

**Response to the toast to the College  
at the 50 year reunion lunch at St Mark's College, Adelaide,  
by the Head of College, Professor Don Markwell,  
Friday 22 November 2019**

Thank you, Ben<sup>1</sup>, for proposing the toast to the College, and for your kind words. And thank you all for your warm welcome to me. I am delighted to be here welcoming you to the College on my 19<sup>th</sup> day as Head of College – a college by which I have been utterly charmed. People ask me how I am finding things here, and I say simply – I'm loving it!

Like everyone who has come before me in my role in the College, from Sir Archibald Grenfell Price to my friend Rose Alwyn, I have a profound personal commitment to the educational value of collegiate life. There will be people in this room who have known every former Master of the College – and Dr John Skipper AM, who was in College in 1940 and who we are delighted to see here today at 98 years young, will have known Archie the longest! I am very pleased to have known four of my eight predecessors – Bob Lewis, Peter Edwards, John Bannon, and Rose Alwyn.

I am welcoming you today to a college that is relatively quiet. Many students have just finished exams, and several have still to finish theirs. Over the short time I have been here, the College has been positive and purposeful.

Now, I would like to draw your attention to two things in this ballroom today. First, a small display today on the St Mark's/St Ann's choir in the 1960s, including a music book donated by Margaret Rice (nee Cheesman) who visited this year from Canada – a music book which includes a setting by Margaret which was used by the St Mark's/St Ann's choir. Margaret is Rob Cheesman's sister, and we are very grateful that Rob, who is here today, continues working with the College on architectural matters.

Secondly, on the wall of this ballroom, new here since the last 50 year reunion lunch, is a significant portrait. Charles Hawker, who was in College from 1966 to 1969, and who is here today, donated this fine portrait of his uncle, CAS (Charles Allan Seymour) Hawker, pastoralist and brilliant parliamentarian who served on the College Council from the founding of the College – indeed, before that, on the provisional committee that first shaped the founding of the College – until his life was untimely cut off by the crash of the aeroplane "Kyeema" in 1938. This portrait of CAS Hawker in uniform reminds us of his brave and repeated service on the western front in World War I, returning to fight despite a series of serious injuries.

CAS Hawker holds a special place in the history of this College, and indeed of Australia, and we are deeply grateful to be able to remember him with this portrait, and also with Hawker House and with Hawker Scholars who come to St Mark's.

Unfortunately, there have been several deaths this year which sadden us all, including Michael Shearer – who I understand came often to this lunch; Professor Ivan Shearer; Richard Brown; and Dr John Alwyn – an Old Collegian who was father of our former Master,

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<sup>1</sup> Dr Ben Robinson (at St Mark's 1959-62, 1968).

Rose Alwyn. Recent months also sadly saw the passing of an earlier former Master, Robin Ashwin, one of three Rhodes Scholars to lead this College.

More happily, pins are presented to Old Collegians who are attending their first 50 year reunion lunch, and I am delighted to welcome to come forward to receive their pins – the Revd Martin Bleby, who was in College 1964-67; Dr Peter Dean, 1963-65; Mr Charles Hawker, 1966-69; and Mr Paul Willoughby, 1966, who is here today with Sally.

As I said earlier, it occurs to me that several people here will have known the first Master, Sir Archibald Grenfell Price – “Archie”. I have a little quiz for you – just two questions. Please put up your hand...

Who knew Archie?<sup>2</sup>

And perhaps an invidious question – who has read Archie’s history of the College?<sup>3</sup>

Archie’s history of the College<sup>4</sup> makes clear the founding ideals of the College: to be an educational institution in the great collegiate tradition derived from Oxford and Cambridge, which had helped to shape many of the founders of the College (including Archie and CAS Hawker), and in the great tradition of Anglican collegiate education. Archie placed strong emphasis on a tutorial system to support and challenge students in their studies within a university to which the College would make an important contribution. He wrote of the founders of the College as “endowed with a firm belief in the outstanding merits of a residential college system which fitted men and women for *service* in Church and State”<sup>5</sup>, and founders who believed in – and I quote – the “manifold privileges of collegiate life”, including those arising simply from the positive interaction of students with other students.

Archie pointed out that from the outset there were strong links with the Rhodes Scholarships. The first Warden of Rhodes House, Oxford, Sir Francis Wylie, suggested possible candidates for the first Mastership of St Mark’s. The first Australian National Secretary for the Rhodes Trust, and Warden of Trinity College in the University of Melbourne, Sir John Behan, gave Archie much valuable advice.

Archie gloried in the strong academic results in the College, as well as in its sporting and other extra-curricular success, and in its remarkable success in the election of Rhodes Scholars.

In language that we might now consider a little old-fashioned, Archie more than once wrote of what he called – and I quote – “that observance of religion, discipline and tuition which are, or should be, the outstanding features of university colleges in their best sense”. Though we might use different language today, his points are right: a college such as us must stand for academic excellence, be faithful to our Anglican foundation, and uphold the values for which we stand, which include being a community based on respect for all, genuine inclusion, and the safety of all.

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<sup>2</sup> Several hands went up.

<sup>3</sup> Even more hands went up!

<sup>4</sup> A. Grenfell Price, *A History of St Mark’s College, University of Adelaide, and the Foundation of the Residential College Movement*, Adelaide: Council of St Mark’s College, 1968.

<sup>5</sup> Emphasis added.

Archie also placed much emphasis on the importance of making the remarkable opportunity of college life available to talented students regardless of means through scholarships and bursaries. I know that a number of people in this room contribute to making that possible today, for which many, many thanks indeed.

What I have described emerges from Archie's history as a vision and ideals central to the founding and early decades of the College. My view is that these are noble ideals which remain relevant always, and that we should aim to give the best effect we can in our time – in the 21<sup>st</sup> century – to these great ideals for which the College was founded. This is a vision of the College as a residential academic community in which students gain broadening, supporting, and challenging opportunities across wide dimensions of life – academic, broader intellectual stimulus, sporting, cultural, spiritual, community service, social and perhaps more: this is what I mean when I sometimes use the phrase “an all-round educational experience”.

As you will know, almost all, if not all, of the truly greatest universities in the world remain collegiate or essentially residential universities because the benefits to students are so great. Archie himself spoke decades ago of “that residential College system which the leading British and American Universities now regard as the outstanding feature of modern University life”.

We must do all we can to give our students, here in Adelaide, the best opportunities we can for all-round education and personal growth in this collegiate environment. This is my commitment for the future – to do all I can to ensure that the all-round educational experience of all our students is the best that it can be here at St Mark's.

As I have mentioned, Archie placed much emphasis on the Rhodes Scholarships. It seems to me that the College's ideals are very similar, if not identical, to those of the Rhodes Scholarships. The Rhodes Scholarships seek excellence in intellect, character, leadership, and service. Although he was a Cambridge man, not a Rhodes Scholar, these qualities were clearly exemplified in CAS Hawker.

Well, today, in 2019, the College has continued to work hard to live up to these ideals. In academic performance, last semester saw our highest level of academic pass rates in over a decade. Six students received High Distinctions for all subjects. Rose created new academic prizes so that high achieving students across all faculties are acknowledged.

Archie emphasised our role within the University of Adelaide. Today, our links with the three universities are very important to us. I hope that my honorary appointment as an Adjunct Professor in the School of Social Sciences at the University of Adelaide will contribute to our university links.

Our students competed in 11 sports this year. We came second to St Ann's College in the annual High Table Cup, but our students were gracious in defeat, helpfully noting that it was the first time St Ann's had won the competition in 24 years. Our students broke two Adelaide college records – one in the women's swimming relay, and the other in the women's sprinting relay. One of our students was a finalist in the National Gymnastics Championships, while another is a member of the Australian rhythmic gymnastics team. I can only marvel!

In cultural activities... two of our students are currently performing in a musical called “Spring Awakening” at the Adelaide Festival Centre. In October the students presented a hilarious revue-cum-play – or play-cum-revue - with a Harry Potter theme running through it. In Reconciliation Week, the College hosted an Indigenous Art exhibition here in the Ballroom. The College Band performed outstandingly in the inter-college “Battle of the Bands” in September

I mentioned that Archie placed emphasis on service. This year, our student charitable foundation supported three charities – Beyond Blue (the mental health support organisation), the Cancer Council, and Taboo (a charity supporting women in developing countries) – contributing several thousand dollars towards these important causes.

Much work has been done this year to implement the College’s Action Plan for Cultural Renewal to ensure that we uphold the values for which we stand. There is a progress report on this on our website, which I commend to you. Amongst much else, policies have been reviewed, and additional training given on key issues. Sustained efforts have been made to ensure that, in Welcome Week – what used to be Orientation Week - and throughout the year, all aspects of behaviour within the College reflect and uphold our commitment to the values of respect and dignity for all, and to being a community of respect, inclusion, and safety for all.

College, of course, provides many opportunities for students to develop their capacity for leadership. This year the College was supported by over 40 student leaders – 13 on the College Club Committee, and 25 or so appointed student leaders such as Library Assistants, Residential Assistants, the Assistant Dean, and others.

In the wider leadership of the College, the new College Board has been providing governance leadership under the chairmanship of Linda Matthews, who is here today, with whom it is a delight to work, and to whom we should all be very grateful for her calm and wise guidance of the College’s affairs since September 2018.

2019 saw the establishment of the Indigenous Advisory Committee to the College and a renewed commitment to supporting current, and attracting new, Indigenous students with a strong Indigenous program.

On the staff side, as everyone knows, Rose left in August to become Warden of St John’s College at the University of Queensland. Mr Darren Pitt then served the College very ably as Acting Head, and I started under three weeks ago. A new Dean joined the College at the start of 2019 – Dr Ari Metuamate – and a new Business Manager started mid-year – Fiona Evans.

Early next year, Dr Rachel Buxton will return to St Mark’s as Director of Learning. Rachel first came to St Mark’s in 1993 as a Hawker Scholar, was College Club President in 1997, graduated from the University of Adelaide with First Class Honours and the University of Medal, and was elected Rhodes Scholar for South Australia for 1998. Rachel’s Oxford doctoral thesis in English literature was published by Oxford University Press – one of her several academic publications. She has held a number of significant appointments in Oxford, most recently – and currently – as Senior Tutor of Merton College, Oxford. Can you imagine anyone better equipped to provide academic support to our students?

I alluded earlier to the fact that Archie emphasised philanthropy, which has been crucial throughout the history of the College – including for buildings, beginning with the purchase of this Downer House to enable the College to open in 1925, and for subsequent developments; and for scholarships. This year we distributed over 80 scholarships or grants to our students, many of whom would not be able to attend College or perhaps university without this substantial support. We are extremely grateful to everyone – including several people in this room – who, grateful for the opportunities which College gave to them, do all they can to hand these opportunities on even better to those who come after; and to other friends of the College who help to create these opportunities for students.

In welcoming you today, I have spoken of the founding vision and ideals of the College – which remain supremely relevant today – and of some highlights of what has been achieved in 2019 to fulfil those ideals, and of my pledge to do all I can to give the best effect to them in the future, for the benefit of our students – our students, for whom the College exists.

Thank you for being here today, and thank you for your support for the College, which is deeply appreciated.