



# THE WILLIAM SHIPLEY GROUP FOR RSA HISTORY

Newsletter 34: September 2012

*WSG Benefactor, Ronald Gerard OBE, has kindly repeated his generosity to the William Shipley Group with his annual donation to WSG funds.*

## **Forthcoming meetings**

**Thursday 1 November 2012**

### ***Almost Forgotten: the International Exhibition of 1862.***

Following on from the meeting with the RCA/V&A in February this year the WSG has organised this second conference to give further consideration to the Exhibition. Dale Dishon will talk about the Exhibition building; Sir Mark Jones will consider the 1851 and 1862 exhibition medals; David Allan will talk about the Society of Arts 1862 anniversary dinner held in the Exhibition building; Julius Bryant will look at the fine art on display; the Medieval Court is the focus of Max Donnelly's contribution; John Agnew will consider the



Machinery in Motion; Anthony Burton the Education Section; John Davis will look at the German States and the Exhibition; Susan Bennett will provide a 'virtual tour' of the building and Stephen Wildman will provide a conclusion to the day's events. Tickets are £20 (£10 for students) and include a sandwich lunch and refreshments. The conference will be held at the Medical Society of London, Lettsom House, 11 Chandos Street, Cavendish Square, London W1G 9EB. The Royal Commissioners for the Exhibition of 1851 have generously made an award towards the cost of day and the planned publication of the papers presented.

## **ROYAL JUBILEE TALKS IN CORNWALL**

On 26 July and 2 August Dr David G.C. Allan spoke on 'Royal Jubilees from George III to Elizabeth II' at The Reading Room, Polruan-by-Fowey, Cornwall. The meetings were held for the benefit of the Royal National Lifeboat Institute which was appropriate in view of William Shipley's interest in safety at sea. Some Fellows from the RSA South Western Region attended on 26 July.

WSG Occasional Paper no.22 ***Jubilee Papers from George the Third to Elizabeth the Second*** by David G.C. Allan contains the proceedings of the RSA 1987 symposium commemorating Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee, with additional papers on the Jubilees of King George III (1809), Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee (1897), King George V (1935) and Queen Elizabeth II's Silver (1977), Golden (2002) and Diamond (2012) Jubilees. An anthology of commemorative verse by poets, such as Tennyson, Kipling, Masfield and Motion, and numerous illustrations of Jubilee medals, loyal addresses and souvenir glass and pottery items, complement this collection. With 103 pages and 47 b/w illus this paper is available from the Honorary Secretary at a cost of £8.50 plus £1.50 p&p a copy. Please make cheques payable to the William Shipley Group for RSA History. A limited number of hard back copies of this paper containing a dedication to the Princess Royal, RSA President, have been prepared for presentation to other signatories to the Diamond Jubilee Address to HM The Queen and its designer Derek Birdsall RDI.

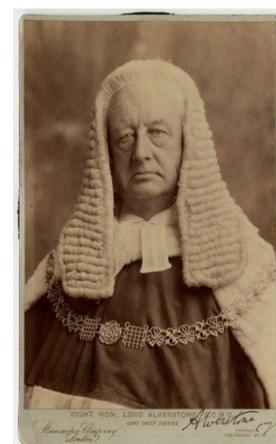
## THE SOCIETY AND THE OLYMPIC GAMES

Members and visitors attending the meetings of the Society in its 'Great Room' were constantly made aware of the original Olympic Games through their depiction in James Barry's great wall painting 'The Crowning of the Victors at Olympia'. The artist showed the ancient Greek athletes receiving their prizes at the close of the games and, in his account the picture, he stressed the feelings of fraternity and international goodwill which prevailed amongst the competitors.<sup>1</sup> A century after Barry completed his paintings the Great Room or 'Lecture Hall' as it was then called, was the scene of a meeting in which the Society was informed of the revival of the Games.



James Barry, *Crowning the Victors at Olympia*

On 22 June 1904 Lord Alverstone, Chief Justice of England and a Vice-President of the Society, took the chair at a meeting to hear Colonel Viktor Balck lecture on the 'Northern Games of Stockholm'. Before beginning his lecture Colonel Balck presented Lord Alverstone with the silver badge of the Northern Games, which was appropriate since Alverstone had a lifelong interest in athletics, having won the mile and two mile races of Cambridge against Oxford in his student days and had subsequently served as President of the Amateur Athletic Association.<sup>2</sup> After the conclusion of the proceedings, when having thanked Colonel Balck, Lord Alverstone called on Baron Pierre de Coubertin to 'make a statement with regard to the revival of the Olympic Games'. This statement which was reported in the *Society's Journal* is worth quoting in full for the information it provides about the initiation of the series of games which would lead to those taking place in London in 2012:

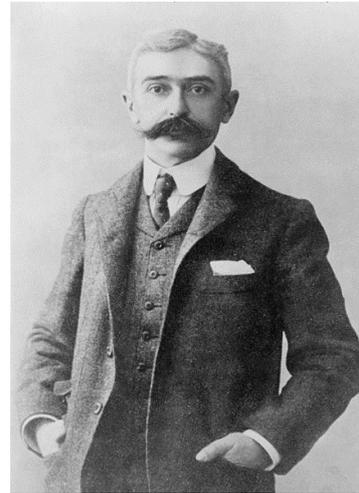


Richard Everard Webster, Viscount Alverstone, 1900

<sup>1</sup> See D.G.C. Allan, ed., *The Progress of Human Knowledge and Culture: a description of the paintings by James Barry in the Lecture Hall or 'Great Room' of the RSA in London* written by the artist (London, 2005), pp.36-9. 54-5

<sup>2</sup> F.D. Mackinnon, 'Webster, Richard Everard, Viscount Alverstone (1842-1915) revised by N.G. Jones, *ODNB* (2004). Alverstone was the son of Thomas Webster Q.C. the great reforming member of the Society. See J. Harrison, *Encouraging Innovation in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries: The Society of Arts and Patents, 1754-1904* (Gunnislake, 2006), pp.40-1, 241

He [Baron P. de Coubertin] stated that their organisation was started ten years ago, and held its first meeting in Paris. About seventeen different countries were represented at the gathering, and over one hundred societies sent delegates. On that occasion it was decided unanimously that the Olympic Games should be revived, and that the first performances should be held in Athens in 1896. This decision was carried out, and over seventy thousand people attended. The second meeting was held during the Paris Exhibition of 1900, and the third was taking place this year at St. Louis, in America. The next games were to take place in 1908. A meeting of the International Committee had been held in London under the patronage, he was glad to say, of His Majesty the King, and it had been decided unanimously that the games of 1908 should be held in Rome. He might be allowed to quote a few Latin words with regard to the moral side of the international revival of the Olympic Games. The words which he was thinking of were *si vis pacem, para bellum*. He wished to turn that saying round the other way, any say, *si vis bellum, para pacem*. By this he meant that, if the different countries wanted to join in the contests and have good sport, they must begin by making friends with one another. There could not be good sport without a strong feeling of international friendship, and the promotion of that sentiment was the work which the International Committee were doing. They were workers for international good will and nothing more and nothing less.<sup>3</sup>



Baron Pierre de Coubertin, 1915

### THE RDIs and the 2012 OLYMPICS

Thomas Heatherwick RDI designed the memorable 2012 Olympic cauldron. Elected to the Faculty in 2004 he is currently the subject of a retrospective exhibition at the V&A Museum (ends 30 September). His studio has recently produced the design for the UK Pavilion 'Seed Cathedral' at the Shanghai Expo 2010 and a new bus for London.

The 2012 London Olympic cauldron



<sup>3</sup> *Journal of the Society of Arts*, 24 June 1904, vol.52 (1904), pp.668-9

David Watkins, elected RDI in 2010, designed the Olympic medals



The Olympic Medals 2012

Edward Barber RDI and Jay Osgerby RDI, whose studio designed the Olympic torch were elected to the Faculty in 2007

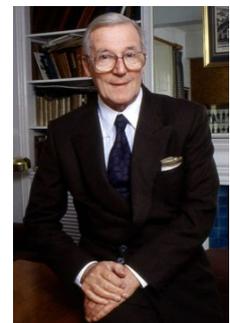


The Olympic Torch, 2012

RSA Archivist Eve Watson kindly provided information regarding these RDI Olympic designs

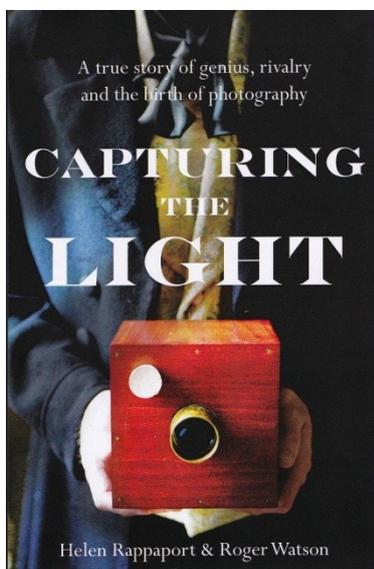
**Exhibitions**

**Hartnell to Amies: Couture by Royal Appointment.** The Fashion and Textile Museum, 83 Bermondsey Street, London SE1 3XF. 16 November 2012-23 February 2013. £7 for adults, £5 for students and concessions. Exhibition ticket booking line: 020 7407 8664. This exhibition deals with London couture fashion by designers to H.M. The Queen: Norman Hartnell, Hardy Amies & Frederick Fox. Hardy Amies was elected to the Faculty of Royal Designers for Industry in 1964 and in 1989 he spoke to the RSA on 'A Century of Fashion'.



Sir Hardy Amies RDI

**Books**

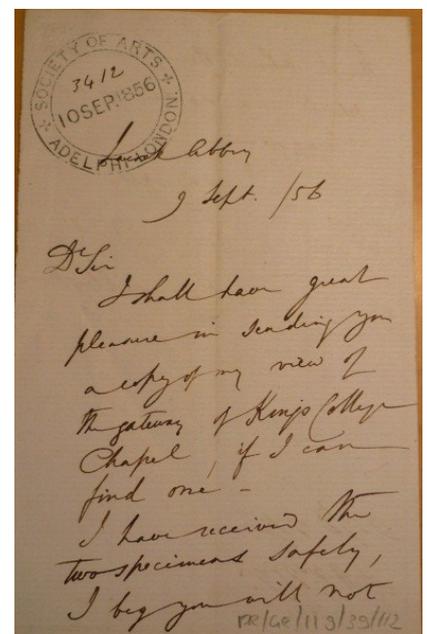


**Helen Rappaport & Roger Watson, Capturing the Light. PanMacmillan, 2013**

The author of *Magnificent Obsession* has turned her research skills to the story of the birth of photography. *Capturing the Light* written with Roger Watson, Curator of the Fox Talbot Museum, tells the story of the birth of photography through its founding fathers, Henry Fox Talbot and Louis Daguerre.

Talbot responded to an open letter signed by a number of photographer members of the Society of Arts, including Roger Fenton, Robert Hunt,

Philip Delamotte and Peter Le Neve Foster (future Secretary of the Society) asking him to relinquish his patent rights. Talbot agreed provided he received recognition for his role in the invention of



photography. Talbot subsequently lent specimens of his photo etchings for the Society of Arts' touring exhibition of photography, as well as giving a paper on his discovery of photoglyphic engraving. He also wrote at this time to say that he wanted to send the Society of a copy of his view of the gateway of King's College Chapel.

### **HENRY FOX TALBOT, FRS**

To mark the centenary of the birth of photography Miss Matilda T. Talbot, lectured on her grandfather at a meeting of the RSA in 1939. The following is the text of her paper.

#### ***The Life and Personality of Fox Talbot<sup>4</sup>***

I can just recollect my grandfather: we came to stay at Lacock when I was six, and I remember a very kindly, friendly old gentleman with a long soft, rather crumpled coat of fine black cloth. He showed us a microscope and asked what we would like to see magnified in it. My elder sisters chose, one a larkspur petal, one a fine cotton thread: I chose a pin's head, and when I looked through the microscope, I said 'It looks like a railway train's funnel', and he laughed.

We always heard him talked about in our family as somebody marvellously clever, and also very kind and much loved. With strangers he was sometime difficult, I imagine, but in his home circle he was delightful - affectionate, easy, and enjoying little jokes with his children. We used to be told that he did not like to give trouble.

When the children were playing noisily in the great echoing hall of Lacock Abbey, so that the sound disturbed him in his study he said

nothing to them, but came and quietly closed the passage door. When he was absorbed in his researches and the fire in his room went out he did not ring for the servant, who should by rights, have been seeing to this, but went and got himself another coat to put on. He was in some ways shy, and not fond of going out, except where the company was of similar interests to his own, being especially happy, in later life, with his scientific friends in Edinburgh.



*Henry Fox Talbot by John Moffat, 1864*

He was born in 1800 at Melbury in Dorsetshire, the home of his maternal godmother. His mother was Lady Elisabeth Fox Strangways - his father, William Davenport Talbot of Lacock. Davenport Talbot was an officer in the Dragoons, young, handsome and somewhat extravagant, but he also had a great interest in old books, of which he collected a large number. Lady Elisabeth was devoted to him but he died when their baby boy was only six months old. After this she spent a good deal of her time in her father's home, and with her sister's family in Wales. Four years after her husband's death, she married Rear-Admiral Charles Feilding by whom she had two daughters, Caroline and Horatia. Admiral Feilding proved the wisest and best of stepfathers, and the relations between the boy, his mother and her husband were extremely sympathetic and happy, as is proved by many letters which have been preserved.

I gather that they with very little at Lacock - Admiral Feilding's naval service took them to various ports, and also they frequently stayed in the homes of relatives, or of intimate friends. Elisabeth was certainly an interesting woman. In spite of having only had the very slight amount of education which was usual in those days for women, and in spite of having been introduced into society at the age of fifteen, she loved to study all manner of subjects and carried on her own education with energy. In her many letters to her boy she introduces sentences in Latin, German, Italian and Greek, besides the French phrases which are almost as frequent as the English ones. She was lively and witty, and we have a miniature of her holding a mask before her face and looking very archly from behind it but a contemporary newspaper describes her as 'Lady Elisabeth Feilding, the most beautiful and respectable of women'.

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<sup>4</sup> *Jnl.RSA*, vol.87 (1939), pp.826-830

She kept her son's diary, beginning when he was six years old, in 1806. The first entries are written by the mother, apparently at the child's dictation, but he soon writes a few words himself. One of his first entries is: 'Learnt 30 words in French and 22 in Latin'. In 1807 – 'I went out with Betty (his nurse). Estimated the number of miles I have travelled in my life and found it to be 2,717'.

1807 - When I was in bed Betty asked me how to spell advice, nephews, etc

1807 – Called Mama at 8 o'clock and read part of the life of Buonaparte and how had he had been defeated by Sir Sydney Smith.

1807 - Got up not very well. Mr Little came and said I read too much, and sat still too much. Played at Thoughts. I thought of the City of Pompei destroyed during the reign of Emperor Titus, which Mamma guessed. Mamma thought of the Brazen Bull belonging to Phalaris, Tyrant of Agrigertum which I guessed.

But I am glad to say the diary also contains many descriptions of hearty meals, of games with his cousins, exciting expeditions with, his step-father, and trying to make bows and arrows, so he was a natural enough little boy.

At eight years old he went to a preparatory school at Rottingdean, under Mr Hooker. At eleven, he went to Harrow, where he was in Dr Butler's house (the Dr Butler whose subsequently became Head Master). Here, when he was twelve, he began to experiment in Chemistry - a subject then of course, not taught in the school. All studies were a pleasure to him, but concerning Chemistry he writes to his Mother:

*You can have no idea with what vigour I pursue my favourite science of Chemistry. I get my things at a Chemist here; at present my laboratory consists of very few Articles, viz:*

*An Iron Spoon to melt metals on, etc.*

*A Tin Pot to boil liquids in, etc*

*A tobacco pipe. A tin spoon to mix things*

*An Egg Cup. A pestle and mortar (lent me)*

*A large green Bottle*

*A seltzer water Bottle*

*Nitrous Acid – Sulphuric Acid – Muriatic Acid – Potash and Nitre*

*Flowers of Sulphur A little Phosphorus*

*I am much obliged to you for thinking of getting me a Book but I had rather defer it till the Holidays. You could not please me half so much in any other way, as by promoting my means of enjoying my favourite Science which at present engrosses all my attention*

Unfortunately an explosion resulted, and both Mother and Schoolmaster concurred in forbidding practical experiments in school, to young Talbot's bitter disappointment and indignation.

Dr Butler tried to comfort him by offering the young experimenter any of the books on Chemistry which were in the Master's library. But this was not enough, and the boy managed eventually to carry out some practical work in the shop of a neighbouring blacksmith.

At Harrow he also developed a keen interest in botany, and went for long botanical walks with his friend Walter Trevelyan. But in deference to the public opinion of the school at that time, they made a point of throwing away their specimens before they came in. About this time he wrote a letter home, expatiating on the advantages to be gained from the study of botany, which he said, was an excellent exercise for the powers of discrimination, and practiced the memory very well.

He must, in many ways, have lived in a world apart from his schoolfellows. But he was quite popular with them. When he was twelve Dr Butler wrote: 'My little friend Talbot still continues to distinguish himself in very praiseworthy exertion: in point of disposition he grows every week more and more amiable'. At the age of 13½ he reached the Sixth form, and at fifteen he left Harrow, having been brilliantly successful in practically all his studies. My uncle told me, if I remember right, that my grandfather left Harrow because if he had remained he would have been Head boy of the School and Dr Butler thought he was too young for that position. Two years were filled in, partly studying with a Mr Barnes at Castleford, partly travelling abroad with his step-father, partly studying with a Mr Bonney at Stamford. He entered Trinity College, Cambridge at 17.

At that time the only examination by which the Honours degree could be secured was the Mathematical Tripos. Accordingly, he set to work and graduated in 1821 as Twelfth Wrangler. Also he obtained the second of the two Chancellor's Medals, then the highest Classical honour. After taking his degree in 1821, he went abroad, and his letters describe eclipses and other astronomical events with keen interest. He also writes at length about the plants and flowers of many districts. The political situation in Europe also interested him deeply. He was a member of the Whig party, and had a strong sense of necessity for Reform.

While disliking public life and also, I think, disliking London - for he writes with distaste of its fogs, its darkness and its cold - he nevertheless stood as candidate for the Chippenham Division of Wiltshire. He was returned, and helped to pass the Reform Bill of 1832.

In December of 1832 he married Constance, daughter of William Mundy of Markeaton in Derbyshire, by whom he had one son and three daughters. All his family were devoted to him, and he to them.

Side by side with his experiments in chemistry, and his exercises on mathematics and physics, he made an exhaustive study of the origin of words and published a book entitled *English Etymologies*. In lighter vein he wrote a volume of *Legendary Tales*, partly in prose and partly in verse, based chiefly upon German traditional stories. He was also much interested in deciphering Egyptian hieroglyphics and was a pioneer translator of the Assyrian Cuneiform inscriptions, with Sir Henry Rawlinson and others.

When he was elected Fellow of the Royal Society in 1831, this was not because of his photographic discoveries, as they were not yet completed, nor for his reputation in chemistry, but for his mathematical attainments.

We have found a great deal of correspondence, which is not yet thoroughly examined. It shows the immense variety of his interests and his energy in prosecuting them. He was seldom long in one place, and he very constantly went on to the Continent, -to France, Italy or elsewhere. He had a great affection for the Latin countries, which was by his wife, mother and step-sisters, and they used to go South whenever opportunity offered. He was very much at ease with men of other nationalities. He spoke and read in very many languages, I have found all manner of dictionaries at Lacock—Gaelic, Welsh, Polish, Wendish, Russian and many more. He spoke and wrote French as readily as English and he had a cosmopolitan outlook, which I suppose is the outlook of all true scientists for whom barriers of nationality are broken down by the strong common interest of their researches and discoveries.

## Deaths

We regret to announce the death of **Anthony Richard Eustace North** (7 June 2012), **Philip John Willoughby Higson** (19 June 2012), **Sir Bernard Lovell** (6 August 2012) and **Nick Butler RDI**

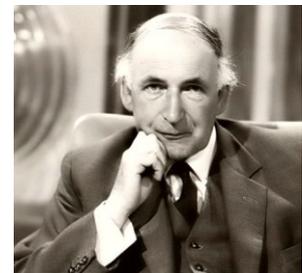
**Anthony North (1942-2012)** for many years Curator of the Metalwork Department at the V&A Museum was a constant source of information regarding various works of art held in the collection of the RSA. In 1988 he contributed to the Society's Armada symposium 'The Armada relics in the Victoria & Albert Museum. 'The Armada relics in the Victoria & Albert Museum. Attitudes and Attributes', *RSA Jnl*, vol.136 (1988), pp.736-9]



*Anthony North*

**Philip John Willoughby Higson (1933-2012)** became an authority on his ancestor Hugh, Lord Willoughby of Parham, Vice-President of the [R]SA (1758-65). He wrote for the *Society's Journal*, 'Hugh, Lord Willoughby of Parham, PSA, V-PRS and his connection with the Society of Arts 1757-65', *RSA Jnl*, vol.120 (1971), pp.39-42. His book *The Singular Lords Willoughby: A Lancashire Family Saga* (Friarwood Press: Newcastle under Lyne, 2007)

**Sir Bernard Lovell (1913-2012).** The pioneer of radar and radio telescopes and Life Fellow Sir Bernard Lovell, who has died at the age of 98, was awarded the RSA's Silver Medal in 1955 for his paper on radio astronomy. Five years later he gave the Trueman Wood lecture on 'The exploration of outer space'. Several features in the 40-acre Quinta Arboretum, created by Bernard Lovell and his wife Joyce on open grassland in the village of Swettenham, Cheshire, commemorate various major events in his life, including the award of the RSA's Benjamin Franklin medal in 1980. Lovell's great radio telescope at Jodrell Bank can be glimpsed from the arboretum through the trees he planted.

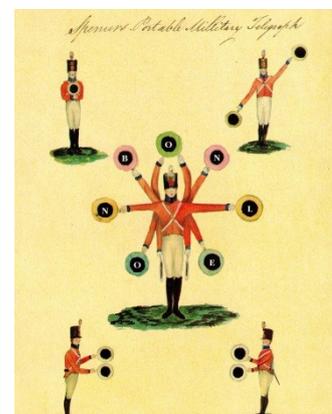


*Sir Bernard Lovell*

**Nick Butler RDI (1942-2012)** who died this year was elected an RDI in 1981 for product design. He served as Master of the Faculty from 1995 to 1997. Poised between engineering and aesthetics his BIB Design Consultancy, established in 1967, produced, among its many designs, scissors for Prestige found in millions of British homes; drills for Black and Decker and the well-known Duracell black and yellow torch with a beam that opens up like a cigarette lighter.



*Duracell torch*



*Nick Butler, RSA Christmas card, 1996. His design is taken from Knight Spencer's prize winning 'Anthropo-Telegraph, 1808'*

Mike Dempsey interviewed Nick Butler for the RDI Insights series: ([http://www.thersa.org/data/assets/mp3/0007/204559/Nick-Butler edit Final 2.mp3](http://www.thersa.org/data/assets/mp3/0007/204559/Nick-Butler%20edit%20Final%202.mp3).)

2012 marks the **90<sup>th</sup>** anniversary of the death of a leader of industry, mining engineer and inventor, **Sir William Edward Garforth**. The Society awarded Garforth a gold medal in 1911, under the terms of the Fothergill Trust, 'in recognition of his effort to perfect and secure the adoption of rescue apparatus in mines. Sir William Garthforth is particularly associated with the mine at Altofts, situated four miles from Wakefield and nine miles from Pontefract, where he undertook a series of exhaustive experiments on the dangers of coal dust following an explosion when 22 miners were killed. As a result of this work a station was established for training men in the use of his portable breathing apparatus. He also wrote *Rules for Recovering Mines after Explosions* and '*Application of Coal Cutting Machines to Deep Mining*.'



*Sir William Garthforth*  
©Joe Stocks

2012 marks the **50<sup>th</sup>** anniversary of the death of **Peter Baden-Powell**, the only son of the founder of the Boy Scout Movement. Baden-Powell, who succeeded his father as second Baron in 1941, was Chief Scout's Commissioner, President of the City of Westminster Boy Scouts' Local Association and he was also founder and President of the Commonwealth Students' Association. In 1967 he chaired a meeting of the RSA which heard a paper on 'Baden-Powell and the Boy Scouts' given by Lord Rowallan. (*RSA Jnl*, vol.106 (1957), p.27)



*Honorary Patron:* Lord Asa Briggs of Lewes FRSA. *Honorary President:* Dr David Allan, FRSA; *Honorary Vice-Presidents:* Gerry Acher, CBE, LVO, FRSA; Sir Paul Judge, FRSA; Professor Franz Bosbach, Director, University of Duisburg-Essen. *Honorary Benefactor:* Ronald Gerard OBE, KStJ, FRSA. *Honorary Member:* Hermione Hobhouse MBE; *Committee:* Dr Nicholas Cambridge FRSA (Chair); Dr David Allan FRSA (Director of Studies); Prof John Davis FRSA (Deputy Chair); Anthony Burton, FRSA; Jonathan Rollason, FRSA; Mrs Susan Bennett, MA, FRSA (Honorary Secretary and Treasurer)