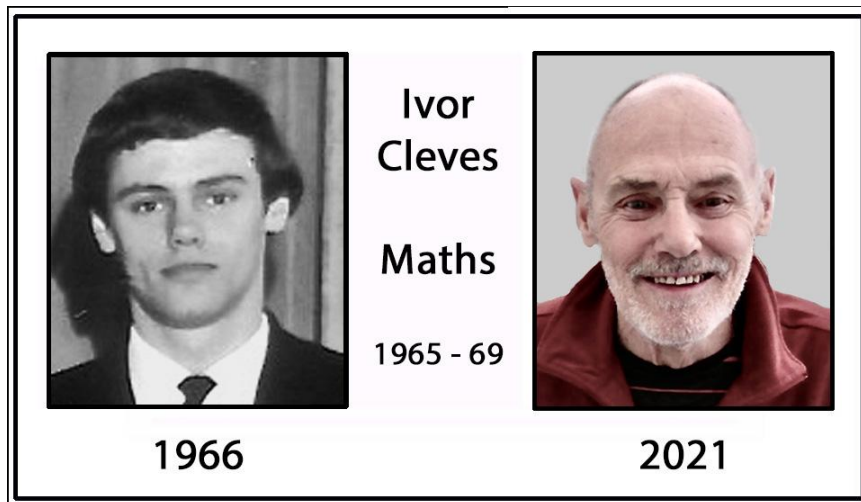


Ivor M. Cleves

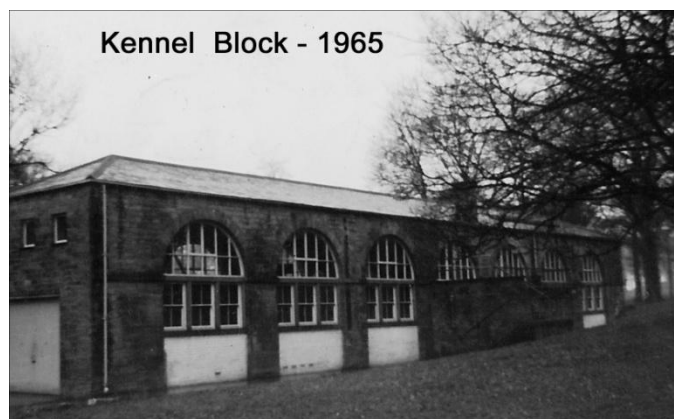
Reminiscence of Bretton Years



A Great Start to Life

Having studied Art, Physics and Double Maths in the Sixth Form of Bristol Cathedral School, I initially considered choosing a career in Architecture. After reconsideration, and advice from my headmaster (Cecil Rich), I applied to Bretton Hall for training to become a teacher of Mathematics. I suspect that Cecil had realised that once I got to the college I would start doing and enjoying some of the arts and science subjects and activities that he knew they offered to their students, thus becoming a well-rounded graduate, as well as learning to be a Maths teacher.

When I went to Bretton for interview, a second-year student had been assigned to take me around the college on those couple of days, and be a sort of guide and mentor over that period. The college's idea was that when I became a student I would already have made a contact there, and know someone to whom I could go for any queries. As it happened, the guy (Patrick Stock) they put me with actually came from fairly near to my parents' home. He introduced me to other students during the day before my interview, and during that evening took me up to the college bar (cutely, I thought then, named Kennel Block!), where the students' Folk Club was in action. Also, on the interview day, he helped me find my way around the place. Subsequent to my arrival there in September 1965, I found Patrick to be a useful 'go-to', to be able to clarify various matters about the college.





I was interviewed by the Principal (John Friend) and the Head of English Studies (Anne St. Leger), and a couple of other lecturers. The whole experience, over one night and two half days at Bretton, was pleasant, interesting and fun, which I felt boded well for what the actual learning experiences would be later on.



John F. Friend

It was explained that during my years at Bretton Hall, the structure of study would be that of an in-depth consideration of one 'Main Subject' (chosen from Music, Art, Drama, Needlework, Mathematics, Science), running alongside subsidiary courses in Movement & Dance, English, and a range of short-term courses from the arts and sciences, as well as periods of Teaching Practice of one's main subject throughout the course.

My interview was directed towards my main subject - Mathematics. I understood from what I was told during the interviews, and what I had read further myself, that the college had been initially set up, under the ægis of Sir Alec Clegg, as a Liberal Arts College, whose students studied principally Music, Art, Needlework or Drama. However, the powers-that-be had decided that in 1960 they would incorporate some Science and Mathematics courses as well... in order, I presume, that the college could develop and maintain a broad-based, Liberal Education stance.

Having been accepted at the interview, when I arrived in the following September, 1965, I soon found that being at Bretton suited me down to the ground; the whole atmosphere as soon as you arrived was lively and involving, and I enjoyed starting to get to grips with my new surroundings. I started life at Bretton as positively as I meant to go on, incidentally gaining myself a reputation for flamboyance of my attitudes, and of the way I dressed, etc. I associated a little at first with the rest of the Mathematics students in my year-group, but ultimately spent more time with the Drama students across the age ranges.

In my main study of Mathematics, I formed positive relationships with my tutors: Messrs John Bunnell - Head of Maths; John Byard - Applied Maths, and Purvaise Engineer - Pure Maths... I found them very interesting, and saw that they had a good range of knowledge about lots of things, not just about Mathematics. They were also very up-to-date in the Mathematics they were teaching us... it was not just a replay of A-level, and therefore gave me something new to get my teeth into. They had the job of increasing their students' grasp of their own mathematical knowledge, as well as teaching us the didactics of Mathematics as a teaching subject. They taught Maths all through the three years of the Cert. Ed. courses, and eventually John Bunnell and Purvaise taught me the college-based mathematics elements of my fourth year B.Ed Course.

I found it very easy to settle-in to college life. In part this was due to the tutors' approach to interviews, and their being able to elicit markers to the style of student they accepted as most likely to fit in with Bretton's 'life-style', and to the tutors' subsequent handling of their students. They knew which interviewees would settle well into the ethos of the college when they got there.

Year One

During my first year I didn't live on-site, but lodged at a farm (Haigh Hall Farm, run by a Mr and Mrs Gemmell) in the village of Haigh, (about a five-minute bus ride, and then a ten-minute uphill walk, from the college, in the direction of Barnsley). I found that at the end of the college day there were two buses home. The early one ran after the casual, cafeteria-style evening meal, at about 6.30p.m. The later one left at about 10.15p.m. allowing students to stay in college for evening activities, and if they wished, go to the Formal Evening Meal.

I shared a room at the farm with a guy named Chris Bertrand, who was likewise a first-year student, but studying Drama. We didn't have any working space provided for us in the farm, and usually caught the late bus back as it allowed us to get some work done in college (in more comfortable circumstances than trying to work in our bedroom on the farm), or to pursue some other activity, or social activity with which we were involved. There were no chairs in the room, and the two beds were old and sagged immensely, making it impossible to sit on them, or lie on your stomach, and read. But whatever, we settled-in there, and held ourselves in patience for the coming of our second year, and our then gaining a room each in the relative luxury of one of the hostels.



Chris Bertrand

In Year 1 on the Cert. Ed. course, the main subject classes were intermixed with sessions on Teaching Skills, in mixed-subject tutor groups. These were run by our group-tutor - in my case, a Miss Osbourne.

There was also English; Miss Lucas took me in year one, and Dave Farnsworth - a Drama tutor - in years two and three. Dance and Movement, was taken by Miss Osbourne and Sam Thornton, who both specialised in these areas.



In my first Teaching Practice, in Year one, I was placed in a Wakefield primary school, supervised by Miss Osbourne, and sharing the practice with a very petite and very Welsh young lady called Anne Calvin-Thomas. We travelled by bus together to get to the school, and at one point Anne had a good laugh at my expense... I told the bus conductor where I wanted to go to, and she, quite seriously, asked me how old I was, and whether I wanted a child's half-fare ticket!

My payback came a bit later in the Practice when we were in the classroom, with our class wandering around doing various activities. Miss Osbourne swept into the room, thought there was too much noise and activity and told the whole class to sit down and wait for their teacher... and when Anne approached her to say what we had been doing with the class, Miss Osbourne, who had mistaken her for one of the pupils, told Anne also to go and sit down and wait for the teacher!

As well as starting my studies during my first term, I heard that volunteers were being invited to help with what was effectively an extra-curricular activity - joining and working in the stage-lighting group, which was organised by Jim Archer (a third year student at the time). This meant that I found myself involved with Drama productions and activities, and mixed regularly with Art and Drama students, as I noted earlier. It also led to my enjoying swinging like a monkey from the scaffolding in the Experimental Theatre, balancing over voids and generally getting a lot of exercise!



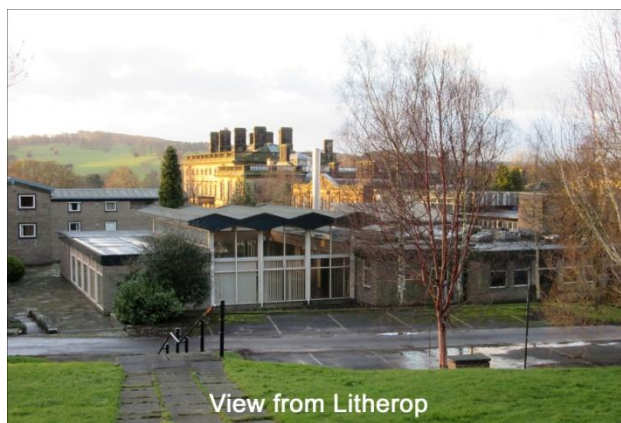
Quite early on (this was still in my first year), when Jim Archer found he had other things to do, such as Final Teaching Practice, and Long Essays to write, I took over the designing, erecting and running much of the stage lighting required either by Drama students for their productions, or as required by the Drama Department itself (in the personæ of John Hodgson, the Head of Drama, and his colleagues).

I continued with this throughout my Cert. Ed. Years, and I was identified very much with the Drama students. Incidentally, in one staff-meeting the Principal asked John Hodgson who on earth was this Drama student he'd seen wandering around the college not wearing shoes. John Bunnell (as Head of Mathematics) then had to claim me for his own!

Year Two

There was no *full* Teaching Practice in Year two. During that year we concentrated on our main subjects, but also brought in studies in a subsidiary subject (in my case, Art, - taught by Theo Olive), and continued Section-Three English studies. We also went out in groups for group-experiences and short teaching-practices in a range of schools.

From September 1966 to July 1967, I lived in Litherop 6, with a wonderful view of the college and the grounds.



During this year there was a treat in store: for me, and for the rest of the college, but particularly for those students in their Second year. John Hodgson, then Head of Drama at Bretton, together with the College authorities, decided that they would put on an outdoor production of the Wakefield Mystery Cycle. This mediæval cycle of plays had not been produced in full for about 400 years until, in 1953, Martial Rose, then Head of Drama at Bretton, worked for five years to translate the text and bring the cycle into a playable published form. Subsequently, in July 1958, he produced a set of 20 of the plays, with some 50 students from all disciplines, not just from Drama, playing the parts.

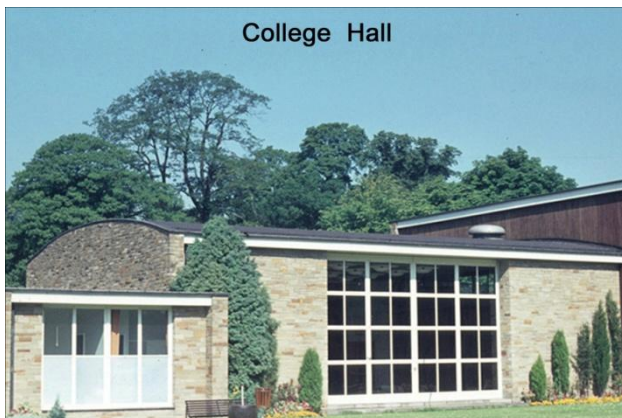
In the spring of 1967, John Hodgson prepared for a further, more complete production of the Mystery Cycle plays. He worked with second-year students from all disciplines from Martial Rose's published version of the plays in order to stage the complete 32-play cycle on-and-around the Feast of Corpus Christi day, June 9th. Students during this, their Second year, spent weeks designing and



constructing settings; making costumes; learning parts; and all the peripheries of any big production.



I had the job of designing, setting up, cueing up and then of running the lighting for all the performances, and working with me was a team of four other Second-Year students who had regularly worked with me on more routine productions for the Drama Department. The lighting for the production was more problematic than at first seemed would be the case. With the known unpredictability of the English weather, even in June, I had had to design, erect and cue up two lots of lighting - one for the proper outdoor performances, and the other in case the weather got the better of us, as it did a couple of times during the week of the performances.



We then had to take the performances indoors to College Hall, with a group of ‘duplicate’ settings. Nothing indoors, however, could match the sight of Piers Johnson hanging by one arm from the crucifix, on the roof of the college hall, when his other arm slipped out of its bindings!

At the end, as a testimony to all the hard work the Second Year students had put in, the whole production was widely acclaimed as a great success.

There was intended to be a follow-on to this dramatic triumph. John Hodgson had arranged with a USA arts promoter, Nat Eke, to take the second-year Drama group (plus me as their lighting technician!) to do a two-week tour of some Eastern Seaboard Colleges in the USA, giving performances and seeing the country. We were all greatly looking forward to this extension to our lives, but sadly, this did not come to fruition... sadly in particular from my point of view, as I had intended to combine that trip with a visit afterwards to relatives who lived in USA.

Year Three

At the start of my third year at Bretton Hall, I was lodged in a single room in Estate House, in West Bretton Village. I was the Student Rep, 'responsible' for ten or so of the new First-Year intake.



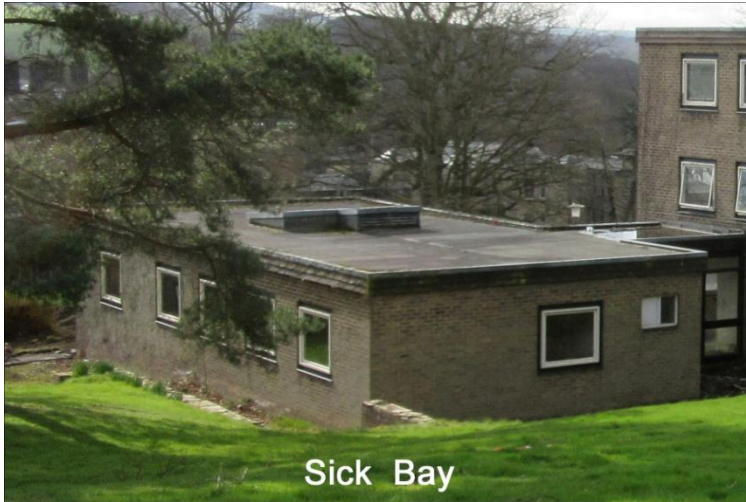
This arrangement had its benefits and drawbacks. It meant that each day I had to walk down to the college for breakfast, but instead of going the whole way down the Main Drive I would turn off at a little gate in a wall about a third of the way down, go past the cottage where the senior groundsman lived, and on out past the three hostels on the hill, among them my second-year hostel, Litherop. At the end of the day it was pleasant to return via the same route.

Being based in Estate House also meant that any day I wanted to go into Wakefield, I had only a short walk to the bus, and less chance of missing it! Also, I had easy access during the daytime (if I had stayed in for the day) to the village shop (there was no general shop down in the college!) When it came to going out on my Year Three Teaching Practice, I was picked up in the morning at the War Memorial in West Bretton, (having made up my own breakfast, for which I was supplied the raw ingredients a couple of times a week by the kitchens...) and then dropped back there at the end of the day. These arrangements all worked well until I got towards the end of my third year when, as with my fellow Third-Year students, all were preparing for final exams.

Drama! I woke up one morning with an horrendous pain in my gut. I put up with it for a time, but then, as luckily Estate House had its own phone – (no mobiles in those days!) – I eventually rang down to the College Nurse. After listening to my symptoms, she decided that it sounded like my appendix had 'blown'. She arranged for an ambulance to come and pick me up and take me to hospital in Wakefield, where I was operated on and put to bed in a separate room, having been given morphine to knock me out.

A couple of students who lived in Wakefield came in to see me, but I was so out-of-it with the morphine, that they couldn't make sense to me, nor I to them. Then no other students came in to visit, which I thought a little strange, though a couple of tutors did come in to see my progress.

I was later transferred to Bretton Hall's Sick-Bay for recuperation. It later became clear that the student body had been very puzzled by a statement put on the college notice board saying that no-one was allowed to come in and see me.



What had I been up to? We all found out then that as my sickness was overlapping with the final exams, I had to be kept incommunicado so that I could still take my exams, but in Sick Bay, where I could not be accused of cheating. It was delightful taking my exams in Sick Bay, as the nurse provided me with drinks and snacks whilst I was writing my papers!

After recovery, I finished the year with a week's work in college with John Hodgson, setting up lighting for a music and drama celebration of the foundation of Bretton Hall College that he and the Music and Drama departments were putting on for the end of the term, on the green area outside Stable Block.

Year Four

After the vacation in 1968, when I entered my fourth year back at Bretton, for my B.Ed. course, another treat was lying in wait for me, and what a treat! I re-met a young lady named Liz Sampson, who was studying Art on the second year of a two-years' course.

I had originally met her briefly when she came up to Bretton for interview in 1967, and ran into her from time to time during my third year. But this later meeting led me to have somewhere to spend weekends other than Bretton itself... Liz was living in 'College-Approved' lodgings, a flat in Long Causeway in Wakefield, so I spent most weekends there. This was to be the start of a long-lasting romance, which resulted in our marriage a few years later – and we still are married and are now working towards our Golden Wedding!



Alongside this life-changing situation, I had started to do my B.Ed. degree courses. These consisted of studies in Mathematics, and in the Philosophy and History of Education. The Philosophy course was taken by David Shields, a youngish tutor with whom Liz and I became quite friendly, and into whom we ran frequently after leaving the college. In addition to my studies on campus at Bretton, I went one day a week to Leeds University to do two Maths sessions and a session on teaching skills and education, which were run by tutors from the university..



Together with other B.Ed. students living on site in that year, I was accommodated in Wentworth Hostel. Male students such as Bernie Crooks, Denis Green and I lived on the ground floor (I had room 3), whilst the ladies such as Sue Bradbury were on the second floor. One of the college tutors lived in the top floor flat which had in previous years been the home

of John Hodgson, who now lived in the Stable Block flat.

In the spring term of that last year Liz and I, both of necessity, started to look for teaching jobs. We both wanted to start our teaching careers in the South West (Cornwall or Devon preferably). Liz had problems in finding her first job, problems that weren't resolved by the time we left Bretton, and not until she had been out of college and at home in Penzance for a month or so. However, I was much luckier, and got a job quickly, while we were still at college. I saw an advertisement in the Times Educational Supplement (TES) for a Mathematics teaching job in Plymouth, at Plymouth College, in Mutley Plain. It was then, and still is, a well-thought-of Public School.

This of course meant that I had to go down to Plymouth for an interview... an interesting process as it turned out. Firstly, I had to borrow a suit, and on the day before the interview I went into Wakefield to stay the night with Liz, so that I could catch the early train direct to Plymouth the next morning.

Unfortunately, we overslept, and I ended up running through Wakefield just in time to miss the train I had been intending to catch! The next train was not direct... I ended up going via London and having to change trains and stations there. Still, I got there early in the afternoon, and had a most successful interview which ended up with me being offered the job on the spot! Unfortunately Liz's job-finding problems continued, and it wasn't until halfway through the Autumn term that she obtained a job in Taunton.

In our final terms, Liz and I of course had final assessments. I had degree exams to face, and then College was all finished for me. Liz had a Final Exhibition and also some exams, and fortunately we both passed 'our Finals'—Liz with her Teaching Certificate, me with my 3rd Class B.Ed. Honours Degree, both certified by Leeds University School of Education. With that lot out of the way we then set off for home together on the same train going to the south-west.

Reaching home I went back to working on the building site opposite my parents' house, that had been my source of holiday (and extra term-time) income for many of the vacations I had spent whilst at Bretton Hall. The site had started-up opposite my home during my first year at Bretton, and the builders welcomed me back at Easter and Summer holidays, and provided a valuable source of income. I carried on working there until just before moving to Plymouth and, as Liz then found a job a couple of months into the new school year, we both started our careers in teaching with each of us having reaped very substantial benefits from our times at Bretton Hall. I think we both ended up as the enthusiastic, well-rounded teachers that Bretton had set out to make of us. We had the most enjoyable time that we could ever have imagined spending, preparing ourselves for our future lives.

The college closed in 2007, but Liz and I wish that Bretton Hall could continue to offer all that we were able to take to present and future teachers.

It was a great start to life!



Ivor M. Cleves - 2021