

Presidential Address

Delivered by Lord Runciman PBA to the 101st Annual General Meeting of the Academy on 3 July 2003



I have five matters on which I would like to say something before leaving it to the Secretary to report more formally on the events of the last 12 months.

First of all, you will remember that at last year's AGM the two issues which came up for discussion were the need to try and involve more Fellows in the affairs of the Academy and the question of how proactive or otherwise we ought to be in our relations with government. On the first, it turned out – I suppose unsurprisingly – that everyone agrees that it would be a good thing to involve more of the Fellowship but nobody has any idea how to do so. New Fellows are told that the Academy is a working academy and that Fellowship should not be regarded as purely honorific. But as Section Chairmen know only too well they have no weapon in their armoury beyond moral persuasion, and I can add nothing more than to say that the discussions which I have had on this topic have made me more grateful than ever to those Fellows who do commit substantial amounts of time and effort to the affairs of the Academy without any recompense beyond the refund of rail tickets. And in this connection, I would like particularly to thank the retiring chairmen of the Humanities and Social Sciences Groups, Professor Margaret McGowan and Professor Roger Hood, for what in both cases have been exceptionally valuable contributions, and to thank Professor Paul Slack and Professor Ken Wallis for agreeing to succeed them.

On relations with government, it turned out that some Fellows feel as strongly that we should be more proactive than we are as others do that we should be less. Council will, however, be discussing the question in the near future. We have to recognize that we are in a world in which our relationship with our paymasters cannot be taken for granted and that we ought, if nothing more, to make it explicit that we are always available for consultation and discussion with ministers and officials, either individually or collectively as they may wish. At the same time, it continues to be my firmly-held view that we must be careful not to appear in anybody's eyes either, on the one hand, to be telling universities how to conduct their affairs or, on the other, to be lobbying ministers on universities' behalf.

The second matter is a revision to our bye-laws. Council has decided that it is anomalous that the Chairmen of the Public Understanding and Activities Committee (PUAC) and the Board for Academy-Sponsored Institutes and Societies (BASIS) should not be members of Council and of the Finance and Advisory Committee. They are *de facto* treated as such. But we intend to go to the Privy Council in order to put this on a formal basis and I have no doubt that this is a move which all the Fellowship will support.

The third is the Centenary Project. As you will all know, it was originally announced that a maximum of two awards for Centenary Projects would be made. It was not a competition to decide the two best contestants, but an offer to fund two major long-term research programmes if, but only if, they came up to the exacting standards which had been set and the proposers could make the case that the research in question could not or would not be funded from elsewhere. It was, perhaps, a disappointment that we did not receive more proposals which the Research Committee thought up to the standard which had been set. But in the event, there was only one which the Research Committee and Council unanimously agreed to be what we were looking for. That was the project *From Lucy to Language*, which will bring together a world-class team of psychologists and archaeologists to address the fundamental and fascinating question of how it came about that we – human beings, that is – have minds of the kind unique to ourselves.

Fourth is the review of the Academy's strategy, which Council initiated with a view to establishing priorities for the allocation of uncommitted income in the year 2004/05 and thereafter, but which has widened to cover a review of our current procedures for the allocation of funds and to develop the case for a significant increase in our grant-in-aid over and above the rate of inflation. So far as priorities are concerned, what has emerged is: strong support for our programmes for small grants and for conferences; a preference for helping talented scholars at an earlier rather than a later stage of their careers; a wish actively to encourage interdisciplinary research; a wish to see the Academy's public activities expanded and a wider audience informed about, and involved in, what we do; and an explicit recognition of the value of the Academy's activities both abroad and at home in promoting the humanities and social sciences in ways other than by the direct subvention of research. At the same time, there have emerged two general themes: first, the need for what the Academy does to be, and be seen to be, distinctively different from what is done by any other major funding body, and second, a need for the Academy to be, and be seen to be, dealing with all applications for funds on consistent and transparent terms. The intention is that a document incorporating the conclusions of the review will be submitted to Council in September and, if approved, will then be circulated both to Sections on the one side and to Ministers and officials on the other. What the chances may be of our securing a real increase in the grant-in-aid out of the next government spending review I simply do not know. But I am sure that it is right that we should make the attempt, and indeed that we should be failing in our duty to our constituency if we were not to.

Fifth and last, I am sure you would all want to join in sending the congratulations and best wishes of the Academy to two people: to Professor Frank Walbank, who was elected to Fellowship 50 years ago in the second year of his 26-year tenure of the

Rathbone chair of Ancient History and Classical Archaeology at Liverpool; and to Doris Pearson, the Academy's first salaried member of staff, who was appointed half-time in 1928 and full-time in 1930, and celebrated her 100th birthday this year.

Medals, Prizes and Honours

MEDALS AND PRIZES

The winners of the 2003 Medals and Prizes were announced at the AGM. A ceremony for the prize winners will take place in the autumn at the Academy, and a report will follow in the next issue of the *Review*.

Burkitt Medal for Biblical Studies:

Professor B. Albrektson, Fellow of the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities

Derek Allen Prize (Celtic Studies):

Professor P. Ó Riain, University College Cork

Sir Israel Gollancz Prize (English Studies):

Professor R.E. Lewis, University of Michigan

Kenyon Medal for Classical Studies:

Professor J.N. Coldstream, FBA

Rose Mary Crawshay Prizes (for female authors of historical or critical work relating to English Literature):

Ms C. Tomalin for *Samuel Pepys: The Unequalled Self*

Dr J. Stabler, University of Dundee, for *Byron, Poetics and History*

Serena Medal (Italian History):

Professor S. Woolf, University of Venice

HONOURS

The following honours for Fellows were reported to the Academy during the period January to July 2003. Fellows are invited to notify the Assistant Secretary (Fellowship) of any honours, prizes or other marks of recognition bestowed upon them.

Kt: Professor J.H. Baker; CBE: Professor J.M. Crook; Professor H. Lee; Professor G. Marshall and Professor J.T. Reason; KCMG: Professor L.D. Freedman; Knight of the Thistle: Lord Sutherland; CH: Sir Denis Mahon.

Dr J.H. Golding, Mitchell Prize for the History of Art for his book *Paths to the Absolute*;

Professor A. Karmiloff-Smith, Latsis Prize 2002 in Cognitive Science;

Professor S. Bann, R.H. Grapper Prize for French Studies for his book *Parallel Lines*;

Dr P.R.S. Moorey, Gertrude Bell Memorial Gold Medal of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq for outstanding services to Mesopotamian Archaeology.

Foreign Honorary Members of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences: Professor A.H. Brown; Professor H. Lee; Sir Anthony Kenny; Mr R.N. MacGregor, Professor F.G.B. Millar, and Professor F.W. Walbank;

Fellowship of the Royal Society of Edinburgh: Professor P. France and Professor J.D. Hardman Moore.

National Fellow of the Indian Council of Social Science Research: Professor A. Béteille;

Honorary Fellow, Australian Academy of the Humanities: Dr J.N. Adams.