



Adrian Aylward Award

The Stonyhurst Foundation established a dedicated Award in June 2020 in memory of former Stonyhurst Headmaster, Adrian Aylward, following his passing in April 2020.

We are delighted to share with you that since the fund was established it has been generously supported and it now stands at around £260,000. From September 2021, this award will part fund a Means-Tested Bursary enabling a new pupil to attend Stonyhurst.

The Times recently published Adrian's obituary, a moving and heartfelt read, reproduced below by kind permission of the Times:

Adrian Aylward, 62: Stonyhurst headmaster who eschewed convention

Saturday July 24 2021, The Times



Conscientious and charismatic, Adrian Aylward quit the City for a more fulfilling career in teaching

As only the second lay headmaster of Stonyhurst College, the Roman Catholic independent school in Lancashire, Adrian Aylward used the college's Jesuit motto, "Men and women for and with others", to inform much of what he set out to achieve, particularly in terms of working together and to include the marginalised. During his ten-year tenure at Stonyhurst from 1996 to 2006 he oversaw the move to make

the college fully co-educational, fielding the controversy surrounding the admittance of girls after 400 years of single-sex schooling in his characteristically kind and steady manner.

The early years of Adrian's headship coincided with helping the police as they investigated child abuse cases from earlier decades and fired his determination to lead the college into a new chapter. He set about ensuring effective pastoral care, refreshing the staff room and making other adjustments that reflected his Jesuit outlook. He took the decision to do away with Guy Fawkes night, a tradition that he viewed as religiously divisive, and did not warm to the secondary school league tables. He pulled Stonyhurst out of the tables in a year when it had received one of its best results.

For Adrian, a conscientious and charismatic figure, the route to the headship at Stonyhurst had been swift. After spending his twenties at the City bank Morgan Grenfell, which was followed by a period as a consultant to failing industries, Adrian chose to take a more fulfilling route after the birth of his first child in 1991. Sensing that he was not fully exploiting his pastoral and spiritual side he quit the City for a teacher-training course in theology at King's College London and a year later was asked to be head of religion and theology at Downside, the Catholic independent school in Somerset.



Adrian Aylward's early life was marked by personal loss

In the four years that Adrian was at Downside he swiftly took on a succession of roles. He was made housemaster of its junior house, housemaster of a senior house and deputy head. He also took responsibility for marketing and admissions during a challenging time for boarding education in the recession of the early 1990s. When Adrian left Downside for Stonyhurst the vacancy was filled by three people.

Adrian Aylward was born in 1957 in Auckland, New Zealand, a premature baby who weighed so little that

his father, John, joked that he was brought home in a shoebox. He later grew to a height of 6ft 3in. His father was an architect and his mother, Cynthia (née Minch), raised her five children.

Much of Adrian's early life was marked by personal loss and a sense of sorrow did not lie far beneath his large jovial presence. By the time he had reached his early twenties he had lost his youngest sister as a baby, his mother when he was six, his brother when he was 14 and his father when he was 21.

When Adrian was four the family returned from New Zealand to base themselves in Tunbridge Wells, Kent, and after the death of their mother were brought up by their father, who had a way of his own. Christmas lunches were spent with the less fortunate at John's invitation, furniture disappeared from the house to answer the greater need of others, and every holiday was spent in Ireland or touring Europe in a converted caravan. It was during these trips that Adrian discovered a lifelong love of fishing.

Six months after his mother had died Adrian went to board at Holmewood House in Tunbridge Wells, and at 13 he went on to Worth, the independent Catholic school in Sussex. At Exeter College, Oxford, he read classics, which he combined, a friend recalls, with "a highly convivial existence and a certain amount of high jinks". Nonetheless, he set aside time to make pilgrimages to Lourdes and was one of the founders of the Order of Malta Volunteers.



Adrian Aylward with his daughter Freya in 2003

In 1990 he married Caroline Cramer, an occupational therapist whom he had met on holiday in a hut in a forest in Provence. They raised three children: Molly, a primary school teacher; Joseph, who works for the Japanese bank SMBC; and Freya, who is training to be a primary school teacher.

Adrian moved from Stonyhurst to head the Catholic girls' school St Antony's Leweston. Recruitment of pupils was thin and with the marketing experience gained from working in industry he was tasked with raising Leweston's profile. One of his moves was to bring in leading lecturers for evening events to which the public and pupils were invited.

When Adrian retired in 2015 to a remote cottage on the edge of Dartmoor he went on working in education, and contributed to an ambitious project to make good boarding education affordable. He became chairman of the governors of Downside, and guided the drive to separate school and monastery, with a view to the furtherance of both in a modern world. He worked in a local youth club, was employed by the church to evangelise on the street, and started training to be a deacon.

If Adrian viewed his life as one of service to the church, he refused to be earnest about it and was not always on the right side of authority. A heavy smoker, he was once ticked off for lighting up during a conference for trainee deacons; and during sessions of the Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference he could be found playing the pinball machine in the foyer. He trod his own path, and his appearance bore him out: mismatching socks, floppy hair, ruffled shirt and tailored suit, which, as a Stonyhurst colleague described, "somehow struggled to conform to his loping walk. I was often reminded of an Irish wolfhound seeing him pace around the corridor."

Rules were less important to him in running a school than the judgment of each case for its right and wrong, an art for which he had a gift. When a pupil drifted, his aim was to bring them back, not to punish. The principle was a spiritual one. After a school inspector, fearing for health and safety regulations, complained that he had seen 40 boys going up a wooden staircase holding candles, he responded: "Yes, they've been doing it since the 17th century. It's called Candlemas."

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