

Remembering Alun Davies

In October of this year, we received the sad news that our dear friend and former colleague Alun Davies had passed away. There was an outpouring of tributes from students and staff, and we held a memorial event in the L. S. Wing on October 24th, 2019. A large number of students, including many graduates, attended to pay their respects to their beloved teacher. We served tea, of course. Third-year student Toshiharu Gouda led a sing-song of Beatles tunes for Alun, and a steady stream of former students came to the Wing to leave messages on the whiteboards during the week. Ms. Eri Tomita, a 4th year student, dedicated her graduation essay on the Beatles to Alun - perhaps the nicest message of all for the man at the head of the class with the

Beatles tie on. You can read Eri's essay in these pages. It has received an award for one of the best essays of 2019. Alun would be proud.

A Short History of Alun in BACS

Alun joined the staff of the British and American Cultural Studies Department in 2003, just one year after the new World Englishes Faculty was established here at Chukyo. He came to us on recommendation from Dan Molden at Aichi Shukutoku University. Little did we know what we were in for.

Alun took charge of our newly added courses "Academic Writing" and "Reading and Discussion," 1st and 2nd year courses that he would teach throughout his many years with us - and upon which he put his unique seal. As our curriculum expanded past the 2nd year, he lent his expertise and enthusiasm to "Advanced Oral Communication" and a lecture course in British Social History - both elective courses that were very popular with students. He also taught a second-year seminar in British Studies. His mania for all things British - The Beatles and Harry Potter, in particular - could not be confined to his British culture classes, however. One year I attended his final reading class, which was to be held in the Arena building of all places, only to find an entire authentic ensemble of Beatles instruments on display for the students to try out - a Hofner bass, a Rickenbacker guitar, the works. Later, after 2014 there was Critical Reading - aka the Harry Potter class, Professional

English, and what might have been his *magnus opus*, Music and Culture - a grand tour of pop music - UK emphasis, of course.

Alun brought a gorgeous tea set from England one year, which was put to bi-annual good use at the lavish tea parties he held in the BACS Common Room and later in the L.S. Wing. We had to find extra budget - though Alun often paid out of his own pocket - for the specially made scones that he served at the popular event.

Alun had courses in the Department of International Liberal Studies after its establishment in 2010; before that many classes in the General Education Department; but, as he would often say, it was BACS students that he loved and enjoyed teaching the most. He was truly committed to our students - he knew all of their names - and to giving them a first-rate education and fun experience of the English language and of British culture.

Alun's enthusiasm (and pugnacity) was usually on best display during at our annual Curriculum Reviews - he never missed a single one and often showed up early to help set up the tables and chairs or to bounce a revolutionary idea for the curriculum off me. Alun always had lots to say. He was a champion of the students and of the best the curriculum could possibly be. He put a few noses out of joint - mine included. (To be fair, he spread his indignation around: the scourge of the Academic Affairs office at Chukyo, he could often be found, mid-winter and mid-summer, pleading for more heat or more air con so that his students could learn in comfort.) Alun was the longest-serving vegetarian at the end-of-the-year receptions that

followed our curriculum meetings, some of them lavish meaty affairs at Kobe-Ya. There was Alun coveting his salads and his omeletttes and cheese dorias.

I remember the partings on those cold winter evenings, sometimes it was a December night with a dusting of snow or still chilly January one. We all made our farewells, exhausted (and tipsy of course) at the end of a busy talk-filled day and another busy school year. Students we'd taught for four years were on the verge of entering the real world, a new group of fresh faces were coming. We said good night and thanks and had smiles all round. Alun trudged off alone, all set to start a new diet - well, maybe a tipple and some crisps before that or somehow as part of that - but certainly to start planning his courses for April.

I thank you, Alun, for your immeasurable contribution to our program, for the time and care you took with our students, and for me personally, your inspiring example of collegiality, compassion and commitment.

Chris Armstrong,
Chair, British & American Cultural Studies



Each year, Alun would plan an elaborate tea party with real scones and cream, biscuits, and of course English tea. Alun held his last activity for students in the L.S. Wing on December 7th, 2017. Much to his dismay, we turned it into a surprise farewell party in his honour.

Messages from Staff and Students

Alun Davies was not just a co-worker, he was also a good friend. He was one of the hardest working and most passionate teachers I have ever met. At the end of every year, he would mull over the successes and failures of each class, and while the rest of us enjoyed our vacations, he would be reorganizing his classes, trying to find new ways to give students as enriching experience.

Alun and I talked a lot about teaching, and I was always

appreciative of his honest feedback and straight-forward criticisms. His cheeky jibes also kept me from taking myself too seriously. Being able to vent about the teaching kept me sane during stressful times. He did little things to cheer me up like leaving chocolate bars in my work mailbox. We worked well together on common projects for many years, and he could always be counted on to see any problems in organization or application.

We spent hours in the Wing chatting. He was always asking me bewildering diet questions, like "which do you think is healthier: crisps or chocolate?" I was always telling him that he couldn't survive on a diet of saltines and tea (or a bit of scotch or wine) - advice he continued to ignore.

Alun loved learning, and was constantly picking up a new musical instrument or reading historical works. When he wasn't teaching or planning his classes, he was teaching himself the accordion, the piano, or the guitar. He shared his stories of growing up in a mining family, and the expectations that he would follow the life of his father. He saw education as his means of escaping a life that he had no passion for and felt ill equipped for. I believe this is why he was such a passionate educator, and why he worked so hard to instill a love of learning in his students. He knew the power of the joys of learning.

As with everything in his life, Alun had painstakingly planned and prepared for his retirement, and after he left it made me happy to think of him driving through the French countryside, people watching in quaint cafes while honing up on his French, or enjoying a nice bottle of French wine. It was a big blow when

I heard that he had died.

As I go about my work everyday, little things remind me of Alun and I find myself tearing up. But when I think about how many students he inspired, how many hearts he touched, and when I remember the laughs we had, I also find myself smiling.

Maureen Boulanger, Instructor

In Preparation

Despite knowing you, Alun, for over 15 years, I have no idea whether or not you were a boy scout and this motto rang true from your youth.

So prepared for lessons. Your dedicated preparation for each and every lesson, patiently adjusting the content of your courses daily to accurately match the ever-changing student level and curiosity.

So prepared for your working day. We tended to meet in an elevator (by chance?) and you would cheerfully tell me how you had already been on campus for a couple of hours getting ready for your day. Fastidiously dressed to smartly match your professional position as a lecturer at Chukyo University here in Japan.

So prepared for your students - all names not only memorized but remembered forever. Over the years hundreds of your students' names still in your head ready for any unexpected meeting whether that be at the university or out and about in Nagoya.

So prepared for the harsh seasons of Japan - In winter you and your case on wheels - inside a mini-heater and warm clothes to ensure comfort for the cold cost-cutting classrooms and then in Summer - your personal stand-alone fan being positioned for all to benefit when the air-conditioning was lacking. An extra freshly- ironed shirt prepared to ensure continued freshness and professionalism throughout your day.

So prepared for leaving Japan - your ultimate generosity in sharing your teaching material with your colleagues perhaps in the hope your legacy as a professional educator may continue for years to come. Your own personal effects prepared at least two years before your planned departure date from Nagoya Centrair airport, living the lifestyle of a disciplined monk surrounded by minimal luxury to be ready to fly.

So prepared for your retirement, savings, pension plans, your living circumstances, with even a readiness to purchase a red, traditional, genuine English telephone box for inside your future home- complete of course with the dial up phone itself.

In preparation Alun - admirable, inspirational, quirky and professional. You really were the ultimate educator. So many of us are grateful for these qualities, your students, colleagues and friends here in Japan. Hard to emulate but worthy traits to aim for any and all of us.

The antonyms of 'in preparation' are completed, ended, finished. Perhaps you were all of these too Alun? Sadly, we were all not prepared for your ultimate departure from this life, but your way, actions and legacy are far from over. I hope all of us

are able to find some comfort in our memories of you - sadly missed but certainly not forgotten.

Thank you Alun Davies, much appreciation.

Julia Beardwell, Instructor

A Man of Passions, Brilliant Teacher and Good friend:

Sadly Missed

When Alun passed away in October 2019, we lost, first and foremost, an eccentric and huge personality. It only takes a brief look at some of the many photos around of him with his students, either in formal settings or at parties to see that, and also to see how much his students loved him. Me? I especially loved it when his eyes used to crinkle up in mirth and his glorious laugh would gurgle up from inside him. And since we shared a common culture and the same film, TV comedy and musical references, we always had many things to laugh or smile about - lots that some 'other' Anglophone colleagues might miss. Perhaps we shared what only Brits could; apologies for being a little bit exclusive here.

I loved Alun's glorious Welsh accent, I loved his crazy love for life and his punishing diets and exercise routines. I was jealous but loved that he didn't need more than a few hours sleep per night, afraid that he would miss something or waste a minute. And though I am not a vegetarian, I loved that he was, simply for humane reasons.

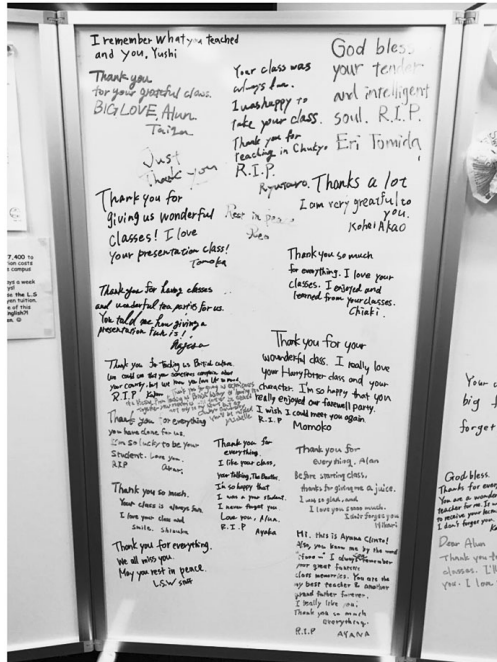
Few people know, and I am sure Alun didn't advertise it, that

he was a very radical animal rights activist back in the day, the kind that would free animals earmarked for medical research; those who would go out at dawn to save foxes from bloodthirsty hunters on horseback, ruining what was going to be their 'perfectly good day of hunting.' "Some of the best days of my life," he used to say. It is a part of Alun that few were privy to but I wanted to share with you now. There was a lot more to this wonderful human 'bean' that many people were not privileged to see.

As Alun loved animals he was a natural choice as a cat-sitter for me as I traveled more than him. Actually, he NEVER traveled, as he was saving up for his retirement, and isn't that just the saddest irony?

The following humorous quote is one I found by Alun in our 'cat-sitter' journal: 'Luna met me at the door - very friendly and obviously pleased to have a visitor! I fed and watered her and cleaned her toilet area. She thanked me from the bottom of her heart, by disappearing... c'est la vie.' Alun.

Everybody did know of course that Alun exuded intelligence. He had a brilliant mind. As an undergrad, he read Russian and French before his graduate work in Education at the University of Edinburgh. In those days Russian was popular with people allying themselves with the British Communist Party. I am not sure if this was his motivation or whether he simply loved the literature, but I am somewhat in awe of him, not having got past 'da' 'niet' and 'spasibo,' myself. Imagine trying to read Dostoevsky or Tolstoy in its original form. *War and Peace*, *Crime and Punishment* and *The Idiot* are hard enough in translation. So,



Following the memorial for Alun on October 24th, there was a steady stream of students coming to the L.S. Wing to leave messages for him.

bearing this in mind, you may be surprised, as I was, to learn that Alun had also been a coalminer in 'another life.' Mining was widespread in Wales pre-Thatcher, but in my experience not a job many people 'graduated' from. Again, power to him.

When my husband and I accompanied Alun to the airport back in February 2018, envious of him traveling to Europe Air France business class to mark the occasion, we were convinced that we would be seeing him again in France very soon. That was not to

be. But hey, I know he will still be making magic, wherever he is.
"To live in the hearts of those we love is not to die"

Beverley, Lafaye, Instructor

Alun, It's hard to believe you're gone. I loved the way you loved the Beatles, Harry Potter and all other British stuff. Thank you for the great memories, they will never be forgotten. Please rest in peace.

Maho, Student

It is a sudden and really sad news that my sweet professor, Alun, left this world. I still can't believe. I feel like he still in his dream country, France, while listening to Beatles. I still can hear you say "fantastic, kawaii..." as always. I'm very grateful that I had you in my life and could be your student. You taught me a lot of things about not only English also life. I will never forget them and you. Thank you for everything you did for me. Hope you are having fun in another world. Stay in peaceful place and see you again:)

Akane, Student

It was a big shock to hear of Alun Davies's passing. I feel deep sorrow. I can still clearly remember his voice and laughter like it was yesterday. I am greatly thankful to him for being such a great teacher to me. What he taught me is still a big part of me. I will keep developing myself from his advice and contribute to the world so that he can be proud of me. May he Rest in Peace.



Alun with Beverley, Departure from Japan, February 2018

Hiroataka, Student

It's hard to believe... It seems only yesterday when I took his great classes. May he rest in peace.

I hope he enjoys playing the guitar in heaven.

Kaori, Student

Please rest in peace...

Alun and I loved the Beatles and guitars, so we often chatted about them. The memories are so precious, and I am missing him ... I wish he will meet John Lennon and George Harrison in

heaven.

Toshiharu, Student

The Alun Davies English Learner's Award

To honour Alun's memory, his spirit of excellence, and his devotion to BACS, we are proud to announce a special award in his name. This award recognizes a student who has made outstanding progress in his or her studies of English. The student is highly motivated, hardworking and shows commitment and enthusiasm in learning English, making outstanding improvement in all four skills over the course of study in BACS.