Citation for Miss Kate Adie

Lord Visitor to the College, it is my pleasure to present to you Miss Kate Adie.

It is hard to imagine anyone in Britain who does not know of Kate Adie, her name synonymous with fearless television reporting in the world's trouble-spots, and her image immortalised by TV's *Spitting Image*.

Her early career might have predicted quite different futures for her. Educated at Sunderland Church High School, she went on to the University of Newcastle to read Scandinavian studies. In the vacations she enrolled with the National Youth Theatre, hoping to be an actress. But her one stage role, outside the wardrobe department, was as a spear-carrier in *Julius Caesar*. Her first job after graduating with an Upper Second was as a translator for the Swedish Air Force, and English Language Adviser to South Lapland.

BBC local radio in Durham must have found this valuable experience, somehow, because this was her first post in the media. From there she moved to Bristol as a producer, mainly for arts and farming programmes; then worked as a director in Television Outside Broadcasting (mainly sport and religion); and then became a regional TV reporter at BBC Plymouth, and later Southampton and Brighton.

In 1979 she entered the world of BBC national news and was also Court Correspondent for two years. She became part of our consciousness, however, (and even conscience) once she started reporting from Northern Ireland; and Tripoli (the American bombing). Her 'big break', as it were, had been the Iranian Embassy siege in 1980.
It was on her return from China in June 1989 that she was promoted to Chief News Correspondent. The shocking Tiananmen Square massacre of the Chinese students had been dramatically and vividly reported by Kate Adie in the very midst of the slaughter. A bullet grazed her arm, killing a young man next to her.

Undaunted, she has continued to be in the front line as war correspondent in the Gulf War; Rwanda; and Bosnia.

From 1989 also the honours and awards started to accumulate; although she had already received a Royal Television Society award in 1981 and 1987, and an Honorary MA from Bath University; and a Monte Carlo International TV award in 1981 (another to come later in 1990). But in 1989 alone she received another RTS award; a Judges' Award; the BAFTA Richard Dimbleby award; the Honorary Freedom of her birthplace, the Borough of Sunderland; and an Honorary D.Litt. at City University.

Other universities have continued to honour her: her alma mater the University of Newcastle with an Honorary MA in 1990; the University of Loughborough and the then Sunderland Polytechnic with Honorary DLitt in 1991. In 1990 she was a runner-up in Radio 4’s Woman of the Year. In 1993 she was awarded an OBE.

One feels that it is not only the quality and depth of knowledge of her reporting that is being honoured on these occasions, as indeed the present one, but also her bravery. However, I suspect that Kate Adie herself thinks she is far from brave, although she has been in many a front line where women soldiers have not been. She has had, in her own words, 'a ringside seat at history' (The Times 10.8.93).

More significantly, she has proved herself in alien, foreign territory, not China and the Middle East, but that territory relatively unexplored by women, namely international TV news reporting. Certainly, her reporting of the Iranian Embassy siege in 1980 was regarded as a sensation by the press: a woman no less! I am reminded that in the early days of BBC radio before the Second World War, women were banned from reading the news on the grounds that their voices were not serious enough! She has helped to end the prejudice against women in the media, however talented.
In recognition, therefore, of her outstanding contributions to the public good, may I invite you, Lord Visitor, to induct as an Honorary Fellow of the College, Miss Kate Adie.

Professor Katie Wales
5 July 1996