



E-mail Newsletter May/June 2009

Introduction

2009 is flashing past at the Royal Commission and we have just completed our May round of committee meetings, starting with the Finance Committee which not only considered the 2008 accounts but also our strategy for dealing with the impact of the current global recession on our income. Hopefully this should not be seriously affected and our awards committees all met to consider candidates for our 2009 fellowships and studentships. Having extended the Science & Engineering Research Fellowships to 3 years from this year, we had a record number of applicants.

We have also agreed to link our Industrial Fellowships with University Centres for Engineering Doctorates in a pilot scheme in 2009 and this is proceeding well. The full story and details of all 2009 award recipients will be in our next newsletter.

New Commissioners

Following the retirement last year of Lord Linley and Dr Caroline Vaughan as Commissioners on completion of their 10-year terms, our President has approved the appointment, now announced in The Times, of the following:

Professor Sir Richard Brook OBE FREng – Materials Scientist and Chief Executive of The Leverhulme Trust.

Mr Stuart Corbyn – until recently Chief Executive of Cadogan Estates and already a member of our Finance Committee

Professor Sir Christopher Frayling – lately Chairman of the Arts Council and Rector of the Royal College of Art.

Exhibition Road Development

As announced on the news section of the Commission's main website, the long-awaited development of Exhibition Road has now started, with major traffic changes to the area around South Kensington tube station. Following the announcement in the New Year of an extra £10 million funding for the project from Transport for London and with the enthusiastic support of Mayor Boris Johnson, once the traffic management changes are complete, work will begin on transforming the road itself to a shared, more pedestrian-friendly thoroughfare and a more fitting portal to the Great Exhibition legacy cultural estate. The aim is for the development to be complete by the end of 2011, well in time for the 2012 Olympic Games.

At the same time, earlier this year the Commission made a Special Award to the Royal Albert Hall to engage consultants to carry out a scoping study on possible development and improvement of the public realm in the vicinity of the Hall. This will further enhance the area and of course link in with the development of Exhibition Road.

All Change at the North End of the Royal Commission Estate

This summer sees new tenants on our estate as a new Chief Executive takes over at the Royal Albert Hall and a new Rector arrives at the Royal College of Art. On 1 June Mr Ralph Bernard succeeded Mr David Elliot who steps down as Chief Executive of the Royal Albert Hall after more than 10 very successful years – including its major development. Ralph Bernard comes from 25 years in leading roles developing commercial radio, including creating Classic FM and running major radio groups, as well as development of digital radio.

Later this month Sir Christopher Frayling, now a Commissioner, leaves the Royal College of Art after a highly successful period as Rector, to be succeeded by Dr Paul Thompson. Dr Thompson, previously Director of the US National Design Museum, has a highly successful background in arts and design education, including work with the Design Council and directorship of London's Design Museum.

Alumni Science Evening

The Commission's sixth annual Alumni Science Evening took place on 10 February, in its now established form at The Gallery, Cowcross Street, by kind permission of Commissioner Mr Alan Baxter. Despite poor weather and Underground

failure, it was attended by 65 people – a significant increase on previous years. A small number of special guests included Lord Rutherford's great grand-daughter, who spoke briefly about his fellowship almost exactly 100 years after the award of his Nobel Prize.

Chaired by Professor Windle, the short presentations by four final year fellows (two Science Research and two Industrial Fellows) showed the impressive depth and variety of research they undertake. These were followed by a short drinks interval in which the Commission's new Design Fellow demonstrated the fascinating prototype of his design project. The highlight of the evening was the keynote address by Professor Roger Cashmore, a Royal Commission alumnus himself, and now Principal of Brasenose College Oxford. Prior to that he was the Director of Research and Deputy Director General at CERN, and the development of the Large Hadron Collider was the subject of his gripping address.

Drinks and supper afterwards allowed development of discussions on a wide range of topics. The next Alumni Science evening, to follow a similar format, has been provisionally booked for Tuesday 9 February 2010 – so please put this date in your diaries now, as it is previous award holders we most want to attract.

Presidential Dinner

In March we held our biennial Presidential Dinner, a formal but highly enjoyable event, once again at the spectacular Armourers' Hall in the City of London. In honour of our President of 43 years, His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh, it took the familiar format of poster presentations by final year award holders during the drinks reception, followed by a dinner in the impressive wood panelled dining room under splendid real candle chandeliers.

Many alumni will remember these dinners and this one, attended by current award holders, Commissioners and Committee Members was as memorable as any, with our President in excellent form, meeting all the poster presenters as well as nearly all those present and delivering a pithy and amusing speech. The evening was also notable for a hard-hitting speech by the Commission's Chairman on the current state of British industry – which of course the Commission exists to support. This speech is posted on the Commission's website (under News) and hopefully you will have had a chance to read it.

Destinations of Award Holders

Recent analysis of Royal Commission Research Fellows over the past ten years shows that they are all forging impressive careers, with more than half in senior academic or research posts. However not all are keeping their Alumni website details up to date. Can you do it please? If you cannot access the details, or have forgotten your password, please let us know. Meanwhile, we are exploring the possibility of a lost password facility to make keeping in touch easier for you.

The Commission's Archive

Rather than a story **from** the archive, this time we end with a story **of** the archive which is developing fast. Our previous Archivist completed the mammoth task of cataloguing the archive's more than 10,000 items. Our current Archivist, Angela Kenny, has transferred this catalogue to a database and is about to make the list of those archives available for research accessible via the web. So it will soon be possible for everyone to explore the archive online. At the same time we will be digitising some of the archive's most important and interesting images to make them viewable via the web.

Finally, we send the Commission's best wishes to all our alumni, wherever you may be; please keep in touch – particularly if you have any news or stories we could include in future newsletters.

Malcolm Shirley
Secretary to the Commission