



SUAA

Newsletter

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JUBILEE NEWSLETTER 2003 - The Sydney University Arts Association celebrates its Fiftieth Anniversary

Founded in 1953, the Sydney University Arts Association reaches its fiftieth anniversary this year. The event was celebrated formally on 8 May 2003 with a reception in Maclaurin Hall at which representatives of many generations of Arts graduates presented their reminiscences of the University's foundation Faculty (for details of the occasion, see next item: Arts Generations).

The idea for an Arts Association grew out of the successful centenary celebrations of the University of Sydney in 1952. The public attendance at the Open Day held then by the Faculty of Arts and the enthusiastic response to the publication, *A Hundred Years of the Faculty of Arts*, showed that there was a strong community interest waiting to be marshalled.

The Dean of Arts and other Faculty members at the time grasped the opportunity to raise the profile of the Faculty of Arts by creating an organisation devoted to highlighting the Faculty's achievements, enhancing community understanding of the Liberal Arts tradition in higher education, and providing a point of contact for its many graduates.

The plans of the provisional committee that was initially set up, comprising members of the Faculty and influential community representatives, came to fruition on 30th September 1953, when the University Arts Association was constituted and a committee elected,

presided over by the Dean, Professor R.B. Farrell.

The foundation address was given by Major-General W.J.V. Windeyer, the grandson of the first graduate of the University and a distinguished soldier and lawyer. His topic was 'The Faculty of Arts and the Community'. (See item below on the Inaugural Meeting and Address).

Invitations sent to well known people in law, education, the churches and in other areas of public life were very favourably received. The range of interest was impressive, as was indicated by the first three Vice-Presidents elected: Miss Kathleen Commins from the *Sydney Morning Herald*; R.J. Boyer, the Chairman of the ABC; and Norman Cowper, a well known lawyer with an important influence in public affairs. Five hundred people attended the inaugural meeting.

Over the years the Arts Association has remained faithful to the original aims of the organisation, both social and intellectual. While providing occasions for fellowship, it has continued the tradition of sponsoring lectures by outstanding academics willing to share their knowledge and insights. In particular, an impressive series of Inaugural Lectures by new Professors in the Faculty of Arts has been a major achievement.

The Association exists for the benefit of all graduates and friends of the Faculty of Arts, but it reaches out even further through the publication of the scholarly journal *Arts*, now in its twenty-fourth yearly volume. The latest issue (2002), in what may well be an academic first, contains a CD of musical excerpts to

accompany the text of a lecture on Australian music.

The need to promote the interests of the Faculty and the relevance of a humanist tradition in an increasingly diverse and competitive tertiary sector resonates even more strongly in this Jubilee year than was the case in 1953. With the support of graduates and friends of the Faculty, the Sydney University Arts Association looks forward to its next fifty years.

(Taken from report in the *University Gazette* by Beverley Fletcher, member of SUAA Committee)

ARTS GENERATIONS – 8 May 2003

Arts graduates from across eight decades gathered in MacLaurin Hall on the evening of 8 May 2003 to celebrate the contribution of the humanities to public life, as well as the 50th anniversary of the Sydney University Arts Association.

At the beginning of the function, Koori Centre deputy director Mrs **Michelle Blanchard** acknowledged and paid respect to the traditional owners of the land on which the University stands, the Cadigal people of the Eora nations, saying she felt honoured and privileged to be among people who shared her passion for words. "The right words can move us on a physical, emotional and spiritual level, and may we continue to choose them with care," she said.

In keeping with the celebration of the Jubilee, "Arts Generations" began with the presentation of a short video of historical photographs of the University

and Arts students of other eras. Extracts from two video interviews with graduates from the late 1920s were also shown. Miss **Mary Gilder** and Mrs **Glen Fogarty** (née Boland) both spoke fondly of their time in the Faculty of Arts, of the friendships they made, and of learning to argue, to think, and to appreciate other points of view.

Representing the 1930s decade was writer and academic **Donald Horne**, author of *The Lucky Country*, who said that his first year in Arts in the 1930s revealed to him, over cups of foul coffee in the Union refectory, “the value of pursuing things for their own sake and not always for the sake of the economy”. But while he revelled in discoveries that year, he found at the end of year examinations that he hadn't done quite enough of “the work you get marks for”. He paid tribute to his Arts degree at Sydney for fostering in him a spirit of critical inquiry.

*Company of Herald*s author, historian and journalist **Gavin Souter**, from the 1940s, said that the Arts degree was for him “the getting of knowledge”. He added: “It made me read, write and think more than I might otherwise have done,” while providing “a sense of direction in libraries, a taste for research and an interest in the past - more than enough to be grateful for”.

Edmund Campion, priest, writer, editor, literary judge and academic, representing Arts in the 1950s, drew on the title of his most recent book *Lines of My Life*, in saying: “The lines of my life have run in pleasant places, and no more so than in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Sydney.” One made friends for life, he said, and among the most important thing he learnt in those years was respect for different ways of thinking and other points of view.

Academic, literary editor and critic **Andrew Riemer**, representing the 1960s, said that the Arts degree was a time for reading, talking, and exploring all sorts of issues. “It provided a matrix for one's later life.” He praised the liberal education of the time which allowed “enough leisure for the mind to flourish and the spirit to soar”, contrasting it with the more recent experience of frazzled students queuing

for books to complete endless assessment tasks to satisfy “bean counters”. The question now was whether the University could escape “the dun-coloured mediocrity which is the time in which we live”.

Journalist and writer **Susan Wyndham**, representing the 1970s, light-heartedly revealed that her first year in Arts introduced her to “American literature, cappuccinos and people from west of Anzac Parade”. The University was culturally vibrant at the time, she said, and she made many friends and professional contacts she continues to value highly.

Theatre director **Marion Potts**, representing the 1980s, saw the University as “a thoroughly inspiring place”. She said: “Being among a group of talented and like-minded people allowed me to articulate my aspirations.” In the present political and economic climate she said that she hoped “we can safeguard the sense of the collegial values and respect for knowledge, and keep this place a repository of knowledge and expertise.”

Jack Manning Bancroft, a first year Arts student and holder of the inaugural ANZ indigenous scholarship, representing the present generation of Arts student said: “I am really enjoying the challenge of learning new concepts and ideas”. He stressed the importance of having the opportunity to learn about and question concepts and values from many different sources.

Professor **Gavin Brown**, the Vice-Chancellor, spoke briefly, and warmly, early in the proceedings; and Professor **Ros Pesman**, Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, and Professor **Stephen Garton**, Dean of Arts, introduced the representative speakers from across the decades. The Chancellor, Justice **Kim Santow**, thanked the speakers and brought the celebration to a close. Arts Association President Emeritus Professor **Angus Martin** said that the need to promote the interests of the Arts faculty and the relevance of a humanist tradition in an increasingly diverse and competitive tertiary sector resonated even more strongly now than in 1953 when the association was formed.

(This account of the “Arts Generations” celebration is taken largely from Alison Handmer's report in *UniNews*, 23 May 2003. A more complete report will appear in this year's volume of the SUAA journal *Arts*, due at the end of the year).

Identity and Community in the Faculty of Arts

Graduates and current students are invited to participate in a project “articulating a sense of identity and community in the Faculty of Arts”. Those interested should contact Dr Marie-Thérèse Barbaux 9351.7511 or <mtb@artsit.usyd.edu.au> or Ms Cherie Kennaugh on 9036.9313, or <cherie.kennaugh@social.usyd.edu.au>

Arts Association: Inaugural Meeting and Address – 30 September 1953

Under the heading “University Arts Body Formed”, *The Sydney Morning Herald* of 1 October 1953 announced:

“A meeting of more than 500 in the Great Hall of the University last night agreed to form the Sydney University Arts Association.

Major-General W.J.V. Windeyer spoke on the ‘Faculty of Arts and the Community’.

The meeting adopted a constitution and elected a provisional committee to carry on the affairs of the association until a committee is elected.

It was announced that the Governor, Sir John Northcott, had agreed to be patron of the association. The Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Professor R.B. Farrell, is president of the organising committee. Other officers are: Vice-presidents, Miss K.M. Commins, Messrs. R.J. Boyer and N. Cowper; honorary secretary, Dr. Morven Brown; and honorary treasurer, Miss M.C. Alder.”

The Faculty and the Community, address by Major-General W.J.V. Windeyer, 30 September 1953 (edited extracts):

“For very many reasons the very words ‘The University’ are for me charged with emotion and memories, evocative of loyalties. Bureaucrats and experts may talk of tertiary education, if they must. That is not what for us a university means.

When I was asked to speak I wondered whether, because I have had some acquaintance with various practical affairs and was until a few weeks ago occupied for much of my time with army matters, I was expected to urge the usefulness of courses in the Faculty of Arts as a preparation for severely practical undertakings – whether I should say that I had seen a man reading Plato under a palm tree in New Guinea during the course of a campaign. That is true. So also it is true that a member of this University, while in France in the First War, translated a greater part of *Paradise Lost* into Latin hexameters. He, S.J.G. Davis, was a Demonstrator in Geology who had turned to Latin. Reported to be ‘in performance and in promise the outstanding man of his generation in the School of Classics’ he was killed in action in 1918. I mention him as a representative of all those graduates and students of the Faculty of Arts whose service to the community meant death in war. But when he wrote in the trenches he was seeking relaxation from a stern task, not fitting himself for it. Does that make an undertaking less worthy or less useful? Are to try to justify what we have come to call the humanities by urging only that, after all, they have their uses? And, if so, must we mean by useful that they aid men to make money? Surely it is useful to teach a man not only how to work more efficiently and make more money, but also how to enjoy leisure worthily and use wisely what money he has; not how to make a living so much as how to live. ...

That does not mean, however, that the studies and disciplines of the Faculty of Arts have no relation to the proper performance of practical tasks. Indeed, I personally believe that they have a direct relation. ...

What is the aim of a university? ... What are the stated aims of this University? ... Hamilton’s papers on education and university reform had been published shortly before our inauguration ceremonies in 1852; and Professor Woolley in his oration quoted Hamilton: ‘The idea of a university is twofold; it is first what its name imports, a school of liberal and general knowledge, and secondly a collection of special schools devoted to the learned professions. Of these, the former is the university properly so called; the second is complementary and ministerial’.

And said Woolley: ‘A good education must induce a habit of patient, connected, vigorous, independent thinking and must afford a general prospect of the most important objects of thought, the world within us, and then the world without, both in our relations to our fellow men and the constitution of the physical universe’.

Classics, mathematics and natural science each had its place and professor.... The University also had a particular purpose ... in due time to send forth statesmen, lawyers, physicians, scholars. Wentworth had eloquently predicted that from the University would come ‘a long list of illustrious names’. But, ‘if a practical purpose must be assigned to a university course, then’, said Newman, ‘I say it is the training of good members of society’.

The contribution to the life of the community of the Faculty of Arts of this University over the last hundred years is not to be weighed in illustrious names, but rather by the lives of many people who answered to Newman’s description, ‘good members of society’. The influence of the University has been largely the work and the worth of the work of country school teachers and suburban clergymen, of numerous men and women, graduates and others, in many walks of life, who have in their homes and among their families and by their lives and doctrine set forth a love of learning, the virtues of temperate thought and impartial inquiry, the enjoyment of poetry and prose. So although I shall mention a few notable names here and there, they are incidental only.

[With reference to political leaders] I may say that two of the Premiers of New South Wales, Carruthers and

Bavin, have been graduates in Arts of this University; and one other, Wade, an M.A. of Oxford. Two of the Premiers of Queensland were also Sydney graduates in Arts. Of the Prime Ministers of Australia, we all know that the first, Barton, was from this University, Deakin and the present Prime Minister [R.G. Menzies] from Melbourne, and Lord Bruce from Cambridge – all graduates in Arts. ...

Leaving politics aside, the Faculty of Arts has had its part in training men for many forms of public office, and through them it has influenced Australia. This is especially true of the judiciary. The last four Chief Justices of New South Wales and most of the puisnes for a long time past have been graduates in Arts in this University, as was also Sir Pope Cooper, Chief Justice of Queensland. Nearly all the Justices of the High Court of Australia have been Arts graduates of Sydney or of Melbourne. ...

I shall not say anything about the direct contributions which the Faculty of Arts has made to scholarship, either by the writings of those who taught here or by sending forth its sons and daughters to tasks of teaching and research elsewhere. I am concerned with the influence of scholarship on the community, rather than with the influence of the University on scholarship. ...

The University, as Nicholson had said, was to be ‘limited to no sect and confined to no class.’ From the start the University gave a number of scholarships of £50 per annum. There were seven such scholars among the original twenty-four undergraduates. There were poor scholars then, as there were before and have been since. My grandfather, whose widowed mother was very far from well off, recorded month by month his receipts and expenses as an undergraduate, living on his scholarship and some small aid from his mother. ... [Note: Major-General Windeyer’s grandfather was the first graduate of the University].

The worth of a classical education was not seriously questioned in the early days. Nicholson, himself a doctor of medicine, said. ‘the great and paramount object to be achieved in any system of academic training at the present moment is the raising of the standard of proficiency in classics and

mathematics'; and the early students came to the University not questioning its aim as set before them. They never doubted that a degree in Arts was only a preliminary to undertaking some other and more professional study. They came because the knowledge with which the Faculty of Arts was concerned would enable them, whatever profession they later embraced, the better to practice their profession; or because they, or their parents, felt that they were, in some sense or other, destined for leadership in the colonial community.

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century Badham's thunderous annual denunciation of those who did not value classical education showed that the citadel was being threatened. Greek first and later Latin ceased to be compulsory subjects for matriculation. More and more there were various technologies seeking to compete with the humanities for a place in the University. In 1873 Badham said, 'I cannot conceal from myself the tendency to turn this University straightway to account; to adopt it as a means of helping on mining operations, and to turn that which was intended by Wentworth and all his compeers to be an establishment for proper education into a mere machinery for bringing out of the bowels of the earth the riches they contain, and turning them into marketable cash. That I may say is not the mission of the University.'

But at the same period the Faculty of Arts, as a result of its share in the Challis bequest, was able to offer its adherents a wider range of studies. The new chairs of Logic and Mental Philosophy, Modern Literature and History brought to us Francis Anderson, MacCallum and Wood. And as time went on, further subjects were added. But the added scope brought its own troubles. A synoptic view of knowledge was no longer a practical possibility. The disintegration of the single fabric went on rapidly.

It is a mistake, I feel, to think of all problems which began in this period as if they were the result only of the greater and always growing body of scientific knowledge. Neither can the matter be explained away simply as the result of new pressures and hurry coming in with the new century.

Matthew Arnold's scholar gypsy was-

born in days when wits were fresh and clear,
And life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames;
Before this strange disease of modern life,
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
Its head o'ertax'd, its palsied hearts,
was rife-

That was written in the year the University of Sydney began.

For a time the University was able to hope that all men, and from 1881 women, before undertaking special studies would first graduate in Arts. Some always did. Some Arts graduates, like Rennie, later became distinguished in medicine; others, like Russell, the astronomer, and Fletcher, the naturalist, in science. For a time those who sought the University degree in Law must first have either graduated in or done two years in Arts.... In the Faculty of Science also, undergraduates for some time attended the first year in the Faculty of Arts, and then in the second year took purely scientific subjects and also French and German. But this was changed in 1890. And at the same time, with the lengthened medical course, a preliminary first year in Arts for the medical undergraduate also ceased to be a requirement.

Whether in the long run the community has been the gainer by earlier specialization I do not know. But one, certainly unfortunate, result is that its occurrence at the undergraduate level has not been met by greater emphasis in the schools on the humanities and linguistic study or on general education. On the contrary, boys and girls start long before they leave school to concentrate on those subjects which either will enable them most easily to matriculate or which they assume will help them most in some professional Faculty at the University. And they do this at ever earlier ages. ... If present tendencies go on, soon Shakespeare will mean to many graduates in many faculties only 'something we did for the Intermediate Certificate'.

The atomic bomb is not the only danger to civilization. Hollywood can be another. There are, however, still those who think that standards of taste and cultivated living help to determine the character and calibre of a people. There are still those who believe that for the

solution of current problems there is guidance in Plato, Bacon and Edmund Burke, just as surely as in the daily newspapers. ...

[Most men and women] who come to universities do so, and have always done so, to gain knowledge which will enable them to make their ways in the world. This is not the less so because they may love their work or because their work is the scholar's trade. Chaucer's scholar was poor and threadbare not simply because he loved learning and spent what he had on books, but because 'he had gotten him yet no benefyce'.

We should gladly recognise, therefore, that the studies with which this Faculty is concerned can in fact have a value for work as well as for leisure. In particular, for those whose duties will be in the administration of large enterprises, there is very much to be said for the view that an Arts course with some science or economics included is to be preferred to courses in Economics or Science alone. So far as the Law School is concerned, the matter is beyond doubt.

Wherefore, Mr Chancellor, I have the honour to commend the purpose for which we have gathered this evening."

For details of the SUAA 2003 program, also membership application form, see the Alumni website, through the Faculty of Arts website at: <http://www.arts.usyd.edu.au>

Alternatively, to apply for membership, send your name and address with a cheque for \$30 made payable to 'Sydney University Arts Association' (or credit card details) to The Secretary, SUAA, Box 2, The Holme Building, A09, University of Sydney, NSW 2006.

SUAA Newsletter Editor:
Paul Crittenden,
for the SUAA Committee.

Next Newsletter: March 2004 – the Faculty of Arts in 2003 in review.

