

A highly personal, biased account compiled with the aid of some notes made at the time, semi-accurate memories, the benefit of hindsight and a genuine liking for all the people concerned. I apologise for incorrect versions of people's names, titles or degrees.

Miss Scott was Aidan's and Aidan's was Miss Scott: but first there were Home Students.

"Go through the small red door in the large wooden door and 60A, Saddler Street is the first door on the left." So ran the instructions. How many times must they have been given? I climbed those stairs heart in mouth the first time (and on some later occasions, with explanations to make or for reassurance to be given). The room at the top was restful with muted colours; here Miss Scott would return after taking Kim for a walk on his lead. I think of it as peaceful, the scene of sympathetic discussion with a person of shrewd judgment, but the sharpest picture retained is of it crowded with gowned students, every seat taken, every inch of carpet covered, as we listened to Miss Scott playing the piano.

It was 1946. The war had been over for a year; food and clothing were rationed; everything was in short supply; a Labour Government was in power determined to nationalise the basic industries and to change the social structure. Many people had acquired wider horizons by their enforced service away from restricted surroundings. Ex-service men and women could enter and claim an unclassified degree after two years or complete a full course in more subjects. Complications arose because students would arrive during the year as they were released from the services and so be unable to complete the residential qualification of 9 terms. It worked in reverse, of course, some completing their 3 years for a General Degree, but not qualifying in all subjects, could claim an unclassified degree. And passing the second year examinations at Durham was accepted as the equivalent of an American degree. (Remember Mary Thoites in St. Mary's?)

Can Durham ever before have known such a mixture of students? Two years National Service was in force and most men went into the Forces before going to University: the regulations kept changing. Women were at last exempt. Some students already up had possibly chosen to go to University before joining the Forces, but the new intake was different. The men were being at last released from the Services, some married, a few with children: the women mere schoolgirls with a leaven of maturer ex-service women. The schoolgirls were very solemn or very frothy or both, while the others gave balance. I was a schoolgirl terrified of letting anyone know my feelings, very shy, and determined to disguise this by talking, sometimes interminably, as my *alter ego* would point out with malign glee. This creature lived 2 or 3 feet above my right shoulder and viewed my actions and those of other people from this Olympian height commenting on mine in sardonic tones so that I was forced to argue back with only half my mind on what I was saying and I was driven, half-hypnotised, into some gaucherie which left me covered in confusion. The imp was much more generous to other people.

There were about 300 (500?) students in the whole of Durham Colleges and 31 were Home Students, 3 of them being Second years: Alwyn Bailey, Sheila Walker and D. Margaret Johnson. Home Students might reside at home or with friends but in fact most of us were in digs or rather 'with hostesses'. Miss Scott worked hard at finding and keeping suitable

accommodation and smoothing out difficulties, regularly visiting our hostesses. Some years later, when Tim Mares, a Cuthbert's man, called to ask if I was leaving because he was searching for somewhere for himself and his wife, I managed to stop myself bristling indignantly, "But these are Aidan's digs", and murmured that I did hope to be there. However, Peggy Mares was a post-graduate student in Aidan's when she arrived in 1950 (and I was still in my desirable digs for my Dip.Ed. year).

But there was no St. Cuthbert's Society at Michaelmas, 1946: there were Non-Collegiate Students. Both groups felt a bit like displaced persons in a collegiate university and tended to be in sympathy because we shared similar problems and rather felt that we were regarded as of inferior status. We needed to find our identity and supported each other. Non-Colls seemed to disappear somewhere up Owengate and Home Students were given the use of the Top Common Room in the Women's Union in the Bailey. We cleaned it. It needed it. Later Maida Sturge painted the early version of the coat of arms with St. Peter's Keys on the fireplace. But more of Maida later.

I had applied to St. Mary's College, the only women's university college, although the two Teacher Training Colleges, Neville's Cross and St. Hild's, took a few university students. Bede College was the men's Teacher Training College and the men's university colleges were University (Castle) with an outpost at Lumley Castle when numbers demanded it; Hatfield, which had combined with Castle for the duration of the war; the theological colleges, St. Chad's and St. John's; and King's College, Newcastle, three times the size of the Durham Colleges. In 1948 the numbers had grown to 1050 in Durham and 3182 at King's. Also associated were Sunderland Technical College, Codrington College in the Barbados and Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone, although I was aware of only the latter at the time: there were several students from Sierra Leone.

I was interviewed by the Principal of St. Mary's, Miss Ferguson, and Mr. Angus, the Registrar. Later I was to learn that Miss Ferguson wrote little notes about interviewees such as 'hole in glove'. (That student was accepted). Unfortunately, I was not, but she gave my name to Miss Scott, as Censor of Home Students. Suddenly, in the October, I was accepted. I was desperate to go to Durham, because a school-friend of mine, Ann Robinson, two years older than I was, was at St. Mary's and had told me all about the University. She showed me round the town when I went up for interview and I was captivated. I was still bemused by the geography some months later, when I was living at 30, Church Street, because I could not understand how I could cross the river twice by bridge and end up further than ever away from my starting point. Someone thought to explain to me that the river made a loop and my problem was solved. There were no maps, of course; they had been confiscated at the beginning of the war. There were just the three bridges then; Elvet, Framwellgate and Prebends. Was there a footbridge up by Bede?

My first digs in Church Street were where the Union building is now, next to a little public garden. I shared with Elisabeth Read (later Mrs. Page) and our hostess, Miss Dorothy Harrison, who was a member of the organ-building family in Durham. Harrison's built the organ in the Cathedral (the Abbey, as she called it), and, as a young woman, she had gone to Shanghai with her father to instal the organ in the Cathedral there. The house was a tall Georgian building, with cellars spreading

to two doors away (it was interesting to see our coal delivered to a cellar up the street), and staircase with an enormous window built through to next door with a dividing wall stopping two inches from the glass. Besides ourselves and Miss Harrison, it housed Dora, the maid, Pat, a solicitor, and a Deaconess who was attached to St. Oswald's church. She wore the deaconess's dress of the period, below ankle-length navy blue, a flowing head-dress and a large silver cross.

Our bedroom contained two beds, two wardrobes, two tables, numerous chairs and chests of drawers and, over the beds, a suspiciously large sag in the ceiling, which grew larger during the appalling winter. Maida had a ceiling that actually leaked in her digs, but her landlord did nothing whatever about it as it could not be tackled in wet weather and in dry weather there was no need.

From our bedroom window and the back garden we could watch the non-Colls practising on the river; they had the use of Hatfield boathouse. On the opposite side of Church Street lived Claud Colleer Abbot, the professor of English. Prof. Abbot had some time before discovered in a Scottish farmhouse attic, so the story went, an unknown collection of James Boswell's writings. He brought out a book of poems, a little after 1946, which was reviewed as the work of this interesting 'young poet'.

Nearby in Hallgarth Street lived Marion Oldfield, another Home Student. Her digs were without a bath and we used to meet her going to have a bath at some other house. (?Mrs. Gordon's) Marion was fabulously wealthy; she had a grant of £300 a year from her Local Education Committee at ?Burnley, ?Bolton, ?Blackburn. This largesse can be appreciated when compared with my pay at the Income Tax Office that Christmas. I earned £2.10s. (£2.50) for a 44-hour week. We worked Saturday mornings in those days - and at Durham there were lectures on Saturday mornings, as well, but Wednesday afternoons were sports afternoons for those inclined. This was a relic of pre-war times when the same was true of the secondary school I had attended at home in Grimsby. There were some nine o'clock lectures as well, which Miss Scott thought highly uncivilised. "No students are sufficiently awake before Ten in the morning," she declared.

When we first went up we had to pay our fees to Mr. Angus and also queue to put down for our various subjects. The long queue snaked down the street as we waited to see Dr. S. Holgate who had not long qualified. He was very helpful, taking time with each student in spite of the press of numbers all waiting. "No, you must not take History if you want to do English and French," he told me. "You would not find time for the necessary reading. Try Economics."

I tried Economics. I also did Latin because it was not really clear to me that that year Durham was the first University to make its study not compulsory. It was still compulsory for entrance. There was not enough paper for people to have syllabuses, of course. How odd that I should need some Latin for my hobby and my work forty years later!

There was not enough paper for books either. We went to the House of Andrews to buy what was on the shelves and to order other books that were in print. In this way we managed to acquire about half of the set books and for the others we relied on the University Library on Palace Green (U.V.L. on P.G.). There were long queues for these books, too.

Our gowns we bought from Grays, the robemakers, in Saddler Street. An undergraduate gown cost thirty shillings (£1.50) and had to be worn nearly all the time. I know I wore it to the Presbyterian church

behind the Bus Station. In a year or two the regulations were that it had to be worn on Palace Green in the morning, to lectures, and after dark. It was a very useful item of clothing in the cold winter of 1947 when there was only inadequate heating, and it was also the ideal garment for concealing the utility wartime clothing bought with an ungenerous supply of coupons that was all we had. (We thought the students of the Sixties looked like fashion-plates when we saw them). I remember seeing Ann Robinson using her gown to draw up a reluctant fire into flame when she and Lucy Field had invited Elisabeth and me to tea in Mary's (where did they get the food?); then she tenderly hung it on a coathanger and put it back on the door. Mine got well worn as I ran down to Elvet Bridge from Church Street; there was an empty shop on the corner of Elvet which had projecting metal eyes for hooking shutters; these trapped my gown daily and gave it a desirable, well-worn appearance. I sold it in 1950 to Joanna Cacannis who insisted on paying the original thirty shillings, it was so sought after in its used condition. New gowns were £3 by then.

Not long after we arrived, Dr. Gibby and Mr. Colgrave led a guided tour of the city (there was no Freshers' Conference) one Wednesday afternoon. We went along the banks, also past Prebends', closed to traffic, and ended at the Cathedral where we were shown the arrow from the Battle of Neville's Cross in one of the smaller towers. "Of course," explained Dr. Gibby, "it is made of metal, and the distance is further than a bolt could be expected to travel, and the tower was rebuilt in the nineteenth century!"

Perhaps it was Mr. Colgrave who told us the tale of how the Cathedral was saved during the war, when a lone German bomber came overhead and a thick fog rose from the river and concealed the building from view. In my last year at school, we had a new, young English master back from the war. He was a Hatfield man, Reggy Waite, and had good memories of "Bertie", who was very kind to me when I lived next door to him in South Street some years later. Suddenly our landlady's son died and his body lay in the room next to our bedroom. We were invited by Mr. & Mrs. Colgrave to stay with them, which we did, and were made to feel very welcome till our return to No. 57.

There were not many lecturers in 1946 however. If I remember correctly, I don't think Major Wilson was there at the start of term. Certainly he was there in a week or two. Ronald Lindsay Wilson, well-groomed in the remnants of army uniform, would be seen walking his spaniel to the shops daily. He took me for French and always smiled as we shared a Christian name. The French department was not excessively well staffed though. We did French prose with Mr. Dixon. Phil Dixon was a third year Honours French student from Bede, an ex-serviceman. I can picture him in Durham colleges blazer and assorted bits of army uniform. This was not display, but simply shortage of civilian clothes, although it was noticeable that army officers' uniforms seemed much more durable than those of other ranks. He took us for one term and then another third year student did French prose with us - Bob Dunn, a Castle man, I think. Also after Christmas we had oral French with M. Lecocq, a very young Frenchman. He told us once that he didn't like the way English people didn't acknowledge him in the street in Durham. I had noticed that myself but I later realised that some of the offenders should have been wearing glasses. It was not fashionable to wear them. Oddly enough, when I went to France in 1948 with Marjorie Page and Moira

Tatem, who should we see getting on a bus in Paris but M. Lecocq! We were too much young ladies to call out to him.

Mr. Curgenven was one of the English Lecturers. He would speak very slowly and pace six steps one way and six steps the other. He had the reputation of being afraid of women students. Sometimes we were able to snatch an unexpected cup of coffee in the Men's Union on P.G. because one of Mr. Curgenven's lectures finished early. Mr. Severs took us for Ben Johnson and Eliot (and Milton?). We felt quite uplifted after his lecture on T.S. Eliot. He was also involved in the Dram. Soc. where Dr. Leech was concerned, too. Clifford Leech was the treasurer of the Dram. Soc. I think the treasurers of all the student societies were lecturers.

I used to go to St. Hild's College for Art as a practical subject for the Education year. This was optional while doing the degree course. Miss Peddlesden took us for Art and initiated us into the mysteries of painting with poster paint on sugar paper in preparation for our careers. I painted a striped red cat curled up asleep from a sketch made of Miss Harrison's cross-eyed cat at our digs. I stopped going to Hild's at the end of the year but when I restarted in 1950 Miss Peddlesden fished out the red cat once more. She had kept it!

Miss Harrison was a believer in Sunday afternoon tea. We would have thinly sliced bread with home made jam (more like stewed fruit because of the sugar shortage) and some cake. We were served China tea in Victorian cups rivetted together where they had been damaged. I would drink China tea but I did not like Indian tea, and, of course, the household benefited from my tea coupons. There was nearly always a visitor or two and we met some of the staff socially at Sunday afternoon tea. Miss Scott visited and so did Mr. and Mrs. Angus. Bill Pearson, a lecturer from Bede, told us about the updated hymn sung by members of the Men's Union about its president: "The Union's one foundation is N.E. Scott today." Mrs. Gordon, the widow of the Bishop of Durham, later a member of the Governing Body of St. Aidan's, came too. Mr. and Mrs. E. Allen were among the visitors. Teddy Allen took me for Economics. The first year Honours History and P. & E. people also went to these lectures, so Elisabeth and Yolande Cross and I would see some of the Non-Collegiate students, Tom Kennedy, Ken Shimeld, Bill Smith and Roger Appleton, there.

I also had private tuition from Mr. Norman who did Latin with three of us who felt in need of it. We went to his house and he was very pleasant but we had strict instructions to pay Miss Scott as he would have been embarrassed to have discussed money with us. Miss Ferguson gave lectures on Latin. She was not very tall and it was amusing to see her lean further and further back as some tall male student loomed over her. Her nervousness also showed when you met her in the street. You could identify the exact moment at which she recognised you and started to prepare to be ready to greet you, making fidgety movements, pressing her hands together and smoothing her gloves and opening and closing her fingers. Also attending her lectures were three student priests from Ushaw College in the long black robes of Catholic clergy, Mr. Moss, Mr. McCann and Mr. McKee. They were inseparable.

Fair haired Mr. Kerferd took us for Horace and Mr. "Willy" Wright and Prof. Morrison also took us for Latin. Unfortunately Mr. Wright was ill later, but Prof. Morrison, I remember, enlivened the day when during the great freeze-up of 1947, he brought along a Latin poem, bewailing the

weather and the Ministry of Fuel, from "Punch" for us to translate. (Under its latest editor "Punch" doesn't seem to have any poems, let alone ones in Latin). "Ministro Fulminis" it was headed. At the end of term Prof. Morrison told us that next term we should do Roman History so that, that vac., he would do Roman History. But the weather really was appalling. It was the 8th. of March when we wrestled with the Latin poem and the snow had begun on 26th. January. It had really set in on Elisabeth's birthday at the end of January, when she received very welcome biscuits from her mother. When it was her mother's birthday in early February, her parents visited and we went to tea with them in the Royal County Hotel where we were most impressed by the roaring fire. By the 14th. February, Miss Harrison had taken away the light bulb from between our beds to economise on power. "We're all doing it!", and we were left with one 60-watt bulb to light our enormous room. There were continual arguments about baths and the 5 inches of water necessary for one. By the 26th. February, gas cuts were being mooted. Miss Harrison looked disgusted that week at the crack about the fuel shortage - "Not an act of God but the inaction of Emmanuel." Even Deaconess laughed. Emmanuel Shinwell was the Minister of Fuel and Power and was the M.P. for Easington, where he was a popular personality. The day before that, I had fallen down the length of Owengate in the snow and the rescuers rushing to save me fell down too. On the 28th. February, Norman Butterworth, a Castle man, said, "It's cold!" to me and my reaction was that that was putting it mildly. By the 1st. of March, Castle had run out of coal "after lending it to all and sundry", so that they were "kicking up a stink (trust the Castle)", and it was suggested by them that we should go down a fortnight early. That did not eventuate, however, but the boat races on the 7th. and 8th. of March were postponed for a week. I see that when they took place there were "a great number of men dressed aggressively in Castle blazers and scarves," some abandoning their colours in favour of their college. The thaw and rain came on 16th. March, in time for us to go down on the 22nd. There were far-stretching floods around Selby on the way home, sprays of water being sent up by the wheels of the train even on an embankment as we crawled along. There were severe floods at Gainsborough which had still not receded by 27th. April. My mother had written to me during the worst of the snow telling me that, at Caistor in Lincolnshire, the drifts had reached the tops of the telegraph poles and that the postman there, making deliveries, had found he was walking along the hedge tops. There was a lot of snow to melt. There had been no hint of the severity of the weather to come when the Home Students had first met together in the October of 1946.