

**Address: Tony Verity, Former Master, Dulwich College**

I am very honoured to have been included on Terry's detailed plan for this occasion, and to have been asked by Edward and Victoria to speak about him.

If anyone had told me in the early 1960s, when I was a young teacher of Classics at Dulwich, that I would one day be standing in Chapel to commemorate a great schoolmaster, I would certainly not have believed him. We new Lower School form-masters did not approve of TJW. Dear me no. What place was there in that brave new world for strong discipline and formal teaching, much of it delivered in a parade-ground voice that often reached the South Circular? How wrong we were, and how little we knew about the man – and teaching, for that matter.

When I returned in 1986 I found that this formidable man had been *en poste* for eight years as Deputy Master, which was a prospect I viewed with some trepidation, I must admit. This is what I found:

A man, as we all know, with a rock-hard sense of service to the College, not just for its past glories but as a living and dynamic organism. Terry had a way of pronouncing 'Dulwich College' in conversation (never just 'Dulwich') that was rather like a priest referring to the Holy Trinity. He had an almost protective affection for the school, coupled with a historian's sense of its place in the education of South London boys; and his approval of the Dulwich Experiment, which gave so many boys from ordinary backgrounds a lift off in life, was given new impetus when he and I got together to kick off the bursary

appeal. (I am delighted to read of its vigorous health under the present Master.)

I found a man with a profound knowledge of boys, individually and *en masse*, which of course extended after they left and became old boys. He enjoyed a story I sometimes used at parents' evenings, written I think by E F Benson. It is set in Edwardian times, when schoolboys wore stiff collars (as indeed they did at Dulwich back in the 60s) A boy slides a dormouse down the neck of his neighbour. There is almighty uproar, and he is sent to the headmaster and caned. He returns to the classroom in tears – not because of his painful punishment (which is what the parents thought), but because, as he said, 'How did I know he'd draw the line at dormice?' Boys, as Terry knew, will go to any lengths to break rules, but will view with contempt any institution that lets them get away with it.

Under his stern exterior – sometimes, I think, adopted for the occasion – he had a soft spot for scallywags: the kind of OA who turns up in his BMW 20 years after a hurried departure from school at the Dulwich Common clubhouse for a drink with old cronies, and to cheer loudly for a rugby team – provided, and always provided, he does nothing to injure the reputation of 'Dulwich College.'

I found, too – and this may surprise some of you – a man of broad humanity, with sympathy for the lame duck as well as the star performer or the rogue. And not only boys. I remember him lending a kindly ear to a South Block porter who was having a rough time personally, not only because he knew how much the school's smooth running depended on him, but because that's what you did when people were in trouble.

I found a man blessed with formidable organisational skills and mastery of detail, allied to an encyclopaedic memory – always with initials attached: 'Oh yes, Smith P J, 2<sup>nd</sup> XV scrum half, read medicine at Oxford; not his brother J R, who was of

course more of a cricketer.' In this he resembled Ronald Groves, who appointed him (and me). It was said that Ronald had a surer grasp of the boys in his school than the people who actually taught there. Not so Terry.

Indeed, his perception of the College was essentially as the sum of the people who learned and taught there. He was not especially excited by new buildings or titles, offices and secretaries; what was important was the daily transaction between old and young, in the classroom, on the games field, in the orchestra or the theatre. He would have given you a strange look if you had called him a good staff manager, but he did know that more can often be achieved by a short and direct exchange in a chance encounter on the Gravel than in specially convened meetings or a dozen notes in a pigeonhole. I think he was relieved to have escaped the curse of the email.

I suppose I knew Terry professionally as well as anyone for the three short years we worked together from 1986 to 1989. It must be said that it was not easy to see into the inner man. He never gave much away about himself, possibly because he wasn't much interested in what other people thought of him. This was partly out of modesty: the laconic diary he kept while standing in for David Emms for a term is full of entries like, 'Took Middle School assembly; said the usual things.' Maybe that really was all he did; but he was a powerful, direct speaker when the occasion demanded, both formally and after a good dinner.

But his reticence also stemmed, I think, from a British sense of decorum and reserve. It meant he could be infuriating; there were times when I obviously needed to take a firm line about something, and would have welcomed a strong steer from an experienced schoolmaster: 'You must do as you think best,

Master'. But I came to understand and appreciate this small distance between us, realising that its origin lay in a deep respect for the office, in the sense that he and I were temporary stakeholders in a centuries-long tradition, bit-part players in a greater narrative. And it was backed by an unshakeable loyalty; what you saw was what you got, absolutely straight, no hidden agendas or talking out of school. Headmasters are supposed to think about things like policy from time to time, and shuffle off the job of actually keeping the show on the road. Of no one more than Terry could the old HMC chestnut be told: someone asks who runs the place when the Master is away, to which the answer is of course, 'The same man who does it when he's here.'

All this made the occasions when Terry allowed an impish sense of humour to emerge all the more enjoyable. I remember him telling me, with considerable amusement, when we were talking about 'the Dulwich boy', how he had once walked into a senior boarding house and was beaten to the single phone by a young man who picked it up and said, in a rather camp voice, 'Hello! This is the Dulwich male escort service; how may I help you?'

There are many examples in schools like Dulwich of long-serving members of staff crowning their careers as deputy heads; Mr Chipses, who make their farewell speech, say thank you for their present, and toddle off into obscure retirement. Terry bears absolutely no resemblance to such a person: he was a man of stature, of consequence, of unusual wisdom and integrity, and of far-reaching influence, who inspired respect – and no little affection – during his long association with the College; which is why this chapel is full today, and why so many of us in our different ways were proud to know him.

