

Michael Clark (OW Staff 1960-1994)

Michael grew up in South London during the war in a single-parent household. He won a scholarship as a boarder to Caterham School, so he had perhaps a deeper understanding of the situations of many whom he taught at King Edward's School. He was awarded a First in Physics from Imperial College, London, then trained at the Institute of Education and spent his first two years teaching at Bryanston School in Dorset.

Michael joined the staff at King Edward's in 1960 and was appointed Head of Physics, House Tutor in Ridley and hockey coach. He always looked to make improvements and often had radical new ideas including developing a CSE Science syllabus; this was accepted and moderated by the exam board for several years. Michael was key in designing and equipping the Warburg Science building.

In 1969 Michael was appointed Ridley Housemaster, a role that changed significantly in 1976 with the opening of the twinned boys' and girls' houses. Ridley and St. Bridget's have always had a strong alliance, but the new structure enabled the houses to run joint activities including an annual outing involving a walk and picnic near Thursley. One year the walk was nearly a disaster when it was discovered the Royal Marines had an exercise in the same location. Fortunately, staff and pupils were welcomed and guarded with great humour!

In 1987 Michael gave up his Housemaster role to become Head of Science. This new role proved extremely challenging as it involved balancing the needs of a large Science department alongside the introduction of GCSEs. Michael also oversaw the re-development of the Science School in 1990. Michael successfully managed all this with integrity, creativity and efficiency. He was made a Freeman of the City of London in recognition of his long service to the School and retired from KESW in 1994 after 34 years of service.

Fellow staff remember Michael as a supportive, dedicated colleague and role model. For many students he was a kind, effective and knowledgeable teacher, and an inspiration to those who went on to study Physics, whilst being equally able to encourage those who found the subject difficult. He was committed to the pastoral and Christian life in the school and it is the impact of his faith, that most reflect upon. He fostered staff friendships and organized several staff reunions, most recently in July 2019 for staff from the 1960s and 1970s.

His daughters, Ruth, Cathy and Jo, all attended King Edward's and his wife, Jean, taught Home Economics for a number of years. Their home was a haven for many, a welcoming centre of hospitality, friendship and care. In 1974 Michael and Jean purchased 'Bethany', a home used by missionaries on furlough in the UK. This became the family home upon their retirement.

Michael never lost the urge to be of service, and, at the age of 76, he and Jean moved to Cambodia to teach at HOPE International School where two of his grandsons were pupils. HOPE needed a Physics teacher for A Level and IB, so Michael patiently set about re-equipping the department and addressing the demands of the syllabi. On their return to the UK, the Clarks took every opportunity to promote HOPE, giving talks and producing thousands of beautiful cards sold in aid of the School.

