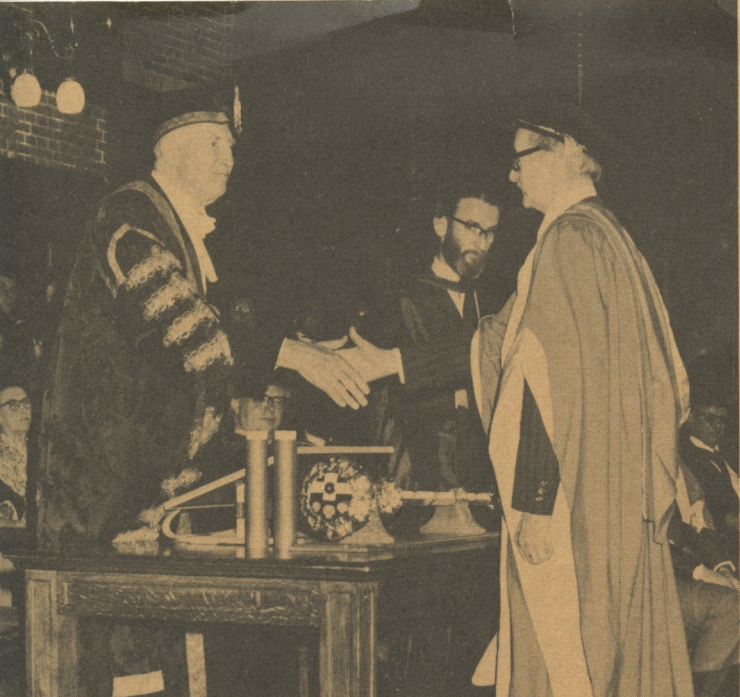


Presenting Professor Randolph Quirk, CBE, FBA, for the degree of DLitt, Professor Crystal said:

My Lord and Chancellor,

A few weeks ago, I had the mixed blessing of lecturing at a meeting where the chairman was Randolph Quirk — mixed, for the subject of



my lecture was the English language, and it is always a nuisance when your chairman knows more about your subject than you do. And now it has happened again. Today I have to talk on a subject where, once more, Randolph Quirk's knowledge is far superior to mine, in almost every respect. Fortunately, in that little adverbial 'almost', I find some salvation.

I must begin by asking you to put out of your mind, for a moment, the fact that you have before you the Vice-Chancellor of the University of London. This latest achievement in Professor Quirk's long and distinguished career is to me an embarrassment, for I know nothing of Randolph Quirk the Vice-Chancellor, other than from a distance. But many of my colleagues at London have expressed their relief at having the future of their University in such capable hands in these difficult times.

It is Randolph Quirk the scholar whom we know best. His scholarly life has been largely bound up with the Universities of London and Durham. From 1947 to 1954 he was a lecturer in English at University College London. From 1954 to 1960 he was at the University of Durham, first as Reader in English, and then as Professor of English Language. In 1960 he returned to University College as Professor of English Language, from 1968 becoming holder of the Quain Chair of English Language and Literature — a post which he held until his appointment as Vice-Chancellor last year.

I first met him when he returned to UCL in 1960. I was at the beginning of my second year of studies as an English undergraduate. I had survived a first year, trying to absorb the fundamentals of Anglo-Saxon, the history of the language and basic linguistics. For my efforts, I had been given the grade of D minus — an accurate estimate of my then knowledge of and interest in English language studies. Then Randolph Quirk arrived — though Roget gives better verbs (such as *surge*, *erupt*, *detonate*) — and for me, as for so many of my contemporaries, brought the study of the English language to life. Anglo-Saxon became a real language, spoken by real people. We began to see the difference between modern English as it is, and what we imagined it to be. He gave us a sense of pattern, of explanation for the way in which the language has developed over the centuries. And throughout all, he transmitted his fascination with language, a concern for accuracy and objective statement, an urgent search for explanations — in short, he gave us a reason for linguistic scholarship.

I should like to dwell on Randolph Quirk's brilliance as a teacher, for it is not a point which can be gleaned from conventional sources such as *Who's Who*, and it is the one thing where my knowledge of him is superior to his. He is a teacher in the broadest and most effective sense. I can cite the meticulous care with which he has supervised years of postgraduates from all parts of the world; the solicitude with which he has taught junior colleagues how to do research; the innumerable lecture-tours he has given in this country and abroad; the summer schools he used to organise for the University of London; his many radio talks and interviews. From all of this, one story must suffice, but it is one with implications that have always intrigued me. Some years ago, Professor Quirk was on a tour of India. A friend of mine happened to visit a town some days before Quirk was due to arrive, and being short of money went to the local branch of a bank to discuss a transfer of funds with the manager. On seeing his British passport, the manager looked up at my friend, as if with recognition, and said, "We have Quirk of England lecturing here next week: I shall be having to close my bank!"

His reputation as a teacher is exceeded only by his reputation as an author. In his early work, he produced several specialised studies of Anglo-Saxon, including a grammar, written with C.L. Wrenn, which has been the salvation of generations of undergraduates since. He has had something to say concerning most periods of the language's subsequent development, and especially concerning the linguistic effects used by our major authors. The integration of linguistic and literary studies is a particular characteristic, best illustrated in his papers on Dickens and Shakespeare. In 1960 he commenced work on the vast Survey of English Usage, which he directed until last year, and which led to a wide range of papers on varieties of English, aspects of grammatical theory and practice, and several major works on the methodology of language study. In due course, arising out of this approach, he co-authored the major grammatical reference work of our time, *A Grammar of Contemporary English* (1972) — a grammar which has since come to be known, with no disrespect intended to his co-authors, simply as 'the Quirk grammar'. It is a grammar, incidentally, which follows in the great tradition of grammarians writing on English, in that it is written mainly by people who are not themselves English (and here perhaps I should remind you that Professor Quirk is not English, but Manx).

In all his writing, Randolph Quirk has a skill which I have never seen bettered — an ability to maintain the delicate balance between the general and the particular, in matters of language analysis. We are at once given a broad view of the role of language in the world, and of the patterns and trends which shape it, and a meticulous account of the detail of usage, and of the factors which complicate its study. This combination of perspectives is best illustrated in his most widely-known book, *The Use of English* (1962), a standard piece of reading for anyone approaching the field of English language studies for the first (or even the 21st) time.

In his teaching and writing, we see Professor Quirk's most public image. Less noticeably, but no less significantly, he has acted and advised on many public service committees, on behalf of the BBC, the British Council, and many other institutions both in this country and abroad. He was a member of our own Centre for Applied Language Studies' Advisory Committee for several years. Through his making available the files of his Survey, he has helped many of us in our research, and many of our students too. But above all, for three long years he chaired the Government Committee of Enquiry into Speech Therapy Services, and produced in 1972 a Report which now bears his name. The Quirk Report revolutionised our understanding of speech therapy in this country, and this is one of the reasons why we in this University owe him a special debt. For it is as a direct consequence of the recommendations of this report that we were able to commence our degree course in Linguistics and Language Pathology in 1975, and subsequently to establish clinical facilities, and a major research programme in language disability at this University.

And now, in his post as Vice-Chancellor, it might be thought that the world of English language scholarship has lost its leader in this country. Not so. For since taking up this post, he has continued to contribute to the subject, and to perform a few small chores, such as revising his Grammar. His next book is due out in July, *Style and Communication in the English Language*. I am sure it will not be his last on the subject.

Professor Quirk has received many academic and public honours in recent years — doctorates from London, Lund, Uppsala, Paris, a CBE in 1974, a Fellowship of the British Academy in 1975. But I should be surprised if any other body could match the warmth of regard which so many of us hold for him at this University, and which it is our purpose today to symbolise by the conferment of this degree.

My Lord and Chancellor, I present to you

Charles Randolph Quirk

for the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Letters.