

**The 2012 Christ's College Leadership Medal has been awarded to Sir Miles Warren. For many years Sir Miles was the College architect, creating the Chapman Block which has recently been demolished, the extension to Big School which now functions as our library, the gymnasium, the Tothill Science Block, the conversion of the Selwyn building, staff housing, the administration building, the swimming pool, Corfe, Condell's and the carpark complex, as well as the Fine Arts building and the Old Boys' Theatre.**

"But we acknowledge him today," Mr Leese told those assembled for the presentation ahead of the 2012 Emerging Leaders' Conference, "for the part he played in what may have proved to be an even more critical contribution to Christ's College. Some forty years ago he famously banged the boardroom table and insisted that the Board embark on earthquake strengthening of our historic buildings. The fact that our historic buildings have survived the brutality of the earthquakes, and all of us on campus were able to emerge safely, can be rightly attributed in large part to his leadership."

First joining Christ's College as a Somes Scholar in 1942, Sir Miles winces a little as he recalls daily Latin classes. "Certainly in the Upper 6th, each day began with Latin with the Headmaster and we always had to have one's Latin lesson sitting in the pews of the Chapel. We desperately tried to get the translation from one another. Cox was the main source. He always did the homework," he chuckles. "I can remember that there were only about ten of us in the form and I remember sitting thinking to myself, 'Please God, please God, the Headmaster can't see me, I'm not here, I'm not here' and suddenly there would be this terrible roar, 'Warren, translate!!' It was an ordeal every morning to go through."

Sir Miles clearly did not have a fondness for the subject, "I did at one stage ask if I could take less Latin and perhaps Physics would be more useful. The Headmaster said to me, 'You are not here to learn how to move a cow, but the principles of moving a cow.'"

Describing himself as a singularly unathletic boy, he claims his greatest

sporting achievement was to be the captain of an under-14 cricket team. "It was the lowest possible cricket class in the school. Our great aim was to be bowled out as quickly as possible so that we could go to sleep under the trees."

Mr Leese spoke to the assembly about the school days of Sir Miles, "In his autobiography we read that the young Sir Miles found College sadly missing the visual and aesthetic arts, but enjoyed the architecture and forms of the place. According to the published history of the school, the Headmaster of the day, RJ Richards, when hearing of young Warren's ambition to be an architect, said, 'An architect young master? We had hoped for better things from you.' "

Of the buildings at Christ's College, Sir Miles says, "One saw them, but I had no idea who the architects were or what the styles were. Obviously the forms did impact on me."

Sir Miles' father sought advice from Christchurch architects on learning of his son's ambition. "And they all said, 'Oh, it's a disaster!'" says Sir Miles. "Most of them, you see, had seen very little building work at all since the slump of the thirties. They were all flat broke!"

"I went to work for Cecil Wood, one of New Zealand's foremost architects and I was his sole draftsman earning thirty shillings a week. There was very little work in the office so I really had a full time tutor." Cecil Wood is the architect who created College's Hare Memorial Library, Dining Hall, Open Air Classrooms and Jacobs House.

It is a Cecil Wood building, the Hare Memorial Library, for which Sir Miles holds the most fondness. "I had the good fortune to show Nikolaus Pevsner, the great architecture critic and author

of *The History of European Architecture*, which was a bible of the time, around our city and its architectural gems. We got to within an inch of our quadrangle here and he looked across and he said, 'Good God, it is a perfect Norman Shaw.' Fifteen years too late," says Sir Miles, "but Cecil Wood was the last flowering of the arts and crafts process. I was very lucky to be working for him. It was a great start."

He went on to study architecture at Auckland, and after a spell working in London, returned to Christchurch where he set up the Warren and Mahoney practice.

"I suppose the first major building Maurice Mahoney and I built was Ballantynes. It was a huge building at the time. So we got a reputation and we were extraordinarily fortunate. If you could build for the Ballantynes, who were known to be exacting and particular, then you could build for anyone."

When asked if he was particularly aware of the 'leadership' component of architecture when he set out, Sir Miles responds, "It was really imposed on us you might say. The old generation of architects had completely gone and suddenly Maurice Mahoney and I were there in our thirties to our astonishment building major buildings. The Warren and Mahoney office grew and we had offices in Wellington and Auckland and a staff of sixty or more. We got some remarkable commissions like the Washington Chancery, the High Commission in Delhi and so on."

As well as international commissions, within New Zealand his work included the Michael Fowler Centre in Wellington, refurbishment of Parliament

House and Library buildings, the Rotorua Civic Centre, and many more. But it is in Christchurch that his practice developed what came to be called the 'Christchurch School', which was responsible for so much of the major architecture of the city, including the Harewood Crematorium, the Town Hall and Civic Centre, College House at the university, the Clarendon Tower, as well as many other civic, commercial and domestic projects.

His career led to the award of a CBE in 1974, and a Knighthood in 1985. He was acknowledged by his own profession with the New Zealand Institute of Architects Award of Honour and Fellowship. Further recognition for his contributions came with the New Zealand Commemoration Medal in 1990 and the Order of New Zealand in 1995.

In 2009 he was included amongst twelve Canterbury heroes commemorated in bronze busts installed in front of the Arts Centre. His plaque reads,

*Eminent Architect, at the forefront of building design for over 50 years, generous supporter of the arts and tireless worker for the betterment of Christchurch.*

Mr Leese concluded his citation for Sir Miles by saying, "Whilst much of his civic architecture has succumbed to earthquakes, he has never lost the passion for innovating, and for moving forward. His own beautiful and historic home at Governor's Bay, severely damaged, he redesigned it, planned its restoration and has got it done whilst many were still wondering where to start with their problems. His seniority has not diminished a tireless enthusiasm, and a consuming passion for buildings – their aesthetics, their function, innovation, conservation and the quality of life that they provide. He has been a leading voice within his profession throughout his career."



“ For his pivotal influence in Christ's College, in enabling the College to emerge as it has from the events of the last two years, and for the most distinguished leadership within the architectural profession in New Zealand, it is with great pleasure that I present the Christ's College Leadership Medal for 2012 to Sir Miles Warren. ”

Simon Leese, Tuesday 26 June 2012

# SIR MILES WARREN