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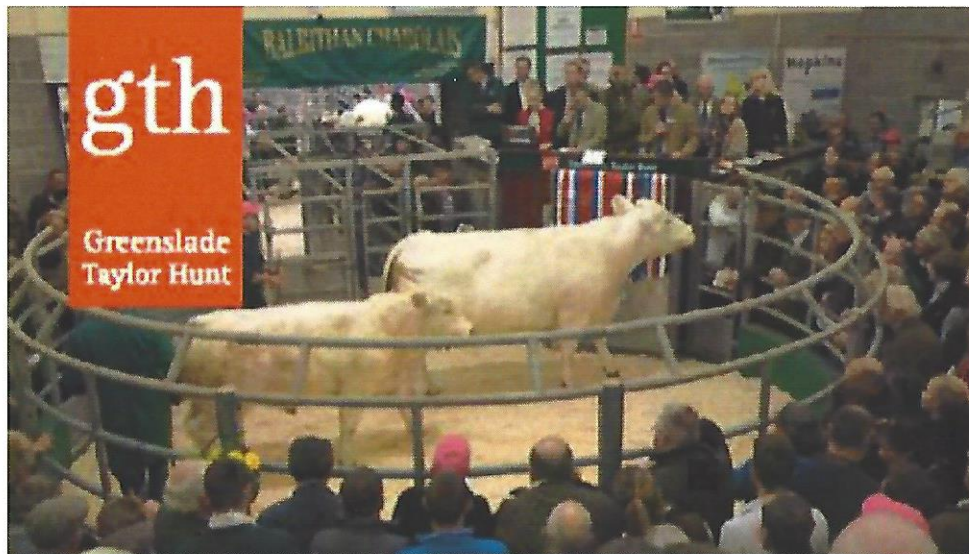
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Spring 2019 Edition 13



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## Welcome Letter from your Chairman

A warm welcome to you and may you enjoy this, the 13th edition of The Spur. Your continued support and commitment as an Old Brymorian is very much appreciated by the Committee who continue to fulfil the aims of the Association on your behalf.

The Committee would like to thank all those who support the OBA in so many ways, whether it be through subscriptions, generous donations, advertising in this magazine, or just by giving moral support at the events we hold each year. The Association has enjoyed another successful year and has had a presence at many Brymore Academy events – Pym's Night Supper in October was well attended; Nigel the Catering Manager did us proud with an excellent 3 course meal which was followed by Mark Thomas and Vicky Davis, Head Teacher and his Deputy, giving us up-to-date information as to where Brymore is today and its plans for the future. It was good to see new faces, and some of our younger members attending this supper for the first time.

Ollie Mahon has been appointed by the Committee as Vice-Chairman. It may be of interest to you all that I have served for the last 11 years without a deputy. Ollie is a super young man, a Brymore boy through and through, and this appointment helps to secure the future of the OBA when the time comes for me to step down from the position of Chairman.

Happy New Year to you all.

Peter

## From the Editor's Chair

Welcome to the new issue of the Spur, I am very grateful for all the 'Old Boys' and in particular the wives and mothers of Old Boys who have submitted articles for publication and of course our sponsors who advertise in each edition.

This year I managed to get my act and diary together and attend Pym's Night, it is always lovely to speak to attendees and extract promises of 'bits of old rubbish, no one would want to read but I'll send to you anyway'. Thank you to those who did, it's in here.



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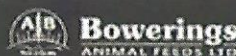


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## **Head Teachers Report**

I often report that one of the challenges of being the Head teacher of Brymore is ensuring that the school evolves and changes with the times without losing its unique identity, ethos and values. This struck me recently when I attended the first planning meeting with the contractor, project manager and quantity surveyor for the new farm building. I am sure if the boys had been there, or indeed others from the agricultural community, there would have been talk of robotics or at least an automated system. When you consider the school was successful in securing over £500 000 for the project then these sort of systems would clearly be possible. However many may be surprised to know we have decided to go with a similar system to the one we currently have so that the boys get used to handling the cows and actually get to know their individual characteristics. I believe basic handling skills and animal husbandry are key skills all Brymore boys should know, whether they come from a dairy farm, arable farm or as is often the case if they arrive at Brymore with no farming experience at all. I am also convinced that the wider skills learnt such as confidence being around livestock, resilience, hard work, learning something new, understanding where food actually comes from and hopefully gaining a greater respect of the farming industry and the environment in general are skills that all young people should learn. One of the key decisions made in Brymore's recent history was the decision to join Bridgwater College Trust. It was this decision that effectively has ensured that the funding for this new building was secured as it was the Chief Operating Officer who helped oversee and drive the bid forward.

Another key change has been the move to a five day week, something that the boys were very much in favour of but I know many Old Boys were not. The feedback from all concerned is that on the whole it has very much been a success. Inevitably there have been a few unforeseen problems however boys, staff and parents have all reported favourably since the changes were made. Ironically the full time boarders, those that do not go home at weekends, have said that they enjoy the weekends more with the chance to continue to take part in the many activities put on, but also a chance to relax and spend time with their friends.

I think importantly it has also provided opportunities for more boys to spend time with their families and to continue to take part in activities outside of school time which they previously were not able to. I do not think it has made attending Brymore an easy option though, as boys must now complete six hour long lessons a day which is more than any other school I know. Obviously, being Brymore this is in addition to the various duties that also need covering both before and after school. So we still live by the school ethos of 'Diligentia et Labore' ensuring boys leave us more resilient, resourceful and responsible than boys who attended other schools. I am convinced therefore that our current boys will continue to enhance our reputation, not only in the agricultural community, but beyond.

Mark Thomas

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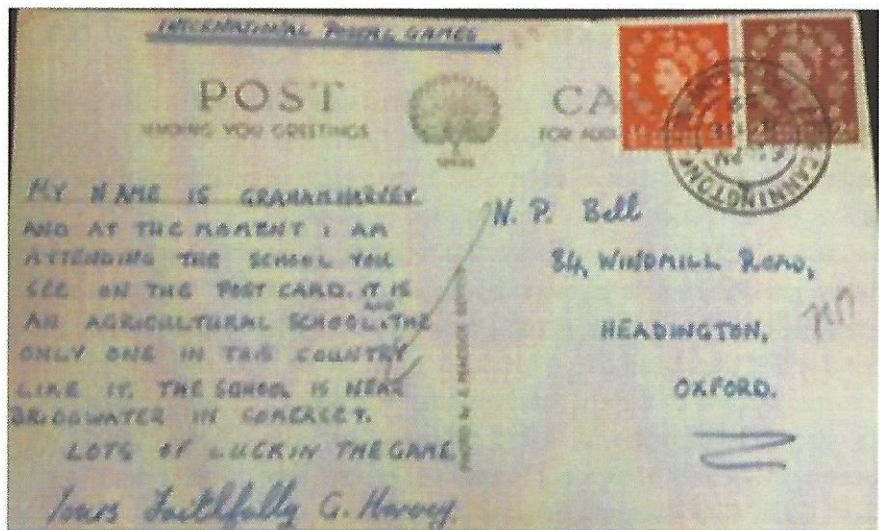
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Graham Harvey, pupil 16.09.1957 – 22.07.1961

Are you out there somewhere, let us know for the next Spur. Ed



## Honorary Treasurer's Report

The Old Brymorians' Association continues to hold its own, and over the past year has given the following amounts of money to Brymore Academy for financial help with boarding fees for 5 pupils and additional monies for specific items for the whole Academy.

- £9500 for boarding fees
- £350 purchase of athletic vests
- £129 purchase of rosettes for cattle/sheep class winners for Open Day 2018
- £1500 English Department for 3-year subscription for Quick Step English
- £1000 English Department for new books
- £200 Maths Department for 2 visualisers

The 3-year student membership of £30 for Year 11 leavers was not as successful as we had anticipated, so the committee will make more of an effort with 2019 leavers by meeting them face-to-face.

All monies raised comes from your yearly subscription of £20, generous donations and our Summer Draw on Open Day. 2018 was another success and £3238 was raised by the Draw.

Our membership level remains around 380. If any of you know a past pupil from Brymore who does not belong to the Association, please encourage them to look at our website and consider joining so we can continue to support Brymore Academy. It has become an outstanding secondary education establishment – its GCSE results prove this, and it is all down to the dedication of all the staff working there.

May Brymore Academy and the Association go from strength to strength in 2019. Thank you for your continued support in the coming year.

Jenny Harris

## Gardening Memories

I suppose it was Bill Freer the metalwork master that wound me up at school and I left in 1962 with the ambition of becoming an agricultural engineer. I met Bill again in 2004. He hadn't changed! A tall gangling, quick to smile character, his large hands were built to form and create. Even at the forge in the metalwork shop his demonstrations in flattening and curling metal scrolls created an enthusiasm in us boys. I was too old for an apprenticeship at 17 plus and so it was not to be. I ended up as boy gardener at Bristol Botanic Gardens. Bill's efforts were not to be wasted as he produced a confidence of a mechanical nature which helped me totally renovate two and four wheeled modes of transport and reduce garage bills further up life's road.

That first job as Boy Gardener seemed the lowest of the low at the time, but every difficult or onerous task has its silver lining, as I was to find out in life. We had the two extremes at work. Alec Garrett who fantasised and fraternised with his orchids, took on experimental plots with 200 plus cultivars and species of mint, swapped seeds with other botanic gardens throughout the world and poor old me who washed pots and did the weeding. I was the Boy Gardener, he was the Curator and Botanist. I was totally unprepared for the wealth of information that filled his brain and the piped tobacco smoke that filled his lungs. I had not yet acquired the skill of having a notebook and pencil to hand, but I did realise this was an essential for the future if I was going to make the grade. My other inspiration for Horticulture came from home in a large garden tucked away down a lane in Portishead, near Bristol. Home also to a few other Brymore boys; Jim Bishop, Don Hill, John Burden (now Mill Farm, South Milford), Ben Elliot, John Lovell and Malcolm Winter. Then up on Walton Down, the Down boys, Alan and the twins Nicholas and Nigel and Mick Mearns. Up the road at Portbury was Richard Prendergast and Bill and Bob Cox and Richard Ellis at Failand.

The Second World War left an indelible mark and the habit of "grow your own" was one of them. It didn't need the knowledge of Adam Smith and John Maynard Keynes to show that there was an economic advantage in your own vegetable and fruit production and so it was with my Dad. He knew little about "elasticity" but he took great pride "out there" with his flowers, fruit and vegetables. Like the rise and fall of the Third Reich, or the Roman Empire, but in this case "no fall": gardening and landscaping has gained in momentum and we really these days, couldn't do without our Monty Don's.

Looking back (as you do) some of the family's background had been in smallholding. Trips over the hill to Tickenham especially during the winter had always been an experience. You don't forget trips to a dry loo at the further reaches of the garden in the middle of winter (What! No inside loo comes the cry?). We used to get 'em cold in those days and with the washed sheets like huge boards on the line it was too much to ask a young lad to keep his hands off. It was like playing the xylophone as you ran down the path, but in this case more of a booming sound which woke up the pigs in the row of sties. By the time you returned they were up waving their tongues over the sty doors and making no end of a

I pass the herb garden, now looking incredibly bare as we are stripping out the herbs to make way for a new sales area with a pergola over the top. It is clear that the rosemary bush has been raised to the ground but its root goes down very deep. That one and the big bay tree, both at least 30 years old have roots which will be a real challenge to get out.

We took record amounts of money on Open Day which has offset some of the expensive tools required. We are always very grateful for the continued support from parents and friends and yet marvel every year at how local people seem to have little or no idea that we have such a stock of plants and produce.

The sun has almost set in a blaze of glory. The reds and oranges adorn the sky and in the distance I hear the rumble of the sales trolley, now in need of some repair. The boys are heaving it back to its place, remaining produce and plants are stowed away for another day and they head off. A few lads linger on the rustic seating area which we have created outside of the LRC kindly funded by FOBSA and yet to be completed (we have paving slabs to lay down).

This has been another year of trips out (to Monkton Elm Garden Centre near Taunton, Knightshayes Court near Tiverton, Powderham Castle Show, just outside Exeter and Team Green Growers, the local strawberry producer) and work has been carried out at Spaxton School on their willow structure. We represented the school at the Bath and West Field to Fork event where we met with 700 primary school children, told them about Brymore and then showed them how to sow some seeds. The last of the BTEC students left in the summer and now Horticulture is subsumed into the City and Guilds Land Based course, which sadly has no real element of practical in it. Yet as a Department we are buoyant, developing, changing again, trying to enthuse and above all committed to and thoroughly enjoying Horticulture. How could we be anything else?

Oh and why am I now packing up and heading home on a Friday evening?

Well Brymore too has entered a new phase and we are a five day week school, so that means I can get to work on my own garden tomorrow... once I have finished this bag full of marking!

Thanks for your continued support.

**Reuben Willcocks.**

**Head of Horticulture.**