

Champagne days for winners of the Duff Cooper Prize



Duff Cooper with his wife, Lady Diana Duff Cooper, in 1924 (Picture: ¹ of 1 Associated Newspapers)

To the 56th annual Duff Cooper Prize, where Sue Prideaux received the award from French ambassador Bernard Emie for her biography of August Strindberg, Swedish-born polymath and friend of post-Impressionist artist Paul Gauguin, based in Paris.

"When I was 15 I ran away from school and went to Paris," Prideaux said in a speech, in which she also told how Strindberg used to inject apples with morphine to see if they had nervous systems. Cooper's grand-daughter, Artemis, said the awards would be known as the Pol Roger Duff Cooper Prize from now on after its new sponsors, Winston Churchill's favourite champagne. "Duff Cooper introduced Churchill to Pol Roger," Artemis told guests who included her husband, Antony Beevor, Robin Lane Fox and Claus Von Bulow. Each year on his birthday, Pol Roger dispatched Churchill a case of its vintage champagne.

"I could not live without champagne," Churchill once said. "In victory I deserve it; in defeat I need it." Last night Prideaux deserved it.

