

Peter Green 1935-2006

I feel very privileged and honoured today to give the address in celebration of Peter's life.

Peter was born in Hendon in 1935 and attended Christ's College Finchley before going on to LSE to study Geography and to Woodman College Oxford for his Dip Ed. He lived in London throughout the war which for him became a never ending topic of conversation. He knew London like the back of his hand and he became what I might describe as a London Bus Guru! He knew the number, route and destination of all route master buses and always took great delight in being questioned about them.

In 1958 he took a teaching post at the RRS to teach Geography and little did he know what a life changing moment that was to be. The school became Peter's life almost entirely for the next 22 years until he married Jane. But more of the school later.

Peter and Jane married in 1980. What a shock/surprise it was to so many people – including myself. Jane only reminded recently me of my own reaction! Their wedding was a wonderful occasion and one of the surprise packages which we made Peter open contained a very large Red Rosette with a picture of LENIN at the centre. Needless to say Peter entered into the spirit of the occasion.

For Peter marriage was a key turning point and suddenly life became full of new adventures. He was 45 and I think that he probably thought that marriage and children had passed him by (we certainly did). But with the arrival of David, Elizabeth, and Nicholas Peter became a family man. And how he enjoyed it! He now faced many challenges: his boxes of National Geographic and the Economist, carefully stored in the garage, in date order, had to make way for bikes sandpits and paddling pools. The family Christmases, birthdays and annual holidays were new fixtures alongside school examinations and local elections.

Our family always looked forward to seeing Peter at Christmas time to find out what present the children had bought him. We arrived one year to find Peter sporting an earring. Christmas games were also memorable occasions. Dads can be embarrassing to their children as David, Elizabeth and Nicholas found when watching Peter in a game of charades trying to be a lobster, or acting the titles of POP songs of which he had never heard.

Many of their early family holidays were spent like ours, camping in France but our children were very envious of the Green's trailer which opened out to provide proper bedrooms. The family camping equipment increased each year – remember that Peter was only used to a one man tent! Their family holidays later became more adventurous with a holiday in New England and the Canadian Rockies in 2003.

As a young lad Peter and his parents spent many of their annual holidays on a farm in Huntingdon. The farm, with its tractors and animals, left a very big impression on Peter and was very important to him. So much so that, on several occasions, he took his own children to the farm when they were younger.

I know that Jane and her family are so pleased that Sheila, John and Michael, Peter's oldest friends, have been able to join us today.

Peter developed a genuine interest in farming and his friends, in bemused recognition of this, began to buy him a variety of Cow memorabilia – mugs, aprons, hats, pens, tea towels, ties.

While his family was so very important to Peter two other great loves of his life were never far away: the school and the CCF

Peter spent an unbelievable 57 continuous years in the Cadet movement joining Christ's College as a cadet in 1948 and finally retiring as a Lieutenant colonel and Commanding Officer of the Royal Russell cadet corps in 2005.

James Lacey, an Old Russsellian, and an officer in the RRS cadet Corps, will now speak about Peter and the CCF

The CCF Officer's cap was but one hat that Peter wore at the school which, as I said earlier, he joined in 1958.

The responsibilities that Peter held during his time at the School are quite staggering:

- Head of Economic and Public Affairs
- Boarding House Tutor until 1974
- Examination Officer from 1974 and i/c School internal Exams

- Third Master and then Senior Master
- Producer of the School Timetable
- Master i/c cricket and Cross country
- i/c School stationary – his many stores around the school were each and every one an Aladdin's cave
- i/c school detentions
- u/14 and later u/12 soccer manager
- u/14 and later 1st X1 cricket manager
- Organizer of main school events like –Parents evenings, Remembrance Day, RRS Day, School photograph
- Treasurer of the OR society until the mid 1980's and the main link between the society and the school

I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that during his career at the school no teacher spent more time in school nor displayed greater dedication than he. And everything carried out to the highest standard possible.

Peter's colleagues have many comments on the above, serious and light hearted, but both reflect Peter's character which we know so well

Of standards a former colleague of Peter wrote:

"It was in the maintenance of standards that Peter excelled. His own integrity demanded high standards of personal behaviour and he expected and demanded similar standards in school organisation, the work and behaviour of pupils and staff, in dress and uniform."

As for stationery another colleague wrote

"Always prepared for the rainy day – when maybe national supplies of stationary might run out – Peter had hidey holes all over the school, cupboards and rooms crammed with pads of paper and RRS exercise books of all sorts and sizes, yellowing with age but ready to be unearthed and pressed into service at moments of crises."

Indeed Peter was a "Jackdaw." At home not only in school he hoarded everything and never threw anything away. - Much to the frustration of Jane who at times despaired of the state of his study. So many newspapers and cuttings to be read later and nearly four hundred videos of state openings of parliament, election nights, budgets, question time, war documentaries. All to be watched when time allowed.

In 1972 the school was in crisis and threatened with closure. Peter was a very active and effective member of a committee of staff and parents which successfully prevented the threatened closure. A colleague of Peter later said that he "acted courageously putting the future of the school before his own personal future" Peter then went on, as part of the school management team, to help guide the school onto the road to recovery and he played a very pro active role in the tremendous changes and developments which the school has undergone since 1972.

The school today is going from strength to strength and the legacy it owes to Peter is immeasurable.

I would now like to share with you some of my own personal anecdotes of Peter wearing his different hats: Russellians will readily identify with many of them while other friends will recognise in them Peter's wonderful character and personality

Peter the Sports enthusiast

Peter enjoyed his sport and he was a life long supporter of Arsenal and member of Middlesex cricket club. He ran very successful junior football and senior cricket teams, which were always meticulously turned out. Safe to say he would not be a Wayne Rooney fan!

Football kit was distributed individually by name – surname I hasten to add! - and collected in "folded" - as it had been given out!

I remember a particular school match when Peter had to send off a rather loud and unruly boy from the opposition

"**Would you kindly leave the field of play?**" he said to the totally astounded boy who was left speechless'

Peter's tracksuit was legendary. He wore the same tracksuit, purchased in 1962 for the princely sum of 5 shillings, for 20 years. After being through the school laundry countless times it was well past its sell by date, no longer black and quite out of shape – but Peter did not throw anything away. Then one Saturday Peter arrived in school in a spanking new tracksuit. His old one had gone AWOL – Peter suspected Jane. I don't think that I need to tell you the colour – but it wasn't RED.

Cricket was perhaps Peter's favourite sport and as Master i/c he spent countless hours coaching and umpiring the U14 and later the 2nd and 1st X1teams.

He rarely gave LBW's as some of you here will testify. He took great pride in organizing and marking the cricket kit for each team and every single item was marked – bail and bowlers mark. If you were not in the know it was probably easier to decipher the Da Vinci code than Peter's code. For Example:

5514X1BG(LH) = left handed batting glove for the U14 purchased in 1955!

He was greatly admired and respected by all of his teams and one OR wrote to me saying:

"Peter was responsible for teaching 100's of boys the most correct of forward defensive shots with the straightest of bats. Although we have learnt flashing cover drives and hooks elsewhere we have built our greatest successes on the bedrock that Peter provided". And he wasn't just speaking of cricket.

Peter the examination officer

This position saw Peter at his most efficient. Everything in triplicate; everything signed for; don't trust the computer. But perhaps he will best be remembered for his conduct of public examinations in Great Hall. Entry and departure were choreographed with military precision:

Hand movements, a nod of the Head, or a movement of his eyes and the exam room emptied in complete order and silence.

It was like a ballet.

Peter the Luddite

Peter strongly resisted, but in vain, the replacement of the Blackboard in his room with a white board (besides what was he going to do with the several dozen boxes of chalk in his stationary cupboard)

He eventually mastered the video but the DVD remained a mystery.

The mobile phone and "hole in the wall" were very reluctantly embraced - but not for Peter the email or on line banking - and he always remained uncomfortable with push button telephone dialling.

When in hospital Peter found it rather disconcerting to be addressed in the following way "Hello Pete (not Mr Green) my name is Michael and I am your consultant.

Peter the Chinese cook

In retirement Peter became adventurous and joined Les and myself at Chinese cookery lessons on Wednesday evenings. He would then share the product of his evenings work with a rather less than enthusiastic Nicholas!

I have to say that I have never seen such neat rows of Spring onions and carrots cut to precise measurements. His chopped garlic and ginger brought gasps of admiration from fellow cooks not to mention the teacher.

The very idea of "stir fry" is the antithesis of so much of what Peter stood for.

Much to our amusement and that of his family Peter carefully placed 3 of 4 pieces of meat at a time his wok and proceeded to cook them slowly and precisely, turning each very carefully

Peter the conversationalist

Peter was a wonderful conversationalist and was incredibly knowledgeable on so many issues. He was at his most relaxed at lunch or at Dinner parties in animated discussion with other people.

Peter had very strong views on a variety of issues and those of us who knew him well avoided them. But there were, however unsuspecting/innocent dinner guests or new colleagues who would raise such topics as:

- The Tory Leadership
- Royal indiscretions
- The British Empire
- Standards
- and more recently Body piercing!

David, Elizabeth and Nicholas had a topic which they were reluctant to discuss with Peter:

Questions relating to Prep.

His answers were so long and detailed that it doubled their prep time

Peter the Transport Enthusiast

I mentioned earlier about Peter's great interest and knowledge of Route master buses and their number and destinations. He was really what can only be described as a "Transport Anorak", because he also knew the Train and Bus liveries for most cities and routes in the country. He was always very pleased when companies changed back to their original livery. In Preston the two main bus companies were the Ribble and Fishwick with liveries of red and green respectively. If you are not particularly interested or fascinated by this, then neither were we when Peter went on at length about it – and we told him so! It didn't matter. Peter never took offence. It was important for Peter that we knew about such things.

Peter the political analyst

Peter was an ardent royalist, feverishly patriotic and it is hardly surprising that Winston Churchill was Peter's greatest hero. How often have many of us heard Peter mention "The Churchillian Spirit" in so many different contexts. Of course he went to see Churchill lying in state. He remembered the day as if it was only yesterday.

More than anything else Peter was a Conservative Party loyalist to the Nth degree. How would he have enjoyed last Thursday's local election results and the subsequent cabinet re-shuffle. He has had to endure many election setbacks in recent years after his glorious Thatcher years.

General Elections, and particularly election nights were great events for Peter and theatre for those of us privileged to have been with him. He was in his element. Armed with trusty clipboard and black bic pen for notes, surrounded by reference books (not that he really needed them), drink and nibbles on a nearby table he was there for the duration.

His knowledge was really quite phenomenal and I think that the only time that you could actually describe Peter as being "smug" when he was right and Peter Snow was wrong.

Peter was a gentleman of the highest integrity, dedicated to his profession and his family. He was a very close and valued friend of mine and greatly admired and respected by all of us here today. He was the first person I met when I came to the school for interview. It was during school holidays – so there was no-one around the school – except Peter!

"Can I be of assistance" He asked. He never stopped being of assistance to me and his family, to countless colleagues and pupils of the RRS and to so many other friends. **In particular, Jane will miss his love for her, and his wise council.** His influence and memory will always be with us all and there can be no greater tribute than to say of Peter

"the sum of the parts is greater than the whole"