



E-mail Newsletter July 2008

Dear Royal Commission Alumnus,

I am mindful that it is now some months since my last 'proper' newsletter, since our communications earlier this year related to the strategy questionnaire. When I wrote earlier in the year to thank so many of you for your helpful responses to the questionnaire, I explained that all your views would be taken forward to the Commission's strategy development.

This was indeed the case and the Commission's Board of Management met in May for a full day's strategy discussions. The outcome was a large number of ideas which fell into two main categories – development and enhancement of our existing award programmes and possible new initiatives. Both, particularly options for programme enhancements, took full account of the responses from the alumni questionnaire.

These strategy initiatives are now being taken forward into feasibility, costing and development and some decisions on implementation are expected to be made at this month's meeting of the Commission's Board of Management. I will of course keep you informed as things develop.

2008 Alumni Science Evening

Meanwhile it's business as usual at the Commission and back in February we held another successful Alumni Science Evening. With a sparkling set of presentations from final year Science Research and Industrial Fellows, the keynote address was given by Philip Ruffles, CBE, RDI, FEng, FRS, previously main Board Director for Engineering & Technology at Rolls Royce and member of our industry awards committee, who led us through the development of 50 years of gas turbine development for civil aviation. His talk "Find me 40 tons of thrust!" was followed by drinks and buffet supper, enjoyed by alumni, Commissioners and guests alike.

We would still like to see more previous award holders at these events – so those of you in the UK, please note in your diaries that the 2009 Alumni Science Evening will be taking place on **Tuesday 10 February 2009**.

2008 Fellowships and Studentships

The round of the Commission's 2008 education awards is now nearly complete, with announcement of Science Research Fellows, Industrial Fellows and Industrial Design Students just awaiting the confirmation of some degree and PhD results. The full set of awards will be published in The Times – and another newsletter – in a few weeks' time.

The Commission's second Fellowship in Design will also be awarded later this year. Announced in the design press last month, applications are now being assessed for the award, which will be for research into "*Design: The link between technology and productive industry.*"

The Commission's Estate

Work continues within the boroughs and the Exhibition Road Cultural Group to develop Exhibition Road, and the first stage of traffic management changes are planned for the end of this year. At the same time, there are equally exciting developments in the residential elements of the Commission's estate. Changes in legislation relating to ownership of freeholds of residential property mean that tenants are legally entitled to seek to purchase the freeholds of the property they currently lease. This has resulted in the sale of the freeholds of some of our more prestigious residential property – including parts of Albert Hall Mansions, which stand next to the Royal Albert Hall.

As a result, the premiums we receive, when invested, will significantly increase the Commission's income. This is one of the reasons for our strategy development, to use this increased income to do yet more to "extend the influence of science and art upon productive industry."

Our most distinguished Alumnus?

2008 is the centenary of the award of the Nobel Prize for Chemistry to Ernest Rutherford, whose distinguished career as a scientist began with the award of a Science Research Scholarship in 1895 was the start of his long association with the Royal Commission for the Exhibition 1851. Initially for two years, he applied for and was granted a third year's scholarship, at the end of which Professor Ayrton, his external examiner, wrote that he was an *"exceptional scholar, and the researches carried out by him during the three years' tenure of his Scholarship were both wide and extensive in character.... I shall not be expressing an exaggerated opinion in suggesting that the Commissioners may feel justly proud that it was through their scheme of Science Scholarships, and through their selection of the candidate, Mr Rutherford, that such a first rate physicist was enabled to come from New Zealand to the Cavendish Laboratory of Great Britain"*.

By 1909 Rutherford was acting as an external examiner for the Royal Commission. In 1921 he was appointed an 1851 Commissioner and in 1924 he joined the Commission's Board of Management. He took a keen interest in Industrial Fellows, Science Research Scholars (many of whom came under his guidance at Cambridge) and the extension of the Overseas Scholarship scheme to India. When he died in post in 1937 the Commissioners recorded that his death *"deprived the roll of its Scholars of its brightest ornament,"* and that *"there has been nobody who has exercised a greater influence upon [the Commission's] counsels"*.

Finally, Commissioners and staff send you every good wish – and hope you will keep in touch; we are always delighted to hear from you.

Malcolm Shirley
Secretary to the Commission