

Profile of an ex-Student – Bob Pearce – Class of 1952

I believe Brymore Secondary Technical School of Agriculture was made for me. At the end of the 1952 summer term I left primary school. Early in the holiday I visited the local Youth Employment Office to ask if there was a school where I could learn about farming.



Within a few days they discovered Brymore and even arranged for me an interview at the school, making it possible for me to take my place in the class of 1952. Three years later in July 1955 I said goodbye to Brymore after a full and rounded education which I believe prepared me for the journey ahead.

I did not have the required entrance qualifications but by the award of a Cornwall County Agricultural Scholarship I was able to commence studies at Seale Hayne College in 1956. I was awarded the College Diploma in Agriculture and the National Diploma (NDA) in 1958.

National Service papers soon came. I decided to opt for three years in the RAF. After a few months in the UK, I was posted to an Australian Air Force Base near Adelaide. Just before my return to the UK I visited the South Australian Department of Agriculture in Adelaide to ask about employment opportunities. I was taken, informally, from person to person and asked a few questions by each of them about background, experience and interests.

After returning to the UK for demob I worked as a herdsman in Dorset. I needed some time to readjust to agriculture. A letter from the South Australian Government offering me a position as a Field Officer in the Department of Agriculture arrived out of the blue!

Six months after arriving in Adelaide I was promoted to Project Officer responsible for Herd Improvement projects. A couple of years later I became Information and Press Officer and I also served with the Tasmanian Department of Agriculture, conducting research projects, before returning to the UK at the end of 1968.

BOCM appointed me as their Agricultural Advisory Representative in the West Midlands and Welsh Borders. My role was to provide technical advisory support for farmers using our products.

By now I realised that to progress in the UK I needed better qualifications. It was suggested to me that teaching would be a good place to begin to upgrade. I was offered a place at Wolverhampton Technical Teachers' Training College where I completed a Post Graduate Certificate in Education.

My first teaching post was a Boys Secondary Modern School as a Science Teacher. This School became a mixed Comprehensive School and after four years I moved to teach as Head of Science at a school in Dorset which was also due to become a Comprehensive School. During my four years in this post I was seconded to join a University of Southampton B ED (Hons) course. I graduated with First Class Honours, majoring in Ecology/Biology.

Soon afterwards I joined the RSPCA as their Chief Education Officer, leading a team of teachers and support staff based through out England and Wales Our role was to upgrade the position and awareness of animal welfare topics within the curriculum of schools and colleges throughout the UK.

While working for the RSPCA I identified a niche to set up a consultancy to develop curriculum-based education and training projects with 'sponsorship' funding from commercial organisations. Over the years we developed many cross curriculum projects with well-known UK companies and international organisations.

While developing these ideas I joined a group PhD project at Bradford University School of Science and Society. Individually we studied specific aspects of diet and health. Unfortunately in my thesis write-up year I needed to have total replacement of both hips and was unable to travel to complete the thesis within the deadline. The work was done; but I declined to spend time updating and revising it to present my thesis.

However, I recommenced my PhD quest at the University of Southampton. My research considered strategies and impact in communicating ideas and innovations and the thesis was examined and accepted in 1992. I felt a bit 'long in the tooth' at the graduation but I got there in the end.

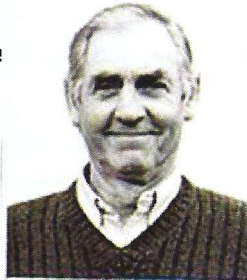
Sixteen years ago we bought and moved (retired) to an old farm in SW France which like me, needed total renovation. We have enough hectares for grazing horses, long walks with our dogs, our own timber for harvesting, gardens to feeds us, nice views and room for grand children to play. I write and play the guitar!

JOHN PERHAM 1940 – 2011

We sadly report the passing of John Perham who attended Brymore from 1953 – 56. We all extend our deepest sympathy to John's wife Val and their three sons, who in their turn all attended Brymore. John's friendly personality and attitude assured that friendships forged at Brymore, were retained for life. This was so obvious by the number of Old Brymorian who attended his memorial service. The family farm at Stolford near Bridgwater is now managed by Val and eldest son Philip, while youngest son, Richard trains and approves new jockeys at Newmarket. Anthony, a professional cabinet maker and head boy in his time, operates from his own workshops close to the family farm.

It was Anthony's skills which earned him a commission to make furniture for the Head Masters study at Brymore. A carved oak desk and octagonal shaped coffee table are both embellished with carved 'Brymore Spurs'. Also included are a pair of filing cabinets. The existence of these special works of art only became known to us when we started holding meetings in the Heads Office. Unfortunately, the refurbishment of the Headmaster's new office has rendered this furniture unsuitable for current needs as was scheduled for possible disposal.

It is now decided that the complete set will be retained and displayed for use in the Library as a Brymore Legacy. In recognition of family involvement, a memorial fund has been launched in John's name to assist with a required Trophy Cabinet to be located in the reception area of the Teaching Block. Prior to going to press, this fund has already reached £350, which is approximately half of the required sum. If any Old Brymorian feels they could support this cause in John's memory, DONATIONS may be sent to the OBA Treasurer in the usual way. A suitable plaque will no doubt be designed and displayed as a reminder to Val and family of the happy memories and friendships gained from the Brymore Experience.



The Last Thirty One Years Brian Spridgens Senior Duty Master

Mr Spridgens asked classes of year 11 boys for questions regarding his 31 years at Brymore – here are a selection of the questions and his answers.

James Cartwright "Was being a House Parent a job you enjoyed?"
"Yes but I am now back to being the Senior Duty Master as I had been before, when I was responsible for 110 boys in School House"

Cyrus Dorrington "What is the biggest change you have seen to the school?"

"Technology! When I started at school, there were no computers or mobile phones, if you wanted to make a call, it was the pay phone in the corridor; now every boy has a mobile and there are computers everywhere."

Oliver Herrington "Has the attitude of boys towards activities changed?"

"It has, when I started there was rugby & hockey and in the evenings darts which was played in the cellars – darts has stopped for all sorts of Health & Safety reasons but rugby & hockey are now joined by Chads runs, weights, fitness & circuits. In the 80's & 90's there would be up to 50 boys running Chads or attending sports training after school – not now, many sit in their dorms playing games on their computers or phones!"

James Kerry "What would you say was the biggest & best quality about Brymore?"

"You see it on Open Day, the number of Old Boys that return & speak to me & other members of staff they know, with politeness & respect, we can remember what they were like as boys; the school helped turn them from boys into men".

Luca Phillips "Which is your favourite rugby team?"

"A team from the 1990's which had Paul & Peter Grovier & Lloyd Williamson playing. I remember after returning to school from a rugby match at West Somerset and those boys getting off the bus & running to finish some school work before tea!"

Roger Danby 1953 - 1956

George Thompson "When did the Chads Hill run begin and why?"

"I used to run along the A39 towards town & the traffic was bad, so looking for another, safer route, I spoke to Dave Dagger a teacher at the school where I could run without the fear of being killed! He suggested that I run up Chads Hill & then back up Rodway into the village, this I did on my own, then 'Juggy' Calloway asked if he could join me, from then on other boys joined in. Since 1985 each runners time is recorded & their placement on the list can change with each run."

Ben Lyons "What is your favourite memory?"

"There are too many to mention but I will tell you one of my strangest. One night when in school house about 12:30, there was a knock on my door and outside were two HODs from dorm 1 and a year 9, Roger Ward; 'yes I asked?' 'Sir, Roger has come from our room', 'What do you mean, come from?' It transpired that the HODs had been woken by a tapping on their window, on opening it they found Roger standing on the parapet outside, he had been sleep walking and had fallen out of the window from the floor above and had woken up on landing. Had he fallen either side he might have been killed! That I won't forget."

Daryl Roper "Best memory from school?"

"One of very many, is a group of Gap Students from New Zealand performing the Haka in front of me & then going on to teach the Haka to the school team."

Gareth Stockton "What is the best sporting year?"

"The early 1991's when we had 60 boys taking part in the County Athletics Championships – that was a great year"

When Mr Spridgens started here at Brymore a large percentage of boys came from a farming background; in a straw poll taken this term there were only 6 out of a class of 17.

I always wanted to farm and attending Brymore was the first step. As a child I had helped on my uncle's farm where milking was done by hand and the farm work using horses.

I hoped to attend Seal Hayne Agricultural College after Brymore but found I needed more practical experience and O levels. So I got a job with a farmer close to home who set me to digging out every thistle in a 20-acre field. It took a whole week. I think I surprised him by showing up for work the next Monday.

For the next 18 months I did farm work during the day and GCE correspondence courses at night. Then I felt that I needed more technical experience so I became a Laboratory Technician at Bristol University. After a year I had all that was required for Seal Hayne but I was "broke." However, the local paper mill offered me a position as a "Management Trainee." This was the first turning point in my life. I became familiar with all aspects of paper manufacturing. I also attended Bristol Technical College and obtained an ONC in Mechanical Engineering with endorsements in Fluid Mechanics and Thermodynamics. After 11 years I had risen to assistant production manager but I wanted to see the world.

I landed a position as Technical Director in a Paper mill in Greece which lasted only six months. I then joined Consulting Engineers in London building a Paper Mill in South Africa. But then the company that had hired me into the Paper Industry 12 years earlier offered me a Production Managers position in Scotland. I was there 18 months before European competition forced the mill to close. Fortunately I was able to rejoin the Consulting Engineers and was sent to Vancouver, Canada for training.

The next turning point in my life came when another Canadian company offered me an Application Engineers position to introduce a new product to the Paper industry. We moved to Canada on November 5 1972 and faced one of the coldest winters I have ever experienced. After two years, I was able achieve my long held ambition of getting into Farming and to combine farming with my other profession, Application Engineering.

2011/12 Deputy Head Boy's Report – Ollie Mahon

The farm became a family project. My wife, Gillian, ran 5 acres of “pick your own” raspberries. My daughter, Melinda, raised Turkeys and my son Jonathan, raised Pigs. Together we built up a Purebred Hereford herd.

The next turning point came when, after 24 years with the same company, I was asked by a competitor to become Development Director. They wanted to develop a saleable product using ideas I had formulated during my years in the paper industry. My practical engineering experience joined with the theoretical knowledge of the PhD's and together we developed and patented a very successful product.

Since retiring I have assisted my wife in creating an “English Garden” that has been featured in a number of magazines and charity fund raising garden tours.

We are also committed to “Harvesting Solar Energy” by heating our domestic hot water and generating electricity from roof mounted solar panels. The electricity is fed into the national grid.

In conclusion I feel that I took advantage of the opportunities and luck that came my way and consider the following as my life time achievements:

- 1) Holding ten worldwide patents, the latest being issued April 2012.
- 2) Working in five different countries.
- 3) Writing presenting and publishing technical papers in 16 countries, some of which have been translated into Chinese, Spanish and Russian.



Boys working in the new polytunnel

I was very privileged when Mr Thomas asked me to become the deputy head boy. I thought to myself this was the opportunity to give something back to school, so I accepted the post and I never looked back on the decision I made.

Being a current year 12 student I go to the Cannington Centre of Bridgwater College to study horticulture at a level three standard. Being at Cannington is great because of all the wonderful facilities they have. I chose horticulture because I have a strong interest in it. In particular about growing all of the fruit and vegetables.

I am in the college two and half days a week. So the rest of the time I do my work experience in Monkton Elm Garden Centre which is a great place to work because of all of the different types of plants I work with. It has also been running for 30 years. If I am not there I work in the school garden department which is also great fun because I get to work with the boys in a lesson environment.

In the evening I help out with prep in particular horticulture prep. I also help out the evening activities which are taking place, I also enjoy spending time in the other houses, not just school house.

Another part I have enjoyed of being a year 12 is going to all of the rugby matches with the boys because I have a keen interest in rugby. I will also help with all of the cricket training and I will go to as many games with them as passable

I have also tried to organise more trips for the weekends for boys to go on like, the rugby 7s in Twickenham. I have also got about 5 trips to go to Taunton to see Somerset play cricket. I am hoping to have a number of paintballing trips to Cannington Paintball centre on weekdays and weekends. I have also got plans to go to an activity centre in Devon one weekend

Ollie is now employed at the school as a Gap Student while continuing his studies at college