

The Honorary Graduate: Thomas Foot

The Orator: Dr Vivian Gibbs

Thomas Foot is to be awarded the Honorary Degree of Master of Science

Tom Foot is a retired ex-General Manager of a large, national company responsible for sales, profit, development strategy and its success. He joined the company as Northern Area Technical Manager based in Leeds and worked his way up to managing five regional managers with approximately 60 sales personnel reporting to him and achieving a turnover of around £45 million per annum.

Tom was educated at his local comprehensive school and was awarded an apprenticeship as a printer, attending Exeter School of Art. Having completed his apprenticeship he went into teaching subjects related to printing, firstly as a technical assistant at Exeter School of Art and then as a lecturer at the School of Art in Middlesborough and at North East London Polytechnic.

He is married and has a daughter who is studying medicine at Queens University Belfast.

In late 2006 Tom was diagnosed with laryngeal cancer. He underwent intense radiotherapy and was clear until late 2007 when a biopsy revealed that the cancer had returned. After attempts at laser treatment were unsuccessful, Tom had a total laryngectomy in January 2008.

The problems Tom initially had in coming to terms with his surgery and his new way of communicating made it very difficult to continue in the highly pressurized sales environment he had been working in and he took early retirement.

One of Tom's passions had been scuba diving which he could no longer enjoy but he was determined to find a way to get back into the water and, after some searching, found that Northampton General Hospital were running swimming courses enabling laryngectomees to swim. He took the course and was signed off as being proficient to swim on his own and has since swum and snorkelled in the Red Sea, a brave thing for a laryngectomee to do, but Tom finds it exhilarating.

Tom has given talks to many laryngectomy clubs passing on his joy of swimming and the feeling of normality this gives him. He was also involved in the early discussions with

Macmillan and the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital for setting up a training course for laryngectomees.

Through his contact with Macmillan head and neck specialist nurses, Tom and his wife were invited to speak to a Head and Neck cancer master class at UWE about their experiences with cancer and the effect it had had on their lives. Following this, Tom was asked to speak to various student groups at UWE about his radiotherapy treatment and his experiences from initial diagnosis to where he is today. This led to Tom being invited to be a member of the interview panel for radiography and radiotherapy students at UWE and he has been doing this for the past four years. Tom thoroughly enjoys his interaction with the students in their interviews and later in their classes in which he is still involved.

Tom has always pushed his genuine desire to promote and ensure that laryngectomees and head and neck cancer patients can live their lives as near normal as possible. Tom feels that the "apparent" limitations are, for the most part, self-imposed.

Tom realizes how far he has progressed since his surgery and acknowledges the huge depth of gratitude he owes to those who helped him on his journey.

The Honorary Degree is awarded for Thomas Foot's contribution and loyal support of student education at UWE Bristol over a number of years.