

## Alan Wise, Teacher of Chemistry at Kelso High School from 1980-2011

By Gordon Watson

This week we heard the sad news that the much-loved teacher Alan Wise has died. His contribution to KHS, in a career spanning 31 years, cannot be over stated.

There will be very few pupils who didn't interact with Alan either as a student in his Science/Chemistry classes or in the numerous activities he was involved in – most famously, the very successful and popular Alps Trip. Or, they may have met him in his role of sound engineer/lighting technician in any number of school productions. Or, they may have been one of the many who regularly turned up at his door at interval, lunchtime or after school for a 'good natter' or a quick guitar lesson.

Alan loved helping people. Nothing was ever too much trouble or, it seemed, beyond his abilities. He was a practical man who could turn his hand to just about anything from exquisite renditions of "Sweet Home Alabama" on his lead guitar, to tree surgery – a genius at rope harnessing – as well as map-reading, navigation and first-aid which he used to the benefit of the local mountain rescue team.



One of his many passions was geology and he was thrilled when the school decided to introduce a Geology class to the curriculum. And when, a few years later, timetable restrictions meant he could no longer take the class himself, he just worked even harder to ensure the subject's smooth transition to the Geography department. This was typical of Alan – everything he did was for the benefit of others.

Having struggled with dyslexia as a youngster, Alan was always prepared to go the extra mile to help pupils with whatever difficulties they faced. Eternally positive and encouraging.

Alan was a great family man. He was devoted to his parents and he spent many years travelling home every weekend to Keswick to care for them. He took great pride in the careers of his sister and nieces, and no-one who saw him with 'his boys', John & James, could ever doubt the strength of the bond between them.

And, of course, there was the new vocabulary he introduced - words like 'wazzock'! Whilst checking that I had the spelling correct, I was amused by the following story in a major

newspaper: *"The term 'wazzock' is causing much head-scratching among word experts. Quite simply, they don't know where it comes from."* We know where it came from!

Retirement, 10 years ago, meant a return to Keswick and multiple job opportunities. When not working with his uncle tending the grounds of a big estate, Alan had his dream job as a 'handyman' in a distillery, turning his many talents to whatever needed doing.

Clearly, he was also able to indulge his love of the local geology as reported by the Cumberland Geological Society:

*"On the evening of 17th August 16 members and friends met in Keswick. Our leader, Alan Wise, explained that most of Latrigg Fell is composed of a chaotic assemblage of Skiddaw Group rocks and there are arcuate faces on the hillside indicating that more landslips will occur in the future."*

These were the times when we never understood a word Alan was saying, but we could certainly appreciate his passion!

Alan rarely missed a staff social event though he was almost always late! Even after his retirement, he would travel up from Keswick to celebrate the next retirement or 'leaving do' and we were always delighted to see him. He has left us with so many happy memories.

