

# Memorial Service for Steve Pulford

A short tribute to Steve's time at the Minster Grammar School

It includes quotations from a few of the many Old Southwellians who have written.

***Anthony Peabody will read the quotations in italics***

Steve was a **Man**. I say this thinking of Kipling's 'If'.

You may recall that Kipling's poem ends 'if you can fill the unforgiving minute with sixty seconds' worth of distance run, yours is the earth and everything that's in it, And – which is more – you'll be a **man**, my son.' Many of Kipling's 'ifs' are relevant, but I believe that Steve had his own list of 'ifs'. Here are some suggestions:

**If you can work hard and not give up:**

My brother Bill recalls a report from Steve:

***After the death of his mother, Steve kept the bungalow at Mablethorpe for a while. Seizing a rare day of freedom from his duties, he rushed over there to tend the garden. Having made all tidy, he laid down in the seaside sunshine to rest. After but a moment he thought, "what will the neighbours think?" Leaping up, he returned to work...***

**If you can see potential and encourage it, but take no credit for subsequent achievement:**

Above all Steve was an educator. He had the ultimate gift – to see in young people their potential – to lead this out - to encourage and make miracles happen. So many have reported how their lives were shaped and facilitated by Steve's vision and confidence in them.

***I will always remember Steve as one of the greatest influences in my life. He taught me so many things about life in general and helped me personally in times of stress. For instance he was the one who persuaded me to stay on at school and re-take my exams (which I had failed spectacularly) and go on to university. This led to a great career and a very happy life, mostly thanks to Steve.***

**If you can give each individual your utmost care and attention, yet never let this spoil your commitment to the larger group:**

It seemed so natural at the time...only later did we understand what Steve did for us, and at what cost to himself. He made it possible for individuals who excelled in sport, music or other endeavours to participate in district, county, and regional events, making long journeys for them and always giving his support and expert guidance. A knock on his study door would always find him ready to talk and help with whatever problem someone brought. And yet his marking was always done! He must have worked long into the night as a matter of course, but no one remembers any lack of energy in the morning!

## **If you can remember:**

Steve kept in touch with countless former pupils, always showing them his abounding interest, maintaining contact as though it was but yesterday, remembering details, sharing anecdotes and celebrating success.

***I knew Steve at school (1952 to 1959) but lost touch until this year. He sat on our table at the Annual Dinner and I introduced myself. At first he could not remember but when I mentioned my year he suddenly said. 'I remember you; you scored the winning try to beat Magnus and broke your leg. You were more interested in letting your girl friend know about the try than telling her about your leg'. We had a laugh about it. What a memory and what a man. He taught me maths, rugby, the value of hard work and to tell it 'as it is'. I owe him a lot. We shall not see his like again.***

## **If you sense an opportunity to broaden horizons and enrich the lives of those in your care, seize it, and do not shirk the extra workload this involves:**

At the end of WW2, having been a pupil, Steve came back to Southwell with a 1<sup>st</sup> class degree to start teaching. He did this with consummate skill, but this was not enough. He created for himself three huge additional responsibilities: Scouting, Rugby, and Athletics.

One of his first projects was to reform the school Scout Group. This he developed and nurtured for 30 years. What an impact it had on so many lives! The weekly activities, the summer camps, the weekend patrol camps, the expeditions to International Jamborees, the epic journey beyond the Arctic Circle...these and many other things made indelible marks on the lives of those involved. And it was through Scouting and Guiding that he met and married Margaret! What a surprise that was. We all thought of Steve as the epitome of the confirmed bachelor. But no!

In Scouting, Rugby and Athletics Steve's enthusiasm brought him local, regional and national responsibilities. He never allowed such commitments to get in the way of his primary purpose in Southwell. Rather, these additional roles enriched his contribution to our education.

*My experiences, may highlight the drive, dedication and selfless way in which Steve helped me and many others. When I was in Form 4, Steve began his keen interest in athletics. He encouraged us to compete in County championships.*

*We began to have county champions in School and in increasing numbers each year -- Steve's enthusiasm bounded. He thought nothing of devoting a day to take a competitor to a far-off event.*

*Soon the school had a strong athletics team, beating much larger schools ---- Steve was truly elated.*

*When he learnt of later successes, the congratulatory note would always arrive!*

*'Steve the Schoolmaster' -----a wonderful, remarkable, unique man.*

**If** you can persevere in the face of adversity and not give up when all seems lost:

The weather certainly did not deter him:

*I distinctly remember rugby on Top Ground in thick dense fog. Half the players had sloped off for a quick smoke in the trees during the match. I think that also might have been the time when somebody "accidentally" decked him, "Sorry sir, couldn't see in the fog"*

**If** you have learnt something, and can share it...:

Steve was largely responsible for putting on the double mathematics and physics courses which started around 1949.

*We remember well our sixth form days under Steve's teaching spell. He made the subjects a joy to learn because he obviously found them a joy to teach and as a consequence he certainly influenced our lives; we all went on to careers in mathematics and physics. He had total dedication to his teaching and total concern for our progress. We remember, with affection now, our first lesson on the differential calculus. For once, for some reason, we did not understand matters too well and returned some indifferent exercises. In his disappointment, Steve, was clearly furious. In the next lesson he stepped up a gear and riveted us in place until we finally saw the light ---- that was Steve -- and we have never looked back.*

'If you can fill the unforgiving minute with sixty seconds' worth of distance run, yours is the earth and everything that's in it, And – which is more – you'll be a **man**, my son.'

Steve Pulford was truly a Man.

A Man of Southwell