

Friends, fellow Tadcastrians, I have been asked to say a few words as we pause to remember those of our contemporaries who have not lived long enough to be part of this reunion. I think I have been chosen because, as an ordained clergyman who gets to preach sermons every few weeks, I have no qualms about public speaking.

I always say that this oratorical confidence was greatly helped by taking part in drama productions in my village , and here at the school, where my crowning role, rather prophetically you might say, was as a drunken monk in the December 1973 production of the “Caucasian Chalk Circle”

What was happening on the world stage fifty years ago as our cohort prepared to leave school and enter upon the next stage of our education or careers ? There had been, in the previous year, a nasty war in the Middle East after Israel had been caught napping by a surprise attack. A Labour government had recently come into power, and was handing out money left right and centre to get strikers back to work. Germany had just won a World Cup. IRA bombs had exploded in Dublin and Westminster Hall, and a massive chemical explosion at Flixborough in Humberside had killed 29 people. The duplicitous presidency of Richard Nixon was soon to come to an end.

These were the events which were dominating our newspapers and TV screens, and they may have a familiar ring to you if you were able, at the time, to give them *any* attention as you struggled with the preoccupations of A-levels, driving tests, university admissions and job interviews, and navigating the emotional and social complexities of the last few months into adulthood

But the point is, this was all *half a century* ago, and as most of us are now much nearer 70 than 60, it is no surprise that some of us who departed from these hallowed grounds in July 1974 , have since then succumbed to cancers and other ailments, and departed this life much earlier than they would have hoped, some leaving behind partners and children who miss them terribly

Bill Roberts and I will now read out alternately a list of the names of those who were our contemporaries, and who are known to have passed. I invite you to listen in silence, unless you can, at the end, call out to add the name of anyone we have unfortunately missed off. Then let us remain quiet for a couple of minutes as we remember these amazing personalities as we knew them, and commend them in our hearts to God, or to life in our memories, according to your beliefs.

{Silence}

Thank you. I daresay we will also raise a glass or two tonight to absent friends.