

DGS Memories from the 1940's

Alan Treadwell was a student at Dundalk Grammar School from 1942-46. Here he shares some wonderful memories from a time when milking cows and gathering snipe were all part of a student's day!



Alan amidst his DGS peers in the 40's!

I wish to give you a very brief idea of what student life was like in Dundalk Grammar School during the nineteen forties.

In early 1942 I won a scholarship to DGS and commenced my secondary education there the following September.

The teachers there at that time were Rev. A.A. Hanbidge, Headmaster (Latin, Greek, Drawing), Mr Kleinstuber (Maths, Irish), Mr Erskine (Latin), Ms Reaburn (French, english), Miss McGowan [later Mrs McClenaghan] (Maths, History, Geography), Ms Neiland (Science, Maths) and Ms McCabe who taught singing and piano. They were all good teachers and high achievers.

Ms McCabe rode a bicycle from Newry every day and back home again! We had some good laughs with Ms Neiland. She was rather petite but she packed a good punch and was very dedicated to her work. Whatever she had in her hand, she would let it fly and you had to duck fast. She was probably driven to it though! She was the science teacher and we had some good days out on walks on a botany class. Being a country boy, I knew all the plants that we gathered on our walks and she would tell me not to answer anymore. I would look for birds' nests then instead.

After I went into second year, a Mr Ahern came from the Marist to teach us. He would go to the pictures with a young lady who later became his wife. When we got word that he was at the pictures with his lady friend, we would joke with him about his company. He took it all in good humour. Later, his son, Dermot became a T.D and a Minister in Dail Eireann.

The majority of pupils in those days were from the urban area of Dundalk. The *train pupils*, as they were then known came from Castleblaney, Ballybay and Monaghan and the remainder came from Northern Ireland. Dundalk Grammar School was regarded as a safe place for parents to send their children from Northern Ireland during the war years.

They were well looked after and very well fed. The boarders were full-time boarders and there were no mid-term breaks in those days. So, when a boarding student came during the first week of September, he/she didn't get back home until Christmas. The same procedure applied for the other terms.

In those days there was a full-time matron, and when the matron was off duty, Mrs Hanbidge took over the duties. There were also quite a few boarders in the Junior School. The youngest would come in at five years of age and again the same rules applied to them with regards length of term and lack of breaks during them.

Hockey was the dominant sport in the school then. We travelled to Dublin, Drogheda, Newry, Clones and many other places. I remember we played in Clones High School one time. Their headmaster was playing centre forward and I was goalkeeper for DGS. Before the ball ever came near me, he would have me in the back of the net with what was regarded as a fair shoulder. One of our teachers, Mr Vere Cooper, was umpiring the match and I complained to him about what was happening. "Well" he said, "you know what to do." So, the next time he came in, I set myself down low and he went over the top. I guess you know the rest! Needless to say he did not come in any more. Mr Cooper now lives in retirement in Co. Tyrone.

I also remember going out shooting with Mr Hanbidge. He would call me out of class and we would go up to Balmers Bog which lies between the old Dublin Road and the railway line out of Dundalk to Dublin. We went up to Priorland Lane which leads to the back of the Louth Hospital. There was nothing there at that time but one or two old houses. Mr Hanbidge loved snipe and he was a terrific shot. He had no dog at the time and I would collect the snipe out of the bog. He didn't need a dog when I was around as I was light and sure-footed like a mountain goat. We never lost a snipe (or a boy).

Another thing I remember was the school dances which were held in the old dining hall (now the day canteen). Ms Neiland taught us all to dance. We would have supper (which was a big treat in those days) and a dance. The boys had to give Ms Neiland a dance or else they were in big trouble.

Attached to the school was a small farm where the headmaster kept a few cattle and a horse for tilling the garden. The garden was a very large-sized vegetable garden which also had quite a number of fruit trees. This area is all covered now with the new buildings along the Ardee Road.

I remember having to milk three cows as Davy Dixon the gardener / caretaker had an accident. One of the cows was a 'kicker' and I got Tom Patton to hold her by the nose while I milked her. Davy Dixon's son did the milking from then on and I returned to class. Whenever there was work to be done on the agricultural side of things and the gardener needed help, Mr Hanbidge would always come into class and look for a country lad to help out. When one looks back at these times, they were great days – just to get out of class. Those were the days; I

thought they would never end. I could fill a book with all the stories but I am sure you have heard enough. *(Let's fill that book Alan. Keep the stories coming! – Ed.)*

My friends at school were John Doran, Harry Bleakley, Tom Patton and Austin Finnermore (a brother of Bart who later became headmaster in DGS). Bart was a couple of years ahead of me in school.

I will close now and promise myself that I will have to visit the school in the near future as I have never been back since I left about sixty six years ago. I would love to see the improvements carried out since then: It was a rough, tough place but it was enjoyable and a great education for life. I can testify to that.

All the very best for the future.

Alan H. Treadwell.



A contemporary photo of Alan.



Dundalk Grammar School, 1954.

Top Row (L-R): Colin Millikin, Alan Winter, Grier Parkes, Maurice Sirt. **Second Row Down (L-R):** David Finnermore, Wilfred Steen, Marcus Swan, Charles Treadwell, David Ramsey, James Stewart, Michael Rooks, Maurice Purvis, Christopher Taylor, Jeffrey Dobson, Clem Bell, John Beatie, Edward Bourne, Alan Lambert, Brian Brown, Ian Grimson, David Cochrane, Maeve McCullough. **Third Row Down (L-R):** Leila Dixon, Marion Bothwell, Hillary Reid, Dorothy Henry, Gloria Armstrong, Randolph Algrove, Margot Hall, Joan Welch, Robert Creane, Theo Henry, Jack Daly, Douglas Grimson, Tony Adamson, Patricia Winter, Helen Irwin, Robert Waters, Nuala Prole, Barbara Tams, Rosemary Bourne. **Fourth Row Down (L-R):** Valerie Hanna, Dorothy Hillis, Gwen Lucas, Gladys Windrum, Miss Brenda McCarthy (Science and Irish), Miss Jean Douglas (Junior School), Mrs Rose Walsh (Music), Revd. Albert John (Bart) Finnermore (incoming Headmaster), Revd. Alfred Austin Hanbidge (Headmaster), Mrs. Janet Hanbidge, Mrs. Maureen McClenahan (Mathematics, Geography), Ms. Joan Raeburn (English, French), Edith Hanna, Violet Ross, Aileen Lait, Margaret Thompson, Bernice Comerford, Freda Montgomery. **Bottom Row (L-R):** Kim Lawrence, David Scott, Anette Hall, Myrtle Creane, Malcolm McMoran, James Kelly, Dundalk Grammar School Sign for 1954, Billy Lait, Oliver Rolston, Claire Hall, Selena Kelly, Georgina Treadwell, Brian Whaley, John Lait.