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Chemistry and Pitt
More Adventures of a Chemist Collector

Chapter 12 -
The International Study

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES	
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Chapter 12

The International Study Centre

Isabel and I have watched the development of the International Study Centre (ISC) at Herstmonceux Castle ^(fig.) with care and concern. Only now, years after the purchase contract was signed in August 1993, does it seem to be on a stable course.

Principal David Smith's choice of Jane Whistler as the first coordinator was most fortuitous. Jane was a friend of David's wife, Mary, with whom she had taken courses at Queen's in Kingston some years earlier. Jane had also lived near Herstmonceux for many years; she was just the right person for this new venture. As I wrote in my first *Adventures* (p.280):

She already knew many people in the area and was familiar with the intricacies of obtaining planning permissions, which would have to be secured before Queen's could consider acquiring the property. Jane was so tireless in her negotiations with government bodies, heritage committees and planning authorities, as well as the local people that she made me think of a "Swiss army knife." She could tackle anything, yet is full of charm.

The ISC's first Executive Director, appointed in 1993, was British-born Dr Maurice Yeates. Although the Dean of Graduate Studies at Queen's, he was at the time on leave of absence at the Ontario Council of Graduate Studies in Toronto and was not able to take up this new position until spring 1994. Once he was appointed, however, Jane was no longer able to liaise directly with Kingston, and communications through Maurice were



so slow that relations became strained to the point where Jane felt she could not make any progress, and she decided to leave at the end of the year. This was a real loss for the ISC, as the direct contact between Queen's and the local authorities and builders in England was broken. During the next few months, Maurice made several trips from Canada to learn about the project in order to keep things moving. Jane remained in place for a time to ease the transition, and Gilly Arnell, who had taken the position of secretary, held things together until the arrival in March of the newly appointed operations manager, Sandy Montgomery.^(fig.)

The original hope was to begin the first courses in the summer of 1994, and in an attempt to expedite work, Principal Smith decided in February to ask Don MacNamara, Professor of International Business at Queen's, whether he might be able to become the ISC's Executive Director. Don had to decline for a number of reasons, but did accept the position of Associate Director to run the Kingston-based ISC office and be responsible for curriculum development, staffing, and marketing. He assumed that role in May 1994 and worked tirelessly to promote the Castle and its programs both in and outside Canada.

Maurice eventually took up residence at the ISC, and in September 1994, he welcomed the first group of fifty third-year students who moved in just as the builders began to move out. We were as thrilled as Principal Smith to know that at last our dream of having teachers and students at Herstmonceux was a reality. The castle had come alive, but there were a great many difficulties still to surmount. David Smith retired as principal in 1995 and Maurice resigned as director in April of that year, so the new venture had to be handed on to Bob Crawford, who came out to work with Sandy Montgomery, who luckily had remained to tackle whatever problems arose.



Bill Leggett, who succeeded David Smith as principal of Queen's, turned to Don MacNamara, whom he asked to step up as executive director to run the ISC from Kingston with an academic director who would be appointed for two years in England. As well as working with the academic directors to build the curriculum, Don was instrumental in proposing and designing the "field study" models for the academic European trips that every student takes. Don's enthusiasm in Kingston and Sandy's dedication at the Castle were the two factors that held the ISC together in the first years. However, the division of executive management in Canada and limited two-year academic direction in England, a situation that continued until the end of 2003, never allowed the ISC to develop its full potential. It was very difficult to take a long-term overall view for development when control was in Kingston and the directors in England changed so often. The one firm constant was Sandy. He was the backbone of the ISC and richly deserved the recognition he received in May 2004, the Queen's Distinguished Service Award, ^(fig.) which tells this clearly.

Financial problems had existed through the 1990s, when the Canadian government grants to universities were cut drastically. The loss of millions of dollars in funding affected every aspect of the university's organization. When Queen's bought the Castle in 1993, Isabel and I did not realize that quite a few Queen's academics would strongly object to the ISC. Tighter financial stringencies in Kingston simply increased their opposition. "Why spend money in England when it is needed so badly in Canada?" was their complaint. Some even referred to the Castle as a "boondoggle", a "sinkhole",



and when a programme for first-year students was added to increase enrollment, detractors referred to it as "the International Summer Camp".

There were times when the Board of Trustees came close to giving up. A real estate firm was consulted and reported that the market for castles in England was so poor that Queen's might receive only \$10 million from a sale. The Board met to consider selling. It was Don MacNamara's appeal that persuaded the Board not to close the ISC. Don remembers our telephone conversation in which he related the decision and my reply: "Praise God. He has sent you to save the Castle." Principal Leggett flew to Milwaukee to ask us for an additional U.S. \$1 million, which we gave. Funding has remained a constant problem as costs and the number of students has fluctuated over the years. In 2002, we offered to pay all ISC deficits for a period of five years and are very pleased that the financial situation has improved so that further help should not be necessary.

The problem of the short-term appointments of directors had still to be addressed. The last two-year academic director (2001-2002), Patrick O'Neil, struggled valiantly to persuade Queen's to alter and strengthen the leadership by appointing an executive director in England for a term of five years. Mr David Bevan,^(fig.) not already a Queen's academic but with wide international experience, accepted this appointment in January 2003. The ISC has benefited greatly from the new management structure. Straightforward and hardworking, David has worked splendidly with Sandy Montgomery, who is happy not to have to shoulder so much responsibility.

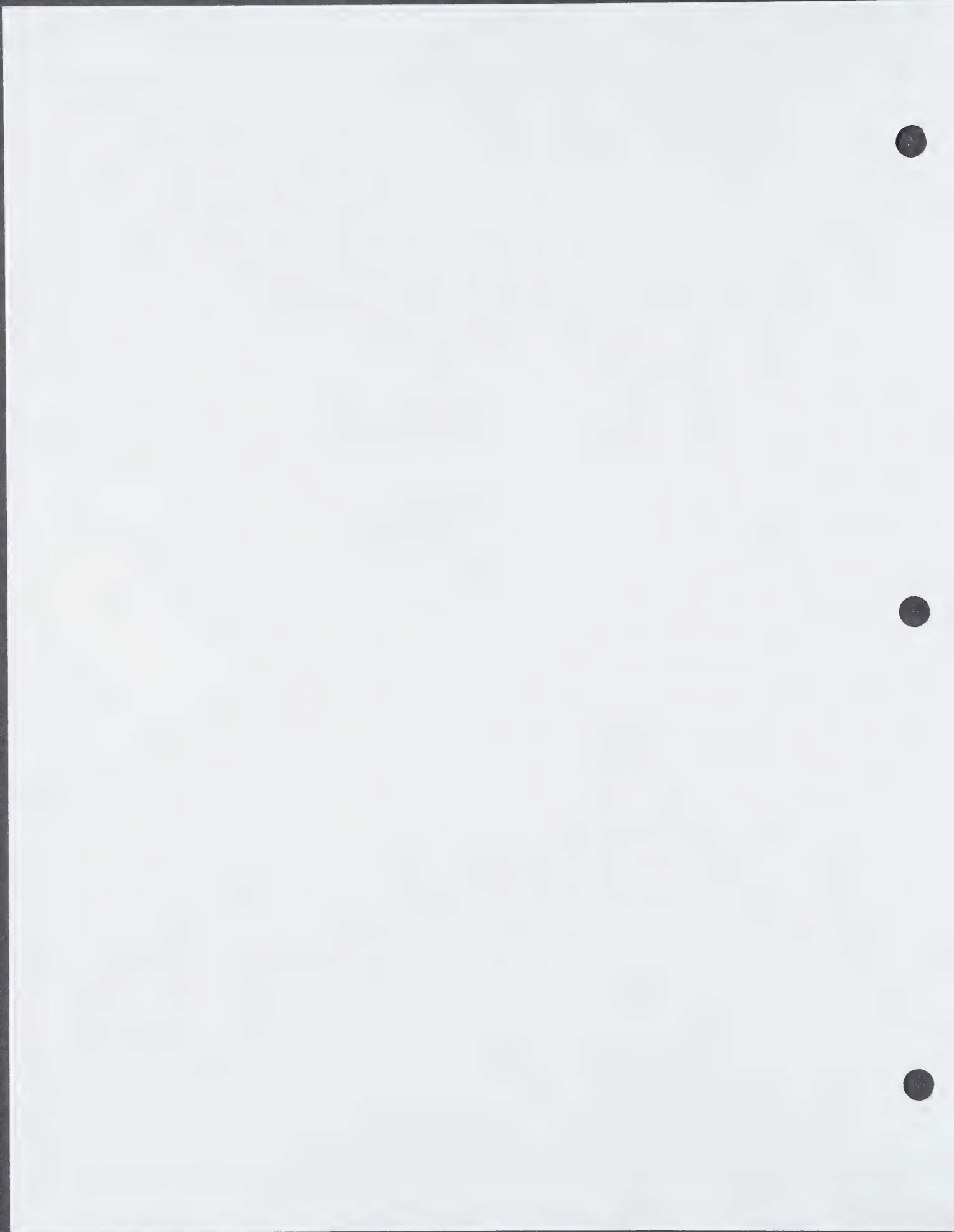


Efforts to encourage students from a variety of universities in different countries have had varied success. Even the number attending from Queen's and other Canadian universities has at times been disappointing. Reports of possible closure, anxiety caused by terrorist activity, and the difficulties some students experienced of fitting into the home university after the time abroad have all played a part in less-than-optimal enrollment. Fortunately, numbers have increased steadily nevertheless. The maximum of 180 students in a term was first reached in 2004. As a result, the 2003 deficit of C\$ 914,000 declined to C\$ 348,000 in 2004, to C\$ 187,000 in 2005, and was fully eliminated in 2006.

Largely unaware of all this, the students have from the beginning really enjoyed themselves and learned a great deal. For many of them, this is the first time they have been abroad. If they are first-year students, they and their parents have the assurance that they will be in a safe environment. They also benefit from the fact that, as Andrew Loman has written in a history of the castle: "The small classes, the committed students, the field study program, and above all the opportunities for daily intellectual exchange with academics from different fields make the ISC overwhelmingly a pleasure." For many of these students, it is a life-changing experience.

British immigration policy makes it almost impossible to hire Canadians on any long-term contract. There is no problem with British and Europeans who come from countries in the Common Market, but Canadian academics must be hired on a limited-term work permit and thus are not on a tenure track.

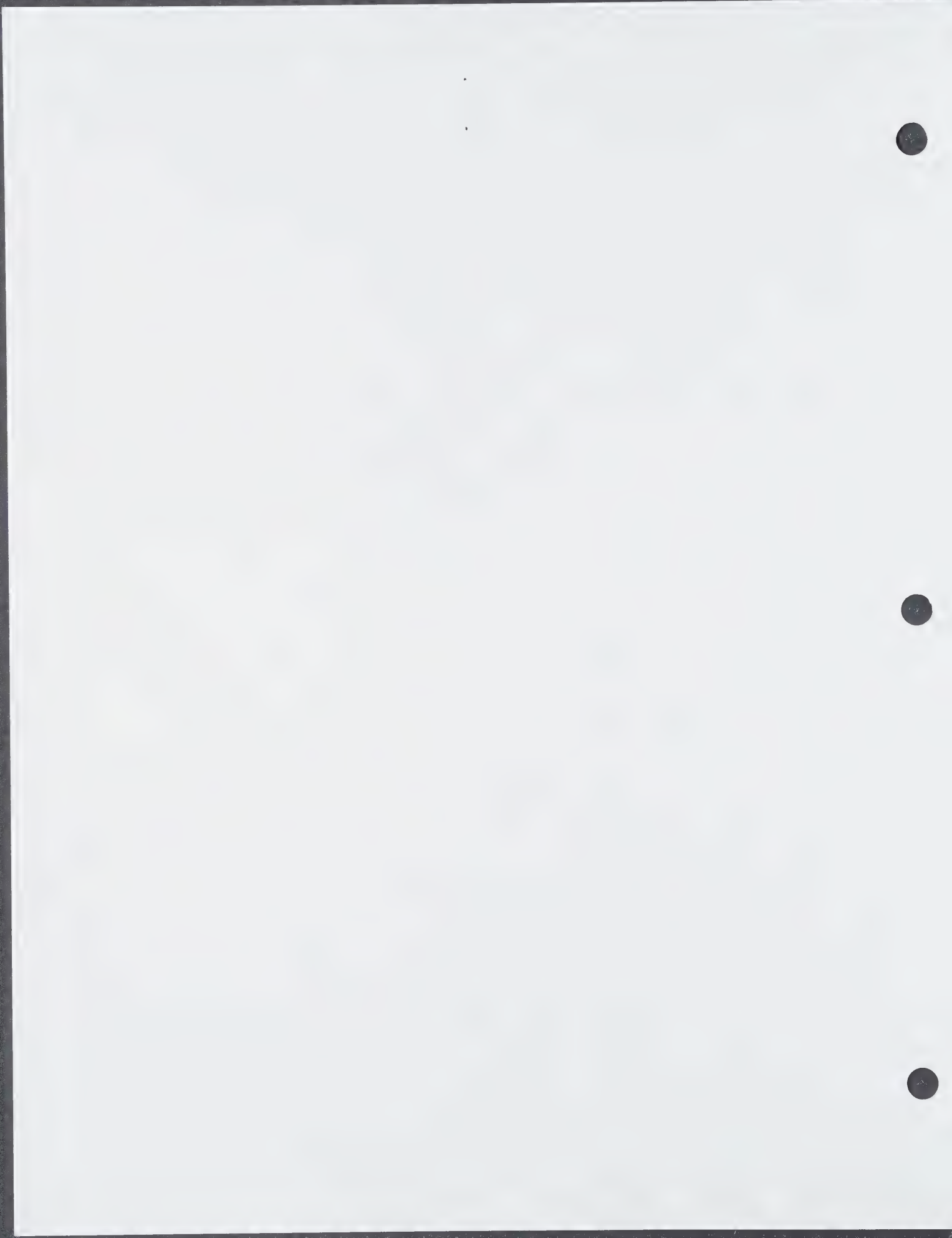
In 1997, however, the ISC had the opportunity to welcome two brilliant Canadian musicians, Dr Shelley Katz and Diana Gilchrist Katz^(fig), he an outstanding pianist, she a



world-class singer. Had they “only” been musicians, they would have been classed as entertainers and would not have been given permanent residence. Luckily, Shelley is also a composer whose work was published in Germany, and so he was allowed permanent residence as an artist! Their activities with the students, local residents, and visiting professionals have truly enriched the cultural life of the whole community. The Castle Concerts they presented several times a year have always been highlights. In the years since the family has moved to Cambridge, Shelley and Diana have come down during the week to continue their work with the students, many of whom bring their instruments from home to play with some of the local musicians in a small orchestra or chamber group under Shelley’s direction. The choirs get better and better, and everyone looks forward to the concert at the end of the semester.

One of the hopes we had from the very beginning was that the students would have an opportunity to get some flavor of English life. Their time is short, the courses are intense, and many weekends are taken up with field trips, to London, Stratford, and Brussels. We are very grateful that a number of the local residents, Friends of Herstmonceux Castle, have invited students home to tea and meals, have taken them on favorite walks on the downs, and have given the students a peek into life in rural England. From the earliest days and for the next ten years, the ISC was blessed to have one of these “friends”, Mrs. Gillie Arnell, as the wonderfully capable secretary who worked first with Sandy Montgomery. She was truly helpful not only to students but also to each successive academic director.

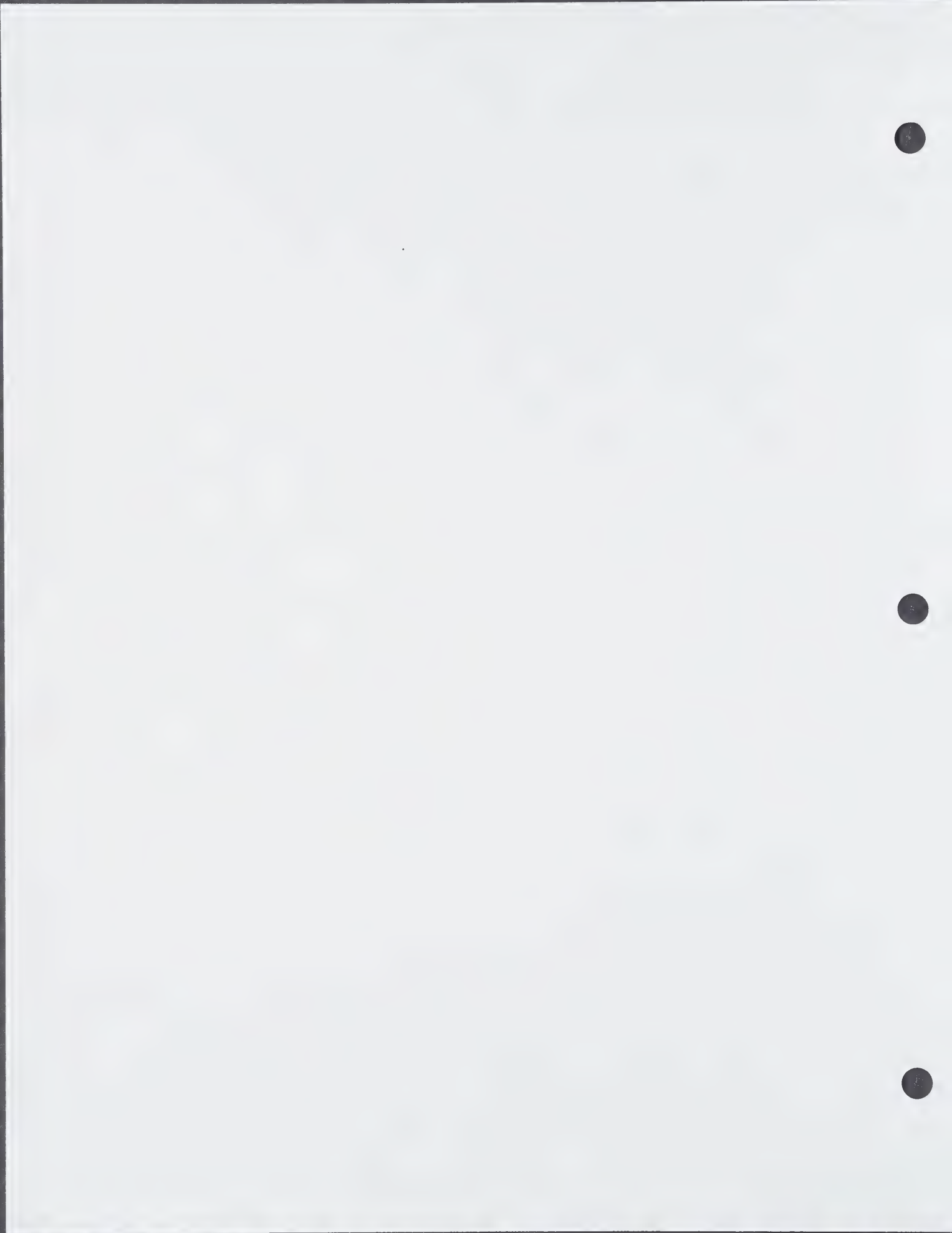
Many of these local people were among those who, in 1988, formed the “Friends of Herstmonceux Castle”, hoping to prevent the estate’s falling into the hands of developers.



After they actively opposed a number of proposals, they were relieved to hear that a university, Queen's, was hoping to buy the property, and were particularly pleased to learn that Queen's was a Canadian university. A great many Canadian soldiers had been stationed in this part of Sussex during the Second World War. This seemed to be an acceptable new owner for "their" Castle.

It was Celia Scott, one of the committed Friends of Herstmonceux Castle, who proposed me for a CBE, Commander of the British Empire, an honor given by the British Government. Many of our family traveled to Washington to be with us when the British Ambassador presented me with the medal I was very proud to receive ^(fig.). It is a "thank you" for our efforts, not only to provide an international study center for students from many countries, but also to help the economy of the region of Sussex where Isabel lived and worked for thirty-two years. And we were especially glad to celebrate this honor again, some months later, with a large group at the ISC, where we enjoyed a reception in the courtyard followed by a short musical interlude provided by the Katz family. We have had so many happy times with these friends ~~we~~ we have made in Sussex.

Isabel and I are always thinking of areas where we feel we can make a difference, and the ISC clearly offers many opportunities. The estate was the home of the Royal Greenwich Observatory from 1952, when the telescopes were built, until 1988, when operations were moved to Cambridge and La Palma, the Canary Islands. Of the seven telescopes, only the largest, the Isaac Newton, was moved to La Palma; the other six remained in place, largely in working order. For many years after the Observatory closed, a group of scientists, including Patrick Moore, Richard Gregory, and Stephen Pizzey, hoped they might someday be able to set up a science centre on the site.



When it became clear that the ISC would not be likely to make use of the telescope complex, they asked and were granted a short-term lease to set up temporary exhibits until they could make the building usable. Working tirelessly, with volunteer help, Stephen Pizzey built a very successful centre, and in 1995, the Observatory Science Centre signed a fifty-year lease with the ISC that enabled them to apply and eventually win a heritage grant to make necessary improvements to the property. The Centre has become a major venue for youngsters to be involved in hands-on physics, thousands of whom visit each year. Nor is it only for youngsters. There are evening courses for adults in astronomy and the exploration of space, and the ISC now includes a course in astronomy, with telescopes better than the one I knew in Kingston during my student days.

Set in the woods, apart from the main group of domes, the Isaac Newton Observatory building, visible for miles around, has remained vacant. This seemed a waste of a grand space. In 1999, Isabel and I funded a study by an architect and supported the formation of an Isaac Newton Arts Trust. The building had been condemned as unfit for use, but the architect's report found the structure sound and estimated that it would cost £3million to convert the building into an art center to include a concert hall, restaurant, and space for art exhibitions. We offered £1 million to the Arts Trust, headed by Stephen Phillips, who had considerable experience in the arts' world. He hoped they would be able to raise an additional £2 million from Arts Councils and the National Lottery with which to make major alterations to the building. Various efforts so far have failed, but until they find additional funding, the plan is to try to convert the area *peu à peu* with help from the European Community.



Some progress has been made. A large amphitheatre-shaped area on one side of the building has been cleared of scrub and protected by the planting of hundreds of trees. A number of outdoor events have taken place in the Castle grounds and in the amphitheatre. The Isaac Newton Trust has recently signed a fifty-year lease with the ISC, and our hope is that some day both they and the Observatory Science Centre may combine and work together as an Arts and Science Centre.

At the end of July 2005, the ISC held a Tenth Reunion for ISC alumni. It was also the twelfth anniversary of the ceremony held in July 1993 when Principal David and Mary Smith, Chancellor Agnes Benidickson, Isabel, and I rode into the grounds of Herstmonceux Castle for the "Cutting of the Ribbon" ceremony. What an exciting gala day Jane Whistler had arranged for us and for the hundreds who came to visit the grounds, open to the public for the first time after so many years. On Thursday evening, 28 July 2005, the new Queen's principal, Dr Karen Hitchcock, with a number of members of her family, was making her first visit to the ISC to welcome thirty-two ISC alumni who had returned from many parts of the world for this reunion. It was also a time for many Friends of Herstmonceux Castle to meet the new principal and the students who had returned.

We were a very happy group: new people to meet and so much to learn about what had been happening since the students had graduated. But reunions would wait, at least until the buffet supper, after the concert specially arranged for me by the Musicians in Residence. "A Musical Tribute: Themes of a Life" was beautifully presented by Shelly and Diana Katz, joined by three guest musicians and their sons, David and Nathan Katz. I had a hard time holding back tears of grief at the Ani Mamin, in memoriam of the



Shoah, and of joy at the end, "Once you have found her, never let her go". Whenever I have heard this, I have thought of Isabel, and here she was sitting right beside me with four members of her family who had come from Canada to be with us. My happiness could not have been greater!

On Friday, Isabel and the family, Jane Whistler, and Mary Smith went to Glyndebourne to see Smetana's *The Battered Bride*, while I stayed at home in Bexhill to discuss the manuscript of a long history of the Castle written by Andrew Loman who had taught at the ISC for three years. Andrew had come over for the reunion and on Saturday afternoon was to give a lecture about the history of the Castle, which would be followed by my talk: "Why I Love Queen's". Diana and Shelley had prepared a CD, "Love Live Forever", that had been planned as an accompaniment to Andrew's book. In the meantime, everyone who came to the reunion received a copy of the CD, which we can now play if we need a reminder of the Castle.

During our discussion, Andrew mentioned another reason, apart from the legal problems Canadians have in receiving permission to work in England, why coming to teach at the ISC is difficult. There are just two cottages and two very recent small apartments, very little accommodation for families, and since most of the staff come from afar and for a relatively short period, it has been necessary to house them in one section of Bader Hall. This is a situation that has long needed attention. When we discussed this with Sandy Montgomery, he suggested that it would be possible to rebuild on foundations of existing buildings and to alter part of Bader Hall to make more adequate provision for academics. This seems to us a very important step to take, and we have given Queen's the funds. Since we would not have given the Castle to Queen's without the vision and



our wonderful rapport with Principal David Smith, we suggested that we call this residence the David Smith Hall, completed early in 2007.

