Thank you James. I find myself now in the somewhat invidious position of being the oldest surviving Aldenham housemaster so presumably the next one to drop off the perch at which point I will pass the baton on to Austin Galvin.

I thought this evening as James and Adrian are going to talk about Richard as a man and a schoolmaster I would be WOKE AND MEME!!! See dinosaurs can keep learning. This will be appropriate because we have 4 former Housemasters wives present tonight, as well as Margaret from Paull's there is Sue Barnard from Beevor's, Gill Wood from School House and Mary Galvin from Kennedy's. Mary's mother Vera was also the first housemaster's wife in Kennedy's so Mary has had a double dose of experiences. \What I want to try to show you is something of what was involved in running a boarding house back in the late 1960s, 70s and 80s when facilities and conditions in the houses, apart from Kennedy's (who had it cushy), were to put it politely primitive and to highlight the key roles that the housemasters wives played in the smooth running of Aldenham. So I give you, shades of Hilary Mantell:-

THE POWERS BEHIND THE THRONES

When Margaret and Richard took over Paull's the school was still mainly boarding, a 7 day a week operation and with House not central catering. The School with Richard's appointment was in fact getting 2 people for the price of one as Margaret, the housemaster's wife, ran the whole of the domestic side of the House, supervised the catering, the matron, the domestic staff, entertained parents and visiting dignitaries and fielded all incoming telephone calls from parents etc (at least there was no email and twitter etc then). This enabled Richard to teach and fulfil his extra-curricular duties.

A few examples drawn largely from Margaret's experiences:-

1. She had to deal with Spanish domestics who had little or no English, so clutching a dictionary in one hand, talking loudly in a combination of cod Spanish & pigeon English she would try to demonstrate what needed to be done.
2. Filled in when the cook was ill, having 60 hungry mouths to fill is a challenge.
3. Filled in when domestic staff had walked out on being asked to change their routines. One house tutor received very short shrift when he complained that his wastepaper basket had not been emptied.
4. The flu epidemics in the 1970s. Those dealing with the present coronavirus scare might learn a few lessons in self-sufficiency here. The San was full, the House sick bays were too small, so dormitories had to be converted into sick bays. Feeding the patients, washing the sheets and moving boys from one place to another as they recovered or succumbed to the virus was a nightmare but daily life continued and eventually the crisis passed.
5. One incident remains firmly in Margaret's memory. At the end of a term a mother thanked her for looking after her son and said I want to give you a present, I am going to give you a pig. Being polite Margaret said thank you but very much hoped this might not happen. The next term the mother turned up late in the afternoon and said, at last I have got your pig. I am in a hurry so we must get it inside. No-one else was around to help as the boys and staff were in lessons so the mother said we will have to move it ourselves. She opened the back of the car and there was the carcass wrapped in a sheet oozing blood. Together they managed to lift it up and staggered into the kitchen of the house and dumped it down. I must dash the mother said but as soon as possible you must hang it up on one of those pipes, pointing to the ceiling,

and let it bleed out. Off she went. Later that evening Margaret, Richard & the house tutor got a rope round the trotters, heaved it up and suspended it from the pipe with a bucket underneath. Margaret's last thought as she went to bed was I must get up early to warn the staff about what is in the kitchen. Unfortunately she overslept and the whole house was awakened by screams coming from the kitchen where a Spanish maid had come across the pig hanging from the pipe and thought a boy had committed suicide. No disrespect to the looks of those of you who were in Paull's.

6. They were amazing times and the boys were rarely a problem, headmasters, bursars, domestic staff and occasionally parents could be far more troublesome. However the friendships that were made, the interesting people that were met, the lively pattern of the daily life of the house and the school more than compensated for the down times and the long hours. Margaret and Richard created a happy and successful house as all the tributes you will hear tonight will confirm. I ask you to remember though the contributions that were and are being made in the houses by **THE POWERS BEHIND THE THRONES.**