

Clip:ap_clip3: The first graduation ceremony at Alexandra Palace

Open Forum 07(1973)

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Kevin Moloney

Well here we are, the very heart of Ally Pally, the Great Hall itself. As you can see it's large, extremely large, 400 feet long by 180 feet wide. By coincidence, this year is the centenary celebrations of the original Alexandra Palace, and the people in the background are rehearsing for some of the many events that are taking place here each evening. Peter Thornton-Pett, co-ordinator of the ceremony is here with us. Peter, what are these robes your wearing?

Peter Thornton-Pett

I'm wearing the academic dress, the gown and hood of a Doctor of the University. That is, of the honorary degree which we are conferring upon ten distinguished public figures at this ceremony in June. And Anne here, is wearing the academic dress of a Bachelor of Arts. The colours of the academic dress are based on the colours of the university, blue and gold. My own gown is in gold faced with dark blue and with a rather lovely blue hood and Anne is wearing a dark blue gown with a hood of light blue faced in gold. Thank you Anne.

Kevin Moloney

Peter, can you give me a run down on the ceremony please?

Peter Thornton-Pett

Yes, the ceremony will be in three parts. First of all the installation of Lord Gardiner as our second Chancellor. Second the conferment of the degree of Doctor of the University on our first ten honorary graduates, and thirdly the presentation of our first BA graduates to the Chancellor.

Kevin Moloney

The Open University is unique in many ways and it doesn't follow the traditional pattern. Why are we holding this ceremony?

Peter Thornton-Pett

The first answer is that very many of our students requested it, and I think that that is understandable because we all like to mark the great milestones in our lives with something out of the ordinary and if I may speak as a recent graduate, graduation day is one of those milestones and it signifies a wonderful sense of achievement, in coming together in this great cooperate occasion.

Kevin Moloney

Is the ceremony going to be different from that held in other universities at all?

Peter Thornton-Pett

No, we did look at the possibilities of some new twist or trend but we found that in many ways the old ways were best, at least for this first occasion.

Kevin Moloney

Why is the ceremony being held here and not at Walton Hall?

Peter Thornton-Pett

Well we were going to hold it at Walton Hall originally but so many people graduated in our first year, so many wanted to come, that it was quite beyond the resources of Walton Hall to cope with the numbers we expected and which we were so happy are coming, and the opportunity occurred to hold it here, which is both an Open University and a BBC site. It solved all our major problems in regard to catering, parking and so on and it was ideal and it fits very nicely into the centenary year of Alexandra Palace itself.

Kevin Moloney

How many of our new graduates are coming?

Peter Thornton-Pett

About six hundred of the nine hundred or so, who have graduated. And may I add that over a hundred of those who are not coming have not really said no but a belated yes because they have opted to come after they have graduated with honours.

Kevin Moloney

And Peter, will there be any music at the ceremony?

Peter Thornton-Pett

Oh indeed! We want to make it memorable in every way that we can. We would have liked to of course played this lovely organ, but unfortunately that, the finest of all Father Willis' instruments has been unplayable since about the end of the war, so we are bringing in a distinguished brass consort and an organ to be played by our own Professor of Music to accompany them

Kevin Moloney

Fine, thank you Peter.