

## **Julian Fellowes address at the Service of Thanksgiving for Henry Herbert Kitchener**

Henry Herbert Kitchener was born at Ringwould in Kent, on the 24<sup>th</sup> February 1919. He was nine when his father, Toby, Viscount Broome, died, leaving Henry the heir to his grandfather. This meant both that his early years would be directed by his mother, the formidable Lady Broome, whose influence he would feel throughout his life, and also that he would inherit young. In due course, his grandfather died, and Henry became the third Earl Kitchener of Khartoum, at the age of eighteen. It was a heavy responsibility, to carry one of the most famous military names of all time, and for a natural peace-maker, a scientist, a mathematician, above all, a gentle gentleman, it was heavy indeed. But it is a mark of his character that he bore the title and its responsibilities with absolute conviction and without complaint. He was proud of his forebear and proud to do his duty by him.

His fascination with how things worked started young, with Lady Broome's chauffeur, Maskell, teaching him the component parts of an internal combustion engine. But if his interests developed early so did his awareness of what his name must represent.. It so happened, in 1937, that four of the Nation's senior military and naval titles were held by minors and Queen Mary had the idea that these four boys should attend the King at his Coronation. Henry's main concern was to stave off any possible hunger pangs and so he secreted chocolate bars about his person, and consumed them piecemeal whenever he found himself behind a convenient pillar. He figures in the photographs of the Royal Family on the Palace balcony and I remember his telling me how much he was struck, even as a young man, by the strength of the new Queen and how she showed her unflagging support of her husband throughout the day.

After Winchester and Trinity College, Cambridge, where he studied maths and physics and where he shared a room with his younger brother, Charles - a mistake, as they both said later - he was anxious to join up despite a heart murmur which, had he so wished, would have spared him service altogether. His name inevitably proved a mixed blessing. In fact, he spent some time being interrogated by the Home Guard when he was challenged and gave his name as Lord Kitchener. The assumption being that he was either a spy or a lunatic.

Eventually, as we have heard, he was commissioned into the Royal Signals, serving in Sicily where he was responsible for organizing the military telephone network. To his delight, this was not a desk job and there are some marvellous pictures of him at the top of a telegraph pole which were published in the Illustrated London News. After VJ Day, he was transferred to India, where he established a signals training centre

before being demobbed as Major in 1946. The Henry touch in this, is that he spent all his free time enjoying the beauties of Kashmir.

The point about Henry is that he was a genius. This was easy for strangers to overlook because of his modesty and courtesy. He would rise at seven to light the stove in his study to make sure that his much-valued assistant, Lois Cope, would be comfortable, when he himself was quite indifferent to the cold. He would never raise his voice. He could not shout any more than he could lie. But he was a genius nonetheless. While working for ICI after the war, he was instrumental in developing the chemical formula for polythene and defining the mathematical nature of ammonia. He was brilliant with numbers, the reason for the Bible *reading* you have just heard, and my enduring image is of this diligent figure at a desk in the morning room, typing programmes on to a computer in a seemingly meaningless stream of digits, and his genuine puzzlement that we could make neither head nor tail of them.

He sent a problem to a young cousin about "how to lay out a dartboard with sectors numbering one to thirty two, so that each adjacent pair of numbers added up to a perfect square." Most of us could not understand the question, let alone work out the answer, but his own specialness never occurred to him. I enjoy the story of a group of young men on a train trying to solve a Sudoku problem. Henry expressed, too loudly perhaps, his sorrow at how badly maths was taught and this elicited a loud guffaw: "If you're so smart, Grandpa, you do it." Henry took the paper and solved it in two and a half minutes.

He was not vain, even if he did have a high opinion of the shape of his ears, and clothes meant little to him. His suit had been made shortly after the war and he never saw a good reason to replace it. Once, when he had left it behind and he had to lay a wreath at a memorial service in Dorset, he confided in the Lord Lieutenant that he was wearing our gardener's jacket and Peregrine's school trousers. But if he had no sense of vanity, he was strong on duty and he gave his support freely where he thought it might do good. In all, he was involved with more than forty charitable causes. With army charities like the British Legion, the Eighth Army Veterans, the Melik Society, or of course the Lord Kitchener National Memorial Fund, and it gave him great pleasure to hand on the Presidency of this to Emma in 2008. But his interests were by no means confined to the military. He valued the work of the Masons highly which took him into many different spheres. And improving diet was a cause that was more important to him than almost any other. He was President of the Institute for Food, Brain and Behaviour, arguing the negative effect of

poor diet on prisoners many times during his long career in the Lords. He was also an early champion of organic farming, serving as President of Garden Organic, formerly the Henry Doubleday Research Association, for fifty years. Again, his quiet manner and professorial mien allowed people to dismiss these as fads at first, when history would show him to have been literally years ahead of his time. This was his power, a penetrating curiosity, an attention to detail, an extraordinary understanding and a tenacity when he knew he was right, which meant in so many cases that his thinking would prove to be the way forward.

Above all, he enjoyed the small things, honey and maps and the invention of the SatNav, the film, *Brazil*, which made him laugh until *the* tears ran down his cheeks, and Scrabble and Peggity and Chess, playing Peregrine by e-mail, and keeping a board in his study to mirror the game. He hated waste and would spend every walk picking up elastic bands and tins, usually with the plan to recycle them. And you will notice there are no cut flowers in the Church, but only growing trees destined to be planted in Dorset. Then, of course, there was the DIY. I can bear witness to the blue boiler suit and the wooden box of tools. Mainly, he loved to dismantle locks even if, in his own words, things did not always go according to plan. He mended the lock on his bathroom door at Stafford once, resulting in two women being stuck in there during a dog show, their cries for rescue hampered by the barking below.

But it is as a crucial part of our family that we will remember him. My wife's father, Charles, was an invalid from the early seventies and even before Charles's premature death in 1981, Henry took on the role of deputy father to Emma, so he was very much my father-in-law after our marriage in 1990. I was the beneficiary of his wisdom and his gentleness, his modesty and his kindness. And also his ability to inspire love to a degree that would have amazed him. As just one example of this among many, his cousin and Goddaughter, Libby Glover, has flown from Australia to attend this service today, while, in my own house, Emma would place his comfort far above any other call upon her duty, as Peregrine and I were frequently reminded. But if he would have been astonished at the level of devotion he inspired, we should not be. For this was, above all, a generous and a useful life, honourable and selfless, diligent and worthwhile, and lived in the service of others.