Dr & Mrs Miller, Bishop and Mrs Palmer, Mr & Mrs Baber, Members of the P&F, Old Boys, Old Girls etc.

I am very honoured to be asked to join you this evening but I feel a little like Elizabeth Taylor’s eighth husband when he said “I know what I am expected to do I just hope I can make it interesting”.

The other day I was at the pictures and there was a girl with her boyfriend in the row in front of me. She kept wriggling, squirming and giggling. I tapped her on the shoulder and said excuse me are you feeling hysterical. She said no he’s feeling mine.

I have had a long association with All Saints’ and Marsden. I was a border for seven years and later on I married a Marsden old girl. If you take our siblings plus our own four children and four of our grandchildren, that adds up to seventy-six years attendance. If you add the cousins another 14 years, making a total of 90 years attendance at the schools.

I was very proud that my youngest grandson was Head boy in 2006. He is sitting over there.

When I was at All Saints’ the school was only half as old as it is now and it was much smaller and there were many differences.

The average attendance was about 105 borders with about half a dozen day boys. More than half of them came from western NSW. At one stage during the war it dropped to about 50 when a lot of the boys had to go home to help their fathers on the property. Our uniform was black shoes, dark grey trousers, double breasted navy blue coat, school tie, grey felt hat with the vertical stripes cardinal and blue hat band. Prefects had a blue hat band with the school crest on the front. We were not allowed to wear shorts, only long trousers. This was not very compatible with one of our greatest pass times which was playing marbles on the ground.

There were very few buildings in those days. The old Esrom homestead with the classrooms and dormitories with the colonnade attached. There were two classrooms behind this near the kitchen plus a room for the gardener and workshop for Mr McLeod. A few storage sheds and garages plus the Chapel and the recreation hall on the Bathurst side.

There was only one small shower room with hot showers. This was adjacent to the junior dormitory above the headmaster’s study. We were allowed two or three hot showers after football training in the winter, in the summer time mostly cold showers.

The hot water system was added to the main locker room in 1937. At the same time as the wing extending from the archway was added including a library, a prefect’s room and a tuckshop. The flagpole was also erected on the lawn near the colonnade. In 1941 the steps leading to the oval was built using bricks from the old school building in Bathurst. The Education Department now owns the building and they were having it demolished. Luckily 2,500 bricks were given to All Saints’. This was a close connection with the original school, as was the chapel which was rebuilt on its present site.

There were no windows or blinds on the sides of the dormitory. It was completely open to the elements on both sides and believe me the elements did blow through. We piled everything we had on our beds on the cold winter nights but we all survived. We were given open shelves and a hanging space along the passage way on the western side of the dormitories for our clothes. We also had a steel locker in the locker room for our sporting gear, the headmaster, Rev Watson, would not allow padlocks, he ran the school on an honesty system and in the whole time I was there I only remember one enquiry into anything being stolen.

Another big difference was our relationship with girls. We were not allowed to receive letters from girls or write to girls. If a suspicious letter arrived we would be called to the headmaster’s office where it would be opened. If it was from a girl it would be confiscated and we would not get it.

We were allowed one dance a year with Marsden, alternating between schools. Even here the doors were guarded and we were not allowed out of the hall.
Those of us who had sisters at Marsden were a little bit more fortunate, we were allowed to ride our bikes over to Marsden to see them one Sunday afternoon each term which resulted in the usual thing "how are you sister, have you heard from Mum and Dad" and then we always found someone far more interesting than a sister to talk to. One term we got rather excited when we were told that we were to go to Marsden every Sunday afternoons to dig air raid shelters. We were disappointed when we found that the girls were not allowed to come near us.

Our other war efforts included fruit picking at some of the local orchards and making camouflage nets which the army used for covering their equipment.

This isolation from girls while we were at school opened up a new world of excitement after we left school.

I can clearly remember most of the boys that I was with but I will only mention one. He was a lovable larrikin from Brewarrina, he was one year older than me but he was a great friend. He was always up to mischief. In the apple season on a moonlight night he would organise the "apple safari". Four or five of the boys would ride their bikes over to Winterbottom's orchard near Marsden and bring back apples in pillow cases. These of course had to be eaten with much discretion out of the sight of teachers.

One day a horse came into the school grounds, he was able to catch it and got onto it without saddle or bridle and galloped around until he eventually fell off and broke his wrist.

He was made a Prefect in the last year he was at school which slowed him down somewhat. He joined the Airforce just after he left school and was shot down and lost his life over Germany eighteen months later.

School honours or colours for sport were very difficult to get. For Rugby Union or cricket you had to represent Bathurst district while at school. For athletics you had to win an event, or at least run a place, in the NSW All Schools championships. One boy did win the broad jump and another boy broke the mile record running in bare feet, this was the same boy who organised the "apple safari".

The two old boys' reunions after the war were memorable events. There was a big attendance, lots of the boys had been away in the services and we were all in a mood to relax. They were fairly wild weekends but no damage was done. One morning when we arrived at the school we found the big road signs from Marsden and All Saints' had been swapped over. This caused quite a bit of amusement but they were replaced in the afternoon without any damage.

I could not talk about All Saints' without mentioning Albert Emms well known to many of you. He was my school teacher for six years and then left to join the Airforce. I left a year later and joined the RAAF and trained in Australia for one year. When all the ones I was with left for overseas I was in hospital and I missed the draft, when I came out I was a lonely figure in the camp waiting for the next intake to arrive. Then who should step off the bus but my old school teacher Albert Emms. I more than likely went up to him and said "how are you sir" I can't remember. He had remustered into air crew after me. He was 12 1/2 years older than me and had lived in a completely different world but we became close friends and stayed together for the next two years. ending up flying in the same aircrew.

He was about half a generation older than most of the others that he was mixing with but he was very popular always known as "old Albert" he was a man of very high principles himself and looking back on it after the war I'm sure he had a guiding influence on us younger ones. Our close friendship continued after the war with the Rugby Union and then with Bathurst Legacy.

I have never missed an opportunity of letting people know that I attended All Saints'. I think the last verse of the school song sums it all up

"So years after this, 'mid the lengthening rays
Of the sunset of Life, may each one turn his gaze
To something like pride to those schoolboy days,
Which he spent at All Saints' in the morning."

I thank you all again for asking me to be with you and with a little luck, no I'll rephrase that, with a lot of luck, I might join you for the 150th."