

PRINCIPAL'S ADDRESS

OPENING OF HM BEGBIE BUILDING

SUNDAY 5 JUNE 2011 2.30PM

On this day, 5 June, at about this time in the afternoon, fifty seven years ago in 1954, fifteen men moved into Thatcher Wing, and so began Cromwell College, the first residential college on the St Lucia campus.

In his report to the Board of Governors at the time, Founding Principal Reverend Lindsay Lockley wrote:

“A bitter westerly wind was blowing on 5 June and had no difficulty in invading the College through many unglassed windows and through doorways in which doors had not been hung.

The upper Thatcher rooms were occupied with piles of wood shavings and other builders’ debris. Floors were unsanded, blinds were unhung, there were no drawers, louvers, light shades or mirrors.

There were toilets but without doors or partitions between them. The bathroom had one shower head nestled coyly behind a propped up sheet of galvanized iron. It rarely exuded water, either hot or cold.

The builder had overlooked the provision of stairs to reach the living quarters on the upper floor, and we had access only when the clerk of works constructed a temporary set from packing case timber.

The kitchen represented the sorriest spectacle of all. There were no doors to stop the wind, one small gas stove, one small sink and one fridge. There was no laundry.

Many months passed before there was anything approaching residential completeness.

But we moved in, and the men seemed to take a perverse pride in coping with the situation. A routine of after dinner announcements developed, during which the forecast was given of where bathing water might be available the next morning.

The filth left by the builders led to rodents, and it became a custom to engage in an hour's mouse catching after dinner. The rules included that academic gowns must be worn, and that mice must be caught bare handed."

Lockley summed up by saying:

“We had difficulties. Nothing was right with the buildings. But common adversity made us an intimate and cheerful group, and I think that we probably enjoyed it, as no other student community has done since.”

Well ladies and gentlemen; perhaps back then in 1954 amongst the wood shavings, mice and cold westerly winds, was born the unique spirit of Cromwell, or, as the students say, ‘Crommie Ticker’ that continues today.

A significant College occasion such as this today, begs reflection on our past and a glimpse of our future.

Cromwell was founded on Christian Faith and Christian principles. Psalm 127:1 reminds us that if the Lord does not build the house then the labour is lost.

In Matthew’s Gospel, Chapter 7 (v24-27), we are encouraged to build our house on the rock of the Lord, and not on shifting sands.

1 Thessalonians, Chapter 5 (v12-16) begs us to pay respect, be at peace, warn the idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient, reject paying back wrong for wrong, and do good to one another.

For fifty seven years, Cromwell has embraced Christian values, and more importantly beyond that, nurtured Christian Faith. Successive Boards, Principals, Staff and Students have embraced the College Motto VBI SPIRITVS IBI LIBERATAS “Where there is the Spirit of the Lord, there is Freedom,” the result being a College of which all associated with it, past and present, can be justifiably proud.

Cromwell has a unique and enviable culture driven by successive generations of students themselves and staff. There is no doubt that Cromwell today mirrors the vision of its founders.

I am sure that if Rev Lindsay Lockley was here today, and spent some time at Cromwell, he would be very proud of what he would see and feel.

Today, in front of you, is the latest physical addition to Cromwell College. The 4.4 million dollar facility behind me, thankfully bares no resemblance to the Thatcher building that unfortunately greeted Rev Lockley on this day in 1954.

This modern, fifty four bed complex, offers supreme accommodation over three levels, for undergraduates in combinations of four and two bedroom ensuited apartments. There are three, large well appointed common rooms, and an undercroft area and basement. Ongoing landscaping will see further aesthetically appropriate areas for relaxation.

The building is structured as three corridors of eighteen students each, including a Resident Assistant per corridor for pastoral and academic support, and guidance. Cromwell's philosophy is to integrate rather than segregate first, second, third and fourth year students, so what you see in front of you is not only first class accommodation, but in particular, one of the

better examples of fresher accommodation nationally.

The future of Cromwell is exciting and positive. There is no plan to grow the College student numbers beyond the current 247. It is planned to use our recently refurbished deluxe Lockley Studios to attract more post graduate students to Cromwell. Our Campus Lodge product in Hood Street has been modified this year, to offer a greater competitive advantage in the wake of other self catered accommodation providers now and in the future.

There has been heightened emphasis on securing greater utilization of our facilities in the seventeen weeks of vacation time, and a reinvigoration of the Foundation and Past Students Association.

A major project soon to come to fruition through the work of Mrs Barbara Merefield (Rev Lindsay Lockley's daughter), is the establishment and permanent display of the vast College archives, where those associated with Cromwell present and past can regularly view them, and in so

doing, soak up the atmosphere, and contemplate the link between the past and the present.

Although we are here today to officially open a wonderful new facility, the strength of Cromwell is really its people. Everyone associated with this College knows that we have something very special here. Something that is difficult to effectively articulate, or print in a prospectus or upload to a website.

Cromwell spirit or, 'Crommie Ticker' pervades this place, and it is sensed by many when they first come in contact with the College. It is a powerful feeling and culture that sweeps through the corridors.

Tangible examples of this surface in various competitions, where with just one hundred and twenty four men and one hundred and twenty three women, the College consistently punches above its weight in the single sex sporting and cultural pursuits.

Cromwell is a very social college where many varied activities are deliberately embedded into the calendar to bring people closer together. Its

community service programs, pastoral and academic support programs, and opportunities for leadership development are considerable. There are a growing number of students involved in spiritual exploration and growth.

So although we are here today to witness the official opening of the latest of Cromwell's excellent facilities, we are here today primarily to give thanks to God for everything that is Cromwell College.

There is no question that here at Cromwell, the Lord has built the house, and that the house is built on rock and not shifting sands.

Let us Pray.

Almighty God. We acknowledge your presence here with us on this special occasion. We give you thanks for this magnificent building which we are officially opening today, and the years of useful service that it will bring to the Cromwell community.

As we look to the future, we ask that this building be a place of learning and growth in

every facet of life. May it be a safe home away from home, a place of laughter, of friendship, and of lifelong happy memories.

We give You the glory Lord, for all your many blessings.

In Christ's name.

Amen

Ross A Switzer

PRINCIPAL (5 June 2011)