

Biography: Cecil Elliott 1906-2002

“Chas”: Head teacher PJGS 1945 – 1966.

Mr Elliott, known affectionately as “Chas” or “Charlie”, became the school’s second headteacher in September 1945. Immediately before, he was Head of History at Goole Grammar School and earlier in his career had taught at Wigton Grammar School. In Wigton he met his wife Nell who was daughter of a local policeman. Mr Elliott came from the mining area of Northumberland. He went to Ashington Grammar School and was a graduate of Durham University. Mr and Mrs Elliott did not have family and during his time at PJGS they lived on Crabgate Drive, Skellow. After retirement in 1966, they moved to Papcastle near Cockermouth in Cumbria where Mrs Elliott died in the late 1990s and Mr Elliott in 2002 at the age of 96.



Cecil Elliott in his office c 1950. On the left is ‘the chair’ over which boys would bend for caning.

Mr Elliott was a tall, distinguished-looking man with grey-blue piercing eyes. On first meeting he could appear quite severe but his somewhat stern exterior belied an inner warmth and sense of humour. He was strict but fair though on occasion was moved to reach for the cane from his cupboard.

He always wanted the best for his staff and pupils and led from the front, setting very high standards. As one former pupil (Nigel Cottam) put it “We were taught in a humane and even entertaining way. We received a broad and rounded education and were encouraged to stretch ourselves into other fields.” Mr Elliott joined in many school activities and is fondly remembered and admired for taking part in drama productions, turning out as left-back in the annual Staff v School First XI Soccer match and singing bass with the Senior Choir. Throughout his time at PJGS and into retirement Mr Elliott maintained a keen interest in the lives and careers of former pupils and he and Mrs Elliott gave a warm welcome to anyone visiting them in Papcastle. In that more relaxed setting he would even address ‘boys’ by Christian name rather than by surname as in their school days. (John Hudson)

Many pupils will echo the sentiments of one former pupil (AL) who, on hearing about Mr. Elliott’s death, said “We owe him a lot and have a lot to thank him for.” A former member of

staff (GC) said “The first headmaster I had and he was the kindest, the most understanding and, in short, the best.”



Mr & Mrs Elliott. PJGS Garden Party July 1961

John Moorley (1960 entrant) makes this tribute: ‘Not one student had anything other the utmost respect for Charlie. His charisma, his physical stature, his formidable eyebrows, his deep but trustworthy eyes, his posh, stentorian, mahogany tones, his authoritarian aspect tempered by much understanding and kindness were the main contributory factors to the widespread respect he commanded amongst the pupils. From my last long conversation with Mr. Mayman in about 1995, it seems that the teachers held similar respect for Chas.’

From his fourth form days, John Moorley also recalls a telling ‘interview’ with Chas where he was caused to admit being insolent to a teacher. He was dismissed with a “Thank you, Moorley.” but as he reached the office door Chas turned from his desk and added “Moorley (pause....) – I wouldn’t have expected that of you.” and turned back to his desk. Was there ever a more effective rebuke?

In its farewell to Mr Elliott, the 1966 school magazine ‘Balkite’ recorded: Mr Elliott will be missed by us all and both present and past pupils will remember with gratitude his unfailing help, scrupulous fairness and qualities of leadership.

Chas turns out to be one of the longest serving members of staff. On 22 July 1966 he entered in the log book “Last day of school session, after 21 years’ service as Head Master.”

Based on pages 15 & 16 from ‘Percy Jackson’s: History of the Percy Jackson Grammar School’, second revised edition 2010.

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