

ANTHONY GELL SCHOOL
1965 - 1985

Anthony Gell School

This magazine tells the story of a Comprehensive School, founded on an ancient tradition, in Wirksworth in 1965. It spans the tentative planning of the 1960s, the growth stage of the 1970s, to the confident achievements of the 1980s. We offer snapshots on the way, conscious that so much has been omitted, but happy in the lively picture that emerges of young people growing to maturity and relishing the life and learning of Anthony Gell in and out of the classroom.

We begin with the hopes and plans of 1964 recorded by Philip Slater, last head at the Grammar School.

HOPING AND PLANNING 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 compulsory schooling. For older pupils, this will be a matter for discussion with them and their parents. Much has been done over the Senior Girls' winter outfit. Above all, the intention is that whatever option is adopted it shall be minimal and inexpensive.

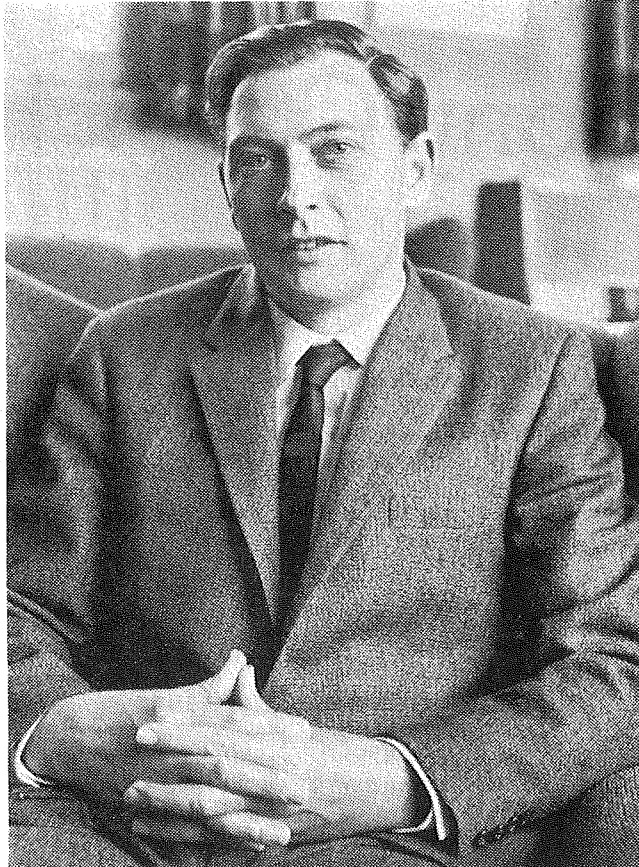
How will the new school work? The basis of the organisation will be the House; four instead of three, each with its own dining/common rooms. It is likely that the present House names will be retained and one added. What about Fearn house, as Agnes Fearn was the school's original benefactor? On admission each 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 – P.E., R.I., 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 specialization will be necessary. Some will take the 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, Language/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 can 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 a Youth Centre which will be used as a Sixth Form Annexe.

It is hoped that 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.



MR. F. BOTTOMLEY
The New Headmaster 1966-71

Mr Bottomley was educated at Oldham, Lancashire, and at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge University. At present he is Headmaster at Raistrick Secondary Modern School, Brighouse, Yorkshire. He previously taught Geography at Hyde Grammar School and was Head of the Geography Department at Harlow Comprehensive School. He will be taking up his post at this school at the beginning of the new year.

He has two daughters, one aged eleven and one eight. The elder daughter will be attending this School and the younger one Hopton Primary School.

Mr. Bottomley enjoys listening to traditional jazz and classical music. He also likes folk music but not so much since it began to become commercialized about three years ago. He plays no instruments himself but he is very much in favour of a school orchestra.

The new Head thinks that school assembly should be "livened up" by using modern tunes occasionally. Drama should be introduced into the reading, as it is already at Raistrick, with two or more pupils reading a Bible dialogue. He is also in favour of more discussion being introduced in Religious Education with pupils expressing their own personal views.

Mr. Bottomley is in favour of retaining the school uniform as it is, with the senior girls, and perhaps later on the senior boys, having a different uniform from the the rest of the School. His favourite artist, by the way is Renoir and his favourite novelist (much to the delight of the sixth form English students) is John Steinbeck.

A closing thought: Mr. Bottomley thought last year's magazine was excellent. Let's hope he thinks the same about this year's.

Victor Hallows and Patricia Scholey, L. VI(Arts).



TWENTY YEARS ON Prospectus 1985

Our aim is for children to leave this school with an ability to learn and a desire to study so that they can meet the demands for adaptability and flexibility which life at the end of this century will require. We hope they will be able to think for themselves and express these ideas through speech, writing or the arts. We want them to understand themselves and other people, to be considerate and thoughtful for the needs of others and for the society in which they live. Our curriculum is planned on this basis.

Many of the teaching classes in school are based on house and tutor groups so that there is a strong link between the academic work of our pupils and the social care we give to them. For pupils who have found learning difficult at primary school level we organise an intensive course in basic skills during the first two years, so for some of the time they work in a small group where their individual needs can be met.

We do not stream our pupils into ability groups when they come to us because we find it neither desirable nor possible to do so. We acknowledge that children develop at different speeds and will show individual abilities. Our intention is to meet these differences by individual learning situations rather than group instruction, and our teaching is organised with this in mind. In the first two years though, we shall be following and assessing the progress of your children with great care. We do not wish at an early stage to make assumptions about your children which may categorise them too firmly for the future. You will understand, however, that as children progress through the school there is a need to adjust our grouping in some subject areas and this is done.

The school believes strongly in valuing equally all our students regardless of race, colour, sex and creed. Our task is to enable all our students to flourish as individuals, to grow to maturity by developing skills and understanding in personal relationships, to seize opportunities for academic and personal enrichment and to grow to adulthood within a civilised and supportive atmosphere.

ANTHONY GELL THE PASSING YEARS

1970 Charity Walk

For several years the Charity Walk was a major event in the Autumn Term. The pioneers were Mr Kitson and Mr Podmore and many pupils trudged down the main road to Duffield and back. From 1971, when 190 pupils walked, we moved to the safer, but colder and hillier High Peak Trail. By 1980 fashions had changed and we walked for the last time. Over the years thousands of pounds were raised for Charity and nobody was lost.

“Sunday May 3, 1970 was a day to remember; its great achievement was briefly summed up by a hastily scribbled note pushed through the Headmaster’s letter box at about 6.30 pm. It read, “All pupils back safely, no incidents or accidents, total amount sponsored £850, what an achievement, what kids!”

In the morning, after the last walker had set out on the 20 mile route, we had settled down to the task of working out the amount per mile for which each pupil had been sponsored, and it all looked promising, but of course we could only guess at what the grand total would be.

It was like waiting for the election results to come through; from time to time we received reports from the Route Marshalls which told us that the walkers were going strongly, then later the leg-weary foot-sloggers began to report back to base and the sponsored sum grew and grew; it was almost unbelievable; the previous year’s total of £500 was passed and finally there it was, the magnificent sum of £850.

Walkers and workers, thanks a million, you did a grand job.

The money has now been allocated to the following charities: Shelter, Christian Aid, Dr Barnado’s Homes, National Children’s Homes, Invalid Children’s Aid Association, Royal National Society for the Blind, Association for Spina Bifida and Multiple Sclerosis.

We have retained a little of the money; it will enable us to respond to any urgent emergency appeal, should it be made to us, as it frequently is.

Will we have another Charity Walk? I would like to think so! But there are certain factors which must be taken into account, not least the safety one. However, I am sure you will find a way to go on helping those less fortunate than ourselves.”

W F Podmore

1971 Oliver

This notable production by Wendy Hepplewhite with a mixed pupil/staff cast took over the School at Christmas time. The final rehearsal lasted till midnight and anxious parents complained, but the result was an unforgettable success with music, dance and drama blending. Sam Fay’s report for the Derbyshire Times reflects the joyous occasion.

“What can you say when a school moves out of the well-trodden traditional paths of end-of-term productions to stage a show like “Oliver” with such tremendous success as the Anthony Gell School, Wirksworth, achieved last week-end?

The customary superlatives seem strangely inadequate to pay tribute, firstly to the courage and confidence of staff and pupils in tackling a modern musical, with all the pitfalls of possible comparison with the professionals; and secondly, to the zest and expertise with which they put over an immensely enjoyable and memorable production.

The production merited top marks on all counts. A 25-piece orchestra under Mr Keith Blood, Head of the school’s Music department, composed mainly of experienced instrumentalists but including a number of pupils, set the right pace and tempo, and the response from the performers was more than adequate.

With an open-plan stage set in the gymnasium adjoining the main assembly hall, imaginative scenery – all built in the school – was used fluently and effectively to portray settings ranging from the workhouse through Fagin’s notorious den to London Bridge.

Such was the superb teamwork in a cast of over 60 that it seems almost invidious to single out individual performances. But the rich promise of 16 year old Jill Atkins as the hapless “Nancy” cannot be ignored. In an out-standing contribution, Jill sang sweetly, had a fetching Cockney accent, and in every way captured the character most convincingly.

One of the most delightful features was the obvious enthusiasm of the children who appeared variously as Fagin’s and workhouse boys, workhouse assistants, Bow Street runners, acrobats, and street vendors – clearly they enjoyed their involvement.

Miss Wendy Hepplewhite, a painstaking producer; Mr Blood, as musical director; Angela Bennett, the choreographer, and all concerned in the show well deserved their reward of capacity houses for each of the four performances.”

1972 Pastoral Care: A PROFESSIONAL VIEW OF AGS

Michael Marland’s book on Pastoral Care has been one of the key books in the development of comprehensive schools. He visited AGS and included the school as one of his case studies.

“You can swoop down by car to School 1, from the amazing hillsides of Derbyshire into a small valley town. The School has the most staggering views in those directions of the distant areas from which a large number of the pupils come each day. Once a small-town grammar school, its old buildings are still retained as one of the new comprehensive’s houses.

This is one of the most strongly house-oriented schools that I have come across. It has been found possible to group the tutor group for each house in a geographical unit. The entire guidance and counselling system, including careers guidance, is based within the house, and the heads of these houses, each with about 160 pupils, have great power. They seem to relate almost directly to the headmaster.

It will be realized that having four houses in such a small school reduces the pupil case-load per house to well below the usual average – in this case only 160 pupils per house. This means that the heads of the houses really do know their pupils closely. It was very noticeable to me, though, that this produces another effect: each housemaster has only six or seven tutors for whom he is responsible. These really are small, closely knit working teams. Tutors stay with the groups as long as possible, and it is thought that ‘weak tutors are helped by the system’. They are consulted on all disciplinary matter, take a large part in careers advices, and are clearly well briefed and active, covering all aspects of school life.

It was interesting to see the school at lunch, in house dining-rooms. The vertical groups break up into 'family group' tables, with about eight pupils of all ages. A sixth-form pupil comes back, not only to her own house, but actually to her old tutor group. It is noticeable that in this pattern the sixth former who has separated off from the house to join peers feels a stronger continuing loyalty to the house, for there are still pupils within the house groups who have grown up alongside him or her. The 'return' of the sixth-former to supervise a table was not in itself unusual, but when combined with vertical groups provided a very real link, as the 'table' of six or eight were all not only from the sixth-former's house but from his or her own actual tutor group.

Heads of houses carry the responsibility for maintaining close links with the contributing primary schools. This is made easier by geographical recruitment to the houses. This means that each has a defined and reasonably limited catchment area and groups of schools. Among the advantages of this system are the easy settling in to the school, the possibility of effective liaison between house and primary schools, and the practical point for a scattered community of making transport for house-based activities so much easier. However, there was some fear among senior staff lest the already limited social mix of the rural communities had been hardened by the restricted entry to the houses."



1973 THE SCHOOL BAND IN CONCERT

Keith Blood's Brass Band is a legend. Roger Jepson was the first to blow a cornet and from that beginning sprang distinguished musicians, some of whom are now professionals, many of whom contribute to local musical groups. The following article appeared in Radio Times and was headed:

"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 BBC 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 50 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, it's 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, 'Colonel 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 on 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're carrying an instrument case in the street of Wirksworth, people will stop you to offer congratulations.

As 15 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 on a 40-seater bus. You can't help having a social life.'

1975 PUPIL POWER MEANS CARING **from the Derbyshire Times**

PUPIL POWER rules . . . at Wirksworth's Anthony Gell School.

But this particular power is not directed towards aggro or vandalism, but into working and caring for the community.

One old-age pensioner in the town said this week: "We've never had it so good. They look after us so well."

She was referring to pupils at the town's comprehensive school, who over the past five years have poured hours of their own time into making life a little better and more enjoyable for others.

Those receiving the service range from toddlers and teenagers to pensioners and foreign countries.

Possibly the most impressive aspect of the school's community service is that the youngsters seem to love every minute of it.

Take Jeremy Shaw (14) and Andrew Mart (15) for example . . . Every week they put away the school books and turn their backs on the blackboard to visit a house at Steeple Grange, Wirksworth.

There they drink tea with a lady resident, chat and help out with a variety of chores. The lady happens to be 88 years old, and she finds their help invaluable.

"We do things like cleaning out cupboards, cleaning windows and other jobs outside her reach," said Andrew.

Jeremy added: "We've been wanting to do her garden but the weather has stopped us . . ."

Jeremy and Andrew are only two at the school who help out old people – there are many others.

Just because the school closes for a holiday now and again, it doesn't mean the visits stop. The pupils do not just stop at visits either, for every so often they arrange a film show and social evening for groups of pensioners.

Fourteen year old Sharon Archer explains: "Some of us stay behind after school to arrange things. Then we show a film – ranging from James Bond to "Carry On's" – and provide tea. Sometimes they have a whip round at the end, which helps with our funds."

Recently the pupils have received a letter of thanks from residents at Griggs Garden who attended such an event.

In charge of the films are Desmond Martin and Mark Sayer – both 15 – who hire them from the town's youth club. Tracey Bowmer (15) has helped organise four parties for the children from Matlock's Ernest Bailey House this year.

Surprisingly, the school's community service has spread to a small Indian village . . . Cash raised by the Wirksworth school kids means that a young Indian boy is able to attend school and take exams. Later it is hoped he will be able to pass on some of his education to others in his village.

Every year £36 is sent via Oxfam – to India to pay his school fees and to buy books and clothes. Closely involved with that project is Ruth Timmins (14).

1976 AND ALL THAT

In 1976 we celebrated the quartercentenary of the original foundation of AGS. We were honoured by a visit from the Duke of Gloucester who unveiled the memorial plaque in the School hall. We published an elegant magazine looking back over many years and 150 pupils, parents and staff visited Hopton Hall for tea, reviving a long tradition. The Bishop of Derby preached at the Founders' Service and over 200 friends of the School attended the anniversary reception in the School hall.

"How can I capture the flavour of this school at a particular moment in cold February 1976? Each one of us will have very personal reactions to life at AGS. As Headmaster I begin by acknowledging that the school is the sum of individual personalities. Whatever the Head may contrive in timetable, administration, management techniques, exhortation, perspiration or desperation, our school will only be what we as pupils, parents and teachers make it. When I ponder AGS in 1976 I see opportunity. The range, the facilities, the expertise of teachers, the enthusiasm and commitment of our students extend each year.

As I write after school, 30 pupils from year 4 are in residence at Lea Green, the band is rehearsing for a concert, the basketball squad is playing Derby School in the gym, and a Housemaster is interviewing a newcomer to the school with her parents. At lunchtime a visitor from Action in Distress – a charity to raise money for children of the third world – talked to the junior assembly, 300 first and second years. One day's events.

At other times the sixth form have visited plays and concerts, the House of Commons, and last week the local Magistrates' court. Recently they talked with the Deputy Governor of Sudbury Prison. They travel the country on interview – Manchester for Metallurgy, Kent for Law. Our fifth form are involved in Preparation for Parenthood, organising a mother and baby club each Friday afternoon. At Christmas they arranged a party providing their own Santa, Stephen Wain in disguise. On Friday morning our mini-bus travels to Derby College, where fifteen students study Hairdressing and Engineering. The fourth year dared an adventure week at Buxton in hazardous weather. They climbed, canoed, walked, caved and remained cheerfully resilient. At half term a third year party goes to Germany, while seniors are skiing in Austria. Our French exchange takes 20 pupils to Paris at Easter. Our second year cricketers wrote to the Minister of Sport and are practising all winter under the guidance of Ian Buxton at Lea Green. The first year travelled to Chester Zoo to study animal behaviour.

In sport Victor Rhodes and Mark Smith are British Wrestling champions, two of our runners will represent Derbyshire in the inter-county cross country races and Chris Allwood is a county soccer representative. Penny Woodruff was a national gymnastics finalist.

The houses are full of activity, a council in Wright, girls' football in Arkwright, Fearne dominating the sports field. Gell House council has arranged discos, films for old people and a handicapped children's party. They are supporting an Indian village boy with the money they raise.

Music thrives. Hear them. The choir sings, the band blows, the orchestra floods, the jazz club swings, the brass quartet booms, the wind quintet plays so elegantly. Derek Taylor plucks his guitar to near professional standard. Mr Blood, very calm, smiles.

In class a rash of new subjects, or old subjects made new; Nuffield Science, Bruner's MACOS, Social Education, Schools Maths Project, Parenthood, Textiles, Technical Studies. In Maths we use calculators, in English video-tapes, in French a space age language lab. Tape recorders abound. What is a resources centre? We foster bantams, rabbits, locusts and mice. Yes, Education in 1976 is full of theory, jargon and technical aids. And I omit so much.

But it is people who matter. Our parents are long-suffering, uncomprehending at times, steadfastly supporting. Our staff work very hard and care very much. Visitors comment on this, many coming in the last year not only from this country but from America, New Zealand, Africa and Japan. Our fame spreads, but our essential task remains to care for the children of Wirksworth. These young people have a wealth of opportunity never offered before in our 400 year history. It is to their credit that so many of them seize the chance eagerly. I am optimistic about the younger generation – their honesty, their vigour, their commitment to life. Floreat Anthony Gell.”



A group of Gell Fifth Formers with Mr. Foster, 1969.

1979 THE COMING OF THE COMPUTER

Peter Avis had been attached to Rolls Royce on a Teacher in Industry Fellowship in 1978 and returned to school determined that computers should become a major part of our school lives. The Department of Industry (with Tony Benn as its Minister) granted us £25,000 and we raced ahead. The technology was important and Michael Hooton reached the final of Young Engineer of Great Britain, but our young boffins retained their humanity and presented their work to important audiences of industrialists all over the country. They put Wirksworth on the microchip map.

Gell school takes the lead in a unique £25,000 project

With 400 years of history behind it, one of Derbyshire's oldest schools, the Anthony Gell, Wirksworth, is taking the lead in an exciting dip into the future.

The school has been chosen for a unique experiment geared to equipping pupils to take their place in industry in the silicon chip age.

First of its kind in the county, and one of the first in the country, a two-years' project is to be launched at the Anthony Gell in January based on the use of microcomputers in machine control and other industrial applications.

The Department of Industry and Derbyshire Education Committee together have invested £25,000 in the scheme – the Department is meeting 75 per cent of the cost, and the County Council 25 per cent.

Said a County Council spokesman: "We view this unique project as one of great importance. We will be looking at it very closely as a pioneer scheme which, if it is successful, might well be extended to other schools in the county."

The aim is to give students experience in practical work with computers, and to forge stronger links between schools and industry in the light of new technology.

Leading the project is Mr Peter Avis, who, at the age of 30 has just taken over as head of the Anthony Gell's mathematics department after five years on the staff.

Mr Avis, a chemico-physics graduate of Sussex University, recently spent a school term on secondment to Rolls-Royce Ltd., Derby, to gain first-hand know-how of the application of computers to industry.

He saw how they were used to control lathes and cutters, and to cut discs for aero-engines.

Said Mr Avis: "Schools – ourselves among them – have done computer courses before. That is nothing really new. But this is different in that the project will provide the equipment and facilities to encourage people to design and produce their own controlled devices."

"What we are trying to do is close the gap between the schools and industry. Technology is here to stay, and young people are entitled to know what it is all about."

Twenty-five fourth and fifth year students will be involved in the project. Mr Avis stressed that the aim was to make the course creative and exciting, and to help the pupils to acquire skills in technological areas which would include simple programming, design, mechanics and structures.

Not only will the Anthony Gell pupils become aware of the application of the silicon chip industry, but they will be given the opportunity to build controlled machines – including small robots.

They will work on such projects within the project as a model railway controlled by computers.

The school has its own computers, with a group of students so enthusiastic that they give up part of their lunchtime break to gain experience of working with them.

Two of the pupils, 15-years-old Catherine Howard and Michael Hooton (14) have together contributed an article to the magazine "Schools Technology" describing their work.

Mr Avis summed up the project target: "Traditionally, the computer had been treated in schools as a mathematical tool. But there is an obvious need to look at other applications. We have to make education in this field more relevant to the needs of industry and commerce."

The silicon chip project represents a major extension to the Anthony Gell's long-established policy of seeking stronger link-ups with industry and commerce, particularly in the Wirksworth area.

Said Mr George Boden, senior master who co-ordinates careers education at the school: "We have been greatly encouraged by the response from local employers. We value very highly the manner in which they have made possible visits by pupils to their factories and offices. In addition they or their representatives have visited the school to give talks to the pupils, and to exchange ideas with teachers."

Mr Boden added that all the school's teaching staff were involved in careers education. "The team approach to solving the individual's occupational or vocational problems has many advantages.

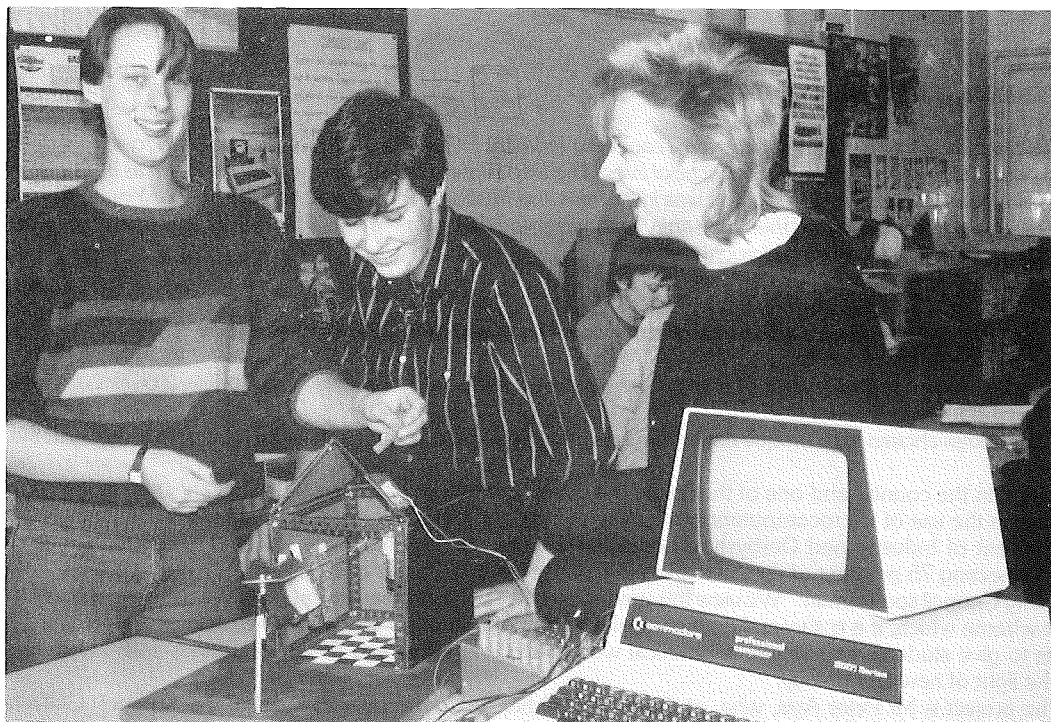
"The aim is to provide guidance and information so that the transition from school to the world of work can be made smoothly and successfully."

1979 ANTHONY GELL AND INDUSTRY

This report of a speech by Charles Brown, one of our School Governors, reflects a different world from the mid 1980's when our leavers face severe problems as they seek jobs.

Anthony Gell and Industry link-up pays good dividends

School leavers at Wirksworth are going straight into jobs through a link-up between Anthony Gell school and local industry, Councillor Charles Brown told West Derbyshire industrial committee.



Councillor Brown, a district council Wirksworth ward member, claimed outstanding success for a scheme introduced last year in which Anthony Gell school staff and senior pupils visited firms in the district.

"They have found out what industry wants and now they are trying to turn out pupils prepared for jobs in the area," he said.

"Of all the children who have left Anthony Gell in the past three terms only one has failed to find employment."

Councillor Brown said that unless education authorities and industry nationally cooperated in similar schemes there was a danger that the present educational system would turn out increasing numbers of people who were unemployable.

1979 OPEN EVENING

By the end of the 1970's optimism was in short supply and the extract from the Open Evening programme reflects the concern of the Head about "the cuts".

"Yet you will know of the imminent and drastic cuts, running to millions of pounds, in Education services. I honestly regard these as a threat to the heart of our school. We are no longer trimming the edges of a prosperous service, but facing major reductions in the quality of education available to our children. Since I came to Wirksworth we have seen significant worsening in our staffing ratio. We now face the loss of teachers with consequent increase in class sizes and reduction in range of subjects. I fear for our splendid Remedial Department, which working with small groups who need special tuition has produced outstanding results, for our gifted pupils whose intellects need to be sharpened, for our examination option pattern which has given *all* our pupils an enviable choice, for our education in Music, the Creative Arts, Community Service, Parenthood, Careers, and Technology, which require small group work to be taught effectively. I am anxious for basic standards in Maths, English, and Science when groups become bigger, as they inevitably will. Our proud House system with time found to care for your children is under threat. Surely as a nation we should be improving our investment in the young, not imposing devastating cuts on a future generation. I write as a parent of young children as well as a teacher in opposing utterly a policy that reduces educational opportunity in the state sector on this scale. I am unconvinced that as a nation we are too poor to provide adequately for our schools."



Gell House

Carol Lake

1980 THE TOWN IS OUR CLASSROOM

The Civic Trust Wirksworth Project became deeply involved with the School and provided a big impetus in our Community Education developments. We were involved with the other Wirksworth schools in a major exhibition held in the Parish Church called Our Town Our Schools. The following report appeared in Heritage Education.

"In 1978 the Civic Trust, with the support of the county, district and town councils, inaugurated the Wirksworth Project. This aims to support local people in building the prosperity of the town and enhancing the quality of life.

The significant role in this for young people and the local schools soon became clear. The Wirksworth Heritage Education Group was set up, sponsored by the Derbyshire LEA, with membership expanding beyond teachers to include architects, planners, environmental officers and representatives of the Wirksworth Civic Society.

The group aimed to stimulate an appreciation of the local community and an understanding of the town, past and present. We wanted young people to be aware of problems and possibilities for future development.

Eileen Adams of the Schools Council Art and the Built Environment Project visited. We were stimulated by her ideas and saw new ways of developing our pupils' work. All our schools had been involved in environmental studies over the the years, but the Wirksworth Project and active local community involvement have extended its vigour and range considerably.

As part of his work, project director Gordon Michell met groups of senior pupils. The young people were interested, positive in criticism and suggestion and active in following up ideas.

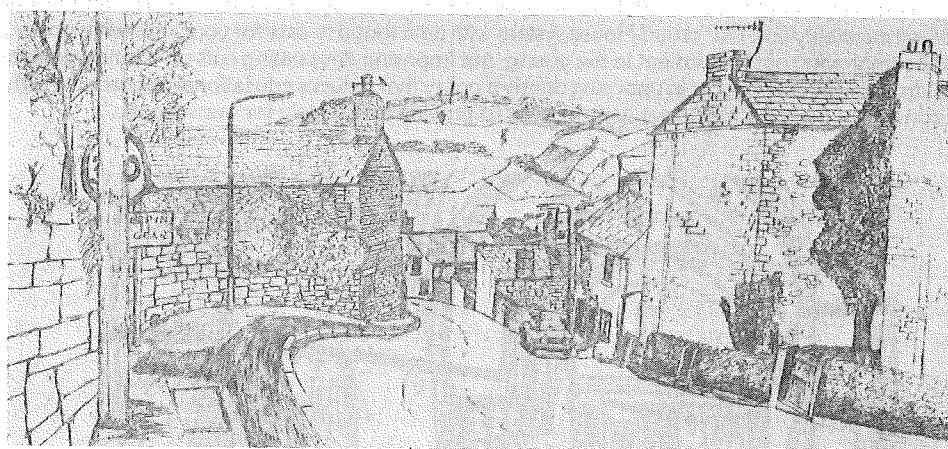
The paucity of opportunities and facilities for leisure and social activities in the town was highlighted, along with problems in communications and transport, which bear hardest on the social life of the oldest members of the community and on its teenagers. The absence of shops aimed at the teenage market was also noted.

After vigorous discussion, a group of lower sixth form students undertook a survey of clubs and societies, which was later published as a town guide. They discovered a whole range of small groups which operate quietly, almost under cover.

Secondary pupils carried out a land use survey, sketched the many historic buildings, worked with the Derbyshire Schools/Industry Liaison Officer on a survey of local industry and interviewed members of the community. Teachers and pupils relished the variety of tasks and a lively record of community life emerged.

So much good work had been produced that we felt the need to present it as widely as possible. The Derbyshire Art Adviser co-ordinated our efforts and an exhibition called *Our Town, Our Schools* was mounted in the Parish Church as the centrepiece of Wirksworth Festival Week.

The exhibition was a success. The quality of work was impressive. The town was proud of its children; the schools encouraged by praise and support in hard times."



Wirksworth, Derbyshire, by Paul Richardson, a former pupil at Anthony Gell School.

1981 MY FIRST HALF-TERM IN THE FOURTH YEAR

In the classroom our pupils work hard and Richard Tucker captured the hopes and anxieties of a conscientious fourth former who is trying to meet academic pressures and sustain a range of extra-curricular interests.

"Before the term began, I had some idea of what school would be like in the fourth year. As I had already studied the Sciences, French, Maths, English, and Music, I thought I knew what to expect in these subjects. I was apprehensive about Physics because everyone said that it would be difficult to understand. I would also be taking Humanities and Social Education and I did not know what to expect in these subjects. I was sorry that I would not be doing P.E., especially Rugby.

I knew that I would have to work hard because Mr Mills had told me to expect about ten hours homework each week. I thought that I would not have much spare time. I intended to work hard, because I wanted to get good 'O' levels so that I would stand a chance of getting a job or of going into some branch of higher education. Mr Mills had emphasised the importance of first gaining qualifications to give me the choice of what I wanted to do in life. I have no real idea of what I want to do in the the future.

In the third year, one of my main interests had been Music and I hoped to remain in the band and during break and dinner time I expected to meet my friends in the Music room.

I have had to work hard. In fact, some weeks I have worked for four hours each evening and for fourteen hours at the weekend. This may be because I am not used to having so much to do and there is a great deal of note copying in the three Sciences. In Physics, I have nearly filled two note books in eight weeks. To make neat notes I have to write slowly; therefore I am learning to work less neatly and more quickly.

The subject I enjoy most is Humanities. We have been learning about Law and Order. I like the way in which the subject is presented and the discussions. I particularly enjoyed a visit to Derby Magistrates Court and during the half-term holiday I went to the Magistrates Court at Matlock. If I stay on at school I might study something like Humanities.

Some days at school are worse than others. On Wednesday, week 2, I have Maths, Physics, Chemistry, and Biology. I am writing all day and each teacher usually sets homework. I like to go to the Disco which is generally on this evening. Therefore I have to copy up my notes as quickly as I can. I think that it would be better if teachers did not expect homework for the day following the lesson, but I suppose that Science notes should be copied up before the next lesson. We do have a homework timetable but the teachers do not always tend to take notice of this. As in the third year, at break and dinner time I go to the Music room. I do not belong to any club, other than the "Music Room Mafia".

1981 MR PEARCE'S SMOKY THURSDAY

Today is bright and sunny, I suppose that's one of the things that you notice when you know something is going to go wrong. And it did! All the class were sitting in the first lesson, which was English, on a warm, but misty day. The lesson was different from usual, and so I suppose that's what made everything all the more exciting. Mr Pearce was taking us for one of the odd English lessons. Everything went quite smoothly, until about ten minutes after the lesson had begun. That's when the trouble really started!

Mr Pearce was quite calmly reading out to us from one of Charles Dickens' books when suddenly he looked up, his face went a peculiar white. With a shocked voice he exclaimed, "There's smoke coming out of that car!" All eyes diverted outside, past the windows to look at the car. I suddenly felt an air of tension, well, more like panic, and so everybody silently watched, until one bright spark shouted, "Look sir, it's smoking, I bet it's a short circuit." That was Danny, who of course was the know-all on cars and lorries.

Mrs Merigold came into the car park, all in a panic, shouting, "Get Joe, somebody get Joe". She had quite clearly gone pale, and was nervous with it. Eventually Mr Gould and Mr Weston turned up. I could almost tell what Mr Gould was thinking. "Trust that to happen to me, and at a time like this as well".

They tried to force the bonnet open, but it got stuck. Still more and more smoke puffed out, gradually going up into the sky, and disappearing.

By now everybody was evacuated from the school buildings under Mr Pearce's supervision. Out on the redgra everybody was gabbling excitedly about the news, "Mr Gould's car is on fire," "Mr. Gould's car is about to blow up."

Of course in our group I was the centre of it all because I had experienced it. Everybody likes to add their own spicy bits to stories; well, so do I, and I did!

Suddenly we were all lined up, and as the tutor called out our names, the fire engine sped away. Another emergency stopped for the day. Then everybody was given orders to go back to their lessons. The excitement had finished and you could hear the remainders of the news, as people left, running, walking, shouting, talking, smiling, laughing and somebody was even whistling!

And now, as I sit here trying to put my recollections into words, I realise that today has been a truly exciting day. Even though we did miss half of our English lesson!

1982 AMBITIONS

Year 5 students wrote:

I hope to have a job as a top hairdresser in one of the big salons. Firstly I would like to go on a Hairdressing and Beauty course at Derby for two years. I am trying to get a Saturday job in one of the local hairdressers till I leave school.

I think the prospects of finding a job when I leave are bleak. I have the idea of studying agriculture and I am sure I want to work in that line, so I am applying for an introductory course.

I am looking forward to next year considerably. At last after sixteen years my schooling is leading to something. I plan to get as many of my five O levels as I can and to stay in the sixth form with the hope of getting two A levels. I shall look very carefully at the many prospectuses I have obtained from colleges of agriculture and decide which are the top five for me to apply to.

I would like to be a shop assistant or a factory worker with sewing machines.

I think the whole thing about getting jobs nowadays is getting worse because you're always thinking what's going to happen if you don't get a job. I don't want to sit at home all my life and this will be worrying me for the year to come. I would like to think of myself in a year's time doing an apprenticeship and going to the Tec once a week, but I wouldn't like to stay on at school.

When I leave school I shall be working with my dad making pallets and repairing them.

I will be staying on in the sixth form to do Maths and Physics at A level. I wish to go into computers.

Hopefully when I leave school I will either get a job or go on the Youth Opportunities Scheme. I'm hoping not to go on the dole, not yet at any rate.

When I leave I hope to get a job as a HGV fitter and then go on to work with my father in our haulage business.

In a year's time I hope to have passed my O levels and be taking French in the sixth form. After A level I would like to go to University to study languages.

I have two possible jobs in mind, police work or social worker. I can't go into the police till I am eighteen. If I train as a social worker I would be able in the end to apply for both jobs and if I didn't like one I could change to the other.

I want to work on the stage, drama or dancing. I've been told it's not easy to get in but there is nothing else I want to do. If I don't do acting on the stage I could maybe do choreographing or directing.

1983 NO ORDINARY THURSDAY

I woke at 6.45, drank the hot sweet tea that sat on my bedside table, fell out of bed and found my way to the bathroom. I turned the cold water tap on and placed my face under the running water. Suddenly my eyes were opened to a bright new world. I quickly dressed in my old jeans, sweater on inside out. I put on my coat and shoes, shouted bye to Mum, ran down the drive, crossed the road, picked up the daily papers and was on my way by about seven o'clock.

It was Thursday 22nd September, the sun shining high above in the pale blue sky. I didn't really like ordinary Thursdays because everybody who I delivered to had a "Matlock Mercury" as well as a daily paper and the papers weighed a ton. Anyway this was no ordinary Thursday.

I arrived home at about half past seven expecting to find various things waiting for me. I couldn't believe it, it was as though nothing special had happened fifteen years ago. Well it was important to me! I carried on as if nothing was wrong. I had my breakfast: bacon, egg, mushrooms, and a slice of bread with a cup of tea. I dressed for school and Mum took me to the place I was to spend the rest of the day. I felt a little mad, annoyed with my parents and relatives.

Today would still be a good day. I had all my favourite lessons and hockey practice at dinner time, yes all in all it would be O.K. I went to tutor, the Biology lab. The long trudge up those stairs didn't seem as long today. I wished Mrs Gibbon a "Happy Birthday", my tutor. I always remembered her birthday. First lesson I had Biology. It's a good subject, you learn how animals and humans work, so to speak. I also like my teacher who explains things and helps you. German was my second lesson. Now this teacher makes you work hard and sometimes has rather complicated lessons, but I enjoy the challenge and usually end up doing well. German is a lot easier than French for a start, this is one of the reasons why I prefer German.

At break I ate my sandwiches as usual, but I had chicken sandwiches which was a surprise. I walked up to the Chemistry Lab, with Pat. Chemistry is another of my favourite subjects. I like doing experiments although when any danger is involved I tend to become rather nervous. An advantage of doing O level Chemistry is that you don't have to do a practical exam as you have to for C.S.E. I am sure I would drop and spill everything. I like most of my teachers and Mrs. Gibbon is one of them.

Hockey practice next. I hope Mrs Austin doesn't make us run about a lot. Usually she lets us have a rest if we are gasping for breath, which is more than Miss Powell lets us do. I was quite pleased with my performance. I scored two goals, one from a penalty corner. I was still a little scared to go in for tackles as I had one unfortunate experience with Tracy Wilson and her hockey stick, and got five stitches on my forehead.

My last lesson was Humanities, which is quite a relaxing lesson. I like to talk about things that are happening in the world. I also like to look at programmes and films on the television. We watched a film on the war in Beirut which lasted all lesson.

The bell went, the school day was over, a sigh of relief. Before I knew it I was on my way home on the Trent bus. I jumped down the steep steps of the bus and began my long struggle up the drive. I walked into the house and dropped down dead! There before me the table was set out: cakes, jellies, sandwiches, sausage on sticks, pineapple and cheese on sticks, crisps and a beautiful birthday cake. It read "Happy Birthday Tracey". Around the table were my Mum, Dad, brother, sister, and many other relatives.

Tracey Ennis, Arkwright Year 4

1983 THAT GLENBROOK WEEK

School for me means sparkling, bright, new, young teachers bounding with energy, completely dedicated to helping their pupils, eager to give them the initiative, allowing them to show what they're like and who they are.

Our Glenbrook week for instance: the theme, the ever-present atmosphere, was one of pupil initiative. From the Glenbrook centre to Castleton is only a few miles, along beautiful country lanes, winding and bending their way to the picturesque little village of Castleton, where the occasional roar of a juggernaut, or a noisy band of school children are the only things that break the hilly silence. In our ultra-modern minibus one of the pupils was given a map and told, "It's all yours." It truly proves the remarkable learning ability that all fourteen year olds seem to possess when faced with an exciting and demanding problem.

Walking was a major occupation on the Glenbrook week. We were led on two intrepid yomps in the Derbyshire countryside. The first, was over previously unexplored and unmapped terrain. With nothing but Glenbrook kitchen knives we fought off marauding bears and wild Derbyshire savages. Our two guides protected us manfully (which was very good going really considering one of them was Mrs. Austin) and supplied us with a scintillating running commentary, enriching our educational lives and pushing our worldly frontiers ever wider. Our other expedition was circumnavigating the freshwater lake: Ladybower.

As we walked through the wood, the lake would occasionally come into view. By the end of the day there was more than one person who was sure they'd seen something moving. Just a ripple or a splash. A slight movement, perhaps it was nothing. But could it be . . . ?

Thomas Thomas

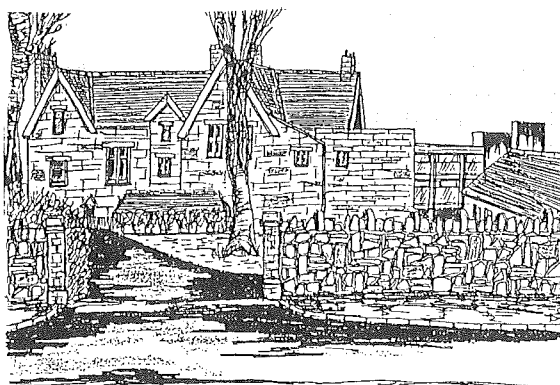
1977-84 AGS PEDALS AND MEDALS

You should see them sprint up Cromford Hill!

In 1977 our cyclists, coached by Harry Gould of Matlock Cycling Club, became the National Hill Climbing Champions. The team (Mark Hughes, Simon Vaughan and Tim Gould) beat all comers at Cambridge, but complained that there were no real Derbyshire hills on the course. We retained the over 15 title in 1978 with John Hartland joining the team and in 1979 this team won the senior time trial. We were also National Time Trial Champions in 1984 (Robin Gould, Shaun Vallance and Richard Pearson).

Individually Tim Gould has been our top cyclist coming fourth in the National Championships at the age of 12 and in 1981 winning his international vest and being our leading rider as a winning member of the Great Britain Junior Cyclo Cross Team at the World Championships. He is now a respected international rider, and brothers Julian and Robin, who last year was fifth in the National Hill Climbing Championship, carry on the family tradition.

Not to be outdone Emma Wood was the fastest girl in the National Hill Climb and in 1984 was the Girls National Time Trial Champion setting a new Competition record. We are grateful to Matlock Cycling Club for their support in training our young riders in all weathers over Derbyshire's hilly roads.



THE SKULL

Yvonne Morley's poem written when she was in the third year won a prize of £10 in the Daily Mirror Literary Competition which attracted 47,000 entries from this country and the Commonwealth.

Old and ancient
Crusty
Pale and grey like the sight of dust,
Twisted bones once strong and powerful,
Hard and lumpy.
Smells of a death that occurred in Egypt,
Naked and antique
Teeth that were soft and crumbly
softness lurches in its mouth
jaws of vicious nature,
Ragged, naked, and sharp
Empty sockets
Angelique
Dead as though it entered the sea
and came out,
Care torn spiritual like
Dinted naked and old
Ruins parts of feebleness, worn
Shavings tarnished, grey
Open and dead.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS BY FIRST YEARS AUTUMN 1984

During their first term, Year 1 wrote:

When I wake up in the morning I always look forward to school.

I thought that all the pupils here would be bullies. I was mistaken because pupils here are very helpful.

Active Tutorial Work I find quite interesting.

I think having three lessons in the morning is a good idea and then having a long dinner break and just one lesson in the afternoon.

In Man we are doing a talk. I think it is good because you can make it as long as you want and plan it out at home.

I like the homework because it keeps you occupied at night time.

My favourite dinner is chips, mushy peas and hot dog. For pudding I like doughnuts and milk shake.

I have joined the Computer Club.

I try and do as many clubs as I can at dinner because I enjoy them very much. Here is a list of the things I do – choir, dance, gym and netball twice.

My favourite subject is English and that is brilliant with hundreds of books to choose from.

In Science we mix chemicals and find heat and volume.

When I started AGS I felt quite strange because at my old school I was the biggest and the oldest, but now I am the smallest.

You have to be more grown up and look after a number of things.

I hate Cross Country. They send us out on freezing cold days.

I have enjoyed Technology. We made a buzz box.

My favourite lesson is English because I like writing stories and drawing pictures.

Before I came I worried that I might get lost as it is much bigger here than at my old school. I found my way quite well though and knew the whole school by the end of the first two weeks.

I think the lunchtime clubs are great.

I like AGS because it gives you freedom.

I am very glad we have years 1-5 in my tutor group. My tutor is Mrs Gregory and I find her very easy to get on with. I like to feel there is someone I can talk to.

A THIRD YEAR REFLECTS ON HER LIFE IN 1984

I didn't know anyone when I first came to this school but I know lots of people now. I'm not as shy as I used to be when I was in the first year because I know more people and know my way around. I'm not much taller and like different clothes – I hate the hairstyle I had in the first year and some of the clothes I used to wear even though I didn't have many. I still like some of the pop groups and have different magazines. I have more jobs to do at home and I don't think I grumble about doing them much now because I know I can't win. I get on better with my brother because there's no point in arguing because he's older and always thinks he's right. I can never win an argument with him. I don't watch so much TV partly because I think lots of programmes are boring and I can't concentrate on them and would usually prefer to listen to the radio or tape recorder. I spend nearly all my time in my room except for when I go to see friends or have to do jobs or eat. I eat more now and drink lots of coffee. I hate my family teasing me about me wearing jumpers in hot weather; it's up to me if I want to wear jumpers. Maybe it's because I feel the cold more so it's not fair when they tease me about this which is quite often. You're also expected to be more responsible.

I hate uniform and hate to wear it but I like the school itself partly because it's not very big and it's not rough like city schools. I don't really like school dinners because I'm fussy and there's not much there that I like.

I wish there was more to do at night after school and I like buying clothes and going to discos and collecting pop magazines, jewellery and pop posters. I have four pen pals and like receiving and writing long letters to them. I don't find Christmas and birthdays as exciting as I used to. My old house is nicer than the one I live in now I decided recently. I think my mum and dad tease me more. I go to bed later and have more pocket money. I don't eat so many sweets. I don't like sports as much or swim so much. I like the idea of hairdressing.

DESTINATIONS OF YEAR 7 LEAVERS 1984

Year 7

Elizabeth Atkinson	completing a diploma course in Dance.
Sally Baines	employment at County Offices, typist.
Duncan Beaumont	degree course in Science, Polytechnic of Wales, Pontypridd.
Teresa Bowmer	employment at County Offices, Social Services Dept.
Paul Brass	employment at Rolls Royce, technician.
Michael Brown	employment at Cord Chemicals, Wirksworth.
Rachel Cooper	degree course in Medicine, Birmingham University.
Neil Davies	degree course in Engineering, Oxford Polytechnic.
Angela Gimbert	degree course in Agriculture, Seale-Hayne College.
Jenny Gimbert	occupational therapy at Northampton College.
Joanna Goddard	degree course in English, Birmingham University.
Mark Goodwin	employment with 'Mountain Haulage', administrative assistant.
Bruce Harris	year off, degree course in 1985 in Mechanical Engineering, at Aston University.
Francesca Hodgkinson	employment at Gulliver's Kingdom.
Richard Hodson	applying for RAF pilot.
Nicholas Howard	year off, degree course in 1985 in Computer Science at Warwick University.
Rachel Hughes	degree course in Chemical Engineering, UMIST.
Jane Jackson	employment at County Offices, Junior Clerk, Magistrates' Office.
Stephen Jeffrey	degree course in Chemistry at University of East Anglia (with 2nd year in USA).
Simon Lawley	year off, has 2 'A' levels for Polytechnic application in 1985.
Darren Middleton	employment as Trainee Manager, Tilcon.
Nicholas Payne	degree course in Pharmacy, University of London School of Pharmacy.
Andrew Potts	degree course in Politics, University of Newcastle upon Tyne.
Helen Rickards	degree course in Education, Homerton College, Cambridge University.
Joanne Rowbottom	Nottingham School of Nursing, S.R.N.
Mark Rowlands	degree course in Politics/Industrial Relations, Cardiff University.
Joanne Ruddock	degree course in Education, College of St Paul and St Mary, Cheltenham.
Emma Short	degree course in French at Westfield College, London.
Andrew Springall	applying for Trainee Engineer, BBC
Sian Thomas	degree course in History, Girton College, Cambridge.
Richard Tucker	degree course in Social Administration, Hull University.
Jonathon Twigge	degree course in Computing, UMIST.
Ruth Williams	degree course in Medicine, Leicester University.
Kate Windsor	degree course in Medicine, Welsh National School of Medicine.
Lynn Woolley	employment as Operating Assistant, Leicester Royal Infirmary.

ACTIVITIES WEEK

Activities Week has become a regular part of the curriculum for the Anthony Gell School in the last week of the Summer Term. The usual timetable is abandoned and pupils are given a chance to do all kinds of things that are important for them to do but difficult to put into practice during the rest of the year.

In July 1984 two groups went abroad; one youth hostelling on the Rhine, the other cycling in Normandy. There were several other residential trips in England: one group went on a barge, one camping in the north east; one drama group stayed in a centre on the Welsh border doing drama and making a video; another spent three days in Sheffield discovering the delights of city life; there were two parties doing outdoor pursuits at Whitehall, another walking in the lake District.

Day trips took pupils to Alton Towers and Blackpool to Sheffield for skating, Nottingham for bowling, Bradford for the Photography Museum, London for exploring. In school there were many pupils taking part in their favourite sports or learning new ones including Archery. Cooking, drama, toy making, providing a picnic for the Mother and Toddler group, and music-making were among the activities, the last being particularly productive when the Grand Union company came in to run a music workshop.

Teachers worked hard over the preceding months to plan, organise and make arrangements. On many activities they were helped by sixth formers, former pupils, parents, and ancillary staff. Activities Week is not just an excuse for breaking up a week early; the experiences pupils gain are invaluable. It gives them a chance to pursue interests, to learn new skills and particularly on the residential trips to broaden their outlook and begin to take responsibilities on their way to maturity.

1984 AGS – AS SEEN BY A VISITOR FROM ABROAD

Coming to Anthony Gell means hospitality, intensive studies in a relaxed atmosphere, friendly and co-operative students and teachers, both modern and traditional surroundings with a notable emphasis on modern approaches to teaching and learning within a traditional setting. On the whole pleasant company, an almost unique experience.

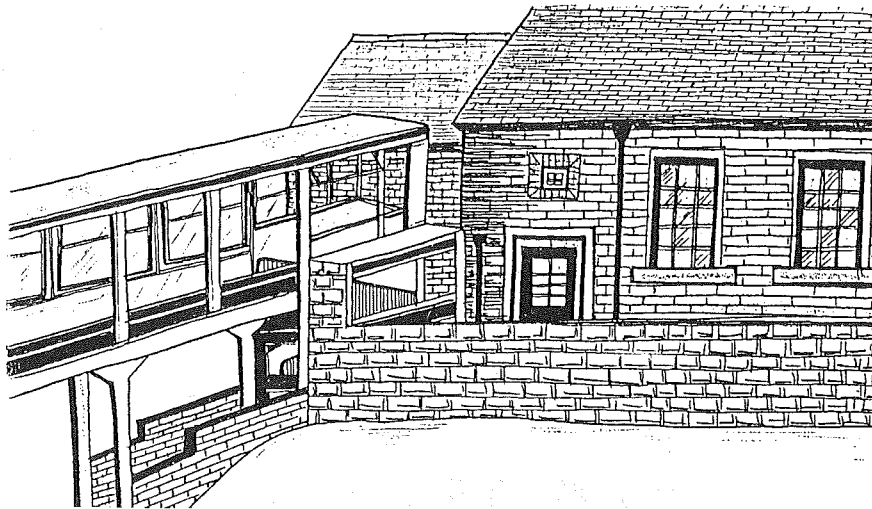
Why is it that a teacher of ten years' experience, enjoying the work with (despite struggling against diffidence and unwillingness) young students between the ages of 10 and 19, revels in such delightful terms of sympathy for a school and its people?

Is it because he has simply enjoyed his visit to an English school for the first time after a span of 18 years? Or is it because he has been met as the representative from abroad (from Germany that is) and shown a 'good school'? Or can it be that the head and staff wanted to find a partner school abroad and tried to impress the candidate who had come on a study visit and, by pure chance, had been matched with a Derbyshire rural school?

AGS – three weeks of observing classes, talking with young people, discussing curricula with teaching adults, going on trips to various places of interest, enjoying the company of so many new people, meeting supporters of community education – AGS to me meant (and still means) showing respect for the needs of the individual, especially to the young almost grown-up, as a partner. It is not merely pupils taught, knowledge implanted in brains, lessons held to earn a living – the Wirksworth school is striving to be a place of curiosity and open-mindedness. It is well on the way to coming close to and – hopefully – reaching its aims.

I want to be there more than once to watch the people involved in their efforts. Best of luck to you all.

Gunter Hirt, who visited AGS on an Anglo-German teacher exchange in 1984 (from Wetter near Marburg in Germany)



1965-1984 SERVICE TO THE SCHOOL

We said farewell to friends who had worked for us since we went comprehensive in 1965 and their work was acknowledged in the 1984 Year Book.

107 Years in Wirksworth by Retiring Teachers.

Mrs Joyce Brealey came to Wirksworth in 1953 from West Bromwich, where she worked as a PE teacher, to Newbridge under the legendary Joe Cresswell. A founder member of AGS when we went comprehensive in 1966 she was second in English to first Barry Foster and later in the new block to Malcolm Stanton. She was an effervescent tutor in Gell and Wright House, discoverer of the Gell ghost, and for many years staff representative on the PTA Committee.

Mr Ron Muschamp taught in both Newbridge and Anthony Gell Grammar School from 1961. When we went comprehensive he continued at AGS and so achieved a unique treble. He was a loyal Fearne tutor and as Head of Art encouraged a stream of talented artists. Their 'A' level projects on local architecture are almost a local history collection. Well known personally for his drawings of local scenes, he enabled our students to see things in their environment. One time tennis player, still connoisseur of ancient vehicles, both his sons were educated at Anthony Gell.

Mr Allan Merigold founded Fearne House in 1965 after education at the Grammar School, service with the Navy, a spell at County Offices and Science teaching at Newbridge. As Head of House respected by pupils and parents, he cared for all his pupils and fought for their interests. Fearne was a friendly House; often champions of the sports field, always keen and courteous. His administration was phenomenal, his eye for a form unmatched, his active Physics remarkable. Allan was a runner, a South Peak Sports officer for many years; now a bowler, a Parish Councillor and countryman.

Mr Joseph Gould joined AGS as a pupil in the new building in 1939 and he links the generations. After a distinguished school career, Nottingham University, RAF service and teaching in Yorkshire and Leicestershire, he came home to the Grammar School in 1960. He served with unmatched loyalty as Head of Physics, Head of Science, Deputy Head for 17 years as the school grew, and on 2 occasions as Acting Head. His energy and dedication to Physics inspired many pupils, whose lives were changed by his teaching. He designed our Science labs. Joe knew the community, was a respected local Councillor, properly elevated to the bench. His 4 children followed him to AGS. The kindest of men, a gardener, practising Methodist, a runner in his youth, fervent Wirksworth patriot, local historian of lead-mining, and Derby County supporter, we will miss his towering support.

A PARENT REFLECTS

In the early 1970's when the grammar school system dominated most of West Derbyshire my wife and I decided we wanted our children to attend a comprehensive school. Gell's was the obvious choice. Many people reacted as though we were deliberately choosing second best for our children.

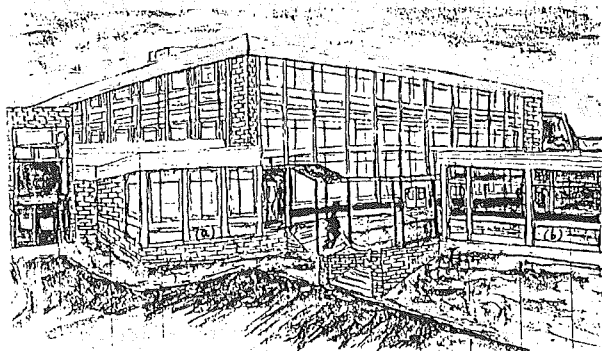
We know now that our choice was right. For our three very different children Gell's has proved a huge success. Socially and academically it has made of their different talents and personalities all that could be asked of a school. All three look on it or look back to it with the sort of irreverent affection that a good, slightly care-worn parent of adolescents deserves.

For Gell's does the difficult job of letting children grow. It hasn't, like the school I went to, a low opinion of someone who is not a keen sportsman or scholar; but it encourages anyone who is. If I were to choose Gell's most important strength it would be that it allows access. What it has, it warmly makes available to its pupils (and increasingly to the wider Wirksworth community). Its students are encouraged to take their chances in studies, in sports, in social links. As many girls end up in the science sixth or playing volleyball or abseiling at Whitehall as lads. As many lads help the elderly or write poetry as girls – or if the statistics don't quite prove me right – nobody who knows Gell's would say that what I've described is much of an exaggeration.

Gell's is remarkably accessible to parents – and that's often hell for teachers because it demands more thought, extra hours, increased tact. But to a parent openness seems naturally part of the school. It's the only school I know where when you have read a child's report you end up knowing a great deal about the philosophy of the school, a lot about the teachers and even something new about your child. If that sounds boringly earnest that's never the impression given on visiting the school. Informality, warmth and an honest attempt to show what the school achieves – without suggesting simply a brilliant showcase – is what an open evening provides. If you have doubts you feel you can voice them.

It's surprising then that some years after the dust of the Comprehensive versus Grammar school debate has settled, a little of the dust has clouded the excellent reputation Gell's deserves. It's perhaps that from the start Gell's has risked giving children the space to grow. Growing is an ungainly process and when it happens in schools, particularly when cash is pitifully short, it's not always neater or smarter to restrict it. Gell's has been brave enough not to do that. So when our children emerge better rather than worse equipped for the complex and rather forlorn society they seem to face, Gell's is thoroughly entitled to our praise.

Bob Windsor



OLD STUDENTS REMEMBER

Bethan Radford 1972-1979

Most of what I remember about life as an Anthony Gell pupil travels through my head like a slide show whose pictures have been jumbled into the wrong number. Though seeming to pass slowly at the time, the seven years I was there slide into each other with incredible swiftness, leaving a blur of single impressions that occasionally stand out from the dull repetition of the timetables.

Standing in those endless queues at dinner time, sneaking back through Wright House and along the wall where the coathangers dug into your shoulders as you leaned against them; crowded PE changing rooms smelling of sweaty plimsolls and disinfectant; the sound of shoes pounding across the overhead corridors between Gell and the main school when the bell announced the end of a lesson; the "human tealeaves" on the wall of the corridor leading to Feame House stairs; the television tapes that never ever worked properly; standing in frozen defence on a winter's day when the action was at the end of the hockey pitch; the "short cuts" that appeared regularly through the flower beds; the band practising at dinnertime; more queues for the buses at 4 o'clock . . .

Robert Gould 1965-72

The Anthony Gell Experience? Well I suppose first impressions are always the strongest. Standing in a corner of the playground at the old Newbridge annexe on the first day, anxiously waiting for one's old friends to arrive and give moral support. Watching other children from 'foreign' villages like Bonsall and Cromford doing exactly the same thing! But the clannish atmosphere soon vanished and we all gelled within a matter of weeks into a homogeneous mass of excited and excitable first formers stepping into a much bigger world than we could all have imagined. Other impressions are more varied; moving to the new buildings in 1966, sitting in the Chemistry Laboratory and watching with a mixture of horror and excitements as a train slowly fell over on the nearby branch line; taking part in school plays, and most of all the joy of representing the school in various sports teams. In the season 1971/72 we turned out possibly the best 1st XI soccer team the school had produced up to that date, with wins over schools with much larger sixth forms such as Noel Baker and Tupton Hall, and the memories of some of these matches will always live with me.

Experiences always take in a golden glow when viewed in retrospect, but the overriding memory of Anthony Gell is belonging to a small, compact and very friendly school. We only had between 500-600 pupils during my years at Anthony Gell, in comparison with other much bigger schools, and I am more than ever convinced that in educational terms small really is beautiful. The family atmosphere of the Anthony Gell School gave me a very happy start to my adult life and provided a sound basis for my career.

Caitlin Taylor (née Measham) 1973-1978

In 1971 having been awarded a prize for English three years in succession at my junior school I failed the eleven-plus examination, was suddenly classed as 'non-academic', and unlike most of my friends, was referred to the Secondary Modern School. Perhaps people had just been being kind when they said I wrote good stories and read aloud nicely, I thought, whilst relatives asked if my father was disappointed in me.

During my time at the Secondary Modern School I did what work was set quickly and then giggled, chattered, and even skived off lessons. I was disillusioned, and was given – or at least felt – little incentive to 'succeed' . . . In 1973 my brother, who had always been considered the 'lazy' one, passed the eleven plus, which made me feel no better. Realising the potential of a 'split-family' situation, my parents decided we should both attend the Comprehensive School.

The difference between the two schools struck me immediately: at thirteen the main 'plus' points being the lack of bossy prefects, no strict school uniform, no long and boring assemblies every morning, tutor groups in which pupils of all ages mixed, and lessons such as metalwork which girls and boys took together. Later, the main and most important difference became apparent, this being the attitude of the children. Their interest and enthusiasm in their work had not been destroyed as mine had: they had not been humiliated by failing an examination at eleven. My pride and enjoyment in my work were rekindled just in time, and, having passed several CSE's and GCE's (some in subject such as History and Music not taught to examination standard at the Secondary Modern) I was encouraged to take A levels. Opponents of the Comprehensive system might point out that I could have transferred to the Grammar School's sixth form at sixteen. Although theoretically true, I very much doubt whether I would have wanted to do so, or indeed would have been given the opportunity to prove myself capable of taking A levels, had I finished my statutory education as a Secondary Modern pupil.

Last year I, who was labelled 'non-academic' at eleven, achieved a Division One Degree in English and History, and, for those who prefer a more romantic happy ending, this year I married the boy who belonged to the tutor group next door to mine, who was also in Arkwright House, and who I used to meet at Anthony Gell School discos after school, all of twelve years ago.

Andrew Redfern 1973-1980

Conscious of the tendency to don "rose-coloured spectacles" I'll try and think of my criticisms first. The Spanish, I understand, have abolished homework. We should certainly follow suit, because there is a problem with the undoubted commitment of AGS to education in a wider sense than simply training people to pass examinations.

I remember playing "boule" and tasting cheeses in French, discussing why Rolls Royce went bankrupt in Maths, visiting churches and farmyards in Humanities and playing detective games in English. I also remember catching up on the textbook work at home. Constrained by the examination system, the needs of the real education have to be balanced against the pressures it puts on people. The right balance would be struck more readily by limiting the more academic or theoretical side of education to the hours of nine till four.

After my O levels I was physically and mentally exhausted. Within four days we were back at school for the remaining three weeks of the summer term. The first day we did an essay on "What is the point of life?" The second day we looked at the impending nuclear holocaust. Then it was the Brandt Report and Third World Hunger. When we ended the week trying to decide whether the corridor outside the room would continue to be there when we opened the door, and whether it still existed when no-one could see it, I gave up. This was not the time whatever the importance of this issue. I would cut out those three weeks and start the A level course the following September.

Overall I have fond memories of a place where you felt you were a human being, not just a statistic. One of the first things that struck me was that teachers were friendly and wanted your cooperation. In general a "them and us" attitude could only be sustained if you wanted it that way.

Unfortunately many of the details have faded from my memory. But I know that there was plenty of opportunity to pursue your interests for as long and as far as you could take them. Structures and timetables were flexible, and could be altered if you pushed hard enough. Pupils who saw a need were allowed, indeed encouraged, to do something about it for themselves.

There were teachers who went far beyond the call of duty to help with particular problems or to assist in passing important exams. These were accorded sufficient but not exclusive attention, as were the other basic essentials of the life of the school.

But what really makes a good school is the ability to meet all the needs of those who pass through it, and the contribution it can make to the life of the community. In both respects Anthony Gell is increasingly successful. I wish it well for the next 20 years.

1985 AN ADULT STUDENT REFLECTS

For several years adult students have joined sixth form classes. When her elder daughter left school Oreole Brownlee joined our A level English group.

"More often than not, there was a sense of humour in the classroom: when the teacher told us to expect questions he would be 'springing' on us, Emma asked, "Can you be more specific when you will be springing them". We laughed.

From the Russian Literature I shall remember Gregor Melekhov, a Cossack. From the American poems I shall remember one about the death of a life-long friend. From the work of an Irish author I shall remember his account of an Irish Catholic upbringing. And when I heard on the news, and read in the papers that the Poet-Laureate is Ted Hughes I was pleased that, as well as the works of other English poets and authors, I have studied, and liked, his.

I have enjoyed studying the techniques which make them memorable.

It wasn't easy being a mature student. The reading was a pleasure, the knowledge I gained a privilege; but writing the essays and remembering the spelling was hard. At first I was consulting the dictionary so often, it became automatic where to flip it open for the letter I needed. I was very pleased with my most recent essay, though, and seldom consulted the dictionary.

Looking back on my terms in the lower and upper sixth of the Anthony Gell School, I would like to say "thank you"; to Jenny for taking part in the play 'wot' I wrote; to Karen for passing on worksheets to me when she knew I had missed them; to Helen and to Simon for their company; and to Kay for listening to me.

"Thank you" to the teachers of the English Department for organising my course; for sharing their sense of fun and enthusiasm; for helping me over each hurdle.

"Thank you" to Mr Pearce.

And a last, but not least, "Thank you" to Nicola, my daughter who switched off the television while I did my homework."

THE EARLY DAYS by Joseph Gould

There was a time when many of us felt that the new school might never be built. After several delays all seemed set fair for an early start when it was announced that a Public Enquiry was to be held into the proposed closure and diversion of the public footpaths across the Hannages. One of these footpaths cut diagonally through what is now the school hall and gymnasium.

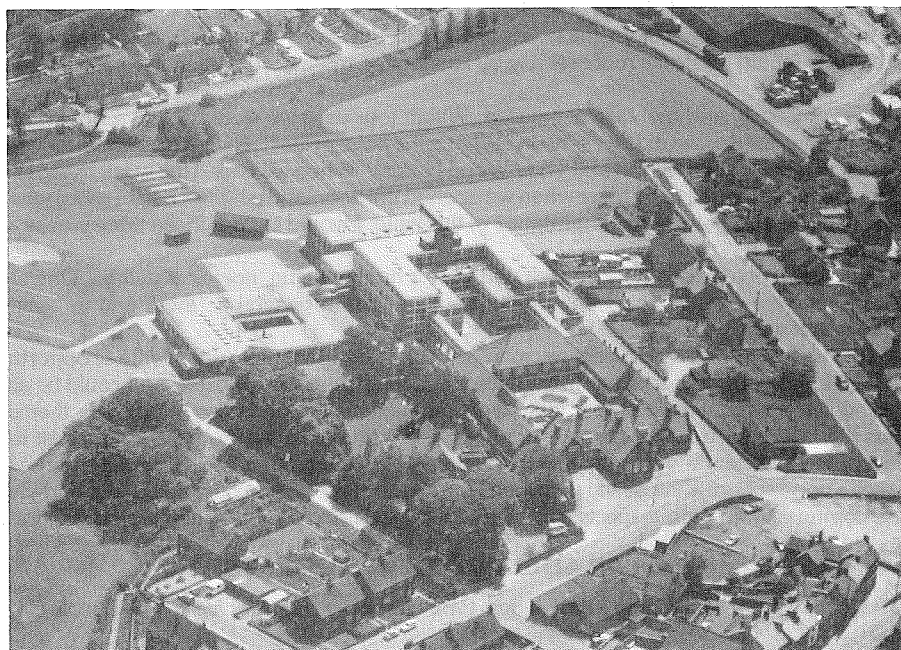
A number of local people objected to the closure and there is no doubt that they had a very strong case, for the footpaths were probably the most widely used and best loved in Wirksworth.

The inquiry was held in the Town Hall and one of the main speakers for the objectors was the veteran councillor Mr "Freddie" Slater. Well though the case was presented by the objectors it must be said that they were no match for the big guns from the County Council and they lost. The result was that the school now stands on what must be one of the most beautiful sites in Derbyshire.

I remember my own anxieties before the new school opened. We were without a headmaster, who had left to take up a post in Manchester just before the start. I wondered, as so many parents must have done, whether the new school would give my own children the guidance and encouragement that the Grammar School had given me some 25 years before. How would I cope with teaching the ex-Newbridge pupils who had prospered under Mr Joe Cresswell? Would they be resentful of the change? I need not have worried, they turned out to be as likeable and pleasant as the Wirksworth children I had taught during the previous five years.

Just one more memory! I arrived at the school very early one morning, shortly after the new school opened to see the caretaker standing aghast in the middle of the school hall surrounded by about three inches of water which was slowly rising. Apparently an overhead water pipe had fractured in the early hours and the hall and gymnasium were flooded. All the sixth form student took off their shoes and socks and set to work with mops, brushes and buckets and baled us out. Two expensive floors were ruined and had to be replaced.

As I look back on those stressful but happy early years I do so with pride and affection. Indeed I have often wondered why the change was not made many years earlier.



20 YEARS ON by Allan Merigold

The amalgamation of the two Secondary schools of Wirksworth had been a talking point during the early Sixties, footpath diversions had been discussed and finalised, attempts had been made to reconcile the deep seated rivalries, going back over half a century, of the two schools, a visit of the Secondary school pupils to the Grammar school production 'Noes Flud' had left both sides bemused, and soundings had been made in the Staff Rooms. By 1965 building was well under way, appointments made and the Schools prepared for the opening of Derbyshire's first Comprehensive School and although I had lived, been to school and worked in and around Wirksworth it was with some trepidation that I reported to school on the first day.

All my fears were groundless, timetables worked better than Bradshaw, exercise and text books appeared in the class rooms in the correct numbers as if by the magic of a Paul Daniels. Pupils were mustered and allocated to Houses and they materialised on the day without exception in the blue, white and grey uniform, blazered boys and skirted girls. The feeling permeated both sections of the School that we were on course for success.

Succeeding months confirmed this feeling with both Staff and Pupils. The four Houses took on a vital role in forming the backbone of the School and as years passed increasingly took on more responsibility for the social and educational welfare of the pupils. This was furthered by two major decisions, to have mixed ability teaching by Houses in the first two years and secondly to organise the Houses on a vertical Tutor Group system. Both decisions were ahead of their time and although amended in minor details continue to flourish at Anthony Gell.

For nine years the School survived the appointment of two Headteachers and began to make a name for itself as a humane institution willing to give all its pupils a fair hearing and equal chance to gain success at their level, and these successes were in many cases both spectacular and rewarding especially those from pupils passed over by the old 11+ examination. As I remember the times of the early '70's some 60% of 15 year olds were electing to go on to take 'CSE' and 'O' level examinations and it was probably because of our experience in the Houses and by subject teachers promoting suitable courses that we were able to survive so well the raising of the school leaving age in 1974.

To look forward 20 years seems an eternity; to look back seems but a flash of light. So many young people have grown to adulthood in this time, each of them a contributor to good memories; fortunately most have made a success of their lives and my greatest pleasure is to be able to walk among them as a friend. Sports days, House matches, swimming galas, General Knowledge competitions, Cross Country runs were always keenly fought by the pupils with the Heads of House coping with the intrigue, the infighting and challenging of borderline refereeing decisions. The social events, Founder's Day, Open Days, Career Evenings, School Fetes, Charity Walks, Drama Productions (who could forget 'Oliver' or '1066'), Musical events with the annual concert and the special T.V. appearance on 'Opportunity Knocks', the Carol Services and the many P.T.A. events all added to the patina of life and will be missed not least in as much as I no longer have any responsibility.

INTERVIEW WITH MRS. McCABE **by Thomas Thomas and Tracy Ennis**

Mrs. McCabe, who was at the A.G.S. in its first year as a comprehensive school, now has a son in the second year. We asked her about her memories of these first years.

On her arrival in 1965 the school was still unfinished, although this in no way put a damper on her excitement. For her the novelty and enthusiasm of the new school never wore off.

Now twenty years later, in 1985 she has noticed many changes which have occurred within the school. She said that the school was a lot stricter in her day than in ours. Challenging a teacher, for instance, was unheard of.

Opportunities at the new comprehensive school were much better than at her previous school, the secondary modern at Newbridge. She commented that the opportunities open to pupils today are much wider, even than those offered at the new comprehensive school. The school leaving age at that time was fifteen and it was at this age that Mrs McCabe left school.

One of the best aspects, for her, of going to a new school was the fact that she had to wear a uniform. This consisted of a black skirt, black tights, white blouse, black jumper, and tie.

One remnant from the Grammar school tradition was the existence of Head boys and girls. Mrs. McCabe was once harshly treated by a Head boy and the memory of this event still remains vivid in her mind.

Although there were grammar school pupils and secondary modern pupils in the school, very little prejudice existed between them.

She feels that pupils in her day were better behaved than those of today. They were never allowed to go into Wirksworth at dinner time as we are. This she feels creates a bad image for the school.

Mrs. McCabe thoroughly enjoyed her time at A.G.S. and is very happy knowing that her children will pass through their secondary education here!

P.S. Since she left Mrs. McCabe has served our local schools well. Many will remember her as Welfare Assistant at the Church of England Infant School, and Lunch Supervisor at the Junior School. She also worked at Anthony Gell ten years ago!

INTERVIEW WITH JOAN TOMLINSON

Twenty years ago Joan Tomlinson left Newbridge School just before the merger of Newbridge and Anthony Gell Grammar School formed the new comprehensive school. Today Joan works in the kitchen at the Anthony Gell School where her own son is a pupil. So she is in a good position as a worker and parent in the school community to evaluate the changes that have taken place in those twenty years.

Joan Tomlinson recognises the importance of the social changes. Nowadays children can express themselves so much better than they could when she was a youngster. Not only do the pupils have a School Council where they can discuss topics important to themselves but there are now pupil representatives on all sorts of other committees, like School Fund, The Governors and the Catering Committee where Joan herself takes part.

Facilities have improved too. There are six labs instead of the one in the old school which had to serve all the sciences. There is a splendid library with far more books, there is a minibus which takes children on outings and visits, there are computers, a video camera. But it isn't just the material things that count, and in some ways there have been losses too. Joan regrets the passing of free school milk, the old-type school dinners, school uniform, and sadly since Mr Blood's retirement, the school band.

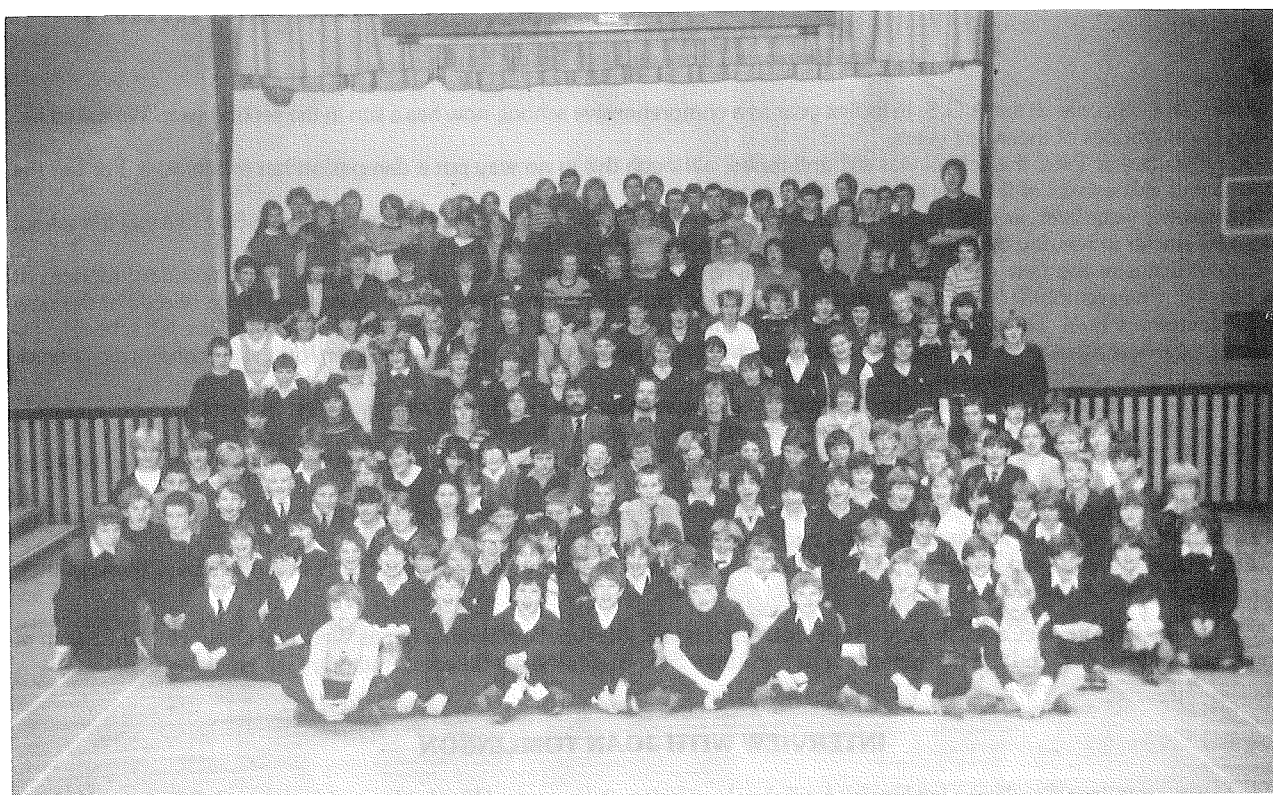
But overall, Joan is delighted her son has the chances she didn't get: excellent facilities and expert teaching that goes far beyond the classroom. Working in the kitchen and dining rooms Joan has the opportunity to see a lot of what goes on. The kids are friendly, she says. They'll always greet you in and out of school. She welcomes the new developments in community education, approves of the community service projects that already go on and hopes that the links between school and community will increase. She and her husband both use school facilities in the evenings.

She may have missed being a pupil here herself, but her children and the whole family can benefit now. There is so much on offer at Anthony Gell School today, says Joan, and it is up to pupils and parents to take advantage.

ANTHONY GELL TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY QUIZ

Which pupil or former pupil

- 1) Played soccer for England schoolboys
- 2) Became President of the Union at Keele University
- 3) Came fifth in the English Schools 100 metres
- 4) Represented Britain in the World Wrestling Championships
- 5) Conducted the BMW Band
- 6) Reached the final of Young Engineer of Great Britain
- 7) Won a gold medal for England at cyclo cross
- 8) Became Chairman of BMW Brass
- 9) Captained Wirksworth Cricket Club when they were promoted to the Premier Division of the Derbyshire League
- 10) Won the English Schools Girls 25 mile cycling time trial
- 11) Became the first pupil governor
- 12) Played the drums on Opportunity Knocks
- 13) Is Chairman of the Community Education Council
- 14) Played the Cromford Kid



**GELL HOUSE
FINAL YEAR 1984**

Postscript

Our thanks to the many people – pupils, teachers, parents, governors, visitors, who have contributed to this booklet which reflects the whole life of our school and its pupils over twenty years.

Many more have contributed to the Anthony Gell experience during that time. Inevitably there are many omissions of young people and their activities. Above all it is hard to reflect the splendid relationships between pupils and teachers, which have developed as the school has grown. The ideals and efforts of our 1965 founders to establish a civilised, co-operative community have been sustained steadfastly. We offer rich opportunities for young people in this town. As we move into our third comprehensive decade we see the need to widen our provision to the whole community, to meet the rapidly changing patterns of work and leisure in our town and to be a centre for the creative, cultural and recreational needs of the community we serve. We go forward confidently.

Roy Pearce 1985

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