

A Fellow's Progress

by Thorsten E. Hauler

When I came to Britain in October 2003, I wouldn't have believed that I would be a Fellow of this honourable Society only one year later. Here is what happened. I started my job as Academic Administrator in the School of Engineering and Mathematical Sciences at the City University, London. My line manager thought it would be a good idea for me to act as Departmental Marshal at the School's graduation ceremony in November that same year. I couldn't resist, bearing in mind the rather sad memory of a certificate simply being handed to me in a departmental office at the University of Heidelberg a couple of years earlier. I needed to make up lost ground! The first step was to obtain a proper garment—the University hires robes for members of staff. This obviously posed a problem, as there is no academical dress for German state universities any more.¹ My scientific instinct kicked in: this was my first contact with academical dress, so I had to find out more about it. I came across a variety of information—the internet is a wonderful invention!—the most important of which was the website of the Burgon Society. Becoming a member was a must for me. The second most important was the Society's bibliography, especially the book by George Shaw, *Academical Dress of British Universities*.² I found a copy in the City University Library, signed by the author and donated when the institution acquired university status in 1966. I borrowed it and started immediately to draw up a concept for academical dress in contemporary Germany. Meanwhile, Ede & Ravenscroft provided me with a standard black gown and, based on my degree specification, a bright orange hood for the graduation ceremony. I felt proud—and a little unsure of what to make of this. But I enjoyed every second of the ceremony and deeply regretted the absence of these celebrations at my university in Germany.

I joined the Burgon Society in January 2004 and contacted the Dean of Studies, Professor Bruce Christianson straight away, my proposal being for a critical study of academical dress in Germany. My intention was to investigate the history and to propose a new design, based on my findings. My second intention was to hand this in as a Fellowship submission, which if successful would be a great honour for me and would entitle me to my first hood in this country. In any case, I would need a proper outfit for the forthcoming graduation ceremonies and for another of my favourite pastimes, the University of London Church Choir: we sing in gowns and hoods, on a regular basis. Lively discussions via e-mail followed—may I express my deepest gratitude to everyone involved—and the work took shape. I flew to Heidelberg to do some research there, visited various libraries in London and started putting together my results. The Burgon Society's next event was the Garden Party on 10 July 2004, and I intended to present my

¹ See Hauler, Thorsten E., 'Academical Dress in Germany: A Historical Outline and the Development of a New System' (submission for the Fellowship of the Burgon Society, 2004).

² (Cambridge: Heffer, 1966). The Burgon Society on-line Bibliography can be accessed at www.burgon.org.uk/society/library/biblio.html

draft to Bruce's critical eye. I was very impressed by the knowledge and expertise the members of the Burgon Society possessed. For a fresher like me it was a revelation, something I so much had wanted to belong to, and now did! I had started to wear my boss's gown and hood (City MBA), the only one easily accessible and remotely suitable. But I hoped to have my own academical dress very soon. The Garden Party was extremely enjoyable; I met hugely interesting people, was impressed by the Archive collection and enjoyed the organ recital during the afternoon. I also discussed the possibility of a speedy submission for the FBS with the Chairman, Fr Philip Goff, who was delighted by the prospect of having another Fellowship by Submission in 2004. However, the date of the next Congregation was fixed for the 23 October, roughly three months away. But I was confident that Bruce would make only minor corrections and praise the style and content—no problems there. Bruce stripped down the paper, made valuable suggestions and left me with the task of rewriting half the paper in a very short time to allow for the examiners to do their bit!

The opportunity of admission to the Fellowship so soon and the prospect of the alternative, the disappointment of missing it only by days, both encouraged and motivated me. The paper went to the examiners by the end of July, and their reports came back in early September. They recommended a few amendments but their tone was incredibly positive. I submitted the amended version in early October, and in the week before the Congregation took place, Bruce informed me of the examiners' recommendation, the award of a Fellowship that Saturday! In fact, the decision came too late for my name to be included in the printed programme but just in time for the decisive Council meeting. One year, one week and one day after I came to this country I proudly received my FBS. Nicholas Groves, who stood in for Bruce as Dean on the day, summarized my design as having originated from different sources: historic German (general shape of gown, button and cord, faculty colours), English (idea of hood, hat) and City University (neckband colour representing faculty).

What happened next? I am in contact with my old university, Heidelberg, and have received approval to have a gown made according to my design. More on this will be presented in a forthcoming short article. I am currently writing the second paper in my series on German academical dress. As the University of Heidelberg intends to reintroduce academical dress for its doctorate graduands, this publication will serve as a basis for a new design. A third part is planned and will conclude this short series on German academical dress, which I hope will eventually be published together by the Burgon Society in its monograph series.