

Appendix: Leadership biographies

The examples presented here are meant to speak to a number of different professions and situations, but it is important to remember that 'leadership', as a concept, is by no means inextricably tied up with the famous. All of us, in the words of the song, have to 'Search for the hero inside ourselves'. There are likely to be examples of leadership within one's own family – and that is often where we look last! Some years after his father's death, one of the present authors (Peter) was reading a book on the Frontier Scouts, the old Indian Army's equivalent of the SAS, and found references to his father's skills as a military trainer (Chenevix Trench, 1986, pp111 and 123).

Leaders don't always have responsibility for teams of people; sometimes they carry a torch for an ideal, a scientific discovery or a concept. Maureen Oswin, the winner of the *Community Care* magazine's award as the person who had made the greatest contribution to social care in the last 25 years, was exceptionally self-effacing but, due to her dogged efforts, and at enormous cost to herself, the lives of disabled children were changed immeasurably for the better (see Atkinson, 2001; Philpot, 2001).

Leaders very rarely achieve great things all by themselves; they have to inspire others to reach goals. In the summation programme for the Spielberg television drama 'Band of Brothers', one of the former American soldiers recalled his grandson asking him: 'Grandpa, were you a hero?'

'No, son', he responded, 'but I served in a company of heroes.'

Biography 1: Nelson Mandela (1918-2013) – anti-apartheid champion

Nelson Mandela, who opposed the apartheid regime in South Africa, was imprisoned for his beliefs, released in 1990, and was voted in as his country's first black President. He wrote about his experiences in *The Long Walk to Freedom* (Mandela, 1994), in which he said:

'I was not born with a hunger to be free. I was born free – free in every way that I could know ... It was only when I began to learn that my boyhood freedom was an illusion, when I discovered as a young man that my freedom had already been taken from me, that I began to hunger for it. At first as a student, I wanted freedom only for myself ... but then I slowly saw that not only was I not free, but my brothers and sisters were not free. I saw that it was not just my freedom that was curtailed, but the freedom of everyone who looked like I did ... that is when the hunger for my own freedom became the greater hunger for the freedom of my people ... I am no more virtuous, self-sacrificing than the next man, but I found that I could not even enjoy the poor and limited freedoms I was allowed when I knew my people were not free. Freedom is indivisible; and the chains on any one of my people were the chains on all of them, the chains on all of my people were the chains on me.'

Mandela's obvious qualities are:

- ▶ His integrity in holding firm to his beliefs; his willingness to sacrifice his personal happiness and comforts; and the forgiveness shown to his captors and political opponents.
- ▶ The formation and articulation of the vision for a new multi-racial South Africa. His political opponent, ex-president de Klerk said of Mandela:

'The ordinary man would get to the top of the hill and sit down to admire the view. For Mandela there is always another peak to climb and another one after that. For the man of destiny the journey is never complete.'

- ▶ The energy to take on the presidential role in his 70s and to tour other countries on behalf of South Africa.
- ▶ An extraordinary internal, personal process whereby justifiable anger is turned away from bitterness and into a search for connectedness over boundaries, and brings courage in sticking with the path he knew was right.
- ▶ His commitment to peace and justice, whereby Mandela used his experience to urge other groups in conflict to find peace through justice.
- ▶ His ability to live the vision – for example, wearing the Springbok rugby jersey, with its Afrikaner connotations at the final of the Rugby World Cup, held in South Africa, and the mutual embrace with Francois Pienaar, the Afrikaner captain of the team.

Reference

Mandela N (1994) *Long Walk to Freedom*, London, Little, Brown and Company.

Biography 2: Florence Nightingale (1820-1910) – founder of modern nursing

At the height of her popularity at the end of the Crimean War (1853-1856), Florence Nightingale was perceived by the British nation in highly visual, emotive and simplistic terms as: ‘the lady with the lamp’ (quoted in Small, 1998, p53), a comfort to injured and dying soldiers who had suffered immense hardship, not just at the hands of a resolute enemy and harsh climatic conditions, but through the incompetence and neglect of their own generals. Nightingale provided a human touch in a situation of great inhumanity, giving reassurance to people in a vulnerable state. A letter from one of those soldiers gives a vivid example: ‘What a comfort it was to see her pass. She would speak to one and nod and smile to many more ... We would kiss her shadow as it fell’ (Small, 1998, p53). I think we can all identify with the comfort that an experienced and reassuring presence brings when one is on a hospital ward.

In the years following her death in 1910, however, Nightingale’s legacy became clouded and complex. Biographies began to fit her into a socio-historical pattern either as a career woman appropriate to an era looking forward to female emancipation (1910-20), or a victim of family tensions, a 1950s preoccupation.

What Small’s biography draws out is Nightingale’s searing honesty and self-appraisal which caused her profound distress when she realised that her Crimean War Hospital at Scutari, had caused huge numbers of unnecessary deaths because of the lack of attention to basic hygiene. That realisation initially incapacitated her, but then drove her forward relentlessly.

Nightingale’s early life is marked by her dreams of heroic action, and very strong personal beliefs and self-belief. In her youth she visioned scenarios in which she achieved her goals. She felt guilty about this but, of course, nowadays, personal development and sports coaches see visioning as a powerful tool for growth and achievement. Later, she spoke of: ‘Infinite wisdom ... wills mankind [sic] to create mankind by their own experience’ (p14).

Bitterly frustrated at the limitations imposed on her as a 19th century woman, she railed against her lot in life: ‘Passion, intellect, moral activity, these three have never been satisfied in woman’ (p11). She was delighted, therefore, to be appointed at the age of 32 as superintendent of a charitable hospital in Harley Street. Her ambition was wider, however, and she wished to be in a position to set up a nursing school in a large London teaching hospital, and advance nursing as a profession.

The commencement of the Crimean War, and The Times war correspondent’s searing descriptions of an army betrayed by its ‘leaders’, led to the government sending Nightingale out to manage the nursing service. Arriving at the converted barracks at Scutari, her ‘towering optimism and confidence’ (p14), energy and administrative ability, coupled with an iron will, created an organised regime, but one which was fatally undermined by inadequate hygiene and battles with the medical staff.

While Nightingale's nurses put in place items conducive to human dignity, such as operating screens, and cared for those who were terminally ill:

'The army doctors, most of them young and very inexperienced, reacted to the horrors that surrounded them in different ways. The nurses found that even the kindly doctors became exasperated and unreasonable when the newly-arrived patients proved to be too far gone to recover.'

(p26)

Returning a national hero, Nightingale was honest enough to realise that the lack of basic hygiene precautions at her own hospital had naturally caused deaths which might have been prevented.

Minister Sir Sidney Herbert, one of her main supporters in government. Had set up a committee to raise money to establish a school of nursing at a major London teaching hospital. As Nightingale became more and more convinced that environmental rather than individual treatment was the key to good health, she distanced herself from the project for a time, but later became reconciled to it and played a major role in nurturing the development of a number of nurses she saw as future leaders – especially those in community settings.

In the 21st century, many parts of the UK's infrastructure – rail, water, public buildings – are crumbling in a way that Victorians would have found unimaginable. The Health Service in the UK is still far too dominated by acute medicine as against primary and community care; and dominated by the image of the hospital and technological medicine, rather than environmental factors. Nightingale's prophetic approach to public health is perhaps as important today as ever, as is her role in giving birth to nursing as a modern profession. If she had been put in charge of public health at the peak of her popularity and fame rather than the environmentalist Edwin Chadwick, who tended to alienate those he most needed to embrace, or Dr John Simon, the proponent of specific scientific advance rather than environmental factors, the health of the nation might be quite different today.

Reference

Small H (1998) *Florence Nightingale: Avenging Angel*, London, Constable.

Biography 3: Carly Fiorina – Businessperson and future US politician?

Carly Fiorina was chair and CEO of the computer giant Hewlett Packard from 1999 to 2005. On her arrival from Lucent Technologies, she promised to shake up what she saw as a struggling enterprise and reinvent it as a company that made the internet work for businesses and consumers. The Hewlett Packard website states that: 'Under her leadership, Hewlett Packard has returned to its roots of innovation and inventiveness, and is focused on delivering the best total customer experience'.

When William Hewlett and David Packard teamed up in 1938, it was pioneering work – Hewlett was said to provide the engineering brain and Packard the visible management in the workplace.

A mediaeval history and philosophy graduate, Carly Fiorina was 46 when she took over at Hewlett Packard. Revenue and earnings rose by 15% at the end of her first year, but then the internet bubble imploded and sales were expected to fall by 10% in the financial year before the terrorist attacks in the US on 11th September 2001. The announcement of the HP/Compaq merger on 4th September 2001 was seen as something of a gamble, but Fiorina argued that, 'Doing this makes us a more effective competitor with a more effective market. For those who don't believe us – just watch!' (The Guardian, 5 September 2001).

During her time as CEO, Fiorina was known as:

- ▶ Highly energetic. She is said to rise at 4am and work out before heading into the office.
- ▶ Very communicative – and living the communications industry she worked in; customers and staff were able to email her direct.
- ▶ Having a conceptual framework that engages with the industry. In a talk on 13th November 2000, she commented:

'Looking at history, the Renaissance wasn't triggered by a single act of bravery or ingenuity. It was a collection of acts by individuals of many different talents. It was not fuelled by the bold acts of the few, but the everyday acts of many. The Digital Renaissance will be also.'

- ▶ An ability to envision the future and to take calculated risks at a time of turbulence in the market. She makes the case that building sustainable value requires 'preserving the best and reinventing the rest'. Businesses need to look inward at how they are set up to adapt and create new value in this changing landscape, and look forward in order to find long-term opportunities for creating lasting value through change.
- ▶ The creation of a narrative for life. Returning to Stanford University where she graduated, Fiorina told students that they should, 'Begin the hard work of examining their lives to find out who they truly are'.

- ▶ To do that, she advised them to treat fear as a motivator rather than an inhibitor, to make choices and decide to go forward rather than merely act out a role, and to actively engage in the process of distilling the 'text' of their lives down to its essence.

In his book *How The Mighty Fall* (2009), Jim Collins notes that, following the Hewlett-Packard acquisition of Compaq in 2001, the company's return on sales showed an erratic pattern. Fiorina's tenure came to an end on 7th February 2005. While opinions are mixed on her performance at Hewlett Packard, Collins states:

'that Fiorina's tenure at HP ended in disappointment cannot be blamed entirely on her. In fact, Fiorina was exactly what the Board appears to have wanted: a charismatic, visionary leader who would bring the magnetic star power and passion for change needed to revolutionise the company.'

In Collins' estimation, HP was already in what he calls Stage 4: 'grasping for salvation', when an organisation 'reacts to a downturn by lurching for a silver bullet' (Collins, 2009, pp88-9).

Fiorina released her autobiography, *Tough Choices*, in October 2006. Her comment on the loss of her role at Hewlett-Packard was typically forthright:

'The worst thing I could have imagined happened. I lost my job in the most public way possible, and the press had a field day with it all over the world. And guess what? I'm still here. I am at peace and my soul is intact.'

Since 2005, Carly Fiorina has had a number of business, media and academic roles, and indicated at one point that she would like to run for the United States Senate. In March 2009 she disclosed that she had been diagnosed with breast cancer and had undergone surgery with a good prognosis for a full recovery.

Perhaps her statement in June 2000 was prophetic. In talking about the journeys of life, Fiorina stated that: 'All you have to do is to engage your heart, your gut and your mind in every decision you make; engage your whole self and the journey will reveal itself with the passage of time' (address to MIT, 2nd June, 2000).

Reference

Collins, J. (2009) *How the Mighty Fall*, London: Random House Business Books.

Biography 4: Anthony Ashley-Cooper, 7th Earl of Shaftesbury (1801-1885) – Social reformer

It is difficult today to envisage an earl as a great champion of poor, disabled and dispossessed people over half a century of campaigning, but when Shaftesbury died, a vast crowd gathered outside Westminster Abbey, and his passing was mourned across the country in every sector of society. While most social reformers today, like sports people, are specialists in one area – child care, disability, employment, mental health and so on – Shaftesbury's indefatigable spirit and immense sympathy for people deprived of decent opportunities in life meant that as soon as he identified a challenge, he went into campaigning mode.

His successful campaigns to improve people's lives through legislative and community action were:

- ▶ Mental health legislation, to introduce public care and commissioners to inspect asylums and people detained (Shaftesbury's commissioners still survive today as the Mental Health Act Commission).
- ▶ Curtailed the hours that children worked.
- ▶ Set up the Ragged Schools Union to educate children from poor families, and stopped inhumane practices such as children being used as chimney sweeps. The original foundation of the Union exists today as a modern charity – The Shaftesbury Society, working with people with disabilities in education and care services.
- ▶ Championed sound public health.
- ▶ Oversaw industrial reform in the Factory Acts.
- ▶ Encouraged Florence Nightingale, and badgered the government to dispatch a sanitary commission to the Crimean War zone.
- ▶ Played a part in bringing reforming and pastorally energetic bishops into the Church of England.

Shaftesbury's life was characterised by:

- ▶ An empathy for dispossessed people, which he turned into a compelling vision and then practical and enduring action.
- ▶ A strong personal faith which he lived and promoted as a driving force in his own life and social reforms.
- ▶ Despite personal tragedy and setbacks in his parliamentary programme, he showed a long-term commitment and he also used persuasion to win round die-hard opponents.
- ▶ As a legislator, he always wanted to see for himself and experience, if possible, the people, the conditions he was determined to change, and to communicate directly with those who were oppressed by them. When he was bringing in legislation in the House of Commons to abolish the labour of children and women underground, he

went down himself into a coalmine, not long after a number of people had been killed in a tragic pit shaft accident. When questioned by colleagues as to why he had gone down into the mine, he responded that he: 'thought it a duty: easier to talk after you have seen' (Pollock, 1985, p13).

- ▶ Presence and being a passionate speaker.
- ▶ Integrity. He was able to bridge the wide class divides of the 19th century and was instinctively trusted by a wide range of people. He used his own deeply unhappy childhood and his struggles with depression in a positive way so that his personal experience fuelled his social commitment and his empathy with dispossessed people, rather than becoming introspective.
- ▶ Despite being profoundly serious about his beliefs and his reforming work, he had a well-developed sense of humour. He was once booked to take the chair at a meeting of a charitable society and, through some mistake, nobody turned up but himself and one newspaper reporter. Getting up, he said, 'At this large and distinguished meeting...'. The reporter looked up wonderingly. 'Why not?' said Shaftesbury, 'it's true. Am I not large, and are you not distinguished?!' Sharing a laugh at themselves, the two left the empty hall (Pollock, 1985, p165).
- ▶ He never forgot his core mission. When in meetings people started getting sidetracked, Shaftesbury would urge, 'What about the children?' to bring them back to their mission (see Gilbert, 2010).

References

Gilbert, P. (2010) *Social Work and Mental Health: The Value of Everything, 2nd edn*, Lyme Regis, Russell House Publishing.

Pollock, J. (1985) *Shaftesbury The Reformer*, London, Hodder and Stoughton.

Biography 5: Ernest Shackleton (1874-1922) – Explorer

'The loyalty of your men is a sacred trust you carry', wrote Sir Ernest Shackleton, 'it is something which must never be betrayed, something which you must live up to.' (cited in Morrell & Capparell, 2001, p215).

'He led, he did not drive...' – Gilbert Douglas, geologist, on the 'Quest' expedition (quoted in Morrell & Capparell, p104).

Sir Ernest Shackleton, the Antarctic explorer, is now extensively used as a leadership model in business and military circles. Yet, in many senses, he was not a conventional success.

As one of his recent biographers said:

'He never led a group larger than twenty-seven, many of his expeditions were glorious 'failures' rather than conventional 'successes', and because of the advent of the first world war at the time of the 'Endurance' expedition to Antarctic (1914-1916), his fame was overshadowed for a long time. The 'Endurance' expedition is particularly noteworthy in that, having navigated through a thousand miles of icy waters, the ship became surrounded and trapped by ice just one day's sail from its destination. The expedition was stranded on the ice, unable to move; the ship was then crushed like a toy before their eyes; after camping on the ice the crew had to take to the lifeboats when the ice broke up, which saw them moving rapidly from four months of inactivity to an intense battle for survival that brought them to the limits of human capabilities.' (p3)

Having reached Elephant Island, Shackleton took five men and sailed 800 miles in a lifeboat to reach the inhabited settlement on South Georgia. Even then there was a hazardous overland journey, made by Shackleton and two companions. And, once safe, Shackleton immediately turned round and joined the rescue party to save the majority of the crew marooned on Elephant Island. Every single member of the crew survived.

Shackleton's very singular leadership style is perhaps particularly apposite for leaders in the 21st century when rapid change and the need to manage that change effectively are critical. Morrell & Capparell quote Richard Danzig, a past US Secretary of the Navy, as saying:

'The issue is not whether they [leaders] will encounter different types of crises; they will. The issue is whether or not they will change fast enough to be prepared for those crises when they occur.' (p47)

Danzig praises Shackleton's model of leadership, and how it works on a number of levels:

- ▶ Leadership in response to danger and adversity.
- ▶ Working in extreme environments and surviving unforeseen challenges.

- ▶ Flexibility and planning.
- ▶ Gaining and retaining the loyalty of those under your command.

Like many successful leaders, Danzig highlights what he calls Shackleton's 'thoughtfulness': 'He was thoughtful in the emotional sense – he was empathetic and caring. He was also thoughtful in the cognitive sense – he thought logically even while under great stress' (p47).

As another commentator on Shackleton's life and work, Eric Miller, senior advisor for an American investment bank, points out, Shackleton's methods and ideas about how to structure work are only now coming into their own as 'organisations have become more horizontal and less hierarchical' (p101, see also Scott, 2000, for his views on the changing nature of organisations).

Traditionally, Robert F Scott – 'Scott of the Antarctic' – is the more famous of the two explorers and, interestingly, while operating at the same time, and sometimes together, both men exemplified very different types of leadership. Morrell and Capparell quote Jeremy Larkem, Managing Director of OCTO, a crisis management company, as highlighting the differences between the two men:

'For Scott: ambitious, naive technically, hierarchical, arrogant, wary of colleagues more able than himself, indifferent selector, poor trainer, bad safety record, gifted author ... For Shackleton, single-minded, excelled in crisis, technically sensible but not innovative, gregarious, excellent public speaker, broadly objective, good conceptual planner, effective selector and trainer, good safety record, erratic in business, bored by administration, politically astute.'
(p155)

Shackleton had vision; planned meticulously for hazardous expeditions; held the strategic and the personal together; and was very incisive when crises arose. In addition, he had an ability to delegate but never shirked personal responsibility.

It is interesting that Shackleton's early life showed little signs of promise. He was introverted at an early age and achieved little at school. A schoolmaster who met Shackleton after he had become a famous explorer confessed, 'We never discovered you when you were at Dulwich.' 'No', Shackleton replied sympathetically, 'but I had not then discovered myself.' (p20)

Shackleton's family make-up is interesting. He grew up in a warm and supportive family environment with eight sisters, and his grandmother and aunts also helping his mother with the children. Morrell and Capparell state that:

'It is no wonder that many people would later remark on his strong feminine sensibilities. Despite a burly physique, enormous stamina and a tough, no nonsense manner, he could be nurturing and gentle, quick to forgive frailties and generous without seeking thanks in return. One friend called him 'a Viking with a mother's heart.'
(p18)

The values of the family were founded on Quaker and Anglican traditions, and in later life Shackleton, 'maintained his faith and his moral compass, balancing his contemplative, spiritual side with practical, humanistic commitment' (p19). The extraordinary feats that accompanied the 'Endurance' expedition created a vivid feeling in Shackleton and his companions that 'providence' had guided them. In the final march across the mountains and glaciers of South Georgia, it appeared to the three trekkers that they had a fourth companion with them. This was incorporated by T. S. Eliot in 'The Waste Land' (p187).

The biography by Morrell and Capparell is written as a narrative, but also has summaries at the end of each chapter that explore the leadership lessons, which is most useful for trainers and students.

Some of Shackleton's main leadership attributes are as follows:

- ▶ He was strategic in his planning but paid close attention to detail.
- ▶ He was clear that, while he was determined to meet his goals, success must not be at the sacrifice of men's lives.
- ▶ Awareness of his environment was crucial as an explorer, and he always had in his mind a number of alternative courses of action so that his strategic approach was flexible, depending on the circumstances he encountered.
- ▶ As a leader, Shackleton was particularly good at identifying the right people for his expeditions and developing them.
- ▶ His choice of Frank Wild as his second in command was particularly inspired. Wild's complementary qualities were a vital element in safeguarding the welfare, and ultimately the lives, of the crew on the 'Endurance' expedition.
- ▶ It is clear that Shackleton made mistakes in human resource management in his first expeditions, but he quickly learned from his mistakes.
- ▶ He was an expert in keeping up the morale of the crew. He encouraged celebrations, singing, games and so on. When only essentials could be taken on the boats after the Endurance sank in the ice, Shackleton insisted on the banjo being taken because 'it's vital, mental medicine and we shall need it' (p87).
- ▶ His biographers point out that he developed a personal relationship with each crew member, no matter what their rank or role. Dr Macklin, then a youngster at 24, said that, when Shackleton came across a member of the crew:

'...he would get into conversation and talk to you in an intimate sort of way, asking you little things about yourself – how you were getting on, how you liked it, what particular side of the work you were enjoying most ... This communicativeness in Shackleton was one of the things his men valued in him.'

(p117)

- ▶ Loyalty was one of Shackleton's prime requisites. He was loyal and he demanded it from his crew, and their loyalty to each other as well as to him. Shackleton also led by example and lent a hand with even the most menial of tasks when it was required. This was not a dereliction of his strategic duty but a way of encouraging solidarity, getting to know the task and the people, and showing everybody how he wanted things done.
- ▶ Unlike many people, Shackleton was not jealous of other people's expertise. He hired and encouraged people who had better technical qualities than he did and was keen to learn from them.

References

Eliot, T. S. (1954) 'The Waste Land' in *Selected Poems*, London, Faber & Faber

Vibert-Douglas in Morrell, M. and Capparell, S. (2001) *Shackleton's Way: Leadership Lessons from The Great Antarctic Explorer*, London, Nicholas Brealey.

Biography 6: Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson – Sports person

Tanni Grey-Thompson is the former Paralympic athlete who, born with spina bifida, and experiencing numerous setbacks in a sport not geared to her condition, turned herself into the most famous Paralympian in the world.

At the time of the publication of her autobiography (*Seize the Day*, 2001) she had won the London Marathon five times and she brought home four gold medals from Sydney in the 2000 Olympics. Inadvertently, she also brought disability issues into the spotlight when, on winning the 2000 Sports Personality of the Year Award, the BBC failed to provide a ramp so that she could join Denise Lewis and Steve Redgrave on the podium!

Grey-Thompson's attitude to life is summed up in the first page of her book: 'I've never thought why me? I've never cried because I'm in a wheelchair and I've never felt bitter. This is just the way it is'. When her mother asked her what she thought about having spina bifida, she replied: 'Well, if it wasn't me then it would be someone else. I've got it, there's nothing I can do about it, so I might as well get on with it' (Grey-Thompson, 2001, p1). *Seize the Day* will speak to many people with disabilities and their families who have shown considerable leadership qualities in having to battle against the obstacles which society places in their paths. This autobiography looks at the difficulties the family experienced with doctors – for example, one suggesting that Tanni have a painful and lengthy operation to make her legs the same length. She challenged the doctor:

'I asked if the operation would do me any good and was told by a doctor, "no, but your legs will be the same length".

"But will I walk?"

"No, but your legs will be the same length". I thought, no way.'
(p14)

Getting to a school that would suit her needs rather than the bureaucratic mindset of the council, the difficulties being taken seriously in her desire to be an athlete when she went to Loughborough University, and the exclusion of Paralympic athletes at various international games, are detailed in a vivid, but very un pitying manner. Perhaps one of the most difficult times was when she had been extremely successful in Barcelona in 1992, winning four gold medals and breaking all four records, doing relatively less well at the Atlanta games, and being told by one official: 'You're finished now. You should retire'. Although 'a lot of coaches told me I failed ... I'm quite bloody-minded at times and I thought I'd carry on' (p132).

In the end, she won four gold medals in Sydney, continued a successful career in the London Marathon and became a development officer for the British Athletics Association. The extraordinary feat involved in both retaining a competitive edge over so many years and being successful at distances ranging from 100 metres to the Marathon needs to be appreciated.

Some of the ingredients for Grey-Thompson's success are:

- ▶ Her lack of self-pity and her 'can do' philosophy. She clearly has enormous self-belief, and it is interesting to note that as a child she didn't have idols like many young people do:

'I didn't have posters of pop bands or film stars on my bedroom walls when I was growing up. I always wanted to be me, getting out there and doing something rather than just dreaming about it.'

(p31)

- ▶ Clearly very competitive, and extremely focused, she also knows when to co-operate, and there is a description on pp129-30 in her autobiography, which most runners will appreciate, of a time a competitor had pulled her through much of a marathon and, although she is feeling stronger at the finish, they go over the line together as that, in her own words, is 'fair'.
- ▶ Her life has been centred around competing. In an amusing but rather awe-inspiring anecdote, she admits that both she and her husband, Ian, would have been tempted to compete in a race on the morning of their wedding, if the race hadn't been cancelled!
- ▶ A sense of humour is evident in all that she does and an ability to live life to the full.
- ▶ She has the ability to make friendships which are mutually invigorating. Her friendship with the BBC presenter Helen Rollason, who later died of cancer but who was a great promoter of sport for people with disabilities, is particularly touching.

Tanni Grey-Thompson sums up her philosophy of life with the following words: 'What I do believe is that if you have the will, the luck, the time and the energy, you can achieve everything. Whether you can walk or not does not come into it.' (p176)

Reference

Grey-Thompson, T. (2001) *Seize the Day*, London, Hodder and Stoughton.

Biography 7: Three generals: Richard O'Connor, Erwin Rommel and 'Bill' Slim

Richard O'Connor (1889-1981)

Napoleon is said to have been overheard muttering: 'Don't give me good generals, give me lucky ones!' Both Richard O'Connor and Erwin Rommel were excellent generals, but the latter was fortunate that his tendency to lead from the front, while getting him into scrapes, never led to his capture (though it nearly did), while O'Connor was captured in North Africa and spent two years in a prisoner of war camp in Italy. Rommel is celebrated in books and films as a superb tactician and man who stood as an emblem against Nazism at the end of the war, while only the student of military history relishes O'Connor's nearly decisive North Africa campaign in 1940/41.

O'Connor was slight of figure and mild of manner, but by the time he faced the Italian invasion of the western desert in September 1940, he had already endured battles in the Alpine snows, the mud of Ypres and on the north-west frontier of India. During World War I he received a DSO and Bar, an MC and the Italian Silver Medal for Valour.

In September 1940, O'Connor commanded 36,000 British and commonwealth troops against 80,000 Italians, but he had trained his soldiers to a high degree of battle-readiness, he had the edge in equipment and the intelligence to exploit it. First, using 'Fabian' tactics (drawing the enemy onto ground of his own choosing) he then turned on them and conducted a lightning campaign which resulted in the complete capitulation of a large Italian army and its allies. 35,000 officers and men had advanced 500 miles in ten weeks in vehicles which were in a poor state of repair before the advance started. Over 130,000 Italian and Libyan soldiers had been taken prisoner, 180 medium and about 200 light tanks, 845 guns and an immense amount of other material were captured (Keegan, 1999). Pitt, the author of the chapter on O'Connor, in Keegan (1999), quotes the general as saying, 'I think this may be termed a complete victory as none of the enemy escaped' (p197). This was the kind of wholesale victory, very rarely accomplished by British generals in World War I or II. O'Connor's victory was truly a British blitzkrieg.

How did he achieve this astonishing feat? He did it by:

- ▶ Meticulous planning – with exercises conducted both on paper and on specially constructed outdoor sites.
- ▶ By retaining the element of surprise and masking his intentions to an extraordinary degree so as to confuse the enemy. The Italians were constantly surprised by the rapidity of O'Connor's movement and the direction from which his troops came. He also managed to build up an image in the Italians' minds that they were outnumbered by O'Connor, rather than outnumbering him by more than two to one!
- ▶ He concentrated initially on gaining air supremacy.
- ▶ He had superior equipment, but that does not necessarily lead to victory in itself. Sometimes excellent equipment is used inappropriately – for example, the

use of tanks in penny packets (small groups) rather than to punch through the enemy's lines.

- ▶ O'Connor understood his technology and used it skilfully.
- ▶ Speed of thought and action.
- ▶ Pitt remarks on O'Connor 'closely attending all phases of the day's actions' (p190). This Wellingtonian concept of attention to the process of the strategy, while trusting junior commanders and allowing them to show initiative, is a constant theme in successful generalship.
- ▶ Calculated risk taking was demonstrated when, rather than simply securing ground gained, which was a British flaw in the two world wars, O'Connor constantly urged his troops forward in swinging hooks to cut off his opponents.
- ▶ To push soldiers who were tired, thirsty, battle weary and whose vehicles were almost past repair, required a high degree of motivation, morale and trust. O'Connor's men trusted him and his leadership competence. The Australian advance along the coast, through minefields and immensely difficult terrain, ensured that the northern arm of O'Connor's pincer movement trapped the Italian rearguard and pushed them into the arms of other forces. Australian troops had a certain in-built distrust of British commanders, but Pitt remarks on their trust for O'Connor.

North Africa was very nearly captured in its entirety. If it had been, then Rommel's campaign in the western desert would not have been possible, and the war would have been shortened immeasurably. Unfortunately, other strategic requirements – in the end mistaken ones – meant that the majority of O'Connor's forces were withdrawn. O'Connor was very unluckily captured by forward troops of Rommel's command. He spent two years in a prisoner of war camp, and enterprisingly escaped wearing clothes from the drama company! He later played a distinguished role in the battle for Normandy.

O'Connor is little known today. If he hadn't been captured and had pressed on, then the history of the Second World War might have been very different. As Pitt remarks:

'The ifs of history are of course imponderable. But one certainty is that the loss, so early, of Richard Nugent O'Connor from the higher direction of Britain's war effort was as unfortunate for us as it was for him.'

(Keegan, 1991, p198)

Erwin Rommel (1891-1944)

The image of Erwin Rommel has been etched into our memories as the consummate commander by films like James Mason's 'Desert Fox' or 'The Longest Day'. He is regarded as the creator of the Africa Corps; the 'Good German' who won the respect of his adversaries; the honourable man whom Hitler forced to his death as the Fuhrer's paranoia grew. Winston Churchill himself paid tribute to Rommel in the House of Commons, describing 'a very daring and skilful opponent ... and, may I say across the havoc of war, a great general.' (quoted in Fraser, 1994, p5)

Fraser, a former soldier as well as a historian, highlights three qualities which, when combined, composed the battlefield commander's skill:

1. **Temperament.** The commander relishes the challenges. This does not mean that he or she is unaware or uncaring about the human cost, but relishes the adrenaline of the crisis.
2. **An understanding of the history, knowledge base and skills of war.** The great commanders have an ability to carry technical and professional expertise in their head and apply it in a variety of situations with practical skill and a sense of what will work, when and why. It was this sense that men in the Africa Corps called Rommel's 'Fingerspitzengefühl' – 'his almost animal response to the dangers, the chances, the currents of battle.' (Fraser, 1994, p7)
3. **The ability to think and act with clarity, with resolution and with speed.** This was an attribute that O'Connor and Rommel shared. They were attributes which the British Army had honed in the relatively small colonial wars, but appeared to have difficulty in the world wars in translating this to larger theatres. The Germans had the immense advantage that they had garnered their most able people and put them through a staff college training which enabled them to ingest and then use those skills in a variety of theatres of war during the period 1939 to 1945.

Rommel had a number of other attributes:

1. Fraser makes a major point about Rommel's integrity and loyalty. Rommel wrote that once a commander had won his soldiers' trust, they 'will follow him through thick and thin' (p39). The Field Marshal's loyalty to his country, its leaders (mistaken until the veil was lifted from his eyes), his family, his staff and his men was, in Fraser's words, 'wholly faithful, wholly true' (p19). Rommel did not always find that loyalty was reciprocated and, towards the end of his time in Africa, the lack of trust by his superiors in Berlin caused him both personal and professional unhappiness and also took the edge off his military competence: 'professionally, Rommel was deeply unhappy. It seemed to him that his opinion on military essentials had recently been disregarded or overruled. He felt that he was no longer trusted.' (p402)
2. Rommel had leadership qualities that rarely seemed to falter: strategic grasp, clarity of thinking, incisiveness, and speed of thought and action. While leading the point of the German blitzkrieg through France in 1940, he moved so fast that his unit was called the Gespensterdivision – 'the ghost division'. Rommel 'remained absolutely convinced that in mobile operations a commander must influence decisions at the critical point. In an advance, this is at the tip of the spear.' (p207)
3. Related to this, he exercised dynamic action at critical points. Rommel believed that: 'in a fluid battle situation, near superhuman energy is required at particular places and particular moments; and that the function of the commander is to supply that energy where it is even temporarily defective'. Through this he imposed his will and imprinted his image on his adversaries in a manner reminiscent of other great commanders.

4. There has been a lot of controversy around Rommel's military judgement in certain instances. At times he appears to have been reckless in his command in the western desert, and Fraser believes that an extremely competent staff group sometimes got their general out of trouble. The German military machine was one of the most efficient of this or any other age, and sometimes Rommel appears to have ridden it too hard. Rommel's justification was that the margins of victory and defeat in Africa were very slim, and just as in O'Connor's campaign, it was sometimes right to push for outright victory. In Normandy, the controversy still rages as to whether Rommel's dictum of fight the allies on the beaches, or Von Rundstedt's concept of a mobile strike force of panzers would be the more effective. In the event, it looks likely that Rommel was right. Allied air power was such that, unless the allies were stopped on the beaches, which they very nearly were in parts of the American sector, the allies would have overwhelming strength to move through France.
5. Rommel was well known for his sense of humour and also his chivalry. He recognised the talents of his adversaries, carrying a copy of Wavell's published essays on generalship with him on campaign. When a British commando was captured and taken to Rommel, the Field Marshal didn't use the obvious trick of waiting for the officer to come to him at his desk, but moved forward to meet him, shake him by the hands and entered into an animated discussion.
6. Above all, Rommel allied the strategic with the human: 'he thought ahead with clarity, he had a vision, a concept of battle before he launched it. And he shared it with his subordinates... This was far superior to attempting to preordain their every action.' (Fraser, p418)

William ('Uncle Bill') Slim

Slim's 14th army in Burma was sometimes referred to as 'the forgotten army'. William Slim might also have been referred to as the forgotten general in the years immediately after the war: an unfashionable early career with the Gurkha Rifles, and an unspectacular start to the war, it was Slim who had halted the Japanese invasion at the gates of India, in the desperately fought battles of Kohima and Imphal, and then, having rebuilt an army, he launched it against the Japanese in a campaign that took the allies back through Burma. It was apt that Slim's own account of the campaign should have been called 'defeat into victory'. Both sides in the war used a great deal of propaganda, and it is useful to get behind that to see the man beneath the general's uniform. As the author George MacDonald Fraser wrote in his autobiography of life as a private soldier in the Burma Campaign, *Quartered Safe Out Here* (1992):

'By rights each official work should have a companion volume in which the lowliest actor gives his version (like Sydenham Pointz for the Thirty Years War or Rifleman Harris in the Peninsula); it would at least give posterity a sense of perspective.'
(p.XI)

Lord Louis Mountbatten, Supreme Commander, South East Asia, stated firmly that 'Slim was the finest general the second world war produced' (Fraser, 1992, p31), but perhaps the frontline soldier's perspective is even more crucial, especially in fighting that often became hand-to-hand combat:

'The biggest boost to morale was the burly man who came to talk to the assembled battalion by the lake shore – I'm not sure when, but it was unforgettable. Slim was like that: the only man I've ever seen who had a force that came out of him, a strength of personality that I have puzzled over since, for there was no apparent reason for it ... His appearance was plain enough: large, heavily built, grim faced ... the rakish Gurkha that was at odds with the slung carbine ... he might have been a yard foreman who had become a managing director ... nor was he an orator.'

Slim had a number of attributes that contributed to his success as a leader:

- ▶ Slim had that ability to be 'Uncle Bill', the soldier's trusted uncle, while at no time leaving any room for doubt as to who was in command.
- ▶ Duncan Anderson, who wrote the chapter on Slim in Keegan's edited work, says that Field Marshall Slim 'revealed a natural talent as a manager of men' (1992, p302). Bill Slim would often pick out people who seemed to be rogues or misfits and bring out the best of them. During his time with the Ghurkhas, he learned the languages and customs of the people of north India. The 14th Army, in Hickey's (1992) opinion, was possibly the most multiracial army since those of the ancient world, and he brought the best out of a potentially complex and difficult command.
- ▶ Because of the particular difficulties in Burma, Slim never forgot the importance of good logistics and took great care to see that his staff officers knew that their contribution had a vital role to play in success at the front line.
- ▶ 'Slim was both a good student and a good teacher' (1991, p303). He could absorb both quantity and quality of information and impart it well.
- ▶ Slim always accepted responsibility. The retreat from Burma was handled with great determination and skill.
- ▶ Because of the massive defeat the army had suffered and its heterogeneous nature, Slim decided not only to train his troops but to motivate them by personal contact: 'From past experience, Slim had learned that the best approach was the most simple and direct – to talk to as many troops as he could, man to man, cutting through the traditional barriers of military hierarchy.' (p313 – a method that Fraser describes so graphically)
- ▶ Some generals are characterised, sometimes unfairly, as either good at defence or offence. Slim was a master of both, and Anderson believes that he ranks with Guderian, Manstein and Patton as an offensive commander (p319).

It was a desperately hard campaign and there still remains the memorial to the defence at Kohima and Imphal:

*'When you go home, tell them of us and say
For your tomorrow we gave our today.'*
(quoted in Hickey, 1992, p263)

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Biography 8: Dame Stella Rimington – spy supremo

When the James Bond films introduced the admirable Dame Judi Dench as the new 'M', the head of the British Secret Service, it was either art imitating life, or perhaps life imitating art! In 1993, Stella Rimington became the first female Head of MI5, and the first Head of the Secret Service to be named and photographed.

She was also the first Secret Service Chief to publish her memoirs, and it was then that she hit a storm of criticism and accusations of double standards because of the strong grip that MI5 had kept over revelations by its operatives (see Rimington, 2001, and Norton-Taylor & Rusbridger, 2001).

Rimington's is a quite extraordinary career story, and yet, perhaps because of a natural reticence born of working in such a secretive organisation, or perhaps because of the rigour of the censorship which she submitted to, Stella Rimington's leadership characteristics remain amazingly opaque. Born in Essex, educated at Nottingham High School, and with her first job as assistant archivist in Worcestershire County Records Office, there was nothing apparent to foretell her meteoric rise when, in 1967, she was approached by the MI5 representative in India and asked if she would like to do some work on a temporary basis.

On her return to the UK in 1969, she joined MI5 on a permanent basis but:

'...it soon became clear that a strict sex discrimination policy was in place at MI5. It did not matter that I had a degree ... the policy was that men were recruited as what were called 'officers' and women had their own career structure, a second-class career as 'assistant officers'.'

(Rimington, 2001, p5)

As Norton-Taylor & Rusbridger (2001, p18) point out:

'It is difficult to imagine anyone rising to the top of the pile without a streak of ruthlessness to match whatever analytical or managerial qualities they might also have. And yet, whether due to modesty, a gift for understatement, or the work of the Whitehall censor – the book itself does not quite explain the meteoric career of this woman.'

Perhaps one reason is the state of MI5 that Rimington describes. She is affectionately scathing of a number of the operatives, usually people who had been successful in a military career, but now either damaged or out of their depth. She also sardonically remarks that one of the best sources of information about the communist party of the UK was the *Morning Star* newspaper. Rimington opines that the large standing order for the newspaper from MI5 may well have kept that newspaper going when otherwise it might have folded!

Rimington pushed to become a full officer of MI5, clearly causing great consternation among the tweed suits(!) and, in 1973, was so promoted. By the late 1970s, and now with two children at home, she was looking to break through the glass ceiling to try and move into the job of agent-running. Already Rimington was just demonstrating attributes of high intelligence, perception of situations and immense determination to succeed in an inimical environment.

Determination was required in great measure when her spell as an agent-runner coincided with her two daughters being both of school age. In one instance she was due to meet an agent who was considering defecting and had agreed to meet him in a safe house in the Barbican. Just as she was due to set off, she was phoned to say that her younger daughter had been taken ill and rushed to St Bartholomew's Hospital. Torn between abandoning her daughter or the agent she was due to meet, she managed to fulfil both obligations by going via the safe house to St Bartholomew's Hospital and borrowing money from the would-be defector to pay for the taxi involved in this complex manoeuvre. Rimington speculates whether the apparent scarcity of funds available to MI5 operatives had any influence on the prospective defector's decision, but eventually he decided not to cross the line!

Rimington acknowledges that her frequent absences on operations and the stresses inherent in her work caused tension in her marriage and the couple separated. When in 1986 she was promoted to Director of Counter Espionage (or 'K', as it was known then), she was still caring for her two daughters, then aged 12 and 16. Although her book gives some detail of the tensions of the job – for example, the Georgi Markov assassination and the IRA bombing campaign in London and its effect on the family. One presumes that all this was fairly much downplayed.

When asked by Norton-Taylor and Rusbridger about what qualities and techniques she had and used, Rimington talks about the theme of her book which is very much about being a woman in a man's world, and a very ultraconservative world at that. She talks to the journalist about the advantages of gender: 'Any woman will tell you, you work out what you can use to your advantage, the fact that you're female – and that's what you do.' (Norton-Taylor & Rusbridger, 2001, p18)

Rimington felt that the very male-dominated environment that made it so difficult for her to progress also left her colleagues very unused to coping with a woman who was both intelligent and decisive – perhaps something akin to the difficulties that Margaret Thatcher's cabinet had in coping with her (Blake, 1997).

Rimington certainly had to display steel in mind and spirit and, as she says about the pressure on her when she wanted to publish her memoirs:

'I've never been one to retreat at the first whiff of gunshot. If you terrorise everybody who wishes to say anything – even like me, originally, wanting to write about what it's like being a woman through the period I've been working – then clearly people won't use the system, and that would be a pity. What you need is a system people are encouraged to use.'

(cited in Norton-Taylor & Rusbridger, 2001, p21)

Perhaps in the Security Services more than anywhere there are the issues of ethical engagement, and the need to balance ends and means:

'The agent-running thing does bring you up sharp with the ethical dilemma of asking people to do things that might put them at risk. And that is the moment, when it's personalised and you're dealing with people face-to-face, that you actually focus on.' (p22)

Rimington still sees herself as fighting these battles, in a new life in the boardroom of British companies – still arguing for diversity and for talent to be recognised in whatever form: 'By the time I left public service, I think it's true to say that women were regarded as paid-up members of the human race. But in the boardrooms of British companies, that really is not yet the case.' (p29)

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Biography 9: Sir Alex Ferguson – Football manager

'On one of my more philosophical days, I tried to define the feeling that should exist among footballers aspiring to reach the heights: when you can look round this dressing room and be glad that you have every player you see will be out there shoulder-to-shoulder with you, then you will know you really do have a team.'

(Ferguson, 2000, p255)

Even enemies of Manchester United, and there are many, would have to admit that the club has been remarkably successful over the years – especially the years when Alex Ferguson was manager – while playing attractive, attacking football.

Most of the revival of this 'sleeping giant' of a football club must be down to the skill and sheer will power of the rugged Scot from the Govan district of Glasgow, who also temporarily disrupted the hegemony of Rangers and Celtic in the Scottish Premier League, when he led unfancied Aberdeen to four championships.

Perhaps the first attribute to strike one about Ferguson is his loyalty to kith and kin. Born and brought up in the tough, Clydeside area of Glasgow, his comments about his family are always warm, sometimes moving: 'Nobody', he writes, 'could have had a better home than I had.' (p11)

His father was demanding but supportive of his ambitions, and his mother was always a staunch figure backing him. Loyalty is a major ingredient in Ferguson's make-up. He expresses this about his family, his Govan friends, many of the managers and chairmen he worked with and for, and players such as Bryan Robson and Steve Bruce, captains during his time at United.

He has absolutely no time for dishonesty or lack of integrity, and is caustic in his comments: 'The club [Falkirk] had suffered a grievous loss when Willy Palmer ceased to be chairman. He was a man who could be trusted, which is something I never felt able to say about his successor.' (p119)

When parting from Falkirk FC, Ferguson commented that the manager 'found it difficult to look me in the eye' (yes, I'm sure many of us have experienced that!). But Ferguson has his revenge, and had no problem delighting in it: 'When they [Falkirk] came calling on my next employers, Ayr United, I scored the winning goal against Prentice's team. One good team deserves another!' (p122)

Sir Alex is realistic about people, but can also be generous about their good qualities. In writing about the effervescent but somewhat erratic former Scotland manager Ally Macleod, he wrote: 'Some might have been put off by the dream factory Ally carried in his head but I was stimulated by his bubbling enthusiasm' (p123).

Although Ferguson may have come to be seen as the finished product, he studied those around him – for example:

'There was much to be learned on that course at Lilleshall and the star of the show for me was Jimmy Sirrell ... It was instantly obvious that he commanded the respect of everybody at Lilleshall and I've decided that I wouldn't neglect any opportunity to listen to him. He did not disappoint me. The principles of management he laid down with such emphasis were often simple but their importance was so undeniable that I always tried to adhere to them ... It was a reminder that common sense, when there is enough of it, amounts to wisdom.'

(p121)

The Celtic and Scotland manager, Jock Stein, was perhaps his main mentor. In this he tells stories about himself which shows a capacity for humility and willingness to learn, which is very instructive. When Ferguson passes some miners campaigning for strike funds without contributing, Stein calls him back with the words:

"I'm surprised at you of all people forgetting these lads". I offered no apology or excuse. It was an important message he was giving me and I have never forgotten it. In fact, I go out of my way if I ever see anyone in that position or selling the Big Issue.'

For those of us who are, or have been, in senior leadership positions, Sir Alex's experience at Manchester United is encouraging in a paradoxical way. He was not an instant success; far from it. There are strong indications that, if he had not won a particularly crucial cup game in his third full season at the club, Ferguson might well have been sacked and regarded as 'a failure'. Sir Alex came into one of the world's biggest football clubs as a man who had transformed Scottish football through his success with Aberdeen, but it took six full seasons to bring the championship to Old Trafford.

It is primarily to his mother that Ferguson attributes his courage and determination (p244), and he is quite clear about his desire to build long-standing success on firm foundations, even when the sky was darkest:

'My aim in management has always been to lay foundations that will make a club successful for years, or even decades. Flash-in-the-pan achievements, such as some good runs in cup competitions ... could never satisfy me ... putting them in a position to challenge consistently would, I knew, be a long haul. I would have to build from the bottom up, rectifying the flaws I had recognised and spreading my influence and self-belief through every layer of the organisation.' (p242)

It is useful to look at a modern management tool like the Balanced Scorecard when considering Ferguson's achievements at United, and the tensions between the need for instant success against long-term success, financial returns against the building of a team able to compete at the highest level, and a learning process which builds on success and continues it.

The Balanced Scorecard (see Kaplan & Norton, 1996) has performance measures under four headings:

- ▶ The business process perspective – is the organisation producing what it needs?
- ▶ The financial perspective – is the organisation operating efficiently and within budget?

- ▶ The learning perspective – does the organisation develop its staff, and take on board developments in technology?
- ▶ The customer perspective – how do the organisation's customers perceive it? Is the organisation satisfying its main customers?

Ferguson has probably never read the book, but he has in effect achieved 'strategic alignment' from the top to the bottom of the organisation, which is what the Balance Scorecard proposes, a performance method promoted by the Audit Commission and Cabinet Office (2001). One leadership factor which comes out most frequently is his attention to people: their potential, their vital contribution to the whole, their individual needs – whether it be his young stars, possible future players, stars in temporary disgrace (as in the notorious incident involving Eric Cantona, for example), and indeed everybody in the organisation:

'I wanted to form a personal link with everybody around the place – not just the players, the coaches and the backroom staff – but the office workers, the cooks and servers in the canteen and the laundry ladies. All had to believe that they were part of the club and that a resurgence was coming.'

(p242)

Ferguson believes everybody has a vital part to play in a sophisticated modern organisation. With that, however, is a willingness to make tough decisions. Manchester United in 1986, when he took over, had a drinking culture: 'Drinking to Failure' (p239) as he called it, and Ferguson ruthlessly confronted it, ridding the club of those he felt were undermining its success, and after a disappointing 1994/95 season, selling Paul Ince ('the decision to sell Paul Ince was mine alone and nobody at Old Trafford was inclined to let me forget the fact', p361) and two other key players. He then won the double with the team of 'kids', as the football commentator Alan Hansen termed them. Ferguson's ruthlessness at the beginning of the season earned him a great deal of opprobrium and, as he puts it: 'there was nothing splendid about my isolation' (p361), but Sir Alex had the strength of character to ride that temporary unpopularity.

Scouting for talent, setting up a football academy and encouraging his young players, he produced a crop of almost legendary youngsters: Beckham, Giggs, Scholes and so on, who became almost priceless. Again, Ferguson paid tribute to past mentors:

'He had a good way with young players and always made you feel special. Remembering how much that meant to me then, I have tried hard to convey warmth and reassurance to youngsters I have dealt with as a manager.'

(p30)

Throughout the book there is a demonstration of an immense mental strength, but not in any sense an insensitivity. This is an emotional man who allows what can be termed his emotional dialogue to convey a passion for people, for the game and for life.

There is considerable misunderstanding about the emotional content in leadership. The 'Iron Duke' Wellington himself, had a resolute will and self-control in times of conflict, but was moved to tears at the cost afterwards. Following the Battle of Waterloo, a friend recalled:

'His eye glistening and his voice broken as he spoke of the losses sustained at Waterloo, he said, "I hope to God I have fought my last battle ... while I am in the thick of it I am too much occupied to feel anything; but it is wretched just after ... and I always say that next to a battle lost, the greatest misery is a battle gained".'
(quoted in Keegan, 1987, p161)

A sense of humour shines through Ferguson's book, as does a very clear sense of integrity and what is right and wrong – old-fashioned terms maybe, but something, coupled with a Wellingtonian attentiveness to any situation, are qualities his players clearly respond to.

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Biography 10: Jack Welch – Business person

Bennis (1989) quotes Jack Welch, retired Chief Executive of General Electric, as saying:

'Yesterday's idea of the boss, who became the boss because he or she knew one more fact than the person working for them, is yesterday's manager. Tomorrow's person leads through a vision, a shared set of values, a shared objective.' (p194)

Welch is one of the most quoted corporate business leaders of his generation, leading General Electric, at times a major challenge, and making it a world leader through initiatives like Six SIGMA Quality, Globalisation and E-Business. In his book, *Good to Great* (2001), Jim Collins points to General Electric as a company that grows its leaders who, in turn, are committed to the creation of something greater and longer lasting than their own egos. To achieve this, they need a deeper understanding of the company's purpose and possibilities than is often achieved by bringing in a high-profile outsider.

In his autobiography (Welch, with Byrne, 2001), Welch is very keen to acknowledge other people, rather than highlight his own talents, though there is also no doubt concerning the man's self-belief. As he puts it:

'At every moment of my life, I've been lucky to have people at my side whose support, encouragement and love made all the difference in the world. They filled my journey with great fun and learning. They often made me look better than I am.' (p439)

Welch also highlights an issue which will be true of a number of great leaders. While a number, in the Napoleonic mode, are clearly well ahead of most of their contemporaries, the talent in others is to bring out the very best of those around them. Welch puts it very graphically: 'I sometimes said that while I might not be the brightest bulb in the chandelier, over the years I've always thought I was pretty good at getting most of the bulbs to light up.' (ibid)

In a chapter entitled 'What this CEO thing is all about', Welch sets out 'some of the ideas that worked for me'.

The ones he names are:

- ▶ **Integrity.** Welch recounts that he was once asked, 'How can you be a good Catholic and a business man at the same time?' Welch says that he answered: 'Emphatically, "I am". The simple answer is: by maintaining integrity, establishing it and never wavering from it supported everything I did through good and bad times. People may not have agreed with me on every issue – and I may not have been right all the time – but they always knew they were getting it straight and honest ... I never had two agendas. There was only one way – the straight way.' (p381)
- ▶ **The corporation and the community.** Social responsibility begins with a company that is strong in itself and willing and able to operate responsibly and invest in people and the community.
- ▶ **Setting a tone.** 'The organisation takes its cue from the person on top. I always told our business leaders their intensity determined their organisation intensity. The CEO

sets the tone. Every day, I try to get into the scheme of every person in the place. I wanted them to feel my presence' (p382). This, as many of us know, is a highly ambitious aspiration in a large organisation.

If you read Keegan (1987) you will see that Alexander the Great took this approach, but of course it was in a relatively small army on a foreign expedition, and therefore pulled very tightly together through circumstances in a way which enabled Alexander to exert his formidable personality to its maximum extent. Keegan describes Alexander in battle:

'The knowledge that their King was taking the supreme risk drove capable and well-briefed subordinates, at the head of drilled and self-confident troops, to fight as hard and skilfully as if he had been at the elbow of each one of them.'
(p81, emphasis added)

Welch, however, clearly had considerable success in creating this personal alignment.

- ▶ **Maximising an organisation's intellect.** This is what Welch calls 'getting every employee's mind into the game', and GE worked hard at learning from all parts of the organisation so as to gain competitive advantage.
- ▶ **People first, strategy second.** Welch found that the company had some excellent strategies, but performance was mediocre and failed to meet their customers' requirements until the right people were put into place.
- ▶ **Informality.** By this, Welch means cutting down on bureaucracy, welcoming ideas and including people so that, 'it's about making sure everybody counts – and everybody knows they count' (p384).
- ▶ **Self-confidence.** Welch believes that arrogance 'is a killer', and so is 'wearing ambition on one's sleeve'. On the other hand, insecure people find it difficult to be challenged and are usually thrown badly off balance by proposals for change. Welch advises 'seeking out people who are comfortable in their own skin' (p384). He also advises: 'Don't ever compromise "being you" for any damn job in any institution' (p384).
- ▶ **Passion.** Welch argues for organisations which 'ignite passion', and leaders at all levels who care passionately for the role they are undertaking and the people they are working with and for.
- ▶ **Stretch.** Reaching out for aspirations.
- ▶ **Celebrations.** Jack Welch shares with his British counterpart, Sir John Harvey Jones, a belief that success has to be celebrated to keep motivation going and keep people stretching.
- ▶ **Aligning rewards with measurements.** Setting and measuring the right objectives.
- ▶ **Differentiation develops great organisations.** This is a tough one, especially in public sector organisations where the rewards and incentives are less, but it is true to say that the leader who listens carefully to staff on the front line will often hear them being the most critical of staff who don't perform – for precisely the reason that they have to carry the performance gap that is left.

- ▶ **Owning the people.** One of Welch's mottos was: 'You own the businesses. You're renting the people'.
- ▶ **Appraisals all the time.**
- ▶ **Culture counts.** Welch is critical of a number of major companies who merged and didn't sort out the issue of culture. This is the same in any type of company, any size, private or public. You must have a positive culture and you cannot have multiple cultures.
- ▶ **Strategy.** In Welch's opinion: 'business success is less a function of grandiose predictions than it is a result of being able to respond rapidly to real changes as they occur. That's why strategy has to be dynamic and anticipatory' (p390). Compare this with Rommel's opinion that: 'no plan survives contact with the enemy' (Fraser, 1994, p418) and Shackleton's approach where his strategy was underpinned by a range of flexible alternatives (see Morrell & Capparell, 2001).
- ▶ **Competitors.** Never underestimate them.
- ▶ **The field.** Welch spent at least a third of his time with the GE business out in the field. As he puts it: 'I always reminded myself: headquarters doesn't make anything or sell anything. Banging around the field was my best shot of getting some idea about what was really going on' (p391).
- ▶ **Initiatives versus tactics.** In 20 years, GE had only four major initiatives – Globalisation, Services, Six SIGMA and E-business. These initiatives were designed to create fundamental change. Tactical moves are also important, but it is vital to understand the difference.
- ▶ **The communicator.** Welch describes himself as 'an outrageous champion of everything we did'. He believed it was most important to have a fundamental sense of the values and mission of the organisation and to keep repeating that time and time again, so that people lived and breathed it.
- ▶ **Employee feedback.** GE concentrated on fundamental issues around the theme: 'Is the company you read about in the annual report, the company you work for?' (p393).
- ▶ **The advertising manager.** Welch saw the Chief Executive's role as being involved in something that many people would see as a detail, something to be delegated or something to be passed on to experts. Welch believed that the image of the company was something that he needed to be personally involved in: 'Image mattered. I was convinced it was my job.' (p395)
- ▶ **Managing loose, managing tight.** 'A lot of this is pure instinct. I managed tight when I sensed I could make a difference. I managed loose when I knew I had little if anything to offer.' (p395)
- ▶ **Your backroom is somebody else's front room.** This is a bit like Peters and Waterman's (1982) idea of 'Stick to the Knitting'. Basically, each organisation should do what they need to do and concentrate on that.
- ▶ **Speed and size.** Welch advocates taking decisions quickly and keeping an eye on the size of the organisation – using size when the organisation needs weight behind it, and breaking parts of the organisation down into smaller discrete teams and units to re-energise.

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Biography 11: Cardinal Basil Hume (1923-1999) – Spiritual leader

The rule of St Benedict, written in the 6th century for communities attempting to light a beacon of civilisation to illuminate the 'Dark Ages' with love and learning, has recently come back into focus as a way of studying community leadership and living and achieving a sense of balance at a time of societal and personal stresses.

Reading the Rule (Benedict of Nursia, circa AD540) there are lessons for modern leaders in ethical governance. For instance, in Chapter 2 on the 'Qualities of the Abbot' (the monastic community's Chief Executive), St Benedict states: 'To be worthy of the task of governing a monastery, the Abbot must always remember what his title signifies and act as a superior should' (Chapter 2, verse 1).

And again: 'The Abbot must always remember what he is and remember what he is called, aware that more will be expected of a man to whom more has been entrusted' (Chapter 2, verse 30).

Governance is set in the context of stewardship so that:

'Once in office, the Abbot must keep constantly in mind the nature of the burden he has received, and remember to whom he will have to give an account of his stewardship (Luke 16: 2). Let him recognise that his goal must be profit for the monks, not pre-eminence for himself. He ought, therefore, to be learned..., so that he has a treasury of knowledge from which he can bring out what is new and – what is old.' (Chapter 64, verses 7-9 inclusive)

Ambition for oneself is not encouraged. Benedict describes the personality too often seen in authority: 'Excitable, anxious, extreme, obstinate, jealous or over suspicious he must not be. Such a man is never at rest.' On the contrary, 'he must so arrange everything that the strong have something to yearn for and the weak nothing to run from' (Chapter 64, verses 16 and 19).

Hume was headmaster of a Benedictine school and Abbot of Ampleforth before becoming Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster in 1976. As one of his obituarists wrote: 'The monk lived on in the Cardinal' (Hebblethwaite, 1999).

As befits the spiritual leader of a faith that believes in a transcendent being, Hume always impressed people he met as someone who connected both vertically and with those around him. When John Crowley, Bishop of Middlesbrough, delivered the funeral homily on Hume, he said:

'For thirty-five years as a monk and for twenty-three years as Archbishop, Cardinal Hume centred himself on God. And from that store of wisdom he fed us. He addressed head-on the God-shaped emptiness which is within everyone. Without ever seeking it, he became a reassuring light for perhaps millions of people in this country and beyond.'

(The Tablet, 3 July 1999)

To talk about 'God' in a secular society is somewhat uncomfortable, but there is no doubt that this is an age when the search for some kind of 'spirituality' is a pilgrimage which many people embark on. Rolheiser (1998) writes of:

'An unquenchable fire, a restlessness, a longing, a disquiet, an appetitiveness, a loneliness, a gnawing nostalgia, a wildness that cannot be tamed, a congenital all-embracing ache that lies at the centre of human experience and is the ultimate force that drives everything else. This dis-ease is universal. Desire gives no exemptions.' (p4)

Rolheiser goes on to say that:

'Spirituality is, ultimately, about what we do with that desire. What we do with our longings, both in terms of handling the pain and the hope that they bring us, is our spirituality. Thus, when Plato says that we are on fire because our souls come from beyond and that beyond is, through the longing and hope that its fire creates in us, trying to draw us back towards itself, he is laying out the broad outlines for a spirituality.' (p5)

It was this disease which Basil Hume sought to identify, address and provide some consolation and answers for, which was the reason why he drew unto himself many people outside his own faith, or with no formal faith at all.

Allied to this vertical integration between human beings and the Other, Hume had an ability to relate to a wide range of people. John Crowley thought that this was partly because 'that sense of the worth of the Other is strongly influenced by his conviction that every human being he meets is superior to him in some way' (Butler, 1999, p31).

Father Luke Jolly, Co-ordinator of the Centre for Spirituality at Worth Abbey in Sussex, was amazed to bump into Cardinal Hume in London some years ago and find that Hume knew exactly who he was, though they had never met before.

Hume's connectedness with a range of people from different cultures may have partly stemmed from his birth to an agnostic Scottish father and a French mother. He had a good command of a number of European languages, and, unusually in an English Archbishop, led the convocation of European Catholic Bishops. These European and global dimensions of Hume's reach are very evident from the contributors to Carolyn Butler's book (Butler, 1999), including Lord Jakobovitz, Sheikh Zaki Badawi and Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini.

In terms of his leadership, Hume was essentially an inclusive leader within an autocratic structure. The General Secretary to the Bishop's Conference recalls that his style of being chair promoted the 'discovery of the common mind'. Minority voices were always given a chance to speak, and a great deal of trouble was taken by Hume to discern the best direction before acting. Sometimes he was criticised for being too cautious, but he would often work deftly behind the scenes to produce change, and would attempt to find and steer a middle course between two extremes, if that was right. Julian Filochowski, Director of CAFOD, recalled, in a conversation with Peter Gilbert, that it was Hume who was the only one to persuade Prime Minister Callaghan not to sell arms to a South American government which would have been used to oppress the civilian population.

In 1996, the Catholic Church published *The Common Good*, a document on ethical social issues, which, true to the spirit of the rule of St Benedict, looked back to the creative route of the past and forward into the future.

Cardinal Hume allied a sense of humour to a deep seriousness and dignity. Clifford Longley, a prominent Catholic commentator and journalist, wrote of Hume's significance:

'Maybe the main part of it, was to be at the level of public image and perception rather than at the level of policy or strategy. That does not reduce its importance. Image and perception play a crucial role in changing the relationship between a large historical organisation like the Catholic Church and the society within which it has to operate.' (quoted in Butler, p92)

Cardinal Martini has pointed out that, at a time when people demonstrate 'a great hunger for spirituality', a spiritual leader who 'embodies the long tradition of prayer of the Benedictine', and who is also able to speak to the concerns of present-day society, has much to offer (Butler, 1999, p78).

Timothy Radcliffe, a theologian, in talking of Hume, quotes the 14th-century mystic Meister Eckhart, who wrote: 'People should not worry so much about what they should do; rather about what they should be. If we and our ways are good, then what we do will be highly valued' (cited in Butler, 1999, p53; see also Charles, 2009).

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Biography 12: Dame Cicely Saunders (1918-2005) – Founder of the hospice movement

'I have seen people in Japan, New Zealand, in Australia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Bermuda, all over the United States and all over Europe, who regard Cicely as their teacher, the person who originated all that they are doing.'

(Richard Lamerton, Cicely Saunders' first houseman at St Christopher's Hospice, (quoted in du Boulay, 1984, p231)

The extent of Cicely Saunders' work in founding the modern hospice movement was clearly outlined by Dr Lamerton in 1984, and by now is far more extensive. The depth of her contribution is described by the biographer herself:

*'Cicely has transformed the face of death throughout the world ... she has brought about this revolution by the effective use of drugs and by changing attitudes to the one certainty of life and its greatest mystery. **Through her, dying has lost something of its sting.**'*

(du Boulay, 1984, p231 – emphasis added)

Most people are afraid of the pain involved in a terminal disease, the possibilities of dying lonely and afraid, and what, if anything, lies on the other side of the 'curtain'.

One of the greatest services we can do for people individually is to ease that passage using pain relief, hope and companionship. Dame Cicely Saunders, with her very unusual training in social work, nursing and then medicine, allied to great determination and a strong vision, has given much hope to so many people.

There is perhaps the danger in being too psychological when considering the achievements of leaders, but very contented people from entirely happy childhoods don't always have the 'itch' to achieve which drives many acknowledged leadership figures. Certainly, Cicely Saunders had a less than perfect childhood, caught between her warm, energetic, somewhat overbearing father and her mother who had great difficulty in expressing affection. Saunders was really mothered at an early age by one of her father's relatives, but aunt Daisy was sent away when it was clear that the baby preferred her to Saunders' mother.

Du Boulay remarks that the inability to love her mother created considerable guilt in the young Saunders, and one can speculate as to whether her love for two terminally ill men, David Tasma and Antoni Michniewicz, were aspects of distrust for long-term relationships?

At school, her headmistress wrote of her: 'Although not a natural leader, she has been a good Head of House' (du Boulay, 1984, p23). Interestingly, the young woman felt that she had learned something very specific – a feeling for the underdog: 'because I felt I'd been an underdog fairly frequently myself' (quoted in du Boulay, p23).

But, despite a rather average school performance, her biographer identifies a number of her father's characteristics that were already beginning to become evident: his ability

and energy, the breadth of his interests, and 'his powers of leadership'. She said of him: 'All my father's geese were swans, he was marvellous at inspiring people' (p28). This was certainly also said of her, although, as her biographer points out, she was not always an easy person to work for or with.

Moving from school to St. Anne's College, Oxford, she studied under Ms CV Butler, the economics tutor who, according to du Boulay, 'had such influence over generations of social workers between 1914 and 1945' (p31). But Cicely Saunders left before completing a degree, the advent of the Second World War attracting her to undertake nurse training. There is an interesting link here with the life of Florence Nightingale, as it was to the Nightingale Training School that Saunders went, and it was very much the Nightingale standards with which she was imbued. Her years at nurse training are again a good antidote to those who believe that leaders spring fully armed like Athena from the forehead of Zeus! The nursing supervisory reports describe her as diffident and 'somewhat handicapped by nervousness', with what appeared to be 'an inferiority complex' (p35). Some of the remarks seem to describe some attributes of Saunders' mother, but other reports remark on the description 'determined', and the reference from her headmistress to St Thomas's Hospital Nursing School states: 'she has always given serious thoughts to her career, and I should be greatly surprised if anything deterred her once she had decided to embark on a piece of work' (p25).

One other neat connection with Florence Nightingale, and a neat description of Saunders' sense of humour and willingness to depart from conventional paths, is the skit about Florence Nightingale which she put on at one end of year party – something about which one does not make jokes. If you are really thinking of being a Matron, Saunders was told in round terms, 'You'll never be a good nurse, nurse, if you do not learn there are some things about which one does not make jokes. If you are really thinking of being a Nightingale Nurse, you must not make jokes about Miss Nightingale!' (p37).

Plagued by severe back trouble, Saunders completed her training but was advised not to work as a nurse. Instead, she became an almoner, the role which turned her toward medical social work in the mid-1950s.

Inevitably, du Boulay's biography of Cicely Saunders has a strong focus on her Christian beliefs. Suffice to say that this spiritual dimension was very much part of her vision for a specific service which catered for the physical and spiritual needs of people who were dying and their families.

Saunders' love for David Tasma (a patient from the Warsaw ghetto who was dying of inoperable cancer), their discussions about care for the dying and the gift in his will of £500 for her, coupled with her next job at St Luke's Home for the Dying, proved to be important drivers towards her ultimate goal. It was one of the doctors that she worked with who said to her: 'Go and read medicine, it's the doctors who desert the dying' (quoted in du Boulay, p63).

Qualifying as a doctor, Cicely became involved with St Joseph's Hospice in Hackney, where nursing care was superb, but pain control was elementary. Saunders' work gave patients the ability to be free of pain without being comatose. A group of social work students went around St Joseph's, following Dr Saunders' involvement and made the following observations:

- ▶ An absence of pain and drowsiness.
 - ▶ Liveliness and peacefulness.
 - ▶ An indefinable atmosphere which left one feeling that death was nothing to be worried about – a sort of homecoming.
 - ▶ Integration – patients, staff and visitors were all of equal importance; there seemed to be no dividing barriers. We noticed especially how easy it was to talk to patients and how easily they accepted us.
 - ▶ Simplicity of approach to the problem of pain.
 - ▶ People are helped to come to terms with death in a way that suits them best as individuals.
- (du Boulay, p72)

Having so many areas of expertise that she was almost a multidisciplinary team all on her own, Cicely had a unique perspective and was able to observe that, for the majority of doctors, death was seen as a defeat, a failure which needed to be avoided or to go unacknowledged. Saunders was determined to found her own hospice, based on her unique approach, and set out her vision and the practical steps in two short, clear documents: 'The Need' and 'The Scheme'. As her biographer remarks: 'Her distilled experience was committed to eight pages of closely typed confident prose' (du Boulay, p86). Although a supporter of the National Health Service, Saunders wanted her hospice to be independent so there could be freedom of thought and action, but good relations were needed, she foresaw, with the commissioning health authorities and the local community.

Aware that the Ministry of Health might see her scheme as a criticism of current services and therefore block it, Saunders worked very tactfully and persuasively with senior national and local managers. She also used her powers of persuasion with charitable foundations and local planning committees to fund and build St Christopher's.

In leadership terms, she had the difficult task of acting as a founder and medical director, and in a sense as 'a benevolent despot' (du Boulay, p101). However at the same time she was building a 'community', one without a religious rule (such as the rule of St Benedict), but a large team where people had to work together for the common good. Clearly, Saunders was not always an easy person to work with, but she had an incredible knack of listening to patients and carers: 'An almost uncanny capacity for really listening and enabling people to speak of their deep inner pain' (du Boulay, p141).

Du Boulay remarks that perhaps part of her secret lies in a Hasidic question and answer she often recalled:

'Why do you say you should listen to someone as if you were looking on water rather than as if you were looking on a mirror? Because you have to be very still if you are going to see in water, you can so easily disturb it.'

On the other hand, colleagues sometimes felt that she wasn't always as careful of them as she was of her patients. Her demand for high standards could sometimes come at a cost, though as one nurse wrote: 'How can one express in words the quiet, endless learning here?' (du Boulay, p147).

As well as leading on hospice care in the UK, Cicely Saunders had an powerful effect overseas. She made an immediate impact when she went over to the United States, and Dr Klagsbrun, Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Columbia University, described her as follows:

'Dr Saunders is strong, courageous and persistent – some might even consider her stubborn. She is articulate and has a basic faith and trust in her message. She is relentless in pursuing her goals and is quite unconcerned with the opinion of others, if these opinions jeopardise her work. She evinces humour, and a sharp wit when it is needed. These characteristics have been crucial in the establishment of St Christopher's Hospice; yet Dr Saunders has never acknowledged the importance of her personality, or the impact of her leadership, in the field of medical care for patients facing death.'

(quoted in du Boulay, p149)

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