

Opening of the OD Union Mitre – 13th August 2015 **by Raymond Ackerman**

I would like to welcome everyone here tonight including many of the wives of ODs, teachers, and people interested in the school.

I have four or five points which I would like to stress this evening and I will not keep you for a long time.

The Brief was given to the Architect Luke Scott and his colleagues who frankly have done an outstanding job.

Brian Robertson and his Committee listed the main points that they wanted covered, and that was:

1. It must be functional.
2. It must suit our requirements.
3. It must be aesthetically pleasing and welcoming to all ODs and that we wished to preserve our heritage in a modern manner.
4. Brian and Luke Scott the Architect and one of the OD Committee members Phil Calothi, travelled to many UK schools and other schools in other parts of the world, and analyzed the features as mentioned earlier.
5. In addition to the Architects and Chris Weylandt who is an OD and a very fine interior decorator, we really appreciate the role that Paul Murray played and who will become the Curator and he is as you all probably know, the Custodian of the Architecture at Bishops.
6. Brian, his Committee and I would particularly like to show our appreciation to Phil Calothi who is a member of Brian Robertson's Committee, who played such a valuable role in coordinating this whole very brave project. He was the driving force to get tonight's opening to completion although there are still a few issues that are unresolved. It is 95% settled.

I have a few other comments to make and one is to ask Brian and Paul Murray to consider commemorating the Bishops OD's who died in the last two wars in this pavilion as unlike us they will not be able to use it and we owe so much to them.

In the same vein, I would like to suggest that a picture or portrait of Mr. Mandela could be shown with all the other dignitaries because there is no question that his influence on giving us hope for the future of this country and the school, is of such a vital aspect of his amazing life.

Bishops will be celebrating its 175th year in 2024 which is quite amazing when you think that the 100th year anniversary occurred the year after I left school in 1949 and here we are planning the 175th anniversary. Mike Bosman and the Principal are busy planning a great occasion for 2024 and planning possibly to raise a large sum of

money as an endowment to protect the future of the school, and we will be hearing more about this in a short time.

In understanding Bishops today, one must realize just how improved and different it is from many years ago. For instance, there are hundreds of our boys playing different musical instruments and we are engaged in 22 different sports. These two points alone just show much the school has grown and how much we commend the work being done by our Principal Guy Pearson and his team, to grow Bishops boys into well rounded men who believe in South Africa, have hopes for South Africa and a belief that we must respect what the school has done, in accepting all religions, and all races. Although remaining a Church based Christian school, it is opening its doors to boys from other religions and cultures which is really what South Africa needs in the future.

My third point is a few words on the usage of the Pavilion. There will be regular meetings with outside speakers on a host of subjects and the ODs will be able to use the pavilion for their class reunions, and Paul Murray is going to build an archive so that future generations will know what happened over the last 180 odd years. OD's who want to promote the launch of their books, have gatherings in this Pavilion and invite the wives and sisters of ODs to join in with so many of the speakers and occasions that will be held here. We can have music presentations by well-known South African or international artists and really enjoy this aspect of the pavilion, and there are just so many other areas where this wonderful building can help build the spirit of Bishops and ODs.

I want to end by quoting a little story by Rev. Burt who came here as Principal in 1919. He was not too happy when he came out from the UK and felt that Bishops was not in good shape from an architectural point of view and it was a little run down, and yet a few months after, he realized the "unseen strength" of the ODs and the school and that it possessed a "hidden riches". He changed his mind about leaving to go back to the UK and he did an excellent job at Bishops and then was finally followed by Mr. Hubert Kidd who many of us tonight, served under his leadership. An interesting point to note for the archives is that for Mr. Kidd to become Principal it had to go through Parliament because of the initial statutes of the founding of the school and that was that the Principal should always be a man of the cloth. This was passed by Parliament allowing Mr. Kidd to become Principal. Rev. Burt said that the ODs had a faith in the school that was quite "unshakeable". They believed in Bishops and no temporary setback was going to destroy their faith in the future.

Thank you again for coming and Brian Robertson as the leader of this amazing concept and his team should be given all the help possible to make it successful because all they want frankly, is for the pavilion to be used in friendship, camaraderie, and faith in the future of the country.

Floreat Bishops and Floreat South Africa!