

Honorary – Professor Terence Wilkins (Doctor of Technology)

Monday 30 July 2018 | 1.00pm

School of Human Sciences

Vice-Chancellor, it is my pleasure to present to you Professor Terence Wilkins for the Degree of Doctor of Technology honoris causa.

Terry Wilkins is one of us. He studied at the Northern Polytechnic which, after several mergers, eventually became London Met. The Northern Polytechnic opened in Holloway with aid from the City Parochial Foundation and substantial donations from the Worshipful Company of Clothworkers in 1896.

Under the terms of its Royal Charter, its objective was to promote the industrial skillset, general knowledge, health and well-being of young men and women belonging to the poorer classes of Islington and to provide for the inhabitants of Islington and the neighbouring parts of north London, and especially for the Industrial Classes, the means of acquiring a sound General, Scientific, Technical and Commercial Education at a small cost.

When they recruited Prof Wilkins they certainly got that in spades.

He commented: “I loved the high quality teaching and experimental work. I found that quantum theory, statistics and physical chemistry were well taught.”

I understand that Professor Wilkins also had a few shots at blowing up the Tower while doing his Chemistry PhD. But that did not deter him from embarking on what has been a successful and colourful career.

Terry Wilkins is a serial innovator of novel, game-changing technologies that have had a significant impact on the healthcare and advanced materials industries. His innovative high-speed measurement systems have created enormous financial and social benefits and have influenced industry widely. Applications of these systems have included the diagnosis of metabolic diseases, and cancer and eliminating the need for radioactive licenses for clinical laboratories worldwide.

Since being appointed as Europe’s first professor of nanotechnology manufacturing in 2005, his work has led to the development of novel translational nanotechnology research at the University of Leeds.

He has achieved stunning success in advanced materials and environmental engineering throughout his career. His research has led to a 99% reduction in chemical pollution in the River Tees in just 18 months.

He has made a substantial personal contribution to the creation of the world’s first DNA fingerprinting business, Cellmark, which has helped transform policing, paternity resolution and immigration.

He led a team that developed a novel measurement and control system essential for the success of **Hydrofluorocarbons** (HFCs) as a replacement for **Chlorofluorocarbons** (CFCs).

Until the late 1980s CFC's were to be found in air conditioners and refrigerators all over the world, but were banned after The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer prohibited their use. By enabling the use of HFCs, Professor Wilkins and his team have helped significantly reduce damage to ozone layer over the last 30 years.

Success as a serial innovator has led to service as a high-level expert advisor to the UK government, including the former Minister of Science & Universities, David Willets; the European Commission, and EU parliament, covering the nanotechnology, advanced materials, biotechnology and production technologies and the Marie Skłodowska Curie mobility programs respectively.

He has won 10 awards including two prestigious Prince of Wales Prizes for Innovation and Production.

In 2017, Professor Wilkins was elected to the Fellowship of the Royal Academy of Engineering in recognition of his substantial achievements and the continuing influence that he exercises over the many areas in which he is involved.

Professor Dame Ann Dowling, President of the Royal Academy of Engineering commented: "Our new Fellows represent the very best of UK engineering. From technology giants to our universities' finest minds our new Fellows demonstrate how engineering is tackling some of the biggest challenges facing the world."

Vice-Chancellor, Professor Terence Wilkins epitomises the spirit of science and innovation which our predecessors have passed to us and it is with pleasure that I present him to you for the Degree of Doctor of Technology *honoris causa*.