

Ivor Wycherley

I am privileged to speak today on behalf of all Old Lewesians – former pupils of the Lewes County Grammar School for Boys where Ivor was a pupil more than 80 years ago.

For a few of those many hundred Old Lewesians, the name of Ivor Wycherley will perhaps have significance only because they see it alongside the title of President of the Old Lewesians Organisation. But most will know that this President was much more than just a figurehead.

It was in 1932 that the first encounter occurred between a formidable Headmaster and – in all probability – a rather nervous and timid 11 year old pupil. Whether or not there was an instant rapport between the two – who can say? But what we do know is that that meeting was the beginning of an association that led to lifelong respect and affection – the one for the other.

Just a few years after that meeting, the country was thrown into the horrors of the Second World War. The Headmaster was receiving news of former pupils who had been killed in action and he confided in Ivor – by now serving with the Royal Corps of Signals – his determination, when the war was over, to raise a Memorial Chapel in the school grounds to commemorate the Old Lewesians who did not come home.

Ivor accepted the proposal from his old Headmaster that he should take on the role of Treasurer when the post war fund raising activities got under way.

Together, Ivor and his former school companions established the Old Lewesians Association and the ambitious task of raising money during the austere post war years was begun.

The task proved long and arduous – many lost their initial enthusiasm, and it fell to Ivor and just a handful of close friends to keep the Old Lewesians Association going through the 'doldrum' years of the 1950's.

Ivor's determination and faithfulness never wavered and, in 1960, he joined his old Headmaster once again as they sat together for a Service of Dedication in the completed and beautiful Memorial Chapel.

A Fund was established to be used for future upkeep of the Chapel furnishings. For more than 40 years, and again, almost singlehandedly, Ivor managed this Fund.

In due course, the help of others was enlisted and now the Chapel is officially listed as a War Memorial and a Board of Trustees – all Old Lewesians - manages the Chapel Fund as a registered Charity.

To Ivor, we owe an enormous debt of gratitude for what – in schoolboy terminology – might be called 'stickability'.

As the years go by, Old Lewesians decrease in number – but the legacy of Ivor Wycherley's work on their behalf is to be found not only in a living organisation of erstwhile school chums, but also in the bricks and mortar of a fine building now serving the needs of present and future generations of Lewes pupils.

John Davey

29th January 2016