

Martin M Marriott's Speech

Martin Marriott Year Reunion and launch of Martin Marriott Foundation, London, 7th December, 2016

Headmaster, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Judith and I are very honoured to be your guests at this great occasion in such august surroundings. We too love reunions!

So may I start by thanking all those who have arranged this wonderful occasion, especially the Headmaster, who has been the mastermind behind it all, and Rowena Gaston who has done all the detailed planning. These occasions don't happen by chance. A great deal of careful, detailed hard work has obviously taken place. So thank you both very much indeed.

Could I also say how delighted I am to see so many members of Common Room here – most of whom I appointed – well, Lynne and I arrived on the same day and Robert Hooker and Steve Ives who were boys at the school in my time. Keith Hay & Rick Raumann were already at Canford when I arrived there 40 years ago this term! So they have seen off three Headmasters already and are now onto their fourth!

I think it is worth recalling what all these men here tonight have contributed to the school. Together we have taught at the school for a total of 317 years and all of you will have come across them somewhere - on the games field, on the river, in the classroom, on Geography expeditions, in the Sixth Form Union or as a House Tutor or House Master. Between them they will have played a very important part in shaping the person you are. Incidentally Keith is about to become the link man between all you Old Canfordians and the School. No-one could do that better. So let's applaud these fine men and thank them for all they have given to the school over many decades.

Could I also say how pleasing it is to have four stalwart OCs here in Paul Merritt, Richard Baxter, Jeremy de Halpert and Barry Coupe. The first three had sons at the school in my time and Richard's father, Alex Baxter, was my chairman for many years and a very dear personal friend. How he would rejoice in this occasion. It is great that they and their wives have made the effort to be here tonight.

Now, I know this occasion is labelled 'The Marriott Years', but I was not the school. You were. They were your years, and still are. We were very fortunate to be there with all of you and hundreds of others.

We are all here tonight because we all shared those years together at Canford.
We all remember them with enormous pleasure because they were very happy days.

But ask yourself. Why were they such happy years? You will have your own thoughts about that but I think there are several main reasons:

1. You were in a safe and encouraging environment - and a very beautiful one too. Don't underestimate that. I feel that that beauty, although not noticed much perhaps at the time, nevertheless seeps in through the pores and is a life-long endowment for many of us.
2. We were very much a community – a theme I know which is of great importance to Ben, and this

was helped greatly by being a campus school. Everyone played their part in fostering that concept, but you and your parents responded very positively and encouraged it to develop. And you developed life-long people skills and standards in the process.

3. You were enabled to do many, many things you enjoyed and you achieved a lot in all sorts of ways – academically, in the arts, on the games field - and all this prepared you well for the future – a future where you are now the leaders in society. Together as a cadre you are a really important influence on our society and on other peoples' lives – and that's where standards and integrity really count.

I mean, just think of it. During the 16 years that we were at Canford, about 2000 people went out into the world to play their particular roles – many of them quite unpredictable. That is a significant number and they are working in every possible area of our society today. A great many are in business as Directors, MDs & CEOs and many who have started their own firms – all helping to create our GNP! Others are in the law (with at least two High Court Judges), banking, surveying, the Armed Forces, medicine, education (at least 5 are Heads of very good schools and 5 are university professors), in the church, the welfare services, events organisers, airline pilots, musicians, artists and so on. We even have an acupuncturist who I'm sure, has left his mark! You people here tonight represent an excellent cross-section of that cadre.

4. Much of what you learnt was unmeasurable but was of the greatest importance. That was to do with personal relationships; the friendships you formed there were fostered in part by it being a campus school, not one that was spread round a town. The Houses were near each other and you had many friends in other Houses. I sometimes think that schools are all about relationships; certainly being a Headmaster is. It is very noticeable how so many of you have kept up with your Canford friends. When I bump into one of you, as I do from time to time, I am astonished how quickly I can catch up with so many of you.

Several years ago, I was going to a meeting near Kingsway. As I stopped to look at my map, I heard a voice behind me ask, "Lost again, Headmaster?" This was Matthew Kind who I hadn't seen for years but in just a few minutes conversation I learnt a lot about his contemporaries

On another occasion, I was going to a dinner in the City but when I was coming up out of the Bank Underground station, I paused on the steps as it was raining heavily. "Forgotten your umbrella, Headmaster?" asked a voice behind me. This time it was James Telfer and we had a similar conversation. These ex-Heads of School seem to have a happy knack of catching me off guard!

And, I suppose that the main reason you are all here tonight. You still enjoy being with the friends you first made decades ago – just as we do.

And they were very happy years for Judith and me too for a number of reasons. Judith was able to be very involved in the Canford Music Society - her first love – and to spend her Tuesday afternoons teaching many of you girls rudimentary cooking skills - in amongst all the chat - as well as being the school's hostess. I was a very fortunate Headmaster. I took over a school, which my predecessor had left in good order. I had the opportunity to build it up a bit but it already had very secure foundations. The Common Room were a very committed and hard-working group. I had very good and supportive Governors, many of whom became very good friends. The 1980's was a good time for recruitment. We were always full. In addition, we were free from external interference. There was no Health and Safety, no League Tables, no Inspections, no constant interference with the curriculum or the exam system. We were left to get on and run the school as well as

we could with a minimum of external interference. And, most importantly, it was fun!

And since then? Canford was very fortunate in 1993 to come into a great deal of money, but equally fortunate to have a Headmaster who was absolutely clear about how to use that money in the best possible way to the long term benefit of the school. I am full of admiration for the way in which John Lever and his Governors thought through their strategy with such care and then implemented it so successfully. That process has continued under Ben. He has quickly identified all that is best in Canford and is developing the school in a very happy and successful way. Everyone I know who currently have children in the School (including some of you) are very pleased indeed with what they find.

So why are we here? You don't really need me to tell you – but I will – just so that we know we are all singing from the same hymn sheet! And I know that Ben will enlarge on what I have said in a minute. Incidentally, he has been very kind to me and Judith in many ways – and not least in letting me speak first tonight!

Just as I was very privileged to be appointed to such a fine school, you were all very privileged in the education you enjoyed at Canford. You not only had to have reasonable intelligence to be accepted, but your parents had to be able to pay for it – quite often, as I know, at considerable sacrifice to themselves. But they often said to me 'Never mind. It is much the most important thing we can do for them.' How right they were!

Although it costs quite a lot more now, Ben tells me that current parents have much the same attitude as your parents had. It is often quite a sacrifice to pay the fees but it is the best preparation for life that they can give their children. But, as we all know, not everyone can manage it, however great the sacrifice they are prepared to make.

During my time at Canford the government introduced the Assisted Places Scheme which a number of you may have benefitted from. Many of you will remember Luke Ahern in School House who was one of the first beneficiaries of that Scheme. At the OC Drinks party at the House of Commons in the summer, he thanked me for giving him what he called a life-changing experience. It was an excellent scheme and it is the clear intention of those who have organised this wonderful occasion that they should raise sufficiently large sums of money to be able to do something similar. They want such parents to be able to send their children to Canford so that this and future generations may continue to benefit just as you did in your day. It would be difficult to think of a more laudable or selfless and generous objective for any fund-raising campaign. And as Judith and I were lucky enough to be at the School at a very happy stage of its life and can now enjoy meeting so many of you and hear about your happy and very successful lives now, how could we not support what you have set out to do?

It is a wonderful idea and we would both like to support you in every way possible.