

## Sanderson's Dinner, 10<sup>th</sup> October 2015, at Lancing College

### *Speech by Andrew Page, Sanderson's 1978-83*

#### **Headmaster, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I feel honoured to be giving this speech on behalf of Sanderson's House – and humbled to be doing so in the presence of several great Sanderson's Housemasters. But what daunts me most is to have to speak in front of so many peers from 30 years ago. Almost the entire class of Sanderson's 1978-83 is here this evening: Barltrop, Blackburn, Cummings, Griffin, Luce, Leyland, Robinson, Thompson. Great to see you all here, gentlemen! Listing you reminds me of my grandfather's class when he arrived as a new Classics Master at Christ's Hospital. In those days, each lesson began with a roll-call. My grandfather found himself reading out alphabetically, in his booming voice, the names: "***Balls, Balls, Bottomley, Cox***"

I shall start, Ladies and Gentlemen, with some Sanderson's history, before describing the Housemasters in living memory, and ending with thoughts on the impact this House has had on us, its old boys, later in life.

First, some history. The **Reverend Nathaniel Woodard** founded Lancing College in 1848 when he was Vicar of Shoreham. Determined to tackle the ignorance of the agricultural classes who could not afford a public school education, he bought a farm in the parish of Lancing and moved the College there in 1854. In the beginning, there were just two Houses: the Head's House and Second Master's House. As the College grew, these were followed by School House, which grew larger and, in 1910, was split into two, Olds and News.

Less than a decade after Woodard had established the School, in 1862 another visionary arrived at Lancing, as Headmaster – the **Reverend Robert Sanderson**. Sanderson had been educated at Uppingham and Lincoln College, Oxford, and Headmaster at Bradfield for 10 years. He remained Headmaster at Lancing for 27 years (1862-1889). His era was known as the "*Golden Age*"; his skills have often been compared to those of Thomas Arnold at Rugby.

There was an enormous amount of development in the Reverend Sanderson's time here: foundations of the Chapel were laid in 1868; he brightened Chapel services; he started many scholarships; and he introduced drama, music and debating. As Basil Handford wrote in his "History and Memoirs": "*he brought in the little civilising improvements in lighting and feeding and the daily life of the younger boys... In short, he was dignified, friendly but revered, working quietly towards his ideal*". When he died, in 1913, just before the outbreak of the Great War, News House was re-named Sanderson's House in his memory.

100 years later, we have with us here, I'm delighted to say, his **great-great-grandson, Robert Sanderson**, with his mother Jenny. Robert, I'd like to invite everyone to join me in a toast to this outstanding educator, your celebrated ancestor, the Reverend Robert Sanderson.

Since 1913, Ladies and Gentlemen, there have been ten **Housemasters of Sanderson's**. I would like to tell you about the last five, which will cover the school-days of all of us Sanderson's old boys here tonight.

The longest serving of the Sanderson's Housemasters was **Basil Handford**, who devoted his entire life-time to Lancing, including 20 years as Housemaster in 1938-58. It a tribute to Basil that we have 15 "boys" from his House here tonight, headed by the most senior among them, John Bell, who later became a much loved Housemaster in Gibbs.

I would like to share my own fond memory of Basil, as I was the last Lancing pupil to be taught by him. When I arrived in 1978, Basil had long since retired, but for some reason he was brought back for a few weeks to teach me the most difficult of irregular verbs in ancient Greek, the so-called "**verbs in -mi**". (John Bell will know what I am referring to, even if no-one else does.) I recall Basil as a most kindly, erudite – and *ancient* – man. To a 12-year old boy like me, he looked a bit how I imagined God to look.

When I asked a few old boys from his house for reminiscences, they too remembered Basil as a lovely, gentle man – “*a Lancing historian immersed in his world of the classics*”.

One, with us tonight, recalls how Sanderson’s consistently won House matches in football and cricket at all age levels in the 1950s, although Basil was never seen on the touch-line or boundary – he was, I quote, “*too busy trawling prep schools for boys who could play in his string quartet*”. Another old boy, also with us here, paints a vignette which I must quote in full: “*Basil’s method of **sex education** was conducted in a haze of pipe smoke, which increased as details became more explicit. Being a classical scholar, he used pictures of Greek sculptures to explain more intimate parts of the female anatomy. It is said that some of our more innocent fellow pupils, when first confronted with female nudity, were confused that their partner had complete arms, rather than finishing just above the elbow.*”

Basil died in 1991 at the age of 90. His legacy lives on in Handford House, named after him in 1985. His successor dedicated 17 years to Sanderson’s (1958-75) and half a century to Lancing, and he is with us still: **Ken Shearwood**. Ken’s story will be well known to most of you here and to many others who have enjoyed his autobiography “*Hardly a Scholar*”. An outstanding games player, he went from Shrewsbury to Oxford to Pegasus, the combined soccer side of Oxford and Cambridge Universities that won the FA Amateur Cup twice in front of 100,000 fans at Wembley. When he retired from soccer he came to Lancing, where he stayed – schoolmaster, Housemaster and Registrar – for the rest of his working life.

One of his boys recalls a story that exemplifies Ken’s approach to the Housemaster role – a position of authority he seemed amused to find himself in. The boy was summoned to Ken’s study after being reported for smoking. Ken looked at him quizzically and said: “*You really should give up **smoking**, Richard. It is not difficult to give it up. I have done it many times.*”

Ken’s colleagues were very fond of him, too. One called him “*a constant source of amusing comment, day to day: one of those people everyone wanted to talk to when life seemed unusually complicated*”. Another colleague and life-long friend captured him in the preface to his book: “*Ken has a quality that has been called ‘**the common streak**’ – ‘common’ in the best sense, rejecting snobbery and exclusiveness, seeking and finding all men as they are.*”

The man who wrote this fine preface succeeded Ken: my first Housemaster, **Ted Maidment**. It is a sadness for many of us that Ted could not be with us tonight. While my peers and I recall Ken as an amusing, shrewd schoolmaster who had seen it all, our memories of Ted are charged with different emotions – affection, yes, but tinged with fear. For here was a Yorkshireman with massive physical presence and charisma, early in his career, a history graduate and choral scholar from Cambridge, driven by ambition.

Ted had been at Lancing for ten years, initially at Sankey's, before coming to Sanderson's in 1975. He was Housemaster for seven years, and made a huge impact before being appointed Headmaster at Ellesmere (1982-88) and thereafter at Shrewsbury (1988-2001).

I recall Ken's telling us later that, during this time, Ted – or "Tiddles", as he called him – was offered **Eton**, but turned it down. I do not know if this was true – but it was plausible, such were Ted's leadership qualities. There is a parallel story I heard about Ken: that in the 1960s, when a Housemaster, Ken applied *on a postcard* for the job of Headmaster of Eton. Unimpressed by the standard of the field, his application to the Provost read: "*despite what I've just read in the Telegraph about the candidates I believe I am just the man for the post*". He did not receive a reply, but a few weeks later, Gladstone (a former beak at Eton) told Ken he had been approached by the Provost and asked to keep his Housemasters under control.

Ted was the reason my parents chose Lancing. **My father** was a housemaster at Christ's Hospital for 18 years; he was in no doubt that the choice of housemaster was more important than the choice of headmaster. One meeting with Ted and his mind was made up. I think he recognised in Ted some of the characteristics he himself had shown as a bachelor – my father always said that he had been a better housemaster before he married. Ted was devoted to his House – the "Cock House", he called it – ambitious for it to be the best.

My friends and I have so many stories about life in Sanderson's under Ted. My most vivid pictures of Ted are (i) in the role of the Mikado, singing "*let the punishment fit the crime*" in his glorious baritone, alongside John Bell's Pooh-Bah; and (ii) bursting into the table tennis room to play a few quick rallies, rather well, and appointing a junior boy to pick up the ball.

Others remember the infamous **orange**... Ted had spent his summer overseeing painters; they had painted the House-room orange, and he was chuffed with it. At the start of term, an audacious boy threw an orange at the newly painted wall, and it stuck. Ted went ballistic. We were worried for his heart. He called a meeting of the whole House. “*Someone hates this House*”, he bellowed. We cowered, and there was silence, until a plucky boy piped up: “*we think it was Olds, Sir*”.

It always *was* Olds. Another time Olds raided the dorm and left John Thompson “**ninetied**” in his bed. Ted came in. When he saw John’s bed at 90-degrees, he shouted out “*where’s Thompson?*” This cracked us up, adding to his fury. Realising that John was in the bed, he sprinted down the dormitory and restored the bed to horizontal. Zander Luce recalls telling us all later that he had never imagined Ted could run so fast.

Had it not been for Ted, I might not have become a diplomat; he sowed the seed in my mind. I had a reputation for never saying “boo” to a goose at school – which is why, I think, I was deputed to be the one who read aloud stories from porn mags to the dorm after lights-out: Ted would never suspect me. This might explain why I didn't get in to the **Foreign Office** when I first applied. I answered an entrance exam question wrong. They asked: “*Where do women mostly have curly hair?*” I answered as would have done most boys of my age who had glanced inside a few porn mags. But apparently the right answer was “*Africa*”!

The man who filled Ted’s shoes, **David Lutwyche**, left an enduring mark on Sanderson’s, including its fabric, in the next 17 years. As he recalls, “*in 1982, accommodation consisted of three dormitories with 20 boys in each, three bed-sits, a large house-room – ideal for indoor football – and the infamous “Pitts Passage”, with its monk-like cells. It was evident this needed upgrading. By 1998, the dorms had been converted into double study-bedrooms, and the Pitts Passage into popular single study-bedrooms overlooking the Upper Quad*”.

Originally from Lincolnshire, David overcame big challenges early in his life to gain a place first at UCL, then at Cambridge, to read mathematics. He joined Lancing from Dulwich in 1971, soon becoming Head of Maths, taking over from Ken as Master in charge of Football, and running the 1<sup>st</sup> VI at Tennis. He also arranged great School ski trips every year.

While Ted the bachelor had run his House as a personal fiefdom, David had a refreshingly **iconoclastic** side. Not afraid to defend his forthright views, with boys or Common Room colleagues, he won their respect, running the House with a judicious mix of discipline, competitiveness and concern for the welfare of the boys – softened by his loyal wife Sue. He brought humour to the job, too – self-deprecating, and occasionally biting. Frequently his patience was tested by the likes of Edward Luce, son of the local MP, whose cunning knew no bounds: I recall catching Edward sweeping up glass from the Quad and sprinkling it by the broken window inside the Junior Dorm, before blaming Olds House for his crime.

In the late 1990s, the number of pupils coming to Lancing fell dramatically, from 550 to under 400. The School decided to move to full co-education, but the interlocking of Sanderson's and Olds made it difficult to provide housing for girls. This lay behind the decision to combine the two houses in 2000 and revert to the previous name, **School House**. My spies tell me that this was a secretive decision taken without consulting former Housemasters of Sanderson's and Olds. The House portrait of Reverend Robert Sanderson was moved to the old library which was re-christened the "**Sanderson Room**" in his honour. And thanks to insistent badgering by Brod Munro-Wilson, the Sanderson's House Boards have been resurrected, providing the ideal back-drop for our Heads of House photo tonight.

The man who made a success of this challenging transition to School House was Doctor **Andrew Betts**. Andrew took over Sanderson's in 1998, saw through the merger, and stood down from School House in 2010. A graduate of Durham, he arrived at Lancing in 1990 to teach French and German, becoming House Tutor in Olds before moving to Sanderson's. He went on to become Head of French, and as of a month ago, the new Registrar.

Sadly we do not have any boys from Andrew's House with us tonight, but a number have sent in tributes about their Housemaster: nick-named "Womble", he was consistently voted favourite Housemaster from the days when leavers starting writing Yearbooks. They describe him as: "*generous and forgiving*", with "*a laissez-faire approach to Housemastering*" – and in one case, "*the most tolerant man on earth*". Heaven knows what the boys got up to, or away with, but clearly Lancing's reputation as a laid-back place lives on.

So five fine Housemasters, Ladies & Gentlemen. Finally, what of the boys they turned out – the measure of their success? For the best answer, one needs only to look around this Dining Hall – and at the roll-call of old boys who have gone on to make a success of their lives in so many spheres. At one end are the best known, starting with Bishop Trevor Huddleston, one of Lancing's most distinguished **alumni**, an Anglican priest who became President of the anti-apartheid movement and whom Lancing honoured by naming a window in the Chapel, as well as a scholarship, after him. Others, just from my five years in the House, who have reached the top of their trees, range from the award-winning British film score composer Rupert Gregson-Williams, to the Chairman of the British Venture Capital Association of a few years ago Wole Kolade, to the Editor of "The Grocer" Adam Leyland, to the Legal Adviser to Aung San Suu Kyi in Burma Robert Pe, to David Lutwyche's *bete noire*, the mischievous Ed Luce, who is now Washington columnist of the Financial Times.

But the **essence of Sanderson's** goes so much wider than these celebrated *alumni* – indeed across the full spectrum of old boys of the House. It is what we have in common, and we owe our Housemasters a debt for it. I would describe it as a spirit of camaraderie, with the word "loyalty" running through it as through a stick of Brighton rock; among its main ingredients are charm, a sense of fun, a dash of cynicism, and an ability to build rapport with people – so vital to survival at boarding school. It manifests itself in life-long friendships, like those I shall always enjoy with my predecessor and successor as Head of House, John Thompson and Simon Margaroli; in professional life, wherever there is a premium on people skills; and in our wish to give back to the House and School later in life – why else are we Sanderson's old boys here in such numbers tonight?

And for tonight's reunion, we have not only the Reverend Robert Sanderson to thank, but an outstanding team in the Foundation Director **Catherine Reeve** and her colleagues Claire Welling and Sarah Swales. Aided by the indefatigable Simon Margaroli, who played a big part in drumming up our numbers tonight, Catherine and her team have put in a huge amount of work, with great attention to detail; and the result has been magnificent. Please join me, Ladies & Gentlemen, in showing your appreciation for Catherine, Claire, Sarah and Simon.

We also owe a big vote of thanks to **Andrew Johnston** for his tremendous generosity in providing the champagne for this evening; Andrew has come all the way from Australia and donated 70 bottles of Bollinger, Ladies & Gentlemen. Andrew, thank you so much.

Let me conclude with an anecdote – a true one – which reminds me of the Cock House and its humour. It concerns Winston **Churchill** and his wife Clementine, and Charles **de Gaulle** and his wife Yvonne. Churchill and de Gaulle had spent the War doing their utmost to stop France giving in to Hitler – a bond they would share for the rest of their lives. After the War, they met for dinner with their wives. Over dinner, de Gaulle asked his wife: "*Cherie, is there anything you have had too little of in your life?*" Madame de Gaulle replied to him: "*yes, a penis*". Non-plussed, Winston and Clementine looked at the General for explanation. De Gaulle said gently to his wife: "*Cherie, I think the English pronounce it 'happiness'*".

Ladies & Gentlemen, please charge your glasses and join me in a **toast** to Sanderson's House and the Sanderson's Housemasters:

**"To Sanderson's House and the Sanderson's Housemasters!"**