



**Centenary Service of Celebration**  
**Wednesday, 17 May 2023**

**Southwark Cathedral**  
**London**

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**Transcript of Welcome**  
**and Speeches**

## Welcome from Southwark Cathedral

Welcome to Southwark Cathedral on this fantastic occasion, the Service of Celebration for the Centenary of Stowe School.

The Cathedral has a momentous and proud history, having been a religious site for over one thousand years – first as a convent, then a monastery, a parish church, and finally since 1905 a Cathedral. Its connections are many and varied, having links with, amongst others, St. Thomas Becket, Geoffrey Chaucer, William Shakespeare and Charles Dickens.

It was the workplace parish of William Shakespeare and his entourage. William's brother Edmund is buried at the Cathedral, and there is evidence that William is in debt to the Cathedral for the tolling of the bell at his brother's funeral. In spite of that, William is memorialised at the Cathedral in the form of the marble figure and a stained-glass window depicting his Comedies and Tragedies.

Other historical connections range from John Harvard to Charles Dickens to Oscar Hammerstein. John Harvard was born in Borough High Street in 1607, became a Cathedral Warden, and subsequently travelled to the Americas where he bequeathed his library to the founding of the college that bears his name. The author Charles Dickens spent his Wednesday evenings with the Cathedral bell ringers, and even now Wednesday evenings are bell ringing evenings. Oscar Hammerstein, of Rodgers and Hammerstein fame, used to come to the Choral Evensong when his shows were in town. He loved the place, and bequeathed money to fund two choristers per year, and to this day there are two choristers, The Hammerstein Chanters.

We warmly welcome you to this wonderful place, one of the three great monastic churches of London.

## Welcome from the Old Stoic Society

On behalf of the Old Stoic Society, we would like to extend our welcome to everyone connected to Stowe on this, the occasion of a celebration of 100 years of our wonderful school.

We have been most warmly embraced by Southwark Cathedral, and we are delighted to be here.

The Service of Celebration is designed to be just that – a celebration. It is a joyful occasion whereby we can acknowledge the founding of the school with the first 99 pupils and two boarding houses, embracing the early expansion under the famous Headmaster, JF Roxburgh, past the darker days of the Second World War and the sacrifices made by a new school where many of the alumni joined up, through the post-war years and the collaboration with the National Trust and the introduction of full co-education.

Stowe, perhaps slightly against the odds, has been an outstanding success. We must not forget that there were some powerful influences antipathetic to the founding of a new school so soon after the First World War, including some of our most august national publications and some of the older and entrenched educational establishments. Being a new school, we do not benefit in the same way from long-standing foundations, and yet the school has flourished and from its early days established itself in the first rank of the great public schools of the land.

The current rollcall stands at over 900 pupils, the school continues to develop its facilities and expand its commitment to providing opportunities for students from a broader base, and under Dr Anthony Wallersteiner, our Headmaster for the last 20 years, we can look forward to an increasingly glittering future.

It is reassuringly hard to try and define a Stoic, but perhaps the most prominent feature is how much Old Stoics enjoy each other's company, something that is exemplified by the numbers attending this evening's celebration. Please do join us for a drinks celebration in the Cathedral following the service.

May we wish you all the very best, and hope you enjoy the Service of Celebration.

**Luke Chauveau (Cobham 87), Chair, Old Stoic Society**

**Oliver Croom-Johnson (Temple 69)**

**David McDonough (Cobham 71)**

## **Dr Anthony Wallersteiner, Head**

### **The Vision, Foundation and Early Years under JF Roxburgh**

The conversion of Stowe from Temple-Grenville family home into an educational establishment was one of the most daring educational experiments of the twentieth century. It is sometimes forgotten that before Stowe was put up for sale in 1922, it was threatened with demolition to make way for ribbon housing development between Buckingham to Silverstone. The place where the English landscape garden was invented by Capability Brown and the largest and most completely realised neo-classical building in private hands would have been lost for ever. The arrival of the school was a time of rebirth and renewal: Stowe woke up from its long slumber and the melancholy procession of Temple-Grenville dukes, marquesses, earls and viscounts vanished like highland sheep in the misty heather. When Stowe opened as a school on 11 May in 1923, the founding Headmaster, JF Roxburgh welcomed the first 99 Stoics on the North Front steps. At first, Stowe resembled a glorified prep school: there were ten masters and five senior boys, four were poached from Roxburgh's previous school, Lancing, including Andrew Croft, Stowe's second head boy, who, after Leonard Cheshire and Nicholas Winton, is the third Old Stoic to have a house named in his honour.

Roxburgh immediately sensed how the history and grandeur of Stowe could become an important part of the new school's identity. Pupils at Stowe are not called Stoweans, but Stoics, because Roxburgh wanted them to emulate the philosophers and leaders of Ancient Greece. Roxburgh also tapped into the optimistic ideology of the Enlightenment, the period of history when maps of Britain featured Stowe not only as the geographical centre of England, but as the epicentre of political power with the cousinhood of Pitts and Grenvilles producing four Prime Ministers while promoting the ideal of civil and religious liberty all over the world. The Enlightenment became synonymous with the identity, culture and ethos of the school as Roxburgh gave Stoics freedom in their daily lives. Faded glory was soon replaced by the rising sap of youth, budding intellects were encouraged to question conventional wisdom, and Roxburgh encouraged Stoics to treat the architecture and lakes, temples and groves, grottoes and vistas, as an outdoor classroom, tapping into the universal pulse and rhythms of nature. Stoics then and now were encouraged to relish their freedom, develop a sense of adventure, celebrate the excitement of learning and not become public school stereotypes or boringly conventional all-rounders.

The challenge of converting the old ducal Mansion into a modern school was enormous: thirty-five miles of piping and electrical wiring were installed to bring the main building into the twentieth century. Classrooms were designed by the distinguished architect, Clough Williams-Ellis, the duke's huge sunken bath at the east end of Plug Street was augmented by 60 baths and washbasins, and grounds were levelled to create the North and South Front playing fields. The first bursar couldn't cope with the scale of the task and joined a religious order soon after the School opened. The education that Stoics were to receive would stand apart from other schools in four ways: first, the school would modernise, liberalise, and humanise traditional and sometimes barbaric Edwardian boarding school practices; second, Stowe would be an inclusive community in which the rights of the individual would be respected to enable Stoics to be their best, do their best and feel their best. Third, every pupil leaving Stowe would know, recognise, and understand beauty for the rest of their

lives. Fourth, Roxburgh believed that character is a better predictor of success than exam metrics: Stoics were taught absolute and immutable values, clear distinctions between right and wrong, that the end does not always justify the means, truth is not flexible, other people are not disposable objects, success is seldom immediate, and there is nobility in a life of service.

Roxburgh showed an unusual courtesy and consideration for the individual pupil. He preferred gentle persuasion to the use of force and school rules were based on common sense in the belief that good order emanates from everyone working together for the greater good. Roxburgh had an intimate knowledge of each Stoic, addressing them by their first names, and never forgetting a birthday. He gave his prefects port and Turkish cigarettes and took them to operas in Covent Garden. Pomposity and snobbery were disdained and gratitude was rated highly. As a new school, Stowe was refreshingly free of the made-up conventions and rituals which characterised more ancient establishments. Among the school's early eccentricities was a zoo – rabbits, ferrets and pigeons were joined by a laughing jackass and a brown bear which has the unhappy distinction of being the first sentient creature to be expelled. Roxburgh prized intellectual pursuits and academic scholarship, but believed that "the real test of a school's efficiency is not the number of scholarships it gains, but the character training it gives the ordinary pupil." The infusing principle was the Greek *philia*, the highest form of platonic love, which was also the foundation of Roxburgh's Christian faith: His favourite passage from the Bible was this crowning statement from St John: God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

Roxburgh's vision of a modern, humane, forward-looking school infused with love is as relevant today as it was in 1923.

## The Lord Michael Grade of Yarmouth, CBE (Grafton 61)

### Reminiscences

Grade M, 733, Grafton 1956. I arrived at Stowe just in time for the school to hit its academic and reputational nadir. I hope these facts are just coincidental. My recollections of my time there long, long ago have mellowed with the years. The magnificence of its facilities and architecture, the friendships developed and sustained there, the switchback and thrilling cycle ride into Buckingham for a cream tea...it wasn't so bad after all.

I just hope that in its great current revival they have turned the central heating up in Grafton. We had the coldest lino in Christendom. The sensation of my bare feet on that dormitory floor in February remains with me to this day.

Highlights included being read *Biggles* by prefect Guy Harwood before lights out in the dormitory. Guy went on to become one of the horse racing world's most successful and admired trainers. Other chums included Reg Gadney. He and I remained friends and he became a hugely successful television dramatist.

My sporting career is more as a spectator than participant. My achievements in the field of athletic pursuits are extremely limited, well non-existent really... I guess I am to athletic achievement what Diane Abbott is to arithmetic.

But..., let me record here for posterity that i was the first-choice soccer goalkeeper in the Stowe first eleven (there was only one eleven – and only one goalkeeper). The fact is that Stowe was a rugby school and the soccer team was only created for those who were hopeless rejects from the union game. Nevertheless, Stowe gave me my one sporting achievement.

My other career highlight was being cast in the school production of Gogol's "The Government Inspector". My voice was breaking at the time, so i cracked my way through my lines as the sergeant's wife with a padded bra and peasant's skirt. I think I would be cancelled today for such a cultural outrage!

My reconnection with Stowe was rekindled a few years ago when I accepted the headmaster's invitation to offer a few words at Speech Day. It came at a moment of huge media controversy; a member of the catering staff had just been arrested for serving the students and staff pea soup laced with cleaning fluid. Now in my day, that would have been regarded as a treat!

Despite not staying the full course to A Levels, I have become more and more proud to be counted as an old stoic, not least because the school's academic and reputational stock under its current leadership, has never been higher – since I left, of course! The school now lives up to its magnificent surroundings and it is fitting that we can celebrate its first 100 years just at such a high point in its history.

I will finish if I may with a quote from Stowe's first Headmaster J.F. Roxburgh who said that the school should aspire to produce students who could prove, "acceptable at a dance and invaluable at a shipwreck." There is no answer to that!

## Admiral Sir James Burnell-Nugent, KCB, CBE (Grafton 67)

### The Second World War: The Contribution and Sacrifice

I have been asked to speak about the Second World War and the contribution and sacrifice of Stowe and Stoics.

Stowe was founded with hope after the end of what HG Wells called "The War to end all wars." But that hope was already under challenge. Mussolini had become Prime Minister of Italy in 1922; Hitler staged his first violent coup in Munich in 1923; and Emperor Hirohito of Japan was building up his forces to attack China.

Only 16 years after Roxburgh had founded Stowe, Germany invaded Poland and the UK declared war. As that Autumn term began, Roxburgh, addressing the school, described war's impact on his vision for Stowe: "*Darkness has come down upon the road before us. We planned a future that was to be full of new achievement and was already full of hope.*"

Stowe and Old Stoics had to chart a course through that darkness. Roxburgh had described his hope "*to develop students with good character and moral courage, young men that would be acceptable at a dance and invaluable in a shipwreck.*" WWII was an early test of their character and courage.

The school was quickly placed on a war footing. Over 1000 windows were blacked out. Haystacks were set up on the South Front to prevent enemy aircraft from landing. The Bourbon playing fields were sown with potatoes as part of 'Dig for Victory'.

Stoics aged over 17 had to join the Local Defence Volunteers. They went out at dawn to check the grottoes and temples for Nazi parachutists – or at least that was their story.

Stowe itself came under desultory but not deliberate attack. On 9 May 1941 a stick of light bombs fell on the grounds, the nearest being 180 yds from the South Front. 'George' was hit by shrapnel. Over 100 windows were broken. A year later four small bombs fell 600 yds from the school but with no damage.

In 1942, 500 troops of the Royal Army Ordnance Corps were billeted at Stowe, mainly in huts under cover of the Avenue. This was an opportunity for the boys to demonstrate their imagination and initiative – resulting in the Headmaster having to announce in Assembly "*Will the gentlemen who removed a box of hand grenades from Hut No. 33, kindly hand them in to me. The Army wants them back.*" The only casualties from this episode were large numbers of fish in the 11-Acre Lake.

Before the war Stowe had had a very successful Air Training Squadron, so many Old Stoics joined the RAF. Squadron Leader DA Pemberton, who like many of us got less-than-perfect



school reports, led his Squadron throughout the Battle of Britain, accounting for 51 enemy aircraft destroyed or damaged. He was killed a few months later.

Stowe initiative was also demonstrated by the large number of Old Stoics serving in the Special Forces. The Duke of Wellington and 10 other Old Stoic Officers were in No. 2 Commando fighting in Italy, including 'Josh' Nicholl (whom I later knew as Cobham Housemaster). My uncle, Michael Alexander, another Old Stoic, was in the Special Forces but was captured in 1942 and spent the rest of the war in Colditz.

On the outbreak of war, the oldest Old Stoics were only around 30 years old. It was little more than two months before the first Old Stoic was killed in action on 16<sup>th</sup> November 1939.

To the grief of their families was added the grief of JFR, who saw the school as his extended family. Preaching in chapel, JFR referenced Horace who said, *"It is sweet and noble to die for one's country."* JFR commented: *"It is not sweet it is bitter. But it is certainly noble."*

15 Old Stoics were killed in the last few days of May and early June 1940, during the retreat and rescue at Dunkirk. Amongst those were the first of seven pairs of Old Stoic brothers to be killed.

On the brighter side, Second Lieutenant TS Lucas displayed Stoic initiative by escaping from German capture, walking 20 miles to the coast, helping himself to a dinghy, and rowing to within half a mile of the English coast.

We see the contributions of Old Stoics recorded on the war memorial at the back of the Chapel and in the Book of Remembrance. The names include my father's first cousin, who was killed in battle in Italy.

Stoics were also recognised in other ways:

Group Captain Leonard Cheshire was awarded a VC to add to his three DSOs. He became a household name, and now at Stowe, the name of a House.

The school was given a Whole Holiday in 1943 after Old Stoic Major Jock Anderson led assaults on three machinegun positions, capturing 200 enemy soldiers, with only 40 men. He was awarded a VC but sadly, he was killed 6 months later.

In addition to those two 2 VCs, who remarkably had shared a study in Chatham, Old Stoics were awarded 28 DSOs, 21 Naval DSCs, 111 Army MCs and 46 Air Force DFCs.

In 1944, D-Day brought more courage and consequent losses. Major David Barrow of the Queen's Royal Regiment was one of the first to land on Gold Beach. He survived the initial assault, took an enemy position, but was sadly killed a few days later.

Captain Tony Bartley carried an Old Stoic tie in his pocket, which he put on the moment he reached the French beach.

Some Old Boys drew on their schooldays to keep themselves going. Lieutenant Gordon Forsyth Royal Navy described waiting in HMS Norfolk before a successful attack on the German battleship Scharnhorst. He wrote: *"I kept thinking about Stowe, particularly periods of waiting there – waiting before matches, waiting to be sent for."*

The official end of war in Europe, VE Day, was the first day of the Summer Term 1945. Just under 2000 Old Stoics had fought. Of those, 270 would never come home.

Let us be inspired by the contribution and sacrifice of those Old Stoics who "gave their tomorrow for our today". We, fellow Old Stoics, must try to live up to their values of courage, strength of character and independent thought. I hope that these qualities will endure in new generations of Stoic boys and girls as the school moves forward into the next 100 years.

## Christopher Atkinson (Chatham 59)

### The Post-War Years

If you stick around long enough, you'll always get a job. And, that is why I am here – I've been sticking around Stowe since I was a boy in the 1950s - then as a member of staff in the 70s - my three sons became Stoics in the 80s - I retired in the 90s but continued to live in the area, and in the 20-teens to the present day, two of my grandsons have been Stoics. So that is why I was given the job to cover the post-war years – all 78 of them. When I asked, 'how long do I have to cover this period?' I received the answer: '4 minutes'! .....I'll try.

As I see the School today with, the fully restored Main Mansion and state rooms the many new buildings. The number of pupils: a staggering 930, girls as well as boys of course, all reflecting the multi-cultural world in which we live, accommodated in 16 houses and mentored by 130 academic staff. It all demonstrates just how far Stowe has come since my day as a boy. Add to that, the widest curriculum you can imagine, an army of dedicated sports coaches, close parental involvement, and the age of electronic communication with smart phones, email, social media... and the contrast with 70 years ago is magnified still further.

And here, I must also add that I believe Stoics today are kinder, more caring and more worldly-wise than their predecessors, but they certainly still retain the same entrepreneurial spirit for which the school is famous.

Perhaps the simplest way to highlight the contrasts between now and my school days is through a few one-line personal reminiscences of Stowe in the mid-50s.

It was just post-JF Roxburgh and the School was passing through an uncertain period of readjustment. There were 530 pupils – all boys, of course, and all boarders and 46 members of the academic common room. Prefects were i/c discipline and corporal punishment was an accepted deterrent.

The School buildings were grey - and the most used indoor facility was the old Gym - built in timber as a temporary Chapel in the 1920s - it doubled up as the school theatre, cinema and examination hall. The swimming pool was a cordoned off section of the Eleven Acre Lake

There was just one telephone available for Stoics' use, situated in the Egyptian Entry, otherwise communication with home was by post.

I remember winters being colder – we seemed to skate on the Eleven Acre Lake every winter - and incidentally, it was deemed safe to skate if the ice took the weight of the heaviest member of staff – one, Freddie Fox. What would the Health & Safety Executive have to say about that today?

And, on one Speech Day, I remember my father wincing when the Chair of Governors announced that the fees were having to go up by 10% to £400 ..... per year!

As for the intervening years between the 1950s and today - I maintain that two particular milestones had a significant impact on the shape the School's future. One was the arrival of Bob Drayson as Stowe's 4<sup>th</sup> HM. And, as we look back over the school's first 100 years, it is clearly evident that his era produced an upturn in Stowe's fortunes.

For a start he appointed David McDonough as Head of School, Christopher Tate as Head of Walpole and James Burnell-Nugent as one of his top scholars.

Numbers in the school rose to over 600. A new house, Lyttleton, was built, followed by the swimming pool, science labs and sports hall. It was also at this time that he invited me on to the staff in 1971 and then to take over as housemaster of Walpole in 1978... and, I am privileged to say that I can count the Bishop of Islington as one of my former charges... and incidentally, it's a delight to see a number of others in this evening's congregation – good to see you gentlemen.

But perhaps most significant of all, in 1974 Bob Drayson welcomed the first five girls to Stowe – what a bold and progressive step that has proved to be and a base on which Anthony Wallersteiner orchestrated the introduction of full co-education in the early 2000s.

The second milestone was undoubtedly the partnership with the National Trust. Not only did it remove the responsibility for the 33 Grade 1 listed garden buildings from the school's finances but, in time, it became the catalyst that attracted huge funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and other sources for the incredible restoration of the main mansion.

What is more, a crucial roll-on benefit was the effect it had on the school's fundraising capability from thereon – it stands to reason, does it not, that would-be donors are far more likely to back a sure winner – in Stowe's case, a stunningly beautiful asset, rather than a drab, expensive-looking liability.

Which brings us back to the modern era, and the arrival of Anthony Wallersteiner some 20 years ago. I still refer to him as 'the new headmaster' but he has actually been in office longer than any of his predecessors other than JF Roxburgh.

During his time, as I think we all know, Stowe's academic, sporting and cultural reputation has advanced continuously year on year. What is more, the building and restoration programmes that have taken place over the past two decades have been quite staggering.

Anthony, with his vision and leadership, backed by a shrewd and bold governing body and, I have to say, supported by the extraordinary fund-raising success achieved by Colin Dudgeon and his team, has raised Stowe to a new summit in its Centenary Year.

So, as we celebrate Stowe's first 100 years, it is most heartening to feel a distinct spirit of optimism for the future, epitomised by the launch of the hugely ambitious 'Change 100'. What bolder statement of intent could there be for the second 100 years. And here I say to all who have not already done so, now is the time to contribute to Stowe's future. And if you're not convinced by this rallying cry, I'm sure you will be won over when, in a few moments, Anthony presents his vision for Stowe's second century.

But first, I hand over to Stephanie to expand on another significant Stowe success story – The girls. Persto et Praesto.

## The Baroness Fraser of Craigmaddie (Stanhope 86)

### Here Come the Girls

If Roxburgh's claim was "Every boy who goes out from Stowe will know beauty when he sees it all the rest of his life", I doubt he was envisaging the arrival of girls and co-education.

Stowe has always had cause to be thankful to girls. Whilst the Dukes of Buckingham and Chandos were the ones to squander their fortune, it was their Duchesses who did their best to replenish or save what was left, and it was the eldest daughter of the last Duke, Lady Mary Temple-Nugent-Brydes-Chandos-Grenville, whose sale of the house and grounds enabled the foundation of a school.

It was another doughty female, Mrs. Ruby Croom-Johnson, who provided drive and backbone to the founders of the school, when responding to an article in the Times about the futility of establishing a new school in a time of financial hardship, she wrote to the editor pointing out "every school has had to make a beginning" and she foresaw that in the hands of an imaginative leader and headmaster Stowe could do better than other schools stifled by tradition.

It was to be another 50 years before girls were admitted as pupils. Admitting girls was the response to the financial pressures and inflation of the 1970s. But it was a tentative step at first, with an original group of 5 day girls arriving in September 1974. When girl boarders arrived shortly afterwards, they had to lodge in Masters' houses. It was decade before Nugent, the first boarding house for girls, opened. There wasn't a formal Head Girl until 1991 and full co-education, with girls throughout the school and not just in the sixth form, didn't happen until 2003. Today, I am happy to report, there are 6 girls' houses and 40%, over 300 pupils, are girls.

An article from 1990 in *The Stoic* by Julia E Moore describing the experience of girls at Stowe certainly chimes with my own. She writes:

"It is still quite worrying how many MVI girls can't walk across the Vanburgh block without a friend flanking her on either side."

And:

"The MVI girl knows who her friends are...whereas the LVI girls try to be friends with every boy they come across (just to be accepted). In your last year, you know which boys are adolescent creeps and which boys' company you genuinely enjoy."

Today's Stowe has an equality and inclusion policy which seeks to "foster healthy relationships amongst pupils" but equality and respect was hard won in those early years.

I believe the admission of girls did much to raise academic standards. Brian Rees, in his *History of Stowe*, noted "The competition for girls' places meant that almost everyone accepted has sound academic claims." Amongst our alumni we can boast of broadcasters, journalists, actresses, Olympic athletes and a Dame Commander of the British Empire. I

certainly look back on my time at Stowe as excellent training for the world I find myself in the House of Lords. (Clearly my participation in the debating society stood me in good stead).

In preparation for today, I turned to my copy of *Cantata Stoica*, swiped from Stowe Chapel and signed by my fellow Stoics on leaving school. One of the few messages that could be quoted in this hallowed cathedral, from a certain P J R Stopford (Walpole 86), scribbled over Hymn 261, the hymn we've just sung, Praise My Soul, the King of Heaven, perfectly sums up my time at Stowe. He wrote:

“When you're married and settled down and have grown up a bit more, I hope you'll look back and think of the moments of laughs, and the tears, and just think of it as part of growing up, for I think it was one of the most important lessons you learnt at this great establishment. Good luck and God bless.”

Stowe was indeed a very important part of our growing up. So whilst Stowe has always had cause to be thankful for girls, may I take this opportunity on behalf of female Stoics, to say thank you to Stowe.

## Christopher Tate (Walpole 71)

### David Niven, 'The Moon's a Balloon'\*

David Niven was a huge Hollywood star. In the 1950's, 60's and 70's when Hollywood was at its absolute zenith in terms of glamour and style, David Niven was up there with the most glamorous and stylish.

Handsome, urbane, talented, charming, witty, and a natural raconteur, he was universally loved, and an Oscar winner. He was the first of the British community in Hollywood to return home the moment the Second World War was declared. He served in the Commandos, acted in films in support of the British war effort, was part of the Allied invasion of Normandy, and ended up as a Lieutenant Colonel in the GHQ Liaison Regiment.

He also, somewhat inadvertently, went to Stowe.

Originally intended for Eton and the Navy, his predilection for pranks and the tweaking of moustaches allied to an inability to combat maths, led to him being excused from several educational establishments before arriving at the gates of Stowe where, for the first time, he found a school that suited his exuberant character. Eton's and the Navy's loss was very much Stowe's and the Army's gain, and Stowe remained in his affections for the rest of his days.

As an overly precocious teenager, Niven spent much of his time wandering the streets of Soho where he met his first love, Nessie. A beauty with an open, fresh, English rose complexion, Nessie was employed by Mrs Meyrick at the 43 Club to act as a dancing partner and to make a fuss of the high-class clientele persuading them to buy champagne at exorbitant prices.

In his best-selling autobiography, *The Moon's a Balloon*, Niven tells of introducing Nessie to Stowe and its iconic Headmaster. "My life had changed fundamentally in other ways. I had been admitted into a school, Stowe in Buckinghamshire, where the inspirational headmaster, JF Roxburgh, seemed ready to overlook what he called my 'ups and downs'.

Nessie, who had never been out of London, came to Stowe to see me and brought a picnic basket and a tartan rug. We took full advantage of the beauties of the school grounds.

She became so intrigued by my hero worship of Roxburgh that she insisted on meeting him. Basely, I tried to avoid this confrontation, but Nessie was not easily put off. 'Look, dear, 'e'll think I'm yer bleedin' aunt'.

I said she looked like a duchess, not that looking like a duchess was much of a compliment, but she was as easily flattered as she was hard to dissuade. 'That's 'im, innit?' she cried one Saturday afternoon, looking across towards the cricket pavilion. Roxburgh was approaching our tartan rug, resplendent in a pale grey suit topped with the inevitable spotted bow tie.

Nessie stood up, bathed in sunlight. She was wearing a short, white silk dress that clung lovingly to her beautiful body; her hair was cut in the fashion of the time – the shingle; she had a small, upturned nose; she looked wonderfully young and fresh.

Roxburgh came over smiling his famous smile. 'May I join you?' I introduced him. 'He's just like you told me', said Nessie. 'He's beautiful', and then to Roxburgh: 'Don't look a bit like a schoolmaster, do yew, dear?'

JF, settling himself on the rug, missed a tiny beat but thereafter never gave any indication that he was not talking to a beautiful duchess. He stayed about ten minutes, extolling the glories of Stowe House and its history, and Nessie bathed in the full glow of his charm.

Never once did he ask any loaded questions and when he got up to leave, he said, "David is very lucky to have such a charming visitor'."

\*Extracts taken from David Niven's autobiography, *A Moon's a Balloon*, first published in 1971 by Hamish Hamilton.



## Dr Anthony Wallersteiner, Head

### Present into the Future

And what of the future? The school has drawn institutional resilience from only having seven Headmasters with Roxburgh serving for 26 years and I'm closing the gap with only 6 years to go before I equal Roxburgh's astonishing record.

The Stowe Group now includes Winchester House and Swanbourne and has collective responsibility for educating nearly 1,500 pupils. The Group needs to evolve and adapt if we are to compete effectively and maintain our status as leading independent schools.

In recent times we have sought to recapture both the effervescent fizz of the early Roxburgh years while adapting to the dynamic and ever-changing demands of delivering the curriculum, complying with inspection criteria and attaining the all-important metrics of exam success.

Excellence comes down to the clarity of the vision and strategy, the overall quality of the pupil experience, the rigour of teaching and learning, the school's facilities, and the breadth of the co-curricular provision.

The aims of the School are to remain innovative, liberal and progressive by developing our Change Maker vision and strategy; to maintain the breadth and accessibility of a Stowe education; and to retain our position in an increasingly competitive educational market place.

We are grateful to everyone who has supported the Campaign for Stowe to provide the school with first-rate facilities and the next phase of the school's development, Design Technology and Engineering, has now started. This will be followed by the transformation of the school's provision of sport with a new indoor sports centre on the Bourbon Playing Fields and the modernisation of the Drayson Sports Hall. Within the next decade we will have superb indoor sports facilities.

Change 100 demonstrates our commitment to inclusion and accessibility. Our aim is to build a transformative endowment of £100m which will promote unprecedented access and social mobility for talented children from disadvantaged backgrounds. These children have the potential, character and ambition to become Change Makers of the future. Thank you to everyone who has supported Change 100.

The Change Maker vision will future-proof our Stoics. We may not compete on labour costs or raw materials, but Old Stoics will continue to set the pace in intellectual capital, creativity and entrepreneurial flair. The future of employment will be radically different from the past and tomorrow's school leavers will require a range of skills, not just grades: they will have an average of 17 jobs in 5 different fields of employment and will need a portfolio of competencies which include digital and programming literacy, fluency in multiple languages, analytical thinking, creativity and entrepreneurial skills. They need to be prepared not just

for their first job, but for their last job, remaining economically productive for the whole of their lives which could see the majority of them living well over 100 years old.

Our Change Makers will compete in the workplace with robots and computer programmes which deploy algorithmic artificial intelligence for lower cost, greater speed and maximum efficiency. Machines cannot yet replicate human emotions, creativity and entrepreneurial flair. Chat GPT makes Wikipedia look like papal infallibility, after all it is drawing its wisdom for billions of data points on the internet. But a new generation of computers will emerge with the capacity to self-programme and re-design themselves at an exponential evolutionary rate, rendering many jobs obsolete and consigning entire professions to the dustbin of history.

One hundred years on, JF would recognise his school as fundamentally unchanged. Stoics still relish the beauty that surrounds them, and their unique qualities and talents are still burnished and polished. Edges are rubbed off and friendships that last a lifetime are forged.

The 1st XV rugby team will continue to thump the opposition, as they did in the autumn when they thrashed Oundle 67-10, Uppingham 48-7 and Rugby 35-19. Beating Rugby was an excellent way to celebrate the bicentennial of William Webb Ellis' decision to pick up a football and run with it. Our girls' hockey, tennis and netball teams enjoyed equally strong results and the 1<sup>st</sup> XI cricket team remains unbeaten. There will be more Stoic Olympians like Marilyn Okoro and James Rudkin, sportsmen like Bernard Gadney and Ben Duckett, film stars like David Niven and Henry Cavill, entrepreneurs like Richard Branson and John Sainsbury, philanthropists like Leonard Cheshire and Nicholas Winton and intellectuals like Tony Quinton and Michael Ventris.

The bridge over the Oxford Water takes us from Arcadia to a volatile and uncertain Brave New World, but the ultimate aim of Stowe will always remain Enlightenment for All. All of us here are a fleeting presence, like the mist which hangs over the Eleven Acre Lake before the sun burns through the haze. When we are gone, we will be judged by our legacy – Stowe, our children, and our children's children. It is our fervent wish that in 2123, the school's bicentenary, our descendants will be able to look back with equal pride, awe and wonder, over a second century of achievement.

## BIBLE READINGS

### **Reading by Cressida Bonas (Nugent 07)**

#### **Proverbs 3, verses 1-8, 13-14**

<sup>1</sup> My son, do not forget my teaching,  
but keep my commands in your heart,

<sup>2</sup> for they will prolong your life many years  
and bring you peace and prosperity.

<sup>3</sup> Let love and faithfulness never leave you;  
bind them around your neck,  
write them on the tablet of your heart.

<sup>4</sup> Then you will win favour and a good name  
in the sight of God and man.

<sup>5</sup> Trust in the LORD with all your heart  
and lean not on your own understanding;

<sup>6</sup> in all your ways submit to him,  
and he will make your paths straight.

<sup>7</sup> Do not be wise in your own eyes;  
fear the LORD and shun evil.

<sup>8</sup> This will bring health to your body  
and nourishment to your bones.

<sup>13</sup> Blessed are those who find wisdom,  
those who gain understanding,

<sup>14</sup> for she is more profitable than silver  
and yields better returns than gold.

**Reading by David McDonough OBE (Cobham 71)**  
**Philippians 3, verses 13-16, 4, verses 1 and 4-9**

<sup>13</sup> Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,

<sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

<sup>15</sup> All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you.

<sup>16</sup> Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!

<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

<sup>5</sup> Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.

<sup>6</sup> Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

<sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

<sup>8</sup> Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

<sup>9</sup> Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.



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July 2023