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Editorial

***LAUREATION FOR HONORARY DEGREE OF LLD:
PROFESSOR W R CORNISH, QC, FBA
(University of Cambridge)***

*Presented by Professor Hector MacQueen during the
graduation ceremony, Friday 28 January 2005.*

Bill Cornish has had an outstanding career as an academic lawyer, and is one of the leading figures in the world in his principal field of intellectual property (IP). Last October he retired as Herchel Smith Professor of Intellectual Property at the University of Cambridge. He previously held a Chair of Law at LSE from 1970-1990, and has been in British academic life since 1962. He was appointed a Fellow of the British Academy in 1984 and an honorary QC in 1997.

The principal basis of his academic fame is his book, *Intellectual Property*, first published in 1980, and now in its fifth edition. This is much more than a textbook. I will never forget the excitement with which, as a young teacher here in Edinburgh, I read that first edition. Not only was it informative about IP law, but it showed how that law might be understood, criticised and developed, not only in its own terms, but also in those of economics, politics and history. Further, the book was shot through

with knowledge of the practicalities of its subject. Although focused on law in the UK, the book also had a deep comparative aspect and saw the way the European future of the subject was taking shape; a perspective which has grown ever more important in subsequent editions as the Europeanisation of IP law deepened with ever-gathering speed.

The effect of Cornish on Intellectual Property was remarkable. It was based on the author's innovative LLM course on the subject at the LSE. That must have been the only course of its kind in the country at the time. Nowadays, no serious law school in Britain will be without such a course at both under- and postgraduate levels. For many, if not all, of them, Cornish was the inspirational text. The result is that IP is one of the liveliest areas in most modern law schools, involving an ever-increasing number of researchers and students. In Edinburgh this manifests itself in the form of our AHRC Research Centre for Studies in IP and Technology Law, in which Bill Cornish serves as a member of the Management Committee.

Bill Cornish's writings and advice also have a major effect on the senior players in the IP field in Britain. The IP judges, the Patent Office, and senior IP practitioners all respect his shrewd insights. He has a similar standing in continental Europe, reflected in particular in his membership of the highly influential Max-Planck Institute of IP in Munich. He has also demonstrated constant support and kindness to his fellow IP academics, encouraging their writing and their participation in national and international ventures. All is backed up by intellectual rigour and high standards, which are never – in the nicest possible way – allowed to slip.

Bill Cornish is no narrow specialist. He has made a notable contribution to legal history as an academic discipline – indeed his publications in this field would be enough for most ordinary academics. And from time to time he has ventured into other fields of law with considerable impact. His name at least will be known to most academic lawyers in Britain; he is a model to which we can all aspire, knowing that it will only be given to the few actually to emulate.

Mr Vice-Chancellor, I now invite you to confer on William Rodolph Cornish the Honorary Degree of Master of Laws.

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The Ceremony took place in the magnificent McEwan Hall, Edinburgh.



Professor William Cornish, *SCRIPT-ed* editor Dr. Johanna Gibson and Professor Hector MacQueen