

MARK SCRIMSHAW

Mr. Chancellor,

Late summer. Death of local youth following police action leads to rioting, looting and arrests. Sounds familiar? That was twenty years ago, on the Meadow Well Estate, North Shields. It is a strange statistical quirk of recent history that riots in England seem to occur roughly every ten years, in 19 or 20-something-and-one. 1981, 2001 and, most notoriously, 2011 have all seen major unrest. The north east's own contribution to this intriguing pattern was in 1991.

Mark Scrimshaw directed an award-winning documentary about the Meadow Well Riots in the Close Up North series that he produced and directed while working at BBC North in Newcastle from 1985-1993. This won the 1991 Royal Television Society North East award for the best current affairs programme. It was just one of many cutting edge documentary productions from Mark and his team, several of which won awards.

In the late 1980s the six part BBC2 series 'The North Sea' made in association with TV companies in Norway, Denmark and Holland, and broadcast widely across Europe, focused on the pollution in the North Sea and how it affected people, environment and ecology. The series also won a Royal Television Society special award and additionally won the 1989 'Prix du Parlement European' at the 5th European Environmental Film Festival – Ecovision 89 – in Lille.

Those were the golden years of TV documentaries. Mark himself produced or directed over 80 documentary films working within a team producing 100 30 minute programmes a year. He is proud of the work he did in that period of his career. Or perhaps I should say, in that career, because he has had three. Mark was born in Derbyshire and went to School in Nottingham. His father, Harold, was leader of the district council and a leader nationally on issues of economic development. Mark says he learned an enormous amount from his Dad that has influenced the way he approaches his own duties.

Mark became the first in his family to go to university when he came here to read History. He was active in the Students' Union while he was here as deputy President, and also President of the Theatre Society and the Union Film Club. He directed 17 plays in three years and so it's amazing that he successfully graduated from his degree in History from Newcastle in 1976. So already, as a student, he was doing a number of different things at once, and doing them all well. This has been a characteristic of his life since graduation too. From here he went to the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School to take a stage management qualification, and this led on to his first career. After a period stage managing at the Swan theatre in Bristol he became Assistant and then Associate Director at Salisbury Playhouse and then a freelance Director for a couple of years till 1983. He then joined the BBC for career number two, where he soon moved from BBC West to BBC North to make the documentary features with which his name is most strongly associated. While

here, he became active in the BBC division of the Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinematographic and Theatre Union or BECTU, and since 2004 has been seconded full time from the BBC to BECTU for his third career, where he has been chair of the BBC Division for several years.

But alongside his creative and often demanding employment, Mark has always engaged in many voluntary activities for a variety of cultural and public sector bodies in North East England – including us here in the University.

He was on the Board and later Vice Chair of Northern Arts during the exciting times from 1998-2002 which saw the development and implementation of plans for regenerating the Quayside, through the construction of the Sage, and the completion and opening of the Baltic and the Millennium Bridge. He watched and helped persuade ‘those awful people in London’ (his own words) that people in the North east might visit an art gallery or concert up here. He has also been amazingly effective in his role on Newcastle City Council where he has chaired the Standards committee as an independently appointed member since 2000. Mark has helped ensure that the Council has been a leader in setting standards of conduct over a range of topical issues including expenses, hospitality and also in seeking similar standards in the partner organisations with whom the City Council works.

For Newcastle University, Mark has served as Chair of The Alumni Association, now Alumni Consultative Group (ACG) for 8 years, from which he stood down in this past summer. During this time Mark was influential, working alongside Jack Jeffery, in changing the ACG from a self-appointed to an elected body and continues to be an active supporter of the Development and Alumni Relations Office.

In his paid and voluntary work he has put to good use a number of things learned early, from his university experience and from his Dad's wise counsel. That sometimes, as he found in his theatre work, one has to achieve miracles with the minutest of budgets and very tight timelines. That going into a meeting having read the minutes and papers puts you several steps ahead of many other committee members. That managing time means being clear to everyone, including yourself, how long is allocated to a particular task and sticking to it.

People who have worked with Mark comment on his commitment to tasks and to people. He is loyal, tenacious and has extremely demanding standards. Disagreements are expressed openly and honestly and he makes things happen through creativity and the strength of his character.

A theme that links most of his varied salaried and voluntary activities is an interest in people and communities and how they work. His documentary work focussed on communities and his work

for the Arts and Newcastle City Councils has helped enhance the cultural life and services enjoyed by communities both sides of the Tyne. He has done more than almost anyone to make sure that our critically important community of alumni are functional and engaged. Now a member of the University Court, we are delighted that we will continue to enjoy Mark's input to and influence on our university.

Mr. Chancellor, in recognition of his contribution to culture and community in the north east of England, and his enduring support of our University, I ask that you award to Mark Scrimshaw an Honorary Fellowship of Newcastle University.

Citation by Professor Vicki Bruce