

Mr. J. E. "Jock" Lindsay



During World War Two J. E. Lindsay worked in intelligence with RAF Bomber Command (Photo Courtesy Judy Longman)

"The Head of the English department joined the staff 30 years ago; the school is indeed fortunate to have retained the services of such a gifted teacher, whose liberal and cultivated literary interests have exercised a strong influence here. His quiet, inspiring leadership has welded together the department.

The above, taken from the report by H. M. Inspector of Schools following a visit to Swanage Grammar School in 1960, neatly encapsulates the life-long teaching career of J. E. Lindsay, spent entirely at our school.

Jim, or Jock Lindsay, depending on what era you happened to attend SGS, was descended from a Scots family and was born in Farnworth, near Liverpool on St Andrew's Day, November 30, 1907. His father had been a mining engineer but died when Jock was very young; an elder brother had died before he was born. Jock grew up in Lancashire and attended Farnworth Grammar School, where he shone both academically and on the field; he not only became Captain of both cricket and football, he became Head Boy. Jock exemplified what he eventually taught; intelligence, excellence, physical fitness and overall balance. After grammar school Jock went on to Manchester University and there too distinguished himself. After university he had the qualifications necessary to embark upon a high flying career in Academia. Instead, this promising graduate student chose to teach in a obscure little south coast seaside town.

Jock arrived in Swanage in 1930 and joined the staff of Swanage Grammar School a year after its opening in 1929. Apart from the war years he was to remain in Swanage for the rest of his life. At school Jock initially was involved in some other areas apart from his beloved English. Later alumni may be surprised to learn that he took an active interest in soccer, cricket and tennis and for many years he played for the Swanage Town Cricket team. In 1932 Jock married local girl Betty Tatchell and two years later daughter Judy was born.

For nine years Jock enjoyed the leisurely, satisfying existence of teaching in a small seaside backwater - (SGS had no more than 150 pupils in the 1930s). But the events of 1939 were to change all that. Several of the school's male staff went off to war. Jock joined the Royal Air Force shortly after the Battle of Britain, even though as a teacher he was exempt from joining the forces. SGS's Head of Geography, Arthur Gaskell and another Lancastrian, did the same. Jock was in Bomber Command intelligence and briefed Canadians, New Zealanders, Australians, Polish and American men, initially from the Royal Bath and Norfolk hotels in Bournemouth. Jock was later billeted at Morton-in-Marsh, Kinloss and Dunkeswell. At some stage in 1944 he was involved with V1 flying bomb sites.

After the war Jock returned to his beloved Swanage where, in his words, "the sea is as blue as anywhere in the Mediterranean". A son, Jamie, was born 18 years after the birth of daughter Judy and Jock settled down to continue teaching English. As the years rolled by it soon became evident that he was no ordinary teacher. In his appreciation of Jock, published in the 1994 edition of *The Swan*, former pupil Dennis Brown (now a Professor at Hertfordshire University) wrote, "For those of us who took "A" level English, Jock transformed from an authoritative and imaginative teacher into a combination of father-figure and intellectual guru. He fondly fostered the intuitive growth of a pupil who showed any interest in Literature and in doing so he opened up a Pandora's Box of ideas, subject areas,

intellectual trends and historical precedents - for his knowledge was as broad as it was deep...In and out of class, he would stress thinking for yourself rather than relying on received opinion (including his own) and getting acquainted with as wide a range of ideas as possible... He stretched out and made us want to know about...well everything." Jock often reminded many of his students that they should not forget the three jewels of the Crown of English Literature namely: - the 1662 Prayer Book, King James Bible and Shakespeare.

After he retired from teaching in 1965, after 35 years of service at Swanage Grammar School, Jock continued to live at Magnolia House at the top of Swanage High Street. He loved to hear from old pupils, particularly when they dropped in or sent him Christmas cards; all cards from past pupils were neatly filed away in his desk. Thus Jock was delighted to reacquaint himself with several hundred former SGS pupils during the 1989 SGS reunion; sadly he was too unwell to attend subsequent reunions.

In later years Jock suffered from Meniere's disease and using a hearing aid would sit in his garden during summer and watch the linnets. He had also developed diabetes, complications from which led to him spending his final days in hospital. There, at the end, he refused medication, telling his doctor to spend his time on those who would benefit from his ministrations. He was told that he could not return to Magnolia House and, wanting his home, books and garden Jock saw no point in struggling on in a nursing home. He loved his books and took with him to hospital Plato and his Dialogues. Shortly before the end Jock purchased his final book, Storm Command a personal account of the Gulf War written by a former Studland man, General Sir Peter de la Billiere. Jock had told his doctor that he was preparing to meet his maker. A few days before he died he asked what the date was, knowing that his wife Betty had died on November 26, 1979 - Jock died on November 25, 1993.

Throughout his long teaching career at Swanage Jock had been repeatedly advised by various school inspectors to move on to better things. Because of his wife's business interests and her strong family ties in Swanage Jock felt unable to move on to the university lectureships etc. offered to him. In any case he delighted in the beauty of Purbeck and the rich rewards from his teaching at Swanage Grammar School. Jock Lindsay loved Swanage Grammar School and his pupils ("half wits and all") to the end. How fortunate we all were!

(This tribute is a shortened version of the 12 page appreciation that appeared in Swan No. 5, published in 1994. We are grateful to Jock's daughter Judy and his son Jamie for kindly supplying further material on their late father).



J. E. Lindsay, aged 26, pictured in the school photograph, May 1933



Arthur Gaskell, 'Jock' Lindsay and John Brigham caught during a light moment on Sports Day, July 1951

(Ethel Shaw photograph)



'Jock' Lindsay handing out a prize in the school hall in the 1960's.



'Jock' Lindsay at the 1988 SGS Reunion at the Pines Hotel, Swanage.

(Dick Riding photograph)