

Ladies and Gentlemen

Michael Eavis is the first person to be honoured as a recipient of a Wells Cathedral School Foundation Fellowship.

Michael is an Old Wellensian, having started at the School in 1946 when Prebendary Ritchie was headmaster: much in the world and at Wells was not quite as it is now. Schools were much tougher places in his day, and many who attended School then have a mixture of good memories and bad: Michael is probably no exception in that regard.

As we look back, and consider the years and what they have brought, we can be proud of the interesting and creative journey which has unfolded since Michael was here as a pupil of this School.

Wells Cathedral School has become co-educational, and has added its specialist music programmes, and is now poised to build on past success, with the Head and Governors considering how to provide new classrooms, new music facilities, a sports pavilion and certainly more bursary support to help students from a wide range of backgrounds to come and experience a Wells education.

Academic results are very good, the Junior School has been awarded a Gold Arts Mark standard recognising its enviable reputation for creativity in the arts, our musicians have a reputation for excellence and a well rounded maturity as people; maths and other subjects grow in reputation, sport flourishes and our girls' First Eleven Hockey team was unbeaten last season - one could go on.

Meanwhile and in parallel with all this development, Michael Eavis has been on his own adventures. He left School at the age 15 and

joined the Union Castle Shipping Line as a trainee midshipman, spending four years on ships between Britain, Kenya, and South Africa. He was only nineteen when his father died and he inherited 150 acres of land, 60 cows and by all accounts, an overdraft.

Michael became a dairy farmer and man of the land and the people of Pilton came to realise that in their midst there was a man with strong morals, and a belief in hard work. Somehow this did not mean that the future was to be steady and secure for Michael had developed from his earliest days a deep love of music, and in 1970 the first Glastonbury Festival was held on Worthy Farm. 1,500 people gathered that year and each year since then it has grown and grown until this year it was pre purchased tickets, photo IDs, and vast television coverage for those unable to attend. Despite these changes Glastonbury has remained special and the unique spirit of Glastonbury is down to Michael. The

Glastonbury Festivals have become world famous for the ongoing quality of the music, and infamous for the capacity to guarantee rain on the selected weekend, with the resulting high sales of wellies – appropriate, perhaps, for an Old Wellensian.

Michael has become a parent along the way and a Wells Cathedral School parent as well, for his daughter, Emily and step-children Catherine and James attended School here, and the family have added those memories and experiences to their journey through life. There have been good years and not so easy ones, but Michael Eavis has had music at the heart of every day, and values not inconsistent with those for which this school always tries to stand, and as the festivals have become more popular, so the generous spirit of Michael Eavis has become more evident and well known.

The local community has benefitted hugely from Michael's generosity as have many charities and those charities include Greenpeace, Oxfam, Water Aid and others. Michael Eavis is a hard working entrepreneur, a visionary, a man who knows his music and musicians and his developing and changing audience. He has year by year sought his license, faced his critics, and with warm heart and steady hand, built a reputation for excellence.

All this activity on a small farm in Somerset has not gone wholly unnoticed, and rewards have included honorary degrees from Bath and Bristol Universities, and more recently Michael was awarded a CBE in the Queen's 2007 Birthday Honours list for services to music. As one commentator said at the time "He's incredible. Such a public figure - just like Santa,"

The fame and recognition has not taken from Michael his modesty nor his place in the community. He keeps his phone number in

the phone book. He retains his local roots and community presence for example standing as a candidate for the Labour Party in the 1997 General Election achieving the party's best performance in the seat for many years. He finds time to help his old School with its search for an architect and to attend dinners like this one.

Tonight we as a School officially launch our new Foundation. And that Foundation looks to search out Wellensians and others who have the power to inspire success in the hearts and minds of our pupils. We want to honour those special people that pupils now and in the future can aspire to emulate; take note of; perhaps meet and be encouraged by.

We want to gather into the life of the School those who might be described as our elders - those we may from time to time consult and take council with, that we might gain from their power to

dream and their skill to implement, and their spirit to hold fast to that which is good.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my privilege and pleasure, on behalf of the School and the Foundation, to ask you to stand and applaud and welcome the first Wells Cathedral School Foundation Fellow,

Michael Eavis.