



THE BEVIN BOYS ASSOCIATION

FOUNDED 1989

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NEWSLETTER FOR AUTUMN 2024.

Chairman's Message.

Welcome to Autumn 2024. We used Zoom for our AGM this year again, which was quite successful and certainly a lot easier. Would any of you like to have a social get together on Zoom, perhaps in January or February? Can you ask your family if they can help you with this? If yes, email me with your email address and I will send you the log in details nearer the time.

I wish you all a Happy and Healthy 2025,

Anne. (Lane)

MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY.

What a relief we are leaving behind the wet cold summer. hopefully we will have a better Autumn!

I heard from Norman Duff who is trying once again to get the Government to grant a Medal in place of the Bevin Boy Badge, but we are going over old ground. So far I haven't heard anything more from him. Although Anne has, which looks interesting.

Did you see the TV programme on the Bevin Boys July20th? Nothing new shown that we don't already know.

I was surprised to read permission has been given for a new mine to be sunk off the North West Coast of Cumbria, retired miners in the area have protested. This has now been cancelled.

I still have requests from family members for details of their service as Bevin Boys which we do not have. Another query is 'When was the last one released?' - 1948 is the accepted date. This was after the last serving member of the armed forces was demobbed.

I hope you all have a good Autumn!

Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, so enjoy today!

Best wishes,
Liz Todd.

MESSAGE from the TREASURER.

This has been a quiet year with our balance generally holding steady although there is a small underlying deficit. This is planned as we have plenty of funds for our needs so it would be wrong to amass more at this stage.

We have ended the year some £50 up on last year however, this includes a generous donation of £250 towards the cost of producing Bevin Boy Leaflets to go to museums, special events etc. This donation was made by a Bevin Boy's grandson in memory of his grandfather so we would like to thank him.

We continue to pay for Zoom as this is one way of keeping in touch with some of our members and interested family and friends. We continue to support any Bevin Boy reunions but sadly only one went ahead this year thus expenditure is down on last year. Although it seems that Bigbury Mint donations are down in fact last year's income was for two years as

the cheque for the previous year had never reached us and when they reissued the cheque it arrived after year end. They now pay by BACs.

BACs payments do save us money as we now have to pay to cash each cheque. However, if you do pay in this way please let either Anne or myself know at the time so we can account for the money.

Barbara McElroy.

ARCHIVIST

I hope that you are all keeping well. We have had the usual enquiries from relatives asking for information, often we cannot be of much use although we can point the way to more general information.

We did however have one particularly interesting communication with a lady called Anneliese Holah about her Uncle Trevor Fry who was a Bevin Boy. They found amongst her aunt's possessions quite a lot of material relating to his Bevin Boy days including photos of his time as a BB and an unpublished book. She is kindly sending everything to me shortly and we hope to be able to include some items in forthcoming newsletters. The originals will go into museum archives eventually. I am excited to receive it all, but contemporary photos are hard to come by. If you have any lurking in drawers or albums I would love to see them. I can copy them and send them back if you don't want to part with them.

The other interesting communication we have had is with Les Leggett from the Lancashire Mining Museum. He put on a Bevin Boy display in September at an event they held and had asked for photos and written content which I was able to provide. The display apparently was a great success and they plan to repeat the exhibition on a bigger scale over the winter months in a Nissen Hut that is to be the centre for a World War Two exhibition.

Currently I am in the process of producing A Bevin Boy Association Leaflet which we will be sending to major Mining museums and the Imperial War Museum. All members will receive a copy.

I continue to talk about the Bevin Boys locally in Suffolk - it feels like I have visited every WI and History group over the years- at least they know about you in Suffolk and I know others spread the word.

My very best wishes to you all,
Barbara McElroy

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT.

Sadly we now have 1909 names in the Book of Remembrance and 30 BB's who still receive the twice yearly Newsletter, as well as other friends and family.

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! 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 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 £1-50 for the lighter items & £3 for the book, as it is expensive to post.

Bevin Boy Lapel Badge @ £5.00 Digging Up the Past @ £10.00

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.

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

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 have any input or news items for publication please contact me on Tel: 01275 463703 or e-mail: alananne2749@gmail.com

Anne.

Norman Adams.

Norman Adams has so many memories of his time as a Bevin Boy, these are just some of them.

Norm was called up in 1944 at the age of eighteen to go down in the mines. He was disappointed as he wanted to go into the Army, Airforce or Navy.

He was sent to a training camp for four weeks in a pit which was eighty feet deep. Then it was time to go to the coal mine in Louca where about eighty men were employed. He went with the other men down a 700 feet shaft in a cage. Then into a riding set of twenty tubs coupled together with four men in each.

Coal came along the belts and went into tubs off the conveyor belts. These tubs were sent away along the track back to the shaft to go to the surface. Norm did the coupling in a team of six who were down underground for about eight hours. When their shift had finished, they showered and changed into clean clothes.

One day when Norm was down in the mine, there was a huge explosion and rescue teams arrived to assist everyone to get out. Sadly, fourteen men were killed, this was in 1946. The mine was closed to get workable again. Norm was part of the Bevin Boys team for two and a half years. But in 1946 he went back to work at Barrow Steelworks.

Norm still has the Bevin Boys badges and enjoys receiving the newsletter. Norm is nearly 98 years old and has recently moved to an aged care facility in Nowra, NSW, Australia.

Kindly written by Norm's Step Daughter, Julie Guy.

Bert Allott.

It was back in November 2001 when my husband and I first met Bert Allott, we were researching the Forest Town Hostel, (accommodation that was originally built for Bevin Boys in 1944), This was during the years of the Second World War, and Bert who lived in

Grimsby at that time received his call up papers. He was hoping to enlist in the Navy, his dad was a fisherman. Like many other young men at that time, it came as quite a shock to Bert when he was told to report for work down the coal mine instead of serving in the armed forces. Instead of being soldiers, sailor or airmen these lads became known as Bevin Boys. Subsequently Bert was sent to Cresswell Colliery to do his initial training for six months, and from there he came to Forest Town and worked at Mansfield (Crown Farm) Colliery. He lived at first in the Avenues lodging with the Hilton Family and later moved into the newly built Forest Town Hostel.

After the war Bert stayed in Forest Town, he had already met and married Audrey Taylor, and he continued to work in local pits. When we met Bert we discovered he very rarely talked about the fact he had been a Bevin Boy because some people were still ignorant of the real reason Bevin Boys has worked in the mines and preferred to say they were conscientious objectors. People with that attitude could of course be unpleasant.

In our research on the Hostel we made many contacts, and one of these was Warwick Taylor who had been instrumental in founding the Bevin Boy Association. We passed on the address of the association to Bert. A few weeks later he excitedly phoned us to say he had joined and had sent for two medals he was entitled to, the National Service Medal, and the General Service Cross. When these arrived, we were invited to visit Bert and Audrey and share in their joy at Bert receiving them, and also knowing that Bevin Boys were now properly recognised. That was at the beginning of 2002.

In August 2007 we had another phone call from Bert who wanted to share with us the honour that had been paid to him by the Ollerton Branch of the British Legion which he and Audrey belonged. On the 2nd August at Ollerton Cenotaph the British Legion held a service to commemorate the Battle of Kohima that took place in Burma. After the service (which is commemorated every year) Bert was asked to step forward by Mr John Ostle (Ollerton British Legion), he did so thinking help was needed with moving the heavy wreath that had been laid. However suddenly Bert found he was the centre of attention when the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Nottinghamshire Col. Roger Merryweather told everyone that Bert was being presented with a medal for his service with the Bevin Boys during the war years. Col Merryweather pinned on the medal and to use Berts own expression 'he was gob smacked'. He was also presented with a framed award that read,

*For Bert Allott in recognition for dedicated service to the Royal British Legion.
He was called up in 1942 for National Service in HM Armed Forces and was directed to serve in the coal mines for the duration of Worlds War Two. Serving at Whitwell and Thoresby Collieries. The Bevin Boy Medal was presented to him on August 2nd 2007 by the Ollerton Branch of the Royal British Legion.*

*Signed,
Mavis Ilett
Madam Chairman.*

When Bert received the medal and award, his wife Audrey was not only delighted for him, she was pleased that she could now talk about it all as she had known for two weeks about the presentation. It was good to meet them both again and share in their joy which as Bert pointed out to us, 'was all because he got involved in our local history project'.

Sadly neither Bert or Audrey are still with us.

Further reading

The Forest Town Hostel 1944-1959 – Pauline & Malcolm Marples.

Phil Robinson Reminisces!

I was telling an old friend and member of the church I was involved with (some fifteen years ago) about some aspects of my job. He said that I should write it down, so here goes, eventually!

As a mining surveyor I was involved with the opening up of new districts and coal seams as well as accurate mine workings. It was a wonderful, awe inspiring, almost spiritual experience to be standing in an exploratory tunnel when the dust had settled after the firing (explosives). We could be confronted with maybe a black marine shale formed from the floor of the primeval ocean, rich in marine fossils or a massive sandstone, once a desert. Once or twice there would be a great sloping glassy black geological fault. These faults often defined the boundaries of coal mines, particularly in Lancashire. The major ones which displaced strata hundreds of feet had names e.g. The Boston Fault, The Downall Green Fault, The Twenty Acre and one called the Roaring Meg! (Don't know why?)

We stood in a place 220 million years old with feelings of awe, our insignificance and the wonders of The Almighty.

Phil Robinson asked if we could mention the many BB's who stayed in coal mining and contributed to the recovery after the war! He knew of several such men, so nationally there must have been a considerable number. Unfortunately not many joined the Association. There was the late John Burgess, who was Chairman, and was Colliery General Manager of one of the largest coal mines in the UK. In Lancashire Jack B became a Planning Engineer, Jack D was Day Shift Overman, 'Tiny' a Londoner who developed a Lancashire accent with Cockney overtones! Ted from Blackpool became a highly rated collier. Then there was me, a qualified Mining Surveyor. Most of us married local girls, which was probably an incentive to stay in the industry!

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

EDITORS PLEA!

I always welcome any contributions for the Newsletter. Please send to Anne Lane at the email address at the top of this Newsletter. Many thanks!

PLEASE NOTE!!

Please don't forget to send your £5 subscription to continue receiving your twice yearly Newsletter in 2025 to Anne Lane.

We ask you to pay by BACS please, details from Anne.