT.

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

We would like to ask if any Bevin Boys sons, daughters, grandsons or granddaughters would like to join the committee or help with keeping the Memorial clean at Alrewas. This would be once a year. The committee usually meets twice a year, once at the AGM and Reunion, and again this year near Alrewas before the Forces Day.

PLEASE, do consider this.

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

Best wishes,

Anne.

Sales.

Total Sales to date are £87.19p. For all Sales, please apply to Mrs A. Lane, Snipelands, Bourton Combe, Flax Bourton, Bristol. BS48 3QL. Tel: 01275 463703. All cheques to be made payable to **THE BEVIN BOYS ASSOCIATION**. Please add £1 for the lighter items & £2 for the books, as they are expensive to post.

Blazer Badge @ £7.50 New Blue Enamel Badge @ £2.00

Miners Lamp Keyring @ £4.00 Ladies Brooch @ £5.00

Digging Up the Past @ £10.00 The Forgotten Conscript @ £10.00

Bevin Boy Banner Postcard, 2 different Black & White postcards of prints from A Bevin Boy Remembers & 2 colour & 2 black & white prints of A4 size from A Bevin Boy Remembers

ALL POSTCARDS & A4 PRINTS @ £0.20 each

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

Anne.

AREA REUNION's in 2015.

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

You may not know, but Eric Johnson has not been so well lately, but he was able to organise his Reunion lunch as usual.

ESSEX & NE LONDON: I managed to organise a reunion for our area on 15th July. It was all pretty easy, because we know the people at the Vineyard quite well and it was just a matter of getting there and they did the rest.

We had fifteen members and partners. It was St.Swithins day and the weather was not at its best, but everyone seemed to enjoy it and asked for the same venue next year. After lunch we had a photoshoot.

In June I had a letter from Ariane Mak, who is researching the impact of the Second World War on mining communities at large, with a particular interest in the Bevin Boys 'experiment'. She had recently given a paper on Bevin Boys and was keen to interview me. I suggested she should join our Reunion and she was pleased to chat with our members over lunch. Following lunch she came to our home, where it was much quieter and carried out a recorded interview lasting about an hour. She had visited the museum in Wakefield, which she had found most interesting and told me that my colliery, Betteshanger in Kent, is to become a museum. Live and Learn!

Eric Johnson.

National Reunion & AGM

As I write these few lines, the Autumn meeting and AGM draws near. Thirty people are expected to meet in Derby, all looking forward to a happy time together and to attend the AGM. It is at this time that the business of the Association is discussed and matters arising dealt with. For those of you unable to meet this year my message is that you will be missed. With the proverbial 'eye of faith', the year of 2016 is under discussion and plans well in hand. The date for 2016 is Monday 12th September to Friday 16th September. Please note the change of month. Unfortunately, we were unable to book a hotel in Buxton for this year, although it was eleven months ahead! I can inform you that next year's date has a provisional booking confirmed; and by popular request will be in Blackheath again. Please contact me for more information.

The Committee appreciates the difficulties we all face from the challenge of age, aches and pains, but we look ahead and graciously accept whatever is put our way.

I thank all committee members for their support especially this year when for twelve months we have lived out of boxes and suitcases!

I hope that we all appreciate our membership of the Bevin Boys Association and even at this late stage; we welcome a new member to the reunion in Derby.

My contact number is 0208 300 4511 or, in an emergency, 07796 125227.

With all Best wishes to you all,

Margaret.

Bevin Boys Association Website.

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

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

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

Anne.

National Service Conscripts Annual Reunion

The Armed Forces Annual Remembrance Weekend takes place nationally on the last weekend in June. On Sunday 28th June 2015 the National Memorial Arboretum hosted a ceremony to remember all National Service Conscripts who served during and after the 1939 – 45 conflict. The Bevin Boys are always invited and encouraged to take their place.

Veterans and Standards assembled at 2pm. in front of the Saluting Base. A message from the Queen was read followed by a short Service of Remembrance, Last Post, and Two Minutes Silence, ending with reveille and laying of Wreaths.

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

The address was given by Vice Admiral Peter Wilkinson R.N. also National President Royal British Legion. The band then played 'Sunset' and the Union Flag was lowered.

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

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

Harry Parkes.

Memories from Bob Kinnear.

I read with interest the letter in the Spring Newsletter from Ronald Pearse, referring to lodgings during serving as a Bevin Boy. I had the pleasure of lodging with a family during my three and a half years as a Bevin Boy in the following circumstances:-

At the beginning of the Second World War, I and my two young brothers were evacuated to Folkestone on the Kent coast, not the best of places to be evacuated to. I left school while there, as I was then fourteen years old. My brothers were re-evacuated to South Wales, to the town of Tredegar. I got to know the family they were billeted with, so when I got my 'call up to go down' I asked to go to South Wales, then after the first meeting, which was in Newbridge, I informed the officer in charge that I had arranged my lodgings and was told to make my way to Tredegar and report to Oakdale Bevin Boy Training Centre on the Monday. The family were part of the family that my brothers' were with. I lodged with them for the whole of my National Service. The husband of the lady of the house, who had been a collier, was in the ARMY.

I also married a Welsh girl, but she unfortunately died in 2004.

The Bevin Boy Story.

In the midst of a savage war, where else but in England, could a scheme be agreed that would entail taking young men, who would normally be conscripted to fight for their country in one of the armed services, to instead be directed to help the war effort by working in the coal mines, helping to produce much needed coal for industry. Ernest Bevin, who was Minister of Labour and National Service during the war, evolved a suitable way to select those young men who were, in time, called Bevin Boys.

At the end of 1943, by which time coal reserves were down to no more than three weeks supply, the government of the day, led by Winston Churchill agreed that certain young men, instead of being directed into either Army, Navy or Air Force, would instead be sent down the coal mines to assist in the production of coal. And, between 1943 and 1948, 48,000 young men were so directed, and certainly did make a difference.

However, strangely enough, in 1948 all records regarding the Bevin Boys were apparently deliberately destroyed, and no information or evidence of their being exists. And for fifty years Bevin Boys continued to rankle at the notion that no one appeared to be aware of what they had done, in fact almost continually being referred to as ‘conscientious objectors’, being given a so-called easy option out of the armed forces. We all knew this was not so but, having not been awarded any medals for our efforts, not even a demob suit at our demobilization, or pension for disability sustained during our work or compensation to the families of those Boys killed, we could not prove what we had always felt we had been entitled to.

But, in 1995, at the special celebrations to mark the 50th Anniversary of the ending of the war, the Queen in her Guildhall speech actually mentioned the Bevin Boys, thanking, as well as others, as having helped to win the war. At long last our wishes had been granted and we were officially known.

But, even today, there are still members of the public who assume that we were not conscripts and had volunteered for work in the mines instead of fighting in one of the armed services. Whilst it is true that there were ‘optants’ as they were called, in fact less than fifty out of the 48,000 so conscripted, the vast majority had been ordered to work in the mines, even after volunteering unsuccessfully for one of the armed services, with prison being the alternative.

For sixty years we still got no official recognition. That is not until Tuesday March 25th 2008 when twenty seven especially invited Bevin Boys received a Veterans Badge (not a medal) from the hand of the then Prime Minister Gordon Brown at 10 Downing Street.

At last we had made it!

Other lapel badges were given out to Bevin Boys and Association members at suitable locations and by post over the following weeks.

It was a long time coming but we got there in the end!

This was written by Raymon Benedyk in March 2008.

Editors comment.

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

PLEASE NOTE!!

Please don't forget to send your £5 subscription to continue receiving your twice yearly Newsletter in 2016 to Anne Lane.

Cheques payable to The Bevin Boys Association.

Any amount over £5, please indicate if balance is a donation.