

Speech made by Oliver Bone at the unveiling of Oxfordshire Blue Plaque to Sir Muirhead Bone at Grayflete on 20 September 2025

Firstly, thank you to **Professor Evans**, the Oxford Blue Plaque Board, **Harry Dickinson**, and our generous hosts **Katharine and Mark Payton**.

It's an honour to speak today on behalf of the Bone family. Although Sir Muirhead Bone died before we were born, his presence was deeply felt as we grew up. His drawings and prints — including Oxford scenes — were very much part of the fabric of our home in Plymouth. I remember a Piranesi print on the stairs, once part of Muirhead's collection here at Grayflete, which I found rather intimidating as a child! Books, family portraits, sculpture, and antiques all came with Mum and Dad's provenance of: **“from Grayflete.”**

So it's marvellous to be here today, for the first time, to the place where Muirhead and family lived. There was also a rich archive of letters and photographs, now gifted to the University of Glasgow. These were carefully explored for my uncle Sylvester's biography **Muirhead Bone: Artist and Patron**. In the book he recalled a **“Small Drawing”** competition between Muirhead and his grandchildren — which Muirhead won with a drawing so tiny it needed a magnifying glass to see it. Muirhead's eyesight — long-sighted in one eye, short-sighted in the other — was said to help him draw both near and distant subjects with precision. His prolific draughtsmanship was well known, and a **pencil** was always considered the best birthday or Christmas present.

Muirhead was also a generous supporter of other artists, including his daughter-in-law, our grandmother Mary Adshead, whose witty mythological illustrations still decorate the fireplace tiles in the house. He also supported Stanley Spencer, acquiring ***Zacharias and Elizabeth*** early in Spencer's career — a major work that hung above the fireplace in Grandma's London home.

Thank you all for joining us today to honour the life and legacy of our great-grandfather, Sir Muirhead Bone, and to celebrate his enduring connection to Grayflete and Oxford.