

I transferred to Glyn County Grammar School in 1962 into the third year. The school had 4 "Houses". I was in Carew. The others were Abbey, St Benet and Tudor. The school magazine was called "Ebba's Scrip" and the school motto was "Tenax Propositi Ulteriora Peto" (firm of purpose, I seek nothing but the best – this is the official, but slightly dodgy translation).

There were prefects, many of whom were sportsmen. They wore half-length academic gowns and were known as "Mogs", for reasons that remain obscure. When they were doing their A levels, some other pupils were asked to stand in – they were called "Half Mogs" and no-one took them seriously!

The main building housed most of the classrooms, with the science laboratories on the first floor – Chemistry at the Hessle Grove end, Physics at the other and Biology in the middle. There were two laboratories for each subject, a large one for O level studies and a smaller, better equipped one for A level groups. On the ground floor, there was a series of old style classrooms, with a new language laboratory in the middle. This room was popular, because it had a series of cubicles and it was possible to listen surreptitiously to the cricket on one of the newly invented transistor radios that a few boys brought in (against school rules!). There were cloakrooms at each end of this building and lavatories outside, connected by a covered way.

At the Hessle Grove end, there was an outside block that housed the dining room, with a small tuck shop in one corner that was manned by senior boys. Furthest away from the main gate, there were some new classrooms in what appeared to be a jerry built complex now demolished and replaced. The metal work and woodwork rooms were there. There were two newer and even tattier wooden classrooms between it and the main block, with a path leading to them up a slope that was slippery when wet – as it often was.

The main block was on one side of a quadrangle, with the assembly hall, school offices, prefect's room and headmaster's study on the other. The 6<sup>th</sup> form room (Dawson room) was a new building immediately north of the assembly hall. On the side of the school nearest to the Hessle Grove entrance, there was the staff room on the ground floor, the art room on the mezzanine and the library on the first floor – opposite the chemistry laboratory. To the South of the school buildings was a sports field, now almost completely occupied by a variety of new school buildings, with an exit onto to a muddy path called "Snakey Alley".

My form master was Mr Swithinbank. I was promoted to 3x – the stream that aimed to get boys through their O levels in 4 years, rather than 5. This was a strange system, which seemed wonderful at the time, but in retrospect it just resulted in pupils arriving at

University entrance too soon - I was only 17. It actually explains why relatively few Glyn boys went to Oxbridge. They were well qualified, with good reports from the school, but immature and would have interviewed badly. The teachers were a splendid group of eccentrics, who all enthused about their subjects and as a result, the education was really good.

They were as follows:

English, Mr K H M Curtis (Ken, or Killer), a terrifying man, with a surprisingly high pitched voice who didn't stand any nonsense. His son Gareth, a quiet and likeable lad was in my year. Privately, Mr Curtis was a gentleman in both senses of the word. There was another English teacher whose surname name I can't remember. His given name was Algernon.

French, Mr Inchcombe (Bert - his real name could have been Basil). His other school activity was to stage manage the school play.

History, Mr Swithinbank (Jake). A Yorkshireman, who had been on the staff since the 1950s.

R.E., Mr Evans (Islywn, Evan) – the "Rev Ev". A Welshman who took himself seriously, but who was able to teach at a higher level than was needed for the main stream.

Music, Mr Cleall (Charlie). A cheerful man, who would refer to pupils' "best girls, or even second best girls" when inviting them to bring friends to concerts. He was a very good organist.

Art, Mr Whiteley (Alf). Rather vague, but always pleasant. He apparently commuted from Sussex.

Latin, Mr F W (Frederick, Willoughby) Allen (Gubby – the nickname of a cricket player of the 30s and 40s, whose actual name was Sir George Allen). A very nice man, who combined bluster with inability to keep order. He was actually a good teacher, but the boys led the poor chap a merry dance

Maths, Mr H R Richards (usually known as Harry). He was the deputy head, who had also been on the staff since 1929, originally teaching physics and chemistry as well as maths. He found his subject very easy and described simultaneous quadratic equations as being "as easy as falling off a log".

Maths, Mr T S Dunne (Tommy). A genial Ulsterman, who did his best, but failed to teach me calculus! I abandoned Maths at A level. He was always interesting and interested in the progress of his pupils.

Biology: Mr C W Ward. He taught biology to O level and botany to “A” level. He had been in the navy during the war.

Zoology, Mr Ian T Hamilton (Dr Death). One of the real stars. A wonderful teacher, who responded to pupil’s enthusiasm by giving extra tuition. He was disillusioned by the lack of engagement and stupidity of the lower streams. He hated the word “Sellotape”. Uttering this and other misdemeanours were punished by being put in the dungeon, a cupboard under the demonstration bench. This would have horrified today’s Ofsted schools inspectors. Privately, he was terrific and invited his 6<sup>th</sup> form classes for tea with his wife and a game of croquet.

Physics, Mr George W Wright (Wilbur). Another man who would not tolerate bad behaviour and who did not suffer fools gladly. He apparently acquired his interest in physics through working in Bombay docks during the war. He had been fascinated by the levers and pulleys for doing work more efficiently. His mantra was “Physics is a mathematical subject”. He told us not to accept what we were told and that we should ask him to “prove it”. When asked to do this, he would fill the blackboard with algebra and do just that.

Chemistry: Mr James G Wilson (Jock). The best of all. He taught didactically to O level standard, but in the 6<sup>th</sup> form he expected pupils to take the lead. One of the topics for A level practical chemistry was qualitative Semi Micro Analysis. Jock had written the standard school textbook for this and of course, it was used at Glyn. The book was last re-printed in 1965 and is long out of print, but it is still available on Amazon. We were allowed free use of the laboratory during the lunch hour. When we had done something particularly interesting (certifiably dangerous), he would say that he had never seen this done and ask us to do it again. He trusted us to know our limitations, which earned our respect and there were no mishaps. We made chlorine dioxide and nitrogen tri-iodide – both highly explosive and Thermite in kilogram quantities which we set off in the playground. We gassed the arts group in the class room beneath us with foul smelling vapours and discovered a reaction that I have never heard of before or since – we called it a “nitration”. If granulated zinc is added to a mixture of potassium thiocyanate and dilute nitric acid, it fizzes for a while and then goes red. The solution boils and pours out of the tube. Finally, we found that if the sink tops were put on and then filled with coal gas, an enormous explosion was produced by lighting the finger hole. The deputy head caught us doing this and told Mr Wilson, who asked for a repeat performance. No such thing as health and safety then! Jock gave me special attention and said that “A” level was too easy. He arranged for me to take the special paper in chemistry and with his help, I passed this with merit. Jock had been an industrial chemist and had worked in a steel factory. He seems to have had so many different jobs, it is difficult to see how he had the time to train as a chemistry teacher. I

suspect that in those days, you didn't have to. You just went into the class room and told the pupils what you knew – in his case, a great deal. He had a number of stock phrases, such as “Och I'm big” and “Look at me”. They were wheeled out to emphasise points, but goodness know what they meant. He retired to Peebles, which was his original home. There were many others who did not teach me. They included:

Mr W K Dawkins had been a fixture since 1927. He taught Latin and surprisingly, was the school's games teacher before the Second World War. He was always known as “Dick”, although his actual name was Walter. He was famously irascible and reacted to minor problems with the expression “Oh my Godfathers”. He had been wounded in the First World War and had a prominent scar on his neck. He died in 1971, just before retiring. If the dates are correct, he must have been at least 67 then - past normal retirement age.

Mr R B Dorling (Gus), whose family ran a printers. He taught history and economics. He lived in Dorking and drove a Jaguar.

Mr W A Saalfeld. A German, who taught that subject. His pet topics were the “Helping Hand Fund” and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Every Christmas, he spent much time trying to sell this organisation's Christmas Cards.

Mr H T Pearce, physics. He had been on the staff since 1930, something that none of my contemporaries realised.

Mr H A J (Jack) Hardy, who taught French and was head of the department had been appointed in 1931. I was never taught by him.

Mr Desbruslais (knowns as “Dibs”). He taught maths and was said to be very good at it.

Mr S J (Sam) Sanders taught English and was head of the department.

Mr S J Sageman, who went by the nickname of “Creeps”. He wore suede “brothel creepers” – hence his nickname. He was a friend of Mr Swithinbank and I have seen a photograph of them together on an embankment at the school sports day in the late 1950s. He taught History.

Mr Howell, geography. He ran the Combined Cadet Force and held the rank of Captain. For some reason, I joined this organisation, but hated it and eventually managed to extricate myself. My brother Mike was taught by him and says that he was very good.

Mr Dyer (Obi – presumably, phonetically from “Obadiah”). He taught metal work, which was not much use, but it was fun.

Mr Bennion (Jim), taught woodwork - rather more useful for the average denizen of the London suburbs. Putting up shelves has always been popular!

The Headmaster was Mr Nathaniel Dawson (Norman). We saw very little of him, except in assembly. I think he was shy, but he was well liked by the staff and senior boys. The sixth form annexe was named after him. He came from Heversham Grammar School in Cumbria, and was supported in his application by the first headmaster, Mr F L Clark who had also taught there.

We were a cliquey lot. My friends were:

Robert Winstanley. He was made a judge, one of the first to be raised to the bench from the ranks of solicitors.

Andrew Young did arts subjects and we lost touch in the 6<sup>th</sup> form, because the two interests were taught completely separately.

Alan Wood was particularly interested in biology. This was his hobby as well as his subject of study and became his life's work. He is still interested in it and has a web site explaining his activities

Paul Croft, always known as "Crog", who joined the school in the 6<sup>th</sup> form, but settled in very quickly. He was a splendid chap and a great favourite of Mr Hamilton. He worked in forestry management and then ran a guesthouse in Scotland. He has now retired finally to Pitlochry.

Peter Rapsey became a cleric and was clearly popular in his West Country parish. He retired around the same time as me – in about 2010 and now lives in Crediton. He is a prebend of Exeter cathedral.

The sixth form had a social club – very avant garde for those days. We were allowed to use the new sixth form centre (latterly called the Dawson Room) for meetings once a month. Girls from Rosebery Grammar School were invited and we had the curiously awful "hops".