

The Menzies Virtual Museum Web Site



During 2003, the Secretariat has continued to develop the Menzies Virtual Museum web site (www.menziesvirtualmuseum.org.au) following its launch last year by the Hon John Howard, MP, Prime Minister of Australia. The web site is an educational resource documenting the life and achievements of Sir Robert Menzies and takes the form of a time line spanning Sir Robert's life from 1894 to 1978. The time line incorporates Australian and world events to help keep the Menzies years in context, and includes multimedia resources such as historical photographs, sound and film clips and 25,000 words of supporting text.

The Menzies Virtual Museum web site has had 50,000 visitors and 2.5 million "hits" (files requested from the server) since it was launched in September 2002. The statistics indicate that the site is visited most during school terms with the highest number of visitors in May 2003. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this was due to a primary school project on notable Australians. Information regarding the site has been widely disseminated to teachers, particularly history teachers, and to the wider community through historical societies and general advertising.

Enhancements during 2003 include the upgrading of the search engine, a comprehensive site map to assist with navigation to the multi-media resources such as audio and film clips, the "re-streaming" of film clips; and the addition of the 37 "Forgotten People" essays broadcast by Sir Robert in 1942.

Of special interest is the addition of photographs generously provided by Mrs Heather Henderson from the Menzies family collection. Many, like the one reproduced here, depict Sir Robert in his proud role of grandfather.



Sir Robert and Dame Pattie Menzies with their first grandchild, Alexander Robert Menzies (1951).

The Menzies Foundation Lectures

Since 1999, the Foundation has sponsored ten Menzies Foundation Lectures on health-related themes. In 2003, the Lecturer was Dr Ronald McKay, Head of the Laboratory of Molecular Biology, National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, National Institutes of Health, USA. The free public lecture entitled “Stem Cells and Tissue Repair” was held in association with the First National Stem Cell Centre Scientific Conference. Dr McKay is an internationally renowned scientist who is a forerunner in the area of stem cell research. The recent scientific advances from his laboratory are amongst the most promising for stem cell based treatments of diseases such as Parkinson’s disease and diabetes.

Previous Menzies Foundation Lecturers have been:

Year 2002

Lecturer Prof Colin Blakemore
Professor of Physiology, University of Oxford

Title “From Mad Cow to Mobile Phone: how should we deal with risk?”

Lecturer Prof Nigel Morgan
University of Oslo

Title “Health and Medicine in Medieval Art and Culture”

Year 2001

Lecturer Prof Sir Philip Cohen
Professor of Biochemistry, University of Dundee.

Title “How Biochemistry can Transform the Economy”

Lecturer Prof Christopher Mathias
Institute of Neurology, University College, London.

Title “Living with Spinal Cord Injuries”

Lecturer Prof Lord Winston
Professor of Fertility Studies, Imperial College School of Medicine, London.

Title “Science and Ethics in the 21st Century”

Year 2000

Lecturer Prof Susan Greenfield
Professor of Pharmacology, Oxford University.

Title “The Future of the Mind”

Lecturer Prof Al Sommer
Dean of the School of Medicine and Public Health, Johns Hopkins University.

Title “World Blindness and the Global Initiative”

Year 1999

Lecturer Ms Laurie Garrett
former President of the National Association of Science Writers.

Title “The Global Fight Against Disease”

Lecturer Dr Mark Schena
TeleChem International Inc., California.

Title “Current and Future Trends in the Application of DNA Microarray Technology”



Dr Ronald McKay is pictured with Ms Sandra Mackenzie, General Manager, The Menzies Foundation and Professor Alan Trounson, Global Strategic Science Advisor, National Stem Cell Centre, Monash University.

The Menzies Oration on Higher Education

Sir Robert Menzies considered that his contribution to the development of Universities might prove to be amongst the most lasting of his achievements for Australia. In recognition of this vision and in order to strengthen the role of higher education in Australia, the University of Melbourne and the Foundation established in 1991 the Sir Robert Menzies Oration on Higher Education.

The theme for the Oration is higher education policy and practice in Australia both in view of its national importance and also because of Sir Robert's attachment to both the extension of higher education and the wise development of it. The intention is for each Oration to be a contribution to intellectual debate in Australia.

Previous Menzies Orators have been:

2002	Dr Bernard Shapiro <i>McGill University</i>
2001	Dr John Hood <i>The University of Auckland</i>
2000	Professor Sir Alec Broers <i>The University of Cambridge</i>
1999	Sir Guy Green <i>Governor of Tasmania</i>
1998	Lord Dearing <i>The University of Nottingham</i>
1997	Professor Wang Gungwu <i>The National University of Singapore</i>
1996	Professor Sir Stewart Sutherland <i>The University of Edinburgh</i>
1995	Professor Brian Wilson <i>The University of Queensland</i>
1993	Professor Henry Rosovsky <i>Harvard University</i>
1992	Professor Emeritus Peter Karmel <i>Australian National University</i>
1991	Professor David Penington <i>The University of Melbourne</i>

The Oration is presented annually at the University of Melbourne in conjunction with a higher degree graduation ceremony. The choice of this University as the venue for the Oration recognises the eminent role played by Sir Robert as its Chancellor from 1967 to 1972 and a Menzies Foundation medal, specially struck by the Royal Australian Mint, is presented to each Orator.

The 2003 Oration entitled "Some Heretical Ideas about Universities" was delivered by Professor Alan Gilbert, Vice-Chancellor of The University of Melbourne on 9 October.

Professor Gilbert warned that the values traditionally placed on knowledge for its own sake may be abandoned, along with the idea of universities as civilising institutions and that "the notion that the pristine idea of a university is realised only in universities totally dependent on public funding is a dangerous policy premise". The full text of the oration is available at www.unimelb.edu.au/speeches.

The Foundation was represented by Professor John Coghlan, its Executive Director, Ms Sandra Mackenzie, General Manager and Mr Alec Menzies, grandson of Sir Robert, who presented the Menzies Foundation Medal to Professor Gilbert.



Professor Alan Gilbert delivering the 2003 Menzies Oration on Higher Education. (Photograph courtesy "Uni News")