

Dr William Fowlds



We warmly welcome Dr William Fowlds (Armstrong, 1988) as the 2023 President of the Old Andean Club in recognition of his significant and critical contribution to conservation in South Africa.

William Fowlds was born in Makhanda/Grahamstown in 1971 and grew up on the farm, Leeuwenbosch, near Sidbury, the second son of Bill and Rosemary Fowlds (nee Rippon).

At College, William excelled academically and displayed the leadership and team sport qualities that would support his career in years to come. He was elected Second Head of Armstrong House in 1988, he played 1st XI cricket, 1st XV rugby, was awarded athletics colours and was a member of the shooting team.

After his national service, William studied Veterinary Science at Onderstepoort.

He specialises in the clinical support of wildlife management, and is extremely active in re-wilding projects, landscape planning and habitat restoration as well as overall awareness, fundraising and the strategic implementation of projects to prevent rhino poaching.

William co-founded the Investec Rhino Lifeline in 2013. In addition, he is the project coordinator for Wilderness Foundation Africa on the Medivet Saving the Rhino campaign which has enabled him to increase his work in the rescue and prevention of poaching at both the protection and demand reduction sides of the crisis.

He is a trustee of the Chipembere Rhino Foundation and the African Rhino Conservation Collaboration and strives to encourage a multi-faceted approach to the rhino crisis through increased collaboration and cohesion.

He is a founding director of the Conservation Landscapes Institute which promotes the expansion of biosphere reserves, conservation landscapes and ecosystem connectivity corridors as a mechanism to reverse the adverse effects of climate change, the extinction crisis and to address socio-economic poverty.

William is a majority shareholder of one mixed and one wildlife veterinary practice in the Eastern Cape and lives on Amakhala Game Reserve which he co-founded with several neighbouring families 23 years ago.

He spends part of his time facilitating courses which connect veterinary students from around the world with the diversity of African wildlife and their issues. These “Vets go Wild” courses are aired around the world as the “Safari Vet School “ and “Work on the Wild Side” series, via ITV, Animal Planet and Channel 4.

In his presentations, William journeys through his experiences at the cutting edge of the illegal wildlife trade, wildlife habitat restoration, re-wilding and the search for solutions to the urgent issues of the decade in climate change, loss of biodiversity, disease implications and the poverty gap.

He has built partnerships with a number of initiatives in the USA and UK including Medivet, Texas Christian University, Helping Rhinos, Wildlife Protection Solutions and Global Conservation Force.

He also drives several social media awareness platforms that support these causes.

William’s family is inextricably connected to St Andrew's College, Prep and DSG. William’s grandfather, Victor Fowlds (Armstrong 1924), father, Bill (Armstrong 1954) and his siblings, Grant (Upper 1979), Ros (Crewe 1980) and Jayne (Espin 1991) all attended our family of schools. His grandmother, Laura Fowlds, was matron of Armstrong House from 1981 to 1990.

His extended family includes legendary figures like his aunt Sylvia Birrell (Merriman 1950), past staff member of DSG for 20 years and her husband, Harry Birrell (Espin 1945), past housemaster of Armstrong and member of the College staff for 20 years, as well as President of the Old Andean Club (1995).

His other aunts are the renowned artist Mary Fowlds (Merriman 1955) and Colleen Rippon (nee Fowlds, Merriman 1960), who is a past member of the DSG Council and staff.

William is married to Heidi, a junior primary school teacher at St Andrew’s Prep and they have three children, Laura (Merriman 2019), Amy (Merriman 2020) and Daniel, currently in Armstrong Grade in 10.

William maintains close ties with his 1988 College year group and is active in the Old Andean community with fundraising initiatives and supporting projects.

He was on the St Andrew’s Preparatory School Board of Governors from 2012 – 2014.

“Don’t let any person or system tell you that you aren’t good enough. If you have a passion and a desire to get somewhere in life, the only thing standing in your way is time. Learn to embrace the lessons learned along the way, and time flies.”

- Dr William Fowlds, President of the Old Andean Club 2023