

## Return to PGS



I drove into the school and parked at the bottom of the bus loop. It felt strange even driving down here. It's not a place that people would have been able to go in the past.

Getting out of the car, I turned to look at Fulford – the original building of the Grammar School and later main block for the Lower School pupils. Apart from the red sign over the entrance door, it looked the same as I had remembered it when I arrived at the school in September 1972.



I walked along the side of 'B' [Bowman] Block in the direction of FW [Frank Winterbottom] Hall and followed the make-shift signs for Reception. I had arrived a few minutes early, so had waited in the car until 2.15pm so that I didn't turn up too soon for my meeting with X at that time.

As I approached the Main Hall, there was a strong smell of what seemed to be fresh oil paint. I turned to the left and entered a new building just before the Hall. Although I say new, I mean in point of fact 'new' as in 'it wasn't there when I was at school'. All that had really happened was that many of the through walk-ways had been filled in to create new rooms or weather-proof spaces. I glanced to my right and through the Main Hall entrance noticed new varnish on the wooden floor – hence the smell.

I announced myself at the first office and was told that X was in the room around the corner. I noticed she was talking with someone so I waited outside. The conversation ended and the man came out. X was sat at her desk, looked up and came over to me. Although I recognised her immediately, I commented later, in answer to her query as to whether I would recognise her, that I might not have recognised her out of context in a town. It felt funny (as in a bit strange) that we were in the same school form together for 5 years, yet we had probably never really spoken to each other until now.

I asked if we could look inside Fulford first. It was a building that somehow was more significant to me than any of the others. The first two years of most of our lessons had been spent in there and a couple of years ago I had spent some time walking the corridors on both floors in one of my dreams!

We walked up the main steps and I saw the little offices to each side at the top. 'Killer' Cartwright, the Head of Lower School used to 'live' in the one on the left but X had to remind me that Miss Stubbs occupied the opposite office as Deputy Head. Ahead and to the left slightly, were the library doors. Even without the old shelves and furniture, I could still see the elderly and bespectacled 'Ma Wright', looking over her glasses in a stern manner from her big desk. (At a previous school reunion to celebrate 600 years, I met Miss Wright and learned that she was the oldest serving member of staff – at that time). Over to the right, I remembered the racks of 'Look and Learn' comics in their special stiff red plastic-coated card library covers. Then I saw Gary M throwing a fit and Mr Bubb, our form teacher, carrying him out under his right arm like a roll of carpet - kicking and screaming!

We had also said goodbye to Mrs Bannister in that room; an English teacher who most of us had developed a real affinity with and respect for. Very few teachers could manage Form 'JB', let alone gain their attention and respect. It was a very sad occasion when she left. She brought in a cake and I think we gave her a leaving card. It was one of the few times that even the notorious three Gary's didn't screw things up! We were in the second year then – 2JB. The really sad thing for me was that Mrs Bannister was the first teacher who I had really liked and had enjoyable lessons with. In fact, English was the only lesson that I felt I achieved something in.

I remember once, we all had to give short talks to the class. When my day arrived I talked about discovering old clay pipes in the fields around a house I used to live in. As Mrs Bannister praised my effort, the tension and anxiety I was feeling went into a plastic bic biro pen I was holding. With a loud crack, it broke and shattered between my hands!

But now she was leaving. Bloody typical! The only teacher I liked was deserting us.

We left the library and from the doorway, turned to the right and headed towards the old dining room area. Even though the use had changed, I could still see the concertina, beige, dividing doors in my mind's eye. At one time, as well as eating in there, we also had assemblies. I remember one in particular with Geography teacher, Mr Yoemans. He had two sticks – an angel on one and a devil or a Trident on the other. It was a hilarious assembly, much enjoyed by everyone – but I'm buggered if I can remember what it was about! – Possibly something to do with being 'led into temptation'.

We walked up the stone stairs to the top floor. I commented that I didn't really recall using the stairs at this end of the building very often. At the top, a few rooms led off to the right and the main corridor stretched off to the left. Art and Design now inhabited this end and for some strange reason, the first part of the corridor had been narrowed. Walking along it and turning to my left at the end, before it became full width once more, I realised the wall had enabled a classroom to be extended into a larger space. In my dream, and in reality at the time, the corridor was lined with wooden lockers. These were allocated to classes who had Form Rooms along the corridor. No one had secure desks in Secondary School. I noticed that there were still some lockers further up the corridor, but they were now metal.

The other feature I was aware of was all the rust coloured tiles around the entrances, stairways and corridors. I remembered them in the stairways but had forgotten they were also along the corridors.

I gestured towards a little flight of wooden stairs going up to a sort of mezzanine area. I knew that there was a classroom labelled F111 up there, but thought that the only stairs up were at the opposite end of the corridor to where we were now. As we walked up, I was more surprised to see that it was labelled F111 and when we passed through an adjoining door, into another room and then exited at the opposite end to go down the other stairs, it was labelled F109. In my mind, I somehow thought the rooms were originally positioned the opposite way around. F111 had been used for technical drawing and later, design & technology.

I looked back down the corridor:



We returned to the ground floor and I talked about having lessons in the first two classrooms and that the boys' toilet, between the two stairways for boys and girls entrance and exit routes, was now another large classroom. I walked to the edge of the former boys' stairs and looked over the rails and

down to the small area of ground floor to the side. "I once had a fight with NP down there!" I also remember another earlier occasion, when in the same place, someone dropped an ink pen refill. One of the boys with me stamped on it while I was tying my shoe lace and the blue ink sprayed onto my satchel. I remember feeling quite upset and having to not cry.

As I write this now, I can hear Mr Cartwright's voice, booming and echoing along the corridor.

As we walked and talked, we shared snippets of memories.

We walked down the stairs that used to be 'girls only'. I commented on this and we considered how, these days, such discrimination would no longer be 'politically correct'.

I asked if we could look at Weirfield – the former Headmaster's house and a few classrooms. I remembered old 'Simsy'. Wilfred Simms was a retired army Colonel or something... Everyone lived in complete fear of having anything to do with him. Even the most out of control and violent kids feared him. I remember him filling in for an absentee maths teacher. It was our second year at school and in that time we had 13 different maths teachers! No wonder my mathematical ability suffered so much. Mr Simms rarely appeared to take lessons – this must have been a first. The class was so silent with fear that when he attempted to crack a joke to ease the tension, no one dared even to smile.

X led me around classrooms and then around to what had been Mr Simms' front door. The house was quite large but apparently he only lived in one part of it for all the time he was there. I hadn't even realised it had an upstairs self-contained 'attic' flat – no longer used due to health & safety fire-escape issues.

We then walked towards the old music block. Miss Smith had been in the room on the left and Mr Fern had occupied the room to the right. In our first year, this latter room had been our form room with new teacher, Mr [Jeff] Bubb. Hence form, 1JB – one of a record 9 first year intakes in 1972.

We continued along the rear side of 'B' Block and towards 'S' Block. We went towards the offices that used to be on the bridge between FW Hall and 'S' Block. We then walked into 'S' Block and looked into a few classrooms through the glass fire windows in the doors – currently locked to secure computer equipment. When I'd been there as a pupil, they were all science labs with benches and gas taps.

We walked down to the ground floor by what had been the boys' toilets. I'd heard that a few years after I left, someone had thrown a live grenade into the toilets and blown them up. I'm not sure of the full truth of this story, but I think X was aware of something similar having happened.

We came out of 'S' Block and turned left around to the side, onto the path leading to the old environmental studies block.



We walked down the path towards the Sixth Form. Everything seemed much the same.

The biggest shock for me was the extreme run down state of the school buildings, both internally and externally. Although the usage and furniture of many rooms had changed, the flooring and décor had not altered since I had left in 1979.

