

Old Brymorian Committee 2009

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Chairman's Report - Peter Harris



Welcome to the 4th edition of 'The Spur' with a slightly different format this year which I hope you will find both informative and enjoyable.

It has been yet again a very successful year for the Old Brymorian, with thanks to yourselves, the School, Malcolm Lloyd, the Headmaster, Gina Bryant and everyone who has given so much support and encouragement to the OBA in so many ways. I would also like to thank a very hardworking and dedicated OBA Committee, of whom I am extremely proud, and we must not forget our wives/partners who not only give us tremendous help and support, but also allow us to come back to School!

Pym's Night Supper in December 2008 was a well supported evening. Our guest speaker was Michael Eavis who spoke on the 'History and Success of the Glastonbury Festival'. It was a very entertaining talk, supported and thanked by Philip Eavis, his brother, who was the first Head Boy of Brymore.

The Pym's Night Supper this year will be on Saturday, 5th December 2009 and our Guest Speaker will be Anthony Gibson OBE who is a retired South West Regional Director of the National Farmers Union and cricket commentator. This should be a good evening and hopefully the dining room will be warmer and the food hotter than last year!

An Old Brymorian Day was also held in February 2009, by invitation of the Headmaster, to view the new boarding accommodation and class rooms; in fact it turned into a visit of the whole school including a tour of the old dormitories! This was followed by a buffet lunch, after which there was an opportunity to watch an Inter- House rugby match; yet another well attended event which might be replicated in some form at about the same time next year.

In May 2009, Mike Fry and I attended the Leavers' Service on your behalf. You can read more about this event elsewhere in this edition of The Spur.

Finally the Open Day and Country Fair on 27 June 2009 was, to say the least, a spectacular day. We were blessed with fine weather and vast crowds of visitors. Cars were actually queuing back into Cannington village to gain entry to the site! The Summer Draw, run by the OBA, raised nearly £2500 towards our next bursary. The day was followed by a very well attended OBA AGM and Reunion Supper.

Special thanks must go to the sponsors of advertising for this edition of 'The Spur' and also those people who gave so generously with draw prizes and donations. It is all very much appreciated. Thank You.

Peter G Harris
1959 – 1963
Chairman of OBA

May 2009 – A Leaver’s Celebration

The Leaver’s Service was held in the Main Hall and Mike Fry and I were invited to attend by the Headmaster, Malcolm Lloyd. I am sure some of you remember a similar event in years gone by when it was then called the Speech Day. At that time it was held in a marquee on the playing fields when teachers in their academic robes, dignitaries in suits and the Headmaster resplendent in his gown and mortar board held centre stage.



*Nick Moulund. O.B.A.
Prize Winner 2009*

The present day Leaver’s Service was totally different; it was about the boys, for the boys and by the boys. The service was led by Malcolm Lloyd and awards for academic work and sports were presented by the Guest of Honour, Mrs. Pam Jamieson, the school librarian. Pam has been a librarian for more than forty-three years with twenty-one of those years as the Brymore librarian. Pam, who retires this year, has also been Clerk to the school governors.

Throughout the service / celebration there were only two people on the stage at any one time and a projected slide show, with musical accompaniment, illustrated the various activities and achievements of those leaving the school.

I was asked by the Headmaster if I would present the Old Brymorians Association Silver Salver for Practical Excellence in Agriculture to Nicholas Moulund. This I did on your behalf and was very proud to do so. Strangely, I found the whole event quite emotional, young men going out into the world with a mix of excitement, apprehension and may be even dread.

The celebration was well supported by parents; they look so young! Following the proceedings Mike Fry and I recruited thirty new OBA members though it seems wrong at that moment to call them Old Boys. Each was presented with a Leavers pack containing an introductory letter from myself, an edition of *The Spur* and other information on the OBA.

To sum up, I was extremely proud to be an Old Brymorian and represent you, the Old Boys, at this event.

Peter G Harris
1959 – 1963
Chairman of OBA

A memorable year! : Headmaster's Report

The 2008/09 year will probably go down in history as one of the better years at Brymore. It started with us being labelled a “failing school” by the Government (one of 638 schools in the country where less than 30% of students get five GCSEs graded A*-C including English and Maths) so we knew that things were going to be interesting! Then, in January, we hosted the Annual Conference for The State Boarding Schools Association, our guest of honour was Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal who, being the spirited person she is, went along with the theme of the conference “Bring your wellies” and wore some very stylish boots for her visit and for the official conference photograph. She also “officially” opened our new accommodation and teaching buildings. It was good to see John Manning, Michael Fry and Lionel Bagg represent the Old Brymorians Association at the opening and be introduced to Her Royal Highness.



New Classrooms

At the conference dinner, the additional bonus was our guest speaker, Sean Fitzpatrick, legendary All Black rugby captain whose one man rendition of the Haka was enough to convince the one hundred and twenty delegates that

rugby is a pretty serious thing in New Zealand. Sean also came to breakfast on the Monday morning where the boys were encouraged to join in the Haka. You wouldn't say no! So, an All Black Captain and a Princess in one day!

In February we finally moved the boys into their new dorms. The difference has been phenomenal and, despite the fact that the builders are back to sort the roof out, the buildings have been officially declared a success; the Year 9 boys say so!! It has also been suggested, by Year 9, that all future Brymore boys are made to sleep in the "old dorms" for a term, just so they know how lucky they are! With seven new classrooms in September and now new boarding accommodation, it has been quite a year.

Some things stay the same, both our Year 10 and Year 11 rugby teams played in the final of the Sedgemoor League at Bridgwater and Albion, unfortunately both lost to teams from West Somerset Community College, Minehead, but I have not been prouder of being Headmaster at Brymore than on that night. Both teams performed magnificently and the spectators supported them superbly and certainly made a big noise. That we had ex Brymore boys come back to support, along with parents, governors, staff and even parents of old boys, showed me how important Brymore is to the families who send their boys here. We have also had a record number of boys running Chads Hill and one member of staff, Mr Edmunds, will complete his 100 "Chads" this year. One day saw a group of parents and governors walk Chads (too easy) so a few weeks later the same group assembled, with others, and ran Chads. Now, that's commitment!!



New boarding accommodation

Farm Report June 2009 - Paul Kingston

Dairy

Some of you may know that the Bridgwater Agricultural Society were kind enough to donate some money to allow us to update the parlor to a five abreast unit replacing all of the pipe work, the units, vacuum pump and hot water tank. This work is now 95% complete and has sped up the milking considerably.



Currently we are milking sixteen cows but are always trying to increase to twenty which is proving difficult due to a run of bull calves, trodden teats and a TB threat which thankfully turned out to be negative although the cow lost her life to prove it. We are always on the lookout for organic cows and have been in touch with most of the organic herds in Somerset, Devon and Cornwall. We are very grateful to the Tincknell family from Wedmore who donated a Friesian heifer calf that year 9 boys will be choosing at the end of the year.

We now have two Ayrshires in the herd, one milking quite well, the other calved in three quartered, just our luck! The third Ayrshire has been PD positive and should calve in the spring. We also have a Jersey heifer due to calve in the autumn and have bought 2 cows from a dispersal sale in the autumn; one was a bit of a gamble but it paid off as she calved in the spring and peaked at 42 litres / day.

Sheep

This years lambing has been a bit of a disappointment with few lambs. Twelve ewes failed to get in lamb; thankfully cull ewe prices were high. In spring we lost a few ewes to fluke; with a phone call to the Soil Association and a post mortem we obtained a derogation to treat them; it shouldn't pose such a problem in the future. During lambing we also lost a ewe which choked on her afterbirth which I believe is a very rare occurrence. On a positive note we do have some excellent lambs which will hopefully finish on grass/clover leys with the first lambs going in the next few weeks. I will be looking for some more breeding ewes later on in the summer probably Lleyns again as I am convinced that they are the best for our system; put to a Texel ram they deliver some quality lambs.

Beef

Beef sales have been good this year starting off with some dairy steers being sold in the autumn. These beasts sold really well due to their sheer size. We then sold some store cattle at Easter at an organic store sale at Sedgemoor market; they sold well but no better than their conventional brothers.

The store market was really strong then and highest price steers made just £50 less than a finished bullock on Easter Monday. We have recently purchased a shorthorn bull to run with our dairy cows to produce good beef cattle rather than the Friesian/Holstein steers that we are unlucky enough to rear at the moment.

Pigs

We have come to a very difficult decision to sell the Saddle Back pigs due to poor meat sales and the fact that the buyers tend to pay less for a colored pig. This is a great



disappointment to me as I have grown quite attached to them but, after speaking to various organic farmers, the trend is that everyone is either down-sizing or getting out all together the reasons being poor sales and extremely high feed prices. We cannot however get out of pig production altogether due to the educational need and have decided on either British Lop or Welsh pigs. They are both good traditional breeds and both are white pigs; we now need to find a breeder to supply gilts and a boar.

Grazing / Forage

This year we are experimenting with pea / barley whole crop silage under sown with grass which looked very promising right from the start. The peas germinated better than expected and looked like they were always going to stay in front of the barley but, in the last few weeks, the barley has taken over; best of all the weeds haven't had a chance to establish. We hope to cut in mid July leaving a healthy sward of grass clover to graze over the summer, these bales are intended for the beef cattle over the winter to help save on concentrate costs.

This is also our second year of growing fodder beet. We are still learning about growing it and keeping the weeds down early. We now have our own steerage hoe, thanks to old boy Terry Ayre, which saves an awful lot of weeding by hand although the year 9s do love it so (not!). We harvest from mid-October onwards (leaves as well) and feed right through to the spring. There wasn't a great jump in milk yield but the cows seemed to have a lot more energy making it easier to get them in calf again. We currently grow around five acres but will probably drop to three acres as it is a great drain on our time.

The extra land at Ashford is not only a great help for the "arable" crops but also better for the grass/clover leys. We have hopefully made some quality silage to feed over the winter; the lambs also tend to finish well on the leys over the winter.

Poultry

We have increased the laying birds to approximately forty which has been a success although there are still peaks and troughs in sales. The eggs are still selling at £3 /dozen and I have had very good reports about them. We will still keep the meat birds going but just in small numbers as people don't seem to understand that, yes, they are expensive but there is a large amount of meat on them.

We have decided not to rear turkeys this year. Last year we had a really bad problem with the disease "black head", even after trying to do everything right, clean grazing, feeding in doors and away from other birds it was still a race to get them to slaughter before they died. This is not the way to go on.

Machinery

I purchased a finger bar hedge trimmer this spring which should save us a lot of money in the long term." A finger bar trimmer" I hear you say, well what you see is what you get and it looks like there are no hidden problems with it. In the future I plan on getting a 10 foot pasture topper, a 7-8ton tipping trailer and a conventional baler. If anyone can help out in any way it would be greatly appreciated.

Retiring Librarian Pam Jameison Reflects

By the time you all read this I will be an “Old Brymorian – the Girls section”. After 21 years I will have shelved the last book, hung up my date stamp and told the last Year 9 “to keep the noise down”.

I came to Brymore all those years ago from being a Mobile Librarian to what was a part time two and a half day a week job running the library at Brymore. In those days the library was in the Quiet Room which was where I waited for my interview. Summoned by Robert Hort, the then Head, to his office I was asked what I thought of the library and how I could improve it. My reply must have led him to believe that I was a right idiot when I said “What library?” Admittedly there were a few books on very high shelves but as for describing it as a library took a lot of imagination. I suppose Mr Hort thought that things could only get better and so I was appointed.

As a member of the non-teaching staff I was not allowed in the Staff Room for coffee so became an honorary member of the ‘Office’. Thank goodness this unwritten rule has long disappeared because where would Brymore be without its support staff?

Reading was, and even is now, not a high priority in a Brymore pupil's life with the obvious exception of the Farmers Weekly and Practical Farm Ideas. Friday morning break was a nightmare with everyone wanting to read the new edition of ‘Dingers’ (Farmers) Weekly. Arranging for individual half price subscriptions was a saviour for me, now the Office bears the brunt of the onslaught when boys collect their copies on a Friday. If magazines were what they read I decided to spend a great deal of my budget on them which proved to be very popular. It was the carrot that got boys into the library in the first place.

Asked by a boy ‘What was the best thing about being a librarian?’ I had no hesitation in saying that it was helping them to find out things. I think that during the unfortunate Foot & Mouth period the library became very busy as boys came to check on recent outbreaks all across the country and we all learnt that dreaded word “contiguous”.

I was always envied by other school librarians when they visited and saw what made Brymore different and why. Where else would you have to “look after my egg Miss till the end of school ‘cos I don't want to break it” or find a recipe for butternut squash because a boy grew them and was taking them home that weekend to mum who did not know how to cook it.

Brymore becomes a way of life governed by terms and seasons. You return in autumn to the splendid show of colour on the trees in the grounds, bulbs and rooks dominate the spring term and then after Easter – the wonderful swallows and swifts start zooming over the workshops and creating that evocative sound of hot summer.

Boys who come to Brymore have always had great opportunities if they care to take them up and this is also true for staff. I have done many memorable things and taken part in some wonderful events and activities during my time. I can tractor spot from 100 yards; I've met royalty, served tea to Prince Charles, visited his home and garden; organised trips to Gardeners World Live where we met some great gardeners including Geoff Hamilton and Alan Titchmarsh; shouted myself hoarse in supporting various school 1st XV teams in the Daily Mail, and Somerset Cups; “sold” Brymore from the publicity vehicle, just to mention a few.

Inevitably there have been changes. The library was the first place to have e-mail within the school and that led to an amazing friendship and knock on effect between myself, the school and an American GI (now 91) who was stationed here prior to the D-Day landings.

Now e-mail and computers dominate our lives, as to whether this is a good thing is up for debate.

Changes to staff, systems and now new buildings have been a challenge, but such is the way of things that people have coped and made the best of it which really sums up Brymore.

I worked out that during my Brymore career, there were potentially 1260 boys who crossed the library threshold, some willingly, others under duress. Perhaps in years to come a young or maybe old man may read a book and say "do you know what that Mrs Jamieson was right, reading is for enjoyment and escape!"

So thank you Brymore for what has been a wonderful way to make a living.

Pam Jamieson
Brymore School Librarian
1988-2009

Summer Draw 2009 - Rex Steer

When I suggested holding a summer draw four years ago little did I know what a success it would be. This year we broke the record for the fourth consecutive year by making an amazing £2,500 profit!

My thanks to all who supported us by buying tickets but I would say that if every member of the Old Boys sold or purchased their allocation of two books of tickets, or returned them unsold, the total would have been in excess of £3,000 as £700 worth of tickets were not returned and by 2.30pm on the day of the draw we had sold out of tickets so many people were disappointed at not being able to buy them. Next year would you please return either your counterfoils and money or your books of unwanted draw tickets so that we are able to sell the unsold tickets on the day.

As you are aware our aim is to offer a bursary to boys who wish to attend Brymore. We had initially hoped to provide such a bursary every two or three years, but the OBA fundraising has been so successful that

we are now able to achieve this annually. This year we exceeded even the revised target. The Headmaster asked the OBA for help with fees for a student who had completed two years at school but, due to family circumstances, they could not fund his third and final year so the OBA stepped in and funded this year for him.

The committee and I wish to thank all of our sponsors, ticket purchasers and helpers for this great achievement.

Rex Steer (OBA Committee Fundraiser)

The following sponsors provided prizes for the 2009 Summer Draw:

- BOCM Pauls
- Puxton Park (Mead Associates)
- Crediton Milling Co.
- Yeo Valley Organics
- Mole Valley Farmers
- OBA Prizes given by : Peter Wood, Peter & Jenny Harris, Rex & Pat Steer, Mike Fry and John Manning, Harold Bolt, John Lang, John Field, Paul Steer, Rex Eastment and Tony Bradford.

Treasurer's Report: Mike Fry

It is an ever increasing privilege to report on the growing success of this organisation year on year. Membership has continued to grow from 237 a year ago to 307 this year. The milestone of 300 members is a great achievement as the income, from subscriptions alone, generates the required £6,000 to meet our intended annual school bursary, however once again a few 'cash' members will not receive this 'Spur' if they have failed to renew their subscriptions by 1st September.

We were able to complete our third Three Year Bursary to Brymore following our July committee meeting; a further £2,000 was paid in September to enable a lad to complete



*Malcolm Lloyd, Rex Steer, Mike Fry
presenting Bursary Cheque*

his final year at the school. The total sum paid over a four year period to support bursaries stands at the grand sum of £22,000! Successful fund raising at the Pym's Night Reunion in December for which a hundred tickets were sold. This, together with Rex Steer's extremely successful Open Day Summer Draw combined with your individual subs and donations have made the unachievable, achievable. Well done to you all!

A third event was held on February 14th to preview the new buildings; a surplus of £165 was made on that day. The purchase of 500 silver spur lapel badges will, I feel, be a great PR exercise as well as a fund raiser.

Peter Harris and I had an even more successful day at this years Leaver's Service at which we recruited thirty new members from the fifty-six leavers whereas we had only ten the year before. Could it be that the boys at the school are taking more note of our regular activities at Brymore and are feeling that their involvement with the school after leaving could be both interesting and worthwhile? Answers on a 'postcard' please! The recruitment of so much young blood, particularly over the past three years, raises the hope of their continued support and interest amongst us 'oldies'.

Finally, many thanks to you all for your continued support and may it continue well into the future.

The Royal Visit - HRH Princess Royal at Brymore, January 2009



PJ Wand (Head Boy), Malcolm Lloyd



Vernon Hughes (Physics), Nick Mouland, Sam Tinknell



Chris Nicholson, Head of Horticulture