

## **FALCONER, ALEX**

After Milton 1959 to 1964 went to UCR to study biological sciences and graduated in 1967. From 1967 until 1971 a junior research fellow at UCR looking at the plankton in the polluted Lake McIlwaine. I obtained an M. Phil. and did not know what to do. I took a temporary teaching job at Mount Pleasant School and then left for the UK in April 1972. I enjoyed teaching, but was still not sure what to do.

In England, went to stay in a village near Southampton and by sheer luck spotted a biology teacher post at a posh private school in Switzerland and got the job. I taught biology at Le Rosey between Geneva and Lausanne for two years and returned to the UK in the summer of 1974.

Again, by sheer luck spotted a biology teacher job at a sixth form college in Southampton and got the job. Loved the job and bit by bit got better at it. In 1976 met Christine and married in 1977. She was an English teacher in a secondary school. What is it with teachers that marry teachers?

I was head of biology, then head of science and head of mathematics, science and technology. Eventually ended up as vice principal in a sixth form college.

In 1995 began to be interested in how colleges and their curriculum teams develop and try to improve. Got involved in peer review with local colleges and this involved me in lesson observations that I found fascinating. I applied to become a part-time curriculum inspector with OFSTED (the Office for Standards in Education – essentially England's inspectorate for schools and colleges) and in 2002 I was appointed a full time inspector (HMI) with OFSTED.

I am still fascinated by evolution and try to keep up to date with developments in biological sciences. This has happily coincided with my interest in palaeontology. I frequently visit the Isle of Wight to look for

fossils and have a large collection of Eocene/Oligocene (30 my) vertebrate fossils – mainly turtles and crocodiles from the muddy beaches of the northern shores. After ten years of searching the south western shores and cliffs, I have a small (half a dozen) collection of dinosaur fossils from the Cretaceous sediments (100 my).

Mixed memories of Milton – some good times and some generous friendships from other people – Phil Gardner (despite our occasional differences, good times with Malcolm and Wayne Light and an introduction to under-age drinking from the always excellent Robin Potts).