

Ladies and Gentlemen

This evening Terence Mordaunt is to be honoured as a recipient of a Wells Cathedral School Foundation Fellowship

Terence can rightly be called a man of action, a seafarer and an entrepreneur.

Terence was brought up in the Home Counties; his father's career was 'as safe as the Bank of England', he worked there. He first came to the West Country to be a boarder at Wells in the 1960s. His housemaster, Jeffrey Bigny, remembers him as eager, ever smiling and always willing and anxious to help. In this he was a ready assistant in helping Jeffrey to look after the large and impressive garden of De Salis House – one of the finest in Wells. Terence was expected to go into the Sixth Form which he did for a term, after which he came to Mr Bigny and said that he was not making much progress and so he would leave and go round the world working on ship. How sensible his housemaster thought. A year later he came back and told him how much he enjoyed the whole business and he was now going to the Nautical College at Liverpool. This story tells us much about Wells – how easy it would have been for the school to encourage him to stay and follow an orthodox path, and about Terence for this was a courageous decision

He spent the next ten years in the Merchant Navy in due course obtaining his Mate's and then his Master's tickets. Following his marriage in 1973 he decided to end his seafaring days and moved ashore, working in England.

Thereafter his career included a variety of jobs which widened his experience, enabling him to reach his present position. Among them he was appointed to be the Distribution Manager of an expensive and ineffective service carrying ores and metals. He inherited over

400 employees working out of many depots. He turned the service into a reliable one, working from one centre in Northumberland and employing fewer than 15 people. The company's reward was to reduce Terence's job-grade because he was now in charge of so few employees.

This was clearly not a company worth working for and so he moved on, to become the Director of the Port of Tyne. A few years later he led a consortium which bought the port and ship repair yard in Falmouth, Cornwall. Terence became Chairman of the new company. At last he had the opportunity to make full use of his talents.

Times were changing and private ownership of ports was now a reality. Terence was confident that his experience as a merchant seaman, his work in a number of docks and his general business success fitted him to take over a port. Bristol's Royal Portway Dock met all the essential criteria for running a port in the 21st century therefore, on the 1 October 1990 Terence made a firm bid to Bristol Council, who owned the port. The negotiations were protracted, but Terence's single-minded, dogged determination and his ability to cope with long exhausting meetings won through and, in August 1991, the deal was completed.

There is a real sense of achievement about Terence's work with the Avonmouth and Portbury Docks. The enterprise has gone from strength to strength and is now the most modern dock facility in Western Europe; it is the only British port with a permanent salaried work-force with a pension scheme and profit share; it has throughput which has doubled; last but not least, Terence has turned an annual £12 million loss into a £12 million profit.

I have told you about Terence's career and achievements, what of the man himself?

He certainly does not claim that at school he was a scholar. Mathematics and sciences he found easy, but expressing himself on paper was more difficult, dyslexia then was little recognised. A legacy of this is that he refuses to read large and wordy documents: they have to be distilled into one page forcing people to think carefully about every word! Single handedly he has, therefore, made a significant contribution to society in the fight against unnecessary bureaucracy.

Terence possesses the qualities that make for success in business. These include understanding and motivating people, being aware of the art of the practical and knowing the best way to reach a result.

He comes up with many bright ideas and he has the concentration to think very deeply. He will take an embryo of an idea and work away at it until either a full proposal is developed or it proves to be impractical. He is also particularly adept at lateral thinking.

Fairness is an important principle for Terence. Whether it be a customer, a colleague or any one of the work-force, his aim is to achieve a fair deal for all. He is also extremely loyal, self-disciplined and polite and, someone who does not stand on his dignity, is ready to talk to anyone and often walks round the docks to see what is happening and to enquire how people are doing.

Tonight we celebrate and acknowledge this remarkable career in the knowledge that for Terence, as for so many young men and women, Wells provided 'a brilliant foundation for life'. He is a Wellensian with the power to 'inspire success' in the hearts and minds of pupils.

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