

Honours list: gongs go to entrepreneurs

By James Boxell

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Big hitters from the world of business and finance are largely conspicuous by their absence from the Queen's birthday honours list on Saturday, although Gail Rebeck, chairman and chief executive of the Random House book publishing group in the UK, becomes a dame.

Ms Rebeck, who has been in charge of the publisher in the UK for 18 years, was singled out by the government for overseeing the "publication of 1,500 books each year from some of the world's most established authors". She said on Friday: "I'm greatly honoured to receive this recognition, which reflects the achievements of everyone at Random House."

The City and banking worlds went largely unrecognised, particularly when compared with the creative industries, which were prominent among the 984 gongs recommended to the prime minister for an award.

The City's performance compares poorly with last year.

The Cabinet Office insisted on Friday it was not punishing the City for the recent banking meltdown and subsequent economic crisis.

"These decisions are made on an independent basis and always varies in what areas are doing well," one official said. Once again, the government emphasised that the list was biased towards "ordinary" people from all backgrounds, with 72 per cent of awards going to "local heroes".

Politicians also fared badly after the recent expenses scandal and the subsequent public backlash against Westminster, with not one major gong awarded to an MP.

Among the business community, Garry Hawkes received a knighthood. Mr Hawkes left school at 16 to train as a chef before transforming Gardner Merchant – known as **Sodexo** since 2000 – into one of the world's leading catering suppliers. He is joined by William Hastings, chairman of Hastings Hotels, a leading hotel group in Northern Ireland.

Christopher Bailey, creative director at **Burberry**, becomes an MBE; while Jeff Banks, the fashion designer, is a CBE. There were MBEs for Natalie Massenet, who founded the popular fashion website Net-A-Porter, and Lopa Patel, founder of RedHotCurry.com.

There was some vindication too for Andrew Wolstenholme, BAA's director of the £4.3bn Terminal 5 project at Heathrow. Despite the chaotic opening of the terminal, Mr Wolstenholme was lauded as bringing the project in "on time and on cost", and becomes an OBE.

David Blanchflower, an outgoing member of the Bank of England's monetary policy committee, known to fellow economists as "Danny", was rewarded with a CBE after warning ahead of most analysts that a steep rise in unemployment was on the way.

Mr Blanchflower was the first non-UK resident to serve as a member of the MPC.

In the celebrity world, Nick Faldo, the golfer, and Christopher Lee, the actor best loved for playing Dracula, have been knighted, as has Andrew Motion, the poet laureate. Delia Smith, the popular TV cook, becomes a CBE.

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