



Royal Holloway, University of London
20 May 2010

Citation for The Rt Hon Sir David Latham

Chairman of Council, it is my pleasure to present to you Sir David Latham.

The reasons for this honour are his distinguished contributions to the law and his long association with this College.

David Latham was born in 1942, the son of the historian, Robert Latham, who taught at this College from 1947 to 1973, later becoming an Honorary Fellow. Robert Latham is famous for *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, which he edited with William Matthews. It was described in *The Times* by Bernard Levin as 'the absolutely complete and unimprovably definitive edition'.

David Latham's early life was dominated by two great red-brick buildings which, in terms of inspiration, had much in common. The first was our Founder's Building, inspired by Francis the 1st's Château de Chambord in the Loire Valley. As a boy, in those pre-Health and Safety days, he relished the possibilities offered by long corridors, free of fire doors, for his tricycle and then his bicycle. He also valued the possibilities, made available by a friendly head of maintenance, to explore the tunnel between Founder's and the Boilerhouse, and the roofs of Founder's Building, where he discovered much unseen sculpture on the chimneys.

The second great red-brick building was Bryanston House, the focus of Bryanston School in Dorset, which was built in the early twentieth century under the inspiration of Madame de Pompadour's Château de Menars in the Loire Valley.

There he succeeded both as a scholar and as a sportsman, going on to read Law at Queens' College, Cambridge, where his father and Philip Allen, later Lord Allen of Abbeydale and Chairman of the Council of this College, had been contemporaries.

David Latham, by his own account, had no vocation for the Law; he just wanted to avoid doing any more Classics. Throwing himself into the pleasures of Cambridge his results declined over the years from a 1st to a 2.1 and then to a 2.2. When his father inquired of his tutor what had gone wrong, he was told: 'If you knew how little work David had done, you would reckon a 2.2 a fine achievement.' Nevertheless, vocation or not, 2.2 or not, David Latham read for the Bar, was called in 1964, and joined 1 Crown Office Row in the Temple, first as a pupil and then as a tenant. Of the fourteen tenants when he joined, ten became High Court or Court of Appeal judges. One, Harry Woolf, became Lord Chief Justice and Pro-Chancellor of the University of London.

David Latham began practice on the Oxford Circuit as a general common law barrister. As time went on, he came to concentrate on professional negligence and administrative law. He was appointed Queen's Counsel in 1985. Around that time, Harry Woolf was Treasury Junior, that is a full-time advocate for government. Hard-pressed by work he asked David Latham to join him, which is how David came to be counsel to the Enquiry into the Clapham Junction Rail Disaster of 1988 and counsel to the Enquiry into the Prison Riots of 1990 at Strangeways Prison in Manchester, which resulted in the Woolf Report on Prisons.

Chairman of Council, like many of the best professional men and women, David Latham has given back to his profession. As a member of the Bar Council, as Chairman of its Professional Standards Committee, and as Vice-Chairman of the Council of Legal Education, he has played a leading role, with his colleagues, in the professionalisation of legal education, formalising the pupillage structure, establishing the Bar Vocational Course, and putting together the Bar Code of Practice.

In 1992 David Latham was appointed a High Court Judge, and in 2000 a Lord Justice of Appeal, becoming the Lord Justice responsible to the Lord Chief Justice for the running of the Court of Appeal Criminal Division.

On his retirement as a full-time judge in 2009, he was appointed to the sensitive position of Chairman of the Parole Board, where he immediately announced his strongly held view that there were far too many people locked up in prison. At the Parole Board, one of his senior staff is Martha Blom-Cooper, daughter of Sir Louis Blom-Cooper, Honorary Fellow of this College.

In recognition, therefore, of his contributions to the Law and his long connection to the College, may I invite you, Chairman of Council, to induct as an Honorary Fellow of Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, Sir David Latham.

Professor Francis Robinson CBE
Former Senior Vice-Principal
20 May 2010