

Prelude

HENNING SØRENSEN
PAST-PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL DANISH ACADEMY

Contacts between the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters were in the past restricted to the exchange of publications and Danish participation in the celebration of the 200th anniversary of RSE in 1983. When I talked with Professor Malcolm Jeeves, the President of RSE, at a NATO Advanced Research Workshop in Athens in November 1996, we both found that there were good reasons for forming closer contacts between our two Academies. I was then the immediate Past President of RDA. We found that we are neighbours, separated only by the waters of the North Sea, an area for work and play for both Scotland and Denmark, and that Scotland and Denmark have much in common. We therefore discussed how we could strengthen the contact between the two Academies and found that joint symposia might be a good way of establishing closer relations between RSE and RDA.

On arrival home from Athens, Malcolm Jeeves presented this idea to the Council of the RSE and I did the same to the Presidium of the RDA. The idea was welcomed enthusiastically by both Academies and Professor Jeeves then invited the RDA to send a representative to Edinburgh in order to discuss how we should proceed. The RDA entrusted me with this task.

On May 23rd 1997 Professor Jeeves and some of the officers of the RSE hosted a meeting in the premises of the Society in Edinburgh. After brief presentations of the two Academies, we discussed the form and contents of the first meeting between RSE and RDA. It was decided that a joint symposium would be the appropriate way of initiating co-operation between the two Academies and it was recommended that the RDA should arrange one on the theme “historical connections between Denmark and Scotland” which I had brought with me as a proposal. This had been prepared by Gillian Fellows-Jensen.

The Presidium of the RDA subsequently offered to include the RSE-RDA symposium in its regular series of symposia supported by funding from the RDA and the Carlsberg Foundation. Gillian Fellows-Jensen was asked to organise the symposium, a task which she readily took

upon herself. The RSE appointed Professor John Laver, Vice-President with responsibility for international relations, to represent the RSE in the further planning of the symposium.

Professor Laver visited Copenhagen 2nd-3rd April 1998 and Gillian Fellows-Jensen Edinburgh 23rd November 1998 in order to prepare the programme of the symposium with the title "Denmark and Scotland: the environmental and cultural resources of small nations". On 27th November 1998 Gillian Fellows-Jensen sent out the invitation to the Scottish and Danish speakers.

The symposium was arranged by Gillian Fellows-Jensen and Pia Grüner, head of the Secretariat of the RDA. It took place 15th-18th September 1999.