

**FROM THE GARTON ARCHIVE**  
**PICTURE OF THE MONTH 90    OCTOBER 2019**



**Mark Byford returns 50 years after he enrolled at Lincoln School in 1969**

**(Photograph by Catherine Forbes)**

The recent Senior Prize-giving ceremony at Lincoln Christ's Hospital School saw the return of one of its former distinguished pupils, Mark Byford, who presented the prizes and gave the speech.

Mark began his speech by informing the packed sports hall audience that 1969, the year he began his six-year career at Lincoln School, was a momentous year. There was the first moon landing, the Woodstock pop festival, the Beatles Abbey Road album and the Stonewall riots in New York which led to gay rights being established and enshrined in law. Ironically, the troubles also began in Northern Ireland, which lasted for thirty years, and ended in the Good Friday agreement. He also admitted that he was a Leeds United fan, and his team won the League for the first time in that year.

The major event for Mark, of course, was enrolling as a pupil at Lincoln School, arguably the oldest school in the country. His memories of that first day in September 1969 resonated with my own seventeen years earlier; the pristine

uniform, the cap, the new shirt and shoes, and that shining leather satchel slung over the shoulders. He was even able to recite the 'B's in the form list, all nine of them including his own! I can only recall a Baker, Bell, Bocock and Blatherwick in my first year, but there were probably more, and his memory is younger than mine! With the student section of his audience in mind he pointed out that there were no computers, no mobile phones, no internet, while at home there was no colour TV and only three black-and-white channels; BBC One and Two, and ITV.

Mark's career at Lincoln School spanned six years until 1975 when it became a co-educational comprehensive school with the massive increase in numbers from 550 to 1,400. With due modesty, he recalled that he had recently looked at a 1973 volume of *The Lincolnian* magazine, and found that sixteen out of his eighteen classmates had received prizes, and he was one of the two who had not. I can certainly identify with his feelings! He was, however, justifiably proud of his achievement in being Junior Long Jump Champion in 1969! After spending the second year of the sixth form at the new Christ's Hospital school, he left with three 'A' levels, and went on to Leeds University to study law, following what is now known as a 'gap' year, during which he worked at the Co-op Discount Centre on Lincoln High Street, and travelled to the USA.

Mark graduated from Leeds in 1979, obtained a three-week vacation job at the BBC in the city, and remained with the Beeb for thirty-two years, as a researcher, journalist, producer, editor and broadcasting executive. The culmination of his career resulted in his being appointed Director of the World Service from 1998 to 2004, and Deputy Director General and Head of BBC Journalism from 2004 to 2011. Mark left the BBC in 2011, wrote two non-fiction books, and did voluntary work in various charities.

Mark continued his speech by holding his audience spellbound with his advice to the 2019 senior prize-winners. He had clearly been reading School's mission statement, and outlined his characteristics of a great school, which mirrored those of LCHS; reaching one's full potential, having a thirst for knowledge, a stimulating learning environment, high calibre and dedicated staff, and respect for students and staff. He also added the importance of dynamic and inspiring leadership, and the need for active support and engagement of parents and guardians.

Mark ended his entertaining and inspirational speech by giving advice to the present students at LCHS. He began by sharing 'Ten Rules for a Better Life' seen in a Winchester shop window where he now lives; be kind, work hard, stay humble, smile often, expect little, give a lot, be thankful, have fun, laugh more, and love always. Quite a challenge in the present political climate! His advice was to live life according to a set of such values, and adhere to them; take opportunities, absorb failure and learn from it. Never be arrogant.

In congratulating the students on their achievements, Mark ended by urging them to remember and cherish their time at LCHS. His invitation to come back to his alma mater had inspired him to organize a special 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary reunion on the following Saturday morning, and he was expecting more than twenty of his contemporaries to walk through the School gates and re-ignite memories of the past. One of those was his long-time friend John Prictoe, who enjoys sharing a couple of stories about Mark's career at Lincoln School. His most memorable quote was from woodwork teacher Mr Peter Kerr, who wrote on Mark's report, "I could chew his joints better than he makes them!" John's second favourite was from PE Teacher Mr John Howie; "Forgot your shorts, Byford? Well then boy, you'll do it naked!" Imagine the rumpus that such a retort would cause in these days of safeguarding!

Mark ended by recalling that the biggest selling record of 1969 was 'Get Back' by The Beatles, the main chorus line of which was, 'Get back to where you once belonged'! His own parting line was;

"Tonight I'm back where I once belonged and it's great to be here."

Prolonged, generous and sincere applause followed from parents, guests, staff, and above all appreciative students, who clearly identified with his enthusiasm, his inspiration, his charisma, his sincerity, and the messages based on his experience and distilled wisdom.

**Peter Harrod**

**Archivist for the pre-1974 archives**

