

1851 Royal Commission Alumni Association

E-mail Newsletter December 2004

Dear Royal Commission Alumnus,

It is now two years since the establishment of the Royal Commission's Alumni Association, and we marked the maturity of the association with a further push to those 1851 award holders who did not sign up when I first wrote to everyone in late 2002. I wrote again in October and, partly because joining is now a simple matter of filling in the boxes on the web site, we have been inundated with applications to join. With well over 100 new applicants already, this brings the total number of 1851 Alumni Association members to nearly 400 - over 45% of all living award holders – and it's still rising. I, and the Commission, would like to warmly welcome all newly signed-up members. Thank you for joining; we look forward to taking the association forward together and please get in touch if you have any ideas.

It has been a busy and stimulating autumn. As well as the usual round of letters to universities and organisations, publicising our 2005 awards, we have written to many research based companies, including the Government's Top R&D 700 list. The aim is to spread the word even wider about the Commission's Industrial Fellowship scheme.

£2 million Gift to the Commission

The big news of the autumn is that the Commission has been given a hugely generous donation of £2million by the ERA Foundation. Established by the UK specialist electronics company ERA Technology, the Foundation supports high level research in the sector. Since the sale of the parent company, the Foundation has been considering its future activities and decided to offer generous donations to two existing charitable organisations with like-minded aims of supporting industrial education. As well as the Royal Commission, a grant was also given to the Royal Academy of Engineering.

This is the first time that the Commission has received such a gift and it will directly allow us to increase our support of 'productive industry'. We will use the additional funding to award an extra Industrial Fellowship in the electro-technology sector, every year from now on. This shows that every penny of a gift of any size can be put totally to the support of 'science, art and productive industry', in line with the Commission's original and unchanged aims – and with no increase in administrative costs. Hopefully this will be a model for future gifts from other organisations or individuals – perhaps even alumni!

South Kensington Development

I mentioned in my last newsletter the project, led by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, to develop Exhibition Road as a fitting access to the unique cultural site that is the 1851 legacy of museums, colleges, societies and the Albert Hall. The architects Dixon Jones presented their plans to the South Kensington Cultural Consortium last week and received unanimous support for what – funding permitting – will be a radical and exciting development of this important road. They are planning to launch the project in February next year, so details will soon be available to the public. At the same time, the Royal College of Art, faced with a campaign against its proposed 'Ellipse' extension and a public enquiry, has withdrawn its planning application and will reconsider its future development plans.

President's 40th year

2005 marks a significant anniversary for the Commission – its 40th year with HRH the Duke of Edinburgh as its President. As many of you know, having met him at our biennial President's Dinners, Prince Philip is an active president who takes a close interest in the work and development of the Commission. He was particularly supportive of the establishment of the Alumni Association and we hope that we may be able to organise an event in his honour. So watch this space!

New Alumni database

Now the association is established, we are aiming to refine it by setting up an alumni database which will link to the web site which will be upgraded to match, allowing alumni to amend their own details and providing better communications. Over the first few months of next year we will be taking on a specialist to design and populate the database and link it with the web site - I will keep you up to date as this develops.

February 2005 Alumni Evening

The second Alumni Science Evening has been arranged to take place in London on Tuesday 8 February 2005. As with this year's pilot event, it will take the form of a number of short presentations by some of our final year Fellows, followed by a keynote address. The evening will conclude with a glass of wine and supper. We look forward to another stimulating and enjoyable evening and I will be sending invitations to current award holders, Commissioners and Committee members in the New Year. As I cannot send personal invitations to every Association member (the Gallery can only seat 90 people!), if any of you would like to come, **please** let me know as soon as possible by e-mail and I will send you an invitation with full details in the New Year.

Royal Commission Naval Architecture Scholars

One of the bonuses of establishing our Alumni Association is that we have made contact with two of the Commission's Naval Architecture Scholars. This scholarship was a relatively short-lived scheme which was discontinued in the late 60's and because we did not have contact details for the very small number of active holders, we did not include them in our alumni mail-out. However John English (1955), having found our web site in a Marine Engineering journal, has signed up and we have created a special category for him on the Alumni web site. He has also put us in touch with another Naval Architecture Scholar, Neil Hogben (1952). It is good to hear from all our Award holders, so if you know any who are not already association members, please urge them to get in touch.

Farewell to the Commission's PA

The Commission will be sad to say farewell to Chris Carpenter, the Secretary's PA, who retires next month after managing the office and supporting both me and Patrick Middleton, my predecessor, for more than 6 years. Well known to most fellows during this period, Chris has been the friendly and helpful voice of the Commission and will be missed by all. As a gesture of thanks the Commission is presenting Chris with a state of the art PC to keep her busy and on-line during what we all hope will be a long and happy retirement. If any member wishes to send her a message, please use the Commission's e-mail. Chris's successor as PA and Senior Administrator in the office will be Jenifer Parkyn.

Finally, I would like to transmit to all 1851 Alumni the Commissioners' and staff's warmest good wishes for a very happy Christmas and a successful and enjoyable 2005.

With every good wish,

Malcolm Shirley.