

Annual Report for 2006-2007

By Peter Stanford Director of the Trust

'They are never the same,' one member of the audience at our annual Longford Lecture said to me as she was leaving. I took it as a compliment to the range of speakers we have attracted to give our annual Longford Lectures since 2002. She had just listened to our 2006 Lecture on November 27 at Westminster Central Hall by the human rights lawyer, Clive Stafford Smith. It was a triumphant start to the 12 months under review.

The hall was full, with Lord Longford's face, as ever, gazing out at us from the display boards behind the stage. Clive built on his experience of working with Death Row prisoners in the US and with detainees at Guantanamo Bay to present a powerful, moving and very personal picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the American system, and the lessons it offered for British society.

Powerful too was the short acceptance speech by the charity Hibiscus, winners of the 2006 Longford Prize. Their educational work with women in Jamaica and Nigeria, trying to cut off at source the stream of female 'drug mules' arrested at UK airports and then imprisoned, showed how thoughtful prevention work can be more effective than the threat of punishment.

Elsewhere, it has been a busy 12 months for the Longford Trust as our Longford Scholars project has continued to grow, in partnership with the Rank Foundation. We saw our first graduates emerge from the programme - two with 2:1s from London universities, and one with a PhD from Northampton. There was substantial press coverage of their success which gave the scholarships programme a boost - and prompted a full mail bag of new applicants.

A record 12 new scholars were accepted on board by the trustees this year, with a financial commitment, if all see through their courses, of £30,000. They come from a range of backgrounds - some still in prison, others about to leave, others still trying to find their way in the world once released. Their courses range from Geography with Mountain Leadership, through Applied Architectural Stonework and Conservation to the more familiar Business Studies and Biology.

We have also seen the first recipients of our Patrick Pakenham Educational Awards, set up in memory of Lord Longford's barrister son

who died in 2005. These help ex-prisoners who want to study Law. Two students are currently at college and we hope to add a third very soon. And plans are already well underway for our 2007 lecture, later this year, by the President of Ireland, Mary McAleese. We remain hugely grateful for the sponsorship of the Independent newspaper for the annual lecture. Their financial help is vital, but they do so much more, applying their well-honed organisational and marketing skills to making the event a headline-making success, and offering wise counsel to the trustees each year on the choice of our next lecturer. I would like in particular to thank Ivan Fallon, managing director of the Independent, for his commitment and support for the trust. Thanks too to our tireless chairman, Kevin Pakenham, and his fellow trustees as we continue to work to place the trust on a sound and sustainable financial footing; to Tom Pakenham in particular for all the hours he puts in to support the trust; to Countess Dominique de Borchgrave for her inspired fund-raising for the Patrick Pakenham Awards; to the panels of experts who advise us on the annual Prize and our awarding the Scholarships; to Jon Snow for his flawless hosting of the lecture and much more besides; and to my colleagues Thelma Cross, Matthew McGinn, Magdalen Evans and Jill Dale who work hard behind the scenes to keep our financial and administrative set-up in good shape.

The trustees would like to take this opportunity to thank the following who have contributed to the trust in the past year: the Avenue Trust, Nat Billington, Len Blavatnik, Dolly Costopoulos, Harriet Cullen, the Earl of Dartmouth, Lady Antonia Fraser, Orlando Fraser, Independent News and Media, Richard I Morris Jr, Thomas Pakenham, Putnam Lovell Securities, The Rank Foundation, Jon Snow, Peter Soros, The Jessie Spencer Trust and Sir James Spooner.