GORDONSTOUN
Plus Est En Vous

Sir Iain Tennant KT FRSA DL

Chairman of the Gordonstoun Board, 1957-1972

Recognised for his distinguished leadership in business, commitement to public service and steadfast support for Gordonstoun School.

Sir Iain Tennant was a Scottish businessman, civic leader and philanthropist who dedicated 15 years to Gordonstoun as Chair of the Board, providing enduring - and vital - support.

He was born in London in 1919 but was raised in Scotland; in North Berwick and at Innes House on the family estate near Elgin. Educated at Ludgrove and Eton, he spent a brief spell at Magdalene College, Cambridge, before war broke out and he enlisted with the Scots Guards.

During the Second World War, he served in Egypt and was captured at Tobruk, becoming a prisoner of war in Italy, Poland and Germany until he was released after the Armistice in 1945.

Sir Iain married Lady Margaret Ogilvy and they had three children. During this time he embarked on a new and successful career in business. This included roles as Chairman of Grampian television, Director of Caledonian Associated Cinemas and Director of both Clydesdale Bank and Abbey National Building Society. He became involved in the whisky industry as chairman of the distilleries of Glenlivet and Glen Grant, staying on the board when the companies were sold to Seagram Co.

In 1957, having met and become friends with Kurt Hahn, he joined the Gordonstoun Board and remained Chairman until 1972. He was heavily involved with school life and played a key part in shaping the school's development.

He filled his life with public service, devoted to his native Scotland. He served on Moray and Nairn County Council, was a Lord Lieutenant of Moray for over 30 years and Crown Estate Commissioner for Scotland. He became a Knight of the Thistle in 1986 and in 1988, he was appointed Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

Sir Iain died at Innes House in 2006, and his funeral was held in the Chapel at Gordonstoun. He is remembered by his eldest son, Mark.

Tradition was incredibly important to him - it underpinned all the roles he played.

Like many of his generation, tradition was very much part of his life. I think if you were to ask him, he'd say that his regimental tradition, that of the Household Division and the entire British Army, is what kept him strong in the POW camps. After the war, his public service saw him continue to uphold key historic traditions in Scotland. This sense of duty ran deep and with it came an appreciation of the importance of teamwork and the value of each member. I've never forgotten his words to me: "When you inherit [Innes House], you must understand that whilst you own the estate, you actually simply hold it in trust for the people who work it and live on it."

My father was enormous fun - he had a great sense of humour and simply loved people.

You can see his strength of character in how he dealt with prisoner of war life. Rather than be bowed by his circumstances, he played bridge every day (emerging an exceptional player), set up a theatre group, and put on plays. Currency was created from strips of paper made from bully beef tin labels and used to buy tickets. He had the ability to find the best in people - and to make the best of life. His skill in understanding people and his empathy in appreciating those on both sides must have helped him greatly during his days "in the bag".

Gordonstoun was the centre of his life for as long as I knew him.

He was deeply committed to young people's education. As Chair of Gordonstoun, upholding the great traditions set by Kurt Hahn was very much at the top of his mind. The idea of leadership, teamwork, inclusiveness and loyalty were core principles in my father too. His deep love of Scotland, particularly its hills and glens brought a somewhat Hahnian influence to our childhood; we were always encouraged to get out in the great outdoors, for outward bound, adventure activities. Yet the most extraordinary thing about him was his ability to bring people together and get them to agree on things - it was central to his success in public office, and absolutely key to the development of Gordonstoun.