

ANTHONY GELL SCHOOL

1965-2015

in
CELEBRATION

of
FIFTY YEARS

of
COMMUNITY COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION

in
WIRKSWORTH



**A FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION
IN CELEBRATION OF ANTHONY GELL SCHOOL
1965-2015**

Following the wonderful gathering on Gell Day, 18th July 2015, I received several warm letters about the school. I was inspired by these happy recollections to invite some former Gell students, teachers and parents to write about their Gell experience and record memories of their time at Anthony Gell. I am grateful to those who turned willingly to the computer and I understand why not everyone was able to respond.

I am an enthusiast for history, but I knew I could not muster the energy or objectivity required to produce a history of the first fifty years of comprehensive community education in Wirksworth. It is a fascinating story, so I have compiled this collection of sources for history from writings sent to me in 2015 with a few references from earlier years, including accounts of how our school was established in 1965. Inevitably there is favouritism and a personal Pearce bias in the selection. This portrait of the school is not all-encompassing and friends will point out the gaps – too little on community education, charity efforts, especially the annual Children in Need sixth form extravaganza, and the exchange trips abroad, notably to Die and Wetter. Some of these are well reported in copies of Gell News. I have tried to be inclusive and I made a genuine effort also, not entirely successfully, to resist the temptation to write more myself. Contributions have not been edited. They stand as sent to me, though in some cases I have added a brief introduction. If readers consider their special interest has not been covered they can write and we will incorporate any items received after 31st December 2015 into our 50th supplement.

My plan was to gather evidence about the Gell experience and to produce a written collage, a set of snapshots, composed by those who were there. I have tried to record key moments: the initial governors' meetings, the arrival of computers, MACOS as a curriculum development, the sports college decision, the unseen contribution by the band, the post Swann project. A key item is the interview I conducted with Dave Baker – more a long chat deluged with laughter. It gives a lively picture of the steady development of the school through the 32 Baker years.

In 2015 we held both Gell Day and a special gathering to plant the anniversary tree. Both celebration events are reported with some names for the record, a special section, closing our first half century with firm confidence in the future.

As I was working on the collection Barry Foster, one of the original 1965 teachers, died amid great community sorrow. I include an account of his major contribution and creative influence as a Gell pioneer, one of the 1965 founding teachers.

Enthusiasm and affection shine out. I hope this will be a serious contribution to our history and that the author of the centenary history will enjoy reading these pieces with many rich memories as much as I have and will begin to understand the varied challenges of the first fifty years, the spirit with which the school tackled them and the people who have made AGS a very special school.

Roy Pearce, Headteacher, Anthony Gell School 1971-1991.

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ANTHONY GELL SCHOOL 1965-2015 TIMELINE

- 1959 Derbyshire proposes a comprehensive school in Wirksworth.
- 1959 Grammar School governors agree proposals.
- 1963 Objection to Hannage path diversion goes to Transport Secretary.
- 1964 Planned opening delayed.
- 1965 Mr Slater, Head designate, resigns.
- 1965 School opens with Mr Phillips as acting head.
- 1966 Mr Bottomley, headteacher.
- 1967 The first sponsored charity walk to Duffield and back by road.
- 1969 First ski trip.
- 1971 Mr Gould; acting headteacher for summer term
- 1971 Mr Pearce appointed headteacher.
- 1971 School band plays on TV in Opportunity Knocks.
- 1972 School leaving age raised (ROSLA) to fifteen.
- 1973 Maths block opened.
- 1975 English Block opened on site of proposed swimming pool.
- 1976 400th anniversary of Wirksworth Grammar School celebrated.
- 1977 Education Forum at Gell following Mr Callaghan's speech.
- 1979 Community Education Council established.
- 1980 Michael Hooton finalist as Young Engineer of the Year.
- 1981 Learning to Build Micros Project: the first computers.
- 1983 Mr Baker appointed to teach Maths and Computer Studies.
- 1984 Gell & Fearne Houses united.
- 1985 Chair of Derbyshire Education Committee, Geoff Lennox visits.
- 1987 AGS joins BEMBAGS schools curriculum development group.
- 1988 School features in The Reality of School Management research.
- 1989 Small six a side floodlit astro opened by Arthur Cox.
- 1990 Schools Curriculum Award granted for community focus.
- 1991 Mr Leach appointed headteacher.
- 1994 Two Houses Arkwright & Wright established.
- 1996 GNVQ Group publishes Business Calendar.
- 1999 Sports Hall Foundation Stone laid.
- 2000 Wirksworth Sports & Leisure Centre opens for joint use.
- 2002 School attains Sports College status.
- 2003 Ellen MacArthur sails round the world.
- 2004 Full sized artificial hockey pitch opened.
- 2005 National Schools Curriculum Award.
- 2006 Mr Baker appointed headteacher.
- 2007 Four Houses Revived
- 2009 FA Club Link Programme: Certificate of Merit.
- 2010 Wirksworth Picturing the Past published by AGS Camera Club.
- 2013 Gell Friends formed.
- 2013 Additional hard surface opened with new car park.
- 2014 Sixth Form Maths team wins area challenge.
- 2015 Mr Baker retires as we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary.
- 2015 Mr Kelly appointed
- 2015 Gell anniversary tree planted.

ANTHONY GELL'S GRAMMAR SCHOOL WIRKSWORTH

A few notes on the re-organisation in 1965

I have read the minutes of the meetings of the governors of Anthony Gell Grammar School from 1958 to July 1965, when the grammar school was closed. The community comprehensive school opened as a new school in September 1965. Of course these formal minutes record the public discussion, but there was obviously much backstairs lobbying, especially about the name of the school.

The school had been called Wirksworth Grammar School for many years until 1953, when Col Philip Gell, almighty Chairman of Governors, contrived a name change to include the family name of Anthony Gell, the eponymous founder. Mr Cecil Round, headmaster since 1929 seems to have resisted the name change, but the arrival of a new head, Mr Draycott gave Gell his opportunity. The Anthony Gell Foundation survived as the governing body of the almshouses in Wirksworth, which originally shared both the foundation and the governing body. This caused confusion, especially about money, so in the nineteenth century the school was commonly, and in official documents, called Wirksworth Grammar School. The Anthony Gell Foundation (see later) survives and in 2015 is a source of significant financial help to the school. When the name of the new school was raised as an issue, the county assured governors that the traditional founder's name could survive, but the word 'grammar' would not be appropriate.

Anthony Gell School opened as a community comprehensive school in September 1965. The extensive new buildings were unfinished, so the school had to operate in its first year on two sites, the old Newbridge and Grammar school sites. In addition the school opened without an appointed headteacher. At the governors' meeting on 8 April 1965 Philip Slater informed the governors that he would be leaving in July at the end of the summer term to become head of North Manchester Grammar School. He had told the chairman four days earlier. It is not clear to me that the appointment to the new school had been advertised and I found no reference in the grammar school minutes to Slater becoming head of the comprehensive school. With the head of Newbridge secondary school retiring the job fell to Slater, no doubt by pre-determined decision. Slater's background as deputy in a Coventry comprehensive school was a firm recommendation. His appointment could be seen as a takeover by the grammar school and a continuity of tradition and his succession must have re-assured the governors. I found no evidence of the existence of an interim governing body involving both grammar and secondary school governors. How much consideration was given to the views of Newbridge 'managers' throughout the complicated process?

As Slater had been central to the planning and preparations for the new school his departure was a major, unexpected and unwelcome blow. The governors were, reasonably, unimpressed and merely noted his departure, though there is indication that some wanted a less sympathetic resolution. They could do nothing. It was impossible to make a headship appointment for September, but they provided four governors to an appointment committee and there were 120 applicants for the post.

Timescale to re-organisation.

LT Draycott, head since 1953, left the grammar school at Easter 1958. The governors thanked him for his four and half years of 'inspiring and devoted service'. At their July

meeting they welcomed Mr Philip Slater from Foxford School, Coventry. Foxford was significant, because the school was a large comprehensive school with a strong house system. I found no record in the minutes that Slater had urged that the new school be built on a house basis, but it is a reasonable assumption that Slater was the moving spirit. House systems were fashionable at the time and I am sure the county education officials were supportive. There is a reference in a head's report to 'good consultation with officers', but no detail.

Old Etonian Col. Gell, Chairman of Governors, was delighted that there would be a house system. 'Just like Eton,' he proclaimed. The new scheme would go through triumphantly.

The first indication that change was in the air came in March 1959 when there was a meeting in Derby (at the divisional education office?) for school governors from the Wirksworth/Ashbourne area. There was a presentation in general terms about the re-organisation of secondary schools in Derbyshire.

The follow up meeting with Gell governors took place at Wirksworth soon after, in December 1959, and involved the Director of Education, the legendary Jack Longland, with Chris Phillips, the massively able assistant director. The secondary school governors were not involved at this meeting. The officers indicated that they were looking forward about five years before a comprehensive school of 700 pupils could be established in the town, but there might be new facilities on the grammar school site for craft before then. With the Head of the secondary modern school retiring in 1952/3 they could move steadily towards one school. The school name could be retained, but the word grammar could not be included.

'After discussion in the absence of officers it was resolved that the governors supported the proposals in principle.'

From now on there was consideration of issues relating to the new school at governors' meetings, though most matters, especially building design, took place outside the formal meetings and were reported only for major decisions.

In 1960 there was discussion about the main hall, with governors, led no doubt, by the Colonel, insisting that the hall be big enough, despite the house system, for the head to address the whole school. This led to the awkward design of the unprotected balustrade round the hall well, and the doors opening to the gym, which caused much difficulty for so many years.

Although the phrase 'community school;' was not used the authority built a youth wing into the design and, alongside youth work, assumed WEA and adult evening classes as part of the basic contract. The gym was used for evening activities and the seeds of the later community use were sown in the early days. I suspect that Jack Longland had the community-use vision, taken from the Cambridge village college system.

In 1961 the governors supported the Wirksworth Urban District Council, with Councillor (and school governor) Hubert Doxey in the lead, in urging that a swimming pool be constructed for school and public use with a significant funding contribution from the Town Council. The County response was that this could be considered in the second phase of building planned for the raising of the school leaving age in the near future. I note that when the Matlock outdoor lido was covered in 1971 this ensured that no pool could be built in

Wirksworth, because an indoor facility was available within five miles of the town. The area intended for the pool was the site of the English block.

There was full inspection of the school by HMI in 1962 with a 'highly satisfactory' outcome. The main criticism concerned the poor facilities.

Rumbling through 1963 came the row about the footpath. There had been a long-established public footpath across the Hannages, the historic route from the town centre to Gorsey Bank, and there was local opposition to the re-direction of the main path, to be round, not across, the school field. The objections, led by Councillor Fred Slater, who had formerly been a woodwork teacher at the secondary school, were referred to the Ministry of Transport. A public enquiry was held on 7th May 1963. The town had to wait for the result and all work stopped, so the intention to open the school in 1964 (when Philip Slater was still in post) was frustrated by democracy and September 1965 became the start date, even though the buildings were far from complete. I was told by a stalwart of the town that the footpath issue was an effort to block the whole programme of reform. I know the footpath dissatisfaction lasted for many years, especially with those who considered that the only way home from a town centre pub on a Saturday night was to totter over the Hannages. The surrounding big fence was easily and regularly cut.

Why did Philip Slater, who had made such a strong contribution to the planning of the comprehensive school, abandon ship that fatal Easter? Nobody knows. He had been happy in Wirksworth and fifty years later we can only speculate that there was some immediate personal issue which led him to move at that time. Slater went and Frank Bottomley was appointed from January 1966. Alan Phillips was the acting head during the first term. Alan was a brilliant man; a linguist, mathematician and international chess player, who later became head of two London comprehensive schools. His contribution should not be forgotten.

As a post script the opening of the school in September 1965 was only the first part in the planned re-organisation of the schools system in Wirksworth. The county council owned a site, sold in the eighties, which is now the Pillar Butts housing estate. This is where the new primary school would be built as the second stage in the development.

Roy Pearce, February 2014, revised in December 2015.



1970

HUBERT DOXEY REMEMBERS the DECISION

Hubert Doxey, who died in 2015, was a founder governor of AGS in 1965. I met him in 2008 and he was keen to remember. Hubert told me that of the group of governors who decided the school should go comprehensive he alone was alive. ‘I remember the meeting when it was decided.’ He was referring to the meeting of grammar school governors who would be abolished if the decision was for a comprehensive school. Hubert, a man of great ability, much respected town and district councillor, was a life-long and resolute Labour Party member. In 1959 for Wirksworth to go comprehensive was a revolutionary proposal, so I anticipated a tale of disagreement and possible skulduggery before the decision was made.

‘I was with Ronny Stafford,’ said Hubert. Miss Stafford was a school teacher at Hopton and Carsington village school and a power in the Labour Party: her name survives in Stafford Crescent. ‘We met the chairman, Col Gell on the steps. The vice-chairman was with him and they had been talking.’

Col. Gell was an old Etonian and a great, almost feudal, traditionalist. He regarded the school as his fiefdom, belonging to his founding family. The vice-chairman was General Walthall, who lived at Alton Manor. I know him through the cricket club where he was chairman for 42 years. He had served a similar time as school governor. He upheld the ancient traditions of cricket and no doubt had traditional views on education. The two sides seemed equally matched.

‘There’s only one important thing tonight,’ said the Colonel, ‘We have to decide about the comprehensive school.’

Ronny was in at once. ‘I’ve made up my mind already.’

‘So have I,’ said Hubert.

‘Then we are in agreement,’ smiled the Colonel cheerfully. ‘We think it should go ahead too. I’ll propose it from the chair. We don’t want any disagreement in the town about this.’

‘So Gell proposed and Walthall seconded and it went though like that. We didn’t hear any more,’ said Hubert, ‘until Freddie Slater got on about the footpaths.’

This refers to the campaign by Councillor Slater, who objected to the Hannage path which ran diagonally across the field being ‘taken away from the town’ and diverted round the edge of the playing field. The formal objection was considered at the Ministry of Transport and delayed the opening of AGS from 1964 to 1965.

Was Slater really concerned about the footpath or was it a backwoodsman’s effort to scupper the whole scheme? There was certainly opposition in the town to the ‘destruction’ of the grammar school, especially from some former pupils, so unity in the governing body was a strength at a delicate time.

How the fate of so many of us was affected by that delay. Philip Slater, grammar school head and head designate, left at Easter before the school opened. AGS began as comprehensive school without a head till Frank Bottomley came in January 1966.

Of the governors involved I would expect Hubert & Ronny (it must have been Veronica) to follow the party line and at Hubert's insistence a swimming pool was included as second phase. But how did Gell come to favour the comprehensive solution. I speculate he was told the school would continue to bear the Gell name, a shrewd tactical move. The aristocracy was not greatly troubled by the fate of grammar schools as long as public schools survived. Moreover I was told that when the organisation of the huge new school was being discussed, education officer, Christopher Phillips, explained there would be a house system. 'Just like Eton,' muttered Gell. The argument was won. Walthall was spoken to and the scheme went through.

Sadly Hubert died, aged 92, in January 2016, as I was doing the final revision of this piece, but his spirit survives in his account which I have written up with a few imaginative additions; I sense it conveys the true story of the birth of AGS.

Roy Pearce 31/10/08, revised October 2015.

Below are the minutes of the meeting Hubert Doxey attended in 1959, at which the Derbyshire officers explained tactfully that a plan was ready and they hoped it would be approved.

Minutes of a meeting of the Governors of Anthony Gell's Grammar School held in the School Library on Thursday 10th December at 3.00p.m. pursuant to notice.

Present: Lieut. Col. P.V.W. Gell, Brig General E.C.W.D. Walthall, Miss A.E.H. Severne, Miss A.V. Stafford, Mrs E.Smith, Messrs. H.E.Bowmer, C. Widdeson, N. Harrison and W.H.Doxey with Mr. P. Slater (headmaster), and Mr. P.R. Cash (Clerk).

Apologies for absence were received from Messrs, H Buckley, L Yeomans and J.W.Porter.

Re-organisation of Secondary education in Wirksworth.

At this stage Mr J. Longland, Director of Education, with Mr C.R. Phillips and Mr R.Heath Smith, Divisional Education Officer, entered the meeting.

The Director then made a Statement explaining the proposals for the Reorganisation of Secondary Education in Wirksworth. He pointed out that Wirksworth and Cromford constituted a distinct geographical area which fact had been taken into account when the development plan had been considered twelve years ago. The limited population of the area however meant that a grammar school by itself would never be more than a small School by modern standards which would not be economical from a financial and staffing point of view.

It was therefore proposed to make the present grammar school into an all purpose school to include the Secondary Modern stream at present catered for at New Bridge. A legal difficulty had been anticipated on account of the fact that the grammar school was at present a voluntary controlled school while New Bridge was a county school. But the Director had ascertained that it would be possible to enlarge the voluntary control to take in the proposed all purpose school. He emphasised that the Minister was not committed to the amalgamation. And in any case Governors of New Bridge School had yet to be consulted but a scheme

approved locally by all parties was more likely to receive early sanction. The proposal was to erect new buildings at the Grammar School leaving the New Bridge Buildings available for Junior Education. It was not likely that the complete building programme could be carried through within five years but it was thought that some building in the form of practical workshop accommodation could be anticipated by 1962 or 1963 when the present Headmaster of New Bridge School was expected to retire which event would be an appropriate time for the amalgamation.

General Walthall questioned the use of the expression comprehensive or bilateral which had been used in previous discussions and the Director explained that the modern tendency was not to have a technical stream as such but to provide technical education on a limited extent for those pupils who required it. The school would therefore strictly be bilateral but could properly be described as all purpose.

Miss Stafford stated that she welcomed the move and pleaded for the building programme to be speeded up as she was very concerned to make better accommodation available for the Junior School and she enquired if the voluntary controlled status would affect the building priority. The Director assured the Governors that the status of the School would not make any difference.

Mr H.E. Bowmer enquired if the name of the School could be retained and the Director explained that every effort was made to retain traditional or Founders' names where desired locally, but the retention of the word 'Grammar' in the name of the School would be misleading.

Mr C. Widdeson enquired the anticipated size of the School if Cromford children were included and Mr Phillips replied that the proposals were based on an estimated seven hundred. It was also pointed out that the proposals were dependent on the consent of the Governors of the Foundation to make land available for the extensions.

The Director of Education, Mr Philips and Mr Heath Smith then left the Meeting with the request that the Governors would notify them as soon as possible if they approved of these proposals.

The governors approved.

Philip Slater, Head of the Grammar School, wrote presciently in 1964.

The new school which should open in September 1965 will have about 550 pupils including the Grammar School and Newbridge, together with a new 4-form entry into the First year, drawn from the slightly enlarged catchment area which, for the first time, will include Cromford. These numbers will gradually increase as the larger numbers in the first and second years make their way up the school. When the leaving age is raised to 16 there may well be 700 pupils: at this point, further accommodation will be provided by the addition of an indoor teaching pool and a fifth laboratory. The name of the new school will be for the Governors to decide, as will also be the question of uniform, but it is unlikely that the Founder of the Free School of Wirksworth in 1576, one Anthony Gell, Esquire, will be overlooked at a time when his Foundation will, in fact, resemble more closely the terms of the original charter. Nor his badge to fade. There will be a basic uniform, similar to the one worn now – at least for those under the age of compulsory schooling. For older pupils this will be a matter for discussion with them and their parents, much as has been done over the Senior Girls winter outfit. Above all, the intention is that whatever opinion is adopted it shall be minimal and inexpensive.

How will the new school work? The basis of the organisation will be the House; four instead of three, each with its own dining/common rooms. It is likely that the present house names will be retained and one added. What about Fern House, as Agnes Fern was the school's original benefactor. On admission the pupil will be allocated to a house form which will be a cross-section of the year's intake. In these groups for the first two years at least, pupils will do their non-academic work – PE, RI, Art and Craft. For the academic subjects English Mathematics, Science and so on pupils will work in ability groups with as much cross-setting, particularly in Mathematics, as circumstances permit. Transfer between the 'sets' will be possible at any time.

After the first two diagnostic years when each pupil will work at as many subjects as possible, a very small measure of specialisation will be necessary. Some will take separate sciences; some will add another language instead of Physics and Chemistry; for others there will be a greater concentration on the Crafts. There should take shape four or five major courses, each with a slightly greater emphasis on one aspect, Science, Languages/Arts, Technical (Boys and Girls) and Commerce. It should be possible in this way to cater for all those who wish to take external examinations - 'O' level, the Certificate of Secondary Education, Commercial examinations, Pre-Nursing, some of which are now taken at Derby Technical college.

There will naturally be a transition period. For those who have already started on their course, there will be little change, although the older Newbridge pupils may be able to increase their scope. But all will have the advantage of modern facilities - four laboratories, a new craft block, containing metal, wood, needlework, domestic science rooms and a drawing office; two new art rooms; music room, library. gymnasium and hall with a good stage, as well as Youth Centre, which will be used as a Sixth Form Annexe. It is hoped the Houses will develop their own activities which will give Fourth and Fifth formers opportunities to shoulder responsibilities.

This can only be a rough outline of how I expect the school to develop; how successful it is will depend on us all.

Les Tickle's (2015) memory of his first job as a probationary teacher at Anthony Gell School, Wirksworth, September 1965: written for the occasion of the 50-year celebrations of AGS becoming a comprehensive school.

Anthony Gell comprehensive school in Wirksworth was an amalgamation of the town's secondary modern and grammar schools. It was the first of its kind in Derbyshire and in the vanguard of comprehensive education in England. That was exciting. Talk of change in the education system had been in the air for some time. The 1959 Crowther report had proposed major changes to the education of fifteen to eighteen-year olds. The Beloe report of 1960 introduced CSE examinations. The Newsom and Robbins reports in 1963 dealt respectively with the curriculum for 'lower achievers' and provision for the 'highest achievers'. The Schools Council for Curriculum and Examinations was established in 1964 with a brief to bring about innovations in curriculum and teaching throughout state-school sectors. A Labour government (elected October 1964) had committed itself to helping local authorities who already had plans to abolish eleven-plus selection and introduce comprehensive secondary education, and to press others to do so. In July 1965 a government circular was issued, asking local authorities to submit plans for the reorganisation of secondary schools so as to eliminate selection at eleven-plus.

Derbyshire County Council must already have had plans for reorganising secondary education in Wirksworth well in hand even before the famous memorandum 10/65 was circulated by the new government. I had applied to the 'pool', that is, new recruits willing to be considered for any job in any school, knowing that the County was 'going comprehensive'. My commitment to the idea was made clear in the application. It was a great surprise to be invited for interview at the Anthony Gell grammar school - founded in 1576 - during the summer term. The school was due to be transformed in September 1965, its first comprehensive intake of pupils starting on the same day that I started my career as a teacher. It was a turbulent moment for the school: the old grammar school had become surrounded by a building site; the former secondary modern school was still occupied; and quite a lot of temporary, make-do-and-mend arrangements were in place to get things off to a 'new start'. But for me it was part of a national, optimistic sea of change, and an opportunity to participate in the vanguard of comprehensive secondary schooling.

The appointment to teach art and ceramics was also an adventure, reaching outwards to the boundaries of what was going on in the wider world of the arts, and bringing those events face-to-face with ancient local traditions. At that time, beyond the industrialised world of the Potteries, British ceramic culture had rediscovered craftsmanship and studio pottery. The work of Bernard Leach (1887-1979), who was born in Hong Kong, raised partly in Japan, and collaborated with the Zen Buddhist tradition of Shoji Hamada (1894-1978) and his Japanese associates, had become mainstream. Refugee immigrant innovators like Lucie Rie (1902-1995) and Hans Coper (1921-1981) made major contributions to the scene. Painting was experiencing Abstract Expressionism, Pop, and Op. Henry Moore (1898-1986) and Barbara Hepworth (1903-1975) were established in sculpture, and a new abstract wave was in the ascendency with Edward Paolozzi (1924-2005) and others. These were people of my parents' generation, but they might as well have been from another planet, and I think that was probably the case for most of the people of Wirksworth too. The ancient, annual celebration of well dressing was more familiar in the locality.

The surprise and thrill of the new job in a setting that was quite unfamiliar is hard to exaggerate. It was a personal epiphany, as the sociologist Norman Denzin calls those kinds of

experiences which are not just new, but transformative in the effect they have on the way we see the world and on our whole being. Wirksworth is not a renowned place on the map even now, but the idea that I was embarking on a major educational innovation in what D.H.Lawrence called 'the navel of England' definitely appealed to the senses at the time. And it still gives me a kick. Perhaps the town and the school are now best known because the yachtswoman Dame Ellen MacArthur was a pupil there - though there is much more to celebrate too, in its now-buzzing artistic scene, features in TV productions, proximity to the world heritage site at Cromford, and much more besides. In the mid-1960s, though, for me it was a world apart from the experience of growing up in an urban environment in Lancashire. It was a meeting of minds, in more senses than one, both inside and outside the school.

Getting to know the students, their families, and their ways of life involved a very rapid initiation, not just as a teacher but as a resident in the community. It was a matter of exploration, investigation, and revelation. There was immediate advice from senior colleagues, for example, to be sensitive about asking about family relationships. (The question of who in the long history of the place was related to who should be asked carefully!) Some of the occupations of parents were familiar to a stranger from a Lancashire town - the mills, large and small, were still functioning. Other jobs were unfamiliar: quarry working and long-distance transport of limestone to the sugar beet factories of East Anglia, for example. But this was (and is) also a fully-functioning agricultural community, not the remnants of a by-gone era like my childhood experience on the outskirts of Warrington. This was Derbyshire Rural with a capital D and capital R, the estates of the Dukes of Devonshire and Rutland, and of generous gentry like the Gell family whose ancestral presence was in the local church, in the founding name of the grammar school, in the alms houses. The senior incumbent of the estate at nearby Hopton Hall was automatically the chairman of the school governors, but he was also 'just' the local squire. Unlike the working-class occupational homogeneity and social-class separation where I grew up, Wirksworth had a broad cross-section of social and economic life that interacted directly and daily in and around the town, and among the students in school.

As well as the socially diverse but very close-knit community in town, many students lived in surrounding villages high in the hills, or on isolated farms. Some travelled as much as ten miles to get to school, after having helped with the milking or the lambing, or whatever the farm or the neighbour's farm demanded. One family had eighteen children all delivered by the parents alone in their isolated farm, it was said: just like delivering any newborn. Another family had fourteen, integrated by remarriage, living in a small stone-built cottage with the adults getting work where they could. Some pupils, including some deemed to have special educational needs, had their own small business ventures raising poultry or breeding sheep. One eleven-year-old in my registration class was the daughter of the 'A.I.' man. There was no embarrassment on her part telling me that, but a few sniggers among the lads, when I asked what that meant. Breeding was a matter-of-fact thing. There was obviously a lot to learn.

Much of that learning was farming-related. During school holidays, accompanied by new farmer friends, there were opportunities to join in on the sidelines of the social and economic activities that formed a focal point for many: the cattle markets at Bakewell (Mondays), Uttoxeter (Tuesdays), Derby (Fridays). Here was a decidedly other way of life to anything I had known in industrial Warrington. The dialogue among men and women who spent much of their time in isolation in the hills was fast and furious, catching up on community news; finding out who was getting out of milk production because it wasn't paying; commenting on

the day's auction price of lambs, calves, and heifers; doing deals over supplies of fodder; paying bills; organising transport for beasts just bought - usually with a final transaction of spitting in the palm and agreeing 'a pound for luck'. The business was endless, and it was a curriculum in its own right that surrounded the formal one that pertained inside the former grammar and secondary modern schools.

There wasn't really a boundary between the inside and the outside, though. A girl on the school bus carrying a jar of pigs teeth explained that the previous evening they had killed the family pig and salted it down for winter. The teeth were for the science class! A boy brought a live bat in for the same purpose, and it escaped from its box in the staffroom. Another pupil had replaced the old adage of 'an apple for the teacher' - he brought dead rabbits. A group of twelve year old boys invited me to go with them down a nearby cave that they said they knew well, and I accepted without caution. Entry to the cave via a tight opening, hidden beneath a rock overhang, revealed a network of large caverns and narrower crawls, with a floor of red slimy mud. After exploring these innards for several hours we emerged like red chocolate animation characters, to hear one boy declare that he had only told his mother that we were going birdwatching! My job might have been on the line, but I heard nothing from the parents. At other times I arranged expeditions as part of the Duke of Edinburgh awards scheme, combining past experience of hiking the hills with now having the hills literally outside the door. We could just meet at the school gates on a Saturday or Sunday morning and set off over the tops, out towards Harborough Rocks, Bonsall Moor, or the stone circles on Stanton Moor. There were no health and safety questions, no letters of reassurance to parents. Like going down the cave, there was a simple, unspoken understanding and trust that we would look after each other, and would return safely. But then everyone knew the new teacher in town very quickly; we met each other in the market place, at school events, and in the pubs. There were no identity checks for under-age drinking in the pubs, either. Some of the pupils were regulars from the age of fourteen or fifteen, sociably and enjoyably whiling away their evenings in a safe and warm place, surrounded by people of all ages who they knew, and who knew them. It just seemed like the natural order of things. But the whole social and professional experience was such an eye-opener that I also imagined what it might mean to send pupils on placement in Warrington, to give them some experience of what that other world was like! It was a fantasy about doing anthropology in reverse, if you like. While I was learning about their culture, I would have loved to have them learn something about mine. They were different worlds indeed.

The transformation into a comprehensive school was sudden and in some senses ill-prepared, needing the wit and dexterity of a juggler to make the show succeed. The grammar school headmaster who had been appointed to oversee the transition and take charge of the amalgamated schools quit unexpectedly just months before the change. A few teachers of the former grammar school took flight, in one case loudly proclaiming that he had not entered teaching to teach secondary modern types. Initially both the grammar- and secondary modern buildings remained in use, as I said, awaiting additional accommodation being built on the grammar school site. Old traditions and the former administration arrangements were not overthrown overnight - it was a transitional state of affairs. The established teaching groups remained 'selective' - the eleven-plus successes and failures clearly identifiable as 'Gell' or 'Newbridge' pupils, denoting those who would leave at fifteen and those who were heading for GCE 'A' levels. Some teaching groups were still streamed, and sometimes sexually segregated for timetabling purposes, or for traditionally gender-specific subjects like woodwork, metalwork or domestic science, and for PE and sport.

The new intake, though, was integrated, unblemished by the labels of 11+ success or failure and plans were in place for the occupation of new buildings as a truly community comprehensive school. A new, young and vibrant head teacher had been appointed, sporting credentials as an Oxford Blue on his office walls, and unashamedly speaking with a broad, reassuringly levelling Lancashire accent. In the relatively small and close-knit community the remnants of segregation and the separation of family members and friends at the age of eleven were on their way out. Most staff embraced the change with enthusiasm, academically striving for Harold Wilson's dream of a grammar school education for everyone, and enjoying substantially improved facilities as they were completed. The vibrant sixth-form left no doubt about the academic lead given by teachers and the commitment of students aiming for higher education and the professions. The Beloe Report's recommendations on secondary school examinations added momentum and had us striving to introduce new CSE courses and make them succeed. As a stranger in the neighbourhood, the most memorable aspect of the new job was that the school was also about opportunities beyond the boundaries of academic subjects. The 1944 Education Act's intention to commit local education authorities to a duty of contributing in the broadest sense to the spiritual, moral, mental, and physical development of their communities were being taken seriously by Derbyshire County Council, and entrusted to the governors, teachers, parents, and pupils of the school. What was nicely surprising among other things was that at the heart of the whole venture, and in the essence of the community itself, education was about 'character'. The environment and the circumstance that I joined was not containment or the anonymous processing of nameless numbers that schooling in some places had become. It was about individuals who arrived with character, and building on each of those characters with an outlook towards their individual and communal well-being, their welfare, and the common wealth that education (rather than schooling) is supposed to involve.

When the new buildings were ready for occupation the school was arranged in four houses for registration, assemblies, dining, sports competitions and social activities. For registration each house had tutor groups of eighteen students made up of two or three from each year's intake, so eleven and twelve year-olds met with sixteen and seventeen year-olds informally for registration and for dining. They might well be relatives, neighbours, or members of the same church or scout / guide group, or might have attended the same village primary school. Whatever the social dynamics, the idea that interaction among pupils of different ages reflected life in the community outside seemed very innovative, and very appealing. The appeal was also evident during that first year when we joined in the local tradition of well dressing. Getting involved in well dressing and creating the first Anthony Gell school well was artistically and personally life changing. It involved learning the local tradition in all its detail: sourcing and preparing the clay, designing the tableau, collecting moss and the most appropriate kinds and colours of petals, and so on. Most of all was the communal nature of the whole event, weeks of preparation, of sharing know-how, and with the help of pupils and parents alike, eventually working overnight to press the thousands of petals into the several panels that made up the whole structure, and to have them erected on site by day-break ready for the public to see.

Less appealing was the trauma of spending Monday afternoons trying to engage the former secondary-modern 3C boys with the mysteries and wonders of art. The experience left an indelible scar on the memory: thirty six bottom stream, fourteen-year-olds were relocated by quirk of timetable from the relatively spacious buildings of their former school to a room in the darkest recess of the old grammar school quadrangle. They were cramped into old style, iron-framed, oak double desks with hinged lids, lined up side by side in four rows of four and

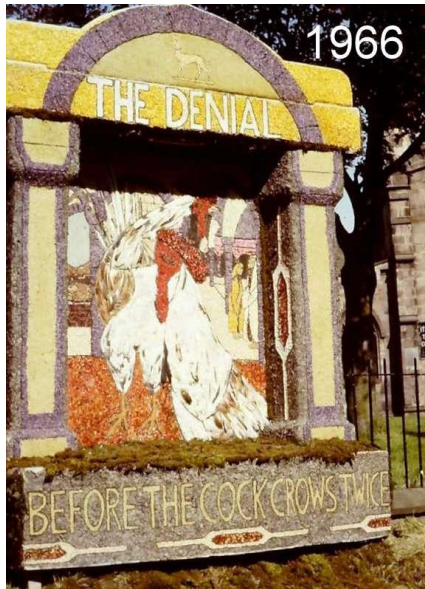
one row of two, the only way to fit them into the space available. Once in their seats, there was no way out for most except over the top of the backs of the others. The hinged lids provided perfect ammunition in the noise war, which they re-declared at the start of each lesson. The only classroom water source was a single galvanised bucket and the only visual display was a blackboard with a piece of chalk. Working space for each pupil was the desktop in front of him. A floor of polished oak blocks with crevices that retained any droppings, coupled with a work-shy caretaker who searched for any sign of droppings at the end of each afternoon, added to the atmosphere. The normal timetabled use of the room for teaching French did nothing to alleviate the sense of restriction on any notion of creativity and exploration. That was compounded by the need to prepare and transport materials into the room for each lesson, and to manage a distribution system for the materials that entailed fairness and guaranteed that every pupil actually received his allocation down the lines of desks. There was a similar need for an efficient collection system to allow drying time for the work and ensure that the boys left in time to catch the buses to their homes, some of which were a long way away across hill country. There was an accommodation between us, because none of us wanted it. The situation was intolerable and abnormal in what was usually a respectful, caring community, inside the school boundary and out, with that outlook towards well-being and welfare that the school represented. Monday afternoons were schooling at its worst, and the best we could do was cope with it. The only hope was that the new buildings would be completed quickly. But it wasn't fun. Many were the times when I sat on the banks of the River Derwent in Derby on a Monday evening and wondered if it would be more comfortable jumping in.

These were the Half Our Future kids that the Newsom Report had deliberated about, and some of us in the school were working out what to do with in practical terms to implement the recommendations of both Beloe and Newsom. If comprehensive education was to work, it needed to work harder for this half than the other half, whose futures were more assured by access to GCE examinations at 16+ and 18+. I have sometimes wondered if policy makers ever knew what those kids were putting up with every Monday afternoon in that classroom? To solve the problem of such 'under-achievers', the policy makers (the Beloe Committee) decided to introduce the all-singing, all-dancing, bright, shiny new Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE), including its mode 3 manifestation. Mode 1 was intended to equate with GCE, the syllabus prescribed externally by examination boards. Mode 2 syllabi could be designed by a school or consortium of schools, but examined externally. Mode 3 could be designed and assessed by teachers within a school, including the cumulative assessment of coursework, but overseen by external moderators. It was thus deemed possible to design courses of study to suit all capabilities, in every aspect of the school curriculum, they thought, and so did we. But neither we nor the pupils were fooled into thinking that there could be anything like equal worth among the qualifications. While the highest CSE grade was deemed to be equal to a GCE pass, the rest amounted to fine tuning of educational credentials and the identities that come with them. The advent of GCE and CSE grading is now combined to give the present system of GCSE grades and fine-tuned with A and A*. That combined version was yet to come, though. In 1965 the two systems were being established side by side in the same school.

As I write, preparations are well under way for the commemoration of the school's 50th anniversary as a comprehensive school - albeit 439 years after it was founded in another form. As some measure of the sense of community and the celebration of character that it established after the elimination of eleven-plus segregation, in 2015 we will join that 'new' headmaster (now in his nineties) and a host of people who were 'there at the time'. Some of

the other former colleagues and some of those eleven-year-old pupils from that first registration class have remained friends for half a century. A source of celebration indeed.

Les Tickle AGS 1965-1967



50 years of Well Dressing Tradition started by Les Tickle

Judy (nee Shimwell) Noble, year four pupil, Easter leaver 1965-66,remembers.

I can't believe it's fifty years since Anthony Gell became a comprehensive school. It was big move for those of us at Newbridge Secondary Modern School. We were mixing with pupils who were used to the buildings, regulations, teachers and subjects, but it didn't take us long to settle down in our new environment.

In the six weeks holiday beforehand mum bought my uniform which included a blazer, a white blouse, a tie skirt, and a navy blue gabardine raincoat (which I hated). She knitted me three navy cardigans. Mrs Brearley was our form teacher, which was good as she had been our form teacher at Newbridge in our third year. Our new classroom was in the old part of the new school and everywhere there seemed very old fashioned. The new part of the school was still in the process of being completed, but a little later we were able to use the cookery, woodwork and metalwork rooms plus the science laboratories and classrooms on the top floor. We were lucky to play hockey on Friday mornings either on Cromford Meadows or Idridgehay football ground and to travel there by bus, which I really enjoyed. At Newbridge we had only played Netball in the boys' playground.

I was only at the new school until April 1966, when I left and started work at the Hoveringham Stone Dene Quarry office. School was not my favourite place at that stage of my life, but I appreciate it now and I am pleased it is still growing and continues to serve generations of young people.

Judy remembers Mr Gould, Deputy Head, asking a question.

The week before Easter 1966 our class went on a day trip to Dudley Zoo and then on to Bournville to Cadbury's. This was years before Cadbury World. I can remember standing in Dudley Zoo on a very cold March day with a sprinkling of snow everywhere. I don't remember a thing about any animals. Then we travelled in our coach to Cadburys - again all I remember was tasting chocolate in the factory

On our way home Mr Joe Gould said, 'Judith, you leave next week. Have you got a job yet?' I said, 'Not yet.' When I got home my friend Maureen called at home and said, 'You have an interview tomorrow at Hoveringham Stone office at Dene Quarry, Cromford to work in the sales office.' I went straight from school next day on the bus. Mr Gordon Evans told me what my job would entail and I was lucky enough to begin the job, starting on Monday 12th April 1966. So in less than 48 hours I had got a job, which I enjoyed and stayed till I was twenty one, when I left to have my son.

Judy remembers the youth club in the new building in 1965.

We were very lucky to have a new youth club, which was part of the new school. We used to queue up outside waiting for it to open. We had a television, coffee bar, table tennis and football in the hall We had a record player and we took our own records. We were very lucky to have the youth club as there was nothing in the town, only the cinema in St John Street. One evening someone came from a local magazine to take our photos and do an article on the club. What excitement! These memories seem very dull to children nowadays.

NB. Inclusion in 1965 of the youth club and adult education on site was central to the education department's policy of establishing a community school with dual use of premises.
RP

RECOLLECTIONS of EARLY DAYS

1965 STAFF & STUDENTS MEET AGAIN in JANUARY 2015

Celebrating 50 years since Anthony Gell School, Wirksworth was established in 1965 as a community comprehensive school.

The first event to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the ‘marriage’ of Anthony Gell Grammar and Newbridge Secondary Modern schools in Wirksworth (which took place in the summer of 1965) was held on Saturday 24th January 2015 in the school. The day was organised by former headteacher Roy Pearce (1971-91) and hosted by headteacher David Baker, members of Gell Friends and former teacher Barry Foster. Invitations to attend the day had variously appeared as “Were you there?”; “Do you remember?”; “What was it like at AGS in 1965?” and “Memories Morning”.

The programme began with arrival, informal introductions, and quite a lot of face-recognition-and-name-guessing games that immediately set the tone of a gathering of long-lost friends and family. The idea of celebrating a golden wedding anniversary came immediately to mind. Greetings from David Baker, Roy Pearce, the Mayor of Wirksworth, Councillor Alison Clamp, and Gell Friends were followed by a tour of the school, including a lot of “that was where I...” - did maths etc. - and more reconnecting and story-telling. A feast of cakes, biscuits, tea and coffee served by Gell Friends volunteers added to the party atmosphere and raised another question: “Who do you remember?” prompted particularly by a film made in the school at the time by Neil Houghton (more below). The gathering then moved to an informal seated circular session chaired by Roy and led by Barry, with the purpose of hearing recollections of events ‘as a record of an important time in education in Wirksworth’. Former teacher Les Tickle acted as recorder for the session.

Les Tickle produced the first draft and various hands have added their own memories of a fascinating gathering. We have endeavoured to create what the programme described as ‘a record both oral and written, our contribution to (the) history’ (of the school). Roy had already produced the document ‘Hubert Doxey Remembers the Great Decision’, a memoir of one of the founder governors of the comprehensive school. (See below) Les has also written separately about his experiences of 1965 - 67 and the historical changes in education nationally, in which AGS was at the forefront (available on request from les.tickle@googlemail.com).

1965 Students who attended: Ann Andrews (Proctor), Ian Andrews, Graham Ault, Anne Bottomley, Lynne Broomhead (Todd), Tony Carline, Barbara (Cordin) Edwards, Sue Gregory (Webster), Neil Houghton, Keith Howard, Sue Kirk (Potts), Josie Little, Brian Minion, Ann Moorby, Julia Morley (Day), Judy Noble (Shimwell), Ivan Taylor, John Taylor, Joyce Taylor, Rosie Thompson, Gillian Wholey (Wilkinson), Ann Wilson (Webster)

1965 Staff who attended: Frank & Lilian Bottomley, Marjorie Billings, Barry Foster, Don and Jill Hughes, Allan Merigold, Ron Muschamp, Les & Chris Tickle.

Gell Friends: David Baker, Anna Bristow, Alison Clamp, Bridget Edwards, Janet Fuller, Paul Lovatt, Liz and Roger Morton, Annie Nelson, Liz Ormond, Brendan Quinn, Carol & Roy Pearce, Phil Richards, Agnes Rooney, Muff Wiltshire.

A note from Les about recording the session:

The term ‘senior moment’ is sometimes used to excuse forgetfulness; well this event turned that meaning upside down. This was certainly a ‘seniors moment’ with many lucid memories, of people and events in 1965-66, recounted in graphic detail in an atmosphere of shared humour and (mostly) high praise for the way in which comprehensive reorganization in Wirksworth got off the ground under very difficult circumstances. A lot of people told stories during the day. These notes cannot do justice to them all, and many who spoke didn’t announce their name.

These are the first oral accounts of that crucial time in the school’s history, recollections recorded almost 50 years after. They show just how much could be recorded, and how valuable a more complete record would be, for both our own and future generations to enjoy.

Before the detail, I would like to mention three particular themes that came through repeatedly as I made my notes. The first was that although everyone was there to celebrate the events of September 1965, the start of AGS as a comprehensive school, many stories were inevitably about the experience of two separate schools coming together and the creation of something different from both. Some of those in the group, for example, had been pupils at Newbridge Secondary Modern for several years; others were in the sixth form at Anthony Gell Grammar. It is the recollections of the characteristics of that coming together - as distinct from the fifty years of energetic development of the school since - that makes this record especially significant.

The second theme that shone through was about how hurriedly it all happened, and how unprepared people were for the changes, at all levels of provision in the education of Wirksworth’s pupils.

The third was about how rapidly people got to grips with a very tumultuous situation, facing up to the challenges with energy and commitment to the new creation, and most of all, how that brought out the best in people as a caring community determined to make it work. ‘Like a family’ was said several times. I hope the record below provides a reasonable representation of some of the things that people wanted to say. They are written as a narrative summary of the conversation chaired by Roy and led by Barry.

Barry Foster had been a teacher of English in the grammar school for five years by 1965. He started the conversation by recalling five memories of the first year in the comprehensive school teaching English, and as the housemaster of Gell House.

One: the third of his and Mary’s four children was born in August 1965 and the creation of the comprehensive school would come to mean that all four would attend the same school; there would be no chance of separate schooling from age eleven, “no division”.

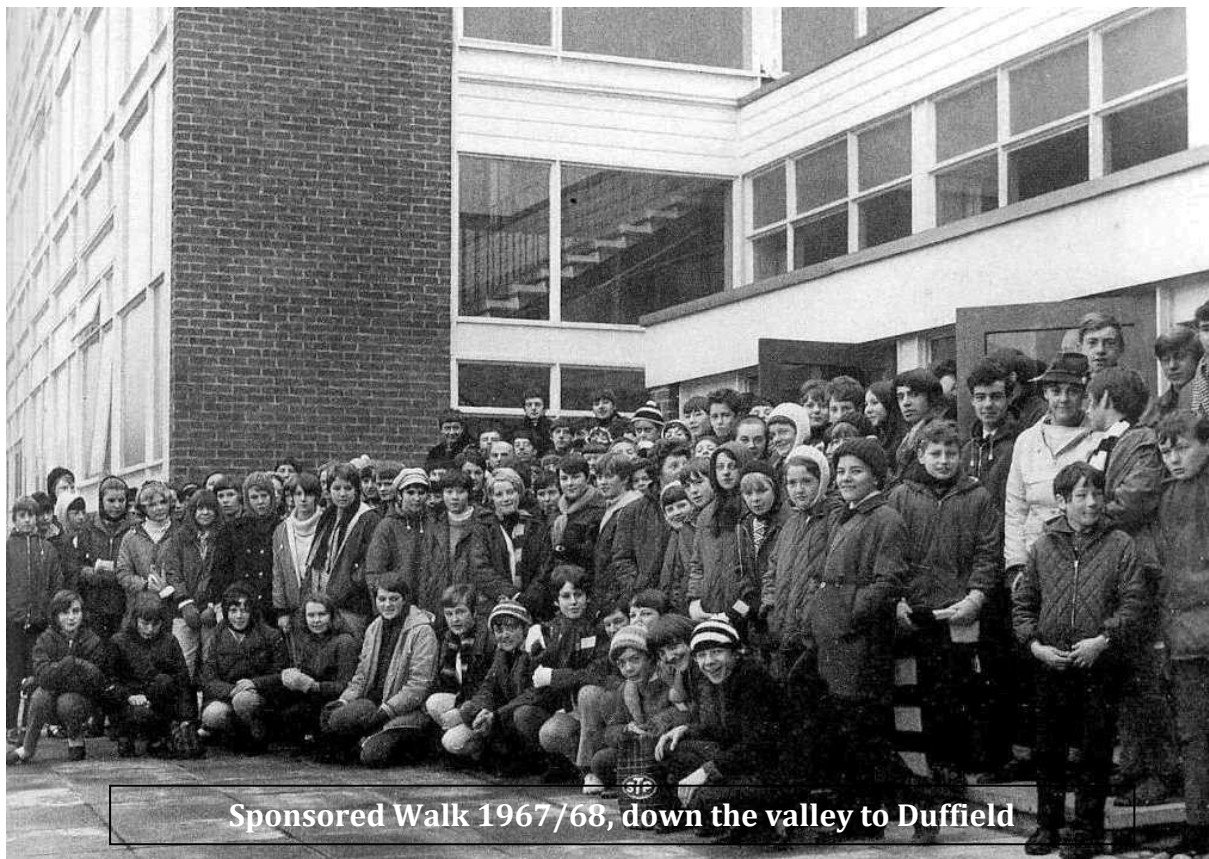
Two: 6th September 1965 the first assembly as housemaster was taken with a mixture of excitement and apprehension. There had been delay, the school was on a split site, and was leaderless because the headteacher appointed to lead the changes had unexpectedly quit the job. Alan Phillips acted as head from September 1965 for the autumn term. None the less, there was optimism, a clear sense that the change was “good for the town”.

Three: Barry was timetabled to teach 3C at Newbridge, reputedly the worst class in the school to teach, which he saw as a test of his fitness to do the job under the new arrangements. Borrowing a cow's skull from the art department, he got 3C to discuss it, describe it, and to think and write about it. The results were "astonishing" with one piece by Yvonne Morley so outstanding that it was entered for a national competition and came first out of seventy-five thousand entries. This was "evidence of remarkable work by someone who was rejected at 11+".

Four: Gell House decided to organise a party for children with special needs, giving Barry some concerns about how it would work, only to be reassured by students "Don't worry, Sir, we'll organise it".

Which they did, demonstrating clearly that they had many personal and social skills and other talents in addition to academic ones that the school could allow to blossom.

Five: The arrival of Frank Bottomley, newly appointed as headmaster in January 1966, not only to provide the missing leadership, but brought leadership with a vision about what comprehensive education might become. Alongside the vision, Frank brought a management style based on "asking questions". One challenging question Barry recalled was: "Why do we have children all of the same age for registration groups? Why not have vertical age groups?" Something that had been taken for granted (for generations) was thus replaced by something that has served the generations since.



Others were then invited to contribute to the conversation, starting with John Taylor's story of having been a high flyer at Newbridge and due to be made a prefect, only to be transferred for his last school year as a 'nobody' to Gell's and denied the chance of becoming one. His disappointment was transmitted to the audience, even after fifty years. Several apologies were made during the rest of the session - by female former grammar school students who had become prefects, with plenty of underlying gender-equality innuendo.

Roy Pearce suggested that this was the kind of issue that could have been addressed if Derbyshire had had more experience of setting up new schools and had the resources to support re-organisation.

Ann Moorby expressed her appreciation of enjoying every day of school life at AGS, including organising the party for children with special needs, and how that contributed to a career working with and caring for children with very specific individual needs.

On a background note, one member of the group, Nancy Slaney, had not been in the school in 1965 but worked in the education offices of Derbyshire County Council, South Division, alongside the accountancy team who had responsibility for checking the orders, delivery, invoicing, and payment for all the new materials and equipment for the additional building and re-equipping of AGS.

She described the piles of invoices and behind-the-scenes pressure to get everything in place quickly for the new school.

Susan Gregory (Webster) described how the girls' PE and games lessons were 'wasted' by spending time picking stones off the new playing fields on the Hannages. With another gender innuendo one of the men said how, since the boys played rugby on those fields, they really appreciated the work of the girls who had cleared the stones! There were some descriptions of the gender-separated sports arrangements, and also of the variety of new physical and outdoor activities introduced later under the 'regime' of Richard Kershaw as head of PE. One described outdoor activities on the Gilkin and Middleton Moor; others how they had to go by coach to Kirk Ireton to play rugby 'just in a farmer's field, with no goal posts'. The girls played hockey on the field next to the road near Idridgehay.

Roy Pearce failed to mention, but recalled later, that in the early years each pupil was provided with a showering towel for each PE lesson. Towels were collected, taken to the school laundry, put in the machine by the Laundress, Mrs Cowley, and washed ready for another lesson. It was not surprising that this sensible policy and notable investment in child welfare by the county council was the earliest cut when money was reduced in the 1970s.

Les Tickle mentioned his own efforts to know and understand the area. One of the lads invited him to join a small party exploring a local cave one Sunday morning. Les, enthusiastic and impressionable, joined them as they crawled into the dark and threatening muddy depths. Wriggling amid the muck and water Les wondered if he would lose his job almost before he had started, especially when the boy informed him he'd 'told his mum he was going bird watching'. No health and safety then.

Don Hughes illustrated the notion of 'concern and caring' among the teaching staff with a story about what happened in the case of unexpected heavy snow occurring while school was in session. In such an event, transport to get pupils home to Bonsall became impossible, in

which case deputy headteacher Joe Gould would make sure everyone was appropriately dressed and walk the pupils from AGS to get them safely home before returning home to Bolehill himself.

Several people talked about the competitive spirit of the House System, in particular the driving force of Allan Merigold as head of Fearn House. That spirit was not limited to sport, though. Neil Houghton quoted Allan as telling the students “you can always do better than you think you can.” As a consequence, Neil had made it a rule of job hunting to apply for jobs that he thought he couldn't do, and had a very successful career thanks to Mr. Merigold. Others echoed that theme, describing different ways in which encouragement and comment by teachers had influenced their choices of career and subsequent success.

Graham Ault talked about having his backside paddled for misbehaviour in the craft department with a piece of chalked wood, the result being that his trousers were inscribed with the chalk for others to see that he'd been paddled - and so his misdemeanour followed him throughout the day, not least telling other teachers (Mr Merigold again!) he had been in trouble.

Someone asked how the film of the school in 1965/66 (mentioned earlier, on show in the library) had come about. Neil told the group how he had ‘borrowed’ his parents’ cine-8 camera without asking permission and over time had filmed daily events around the school - again without asking permission. He just pointed the camera here and there. In the telling, he seemed to enjoy re-living the naughty boy sense of it, but also the freedom to do it at the time and how his parents found him out when the film came to be developed (and paid for).

Recently Neil retrieved the footage, found an old cine-8 projector, and realised the significance of the film record. Thus it was converted from cine-8 to DVD, to be made available, in cooperation with Phil Richards, via the school web site and perhaps Youtube. While the film had been showing during coffee-time in the library some of the group had engaged in identifying teachers and pupils; that was followed with an open request to identify more individuals when the film is uploaded to the web site. Neil remembered the bravado of his friend in a Fearn house cricket match, who boasted of the fine innings he would play. His brief appearance at the crease, in and out in one ball, is included in the footage.

Barry described how, during his five years teaching in the grammar school, all the staff wore academic gowns all the time. “From day one” in September 1965, however, although there was no discussion about the matter, and no formal decision made, the gowns came off and were never worn again. There was, he said, just an understanding about everyone coming - and working - together, implying that displaying this traditional symbol of academic superiority (graduate status) of grammar school teachers was inappropriate for the new community comprehensive school.

Joyce Brealey, form teacher of a group of girls at Newbridge, was able to reassure them that when they arrived in September she would again be their teacher. Judy Noble recalled that on day one, not only did the girls appear in their new blue uniform, but so did Joyce Brealey, indicating her solidarity.

That sentiment was shared by Frank, who (at the age of forty-one) had arrived to his new job as headteacher in January 1966 from a secondary modern school in Yorkshire, with some trepidation about whether he was up to the job of taking over a school with a very long

history (as a grammar school), facing momentous change. However, he said, by then there had been time for those who didn't want to be part of the new arrangements to move elsewhere, and there was an overwhelming sense of collaboration and commitment among the staff to make things work. He also spoke about how nice it was to feel wanted by the teaching staff "because headmasters didn't always get that". The commitment of the staff, he said (modestly) made his job easy! None the less, each day, he walked past the portrait of former grammar school headmaster Hansen Bay hanging in the corridor, with a sense of trepidation, as if being watched over as the new guardian of an ancient institution.

Frank went on to tell about his experience as a keen hockey player taking part in a staff-student match, in which he faced Derbyshire County hockey-player pupil Ann Petts for the bully-off. "And there were a lot of bully-offs," said Frank, "and I didn't win one."

Typical of the first headmaster of Anthony Gell Comprehensive School, in that story Frank Bottomley seemed to illustrate the spirit of education in Wirksworth during the changes in 1965 / 66. Others remembered the match as remarkably hard and competitive with no quarter given.

Les Tickle wanted to convey a personal note to the group, and put on record the fact that AGS at the time also made a significant contribution to adult education in Wirksworth, with evening classes in a range of subjects - foreign languages, secretarial skills, pottery, etc. coordinated by Don Hughes. One of the adult education students, a former Anthony Gell grammar school girl who Barry had taught, was thus also 'there at the time' in 1965/66 - and became Mrs Chris Tickle forty-eight very happy years ago this year. For the education record, Les thought it important to register the role AGS played in 'second-chance education' by providing those evening classes. There must be many people in Wirksworth who were not necessarily pupils at Anthony Gell school, but who were students there and benefited from the new vision for education in the town.

The memories session closed with a contribution by John Thompson, who was in hospital, but had rung Roy during the week to tell of:

THE BEST SCHOOL TRIP EVER.

The first year of Gell was the year when England won the World Cup. Amazingly Bill Walton, PE teacher, managed to obtain tickets for the final at Wembley and John was one of a group which went down by minibus.

In those days you stood at football matches and the boys were positioned cramped beside the corner flag where the Russian linesman gave the disputed goal scored by Geoff Hurst. They saw the line precisely; the linesman gave a goal, John agreed with him and England won. Gell was represented at a famous moment of sporting history. The best school trip ever.

Annie Nelson, chair of Gell Friends and a school governor, closed the session as we moved to the first AGM of Gell Friends. She identified many aspects from 1965 which had survived and would continue, describing the character of the school as it is now. The first sense is one of FAMILY and community. With that goes the sense of CARING. A third is about LESSONS and LEARNING.

The gathering ended on a similarly family note, with a very warm expression of thanks from headteacher David Baker who described himself as the custodian of the school and its traditions in 2015. During the day no secret was made of the fact that was already well known: David will retire from the job in summer 2015, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of AGS becoming a comprehensive school.

RECORDER'S END NOTE

Many expressions of thanks were conveyed on behalf of everyone who was 'there at the time' (1965/66) in AGS and shared their memories during this event in 2015, with special thanks to some who were not 'there at the time', but who made the event possible: Roy, for organising the day and much other background work; David and Gell Friends (listed above), for hosting the day and especially for the feast; Phil Richards, for photographing the moment.

Thanks were also expressed to Barry for leading the conversation. The creation of the comprehensive school in 1965/66 took a long time coming in Wirksworth's history, removing the artificial segregation of children at the age of eleven that had been in place for several generations. The change brought about what Barry Foster said in his introduction to the discussion: his four children were able to go to the same school together to enjoy its caring, family-like support for learning and aspiration, and that would henceforth be true for all families in the community.

Recorded by Les Tickle (with minor contributions from others) January 2015.



MR BLOOD'S BRASS BAND

Keith Blood came to Gell in 1967 and began a period of service till 1983, which not only inspired many Gell students to love music, but also gave a great boost to the public understanding of Anthony Gell School.

Keith was a violinist, a fine, classically-trained musician and a man of great humanity. Children liked him. When interviewed at Gell Day 2015 in a brief comment he said, 'All young people have talent. Music gives people a life, gives them something that can never be got from anywhere else in life. We're all born with a musical instrument – your voice.' When he taught, he told the interviewer, he always tried to find something that all students would enjoy.

Keith's optimism about his students shone out and his inclusive philosophy - nobody was rejected - was at the heart of his work in the school. He set himself first to establish a school brass band, a good choice in a community where brass was a strong local interest and there was an established town band, The BMW Brass – a combination of the original three bands from Brassington, Middleton and Wirksworth.

Immediately to become a band member was a prestigious achievement for both boys and girls. Keith found some outstanding musicians, several of whom became professionals and many were keen amateur players in later life. This was not a competition band and Keith managed also to include in the band lesser players, the enthusiasts as well as the gifted.

When Steven Thompson was getting together a gathering of old students to play for the fiftieth anniversary celebration day he wrote to me, *'I have now been playing for 48 years and during that time have played with the top bands in the country such as Grimethorpe Colliery, Brighouse and Rastrick, GUS. I have been privileged to play in the best concert halls in the UK such as The Symphony Hall in Birmingham, The Sage Centre in Gateshead and The Royal Albert Hall. I have travelled across Europe playing and have only just returned from a band tour in Thailand with the Desford Band. All of this was as a direct result of Keith Blood's enthusiasm and hard work. I owe him a great deal.'*

When I came to the school as headteacher in 1971 I was told of the band and I heard them play at a welcoming assembly. They were magnificent and that year they reached the broadcast stage of Opportunity Knocks the popular TV talent programme.

This report has focused so far on the musical and social aspects of the school band – see the article below -, but there was one important community bonus. Gell was the first school in the Dales to go comprehensive and all the initial suspicion of the change and anxiety about 'standards' was evident in the community. It would be hard to win local approval against the four traditional grammar schools, which surrounded Wirksworth.

Suddenly our community noticed a public demonstration of excellence which gave the town great heart. The band played widely outside school at village events, carol services, local concerts and notably at Wirksworth Well Dressings. The school concerts in a house-full hall were a tremendous event.

People saw a smartly dressed group of youngsters from the school performing at a high level. They were courteous, well disciplined, playing with total concentration and with a smile on their faces, led by a gentleman musician whom the young performers (and their parents) obviously revered. Model students they brought great credit and a positive profile to this new comprehensive school. It truly was Mr Blood's band and they took Gell to its community.

In our early years the school band made a vital contribution to the reputation of our school and to comprehensive education.

Explanation.

I have written this account in tribute personally as a 'political contribution', because as head I saw the difference that these public demonstrations of excellence made to the prestige of the school.

It was pointed out to me that I had failed to mention that beginning with the brass band Keith gradually developed a distinguished school orchestra and many small groups, pop, jazz and classical, emerged and flourished within the thriving, whole-school, musical environment. I remember Mrs Porter's Down Town Strings, a self-run group, which made and sold me their own record.

There was every opportunity for music to be a central experience of your life at Anthony Gell.

Roy Pearce October 2015

Article in Radio Times in 1973: the band played a concert for Radio Derby.

'BLOWING THEIR OWN TRUMPETS in THEIR OWN TIME'

If you want to snatch a game of basketball or badminton during lunch-break at the Anthony Gell School, Wirksworth, you need considerable powers of concentration. You'll probably be swatting your first shuttlecock to an accompaniment provided by the school band – at point blank range. The school band, which has recorded a programme for Sunday's In Concert for Radio Derby, was started four years ago when music teacher Keith Blood managed to raise a cornet, a bass and a euphonium from the county music department. Since then Mr Blood has taught more than fifty children to tackle an instrument and the band has appeared on television in the face of stiff opposition from more senior groups.

Not that competitive playing is any part of Anthony Gell philosophy. 'The idea of the band is to encourage team spirit, as with a football team, says Mr Blood, 'But we're not interested in going out to test our talents against somebody else's. To do that sort of thing we'd need a smaller group made up from the cream of our players, and that's the sort of selection we try to avoid.

This is a band for the pupils themselves, and if they are keen enough to learn an instrument, then they can join in, regardless of whether they represent the cream. One or two members have only been playing a couple of months and others are absolute beginners. 'We don't make a lot of fuss about playing; like football, its just another enjoyable part of school life.'

What's more, the musicians seem to agree with their leader. When there's a conflict about listening to pop or blowing their own thing 'Col. Bogey' wins hands down.

Mishaps, too, are obviously part of the fun of belonging to the band: like the time when they went to play in a hotel where the lift was too small to take drummer and drums together, so the drums went up in a lift of their own. The players arrived at the top, but the drums somehow didn't. But it needs something more than a guaranteed giggle to make 55 teenagers give up their lunch break for a band.

Bass-player Richard Killer says it's the social life. 'Not only do you get to know people in the school better, he thinks, 'but you make friends with people outside, thanks to the band.' Apparently, if you are carrying an instrument case in the streets of Wirksworth, people will stop you to offer congratulations.

As fifteen year old Julie Houghton says, ' It's fun playing and the social life is even better.'

What social life? 'Well,' says, Alex Winkler, 'just imagine 60-odd people going to a concert in a 40-seater bus. You can't help having a social life.'



The Band 1971

GELL HOUSE COUNCIL
at Anthony Gell School 1974-1978

Different teachers have different priorities. Two of mine were, and are, enabling young people to learn about democracy by doing it and learn about responsibility by taking it. My dream when coming to Anthony Gell School as head of Gell House was to move towards a situation where the 180+ students would become a democratic learning community. A place where curricular and extra-curricular would meld into one overall learning experience with all students involved in decision making, project creation, implementation and evaluation built around house classes and all age tutor groups. These projects would involve the wider community of Wirksworth wherever possible. A house council would be the vehicle for initiating and/or coordinating activities which would control a house fund with house assemblies becoming the forum for wider debate and decision making. The size of the house was perfect – just about the maximum for face to face discussions where everybody could know who everybody else was yet big enough for a wide range of interests and enthusiasms to emerge.

The previous head of house had also carried the enormous responsibility of a major department. I was in a much better position to innovate. The tutor team was mixed in age and experience and all the stronger for it. The decision to create a house council with representatives from each tutor group was unanimous. I then discussed this with the whole house at several house assemblies. It was received with enthusiasm with the amendment that if any individual who was not a representative had a good idea they should be free to attend a council meeting to propose it.

The first meeting was attended by the two representatives from each of the eight tutor groups who jammed themselves into the small house office. Some groups chose to elect ‘deputy reps’ and many of those turned up as well. I said that I would chair the first meeting only and that it might be a good idea to elect a chair for the next meeting and a secretary to record decisions from now on. Two great Year 10 characters were elected who were much better known to the students than to me as a new arrival. The first discussion was about how often to meet and how to raise some money. Some would have met twice a day but weekly received the majority vote. It was pointed out that other houses had sound systems but Gell did not. A volunteer deputation to Roy Pearce, the head, agreed to request an equivalent sum for Gell. Another group offered to research what could be bought for the sum requested. The secretary recorded all this in her new ‘minute book’ (provided by the English department) and put a notice of the minutes onto the then empty house notice board.

I had been advised that there was no point in putting anything on the house notice board as it would quickly be torn down. My experience at other schools had been that this would not happen if the notices were of real interest to students. I was wrong – at first. The minutes did get torn down. The secretary was very angry and said so at the next house assembly. She was a popular and respected figure, more so than me probably, and was listened to. It did not happen again.

The deputation to the headteacher was successful. The sound system was bought by a group of students who listened carefully to several options in the local electrical shop and in shops in Derby. It was immediately put to use to run fund-raising discos at lunchtime. A treasurer was elected and a bank account opened. Ideas for projects began to pour into the house

council. A Christmas party was planned for children from a local children's home which involved over fifty students. A film sub-committee of the house council emerged which used house funds to rent feature films which were shown at lunchtimes for 5p admission – the profits being used to pay for an evening showing for elderly people from the town's sheltered accommodation with accompanying sandwiches and cakes. Musicians from the house played during the tea and eventually a parent donated a piano for the house social area. More and more members of the house were getting involved with the actual initiating, planning and implementation of activities rather than just serving cups of tea, with the full support of the house tutors.

The house fund grew to several hundred pounds totally under the control of the council. Evening discos began – led by one of the first members of the house council who had now left school. The Youth Tutor provided refreshments at wholesale prices and the snack bar group passed all profits to the house fund. The caretaker (Jack Pidcock) and his assistant (Reg Bacon) were incredibly supportive. They would walk round from the pub just in time to lock up after evening discos and as far as I knew did not claim overtime for doing so. Certainly the house council was never charged for evening use of the premises. On one occasion a film about motor cycling was shown by the film committee of the house council in conjunction with a local motor cycle club who had no projection facilities. The local community policeman, a parent who was also totally supportive, had some concern about the 50 or so Harley Davidsons parked at the bus stop!

A house hiking club was started by some energetic Year7 students. Every Sunday morning forty or so students of mixed gender and age would set forth into the beautiful Peak District accompanied by a house tutor and usually a handful of parents. Maps of the proposed Sunday walk appeared on the house notice board the previous week and were never defaced though occasionally diversions were added to take in a tea room or pub which sold bacon sandwiches and soft drinks to teenagers. I never discovered whether this was strictly legal but it certainly was a local custom. It was on one of these walks that the idea of a house insurance policy emerged. A girl had brought some of her own records to a lunchtime disco to supplement the house collection. Two records had been damaged and a house law was passed that provided reimbursement from house funds if personal property was damaged or stolen when brought to school for the benefit of others. It paid out perhaps two or three times a term but was a nice example of collective responsibility totally devised by the students. I don't think it was ever abused because young people are pretty astute judges of the integrity of other young people.

The Council decided to fund the education of a boy in a poor Indian village following the invitation of a speaker from Oxfam to a house assembly. This was managed by another sub-group. Yet another group began to organise evening ice-skating trips to Sheffield which involved booking the coach and paying the invoice.

Another group, with the help of the caretaker and some parents, converted one of the house cloakrooms into a magazine and games room. Magazines on trucks, sailing and wedding dresses were ordered by another sub group and a football machine was purchased – all proceeds to house fund. When some truck magazines were stolen the culprits were identified, told to replace them and given a good 'talking to' by the house council. It didn't happen again. Another group got fed up with the roses being trampled by hordes charging to the buses through Gell quad – so they re-routed the paths and with house funds bought 60 paving slabs via a deal with a parent who worked at Charcon in order to relay them.

The house council rented one of the first video recorders to appear in the school for lunchtime film shows. I remember very well their negotiation with the humanities department over the appropriate contribution to house funds for the teachers to use the machine for lessons.

My dream for the creation of a seamless learning experience from the integration of curricular with extra-curricular was never realised but it is not a totally mad idea as I am currently working on something similar in Finland and Poland (and Finland has the most successful school system in Europe!)

We did achieve a lesser aim however – at several points through the four years the involvement of every member of the house in some kind of decision making process and the planning and implementation of some kind of student initiated activity was achieved. The notice board was plastered with notices about everything under the sun with long lists of participants names and nothing was torn down. Despite the wide range of other activities the normal house activities of sports teams continued and supporter turn out was impressive. The final achievement of the house council before my departure was the massive logistical exercise of a house trip to Blackpool. Although a core group did most of the planning the whole house was involved in decision making at house assemblies and everyone came. Nobody was lost and there were no casualties!

The project did not develop without criticism. A small group of students at one point felt that the house council was a sham democracy with no real power. Well, it could not change the law of the land or even the rules of the school – but it did make a lot happen that would not have happened otherwise and many people benefitted from its activities both in the house and the wider community.

Derry Hannam

Innovation at Anthony Gell by Peter Gibbon (1971-1994)

I started my teaching career at Anthony Gell at the same time as Roy Pearce in September 1971. He had appointed me to teach history mainly, but also Social Studies CSE as my degree was in Social Science. Little opportunities to teach this subject existed then and my main subject for my post-graduate year in Manchester had to be history. Teaching that subject with Ken Taylor and Richard Griffiths (also a new teacher) was exciting but I always thought of a more integrated approach to humanities would be the 'future'. At that time CSE and GCE were the two exam choices for students (and parents) in year 9 with obvious differences in status. To make the former of these more pertinent and not just a watered-down version of the other Roy encouraged departments to develop Mode 3 CSEs, which could be devised locally by any school and if accepted they would be examined externally. First to come up with one was Technology created by Mike North and then I got a Social Studies one going with heavy coursework emphasis.

More radical change came soon after when Ken Taylor left and was replaced by Liz Binstead. Another new member of staff presented to us the chance to take on a revolutionary approach to teach the first years (Yr7). His name was Derry Hannam and he had come from an Oxfordshire school, where the authority was more modern in its curriculum developments. I must admit there was some scepticism from staff, including myself, especially as it was from America. How very wrong I was. The title of this development was called **Man A Course Of Study** or MACOS as it became known. It might well be called HACOS today with H standing for Humans. It had been created with Government funding in America in 1972 and was taught to 400,000 students. The man behind it was Jerome Bruner, a cognitive psychologist who was an expert in how children learn and he was convinced that even young children are able to engage with any materials as long as it is presented in an appropriate and motivating way. His holistic model of learning proposed a spiral curriculum, in which a concept might be taught repeatedly within a curriculum but at a number of levels, each being more complex than the first. At the core of the course were three questions.

What is human about human beings? How did they get that way? How can they be made more so?

A grand undertaking and a long journey, if ever there was one.

There were huge costs involved. Firstly in the incredible package of resources, which included special projectors with unique cassettes of film, thirty-two pupil booklets, various games, five teacher's handbooks containing lesson plans and four extra books for teachers, containing evaluation strategies and extra ideas. Secondly and far more important was the question of curriculum time. It meant some subjects like history and RS giving all their time up with that year and even some being diverted from other curriculum areas like English. A team of committed teachers had to volunteer and have a class regularly each week for a fair chunk of the pupils' class time. The area of expertise of the teachers did not matter as much as their desire to take part in a brand new venture. For example a linguist like Jill Hoppitt and a Methodist minister who was our Religious Studies teacher, Dave Wheeler, couldn't wait to get involved.

The whole first term involved the study of three creatures – the Pacific salmon, our own Herring Gull and the Baboons in the Amboseli reserve in Kenya. Such concepts as life cycle, animal adaptation, information and behaviour, innate and learned behaviour, natural selection, structure and function and baboon communication were examined. Primary sources like a copy of the field notes of the scientist studying baboons were used. There was an added challenge of looking at the films without a commentary as if you were present compared with David Attenborough's dulcet tones that we are so attuned to these days. The final two terms were given over to the study of a simpler society than our own with the chosen people being the Netsilik Inuit in the Arctic. The only time I can ever remember wishing for snow is when we began this course, especially when we were at the part when igloos were being built. Again films had no commentary just sub-titles in English. Children were really becoming anthropologists. They were introduced to their culture as a whole from birth to death and through all the seasons. I am sure some ex-students to this day will remember the names of Itimangnark (ity-MAHNG-nark), Kingnuk (KING-nook) and their little lad Umiapik (oo-MY-apik). Pupils learnt early on how to appreciate and interpret both the physical and symbolic worlds of these people. One exercise where children were given cards with the materials that made up one of their sledges and asked how they thought it was done rarely brought any right answers. When they were shown the film the realisation that these people had the skills to survive in the harshest of environments and we don't without our modern technology was quite honestly a shock. 'Respect' is perhaps the word that could be used. The emphasis of the course was upon learning particular skills within the teaching process, not upon the significance of the content. This included the necessity to ask questions, discuss, and reach conclusions based upon evidence and argument. It was fun and enjoyable to teach and the responses of pupils showed in general how much they shared those feelings with us.

There was a rather sad conclusion to the story of MACOS in the United States at least. It was much criticised and sometimes called un-American. The emphasis upon questioning aspects of life, including belief and morality was particularly targeted by fundamentalist groups and after much national debate funding was withdrawn after Congress had discussed it and it was all finished with in 1975. All this made me believe even more in its importance.

It died with us in a rather more mundane way with the advent of the National Curriculum but that is another story. Should anyone want to see the whole story of MACOS and see clips from the Inuit films the National Film Board of Canada produced '**Through These Eyes**', a documentary about the controversy surrounding it, and more generally about the interplay between politics and education. It can be found on the internet and after watching it I feel even more privileged that I was given the chance to teach it thanks to the support of the staff and especially the head, Roy Pearce.

Peter Gibbon, October 2015.

NOT QUITE HEADLONG HALL.....

Schooling can appear, falsely, as a detached kind of process not properly involved with the real world beyond the school boundary. So an extra-curricular activity such as the school play can seem even more peripheral or even indulgent-like too much jam with your daily loaf.

In March 1983 the School Drama Club presented an evening of 'Drama-Satire-Farce'. This was before Jacqueline Porteous was appointed to teach Drama as a subject specialism but putting on plays was already well established and forty-three students, staff, production and other helpers were involved. This moment in the life of AGS might be seen as typical of the school's collaborative ethos and esprit de corps.

Short scenes and sketches were directed by Phil Richards, Lorraine Wolsey and Dave Roe. Phil Richards had translated these from the German writer Wolfgang Borchert and in the second part of the evening Phil also staged "Scarves" by John Challen.

The evening ended with my staging of 'The Proposal' a 1 Act Farce by Chekhov performed by Rachel Spriggs, Edwin Richards and Paul Neaum - and three aged dining chairs from my home. There may well have been elements of farce in the rehearsing and staging as we all tried to juggle the complicated fit of six separate groups of actors and scene-setting during after-school sessions.

Key to our eventual successes was the cooperation of Jack Pidcock and John Bowyer. Here were the Laurel and Hardy of Caretaking in whose hands we all sat. But true to their best natures they obligingly opened and closed doors, kept their brooms away from busy feet, hummed and whistled in low key and became team members.

In retrospect the whole project was exhilarating and fun as any drama performance should aspire.

Regarding Drama as just one communal feature of Anthony Gell schooling, there were, in my time, numerous productions, including large-scale musicals, major plays by Chekhov and Lorca, revues and sketches penned by teaching staff. The personal commitments of everyone involved over many years is testament to a distinctive Gell characteristic - the joys in learning together. Real drama and even farce occurs in any school community but AGS has consistently risen above the mundane or prosaic to discover then encourage and nourish the talents of all its members.

So 'putting on plays' is a modest example of why the school has thrived over fifty years, often in challenging conditions, but always collegiate in purpose and practice. AGS has never allowed itself to be invaded by the levelling and fragmenting nature of simplistic educational edicts imposed by ill-informed ideologues. Instead it has advanced adventurous curricula and rigorous pedagogies. This has created a vital culture of multiple learning opportunities, in and out of the classroom, for successive generations.

It is an inclusive enterprise, forthrightly ambitious for all its students

Malcolm Stanton (English Dept. 1975-1991)

PETER AVIS and the FIRST COMPUTERS

As a teacher in the late 1970s I was captivated by the power and programmability of the early Commodore PET computer and the way the students were able to develop projects that controlled robots, railways and model houses. I became Regional Director for the Microelectronics Education Programme from 1981 - 1986 and developed our regional centre into a software publisher called RESOURCE from the close of MEP until 1990 when I joined NCET as their Director of Schools. When NCET was renamed as Becta in 1997 I continued and took on the Policy role until its closure in 2011.

Microcomputers and computer control at Anthony Gell School

I was teaching Maths at Anthony Gell Comprehensive School in 1977 when I was lucky enough to get one of a small number of fellowships jointly organised by the Institute of Electrical Engineers and the Institute of Mechanical Engineers which enabled teachers to take a short sabbatical into industry. This allowed me to spend the Autumn Term working at Rolls Royce in Derby and spend some time at Trent Polytechnic on a development project.

When I was working at Rolls Royce I was completely taken with the beauty and power of their newly installed computer controlled machines which created the intricate shapes that make up the working parts of a jet engine. I realised that the automation of industry was little understood by the education system and as the design engineers at Rolls Royce said to me, they didn't need students who could just add up, they wanted those who could adapt to a new world of computers and robotics. It struck me that the school curriculum I was teaching was pretty irrelevant (logarithms, slide rules, etc) to this technological future.

Part of my secondment was spent at Trent Polytechnic with Geoffrey Harrison and Jeff Shillitoe who were pioneers in school technology and supported the secondees in curriculum development. My development project was about exploring how microcomputers could be used to control equipment to simulate the kinds of equipment I had seen at Rolls Royce. This coincided with a real public interest in microelectronics and the emergence of the first microcomputers. I bought a small single board computer just available from the US, the KIM II. This stimulated a lot of interest at school and we went on to use it to create a small run-around robot which could detect if it collided with something and move out of its way. This single board computer needed to be programmed in 6502 machine code and was a good, but complicated introduction to computers.

However more powerful, more easily used computers were coming onto the market. In coming back to the classroom I was able to convince the school to purchase two of the first 8K Commodore PET microcomputers to come into the UK. These were superb machines, with their built in screen, with an easy to learn BASIC programming language and most importantly a user port at the back to which you could attach your own electronic devices.

A number of the students, Michael Hooton, Catherine Howard, Karl Else, David Talbot and others reacted superbly to these machines and we started a computer club after school to develop computer controlled projects.

There was a wide range of these including computer controlled vehicles, model trains, an X-Y plotter, model cranes, houses etc. As well as simulating the kind of machines seen in

industry and helping to explain how microelectronics controlled devices, it gave a real point to programming. Programming can be dull and pointless unless you can see the real outcome of your code. Controlling equipment gave immediate feedback.

Michael Hooton was a real genius at developing the electronic bits and pieces we needed, and I relied on him heavily to create the interface boxes and computer code required to make it all work. An example is the interface box he produced. He went on to agree with Cambion Electronics to manufacture them. This really was a case of the students knowing best. They had picked up electronics themselves, it wasn't on the school curriculum, but here they were doing experimental work in a real way.

This was a time when teachers had reasonable say in the curriculum and the exam boards offered Mode 3 CSEs, where you could create your own syllabus and have the exam board moderate and mark it. It seemed obvious to try and make the computer work available to all students. We ran a CSE Mode 3 exam with course work alongside O level Computing and got about twenty five students signed up to it in the first year. It grew from strength to strength after that.

The headteacher, Roy Pearce, was superb. He had always supported innovation and ran a good student-centred community school. He very much supported the idea of computers in the curriculum and gave us a redundant cookery classroom which we set about converting to a computer and robotics lab. I had kept in touch with Geoffrey Harrison and Jeff Shillitoe at Trent Polytechnic who had provided support for my IEE/IMEchE fellowship and they suggested we bid for money from the Department of Industry who were keen to support projects developing microelectronic skills. They came through with £25,000 over two years which allowed us to buy more computers and to hire a technician. (Well in fact two - Heather Neaum and Sheila Parry worked brilliantly together as a job share).

The grant also allowed me time off from teaching to write materials and support other teachers. Quickly other staff got involved. Barbara Boden and Dave Boston from the Maths Department, Steve Clamp from the special needs department, and others began to use the computers in their teaching. The school soon got a number of interested visitors including a party of HMIs and various local and national journalists who were impressed by the quality of work the students were doing. I rode on the back of this and was appointed as the only practising teacher to the Microelectronics Education Programme Advisory Committee at the Department for Education and Science. This was quite an experience for me, almost surreal. The old DES was a long shabby building running alongside Waterloo Station, populated by quirky civil servants. It was my first understanding of the politics of committees and how policy and government initiatives creak slowly into action. I also saw at first hand the real tensions between the MEP Directorate Team (Richard Fothergill, John Anderson, Mike Bostock, Bob Coates) who wanted to get on and do things and the much more cautious civil servants (Nicholas Summers, Nick Stuart, Peter Fulford Jones) who were mindful of all the politics around LEAs, Universities, researchers, politicians.

It was an exhilarating time. The school entered the Young Engineer of Great Britain and Michael Hooton came third in the national event having won the regional one. We gave talks and open days. We even gave a demonstration on a train - a train hired by the DoI to go round the country explaining about microelectronics. Slightly surreal to be demonstrating a computer controlled model train on a real train!

All in all a great and innovative time. We were challenged, in the best possible way. HMI wanted me to be more explicit about the educational benefits. It made me realise that although you can see that students are enjoying and learning at the same time, you need to convince others. As an aside I want to record my appreciation of the various HMI who helped me to see things more clearly, Alan Marshall, Brian Harris, Joe Tierney, and many others - I also want to say what a huge loss to the spreading of good practice the thoughtless transformation of the HMI into Ofsted created - I am not sure what confluence of political and civil service envy created the change, but the loss of these usually intelligent, critical friends caused great harm to the spreading of expertise across the education system.

To explain what I was trying to do I wrote a number of articles and books on Practical Computer Studies. Essentially I was certain (and still am) that whilst programming can be a boring and futile subject for school students to learn in the abstract, because it generally has pretty opaque rules and anyway it will all have changed by the time the students become adults, its concepts are critically important - particularly relating to control - feedback loops, input, output, the concept of a stored program, machine code versus programming language etc. seemed to me to be as essential knowledge for the future.

I was also challenged by Derbyshire LEA, again in the nicest possible way. I had joined their advisory teacher team - a group of about 20 practising teachers who they had, in a visionary move, given one or two days a week off to carry out computer work and help spread good practice across the LEA. This was under the leadership of Steve Bacon, one of the first computer advisers ever appointed, who thoughtfully helped Derbyshire become a real pioneering authority in this area. The challenge was of course - so how do you get the good work in one school to happen in other schools. This remained the real problem for the education system over my career. I think that many of the mechanisms we tried then really did work, advisory teachers especially, but change takes longer than anyone expects, and these good initiatives eventually fell foul to the power battle between local and national government.

So of course these experiences led me to the fate of any teacher doing well enough to attract attention, you get offered a job you can't refuse which takes you away from teaching. So I became Regional Director for the South Yorkshire and Humberside region of the Microelectronics Education Programme. Peter Avis 1974-1981



GELL REFLECTIONS

Anthony Gell School epitomises Comprehensive Education. During its fifty years it has provided each child, from whatever background, an opportunity to perform to the best of their ability. Nurturing and encouraging growth has resulted in mature, thoughtful and well-rounded young people emerging at the other end. Some have achieved academically, others socially, others in practical ways, but personally what I gained was the strength of knowledge of who I was as an individual. The school produces independent people equipped to move forward with belief in their own abilities. With the mixed messages that come from the varying education systems today it is a shame that comprehensive education is given such a rough ride in the press and the wider population. Done properly it educates and enables all.

Thank you for giving me the start you gave me at Anthony Gell. Sorry I can't be there to celebrate with you all.

Jane Morrison (nee Vaughan 1976-1983)

My time at Anthony Gell was actually quite brief as I arrived in the fifth year and left after the sixth form. However the fact that being part of it for just three years had such a strong impact on my life today is a testament to what a great place it was to be a pupil! I made friends with people that remain part of my closest circle today, despite living in disparate locations and we've shared fun and difficult times together too. My personal values were also shaped by the ethos of the school where everyone, no matter their background, was equally encouraged to participate. This ethos lies at the heart of the architecture practice that my partner David and I run together and it is rewarding to see individuals grow as a result. He also enjoyed Comprehensive education in a school with a similar approach and we're both proud of our roots.

Here's to fifty years and we hope everyone enjoys the celebrations.

Fiona Clark 1981-1983

THE COMMUNITY FAIR 30th SEPTEMBER 1983

‘I didn’t realise there was so much going on in Wirksworth.’

‘Do you remember the boat?’ is the question asked, when those who were there reminisce about the great Community Fair, held in Gell Hall in autumn 1983. The fair was an initiative of the Community Education Council (CEC), led by Derry Hannam, with the active support of a group of staff, parents and several students. The CEC invited fifty local organisations to come to Gell on a Saturday morning and to ‘have a stall’ to advertise their activities and to attract new members. The stall was a school table, carried down by our willing caretaker, Jack Pidcock, and we filled the hall. The event was called Community Fair.

Nobody realised that John Pearson, representing the Sailing Club would bring his boat through the gym, but there it stood, splendid with its high mast, the centre piece of the show. Around sat representatives of the churches, the political parties (all three in those days beside each other), the sports clubs, eager to recruit. These were the days before the sports hall, so the Bowls Club ran an indoor session in the art room corridor. The musicians, actors, dancers, painters, pigeon fanciers, scouts, well-dressers, Civic Soc, Toy Library, pre-school playgroup, Adult Ed, WEA, Amnesty, WANG, Horticultural Soc. and many more, brought their supporters and crammed the hall with their ‘hustle and bustle’. There was a deep buzz of Wirksworthian enjoyment and the CEC had managed a great success.

What next? Somebody suggested that we follow up with a newsheet to publicise the groups involved to those who had missed the great occasion. And so, almost by accident, was born **COMMUNITY FAYRE**.

Phil Richards remembers. ‘After the event a group of us got together to produce a report in newspaper format. With limited technology at our disposal, we stuck photos and text straight on to the page and produced a hundred or so copies on the school’s new plain-paper copier. People seemed to like the idea of a regular community newspaper for Wirksworth and by December that year we had found Eric Evans of the Kinder Press who could give us the paper in the large format we wanted. Ken Acons led the team for many years and later Barry Foster took over. Team members have come and gone but CF has gone from strength to strength to become one of the oldest - if not THE oldest community newspaper in the country.’

The event, hosted by the school and bringing many active Wirksworthians onto the premises, was a practical contribution to the school’s Community Education philosophy, resulting in a memorable community occasion, It led, unexpectedly, to a remarkable publication. In 2015 CF is flourishing, more professional now, but still produced by Wirksworth volunteers, some of whom were there and saw the boat thirty two years ago.

Phil Richards, now the school librarian, two years later became the first Wirksworth & District Community Education Co-ordinator (1985-1987) and a number of sub-groups, inspired by the Fair, emerged from the CEC. One was the Sports Group, which set about a programme of activity and joint use and shared facilities, culminating in the Sports and Leisure Centre, which opened in 2000. But that is another Gell story.

Derry Hannam, Chair of the Community Education Council in 1983.

Derry is dedicated to community education and this note indicates his active commitment at the time and now in his non-stop retirement. His promotion of jazz in school and the community has been a happy influence on many lives.

From his email note apologising that he couldn't find time to write.

'I have made a big mistake - I started digging through the archive and got totally caught up in reading minutes and agendas of meetings from the end of '79 and the way in which so many activities and sub-committees sprang up so quickly. The spidery verbatim notes written by the first CEC secretary Betsy Innes-Smith drew me into a wonderland of nostalgia - including the way in which AGS became a major East Midlands jazz venue. I couldn't possibly do justice to this mountain CEC stuff in an hour

The team of printers running off CF1 (of which I seem to have lost my copy!!) was actually just Phil and me - we used all the A3 paper that the library had.

So many kids were involved in the early days - right back to the 6th form general studies class that opened a book and researched how many organisations there were in Wirksworth - all grossly underestimated. Quite a few sixth formers attended CEC meetings and were right behind the community fair.

I think the development of community education was my best contribution to AGS as deputy head. I feel that it started a snowball that it is still rolling and gathering substance. I have just been talking in Gdansk about how schools and their surrounding communities should be organically entwined as mutual resources with the curriculum evolving out of the needs and concerns of students of all ages (i.e. everybody!).'

Derry Hannam January 2016

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1983

COMMUNITY FAIRE

**MARVELLOUS!
SO LIVELY!
FANTASTIC IDEA!**

These were just a few of the many positive comments passed by those who visited the Community Fair, held in the school hall of the primary school on the evening of Friday 20 September and the morning of Saturday 1 October. There were over three hundred stalls advertising the activities of over 20 groups operating in Wirksworth. And as they sat down to the lunch and evening coffee and cake provided by the ever-willing catering staff of the school, the same comment was heard again and again: "IT WAS A REALITY SHOW AND NOT QUITE ON TV IN WIRKSWORTH!"




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Over 100 people helped to arrange the Fair which was organised by the CEC (see back page) to give all sorts of groups an opportunity to show what they do, to attract new members and to let everyone see what a wonderful variety of things can be done in the town. It was a brilliant success. In fact, the school hall was filled with children and adults, enjoying the beauty of people gathered and the good fellowship of all those involved should be a great encouragement to the CEC.

In the midst of hectic and hectic arrangements were on people's lips: "WAS THAT IT HAPPENED REPEATEDLY" and "WAS THAT THE BEST ONE?". Indeed, the only complaints came from those who couldn't be present! But they'll be there next time, and so will you. There was no one representing the CEC group represented that we can only give a brief impression, but if you want to know more then and what they had to say about themselves and about the Fair, then PLEASE TURN OVER.



JOINING HOUSES - Steve Adams. 1979-1986

It was 1984. I had been Head of Gell House for five years, and the house mattered to the young people who were in it. It mattered to the staff. So when Roy Pearce asked me into his office for a chat and told that he wanted me to combine the two houses of Gell and Fearné into one, I could see immediately what a challenge it would be. In addition, Gell and Fearné each had strong traditions and very different ones. Then came the good news. Roy was intending to ask Alan Brown to be Assistant Head of House. Alan was a young, sporty, funny, well-loved member of staff, who related well to the young people in the school and who shared the values that underpinned pastoral care work. He was already in Fearné himself.

We had a lot of planning to do. We couldn't expect that any pupil would readily accept being in a different house, when we worked hard to make the loyalty to the house of real importance in the school. Names mattered, and we needed to think about how we would help pupils to accept the new house. My theory was that we should accept that one name should go and that this name would be Gell. Gell was preserved in the school name; also, Gell House members would at least keep their head of house, while Alan Merigold was retiring to be replaced by me.

Alan Brown and I agreed that we would never persuade year 11 to accept the change - not after 4 years identification with one house or the other. The job was to work on the rest. There would be a number of strategies. Number one was to ensure that everybody liked being in the new Fearné. We could readily argue that size was good, because the plan was that we would initially have both Gell and Fearné in years 8-11. Only year 1 had no Gell. So the new Fearné was huge, almost half the school. We had eight tutor groups, and lots of new Fearné staff. There would need to be a progressive shrinking in this respect, until the house was the same size as the other two. It would take three years before the process was completed.

I taught English in addition to my pastoral responsibilities so I took on the Fearné year 8 class. House classes had been tried the previous year but the Fearné group had been challenging. Actually, they were delightful and because they were all Fearné pupils they were mine. It reminded me of classes I'd had when I was a young teacher - a sort of special bond.

Gell had not been a very sporty house but the new Fearné had Alan Brown as our not-so-secret weapon. Success in sport was one way we could win satisfaction with house members and Alan got to work. Gell had always occupied a distinctive area, the other part of the school. There was something to be said for taking over the newer Fearné area in the newer building where the other two houses were. Houses still ate in houses (a shame this has gone).

Time passed and we became Fearné. I liked having the name of the female founder of the school, Agnes Fearné. I enjoyed the trips out to Turnditch and Kirk Ireton to meet the new Fearné entry at the end of the school year. Most of all, I was proud of the young people who had worked with us accepting the new house and wanting to be a part of it. The staff were brilliant too. Alan was an excellent pastoral head, and a most supportive assistant, and when I left to become pastoral advisory teacher for Derbyshire, it was great that I was able to leave Alan in charge as my successor. I was sad when Fearné too had to go, as the school went down to only two houses - but I have been equally delighted when not only Fearné but also Gell House were both re-established recently.

The Vertical Tutorial System by Liz Ormond.

This system was fostered from the start and at the time not commonly used. This is how it works; on transfer from the junior school instead of the traditional group of 30 year 7 students with one tutor for one year and an annual change of tutor, the students are allotted in small groups of say 6 to an existing tutor group of up to 30 with a tutor who is responsible for the registration and welfare of that group for 5 years until year 11. This community having students from a wide age group becomes something like a family and also means the tutor really gets to know each student. It is this long established system which makes A.G.S. the very special place it is today.

In the case of my 3, very different, children who attended between 1983 and 1996, they turned out, along with their peers, as well rounded people with a good understanding and empathy of human beings and their wide ranging assets and differences. It gave them each the confidence to get on with their lives in the outside world, an acceptance of the diversity of the world they faced and helped them flourish. Having come from the standard year group system myself I did not face this diversity until leaving school, being kept with the same narrow year group throughout I can see what a limited view of life I was exposed to.

Last year I met the producer of a community play about World War 1 which combined local drama, music and singing groups. When I complimented him on the successful way he had united these groups he commented, (he is a relative newcomer to Wirksworth) that the most surprising thing that he had seen in the production was the way two 16 year old Gell students had taken charge of the pre performance warm up and led a varied collection of artists between the age of 9 and 68 in group warm up exercises like professionals. I pointed out that it was the result of the vertical tutor system, and then had to explain what I meant.

A similar thing happened in the butchers last week. It was lunch time and there was a queue of hungry students buying their sausage sandwich meal deals. I stood at the back of the shop, after several minutes the students noticed me waiting and without a word the queue parted and allowed me to be served.

It was a seamless gesture, a natural understanding of the right thing to do mature social skills brought about, I'm sure, by the vertical tutor system. Thank you, Gell and Mr Bottomley for insisting on it!

Liz Ormond Dec 1st 2015, a grateful parent.

RURAL SCIENCE at AGS

Not many people now remember the days of Rural Science. Jim Booth, a long-serving, much-loved Gell lifer, had been appointed in 1947 to Newbridge Secondary Modern School (remarkably) to teach Religious Studies and Gardening. His gardening survived into the comprehensive era, mostly with the early leavers, until the school leaving age was raised to 16 in 1972. We moved to Rural Science then as a CSE subject and it was very popular; taught over the years by Malcolm Neale, Richard Denmark, Derry Hannam, Agnes Rooney and Julie Benson. We had a large greenhouse on the Croft and a variety of animals. I remember the year when the external examiner praised our students for their excellent oral skills in talking about the work they had done for practical assessment. Gradually this valuable subject became subsumed into the national curriculum. One of our teachers was Agnes Rooney who taught Rural Science for five years, 1983 to 1988 and she remembered happy times in an interview with Community Fayre.

Profile of Agnes Rooney AGS teacher; from Community Fayre, 2015.

Descended from a long line of hill farmers and growing up in Ashleyhay, it is not surprising that the young Agnes Fidler went on to become a teacher of Rural Science.

Agnes in a hand-me-down uniform started as a scholarship girl at Wirksworth Grammar School. Although Agnes achieved excellent academic results, the times being what they were (post war) she left at sixteen to work for British Rail. Marriage and four children followed, but her farming genes were agitating for something more. And this is how it happened. An item in Woman's Hour highlighted the desperate shortage of teachers and encouraged women to train up for a wealth of opportunities

Thus began the long and arduous path to teaching. – two years catching up on A levels and four years completing her B ED. Six years later she was fully qualified – and there were no jobs.

She became lab technician and taught English to Vietnamese Boat people. Her talent for rural science became apparent at Charles White School in Matlock, where she worked for two years. Later she was offered the position of Rural Science teacher at Anthony Gell.

She found a friendly supportive atmosphere still prevailed. She had not only students, but also a small croft (where the houses are now), a greenhouse, hens, turkeys, and lambs. For the next five years she taught the coming generation of local farmers and gardeners and brought her influence to bear on the happy cows and sheep and lovely gardens that make Wirksworth a place of such outstanding natural beauty.

PEAK DISTRICT START
by Hugh Pearson

Swerving down from the stone-wall lined hillside, past the Market Place and into the heart of the community, at Anthony Gell School.

A warm welcome, a vibrant atmosphere, laughter and hilarity and brilliant ideas and enthusiasm.

An ethos at the heart of it that would form a model for my teaching career. A yardstick by which so much would be measured.

Meetings where it was the power of the argument that won the day. Where humanity and generosity were the highest appeal. A sea with currents where who was most equipped to lead at any given time would lead. Initiative. Imagination.

Endlessly memorable students captured in conversations and moments and learning moments. Impressive staff. A community.

Weaving through a valley in a dubiously engined minibus, seeking a cave in which to rehearse Blood Wedding, a day trip for committed friends as well as actors on location and mountain people.

One night with the electric silence of the audience sensed in the darkness a stage wall collapsed on the darkly dressed widow.

The extraordinary feeling late at night on the partially-lit Cherry Orchard set, recalling our shared life there that day and looking ahead, with a sense of magic, to the premiere the next day.

Explosions of laughter in an English class accompanying explosions of beautiful poetry crafted by student hands in the English block.

Going back twenty-five years later and it all felt the same.

Hugh Pearson came to Anthony Gell to teach English in 1983.
He produced notable plays (Blood Wedding, Cherry Orchard)
and spent much of his time after Gell as a drama teacher.

Gell Memories, by Muff Wiltshire,

from 1985 parent and governor and soon to become a Gell grandmother

There was never any doubt our children were going to go to the Gell. I had been to boarding school and would not wish that on them; my husband too had had time in a boarding school and via a scholarship at a fee-paying day school. So our children were going local and inclusive despite many conversations with others trying to suggest to us it might not offer an academic education, 'after all they do not wear a uniform'.

When Tom turned up at AGS on his first day he was either lost or inquisitive and found 'wandering' by Roy Pearce. The exchange went something like this:

RP: 'Hello Tom, are you lost?'

Tom: 'I might be'.

RP: 'Let's find out where you're supposed to be'.

Tom: 'Okay then'.

So together they set off to put him back in the right place. What impressed me most about this encounter was that Roy knew our son's name on his first day at secondary school amongst all the other starters. What a gift that was! It set the tone for the rest of Tom's education there. He was never a conformer but always tolerated and sometimes celebrated for what he had to offer.

A similar exchange took place between Roy and I when I was on the governing body and interviewing with him. We were looking for a member of staff to take on a Community Education role. Yes there was such a person. A number of candidates were interviewed, all worthy and interesting but one stood out. Dadia Conti up from London, no experience in a small school in a rural area but there was something about her that made it feel as though she was the right choice.

The conversation went like this:

MW: 'Well, I really like Dadia and think she would offer something a little different'.

RP: 'I do too. It might shake the school up a bit'.

MW: 'It's a bit of a gamble'.

RP: "Let's do it'.

The ability to take a risk and live with the consequences when based on a sound intention has paid off more than once at AGS.

Long may it remain independently minded, sure of its ideals, truly comprehensive.

POST-SWANN PROJECT 1987-90
by Rob Few, deputy head, 1983-1995

England in the late 1970s was much less at ease with ethnic diversity than we are today. There were national concerns that low teacher expectations and racial prejudice among white teachers and society as a whole were disadvantaging children from ethnic minority groups. A committee of enquiry, under the eventual chairmanship of Lord Michael Swann, published a report in 1985 which took a very broad view of what needed to change. Among its recommendations were:

- the fundamental change that is necessary is the recognition that the problem facing the education system is not how to educate children of ethnic minorities, but how to educate *all* children;
- Britain is a multiracial and multicultural society and all pupils must be enabled to understand what this means;
- multicultural understanding must permeate all aspects of a school's work - it is not a separate topic that can be welded on to existing practices.

John Evans, Chief Education Officer for Derbyshire, served on the committee and later Derbyshire profited from an Education Support Grant made available for improving multicultural education. From among the schools applying, six inner-city Derby schools and six 'white highlands' schools were chosen to join the project.

This was the era when many local government officers, civil servants, police and health workers were obliged to participate in racial awareness training which was not always received with good grace. 'Political correctness' became a term of derision.

Derbyshire's Post-Swann project largely avoided this pitfall, though there was some teacher-resistance in one or two of the participating schools. An African-Caribbean teacher, Donna, and an Asian teacher, Cham (later replaced by Leonie) were appointed to work full-time with the selected schools for three years. They did not drag teachers off on awareness courses. Instead there was a trickle-down approach whereby they met mainly with the twelve school co-ordinators appointed from among senior staff.

Additionally, in each school, around half a dozen teachers were each given an hour a week off-timetable in which to develop materials and strategies to use with pupils. Thus, when multicultural education or racial awareness featured on staff training days, the lead was more likely to be taken by a colleague familiar with local ways of working than by a brought-in 'expert'. At Anthony Gell, 'Post-Swann' became an additional focus of the existing staff Equal Opportunities Working Party and as a result remained on the agenda long after the project itself came to an end.

Staff enthusiasm for the project was notably high at AGS -- and not just in obvious areas such as English, RE, Art and Music. Textiles, Science, Maths, Languages, PE, Humanities and Special Needs all developed ways of incorporating a broader world view or a more culturally diverse approach to their parts of the curriculum. Small groups of actors were invited in to work with pupils, dramatizing situations of racial prejudice or discrimination and following up with group discussion.

In addition to local visitors and the resources we developed in-house, pupils had a chance to experience the wider world at first hand. Derry Hannam and Malcom Stanton were particularly good at recruiting groups of actors or musicians visiting Britain on tour to come

to tiny Wirksworth. And when they got here, we worked them hard: not only repeat performances for different year groups but also workshops at lunchtime or after school for those pupils who wanted to try things out for themselves. It was not long before Community Education began persuading these visitors to stay on and perform to adult audiences in the evenings. African jazz became a particular draw, most memorably when the world renowned *District Six* played for us and gave us a flavour of life under the apartheid regime.

Did it work? Unfortunately, Derbyshire's Post-Swann Project was never monitored. We have no evidence that education or school life for Anthony Gell's tiny number of Asian- and Afro-Caribbean-heritage pupils improved – not least because they had not seemed to be struggling in the first place.

Around the time of the project, there were racist comments in town when an Asian couple came to run the Post Office. They were swiftly dealt with by the mayor, Cllr Mary Waterhouse. A generation later, I am not aware that such attitudes persist. And if you see a group of African drummers performing in the market place, or hear a gospel choir at the Wirksworth Festival, do reflect on how we came to cast our net so widely.

Rob Few .

A REMEMBERED ASSEMBLY

Rev. Robert Caney

was a parent, a governor and the Rector of Wirksworth (1984-2002).

Robert was an observant supporter and a perceptive parent. He came regularly into Gell as a member of the visiting assembly team and knew the school well.

He wrote to me after Gell Day.

‘Thank you so much for encouraging Anthony Gell School to celebrate all the good things stretching over fifty years. It was good to bring so many people together in that special common cause. On that day of celebration there was almost a tangible atmosphere of friendship and a real sense of community. There was also evidence of a shared sense of achievement and pride, which underpinned all the smiles and genial conversations. It was good to be there and to share some of the rich emotion of the day, even though my wife and I could not be numbered among former pupils!

We were content just to see the joy in our children as they mingled with old friends and told enlarged common stories of past days of youth – stories that grew longer and more embellished the more times they told them! Their lives were certainly enriched hugely by their time at Gell – and they recognize how big a part the teachers played in helping them to find their own identities and confidence to face the challenges of the future, whatever that future might hold.

For myself, I can remember clearly lacking confidence in my own ability and skill as I faced a hall full of young people and gave them seven minutes or so in what was called the daily Assembly. As a mere parish priest I hoped to impart something of my beliefs. Alas! The most impressive of my assemblies was one when I spoke of my pain as I prepared to go to the Vet to end my dog's life.’

FRENCH LESSONS

From Fiona Winstone nee Watson , languages teacher 1988.

The Anthony Gell School: I cannot think of a better place for me to have started my teaching career back in 1988. As a PGCE student, I clearly remember reading the job description which ended with the telling phrase “ossifiers need not apply”! At that time, I had only a hazy notion of where Wirksworth was, but as soon as I made my way to the school for interview, I knew that this was a very special place and the school was quite unlike any other.

After I was offered the job (to my great surprise), I remember Roy Pearce telling me that I would be working with a highly skilled team of languages teachers and I should learn as much as I could from them. This was a place I made many good friends and learned how to teach. The opportunities were many and varied during the few years I was at Gell: I took students to Derby to see languages in use in the workplace at BREL, I was involved in three (or four?) exchange trips to Germany and a memorable trip to Paris, weekend residentials at Lea Hall, an old time “music hall” show; plus I helped to organise Roy Pearce’s leaving event!

I loved the friendliness of staff and students, the inclusiveness of meetings and openness to new ideas. No wonder I have remained in touch with many Gell people and often return to visit. My son even spent a week on work experience in the maths department! AGS is not a school you pass through without it making a huge impression on you and I truly value the fantastic start it gave me in teaching.

Fiona Winstone 17th October 2015

Clare Wesson, a great Gell supporter, was head of the Wirksworth Church of England Infant School. She was looking to widen the experience of her tiny pupils and Pam Taylor, Languages teacher at Gell offered to come into school and give the group a French lesson. Clare, who now lives in France, seized the moment and has recorded her memory of that Friday afternoon.

‘My fond memory of Anthony Gell is working with Pam Taylor in the languages department to provide a French afternoon for the infants at the Church Infant School.

At lunch time I popped into town and bumped into Pam in Ken's with shopping bags full of flour, eggs, milk jam and chocolate spread. Ten minutes later she was in the reception classroom with a camping stove set up, a mixing bowl full of pancake batter and oil bubbling in the frying pan. In the course of the afternoon she provided a choice of crepes avec chocolat ou avec confiture for 150 infants who had to respond to her in french. Contented sighs all round and chocolatey or jammy mouths.

Meanwhile outside in the sunshine a group of children constructed model Eiffel towers out of KNX4 or art straws and another group learned to sing to Frere Jacques and Sur le Pont d'Avignon.

Photos of the day were sent to Sylvie Girard, head of the infant school in Die and helped to cement the twinning relationship between our two schools.

Clare Wesson, October 2015

MY ANTHONY GELL
by Chris Thompson

My involvement with Anthony Gell began round about 1988, when I was appointed to the Governing Body. The first of my two children was due to start at the school in 1990 and I welcomed the opportunity to get to know the school at close quarters and to do what I could to support it. My wife and I, Cromford residents at the time, never doubted that our children would attend Anthony Gell, a decision we have never regretted. From a personal point of view, I was interested to be involved in a school which reflected my own philosophy of education. I had at that time worked in two forward thinking, progressive comprehensive schools, in Belper and Sutton in Ashfield. Like Gell, those schools were based on a clear set of principles: that a school should be at the heart of the community it served and seek to involve rather than exclude that community; that discipline and pupil behaviour should be based on mutual trust and respect, challenging students to take responsibility for their actions; that education should be broad based, placing emphasis not only on academic excellence, but on the arts, encouraging creativity and on personal development, seeking to nurture independent, confident and mature members of society.

I remained a Governor for something like fourteen years, several of them as chair, seeing both my children through the school, before deciding I'd done my bit and it was time to go. It is hard to single out highlights but here are a few: I presided over the departure of Roy Pearce and the appointment of Rod Leach, replacing one outstanding Head Teacher with another; I was there as the Sports Centre moved from being a good idea to a stunning reality; I sat in on many interviews, thrilled as new, young teachers (and some experienced ones) bought into the idea of the school and offered ways to take it forward; I attended many memorable evenings of drama and music.

Since I first became a governor, it has become much harder for schools to develop and maintain a distinctive identity and philosophy. Schools are increasingly subjected to top down directives from central government, enforced by a relentless and often unsympathetic inspection regime. That Gell has managed to survive and prosper with its principles intact is of enormous credit to the leadership of its head teachers, the efforts and commitment of its teaching staff and of course the spirit, talent, good humour and energy of its students. I feel privileged and proud to have been involved in the school over such a long time and still follow its progress, from a distance. Long may she prosper.

Chris Thompson
Governor and Parent 1988-2002

District Six Band in Derbyshire
by Liz Cashdan.

Isolated in backwater Derbyshire
Not far from British Rail, now Bombardier
Transport where South African Gautrain
has just begun to snort through its sexy nose,
those farm and quarry kids I taught twenty
years ago had hardly seen a black face.
Today, as train engineers they're meeting
the Gautang fitters, talking assembly points
and World Cup Soccer ready for 2010.

Back in the 80s the London District Six Band
brought by jazz-mad Dermot workshopped
music with the fourth form: the drums went
sounding through the school,
echoed the quarry blasts of the white limestone
worked by their dads; the saxes deafening
the garment factory's midday hooter,
the lambs' hillside bleat drowned in
the beat of trainers on wooden floor.

Last year in Cape Town, driving through
the still derelict District Six under Devil's Peak,
I imagined the Friday smell of pickled fish,
the weekend greetings of holiday cousins,
re-heard the rainbow shouts of kids off school,
the bands playing, drum and saxophone, then
remembered how Dermot and I, Irish Catholic
and Jew, told the Band how I understood dismember-
ment, diaspora. NO YOU DON'T YOU'RE NOT BLACK.

Roy's Notes.

Liz Cashdan and Dermot (Derry) Hannam were creative and democratic deputy heads at AGS in the 1980s. Liz taught English and now in her non-retired eighties teaches creative writing at Sheffield University. A group of exiled musicians formed District Six in London, naming it after the area of Cape Town, where many of them had lived. It was an unforgettable band and our students loved working with them. Liz visits relatives in South Africa regularly. Bombardier in Derby were building the new South African Gautrain. Liz has great affection for her time at AGS.

THE LAST LATIN STUDENT

Foreword by Roy Pearce

Not many people know that I began my career in a grammar school as a teacher of cricket and Latin. Over the years many Gell students sampled my cricket coaching, but only the distinguished few volunteered for express Latin.

In 1990, my last year at Gell, Emma Woodcock (she described herself as ‘geekily interested’) signed the contract for Teach Yourself Latin in four terms with minimal tuition provided in odd moments. I said to Emma, as I had said to others, ‘You have to work very hard on your own motivation and I will help you when needed.’

I knew Emma was an able and committed student with a mind of her own. She enjoyed reading Vergil’s Aeneid and recalls that to her surprise there were three words for purple. At school she had played the lead in Lorca’s Blood Wedding and since leaving she has taken a degree in ceramics, built a successful career in IT and published two fantasy books, available from good booksellers. The first was described as ‘Unputdownable, enthralling magic.....brilliantly written and thought out fantasy.’

Emma is a committed writer, who remembers that ‘in Mr Hannam’s English lesson the idea took hold in my mind that I would be a writer’. I knew any contribution she might make to this collection would be original and thought provoking; that is why I asked her. Emma asked whether the last section was suitable. I pondered and concluded that it reflected a powerful moment in time, the contribution of a thinking, literate and humane former Anthony Gell student.

We are both proud that she was the last Latin student and that she earned the highest grade at GCSE.

Finding the Familiar by Emma Woodcock.

“Why bother to learn a dead language?” people typically ask after hearing I have a GCSE in Latin. “It’s useless.”

Everyone knows that you learn Latin by sitting in a classroom reciting en masse, “Amo amas amat...” - the conjugations of the verb *to love*. I’m afraid I didn’t do much of that in my class of one, sitting in the office of my Headmaster, Mr Pearce. Latin was not on the curriculum, but Mr Pearce was more than happy to teach anyone who showed interest.

Why did I want to learn it? I’m not even sure. Something to do with a general interest in ancient history, with mythology and magic – those were the things I associated with Latin. Though if my interests had lain elsewhere I suppose I might have associated it with medicine, with biology or with the church.

What I didn’t realise I was signing up for was something which would alter the way I perceive language, the way I learn, and even the way I think.

Almost the first thing I was taught after *amo amas amat*, was to examine my existing vocabulary for associated words: amorous, paramour.

When I learnt *puer* (boy) I found: puerile.

Agricola (farmer): agriculture, agrarian.

Mare (sea): marine, maritime.

Nauta (sailor): nautical... and so on.

Latin words form the roots of countless other words, not just in English, but in many European languages (all of the so-called *Romance* languages – Romance as in Romans, not as in love).

Now whenever I encounter a word I don't know I break it down into its constituent parts. What does it sound like? What root might it be formed from? It's surprising how often this proves a useful technique – allowing you to at least get close to the word's true meaning, even if not quite all the way.

What I learned in my Latin lessons was not a dead, useless language, but the ability to think around a problem, to analyse and dissect, to look past the unfamiliar and try and find something recognisable.

That is a valuable skill – particularly if you apply it to more than language. For instance, to culture, to creed, to lifestyle.

We live in dangerous times. There are many people who, for their own selfish reasons, want to foster a culture of *us* and *them*, to instil fear, distrust, suspicion, hatred. But most people – ordinary people who don't have vested interests in arms, in land grabs, in oil, in religious fanaticism - aren't so different from each other. Most people just want to feed their children, to love whomever they love, and go about their lives peacefully and without fear.

I'm writing this on Saturday 14 November 2015 as the world reels from the latest terrorist attacks in Paris, as the inevitable backlash against Islam rises again in the West, as the thousands of refugees remain mired in border camps throughout Europe, alternately vilified and beatified by a press pushed one way by public outcry and another way by their corporate paymasters.

I can't help feeling that the world could be a better place if people everywhere learned to look beyond the unknown, the different, the perceived-to-be-threatening, and instead look for the familiar – people just like themselves, with the same desire to love, to nurture, to live in peace. Stop seeing *them* and see more kinds of *us*. After all, it is harder to gun down us, than to gun down them. Harder to blow up us than to blow up them. Harder to deny food and shelter to us, than to them.

Emma Woodcock 1984-1991

VAULTING AMBITION 1992

Recently, I was chatting with a friend at tea-break. She mentioned that she had tickets for the latest filmic rendering of the Scottish Play, starring Michael Fassbender. She claimed to be ignorant of the plot so I couldn't quite resist mentioning that I actually knew the play quite well; I had been in a school production of it when I was sixteen. She turned, looked at me and asked "So, who did you play?". Turning back to her coffee for a second, she looked over at me again and answered her own question, "You played Lady Macbeth, didn't you?"

What I didn't tell her was that this wasn't just a school play. Having studied Macbeth as our Shakespeare requirement of GCSE English, a group of us decided that just reading it line by line in the classroom was not enough. We wanted to do it "properly".

We took the text and adapted it. We designed sets, costumes and lighting. We cast the parts ourselves and took on much of the directing, too. Of course we had help. Charlotte Rattenbury and Kathrine Brown, came on board as consultant executive producer/directors. They chivvied when needed and encouraged when spirits flagged but they never took over. It was not a case of grown-up teachers taking charge over children but of us all working together towards a common goal.

Looking back, it seems rather arrogant that we would take on one of the best known and most oft performed pieces in the English language. But, I also think some of the moments that we created still sing in the memory (mine at least): Act I, scene II, which we chopped down to the essential speech and rendered as a fierce battle scene, beginning the play with sound and fury after the quiet malevolence of the three androgynous witches and their palpable sexual energy (we were all teenagers, after all). The unintentional comedy of Nathan Bushell's papier mache head held aloft after the intense sword play that literally created sparks from Nathan and Alex Bunting's foils. These are moments that are unlikely to be forgotten by anyone involved and I am sure they have been re-lived more than a few times over a pint at the Red Lion.

It is tribute to Anthony Gell School that we made that production happen. No-one told us that we couldn't do it or that we should concentrate on our studies rather than swanning about doing Shakespeare. We were given the space and encouragement to know that we could do it. So, perhaps the next time Macbeth comes up in the tea-room, I'll be a little less coy and a little more forthright about the production that almost 25 years later still makes me proud.

By Jo-Anne nee March Vietzke, who played Lady Macbeth.

Like Lady Macbeth's stubborn bloodstains, the memory of our production of the Scottish play lingers on; and there were some real standout moments for me. It was the summer of 1992, and there I was, standing in the hall (probably trying – and failing – to look cool) when Jo March and Polly Bailes bounded up to me to ask me if I would like to like to be involved in a production of Macbeth they were planning.

‘What do you want me to do?’ I asked. ‘Help direct,’ they said, “and play Macbeth.”

Obviously, I couldn't say no. As it turned out, it was the best production I've ever been involved in. There was such a communal approach to everything – direction, stage management, costume, design – that the play's success was enjoyed equally by everyone.

There are bits that I still daydream about now: poring over the script with Jo in an attempt to cut Shakespeare's wordy nonsense into something manageable; sitting still while Polly made a plaster cast of my head, for when Macbeth loses it in a fight; heading up to the Yorkshire moors with my mum to take eerie photos of the full moon for part of the set design; sword-fighting with Alex Bunting (Macduff); mine and Jo's photo in the Matlock Mercury; forgetting my lines on the night and relying on Alistair Puddick to prompt me; and some of those lines that will never leave me – “tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow, creeps in this petty pace from day to day, to the last syllable of recorded time”.

Unless I am mistaken, we really took our time with bringing the play to the stage: Jo and Polly decided to produce Macbeth in the summer of 1992, when I was in the lower sixth form, and we performed in the well of the hall a year later, just as university was looming on the horizon. There was a particular scene that sticks in my mind. Much of the play was stylised, and we went to town on interpretations, costumes, lighting, dance and music. But at the end of act 3, scene 4, after Banquo's ghost (Polly) haunts Macbeth, I had a short exchange with Jo (Lady Macbeth), which felt so comfortable and natural that I really felt we knew the play – we weren't acting, we were being. “We are yet but young in deed.” The biggest regret I have of Macbeth is that it wasn't filmed; a year of planning and hard work was over in just two performances. (“Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more.”) Hopefully, though, everyone else who took part in it have as fond memories of it as I do.

By Nathan Bushell, who played Macbeth.

THE CAST of MACBETH in ALPHABETICAL ORDER

Emma Ayling	Caithness, Thane of Scotland
Polly Bailes	Banquo, Commander of the Scottish Army
Alex Bunting	Macduff, Thane of Scotland
Nathan Bushell	Macbeth, Commander of the Scottish Army
Katherine Chapman	Ross, Thane of Scotland
Jane Daykin	Witch/Murderer/Doctor
Kate Edwards	Seyton, Officer attending Macbeth/Executioner
Tim Few	Witch/Murderer
Abigail Healey	Servant/Siward/Commander of the English Army
Claire Holmes	Menthieth, Thane of Scotland/Lady Macduff
Jack March	Malcolm, Duncan's son
Jo March	Lady Macbeth
Sara Markham	A Gentlewoman
Jim Powlson	Duncan, King of Scotland
Caspar Rapkin	Porter
Bethan Rees	Angus, Thane of Scotland
Sam Rees	Witch/Murderer/Young Siward/Old Man
Lynn Taylor	Fleance, Banquo's son
Peter Thompson	Donalbain, Duncan's son/Macduff's son
Sarah Thompson	Lennox, Thane of Scotland
All other parts played by the cast	



Formative experiences surrounded by the green and grey bowl made of the Gilkin, Bolehill and the quarry.

by Michael Ormond.

I have many fond memories of Anthony Gell School from which to choose a subject; the lifetime friendships forged, the all-round education we received or the formative experiences we had surrounded by the green and grey bowl made of the Gilkin, Bolehill and the quarry. I can remember evidence of an industrial Wirksworth that could seem very distant to a child at AGS today: trains of stone trundling past the end of the long jump pits and the occasional thud of the blasting. I can remember peaks of excitement such as the top field being used as a landing pad for a Helicopter, and like anyone I remember personal moments that occurred at the school but are essentially unconnected to it (one such memory is the truly hilarious moment my friend Jonathan fell down a man hole cover just outside the gym).

All these things live with me to this day and make up part of who I am. However the thing I want to write about most of all is not really one specific thing or one specific day, rather it is the way of life that I participated in as a pupil at Anthony Gell School between 1989 and 1996. I suppose if it must be one thing then that one thing is freedom.

Much is written about days gone by and the descent towards today's meagre representation of whatever specific topic is being discussed. The general consensus for people of a certain age is that "back then things were better" and that "it's not like it used to be".

Yet things improve for so many people in so many ways and at such a pace that for this sentiment to be anything other than proof of ageing we must be all trapped in a painting by M C Escher. Perhaps they are not better or worse but nonetheless I am sure that they are different. Friends of a similar age to me tell me that the freedoms afforded me at AGS were enormous compared to those they experienced at their schools. They gasp at the lack of uniform; they stare agog at the fact we were allowed "up-town"; they look suspiciously at me when I tell them about the fact my tutor was known by her first name Charlotte and not the more teacher-ish "Ms Rattenbury". (Charlotte was not the only one – we were also treated to an Angela and in later years an occasional Dave!). I don't know it, but I suspect some of these things are different today: certainly the large metal railings suggest to me that the hole in the fence that led into the Hannages (and then on to Killer's bakery) is not quite the highway it once was. Is this a good or a bad thing? As a parent I would certainly want to know my child is safe when he is at school so maybe the railings are a good thing? It could be that some elements of change are merely an inevitable consequence of shifting times, yet I feel that what matters is not the freedom to escape the railings but what happens within them: the freedom of expression, creative freedom and the freedom to explore educationally. These were the central pillars of my education at Anthony Gell.

I had cousins at the sort of school that can affect house prices and what I heard from them were such phrases as "boots are not allowed at school because boots are a sub-culture", in contrast I vividly remember turning up at school wearing a bright red shirt with every button replaced differently and with paisley patches on the elbows. No one batted an eye.

If boots were a sub-culture (whatever that means) then my choices were individual and expressive: I definitely made fashion mistakes but I also developed my character: I was afforded this freedom. Whilst those uniformed cousins got brilliant grades I feel now that

they led a blinkered sort of life that didn't show them what I saw. I am sure they know perfectly well now that the world is made up of all sorts of different people with all sorts of backgrounds and all sorts of opinions, but I suspect that I knew that first. I had the freedom to experience that at AGS and that could well be one of the best lessons I have ever learned.

I hope to be able to pass this freedom on to my son (who at the time of writing is nearly 4 years old). Whilst he will likely not have the freedom to roam I had growing up in the 80's, I will certainly strive to deliver some of the Anthony Gell ethos in how I deliver the world to him. I hope that this will set him free too.

Michael Ormond 1989-1996



On applying to become a Sports College – a personal view by Rod Leach, Headteacher 1991-2006.

Many people I have talked with have assumed that for AGS to become a Sports College was both natural and obvious. I don't think that is true. There were powerful reasons for not becoming a Sports College around 2000.

The first was the philosophical niche that informs Gell management over many years. The school is unashamedly an LEA comprehensive, and has eschewed, to date, in turn GM status and Academy status. It sees itself as delivering a good service to its community but does not see itself as elitist. Much of the hype surrounding Specialist Colleges was focussed on elite development (many Sports College bids had a big emphasis on becoming an elite hub for a particular sport – anathema to the Gell philosophy).

A second problem was that we had just acquired a shiny new joint use Sports Centre with gym, climbing wall, sports hall and changing rooms. The community effort that had gone into this was immense and, suddenly we had the best facilities for sport in Derbyshire Dales and arguably amongst the best in Derbyshire. Brutally, we didn't need anything else and our Arts, Science and Technology and Languages facilities were all relatively poor compared with what we had for sport. Pursuing any of these other areas of learning for specialist status (and the associated capital spend) would arguably have made far more sense.

A third potential problem relating to the previous one was staff perceptions – the staff at AGS are its strongest asset and their tight cohesion is fundamental to it being both successful and distinctive. There was a real risk that investing further in sport could undermine this – PE staff, to their credit, were acutely aware of this.

At a personal level, I was well aware that my daughter was heavily committed to sport and, whilst by this time her local connection would only be to the ladies hockey club, I naturally felt it important to tread carefully.

On the opposite side of the equation there were powerful reasons for pursuing a Sports College application. These fell into two broad groups – the philosophical and the pragmatic.

The philosophical argument was straightforward and had little to do with “raising standards” – exam results compared pretty well with comparable schools in the County anyway. Whilst the bid had to pay lip service to fashionable political jargon, the real objective was to cement and develop the philosophy of community engagement that had been well articulated in the successful Leisure Centre bid. More of this later on.

The pragmatic arguments were more numerous but pretty obvious.

The first was that a Specialist Sports College application had a very good chance of success. There were, at the time, no Sports Colleges in Derbyshire. We had excellent relations with both District and County Council Officers in charge of Sports Development thanks to the Leisure Centre project and we also had very good relations

with Sport England regional officers for the same reason. We already offered a broad PE curriculum and enjoyed high participation rates in both academic PE and extra curricular sport and we also had specific areas of strength in both basketball and hockey at the time.

The second pragmatic argument was one frequently missed by managements in other schools pursuing other specialisms. Sport was fast becoming a cash cow for education. Apart from the Specialist Status funding, there was also the Lottery which had very considerable resources and, with the Sports College national project, came the Youth Sports Trust headed by the formidable Sue Campbell, who clearly had the ear of government. In short, there was more potential for additional funding beyond Sports College status than there was for other specialisms and this was prior to the winning of the Olympic bid – that was just fortuitous as it turned out.

The final pragmatic argument for an application was that there was a strong and cohesive community structure to back it. Formally this operated through the Community Sports Group but this was underpinned by countless informal contacts. The structures had been well tested in the campaign for the Leisure Centre. Though I never said so at the time, this weighed with me quite heavily when considering the obvious alternative application for Arts College status – yes that had access also to Lottery funding and yes it had the Festival and we had a thriving music centre on site, but the year round community commitment didn't seem as strong – at least from a school perspective. It was a tough call not to go with Arts and I know that it disappointed some people in school and beyond.

So what about the actual decision? Governors were clearly keen to pursue what seemed like a good opportunity and the Foundation Governors had the potential for providing some useful financial backing (as they have done with so many projects requiring an element of match funding). A crucial staff meeting made up my mind. After some discussion of the issues so far outlined, it was a Languages teacher who said unequivocally that she thought we should give the Sports College route a go. That comment was hugely important to me but also to the PE staff – an application need not be internally divisive!

From that point on, things moved from “shall we or shall we not status” to a task oriented period. Basically this was pretty easy – as already mentioned the school had all the right contacts and it was possible to take lots of advice and to delegate the writing of different aspects of the bid to key players. Letters of support simply flowed in from the wider community of sport, the primary schools and the local government structures. One thing that was very different from the Leisure Centre campaign was that this bid had to be school led, whereas the District Council had acted as lead and chief coordinator of the Leisure Centre bid.

That said, it was an age of “target setting” and “quantifiable outcomes” and if, as a Head, I couldn't do that sort of thing I shouldn't really have been in the job! Nevertheless deadlines had to be met and the bid wouldn't have made it without a huge joint effort and a hitherto totally unsung contribution from backroom admin staff at school to finalise costings, formatting and printing.

Once the bid was submitted and had passed initial hurdles there was a crucial HMI assessment visit – and it is my view that HMI are far shrewder than the run of the mill OFSTED inspector. The day was one of plain speaking – I pointed out the improving exam results to be told that the sample was too small to be statistically secure (well that is the problem of being a small school). I was asked if we would change the name of the school (answer no of course) and if we would have a mission statement (I replied that I thought they were meaningless and that it was what a school did rather than what it said that mattered). The PE department were every bit as impressive as I knew they would be. Some time afterwards we got confirmation that our application to be the first Sports College in Derbyshire had been successful and we were not asked to make any significant changes to our bid. Informally, I was tipped off later by the Youth Sport Trust that HMI feedback had been that this was a very unusual bid but that it absolutely had to be approved. What this meant I still don't know, but I think that it probably meant that the bid had not followed standard templates as offered by the Youth Sports Trust and that its very heavy emphasis on the community aspect could be clearly evidenced in the ongoing work and relationships linked to the Leisure Centre.

So far, I have not mentioned the capital project that was linked to the bid. As most probably know, this was the full size floodlit astroturf pitch – for many students and members of the community the most obvious side of becoming a Sports College. The rationale was very straightforward. There wasn't enough money to put in a swimming pool and we had pretty much everything else. It would provide a year round high quality outdoor facility for the PE department.

Three key community partners were prepared to back this financially. These were Wirksworth Colts, Derwent Hockey Club and Baileans Hockey Club. In return for contributing what was a lot of money for all of them, they were guaranteed extensive but not free access to the facility. Such was the level of trust between the school and the other parties that the deal was agreed over a pint in the Wheatsheaf. Fundamentally this was another joint use arrangement akin to the Leisure Centre but, in this case, the actual facility belonged directly to the school. To their huge credit, Derbyshire Dales also agreed to manage the use of the facility through their on site staff at no or only token cost to the school. From my point of view, the revenue funding calculations we did for the Astro were really important. I was determined that it should not run at a loss and that it should be able to fund its own maintenance, repair and eventual replacement. I also argued that it could best achieve this by being priced cheaper per hour to hire than similar facilities in Derby as this would guarantee high usage. For this to work, it needed floodlights and that involved a relatively small extra bid to Sport England for lottery funding – one that was never really in doubt given the total investment in the overall project.

And that is about all, as my brief was to write about the decision making process around Sports College status rather than subsequent implementation. However it would be perverse not to offer a few thoughts on the consequences of it all. From the philosophical point of view I raised earlier, the venture has been successful. The astro has enabled hundreds of youngsters to learn new skills on the surface, to compete and to benefit from not only the teaching of PE staff but also from the practising experts from the clubs. Many of these youngsters have gone on to play club sport and hold down

places in county, regional or national squads. Gender equality has benefitted too as boys' hockey and girls' football have both blossomed. Equally importantly, specialist status has enabled the school to work far more closely with primary schools, making its facilities available and developing an extensive programme of Sports Leadership for AGS students keen to pass on their skills to younger children. Successive inspections and "health checks" by OFSTED and relevant sports bodies have found consistently outstanding levels of teaching, personal and interpersonal skills and extra curricular engagement in PE. All this has been sustained as personnel in all of the involved organisations have changed, clear evidence that the philosophies behind the original application are truly embedded.

Financially things have gone really well. Once we were known for delivering on what we had promised, money continued to flow in. The school received funding to be the first hub school in Derbyshire for a Schools Sports Partnership that covered the whole of Derbyshire Dales – a partnership that is so well established it even survived Michael Gove taking an axe to the national scheme within weeks of coming into office. Money from the FA funded the re-design of the playing fields and proper drainage and new changing rooms, again benefitting school and local clubs. Funds materialised for the replacement of the original small astro with a rubber crumb pitch. More recently, receipts from the astro largely covered the cost of resurfacing it and adding an additional practice area that also doubles as an excellent tennis learner surface. More subtly, revenue from sports college status quietly funded Dance within the curriculum, some of the PE staffing costs and resources for use in Science. A far more extensive and detailed analysis would require a separate study.

An unforeseen outcome of the experiment was the raising of the profile of the school beyond its normal areas of reach. As the first Sports College in the County we became heavily involved in supporting and advising other schools wishing to go down a similar route. Our particular emphasis on the community aspect led to requests to explain what we were doing at regional and national conferences and in return the school learned from and gained perspective on what others were trying out. It was however important to stress that individual applicants needed to develop their own community philosophy – the Wirksworth one is impressive but it is not, for instance, readily transferable to an urban setting or to a school with different priorities.

Strictly speaking the Specialist Schools project is over with the enhanced revenue funding now absorbed into wider school budgets but there seems little reason for AGS to stop pointing out that it is still a specialist when it comes to sport within the school and within the wider community. There are doubtless challenges just around the corner as Local Authority budgets come under increasing pressure and the withdrawal of the District Council from the Learner Pool is probably only the first step in changing relationships. Nevertheless, specialist status and what it has brought probably leaves the school and community uniquely well equipped to handle the forthcoming challenges.

Rod Leach 1991-2006

Andrew & Katy Brown, brother and sister, students at that turn of the century contribute the two following pieces.

It is a difficult task to try and select a memory or summarise the experience I had at Gell... I thought hard about what would best portray what it meant to me, but it's incredibly tough. The best credit I can give it is this; being asked to write this has brought back memories I hadn't thought of in a number of years and they still brought a smile to my face. From 2000-2007 Gell was my home away from home and my experiences, good and bad, continue to impact on how I live my life today. In terms of which memories to detail, I have thought long and hard. From Mr Etheridge's tutor group winning sports day (my Yr 9 200m record stood for years), to that first basketball match in the then new sports hall. I have lots of sporting memories, but as much as sport was always a part of Gell life, it has to be about teaching that I share. I was blessed with outstanding teachers throughout my school life; Mrs Etheridge, Mrs Davenport, Mrs Gibbon, Mr Lovatt to name but a few, but 3 overriding memories that make me write this with a smile on my face really spring to mind.

The first comes from History AS level with Mrs Cunningham, where we were learning about the Weimar republic. We had a class of about 10 so did all our lessons around a central table, which was great. We had a really good group of people who had a lot of fun, but also got the work done. Part of the lesson plan involved us saying what we thought would make a good president. Little did Mrs Cunningham know that we eventually agreed that a carrot would be by far and away the best candidate. So much so, that we actually made Mr Carrot the president of the Weimar republic. He reigned fair and supreme for a number of weeks until he became a health risk... His enduring memory lives on in the picture that remains in my facebook picture albums!

As a chemist, I couldn't leave out my favourite chemistry memory from school. As part of our A level chemistry class, Mr Wesley tried to capture our interest in the nitration of aromatic compounds by showing us the scene from Brad Pitt's Fight Club where they make TNT from human fat (disclaimer: I am fairly sure we were all 18 at the time!). We then got to try out the practical, with the intention of making the early product of the reaction, not TNT. Mr Wesley's mistake came in telling us in no uncertain terms that we were not to heat the reaction above a certain temperature or we could make the TNT... At this point my natural scientific curiosity took over... After heating the reaction I asked Mr Wesley what the stringy substance in my flask was... he calmly informed us it was nitroglycerine and we all needed to evacuate the lab while he disposed of it! This is particularly poignant as it is the first in a now long history of lab evacuations initiated by myself!

Finally, my favourite and perhaps most embarrassing memory of teaching at Gell were Mr Baker's maths lessons. Mr Baker was a fantastic maths teacher and often gave me extension work to push me to my limits. I think I tried to push him to his limits by refusing to change maths book and cram as much work into one of those tiny, orange A5 books as possible.

My most vivid memory comes from work on angles. Mr Baker used to aim for say 65 degrees, draw two lines on the board, and measure the angle between them and he was incredibly good at drawing the exact angle he wanted! Once he even asked one of the people from the class to come and measure it if we didn't believe him. Suitably impressed with this

unusual skill, I just thought he must have a lot of experience. Only years later did I find out he had been lying the whole time! The only time he had ever done it correctly was when he asked someone to come and check. This kind of fun little anecdote may seem insignificant in the grand scheme of things, but it is these kind of touches that set my experience at Gell apart and cement the experience as something that will live with me for the rest of my life.

Andrew Brown 2015

Anthony Gell is about people. Whilst the Tories focus ever more on academic achievement as the be-all and end-all, education is about so much more than that. Gell succeeds in giving people the best kind of academic education but it goes far beyond that, far beyond what Ofsted can measure with tables and graphs. At Gell, students learn how to be well-rounded people with values, respecting others from all walks of life, not simply an academic machine of knowledge. When thinking about what depicts Gell as I remember it, my first reflection was not about why pi is pi or why a lighted splint makes hydrogen go pop! I thought immediately of the people who have inspired me and who really have changed the course of my life.

Gell is full of outstanding people. Led by one of them, Mr Baker succeeded in creating a school based on inclusiveness, combining fun with learning, where everyone feels valued. This piece will describe three inspiring people but I could have chosen many more for a variety of reasons. For example, Mrs Lovatt instilling further in me a love of reading and creativity, especially *Of Mice and Men* and story-writing for Year 5 pupils; or Mr Lovatt motivating me to want to write pages and pages about South Africa in geography; or Mrs Pickford adding drama to her readings of books at A Level, making them even more of a page turner; or Gail in the kitchen putting a smile on my face with her kind, friendly approach to serving dinners; or Miss Smith giving me difficult, interesting maths questions and encouraging me to take part in the Maths Challenge; or Mrs Geeson working tirelessly with me to help me get the best grade I could for A Level English; or Mr Whittall's humour engaging me in history, making me passionate about issues still pertinent today, such as Ireland; or Miss Adnitt and Mr Etheridge making PE one of my absolute favourite lessons and urging me to take part in a wide variety of extra-curricular activities. With a list that could go on, clearly Anthony Gell was full of inspiration for me!

There are defining moments in life and secondary school is often full of them. Big things at the time now seem so insignificant that my previous worries often make me laugh and little things then, of which I will describe three, can now seem like massive life-changers. One of these moments for me, was a trip to Whitehall in Year 9 where I first properly met Emily Dearden, who had recently moved from Canada. It's rare to find someone so thoroughly kind and gentle, but with passion and humour. I instantly warmed to her and an outdoor adventure week was the perfect opportunity to get to know each other.

We enjoyed cycling, orienteering and competitions in the freezing cold of Buxton and in our room, as a group of four Billy's, we chatted long into the night. Even as Emily left a year later due to a house move, we continued to play football together at Wirksworth Colts. A fierce tackler who would not stop running throughout the match, not a drama queen like some, Emily was the perfect teammate. I would come home every week and say to Mum and

Dad, 'Emily is so lovely'. When cystic fibrosis took Em last year, it was and continues to be so hard to deal with. I can't do her justice in the words I write here but she will always have a massive influence on me. I have been blessed to find a wonderful friend in Em's Mum, I've run further than I ever thought I could, all for her, and I've travelled with Emily in my thoughts, discovering the wonders of Switzerland with Louise which made me feel closer to her. She will always be with me and I'm so thankful that she came to Gell and Whitehall. My life is better for having her as part of it.

September 5th 2007 marks another important moment in my life, when Elena Hunter Font walked through the door of S1 to join my tutor group. Thank you to Mr Baker for this decision to put her with me; we now mark this date as our friendship anniversary! Lennie (nickname inspired by *Of Mice and Men* with Mrs Lovatt) came from Catalonia and being obsessed with football and a certain Catalonian player, I asked her immediately about Cesc Fabregas! Although not a football fan, she had heard of him and this convinced me that I practically had a mutual friend, making me one step closer to meeting him of course (unfortunately a dream yet to be achieved)!

We laugh now at how we stumbled into friendship, as I clucked and oinked to explain sandwich fillings, unaware that Elena was perfectly capable of understanding the meaning of chicken and pork, or about the awkward silence that followed her revelation that sleeping was her favourite hobby! Little did I know on September 5th that the two years Lennie spent at Gell would mark the start of a friendship that will last forever. I guarantee that we will still be best friends when we are Grandmas! Secondary School can be a hard time as you are learning how to be yourself with lots of social pressures that maybe tell you not to be that person. Lennie helped me to be the person that I want to be. Eight years of friendship, two years together and now six in separate countries. My upset at her leaving is also the reason why Dad eventually agreed to me getting a kitten and now I have my beautiful cat Jack Bauer! Elena and I talk regularly on skype and we have managed to see each other in person at least once every year, either in Spain or England. I've discovered the beauty of Barcelona, learned about Catalan culture and even visited the hometown of Cesc Fabregas! He wasn't there unfortunately! We are planning a ten-year friendship anniversary trip together! Having a friend like Elena, helps me to know what a true friend is and how rare it is to find. On my travels and at university I've met a few more great people who I appreciate all the more because of my wonderful friend Lennie. So thank you Elena and thank you Gell for bringing us together.

The teaching and wider staff at Gell help to make it a brilliant place to be, as shown by the examples above. I now want to talk about a particularly special teacher who has truly had an impact well beyond academia for me. In Year 9, I had my first lesson with Mrs Etheridge for French and again, I didn't realise that it would be so important for me. Over the following years, Mrs Etheridge instilled in me a love of learning languages. Besides being beautiful and lovely, she is truly an exceptional teacher. It's not always easy to engage students with languages, but she succeeded, showing respect and care for everyone in the class, not simply for those who were naturally enthusiastic. Respect is such an important thing because children sense and respond to it. Mrs Etheridge goes the extra mile for everyone and her lessons were always the highlight of my timetable. Since Gell, I have been on an amazing gap year that involved French practice in Madagascar and an extended period in the Alps.

I am now going into my final year at the University of Bath, studying French and Italian. University life has been wonderful and I wouldn't change a thing... well, actually I'd prefer if Mrs Etheridge was one of my teachers! I've competed in Latin and Ballroom competitions, run the Bath University Labour Society, learned African dance and met a wonderful man. I have just finished my year abroad, half in Italy and half in France, where I worked in two jobs that I absolutely loved. Again, I met great people and made some lasting friendships. I have no doubts that Mrs Etheridge had a great influence on my decision to study languages further. It makes me think about her importance in my life, far beyond simply learning French. My life could have taken such a different route if it hadn't been for her inspiring teaching. Now, as I start thinking about a career that makes use of the skills I acquired at university, who knows what life will bring. One thing is for sure, the experience of Anthony Gell and the amazing people within it, have shaped me as a person and will continue to be influential.

Thank you Anthony Gell for giving me the intellectual skills to pursue my dreams and discover other experiences. But thank you more for all the rest, for all those inspiring people who've led me to meet yet more inspiring people. The smaller things that the school does, like a week to Whitehall, or putting two people together in a tutor group, or employing inspirational teachers, shapes our future. Anthony Gell is about people. Ofsted can't measure that.

Katy Brown 2015



SPORT – the making of my education
by Jack Ritchie (2004-2011)

A wooden sports hall floor, sand-based, ripped, small astro-turf, the big astro-turf not yet completed and concrete basketball and tennis courts which caused scars upon your knees if you were unlucky enough to fall. These were the facilities that greeted me at Anthony Gell School as I arrived in 2004. Now, I do not describe these facilities in such a way as a complaint or a bad memory; I came from a small junior school, which used a single playground to teach all sports and had one annual trip to Lea Green for our sports day. For me, Gell offered new exciting opportunities and ignited my sporting enthusiasm; enthusiasm which would only grow and prosper thanks to the school.

Wirksworth Leisure Centre opened in 2000, a huge turning point for sport at Anthony Gell as this provided improved sporting facilities and equipment. By the time I left the school in 2011, many improvements had been made: the re-laying of the small astro with a third generation (3G) surface; the completion of the big astro; re-laying of the basketball courts; new outside changing rooms; drainage to the top field; a nationally renowned bouldering wall and the re-laying of the main sports hall with a latex/plastic surface. These are the major changes I recall to the facilities during my time at Gell; however these advancements play only a small part in the influence sport at the school had on me personally, educating me in all areas of life.

Like many other schools, the syllabus I remember included the main winter sports of football, basketball and hockey. The facilities I previously described made learning and practising these sports a joy and along with excellent coaching and teaching, many of our school teams had great success in regional and national competitions. But before highlighting a few personal achievements, I'd like to highlight the unique opportunities given to students by the school. I am not familiar with any neighbouring high schools in which Physical Education lessons incorporated the use of a state of the art indoor climbing and bouldering wall. We were able to use the gymnasium for fitness training, as well as use equipment such as the stationary X bikes and weighted machines. Thanks to staff within the P.E department we often had the chance to test new sports and equipment, such as kangaroo boots (boots with springs which were meant to imitate walking on the moon) and undertake new sports such as handball and wheelchair basketball. These are experiences which many schools did not provide their students with and which encouraged inclusion of all students, allowing us the chance to experience sports from different points of view and capabilities.

I was very lucky to be part of some excellent sporting teams whilst at Gell. From the local rivalries in football between Gell, Highfields, Lady Manners and QEGS, to the opportunity to play against schools from Wolverhampton in the National cup and even international teams on our annual school sports tours to Holland. I went on three sports tours in total and loved each one of them. Not only did it mean missing lessons – appealing to most students - it also provided the opportunity to experience a different culture, see new things and make new friends, all the while playing some great, competitive football. I only ever toured with the football team, but there were also opportunities to go on tour with hockey and basketball.

The whole process of training, travelling, playing and representing the school filled students with pride and created bonds amongst teammates - an experience which cannot be mirrored in the classroom.

I imagine the same could be said for the annual school ski and snowboard trip; however I never experienced one myself. I did however represent the school in other sports; I remember the fierce battles in hockey with Repton School and Trent College, punching well above our weight, but putting up good fights against well-known Midland and England players. Having many a good run in national basketball competitions and causing upsets against the likes of West Park School in Derby. I must mention that in my time at Gell, the girls' basketball teams were also hugely successful, winning regional and national competitions in more than one year group.

Winters at the school also consisted of many year groups attempting to get in touch with their more creative sides through dance and gymnastics. I initially, like many young boys, saw dance and gymnastics as a waste of time and would much rather have been out in the rain kicking a ball about; however, this impression soon changed thanks to the innovative ways of teaching and the effort made by staff to draw upon the key disciplines of the sports, drawing a likeness to those we sceptics normally enjoyed. On more than one occasion I remember outside teachers coming in to help us create performances in different forms of African dance; this gave students an insight into different cultures and took us out of our comfort zone, challenging us in new ways.

A mention also has to be made to the fond memories of the infamous Gilkin run, which happened every year in preparation for the regional cross-country competition. This part of the syllabus like many sports prompted different outbursts from students - some saw it as an unnecessary waste of energy, whereas others embraced the challenge. The tough, lung-bursting struggle to the top and then the risky but exhilarating rush back down, I admit was not for everyone, but yet again, another experience that students of other schools - especially those in the cities - don't get to have.

I feel so far in this reflection I have not made it apparent that in addition to the opportunities to excel in sport at Gell, through which many students represented the region and county, the school and staff were also adaptable and accommodating in involving all in sporting activities in students' education. Every term there were inter-house competitions in various sports that gave the chance for those who perhaps weren't in a sporting team to come and enjoy some friendly competition. P.E staff were especially willing to go above and beyond to engage students in sports and provide them with new experiences. I remember new teachers playing Aussie rules football with us and many giving up their own time at lunch time or after school just to coach us. When in sixth form, the caretaker even put on a rugby session every Friday lunch time, so that us older lot could try our hand at a sport the school did not provide. I have not visited many other schools, but am sure that this enthusiasm and sacrifice made by staff would be hard to come by.

Further to these Winter sports, I must of course briefly recount summer dealings of sport at Gell. I remember playing tennis on courts that didn't have the most even of bounces, but certainly tested your reactions. Then of course there was rounders and cricket. I only recall playing four cricket matches at school, all played on an artificial wicket with very long outfields, you certainly had to take the aerial route in order to get value for your shots.

But the real highlight of summer sport for me has to be Athletics. I remember in year 7 being introduced to the Fosbury flop in the high jump; it was the first time I fully appreciated the

feats that the human body can reach. We were shown distances and heights of Olympic records and then compared them to what we were achieving, I know none of us were professional athletes and had not fully matured, but the records attained seemed superhuman, even impossible - it highlighted what can be achieved through dedication. The school Sports Day is another fond memory of mine and was always a great day at the school. Everyone came to the top field to cheer on their houses and battle it out for the much sought after House trophy. Mr Whittall was always on the microphone to ensure the smooth running of the afternoon and provide many a humorous commentary. The day was always competitive but it was also conducted in a professional, sporting manner.

If you were victorious in your discipline, you then had the opportunity to represent Gell against rival schools at the athletic centre in Derby known as Moorways. This was always a fierce affair. The nerves building before the race. The surge of adrenaline on the start line. The roars from the watching crowd. The exhilaration of winning or the despair of losing. School records were broken and heroes had their days. I remember winning the first 350m of my 400m race before the legs unfortunately gave out and my quick start came back to haunt me - a lesson which has stayed with me since, to know how to pace yourself.

Sport can provide so many essential life skills; teamwork, communication, responsibility and sportsmanship to name a few. Sport is a passion of mine, which I studied throughout my time at high school, choosing Sport as a subject at GCSE, A Level and then in further study completing a BSc Sport and Exercise Sciences at University. Now when applying for jobs, many applications ask for past experiences of when you have worked in a team or what do you think is vital for a team to succeed; I always think back to my sporting experiences, both playing and coaching. Anthony Gell School gave me so much and it will always be my sporting experiences that are at the forefront of my memories.

Jack Ritchie, December 2015



Paul Thompson and Charlotte Horton laying the foundations

Anthony Gell School Ski and Snowboard Trips by Barbara Boden (1980-2015)

This trip has become a legend over the years and many hundreds of students have had fun, gained skills and developed in many and important ways. Like AGS itself it is hard to pinpoint what is so special about the trip, each individual participant could give their own story.

During my thirty five years' teaching at AGS I have been on the trip approximately thirty times with at least twenty as the leader. My first trip was to Zell am Ziller in Austria, I didn't have much time to think about the trip as I was taking the place of Mr Baker who was injured at the last minute. I knew nothing about skiing, the journey or indeed anything else about the trip. We travelled on a double decker coach; it would be many years before we had such large numbers to need more than a standard coach again. We set off, as always, on the Friday afternoon at the start of February half term. I remember very little about the journey; without the pressure of organisation I was happily asleep by Idridgehay and only woke to get on the ferry at Dover and for various stops in France and Germany. As the years rolled by I realised that estimating the travelling time was a lottery so I always used twenty eight hours, if shorter everyone was happy and if longer they were at least prepared. 'Why don't you fly?' was often the question; price was the easy answer, but I quickly realised that having everyone on the coach together made organisation and security much easier. The journey to me was for sleeping in preparation for the full-on week ahead, punctuated by drifting in and out of films; I never did see a whole film. Since the mid-nineties the trip would only have properly begun when the film Groundhog Day was played; this suited my viewing as it kept repeating the same things. A freshen up in a German service station on the Saturday morning was always one of the highlights of the outward journey, although not the time I got stuck in the loo and had to climb over the cubicle wall to get out.

We arrived in resort at various times on Saturday evening or even Sunday morning on those extra exciting journeys e.g. to Mauterndorf when the coach could only go at 20 miles an hour up hill; in the days before the Schengen agreement crossing into Germany always took a couple of hours; the burst tyre on the motorway which took 5 hours to repair; winds that prevented the ferry crossing until Saturday morning; snow of course; the police making checks on the coach and many more. Despite these problems all the students behaved impeccably and their only comment was 'we will be able to ski on Sunday, won't we?' Waking the students in the mornings was not for the fainthearted, despite trying it a couple of times I left that job to my colleagues who were more accustomed to early rising.

After accompanying several trips under the fantastic leadership of first Alan Brown and then Pete Gibbon I felt ready and excited, despite being very nervous, to be taking on the leadership of the trip. I decided on Zell am Zee as we had already been there three times, so it was a more straightforward option. All went to plan until the weekend before we were due to leave. I snapped my Achilles tendon whilst playing badminton and the school travel company we were using went bankrupt on the Monday. Panic! Rod Leach, a keen skier himself, was brilliant; he negotiated with the company a way of proceeding, Pete took my place as trip leader and I helped from home in a full leg plaster.

The following year I opted for a late booking, as our numbers were understandably rather depleted; this was our first experience of sharing a coach with another school and going to ski on the Gerlitzten, close to Villach. We had a fantastic week, despite accommodation in the 'eggy smell' (Hotel Egger). Students and staff got on well from both schools, but as always

that special something that the Gell staff had with our students shone out. We met Len, a very special contact who had worked for years in outdoor education in the North East and helped us out in lots of ways, not least sending two minibuses to rescue some of our staff and students who missed the last lift of the day at the other side of the mountain. You can imagine their despair when there were many people skiing down alongside and behind them who then removed their skis at the bottom of the slope and got in their cars. Len also organised our first trip to Italy for pizza which has continued to be a favourite on all subsequent trips. All the trips I led from then on were to this fantastic area for school groups and I quickly appreciated that the saying 'it is not what you know but who you know' is very apt. A year later Len rescued us again. In my inexperience I had forgotten to ask our drivers sufficiently in advance to take us to our last night disco so we were without transport. I rang Len and in true style he saved the day by sending us the Classic coach used by one of his schools. In discussions with Len the following year it became clear that to allow him to organise our trips directly with his contacts at Holiday Shuttle, a travel company local to the area, was the way forward. This made the prices much more competitive, with all day tuition, evening entertainment and hot food on the mountain all included. It also gave us access to people who would readily help us out in any unforeseen situation.

We shared coaches for several years, sometimes with schools from the North East which led to interesting communication with the Derbyshire and Geordie accents. The trip took on its now standard pattern from this point onwards. Sunday quiz night, latterly ably organised by the sixth form; Monday at the Kegelbahn (Austrian style bowling) for a tournament of epic proportions; Tuesday at the now very posh Villach Warmbad for swimming, waterslides and of course Jacuzzi for me; Wednesday night Pizza in Italy, best night of the week in my opinion always followed by Chris Whittall's three-legged pig joke which over the years got embellished with stories of my fictional family history in the actual village of Bodensdorf which we travel through every day on the way to and from the slopes. Last night is presentation and disco; due to the students always making such a good impression we are privileged to have all our instructors in attendance.

Over a decade ago we were devastated to hear of the untimely death of Len, who died in a motorcycle accident, another of his great loves. We were fortunate to be able to continue our links with Holiday Shuttle, established by Len, which enabled us to continue our, by then, well established trips.

I have nearly finished this article and not mentioned the skiing and snowboarding, the main focus of the trip. We often have instructors asking to be with our group; this is very unusual as they generally don't like school groups - again it's that Gell magic. Those new to us always ask to be with us again the following year. The Gell staff always ski with the students which helps the instructors and gives confidence and encouragement to any students who may be a little tentative. I personally get most pleasure and pride from seeing the beginners develop from no skill to competent skiers and boarders by the end of the week.

The mountain is great - just the right challenge to always move to the next level, with something for all. I never tire of the beautiful setting. Of course the 'who you know' saying works here; the leader has to do some significant communication, sometimes referred to by colleagues as schmoozing, with the head of the Ski School to get the best instructors, help with any unplanned scenarios, our own private ski and board store on the mountain and many other advantages. This close contact enabled us to take Luke and subsequently Paige, both students with physical difficulties, to successfully experience winter sports on several trips. We were able to get affordable one to one tuition for them, which would not have been

possible without our contacts with Holiday Shuttle and the Ski School who have now become close friends. I could recount endless stories from both on and off the mountain but perhaps that's best left to the social media site I aim to set up.

And so to my last trip in 2015. Looking back on this trip it was emotional, exciting, tiring, but as always incredibly rewarding. I was very fortunate that in the years preceding my last trip I was able to encourage Paul Brierley to take over the lead from 2016. He had become a competent skier and latterly undertaken most of the administration back at school. All that was left was for me to guide him on the day to day things both on and off the mountain. Poor Paul had to spend the whole week by my side. This didn't start well as due to weather conditions that closed the lift we were marooned at the bottom of the Neugarten piste. Herbert the head of Holiday Shuttle got stuck trying to collect us by car and eventually we had to get a fantastic fast trip on a ski-doo back to the top. When Paul and Peter, the head of the Ski School presented me with a ski instructor's jacket I was overcome with emotion and the fear of actually wearing it as my skiing is nowhere close to instructor level. Of course I did proudly wear it, but as Paul witnessed I fell over on the first run and other times during the week.

However my most emotional time came on Pizza Night when they surprised me with a video which many students, former students and staff had contributed to with personal messages; I needed many tissues on the way to Italy. I look back on all the trips with great fondness and of course pride. It is that special magic that AGS students and staff have which make this trip such a legend. I know it will continue in safe hands.

Barbara Boden December 2015



LIAM'S STORY

In 1965 Pat Murphy was a founding Gell House pupil at AGS and could never have imagined that fifty years later his son, Liam, would join the staff as a teaching assistant. I talked with Liam. Like his dad Liam is sport mad. As a Gell student Liam loved PE, represented school teams, played all the games, soccer, cricket, basketball, hockey and relished the wonderful sports facilities. He enjoyed school life, but at sixteen he was uncertain about the next step. He'd worked hard, taking extra lessons to get key grades, and GCSE results were good; passes in Maths, Science and English and As in ICT and Sports Studies. He tried the sixth form, but Sports Studies, Business Studies and Media to A Level was a demanding programme, a big academic leap and as the lower sixth year went on he was drifting, troubled, unable to settle and steadily less motivated. His parents were disappointed. AS results were a disaster, and the head of sixth form reasonably pointed out that he had wasted a year and he should look elsewhere. This was a crucial moment and Liam was very brave. He went home, sat down and, amazingly, wrote a letter. He is not a great letter writer, but the words flowed as he poured out his heart to David Baker, his Headteacher. Liam explained to the Head that he loved the school and wanted to do his best. He confessed himself and regretted his failure, but he said, 'I'd like to come back and do the BTEC SPORT.' Mr Baker spoke to him sternly and explained that he'd already spent a post-sixteen year and his effort and achievement did not qualify him to extend his studies for another year. 'But I'll give you a chance - a last chance on probation.' It was a life changing conversation. He began BTEC; two year sports studies and he stayed for a third sixth form year to complete his course. He had found work he could do and was growing up. From the age of twelve Liam had worked with young footballers, helping his Dad who was a Wirksworth Colts coach. He realised during the B Tec course that the leadership opportunities in sport at Gell had given him confidence when he worked with young people as part of the course. He specially enjoyed working with older teenagers. With less academic theory and much more practical work he emerged very well from B Tec. Gradually he realised that he had wider skills and he wanted a 'people job'.

So following his two year BTEC course he moved from mainline sport and was appointed to a Derbyshire apprenticeship, working on their support programme for children and young adults. Liam acknowledges how much he developed his inter-personal skills, learning on the job from the experienced adults in the team. He was mentored by Chesterfield College and earned a NVQ level 2 and 3 qualification in working with children and young people. Now he began to look for a people job, a caring post beyond sport.

But first he had a special trip planned, a two month adventure journey with Tim Richards, an old Wirksworth school friend, to South America, including a Machu Pichu expedition and a trip to Rio. It was a formative experience. He and Tim were alone, testing themselves in demanding situations far from Derbyshire. While abroad he checked the internet for jobs and found Gell. The school wanted a teaching assistant to work with young people, with special educational needs. He applied on line, flew home in time for the interview and was appointed.

And so in 2015 Liam came back to Gell, serving the community where his extended family has deep roots and thanking Mr Baker for his second opportunity.

THE AGS 2013 CRICKET SEASON

Thinking three years back to a place and a day is usually a challenge. Nonetheless, the memories of Anthony Gell's 2013 cricket cup campaign are still as clear as ever.

We were fortunate, really, to have such a surplus of cricketers in our Y7 age group, and come summer, it was no surprise to find out we were entered into the county cup. What did come as a surprise, however, was our immediate fusion as a team. In our first game, we played QUEGS all round the park, hitting 140/2 or the full 20 overs. We then took to the field and bowled them out for 23.

Our enthusiasm and momentum drove us through Lady Manners and New Mills, bowling both teams out for an under-par score, then hitting the runs at the cost of two wickets.

In a blur, we found ourselves at the semi final, and up against a team of a very high standard. Tupton Hall had plenty of talent on their side, and were led by the in-form Luke Badderley, a county opening batsmen. We batted first, and though it was a patchy innings, we somehow crawled off the field with 99 runs; the opposition were left arguing and wondering where they went wrong. With divisions forming in the Tupton dressing room, now more than ever was the time for our boys to stick together and 'pull it out of the bag'. Did we? You bet we did.

A stunning catch from Michael Wright dismissed Badderley for 1. His opening partner left shortly after, as did 3 and 4. With Tupton 4/4, we had the advantage, but complacency was not an option. Tupton's number 5 made a quick 19, putting the pressure back on us. Just in time however, Taran Mangat dismissed him; a sharp catch from Harry Mitchell. A flurry of three ducks in quick succession secured their fate, and the final wickets were taken with little trouble for the scorers. We bowled them out for 42, and were on our way to the final...

... Where we were less successful. Teamwork was ever-present, though we were simply outclassed by a county level bowling attack from Trent College. We were finally punished for failing with the bat, though we were able to return home with our heads held high. A team of individuals, brought together by chance, had represented Anthony Gell School cricket team, and were the most successful team the school had produced in 50 years.

With many thanks to Roy Pearce and Bob Etheridge, the team spirit created that year has led our Wirksworth CC team to District, County, and recently National representation, and we hope to continue our success for years to come.

Josef Whitfield, Y10, 2015.

Cath Rowlatt writes as a 21st Century parent about Anthony Gell School 2015.

As well as being a significant year for AGS, 2015 marks my twentieth year as a Wirksworth resident - longer than anywhere else I've ever lived. The first years were spent mostly working out of town, but from the birth of our first child in 2000, we've been increasingly Wirksworth-immersed. All three children now attend Anthony Gell School and I consider myself a Gell Friend.

I joined the Community Fayre team in 2003 and recall my first meeting held in one of the rooms in Gell Quad, courtesy of the Adult Community Education team. At the time, I was a regular visitor to the attached leisure centre (useful creche) and swimming pool (toddler swimming with Pam Oliver), but had never before been inside the rather dramatic old school building. This evening introduction to Gell Block, without the bustle of students but alongside old hands Barry Foster and Don Hughes, now strikes me as a special memory.

Our first family foray to see the Glee Club Pantomime took place in AGS main hall in 2003 (Treasure Island?), although I spent much of the night trailing toddlers up and down the corridor. Further spectacles of primary dance, multi-skills sports and music centre concerts followed, as well as Festival tours and innumerable Colts, gymnastics, cricket, climbing, tennis, trampolining and inter-family badminton sessions.

By the time each of our children left Year 6, they were already very familiar with the idea of their new school being more than just lessons, and have embraced lunch-time and after-school activities with vigour. I'm so proud that they have featured in presentation events and represented the school in music and sport, as well as volunteering for the student exchange programme to Die. As a parent, I am delighted not only with their progress, but with their enthusiasm for their school, which isn't something I remember from my own secondary education. Always at parents evenings and school events we are struck by the numbers of teachers and support staff who turn out to support the school after hours with smiles on their faces, which cannot always be easy to muster!

Whilst not an alumna myself, I was nonetheless infected by Roy Pearce's enthusiasm for a celebratory Gell Day in 2015, and was pleased to be able to contribute tea-serving and mug-selling skills to the day. It was a privilege to observe the rekindling of old relationships and sharing of stories between so many who had made the 'pilgrimage' back to Gell. I hope some of this energy can be harnessed to provide a broad support base for the school in the years to come, to enable it to continue to provide first class, competitive education and an inspirational range of extra-curricular activities for Wirksworth's young people.

Cath Rowlatt 29 December 2015

DAVE BAKER A TEACHER'S STORY

David Baker retired in August 2015 after working at Anthony Gell School for thirty two years. I thought it would be a useful contribution to history to talk with him about his experience. These are notes of our conversation; most of it comes from Dave, but at odd moments it seemed appropriate that I pitched in with a thought, explanation or excuse.

As we pondered his period of service it became apparent how much teaching, school and society had changed during his time at AGS. Education has been through many phases since 1983, some, but not all, bringing improvement. Gell has made remarkable progress, but the pressures on schools and their teachers, constrained by Ofsted, exam results and close monitoring of student records are all threatening the student focus of the best schools. It is hard to breathe, let alone enjoy it. Dave can trace so many changes in policy and practice, but always he has held to the Gell belief that the children are the central concern of the teachers in the school.

Dave was surprised when I asked him as his warm up question if he always wanted to be a teacher. His answer was an immediate yes: but he had no teaching background. Music was a way in because, both at primary and secondary school, he was an active musician, playing clarinet, and helped the younger ones and later was the right hand- man, assistant to the busy music teacher who ran the school band, an early taste of organisation, responsibility and school admin. On occasion he conducted the band. Not many people will remember that he once played the piano at the annual Founder's Service at AGS.

Dave read Maths and Computer Science at Sheffield University, where he gained a first class degree. He wanted to teach, but he rather drifted into his PGCE at Sheffield, continuing there because he was enjoying the city, even though there was no formal support for his second subject. The course was neither a demanding nor a rewarding experience – too much theory, too little practice. Dave liked Sheffield and was waiting for a teaching post in the city. He had not yet begun to apply for jobs, when Norman Rutherford, one of the Maths tutors took him aside. Norman had been a Maths adviser in Derbyshire and knew Gell well. (Norman was responsible for the design of the Maths block.) 'You'd like Gell,' said Norman. Dave, of course had never heard of Wirksworth, but a job, not far from Sheffield, teaching both Maths and computers was enticing. He rang up, spoke to me and was invited to see the school on the Friday afternoon. Here was a problem, because he had no transport and Wirksworth seemed in the middle of nowhere, virtually impossible by public transport. At this stage he was an inexperienced, unconfident driver, but he hired a car and set out to find Anthony Gell. On Friday afternoon he met the Maths team and gossiped in the Maths staff room: Barbara Boden guided him to his hired Ford Escort on Canterbury Terrace, where he had parked outside India Millward's House. To his surprise Barbara cheerfully indicated to him that he would get the job on Monday when the interviews were held.

Perhaps she was expressing her intuition, or she knew that Dave Boston, Head of Maths, and I had assessed him on paper as much the best candidate.

Dave was interviewed by Dave Boston, Margaret Pearson, parent governor, and me. Margaret said prophetically that she only wanted to know whether the children would like him. They did.

Appointed he set out back to Sheffield, tentatively tackling Cromford Hill, then heavily used by quarry lorries, still wearing his formal three piece suit, which was thick, hot and had become more uncomfortable as the day went on.

Dave felt he had a piece of good luck because a maternity leave Maths gap arrived in the summer term, so when his course at Sheffield finished he began to teach at Gell for the last four weeks of that term on a light timetable, a gentle and valuable introduction to the school. He shared a first year Maths class with Janet Dimond. So David Baker was started in summer 1983 and he loved Gell immediately. Three friends and valued colleagues, influential teachers dedicated to the Gell ethos also joined that September: Maggie Coen, Hugh Pearson and Rob Few.

David was always an enthusiast for Maths and he flung himself into his class teaching. He admired Dave Boston's enthusiasm, drive, energy and control of every aspect of the Maths department, which he managed closely, but without impeding innovation. When Dave wanted to change the GCSE syllabus his head of department supported his idea. No doubt the case was put persuasively.

Dave Boston was a GCSE teacher trainer when the new exam was introduced and later became a comprehensive school head. He was outstandingly helpful to the young teacher, who found the same approach in Arkwright House, where he served as tutor with Dave Weston. Gradually he settled in as a confident tutor. Both aspects were seen as important at Gell. An initial tutorial encounter was with an older student who told him in blunt Wirksworth style that she wanted Mr Brown, her previous tutor: apart from that the tutor group was welcoming. Taking over A8, this mixed age tutor group, from Alan Brown was like succeeding Alex Ferguson, but he found Chris Richards, Karl Tomlinson and Martin Pearce a solid group of helpers. Based in the Home Economics room and sharing the group with Gina Thornley he gradually expanded his tutorial range and began to take members of his tutor group on ten pin bowling expeditions to Derby, developing the social side he so believed in. I know as a parent how popular these trips were, especially the Christmas expedition.

We mentioned Dave Boston's contribution as a GCSE Derbyshire staff trainer. Gell also provided Malcolm Stanton as English tutor and Pete Gibbon in Social Studies. We were punching above our weight in the curriculum; not just a pastoral school.

It was interesting that Dave also found an easy way into positive contact with students was to be involved in the computer club, which met every evening after school, with many children, mainly boys he remembers, crowding the room and leaping at the opportunities to work on the new computers.

Dave was teaching both Maths and computers and relished the opportunities for open-ended exam course work in both subjects: a motivating and demanding facet of education, now sadly removed from the syllabus. Peter Avis had set up the mode 3 continuously assessed CSE computer studies course with an emphasis on computer control, a popular success. Dave was particularly keen on the 3D Maths projects.

Dave told me of his initial problems in teaching a mixed GCE & CSE exam group. He divided them into two and one group in the Maths classroom block faced the blackboard at the front; the others looked to the back of the room where he had a screen installed with an

OHP. He switched between the two groups, giving them alternately intensive teaching. This is an excellent example of Dave's creative approach to teaching and the super energy and commitment he gave as a young man to his exam classes. He needed student co-operation and it came to him deservedly. One interesting recollection was that he felt a bad decision was made nationally when the three Maths GCSE levels were reduced to two.

There were other efforts made by this devoted Maths teacher at this time, giving him a wider experience. For many years he taught a computer studies group at adult evening classes in Wirksworth and added to that Maths GCSE in Matlock, a valuable contribution to community education. Many students were catch up learners.

He wrote a book. When talking with Peter Avis, one time head of Maths and instigator of the AGS computer project, Dave said how disappointed he was that there was little opportunity for teaching statistics in the curriculum. Peter urged him to write a book and told him to send a couple of sample chapters to Stanley Thornes, educational publishers. They took the bait and Dave produced his first book; Facts & Figures, a basic book on statistics, which were thinly covered in the School Maths Project (SMP). Later Thornes approached him about a possible project for a GCSE Maths course book. He was recruited to their writing team and embarked on ten years of hard work, all in his spare time: this included many weekends a year in a hotel and a summer holiday two week session at a farm in Shropshire. The sustained effort resulted in a series of books, Key Maths, covering years seven to nine and a follow up to GCSE. With SMP fading Dave's course hit the market at the right time: it was the first Maths scheme to be printed in attractive colour and was surprisingly successful nationwide: copies can still be seen lurking in school Maths departments.

Dave's other extra-curricular involvement was as a volunteer community worker. Heather Neaum, Wirksworth cubs' Arkela and AGS colleague, invited him to help at the cub summer camp. He did this for two years and then became a cub leader in Wirksworth, a Monday evening commitment; without a 'cub name' and untrained, but always offering useful skills. His other piece of community service, this time focusing on less privileged groups, was to be a helper at the local summer play scheme organised by the Town Council. He worked with Joan Tomlinson; two weeks entertaining a mass of children to a summer holiday programme of activities in the memorial hall with visits to Markeaton Park and Matlock swimming pool. His relationships emerging from these two Wirksworth and Middleton community involvements were to prove an unexpected pastoral investment when he became head and found many of the Gell parents had been to cubs or to the summer play scheme.

This was a young man believing in and acting on a wide view of community education.

We now move to promotion. David Baker became head of Maths in 1989, deputy head (1998) and finally in 2006 headteacher of Anthony Gell School.

I believe his protests that he had never intended or believed he would rise through the ranks like this. He loved his jobs at Gell, but the doors opened, unexpectedly, at convenient moments, and he moved, or was pushed through them. He never applied to another school.

In 1989 David Boston, Head of Maths, left Gell to be a deputy head and later headteacher. As head I knew there was only one possible candidate to replace him and I made Dave my internal appointment. I have not told him that the Maths adviser, Kath Andrews, suggested that I was wrong, ('he may not be the best') not to advertise. I was by then confident and

experienced enough to know not to waste my time. Now Dave could run a Maths department and lead a group of teachers. I knew he had the vision, the knowledge, the passion for Maths, the commitment to AGS values, the energy and inter-personal skills to manage an important part of the school curriculum. I ignored the adviser.

On his first day as head of Maths Dave was wonderfully happy. ‘This is it!’ Like me he found middle management invigorating, with enough responsibility, but not the final burden. He acknowledges that school middle managers in 2015 are beset with much tougher burdens and accountability. In his day it was a job he enjoyed greatly.

His happy time was broken when, unexpectedly, I accosted him on Fearn House landing in 1990. I explained that deputy head Alison Duncan was going on maternity leave. I needed some admin assistance and would like Dave to take on some deputy head duties, about half time for two terms. Would he apply? He had never considered the possibility, but applied, took on the job and loved it. He explained that ‘acting up’ was difficult, but he enjoyed the wider school role and I know it was a popular move in the school. He was at home in top level administration.

Times were changing and school numbers were reducing rapidly, reflecting a decline in the birth rate. It was an uncertain period for many staff. I had anticipated this development and had begun to put some measures of re-organisation in place, notably the reduction to three houses with the closure of Gell House, but the steepest decline was to come. Rod Leach took over from me as head in 1991. There was some confusion at deputy level, but eventually Rob Few left, taking early retirement, and Rod incorporated Dave into the senior leadership team, at first as an assistant head, working with Alison Duncan and Charlotte Rattenbury. Later Helen Jackson was appointed. Dave was a totally committed deputy with a huge appetite for work and he steadily accumulated more jobs. He ran all the day-to-day activities of the school: timetable, cover, staffing gaps, management systems, data bases and, crucially, finance. Rod managed strategy, external affairs and he carried through with outstanding skill and success the massive community sports college application, a key Gell development, but a heavy bureaucratic burden.

Dave reflected how much he missed running Maths and being a house tutor. He moved into the sixth form tutor team, but he was changing his relationships in the school. Change is welcome, but as you go up the ladder you lose many nice things.

He had been at the school for fifteen years and had found his true vocation as a teacher and tutor; now he was moving on and up, but the basic grounding and the widening opportunities for experience, which he had seized, had made him the Gell man and senior leader he became.

We talked of one aspect that I remembered as one of his voluntary activities. For several years he supported the school council as the staff lead member. I was pleased for him to tackle this important job, which we had never managed to operate successfully. Dave shared my sense of failure and we pondered why in a school where at one time we had student observers on the governing body we had never produced an effective school council, now usually called student voice. The great advocate of student involvement was Derry Hannam, who later complained that I had failed to develop student democracy. I said he was the expert and I was waiting for him to do it in his fourteen years at Gell. Derry and others had run successful house councils. Dave and I thought that the house was the central social unit

in the school for our students. Relationships between staff and students were close and harmonious and the 'issues' could usually be resolved by sensible discussion. Whatever the reason Gell school councils never took off as effective democratic institutions in our time. The councils did however produce a group of students who participated in each of the three headteacher appointments in 1991, 2006 and 2015. All three exercises won high praise, a mark of responsibility for and maturity from the student population.

Dave Baker Headteacher 2006 - 2015

We talked about the headteacher appointment process. In 1971 when I was appointed I attended one interview for thirty minutes in the school library with about twelve people; politicians, officers and school governors, present round a large table, each asking one question; on a Friday afternoon, having seen round the school on a conducted tour, including school house, in the morning. The 2006 appointment schedule was a more intensive and much more searching process with a series of small group interviews. In the summer term Rod Leach came into the office where the senior management team were waiting to meet with him. Rod announced that he had told the chair of governors that he was going to leave at Christmas. He left the three of them, Dave, India Millward, the bursar, and Helen Jackson the other deputy. For the two deputies it must have been a surprising and tense moment.

Dave decided to apply. He thought hard. He had been happy working energetically as Rod's deputy and had Rod stayed Dave would not have moved. But the door had opened. It would have been unusual for a teacher who had experience in no other school to be appointed head and there was a major bureaucratic obstacle. In the twenty first century you have to be qualified with the NPQH to become a head; in my distant days in 1971 you applied and used your experience as a qualification. The headteacher qualification had recently been introduced. Helen had taken the course, but David, not planning for headship, had taken no steps. However there was a loophole, because it was discovered that as long as he had applied and been accepted for the headship course he could be considered. He applied.

Dave remembers that there were about twenty applications for the job and seven were invited for the three day interview. Dave opted out of the first day walkabouts, but endured the second day of more or less continuous interviews and was among the last two on the Friday. The final included a written management task. For the moment Dave had to go home and wait for a decision. Dave won. The other surviving candidate soon afterwards became the head of Heanor Gate. He was told of his appointment and again had to be at home while the staff were informed.

Dave used his understanding of the school to think through his vision for the twenty first century. He put to the governors during the appointment process a plan for future developments. He felt the school could improve academic performance and there was increasing pressure from government and in sharp terms from Ofsted to do so. It was also vital that he show high success locally in the effort to recruit children from out of the normal catchment area, because the numbers from our contributory schools were declining, a reflection of the new demography and the way Wirksworth was changing from a working town to a pleasant retirement refuge. In tune with the times he wanted children to behave better, to work harder and get better exam results – but the humane fundamentals of Gell must be retained – he didn't want an authoritarian exam factory. He had a strong, positive, united, professional staff, and outstanding parental support, especially from second generation Wirksworth. See the massive approval in Ofsted parent surveys.

His policy hung together. Dave would revive the four houses, so reducing the numbers in each main pastoral unit. This would produce a closer link for students and their parents, a firmer 'belonging' as envisaged in the original 1965 plans. He moved from the two house pattern that had emerged from the falling numbers re-organisation and reverted to the original four house names, winning both staff and parental approval. Together with this stronger pastoral pattern he looked to appoint at assistant head level drivers of improvement; one to manage and use effectively the masses of data on student performance now emerging, a task expected by Ofsted, and the other to work with teachers on a sharper approach to teaching and learning with closer monitoring. This three pronged policy attack on standards set the pattern for Dave's headship. He used the sports college status as a motivator, especially with the Derby County link and the National Breakthrough project, which gave an impetus to needed improvement by boys.

Dave felt he needed to address the uniform issue. Gradually school uniform at Gell had faded away. This was unusual at a time when many schools were seeing 'higher standards' in blazers and ties. There was confusion with no strong staff commitment to 'imposing' a school uniform. Dave, like his three predecessors, was unenthusiastic for uniform. He went into a massive consultation exercise, though he wonders now whether it was worth it. He predicted the result, which produced support for the non-uniform policy. Governors supported his decision. The argument was that at Gell you were trusted as young people to make your own decisions sensibly (uniform was an important aspect of that trust) and in return, as your part of the contract, you behaved well, worked hard and were committed to Gell values.

The policy package worked well and Dave can look back on his years of progress in academic results, in responsible behaviour and parental support. Though the school still receives a less able intake in year seven the results show some of the best progress over five years in Peak Eleven, the local grouping of Derbyshire secondary schools. Gell matches local 'rivals' in crude performance numbers. Dave senses that this distinction is not yet generally understood among the wider public.

Dave had delivered his application vision.

A memory. Dave found an unexpected moment of quiet (the last one?) reflection in his office on the first day of term in January 2006, but he found the initial stages of headship testing. There were staffing upheavals, especially as he moved back to four houses and inevitably relationships had changed. Always he seemed in the early days, on his return from an out of school meeting, to be greeted by some 'disaster', which needed his personal attention. Rod Leach had said to him that the person he would most miss was 'himself'. As deputy Dave had managed a mass of school admin; what now?

Ofsted were expected. Rod had hoped to guide the school through the impending inspection, but Ofsted missed his December deadline and they arrived in the new year in the week after half term. This was much to Dave's advantage. He could start with a clean sheet and build on the Ofsted recommendations.

The Head of House title was deleted and he advertised the four house posts as senior tutor with a smaller allowance. He saw the post being available to able young teachers keen for promotion and responsibility or for a senior stalwart willing to earn an additional allowance. Oddly people (like me) still refer to heads of house.

In 2006 the four senior tutors were;

Arkwright: Liz Lovatt;
Fearn: Paul Brierley;
Gell: Chris Whittall;
Wright: Karen Hughes.

He built a power house of assistant heads to deliver his programme. In the first year Anne Gibbon, who had withdrawn as Arkwright HoH, acted as pastoral leader, supporting the new senior tutors. She was succeeded in 2007 by Kathryn Appleton, who was appointed assistant head with overall pastoral co-ordination and responsibility. Kathryn was a consistent strength with clear focus, outstanding inter-personal skills and an approach with students, their parents and teaching staff that was understanding and sympathetic, but not soft. Dave judges that the four house arrangement (mixed aged tutor groups still) with a senior colleague in support worked very well in producing the mature, co-operative spirit evident in Gell among the student body. See the 2015 Ofsted report.

His three other ass head appointments were stalwart in delivery; Phil Pover managing the important sports college development, Brigid Farnan monitoring standards and data, Katy Lowe teaching and learning.

When Helen Jackson retired Dave managed without a deputy using the four assistant heads as his support with one named in charge if he were absent from school. The foursome shared an office, worked closely together and were a huge strength in the school. Governors were anxious about his personal workload, which was immense. In September 2014 Stewart McIntyre was appointed deputy head, taking some of the burden.

We talked about the sixth form. Dave's School Improvement Adviser, a Yorkshire headteacher, had pointed out that the data suggested that the sixth form results could be improved. Using the ALPS scheme Dave was able to analyse and evaluate progress. He looked for a tighter regime with more regular attendance and a sharper work ethic - less time in the sixth form common room. There are many attractions elsewhere, especially with Gell's small sixth form only able to provide a limited number of subjects and facilities, which are 'not great'. A significant reduction in funding is impending and he sees sixth form viability as a major issue for the future.

Dave put a great personal effort into promoting the school with open evenings, talks to parent groups, a personal walk about with potential parents and close liaison with the feeder primary schools. He has managed to keep the year seven intake numbers above a hundred by out of area recruitment, especially in Crich and Fritchley.

All headteachers are busy, not just in school. Dave found that the Peak 11 grouping of heads was a positive and co-operative support, despite the inevitable competitive strain, and for several years he chaired the group meetings. Recently he has acted as adviser to a Derbyshire school in difficulties and he is now the vice chair of governors. His knowledge and experience will be much sought after. Perhaps Dave's most rewarding extra-Gell job has been to serve on the county safeguarding forum, a demanding and massively sensitive responsibility, contributing to which has given him great satisfaction.

It was a big decision to retire, but Dave has no doubts that he did the right thing. In 2015 there are major problems of funding and numbers for any school and Gell will not escape. The exam system and the curriculum demands are changing again. The school needs the kind of energetic leadership and commitment that Dave himself was able to offer in his early days, but felt he could no longer provide.

He is pleased now to be free of heavy responsibility. He can work without over-working. He knows he will miss the classroom and the close contact with people at Gell, both students and staff. He was a walkabout head, eating his lunch with the students, chatting happily with everybody, seeing the school as a people place with students at the forefront of his concerns. He had taught many of the parents. His leadership at Gell was inspiring, buttressed by hard work, both inspiration and perspiration.

It was a distinguished headship, seizing the moment and building on a lifetime of professional commitment to comprehensive education. Already he is advising others. He will continue to live in Wirksworth. His love of Wirksworth undimmed his community commitment to the Wirksworth learner pool will remain strong. Dave Baker loved maths and will miss the classroom, but after Christmas he will be teaching an A level Maths class at Anthony Gell, a final fling from January to July.

Extracts from the Anthony Gell School Ofsted inspection report 2015

The headteacher provides inspiring leadership. His vision for the school, which puts students at its heart is shared by staff, governors and parents.

The school, is an exceptionally harmonious community where all students are valued. As one student put it, 'It's about living together wanting to learn about different faiths and ways of seeing things.' Discrimination is not tolerated and all students are treated fairly and equally.

Governors are passionate about the school, which they see as an essential part of the community.

The behaviour of students is outstanding. Almost all parents and carers who responded to the online survey agree with this statement. And with good reason. Students are extremely polite, welcoming and well mannered. Especially noteworthy is their ability to be self-disciplined. There is little need for adults to check or regulate students' conduct as they arrive at school or during break and lunchtimes.

The school reports that students' behaviour in the community is highly commended, as is their conduct when on school trips. Students treat their facilities and building with considerable respect. Litter, graffiti or malicious damage of any kind are almost unknown.

Students come to school ready to learn and bring the right equipment, so no learning time is wasted. Behaviour in lessons is impeccable so that low level disruption to learning is extremely rare. There is a strong desire to learn, achieve and improve. There is high mutual respect between students and their peers and with adults. These positive relationships motivate students to achieve well.

There have been no permanent exclusions since 2011 and there are few fixed term exclusions. This reflects leaders' strong philosophy to keep students within the school community and to make sure that any barriers to learning are removed effectively. Students attend regularly and are very punctual to school and to lessons.

Students understand the different kinds of bullying that can occur, but are adamant that incidents are rare. Students and parents are confident that any such issues are dealt with quickly and effectively.

Students feel very much part of a caring school and local community and are proud of it.

Note by Roy Pearce

There is much more to the credit of the school, its teachers, governors and parents in the full Ofsted report, available on line. The culmination of a policy pursued doggedly for fifty years?



Dave's last assembly - the theme "The wonders of Maths"

Barry Foster at Anthony Gell School, 1965-1974, by Roy Pearce

Barry Foster came from Derby and was a Centaur, an Old Boy of Derby Central School, where he was head boy and captain of both football, a lifelong passion, and cricket. He went to Keele University in its pioneering days and then served during national service as an education officer at RAF Wittering. His first teaching post was at Normanton Grammar School in Yorkshire and he moved to be Head of English at the grammar school in Wirksworth in 1960. He taught with his customary vigour, produced plays and an elegant school magazine. When it was proposed that the school be closed and a comprehensive school established he was strongly in support, as he explained in his memorable presentation to the gathering in 2015 of the founding members of the new school, both staff and students.

Below is a report of his contribution in January opening the 1965 re-union.

Barry Foster had been a teacher of English in the grammar school for five years by 1965. He started the conversation by recalling five memories of the first year in the comprehensive school teaching English, and as the housemaster of Gell House.

One: the third of his and Mary's four children was born in August 1965 and the creation of the comprehensive school would come to mean that all four would attend the same school; there would be no chance of separate schooling from age eleven, "no division".

Two: 6th September 1965 the first assembly as housemaster was taken with a mixture of excitement and apprehension. There had been delay, the school was on a split site, and was leaderless because the headteacher appointed to lead the changes had unexpectedly quit the job. Alan Phillips acted as head from September 1965 for the autumn term. None the less, there was optimism, a clear sense that the change was "good for the town".

Three: Barry was timetabled to teach 3C at Newbridge, reputedly the worst class in the school to teach, which he saw as a test of his fitness to do the job under the new arrangements. Borrowing a cow's skull from the art department, he got 3C to discuss it, describe it, and to think and write about it. The results were "astonishing" with one piece by Yvonne Morley so outstanding that it was entered for a national competition and came first out of seventy-five thousand entries. This was "evidence of remarkable work by someone who was rejected at 11+".

Four: Gell House decided to organise a party for children with special needs, giving Barry some concerns about how it would work, only to be reassured by students "Don't worry, Sir, we'll organise it". Which they did, demonstrating clearly that they had many personal and social skills and other talents in addition to academic ones that the school could allow to blossom.

Five: The arrival of Frank Bottomley, appointed as headmaster in January 1966, not only provided the missing leadership, but brought leadership with a vision about what comprehensive education might become. Alongside the vision, Frank brought a management style based on "asking questions". One challenging question Barry recalled was: "Why do we have children all of the same age for registration groups? Why not have vertical age groups?" Something that had been taken for granted (for generations) was replaced by something that has served the generations since.

At the gathering in January 2015, reported above by his friend and colleague Les Tickle, several students recalled his massive contribution. Children loved his good humour, his jests,

his sense of fun, his sincerity, his belief in them as individuals who could achieve success, his idealism that bestowed on them new opportunities – all underpinned by massive hard work. His lessons were a delight. I watched him at work with joy.

Jane McCabe said to me that until she was taught by Mr Foster she never understood English.

Another recalled the party he encouraged a group of Gell House fourteen year olds to arrange for disabled children from the Ernest Bailey children's home in Matlock and how he stood back, encouraging their personal development by giving them responsibility for the organisation, but stood by to help if necessary. Several of that group later worked in caring roles. They remember today how he had opened their eyes to wider possibilities. That was the best kind of education.

His commitment to the underdog was instinctive and notable and he recognised the talent and encouraged the efforts of the young writer of the skull poem, an eleven plus reject – but not rejected by him. Her triumph in a national writing competition was one of the key achievements in the early history of the school and gave him great personal delight.

Barry was a key person in the development of the new school as both head of English, with vital academic and curriculum responsibilities, and as the founding head of Gell House. He was respected on all sides for his creative skills as a teacher able to work with children of all abilities, for his honesty, hard work and integrity. His arguments made sense. Colleagues felt they could follow his lead and they did. Barry was inspirational and persuasive of doubters in his practical approach to the inclusive comprehensive philosophy as it grew stronger at Gell. From 1965 he developed a practical vision of the civilised school. He knew that the traditional assumptions of the grammar school must give way to a wider curriculum, more active teaching styles and to a coherent approach to pastoral care through an effective house system. He was, crucially, a supporter of Frank Bottomley's challenging proposal to organise mixed-age eleven to sixteen house tutor groups. Barry was making a massive all round contribution to building the foundations of the comprehensive school we know today with positive relationships in and out of class at the heart of his work: an outstanding teacher and a leader with sensitive inter-personal skills.

As an English teacher he was regarded in Derbyshire as an outstanding leader. He was an active member of the National Association for Teaching English (NATE) in Derbyshire and he established at Gell an innovative 100% course work CSE syllabus in English. Later this developed into a Derbyshire-wide GCSE double certification syllabus with thousands of entries. He even made a film as a teacher training resource for HMI and I supported him at the premiere in Lincolnshire. He was a strong proponent of oral work as central to learning in English (and across the curriculum), realising how much 'ordinary' children needed confident oral skills in the modern world.

Barry's outstanding professionalism and his contribution to comprehensive and community thinking were recognised when he was justly appointed Warden of Hope Valley College (speedily changed to Principal), the first community school in Derbyshire. With tact, understanding and determination Barry moved the school forward. He was much respected as a warm human being and a sensibly progressive head, working in a consultative leadership style on a community agenda. He worked as an exemplar in Derbyshire and nationally, promoting community education.

Through his period of headship Barry continued to live in Wirksworth and his four children, Michael, David, Anthony and Kate came happily and successfully to Gell. Later Kate joined as a Gell English teacher and to Barry's delight he became a Gell grandfather when Sam & Eddie, Anthony's sons, joined the school.

When he left Hope Valley (retired is the wrong word) Barry devoted much of his energy for the following 25 years to local community activities. He served on the Peak District Rural Deprivation Forum and the Peak District Rural Housing Association; he was chair of the Wirksworth community education council and an active supporter of the campaign for a sports centre; with mad devotion he ran a fantasy football league; he was an active founding member of the patients group at the Hannage Brook practice. Many will recall his cheerful, energetic, optimistic and efficient organisation of the Wirksworth community quiz, which he invented and with Phil Richards master minded for twenty years, a remarkably inclusive and wonderfully happy community occasion. He made a major contribution as a well-organised chair of the management board of the Community Fayre newspaper.

Barry was a raconteur with a fund of good stories: we recall his oft-repeated lengthy tale of a partiality to Weetabix and his confident demonstration of how to make a sunshade, using a beach mat and our washing line. It didn't work for some reason. Though Barry laughed a lot and, with a dip of his shoulders and a little grin of amusement, he teased his friends (and shopkeepers!) gently, he was a deeply serious man who contributed wisdom and balanced judgement to whatever initiative he was involved in. He believed in our community and he worked hard to fulfil his ideals. Barry was always cheerful; he usually had an anecdote at hand, he spoke with everybody and with his gift for friendship he brought happiness to many people in our town. Truly a citizen of Wirksworth, over the last half century he worked hard for others and made a tremendous contribution to town life.

His devotion to Anthony Gell School and its values ran deep. 'We won the argument,' he assured me recently. When Gell Friends decided to mark the fiftieth anniversary of Anthony Gell as a community comprehensive school I knew there would be at least one unstinting supporter. We had decided that the anniversary events would run from January to the end of August and Barry contributed to them all. His calm, inspiring words at the January session for the 1965 students held the audience silent; an affirmation of his beliefs. He was there happily at the staff gathering, the exhibition in the town library and socialised in his element at the great event on Gell Day, chortling with old mates, talking earnestly with former students, smiling with everybody, making other people happy, as he often did. As chair of Community Fayre he managed the special Gell anniversary supplement.

The last celebration event was the cricket match between the Mayor's team and a school eleven. It was a wet day and it seemed unlikely we would play. Barry had said he would come if he could, though it might only be for a short time. I knew he had been unwell, though none of us realised that just over two months later he would be dead. He sat with me on that dank evening, 31st August 2015, and we chattered non-stop as we always did, matching our anecdotes. He asked as usual about the young players who were batting; their antecedents, their personalities, their prospects. He always wanted to know about people. It was the kind of talk we had often shared since I met Barry on the day I was appointed

headteacher of AGS, 24th March 1971. We had been friends and colleagues for 44 years and through those years I recalled not one harsh word or disagreement on any fundamental issue.

Barry Foster died on Thursday 5th November, 2015.

Roy Pearce November 2015



GELL HOUSE 1969

In 1965 Barry Foster was Housemaster of Gell House and he recorded the first comprehensive intake of students into his house. Where are they now?

Sandra Broadway
Pat Hill
Lesely Farrer
Jill Howard
Julia Mabbott
Ann Moorby
Diane Moore
Gillian Snow
Susan Tarlton
Anne Taylor
Susan Thornewill
Susan Webster
Gillian Wilkinson

William Andrew
Robert Gould
Neil Houghton
Jonathon Kaye
Robert Lomas
Patrick Murphy
Ivor Taylor
Paul Thompson
Keith Travis
Andrew Warren
Andrew Ward
Roland Willden
Monica Yates

Typed by Roy Pearce in 2016

Anthony Gell School Foundation - Charity No 527178

What is it and What Does it Do?

The Foundation is a **Charitable Trust** responsible for administering its property and investments for the benefit of the School and its students. A 1910 **Scheme, updated and approved by the Charity Commission on 25 May 2005, has objectives to:**

- 1) Provide items, services and facilities for Anthony Gell School
- 2) Promote the education of persons who are in need of financial assistance in the following order of priority who are :
 - a) Attending the school; or
 - b) Have at any time attended the school; or
 - c) Are under the age of 25 and resident in the Parish of Wirksworth, and the surrounding villages

It is important to note that our help to School is for additionality in education provision and services, but not for core funding.

Who is Involved?

Foundation is separate from the School's Governing Body, but there are Governor representatives at Trustees meetings. Foundation usually meets 5 times a year and has:

- **6 Trustees** – John Thompson (Chairman), Michael Hall (Vice Chairman), Nick Payne, Anna Bristow, Cathy Cooke and Simon Hobbs. The scheme allows for appointments for up to 4 years which can be renewed. John Thompson and Simon Hobbs are the current representatives of the Trust on the Governing Body

- **Governing Body** representatives on the Trust are Malcolm Kelly (Headteacher), Annie Nelson and Gaye Smedley.

- **2 Voluntary Special Advisers** – Chris Loeber (Legal), Peter Jones (Financial)

- **Clerk** - Sharen Thorpe

Property

Property owned by the Foundation used to be in and around School and some land elsewhere. Now it is the **Hannage Playing Fields, plus School's half of School House and some neighbouring land** which has all been recorded with the Land Registry. We also own the land which School is built on and is used for education purposes.

Over the last few years we have reviewed the property we own with the first priority being achievement of maximum benefits to school. We have sold some areas (in consultation with the Headteacher and governing body), for development with the funds being protected and used for improving School facilities and resources. These are:

- **Half of School House** with the garden and a small area to build a garage
- **Adjoining land in the Croft** for housing
- Land for **Hannage Brook Medical Centre** and car park
- An area of land next to the **transport depot** off Coldwell Street
- **A strip of land by the School car park** to a neighbour on Canterbury Terrace
- **Hillview** - as a House formerly occupied by a Caretaker
- **Land off Water Lane** developed for 5 industrial/storage units
- **A strip of land** with hedge **adjoining the Hannage Brook** to neighbours
- **A plot off Canterbury Terrace** which we sold with outline planning consent and has been developed for 2 houses. Foundation provided a new concession ramp and steps as a concession route to the Learner Pool and the Health Centre.

The Community Leisure Centre & car park was completed in 2001 by Derbyshire Dales District Council (we granted a long term lease). It provided a wonderful addition to School and Community facilities which is well used with an excellent partnership with the School. We are involved in discussions with the District Council who have engaged consultants to advise about options for a review of their Leisure Services and Centres. We are currently involved in discussions with the District Council about options for review of their Leisure Services & Centres. Consultants have been engaged to advise.

Canterbury Terrace - we are aiming to dispose of the land we own (unadopted stone surfaced road) serving 6 houses beyond the entrance to School. We are in discussions with the owners of those properties about interest in purchase, and with Derbyshire County Council and Severn Trent Water about various issues and improvements needed .

We have done and are continuing with **environmental improvements to perimeter land** we own, mostly around the outside of the Playing Fields, after very helpful responses from local people to a questionnaire survey. We welcomed funding support from the County, District and Town Councils and the Exton Trust for work done which has included tree and shrub planting, removal of dilapidated fences, installation of 3 benches, path improvements and directional signs on footpaths to places and facilities. We let a contract for perimeter land maintenance and re-charge school for some works.

Use of Funds

We use funds from bequests, donations and property sales. They were modest at first but have grown following property disposals and with leasehold rent and some donations for specific purposes which have been most welcome. **Since 1988 support given to the School, Projects and Students has amounted to £469,719**, but most of this has been since the beginning of 1996. This has helped make projects happen, assisted students, equipment and book purchases and facility developments. It has attracted external funding in several cases. A Summary of Projects assisted is in the Annex attached. We also have a small fund left of around for Special Needs (£1,000). Recently donations have kindly been made towards Archives (£1,000), Arts equipment for less able students (£200) as well as for outdoor education, adventure and sport (£1,600).

A **Financial Spending Strategy** is in place with areas for support based on advice from the Headteacher for help to Students, Departments, whole School projects, Sports facilities and improvements to Property and Environment. We have also agreed an **Ethical Investment Policy**. The Foundation **welcomes the receipt of donations and bequests** for spending by the charity in accordance with its objectives, and welcomed the establishment of a **Gell Friends** Group and launch of that in September, 2013.

John Thompson November, 2015

Anthony Gell School Foundation

Annex

Special Projects supported have included:

- **Sixth form** accommodation - £16,000
-
- **Community Sports and Leisure Centre developed by the Derbyshire Dales District Council** - £11,000 initially and further contributions of £5,300 towards the emergency access road and £5,094 towards an improved Sports Hall surface
-
- **Science block** improvements - £10,000
-
- **Access for all** improvements with charity support-£10,000
-
- **Computer Network** Improvements - £16,000
-
- **Main Hall** - New screen, projector and DVD in the main Hall in 2006 - £5,000

-
- **Surface improvements** to areas at the front of Gell Block costing over £12,000
-
- **Minor Hall Project** with a £15,000 contribution made in Summer 2010
-
- **Changing Room Improvements** within School also of benefit to the Community at a cost of over £70,000 with Foundation £25,000, the Football Foundation £20,000, Community funds £1,000 and Governors (with Derbyshire C.C. capital funds) having met the rest following completion in June,2009
-
- **New Information System** with screens in Reception, the Hall and Library for which we contributed £5,500 in Summer 2010.
-
-
- **Floodlit All Turf Pitch (ATP)** - £70,000 toward £250,000 total in 2001. We have funded maintenance. The pitch is mainly **used for Hockey and Football**.
-
- **We supported a major project developed in 2013/14 with Sport England** (£126,000) and other partnership funding to create an **additional All Weather Floodlit pitch, a car park for 23 cars** on 2 former tennis courts and to re-surface the All Turf Pitch opened in 2001. The total cost of these works benefitting School and Community will be in excess of £450,000 with Foundation contributing circa £300,000 from income received for use of the pitches.
-
- **Improvement of Grass Pitches and a new Changing Room block** in September, 2005- £30,000 towards a major School project costing £463,000 with the Football Foundation and others the District and Town Councils and local Sports Clubs.
-
- **Music Project** for which we donated £7,500 in 2010
-
- **Improvements en route from School car park to the Leisure Centre** with seating, artwork and landscaping for which we contributed £2,500 in 2011
-
- **IT Equipment** in 2012 - £3,000
-
- **Laser Cutter** - £3,000 donation in 2013
-
- **Media Suite Video Editing** equipment £3,800 - 2014
-
- **Wireless Access around School** £4,000 - 2014
-
- **Literacy & Learning Pads** - £3,000 in 2014
-
- **Whole School Energy Survey** - £5,000 contribution in 2015
-
- **School Newsletters** - annual contribution of £300
-
- **Maths and English Books** for new Curriculum in the absence of LEA or Gov't funds - £3,000
-
- **Development of PE Curriculum** for Girls - £2,000

ANTHONY GELL SCHOOL FOUNDATION (charity 527178) - Awards for School and Students

Regular Requests in 2014/15 to 31 March,2016

Music Lessons Fund	£ 550
Individual Students Awards	<u>£1,763</u>
School Newsletter (usually £300 p.a)	£ -

Plus Awards up to 31/03/15 £67,586
Running Total since 1988 £69,899

Special Projects from 1988 (Contributions made towards costs)

Minibus purchase	1,000
Sixth Form accommodation and equipment	16,100
Humanities department - Project with Derbyshire Wildlife Trust in 2015 (£310)	1,010
Arts department -inc.Display Boards in 2015 (£400 +£380) + Creative Arts Eve (£350)	1,630
Personal and Social Education support inc Friday Club £400 in 2010. Learning Support (£100)	1,025
Community Sports and Leisure Centre - £1.3 mill Derbys.Dales project in 2000 - our support	11,000
Then 35% (£5,324) in 2002 Emergency Access road, and 35% (£5,094) Floor renewal in 2005	10,418
and Running Costs contribution - in 2006	1,300
Modern Languages department-curriculum support	5,936
School Hall - improvements £1,000,Screen/projector/DVD - 2006 £5,000, Backboards 2015 £500	6,500
PE dept - InterHouse Trophy (£100) ,Store & Roller Blades (£400) in '13 +Skates. £500 Sports	
Presentation Eves 2014 et seq £1,550, £900 equipment, Girls fitness £150,& Curric Dev £2,000	5,600
ICT dept+ computer network improvements - inc £3,000 in 2012, Media suite video editing £3,800,	
Wireless Access- £4,000, 3D Printer in 2015 - £1,065	17,345
New Information System with 3 screens in Reception, Hall & Library	5,500
Science Block improvements - Engineering Week 2008(125), Project in 2013 (£1,000)	11,125
English Dept - Laptops, Lit and Learn pads £3,000 in 2014 + £1,500 books & Book Buzz £300 2015	7,890
Maths - inc UK Challenge from 2010 -£229, £215, £279, £279,£306, £382 + £1,500 books (2015)	3,190
Languages Department - Room improvements(1,850) Projectors and interactive tablets (2,284)	4,134
Library -shelving, display cabinets and boards (£5,000) Careers Update (£300)	5,300
- Photographic project "Beyond the School" with £20K Lottery funding	300
Displays - General (£511), Leadership Display Cabinet (£200)	711
Music-storage for instruments (£2,000) 2010 Project re Maggie Coen Fund £7,500,£2,000 2013	
Samba kit -£560, Stage Piano - £700, 2015 event - £180	12,490
Technology - Laser Cutter costing £12,000 (contribution £3,000)	3,000
Energy Use Survey contribution - Whole School appraisal by Derbyshire CC	5,000
Property and Environmental improvements and maintenance - Gardening Gp (£750) + £2,490	
Perimeter Appraisal Plan 2006 (50% with School) £280. Improved front of Gell Block 100 th Anniv	
total £11,830 + work on Canterbury Terr (£260). Gell Block seats 100th Anniv and raised beds by	
Art Room In 2011 on signs, seats, fence removal etc - nett £1,276 after grants. In 2011 £3,645	
(bench, steps & pathwork, fence removal),Knotweed (£270 from 2013)	35,147
Seating requests -external and internal seating (School Council) and benches	3,816
Eco School Project to School Council and 50% contribution to a shredder for vegetation £345	1,145
Rewards Scheme (in 2011/12 - £1,400) and Gift Vouchers £35 + £600 in 2012 + £600 in 2013	2,920
Memory Books - year 11(300),£447(2013), £465(2014). Year 7 in 2012 £275, 2013 (£300) + £150	1,937
Business Studies Project Loan to Students	250
Defibrillator - contribution towards purchase (£500) Jan 2015	500
Access for all Improvements using grant from a Charitable Trust accessed by Muff Wiltshire	10,000
Floodlit All Weather Pitch-capital cost £242,000 (2001) - our support with contributions to:	70,000
maintenance starting in 2005 + Special Cleaning in 2013 £2,700 Brushes for Tractor (£600)	18,300
*School to replace equipment (inc. goal posts) £1,894 (posts/nets in 2012)	7,744
*Fees re: tender documents £1,600,works £11,500, Long Jump Pit £1,500	14,600
*Electricity (£2,800) and Admin (£1,800) in March 2012, 2013 & 2014 & lighting 2015 (£1,260)	18,120
Pitches & 5 A Side and Changing Rooms Project in Oct 2004. Cost £463,000 - our support	30,000
maintenance and renewal - fencing (£4,000 to School of £5,000 in 2008)	4,000
Changing Rooms Upgrade in School (costing £75K) - 20K Football Found, rest Govs/Foundation	25,625
Minor Hall Project costing £35,000 - our contribution	<u>15,000</u>

Sub Total from 1988 for Regular Requests & Special Projects to 310315 464,194

Regular Awards paid since 010415 1,763

Special Projects paid since 010415 3,762

Overall Awards since 1988 £469,719

Plus ATP/Multi Use Games Area/Car Park Project 2014/15 -est. expenditure £470,000 with £310,000 from Foundation and the remainder through Sport England, School, Clubs & Local Councils

CELEBRATIONS 2015

In 2015 the school celebrated its fiftieth anniversary as a community comprehensive school.

Gell Friends were actively involved in each of the celebration events. The intention was to run the celebrations from January to August: only the tree planting took us beyond the 31st August deadline.

These were the main events.

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| January | The founding members met at school:
sixty staff and students who were there in 1965. |
| February | 45 staff gathered at the cricket club pavilion
for lunch and reminiscence. |
| June | Exhibition in the Wirksworth town library. |
| July | GELL DAY at school with over 1,000 visitors

50th anniversary mugs for sale. |
| August | Cricket Match:
AGSXI v The Mayor of Wirksworth's Invitation XI. |
| September | Publication of the Gell supplement in Community Fayre. |
| November | Planting a weeping silver birch tree in the school grounds. |

There follows the final collection of writings in celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of our founding as a comprehensive school in 1965. Included, as the first item, is the Gell supplement to the September edition of Community Fayre, the town newspaper. Rachel Pickford worked hard on the publication of this supplement: I point out for special attention, not just the unique photograph of the famous five, but also the perceptive extract from the 2015 Ofsted report, which says so much about what Gell staff, students and parents had been working towards for over fifty years. The other startling item was to see the list of first class degrees gained by Gell students in 2015, a remarkable performance from a school with less than 700 students.

Friends will understand why I have yielded to temptation to write a Gell Eulogy and to include a detailed report on the Mayor's cricket match. The year of celebrations closed in the fog with the tree planting on 1st November.

ANTHONY GELL SCHOOL 1965-2015
FIFTY YEARS of COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY EDUCATION
in
WIRKSWORTH, DERBYSHIRE
by Roy Pearce, Headteacher 1971-1991

INTRODUCTION.

As we moved into 2015, marking fifty years since the foundation of Anthony Gell School, I decided to record some thoughts about the school. I had been head for twenty years from 1971 and came to know many of the pioneers from 1965 onwards. There is a good story to tell. When I arrived in 1971 I could hardly believe how much progress the school had made in the first six years under Frank Bottomley's shrewd and progressive leadership. He was an outstanding founding father. Frank nourished his vision of a school for all students with sharp curriculum insight (driven by energetic departmental heads), deep commitment to counselling and pastoral care and a wide understanding of community education. A school is about people and Frank managed to appoint some outstanding teachers to drive the vision forward. It was clear to me as his successor that Derbyshire and its Chief Education Officer, in particular, valued the school as special place, gave it strong support and approved its inclusive approach to comprehensive education. Most heads of comprehensive schools in Derbyshire then inherited the job as grammar school heads, powerful men (mostly), but not in the forefront of comprehensive thinking. My comprehensive background in 1971 Derbyshire was unusual.

This appreciation began as an impossible task; to write a cool assessment of Gell and its work over the last fifty years. I knew my own commitment prevented me from writing a formal academic history, but one wet day in Autumn 2014 I found myself banging the keyboard and words flooded out. It began as a summary that might be helpful in press publicity for the fiftieth anniversary; it developed into a personal eulogy. Why not?

I realised I could not cover every aspect of Gell's progress through fifty years. I decided not to mention names, except for the four headteachers. My passion for Wirksworth and its distinctive school permeates my writing – not surprisingly. I pondered formal publication, but struggled for an audience: who would buy or read it or wish to publish? Eventually I decided to self-publish by request to those who know the school. Copies are sent by email on request and I look forward to some vigorous responses and sharp criticism. To readers I say, 'This is a starter, so do write in detail about any facet of AGS which you consider has been inadequately covered.' There is too much about the 1971-91 era, but I also sought continuity. I look forward to receiving contributions to fill out the picture. This is a personal view, not an official school document and I alone am responsible for the final text.

Roy Pearce February 2015.
roy.pearce@fsmail.net

For a community comprehensive school to have survived for fifty years un-reorganised, un-academised and still proudly a Derbyshire county school, is a significant achievement, worthy of celebration.

In 1965 Wirksworth was an ancient quarry town on the edge of the Peak, hard working, not very prosperous, inward looking and unsure of the way forward. Many men were employed in the quarries and lorries, which dominated the town, the women in textiles; all now gone. In 2015 the town, more affluent now, thrives as a liberal, tolerant, confident, divergent and creative community with a nationally recognised autumn festival run by a vibrant, artistic local group. With its town the school has grown in confidence. It was not an easy beginning in 1965. The building was unfinished, the head designate had resigned at Easter, so the deputy managed the first term, and no member of staff had worked in a comprehensive school. Older students naturally found the changes difficult, both the fourteen year olds who were uprooted and the sixth formers who felt invaded. It was a challenging time and, though there was much goodwill and surprisingly strong staff unity, the new school was confronted by local scepticism and some unreasonable hostility, especially from supporters of the small Elizabethan grammar school. ‘Just like Eton,’ muttered Col. Philip Gell, chairman of the grammar school governors, when in 1961 the Derbyshire Director of Education explained that the big new school of 700 pupils (690 in 2015) would be organised on a house basis with purpose built accommodation. There was particular concern in a widely-spread, rural catchment area for the country children from the isolated Derbyshire hill villages and the small village schools.

That distant decision gave the school its special ethos and its four houses have survived into the 21st century with ‘all age’ 11-16 tutor groups, beloved of parents, teachers and students, at the heart of school life. Children belong to their house as their home base within the school. This is a ‘listening school’. The relationship with their house tutor, who comes to know them well over five years as they grow to responsible young adulthood, is massively influential, central to their school lives both socially and academically. The tutor/student relationship is highly valued and has developed to meet modern needs. Gell has stuck firmly to its core values and has built its reputation as a civilised school, open to all, truly comprehensive and in the new century producing outstanding academic results. The school has enabled children from different social backgrounds within the local community to share and value and to learn from each other.

Michael Marland, diligent recorder of comprehensive practice, visited in 1971 and wrote in his book Pastoral Care (1972):

‘You can swoop down by car from the amazing hillsides into a small valley town. This is one of the most strongly house-oriented schools that I have come across. The entire guidance and counselling system is based within the house and the heads of house have great power.’

The tutorial influence is evident in enhancing maturity. In 2013 Ofsted said:

‘Behaviour and safety are typically good because students behave well in lessons and around the school. Students get on well with each other and their teachers. They display a remarkable level of maturity and speak very warmly about the positive atmosphere and the strong values of the school. They take pride in their work and when asked to work independently they do so very well. Students’ attendance is above average because they like coming to school.a very harmonious learning community. They have a highly developed sense of moral values and tolerance which they demonstrate through their actions and the way they speak to each other.’

That quality experience has not come speedily or easily. Tutoring and teaching need to be coherent and consistent. Frank Bottomley, the first head, famously to the surprise of many, said at his inaugural staff meeting that the new school must belong to its students. From that initial vision, with teaching colleagues determined to make it work, the triangle of trust, parents, teachers and students building a strong and open relationship and working together with genuine understanding, has grown steadily over fifty years; four headteachers, different personalities, at one in their philosophy, driving forward this practical policy with remarkable staff support. Many Wirksworth parents are now second and, a few, even third generation families. A tradition has been established. Ofsted in 2013 was surprised at the high, almost unanimous, parental approval for the school. Across the social spectrum parents say they know and value their school and even those families least likely to be committed to school life often look to teaching staff for support. Continuity of approach has been a major strength. Gell always cared for children with difficulties and has sustained its worthy commitment to the rejected and the disillusioned.

Ofsted 2009: Support for students with learning difficulties is good. The school deals very well with students whose behaviour causes concern.

In 1965 Gell was ‘an island of comprehension in a sea of selection’, but many aspirational 11+ ‘failures’ came determinedly from out of area to Gell and with active parental support, seized their second chance, earned high grades and moved resolutely into higher education. Gell was different. We showed what could be done and these eager students through the early years contributed positively to the life of the school and to its growing reputation.

David Baker, headteacher since 2006, explains.

‘We have always tried to treat our students as young adults, helping them to grow to maturity, working co-operatively to develop mutual respect and personal responsibility as fundamental to their success in the classroom and to their ability to manage life beyond the school gates. We take care, guidance and support of our students very seriously and parents identify this as one of the strengths of the school. We track students individually and intervene to ensure they meet their personal targets. It is a pleasure to be with them.’

Many years ago, Sir Alec Clegg said, ‘A good school does not make pupils behave, it makes them want to behave.’ Negotiation and calm assessment are fundamental to relationships. The absence of uniform is a key part of the civilising contract. To the surprise of many, students follow a recommended dress code responsibly.

‘They never gave up on her,’ said a mother in 2014, whose daughter had not had an easy ride through her school years.

Society, parents and children change rapidly and in the turbulent world of educational policy, the school, always the enemy of ossification, has often been in the forefront of curriculum development: ‘a vibrant curriculum’ wrote a researcher. In 1990 Anthony Gell won the Schools’ Curriculum Award.

First in the field in Derbyshire with an original and innovative computer project, developed in collaboration with Rolls Royce and supported by the Department of Industry (Minister Tony Benn) with a £25,000 grant, the school produced ‘a completely self-designed course in microelectronic technology’. Yes, 1979 the start of the industrial revolution at Gell.

1980 Learning to Build Micros. ‘This smaller group, aged between 13 and 15 has so far built a simple robot car, an XY plotter, a light pen and a musical organ’, all of which have a simple programme written in basic, controlling their operation.’

There has been a consistent Anthony Gell commitment to course work as an incentive to regular study (how do you assess the builders of micros in an exam?) and in the distant past to mode 3 CSE then GCSE, notably an English syllabus assessed solely by course work and adopted county wide. Oracy, not at first a strength of wary, rural students, was an early target for improvement across the curriculum, with all subjects contributing.

The school addressed equal opportunities and equal value as Gell fundamentals. In the early years, before the leaving age was raised, the school had to overcome parental reluctance for girls to stay at school; later, with girls racing ahead, Gell was quick to identify the need and to drive improvement in the motivation and achievement of boys. Derby County came on board in support. The school was deep into ROSLA (Raising the School Leaving Age, 1972), GCSE replacing O level and CSE, TVEI, CPVE, crucial curriculum developments at the time, but now forgotten acronyms.

Teachers and governors, conscious of our relative isolation, always insisted that we look outwards; as a rural all-white institution we built a strong link with a multi-cultural city centre school, through a Derbyshire project called Post Swann. Languages and an international awareness have been characteristic of the school’s approach, not easy in land-locked Derbyshire. There is a well-established and strongly supported exchange programme with both French and German schools and in 2015 AGS is accredited ‘International School’.

Anthony Gell was built on the wave of optimistic sixties idealism to provide for the community through a county youth centre, now gone, and adult education facilities.

‘The school should not be viewed as separate from the community it serves,’ says the 2014 prospectus. Sport may be the most obvious community link, but Gell teachers were happy to have adults in ordinary GCSE and A level classes; a number of women who had missed previous opportunities came and studied and qualified and prospered to their benefit and that of the children.

Catching up.

Renee Lewis, who left her grammar school at fifteen joined the Anthony Gell in her sixties as a grandmother to learn German. She studied in timetabled lessons in the same class as her grandson. She moved on to A level French and German and then to take a languages degree at the University of Derby in her seventies. Renee enjoyed school dinners and ‘As for the lessons.....other pupils have been kindly and often helpful. The staff have always been supportive without in the least detracting from the their care of the younger pupils.’

We are proud of the community links through sport with shared facilities and close liaison with senior sports clubs to ensure progression. A highlight of community involvement was the grassroots campaign in the 1990s, working for ten years with local people, members of the community sports group, to build a joint-use sports and leisure centre, a model of co-operative effort, school and community together, liaising with local authorities and national sports bodies, to secure one of the earliest lottery grants. The excellent games facilities produced by that campaign, sports hall, fitness gym, climbing wall and both grass and artificial pitches, have expanded steadily through carefully planned management of both plant and finances, crucial policies inaugurated by Rod Leach from 2000. Now both adults and school enjoy top class facilities. Though the school’s sports college status has, disgracefully, been abolished, the high quality work and wide range of individual and team activities continues, with outstanding levels of participation, not least among girls. Many youngsters find leadership opportunities through the activities run by Gell students for local primary schools. And they have won plenty of trophies too; cycling and wrestling world champions in past years as well as a round-the-world sailor. Teachers identify a knock-on effect from the sporting opportunities in academic performance, especially for those involved in the Derby County enrichment programme. There have been over forty school ski trips.

An early distinction, much approved by the community, was the public performance at local events by our fifty strong, high-performing, traditional brass band, which appeared on Opportunity Knocks. Many graduated into the town band. Gell has always been dedicated to education in the arts, reflecting an important community interest and employment opportunities. There is music everywhere: masses attend the Saturday music school. Students now seek training and jobs in the modern world of music, art, drama, film, television, radio journalism and dance. One parent, anticipating poverty, told of her three sons, training as actor, artist and musician. The value of arts education for all as a contribution to personal development, is central to the school’s thinking and practice.

What do our parents think?

‘I was there and I loved it – so did the two girls and they’ve done very well.’

Comments of a delighted mother, a former student, in conversation in the street after receiving the GCSE and A level results of her two daughters in 2014. Second generation children are notably well supported and usually prosper, surpassing their parents’ expectations and achievements. The family continuity is important.

In 1985 a parent wrote,

‘I have always been impressed by the combination of caring and realism which the school shows to its pupils.....Their maturity and social awareness is astonishing to me looking back to my sixth form days..... It was always made clear to us then that we were not grown-up.’

In 1991 parents of four children who had been through Gell House and into the sixth form, fifteen years of Gell parenting, wrote:

‘With each we have seen those qualities and skills you encouraged in them show to good effect - openness, friendliness, self-discipline, a sturdy independence coupled with pleasure in the company of others.’

What of the teachers?

In 1989 Gell took part in a research project, later published as *The Reality of School Management* (1989): extracts about teachers and their culture follow.

‘One of the striking features of this school is the level of commitment and the quality of staff cohesion. Most staff gain great personal and professional satisfaction from working closely with colleagues and being seen to be committed. They feel themselves to be members of a team which is contributing to the growth of the school. Other aspects of the culture are those of mutual support within departments and cohesion through committees and the House system and a commonly held set of mainly, but not exclusively held pastorally oriented values and beliefs. They rally round the same flag.’

In the early years Gell recruited comprehensive pioneers, seeking thinkers and doers, realistic innovators. Gell teachers, consultative and argumentative, have always seemed ready to express a challenging view, to contribute, to complain, to campaign. The management style is collegiate; staff professional development important. The school emphasises tutorial responsibility, attracting teachers with a pastoral interest: professionally sympathetic, not soft, with a growing responsibility for monitoring and supporting academic progress. You come to Gell to work hard, to learn and develop as a professional teacher. The drive and professionalism of teachers in 2015 is startling.

A teacher leaving in 1990 on promotion wrote about

‘The relationships with all the people you are with each day way beyond normal working relationships, friends first, then pupils, teaching colleagues, other staff. That’s why it felt so good to be there. Pupils wandering in at eight o’clock because they enjoy everything so much – delaying going home with their cup of coffee in school. And the tutor group, each morning waiting to be in with them, discussing last night’s football – jokes, happiness and enjoying being together.

It’s a whole life to have been there. We take it away with us when we leave; it is part of us.’

Some teachers are 'lifers', many move on, taking 'Gell values' with them.

The school 'staff' includes those invaluable local people who keep us in touch with the grassroots of the community, many of them parents. They have served the school and its students over the years, one tells me for thirty three years, as cooks, clerks, cleaners, caretakers, receptionists, dinner supervisors, groundstaff – what a badly paid and under-rated contribution, but central to everyday life at the school.

Governors were at first distinguished local representatives, loyal and supportive but, as was the custom, not closely involved. The professionalism, commitment and burdensome hard work of governors in the new century is impressive, providing an informed and powerful influence and strong community representation.

The relationship with the local authority has always been remarkably positive; not many schools may say that. Derbyshire supported the school generously through its early days, worked with Gell in expanding the concept of community education, valued both philosophy and practice and said so: they even provided money for a community tutor. There seemed no need to shake off their influence, whichever party was in power.

Derbyshire Chief Education Officer 1985.

'Nowhere have I been more impressed than during my visit to Anthony Gell School. The friendly, pleasant atmosphere which pervaded throughout the school was extremely heartening..... We were both extremely heartened by the overall community ethos of the school.'

What of our students for whom the school was built, who have worked hard, played their games, enjoyed their time, made lifelong friendships, married each other and laughed so much? The notion that a strict uniform is essential to promote loyalty, pride and commitment to the school is disproved by the confidently assertive views expressed by students in 2015. House loyalty is deep-rooted and many recall house councils and their work on charitable events, from which, as young people, they discovered extra-curricular talents they hardly realised they possessed. Today's students know they go to an unusual school, value that as a privilege and defend the Gell ethos robustly.

The outside world beckons. No names appear here, but our most famous former student sailed round the world and, just as impressive, managed the seductions of celebrity with cool, good sense.

Look and you will find. Locally ex-students serve on the Town Council (one recently became the youngest Mayor in the country), deliver the milk and the post, run the shops, the pubs, the garages, the sports teams and the small businesses which look after the gardens and houses in the town: educated for their community. They occupy administrative positions at County Hall. Many work in the caring professions: nurses and medics, social workers, charity workers, care staff, university lecturers (currently two professors), many teachers. The roll of actors, musicians (jazz and classical) and performers grows steadily. We have produced diplomats, soldiers, lawyers, journalists, entrepreneurs, a professional footballer, some bankers, a top scientist at Rolls Royce, a transatlantic oil man and a water bailiff. They work world-wide and in 2015 two students study in America.

The high academic standard now being achieved has opened doors for Wirksworth youngsters world-wide. A personal observation is that many men and women, successful as adults, have not been notable in their school days as conformist students. The able, questioning individual has a place. We should never underestimate the potential of young people.

In 1991 in a leaving note to pupils I wrote, ‘It is not easy growing up. I have always tried to help you. You need space to make your own mistakes, within the supportive structure which the school can provide. We have to learn from our experiences, some of which may be hurtful, but always we need to be optimistic and cheerful and confident.’

The original Anthony Gell Grammar School was founded in Wirksworth in 1576, so fifty years is like an evening gone. Often it has been a demanding evening, but in 2015 the school stands strong; confident, professional, humane, adaptable, resilient. There are tough challenges ahead, but we have been through many hard times in the last fifty years.

As Col Gell might have said in 1965,

FLOREAT ANTHONY GELL.

Roy Pearce 2015

THREE INTERESTING APPENDICES FOLLOW.

Extracts from the Anthony Gell School Ofsted inspection report 2015

The headteacher provides inspiring leadership. His vision for the school, which puts students at its heart is shared by staff, governors and parents.

The school, is an exceptionally harmonious community where all students are valued. As one student put it, ‘It’s about living together wanting to learn about different faiths and ways of seeing things.’ Discrimination is not tolerated and all students are treated fairly and equally.

Governors are passionate about the school, which they see as an essential part of the community.

The behaviour of students is outstanding. Almost all parents and carers who responded to the online survey agree with this statement. And with good reason. Students are extremely polite, welcoming and well mannered. Especially noteworthy is their ability to be self-disciplined. There is little need for adults to check or regulate students’ conduct as they arrive at school or during break and lunchtimes.

The school reports that students’ behaviour in the community is highly commended, as is their conduct when on school trips. Students treat their facilities and building with considerable respect. Litter, graffiti or malicious damage of any kind are almost unknown.

Students come to school ready to learn and bring the right equipment, so no learning time is wasted. Behaviour in lessons is impeccable so that low level disruption to learning is

extremely rare. There is a strong desire to learn, achieve and improve. There is high mutual respect between students and their peers and with adults. These positive relationships motivate students to achieve well.

There have been no permanent exclusions since 2011 and there are few fixed term exclusions. This reflects leaders' strong philosophy to keep students within the school community and to make sure that any barriers to learning are removed effectively. Students attend regularly and are very punctual to school and to lessons.

Students understand the different kinds of bullying that can occur, but are adamant that incidents are rare. Students and parents are confident that any such issues are dealt with quickly and effectively.

Students feel very much part of a caring school and local community and are proud of it.

Note by Roy

There is much more to the credit of the school, its teachers, governors and parents in the full Ofsted report, available on line. The culmination of a policy pursued doggedly for fifty years?



Appendix 2

Below is an analysis of social class in Wirksworth in 1971, the year I arrived at AGS: very different in 2015.

1971 socio economic groups in Derbyshire Dales. (Source: census of population 10% sample.)

ECONOMIC GROUP of ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE POPULATION 1971

AREA

	employers/ managers	Professional	Other non -manual	skilled manual	semi unskilled skilled	other	
Ashbourne UD	9	2	25	32	21	8	4
Ashbourne RD	19	2	18	30	25	4	1
Matlock UD	12	4	27	29	17	8	3
Wirksworth UD	8	1	16	36	23	12	3
Bakewell UD	14	2	28	25	25	5	1
Bakewell RD	16	4	19	31	22	5	3
West Derbyshire	14	3	22	30	21	7	3
Derbyshire	8	3	25	36	19	7	2
England & Wales	10	4	29	28	19	7	4

Appendix 3

ANTHONY GELL SCHOOL THE HOUSES

HEADS of HOUSE 1965 – 2015

Retitled senior tutors in 2006

ARKWRIGHT

1965	Steve Ottery
1967	Glyn Kitson
1973	David Weston
1988	Ann Gibbon
2006	Liz Lovatt
2014	Colleen Allen

FEARNE

1965	Allan Merigold
1980	Steve Adams
1983	Alan Brown
1993	Jacqui James
1995	Fearne House suspended through falling numbers. Revived in
2006	Karen Hughes
2008	Paul Lovatt
2014	Sharon Walker

GELL

1965	Barry Foster
1973	Derry Hannam
1977	Jim Booth
1977-1983	Steve Adams
1983	Gell House suspended through falling numbers. Revived in
2006	Chris Whittall

WRIGHT

1965	George Boden
1970	Pat Smith
1971	George Boden
1975	Dick Mills
1981	Sally Austin
1992	Mike Law
2006	Paul Brierley
2007	Rachel Pickford

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION

By Rachel Pickford, Head of Wright House.

The sun shone as Anthony Gell celebrated 50 years of becoming a comprehensive school. Gell Friends devoted their time and effort to bring together the people who have made Gell what it is today.

People flooded through the doors and an excited buzz of memories filled the school, as they were reacquainted with each other: friends, teachers, parents. As they entered the building smiles spread and never faded throughout the day. Steve Thompson, an alumnus and one of the first boys to play in the school Brass Band summed up the atmosphere perfectly: 'it is an honour to be back'. He would later perform in the Brass Band in the Gell Quad: one of the highlights of a day with a packed programme of events to remember 50 years of a comprehensive education at Anthony Gell.

A variety of events showcased the superb range of activities the school offered then and now. Students past and present mingled to perform in sporting events, music and drama. The sporting events began with a traditional Cross Country Gilkin Run, the winner being Esmond Tresidder who left the school in 1991. Gell's competitive nature came to life in the basketball tip-off in the Sports Hall, with a mixture of ex-students and current teachers. The last game got 'tasty' but was all in good spirits! Talent echoed from every school corner with a range of present day students busking and performing drama in different class rooms, bringing alive teachers' memories in comic sketches.

The focal point of the day's celebration was the Brass Band who played their famous Cancan performance which they performed on *Opportunity Knocks*, coming runner up to Barry Crush! The band consisted of some of the original players like Steve Thompson and the Truman brothers. Beautiful notes drifted around Gell Quad on the summer breeze as nostalgic memories were shared for Keith Blood, the inspiration for many a band player who he first brought together in 1967.

At midday a three trumpet fanfare announced the meeting together of the five head teachers from September 1965 until September 2015. David Baker joked that he always expects a fanfare before he speaks, before thanking everyone for their overwhelming support, praising the values and ethos that had pervaded the 50 years. He felt 'incredibly proud to be the custodian for the last ten years'. Mr Richards, the eminent school photographer, then took the picture of the heads on the steps of the Gell Quad, where all wore proud smiles.

The sun kept shining and the memories kept flowing, in fact it was probably the first time for many that they had to be asked to leave after half past three. A school bell was rung at 4pm to signal the end of a memorable day of celebrations.

A huge thank you to Gell Friends, staff, and students who made the day possible and extremely successful.

Rachel Pickford

GELL DAY 18th July 2015, a personal view by Roy Pearce

It was an unforgettable day for the estimated one thousand friends who came to school to celebrate fifty years of Antony Gell as a comprehensive school.

The sun shone and from the moment the doors opened families began to stream into reception in the main hall: past and present teachers, students, parents, grandparents, amazingly happy and smiling. I had told Phil Richards that I was inviting everyone.

‘Everyone is coming,’ said Phil, that total optimist, who had been studying Facebook. Phil was right and we estimate that a thousand people may have come to Anthony Gell School that day, creating a tsunami of goodwill.

My recruitment efforts were face to face or by letter, phone and email – I think I sent about 200 emails personally addressed and from 1st January 2015 I walked the streets of Wirksworth, informing, persuading, ‘hassling’, said Carol. At first the great event seemed a long way distant, but gradually the urgency increased. I began to phone friends and more distant acquaintances. It was a delight to talk with so many new friends. I spent time digging out the early teachers and found nine who were still alive, though one died in March, and I invited them to the great event: six came, one was in France, one was anxious and eventually decided not to come.

We had a preliminary run with a gathering for students and staff who were at Anthony Gell when in 1965 the new school was established. It is hard to explain in Wirksworth that this was not a continuation of the old established grammar school and that we now had a new school for a new age.

This is not the moment for a detailed history, but some key points should be recorded. By 1965 the old selective system in Wirksworth was worn out; the grammar school was too small to provide a modern breadth of curriculum, the secondary school had limited horizons. There was general agreement that a new build comprehensive school was the way ahead; only a small minority of the former grammar school pupils muttered.

There was remarkable unity among the teachers of the two schools which were being subsumed. In those days most teachers lived in the town and knew each other. Already there were positive friendships.

In the first term of the new school there was no head (Philip Slater, head designate, resigned at Easter) and Alan Phillips, deputy at the grammar school, served as acting head for the autumn term. Frank Bottomley arrived as the first headteacher in January 1966. He alone had taught in a comprehensive school and he felt himself warmly received by teachers eager to learn and to make the new system work.

Frank had a vision of the civilised school. ‘This school is for its pupils,’ he said at an early staff meeting. That was the ambitious sixties target. Frank’s vision has been fulfilled in 2015. See the Ofsted report. Crucially he introduced the vertical tutor groups from 1966, which have not only survived, but have been central to the development of the positive relationships, which are at the heart of AGS.

These history notes introduce the amazing gathering in January when about thirty of the 1965 students and six of their teachers gathered one Saturday at school to talk about the early days. The warmth, affection and good humour of that meeting shone through. (A full report is published elsewhere.) Immediately you saw the line of progress from 1965 through to the massively changed society of today. Relationships were close and trusting with tutors and housemasters, key people for those early comprehensive pupils. Everyone seems to have laughed a lot in 1965. They still do.

So to today.

On Gell Day I met two of our third generation families: grandparents at the school in 1965, their children followed and now they have grandchildren in Anthony Gell School 2015. There are many second generation families and that has given the school a confident continuity and great community strength. That spirit underpinned Gell Day.

When I told possible clients of the attractive entertainment arranged for the day I added as my parting shot that 'the real entertainment will be the people there'.

It was. Eager faces thronged the hall, the sports area, the library and sunny Gell Quad. Tales of past glories flooded forth. I was on the door from 10.00 to 11.30, meeting and greeting an endless stream. ('You know everyone,' they said at committee. I loved it and Andrew was reminded of his grandfather on hotel duty at Grosvenor House.) What struck me was the number of families arriving. We had saved a car parking space for the band, the ice cream van and those we knew had mobility problems; others were directed to Breasley Pillows by a huge notice produced by Anna Bristow. Nobody complained to me about car parking. Early I realised this was a smiley day, not a Wirksworth grumbling venture. And smile they did. The individual feel-good mood was transferred to friends and a powerful human chemistry produced a unique, indescribable sense of communal happiness, which I have never experienced before. It was a joy day.

The twelve piece band was early to arrive, in time to rehearse in the English block. I was moved to see these former students, mostly now in their fifties, excellent musicians coming to perform and intent on a high standard. Their mentor, Keith Blood, music master when I arrived, would be there to hear them. They dressed immaculate in black and when the time came they played, open air on the Gell Quad raised area with burning panache. I remember Can Can, The Floral Dance and the magnificent three trumpet fanfare. Many months ago I had spoken to the rather puzzled committee about Trumpets at Noon, so that we had a fanfare to Gell as the one central focus for the day. Roger Jepson, the first boy to have a cornet when Keith Blood arrived in 1968, conducted with his customary brio. He is the town undertaker now and has conducted many bands and choirs. Later he handed the baton to Keith Blood (aged 89) who was visibly moved, but unfazed to be in front of his wonderful musicians who had won a place in Opportunity Knocks in 1971, on TV about three weeks after I arrived at AGS. The band arrangements were made by Steve Thompson and the leader was Gordon Truman, professional trumpeter: other ex-AGS players included: John Truman, Janet Sheldon (nee Bacon), Madeline Eley, Julie Dunn (nee Gratton), Andrew Stanton and Roger's son Harry Jepson.

The Fanfare for Gell preceded a brief, perfectly pitched speech by David Baker, the retiring head. 'I always thought I should be preceded by a fanfare,' he began.

Then the photos: first the four heads, then the five; a moment of history.

Frank Bottomley 1966 - 1991;
Roy Pearce 1971 - 1991;
Rod Leach 1991 - 2006;
David Baker 2006 - 2015
with newly appointed Malcolm Kelly looking to the future.

I have never before seen a photo of five headteachers of the same school.

It must be recorded that this was the only formal part of the whole day. A matter of minutes; no exhortations from important guests, no tedious speeches. Alan Bennett use to say that his family disliked 'splodger': Gell matched his best expectations. It was a Wirksworth day and belonged to ordinary people. Their commitment to Gell moved me. I saw and talked with hundreds of students, many teachers and support staff and lots of happy parents, saying lovely things. This was a mixed age gathering and comprised, properly for a comprehensive school, an interesting social mix. These occasions tend to be dominated by successful middle class former students. I was moved that a number of Wirksworth boys saw me during the day, who in their time at school had been 'famous names', needing a lot of support in their young days, but feeling strong enough to come and celebrate many years later. I was touched that Tommy Upton was re-united with Les Tickle after fifty years.

This personal report has missed out the doings in the main hall, where an endless stream were fed tea, coffee and cake by members of the Gell Friends committee. They laboured for many hours, amazed at the number of customers: every bit of food was sold and they ran out of the plastic cups for tea. There had been a suggestion that we bring a picnic to see us through the long day: Carol and I chewed ham cobs and sausage rolls in Gell Quad: I had never done that before.

I have not written of the superb library display produced by Phil Richards with hundreds of photos available to view on the computers, which had been loaded and allocated to each decade. Peripatetic musicians were busking all round and some drama presentations appeared in the Gell classrooms. The great failure was the planned programme of walkabouts – no takers, too many old mates to gossip with. But some managed a sentimental wander through their tutor rooms.

Sadly I saw nothing of the sporting competition, though Esmond Tresidder won the cross country: he is an Alpine guide, massively fit and an experienced fell runner. I told my informant that I knew he would win.

I spent most of my time in Gell Quad, talking with former students, parents and colleagues. Carol made me sit as much as possible, but I was often on my wavering legs. I decided to stay until closing time when we packed up our bags and hobbled back to the main entrance, very slowly and interrupted by many encounters. I was exhausted and the tea urn and admin counter (programmes, mugs, quiz and Gell friends application forms) were already closed down.

I thanked a few people and then left, tottering home, my folding chair under one arm, my stick in the other. On the way the final unbelievable vision: Liz Morton with pushchair, wheeling home the tea urn. It was all over.

At home we flopped immediately into bed.

That night I was exhausted, but excited unable to sleep. It had been an unforgettable day.

The names of the Gell Friends who managed the stalls and tea pots deserve record, with apologies to anyone whose name has been omitted. Annie Nelson (brilliant and patient organiser and chair), Anna Bristow (secretary, who made huge notices and set up reminders along the five approach roads to Wirksworth), Liz Morton, Janet Fuller, Loz Wolsey, Agnes Rooney, Sharron Cooper, Cath Rowlatt. Roger Morton and Paul Lovatt helped on the door.

They laboured long and hard.

Rachel Pickford was the chief reporter for Community Fayre.

Finally to Dave Baker, who admits that at the end of the day he was very tired, never before having spoken to so many people on one day. A friend noted that he smiled all day.

Roy Pearce July 2015.

Jane Stanton Wilson wrote on Facebook:

Reunion and celebration of 50 years of comprehensive education at Anthony Gell School Wirksworth. It works well, good mix of social backgrounds, grown from a school founded 400 years ago and in the middle of the Derbyshire Dales. Any aspiring teacher should attend one of these events to hear what a powerful influence teachers and schools are on people's lives. The memories were fascinating - many of them about extra curricular - music, art, poetry, sport, visits abroad. Heart warming, hilarious, sad all at once and so many teachers returning to celebrate one of the best schools you could hope for.



Three generations at Gell Day:
Gladwyn Gratton 1965-68 and Angela Gratton nee Killer 1965-72;
Suzanne Surgey nee Gratton 1986-92; Harrison (2014) and Finlay Surgey (2015)

AFTER GELL DAY.

Anna Bristow, Hon Sec Gell Friends, wrote.

Dear Gell Friend

You may have heard what a fantastic success Gell Day was, or, even better, been there yourself to experience it all. We reckon there must have been about 1000 people attending. It was a day full of smiles, laughter, conversation, memories, music, drama and sport. The Trumpets at Noon were a triumph heralding the four Head Teachers who have led the school over 50 years – Frank Bottomley, Roy Pearce, Rod Leach and, of course, Dave Baker – and welcoming our new Head Teacher, Malcolm Kelly. The staff and students are to be thanked for putting on wonderful performances (music and drama) during the day and for the displays of work in the classrooms. Phil Richards had put together fantastic collages of 100s of photos which were the source of much interest and these can be viewed now by clicking on flickr. You can also click on to see photos taken during the day, starting with the quiet before the storm!

More thanks to the catering staff whose cakes and tray bakes flew off the refreshments tables, to the team of volunteers who kept the tea and coffee flowing and to those welcoming the visitors as they poured through the front door. And very special thanks to Roy Pearce whose vision it was; this is what he wrote to me afterwards -

GELL DAY was a wonderful celebration of our first half century, filled with so many happy people, a real Wirksworth inter-generational grass roots event, springing from a deep affection, gratitude, dare I say love, for Anthony Gell and all it stands for among the generations who have contributed to a special school community over fifty years.

My head is reeling with the stories and the friendship. I guess we will never forget the whole magnificent day. A triumph.

The Gell friends team made an idea floated over a year ago work superbly and many visitors expressed to me their admiration and amazement for the organisation and effort put in by our many helpers. The sun shone, the planning was worthy of D Day, and we had an all round contribution from past and present; inspiration and perspiration. One former student expressed approval and urged that we do it again soon. I told him we would in fifty years. I am sure that I was not the only one exhausted, but very happy.

I think that we might try and find something to celebrate before another fifty years goes by – but not for a while yet!

With best wishes

Anna Bristow – Hon. Secretary Gell Friends

**TO CELEBRATE FIFTY YEARS of AGS
a cricket match was arranged and this became
ROY'S LAST CRICKET PROMOTION.**

The story follows and is a personal view of the events on my 79th birthday, 31st August 2015.

It was a wonderful day. As we pulled the curtains in the morning the rain was falling steadily. 'You'll never play today.' said Carol hopefully.

'It will stop at lunch time,' responded the ever-optimistic promoter. It did and we played, the culmination of a long planned event.

The story begins with the fiftieth anniversary of Anthony Gell School as a community comprehensive school, 1965-2015. We had planned several happy celebrations and I thought last Autumn I ought to warn the prospective Mayor, Councillor Andy Pollock, of likely dates. Andy is great enthusiast and immediately shouted, 'We must have a cricket match.' I smiled enigmatically and groaned inwardly. Andy's enthusiasm for cricket matches my own, but I saw a busy pattern of summer term dates with no room for a cricket match. Andy pressed me and I said I would think about it.

I considered how tired I would be and I was greatly enfeebled after the great Gell Day on 18th July. Eventually I came upon 31st August 2015, Bank Holiday Monday, as the only possible date: my birthday, marking entry into my eightieth year and the last day of the agreed fiftieth celebrations, with David Baker, AGS headteacher leaving at midnight. This would allow me a gap to recover from the great July event and would fill a blank day in the cricket calendar. Nobody sensible wants to leave Wirksworth on a busy Bank Holiday to sit in a traffic jam. The sceptics said everyone would be away. I know that some are still on holiday, but plenty are back from the beach by then. I warned the young players and asked their parents and was surprised how many boys were likely to be available. I checked at the club and Sue Marshall, chair, hard worker, superb organiser of events and school governor said she would be there and would support.

The Mayor was delighted and we set about sending out formal letters from the Mayoral office to potential players.

The Mayor's XI: Andy Pollock, Grant Boden, Keith Boden, Tony Boden, Steve Eaton, Dave Cundy, Clive Howard, Les Kirk, Paul Taylor, Tristan O'Boyle, Michael Whittall

I had planned to use the U15s as the core, reinforced by some older ones. Alas, there are no older ones. Only Beth Harwood in Y12 is still a cricketer and she was away. Fortunately the fifteens, all Gell students, did amazingly well in season 2015 and won two cups, officially the Derbyshire champions for 2015. The selection was clear, the U15s as the team. Most were available and we had a spare keeper, though both Declan and Liam were late casualties. I billed the team as AGSWMCC.

Here is the final eleven: Luke Eaton, Matt Leaske, Charlie Mellor, Billy Rowlatt, Michael Rowlatt, Rou Nash, Charlie Pearce, Richard Tunnicliffe, Harry Wanford (capt), Josef Whitfield, Michael Wright.

I asked two keen parents, Messrs Whitfield and Rowlatt to score and my umpires, after much pursuit were Jack Ritchie and Graham Sellors, both good friends of mine. Joanne nee Davies Wanford volunteered to do some food; bar by Sue Marshall and helpers. Jack Ritchie worked hard to get the ground ready after a wet night and we played with small boundaries on the non-turf pitch.

Report on the match. The rain had stopped and it was time for the cricketers to take the field. This was the first miracle. The others were that we had eleven on each side and the game began before the scheduled 5.00 match time. I had told the young ones to bat first and the Mayor agreed. David Baker, headteacher of AGS, tossed the coin, an honorary appointment, and the U15s batted. I had muttered that they should go for 150 in their twenty overs and they did. The bowling was not testing and we were all out or retired at 25 in the permitted overs. The short boundary enabled the batsmen to score 25 speedily and allowed every one on both sides an innings. I admired the silky skills of young Charlie Mellor, including a beautifully timed pick up off his legs which flew for six. Matt Leaske hit brutally – he is only thirteen, but his timing was top class and he managed to strike several sixes, including one onto the roof of the pavilion. He is not yet regarded as a considerable batsman in the club: they think he is a bowler. My campaign is that he should bat high. They all attacked the bowling and some of the youngsters ran with encouraging assertion. Everybody bowled: the Mayor’s batters were mostly outclassed, though Tristan showed his quality.

But what counted was the positive spirit of good cheer with which both sides played. The juniors roared encouragement at the efforts of their team members, they changed batsmen immediately at a fall of the wicket with the on-field cross and they smiled all the time. It was a smiley day all round.

There were, of course, as usual in cricket matches several oddities. It was amazing that the rain relented and we could play on yielding but not saturated grass. Jack Ritchie marked out the non-turf pitch and it played very well with good pace and reasonable bounce. He also placed the boundary rope strategically, so that batters scored speedily and every one could retire at 25 without taking too much time. There were lots of cheerful sixes. Luke Eaton, sadly was run out for nought (I don’t think he faced a ball), but he gained sweet revenge by dismissing his father with the first ball of the Mayor’s innings.

Carol commented that someone always gets hurt on these occasions. It happened. Paul Taylor was hit by a delivery from Harry Wanford and later tumbled in completing a run. One man down – twice, but I am told he has recovered.

Match Scores.

WMCCAGS	178	
The Mayor of Wircsworth’s XI	145	Match Drawn.

The post match celebrations.

Good cheer permeated the cricket pavilion as we adjourned for food, drink and happy reminiscence. Sue Marshall, as MC, manages these situations smoothly. The Mayor presented the Collard Dawn County Champions Cup and the Derby & District Youth League Cup to Harry Wanford, the U15 captain. Andy made a brilliant speech, especially the section addressed to the young men. Full of good humour he was much applauded. Andy commended their enthusiasm, skill and sporting spirit and complimented the positive links between club and school.

On a busy Bank Holiday evening also present were representatives of the Wirksworth Open Gardens committee, who presented a cheque of £500 to the club to provide coaching for boys and girls in Wirksworth. I was tired, I had to sit down and I couldn't 'work the room' as I used to, but I had warm conversations with nice parents: I remember specially Rowatts, Whitfields and Nashes. None of them believed me when I revealed that this was my final cricket promotion. Nor does Carol. The bar and raffle raised £600.

A last end of an era note. The AGS fiftieth anniversary mugs to each U15 cricketer were presented by David Baker, his last official duty as headteacher of Anthony Gell.

In the cool twilight I staggered out towards the car with stick and two big bags. Rosie Thompson saw me struggling and kindly volunteered to carry the two folding seats on which Carol and I had sat to watch the game. I was shattered, but deeply content: a cricket match played in the best sporting spirit and a warm social gathering of supporters of cricket and AGS.

Now the AGS anniversary celebrations are over and we await the special Gell supplement in the Community Fayre paper. Early to bed.

Among supporters at the ground were:

Mr & Mrs J Thompson, Mr & Mrs G Taylor, Mr TB Foster, Mr C Thompson, Mr & Mrs A Ormond, Mr DL Baker, Mr & Mrs P Tunnicliffe, Mrs Sue Marshall, Miranda & Max Marshall, Mrs T O'Boyle and Noah, Ms V Penrice, Mrs N Pollock, Mr & Mrs D Harvey, Ms I Millward, Mr & Mrs R Hopkinson, Mrs S Leaske, Mr P Bell, Mrs J Boden & Mrs V Thompson, Mr & Mrs H Boam, Messrs Alex & Alan Bunting, Mrs C Eaton, Ms Helen Marshall, Mr C Rosling, Mr & Mrs D Kidger Preston with Declan, Mr S Temperton, Mr & Mrs C Nash with grandmother, Megan, Bethan and friend, Mr M Ingham, Mrs Barbara Wilson, Mr Neil Doxey, Mrs V Howard, Ms J Howard with grandson, Mr Syed Abrar, Mr & Mrs J Wanford with their three children (Thomas, Ruby & Charlie), Mr Ivan Fearn, Mr Peter Riddle and Ms Jane Aitman, Mr Paul Baines and many others.

Roy Pearce 1st September 2015.

GELL ANNIVERSARY TREE

We planted a tree to remember the first fifty years of Anthony Gell School as a community comprehensive school in a brief ceremony at school on Monday 2nd November 2015, a dank, foggy afternoon.

Gell Friends, the group of parents, teachers, students and governors, both past and present, had been encouraged by Loz Wolsey, a long-serving and devoted Gell teacher from 1971, now an active Friend, to consider planting a tree to mark the anniversary. Loz researched the possibilities and consulted Martin Church, the Gell groundsman/caretaker, who will care for the tree. Gell Friends agreed their proposal that we plant a weeping silver birch in the autumn of 2015.

She purchased the tree from Derwent Treescapes of Matlock, who set it in a high position on a mound near the sports centre. Tom Edwards, former student and now Managing Director of Impala Stone of Kirk Langley, arranged the stone and the elegant, professional carving: **Anthony Gell School 1965-2015**.

Three students were chosen to do the official planting with a shining ceremonial spade: sixth former Charlie Ames, (Y13) from Cromford, Robbie Smith (Y9) and Erin Rowlatt (Y7), both from Wirksworth, representing different student age groups.

Annie Nelson, Chair of both AGS governors and Gell Friends, introduced the Mayor of Wirksworth, Councillor Andy Pollock, who made a brief, good-humoured speech. Andy with his strong, professional knowledge of trees praised the choice of a silver birch (*betula pendula*) as a beautiful tree, which would grow speedily and survive strong till the centenary celebration. Thanks were spoken to Loz Wolsey by Chair, Annie Nelson, for her hard work on a successful project.

We gathered for a group photograph, before a welcome cup of tea in the school hall.

Among those present were, roughly from the left in the photograph:

Malcolm Kelly, Heather Harper, Don & Jill Hughes (1965), Katy Lowe, Rosie & John Thompson (both 1965), Michael Hall, Anna Bristow, Annie Nelson, Charlie Ames (Cromford), Robbie Smith (Wirksworth), Erin Rowlatt (Gorse Bank), David Baker, Loz Wolsey, Liz Ormond, Paul Lovatt, Rob & Jennie Few, Stewart McIntyre, Andy Pollock (Mayor of Wirksworth), Chris Thompson, Dot Morris, Carol & Roy Pearce, with representative staff and students and top photoman, Phil Richards, who took a superb photograph.

Roy Pearce November 2015





Five Heads; Messrs Kelly, Pearce, Bottomley, Baker, Leach

