

# Annual Report 2010

by Peter Stanford

Director, Longford Trust

For those who went through school before there were computers in every classroom, the world of emails, the web and all that spring from them can remain something of a mystery. Lord Longford – who could neither type nor drive – would have been hopeless at the practicalities of a computer keyboard, much less a touch screen, but would equally have immediately realised their potential to change lives. So the 2010 Longford Lecturer, Martha Lane Fox, champion of digital inclusion, would have had him on the edge of his seat – as she did us on ours. Her theme – the cost to individuals and society of digital exclusion – was a powerful one. Her lecture, delivered from a few notes, included the plight of prisoners denied the e-access that could assist their rehabilitation through education while in jail. And, as a result of connections made at the lecture, this was an issue Martha Lane Fox was to pursue subsequently with various prisoner support organisations. Our lecture is not just about words – important as they are. It does bring influence to bear and effect change.

A very welcome addition to the annual lecture at the reception for all attendees was catering made and served by the Clink, a restaurant inside the walls of HMP High Down, Sutton in Surrey, operated entirely by prisoners. Here, for lecture goers, was rehabilitation in practice, and delicious it was too.

We thank the McGrath Charitable Trust for sponsoring the catering, and so enabling us to work with the Clink. And our thanks too to the team at our usual venue, Church House Conference Centre, who welcomed the Clink and gave them the run of their in-house facilities. The lecture was, as for the previous nine years, sponsored by the Independent newspaper, our faithful and much valued supporters, and we were delighted to welcome as co-sponsors Thames River Capital.

The Longford Prize was this year awarded to Circles UK. The judging panel, chaired by our trustee John Podmore who has succeeded Lord Longford's daughter Judith Kazantzis in the role, applauded Circles for their courage, commitment and innovation in working, on their release

from prison, with sex offenders, one of the most marginalised groups in our society.

The trust's scholarship programme, generously supported by the Rank Foundation and the Monument Trust, grows and goes from strength to strength. Over 80 per cent of the young ex-prisoners we support to continue their rehabilitation by studying for a degree complete their courses, re-enter the workplace and have no further dealings with the criminal justice system. That turns on its head the figure of 80 per cent for under 21-years-old who return to prison within two years of being released. Again it is a practical commitment to rehabilitation: to individuals who are given financial and mentoring support; to those others prisoners and ex-prisoners for whom our scholars serve as role models of success; and for society at large. Here are young men and women who give the lie to that disturbingly widespread prejudice that prisoners cannot rebuild their lives and rejoin society.

These are challenging times for the world economy, for our nation's profit and loss account, and for every household. Inevitably these pressures have been felt in the charitable sector, in terms of reduced income from fund-raising at the same time as increases in demand for our services. We have felt these pressures at the Longford Trust but, I am pleased to report, we have continued to maintain a healthy financial performance throughout 2010, at the same time as receiving record numbers of applications for our scholarships' programme.

We have, for example, made sensible economies – reducing costs on our annual lecture year on year. And, though the headline figure for our funding shows a drop in income received by 27.5 per cent compared to 2009, that was an exceptional year because of a single large, one-off donation. If that is removed from the 2009 figures, this year's performance shows us 16 per cent up on 2009 and 27 per cent up on 2008, a creditable effort in such hard times.

The trustees continue to maintain strong reserves to sustain our work in the medium and long term. They wish to ensure that the annual lecture is not dependent solely on sponsorship, and could survive if that sponsorship proved hard to find. And since many of our scholars are embarking on three or even four years degree courses, we have to keep sufficient funds in reserve, once we have accepted them on the programme, to cover our commitment to them in years to come.

We suffered the loss – suddenly and far too young – in September 2010 of the unique Countess Dominique de Borchgrave, widow of Patrick Pakenham, Lord Longford’s barrister son, and founder of the Patrick Pakenham Educational Awards, which help young ex-prisoners who wish to study Law in particular. Our chairman, Kevin Pakenham, offered a moving tribute to Dominique at the end of the annual lecture. We continue to miss her enthusiasm and dynamism every day. My special thanks at the end of another year go to my colleagues, Magdalen Evans, our scholarships’ manager, and Jill Dale, who organises our lecture, for their commitment and hard work. The trustees remain very much involved with the work of the trust in all its aspects, and the patrons give generously of their time and wisdom when we need them.

Among those who have made generous donations to the trust these past 12 months, special mention must go to Sir Christopher Bland, Bridgewater Associates, the Hawthorne Charitable Trust, the Offenheim Charitable Trust, and the Violet and Milo Cripps Charitable Trust.

Thanks once again for your support.

Peter Stanford  
Director