

Mr Headmaster, Members of Staff, Parents and Friends, Boys of Newington College,

The last time I stood here, in front of a school assembly like this was 54 years ago when along with the other prefects for 1965 and at our very last assembly, we sang 'Adieu Adieu old school Adieu'.....goodbye Newington!

What I didn't realise at the time, that it is never ever 'goodbye' to your school years – especially those here at Newington. Because it is here where the foundation of who you are is fashioned, formed, sculptured, crafted, moulded – here, at this place – and that's what you take into the rest of your life! Yes, you may leave Newington but Newington does not leave you. Or as the saying goes – you can take the boy out of Newington but not Newington out of the man.

Newington has always been such an important part of my life and will continue to be so. But being awarded the Newington Medal is something I never anticipated or contemplated and the experience makes me feel so deeply honoured and very humbled.

Yes, I could I guess, spend the 5 minutes allocated to me elaborating on my commercial career, my input to my business industry, my input to Newington over the years – and so on. But I don't want to do that. You see, despite these things, I feel quite underserving and in truth, the only way I can reconcile this honour is to consider that this medal belongs more to my son Chris, than it does to me.

And I'd like to tell you why that is so.

My son Chris, died 8 years ago. Like my dad and I, Chris was a Newingtonian through and through. And like my dad and I, he loved this place. Chris was one of the most amazing men I have ever met – yes of course, there's a lot of fatherly love in that statement but it's not that which causes me to make this statement. It's the fact that I admired and respected him for who he was, what he was and what he did in his life. He was a humble, selfless, egoless, generous bloke, full of humour and honesty, a passion for education, huge compassion for those less fortunate than he, and a deep understanding admiration and respect for our indigenous brothers and sisters.

But without doubt, his major gift or talent was the way he impacted other people's lives, changing lives really – in an amazingly positive way. He lifted others up. He built them up. He didn't do this consciously....he was just being him – a touch of humour here, a wise word or two there, or simply just being there with quiet comfort, support and love. After being with him or around him, where he often turned the ordinary into the extraordinary and the mundane into the exceptional, one could not help but feel amazingly elevated!

He changed lives in his life and it seems, he continues to do so in his death, probably even more so. There are many examples of the latter but let me give you just three:

Firstly, through his volunteering work in India and the local people he got to know, in one of these poor villages and due to their respect for him, after Chris passed away they locals decided to start a school in his name. So 6 years ago, they established the Chris Wild Academy. It now has an enrolment of 120 pupils. Over the years, this school will introduce hundreds if not thousands of children to an education they may have never otherwise received. The ripple effect of this is huge. Changing lives!

Secondly and closer to home, here at Newington is the Chris Wild Indigenous Bursary of which Gage Phillips whom most of you will know, will be the bursary's first graduate at the end of this year. This bursary is solely dependent on the generosity of a number of Old Boy's, parents and the school. It's about half-way to its goal but when fully funded will pay for an indigenous boy starting every year forever. This bursary so reflects the deep love and respect that Chris had for our indigenous community. He again, volunteered his time and effort working with the Koori kids at Redfern....and they loved him. He really was one of them. The kids loved it too when while dropping them home in his van after Saturday breakfast, he would sometimes drive the wrong way up a one-way street! I might add that this bursary is not charity. Far from it. It is much more an opportunity – one that cuts two ways - an educational opportunity for indigenous boys but also and importantly, an educational opportunity for non-indigenous boys and families to learn and understand more about the oldest living community on this planet.....and to show them the respect that they so fully deserve. Changing lives!

Thirdly, my son impacted my life. Sometime before he died, he became a Christian and said three words which later changed my life. He said 'Jesus changes everything'. For me, a long-serving somewhat non-believer and sceptic, those three words at the time meant nothing! It took the brutal reality of his death for me to see what he meant by those words and myself to become a Christian. It is an astounding fact that sometimes it is only in the darkest of darkneses that one finds the light and the truth. And sometimes, it is only in death that one finds life.

So how you might ask, does all this relate to the Newington Medal and my claim that this medal belongs more to Chris than it does to me? Well the answer is in fact, in three words – three words that actually lie very close to your hearts gentlemen, every time you put your school blazer on – because on the pocket under the Wyvern are the three words - In Fide Scientiam – knowledge in faith or as we were taught at school to faith add knowledge. But we were not taught that this is an abbreviation for a couple of magnificent verses from the bible (2 Peter 1:5-7) which read:

To faith add goodness; to goodness knowledge and to knowledge, self-control; to self-control perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.

Wow! Eight astounding virtues – this is the fullness of In Fide Scientiam. You see, we are all imbued with these virtues, either consciously or subconsciously – this is part of the foundation of who we are and what we carry into our life! Chris too carried them into his life but he did more - he put these virtues into play in his life, changing the lives of others for the better. Was he perfect at them - no? Did he do it consciously – I suggest not! Did he employ most of these values – I say yes – goodness, faith, brotherly kindness, godliness, love and so on.

He embodied them, and he practiced them, uplifting others in his life and now in his death – as I have demonstrated in just 3 examples of many. So – Chris Wild, In Fide Scientiam, the Newington medal – yes, it fits. And as I reflect on this gentlemen, it seems to me that if we Newingtonians, young and not so young, were to put the fullness of 'In Fide Scientiam' into our daily lives, helping those around us who need help, then maybe like Chris, we might go some way to making this world a better place.