

# Happy memories

## Mary

One thing I had learnt from a distant cousin, Mary, was that once learned, never forgotten. Back in 1945, on VJ Day, I had met her (then aged 27) at Aunty Rosamund's. It was to be a further five years before I was in the Worcester area again. I recall vividly the following conversation:

**Aunty:** Would you like a cup of tea David?

**Mary:** David don't drink tea, Mother.

**Aunty:** Of course he does, don't you David?

**Me:** No Aunty, Mary's right.

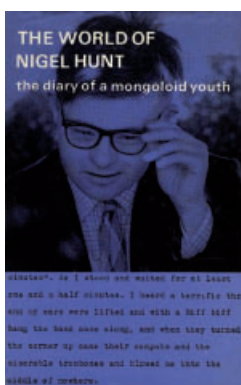
**Aunty:** Fancy remembering that after all these years!

Cousin Mary had a wonderful memory. She also had Down's syndrome.

## Nigel

In 1967 I took up a post as a lecturer in education in Social and Environmental Studies at Kesteven College of Education, based at Stoke Rochford Hall, near Grantham. My Head of Department told me that I needed a qualification in education beyond the standard of my PGCE, and suggested joining a part-time diploma course at Nottingham University. I chose the one about students with

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Nigel Hunt, 1967  
Darwen Finlayson Ltd  
Hardback, 126pp, 13s 6d  
ISBN: 85208-008-5

Special Needs, then classed 'attention seeking and educationally sub-normal' (ASESN).

It was here that I came across a remarkable autobiography entitled *The world of Nigel Hunt: the diary of a mongoloid youth* (1967, Darwen Finlayson). I was so intrigued, that I arranged to visit the author, Nigel Hunt, at the Camphill Village Trust, near Watford, where he lived with his elderly widowed father. Nigel turned out to be a charming young man, who demonstrated to me his self-taught ability to type – slowly, but surely.

## Bernard

In 1972, the James Report on teacher training proposed the closure of the smaller colleges of education, like Stoke Rochford Hall, especially where they were located close to larger teacher training institutions. So, in 1973, I moved to Louth to take up the joint position of Head of Humanities and Professional Tutor (to provide in-service training for probationary teachers in the area).

After six years, and at the age of 50, I felt so stressed that I quit full-time teaching. Happily, this coincided with the launch of a Government-sponsored Adult Literacy Campaign. You may

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## Information

The Down's Syndrome Association (DSA) provides information and support on all aspects of living with Down's syndrome. DSA also works to champion the rights of people with Down's syndrome by campaigning for change and challenging discrimination.

Since 1970, DSA has grown from being a local parent support group to a national charity with 100 regional volunteer-led support groups, over 20,000 members and offices in England, Northern Ireland and Wales.

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recall that a then almost unknown actor, Bob Hoskins, introduced the basics on TV. At first I was allotted Bernard, who was keen to be able to read to his children. Bernard lived in a neighbouring market town, drove the local road sweeper, and was a Salvationist.

Next, the manager of the local ATC (Adult Training Centre) approached me about running an adult literacy class, which would be made up of a mixture of adults with various learning difficulties. This group would include adults with Down's syndrome.

## Mary, Viv and Robin

My ATC class turned out to contain a cross-section of trainees with Down's syndrome. For example, there was Mary with a razor-sharp mind and there was also the vivacious Viv who travelled to the centre by minibus from the nearby seaside resort of Cleethorpes. Viv had a wonderful sense of humour that came across in her hoarse voice and accompanying laugh.

Robin was an active member of the Boys' Brigade based at Louth Methodist Church. He was proud that he helped out the inductees.



David Kaye taught History in Hemel Hempstead (1954-57), Walton-on-Thames (1957-60), Holbeach (1960-61) and Littlehampton (1962-1966). He then taught Year 4 at Henfield CoE Primary (1966-67) before lecturing in Social and Environmental Studies at Kesteven College of Education at Stoke Rochford (1967-73). After a period back in school as Head of Humanities at Monks Dyke High School, Louth (1973-79), he worked as a supply teacher and adult training tutor (1979-95).

## Simon and Robert

Then there was Simon from Horncastle. He was truly amazing, remarkable and memorable. Simon held a snooker cue at a rather odd angle but, as I found out time and time again, he was unbeatable at the table! Even more spectacular, was his prowess on the indoor bowls lawn – somehow his bowls always seemed to finish snuggled up to the jack. Finally there was fun-filled Robert, always ready with a joke.

In 1959, I had candidated for the Methodist ministry, and had got as far as the July section committee, when I was turned down and told I was more useful to God's kingdom as a Christian teacher. During the next 20 years, I was rarely let loose with a Bible in school, let alone allowed to take morning assembly. Nevertheless, over time I came to realise that being a Christian school-teacher meant I was in full-time Christian ministry after all. I often found myself spending time with students and, dare I say, colleagues who were overlooked or ostracised by society. I'd like to think my pastoral priorities were guided by my Christian beliefs. Now, armed with a pack of lexicon letter cards and some homemade worksheets, I found myself ministering to a delightful group of Down's syndrome learners who wanted desperately to learn to read. Thank you, God!

■ David Kaye

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## Down's syndrome and education legislation

The 1944 Education Act categorised pupils into two groups: the 'educable' and the 'ineducable'. Because children with Down's syndrome were placed in the latter category they were denied a proper education. Those deemed to be 'ineducable' tended to be institutionalised in long-stay hospitals or left at home with their families.

Then in 1971 came a sea-change in attitudes. The 1971 Education Act stated that all children, including those with learning disabilities, had a legal right to go to school. Also published in 1971, the White Paper *Better Services for the Mentally Handicapped* advocated the provision of support services within the community.

In the 1980s and 1990s legislation consolidated the rights of people with learning disabilities within society, ensuring children with Down's syndrome had the right to attend a local mainstream school.

The UK Government has recognised this and has completed the first full review of services for people with learning disabilities in 30 years.

In 2001, the UK Government published a White Paper entitled *Valuing People: A New Strategy for Learning Disability for the 21st Century*. This document (which applies only to England) argues that certain key principles – legal and civil rights, independence, choice, inclusion – should be reflected in every aspect of the lives of children and adults with learning disabilities.

