

Mr Chancellor, lords, ladies and gentleman,

Why is Ian Shott here?

There is an easy answer (to receive a fellowship) and a complicated one.

Let's do the latter because the pathway has been complex, unlikely and inspirational, a blend of genius, personality and our serendipity.

Ian Shott is definitely an engineer. He is a chartered chemical engineer, recognized by his profession as a leader. He is a fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering, the Institution of Chemical Engineers and the Royal Society of Chemistry and he has honorary chairs in three British universities. He has been embedded in national policy and strategy in his areas of expertise and was recognized by the country with a CBE for services to chemical engineering awarded in 2009. He is definitely an engineer.

But this represents his position in just one taxonomy.

In another taxonomy he is a hugely successful entrepreneur and business leader. He has bought, sold, merged and demerged companies. He has taken stopping start-ups and stimulated them to success.

In every taxonomy he is extraordinarily hard working, focused and driven, a great host and networker, yet he is modest about his achievements and extraordinarily generous with his time; to this University, to others and to the country.

Ian Shott is from many places....., and at one stage he was technically from nowhere. He is African born, British finished and speaks fluent (though in his assessment “brutal”) French and yet he qualifies as an honorary Geordie.

Ian Shott is full of contradictions but, from our point of view, the important fact is that he joined our ranks.

In 2004 he was brought to Newcastle University under our previous Vice-Chancellor, initially to design a strategy for Chemical Engineering, a brief that was then extended to Chemistry. He obviously breezed that entry test and was appointed to the Newcastle University Council in 2006, so has given over a decade of service to us. Through leadership of the industry advisory board he brought his genius for converting scientific expertise into business opportunity to the University and he probably has a better understanding of what we need to produce than we do.

So, who is he really and what did he do to make him such an important figure to Newcastle University?

Ian was a very employable graduate in Chemical Engineering (Imperial, 1978) and went straight to work for ICI. His work was in operational matters and production, real, hands on, “engineering stuff” in England, France and even Scotland. However, since his late adolescence he had quietly nursed an ambition to take his engineering sideways into the real

business of marketing and sales. He just needed the opportunity... After 8 years at the coal face the opportunity came from within ICI and he grasped it. For the next half dozen years he accepted various roles of increasing responsibility, developing and organizing the global business. He became Group Marketing Manager and then Global General Manager, ultimately including involvement in the business minefield of the demerger of Zeneca.

Ian's reputation as a leader in the pharmaceutical world was growing and, never one to shirk a challenge, he moved out of ICI and to Basel to oversee the transformation of a very Swiss company; Lonza. The transformation included making it a little less.... Swiss. Within 5 years Lonza was a different entity, a world leader in Biotechnology Services to the Global Life Science Industry and with growing profits.

After the relentless pursuit of a head-hunter, and encouraged by his wife, who was keen to see the children educated in the UK, Ian was leveraged out of Basel and into a new challenge. ChiRex was a NASDAQ listed company in the pharmaceutical industry, but a company in big trouble that needed major transformation at pretty much every level, and that was becoming Ian's specialty. He secured the huge investment it needed, transformed its operation, and it was sold for a cool \$550M cash transaction to another pharmaceutical company. There is regional strength in pharma development in the northeast of England and ChiRex

had a manufacturing base here so this was the start of the Ian Shott geordification project.

Having spent years sorting out the problems of others, in the early 2000s he took a bold step and set up his own business with his own money.

Excelsyn offered process research development and scale-up of drug manufacture. With an eye for a deal they bought 14 acres of prime northeast territory for a pound and used it as a manufacturing base. The business grew and grew. Deft management got it through the crash and it was acquired in 2010 for many millions of dollars and brought under the much larger company AMRI.

So, that had gone nicely. It was time for more. Shott consulting was set up to advise those involved in small and medium enterprises on strategy.

Shott Trinova was then formed in 2012 to invest in start-ups that are starting to stop and convert them into hugely profitable businesses. So far around half a dozen carefully hand-picked businesses have gone through the process with others in the wings.

So, what underpins this sort of career, this life history?

Ian Shott likes, and uses, knowledge and understanding. He says that he does not deal in businesses where he does not understand the science. I suspect that even in leisure he is the same. He is interested in wine, and I would wager that he only buys wine where he understands the science of

the manufacture. Basically, Ian Shott is a tireless one-man UK knowledge-based economy.

He will tell you that it was British education that got him to where he is now and that fed his hunger for knowledge. Many of us could say the same, and it would be true, but for Ian educational opportunity and excellence has extra resonance, perhaps explaining why he has been prepared to give so much back.

I said at the outset that Ian was from everywhere and nowhere. He was born in the former German protectorate of Tanganyika in East Africa and spent his early childhood in a volatile part of an unstable continent as it emerged from the colonial age. In his childhood he was, at one stage, stateless, with no passport or right to a passport. By the time he made it to Britain in his early teens he had already experienced a disrupted and difficult life, including the recent death of his father. He had attended over a dozen schools in eleven countries before he washed up in a council flat in the south of England. But maybe adversity drives an innovator. Given the unexpected opportunity to learn in a well-equipped British school and to progress in British higher education he grasped it and maximized the return. We even allowed him, eventually, to be British and ultimately even a Geordie.

Mr Chancellor, for his selfless, voluntary and distinguished support to this University and what it seeks to achieve I commend Ian Shott to you for the award of an Honorary Fellowship.

Jimmy Steele

Public Orator

October 2015