

Royal Holloway, University of London
15 May 2013

Citation for Sir Andrew Burns KCMG

Chairman of Council, it is my privilege to present to you Sir Andrew Burns.

Royal Holloway and Bedford New College has been exceptionally fortunate in its choice of Chairmen. Lord Allen was elected the first Chairman following the merger in 1985. Then we had Sir Robert Andrew and Sir Robin McLaren. These three were followed by Sir Andrew Burns to make up an amazingly distinguished quartet of outstanding men who all became outstanding Chairmen. The College has indeed been enormously enriched by their stewardship.

Andrew served as Chairman for seven years from 2004 - a period of substantial change and great achievement for the College. Under the leadership of Andrew and Stephen Hill, who was Principal for most of that time, student numbers increased from 5,000 to more than 8,000, turnover more than doubled, and our balance sheet was greatly strengthened. These very considerable achievements allowed us to invest heavily in teaching and research with many new facilities and capital projects including the Windsor Building, new student residences at Wedderburn, Gowar, Butler, Williamson and Tuke and a big expansion of the School of Management. These changes led to a much-improved student experience and further enhanced our research standing.

When representing the College Andrew was completely in his element. Both internally, with students and staff, and externally, with Royalty and dignitaries, he was equally at home. He was enormously committed to the College and gave unstinting support to the whole range of events, attending many of them including our St Cecilia's Evening, Summer and Yuletide Feasts and hosting Honorary Fellows Ceremonies like the one we are holding today. He was centrally involved in the celebrations to mark the 125th Anniversary of the founding of the Royal Holloway College and the Silver Jubilee of the merger, which included the amazing 'Three Sopranos' concert which none of us there will ever forget.

It was no surprise when he was asked to Chair the Committee of University Chairs, the body concerned with governance and performance across all institutions.

Andrew's earlier career and past experience brought impeccable qualifications to face the rigours and excitement of Chairing this institution. At Highgate school and, later, Trinity College, Cambridge he developed a keen interest in music, particularly choral singing. Then, after taking a degree in Classics, he joined the Diplomatic Service. He initially served in India, travelling widely to report on local politics, developing an abiding love for the country, and speaking both Hindi and Urdu.

His career then really took off with a series of prominent and important roles. In the 70s he was closely involved in the negotiations with the Soviet Union which resisted their attempts to perpetuate the division of Europe and ultimately led to the fall of the Iron Curtain. He later became a private secretary to the War Cabinet during the Falklands war.

He was Press Secretary to ministers including Geoffrey Howe, John Major and Douglas Hurd and then was posted to Hong Kong as Consul General where he was centrally involved with the Chinese in financing the new airport.

Still not done, he moved to the other side of the world as High Commissioner to Canada.

And the pace of life did not ease off for Andrew following his retirement from the Diplomatic Service. Far from it! He became an International Governor of the BBC, developing TV services in Arabic and Farsi, and he remains deeply involved in cultural, trade and business development bodies in Canada, China and Israel. And two years ago, he was persuaded to take on the role of UK envoy for Post-Holocaust Issues, leading the UK delegation to the Task Force which is dealing with the complex outstanding matters.

Nearer to home he is Chairman of the Hestercombe Gardens Trust, and I can only hope that this provides some relief and perhaps tranquility from the mass of other things he is still involved with, which include Board membership of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, building on his strong musical background.

But Andrew's dazzling career and impressive CV is only part of the story. On the personal side, he was just wonderful to work with. He is a great listener and can distill the essence of what is being discussed or proposed very rapidly, as you would expect from someone with his background. I have never had the privilege of working with a finer man.

In recognition, therefore, of his distinguished career in public service and his significant contribution to the leadership of the Council, may I invite you, Chairman of Council, to induct as an Honorary Fellow of Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, Sir Andrew Burns.

Mr David Beever

Former Vice Chairman of College Council from 2005-2011

Honorary Fellow

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