

# ‘Farewell, Mr Standish’

## A tribute to Master, Keith Douglas

Popular and witty schoolmaster Keith Douglas taught Chemistry (1980-97) and was Crawfurd Housemaster (1988-97). Former English Master, Rob Worrall, offers his reflections on the day of the funeral in Keith’s Lancashire home town

**S**tandish is the small, Lancastrian town in which Keith Douglas was raised. It is where he maintained his northern roots during his professional flirtation with the south. And it is where his ashes are to be interred, following his funeral, which was held there on 23 September, 2016.

The service was held in the impressive, grade 1 listed, parish church of St. Wilfrid’s (16th century, with an added neo-gothic tower). It was packed to standing room only. Like the man, himself, the occasion was never knowingly understated! A choir and choirmaster in full fig; two clergy in attendance; four hymns and a choir-only set piece; a number of personal reminiscences.

The congregation ranged from red-faced, elderly gentlemen to a boisterous two-year-old – Standish had turned out, in recognition of one of its own. That there were also, in that congregation, three of his former Epsom colleagues and half a dozen ex-Crawfurdians would have been a particular delight to Keith.

During the reminiscences, those of us not native to his township were treated to details we did not previously know. One man, who had been a friend of Keith’s for 63 years, told us of their shared boyhood adventures. It sounded like a previously unpublished episode from ‘Just William!’ Another, much younger, man told us of how



### **Keith gives boys some tips about rugby**

Keith had recruited him into becoming a ‘Standish activist’. We learned of Keith, the local historian; of Keith, the founder of a Standish forum, designed to promote positive interest and action within the community; of Keith, the local journalist, observing and commenting upon daily life and issues; of Keith, the driving force behind the now-established Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Garden; of Keith, the scourge of overly ambitious local planning officers.

This is why, in Standish, some called him Keith, while others called him Dougie, but, it is said, all knew him as ‘Mr Standish’, and as a genuine gentleman. When, after the service, we retired, as requested, to The Globe pub, there was much to exchange from our own memories of this most extraordinary man. It was, to use one of Keith’s own favourite phrases, “a great occasion”!