

# Minutes of the Ninth Ordinary Meeting

Held on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> April 2019

President's Guest Lecture

'When the Goalposts Shift'

Mr Alastair Hignell, CBE



Professor Colm O'Mahony and Mr Alastair Hignell, CBE

As a rugby player, Alastair was England's full-back, and sometime goal kicker, in the 1970s.

As a BBC commentator for a quarter of a century he reported on some extraordinary changes in the sport.

The only constants in all that time, he maintains, have been the dimensions of the pitch, the positioning of the goalposts and the role and importance of the goal kicker.

It's the same, he argues, in life. We all live and work according to a set of agreed structures, rules and conventions.

But what happens when the goalposts shift, when the structures break down and the rules and conventions no longer apply?

How do you react when you are told, as he was, that you are diagnosed with a condition that has no known cause and no known cure, that is random, unpredictable, debilitating, progressive and scary?

Alastair not only answers the question from his own experience but also goes on to explain that the personal is also universal - and applicable to any, and all, life-changing experiences.

He quotes the American psychologist Elizabeth Kubler-Ross's research into Death and Dying and the actor Michael J. Fox's experience of Young Parkinson's disease to suggest that all affected go through the process of Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance.

He describes his own journey through those stages and the lessons he learned in the process, before going on to argue that it doesn't need a personal tragedy to bring home a universal truth; that we all, as human beings come into contact with role- models, exemplars, heroes, figures from history and from our own close circle, who can inspire us, guide us and teach us to be the best versions of ourselves that we can be.

Alastair talks about some of the people that he has met who have shaped his outlook - including Nelson Mandela and Jonny Wilkinson - and he talks about figures from history - like Mark Twain and Edvard Nietzsche - who have shaped his philosophy.

He describes the lessons he has learned through personal tragedy and the kindness he has experienced from personal interaction and in his final summing up, urges his audience to go out into their lives and Be Amazing.

Mr Alastair Hignell, CBE