

“ How do you wish to be remembered when you leave School ?”

The following entertaining address was given by Angus MacDonald in 2006 as a School Assembly, directed mainly to the Upper Sixth but of equal interest to staff and boys.

The article has been published on the OH website as it may be of interest to a number of Angus' classmates who are mentioned here and also for general OH website interest.

~~~~~

For many of you, especially those in upper sixth, your time at Hampton is coming to an end and beyond your exams lies university life or a gap year or some of you may even be contemplating full time work, which although more lucrative than the other options can be reasonably postponed for a few years yet. For this assembly I thought I might spend a few minutes looking at your possible futures and also reflect on what you leave behind when you leave after your exams. I was in exactly the same position twenty years ago when my mates and I left Hampton and I thought I might explain some of the things that happened to a few of them in order to illustrate how varied and often unpredictable life can be beyond school.



**Photo 4.** This was our U15 rugby team. You may recognise a youthful Mr. Orr, but then again you may not. I'm not going to talk through all of them because I've lost contact with many of them, but I'll tell you what I know. Jim, front row first on the right went to Liverpool University and read a science based subject. He became an environmental impact assessor and lived in HK for five years. He is now back and lives in Epsom, married with two kids. Next to him is another James. He joined

the army after being in the school CCF and has served in Iraq . He is now a major and lives in Cyprus , married with three kids. Steve, the captain I'll come back to. Chris, front row second from the left came from Canada in the second year. He was hard as nails, heavily into ice hockey and a little unhinged. He returned to Canada in the fourth year and the last thing I heard about was that he was a pimp in Toronto but as an unsubstantiated rumour I've not given it too much credence. I was at school with Nozz, fifth in from the left in the back row since we were both four. As far back as I could remember he wanted to become a doctor.

He didn't quite get the grades he needed so ended up studying Biology at Nottingham . However, once he graduated from there, he went onto Newcastle to study medicine for a further 5 years. He is now a registrar plastic surgeon in Bristol and half way through consultancy training. He has fixed people's badly burned faces and bodies and specialises in reconstructive surgery. Justin, two along from him left school and went straight to work. He did very well in the IT industry and became a director of sales for a big printer firm. He married an Australian and moved to Oz a year or so ago with his wife. Next to him is Greg. After studying anthropology at Swansea he went to Papua New Guinea . He lived with a fairly primitive tribe and enjoyed such diverse experiences as animal sacrifice and being drugged by the tribal witch doctor. He had to extricate himself fairly quickly after an alliance with one of the women in the tribe began to have more permanent repercussions than he was ready for. He lived in Brazil for a good few years, and now is back in the local area and is also a teacher.

So, who knows where you might end up or what line of work you'll enter. Having spent some time looking at your possible futures I'd like to consider the legacy that you'll leave behind. Each and everyone of us creates an impression in everyone else we come into contact with during the course of the school day and over the terms and years. These points of contact can be as inconsequential and brief as a smile or acknowledgement as we pass in the corridor or can be the substantial and frequent interaction in lessons, sport or any of the other multitude of opportunities that exist at Hampton . In fact, one of the reasons that many of us became teachers is the unrivalled chance to influence other people in a hopefully positive way every day. These interactions, from which we all make judgements about each other occur hundreds of times a day. The person who exerts the greatest degree of influence over them is you – and whether you recognise it or not, you own and control our impressions of you, as we own your impressions of us. Should you care about that?

Well, I strongly believe that you ought to be very aware of it at least and yes – I think you should care. Now I'm not suggesting that you conduct yourself as though you were permanently under the microscope seeking approval 24 hours a day. However, you should care what people think of you, even if they don't have much to do with you. Of course, there are some people whose opinions about you don't matter as much, but I think it's good practice to value positive impressions from as many people as you come into contact with as possible. We all tend to be well mannered and careful in the presence of people who we need, who we respect, or who have greater social status or who exert influence over us. However, I think you creating positive impressions in people who have no power over you, or who are younger than you or those you may have met only briefly, is just as important and speaks volumes about your character. Being decent to people for decency's sake, without some prospective reward or recognition is a civilised and proper way to conduct yourself.

So what creates impressions? Well, there is a multitude of factors - what you say, how you say it, what you don't say, your body language, your dress, attitude, eye contact, attentiveness – I could go on and on. We make judgements of people all the time, with a minimum of information and sometimes those judgement are very hard to change, especially if they have been negative to start. The good news though, is that our judgements and attitudes can and do change. Often it only takes seeing someone in a slightly different light to realise that you may have been too quick to judge and that the individual is worthy of more respect, admiration or at least given more benefit of the doubt. Every interaction therefore, however fleeting or profound, is a chance to reinforce positive impressions and change negative ones. This process is ongoing and accompanies us all throughout life. One of the most exciting things about moving on to university or wherever else you are headed, is that you get a chance to start from a clean slate, meet new people who have no prior knowledge of you, no preconceived ideas and therefore have made no judgements about you. A fresh start. What a wonderful opportunity, but be careful not to waste it, because first impressions last and, however clichéd, you only get one chance to create them.

As you embark upon this new and exciting chapter, what are you leaving behind, what is your legacy to this school, its community and ethos. Are you leaving it a better and richer place than you found it. Has the school benefited from you being here – or have you left a deficit – have you taken more than given. What is your legacy and are you happy with it. When you look at those around you, you will see some brilliant academics, talented musicians and sportsmen, actors, linguists and writers. You will see people that care for others, that lead, that inspire and that provide wonderful, life lasting friendship. The staff recognise and applaud the talent that is on display in this school every day of the week. However, the proficiency you show in one, two or many more disciplines is not the key thing. It's important, but it's the character traits upon which that excellence is built that really matter.

The discipline, commitment and perseverance, the single mindedness and team ethic, the willingness to give and wisdom to take the opportunities afforded – those are the things that stick in the mind when you’ve left. I often find myself reminiscing with other members of staff about incidents that have happened and characters that we have come across when teaching or from when I was here as a pupil. More often than not, the conversation is brought to a close with the familiar refrain “What a good bloke”. Four little words that encompass so much. “What a good bloke”. It means that you’re decent, that you care about others, that you take yourself seriously as a student and member of this community. It means that you conduct yourself with integrity, admit your mistakes and strive to improve. It shuns arrogance but encourages confidence. It means that you listened, you learned and you taught. Above all else, it means that you have respect, that you have earned that respect, and that the legacy you have left is of real value. The school therefore is that little bit richer for you having been here.

For those of you who are not leaving, you have more time to create positive impressions, to contribute and to earn the respect which I think is so important to us all. As a last word, if I may be permitted a small personal indulgence, I would like to thank my tutor group who have been a fantastic example of the best that Hampton offers. They have been a joy to tutor and I’m very grateful to them all.

Thank you.



*Angus MacDonald*