

SAINT PAUL'S CHURCH
BEDFORD



A SERVICE TO COMMEMORATE

ALAN RANDALL OBE, JP

Freeman of the Borough of Bedford.

Friday 16 October 1992

2.45 pm.

Alan Randall an appreciation

I feel very humble to be standing, before you today, to speak about our friend Alan Randall.

I understand that I was asked because I have been fortunate enough to be involved in many of the spheres of activity that Alan made such a great contribution to and I count it as a great privilege to be asked to speak about a man who I have known well and for whom I have such a high respect and admiration for everything that he has done in his life.

Today is not a day to mourn but rather a celebration of the achievements of one man who has been the epitome of service to his fellow men.

Alan was born in 1911 and was educated at Rushmoor School & Bedford School. He then went into the family business of Randalls Ltd who were builders and plumbers merchants in St. Mary's Street Bedford. They arranged that he and the son of another family firm in Leeds should do a swap with Alan working in Leeds and the other lad in Bedford for twelve months. This was a stroke of good luck for Alan for he met a young lady called Mary who was then the secretary to his boss and later became his wife.

His war service was in the Signals section of the Royal Air Force where I understand he was dealing with secret work. These were difficult times with Alan away and Mary working for the WVS but like most young couples they had to make the best of it. After the war Alan returned to the family business and eventually became a Director of the family firm and its Company Secretary.

He became involved in Public Services in 1945 when CAEC Howard known to many as Jim Howard asked him to vote for him in the local elections and then later as it was the way with these politicians asked him to help with the Conservative cause. He soon became Chairman of the Young Conservatives, then Treasurer of the Main Branch and then it's Chairman. It was at this time that he was elected to the County Council and was a Councillor for 5 years when as happens from time to time there was a National sea-change in politics and he lost his seat to the labour candidate. He was soon asked to stand for a seat on the Borough Council and was elected in 1951 for the Castle Ward. He served in many capacities on the Borough not least as an Alderman and it's Mayor for two years from 1960 to 1962. I can remember attending functions during those years when he was present in his mayoral capacity but I did not actually meet him until a couple of years later when I was Chairing a meeting at Mrs Guays house in Biddenham Turn at which he was the guest speaker. I was full of apprehension and worried about meeting and conducting the meeting properly but I need not have worried as he quickly put me at my ease and we had a very good evening.

In 1965 when I was elected to the Borough Council Alan was the Conservative Group Leader a job which demands the patience of Job. I found that if I was in difficulty and did not know what to do, he was always willing to talk to me and point me in the right direction, his patience and good humour seemed never ending. When he was chairing our meetings very difficult and tricky problems were solved with ease. Later still when local government was re-organised he was one of those who charted us through potentially disastrous problems stemming mainly from the

different ways of working of the council's which were amalgamated and the new political situation. For these and so many other reasons Alan was awarded the highest honour that the Borough can bestow on any citizen by being elected a Freeman of the Borough of Bedford.

There have been many positions that Alan handled with care far too many to mention by name, but I particularly remember his Chairmanship of the Education Committee which is a hot potato if ever there is one, with all the difficulties over comprehensive education etc.

I am aware that he served on a number of other Government Bodies particularly in what is now called the water industry. He was Vice-Chairman of the Water Committee of the Borough, then Chairman of the Bedfordshire Water Board and eventually Vice Chairman of the Anglian Water Authority and it's first Finance Committee Chairman. This was in the days when there were no salaries for these positions, the only reward was that of knowing that the job had been done to the best of one's abilities. However Her Majesty the Queen recognised the valuable work that he had done for the Water Industry by appointing him an OBE an appointment of great satisfaction to his friends and contemporaries who felt that it had been well deserved.

Alan was appointed one of Her Majesty's Justices of the Peace in 1956 and elected Vice-Chairman of the North Bedfordshire Bench in 1974. Whenever I sat with him I was always struck by his unfailing courtesy to all who came before the Court, his sense of justice and fair play. When he had to retire at the age of 70, he was still our Vice-Chairman and there were many who felt that whilst the rules say that we must retire at that age, he was very much the exception. We felt that he was still giving

extremely valuable service to us and to the community and that it really was too bad that he had to retire just because of his age.

Alan was elected a member of the Rotary Club of Bedford in 1962, was its President in 1969*70 and its Treasurer for a period of nearly 20 years. He was awarded Rotary's highest award "The Paul Harris Fellowship" for services to Rotary and the Community, I was both pleased and flattered when he invited me to a Rotary Lunch in 1970, I felt that it was a great honour. Much later I found out that that Alan had been the President of the Club the year before, was now the Chairman of the Membership Committee and had ideas for my future as far as Rotary was concerned. I can still remember the day that the President the Reverend Peter Hartley inducted me into membership of the Club with Alan standing at my side as my proposer, that day he gave me something which I have cause to value ever since – my membership of Rotary.

I mentioned earlier that Alan was educated at Rushmoor School and Bedford School. He has served both Schools' well in his adult life serving on the Harpur Trust for 14 years and as Chairman of Rushmoor School Governors for 16 years. This is an interesting story for Alan was asked to go to a meeting to try to save Rushmoor as the owner wished to sell and the parents did not know what to do. That meeting ended with a resolve to try to set up a Charitable Trust to save the School. Today I can tell you as its current Chairman that he and his colleagues succeeded so well that the School now owns all the land and building it occupies, is currently in the process of building a kindergarten and has no debt. A formidable achievement by any account.

Alan would always notice the little things around him. When we built the new gymnasium at Rushmoor we had arranged to call it the Randall Hall

but did not tell him as we felt that he might veto the idea. We had a plaque made and erected it on the wall near the door which is not visible as you walk in but is clearly visible from the rest of the hall. We hoped that on the occasion of the Chairman's Party he would walk in and talk to people and not see the plaque until later in the evening when we came to announce what had been agreed. However Alan just walked in the door and then turned round and looked straight at the plaque and said "and when did that happen"? I suppose we should have known better than to try to take him by surprise

I hope that I have given you a little of the feeling of humbleness and thanks that I have for Alan's friendship, it can only be a very one sided account and must have left out more than it said, I know that I and many more like me will miss him, nowhere near as much as his family. Mary, Linda, Barry, Carla, Debbie, Mark & Simon.

If there is one thing that I shall always remember it will be his unfailing kindness, courtesy and gentlemanly approach to everyone.