The Longford Trust

The Longford Trust
Annual Report 2015

Front cover: *"West Country landscape"* by artist Jamie Chapman, Longford Scholar, studying Fine Art at the University of the West of England. Read more about his story inside.

Annual Report 2015

As the last audience member departs from our annual Longford Lecture, there are a few blissful moments when I rest on my laurels. Challenging lecture, inspiring prize-winner, engaged audience, and nothing has gone wrong. Phew!

But almost immediately a realisation dawns. How to match that next year? Or even do better?

That has been the challenge for the trustees for the last 14 years, since we launched these annual events as a chance to put questions of prison and social reform centre stage, not just in the magnificent setting of Church House, Westminster, but also on the political, media and national agenda. I hope the capacity audience that filled Church House to the rafters on November 17, 2015, will agree that we did alright this time round.

Michael Palin has been privately working with, and supporting, prisoners' families for many years now, but did us the honour of agreeing to an invitation from Rachel Billington to talk publicly about the subject for the first time in the Longford Lecture. The result was electrifying, all the more so because sitting up on the stage behind him as he spoke were the parents and siblings of prisoners, all of whom had shared their experiences with him. And in the front row of the audience, the Secretary of State for Justice, Michael Gove, was taking notes.

Our efforts to make the Longford Lecture a must-not-miss date in every right-thinking person's diary were helped this year, as in many before: by our media sponsors, Telegraph Media Group; by our partners in organising the event, the Prison Reform Trust; by our master of ceremonies, Jon Snow; by our caterers from the Clink; and by the team at Church House, Westminster. Our thanks to them all.

In our wider work with serving and ex-prisoners, 2015 has been another year of growth. Numbers of Longford Scholarships awarded have increased, in line with the charity's development plan, and our partnership with the Prisoners' Education Trust and the Open University to boost the number of serving prisoners able to access degree-level distance-learning courses while inside is blossoming, thanks especially to a three-year funding award from the Linbury Trust.

One of the highlights of the annual lecture comes when a group of scholars and their volunteer mentors take to the stage to talk about how support from the Longford Trust really does turn lives around. Alongside all the other changes we have seen in 2015, one thing has remained constant. Well over 80 per cent of those we help continue to graduate, with fewer than 5 per cent of students dropping out and returning to prison. When you consider the current reoffending rate for all prisoners, that is no mean achievement, and creates role models of successful rehabilitation for other prisoners and for society at large.

One yardstick of how well we are doing comes when others sit up and take notice and want to learn from our example. The trust was therefore delighted in the summer of 2015 when we were approached by the Ministry of Justice to sit on the independent review into prison education, chaired by Dame Sally Coates.

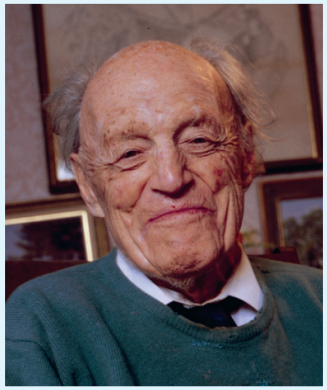
This annual review also contains details of our financial performance in 2015. We were not able quite to match our outstanding fund-raising achievements of 2014, but came close, and continue to build. With the help of Porticus UK, we were able at the end of 2015 to become a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO),which will, we believe, increase our potential to attract major donors. The full figures are inside – both for what we have raised and how we have spent it.

I hope you approve. And we look forward to seeing you at our 2016 Lecture this November.

Peter Stanford *Director Longford Trust*

About the Trust

The Longford Trust is a registered charity (no 1164701) and was set up in 2002 by his friends, family and admirers to continue the work of the late Lord Longford in the area of prison and social reform.
Frank Longford (1905-2001) was for 70 years a campaigner for the rights of prisoners and outcasts in society. He believed strongly in the wider social benefits of forgiveness and the paramount importance of education in rehabilitating prisoners.



"If we are really concerned with the reform of prisoners, what we do when they emerge from custody is at least as important as what we do for them while they are inside."
Lord Longford (1994)

The Longford Trust aims to increase awareness and engagement in prison issues, as well as giving practical support to prisoners, and to those who work with them.
It offers 20 Longford Scholarships each year to enable young serving and ex-prisoners to continue their rehabilitation by studying for degrees for up to three years at UK universities. The trust also runs the Frank Awards to enable serving prisoners to complete modules towards an Open University degree while still inside.
The annual Longford Prize recognises outstanding work in the field of prison reform by individuals and organisations and is awarded as part of Longford Lecture. This prestigious and high-profile event aims to inform and influence public opinion on penal policy. Entry is free of charge and each November an audience of up to 700 gather in London to hear speakers who have included the Nobel Laureate, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and President Mary McAleese of Ireland. This year the actor, comedian, writer and broadcaster Michael Palin, highlighted the plight of prisoners' families.

"My mentor is my second voice"

Jamie Chapman at work photograph by Tarron Spencer

Jamie Chapman is a Longford scholar currently studying Fine Art at the University of West of England, based at their Bath Spa campus. Whilst in prison he had submitted work to the Koestler Trust and it was during their annual exhibition, in which his work had been highlighted in Inside Time, that he met one of the Longford trustees, and was encouraged to apply to our scholarship scheme. A mature student, recent experimentation in plaster has added to the range of his artwork, of which making murals had always been a pivotal part. He cites the support of his Longford mentor, Carolyn, as being "worth its weight in gold". She has also, he says, given him a "second voice" when he has questions about his art practice. Our front cover this year reflects his interest in the textures of the West Country landscape and marks a new ambitious stage of his work, attracting admiration in the office where it has recently been displayed.

The 2015 Longford Lecture

(clockwise from top right): A packed Assembly Hall at Church House, Westminster, listens to Michael Palin deliver his lecture; Longford Trust trustee and Master of Ceremonies, the broadcaster Jon Snow, talks to Secretary of State for Justice, Michael Gove, before the latter presents the 2015 Longford Prize; Michael Palin takes questions from the audience; Jon Snow welcomes back 2013 Longford Lecturer, the human rights campaigner, Bianca Jagger; Michael Gove meets Cassius and Justin, two current Longford Scholars; a group of Longford Scholars and mentors join Longford Trust director, Peter Stanford, on stage, as Daily Telegraph deputy editor, Liz Hunt looks on (right); Longford Trust patron, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor asks a question from the floor, as trustee Rachel Billington looks on (left); Michael Palin meets current Longford Scholar Andrew Hart at an exhibition of his recent works in the reception room after the lecture; and (centre of the page) Jon Snow thanks the team of volunteer ushers from St Michael's Catholic Grammar School in Finchley.

Photographs by David Sandison

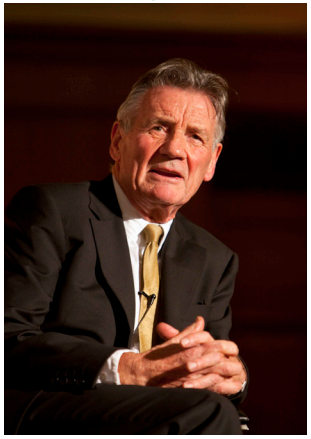
The Longford Lecture

Michael Palin giving the 2015 Longford Lecture photograph by David Sandison

"Collateral Damage: The effects of prison sentences on offenders' families"

The voices of prisoners' families "need to be heard", the actor, comedian, writer and broadcaster Michael Palin told an audience of 650 plus who packed Church House, Westminster, for the 14th Longford Lecture.
"The influence of the family relationship on the mental and physical state of the offender is profound," he said on November 17, 2015, at the annual event, which is sponsored by the Daily Telegraph, supported by the Prison Reform Trust and chaired by the broadcaster, Jon Snow.
Too often, Michael Palin argued in a heart-felt, carefully-researched, powerfully-delivered speech, prisoners' families can be marginalised by the system - or worse, treated with suspicion by society as if they are the ones who have committed a crime. Drawing on his own meetings with prisoners' families, and his involvement with reforming charities such as Pact and Action for Prisoners' Families going back over a decade, he described the impact of a family member being arrested.
"The marginalisation of the family begins from the very first moment of detention," he warned, and spoke of the "stigma by association" that the family members of a prisoner can suffer. "They have committed no crime, but they are made to feel as if they are accomplices just because they're related."

And while their loved one is incarcerated, families experience their own punishment. "In prison not a lot can happen, the daily routine providing a regular if monotonous structure to life behind bars. For the family outside everything can happen…Daily life becomes a series of little lies and deceits as parents or relatives have to deal with the question of what to tell the children. One child had been told that their father had gone to work for the Queen, another that he was working at a police car-wash, another that their father was travelling abroad."
For those parents determined to maintain contact and tell children the truth, he reported, there are many obstacles. "The prison visits are strictly limited and can be traumatic for a child. Even babies have to be searched as desperate people will sometimes hide drugs inside nappies. The prison officers themselves hate this part of a job in which there is no way of avoiding hurt and intrusion. In an already soured atmosphere, emotional spontaneity is discouraged and displays of love and affection must be curbed."
For many prisoners, he explained, the hardest time was not while they were inside, but on release. "One woman I spoke to, who had served an eight year sentence, referred to what she described as a 'Dunkirk Spirit' that prevailed when she was still in prison…As she walked free she felt for the first time the pent-up anger and resentment that her children could no longer contain. The idea that the doors swing open and the prisoner is welcomed with open arms is a dangerous misconception. In her case she had to wait six years before her daughter felt able to give her a hug."
He expressed his concern at the reorganisation of the probation service, the move to bigger prisons and the push for a "faster justice system", but – with the Secretary of State for Justice, Michael Gove, sitting in the front row – he said it was "encouraging to hear a government commit the state so unequivocally to rehabilitation and redemption."



In its drive to reduce re-offending, he urged, that the minister make "common cause with all those of us who recognise the need for the better understanding and treatment of the families of prisoners. Let us come together to recognise the need for statutory support for children or adults affected by imprisonment. Not just as a moral duty but as one of the keystones, holding together our criminal justice system."

The Longford Prize

The Longford Prize recognises the contribution of an individual, group or organisation working in the area of penal or social reform in showing outstanding qualities in the following areas: humanity; courage; persistence; and originality.

Nominations are submitted by the public to a judging panel chaired by the former prison governor, John Podmore. It includes Juliet Lyon, director of the Prison Reform Trust, Lord Ramsbotham, ex Chief Inspector of Prisons, and the Daily Telegraph columnist, Mary Riddell.

In 2015, the judges awarded the Longford Prize to PACT – the Prison Advice and Care Trust. The judges' citation read: "Good research and good practice have both long shown that maintaining strong family ties is one of the key factors in offenders' rehabilitation and avoidance of reoffending. And for that reason the judges want this year to celebrate the outstanding work of PACT and the thoughtful and wide-ranging support it provides for the parents, siblings and children of prisoners, who are often the hidden victims of crime."

The director of PACT, Andy Keen-Downs, was presented with his prize of £1500 on stage at the Longford Lecture by Michael Gove, the Secretary of State for Justice.

Andy Keen-Downs photograph by David Sandison

Lifetime Achievement Award

Eric McGraw (in the centre) photograph by David Sandison

The Judges also made a Lifetime Achievement Award to Eric McGraw of Inside Time. Their citation said: "It is hard to think of another individual in recent times who has had more of a direct and sustained impact on the everyday life of prisoners in this country than Eric McGraw. In 1990, he set up Inside Time as a newspaper that gave prisoners a voice. Under his inspired leadership, it has grown from a small quarterly publication, initially viewed with suspicion by the prison service, to become a 54-page, self-financing monthly, with a truly national circulation of 60,000 - lively, challenging, entertaining and respected by everyone with anything to do with prisons. Its indispensability is a testament not just to the brilliance of Eric's founding vision, but also to the 25 years of hard and sustained work he has given unstintingly to put that vision into practice."

The Longford Scholarships

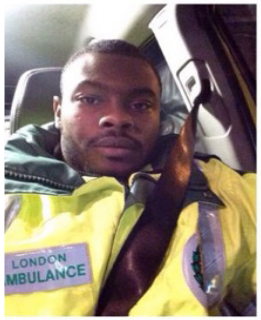
- Afford a unique source of educational funding for young serving and ex-prisoners to encourage them into, and support them through, higher education
- Build viable futures for ex-prisoners by enabling them to achieve degree-level qualifications and by offering them one-to-one mentoring
- Create role models of successful rehabilitation for young serving and ex-prisoners, and for the general public, by demonstrating how education offers a way out of the cycle of reoffending

Why the Scholarships are needed

The link between low educational achievement while at school and subsequent criminal behaviour is well established. Prisoners are statistically now likely to come from homes where education is not valued, and to have been excluded from school during their time there. Whereas around 20 per cent (and rising) of the population now proceed to higher education, only two per cent of prisoners have a degree.

Yet there is no evidence to suggest that prisoners have any less potential to gain a degree than others. With the support of dedicated teachers behind bars, some inmates discover for the first time the power of education to transform their lives. It is at this point that the Longford Scholarships provide practical and financial support to turn this promise of transformation into a reality. Working towards a degree can be the best way to prevent reoffending. Ministry of Justice statistics, released in 2015 through the Justice Data Lab, show that prisoners who have undertaken distance learning to higher education levels go on to reoffend on release over a quarter less than a matched control group.

"The Longford Trust now plays a big very part in my life choices"



26-year-old Cassius Lovell recalls his teenage years, growing up in London, as times when he lacked a sense of direction, and drifted into trouble with the law. The short jail sentences he received, he says, didn't seem to have much impact in changing his behaviour, but in 2011 he was sent back to prison for five and a half years. The judge told him it was his last chance.

"That is where the change really began. I started to reflect on my life and what I had done with it. It led me to getting involved in education. I took various courses and then I was accepted onto an Open University course."

"As my prison release date approached, I applied to the Longford Trust for support in my plans to study biomedical sciences. But I'd always wanted to be a paramedic after helping my mum with her severe asthma as a boy and so, when I was given a scholarship, I talked to my Longford Trust mentor, hospital doctor Hanifa Koguna, about my ambitions. She was able to help me get work experience in her A&E department and finally encouraged to change my study plans. In 2015 I started studying paramedic science at the University of Bedfordshire."

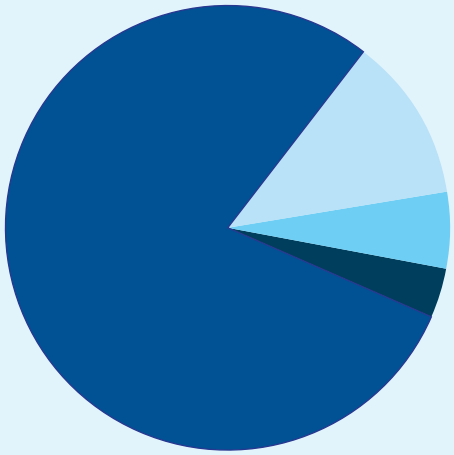
"The Longford Trust plays a very big part in my life. It is not only financial support my scholarship gives me for my studies but also having someone in my mentor to get good advice from about life choices."

How they work

Longford Scholarships are available to young serving and ex-prisoners (within five years of their release from prison). Successful applicants must demonstrate that:

- They are intending to study full-time or part-time at degree level at a UK university
- They have received a provisional offer of a place on a named course
- They can provide evidence of a genuine need for financial support and mentoring
- They have thoroughly investigated all other potential sources of funding
- Their chosen course will help them to rebuild their life

Almost all UK universities have had a Longford Scholar amongst their student population in the past 13 years - from Oxford to Brighton, Edinburgh to Exeter. And the range of subjects studied stretches from pure maths to textiles. We fund vocational as well as academic subjects.



78.9% Graduating or studying and on course to graduate

12% Dropped out of studies but not returned to prison

5.6% Left mid-degree for degree-related jobs

3.5% Returned to prison

What impact have the Longford Scholarships made?

"And thank you to you guys for giving me funding to set me up with textbooks and a laptop as well. It has helped a lot so far"
Aliza, 28, studying Nursing at Bucks New University

"I found it really hard not having much support from either Uni or family, but my mentor Peter has been a godsend"
James, 35, studying Law at Liverpool

"Having had the news of my first in my degree in the summer of 2015, I was amazed that this was accompanied by a nomination from my tutors for an Outstanding Academic Achievement Award. How I managed it, I don't know because I am dyslexic and couldn't even spell academic or achievement then. It took me about four goes each, with a spellcheck!"
Carla, 34, graduated with a BSc in Creative Industries from the University of South Wales.

"I would like to extend my appreciation for the job well done by the Longford Trust in funding my BSc in Quantity Surveying. I passed with a 2:2 and now I am employed as a graduate quantity surveyor. My life is back on track. I would like to become part of the team that helps other prisoners open a new leaf."
Robert, 32, Anglia Ruskin University

"I am still really enjoying the course even though it is tough. I feel the challenge is helping me further develop as a person and I am very grateful for this opportunity"
Sam, 27 reading Law at the University of Sussex

"I am so glad my year's funding has been awarded as I can now focus solely on my studies which had started so well. Thank you for your continued support. I would not of been able to get through this rough time with out all of your support."
Mark, 43, studying Business Management at Oxford Brookes University

"I've only had one assignment so far this academic year because I'm on a work placement, but I received a First for it. I am looking forward to the rest of the course and enjoy watching the Longford Lectures on-line. One day I hope to attend in person"
Jonathan, 27, reading Computer Science at Huddersfield University

Mentoring

The Longford Scholarships programme offers financial support to young ex-prisoners who want to continue their rehabilitation by going on to study for a degree at university. But the 150 plus men and women who have received scholarships since 2003 tell us that just as valuable in enabling them to rebuild their lives through higher education is the mentor that the Longford Trust assigns to every one of them.

Naomi Stewart graduated in 2013 with our support with a degree in photography from London Metropolitan University. This is what she said about her volunteer Longford Trust mentor, Michèle, who works as a psychologist. “Michèle told me how she saw me when we met up. And she was able to tell me what progress I was making, and what I still had to work on. Confidence is always a hard one. How accepting will people be if they find out you have served a prison sentence? Do they even need to know? It can be hard to get the balance right, and Michèle helped me so much. If she hadn’t been there, I don’t think I would have been able to cope. It would have been too much for me”.

All our mentors are volunteers. They receive an intensive training before taking up the role. They come from all sorts of backgrounds – including former Longford Scholars who are now thriving in their chosen careers but want to help others follow in their footsteps.
At the very core of the mentoring we provide is Lord Longford’s lifelong plea – that we should never give up on anyone who has been in prison, but offer them every support possible as they work to rehabilitate themselves.

Current Longford scholar Andrew Hart meets with his mentor at the V&A to discuss his fine art degree.

“How my scholarship helped”

“Kevin” graduated in the summer of 2015 in medical microbiology. He explains how the Trust supported him in rebuilding his life after he was jailed for possessing extreme pornographic images.

Before my arrest I was studying and living with my partner. We looked forward to emigrating to Australia after I qualified as a doctor. To support myself I worked each weekend in a local hospital. I also had an active social life with friends both inside and outside the medical course and I played regular football with a local Sunday league team.

In 2010, I was arrested. I was open and honest with the police and university as well as with my employer, friends, family and partner. Immediately, I was suspended from medicine and my job, my partner and I broke up and I was ostracised by friends and family. In 2012 I received a six-month prison sentence.

Even while in prison I remained in contact with the university. I was permitted to transfer onto the second year of another (different) degree course, an opportunity I saw as my best chance to create a career and rebuild my life. However, due to previous years study, Student Finance England could only finance one of the remaining two years.

I found the Longford Trust through a prison library copy of The Guide to Educational Grants (published by the Directory of Social Change). After a successful application, the trust granted me £2000 toward my course fees, allowing me to return to university only months after leaving prison.

As I write this, I have just received my BSc degree results - First Class Honours. In January of next year I will begin a one-year master’s degree – funded by a university scholarship I won - and am again hopeful of a promising career. My success and dedication to rebuilding my life has helped me to reconcile with family. Some of them will be travelling to attend my graduation next month.

Words cannot convey my gratitude. With limited funds, the Longford Trust chose me above others in as much need to receive the grant. I thank the Trust by rebuilding my life, career and family relationships, and making sure that none of those left behind are ever more deserving than me. I couldn’t have done it without the Trust.

The Frank Awards

Lord Longford was known to all his friends and to many of those he visited in prison as Frank. The Frank Awards, run as a joint project by the Longford Trust, the Prisoners' Education Trust and the Open University, provide grants to pay for serving prisoners to complete full modules of an Open University degree.

As a result of the changed funding arrangements for higher education introduced in 2012, a number of serving prisoners can no longer access funding to enable them to undertake Open University degrees while behind bars. To ensure that such an educational route remains open to all in prison who have the ability to begin a full degree, the Longford Trust has established the Frank Awards.

Twice a year, the distance learning co-ordinators at the Open University make recommendations about those they believe will benefit from a Frank Award. The successful candidates are then selected by the Longford Trust and supported in their studies by our colleagues at PET.

In 2015, with financial backing from the Linbury Trust, the Longford Trust was able to make a total of £18,000 available to 11 prisoners to enable them either to get started with OU modules, or complete more. All had been unable to access any alternative funding, including from the student loans system.

The Patrick Pakenham Awards

In 2015, the Longford Trust began a three-year partnership, working with the Legal Education Foundation (LEF), to support our Patrick Pakenham Awards' scheme. This project, started in 2006, was originally established by friends and admirers in memory of Lord Longford's barrister son, Patrick. It runs alongside our bigger Longford Scholarships' programme and offers financial and mentoring support to young ex-prisoners who want to read Law at university and who have ambitions to be solicitors or barristers. Most of the mentors working with Patrick Pakenham Award holders are themselves lawyers.

Thanks to LEF's support, we were able in the summer of 2015 to take four new ex-prisoners onto this scheme, where they joined three existing undergraduates at various stages in their law studies. Of the new intake of four, three want to practise as solicitors, and one as a barrister.

"I had some really positive feedback from my seminar tutor in contract law which is encouraging," Sam reported back to us after his first term. " I am beginning a new term of seminars and I feel like I am improving week by week with the skills I am acquiring. It is a really absorbing and interesting subject. Thank you for your help and advice which has helped me to get here in the first place. I really do appreciate it."

"I just want to say thanks for all the help over the past three years"

Mark Laurie graduated in 2014 with a BSc Honours in Sport and Exercise Science from Edinburgh Napier University. He came up on stage at the 2014 Longford Lecture with his mentor, charity executive Brain Carlin, to talk about the impact our support for him had made.

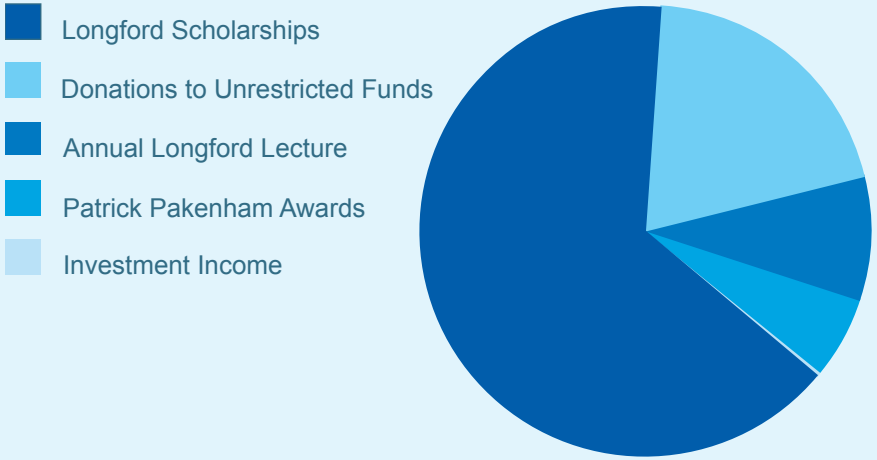
A keen recreational athlete, since graduation he has set up his own business - a strength and conditioning facility where athletes will train under his instruction. At the time of this photograph he wrote:

"It's an amazing feeling to be finished uni, but I'm already planning my next steps of completing some industry certificates and qualifications. I just want to say thanks for all the help over the past three years. It was a massive help to me. I'll keep in touch."

And he has been as good as his word. In November 2015 he came down to London to attend our lecture with his fiancée, Kirsty. He wanted, he said, to introduce us to her as they had just become engaged.

INCOME	2015	2014
Donations to Restricted Funds		
Longford Scholarships	£122,231	£180,565
Annual Longford Lecture	£16,758	£14,295
Patrick Pakenham Awards	£10,900	£1,500
SubTotal	*£149,899*	*£196,360*
Donations to Unrestricted Funds		
General	£34,300	£13,951
Investment Income	£130	£156
Gift Aid	£3,699	
Sub Total	*£38,129*	*£14,107*
TOTAL	***£188,018***	***£210,467***

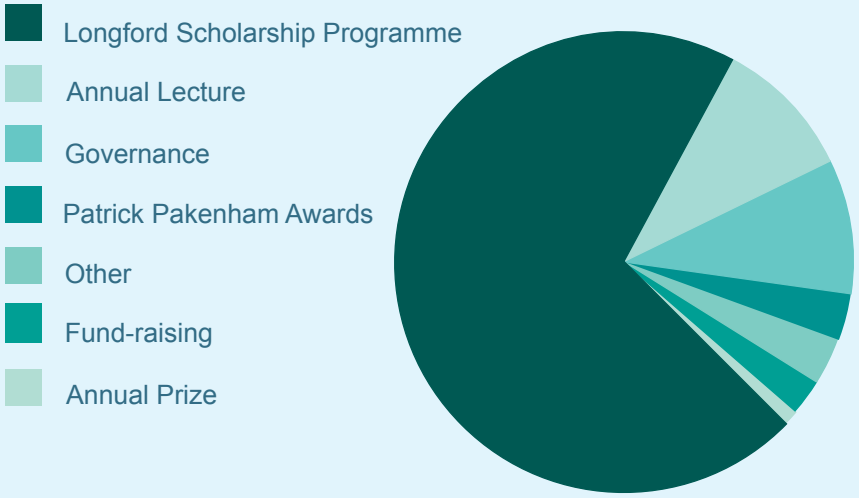
INCOME



Our thanks to the following major benefactors who supported our work in 2015:
Charles Alexander, Sir Christopher Bland, Stephen Blaney, Gyles Brandreth, Bridgewater Associates, Richard Collins, The Violet and Milo Cripps Charitable Trust, Harriet Cullen, The Alex and William De Winton Trust, Orlando Fraser, Gallant Maxwell, the friends of Rasmini Gardiner, The Robert Gavron Charitable Trust, The Hawthorne Trust, Kate Hill, The KW Charitable Trust, The Legal Education Foundation, The Linbury Trust, The Lund Trust, The Man Charitable Trust, The Monument Trust, The Northwick Trust, The Ofenheim Trust, Kevin Pakenham, Porticus UK, Sir James Spooner, The Stone Family Foundation, Telegraph Media Group, Marina Warner, Anne Willcocks

EXPENDITURE	2015	2014
Longford Scholarship Programme	£133,939	£131,891
Annual Lecture	£18,972	£11,317
Governance	£17,728	£9,300
Patrick Pakenham Awards	£6,604	£1,621
Other (inc marketing)	£6,370	£5,434
Fund-raising	£4,900	£12,285
Annual Prize	£1,650	£2,270
TOTAL	***£190,163***	***£174,118***

EXPENDITURE



	2015	2014
Net assets at the end of year	£266,692	£247,237
Current Liabilities in 2016 *(scholarships already awarded)*	£45,000	£39,400
Current liabilities in 2017 *(scholarships already awarded)*	£41,450	£25,300
Other accruals	£1,800	£1,800
TOTAL ASSETS	***£178,442***	***£180,737***

Nat Billington (1970-2015)

The speed with which computers and the world wide web have developed in recent decades is breathtaking. When Nat Billington – who has died aged 44 – was a schoolboy in mid-1980s at St Paul's in London, there was no one on the staff even qualified to teach him computer science at A Level. That didn't stop him, off his own bat, getting top marks.

Such was the single-mindedness of this British technology guru and entrepreneur that, once at Queens' College, Cambridge, reading computer science (they were able to teach it), he used his second year summer vacation, along with his long-time collaborator and friend Lorenzo Wood, to secure a lucrative contract to design and install a whole computer system for the international cinema company, Majestic Films.

It proved to be the launch pad for his business ventures in the burgeoning high-tech world: initially at KBW Consulting where he delivered British Airways' first website; then from 1997 as co-founder of Oyster Partners, website designers of choice to Tony Blair at 10 Downing Street, for Sky TV and BT; and latterly in his role from 2005 to 2010 as managing director of the global on-line resource for doctors, Map of Medicine.

Born on 6 December 1970, Nathaniel Kevin Billington was the eldest child of the novelist Rachel Billington and her film director husband, Kevin. His maternal grandparents were the cabinet minister and prison reformer, Lord Longford, and his biographer wife, Elizabeth. It was the latter who bought him, aged 10, his first computer, a BBC Micro. She was nurturing a passion that had already blossomed when family friend, Adrian Berry, a former science editor of the Daily Telegraph, allowed the youngster to spend time on his then state-of-the-art cumbersome desk-top computer system.

When Map of Medicine was purchased in 2009 by the US giant, the Hearst Corporation, Nat Billington stayed on for a while after the sale, but he wasn't a corporate man. His restless curiosity and entrepreneurial spirit made him search out new challenges. In 2011 with Steve Brooks, he set up Synergy Energy as both a venture capital investment vehicle and a means of accelerating the growth of cutting-edge technology businesses producing energy directly from sustainable means.

It was in line with a strong social conscience in Nat Billington, something that perhaps sat more comfortably with his Longford genes than his knowledge of technology. In March 2012, he joined the trustee board of the Longford Trust, set up to continue his grandfather's work, and mentored some of the ex-prisoners it supports through university.

Nat Billington was driven and incisive, but managed to combine both qualities with a quiet charm and a gentleness that won him a wide circle of friends and admirers. In 2000, he married Hannah Heyse-Moore and they had two sons, Phineas and Jacob.

He faced his diagnosis, in January 2014, with Waldenstrom's Macroglobulinaemia (a form of non-Hodgkin Lymphoma) with typical courage and determination. For a while, it seemed that a stem cell transplant had worked. He set about building a Caterham kit car, the latest manifestation of another passion that had seen him acquire a Lotus Elan at the age of 19. But the cancer returned as diffuse large B cell lymphoma. He died peacefully in his sleep with his wife at his side.

Nat Billington and his sons, Phineas and Jacob

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