

DOWNING COLLEGE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

94th Annual General Meeting

held in the Howard Theatre and via Zoom

at 17:00 on Saturday 25 September 2021

DRAFT MINUTES

1 Dr Kate Panter, President of the Association, chaired the meeting and welcomed the attendees.

2 The Minutes of the 93rd Annual General Meeting were accepted

3 There were no matters arising other than those covered in the Agenda for the present meeting.

4 President's Review: Dr Kate Panter

I took on the presidency of the Alumni Association in September 2020 which marked the 40th year since women were first admitted to Downing in 1980. Sadly, many of the events planned to mark this anniversary were cancelled due to Covid and like college life itself, we have for the past year been a virtual association. One benefit of this was that by conducting last year's Association AGM by Zoom and having Zoom events on Alumni weekend, more of us were able to attend than is usually the case and we continue to facilitate remote access to the AGM today and plan to do this in the future, even now we are permitted to meet in person.

The disruption to our interaction with Downing pales into insignificance when compared to the disruption to student and academic life at the University; with the vast majority of students not experiencing full College life as we did. In response to this the Association has doubled the funding provided to the student hardship fund and we sponsored a series of "Picnics on the Paddock" as outside, socially distanced, social events in the Easter term.

We recognise that the landscape in which the Alumni Association now operates has changed enormously, this results from both the growth of the Downing Development Office, as well as the revolution in communication, electronic mail and social media.

It has been agreed that the Development Office will take over production of the Downing Magazine for the Association from September 2021, but this aside the objectives of the Downing College Alumni Association remain as valid and relevant as ever.

Broadly the objectives of the Downing College Alumni Association are:

Support

To provide support to current students

To use its contacts with alumni to help Downing College

Social

To keep alumni in touch with one another and the College

To hold an annual meeting and dinner

To publish an annual report and news of interest to members

This year we have had a working group with the Master and Director of Development to explore the relationship and roles of the Association, the College and the Development Office and to produce a

Memorandum of Understanding between the College and the Association, to reflect our distinct roles; although having gone through this process we observe very little has materially changed.

Simon Walker, current Association Secretary, who also currently edits the Downing College Magazine, is stepping down. We are all enormously grateful to Simon for his tremendous contribution to the Association. He will be proposed as President of the Association in 2023 and as Life Vice President at this AGM.

A huge thank you to Kate Dyer, former Association President, who is standing down as the chair of the Merchandise Working Group after 7 years

Also, thanks to departing members of the executive Gareth Davies, Harriet Groom and Georgina Erangey.

A huge thank you to David Riddoch our Treasurer and Peter Whittington who will temporarily stand in as Association Secretary until a successor is found and thank you to the support and tireless work of all the Development Office team on our behalf.

Charles Harpum, who is editing the Memorandum of Understanding, now President Elect, is standing for election as President at today's AGM.

I am delighted that Barry Everitt has agreed to be President of the Association for the year 2022-23, 2022 is the centenary of the Association

My personal hope is that the Association continues to facilitate our interaction as alumni with each other and with current students, that it evolves to remain fit for purpose, to reflect the entirety of the Downing Alumni both old and young. If the current Association modus operandi isn't working for you and your cohort at Downing, then please let us know how we can better engage with you. This may be by linking up remotely or in person, it may be driven by geography, shared interests or year groups. This could mean attending the Alumni Dinner or arranging a Pub night in London with your alumni group.

We are meeting this evening in person for the Association Dinner and there will be a Carol Service on Thursday 2nd December in London, which we hope will be an annual event. I hope you will join us.

5 Treasurer's Report

Dr Riddoch is currently in New Zealand and the Report and the Annual Accounts had been circulated before the meeting. It was agreed that the Accounts should be adopted.

6 Sales of Merchandise

Dr Dyer, outgoing Chair of the Merchandise Working Group, commented that we had been able to hold our first in-person sales event for about 18 months earlier in the day and the sales income of over £1,800 was very good.

Our income had depended on on-line sales during the virus restrictions and had been significantly reduced. However, the surplus generated from sales, which provides the main income for the Alumni Student Fund had held up well: 2019/20, surplus about £4,000 from sales income of about £8,000; 2020/21, similar surplus of about £4,000 but from a sales income of about £6,000.

A large part of the surplus is due to sales of The Griffin print by the alumnus Sir Quentin Blake. He has generously provided 50 hand-signed and numbered copies of this limited-edition print at no cost, so all sales income directly benefits the Student Fund.

The Master's wife, Vicki Ambery-Smith, has designed a women's scarf and a pair of cufflinks for the Association, based on Downing architectural themes and these had also contributed significantly to our sales income. We are most grateful to Vicki for her design work.

Details of all merchandise items are on the Downing Gifts web site. Recent additions include a new set of Greetings Cards and the provision to download e-versions of some of the images from the annual Photographic Competition.

In the past year 34 grants were awarded from the Student Fund for books and 35 for materials or travel.

7 Address by the Vice Master, Dr Zoe Barber

This has been a year in which we all had to respond to continual upheaval and changes, often requiring quick decisions and rearrangements. Everyone worked incredibly hard and had to keep on their toes.

Students have been extremely resilient throughout and got through it with some notable successes and, overall, fairly strong exam performances.

The College was 'Covid-proofed', with the very generous support of Humphrey Battcock, including, for example, the Taverna cafe and an outdoor cinema set-up. Matriculation used socially-distanced circles marked out on the paddock and a drone to record it. Association funds supported summer Sunday picnics, which were a much-appreciated addition to an otherwise rather isolated exam-term for students.

Food deliveries were required for isolating households, but amongst all this catering came up with the fantastic concept of the 'Virtual Formal Hall take-away and cook yourself' package.

We have welcomed 8 new Fellows over the year, including our energetic new Senior Bursar, Gavin Flynn (so energetic that he couldn't be here today as he's competing in the European Triathlon championships!). He reports that the year 21/22 should be the last in which there is an overall deficit, as academic life stabilises and conference and entertainment trade pick up. There was perhaps a time when we were concerned that the conference market would not return, but we've all learned that Zoom doesn't always fulfil the need to meet and discuss. There's actually been a large pent-up demand. However, we expect that there will be a drop in the longer term, with less international travel and business meetings, so there's a need to be creative in growing the more local market and leisure travel. There was a brisk B&B trade over the summer, with some excellent feedback on people's experience.

There is a continuing need to rebuild staff morale after such a difficult and turbulent time – it's been the uncertainty that's made this particularly hard. And, like so much of the country, there are severe problems with recruitment to build teams back up to full strength, particularly, but not confined to, the catering department. We must give special thanks for the meals laid on this weekend and for tonight's dinner.

Essential maintenance and refurbishments have continued and planning permission has recently been granted for the proposed new student centre on the site of the Butterfield building – but we're taking stock, thinking hard about our priorities and focus. 90-92 Regent Street refurbishments are nearing completion and this is to be named '1749 House', after the Society for those who include a legacy to Downing in their will.

In an opportunistic move, the College purchased the Pizza Hut site across the road: it seemed too good an opportunity to miss, giving us the ability to smarten-up and develop a rather down-beat area

and creating an improved environment at the front of College. We've had some (rather wacky, in some cases!) ideas from architects, but whether this ultimately becomes student accommodation, or provides income from retail space (or, most likely, both) remains open. I think that it offers an exciting opportunity.

I am very sad to report losses this year: Hugh Brammer, a great champion of Geography at Downing, Sir Alan Bowness, who only recently contributed to the Heong Gallery and was a great supporter of it, and George Pulman, who was a familiar face around College until quite recently.

To finish on a brighter note: graduation ceremonies were a great success - for the 2021 class and for the 2020 cohort who had missed out last year. Family and friends looked on as the graduands processed around the main court and then watched the ceremony at the Senate House on big screens set up on the Paddock.

As ever, the gardens and grounds looked beautiful and we must always be so grateful to Jack and the gardening team for this lovely environment. There's been great pleasure over the year with the observation of a fox and family (based in the Master's garden); though the less welcome continuing battle with the chafer beetles and the crows.

8 Election of Officers, proposed by the Executive Committee

President

From President Elect: Mr Charles Harpum (1972)

President Elect

Prof Barry Everitt

Vice President

Mr Simon Walker (1975)

Honorary Secretary

Mr Peter Whittington (1962)

Members of the Executive Committee

Ms Lydia Donaldson (2010)

Mr Paul Jarvis (1997)

Mr Ian Thomson (1979)

The appointment of Dr J S L McCombie and Mr R K Taplin as Honorary Auditors was seconded and approved.

9. Any Other Business

- i. In response to a comment that the Magazine presents a happy balance between current news and the past, Mr Walker confirmed that the change in responsibility for production of the Magazine from the Alumni Association to the Development Office should not lead any significant changes. The Office will work with Year Reps as before and Association input will continue. Alumni will be encouraged to write articles and provide other input. Ms Finnie Jones thanked Mr Walker for all he had done over the past four years as Honorary Secretary in overseeing the production of a high-quality Magazine.
- ii. In response to a query about the Advent Carol service this year, this will be held on Thursday 2nd December at 19:00 at St Andrew Holborn Church, London and will be followed by a

drinks reception, replacing the biennial London reception which was last held in 2018. It is hoped that a Carol Service and reception will be held annually in London in the future.

10. Date of Next Meeting

Saturday 24th September 2022.