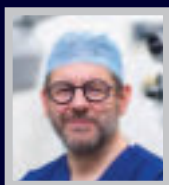


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# An INSPIRATIONAL EDUCATION

Professor Gus Gazzard (A, 1982 - 87) reflects on his journey from receiving an Industrial Scholarship at Winchester College, to becoming a pioneering researcher and Ophthalmologist where the foundations of original thinking from Winchester College guide the approach to his work every day.



**INTERVIEW: PROFESSOR GUS GAZZARD  
MBBCHIR MA MD FRCOPHTH**

Director of Surgery at Moorfields Eye Hospital, Professor in Ophthalmology, (Glaucoma Studies) at UCL London, a Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon (Glaucoma and Cataract) and Chief Investigator of the LiGHT Trial of Laser Treatment for Glaucoma.





At Moorfields Eye Hospital, London, adjusting a slit-lamp microscope

***Q: Can you remember how you and your parents decided on Winchester College?***

G: I didn't choose Winchester, Winchester chose me. I was at a really standard school in the late 70s, early 80s and there was a teacher called Mr. Kingswell who said 'you should go off and do a test because I think it would be good for you'. After I passed the first one, I went up to Winchester and did Election with zero preparation, no idea what I was up against. I'd never done an exam before in my life. I did my best, assuming I wouldn't hear any more of it. On the back of that I got an Industrial Exhibition Scholarship funded by Portal Holdings, as they had Wykehamists on their board. From there my future opened up from a very suburban provincial Hampshire with some very narrow horizons.

***Q: What was the impact of the house system and are you still in contact with people from school or your house?***

G: I loved the feeling of family and collegiality, of being in a house and being part of a gang and part of a team. I really love that I had a very strong identification with this after my initial culture shock. There was a very positive sense of family and later a sense of identification with house and school that continues to this day. There is certainly a feeling of shared experience and allegiance that the majority of Wykehamists I meet in adulthood continue to share.

As it so happens, my three closest lifelong friends are from Winchester College, and we are all meeting up in a couple of weeks' time.

***Q: What were your experiences of original thinking and intellectual freedom at the College?***

G: I had a wonderful and hugely transformative experience because the gap between my pre-Winchester and my Winchester experience was that much greater

than for others. Going to Winchester from an environment where being clever, let alone loving education was a foreign thing, I found that being top of your class was suddenly cool and that having an inquiring mind and asking questions was not just accepted but actually encouraged by your peers.

I remember Mr. Eliot, who was my first div don and also Michael Fontes: it was these pivotal, inspiring, educated intellectuals that could really take a class and open my eyes to Bach and opera and antique clocks and the Baroque. I always liked science and nature and going out with dons where they cared about which particular species of violet we were studying. That love of life and what life has to offer was part of a love of intellectual inquiry and an acceptance and recognition of intellectual success.

Probably for me the most precious thing from Winchester was not exam results or friends, but it was having my eyes opened to everything that was outside my little world of science; and that remains so to this day.

***Q: What would be over-riding highlights of your time at Winchester College?***

G: I'd probably say going on a fungus foray with Mr. Baron and John Durran (who was College Tutor) on a Wednesday afternoon through the woods with a bunch of boys, being inspired not just to love nature but to have an academic interest in it.

***Q: What would you say to your younger self with the wisdom you have now, thinking about those early years at Winchester College?***

G: I would say 'Don't stress so much'. Some of what drove me then was no doubt my innate anxiety to prove myself, but also I think my desire to prove myself worthy of the opportunity that I'd been given.





I can remember being aged 15, walking on Romans Road in the autumn. There was that smell of the chestnut leaves that were mulching down and the mist was rising. I can really remember just thinking to myself, I must never forget how lucky I am to have been here because this isn't just beautiful, this is amazing. I've got to do something worthwhile with it and I've got to do something with this opportunity.

*...it was these pivotal, inspiring, educated intellectuals that could really take a class and open my eyes.*

**Q. Looking back, was there anything about Winchester that surprised you?**

G: What surprised me was the breadth of things that were there to be interested in. At 12 and 13, the longevity of the institution and the sense of place and pride were all very different for me.

What was surprising about the school? Mainly a sense of an unbroken tradition extending for many hundreds of years. Not unchanging, but continuing and being kept alive, being important in its own right. I hadn't previously been exposed to that and the power for good that sense of tradition can be. I wouldn't have phrased it like that when I was 15 or even 13 when I went to school, however I was very aware of that by the time I left and that stayed with me.

(Above) Standing in front of a wing of Moorfields Eye Hospital, London

***Q: How did that foundation of learning at Winchester then set you up for your future?***

G: I think it meant that I had a need to succeed because I wanted to prove everyone right for their belief in me. For my future career in medicine, I had to do a lot of hard learning, but also it required a sense of balance as well. I had a sense that there was lots of other stuff out there that was fun and interesting and whilst I might need to do vast amounts of academic work, I would try and make sure that it was fun on the way through.

***Q: How have the values of Winchester College shaped your approach to your profession and your contribution to the world?***

G: I definitely have a feeling of a need for service and that I should leave this world a better place than it might have been but for my existence. I think that comes from school as much as it came from home.

I came out of Winchester College being able to talk to many different people and I don't know whether it's from Winchester, but I love making links between people. I love joining people up. I love introducing people and creating opportunities simply by introducing people who don't know each other professionally, socially or intellectually. I have a sort of excitement around creating opportunities and also a sense of trying to mentor people.

***Q: Speaking today, how are you making a difference through your work at UCL and particularly through your work with glaucoma?***

G: I often say to my juniors that every patient interaction conducted well makes a positive difference, even if it's just for the most trivial of things. Medically trivial is not necessarily so for the patient and people remember this.

What's mundane and routine for us is often a major life experience that they will remember for all time.

On a personal level, I think I've tried to do research that is very deliberately and intentionally related to the patient. I dabbled with lab work in Oxford for a year before I went up to Cambridge and I found it intellectually fascinating, but too remote from my reality. When I started meeting patients three years after that in clinical work, I realised that actually I wanted to do clinical research that had some degree of immediacy of impact.

In my work I do a lot of randomised control trials. I'm comparing two treatments to work out which ones are better. The big success I had in my life was a trial called the LiGHT, published in *The Lancet* in 2019. That trial changed how we treat glaucoma across the world and made glaucoma treatments incrementally better.

I looked after the Glaucoma Service through Covid and that made a big impact. With my colleague Dr Hari Jayaram and others, we were able to dismantle and rebuild the service. In a way, that has made it much safer, much more efficient with fewer delays for diagnosis and a much more robust service for patients.

Lastly, I have had the genuine privilege of taking uncertain junior trainees, as I once was, and building them up to have the confidence to make decisions, do surgery, believe in themselves and go out there and do the same thing again.

In the next decade, we'll see a tremendous shift in the ability to aggregate and use data to guide what we do. At the moment, we have research studies and research trials from which we draw inferences and conclusions, but I think we're going to be able to do that from



#### FURLEY'S HOUSE PHOTO, 1985

Housemaster, Alan Thompson sitting in the centre holding Tiddles the cat. Gus Gazzard standing behind the Housemaster's left shoulder.

much larger sets of data and we're going to be able to handle that in a more meaningful way. Using AI, I think that improved information handling and data processing will allow us to automate diagnostic processes to make more effective and more accurate diagnoses. Beyond 10 years, I think we're going to be able to regrow dead or dying cells within the eye in a way that will begin to restore sight to those who have lost it.

*Q: To conclude, what would you say to an individual that might be considering supporting a bursary like the one that you received?*

G: I can think of few more life-changing impacts that you can have than giving somebody the opportunity for an inspirational education that they might not otherwise have had. I really believe that Winchester offered me that and continues to offer that today.

Supporting Winchester College helps to maintain the important culture of the School which is a love of learning and investigational, inspired thought and an exploration of all of the aspects of the world. We have to hang on to that, as in the future, we're going to need institutions that can maintain their integrity and moral core, perhaps even more than we have done over the last 38 years since I left.

*I definitely have a feeling of a need for service and that I should leave this world a better place than it might have been but for my existence.*



