

Mr Pro-Chancellor,

We are honouring Garry Runciman in today's ceremony, around the theme of Social Renewal, because he's a sociologist who has made major contributions to understanding social inequality and society's attitudes to it. But this is not the only justification, because, as we will see, he has made contributions to far wider areas of scholarship, and to criminal justice,...and to shipping... and financial regulation too. His capacity and energy to cope simultaneously and successfully with the ivory towers of academe, alongside the world of business, is most unusual. He should, perhaps, be cloned.

Garry's first seminal work on social inequality was his 1966 book 'Relative deprivation and social justice'. Relative deprivation is the term used to describe how differences in material commodities, or more abstract constructs such as power, are experienced by people. It can trigger individual or social acts. These may be positive – as when groups engage in peaceful political demonstrations. Or they may be negative – as when people engage in criminal acts to attempt to redress the imbalances. Considerable research including Garry's own has demonstrated that it is relativities, rather than absolute wealth or status, that determine how people feel about their lot, and distinctively, he stressed the importance of individual and group psychology as mediating responses to relative deprivation.

Perhaps because of this and other important work on possible contributions to crime, Garry was invited to chair the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice in 1991. This was set up in response to a series of false convictions, such as the Guildford Four and the Birmingham Six, for terrorist attacks on pubs.

The two-year long commission led to a series of recommendations, many of which were enacted – indeed in these terms, it was one of the most successful commissions in the 20th Century. One result, for example, was the establishment of the Criminal Cases Review Commission which now assesses independently whether convictions or sentences should be referred to the Court of Appeal.

The combination of academic scholarship with service on public bodies and private companies has characterised his career. For many years while Senior Research Fellow at Trinity College, Cambridge, Garry also chaired the Board of his family's business, Walter Runciman and Co. This was a long-standing, initially family owned shipping business founded in South Tyneside, which later diversified into insurance and security engineering. Following an initially hostile takeover bid, fought off with great panache, the board eventually relinquished the firm to a Swedish company for a very good price in 1990. Garry, freed from the responsibility of running such a business, immediately accepted an invitation to take over the chair of another family shipping firm based in London, Andrew Weir and Co – a position he held until 2005.

While holding down his academic and business interests, he was additionally invited to serve on the Securities and Investments Board, the government regulator of investments agencies, which later morphed into the Financial Services Authority. And he was Deputy Chairman of this until 1998.

And as if all that was not enough, in 2001 Garry was elected to a 4-year term as President of a quite different body –the British Academy, and was in this position during the celebration of the Academy's Centenary in 2002. The first legacy of his Presidency was a vigorous and partly successful attempt to erode the false divide between the 'two cultures' of arts and humanities vs science.

From Garry's perspective the division between those disciplines living in numbers 6 to 9 Carlton House Terrace (the Royal Society), and those living in numbers 10 and 11 Carlton House Terrace (The British Academy) is quite false. If there should be a division, it is between subjects that attempt to understand what is 'really' going on – whether in atoms, cells, brains, the economy, or cultures, and activities with a creative focus – such as writing a novel. Thus the creative and performing arts may be distinguished from a broader, continental definition of 'science' that encompasses the humanities and social sciences very comfortably indeed. Partly as a result of Garry's endeavours, The British Academy and Royal Society now have a flourishing relationship and many joint activities. His second legacy built upon such broad interdisciplinary endeavours, through the Academy's centenary research project ("From Lucy to Language") which explores the evolutionary origins of human capacities and creativity.

This project resonates with Garry's own scholarly interests, now focussed on how cultures and societies change or adapt to different circumstances. He is an advocate of neo-Darwinism – the idea that cultural mores and social norms can be shaped, adapted and reproduced in a similar way to biological characteristics. He is very clear about the importance and the interaction between different levels that determines human behaviour. Biological inheritance predisposes us to certain kinds of action but culturally transmitted values can and do modify these instincts, and behaviour can also be shaped by a societal imperative– as when young men from peaceable communities will fight for their queen and country in wartime.

Legacy and inheritance are appropriate enough themes on which to conclude... because, Mr Pro-Chancellor, I have been improper in my protocol so far.

I should really have introduced the third Viscount Runciman of Doxford, Northumberland. Garry is the great grandson of Walter Runciman, a local shipping magnate who rose from humble Scots origins to found the South Shields shipping company that became their family firm. Garry's grandfather, the second Baron Runciman was a very significant Liberal politician promoted to viscount in 1937. His papers are housed in the Robinson Library here in the university. The Runciman genes continued to do well. His father, Leslie, was decorated as a war pilot, co-founded the Cramlington aircraft company and was first Director-General of the British Overseas Aircraft Corporation. But he came back to the sea in the end through his hugely significant contributions to sailing too. In 1992, Garry Runciman endowed the Runciman Research Fellowship at Newcastle University's Centre for Rural Economy in memory of his father, and we are delighted that he maintains a close interest in the Centre's work. Garry's son is a distinguished and decorated political scientist, but then he gains half his genes from Garry's wife, Ruth, a formidable woman, and about whom I could go on at length.

But I am not permitted the several hours it would take to do justice to this remarkable family, and to honour this extraordinary 'man of parts', as his Scottish ancestors would say. Mr Pro-Chancellor, in recognition of a lifetime of public service and outstanding scholarship, I invite you to confer on Walter Garrison Runciman, third Viscount of Doxford, the degree of Doctor of Civil Law, *honoris causa*.

Citation by Professor Vicki Bruce

4 December 2012