



THE BEVIN BOYS ASSOCIATION

FOUNDED 1989

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NEWSLETTER FOR SPRING 2025.

Chairman's Message.

Welcome to Spring 2025. We have sent you all a couple of our newly printed Bevin Boy leaflets, please contact me if you haven't received yours or if you would like any more. This leaflet has kindly been funded in memory of William Purdy, a deceased Bevin Boy, by a donation from his grandson Simon Fowler. Thank you.

We used Zoom for our AGM last year, which was quite successful and certainly a lot easier.

Would any of you like to have a social get together on Zoom, perhaps in May or July? 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.

I am sure that you will enjoy reading the Bevin boys Leaflet which comes with this Newsletter. Well done Barbara for producing it.

I had a phone call from Mel Gibby, BBC Events, wishing to contact and interview any Bevin Boys for the upcoming 80th VE anniversary. Phil Robinson and Emrys Hughes spent some time on the phone with her, more publicity is always good.

Alan Jones from Wrexham wishes to have contact with the Association. He is the Chairman of the North Wales Miners Trust and a volunteer at the Miners Rescue Centre.

More news of contacts. Graham Newsomes' father was sent to be a Bevin Boy from the Employment Exchange and did all his National Service down the mines.

Does anyone know of any Bevin Boys who were sent to the Ironstone Mines? Firestone Quarry has also been mentioned. Please let Anne or Barbara know if you can help. Their contact numbers are on the Newsletter heading.

Best Wishes for good Spring weather ahead,

Liz Todd. Secretary.

ARCHIVIST

As I write this, at long last, we have some lovely sunshine which is so good to see after what seems like a very dull winter. I hope that this newsletter finds you in good spirits.

Our big news is that at long last we have produced a Bevin Boys information Leaflet and you should be receiving some copies to keep and also pass on to friends and family. We will now send a copy to anyone who enquires about the Bevin Boys and I will be sending multiple copies to the following; Imperial War Museum London (I may see if we can get some into other IWM's) Caphouse English Mining Museum, Big Pit Welsh Mining Museum. Plesley Wheelhouse museum and Lancashire Mining Museum. Les Legget from

the latter has now established a permanent Bevin Boy exhibition in their World War Two hut. If you know of any other suitable locations please let me know and also if you would like further copies let one of us know. All the committee have spare copies.

We had a query about whether we were doing anything to mark V.E day from a member. Of course the leaflets are timely, but I have also approached the British Legion to see if we could be included in any way as I had seen a brief article asking veterans to register. I did also to check that Bevin Boys could be included and you can! Anne has included a letter to all Bevin Boys in her mailing explaining how to register. There are Local and National events as well as possible opportunities to talk to the media about your experiences. Unfortunately this does need to be done online but hopefully if you can't do this yourself you will have someone who can.

If any invitations or other opportunities come to us, we will contact those nearest to see if they wish to be involved. I know for most of you, travel now presents many difficulties which is why we had to stop our National Reunions in 2021 and also why we have decided not to attempt anything ourselves. At least two of the committee would find distance travel very difficult now.

You may notice new photos on the Bevin Boys Leaflet. This is one of the reasons that publishing the leaflet was delayed (lots of other reasons too) I had been promised a photo album from Trevor Fry's family but they wanted to copy everything before sending, which was understandable. I had thought there might be some original photos we could use and I was right. When I received the Album in November I was surprised at both the content and quality, so we made a decision to make digital copies ourselves and these will appear on our website as soon as Trevor's family have kindly given us permission to do so. The original album will be donated to Caphouse Mining Museum as they have a permanent Bevin Boys display and it is likely to be used, rather than residing in a box in archives.

There was also an unpublished book written under a pseudonym. Trevor had made the decision to make it a novel about a Bevin Boy rather than a factual book. I have yet to read all the book but I'm not sure it adds anything to our knowledge of the Bevin Boys.

Also late last year a lady wanted a very specific picture of Bevin Boys in 1943 in a certain pit with the pit in the background- surprisingly she had one but they had clean faces! She wanted dirty ones. As the scheme started in December 1943 and Bevin Boys had 6 weeks training then the photos was likely to be that of trainees- probably in the month long classroom training. I reassured her that the photo was actually authentic. Of course if there were pithead baths then the miners would have been clean anyway! Photos of Bevin Boys still are fairly rare so please make sure we have a copy of any you hold. I am happy to get them copied and return them, if you wish to retain originals.

We have just been told that The Mining Art Gallery in Bishop Auckland are holding an exhibition called 'Ted Holloway: A Bevin Boy Remembers. Some of you may remember Ted Holloway's pictures as we held copies of the book on our sales table. The exhibition is on until **8th June** this year. Wishing you a happy summer.

Barbara McElroy.

MESSAGE from the TREASURER.

As you will see elsewhere in the newsletter, we have finally managed to produce The Bevin Boys Association information leaflet. We had a generous donation that covered the cost of this, but that went into last year's money, thus inflating the 2023/24 final total, as

explained in my presentation at the AGM. However the money has been paid out of this year's budget so has taken the total down. The committee also agreed that we would make a digital copy of Trevor Fry's album to put on our website as we are often asked for good images. This was fairly costly as there were a lot of photos and in some cases the photographic studio had to work to enhance them. However we still have a very healthy balance and funds for the foreseeable future.

I would just like to remind you that if you are are paying for your newsletter or making a donation please be aware that we pay for every cheque, so if you are able to pay by BACs (bank transfer) please contact Anne or myself for bank details. If you already have the details, please make sure we know when you have made a payment. Many thanks.

Barbara McElroy.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT.

Sadly we now have 1915 names in the Book of Remembrance and 27 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 all Sales, please apply to Mrs Anne Lane, for details of how to pay.

Please add £1-50 for the lighter items & £3 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.

AREA REUNION for 2025.

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.

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 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.

My apologies if anyone has seen and read this poem before. it was written by a Bevin Boys' wife after attending our Reunion and AGM at Holme Lacey in 2004.

HOLME LACY

They came without their shovels,
To this year's A.G.M.
They came without their boots and lamps
They'd had enough of them
They'd left behind their pick-axes
And great big lumps of coal,
To enjoy themselves at Holme Lacy
That surely was their goal.

And maybe hair is greyer now
(And some are pretty bald!)
But hearts, still young, recalling
All those stories to be told.
We owe so much to Bevin Boys
What they all did for us.
They had no choice – but slaved away
With barely any fuss.
So “Knock them back” at Happy Hour
You've earned your free drinks – for
'Twas lads like you we have to thank
For helping to win the war!

A poem written by Kath Hurley.

I thought this might amuse you all!

We were on the Saga Sapphire, which is quite a small ship. Alan had bought the three cards as normal in January – Valentine's card, Wedding Anniversary Card and Anne's Birthday card, because all three occasions fall within four weeks of one another. So he always bought the three together, so he didn't forget! When we went away this year he forgot to take the Valentine card, and was unable to buy one on the ship, neither did they have any flowers!

OMMISIONS

The Valentine card to Anne, I've left at home...
On Sapphire, no flowers for cash or hire.
What to do to get out of the mire?
I've done it before, I'll compose a poem!

Alas and alack, back at the shack
No card for Anne, I'll be on the rack!
Will she forgive me for this error?
Or will she start a reign of terror?

Will a box of chocs suffice?
Or will she put my head in a vice?
I've racked my brain to no avail
I shall appeal - let me out on bail!!

But deep down, she is kind not hard

I've already got her Birthday card!
Perhaps in time, at my expense
A piece of gold will make more sense!

By Alan Lane 14/02/14

Sad Poem.

Theres always another tomorrow
However hard the day.
Theres always another tomorrow
Time wipes our tears away.
Theres always a reason for living,
Though sad your heart might be.
Theres always another horizon
Beyond the one you see.

This poem is from Pat Ribbans a Bevin Boy widow, some of you may remember her and her husband Jim attending our Reunions.

Bevin Boys Wives' Song.

And we're the wives,
Yes, we're the wives,
The wives of the Bevin Boys army,
With three meals a day,
We send them on their way,
Make sure that they are fit
And happy every day.

We keep them going,
We keep them going,
We keep them all from going barmy,
If it wasn't for us wives,
They'd regret it all their lives,
Those men of the Bevin Boys army!

The Government Took Over the Running of the Pits in Wartime as it Had Done in the First World War

Creswell was a major sorting out and training centre, opened in January 1944, catering for up to 520 'boys' at a time. The Bevin boys who lived in or around Mansfield were transported by bus from Mansfield Market Place to Creswell then back to Mansfield after shift end. They started underground training, usually with a big shovel shifting coal. Following the end of about one month's underground training period or for some several months they were allocated to various other pits to fill vacancies left by enlisted men. Although many had never seen a mine in their lives before, 99% of them settled in to their new life fairly quickly although overall it was found that attendance was poor. The Forest Town hostel housed 500 with a Manager and a staff of 12.

The first of the trained Bevin Boys in the Nottingham area started work at Clifton and Radford pits on 21st Feb 1944. Others would later go to Babbington, Bestwood,

Wollaton and Gedling. Many of the first batches of young men were put up in lodgings with families, close by the pit they had been allocated to whilst special hostels were built in selected areas to accommodate them. Some 22,000 Bevin Boys were recruited overall but there was still a reduction in the coal output.

Roy Dickinson, known as 'Dicko', interviewed by Robert Bradley lived in Nottingham and wanted to join the RAF but was conscripted and sent to Creswell to train as a miner in October 1944. He had to go to London Road School, Nottingham for a medical. After being passed A1 fit he was transported to a Miners' Hostel at Clowne housing 500 men. For about 6 weeks they did physical training, dressed in shorts and plimsolls. A good English breakfast was provided each morning and a good substantial 3 course meal in the evening. Sandwiches for snap were provided also. They visited several colliery surfaces to see the types of jobs on offer. He was allotted to Creswell colliery for formal training firstly on the surface on various jobs such as sorting coal on the screens then he was transferred underground but he reckoned they 'played' at being a miner there because they were always under the watchful eye of a Training Instructor who would help, but he got a great shock when sent to Gedling to do some proper work, on his own, firstly pony ganging then shovelling on a coal face for £4 a week. He recalled on one occasion when he lost his pony or 'donkey' as he called it. It had wandered off whilst he wasn't looking, however when he returned to the pit bottom stables to explain he found the pony named *Captain* stood in his own stall waiting to have its gear removed, so he didn't report it and carried on as though he had escorted the pony back. He hated the underground life having previously worked for Ketch and Sons hauliers as a driver and after about a year began to holiday on odd days like some miners did. Another part of his work was on the haulage underground where he had to clip 4 tubs of coal onto a moving haulage rope with great dexterity otherwise like some who were run down and bruised badly, luckily not too severely. A piece of cardboard was put at the back of the hand lamp so that all the light was projected to the front so that it was easier to see where one was going. Because he was more fortunate than the others who came from areas of the country not associated with mining and lived far away he lived nearby, and it was easy to slip into Nottingham, eat his snap (sandwiches) on Slab Square, feed the pigeons, walk round then go back home at the recognised knocking off time as though he had been to work.

After a time a letter was sent to his home from the colliery and opened by his mother who was ignorant of his absenteeism. They had to attend Court where his mother pleaded for him as he was unaccustomed to the underground life and it was affecting his nerves and the magistrates were lenient on this occasion, he was let off with a caution and ordered back to work. Of course being conscripted into the mines was like being in the forces and that action would have been classed as AWOL, (absent without leave). He said he was injured in the pit whilst on haulage work and as soon as he could in early 1947 when they were releasing miners from the pits he left. There must have been hundreds in similar circumstances who just had to 'grin and bear it'.

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