

*TRANSACTIONS
OF
THE BURGON SOCIETY*



VOLUME 6
2006



THE BURGON SOCIETY

Founded to promote the study of Academical Dress

Transactions of the Burgon Society Volume 6 (2006)

Edited by Alex Kerr

Editorial Board: Bruce Christianson; William Gibson; Nicholas Groves

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**Information about the Burgon Society can be found on its website at
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Volume 6 (for 2006)

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From the Editor

This issue of *Transactions of the Burgon Society* is for 2006 but is being published more than a year late, for which I must apologize. However, we have the material to hand for the next issue and expect to publish and distribute it by the summer of 2008, with Volume 8 to follow at the end of the year. This will bring us back on schedule and we aim to produce a volume at the end of each year thereafter.

Once again we are fortunate to have contributions of a very high standard, two of them based on dissertations submitted for the FBS. Here is a remarkable variety of topics from the Middle Ages to the present day: an elusive degree long defunct; a thriving profession and how it has moved in recent times into a relationship with the academic world; sixteenth-century laws on dress in England and Wales; the scheme of robes in a modern Scottish university; and the latest in a series of studies on the colours used in academic robes.

Since the publication of the last volume of *Transactions*, two honorary Fellows of the Society, George Shaw and Len Brown, both regarded with great respect and affection, have died. Tributes to them are included in this issue.

I would like to thank the members of the Editorial Board for their continued help. The rigour with which they evaluate material submitted for publication truly makes this a 'refereed journal', and I am grateful for their practical support and advice.

Alex Kerr

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(as at 31 December 2007)

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 Mr Nick Shipp (honoris causa), *Logistics Manager, Ede & Ravenscroft*
 The Revd Ambrose Southward (by submission), *author of 'Is Academic Dress Obsolete in the 21st Century?'; 'St. Bees College, Cumberland'; and 'The Hood of the Carlisle & Blackburn Diocesan Training Institute'*
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 Professor Bruno Neveu, FBS honoris causa *died 2004*
 Dr George Wenham Shaw, FBS honoris causa *died 2006*

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George Wenham Shaw 1928–2006



For over forty years Dr George Shaw's publications on academical dress have served as an introduction for the new enthusiast and as reference works to be returned to again and again by the seasoned student of the subject. He was the doyen of this field, always ready to assist and encourage others in their interest and research and a keen supporter of the Burgon Society.

George was born on 28 April 1928 in Stalybridge, Cheshire. His family moved to the Manchester area when he was six. He attended Altrincham Grammar School, where the masters wore gowns, and this fired his interest in academical dress. His English master had a London BA gown with a Northam's label, and so George wrote to Northam's and purchased a second-hand gown for 12*s.* 6*d.* plus 6*d.* for postage!

When he left school he worked in industry for two years in a chemical company manufacturing DDT. He studied part-time at UMIST, and his interest changed from Chemistry to Biology. He decided to go into full-time education, but 1946 was a bad time for finding a university place as everyone was coming back from the war. George gained a place at Swansea, but found it did not provide what he wanted and so he moved to Bangor. During his last year there he spent time at the laboratory working on cytogenetics and published a paper on the subject. After graduating in 1950 he took up his first teaching post, at Deacon's School, Peterborough. He was impressed to find that the Head asked staff to wear academical dress. In his spare time he continued to do research and, being near

Cambridge, he was able to get help and supervision from academics working in the same field. He submitted his thesis to the University of Wales in 1953 and gained his MSc. In the same year he moved to North Devon to join the staff at West Buckland School near Barnstaple. Again he carried on his interest in experimental cytology, doing research in his spare time. After three years he found it difficult to pursue these interests without access to a university department specializing in the field. He decided to give up teaching for a while in favour of full-time research. In 1956, with a DSIR grant to support him, he went up to Wadham College, Oxford, as a postgraduate student with a research position in the Department of Botany. In 1958 he presented his thesis and was awarded a DPhil. He found the life of a researcher rather lonely and he missed school life. He looked for a post in a public school, was interviewed at Lancing College and was appointed, and that was where he spent the rest of his teaching career.

Shortly after his arrival at Lancing he married Mary, whom he met as a fellow postgraduate researcher at Oxford. They settled into life at the College in 1958 and during the following years the family grew with the arrival of two sons and two daughters. The position of the school in its idyllic setting, together with the attraction of being part of a warm and vibrant community, made any suggestion of a move a somewhat lost cause.

In 1969 the Institute of Biology made him a Fellow. He felt honoured to hold this position which was mainly offered to university academics and only very rarely to schoolmasters.

In 1970 the University of Hong Kong asked him if he would be interested in submitting copies of all his published works to them to be assessed for the award of a DSc. He complied with the request and in due course the degree was conferred on him *in absentia*. He was always slightly puzzled and bemused by this award.

In 1980 he was awarded a Schoolmaster's Fellowship to Girton College, Cambridge, and he took up residence at the College for the Lent term. He was able to make use of University facilities and to have the stimulation of Cambridge academic life for the eight-week term. He found this rewarding and it gave him renewed energy to return to his teaching. Girton College subsequently made him a Fellow Commoner.

On George's retirement from Lancing, he and Mary settled in Grantchester, near Cambridge. He became a member of the University of the Third Age in Cambridge and for a number of years gave an annual course of lectures in Genetics and Human Biology.

In his early days in Sussex, George saw a newspaper article by Dr Charles Franklyn and afterwards went to see him to discuss their common interest in academical dress. Franklyn was also an authority on heraldry and genealogy—and cats—and would turn the conversation to these topics instead. George found him to

be an irascible and opinionated man, and especially remembered him being a difficult dinner guest!

The new University of Sussex was chartered in 1961, and George submitted a scheme for academical dress. It was based on a claret colour and Wippell made up some hoods, which George took to the Vice-Chancellor. He had another set made up in blue. This submission was unsuccessful, but later George designed robes for a number of other academic institutions. Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario, gave him a commission for a set all in green. Then Strathclyde adopted several revisions he proposed. In 1965 the Professor of Horticulture at Bath asked him to design a system of academical dress, which he based on the colour of Bath stone. The University of Bath recognized his work with an Honorary MA.

In 1966 George published his book *Academical Dress of British Universities*. He had received help from many universities but not all the old-established robemakers co-operated. Indeed, he felt there was annoyance in some quarters that he had published a book on the subject at all. Franklyn reacted angrily to it: he obviously thought only he could write authoritatively on academical dress. His four-page, vitriolic review in *Oxford* was dismissive and consisted mainly of self-congratulation on his own designs for Hull and Southampton. However, the book was well received elsewhere: Peter Preston wrote a review in the *Guardian* entitled 'All Mod Dons' and came to visit George for a day.

After the publication of *Academical Dress of British Universities* there were more commissions. Simon Bolivar University in Caracas asked him to design a system of robes and he was offered an honorary degree there (but he never travelled to Venezuela to collect it). Also in 1969 he drew up a scheme for the new University of Ulster. His designs for the Institute of Biology were adopted in 1979.

Academical dress worldwide was to be surveyed in a series of cards commissioned by Ferrograde Laboratories, and George made a set of designs. The project was never completed, but at that time he began work on a book on academical dress worldwide. He then discovered that Hugh Smith had a similar project that was well advanced.

E. W. Scobie Stringer had revised and published the fourth edition of Frank Haycraft's *Degrees and Hoods of the World's Universities and Colleges* in 1948. His family, who held the copyright, contacted a number of acknowledged authorities on academical dress, including George, in the late 1960s with a view to producing a new edition. George contributed a substantial amount of material, but Franklyn took over the editorship—and took possession of the whole project. He did not consult the other editors, but incorporated their material as he saw fit. The book was published in 1972, with a print run of 500 copies.

In 1992 George published a profusely illustrated 32-page booklet entitled *Cambridge University Academical Dress, with Notes on Oxford Academical Dress* and in 1995 a second, much expanded edition of his 1966 book, now entitled *Academical Dress of British and Irish Universities*.

When the Burgon Society was founded in 2000 it was natural that George should be one of those invited to become a Fellow *honoris causa*. He was admitted at the Society's first Congregation in October 2001. From the beginning he was an enthusiastic member, giving generous practical support to the Society's activities and encouraging individual members in their study of academical dress.

At a Burgon Society study day at Girton College, Cambridge, in 2005, George announced his intention to pass the copyright of *Academical Dress of British and Irish Universities* to the Society, with the hope that a third edition might be published in due course. He also donated his important collection of correspondence, photographs and antique prints relating to academical dress to the Society's archive to help with future research.

In 2005 he agreed to become one of the Society's Patrons. He greatly appreciated the honour paid to him by the Society and it gave him very much pleasure to hold the position.

George died in Cambridge on 27 November 2006, having spent much of the year in and out of hospital following heart surgery in January to replace a faulty aortic valve.

He enjoyed a full and happy life with many interests which gave him great satisfaction. He was devoted to his family, as a husband, a father and a grandfather to his eight grandchildren. His professional life was of immense importance to him and in his teaching career the success of his pupils was paramount. He also greatly valued the companionship of his many friends and colleagues. His association with the Burgon Society, and all those connected with it, was the crowning delight of his final years.

Alex Kerr and Mary Shaw

George's widow, Dr Mary Shaw, is arranging to assign copyright in all George's writings on academical dress to the Society and plans are already well advanced to publish a new edition of Academical Dress of British and Irish Universities.

Members of Council were very pleased that Mary agreed to accept an honorary FBS. She was warmly welcomed at Congregation in October 2007, when the award was conferred.

Len Brown 1918–2007

Len Brown was born in 1918 in Porthcawl. His family went to live in Cambridge in 1928 and he attended Parkside School. On leaving school, Len worked for a while with statistics, for the Cambridge Gas Company, until war broke out and he was called up for military service, becoming a drill instructor in the Cambridgeshire Regiment, at Aldershot Barracks. Later he went to Halifax for a time before the regiment was ordered to Singapore. The required medical inspection revealed a serious problem in one of his eyes and he was discharged.

In 1945 Len joined the Cambridge company, Joshua Taylor, as a ledger clerk and worked with clothing coupons. At that time Joshua Taylor had a small unit in Portugal Place making children's clothing; but Bill Plumb, Clerical and Academic Specialist at A. G. Almond, suggested that Len might make some college gowns since several of the smaller outfitters were experiencing production problems. Moreover, at this time Joshua Taylor was developing its own manufacture of high-quality curtains and soft furnishings, and Len was attending courses run by the Royal College of Art and Heal's of Tottenham Court Road, in London.

With these skills and experience, Len was increasingly involved in manufacturing robes. He worked with several institutions on their designs for academical dress. In the 1960s, for example, he worked with Hardy Amies and the robemaker Cobbleys, of Brighton and Hove, on the academical dress designs for Sussex University; and with Cecil Beaton on the robes for the University of East Anglia, in Norwich.

He met frequently with W. N. Hargreaves-Mawdsley, the author of *A History of Academical Dress in Europe*, and was involved with the design of robes for the Cranfield Institute of Technology, now Cranfield University, Bedfordshire.

At its zenith, Joshua Taylor employed thirty-six members of staff in the making of robes and in 1968 Len was made a Director of the company. In 1992 Joshua Taylor was sold to Ede and Ravenscroft and Len became a production consultant working at the newly built production plant at Littleport, near Ely.

During his time Len produced robes for many universities in Britain and around the world, as far as Australia and Papua New Guinea. He also had the honour of making the coronation robes for the King and Queen of Tonga (which I remember trying on during one of my schoolboy visits to Len at Joshua Taylor). These robes were vast, like their owners, and the King's robe was modelled by a policeman standing upon another policeman's shoulders!

Joshua Taylor also manufactured clerical wear and Len assisted the outfitters Thomas Pratt, formerly of Southampton Row WC2, and now alas long gone; and Vanheems, formerly of Berners Street W1, then of Ealing, and more recently gone.

One of the special items he was asked to make was a St Andrews University undergraduate gown for Prince William. His Royal Highness was just six months old at the time the University asked Len to make this, and there must be more to this curious tale.

Friends, acquaintances and colleagues of Len all knew him to be a courteous and genial man and there are several members of the Burgon Society whose childhood interest in academical costume was encouraged and helped by Len's hospitality and generosity at Joshua Taylor.

Already a Fellow of several colleges of music, Len was admitted to the Fellowship of the Burgon Society *honoris causa* at Congregation in October 2003, in absence because he was not well enough to travel to London. He was invested in person with the FBS hood in a ceremony on the occasion of the Society's study day, appropriately on the subject of robes and robemaking in Cambridge, held at Girton College in November 2003.

Len Brown died on 23 November 2007.

Philip Goff

Nick Groves writes:

I first came across Len Brown in about 1991, when some friends of mine discovered Cambridge Robes in Portugal Place, which was his own firm. They were very impressed with the quality of the robes he produced, and also by the prices! They were looking for a robemaker for the then newly established (and currently dormant) Cambridge Society of Musicians, and decided to appoint Len. As a result, he was also given the contract for the Norwich School of Church Music. He was made an Honorary Life Member of both (HonNSCM, HonCSM) in due course. The FCSM hood in the Burgon Society Archive is one of his.

He was always willing to make up whatever one wanted: when the CSM decided to have a parallel academical dress scheme based on the American Intercollegiate Code, he duly produced an FCSM hood of incredible size (about five feet long) with chevrons, bindings, etc. A number of the other 'bespoke' hoods he produced are still in circulation.

Burgon Society Events in 2006

- 17 June** **Visit to Chichester Cathedral**
Programme included:
Talks by Donald Buttress, on his former role as Surveyor of the Fabric of Chichester Cathedral, and by the Very Revd Nicholas Frayling, Dean of Chichester, on John William Burgon, his predecessor.
Evensong in the Cathedral, with Burgon Society Members attending in academical dress.
- 16 July** **Garden Party**
Westminster Institute, Oxford Brookes University, Oxford
Programme included:
Illustrated talks
 Dr Alex Kerr — *Oxford Academical Dress in Grimm's Sketches, 1783: Fact or Fairytale* (on pencil drawing in the British Library by Samuel Hieronymus Grimm)
 Nicholas Groves — *Where did you get that hood?* (on the evolution of hood patterns)
Organ recital in the chapel by Giles Brightwell
- 14 October** **AGM and Congregation**
Charterhouse, London
Annual General Meeting
Admission to the Fellowship of the Burgon Society:
 David Baldwin (by submission — '*Having Dignities ...*': *Academic Attire as a Component of the Livery of the Chapel Royal*)
 John Brennan (by submission — *The Robes of the Medical Royal Colleges and Other Societies*)
 Colin Fleming (by submission — *The Academical Dress of the University of Stirling, 1967–2005*)
 Matthew Cheung Salisbury (by submission — '*By Our Gowns Were We Known ...*': *The Development of Academic Dress at the University of Toronto*)
 Nick Shipp (*honoris causa*)
Talk by Nick Shipp — *Design Influences on Academical Dress*