7 September 1971 - Brian May started his first real job, as a teacher at Stockwell Manor Comprehensive School, Brixton, London, where he worked for 3 months.

Queen had not yet taken off and the band needed to make a living. The boys all had other means to earn extra money.  Brian’s thesis was still not complete and his grant ran out, he took the next radical step in securing a proper job, teaching!  He taught mathematics and science, on a short term basis.

Maths was a natural choice as he had studied it while majoring in physics at university.

But it was a real eye-opener for Brian as he job was at Stockwell Manor School (which was later replaced by Stockwell Park High) in Brixton, one of the poorest and most deprived areas in the country. He explained:

"It turned into something I really enjoyed, it was very challenging.  The biggest challenge was to get people to stay in their seats - seriously! It was quite difficult.

You couldn't get the children to attend unless they were incredibly interested in what you were saying. The kids were bored more than anything else.

I had a great advantage because I was young and could speak to them in their own language. I always enjoyed maths and was able to make it feel fun to them.

Maths gets a bad reputation because it's portrayed as boring. But if you draw pictures or give enough examples, it's not. I used betting on horses to teach statistics which you wouldn't perhaps normally do."

But there were problems. Brian recalls: "One of my most disastrous experiences was the time I tried to teach the second form rectangles, pentagons and hexangles. I had this idea of letting them cut up coloured paper with scissors. The staff said 'You are seriously going to take scissors into the second form?' Half an hour into the lesson they were all attacking each other with scissors - ears, feet and hands were getting cut and there was blood and paper everywhere. I remember thinking: 'I will never try this again'.

But I did have a fantastic time teaching. We had a laugh. The biggest reward was the kids that stayed on to get exams."

Brian believes maths has a bad image because it's so often taught badly.

He said: "There was so much of this learning by rote and making people learn techniques they were never going to use in life. It put them off. My solution was to draw a picture. If you have a problem and draw a picture, a graph, a pie chart, you imagine it as a real problem rather than a jumble of figures. I got that from my dad. If I ever had a problem at school, my dad would say: 'Right, draw a picture'. It works, even in quantum mechanics.

The good thing about maths is, if you get it right it gets a tick. If you can finally answer by any method whatsoever, you have answered the question."

"If you can improve the image of maths, it seems like a good scheme to me. I was lucky because my dad did it for me, he made it fun. If you can make it fun, you're home and dry."

A former student has shared his experience of having “Mr. May” as a teacher to the Official International Queen Fan Club (Winter  2018 edition).  He said Brian was the “tall, softly spoken, very fashionable teacher,…” who made maths more interesting and was “kind and encouraging.” 💛

Source: Brian May .com/Daily Mirror Newspaper Dec 1999 and OIQFC Winter 2018 edition