

Alumni Newsletter – March 2007

Dear Royal Commission Alumnus,

As we move into another year, despite dire warnings of global warming and 'flu pandemics, life at the Royal Commission continues as vigorously as ever. After the highlights of last year - the Palace Reception and the Alumni Science evening at Imperial College - 2007 is rather more 'normal' for the Commission, if such a state is possible as we keep moving forward. In this regard, last year our combined assets exceeded £45m for the first time, which means that the Commission will continue to be able to award increasing numbers of fellowships and studentships.

The year began with the completion of our splendid new office. No longer with drawers falling out of old filing cabinets and tripping over the cable runs across the floor, the new desks, filing cabinets and improved office equipment not only provide a better place to work, but also will make it considerably more efficient.

2006 Fellowship in Design

After its launch last year the competition was held in the autumn for the Commission's first Fellowship in Design, to be awarded for research into The Future of Design in Business. With a wide range of high quality entries, the Fellowship was awarded in November to Professor Tom Barker and Mr Garrick Jones for their joint project to use games techniques for improving business design.

2007 Fellowships and Studentships

Having now passed the deadline for applications for both Science and Industrial Fellowships, it is clear that both numbers and quality of applicant remain impressively high. As mentioned in last year's newsletters, the main development this year is the introduction of full web-based applications and assessment for our Research Fellowships. Ever-increasing numbers of applications had rendered the old paper-based system unmanageable and applying via the web has greatly streamlined the process. The applications are currently being assessed (on the web of course) and the system is working well. At the same time we will be awarding an additional Research Fellowship this year – the Brunel Fellowship – specifically for an engineering research project.

Alumni Science Evening – 13 February 2007

As announced in earlier newsletters, our Alumni Science Evening, held at The Gallery in Smithfield, was a successful opportunity for five final-year fellows to showcase their work, and was enjoyed by an appreciative audience of Award Holders, Commissioners and Committee Members. These included 15 Alumni, going back over the past 50 years, and we hope these events will attract increasing numbers of previous award holders. The keynote address was given by Professor Anne Dell, Biologist, Alumnus and Science & Engineering Fellowships' Committee member who gave us a fascinating account of her scientific journey from an isolated farm in Western Australia to Fellowship of the Royal Society and a leading research position at Imperial College.

Presidential Dinner – 26 March 2007

Every two years the Commission honours its President and celebrates its work at a formal dinner. This took place at the Armourers' Hall in the City on 26 March where HRH Prince Philip, our President for 42 years, gave an inspiring speech applauding our educational programmes and proposed the toast to the Commission. The Chairman, Sir Alan Rudge, replied and welcomed Award Holders, Commissioners, Committee Members and special guests, who included directors of many of the Commission's legacy institutions in South Kensington – the Science Museum, Imperial College, Royal College of Art, Royal College of Music and Royal Albert Hall. The Champagne reception before dinner included impressive poster presentations by 10 current award holders.

South Kensington in 2007

The Commission's South Kensington legacy estate is enjoying increasing levels of popularity and public attention. With over 10m people visiting the museums every year, this is likely to grow with increasingly popular exhibitions, as well as the 150th anniversary this year of the opening of the V&A Museum. Imperial College's Centenary is already under way with a year of celebrations and it is hoped that Big Lottery Funding will allow the Exhibition Road Development project to begin in 2008.

And Finally...

On the subject of the V&A, with its state of the art administration and security, things have certainly moved on since 1954. That year, a 58-year-old Museum Assistant John Nevin fell under suspicion when a number of objects were mysteriously found to be missing from display. A search of his small terraced house in Chiswick revealed a cache of 1,960 valuable items ranging from ceramics, gold boxes, small tables, statuettes and swords. Part of Mr Nevin's job had been to move objects around, and many of these he moved to Chiswick, either under his coat or stuffed down his trousers. Mr Nevin left the museum's employ to serve a few years in prison and the V&A now has a much tighter control on its inventory.

The Commission wishes all Alumni an enjoyable Easter break (if you have one) and as ever, we hope you will stay in touch.

Malcolm Shirley
Secretary to the Commission