



Speech by Lord Mountevans at the Association of Old Worcesters Dinner at Middle Temple Hall on Friday 8th June 2018



Mr President, Chairman, Old Worcesters', ladies and gentlemen, it is a huge pleasure and honour for my wife, Juliet, and I to be here on this very special evening and amongst such a distinguished gathering of people, many of whom have spent much of their working careers connected to the sea and maritime affairs, an area in which I too have a great interest and which has also occupied most of my working life.

Mind you, being here tonight was a close run thing! Not due to the notorious Friday traffic, but to a meeting that took place 10,000 feet up on the Antarctic Plateau, a little over 100 miles from the South Pole, on the 3rd January 1912.

My grandfather, Lt. Teddy Evans at the time and an 'Old Worcester', was second in command under Captain Scott of the 'British Antarctic Expedition' of 1910, often referred to as the Terra Nova expedition.



Two months previous to this meeting he had been put in charge of establishing provision camps on the route to the South Pole using a revolutionary new invention, the motorised sledge. With two of these, each loaded with almost a ton of supplies he had set off with high hopes only to find they continually broke down. Within days they were found to be unusable, forcing his small party to man-haul all the provisions for the next two months. This proved a backbreaking, demoralizing and physically exhausting task even for a man like my grandfather who took great pride in his strength and physical fitness.

He was after all a man who delighted in performing his favourite party tricks, tearing a telephone directory in half, or lifting a man by the belt off the floor with his teeth!

By the time he got to the Polar Plateau, having had insufficient nutrition, he was hugely weakened and showing the first signs of scurvy.

My grandfather, when he agreed to join the expedition, had an understanding with Scott that he would be one of the final party of four to be first at the South Pole. By 3rd January there were only eight people remaining, high up on the Polar plateau, in two tents. In my grandfather's tent were Petty Officers Lashly and Crean and another OW well known to you all, Lt. Henry Bowers of the Royal Indian Marine.



Pennel, Evans & Bowers with dogs

Scott came into the tent and asked that the others leave them alone. He informed my grandfather that he regretted that he could not include him in the final party, and equally significantly, that he wanted Henry Bowers to join him, Wilson, Oates and Taff Evans in their final journey to the pole, now only 146 miles away. This was quite unexpected - it was always assumed that there would only be four going to the pole and four returning to base camp. This decision by Scott meant that there would now be five going to the Pole with only my grandfather and two others, Crean and

Lashly, to make the 800 mile trek back down the Beardsmore Glacier and across the Ice Shelf to the base camp at Cape Evans.

By the end of January the scurvy had taken its toll and my grandfather with ulcerated gums, loose teeth and stiffened knee joints was incapable of walking. They were now running out of food and his faithful team of Lashly and Crean put him on a sledge and continued for days, northwards towards the base camp and safety.

Finally, they could go no further hauling the sledge and, erecting a tent, they put my grandfather inside. He told them to push on without him and subsequently he heard them conversing outside the tent and thought that this was to be his grave. But they had a plan and Tom Crean had decided to walk the remaining 35 miles to the base camp alone to get help, with only a biscuit and a bar of chocolate to sustain him in the sub-zero temperatures.

Alone in the tent, now without food or water, Lashly and my grandfather waited for what they expected to be the end. After two days, now weakening fast, they heard the sound of dogs and a relief sledge arrived to take them to safety. Amazingly, walking continuously for eighteen hours in sub-zero temperatures with virtually no food, Crean had made it.

As you know well, Captain Scott and his companions, including 'Birdy' Bowers, arrived at the South Pole only to find Amundsen had beaten them to it.

Tragically, on the journey back to base camp they all perished with food and fuel having run out and further hindered by the unseasonable early onset of winter.

So, without the truly heroic efforts of C.P.Os Crean and Lashly in saving my grandfather, I would not be with you here tonight.

I think I should add that both Crean and Lashly were awarded the Albert Medal, now replaced by the George Cross, for their bravery.

On July 8th 1913 a small group, including my grandfather, gathered round the main mast on the upper deck of Worcester to witness the unveiling of a memorial plaque to the memory of one of your most famous Old Boys, Henry Robertson Bowers. For fifty five years, until 1968, OWs here today and countless of your predecessors, would pass by on their daily slow round the upper deck. I understand the plaque is now permanently installed next to the Terra Nova ship's bell at the Scott Polar Institute in Cambridge.

This was not the first time Old Worcesters were involved in the 'Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration'. Earlier Lt. Armitage had served as second in command of Scott's Discovery Expedition of 1901. Nor were they the last, but but I would like to think that it was their example and that of many other OWs at that time that encouraged so many of your members to be involved in Polar exploration.



Rear Admiral - Later Admiral Lord Mountevans



I might mention that Armitage had the distinction of having been the first person to successfully lead a party ascending the 10,000 feet up to the Antarctic Plateau. He later became Commodore of P & O and, in his retirement Chief Nautical Examiner to your College.

As many of you may be aware 'Old Worcesters' have also made their mark geographically speaking in Antarctica.

Cape Armitage, Cape Evans, the Worcester Range of Mountains, Mount Bowers, Mount Bruce, Mount Evans (hence my name), and Mount Doorly (please remember this in church tomorrow) two mountains closely side by side named by Scott after what he described as one of the great friendships of the Discovery expedition. My grandfather, having signed up for the Relief expedition on the tiny whaler Morning, had encouraged his best friend from Worcester days Gerald Doorly to sign up too.

And more recently in 2012, the Toomey Straits. These are just some of the geographical features bringing immortality to the memory of OWs and their training.

It was therefore a particular privilege to meet earlier this evening Captain Toomey of the Canadian Coastguard Service who has



Patrick Toomey



Gerald Doorly

had the Toomey Straits named after him for his contributions to

Arctic and Antarctic Research and exploration. This has involved 48 voyages to the Arctic, 6 voyages to the North Pole, 12 transits of the North West passage and 31 voyages to the Antarctic. A truly remarkable record!

Also Captain Peter Hay from Australia, is I understand with us tonight. As an officer on the British Antarctic Survey ship John Biscoe, he unexpectedly overwintered at Base 'T' on Adelaide Island following a tragic accident when three members from the Halley Bay Station died after falling down a crevasse.

Old Worcesters – you should be proud of your heritage and achievements.

And I want to continue on the theme of pride when I pay tribute to the huge contribution that OW's have made to the Merchant and Royal Navies. An incredible contribution over so many years, including in two World Wars, when life for those in merchant ships was particularly perilous.

Towards the end of WW1 the Navy developed the concept of convoys to cope better with the U-boat threat. My grandfather commanded HMS Active, a light cruiser, and was deployed on convoy escort service. In his autobiography he wrote the following:

'Looking back on those days I can picture it all so vividly, and remember a still starlit night when I had 32 dreadfully slow ships without any patrol craft to watch my flock. I was the only shepherd that time, and leaning over the bridge-end I saw the wisps of smoke from the funnels, the

phosphorescent bow-waves and wakes, the dim black hulls and so on, and heard the metallic clang of an iron door which meant that the Watch was being changed and that the black squad, engineers, greasers and firemen were coming up from their heated boiler-rooms and engine-rooms where they had been running the gauntlet of torpedo and mine perhaps for nearly four years of war. A great wave of admiration and affection surged through my heart, for I knew that if a torpedo or mine had exploded in the engine-room the great inrush of water would have drowned the occupants before they had a chance to reach the engine-room steps. If it exploded in a boiler-room those grand fellows would as likely as not be scalded to death before they had a chance to be drowned.

Well, those words are particularly reflective of those in the engine room, but you know it was almost as hazardous for those serving elsewhere in the ship. I think the quotation serves as a tribute to hundreds of OW's who served at sea during the two World Wars, many of them giving their lives in the service of their country.

You should be proud.

My Grandfather held his time on the Worcester in great affection and it was probably this historical family inheritance that led me to attending The Nautical College, Pangbourne, an establishment which was as you all know, closely connected in tradition and training with both the Worcester and the Conway.

I went there intending to join the Royal Navy but my eyesight deteriorated and by dint of some very hard work, I got in to Cambridge to read Economics, next joining Clarksons with whom I have spent almost all of my working life. For those unfamiliar with the name, Clarksons is the largest international shipbroker, headquartered in London and the world's leading shipping services provider with 48 offices in 22 countries. Many of you here tonight may well have had dealings with Clarksons during your careers.

My involvement with maritime affairs does not finish at work as my wife Juliet, and whom I first met over 45 years ago when up at Cambridge, spent her working life as a solicitor specializing in maritime litigation. I would only hope that, if she was involved in litigation in which any of you may have been a part, that she was on your side!

In 2015 I had the great privilege of being elected the 688th Lord Mayor of London and spent an extremely busy year travelling the world promoting the Financial and Professional Services of the City and the UK. In my case a particular priority was to promote Britain's world leading maritime offer.



The office of Lord Mayor is over 800 years old and has, in the British way, much tradition attached. But it is above all a very modern job. It's a very 'high-octane' year, pretty much non-stop. A typical day starts at 8 and finishes at 11, and can have as many as 12 commitments involving a vast array of people from Heads of State, visiting overseas Ministers, Cabinet Ministers, senior civil servants, business leaders, and so on. I spent around 100 days overseas, visiting some 27 countries. In addition I had a major programme of regional visits covering 12 leading cities.

After the privilege of chairing the Maritime Growth Study in 2015, I was particularly keen to try to maintain the momentum of our Maritime Sector going forward, and am encouraged how closely Government and the Sector are now working together, and how well the industry is cooperating across its many sectors.

Like, I suspect t, many of you, I am passionate about this sector, and that extends to my charitable priorities. I am a trustee of the White Ensign Association, which gives advice to all ranks of the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines and the RFA. In truth I don't for a moment think we would turn away someone who served in the Merchant Navy.

I am also proud to be a trustee of Seafarers UK, formerly King George's Fund for Sailors, the nation's leading maritime charity. And I am a keen supporter of the Sea Cadets, where I have the honour to be President of the City of London unit, based in HMS Belfast. Each Lord Mayor has an Appeal and one of the beneficiaries of mine was the Sea Cadets. We raised funds to replace what I call one and a half 36 ft Rustlers. Juliet named the first 'TS City of London' and I am delighted that the remaining funding for the second boat was generously made up by Stelios Hadjiannou. The vessel will be named in September.

Today, many younger people would look back at the education you all received on the Worcester and your colleagues on Conway and at Pangbourne, and would consider it outdated, perhaps even Dickensian!

Who today would send their children aged from only 13 years to a college, training only for a specialized occupation!

A college where almost 100% of those leaving would go on to spend the first decade of their careers and in many cases their whole lives in one industry.

But your training clearly empowered you all and Old Worcesters, I read in Commander Steele's book, were prized for their training and professionalism. Skills that helped those who came ashore to prosper in a multitude of other trades and professions!

Captains of Industry, Lawyers, Doctors, Academics, Farmers, International Traders and even, I'm told, Prison Governors as well as endless other areas of endeavour.

Looking at you all tonight, I think you should be proud.

Proud of your Worcester heritage and the training, proud of the guidance and experience which has clearly enabled you to face up to, and overcome the stormy seas of our fast changing world.

In conclusion I would be grateful if you all could be upstanding for a toast!

"The Chairman of the Association of Old Worcesters"

