

Annual Report for 2004-2005

By Peter Stanford Director of the Trust

December 5, 2005, marked Lord Longford's centenary. As his old friend the broadcaster Jon Snow remarked in his introduction to the Longford Lecture on that night, those close to Frank Longford had always assumed he would make 100 and more. Sadly he didn't, but the Assembly Hall of Church House, Westminster, was once again full with those who came to hear the lecture established in his memory.

Among the many with strong personal memories of Lord Longford was HRH The Prince of Wales, who regretted he could not attend this the fourth Longford Lecture but sent a special message of greetings. Lord Longford, he wrote, 'was a great life-enhancer, and the world is a poorer and less interesting place without him. But above all, he will be remembered for his tireless campaigning, at considerable personal cost, to make prisons better places.'

Frank would have approved hugely of the speaker. He was a great promoter of equality of the sexes in his lifetime and the lecturer was Baroness Hale of Richmond, Brenda Hale QC, Britain's first female Law Lord. She took as her theme women in the criminal justice system (the full text) and highlighted six reasons why women should be treated differently from men in this context.

It was a lecture full of thought-provoking material, delivered with great charm and persuasion, and perfectly pitched to appeal to everyone in an audience that included both members of the public with no great knowledge of penal reform and specialists in the field. The question and answer session afterwards was particularly strong with several distinguished experts joining with our speaker in a debate on the shortcomings of current provision.

The lecture was preceded by the presentation of the annual Longford Prize by Lady Hale to Steve Taylor, the director of the Forum on Prisoner Education who spoke eloquently from the platform about the need to give greater priority to prisoner education if currently high rates of recidivism are to be reduced.

The Longford Trust remains grateful to the Independent newspaper, its editor-in-chief Simon Kellner and its managing director, Ivan Fallon, for the support they give our annual event, both in the arrangements and in ensuring that the vital message of our speaker is broadcast far and wide.

And we are fortunate also in the support of the Prison Reform Trust and its director, Juliet Lyon, in ensuring this annual event is a success. Elsewhere the Longford Scholarships scheme which helps young ex-prisoners who wish to continue their rehabilitation at UK universities once released grows and develops. We now have seven Longford Scholars at a variety of colleges, including one at Cambridge. All will, we hope, encourage others to follow in their footsteps. Prison is not only about punishment. It is about reform, rehabilitation and - a word much used by Lord Longford - redemption. The scholarships programme plays a small part in that.

We are grateful for the financial support received this year towards this project from Accenture, Bloomsbury Publishing plc, Reed Elsevier and the John Thaw Foundation. And also to Putnam Lovell NBF Securities Inc for their on-going support for the wider work of the Longford Trust. Two new developments this year: the first is the launch of a Longford Trust website, designed, funded and maintained by Lord Longford's grandson, Nat Billington; and the second is the launch of a new educational award under the auspices of the Longford Trust.

Following the death in the spring of 2005 of the barrister, Patrick Pakenham, Lord Longford's second son, his many admirers and friends have agreed to fund an annual award in his memory. It will be administered by the Longford Trust and will offer a scholarship of up to £5000 per year for any young ex-prisoner who wants to study Law at university. Paddy Pakenham was involved in his father's work with ex-prisoners and it is hoped that this award, which will be given each year by a committee made up of Paddy's friends and family, will help encourage youngsters coming out of prison to rebuild their lives as contributing members of society.

Among those who have given generously towards the fund in 2005 are: the Hon Eleanor Berry, Viscount Camrose, Lord and Lady Cecil, Harriet Cullen, Lady Marygaye Curzon, Countess Dominique de Borchgrave, Baronne Deschamps, Mrs VN Emrircos, Christophe Gollut, Mrs Robin Hambro, Laurence and Linda Kelly, Henry Keswick, Richard King, Lady Lever, David McDonough OBE, Alidad Mahloudji, Jane Martelli, John Mathew, Alain Mertens, Thomas Pakenham, Lord Reay, James Reeve, Sir Richard Rougier, Ned Ryan, Peter Saunders, Countess Sondes, Lady Juliet Townsend and Jan van Raemdonck.