



MICHAELHOUSE

ST MICHAEL AWARD CITATION

PETER ARDINGTON

10 May 2019

Peter Christopher Ardington grew up on a farm in Eshowe, Zululand. This was the very farm which had witnessed the bloody Battle of Ndongakusuka, and this famous battle inspired his life-long fascination for Zulu history. He was one of the foundation class at Mandini Primary School, and then went on to Cordwalles before entering Michaelhouse in 1961. During his time here, he played both rugby and tennis for the First Team, and was a prefect in East House. Straight after school he joined the medical corps of the Defence Force for a year before attending the University of Pietermaritzburg and later Onderstepoort where he not only qualified as a veterinarian but distinguished himself by being the Thelie Medallist, the award for the top student of his year.

His expertise and experience as a vet have earned him great respect internationally amongst his colleagues. He has represented and been elected onto committees, fora, funds, and trusts worldwide; he has spoken at international conferences in Germany, the UK, the USA and Australia - not to mention the length and breadth of South Africa - sharing his passion for veterinarian issues and enriching the minds of many. And in this way, his father's question echoed within this humble man, as he refined the family challenge "What can I do today to the benefit of many" as he added to this the words "and the whole web of life on our living planet?"

For practically all of his life, Peter has been able to combine a very significant veterinary career with an innate love for farming. This lifelong dual thread is shown through his earnest concern for the environmental challenges of the 21st Century and beyond. Combined with these, his interest in education led to his becoming a champion for social community involvement and countless outreach activities. He and his wife, Margaret, also a vet, have personally sponsored and mentored young students and have encouraged them through their example in practical ways. Peter also continued the family legacy in developing the Cranburn Farm School which has been a springboard to education for many young students in the district.

Peter's expertise has been generously shared: for example, he has helped local emerging cane farmers to develop management systems which have made their farms viable. He has also ensured that workers on these farms have been uplifted and become shareholders in their projects.

As a cattle farmer, Peter is a dedicated custodian of grasslands and natural areas. He has given, over many years, freely of his time and funds to help other farmers to develop holistic grazing systems which preserve both the soil and biodiversity of the veld. This has extended to the support of small-scale farmers and herdsmen in Zululand. Under Peter's mentorship of many farmers, thousands of hectares of grassland have been rehabilitated or sustainably grazed to prevent degradation.

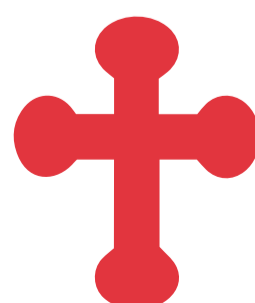
On the professional front, Peter gave strong leadership to the South African Veterinary Council in his capacity as President, and also the Mandeni Town Board for five years from 1989. He served on the Michaelhouse Board of Governors for eight years where his input focussed on the Education, Environmental, and Building and Grounds Committees. As a member of the Board, Peter supported a number of environmental initiatives which resulted in the school being awarded Green Flag status. He spearheaded the raising of funds and the legal process to ensure the Proclamation of the Michaelhouse Nature Reserve in 2007 and, when the Mvuleni Lapa was opened in 2014, it was aptly named after his isiZulu name, Mvuleni, meaning Rain, as he is the Patron of the Reserve.

He retains a keen interest in the Reserve, overseeing the integration of cattle, wildlife and veld on our Estate. His advice is still regularly sought by the South African Veterinary Council, and on environmental matters at numerous educational establishments locally and abroad. He served on the Boards of veterinary and conservation bodies and has been a sought after speaker, for example in London on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the Royal Charter of the College of Veterinarians.

The circle of his life has come back to the Midlands again as Peter and Margaret have recently moved from the richness of the Zululand veld to the lush hills of the Midlands. Here he can enjoy his other hobbies – hiking, tennis, and reading, whilst still keeping a keen eye on the birds seeking refuge in the many indigenous trees he so loves. In his retirement, Peter continues to use his cattle to conserve grazing lands and to support sound environmental practice. He continues to advise farmers, both at the commercial and subsistence levels, about soil conservation and holistic management.

Peter Ardington is a son of Michaelhouse and his influence on the lives of so many has been powerful. He is a most worthy recipient of the St Michael Award.

J A HEWAT
CHAIRMAN OF BOARD OF GOVERNORS



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