

Dr. James Scott

Peter Cousins

University of Wales Dental School (Retired)

I first met James Scott when he stayed with me during the time of his interview in 1961 to be considered for Dean of the proposed new Dental School in Cardiff. Cranio-facial growth is a bit of a hole for me and getting darker over the years, but James gave a challenge to the accepted philosophy, as presented by the establishment, at that time. James could be a bit sarcastic (v. Olli Ronning) and could use coarse language, which was quite unacceptable to the traditionalists, but this was very much part of the challenge he presented to orthodox Royal College thinking. In discussing informally his views on how a new dental school should be run, James gave great emphasis on the need for time to think, laterally and originally. If he had been appointed as Dean, he was proposing to divide his time half and half - half in Cardiff and half thinking and contemplating or fishing in Ireland. Staff and students would do the same. I have no insight into his theology, except to know that his views were unusual and independent and he was a bit of a rebel. He had a strong poetic style. He became a convert to Catholicism when he was a medical student and had a strong reaction to the way children were brought up in religion. He was belligerently loyal and rebellious at the same time. He was strongly aware of his own illness and limitation of life expectancy and impatient of his own disability. He had a marked aesthetic and literary awareness - a polymath of a dentist.

As Dean of the Cardiff Dental School, James would have had a chance to break the mould of dental education in the UK. He was aware that he presented a most unusual and probably unacceptable concept to the dental world at the time. He knew he was going too far, too fast for his contemporaries, appearing to be both critical and even contemptuous of some.