

Farm Report 2013 - Paul Kingston

Get a grip!

Geography and arts rooms; check!

I sneaked across the grass as nobody would see me. History room...check! I walked into the agri block. Between the class rooms was a corridor perhaps 4 feet wide. Half of it was used for coat storage but the other half was accessed through a door behind the building and housed the heating system.

From behind the wall, came a loud cyclic banging sound. I had never heard it before and I knew it wasn't right. The class rooms were fine but the banging was shaking the glass and seemed like Satan pounding out a new sword in preparation for some apocalyptic event.

I walked, with some trepidation around the building. The dew was up and the grass was wet. I felt uneasy but I needed to know what was causing the mechanical thump, thump, thump. There was no moon and the trees hung in ghostly silence in my torch light as I ventured between the forest and the building.

Would Paul do this? God no! There was a reason why he prowled the dorms. He would tell you he was big and mean and he did a better job at keeping things quiet than I did. He was right. But I had seen him in the darkness. He was not the same person.

The door at the back was half glass and as I swung my torch up to look in, someone stared back. I saw him for an instant, his arm to one side, holding something. There was a glare from my torch and I couldn't see it properly. Perhaps it was a spear? He stood perfectly still, watching. His eyes were wide, vacant. He was clearly insane.

I was so surprised at seeing another human being...I fled.

You thought I was good on the games field? This was something special.

I was outside the staff room almost before I had left the agri block. My feet scarcely touched the ground. It took me less than 4 seconds to get there. When I looked back, the hall way was empty; the exterior door was still swinging on its springs. He hadn't followed me. I almost collapsed with relief.

I was outside the staff room! Sweet sanctuary!

I could have swung at him with my torch; and likely died behind the agri block.

"We found huge teeth marks in the door frame..."

I had survived. But the maniac seemed a little...familiar. I knew him from somewhere.

Then I began to recall the details, rethink the event.

"Oh Shit! That was my reflection! I was looking at me" I whispered.

Nobody needed to know!

I could hear the comments. "Have you seen your shadow recently?"

Boooooo!"

But I had turned in an Olympic time. It was definitely under four seconds. I was sure of it. Five seconds would have given me time for a nice cup of tea to celebrate.

I could do it again to prove...maybe not.

DAIRY

The only good thing this year is the fact that we have reached our milk quota. In the process we have had to cull 3 cows due to constant mastitis and failure to get in calf. It is always disappointing to have the cows chosen for us rather than actually choosing the cows. We have to keep cows that we would rather send on but we will get there eventually!

On a good side the milk quality is still very good and the hygiene holding up – with so many different boys milking this is amazing!!

We are however looking forward to some homebred heifers coming into the herd and maybe purchasing some more milkers from other sources.

BEEF

The herd is looking good ranging from young calves through to 2yr old stores. I continue to be really pleased with how the Beef Shorthorn bull is producing calves that do really well on our low input system. We don't finish the cattle but we continue to get high prices for our store cattle.

We will be selling cattle in the autumn as we are pushed for space this winter- mostly through the market but some as breeding heifers to small holders, which is interesting as we get to hear and see how they get on.

SHEEP

Lambs sold well last year but we had to keep them all through the snow and rain that the winter gave us which was extremely difficult both feeding them and checking them, walking through 6 inches of snow with mud underneath – not easy.

We brought the closer finishing lambs in to finish them quicker – at least that was the plan. When we brought the poorer lambs in to check it seemed that they had done just as well outside as the better lambs inside- won't be doing that again.

This year's lambing went extremely well with a 200% lambing. This was a combination of the ewes being in a good condition, nice weather and our new Texel ram – or just good luck. The lambs are growing on well on just grass and we are hoping to sell before the winter kicks in this year keeping a few for educational purposes.

POULTRY

The chickens that we have are currently laying well. We have had a bad year for losing chickens to badgers with a house full of point of lay birds being broken into and 25 being killed and partially eaten. We are looking into maybe creating chicken paddocks with permanent fencing. I am not keen on this idea as the chickens will be unable to follow the cows around and eat the parasites and the grass which make our eggs stand out from the crowd; however we will not have the problem of the bigger predators and the boys forgetting to shut the chickens in at night will not be such a worry!

We continue to hatch our own eggs as part of the B-TEC course and we find it really fascinating to see the day to day development of the eggs. We have also seen our smaller incubator going out to local primary schools to help them as part of their curriculums.

PIGS

Pigs continue to do well with most of the stock being sold as weaners or stores to local small holders and individuals. We finished 2 pigs to be used at our induction evening for the year 9 and parents; these were roasted whole and were really quite tasty!

There continues to be no profit in the pigs with the amount of feed that goes into them and the price that it is.

FORAGE

This year's silage has been very good in my opinion but we haven't had it tested yet. We were able to cut fairly early and had some really nice weather to wilt it so I am looking forward to feeding it.

We have made some good hay as well making both round bales and small squares; small bales are always easier to feed in the calf unit so it is nice to have some about.

Straw- our normal supplier of straw just didn't have enough to go about this year due to the autumn drilling issues so we have had to buy some big squares in from a dealer, I was a little shocked with the price but when considered it was very fair as when you do it yourself you don't see the real cost.

EVENTS

We have just held an open day for primary schools with 6 groups of years 5 and 6 being shown a basic tour of what we do on the farm. The children showed great interest in the animals and were very interested in how the milking parlour worked with all the children brave enough to put a finger each into the unit to feel the vacuum and pulsation.

The Bridgwater ploughing match has just been held so we entered 2 of the boys and the farms tractor and plough into the novice class, they did very well and finished mid table.

Unofficial School Sprint Record – Set in 1971 by Andy Bailey

I was the tall skinny one. Which meant I owned the 100yd dash or sprint. I just wanted to let you know that I also hold the school record for getting from the agriculture block to the staff room. It's way more than 100yds & might be more than 300, but the record is mine, and has been since the winter of 1971. Unfortunately this fact was never entered into the school records. Actually it was never officially timed, and come to think of it, a witness might have been a good idea, but in the moment organizing those details was the last thing on my mind.

I was a prefect that winter and there were two evening tasks to be completed. Firstly we had to ensure that all junior students were asleep, or at least quiet in the dorms and when that was done, we went on a far ranging check of the buildings to close windows and doors, straighten desks, ensure nothing was burning and close down the site for the night. It took time, and we often reported back to the duty house master quite late in the night.

My partner and I decided we could shorten this process and while he looked after the main building and keeping the dorms quiet, I went out into the night and checked all the classrooms. Alone. At the time, nobody else would do this. Wandering around empty buildings, in the damp darkness of a winter's night was not for the faint of heart, or those with a fertile imagination, as Brymore is an idea setting for a good horror movie. Creatures could be hiding behind doors; something that foamed at the mouth and couldn't be killed might rise from under a desk...

Those were the thought that had to be reined in, quickly.

Two nights previously we had enjoyed the Saturday movie. The projector had been set up in the gym, we had all taken a seat and the film club had run a fairly scary movie. I can't recall the details but it had me on the edge of my seat and we had discussed it that night, The director had done his job and the result was without doubt the spookiest thing we had ever seen.

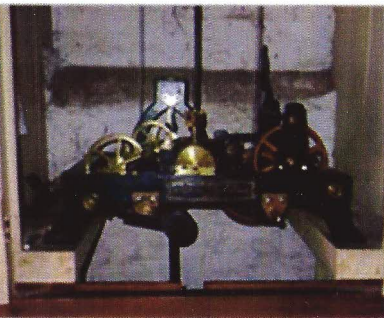
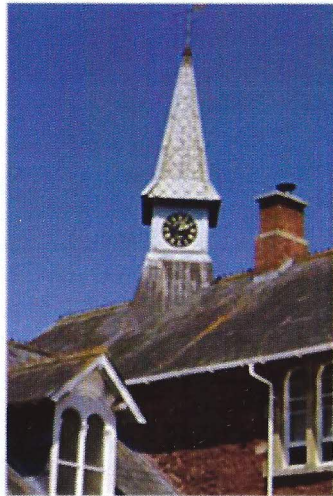
Monday night Paul and I were on duty. He headed upstairs to prowl the dorms. I threw on a jacket, picked up my torch and walked out into the night. I had done this many times before, and devised a route that would maximise my efficiency at the task. The details are lost in time now, but I did the check as I moved away from the main building and walked almost straight back from the Agri block, the furthest building from civilization, when all was well. The farm was not on my route as they looked after their own problems.

It was quiet out there in the night. Some lights had been left on, but not many. I threw on the odd light here and there to look into things but often I raked empty rooms with my torch, items of furniture casting eerie shadows across the walls. As I left each area, all was deathly still and very dark.

I didn't find any dead bodies outside the biology lab. *Sigh.*

The taps were off in the toilets by the chemistry lab. All was well here. If a werewolf opened the doors at the south end could I outrun him back to civilization? Imagine reaching the staff room door and pounding on it, but by the time the housemaster opened the door I had been dragged off to be...

Chairman Peter Harris presents Tim Stevenson with the Best in Agriculture Trophy on behalf of the Old Brymorians at the Leavers Service in May 2013



The Clock Tower and the mechanism of the clock

'Over the Garden wall' **A Year in the Horticultural department** **Reuben Willcocks**

So here I am again. It's Autumn and I've taken time to scramble up to my vantage point overlooking the walled garden. As I sit here, with a breeze whipping up the first of the dying leaves to fall, I notice the bricks that I sit upon. A little crumbled and uneven and showing definite signs of age. Oh dear! Does that mean we're all another year older?

Across the garden, boys are collecting some of the heavy crop of apples we have this year. They struggle with boxes full of the green and red fruits, some as large as a fist. That should mean a lot of juice produced in the squeezing process, enjoyed by everyone and so much more efficient with the machines purchased last year to pulp the fruit and then extract the 'sweet' liquid (or sometimes with just an edge to it and a little tart!) out of them. One or two lads are searching in the plum tree for any tasty treasures remaining there, but the tree has been stripped and any remaining fruits have been hollowed out by wasps. The plots are looking so much better, now that the lads have had a chance to clear the weeds. The harvest has been gathered and a lot of happy boys have taken bulging bags back to parents and friends. The laden trees bode well for a good pressing of cider.

Over the far wall the bee hives and apiary lie empty, awaiting new fencing for protection and the return of a hive of bees from the Spaxton Road Bee Centre, where they have been on holiday over the summer. The apiary had to be moved for fear that the wall may crumble and fall on it. James Kerry (the Head of Beekeeping) has now left the school and we have five more boys in year 10 who are keen to take over. Many thanks to Mr Ken Edwards for all his help, support and teaching of the boys.

My peaceful musings are shattered as a little tractor roars up past. It's a John Deere 4100 compact tractor recently purchased with money given by Bridgwater Agricultural Society. What a blessing it is to have such support. The boys are all keen to drive it and have already spent many a passing moment drooling over its finer features, the front end loader or the hydraulics and not to mention the PTO!!! It has already proven to be a real help for the grounds man, Mr Ollie Mahon, who took on the position in the early summer after Mr Bennett left us to pursue other work closer to his home in Queen Camel. Ollie had already been a part of the Horti team, having been at pupil at Brymore and then working in the department for Work Experience.

The beds and borders are just at that in between stage, as the summer bedding is removed and straggly shrubs are trimmed back,

but I think back to the late spring when everywhere was a blaze of colour, thanks to the hundreds of tulip bulbs supplied to us by Cheddar Garden Centre and planted by the boys. Then I think of the summer flowers which graced our flowerbeds, raised and planted by the boys or supplied by Bower Flowers who had a surfeit of some plants.

Open Day crept upon us all too quickly, but we had a good stock of perennials and shrubs, along with many summer bedding plants for sale. We were grateful for the support from parents and friends who kept the boys busy digging potatoes, picking fruit and selling the produce from our stall. We were a busy department that day!

Year 9s enjoyed a trip to the local Strawberry farm in the summer, where they learnt how to grow the fruit and they had to sample a few (!!) too. It's a good job we didn't weigh any of the lads because I'm sure they put on pounds during that trip.

The department staff also spent a very enjoyable day at The Marjory Fish Gardens, Lambrook Manor, East Lambrook, Yeovil, where we spent time away from school considering the future of the department.

We have many challenges ahead, not least another change of course, budget stagnation in the face of rising prices, ailing facilities and the desire to improve what we do and the way in which pupils interact with the subject. The staff all work hard and Mrs Stanley continues to drive the Department on a day to day basis as Head Technician, ably assisted by Miss Nash, who works with us two days a week and at Cannington College the other three days. Miss Nash has particular responsibility for beds and borders, whilst Mrs Stanley organises the walled garden and duties (amongst other things!). Mrs Richards has joined the team as an almost fulltime Teaching Assistant and because she is a keen gardener herself, is ideally suited to give practical advice as well as help with literacy challenges. Mr Willcocks (yes that's me!) keeps an eye on the propagation side of the Department and also the Sales Area and does nearly all the classroom teaching. We did have Mr Baker (Head of Science), Mr Fitzsimons (Head of Art) and Mr Oliver (Assistant Head) also teaching year 9s but as some have left or been assigned new roles, we now have Mr Austin (D&T) and Mr Williams who are teaching year 9s. It's good to have enthusiastic staff, a committed team and a thriving department. We also had our largest number of applications for HOD positions this last year and they are now settling into their positions with the new year 9s.



Class of 53 visit in September 2013

Back row L – R Graham White; John Durman; Basil Lazenby; Trevor Coran; Graham Taylor; Ray Culliford; Tony Richards; Brian Godwin; Mike Bridges; Mike Pettit; Richard Wilcox

Middle row year 10 boys L – R Will Sully; Robert Kerr; Steven Izzard; Frazier Perry; Roman Amer; Andrew Vickery; Charlie Herbert; Zak Hevness

Front row L –R Roger Danby; David Vickers; Mike Fry; Mark Thomas Head Teacher; Lionel Bagg; John Hill; Les Fry; Roger Sims

Inserts Left John Stark; Right Norman Watts who were unable to make the day but had attended an earlier reunion in June 2013

Many miles were travelled for the attendance of the '53' group [above]. Norman Watts came from Australia; Roger Danby / Canada; Mike Bridges, Roger Sims, John Start / Cornwall; Basil Lazenby / Wales; Richard Wilcox / Hampshire; David Vickars / Warwickshire; Graham Taylor / Glos; Les Fry / Dorset. Others were more local. Those not well enough to travel Ian Walker / Australia; Ian Morton / Yorkshire; Nick Roberts / Cambridge; Alan Lavers / Hereford; Peter Boyt / Dorset. We wish them well and look forward to their eventual return to Brymore. David Chamberlain and Gordon Sutter were otherwise engaged.

Several were returning for the first time in 57 years and they received a few surprises! However, the thing that impressed many the most was the general attitude and manner in which the 'BOYS' conducted themselves. An exceptional day was had by all and our gratitude goes to Mark Thomas and the 'BOYS' for their hospitality and time for

'OUR GREAT BRYMORE EXPERIENCE'