

Mr. D.M. Rollitt

Mr. M.V. Bradley writes:

I remember it well. So much excitement was generated by the new celebrity replacing me in the Maths Department in September 1977, that my departure for a 'quieter' life as a newly promoted Head of Maths somewhere out there (in fact at Monmouth School) was almost wilfully forgotten. Perhaps I exaggerate a little, but here I am in 2003, called willingly to praise the gentleman who 'succeeded' me. I should also be careful about what tense I use, because at the time of publication of this issue of *The Pauline* he will still be employed as a temporary replacement for Andy Mayfield who will be on sabbatical in the Antipodes until Christmas.

David Rollitt, widely referred to as 'Dave' by colleagues, boys and parents alike had arrived with an enormous reputation as the snowy-white-haired back row forward who played rugby for England, famous for a host of wonderful performances on the field, and the man known for claiming "the true test of character of a rugby player comes when you play at Aberavon on a wet Wednesday night in November". What was not known so well, of course, was of the impact he would make at St. Paul's



as a fine schoolmaster in the most traditional and broadest of senses. Dave taught mathematics at all levels of the school and was equally at home with bottom set of 4th formers as with A-level Further Mathematicians. He enjoyed the variety of teaching, was stimulated by it and managed it well. He also helped scores of boys individually, and they enjoyed consulting him because of his patience, his understanding and his down-to-earth sense of humour, entirely in character with his Yorkshire upbringing. It was presumably the necessity of communicating with his fellow rugby players in front of a roaring 60,000 crowd where Dave developed his magnificent booming voice. He certainly met his vocal match while teaching in the classroom adjacent to Bruce Cryer who matched decibel for decibel any surge of volume from his neighbour, although, come to think of it, the cause and effect may have been the other way round.

With the advent of computers in the classroom Dave got the closest he had ever come to a nervous breakdown. You might as well have asked him to program his video player or fly over the moon as to interpret a spreadsheet! Computer manuals were an anathema to him, and he was determined that what he treasured in teaching mathematics was not going to be lost to any trendy intrusion. When computers became of mainstream importance, however, Dave succumbed to the Leviathan, and taught his pupils as devotedly as if he were Charles Babbage's star pupil. Dave even managed to pass a module or two of the much-feared European Computer Driving Licence until it started interfering with his sleep patterns.

We should also remember Dave Rollitt the skier, the Dave Rollitt who headed Paulines and Paulinas towards many European resorts, including Les Arcs in 1985 when there were over 80 students in the party, and Lake Louise in Canada as his final trip. It is no small matter undertaking responsibility for such parties, dealing with the inevitable casualties both on and off the slopes, and Dave proved his organisational skills as well as gaining tremendous respect for his ability to make life enjoyable.

Those who had the privilege to meet Dave, and Shirley his wife, socially found in them the most companionable of friends. As host and hostess nothing overwhelmed them, and

they entertained with style and generosity. Where possible, any social function, whether it was fund-raising dinner or a gathering of neighbours, would always be enhanced, by a turn on the dance floor, and the Rollitts' nimble-footed shuffles became legendary. Dave always seemed to have, in his eyes, a band of musicians 'owing him one' (one what one asks?) so there was seldom difficulty in engaging quality live music. Schoolmasters do not come much more sociable and energetic than David Rollitt!

Another side to Dave's school life . . .

On Dave Rollitt from Les Barlow:

On hearing from Warwick Hele that we were to be joined by an ex-England international I was more than curious about who this person was. I was delighted to find out it was Dave. I knew that St. Paul's rugby would benefit from his vast experience and enthusiasm. Dave initially helped with the Junior Colts before following the legendary duo of McGuinness and Allport with the running of the Colts. In 1994, after a shortened sabbatical in Sydney where he closely studied successful Australian coaching techniques, he and I changed roles and Dave took over the running of the 1st XV squad.

His own rugby playing career was centred in the South West where he went to Bristol University and then to Loughborough where he began to make his mark in senior rugby. He represented Bristol, Gloucestershire, Barbarians and England.

In the world of rugby coaching Dave has directed London & the South East, Harlequins , Richmond and Bristol. He is currently the Director of Coaching to Imperial College School of Medicine and London University Hospital Squads.

Dave has been (and still is) the most innovative and thinking coach whose sessions are always organised and purposeful. Undoubtedly he would have made an outstanding England coach which would have been St. Paul's loss.

On Dave Rollitt from Terry Peters:

Perhaps Dave's most lasting legacy will be that of the 'Tour'. It is indicative of his energy and desire to bring people together through sport, particularly rugby, that he has organised a tour every year since he assumed the role of first team coach at St. Paul's. Boys have experienced rugby in almost every continent of the globe although his first trip to Asia has yet to materialise! Perhaps the vagaries of the Japanese language have proved too forbidding: I well remember Dave's attempts to buy a ticket on the Prague underground to Nâdrai Holeπovice. After two wild shots at it he said "I'll have the end of the red line".

Under his tutelage boys have played in some amazing places whilst experiencing the wonders of Iguassou, The Barrier Reef, The Colosseum and Kruger National Park. So many boys will have great memories of these tours and indeed many have told me how much they have meant to them. One reason for this is the almost paternal care Dave takes over the welfare of the boys and the meticulous planning that goes into ensuring the itineraries are full and varied. Some might have questioned the latter though when he rather mischievously organised an early

morning trip to Prague's Staropramen Brewery the night after our victory over the Czech U18 national team! The sight of boys, fresh from a night on the town, inhaling the full yeasty odours from the huge vats really was one to behold!

The next tour party heads off to South Africa and for the first time in over a decade of touring The Silver Fox will not be going. He will be sorely missed by colleagues and boys alike. No more Yorkshire Yelling from the touchline or superb renditions of Elvis on the tour bus. It is the end of an era and I for one will be drinking a long, long glass to D.M. Rollitt, St Paul's Rugby Legend.