



**Major MacDonald's Speech
OVA Parade
Sunday 11th March 2012**

Good morning Sirs, Ma'ams, Ladies and Gentlemen. I would firstly like to thank the headmistress, Mrs. Bellars, for allowing me the absolute honour of standing before you all today. When Leigh Bissett asked last year for someone to take the salute at an Old Victorians Weekend, I volunteered not knowing what a huge event it would become. I'm sure all of us here today will probably be amazed by the turnout. Thank you all for coming and making this weekend what it has been and thank you to those many people, Old Victorians, staff and pupils, who have worked so hard to ensure the weekend has been a success. I take my hat off to all of you.

When Mrs. Bellars asked me earlier in the week to say a few words today, it didn't take me long to think about what my theme would be. As a very proud Old Victorian, I can honestly say that this school was the making of me. Those of you stood here on this Parade Square today are still in the early stages of an exciting journey.

Those more senior are about to enter a period of the unknown and are probably nervous and excited about what the next few years will bring. When I left the school in 1994, I was itching to get away, not because I didn't enjoy it, but I wanted to move forward in life.

I was extremely fortunate to go to University before joining the Army where I learnt about what life outside the umbrella of school was all about. I loved it: meeting new people, and learning new things educationally and socially. People still here at QV asked me if I missed school and I remember telling them I didn't. However, even at the time, I did miss school. I didn't miss itchy shirts, polishing shoes, boring prep and room inspections. I didn't miss endless band practices, Drill in the Playhall and Tez Boast making me do cross country with no shoes on because I'd forgotten my trainers.

I didn't miss hanging from the wall-bars in the gym early in the morning on Days and didn't miss getting caught skiving chapel by Skip Carroll. I didn't miss being whacked over the knuckles by a fourth year for speaking in prep or being hung out of a window in a kitbag in first year. I didn't miss Harry Buchanan giving me 100 'paragraphs' for messing around in French (although I must admit I did miss James Welsh being given 10000 lines by Harry Berry, the then School Sergeant Major for mucking about during Drill – that was amusing).

I didn't miss the walks to the First Shop in my itchy kilt and often sneaking out in civvies just so I could be 'normal'. I didn't miss being shot in the backside by Mel Mutch with an air pistol. I didn't miss 'round-ups', sticks and enforced hobbies. I didn't miss the building, or the pitches or Wavell Wood or the Central Hall.....

What it boiled down to was that what I missed after leaving here were my mates. One thing that many of you maybe don't appreciate is that one amongst the plethora of opportunities this school offers you is an ability to forge friendships that will last you a lifetime. Many of you will never lose touch with the people stood next to you today. This place has a knack of bonding people together that I believe kids at other schools just don't get. Perhaps it's a shared background, with one of our parents serving in the Forces. Perhaps it's being a long way from home so young, in a strange although beautiful place.

Perhaps it's the opportunity to undertake so many team activities, such as the rugby we watched yesterday. It's difficult to pin down. The only organisation I think that comes close to offering the same thing is the Armed Forces, which obviously underpin much of the ethos and what goes on here.

I remember someone, probably Ben Philip (God rest his soul), telling my classmates and I, in P6 or P7, that the school isn't the building, the grounds or the uniform. It's not the teachers or admin staff. It's not the Headmistress or the military staff. It's not Her Majesty's Commissioners or any of the others that work so hard in support of what is achieved here. This school is the people stood before me on parade today. It's you. And your mates stood beside you. You make it what it is and from what we've seen this weekend, it's in better shape than ever.

So from all Old Victorians, thank you for taking care of QVS. We're very grateful; and on behalf of the Old Victorians Association, we wish you all the very best of luck in whatever you choose to do with your lives in the future; and look forward to welcoming you in to a new and invigorated Association. Finally, if I can offer a few humble words of advice for now and for the future: remember to look after your mates; because if you do, when the chips are down, they'll look after you.

Thank you.