# SIGNIFICANT ENCOUNTERS

*Posted on August 10, 2018 by Eddie*

People can have an impact on your life without ever knowing it.
**Category:** Observations

Yesterday, I headed up to Sunderland to meet my friend Dave for lunch. I've known Dave for a long time and though he is three or four years older than me, our lives have, to some extent, moved in parallel. We went to the same school, we both studied biology at university and then went on to do three years post-grad study (Dave worked on slugs, I looked at one enzyme in the broad bean) and since stepping away from biology, we've both been involved in Christian work. Although we've both led fairly nomadic lives, we've managed to meet up fairly frequently over the years and the friendship has endured.

Yesterday, we sat in a cafe on the sea-front at Roker, and over monumental burgers, we chatted about our families, our work, distance running and how the world would be much better if we were in charge. It was good to catch up, I invariably feel better after seeing Dave.



As we left the cafe, I remembered the last time that I'd been down to Roker with Dave. At a guess, it was in the summer of 1975. These days, we are both old guys of about the same age, but back then, Dave was a university student and I was still at school - a huge social gulf. For a couple of hours, we pottered around the rock pools (Roker beach is wonderful) at low tide and he pointed out the different animals living in the pools and explained how they lived, he showed me the way that different types of seaweed and shellfish lived at different points on the shore and why that was. It was fascinating. I've often thought about that walk in the years since as it was significant to me in two ways. It was the first time that someone pointed out that there was real science on my doorstep. I'd looked in those rock pools hundreds of times as a child, but I'd never stopped to think about what was going on. I was to do lots of field trips and ecological studies in the succeeding years, but nothing struck me quite as much as that first exposure to ecological study on the beach in Sunderland. The second thing that struck me was that a student would spend so much time explaining things to a spotty schoolkid. Dave was willing to invest time in me when he could just as easily had a great walk on the beach without me tagging along. It meant a lot at the time, and it still does.

The funny thing was that when I mentioned this to him yesterday, Dave couldn't recall the incident. Something that was so significant to me that it has stuck in the memory over 40 years later, didn't strike a chord with him.

As I drove south down the A1, I found myself musing on other encounters in life that have had a significant impact on me and wondering whether the people involved know how important they have been. I can only pray that there have been times when I have made a positive contribution to the lives of others without knowing it. Only eternity will tell.

