

GRADUATION – SEPTEMBER 2010

Presentation speech for Professor Trevor Beedham for the honorary degree of Doctor of Science of the University *honoris causa*

Chancellor, I am sure that you will agree with me that one of the great joys of this University is its gardens – so lovingly tended by our devoted staff. But many of the flowers, plants and shrubs in our gardens are not native to this country at all. Rather they were brought to England – and sometimes carefully ‘acclimatised’ – from all corners of the world. Of course, some were imported simply because they were beautiful but others were brought here because they had – or were believed to have – important medicinal properties. In fact, modern gardens owe a good deal to the ‘Physick’ gardens of the past.

Trevor Beedham is currently Master of the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries, founded in 1617 and today one of the great Livery Companies of the City of London. The University already has links with the Leather Sellers Company and is delighted to establish one with the Apothecaries. In a way the link already exists. In the 17th and 18th centuries, the Apothecaries, especially through their links with members of the Levant Company and its depot at Aleppo, played a central role in supporting the importation of new plant species, many of which were first grown at the great Physick garden at Eltham. I am pleased to say that, in the School of Humanities, we have an able research student who is working on this very topic.

Trevor Beedham has had a very distinguished career in medicine – and I believe, Chancellor, that you reason to be personally grateful to him – having delivered both your children. His recent posts include Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist BLT and Hon Professor School of Medicine and Dentistry QMUL. He has engaged extensively in teaching and examining, serving on public bodies and with the General Medical Council. He is the author of numerous papers, including some on diabetes – of course a major area of research in our own Clore Laboratory. His work in the field of gynaecology has been groundbreaking. He has also lectured on

medical training and – I am pleased to note – on *The History of Barts and the London*. In short it has been a marvellously busy and productive career.

One of the most interesting developments during Professor Beedham's time as Master of the Apothecaries has been the growing importance his Livery Company as an examination and award giving body. Professor Beedham has been closely involved in all of this. Here we see another model for the diversification or pluralization of Higher Education in which Buckingham has played such a crucial role. I note for example that the Society of Apothecaries has instituted a Diploma in the Forensic and Clinical Aspects of Sexual Assault. This Diploma is being offered to set national standards for victims of sexual violence and abuse. Of course, Livery Companies are essentially Guilds and Guilds once had a major educational function. I suspect they will do again. Universities and Guilds were once one and the same – the university a self governing band of scholars that enjoyed substantial independence from the state and outside control. So the ties are strong.

Chancellor, over the last few years this university has worked towards the establishment of our own Medical School and we have recruited many distinguished colleagues, such as Karol Sikora and our new Deputy Vice Chancellor, Andrew Miles. There have been set backs, but the School of Medicine is now a fact. As we move forward to create what I believe will become a truly great Medical School, it is especially fitting that we should honour a great medical man and a great Guildsman.

Chancellor, I call upon you confer upon Professor Trevor Beedham, the degree of Doctor of Science, *Honoris Causa*.

Professor John Clarke, MA, DPhil
4 September 2010