

36 Responses to *History*



John Crockford-Hawley *says:*

January 20, 2012 at 11:03 pm

Delighted to stumble across your website. I first visited Dol-llys when it was a nursing home and then briefly re-visited about 10 years ago. My great-great grandfather was Henry Crockford and my great-grandfather (The Rev Henry James Crockford) was born there. One minor correction to your site: Henry's wife was Emma Sarah Louisa not Mary. I didn't realise the old boy was staying at a Holywell inn in 1841 (which may well account for his name not appearing with the rest of the family in London at the time of the 1841 census). You rightly say that William lies buried under the chapel of Kensal Green – I own the tomb, William's corpse, 6 other family "residents" and space for a further seven! It's all that's left of the estates; I'm afraid Henry's son (the Rev Henry James Crockford) put the bottle before the pulpit and familial duty!

I'd love to drive up from Weston-super-Mare when you have one of your open

days.

Best wishes to the community

[Reply](#)



Mark Tindall says:

February 17, 2012 at 3:17 pm

I really enjoyed seeing pictures of this splendid house again after so many years. I am now 72 but used to go to school there in 1945. I daresay other ex pupils may have contacted you. Although the regime there was very strict, ones outstanding memory was of the wonderful building and its surroundings – I even recall the large boulders of Quartz bordering the paths behind the building and the house in the Forest behind.

If I can I should like to come and visit again one day .

Regards

Mark Tindall

[Reply](#)



Greg says:

April 1, 2014 at 8:50 pm

Hi Mark

Was reading post and am in South Africa and found a 1945 magazine for st. wilfrids if you would like I could send you a scan of it.

[Reply](#)



mairette williams says:

July 7, 2012 at 11:55 am

My great great grandfather was George Meares Charles Farmer , who i believe was related to the Stephens family. His son and heir was Charles Tempest Farmer ,born 1855 in Newtown Montgomeryshire

[Reply](#)



Humphrey Platts says:

December 31, 2012 at 1:38 pm

I was a pupil at St Wilfrid's School in 1939 when the school was evacuated to Dollys Hall at the outbreak of the Second World War and I have memories of life there with pretty basic facilities. Lighting was all by acetylene gas, there being no electricity, and we used earth closet toilets situated in a shed outside the house (very cold in winter!). Some time after the school took up residence it was realised that the white painted outside walls of the building were visible from some distance away on moonlit nights and that it might present a target for any enemy bomber which did occasionally fly over en route from the north western cities. All at once large containers of green paint arrived and the whole building was treated to camouflage!

Travel to Llanidloes was by train and in my case I would join the special coach at Paddington for the journey via Shrewsbury, Welshpool, and Moat Lane Junction. My parents were able to visit on occasion and they stayed at the Unicorn hotel which was run by the formidable Mrs George and her daughters. One advantage of life in Montgomeryshire at that time was the plentiful supply of food in the countryside, which was in contrast to strict rationing in force at home in Middlesex. I remember that rabbits swarmed around the Hall and we certainly often had rabbit pie for lunch. All the boys brought bicycles, although we walked to Church in the town on a Sunday. We had maroon blazers which earned us the description 'the Red Army' among the local boys!

The hillside behind the house was covered in scrub and bushes of various sorts. Trees must have been cleared at some time before our arrival. The area provided ideal conditions for boys to build huts and dens. This activity was encouraged during our outdoor leisure times and all sorts of structures were the result.

Also behind the house a trench was dug to form a shelter in the event of enemy air raid. We did practice using it but it was never used 'for real' while I was there. At the back of the house was the equipment which produced the acetylene gas for lighting the building. Once a day there was the overpowering smell when the

expended calcium carbide was removed.

The rural surroundings provided plenty of scope for study of natural history by many boys. I took an interest in ornithology and I was given for Christmas several books about British birds which I had at school for study.

Fishing took place in the large pond not far from the house where we would catch perch and roach. The pond was also the scene of much model boating, some craft being ready made and some built in wood by the boys at school. Some senior boys were also able to fish in the river.

The way to the river led past a farm and much interest greeted the annual setting up of the threshing machine at harvest time. This was driven by a splendid steam traction engine with a long flapping and unprotected flat belt which we were ordered to keep well away from! I dread to think what today's Health & Safety people would think of small boys being allowed anywhere near such a thing! But it was exciting to us.

We had the use of a field below the house as a football pitch, although this was often flooded and so unusable when the river rose! Cricket was played during the summer term on the town cricket ground on Saturday afternoons. To reach the ground we would cycle in a two by two crocodile. I was not good at cricket but always found myself at the bottom of the list of those selected to play. I think I was there just to make up numbers!

Physical exercise (PT) was also taken in an organised fashion on the grass in front of the house. This included marching. We also went for many organised walks for exercise. There were very few vehicles on the roads and so it was comparatively safe for a crocodile of boys along the lanes in the vicinity.

The normal school curriculum of the time was followed and various exams were taken in school. The members of the staff were mostly middle aged, the younger ones having joined up in the services when we left Sussex. George Pearson was Headmaster, assisted by a deputy whose name was Hall. Mrs Pearson was known as 'Mrs George' as a distinction from another member of the family whose name was Mary. There were two matrons – Miss Cuthbert and Miss Lewis – the latter being a formidable lady when it came to discipline. I can only recall two other masters – Messrs. Holberton and Lousada. Eric Lousada was one of those schoolmasters who were found in every school of this type. His subject was English, but he seemed to be involved in every activity of the school. I am indebted to him for his introduction of a once a week period of listening to classical music, which I enjoy to this day! He achieved his aim with the aid of two portable wind-up gramophones and his collection of 78 rpm records. We had access to the radio for news bulletins and there was a special treat for senior boys who were allowed to listen to Tommy Handley's ITMA programme once a week in our dormitory! Because of the tendency for it to rain a lot, boys were encouraged to enjoy a whole range of indoor leisure activity. Board games, chess, model making, and puppet theatre are some of the things I remember. We were never bored!

Walks often brought us to the town and one favourite was beside the Clywedog river to the tannery beside a weir and a mill stream once used to turn a waterwheel. There was a footbridge here across the river.

In the late 1960's I was working at a tannery here in Grantham, Lincolnshire, when the group company bought up the Llanidloes leather works. I found myself instructed to visit the Welsh town and to prepare to move plant and machinery for the transfer of production to Grantham! This strange quirk of fate brought me on a couple of visits to Llanidloes some 25 years after leaving St. Wilfrid's.

[Reply](#)



Tim Wickenden says:

March 13, 2015 at 12:41 am

Hello Humphrey, Great to read your account of the St. Wilfrid's days. I was a pupil at the St. Wils in the 1970s back in Seaford. Eric Lousada was still teaching English then and was a wonderful man. I went back to teach there between 1980 and its sad closure in 1982. I became friends with Eric. He was a bachelor most of his life, but married in his 70s and I was a frequent Sunday lunch visitor. After the meal Eric and I would sit in his study and listen to music. Alas St. Wilfrid's has largely been forgotten and there are very few references to on the internet. It was probably less harsh than in your day, but it was a good school and I was happy there both as man and boy.

[Reply](#)



Michael Brown says:

August 19, 2017 at 1:40 am

Looking for information, I attended St. Wilfrids 1966-1970 and would like to see some from around that period.

Thanks

[Reply](#)



Francis Hornak says:

December 30, 2020 at 10:03 pm

Hello Michael. I remember you from my time there. You had one hell of a temper and I recall Roger Hayes having to hold you in one of the lockers in the boot room while you calmed down! Hope all is well with you after all these years.

[Reply](#)



Andrew Sierakowski says:

December 31, 2018 at 5:28 am

Greetings from Canada! My brother Robert and I attended St. Wilfrids from 70-73. I have a lot of great memories there. Somebody created a group on Facebook a few years ago and I did post the school photo there. Unfortunately the group has since been removed, so sad!

Please feel free to email me for more info..Andrew

aps0762@gmail.com

[Reply](#)



Douglas Jeffrey says:

August 16, 2020 at 2:17 am

Hi Humphrey, This is a long shot I know, but do you know or remember any other names from that time. Details of my father's stay at Dol-llys are only just coming to light sadly. His name is John Robert Jeffrey. Sent there from St Wilfrid's circa 1940. Any details would be fantastic.

[Reply](#)



Francis Hornak says:

December 30, 2020 at 10:00 pm

What a wonderful description Humphrey. A delight to read. I am an old St. Wilfridian as well although I was there rather later back in Seaford from 1966-72 and Eric Lousada was still an influential master in my time too. It was a great school for me and Eric was a great teacher and very gifted at directing the school plays.

[Reply](#)



Bill Bruton says:

March 30, 2013 at 1:58 pm

I also was a pupil at St Wilfrids school from 1940-1943. My main friends were identical twins David and Richard Teversham whose father was the Brigadier in command of the troops on the NW frontier in India. Another friend Bill Gillespie and I went to Pangbourne Nautical College for an interview I failed but went to Cranleigh School instead. Eric Lousada the English teacher used to have musical appreciation lessons on Friday afternoons he played classical music on his wind up gramophone (no electricity the hall was lit by acetylene gas produced by Basset in a shed in a yard behind the Hall) I still have an interest in music. We stayed on a farm at Panty-y-dwr during hols boys could not return to London during the blitz. Eric looked after us and took us for wonderful walks in the Welsh hills. A favourite outing took us beside the river Clywedog a tributary of the Severne where we saw numerous salmon in the sparkling clear water. The geography and games master was Barry Collode whose favourite expression was "Hum Larkes" if you hit a six. His young daughter was the only girl pupil at the school. The hill behind the Hall was a wonderful place to play, building huts and dens. A favourite pastime was "Best Bedrooms" Taking a running jump into a Rhododendrum bush! There were delicious wild raspberries and little strawberries which we were encouraged to collect for supper. I returned to Dol-llys hall with Pat my wife about ten years ago.

correct for supper. I returned to Dol Llys Hall with family one about ten years ago we met one of the residents ,who was charming ,she gave us tea on the lawn,near lake where I used sail home made little boats and build harbours on banks.

[Reply](#)



Debbie Peck says:

October 25, 2015 at 1:37 am

Thank you Bill for calling me charming. It was a pleasure to meet you both. I kept a note of everything that you shared of your memories of your time at Dol-Llys. I live a couple of miles down the road now in Oakley Park. Best wishes, Debbie Peck

[Reply](#)



Omar Malik says:

April 18, 2013 at 7:41 pm

I googled Dol Llys Hall some years ago and drew a blank. Many thanks therefore to those responsible for this very interesting website. Like Mark Tindall and Humphrey Platts, I was a pupil at St Wilfrid's School (frid's, please not fred's; 100 lines that boy). I can remember both a Tindall and a Platts – perhaps the excellent gentlemen above – Hello, chaps. I was at Dol Lys H for two terms, after which St Wilfs returned to Seaford, the ack-ack gun having been removed from the gym (sadly; we could have put it to good use). My main memory of Dol Llys Hall was the incredible kindness of most of the masters: Eric Lousada (articulate, amusing English master and music lover), Barry Claudet (a Royal Marine who had stormed the mole at Zeebrugge, and not one with whom to take liberties, but a true and gallant gentlemen, Geography, History and Rugby football), George Pearson the HM, known as Pip, and his co-HM, John Hall, ex RN. Pure gold, all of them. Perhaps less reverent than Humphrey, we knew Mrs Pearson as Ma G, Miss Cuthbert as Ma Cuth, and Miss Lewis as Ma Loo; the last two were wonderful surrogate Mums to the boys.

The lovely grounds were the scene of perhaps my greatest, probably my last, success with women. Age 6, I had picked a bunch of wild flowers and, when an unknown elderly lady came by, I gave it to her. And! She was the school cook. 50 years later at a school reunion one of my contemporaries remarked, "Malik, you have changed more than anyone else. You used to be such a fat little boy." No connection between the two events, honest.

Happy days. Best Wishes to All. Omar Malik

[Reply](#)



Humphrey Platts says:

April 2, 2015 at 10:18 am

Hello, Omar. I have just read your piece about St Wilfrid's, posted two years ago, during a return visit to the Dol-llys Hall website. I left the school in 1943 so I think the Platts you remember was my younger brother. I regret to say that he died of lung cancer about a year ago. He had followed me to Shrewsbury when

I left there in 1947. Thanks for reminding me of Ma Loo. She used to taunt me that I should pay her back because I was the first boy to catch and spread chicken pox at Seaford before the war!

Best wishes to all. Humphrey Platts.

[Reply](#)



Mairette Williams says:

November 7, 2013 at 11:36 am

I have commented previously on this site and have learned since that my GGGrandfather George Meares Farmer inherited a large portion of the Doll's estate through his uncle...a Stephens I believe . George was a colonel in the Indian Army (Bengal), for around 24 yrs . His mother was Margaret Stephens who married Richard Farmer hence the connection to Stephens as "Maurice Meares was Maurice Stephens prior to his strange inheritance of the Doll's estate .

[Reply](#)



Art Frenz says:

April 16, 2015 at 9:12 pm

Mairette, I am a 2nd great-grandson to George Meares (b. 1815). My mother was a Meares. I have much documentation on Meares & Dol Llys from my cousin (now deceased) who was in to genealogy for 25 plus years. We visited Dol Llys in 1997. Quite thrilling for us from USA. I would love to compare notes sometime. Feel free to contact me afrenz at yahoo . com.

[Reply](#)



Alison says:

July 10, 2020 at 4:23 pm

We've recently bought a cottage that was once on the land. The cottage was sold to a John Jones and his Wife in 1836, it was a toll house and now know as The Gate House. I'm very interested in finding out it's history.

[Reply](#)



Christopher Heath says:

October 7, 2014 at 11:01 pm

Another Old-Wilfridean, with very fond memories of Dol Llys Hall, which (at the age of 10) I thought was an amazing and vast improvement on the proper school premises at Seaford, Sussex. I discovered Wales, the countryside, scenery, and the joys of seeing busy steam trains and noteworthy funerals out of the window during lessons that must have been less than enthralling.

[Reply](#)



robert knight says:

November 26, 2014 at 11:01 am

I was most interested to read about Dol-llys on the internet. It was my grandparents home for many years. They would spend all the summer there. My grandfather was John Robert Morris and his first wife Eleanor (nee Clegg) of Horsley Hall, Eccleshall, Staffs which she inherited on the death of her father, revd John Clegg. My mother Kathleen Eleanor Morris was born at Dol-llys in 1908. Her mother died in Bath of the Spanish flu during the first war. My grandfather re-married Ethel Boughey of Aqualate Hall, Newport, Salop, which she inherited on the death of her father Rev. Sir George Boughey.

In the 1930s my grandfather sold off the land and farms on the estate which was then about 12,000 acres. but kept the house. On his death it could not go to my mother as it was entailed on males only so passed to a cousin Col Reginald Morris-Eyton. who sold the house and grounds. My aunt inherited the contents and I was told gave the Pikes of the Montgomeryshire Yeomanry (which were fitted all up the stairs) to the Llanidloes Museum.

I visited the place about twenty years ago and asked about the wrought iron gate into the kitchen garden which had been a wedding present to my grandparents from the staff and tenants. The council most kindly had it sent to us as a present. I also have here an illuminated address from the staff and tenants to my mother on her twenty-first birthday, together with a gold wrist watch (sadly lost).

It was so good to see that the place is so well kept up and loved. I will I hope in the future come up to visit again, but I am nearly 78.

[Reply](#)



Johnnie Manckiy says:

March 27, 2015 at 6:42 am

I apologize for writing this way. My name is Johnnie Manckiy; I recently graduated from university with my BA in history. I am an American, but British history is my passion. I am especially interested in the histories of British country houses. One period I am working on is researching the role country houses played during World War Two. Most of my research on this subject has been on the use of country houses by evacuated schools.

Until recently I had never heard of St. Wilfrid's or Dol-llys Hall. It was by chance that I learnt about the school and its time in Wales during the war. I was very interested when I came across the website for the estate and read the memories of some of the old boys that had contacted the site. Could you please help me? Do you have any other information on the school's time at Dol-llys Hall?

If any old boys read this, I would love to hear from you.

All the Best,

Johnnie

[Reply](#)



Gordon Smith says:

June 10, 2015 at 5:03 pm

Lovers of fine old country houses owe a great debt of gratitude to the good people who purchased Dol-llys Hall and rescued it from decay.

In 1911 a distant relative, Ethel Russell, was a domestic servant at the hall – such good news to discover it has survived.

[Reply](#)



Robert Knight says:

June 15, 2015 at 8:46 am

I was so interested to read your note on the Dol-llys web-site. My grandparents Robert and Eleanor Morris would have been living there at the time your relative was there. My grandfather died in the late 1930's, by then he had sold most of the estate to the farmers, but kept the house and gardens. It then passed to his nephew, as it was entailed to males only, so my mother or aunt could not inherit. Best wishes, Robert.

[Reply](#)



Caroline Weeber says:

September 2, 2015 at 10:56 am

I am John Robert Morris granddaughter.

My mother was born at Dollys and inherited the contents, some of which are still in my possession.

I have been there several times, at one stage when it was an old age home when there were still residents who had known my grandfather well.

I too have an enormous illuminated address from the tenants of Dollys and others.

It was on the occasion of my grandfathers marriage. It has a picture of Dollys, Horsley and both my grandparents. It also has a most interesting list of all the tenants.

I also have an old book giving much detail about Dollys.

When my grandmother died in the great flu, my mother was a tiny girl. She spent much of her childhood at Dollys, which was her fathers estate. I have very many photographs of Dollys in those days. I even have postcards which my grandmother had made with pictures of Dollys. I have a lovely series of four framed old photographs of the house from different angles. In fact I have a fairly unique collection of furniture, silver and china and other things from Dollys, my mother loved it very much and told me a great deal about it.

Caroline

[Reply](#)



Michael Davies says:

October 5, 2015 at 6:18 pm

Hello, I found this page whilst learning more about my late father's schooldays.

He was Hugh (Quintin) Davies and he was evacuated with St Wilfrid's to Llanidloes at the age of ten, his older brother Ben Davies may have also been there.

I was particularly fascinated to read Humphrey Platts' post about fishing in a large pond, during a conversation my sister had with our Dad a couple of years ago she took some notes, one of which referred to that exact same scene!

Thank you all for sharing your memories!

[Reply](#)



Vance Kirkland Meares says:

November 6, 2015 at 1:54 pm

My family came from Wales and homesteaded in Pinellas County, Florida. My grandfather was Maurice A. Meares. I am trying to learn more about the family history. I had heard stories about a Meares Castle in Wales.

[Reply](#)



Dwayne Meares says:

November 12, 2015 at 5:42 pm

Hey Kirk. I have a lot of info about our family in Wales and Oakhurst. The family castle belonged to the Jeffreys branch of our family. it is Glandyfi castle, look it up on line. Our gggrand mother was Louisa Maria Jefferys. I will be glad to share all my info with you.

[Reply](#)



David Varley says:

May 31, 2016 at 12:22 am

I, too, went to St. Wilfrid's. Long after the Welsh exeat.

Eric Lousada was very much still there in my time and remained a mainstay of the old boys' club until his death.

Although she was then long retired I stayed at Miss Lewis's when despairing parents were having me extraordinarily tutored out of term time.

Uncle Bruv (late Dr. J.F Varley) was a founder pupil and but was taken away as Grandfather thought it was making him too soft!

Trust there are no old boys on this site who dare heel tap with respect to the upcoming reunion in London 14th September. If so I would suggest you contact Roberthutchinson@spitfireevents.co.uk for details.

How pleasing to note that not any bad word has been said of the old place(s).

David Varley

[Reply](#)



Robin Jowers says:

October 8, 2016 at 7:15 am

I was here in 1940. I seem to remember playing war games behind the house!! I remember Eric Lousada very well . Miss Lewis was one of my favourite people. I am finding it a little difficult to write down all my memories of the School. It is also where I became to love all Games (Sport). I left in 1948 from Seaford. Wonderful to read about the School again.

[Reply](#)



Guy Dickinson says:

December 26, 2016 at 4:03 pm

I went to St Wilfred's from about 1957 and I can't find anything on the history! Could someone help please?

[Reply](#)



Robert SANDELL says:

April 8, 2017 at 6:50 pm

I was at St Wilfrid's in Wales for half the Summer term and all the Michaelmas term in 1944, only. I was six years and three months when I arrived there, through the kindness of Eric Lousada, a cousin of my mother who wanted to get me away from London when the doodle-bugs were coming over.

Letters home written every Sunday. My first contains the sentence: "There are bangs in the night here, too."

I remember Mrs Pearson; and Eric, who taught the lowest class English, from Winnie the Pooh. Paddling in the river during the summer; plodding through thick mud to the football field in the winter. Every morning, at School Prayers, we sang

Men of Harlech, being in Wales, and the hymn For those in Peril on the Sea.
Parcels from home were examined for anything unsuitable: i had some comics
confiscated!

[Reply](#)



thomas haldane says:

November 19, 2017 at 5:52 am

I was at St Wilfrid's Seaford 19 50-1953
Have been unable to find out the history etc
Favorite teacher Mr Lousada and also Miss Lewis
Great time there Loved the plays we put on.
I would like to find out more
I was there with Heaton Barry Harrison Banks etc

Thank you Tom

[Reply](#)



Adrian Mathias says:

May 31, 2018 at 1:07 am

What a pleasure to read about St Wilfrid's.

I was born in Llanidloes in 1944 when my father, Dr D.R.B.Mathias, was the
school doctor; I believe that on the day of my birth, George Pearson pounced and
told my
parents "You're sending your son to me"; and in 1952 off I duly went to St
Wilfrid's, by then back in Seaford.

[Reply](#)



Kathryn Bates says:

March 15, 2019 at 12:25 am

Hi

Thanks so much for some history on Dol-Llys. I've been trying to record my
mother's side of the family, who descended from the Meares/Mears line, but had
drawn a blank, so this has opened up a whole new line of inquiry. So, the
Meares/Mears were actually Stephens' which would explain why my great-
grandfather Cuthbert Meares' middle name was Stephens. He was born in New
Zealand – his father Charles Edward Maurice Meares came out here to New
Zealand in the 1850s, and he lived in a house his uncle Charles Jeffrey's (of
Glandyffi Castle, Wales; The 'hanging' judge Jeffreys's fame) had built in
Bryndwr/Fendalton, Christchurch – which was named Dol-Llys. It all makes sense
now!

However, can you possibly tell me who Harry Mears (probably Henry) was? Was
he a brother of George Brookes Mears? I can't anything about him but he pops up
in our family tree.

Thanks

[Reply](#)



Naomi Meaden says:

June 29, 2020 at 11:55 am

I have just discovered today my father John Jeffrey was evacuated from St Wilfrids
to Dol-llys House the early part of WW2. Im not sure of the exact dates but it
would probably have been fairly early on as he joined up in 1943 (underage!!). He
will be 93 this weekend. I have taken the liberty of printing this page as he will be
delighted to read about Dol-llys House as it was a very happy time for him.

[Reply](#)



Mairiette Williams says:

July 20, 2020 at 8:31 am

My GGGrandfather was George Meares Farmer
His mother was Margaret Stephens and married Richard Farmer a Captain in The
East India Company. The Stephens family were apparently local Gentry and lived

at Red House Berth'ddu in Llanidloes Montgomeryshire Wales. I believe he inherited part of the Doll'ys Estate. George followed his Father into the military and was a Lieutenant Colonel in The Bengal Army. He spent nearly 25 years in India.

[Reply](#)

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