

Founders' Day 2017

Welcome – Founders' Day is one of the highlights of the school year, when we reflect for a moment on the origins of the English College and those who helped create it.

Today we are focussing on Richard Holme, Lord Holme of Cheltenham, and his key role in the establishment of the school, as Chairman of the English College Foundation, the charity which was set up to try to establish a school in Prague, and then as Chairman of Governors until his untimely death nearly a decade ago.

The students among you will know Lord Holme's name mainly perhaps from the Lord Holme Library, which was developed with a generous bequest from Lord Holme. You will also know the portrait of Lord Holme which hangs in the library. This portrait was unveiled by his widow Kay, Lady Holme. We are delighted to have Lady Holme here again today, for the first time since the unveiling, accompanied this time by her daughter, Nicola Hardy.

A big welcome also to Dr Martyn Bond, our guest speaker today. He was perhaps the prime mover behind the creation of The English College, and was a dedicated and energetic Governor of the school until his retirement last October. He is accompanied by his wife Dinah, who also played an active part in the history of the College, especially in London.

Others will speak more fully about Lord Holme's part in our history. I just want to say a few words based on my personal experience of working with him from the very beginning. Just four things I most admired about him:

- His lifelong dedication to liberal democracy, human rights and education
- The great clarity of his mind. I first encountered him when a group of people in London were having long and rambling meetings to consider how to go about setting up the school we wanted. Richard Holme would arrive – always about half an hour late – quickly assess where we had got to and suggest a way forward – and then go away again. At which point we said to each other, yes, of course that's right, it's obviously what we should do. But it wasn't obvious until Richard brought his acute brain to bear on the subject.
- Thirdly, his brilliant chairmanship, especially of the school Governors. Faced with a motley bunch of Czechs and Brits, with different agendas and different ideas, he always managed to achieve a consensus, so that we never needed to have a vote.
- Lastly, he was simply inspirational. He made those around him want to give of their utmost, and somehow just be a better person. Surely a wonderful example to all those engaged in education!

Ann Lewis
Chairman of Governors