

PAUL GRIFFIN MBE (G35-40)

He was born on 2 March 1922 and was head prefect at the College at the time of the evacuation to Repton. On leaving the College, he served in WW2 with the 6th Gurkha Rifles and Suffolk Regiment, rising to the rank of Major. After the war he completed his education by going to St Catharine's College, Cambridge, where he obtained a BA in 1948 followed by an MA in 1953.



He went into teaching and held the following posts :-

- Senior English Master, Uppingham School (1949-55)
- Principal, English School, Nicosia, Cyprus (1956-60)
- Headmaster, Aldenham School (1962-74)
- Principal of Language Centre Cambridge (1976-1982)

His time in Cyprus coincided with the worst of the EOKA terrorist campaign and involved trying to hold together an English-language inter-communal school, while civil war was breaking out between the communities. His staff and buildings were frequently attacked, but the school still survives and flourishes today. He was awarded the MBE for services to Cyprus education in 1961.

On leaving Cyprus, in 1961, he became licensed as a Reader in the Church of England, a task from which he retired 45 years later. In 1971, he joined the Court of the Corporation of Sons of the Clergy in Westminster, rising to spend six years as a Treasurer (Chairman), half that time as the Senior in charge. On his retirement from teaching, he served his local Church in various capacities.

He is a poet and writer of numerous contributions to broadcasting stations and national magazines, religious, comic, literary, and educational. Contributor to many anthologies, including the five "How To....." Penguin/Viking comic anthologies. Winner of major prizes: 'Literary Review Best Poem of the Year 1991 (£5,000), Cambridge University Seatonian Prize ¹ for Religious Poetry 2001 ("Belshazzar's Feast"), and again in 2007 ("The Tabernacle of God is with Men") and again in 2010 (Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels – see next pages). Author of six books of poetry and verse (Lyon & Lamb, Publishers): "Sing Jubilee" (1996), "Nearly Funny Poems" (1996), "Songs about Suffolk" (1997), "Going Away" (1999), "Lighthearted Lines" (2000), "The Sound of Violins" (2003), and "Diamonds for Aphrodite" (2006).

He married the sister of **Sir Patrick Howard-Dobson GCB (R33-40)** and **Michael Dobson AFC (R34-42)** and acquired as parents-in-law a fine priest and an impressive teacher. This led partly to his subsequent career in teaching and the Church.

He died on 29 January 2012, five weeks short of his 90th birthday and the following obituary was written by Merrick Fall (his son in law), based on notes produced by Paul himself.

Paul Griffin was born an only child at Chingford, Essex, in 1922. His father spent his life in a London bank, except for service in the Great War. Money was scarce, and Paul's top Scholarship to Framlingham College was a relief to the family. When the Second World War broke out, Paul, as captain of the School, volunteered in a scheme for public schoolboys to go to India and join the Army there. He was accepted and was still 18 when he embarked for Bombay. Paul joined the 3rd /6th Gurkhas, based at Shagai Fort in the Khyber Pass; he became a Captain at 20 and learned Pushtu. His battalion spent time in Waziristan and was then selected for Wingate's Chindits in the jungles of Burma, a highly dangerous posting. Bouts of malaria and dysentery, coupled with his obvious ability, led him to becoming a specialist Air Staff Officer and a Major while still under 23.

On his return to the UK, he married Felicity Dobson, the sister of a Framlingham friend, Patrick (later General Sir Patrick) Howard-Dobson, and went up to St Catharine's College, Cambridge, to read English Literature. With money short, life was not easy. Their daughter, Angela, was born while he was still an undergraduate, and their

second child, Jonathan, at Uppingham where Paul had been appointed to sort out the teaching of English. After six years, Paul took the post of Principal of the English School in Nicosia, Cyprus, a school founded in the belief that the Greek and Turkish communities could be brought together through education. He worked towards this end and showed great courage in walking the talk, making lasting friendships in all Cypriot communities. He was fully involved in local life and activities, including acting and reading the radio news during the Emergency under the pen-name Peter Lyon. He was awarded an MBE for his contribution to education.

When independence came, having lost staff, buildings and many pupils to terrorism, Paul returned to the UK, and was appointed Headmaster of Aldenham, where he spent 13 years. Through his dedication to teaching and to insisting on the highest standards, he inspired enormous loyalty and respect among those in his charge. These were times of great social change and youthful rebellion: a challenge for a man who had experienced the order and precision of the military life during wartime. He described himself in those days as a cautious progressive, for which in retrospect many of his former pupils will surely be grateful. Not unusually, he liked to walk the dog, but did he sometimes, as a rumour had it, almost prefer dogs to people?

A new phase began with seven pleasant years starting a language school in Cambridge, before retirement to Southwold, in Suffolk. He had been writing sporadically ever since India, and won many literary competitions, contributing regularly to "The Spectator" and other periodicals. In so doing he came across a group of writers with whom he wrote a series of humorous books, including *How To Become Ridiculously Well-Read In One Evening*. After that, he published a number of volumes of his own poetry. He was awarded £5,000 for providing the winning entry in the Literary Review's National Poetry Competition with *Love in an English Garden*; and on three occasions, the last as recently as 2010, he won the Cambridge University Seatonian Prize for Religious Poetry.

Throughout his life his religious faith was deep and uncompromisingly orthodox, and was expressed in some of his most moving poems. He enjoyed preaching, first as Headmaster and then as a Reader of the Church of England, and leading services in various parishes in Suffolk. While at Aldenham, Paul had joined the Corporation of the Sons of the Clergy, of which he became Treasurer (Chairman). He also devoted himself to the work of St Mary's, Huntingfield, in whose Rectory Felicity had grown up and where they were married.

To everything he did he brought a fierce intelligence; while loyal to a fault, he was always more at home as his own man than in the role of willing subordinate. In Southwold, many of the local Suffolk boys whose authenticity he relished will fondly remember him on the beach at night, with windbreak and tilly-lamp, casting his line for dabs.

Paul Griffin, teacher, churchman, poet, born 2 March 1922, died peacefully at home 29 January 2012, five weeks short of his 90th birthday. He leaves a wife, Felicity, and two children, Angela and Jonathan.

¹ The Seatonian Prize was established in 1741 by Thomas Seaton and is awarded by the University of Cambridge for the best English poem on a religious subject. It is open to any Master of Arts of the university.

“Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels.”

1. Whistler Window

Etched into glass, his frozen plane
That flew so proudly after prey,
And dying in the air of war
Waits in the winter till the day
When angels come in one last flight
To lift it up, high and away.

The etching glows, but you will see
No trace of how the aircraft fell,
Its wreckage resurrected now,
Not on the burning marl of Hell,
Scarred and battered like this church,
But cured now, and shining well..

2. The Struggle Upwards

Level with beasts, by humans made,
It stays, awaits the judgment day
Held by material weight as we,
Who struggle up and cannot stay,
But fall to earth with wounded wings,
And unlike him, blaspheme away.

As in the ancient bestiary,
The tortoise struggling to fly,
That pauses, fluttering weary wings,
For ever halfway to the sky,
Not waiting till the trumpet blows
That calls the angels from on high.

*Man, with angels, beasts, and stones
Must wait, content with what he owns
Until the whole creation ends
And all in love and glory blends.*

3. Swans

Out of the air, as I crouch by the waters of darkness
I look for a sign, hearing the wings in the distance,
Singing the Lord's song in a strange land.

For sure the end and the angels will come in the evening,
Sailing out of the mist in the river valley
Like swans, incredible necks pioneering the air.

The mist will hang on the river, the water run strangely,
Twisting fearfully under the roots of the willows,
When it hears the beat of wings from the blotted-out bridge.

The sprinting hares will lie, the fish on the sandbanks
Will dart in a puff of smoke to the darkened weeds,
As the whistle and pant of the end of the world comes near.

Water meadows shall pass away, with the hedges;
The lines of trees and the road shall be no more,
When the last swans come to harrow the valley,

Fanning the world with the wind and the noise of their wings,
Crescendo over the mist, then whining away
Up the white valley, leaving nothing behind them.

Out of the air, as I crouch by the waters of darkness,
Singing the Lord's song of the distant wings,
A white feather falls in a strange land.

4. Judgment

All the descent of December, the partridges brown as the plough;
All that's alive and remembered, the foggy cough of the cow,
Sharp steps on the road in the distance: at just such a time we shall see
The parting of yellow clouds, where a pale sun should be,
And the sight of the angels descending, the final judgment of all,
And the brightness of some who wait there, but the darkness of some who fall
Back through the slow creation to a time before man's birth
When Eden lay in the future and the beasts and stones ruled Earth.
There in the Holy City, the angels "Welcome" cry
Below, the Earth is crumbling as the ancient thunders roll,
And what remains in the darkness retains no human soul.
But there in the church's rubble lies Lawrence Whistler's glass
Shining still in the twilight as all this comes to pass
And still alive in the memory of the faithful souls above
As they sing of the double Kingdom of God's unceasing love.

