

Mr Chancellor,

Newcastle University is rightly proud of its status as one of the top civic universities in the country. This is not just a laudable headline. In order to earn it, we have to be seen to deploy the formidable array of knowledge and expertise generated by our academic community in the service of individuals, organisations and society as a whole. That's a tall order – but it is one we are able to fulfil because of the commitment and talent of colleagues like Ashley Wilton.

During 40 years of service to the University, Ashley has served with distinction in many different roles. He was Head of the Law School for nine years and founding director of the School of Business Management. He also fulfilled the role of Dean of the Faculty of Law and subsequently served as Dean of what was then the new Faculty of Social and Environmental Sciences. His colleagues speak of him with great affection and respect, commending not only his unfailing courtesy and kindness, (on both personal and professional matters), but his wonderful sense of humour. Several of those I spoke to referred to him as a second father. He makes people feel valued, and takes a genuine interest in helping them advance their careers. Not only was he seen as a father to the school, but he is, of course, much loved by his own family, as evidenced by the extensive collection of mugs in his office, including several proclaiming him “World’s Best Grandad.” Furthermore, I gather he is something of a legend on the dance floor at the Law School Ball, outlasting many of his younger colleagues. His wife, Katherine, tells me that he is an extremely good dancer!

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Ashley's ability to express disagreement with courtesy and charm is much admired. However, he is tough and decisive when needed and is rumoured to have eyes in the back of his head when it comes to catching anyone indulging in a sneaky cigarette. Having worked with Ashley for many years on the Law School Library Committee, I can honestly say that it was always a pleasure to do business with him - and not just because our meetings were invariably accompanied by tea in bone china cups. There may even have been chocolate biscuits. How very English. How very Ashley. Yet despite the civilised setting, he never lost sight of our core business, and the information resource needs of the school were always articulated with his customary clarity, energy, and precision.

Ashley's capacity to see the bigger picture as well as the small, telling detail that makes the difference between success and failure has undoubtedly served him well in his committee work within the wider University. He served several terms on both Senate and Council. His first appointment to Senate came when he was only 26 and he is very proud of the fact that at the time, he was the youngest person ever to have been elected to this body. As chair of Senate Matriculation and Concessions Committee, Ashley demonstrated exceptional stamina and commitment. In its heyday, "Mat & Conc" met nine times per year and I'm told that the agendas were so long, the accompanying documents went three times round the alphabet! Individual cases could be complex and difficult, but in adjudicating them, Ashley became renowned for his fairness, consistency and humanity. He is passionately devoted to the welfare and wellbeing of students, and is fondly remembered by alumni.

Newcastle University's widening participation programme, Partners, is widely acknowledged as an exemplar within the sector. Ashley Wilton was

a founder member of the Fair Access Committee, and his wisdom, sense of justice, and calm, rational approach helped steer the pilot scheme through many potential minefields as it formulated and interpreted its governing policy.

Ashley's flair for bringing clarity and order to systems of governance has led him to become the University's nominated representative on several charitable trusts. He has served with distinction as chairman of the St Mary Magdalene and Holy Jesus Trust, which provides care to elderly people living in the Trust's sheltered accommodation. The Herbert Dove Trustees have also benefitted from his capable and decisive hand on the tiller and he spent nine years as a member of the Marie Curie Newcastle Management Committee. To have successfully incorporated all of this extracurricular activity alongside his many demanding roles within the University is testament to Ashley's formidable organisational skills, stamina and commitment. He says he feels fortunate to have been able to enjoy so much stimulating and satisfying work in addition to his discipline-specific duties, and describes the nature of his contribution with characteristic reticence, noting that in a modest way, he may have helped "substantiate the notion of a civic university with responsibilities". As your colleagues, we can claim so much more on your behalf.

As a graduate trainee at Newcastle, I had the privilege of being mentored by the then University Librarian, Dr Brian Enright – a gentleman well-known to Ashley. Brian was a historian by training; a man of considerable wit and charm. In concluding this citation, I am reminded of one of the first pieces of advice Brian ever gave me. In one of our eclectic and wide ranging conversations, he told me that, whilst he considered Machiavelli's *The Prince* an excellent primer for those wishing to understand the complex and

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frequently competitive behaviour of academic departments, I would be wise to model my professional conduct on the writings of the English statesman and essayist, Sir William Temple. My 21 year old self was somewhat perplexed by this advice, and suspected he might just be joking. But with experience comes understanding. I can now ruefully reflect that I have encountered a few Machiavellian moments, but in the main, Sir William has proved the better guide. So it is to him that I turn for my closing words: “The first ingredient in conversation is truth, the next good sense, the third good humour, and the fourth, wit.” (*Miscellanea*, 1701)

In both word and deed, Ashley Wilton is a fine exemplar of these qualities.

Mr Chancellor, in recognition of his dedicated service to the University and to the wider civic society to which we belong, I present to you for an Honorary Fellowship, Ashley Wilton.

Citation by Jill Taylor-Roe, 13 October 2014