



*Cyril Smith was born in Rochdale on 28th June 1928. A lifelong member of the Liberal Party, he became MP for Rochdale in 1972. In 1988, he was knighted Sir Cyril Smith and was appointed as Deputy Lieutenant of Greater Manchester in 1991; in the same year he announced his retirement as MP for Rochdale.*

*Respected for his tireless work in the constituency and for his support of good causes – he is very much a peoples' champion; Sir Cyril is actively seeking support for our Appeal and we know we are indeed fortunate to receive his help.*

### **Natasha Muszanskyj in interview with Sir Cyril Smith**

Sir Cyril Smith, former Mayor and Liberal MP for Rochdale, has been a staunch supporter of 'The Way Forward', becoming an important and influential Patron of the campaign. His presence has been paramount in enabling BGS to attract other Patrons, and he has even gone so far as to approach personal friends showing the strength of his support. Sir David Trippier, Sir Fergus and Lady Joyce Montgomery and Sir John Zochonis are but a small number of the supporters he has encouraged. "As far as the list of Patrons are concerned they are people firstly, that I knew, and secondly, that I was confident would mean something to people. Overall they are a good cross section and I'm very pleased with them." In fact Sir Peter Ogden attributes his involvement in the venture entirely to Sir Cyril saying simply 'He threatened me.'

Both products of Rochdale Grammar School, they appreciate what the Bury Grammar Schools stand for and are trying to achieve; Sir Cyril was one of only two Liberal MPs who voted against the abolition of the assisted places scheme. "I thought it was scandalous to abolish that scheme because what they were doing in fact was reducing people's level of education instead of giving them the opportunity to improve it." His passion for education, sitting as Chairman of the Education Committee for eight years, and willingness to take up a cause and fight, has made him a valuable asset to the campaign. He readily agreed to become a patron when approached by his close friend and fellow Patron, Derek Calrow as he had 'a great deal of sympathy' with the cause. When asked on his involvement in the project, Sir Cyril explained that he had been 'happy and impressed' with what he saw at the schools, especially with regards to the dedication BGS has to increasing the number of Bursaries available.

Furthermore he was attracted by the students. On the question of what the venture and BGS has to offer students, he succinctly replied that 'In some ways it's what the students have to offer the school.' He indicated the desire and self motivation of the student; 'You see students are going to BGS because they want to, and that means that they have the right attitude to education'.

Characteristically, never one to shy away from his critics who are surprised at his involvement in a private school due to his political leanings he explains "I have never been prepared to judge the quality and usefulness of a school on the basis of how it's governed or how it's organised. So I have frankly never had a great deal of interest in whether it's a public school or state school or what. What interests me is what it's doing for the children that are there and that it is giving them a good education and a solid education and that is all that matters to me."