

# Annual Report for 2007-2008

**By Peter Stanford, Director of the Trust**

Whenever he was asked his nationality, Lord Longford would invariably reply Irish. And just as invariably brandish the green Irish Rugby Football Union tie which he wore most days, even though occasionally it was holding up his trousers. When he was a member of Harold Wilson's British cabinet in 1966, he caused unfavourable headlines in the London papers by joining members of the Irish government in marking the 50th anniversary of the Easter Rising – against British colonial rule.

That dual allegiance to Britain and Ireland went to the core of Frank Longford. He would, therefore, have been thrilled with our sixth Longford Lecturer. The President of Ireland, Mary McAleese, spoke at a newly refurbished and full-to-bursting Church House on Friday November 23, 2007, on the theme of 'Changing History'. Her audience, made up of significant numbers of the Irish diaspora in Britain, warmed to her theme that the misunderstanding that had so plagued British-Irish relations in the past had now given way to a new era of cooperation, notably in the north of Ireland. It was an uplifting lecture about the value of persistence and the prospect of reconciliation in the face of past wrongs.

President McAleese also presented the annual Longford Prize to the London-based charity, Prisoners Abroad, which works with British citizens jailed overseas. It gave her particular pleasure, the President noted, because 25 years ago she had been one of the founding members of the Irish Commission for Prisoners Abroad. What has given the Longford trustees encouragement was a letter received subsequently from Pauline Crowe, chief executive of Prisoners Abroad, where she wrote that the award 'has had a beneficial effect on our fund-raising and has raised our credibility'.

Elsewhere, in the twelve months under review, it has been another successful year of growth for the Longford Trust. Our fund-raising efforts paid off with a leap of £40,000 in monies received. Our Longford Scholars' scheme, supporting young ex-prisoners financially and

emotionally, when they seek to continue their rehabilitation by studying for degrees at UK universities, continues to develop. In partnership with the Rank Foundation, we have taken on 15 new Longford Scholars – a record number. Of the 36 individuals we have now worked with, seven have already graduated. One is down to speak from the platform at the 2008 Longford Lecture on November 12 in a debate on prison policy alongside the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Sir Ian Blair, the Director General of NOMS (the Prison and Probation Service), Phil Wheatley, and Baroness Helena Kennedy QC.

Two developments in the Longford Scholars' scheme are worthy of mention. The first is a new partnership with the University of Westminster which will waive tuition fees for any Longford Scholar studying there. And the second is the outcome of a fund-raising event held at London's former Clink Prison, and organised by Tom Pakenham, Ben Gummer and Penny Gummer. As well as generating much-needed funds to continue growing this project, it also produced a number of volunteers to join the ranks of our Longford Trust mentors who work with Longford Scholars.

And our Patrick Pakenham Education Awards' project – to support those wanting to study law in particular – grows and matures thanks to the careful nurture of Countess Dominique de Borchgrave.

The trustees remain profoundly grateful to all those who help make this charity a suitable and living monument to Frank Longford. Our special thanks go to Jefferies International and to the Independent newspaper, its chairman, Sir Anthony O'Reilly, and its managing director, Ivan Fallon, for the personal interest they take in all our work, particularly the annual lecture and prize which the Independent generously sponsors. My thanks too to Juliet Lyon and the Prison Reform Trust, our partners in the annual Longford Prize.

Our trustee board has, sadly, lost one of its founding members with the resignation of Peter Soros who worked so hard to promote and sustain the charity. He has been replaced by John Podmore, the former governor of HMP Brixton and senior prisons' inspector. My thanks in particular go once again to our tireless chairman, Kevin Pakenham, and

to board members Jon Snow, Rachel Billington, Edward Fitzgerald QC and Tom Pakenham for all their hard work. And to my colleagues Magdalen Evans, our treasurer, and Jill Dale, who administers the annual lecture so efficiently and effectively.

The trustees would like to thank the following individuals and organizations who have supported the work of the trust in the past 12 months: The Bryan Adams Foundation, Len Blavatnik, The Clore Duffield Foundation, Shirley Conran, Dolly Costopoulos, Harriet Cullen, Lady Antonia Fraser, Orlando Fraser, Independent News and Media, Jefferies International Ltd, The Rank Foundation, Jon Snow, The Jessie Spencer Trust, The Woodward Charitable Trust and The Worshipful Company of Grocers.