

Tributes have been paid by the academic world to a Professor of Politics and International Relations from Chorley who has died aged 71. After coping bravely with cancer for over 2 years, Alan Dobson died peacefully in his sleep at home earlier this month. Two of his former classmates, Stan Duxbury and Mike Toft, have penned this personal tribute.

Educated at Chorley Grammar School (now Parklands Academy), Alan excelled, taking both English and (fittingly) History prizes in his final year. Over his professional life he developed an expertise in 20th Century Anglo-American relations, eventually becoming Professor of Politics at Dundee University and, after retirement, Honorary Professor in International Relations at St Andrews. He moved back in 2014 to an honorary chair at Swansea University, where his academic career had started and the happiest of places for him and his family. During his career, Alan wrote and co-wrote ten books, founded and chaired the Transatlantic Studies Association and edited the Journal of Transatlantic Studies and latterly the International History Review. He was a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society.

He had a surprisingly many-faceted life. A livestock farmer's son from Withnell, he was proud to claim descent from the poet Swinburne and happy to ride the Blackpool beach donkeys that his father used to overwinter. He was passionately interested in aviation from an early age (eventually publishing more on that than any other subject). What most of his academic colleagues don't know is that an obsession with Biggles started this interest. He collected Biggles books to the end, carrying a list of his volumes and "swaps" to show like-minded contacts, ever hoping to increase his collection. His passion for aviation led him ultimately to many achievements, including a Fellowship of the Royal Aeronautical Society, but thankfully an early attempt to join the Parachute Regiment was nipped in the bud by the interview panel.

It's tempting to see Alan's academic legacy as wholly defining the man, but he was much more than that. Whilst a brilliant academic, the friend we remember never took himself too seriously - he was a man who looked for (and found) fun in everything. Spurred-on by a restless enthusiasm, his many worldly delights included cooking, entertaining (with the odd glass of decent red wine), painting, country walks and choral singing. The latter was perhaps stimulated by the arrival at our school of the new Music Mistress (she was surprised how easily senior boys were recruited to the bass section of her new choir). Alan's strong voice was a (perhaps too) powerful addition to any choir, and was once affectionately described as 'something of a loose cannon'.

But he delighted most in other people. His family, his wife Bev, their three daughters and his grandchildren were his bedrock and, in his own words, he considered himself "the luckiest man in the world".

<https://www.bisa.ac.uk/members/working-groups/bihg/news/professor-alan-dobson-1951-2022>