The RSA 1754-2004

An historical review

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AN HISTORICAL REVIEW

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CONTENTS

List of illustrations

INTRODUCTION*

The writing of institutional history is full of perils. The average school history is a work of piety, in which the biographer may hope to learn that Buggins was in the 2nd eleven and Smith, as Headmaster, was the equal of Arnold. University and their component colleges usually receive the same treatment but since the authors are themselves scholars and the subject of higher education being of national significance we may expect a broader and more objective approach. Learned, art, scientific and technical societies generally provide histories which have much in common with the above categories, except that their story forms a part of an easily defined discipline. We know what to expect in histories of the Chemical Society, the Royal Photographic Society, the Royal Statistical Society, the Institution of Electrical Engineers, and the Royal Aeronautical Society to mention but a few who had their beginnings in the RSA 'Great Room'.

The two English national societies which antedated the RSA, and whose members were so important in its foundation: The Royal Society of 1660 and the Society of Antiquaries of 1707, have histories essential for the students of science and archaeology respectively. The Antiquaries have received monumental treatment at the hand of Joan Evans and will have their contribution to archaeology and history reviewed in a tercentenary exhibition planned for 2007. The

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Royal Society has been the subject of book length general histories from Bishop Sprat, who wrote in 1667 onwards. The *Notes and Records* to which period specialists are invited to contribute, have become an historical source in their own right, and the proceedings of the four hundredth anniversary conferences planned for 2010, will no doubt provide further insights.

The Royal Academy of Arts of 1768, so often erroneously claimed as an offspring of this Society, has not only its admirable general history by S. C. Hutchison, but more recently had its important formative years treated in detail by Holger Hoock.[1] For us the problem can be neither simply topical nor simply chronological. Like the Royal Dublin Society upon which we are modelled, our history extends to agriculture, arts, manufactures, to exhibitions and the establishments of technical schools. Yet differences in period are equally strong and the institutions which awarded medals to James Barry and were once so similar inevitably diverged in the 20th century: there being no place for a cattle show in the Adelphi, or for discussion of Commonwealth affairs in the Ball's Pond Road.[2]

Given the task of writing a history of what was once called 'the Society that pokes its nose into everything' what should be the best approach? Two books are available which remain essential tools for the historian, Sir Henry Trueman Wood's *The History of the Royal Society of Arts* (1913) and Derek Hudson and Kenneth Luckhurst's jointly written *The Royal Society of Arts 1754-1954*, (1954). Trueman Wood

was a classicist whose early career at the Patent Office gave him a taste for and a detailed knowledge of industrial history. He had practical experience in movements for popular education and the running of exhibitions. He could also count on the assistance of Henry Wheatley, a devotee of English social and cultural history from the 17th century onwards. Hudson and Luckhurst built on Trueman Wood and often quoted him almost verbatim but they each added their own expertise: the one being an art historian and the other, by virtue of his position as Secretary, showing a familiarity with the administrative by ways of the institution which he interpreted for the reader with humour and understanding. They also carried the story of the RSA from 1880, where Trueman Wood modestly drew a line, down to the bicentenary year of 1954.

In 1958 the Society's *Journal* published the first of a series of 'Studies in the Society's [History and] Archives'. A collection of these, devoted to the 18th century, was published by the University of Georgia Press in 1992 under the title *The Virtuoso Tribe of Arts and Sciences*. The series has also included significant contributions to the history of arts, photography, the patent laws and exhibitions in the 19th century. The publication of annual historical symposia: 1987 on Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee, 1989 on French themes, 1990 on Irish themes, 1992 on Education themes also contributed to our knowledge of the Society in its later period. Professor Rupert Hall's lecture, 'The Royal Society of Arts: two centuries of progress in science and technology' (1974) took our story into the last century. The history of the Society's examinations in the mid-19th century was

explored in depth by the late Frank Foden, who had also contributed to the Studies and the Symposia, in his book, *The Examiner*.[3]

Historians of the 20th century have focussed on the Society's involvement in industrial design and the environment. The history of the Royal Designers for Industry from their foundation in 1936 down to their golden jubilee in 1986 was recorded by Fiona MacCarthy: the Society's concern for the environment in which Prince Philip and the late Sir Brian Batsford had taken the lead was described in the Society's special reports from 1961 onwards and from a finely illustrated work by Timothy Cantell published in 1993.[4]

With such an aggregation of scholarship and information, and with the passing of the years since 1954 a new general history was clearly required. The 1999 *Chronological History* makes no claim to be definitive. My hope was that in dividing the Society's story into thirty year periods the relation between its history and more general events would become clear. These are to some extent indicated in the chapter headings: 'Georgian Glory' covers the first three decades and shows the Society as the epitome of the English Enlightenment; 'Consolidation 1784 to 1815' sees the important question of an appeal for state funding rendered unnecessary by internal prosperity, and a continued belief in the institution's power to guide the progress of industry in spite of the relative low value of its rewards. 'Exuberance, Decadence and Reform' cover the years 1816 to 1847 and recall the Duke of Sussex's royal performances for the benefit of William

Cobbett and the young Millais, the dreadful warning by Charles Knight in 1843 when he asked the question 'The Society of Arts! What Society is that?', and the extraordinary quick revival culminating in the Royal Charter of 1847. 'Exhibitions and Education' take us up to 1879 and cover what has been called 'the honeymoon of the industrial revolution'. The Society's connection with Prince Albert and the Great Exhibitions of 1851 and 1862 will never be forgotten and by this time its terms of reference had become so wide that they were described by Lord Lyttleton in 1860 as 'whatever tends to the intellectual and industrial progress of the people'. For the next three decades 1880-1911, I had no hesitation in using the title 'Empire and Royalty'. The Society's 'Indian' and 'Colonial' sections flourished in this time and were not affected by the foundation of the 'Imperial Institute' in 1887, though considerable help was given to this new body. However, the establishment of the British Academy in 1902 and of the Exhibition Department of the Board of Trade in 1908 had more negative consequences for the Society. 'War and Depression 1912-1943' begins with the Society enjoying its royal title which King Edward had given it in 1908 and, on the eve of the first great conflict in 1914, adopting the style 'Fellow' for its members. Exactly why the obtaining of proficiency in typewriting and shorthand should earn a magnificent diploma from a body calling itself 'The Royal Society of Arts' and why so many colonial administrators and home businessmen, of whom we may count Lords Bennett and Nuffield should be described as 'FRSA' was a puzzle to the general public and its campaign for the preservation of English cottages may have seemed to come to trespass on the work of the National Trust. To

justify its widespread field of interest the Society now more than ever invoked its history and the succeeding period, 1944-1974 has had 'Commemoration' joined to 'Revival' as its title. Yet there was always a platform for those who like Sir Walter Worboys in 1968 argued that without increased industrial efficiency 'social progress' as visualized by the Society would suffer and this was to be re-emphasised eighteen years later when the Society led the nation in 'Industry Year'. This brings us into the final section of the 'Chronological History' called 'New Departures' not because the philosophy of the Society has changed, indeed what was called 'The Shipley Mission' became the touchstone of its activities, but because of such initiatives as the RSA Music Scholarships (to 1991) and the project for teaching Shakespeare in schools seemed to reach beyond the boundaries generally associated with the encouragement of arts, manufactures and commerce. Domestically the separation from the Examinations Board in 1987 and the development of the vaults beneath the Society's houses between 1989 and 1990 and the increasing use of the premises by the newly formed RSA Enterprises plc certainly justified the title. Here however I go beyond my brief and echo Trueman Wood's self denying ordinance which made him wary on commenting on the Society's work in his own time.

* * * *

A former Editor of the Society's *Journal*, the late John Skidmore, whose study of history as an undergraduate under such exacting

teachers as Bruce Macfarlane and A. J. P. Taylor, inspired him with both a respect and a love for the subject, used to say that the Society's archives and *Transactions* were like a wonderful kaleidoscope, which would always yield a new and fascinating pattern each time they were given an in-depth scrutiny: I propose six shakes: One for 1754, one for 1804, one for 1897, one for 1904, one for 1954 and one for 1974.

William Shipley
by William Hincks

1. 1754. The Foundation

The story of the first meeting of our eleven founders at Rawthmell's Coffee House in Henrietta Street, Covent Garden on 22nd March 1754, has often been told. Emphasis has been placed on the rôle of the coffee house in late 17th and 18th society, where business, politics and literature as well as straight forward 'clubability' could be cultivated and where actual lectures and demonstrations of the marvels of natural and experimental philosophy took place. Here I should like to pause briefly to comment on the interesting social mix which our first meeting provided. The Bishop of Worcester and two great noblemen, Lords Folkestone and Romney, promised William Shipley that if he could 'get a few Gentlemen of his acquaintance…to make a beginning' they would 'give them a meeting'. The Bishop did not attend but the noblemen did and with them came a relative, Stephen Hales, D.D., FRS, Chaplain to the Princess Dowager of Wales, and the most celebrated scientist of the time. Dr Hales brought with him his neighbour and parishioner from Teddington, John Goodchild, wax chandler, linen draper and future honorary treasurer of the Society, Shipley himself had introduced his friends, Henry Baker, FRS, FSA, expert on the microscope and active promoter of the affairs of the Royal and Antiquarian Societies, Husband Messiter, the surgeon with whom he lodged in Great Pulteney Street, Nicholas Crisp, the public spirited jeweller and pottery manufacturer, and a certain Charles Lawrence, resident of Fleet Street, of whom little is known. Gustavus Brander, FRS, FSA, the wealthy merchant in the Baltic Trade, was known to Henry Baker through his activities in the Society of Antiquaries and as with James

Short, FRS, through the Royal Society connection. The minutes record these names in the following order and style:

The Right Honourable Lord Viscount Folkestone

The Right Honourable Lord Romney

The Rev Dr Stephen Hales

John Goodchild, Esq

[and] Messrs: Lawrence

Baker

Crisp

Brander

Short

Messiter

Shipley[5]

Anna Zinkeisen, First meeting of the Society at Rawthmells Coffee House, (1954)

Clearly in noting the first four of these names Shipley was conscious of prevailing social forms but why he should award the style of 'Esquire' to John Goodchild and not to Baker or Brander, both of whom would sometimes employ it, is difficult to explain. Perhaps he thought that because he lived outside London and was brought to the meeting by Dr Hales, Goodchild deserved the epithet. In writing to Baker from Northampton in 1748 Shipley had committed the rural solecism of using 'Esquire' as a prefix and had been set right by Baker who had replied using the correct form of 'Mr'.[6] Too much cannot be read into the order in which he records the 'Misters' present at Rawthmells. He may just have looked around the table and this brings us to the question of how the seating was arranged. Anna Zinkeisen's reconstruction of 1954 shows eight figures sitting and three standing. Age and rank would have been a consideration here and appropriately enough Dr Hales, aged 77, sits at the head of the table but Lord Romney has his hat on, the artist anticipating his future Presidency, with Shipley sitting beside him. Henry Baker stands between Dr Hales and Lord Romney, and Lord Folkestone stands behind Shipley. The artist was after all representing what might have been a contemporary group picture such as Barry's composition of Society members on the east wall of the present Great Room. She, like Barry, gives to their Lordships that 'majestic mein' which peers were expected to have in the 18th century, and which as we shall see when we come to 1804 would be disappointingly absent in the then President.

The social atmosphere which prevailed at the early meetings of the

Society was indicated by Henry Baker in a letter he wrote to a correspondent in November 1755 '…we go on with the utmost harmony, and the greatest and the meanest are equally industrious in the same Design, all Rank and Distance is laid aside and every one is listened to with due attention'.[7] Who actually did the talking is not recorded in the Minutes. 'Proposals' to reward the finding of cobalt, the growing of madder and the 'Encouragement of Boys and Girls in the Art of Drawing' were noted as being approved, but the 'proposers' are not named. We can guess that Henry Baker would have urged the first topics and Shipley himself the last. Neither was a polished speaker. Of Baker it was said that 'from the lowness of his voice his manner of speaking was not powerful' although 'it was clear, sensible and interesting' Shipley was described as 'slow and sometimes hesitating in his speech, not from defects, but from consideration'.[8] Dr Hales, accustomed to delivering sermons, and Lords Folkestone and Romney with their parliamentary experience would have had no difficulty in expressing their opinions. Hudson and Luckhurst imagined the founding members 'grouped purposefully round a secluded table, with their wigs and hats bent over the coffee and a pile of public prints pushed determinedly aside. Or perhaps they had a private room'. The latter conjecture is most likely since it would not have done for the general public to have learnt the paucity of their numbers, which was carefully hidden by the word 'some' in the celebrated announcement approved on 25th March:

> Some of the Nobility, Clergy, Gentlemen and Merchants, having at heart the Good of their Country, have lately met together, in order to form a Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures

> and Commerce, in *Great-Britain*; by Bestowing Rewards from Time to Time, for such Productions, Inventions, or Improvements, as shall tend to the Employing of the Poor, to the Increase of Trade, and to the Riches and Honour of this Kingdom, by promoting Industry and Emulation[9]

Moving on fifty years to our next destination in time brings us to the Society's Golden Jubilee of 1804.

2. The Society's Golden Jubilee, 1804

Lord Romney died in 1793 and was succeeded by Charles Howard, 11th Duke of Norfolk, who had joined the Society as in 1769 and been elected a Vice-President in 1791. Described as bucolic, aggressive and slovenly dressed he was nonetheless a liberal patron of literature and the arts. Unwashed, sodden with claret, full of contradictory political and religious ideas, even the peculiarities of his pronunciation have been recorded: 'Airandel' for Arundel; 'Gairter' for Garter, 'Daeity' for Deity. 'Nature' wrote a contemporary 'cast him in her coarsest mould…his person large, muscular and clumsy, was destitute of grace and dignity…He might indeed have been mistaken for a grazier or butcher'.[10] The President was expected to take the chair on two important annual occasions; an anniversary dinner, revived in 1785, and a ceremonial distribution of rewards, begun in 1787. The dinner of 1804 was held, as was the custom, at the Crown and Anchor Tavern in the Strand and although no minutes describing the toasts

survived we can assume that the healths drunk were similar to those proposed by the Duke of 1802. Just to recite them gives one a feeling of intoxication and one rather dreads to imagine the subversive gloss his Grace would have given to no.11. The 1802 list ran:

1. The King with three times three cheers
2. The Prince of Wales
3. The Queen and the rest of the Royal Family
4. Prosperity to the Society of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce
5. May the British Empire long flourish under the protection of peace [Reminder the Treaty of Amiens was about to be signed]
6. The Legislature & may their wisdom & virtue shield us from calamity & guide us to happiness
7. Lord St Vincent & the Navy
8. The Duke of York & the Army
9. The memory of the gallant officers & men who have fallen in the service of their country
10. The memory of his Grace the late Duke of Bedford the patron of Agriculture
11. The memory of Alfred the Great the founder of our glorious constitution
12. May the horrors of war be only remembered as a warning to avoid its evils.
13. The Union
14. The plough, loom & sail
15. Trade and Commerce
16 The Artists of Great Britain[11]

The Duke was well known for his impromptu remarks on such occasions and had yet to earn royal forgiveness for his outrageous behaviour at the Whig Club dinner held at the same tavern four years

before. At the Society's 1800 Dinner, the Duke had asked the assembled guests to drink 'a silent glass' in memory of the late Secretary, Samuel More, expressing his fears that no person could equal him in so influential an office. This was taken as a slight on Dr Charles Taylor, the newly appointed Secretary and at a later dinner the Duke made amends.[12] We can be sure that in 1804 he said something about the golden jubilee at both the dinner and the distribution.

The anniversary dinner was held on Wednesday 21 March 1804 and 'On Tuesday, the 29th of May', as the *Transaction* tells us 'the Premiums and Bounties were delivered to the Claimants, from the Chair, by his Grace the Duke of NORFOLK, the President, in presence of a very numerous assembly of Noblemen, Ladies and Gentlemen'.[13] An engraved portrait of the Duke has the caption 'A view of Norfolk'. His coat would have been the despair of Brummel and he wears no wig or powder. We also see him in Isaac Taylor's general view of the ceremony. Here we can make out some figures dressed in the height of fashion and some wearing the costumes of an earlier age, amongst whom would have been Caleb Whitefoord, Vice President since 1800 and a member since 1760, described as 'the last gentleman who wore the true Garrick cut'.[14]

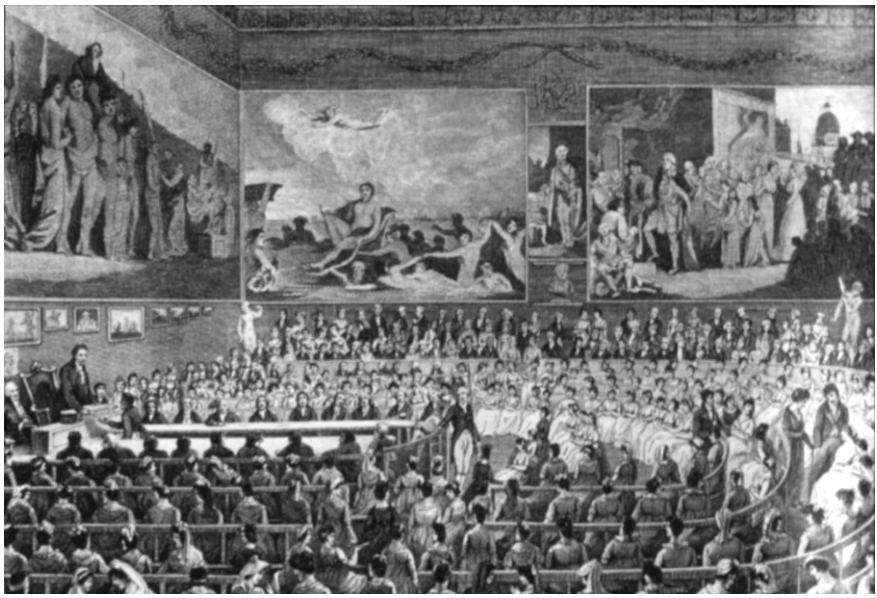
Charles, 11th Duke of Norfolk, b.1746. d.1815. President of the Society 1794-1815
(From an engraving by Dighton presented to the Society by a Fellow)

Caleb Whitefoord by William Daniell after George Dance

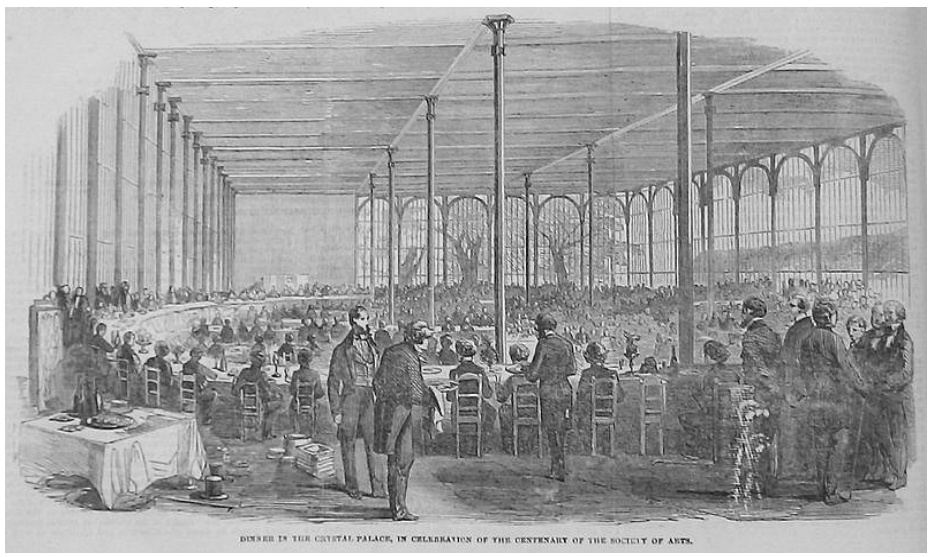
The text of the Secretary's speech has not survived but we may assume he fulfilled the resolution of the Society, taken as early as March 1803 on the suggestion of Valentine Green, to celebrate 'the 50th year of the Establishment of the institution by a public statement after the day of the Distribution of premiums of the various advantages which the public have derived from their exertions'. Dr Charles Taylor, who favoured the plain up to date dress of a professional man, began the proceedings by an appropriate speech… 'noticing the objects of the Society, from its institution, in the year 1754, to the present time, and particularising the Rewards which had been then adjudged this session'. Some 38 awards were then handed out by the Duke : 8 in the class of 'Agriculture', 6 in 'Chemistry'; 18 in 'Polite Arts'; 2 in 'Manufacture'; 10 in 'Mechanics' and 4 in 'Colonies and Trade'. Time precludes particularising but we may single out the tree plantations of John Christian Curwen MP, the colour discovery of Sir Henry Englefield, the paintings and drawings of eight young ladies, at that date the female accomplishment par excellence (notice their numerous friends and relatives in Isaac Taylor's view of the ceremony, all no doubt likely to be ogled by His Grace), topographical drawing of the young George Shepherd, the wood engraving by Richard Austin, and John Cary's map of Cardiganshire. Then there were the awards for improved looms in the class of manufactures and, remembering the great war against Napoleonic France so recently resumed, the gold medals in the class of Mechanics to Captain Brodie RN for 'Marine Improvements' and to Mr (later Sir) Robert Seepings for his seminal method of handling ships in dry dock. In this class also came the Chevalier Edelcrantz's safety valve

for steam engines, and Thomas Holden's machine 'to do the threadwork in shoe making standing', reflecting two opposites in the industrial technology of the time. Finally under the heading 'Colonies and Trade' are the medals and money subsidies given for raising hemp in Canada, reminders of the Society's fruitful collaboration with the Committee of the Privy Council for Trade in this final phrase of mercantilist belief.

The preface to the 1804 volume of the *Transactions* summarizes the sentiments which prevailed in this jubilee year and which would be echoed on many occasions yet to come: 'An area of 50 years has been now completed since the institution of this Society: as far as human judgement can foretell future events, there is every reason to expect that the Society established for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, will remain great and flourishing to many succeeding ages, will reflect an honour upon the merit and judgment of its founders, will preserve its reputation unsullied, and its character highly respected throughout every part of the known world'.[16]



The Society's 'Great Room' from Isaac Taylor's engraving



The Society of Arts Centenary dinner held at Crystal Palace Sydenham, 1854

3. The Society's Centenary, 1854

Fifty years on takes us to the era of stove pipe hats and Gladstonian collars and side whiskers as cultivated by Prince Albert, the President of the Society. The last of the old style distribution ceremonies took place in June 1853 when H.R.H. presented twenty-eight medals to the Society's premium winners. From then on medals would be given out by the Chairman of the Society's Council at an annual general meeting to hear the report of this body, which since its establishment in 1844 had become increasingly influential in the governance of the Society. The Chairman in 1853 was Captain Henry Owen RE, Henry Cole's close friend and colleague. On 2nd November he resigned and was replaced by another civil servant concerned with education, Harry Chester, founder of the Society's examination, whose Trollopean early years have been well described by Professor Hurt and the late Dr Foden. With only sixteen days to prepare it, Chester was now to deliver an inaugural address, a task made all the more difficult by what he called 'the epoch which the life of the Society has attained'. The one hundredth session he said was about to begin.

After pleading his lack of knowledge, Chester repeated in some detail the story of the foundation and its principal activities up to 1853, and may be pardoned for confusing 'Dr Templeman's Transactions', two beautifully written ms. volumes of the 1760s, with the original minute books of the Society and repeating the time honoured claim that 'the Royal Academy sprang from the Society of Arts'. Passing to the

policies and work of the Society in his own day and making an Albertine pun – one thinks of Prince's 'I need steam and send for Cole'. Chester showed himself aware of the Society's destiny:

> The inheritance of our predecessors is accepted by the council of the current year. We shall endeavour to carry on with good vigour what has been commenced with good judgment; and at our retirement, to leave behind us some things that may be worthy of record. We shall not think it necessary to pursue the very objects that William Shipley pursued. He was particularly anxious to promote the growth of madder; but we think it not at all needful in these days to take extraordinary measures to make the world grow madder. We hope, however, to do some things that Shipley and his coadjutors would have gladly seen done.
>
> By the merciful arrangements of Providence, our interests, rightly understood, are always in harmony with out duties; and we have much cause to be thankful that this truth in relation to the health and homes of our poorer brethren, is now peculiarly obvious. The council is thoroughly convinced that an improved education for the whole people, rich and poor, adult and child, is the first requisite for the improvement of manufactures, commerce and arts; that a liberal measure of science must enter into that education; and that it is the duty of this Society to promote vigorously this great object. We shall not involve the Society in any religious or political controversies; but we shall lend a helping hand to make education industrial, scientific and practical.[17]

The 'one hundredth session' closed on 14th June 1854 with the Society's General Meeting to receive the report of the Council. Harry

Chester took the chair and the report was read by the Secretary, Peter Le Neve Foster (whose namesake and great grandson I knew as Treasurer of the Society in the 1950s) containing a lengthy review of papers read and reports published. It also announced a 'great work which it has undertaken – and which it believes to be worthy the Centenary of the Society – the organisation of an Educational Exhibition'. The Society's premises not being sufficiently large, the Exhibition was opened in St Martin's Hall, on Tuesday, the 4th of July, with a *Conversazione*, attended by His Royal Highness the President. Prince Albert's attendance at the 'Conversazione' was reported and illustrated in the *Illustrated London News* for 15th July 1854. The same issue also noted the great climax of the Society's centenary commemorations, a dinner for 750 persons at the Crystal Palace, recently moved from Hyde Park to Sydenham. The magazine thought this a suitable setting, and commented:

> As the Society of Arts claims the honour of the parentage of the Great Exhibition 1851 and as the Crystal Palace stands in a filial relation to that great event, the Council of the Society of Arts very properly considered it both agreeable and appropriate that, on the completion of its first centenary, its members should assemble under the auspices and protection of the roof of its most famous crystal grandchild…[18]

The war with Russia (known to us as the Crimean War) seemingly far away prevented the Duke of Newcastle from taking the chair as he was due to see one of his sons embark for the Baltic on H.M.S. Dauntless. Instead another noble Vice-President, the Earl Granville

presided. We learn from the Society's *Journal* that 'Dinner was served in a spacious banqueting hall, fitted up by the [Crystal Palace] Company, on the basement floor of the building. The arrangement of this hall was such as to permit of a distribution of the company in somewhat of a classified order, with the view of showing that it was not an ordinary mixed assemblage. At a large semicircular upper table, embracing the length and breadth of the hall, were arranged, on either side of the Chair, the Foreign Commissioners to the Educational Exhibition, and other distinguished guests, invited by the Society to be present, including the Directors of the Crystal Palace Company…At 13 parallel tables, embraced within the semi-circular one, were seated the Members of the Society, the Representatives of the Institutions in Union and their friends'.

We see this arrangement portrayed in the *Illustrated London News*: The Council occupied the centre table, with the exception of Harry Chester, the Chairman, who sat on the left hand of Earl Granville at the top table. At the Art table, on the left of the Council table were seated among others, David Roberts, R.A., Digby Wyatt, Owen Jones, Roger Fenton with Sir Charles Eastlake, President of the Royal Academy, as Vice-Chairman. Those at the Commerce table next on the left included John Dillon and William Hawes with William Brown M.P., as Vice-Chairman. At the Institutes table, next on the left were among others J. C. Buckmaster and J. R. Kay with Edward Baines as Vice-Chairman. At the Science table which was immediately to the right of the Council table, were Thomas Huxley and other scientists, with Dr Forbes Royle, F.R.S. as Vice Chairman. At the Engineering

table next on the right, were among others, Sir John Rennie, F.R.S., Charles Manby, F.R.S., with Robert Stephenson, M.P., Vice-President of the Society, as Vice-Chairman. At the Education table, the next on the right were Matthew Arnold and a group of educationalists drawn from various religious denominations with the Dean of Hereford, Vice-President of the Society as Vice-Chairman. Finally on the furthest right at the Manufactures table, were named as present among others Herbert Minton, with Thomas De La Rue as Vice-Chairman.

After dinner had been eaten – we have, alas no menu – the Dean of Hereford said Grace and nine toasts were drunk and eleven persons made speeches. These are fortunately recorded with the appropriate Pickwickian asides. A few gems may be selected.

Lord Granville began by explaining the Duke of Newcastle's absence with a touch which brings the distant war home to us as it did to those in that summer of 1854. Speaking of the Duke's son he said, 'Any one, more particularly a father, can scarcely reflect on the service in which that youth is about to engage without feeling that the Duke of Newcastle, however deeply we may regret his absence, has a valid and sufficient excuse for not being present on this occasion – though I could have wished that he had a more able substitute in this chair. My first duty is now to propose a toast which requires no preparatory observations from me to insure its cordial acceptance, the health of the illustrious lady whom we have the happiness to possess as a

sovereign of this country. I remember, about two years ago, hearing a soldier and statesman, a subject of a northern power, in speaking of the constitution of Great Britain, state that he could not understand how it was maintained, as it appeared to him like a boat continually rocking from one side to the other; upon which I took occasion to remark, that that circumstance most probably accounted for the difficulty which existed of upsetting the boat. (Laughter).'

The toast having been drunk, Lord Granville said – 'My lords and gentlemen, the next toast which I have the honour to set before you is the health of H.R.H. Prince Albert. I am aware that that toast is always received with pleasure, but it obtains a peculiar significance on the present occasion, inasmuch as H.R.H. Prince Albert is the President of the Society whose Centenary we are now assembled to celebrate…'

HARRY CHESTER then rose and said – 'My Lord Granville and Gentlemen, As Chairman of the Council of this Society, I have been requested by my colleagues to propose a toast, and, at your lordship's suggestion, I take it somewhat out of the appointed order…Upon ordinary occasions, those who visit this remarkable building come here as visitors and guests of the Crystal Palace Company; upon this occasion, however, we are here in a somewhat peculiar character – being in one sense the guests, and in another sense the hosts of the directors of the Crystal Palace Company. I have, my lord and gentlemen, to request you to drink "Success to the Crystal Palace

Company" – (cheers) and I will blend with that the health of the chairman of that company, Mr Laing. (Cheers)…I give you my lord and gentlemen, "Success to the Crystal Palace Company, and the Health of its Chairman, Mr Samuel Laing. (Protracted cheering)'

Lord Granville then made a speech which was a long argument in favour of education. He concluded by referring to the visits of working men to Paris and mentioning 'that cordial feeling which exists between the combined armies and the fleets of two nations, which have exhibited nothing but the most generous rivalry…in defence of what both consider the just rights of civilisation, and the interests of Europe (Hear, hear). To such extent is this feeling carried, that when the French sailor wishes to compliment the English sailor not being able to find words to express himself as he could wish in our language, he slaps him on the back, and cries "Bravo, Jackey" (Loud laughter). Having made allusion to the representatives of foreign nations, I am afraid it is an idea fixed in their minds that we Englishmen are not able to do anything good or bad without eating and drinking; but…I think for a society of this sort to eat and drink once in a hundred years, is not very formidable. (A laugh). I am afraid there are few of us who remain to witness another celebration of this sort at the end of another century'

Sir Charles Eastlake first replied telling the story of how 'some years ago (I forget the precise time since elapsed) I had the honour to receive the Gold Medal of the Society from the hands of the late

Duke of Norfolk. That was a stimulus to me. (Cheers)' John Dillon took up this vein of recollection, 'It is impossible' he said, 'to speak of the Society of Arts without recollecting all the improvements which it has originated in those branches which it was formed to promote, and without wishing for some Barry to paint the results to our country and to our nation, more beautifully than he has depicted the effects of general prosperity in those pictures which decorate the hall in the Adelphi. I was in the same room when, as you were told by the President of the Royal Academy, the late Duke of Norfolk presented to him the Gold Medal of the Society. I have in fact, watched the course of the Society from small beginnings, as it took its grand steps towards the general diffusion of knowledge…'

Charles Knight proposed the health of the 355 Institutions in Union with the Society and stressed the importance of continued education in the time of war. Edward Baines, authority on the cotton industry, recalled that in 1824 he had attended a lecture at what was then the only mechanics institute in England, Dr Birkbeck's 'old and dirty chapel' near Falcon Square. The health of the French and American commissioners to the Educational Exhibition was proposed by Lord Mahon. For France, Henri Milne-Edwards, the eminent naturalist sent over by the Emperor came with a paean of praise for the alliance. Speaking for the USA, and in particular for his own state of Connecticut, the Hon. Henry Barnard, told how the 'early settlers in Connecticut were graduates of the grammar schools and universities of this country, and that we owe it to that fact, that there was incorporated into the first code of her laws this simple provision (and

if there is ever to be monument erected, and an inscription placed upon it, I trust it may be the words of that law) "That the authorities of the towns would not allow so much barbarism to exist in their midst, as to have a single child unable to read the Holy Word of God and the good laws of his country!' (Hear, hear and cheers)

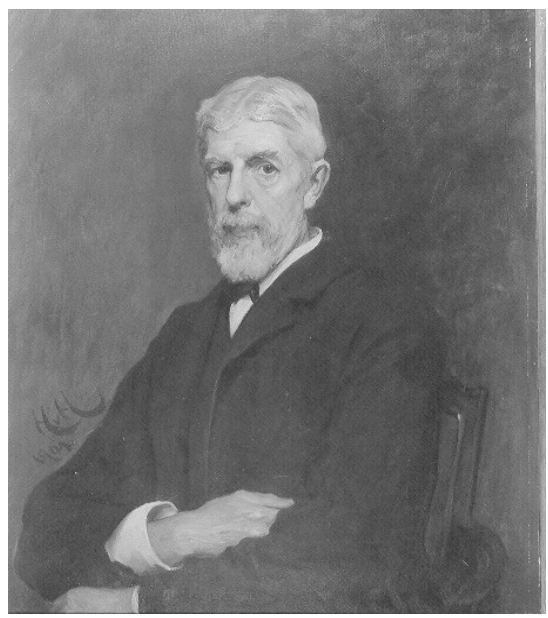
The Earl of Harrowby rose to say – 'I think I heard it suggested in the far end of the room, that "time was up;" I believe it is up, and happily for me it is so. It therefore gives me the suggestion that I am to be short in what I have to say to you; and yet I could not be short if I were to detail to you all connected with the toast which I have to offer to you; I have to give you the health of our noble chairman, Earl Granville'. (Loud cheers)…

The Earl replied – 'Gentlemen, I beg leave to return to you my most sincere thanks for the kind feeling with which you have received the toast…Allow me now, in conclusion, to say, using a theatrical expression "I thank you for your indulgence, as I am an actor who on short notice consented to read his part" . (Cheers and laughter). The company then separated.' Henry Cole, who had sat at the Council table, noted in his diary: 'To Crystal Palace dinner of Society of Arts: passed off well'[19]

4. 1897

This was not only Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee year but was also considered to mark an important point in the development of the Society's work and influence. In his Council report the Secretary, Sir Henry Trueman Wood, who was well versed in its long and complicated history pointed out that the institution:

> has completed a period of fifty years under its Royal Charter, since it was incorporated in 1847 after ninety-three years of previous existence. The progress which has been made is very remarkable, and the members are certainly to be congratulated on the position the Society now occupies as compared with that which it held at the date of its incorporation.[20]



Sir Henry Trueman Wood by H. Herkomer

The membership had grown from 1000 to over 3000. A weekly *Journal* and a system of examinations had been established. The fame of the Society through its initiation of the Great Exhibition and its continuing work in the exhibitions field was worldwide as was the prestige of its highest award – the Albert Medal; given in 1897 to the English meteorologist G. S. Symons and in 1898 to the German industrial chemist, R. W. Bunsen.

Albert Medal

Through its commercial examinations and its sponsorship of the International Congress on Technical Education the Society maintained a constant battle to awake the nation to the increasing skills of its foreign competitors.

A speaker at the Congress which was held in summer of 1897 asserted:

> …it may be taken as a common-place in trade reports – not only by Englishmen but by foreigners – that the British trader and his Representatives are wanting in resource and that they are not well equipped with the arms of their profession

Quintin Hogg spoke to the Congress on English Polytechnics and told the picturesque story of the beginnings of the famous institution he had himself founded:

> The seedling first saw the light just after Christmas, 1863, when [he] took two crossing sweepers into the Adelphi arches, which were then open to the river, and with a beer-bottle and a tallow candle for the entire lighting apparatus, a couple of Bibles wherewith to teach the letters of alphabet as the entire school furniture, the two crossing-sweepers as the total of our scholars, and himself as the teaching staff, commenced a very elementary ragged school. This grew until it needed a home of its own, which was secured in 'Of-alley', off the Strand. In order the more fully to carry out his ideas, [he] determined to build an Institute which should afford scope for a many-sided work, and as he hoped and believed, would serve as a model for other institutes in London.

Trueman Wood reminded the Congress of the Society's work in the

field of commercial examinations. In reply to a speaker who wished for a general examining body he said:

> the Society of Arts would be only too glad to hand over the system which it had carried on now for 40 years with success, to any more capable body. Twice in previous years it had offered to abandon its own examinations, and twice from pressure from outside it had resumed them. The Society had spent a considerable amount of money in founding its system of examinations, and if for the last three years or so they had become self-supporting, for the previous 37 years there had been a heavy annual expenditure on them, and he did not think the Society would be at all sorry if it could hand over those [commercial] examinations in the same way as it handed over the technological examinations.[21]

This self-denying action lay far into the future. Specifically, in 1897 the Society's long standing concern with the Empire overseas comes to the fore and its fervent loyalty to the Crown is reaffirmed. The Society had re-elected each year since 1862 the heir to the throne as President and had as life members his brothers the Dukes of Edinburgh (1871) and Connaught (1872). His sons the Dukes of Clarence and York had been elected in 1885 and 1894 respectively. In 1887 the Society had not only awarded the Albert Medal to the Queen but contributed largely to the Prince of Wales's then favourite project – the Imperial Institute at South Kensington. In 1897 the Prince presented to Her Majesty a Jubilee Address on behalf of the Society.

The Council had as its chairman Major-General Sir Owen Tudor Burne, the eminent administrator of the Indian Empire with his predecessors, General Sir John Donnelley, the Attorney General, Sir Richard Webster, the Duke of Abercorn and Sir Douglas Galton together with the Rt Hon G. N. Curzon and Earl of Rosebery, as Vice-Presidents. So that pro-consults, 'modern major-generals', scientists and both Liberal and Conservative statesmen were represented in its governance.

The Chairman himself seemed the epitome of the Victorian age. Born in the year of the Queen's accession, Owen Tudor Burne was one of a large family having eighteen brothers and sisters. His father, as one might expect was a clergyman in the established church and, as often happened at that time, a man troubled with 'doubts' which led, in his case, to membership of the strange sect known as the 'Irvingites' or 'Catholic Apostolic Church'. The young Owen was commissioned in 1855. After just missing the end of the Crimean war, he was sent to India, where he served with distinction during the mutiny. His services attracted the attention of Sir Hugh Rose (Lord Strathnairn) who appointed him, though he was then only twenty-four, his military secretary. From this time on Burne's career was political rather than military. After serving as A.D.C. to Lord Strathnairn during the latter's command in Ireland, he returned to India as Private Secretary to Lord Mayo (1868) and it was in his arms that the assassinated Viceroy died in 1872. His next appointment was that of political ADC to the Secretary of State for India, to be

followed later (1874) by the secertaryship of the Political and Secret Department of the India Office. Two years later (1876) he went again to India, this time as Private Secretary to Lord Lytton. In 1878 he returned to the India Office, where he held his former post till he was appointed to the India Council in 1887.[22]

It was in this year that he became a member of the Society being proposed by his life long friend Sir George Birdwood – the great champion of Indian interests in the institution. Sir Owen (he had been made KCSI in 1879) joined the Council in 1888. As Chairman in 1897 it was his duty to deliver an inaugural address and he chose the appropriate subject of 'India: its Arts, Manufactures and Commerce'. Had time permitted he would, he said, have referred to 'that still greater world, our splendid Colonial empire, in which the Society takes also a deep interest'. His concluding apostrophe was full of Imperial zeal:

> Long may India remain a gem in the crown of our beloved Sovereign, under whose lengthened and beneficent rule it has made so much progress and has received so many benefits!
>
> Long may the East and West meet in friendly competition and comradeship, each receiving from the other what each has so much to give to the other!

Later in the session the little known and appreciated benefits of the abolition of slavery in India were stressed in a paper by Lee Warner entitled 'India during the reign of Queen Victoria' and achievements in other parts of the Empire described in a brilliant paper by Sir

Charles Dilke, the great Liberal imperialist. Dilke appreciated the jealousies felt in Germany at our superiority in the colonial field: 'We were not' he pointed out, 'the most popular of powers, but that could only make us more anxious to hold our own and protect ourselves in our own way by making our own naval supremacy complete and secure'.

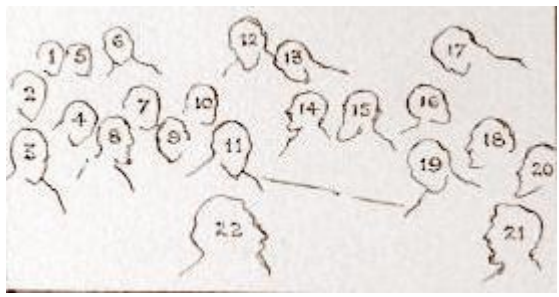
Such were the ideals and boastings of the Society's members in this Jubilee year. If there were clouds on the horizon the land was still brightened by the earlier glories of the reign in which the Society had played so conspicuous a part. Dilke was a living representative of these, and he began his paper by recalling how as a child he had attended meetings in the Great Room when his father was planning the Educational Exhibition of 1854 a favourite project of the late Prince Consort.[23]

5. 1904. One hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the Society

Seven years have elapsed, Queen Victoria has died, the Boer War has been fought and won; and the Society is now one hundred and fifty years old. Yet 1904 saw no attempt to review the history of the Society in detail although the Assistant Secretary, Henry B. Wheatley, an authority on the life of Samuel Pepys and the history of London in the 17th and 18th centuries kept the readers of the Society's *Journal*, which he edited, acquainted with the fascinating byways of its past. Wheatley received warm encouragement from Trueman Wood, who

was already beginning to think about the burden of authorship which he would soon have to take up. The then Chairman of Council, Sir William Abney KCB, FRS, like Tudor Burne came from a clerical

A meeting of Council by Sydney Hall, 1900



KEY

1. Professor John Millar Thompson; 2. Henry Graham Harris; 3. Sir Frederick Abel,Bart; 4. B. Francis Cobb; 5. Joseph G. Gordon; 6. Sir Walter S. Prideaux; 7. Sir Owen Roberts; 8. R. Brudenell Carter; 9. Major General Sir Owen Tudor Burne; 10 H.B. Wheatley, Assistant Secretary; 11. Sir Steuart Colvin Bayley; 12. Sir Henry Trueman Wood; 13. Sir Charles Malcolm Kennedy; 14. Sir John Wolfe Barry; 15. Sir

John Evans; 16. Sir Frederick Bramwell, Bart; 17. The Master of the Rolls; 18. Sir William Henry Preece; 19. Sir George Birdwood; 20. Lewis Foreman Day; 21. Lord Belhaven and Stenton; 22. William Luson Thomas.

family and had combined military and civil service experience, and to this he added scientific distinction. An expert on photography and its application to astronomy, he was also known as an expert on commercial and technical education, and took a particular interest in the Society's examinations. Most of his 1904 inaugural address was taken up with the work of the State and the Society in this field, and he referred more than once to the 1897 congress whose proceedings had just been updated and made available in published form under Trueman Wood's editorship. Abney's opening remarks showed the institution aware of the milestone it had now reached:

> We are now entering on the 150th year of the existence of the Society of Arts – for it was founded in 1754. At that date, only two learned or scientific societies were in being, viz., the Royal Society and Society of Antiquaries, and from the nature of the times it has been called upon to occupy very varied spheres of usefulness. Before the Royal Academy was founded, it held exhibitions of pictures. It encouraged engineering and chemistry before the various special societies which now look after these subjects of science were established, and it promoted arts and industries in the Colonies more than a century before the Colonial or Imperial Institutes were established to fulfil this special purpose. As different societies sprung up in connection with the various subjects of natural knowledge, it became less necessary for this Society to foster them with the care that it had previously done, and it turned its attention to other kindred but unoccupied fields, and is doing so

> up to the present time. As it divested itself of one care, others, due to the progress of our race and times, have taken its place, and at present it has far-spreading bounds within which it has ample scope to expend its energy in benefiting the public. The varied programme which it issues indicates how wide are the boundaries of the field within which it works. It has been the establisher of International Exhibitions – on which blessings and the reverse have been showered by the commercial public…and it has taken an active part in the higher education of the country…In reviewing the past and comparing it with the present, it is satisfactory to know that the Society stands higher than ever in the estimation of the public, as its numbers are larger this year than before, and last, but not least, its finances are in a more satisfactory position than they have ever been.[24]

The Chairman's address counted as the first of the twenty lectures delivered at 'ordinary meetings' of the Society for the Session 1903/4 which were listed in the 'Report of the Council' read by Trueman Wood at the Annual General Meeting held in July 1904. Among the lecture topics which reflect the special concerns of the age were 'Popular Motor Cars', 'Garden Cities', 'Agricultural Education' and 'Physical and Mental Degeneration'. Perhaps by way of antidote to the latter an additional meeting of the Society was arranged for 22 June 1904 to enable Colonel Viktor Balck, then in London to attend the International Olympic Games Committee' to deliver a lecture on the 'Northern Games in Stockholm'. As well as the ordinary lectures the Society's 'Sectional' meetings were also recorded. Six lectures were noted as being delivered to the Indian Section and five to the

Colonial Section. In one of them we see Dilke's 1897 anxieties again reflected. The Report noted 'a striking paper on 'The Biology of the Empire', Sir John Alexander Cockburn traced the close analogy that he finds to exist between 'the laws of life' and the various processes that have operated and are operating 'to provide for the world-wide British possessions an organisation sufficiently elastic to permit the full play of the British genius for self government, and yet at the same time sufficiently co-ordinated for mutual purposes'. Was Great Britain doomed to succumb in the struggle to some world power capable of higher organisation? Reason joins with instinct in assuring us that this cannot be.'

The Applied Art section of the Society, which rejoiced at the award of the Albert Medal to Walter Crane, held five meetings, one of which heard Arthur Lazenby Liberty speak on 'Pewter and the revival of its use', a collection of specimens of antique and recently made pewter was displayed in the Great Room. There were five courses of Cantor Lectures providing a direct means of evening instruction for students of science and technology. Bertram Blount's course on 'Electro Chemistry' was illustrated by experiments on what was practically a manufacturing scale, for a large electric furnace was built up in the Great Room, and practical demonstrations were given of the production by its means of calcium carbide and carborundum'. School children were able to enjoy the Juvenile Lectures delivered by Eric Stuart Bruce, the subject being 'The Navigation of the Air'. The course consisted of two lectures, the first being devoted to balloons and parachutes, the second to airships, kites and flying machines. A

short historical sketch of the progress of ballooning was given, and special reference made to the use of balloons in war.[25]

Although Sir William Abney was able to state that 'the Society stands higher than ever in the estimation of the public' with its membership growing and its finances 'satisfactory'. He admitted to the anxiety caused by the termination of the lease in the Society's house and said 'that if we had more room we would increase our borders'. In this way he prepared the membership and the public for that momentous 'forgotten' episode in the Society's history, the proposed merger with the London Institution. This would certainly have seen the establishment of a magnificent library and have provided much needed space for the examinations department, but would have meant the sacrifice of its Adam building. The London Institution was destined to be wound up and its Library to go to the University of London, and the Society would in the end acquire the freehold of its Adelphi house. These happenings were not foreseen in 1904 but *The Times* did urge both bodies to develop 'some kind of relationship with London University' and to issue a warning which was probably too late to be heeded with effect and which was an interesting verdict or the period we have been considering:

> English culture has always suffered from the multiplication of authorities which clash and overlap. Our best hope if we are to keep abreast of Europe and America is union or at least co-ordination.[26]

6. 1954: The Society's Bicentenary

Earl of Radnor by Rodrigo Moynihan

At its bicentenary in 1954, the *Royal* Society of Arts, which had enjoyed the 'Royal' style for forty-six years, made much of its early history. A commemoration dinner was held by the Council at the Tallow Chandlers' Hall on 22nd March with the chairman, the Earl of Radnor, Lord Folkestone's direct descendant presiding. The Earl also took the chair at a 'Bicentenary Banquet' held at the Savoy Hotel on 26th March, which had echoes of the 1854 affair. The menus and toast lists recall what was a deliberate attempt to revive the perceived luxury and excess of earlier periods. Food rationing did not end until July of that year and in quoting the Stewards Minutes for 1838 *in extensor* Hudson and Luckhurst suggested they 'be read with some nostalgic memory in these less spacious times'. Memories of the recent war were still vivid. Though the bomb damage to the house head been repaired some of the rooms still looked shabby with their pre-war paint work and although coal fires helped to cheer the Fellows and staff they blackened the books and pictures. When not dressed for dinner or evenings at the re-opened theatres or lectures at the Royal Institution, the secretaries wore a standard day dress of

black jackets and striped trousers for meetings of the Society and the Housekeeper and hall porters wore brass buttoned uniforms. Some older Council members still used the high stiff collars of pre-war times.

The Banquet Menu was as follows:

MENU

Le fumet madrilène en tasse aux etoiles

La croustille au parmesan

*

La timbale de sole et homard des prelates

*

La poussine poele Mascotte

Les pommes Berny

Les haricots verts sautés au buerre

*

Le parfait glace Belle Aurore

Le charme de Venus voile

Les douceurs de dame

*

Le café

*

One wine, Champagne de Venoge, Vin des Princes,

will be served at dinner; port and liqueurs after dinner.

Three toasts only were drunk:

The Queen

Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother

The Duke of Edinburgh, the Society's President

The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester

and the other members of the Royal Family

*

The Royal Society of Arts

Proposed by H.R.H. The Duke of Gloucester, K.G.

Response by The Chairman of Council

*

The guests

Proposed by Sir Ernest Goodale, C.B.E., M.C.

Past-Chairman of Council

Responses by Dr E. D. Adrian, O.M.

President of the Royal Society

and Dame Ninette de Valois, D.B.E.

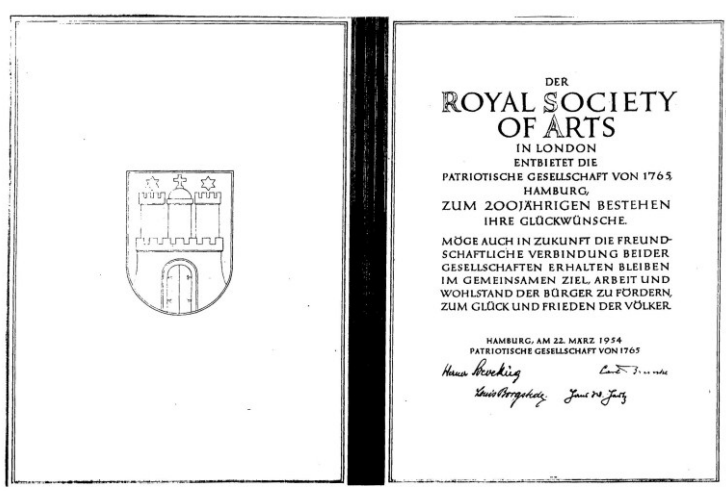
Those present must have felt themselves going back in time. But we notice two developments, the presence of women – Dame Ninette de

Valois as a guest and Dame Caroline Haslett, civil engineer, and Anna Zinkeisen, artist, as members of Council. There was also no 'grace' mentioned in the order of ceremony, though a service of thanksgiving was held for the Society in the church of St Martin in the Fields.

Echoes of the Cold War ominously evident in the mid 1950s and the unpopularity of Labour party policies can be found in the conclusion of the bicentenary history. There is also an ill-defined equation of the Society with 'Englishness':

> The Society has been English in the pride of standing on its own feet, English in its sense of compromise and adaptability.[27]

The distinguished foreign institutes who presented congratulatory addresses to the Society at a ceremony in this room where academic robes of the utmost magnificence showed the international community of arts and sciences on parade, were not deterred by this display of patriotism. The Society's German offspring still used and uses that word in its 18th century sense and, with good reason, distinguishes it from nationalism. I remember the representative of the Patriotic Society of Hamburg giving the Library a copy of its history where William Shipley


DER
ROYAL SOCIETY
OF ARTS
IN LONDON
ENTBIETET DIE
PATRIOTISCHE GESELLSCHAFT VON 1765
HAMBURG,
ZUM 200JÄHRIGEN BESTEHEN
IHRE GLÜCKWÜNSCHE.
MÖGE AUCH IN ZUKUNFT DIE FREUNDSCHAFTLICHE VERBINDUNG BEIDER GESELLSCHAFTEN ERHALTEN BLEIBEN IM GEMEINSAMEN ZIEL, ARBEIT UND WOHLSTAND DER BÜRGER ZU FÖRDERN, ZUM GLÜCK UND FRIEDEN DER VÖLKER.
HAMBURG, AM 22. MARZ 1954
PATRIOTISCHE GESELLSCHAFT VON 1765

receives an honoured mention.

THE PRESIDENT, Council & Members
of the Royal Institute of British Architects
extend their cordial greetings & congratulations
To
THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF ARTS

March 22nd
1754

March 22nd
1954

TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE
ROYAL SOCIETY OF ARTS

We the Members of Council of the
ROYAL AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY
OF ENGLAND

express to you, on the occasion of the bi-centenary celebration of the formation of your Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce in Great Britain, ceremonious and most cordial congratulations.

THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF ARTS

FROM THE ROYAL DUBLIN SOCIETY

ON the occasion of the celebration of the Bicentenary of the foundation of the Royal Society of Arts the Royal Dublin Society offers its warmest congratulations to its contemporary and kindred Society.

The American Philosophical Society

Held at Philadelphia

for promoting useful knowledge

Sends Cordial Greetings to

The Royal Society of Arts

On the Occasion of the

Two Hundredth Anniversary

of its Foundation.

THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF ARTS

22nd March 1954

On the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the Royal Society of Arts the Board of Svenska Slöjdföreningen is pleased to award to the Society as a warm token of the Societys work its Grand Medal instituted on the 25th anniversary of Svenska Slöjdföreningen on 6th October 1870.

Stockholm 22nd March 1954

CHAIRMAN

MANAGING DIRECTOR

Before we leave 1954 a reference may be made to the Society's continued concern with the application of scientific and technological knowledge to industry. A 'Science and Industry Committee' first proposed by the British Association in 1952, was 'reconstituted under the joint sponsorship the Royal Society of Arts, the British Association and the Nuffield Foundation, met on 21 April 1954 at the Society's house, and approved the following terms of references:

> To identify those factors which determine, in different industries and in different types of firm, the speed of application of new scientific and technical knowledge; to examine their relative importance, their interrelations, and their correlation with characteristics of the firm or industry; to obtain evidence of the effectiveness of measures already taken to speed up the application of science in industry, or to remove hindrances to such applications; and to examine the possible results of other proposed measures.[28]

Thus at the very moment of its recollections of the 18th century the Society was endeavouring to forsee the needs of the later 20th century.

7. 1974. The Bicentenary of the House

Finally we reach our last brief stopping point: 1974. Once again there was a dinner, this time held in the former library and repository called 'The Benjamin Franklin Room' in the house itself. There is no need to repeat the mouth-watering menu – a commonplace in that renewed time of plenty. There were only two toasts but these were separated by the presentation of two medals.

Toasts

THE QUEEN

Proposed by H.R.H. The Duke of Edinburgh

President

Presentations by the President

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother

The Albert Medal

Dame Margot Fonteyn de Arias

The Benjamin Franklin Medal

TOAST

THE SOCIETY AND ITS GUESTS

Proposed by Sir John Stratton

Immediate Past Chairman of Council

The Queen herself as Patron of the Society presided at a meeting in the Great Room where she paid the Society the greatest of compliments, saying that 'more than any other body in the United Kingdom' it establishes 'the national standard of culture and civilisation'.[29] It is with this perception of the Society's role in the latter part of the last century that I end my survey this evening. These periodic commemorations provide our Council and Fellows with a time to take stock. In 2008 we will have been the Royal Society of Arts for 100 years, and after that will come 2015, the tercentenary of William Shipley's birth. Many of us will survive to these dates and some I trust will be here in 2054![30]

Prince Philip presents HM Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, with the Albert Medal

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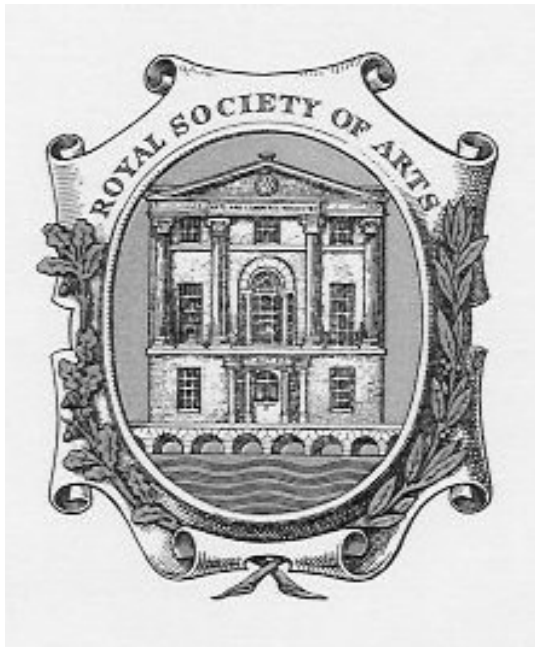

INDEX

THE WILLIAM SHIPLEY GROUP FOR RSA HISTORY

'The history of the Society is extremely important to establish at almost every point in time'
Lord Asa Briggs, Honorary President, WSG

Founded 2004 in commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the first meeting of the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, The William Shipley Group is an independent body formed:

- To extend knowledge about the history of the RSA in an atmosphere of collegiality and scholarship
- To facilitate exchange of information and social interaction between those interested in the RSA's history
- To raise awareness of the connections between the RSA and other institutions and to foster links between them, in particular through holding meetings in locations connected with the history of the RSA
- To support the work of the Archivist of the RSA, its archival collection, and historical activities.
- To provide a resource for the RSA regarding information about its own history
- To raise awareness of the RSA's record of achievements

The group seeks to build on the foundation laid by the Society's History Study Group formed in 1960 and seeks to promote a scholarly appreciation of the Society's history, and to establish networks of institutions and

scholars interested in the subject. Detailed information on the group, together with the latest newsletter and list of published papers can be found at: http://www.williamshipleygroup.btik.com, or please contact Susan Bennett, Honorary Secretary, The William Shipley Group, 7 Drakes Drive, Ducks Hill Road, Northwood HA6 2SL. Email: susan@bennett.as Membership is £5 per annum to cover administration costs. (Cheques should be made payable to The William Shipley Group) **Donations welcomed**.

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