

## Recollections of 24<sup>th</sup> August 1971 and the early years of Perth Grammar School

### Mrs Jean Hendry teacher of science and maths

When the Grammar School opened in 1971 I was 26 and had already spent 2 ½ years teaching in Fife before moving to Perth around Christmas 1970 when my husband started a job as a Chemistry teacher at Perth Academy which at that time was still a selective school. I then spent 2 terms at Perth High School in the slum conditions of the old building in Gowans Terrace. Despite that I chose to stay in those unfit buildings rather than move up with PHS to the new building in Oakbank, being tempted by being in at the start of a new school with the novelty of there being just S1 initially. This would consist of just under 300 pupils rattling around in the space that 1,700 pupils had been crammed into the previous term. The staff and the parents of those first year pupils were promised that by the time they left school they too would be in a super new building!!

This was before the days of routine “In Service days” for staff, with no pupils present but I remember that exceptionally all the new staff were invited into the school either the day before or a day the previous week to meet Mr Bob Heeps, the head teacher and all the other staff – there were about 20 of us of whom a few had come from the same school but mostly we didn’t know each other. After introductions and a briefing from Bob Heeps I think we spent an hour or two of preparation, seeing areas we would be occupying and our timetables. I was given the registration class of 1 Red and remained as the registration teacher of that class as they moved up the school until I left in early 1975 when my son was born. I remember my concern when I realised I would be seeing an awful lot of half of that class as I was timetabled to teach all of them for maths and in addition 1/2 of them for science and there were a lot of periods of both subjects on their timetables. My timetable also meant I had similar contact with 1 Blue with all of them for maths and ½ for science. I think I also had ½ of 1 Black for science. Mrs Beattie who was nearing retirement had a similar timetable to me seeing different “colours” of classes for both maths and science. She was the wife of the Rector of Perth High school and had been teaching in the secondary department of Dunbarney School which closed its secondary department when comprehensive education was introduced, PGS opened and all pupils in the surrounding villages came into Perth for secondary education. Frank Cowie was PT of maths and John Brunton PT of science. David Lumsden was a full time Science teacher with Biology as his specialism. Of the original staff of about 20, I think only about 5 are still alive and I am the only survivor from maths and science. The staff number almost doubled the following year when there was an S1 and S2 + a small S3 made up of pupils from Methven and Stanley Junior Secondary departments which had closed and who weren’t old enough to leave school. Some staff from these closing departments came with the pupils and joined the PGS staff. This was also at the time the school leaving age was being raised from 15 to 16 so some of them arrived unhappy that they would have to spend 2 years at PGS instead of just 1 but mostly they settled in well. It was only in that first year that I taught maths. After that I only taught science and physics if it was S3 and above. When the original pupils reached S3 and chose separate science subjects a PT was appointed for each of the 3 science subjects with John Brunton becoming PT of Physics. My husband was appointed PT of Chemistry and stayed in that post until his early death in 1981 at the age of 35 due to a brain tumour. There was a chemistry prize named after him awarded to a pupil in S5 each year. I don’t know if it still gets awarded each year. The practical subjects of Science, Technical and Home Economics were based in the grottiest buildings of all, the HORSAs (Hut O----? for Raising of School Age) which were temporary buildings meant to last 5 or at the most 10 years and were put up to accommodate the extra numbers of pupils when the school leaving age was raised from 14 to 15 in around 1948! We had our own grotty but cosy staffroom there and I got to know the Technical and HE staff well.

Looking back on those early years I remained in touch with many of my colleagues of that era including those staff who joined during the following 2 years and remain in touch with some of those still alive as we were a close knit group. We shared memories of that unique first year which turned out to include an interesting collection of pupils. Because there was just that one year group we got to know those pupils very well and I think by the time I left I probably knew by name nearly all of that year group including those I had never taught as well as many of the year group who started in 1972. I have remained in Perth and find I still get recognised by pupils from that era and around 20 years later I realised I was teaching the son of one of them at Crieff High School.

The attached photo I have discovered is I believe S1 Red taken during the 1971 /72 school year. If it isn't them in S1 it is the same pupils a year later when in S2 Red. I can still put a name to almost all the pupils in that photo.

