

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS  
BY SIR KENNETH WHEARE

9 *July* 1969

ONE of the most important changes which this past year has witnessed in the life of the British Academy is symbolized by the fact that I am able to address you here today in these splendid rooms in Burlington House, part of what was once the home of the Royal Society, instead of in those sepulchral quarters in Burlington Gardens. The move was made in November. It was a large and complicated operation, carried out with great speed and efficiency. The actual move itself and the inevitable consequent upheaval have laid a great additional burden on our staff and I would like to say how indebted we are to them for carrying out so cheerfully all the extra tasks thrust upon them and for adapting themselves so tolerantly and uncomplainingly to the new situation. We appreciate this all the more because, although the move has produced some fine public rooms, the rooms occupied by the staff are not of a correspondingly high standard.

One result of our move to Burlington House is that we have acquired, in addition to this fine lecture room, what we regard as a Fellows' Room—something we lacked so conspicuously in Burlington Gardens—which is available for the use of Fellows. We used it in January for our house-warming party for Fellows and their spouses, and it proved so enjoyable an occasion that we have decided to hold it every year. Now by the generosity of one of our Fellows, Sir Max Mallowan, the room is equipped with a fine Ziglar Persian carpet for which we are tremendously grateful. And, yet another benefit from our move to this excellent address, the Royal Academy, our illustrious neighbour, has most kindly agreed to lend us pictures to hang in the British Academy's main rooms.

In a year which has seen a number of changes, none was more important nor felt more personally than the retirement of Sir Mortimer Wheeler from the Secretaryship on 31 December 1968 after a period of twenty years' service. We made him our guest of honour at the Annual Dinner on 25 March 1969 and invited him to propose the toast of the Academy. It was, as I said at the time, a unique occasion, in that for the first time the toast of the Academy was proposed by a Fellow of the Academy,

by a Fellow of the Academy who is also a Fellow of the Royal Society, and by a Fellow of the Academy who has done more than any other living person to make the Academy what it is today. We were delighted to be able to present to Sir Mortimer the gift of a cheque for £800 to which Fellows had subscribed as a mark of their gratitude and appreciation. Next year Sir Mortimer achieves his eightieth birthday and we have decided to celebrate it by establishing an annual *Mortimer Wheeler Archaeological Lecture*. The Academy at present has, normally, only one archaeological lecture every other year. Our intention is that, as a general rule, though not invariably, the lecturer should be chosen from abroad. We have asked Sir Mortimer himself to choose the first lecturer.

In the course of my Address last year, I raised the question of our relations, or lack of them, with foreign academies, and the desirability of promoting or increasing exchange visits between scholars in this country and abroad, particularly in Europe. We had been encouraged by the Royal Society to take some initiative in this field and had been given very freely the benefit of their experience. I am glad to announce that in the short period that has elapsed since I mentioned this idea, we have received two most welcome and generous gifts which make it clear that we can now embark upon this new field.

The Leverhulme Foundation has placed the sum of £40,000 at the disposal of the Academy to institute a series of visiting professorships in the humanities, on the basis of four professorships a year for five years, to be held in foreign countries. The professors will receive an honorarium through the Academy, and fares for themselves and their wives, while the University or Institute which they visit will be expected to provide accommodation. We feel sure that these professorships will be of great value both to this country and to the countries visited. They have already proved themselves in a similar scheme administered through the Royal Society. Indeed I have reason to think that we owe it to the Royal Society, in some degree at least, that the attention of the Leverhulme Foundation was turned in our direction.

Our second benefactor was the Wates Foundation which has placed £10,000 at our disposal to start a scheme of regular exchanges between British and foreign scholars in the humanities. It is intended that the scheme shall work on the basis, as does a similar scheme administered by the Royal Society, of balancing funds in the countries which are parties to the exchange.

By the gifts of these two Foundations we are able to make a start in the field of scholarly exchanges and of increased and improved contact with foreign academies on a scale which, I believe, is within our compass and capacities, for in this matter where we are starting on a new experiment, we shall have to learn to walk before we run. In order that we may plan and administer these new activities carefully and efficiently, we have decided to revive the office of Foreign Secretary, and I am delighted that, at an earlier stage of the meeting, you elected Professor A. G. Dickens, Director of the Institute of Historical Research at London University, to this post. He will preside over a committee of the Academy which will be responsible for our foreign relations, including the new developments now made possible by the timely and most encouraging gifts from the Leverhulme and the Wates Foundations.

It is with much satisfaction that I am able to report that our grant from the Department of Education and Science, which is the main source of the Academy's income, has been raised this year to £294,000. This is an increase of £32,000 in the year and we believe that it is an indication of the Government's confidence in the work which the Academy is doing. An important function of the Academy in relation to the Government is the allocation of funds from the annual grant to the Schools and Institutes abroad, dedicated to archaeological, historical, and similar research. Rather more than half of this year's grant is employed to provide the main finance for the chain of seven overseas British Schools and Institutes at Rome, Athens, Ankara, Jerusalem, Baghdad, Tehran, and Nairobi, to which may be added a further grant towards the costs, including the excavations, of the Egypt Exploration Society.

The mention of this latter Society leads me to announce the imminent formation, on the model of the Society, of a Libya Exploration Society whose object is to promote studies in relation to Libya, its history, antiquities, and culture. The Society will come formally into being in the middle of this month and I am glad to say that the Academy has been able to offer some support to this important new project. The cost of launching the Society can be met initially from the income of the Gertrude Caton-Thompson Fund, with the full support of the donor. In addition to providing this initial support, the Academy is, in the current year, supporting no less than three archaeological expeditions to Libya.

May I say a word about the British School at Rome. A

significant part of its revenue comes, in addition to the Academy's support, from the Commissioners of the Exhibition of 1851. It was they, indeed, who were responsible for creating the School in 1911 in its present form and for initiating the system of Rome Scholarships. The Commissioners are now questioning whether the School, in its present form, is still the right institution through which they can fulfil the objects of their Charter, which is specifically directed to increasing the influence of art on productive industry. Accordingly we have agreed with the Commissioners that there should be an inquiry into the future of the art side of the School. We are most grateful to Lord Robbins for agreeing to preside over a small committee to conduct the inquiry; it is well advanced in its work and I expect that there will be something further to say on this subject at the next annual meeting.

One other important new development in the course of the year deserves mention. This was the decision to hold a joint Symposium with the Royal Society—the first we have ever had—on the subject of 'The Impact of Natural Sciences on Archaeology'. The Symposium, which will be held on 11–12 December 1969, has been organized by a committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. T. E. Allibone, F.R.S. A team of speakers has been invited from abroad of whom the first is Professor Willard Libby, the inventor of the radiocarbon method of dating antiquities. The Symposium is, indeed, timed to mark the 21st anniversary of his important discovery. Its aim will be to bring together the latest scientific and archaeological knowledge so as to find methods of eliminating certain apparent discrepancies between dates based on historical methods and on the new scientific techniques. The results of the Symposium will be recorded in a joint volume. May I say how welcome is this new experiment in collaboration with the Royal Society and express the hope that it may be carried into other spheres.

The year in which we bid farewell to our retiring Secretary, Sir Mortimer Wheeler, is, naturally and properly, the year in which we bid welcome to his successor, Mr. Derek Allen. When the Council addressed itself to the task of finding a successor to Sir Mortimer, it set out to discover someone who would be not only a good administrator but also a good scholar, and if at all possible a Fellow of the Academy. This was asking a lot and we were conscious that if we did indeed find such a person, he or she might well feel reluctant to take on the very considerable administrative burdens and responsibilities which the Secretary-

ship of the Academy now involves. In fact we were most fortunate. Our first choice fell on Mr. Allen, a numismatist of international reputation, a Fellow of the Academy, and an administrator of distinction in the Board of Trade, and to our delight he proved willing to accept. We are most fortunate to have him. As a scholar himself, he understands what it is that we are about and believes in it, and as a former civil servant, he understands the ways of Whitehall, of which no academic body these days can afford to be ignorant. We welcome him to the Secretaryship and, in my opinion, we have already received considerable benefits from his knowledge and experience. May his term of office be successful and enjoyable.