In our October issue we invited former 'Bush House boys' to write in with memories of their time as boarders at the grammar school farm near Pembroke. Here are their replies:

Bush House days

JOHN PRITCHARD,
School House,
Laverton, Broadway, Worcester

WHEN boarding school is mentioned to a child, maybe the immediate reaction is one of fear – fear of leaving home comforts and being subjected to a strict regime, all outside the normal comfort zone.

For me there was an element of the unknown. However I can quite honestly say that I left Bush House in 1957 but Bush House has never left me.

The article in your issue of October 2009 revived much nostalgia of my days as a boarder over a two-year period. The salient points which immediately spring to mind were:

There was a strict routine which focussed on discipline, hard academic work and learning to live with like-minded boys in the house.

Each morning after being awoken by the Housemaster parading the dormitory corridors with a very loud hand-bell, breakfast was served. Following on was a daily line-up of all boys to present themselves to Matron who would inspect each of us to ensure that our shoes were polished, our uniform tidy, and – most important – that our ears were clean.

If not, then a return to the washroom was necessary to make the appropriate adjustments, with a re-presentation before being allowed to school.

There was a daily check by Matron (Miss Brown) of the dormitories to ensure that our beds had been made properly. Alas, I remember on more than one occasion having all the linen removed and being told to remake properly!

After school we returned to Bush House for the afternoon tea/supper which was followed by a compulsory one or two hours for all boys in the prep room. This was compulsory for all boys whether or not they had been set homework; if not, then the time was spent doing revision or work on one's own initiative. There was always a master in the room making sure that work was being done. This had the effect of all boys starting and finishing their prep at the same time.

Weekends were looked forward to as they meant a change in routine. On Saturday afternoons we were allowed 'free bounds' – in the limited time available Pembroke town was about the geographical limit!

Sunday afternoons were taken up by house staff arranging a compulsory long cycle ride, maybe to Freshwater West, or a long walk (I think this was to ensure that we were physically worn out before Monday morning).

All this may sound regimented, and perhaps it was. However I can look back after some 50 years and hold my memories in high esteem and feel grateful that I had the opportunity of participating in the boarding days of Bush House. I feel that it has helped me enormously through my adult life and hopefully made me a better citizen.

There is an active and very professional website for all former Pembroke pupils on www.thepenvro.com.

Bill Key was house-master when this picture was taken in the 1960s. A letter from him is printed overleaf.

Back row, left to right: Richard Morgan, Hubert Young, Norman Fry, Nigel Rogers-Lewis, Colin Good, Martyn Evans, John Jones, Robert Hammond, Robert Thorne, David Harries.
Middle row: Anthony Roberts, Peter Protheroe, John Curtis, Philip Martin, A StJohn Brentnall, George Dickman, John Morgan, Gerald Mountstevens, Richard Thomas, David Rees, James Russell.
Front row: ?, Tony Smith, ?, R Hewish, Mrs Hewish, T C Roberts, Miss Brown (matron), J Bevan, Mary (cook), Nicholas Tebbutt, Mrs Roblin. Front: Kathryn Hewish and Mark Hewish.

Pictures courtesy of Wendy Campbell.

BOB LLOYD
36 Brook Street
Kidderminster

BEING a local boy I was not a boarder at Bush School. However I was a pupil at Pembroke School Farm from 1951 to 1957 and made friends with the boys and spent quite a lot of time with them.

I would cycle up to Bush House on a Saturday afternoon and meet up with my pals to walk into Pembroke. Although there were about 20 boys, we would split up into small groups so as not to intimidate the shopkeepers.

Saturday was the day the boys had their weekly allowance administered by Mr Ray Hewish (who is still alive at the age of 90). We would proceed through town, calling at favourite shops and ending up at Brown's Café where Mrs Brown would serve (and she is still serving at the age of 102). She kept a sharp eye on us!

Sometimes, if there was a good film on at Haggars, special permission was granted for the boys to stay out a little later. After the film it would be back to Brown's for a bag of chips and then back to Bush House from where I would cycle home to Pembroke Dock.

Dances would be organised in the main hall of the school where the Bush House boys would mix with the rest of the senior school. The music was skiffle and a new sound called 'rock and roll'.

John Pritchard had a guitar and he tried to form a skiffle group with the boys. I was the double bass player with a home-made instrument made out of a tea chest, broom handle and fine string. When assembled it did produce a similar sound to the real thing.

However, after three or four rehearsals the group disbanded. Who knows? There could still be a discarded tea chest and broom handle in one of the sheds at Bush House.

A Young Farmers' Club was formed and we competed in various competitions. Prior to a competition we would practice tractor and trailer reversing or cattle judging on a Saturday afternoon at the school farm.

The October issue of *Pembrokeshire Life* showed a picture of Mr J Hunt, the farm bailiff, showing us boys how to operate a buck rake attached to the tractor.

We used the buck rake mainly in making silage after the fresh grass was cut and rolled into a large heap. The tractor and buck rake would reverse into the pile and lift the heap off the ground for easy transportation.

Most of us boys were of slim build and one of us driving a small Ferguson T20 tractor with a heavy load on the back would cause the front wheels to lift about one inch off the ground. He had ways of remedying this; two of the heavier boys would stand on the front radius arms on the tractor, holding on to the front head-lamp brackets.

It worked – but Health and Safety would have a fit if it were done today!

ANN SMITH (nee JAMES)
Redford Hill,
Hundleton, Pembroke

I WAS the eldest of four children brought up at Upper Lamphey Park Farm, Lamphey.

Every Saturday my father, Norman James, had a Bush House boy or two to help out at the farm. On a regular basis we had Michael Pennington and Frank Grantham.

Most of the local farmers had someone to help. They used to cycle back and fore to the farm or my father would collect them.

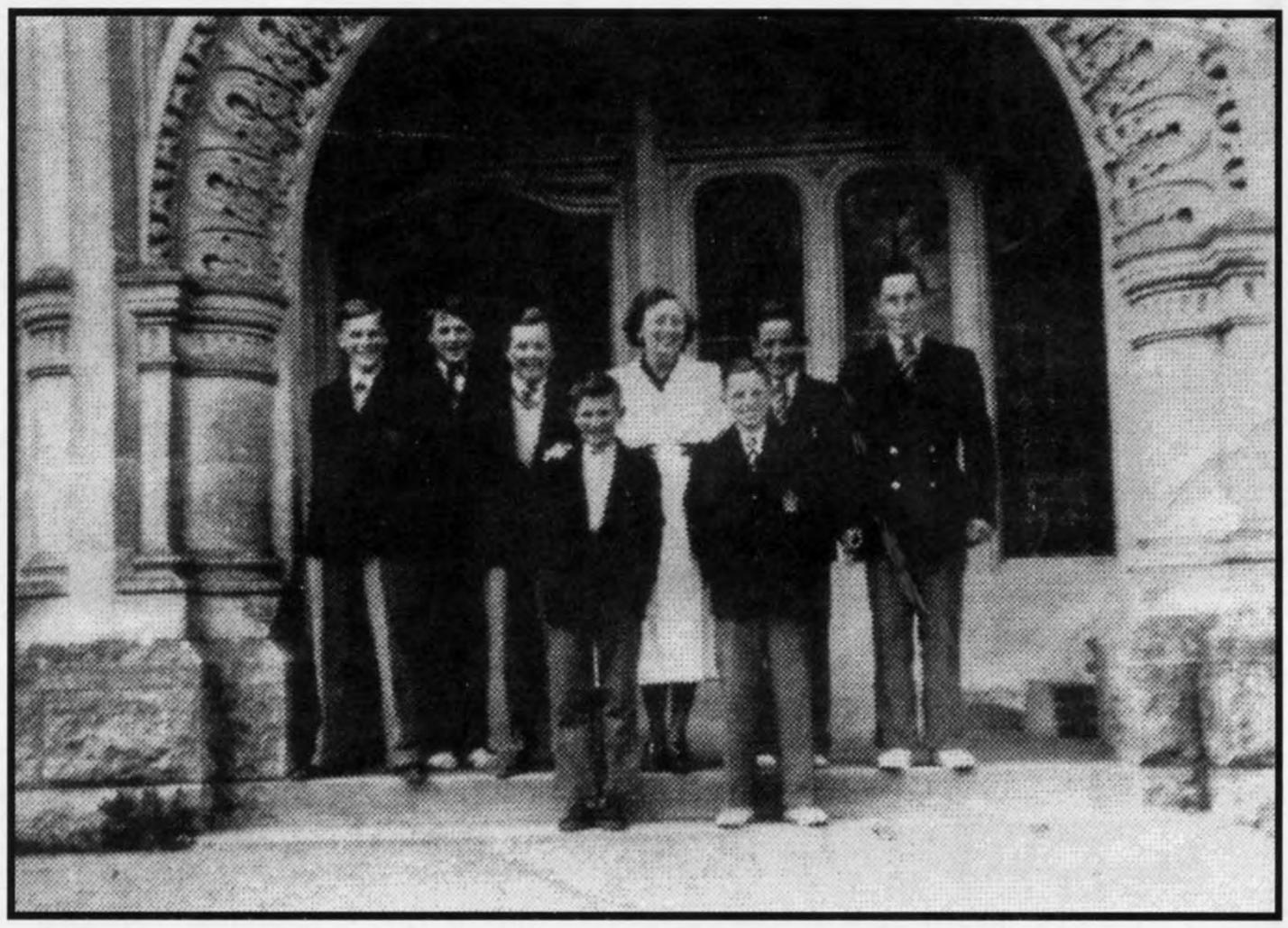
When I was 11 I joined Pembroke Grammar YFC, as did my brother Bill and sisters. It was one of the best junior clubs at the time (1967) and was run by club leaders Bryn Davies, Heather Henry (teacher) and Miss Owen (teacher).

We held our meetings on Thursday evenings in the common room at Bush House - happy days!

More memories overleaf.

Bush House days

NORMAN FRY
32 Quinta Road
Babbacombe, Torquay



The first seven Bush House boys with Matron. Left to right: Mike Dyson, Nicholas Tebbutt, Jeffrey Owen, Norman Fry, unknown; Tony Smith and Norman Mowlem.

WHEN Bush House first opened, which I think must have been in April, there were only seven boys boarding. It wasn't until the September that it filled to the 38.

We had great fun there. Mr Hewish was a superb housemaster, he was very strict in many ways but was also great fun and seemed to enjoy being with us. He joined in our games, took us on bike rides as far as Freshwater East and was very much a father figure to us.

He was very keen on boxing and used to invite a few boys who had been very good or helpful in some way up to his flat to watch boxing on TV. I wasn't interested in the sport but just loved to see a TV.

If any of us had an argument and started to fight he would take us up to the school gym, give us boxing gloves and make us do three rounds to get it out of our system. The only time had to do this I got the most amazing nose bleed which stopped the fight.

Mr Hewish was geography teacher and was the best secondary teacher I ever had. I think he went on to become headteacher of Keswick Grammar School.

Matron was okay, but she could be a bit of a dragon. She used to hold inspections each morning before school to make sure we had washed, had cleanish nails and had cleaned our shoes. This was probably inspired by Mr Hewish as he was an ex military man!

I got into quite a lot of trouble on a couple of occasions. The first was due to me secretly making gunpowder from items I bought from local chemists with my pocket money. I wasn't very good at it and had a couple of accidental explosions, one of which caused some damage (outside the house).

Another time was on a school trip to Rhineland. The school headteacher's son and I were good friends but we really went too far when we got very drunk and Mr Hewish had to come and get us from the local police (we were 14). Mr Hewish never told our parents after we promised we would never do it again.

The work on the farm was great. I did not have a farming background – my dad was an electrical engineer with SWEB – but I loved farming and wanted to go to college to take a Dip Ag. We learned all sorts basic things such as milking, caring for young stock and even tractor and trailer reversing.

Mr Hunt was farm bailiff. Sometimes, if he wasn't around, we would get on the tractor and drive as fast as we could around the main farm block.

I remember one day he tried to teach a group of us how to kill a turkey. We were all lined up with a turkey between our knees (about six or seven of us) and we were supposed to break its neck with a quick twist. Turkeys have very long a pliable necks - these poor birds didn't meet a very quick end as we were twisting and tugging at the things for quite a while before we eventually got the job done.

One day having been sent to collect eggs from the deep litter chickens a couple of us decided to have a competition to see who could swallow the most raw eggs in one minute. We both ended up violently sick and then had to hide all the empty shells. What price Health and Safety!

Sometimes we had legitimate competitions such as tractor and trailer reversing, hand milking or machine milking. I remember that the milking competitions were judged by Mr Bennion of Home Farm Stackpole, a very well respected local farmer. I won both the milking competitions and when he found out that I had no farming background and that I was the youngest competitor, and because there was no prize, he gave me ten shilling note. That was a lot of money then and I was very proud.

We were also taught stock judging. This was done by B J Davies. We became very good at it and a few of us entered local competitions very successfully. A lad called Johnny Curtis from Fishguard and I were given the chance to enter the national competition at the Royal Welsh Show which that year was held (I think) in Anglesey or maybe Aberystwyth . We won our section. Until recently I had a photo of us in action but I can't find it anywhere now.

I was not academic and didn't do much work in school (apart from geography) and I failed to get enough GCEs to go to Seal Hayne College so I left school and got a job at a farm in St Florence known locally as 'the buildings' (it is now holiday flats).

After 18 months I managed to get a job with Fullwood milking machines as a fitter. This was a great job for young man with a van and I travelled all over UK and Ireland installing parlours before I became area service manager for south east England. I worked for them for about eight years.

Eventually, having got married and moving to Aylesbury the lifelong ambition of seeing the South American jungle came to the fore.

My wife and I decided to try for some missionary work in Colombia. However, there are not many jobs in the jungle for a milking machine engineer!

Somehow I managed to get a place in teacher training college (with useless GCEs) and trained as a science teacher, eventually taking a degree at Reading University. To my surprise I loved primary teaching and so was able to spend time working in Colombia, saw the jungle and got eaten by mosquitoes!

On our return to UK I worked in a school in Milton Keynes for about eight years before getting the headship of a village school in Devon and then finally a bigger primary school in Torquay where I was head for 18 years before retiring at 62.

So, from Bush and all those happy memories I had very mixed careers but would not change anything.

Mr William Key is seated fourth from left in this group photograph. His wife Anne is on his left and their children David and Richard are seated on the grass.

WILLIAM KEY
Wychwood
Fawler
Chipping Norton

THE OCTOBER edition of *Pembrokeshire Life* was brought to my attention by a former pupil of Pembroke Grammar School, the Reverend Terry Richards, who lives near me in Oxfordshire.

In 1960 I succeeded Mr Hewish as Housemaster of Bush House and together with my wife Anne and sons David and Richard moved into the flat at the top of the house. Our sons attended Pembroke Dock Primary School.

Trevor Roberts was now Headmaster. He appreciated the unique value of Bush House to the school and often used the study for administrative purposes.

Life in a school boarding house is never dull: on one occasion a fire in the poultry unit attached to the House woke everyone in the early hours of the morning, causing the evacuation of boys and staff. Fortunately no damage was done to humans or staff.

Matron's TV set was taken to safety by one of the boys who proudly recounted this to his parents over the telephone in suitably graphic language!

Richard Roberts receives a trophy from Mrs Anne Key at a prize day held on the Bush House lawn.

There was a wonderful view of the castle and the river from the House. On one occasion the well known ship *Kathleen and May* – later to feature in "The Onedin Line" – sailed up the river. Also there was a spectacular "Son et Lumiere" held at the castle.

Bush House was such an important and distinctive feature of the school and it is sad that educational developments affected its future and eventually its very existence. So when the farm went no boarders were needed - a loss to Pembrokeshire and indeed to the whole of Wales.

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