

## Duncan Abbott



Mary McGuire (Manor 1984-1986) writes:

What to say about Duncan? Not so much a case of where to start as where to stop.

Duncan was one of my best mates. He was part of the family scenery for a long time before we actually met as he was in my dad's House at Lancing and our families had been friends for generations. I would hear his name bandied about (along with others). Our paths crossed many times at school; Duncan and I were cartoonists for the school magazine and he was in my art set. He used to turn up for our art class on Saturday mornings with a full Mohican hairstyle, ready to go to Brighton for the afternoon. As someone who wanted a blue Mohican but never quite had the heart to do it to my parents, I always admired him for this.

It was after I left school, when the two of us were living in London that our friendship really blossomed. I think both of us bonded through an eccentricity, and possibly a love of cars, which could make us feel like very square pegs, and the world like an extremely round hole!

So, these are the words that speak of Duncan, to me:

### **Funny:**

Duncan was very witty, in an engagingly irreverent way, and not afraid to prick the hide of

the pompous. He made me and many others laugh. Lots. Indeed, one of my enduring memories of Duncan is the high guffaw quotient of any time we spent together.

**Enthusiasm/Energy:**

If Duncan was into something, it was impossible not to get carried away with his enthusiasm. I remember visiting him in Sussex just after he'd bought an E-Type. As we drove down a country lane he found a straight and shouted gleefully, "Watch this!" He proceeded to floor the accelerator, guffawing madly as he did so. It was like taking off in a rocket. He was also sensible though, because when I retorted with a, "Go on then! Faster, faster!" He told me there was a bend coming up and slowed down.

**Fun:**

Duncan was effervescent and he knew how to throw a dinner party, which he often did. Usually, after stuffing ourselves with wine and the food he and Lucy had cooked, we'd play a few rounds of the board game, 'Risk'. Many is the time I remember playing late into the night. Usually we'd give up and go home at about 3.00am. We all cheated, decimating the armies of anyone who'd been unwise enough to go to the bathroom by removing half their pieces from the board while they were gone. Nobody ever won because nobody's bladder was strong enough to achieve world domination.

**Generous:**

Duncan was generous with everything. I remember during my time in London, when I was about to move into a new flat and the deal fell through. I had a month with nowhere to stay. Duncan was one of the most supportive of my friends over that time, letting me store a load of my stuff in his tiny flat – and leave my car parked outside – when he had very little room for either.

**Intelligent and a little rebellious:**

Duncan was very bright – prodigiously intelligent, in fact. I mentioned this to my dad who said, "Dear Duncan, he was such a naughty boy. It was because he was so intelligent of course! He got bored. If you were teaching Duncan, you needed to engage him. He was one of the brightest lads I ever taught." Tom Griffiths, our art teacher, also thought similarly.

**Kind:**

Duncan was unfailingly kind to me. Always. I remember in art class, Griffiths saying, "It's no good trying to pretend you're a hard man Abbott, not with those hands, they're the hands of a pianist not a Hell's Angel." This used to make Duncan guffaw both at the time, and when recounting it afterwards. (Griffiths always referred to Duncan as a 'Hell's Angel'. Despite being an art teacher with a goth for a daughter, it seemed he didn't really understand about punk).

**Positive:**

Duncan had been through some pretty heavy stuff and although it affected him, deeply, one

of the things that amazed me, throughout the time I knew him, was the courage and pragmatism with which he attempted to deal with it. He just put his head down and tried to get on with his life.

Sure, he could be mercurial, pig-headed and he didn't suffer fools gladly! What's more he could be spiky, difficult and childish (although he was never like that to me). But he was also kind, generous, lively, funny and brim full of energy and joie de vivre. He was a larger than life character and a true and loyal friend. I thought about him or (since his heart attack) prayed for him most days. He was my friend and I loved him. I will miss him.

One thing is certain, whatever Duncan is doing now, there will be laughter, and lots of it.