

John Moore – two further tributes

John Moore is a Bryanston legend and the huge number of letters his family have received from former pupils speaks eloquently of the deep respect, admiration and fondness they had for him.

Guy was in his second year at Bryanston as a music scholar when it became apparent that not only was the Prebendal School tuning up another Moore for Peter Lattimer, but that their father might also bring some productive talents to bear on Bryanston. David Jones, with characteristic vision, signed John up and he, of course, brought with him the rest of the family. Katrina's great contribution to the welfare of so many Bryanstonians is continued by Sarah and Preet, maintaining an influence that has now been at work for the better part of forty years.

John's acute understanding of the teenage psyche stemmed from his own schooldays. He was a Classics Scholar at Merchant Taylors' but, when he fell ill with polio, the school decided to keep him down a year, with the result that, as Katrina says, he hated school thereafter. This experience was to prove a saving grace for a later generation, since John sympathised with children who didn't fit the system – or, rather, for whom the system was not the right fit.

From his lair in the basement corridor John fulfilled his task of School Manager with the idiosyncratic assistance of Muldoon. As well as the sophisticated view of humanity one would expect from a Chief Inspector in the Met, John had a countryman's realistic attitude to life. This dual focus gave him a sharp insight into the minds of the young people for whom he had responsibility for nineteen years.

One of Bryanston's greatest benefits was the wide variety of places off the beaten track. In these corners, pupils could discover themselves, and, in some of them - the dens in the hangings and the Red Tree spring to mind - be discovered, by a questing Craddock or, even more alarming, a smiling John Moore, whose musteline grin was an eloquent substitute for the words 'You're nicked'!

But, much more important were the other corners, nurtured and maintained by hard working and talented staff for the benefit of Bryanstonians not in the main stream. A/V, stage crew, the Art and Music schools were corners at the centre of things. The canoe club, though, was, by definition, on the margin, and even the river was, in its way, somewhat alternative, since Bryanston oarsmen have always

regarded the Stour at Blandford as 'the wrong kind of river'! For John and his canoeists, there was no such thing, in fact, the wronger the better. The limpid Stour, the racing white waters, the long reaches from Devizes to Westminster, even the banks with the scrambling stress of the portage, were all part of one great element in which John was entirely at home. Messing about in boats it wasn't! That was something reserved for those other occupants of the Stour who, as John often observed, always had to do things backwards.

Pupils were probably unaware of the huge amount of vital administrative work that John did as School Manager, but they were very well aware of the outstanding skills he brought to bear as a coach of shooting, fencing and archery. As a result, for a good many pupils, John was Bryanston, but it could never be said that Bryanston was John. Even setting aside his pre and post Bryanston life, he was never insular or introspective. His work at the Sheiling School was devoted and inspiring, but he didn't wear it on his sleeve. John did many good deeds that passed unseen and it was typical of him and Katrina that, on retiring from the school, they headed to Hermanus, a place of hope and a place of love.

Given the impish and mischievous nature so often remarked on in the letters Katrina has received, it would have been salutary to overhear John's verdict on The Senior Management Team, as such things are called nowadays. That chesty laugh and his wonderfully ribald sense of humour made him a treasured friend of many in the Common Room, rejoicing in such phrases as 'About as much use as an ashtray on a motor bike' or the great coverall excuse 'I was on the upper deck of the bus collecting fares at the time'.

John never confined himself to the upper deck. His presence on or off site was a source of huge reassurance to his colleagues and his pupils. Leading from the front, yet equally aware of the needs of the tail-enders, John richly deserves the gratitude and admiration being paid to him.

It was an honour to be called Guv'nor by such a man.

Tom Wheare (as spoken at John's memorial)

John was a phenomenal man. Tectonic. A fire-breathing, grunting, bullet-proof, and heroic man infused with a depth of wisdom that can only come from living life to the full. He had a tungsten exterior designed to raise the hairs on the back of the neck, as would any former member of the mounted Metropolitan Police, but a marshmallow interior only revealed to those he selected. He had a sixth sense and a loyalty for those who might be troubled, and would offer the warmest and most kind hand of friendship to those who needed it. Behind the scenes, his family was his priority in life, and his pride and delight.

He was a central girder in a different type of Bryanston – an eighties Bryanston. Back then, men were men, and boys were naughty. John was part of the team of staff charged with being the cats in the cat-and-mouse antics of a sometimes unruly student body. John's past experience with the comings and goings of the London Underworld meant nothing could shock him, and the 'suspects' often discovered his interviewing skills were second to none.

As the 'School Manager', John efficiently organised countless school activities and operations, now handled by a small army of staff, and was an immensely valued friend and colleague of many of Common Room. No-one will forget the throaty gravel voice, the technicolour vocabulary, and the bar-propped laughter. John was an original with an extraordinary memory; a proper old-fashioned raconteur of tales with punch lines and bawdy verse, with a demented Spaniel for a sidekick.

On the river, John performed aquatic miracles. The extraordinary successes of the Devizes to Westminster kayaking teams were a testament to his skill and boundless grit, and somehow he had the knack of getting more out of some of Bryanston's waifs and strays than even they knew they had within them. If John hit a bridge, the bridge would come off worse. If you travelled in Mr Moore's Minibus, an adventure might unfold rather than a Geography field trip.

To know John Moore was a privilege, and anyone who lived part of their life alongside him will have permanently embossed memories filed under 'joy'.

Graham Elliot (current staff)