

Draft for Approval

ST CATHARINES' COLLEGE ALUMNI SOCIETY

MINUTES of the 93rd Annual General Meeting

held on 18th September 2021 by Video Call beginning at 4pm.

Lilian Greenwood, President, in the Chair

25 participants as at 16:19 and 16:48 including 20 voting members excluding the Development Director, two Student Representatives and the Bursar.

Agenda:

1 Apologies

Received from John Moverley, Nicola Chakraverty, Karen Cass, Liz Goodman, Brian Woodham, Chris Thompson

2 Approval of Minutes of 2020 AGM

The minutes of the 2020 AGM had been circulated with the papers for meeting. The President enquired if there were any matters arising but since there were none, she invited their adoption as presented. Stephen Mennell **proposed**, and Keith Cocker seconded the motion which was carried.

3 Elections to the Committee

Nominated by the Committee:

The President noted that several long serving members were not standing for re-election: John Little as Treasurer after 25 years, John Wells after eight years on the committee of which four as Chair, Carrie Whitwell after four years. She thanked them all for their exceptional commitment and support of the Society.

Brief CV's of the new appointees had been included in the meeting and papers and the President therefore suggested that the new appointments be voted on "en masse". In the absence of any objections to the proposal, the following appointments were approved.

Resolved:

3.1 John Little (1972) as President. A President Elect has not yet been identified but that person will be co-opted onto the Committee for the balance of 2021-22 when chosen.

3.2 As immediate Past President - Lilian Greenwood (1984)

3.3 Joanna Reeves (1988) as Society Chair

3.4 Michael Roberts (1967) as Society Secretary

3.5 Hugh McNeill (1996) as Society Treasurer. He has been a general Committee member for 8 years.

3.6 Committee Members

The resignation of Carrie Whitwell was noted but no new committee members have yet been proposed.

3.7 College Representatives

3.7.1 Fellow - Deborah Loveluck (2007) nominated by the Master

3.7.2 Student Representatives nominated by the Senior Tutor - Souradip Mookerjee and Maya Smolkova

3.8 Ex-officio - The Chair of the Editorial Board of the Magazine, the Webmaster and the Branch Chairs.

Roger Stratford has agreed to serve until the New Year to complete the production of the 2020/21 Society magazine before handing over full responsibility for future publications to the new Editorial Board.

4 Officers' Reports

4.1 The President's Report – said that it had been an honour to serve through she would have much preferred one normal year where the freedom to be more proactive, attend more functions and meet more of the alumni, at branch functions and elsewhere, would have been possible. Sadly, even though serving two terms circumstances had conspired against this freedom. Despite this the College and Society had successfully managed their ways through the past two years with great fortitude and imagination. She wished her successor Dr John Little a fair wind in calmer waters.

4.2 The Treasurer's Report – John Little noted that due to the extraordinary circumstances prevailing in the past 12 months very few grants were made and there was, unsurprisingly, a significant decline in number of applications. The Society accounts showed much reduced expenditure, largely grants of £4,759 and interest and dividend income of £1,008 leading to a deficit of £3,751. During the financial year the market value of the portfolio, which has been transferred from fund managers Stanhope to Smith & Williamson showed an increase of £40,829. Thus, the net asset value of the Society's assets stood at £374,078 on 30th June 2021. Michael Roberts noted that it had had taken over four months to complete the transfer of all the assets, so that while the increase is gratifying it is too early to judge the new managers encouraging early performance definitively.

4.3 Branch Chairs – Most Branches had not been able to arrange many or any events. There were reports from the North and London. Joanna, London Branch Chair commented on the activities and gave thanks to the President the Master for the online interview which relaunched Branch activities early in the year. This was followed by an online "Battle of the Bubbles" hosted by the Sommelier of the Oxford and Cambridge Club. There was a video talk on Irish History from Dr Niamh Gallagher, Lecturer in Modern British and Irish History and more recently visits to the Chelsea Physic Garden and the Globe Theatre. The latter proving so popular that none of the committee members were swift enough to acquire tickets. The next major event is a dinner at Athenaeum Club in late January 2022.

4.4 Chairs' Report – John Wells noted that he was stepping down after four years in the Chair. During that time, he has focused heavily on matters of governance and matters arising from changes in legislation.

4.4.1 Full integration with the College. The most important concern related to resolving issues arising from new legislation, particularly in the areas of automatic deduction of costs related to membership of the Society, GDPR and treatment of investment income. It had been suggested that

some, but not all, of these issues would be resolved by fully integrating the Society with the College. The College had indicated that it was happy to explore this option.

As directed by the 2019 AGM the Committee of the Society has investigated the matter fully and is now formally reporting to the AGM that the proposal to integrate fully the Society with the College has not, after prolonged discussion and careful investigation, found strong or sufficient support of the Committee. The core reason is that the specific proposal for integration would have resulted in an irreversible change to the Society and its loss of independence. However, the conversations with the Bursar, the adoption of new rules and amendments to existing ones has modernised the governance and improved the relationship with the College. The commitment by the Society to investigate the possibility of achieving Charitable status was also regarded positively as, if secured, it would usefully regulate some important aspects of running the Society.

4.4.2 Grants – In respect of the future of the grant regime it has been agreed by the Committee that in future the Society will give a lump sum to the College at the beginning of each year, after the AGM, rather than continue to process individual small grants as it has done in the past. This will simplify the administration of the awards from the perspective of the Students, the Society and the College. The purpose of these funds must be defined which in turn relates to the basis on which the funds were given to the Society. The further question arises as to the most effective use of the resources of the Society in supporting Students and/or the College. It is proposed that periodically the Society and College agree the basis of the Society-funded, but College-administered, awards. The Committee wishes to have the greatest latitude in selecting areas for support and this requires a relaxation of the current restrictions of the Old Members' Sports Fund (OMSF). Up to eighty percent of the current students are from state schools and a significant proportion would be eligible for school meals. The composition and capacity of the student body has changed significantly in recent years and the proposed changes to the rules of the OMSF is to be able to flex the use of the income derived from the fund to adapt to new circumstances. This was anticipated and explicitly permitted by the terms of the original rules.

4.4.3 The Society Magazine - Since the College now pays the full cost of the Society Magazine it is proposed that a proportion of the income of the Society should be used to give general financial support to the College.

4.4.4 There followed general discussion of the points raised and the matters for resolution.

4.4.4.1 Nicola Robert, Bursar, was pleased to be invited to attend. She reported that over the past two years there had been close consultation and a thorough review of the likely advantages of full amalgamation of the Society with the College. The concerns of the alumni had been considered and properly addressed. Each party had taken independent legal advice that established there are no legal barriers to amalgamation and so the decision came down to what the Society members wanted to do. The College was more optimistic of the benefits and the College would support total integration. The process has been positive, and many areas of common ground established. One notable result concerns the production of the Society Magazine where a new Editorial Board has been established so that in future its production will not be so heavily dependent on one person. She welcomed the proposed changes as to how the Society proposed to utilise its funds to augment the College grants in the future and in making a financial contribution to the College running costs. The College is a pioneer of change in student funding and in recognising the needs of those from less supportive backgrounds, so the donation of unrestricted funds is most welcome as it allows for more freedom of action. Much of the income of the College is restricted which reduces its flexibility.

4.4.4.2 Keith Cocker – he recognised the hard work of the Chair and the Committee in respect of the amalgamation proposal but regretted the decision as he is a strong supporter of integration. He does not believe the issue is finally decided as he is not convinced that the decision is in the best long-term interests of the Society. He is sad that it has not happened now.

4.4.4.3 Martin Reeves – Noted that while the OMSF Fund may be burdensome to administer it can be administered by the College and it is important to remember and respect why the funds were given. Changing the use of this fund, while acknowledging it is still to support students, runs contrary to the intention of those who donated. As a donor himself this is a key concern. Despite the assurances he believes that the support should be maintained for the purpose for which it was originally intended. Surely other funds could be found to help those who need support, for example to study in College during the summer.

4.4.4.4 Nicola Robert – reviewed sports funding noting that Peter Wothers, who is chair of the Amalgamated Clubs where funds of circa £800K yield about £24K per year in income and approx. £250K per year is available per annum from other sources to fund sports infrastructure. The result of a recent review is that there is sufficient to provide more than adequate support to the sporting clubs of the College as well as some specialist funding. This gives the context that there are other sources of money in this segment while some areas such as summer study do not have specific bequests and so must be met from general purpose or unrestricted sources.

4.4.4.5 Keith Cocker – who donated in 1973 – noted that when he came up for the Long Vacation term there was no money available to support his long vac expenses. He later noted that there is another fund that is not restricted to sport, namely the legacy from Robert Hardy.

4.4.4.6 Eleanor Clapp – made a plea for greater flexibility in use of all Society funds.

4.4.4.7 Deborah Loveluck – stated firmly that when money is given to the College it does honour the purpose noted in the bequest. In the case of the OMSF the fund is comprised of a number of small donations. All unrestricted sources of funding are reviewed each year.

4.4.4.8 Maya Smolkova noted that some students feel that their financial ability to remain at the College is often at stake and it is important that each student feels comfortable and able to fit in. Reallocating money to support those students is to achieve a better use of all available resources.

4.4.4.9 Souradip Mookerjee – supported these points noting that he was grateful for the extra funding he had received.

4.4.4.10 The Chair responded by noting that process of giving such small grants, as had been the Society practice, was burdensome. Although the number of applications has been on a downward trend, albeit in exceptional times, nonetheless the proposal to streamline the process by integrating the Society funds with those of the College funds is the better route, providing it can be done without causing any difficulties. It will be more efficient and effective as the College knows their student needs better and can react faster to changes in needs or circumstances. Broadening the ambit therefore makes sense. In part the Society is responding to the fact that needs change from time to time and to a request from the College to help it meet some of its other obligations. If the rules are not changed then the Society will be unable to fund as wide a range of awards and grants as it might wish to. He emphasised that despite its name the rules of the OMSF can be changed and the possibility that this could be desirable or necessary was specifically anticipated by those who drew up its charter. The change will not prevent the use of the income in traditional areas of support and the change will be reviewed after a period of five years.

4.4.5 Change of name of the Society

John Wells said that the Society is examining ways of changing or augmenting its operations to be more inclusive especially for younger members. One immediate step was to clarify the purpose of the Society by adding the word “alumni” to the name.

4.4.5.1 Keith Cocker - Said he could not support the change – similar bodies have all sorts of names, and he feels the change is unnecessary.

4.4.5.2 Tuhin Imam – Welcomed the change as he was not sure what the Society did when he was an undergraduate.

4.4.5.3 Maya Smolkova – confirmed that many undergraduates do not know what the purpose of the Society is and thus is in favour of greater clarity with a name change.

4.4.5.4 Dr Garth Wilson enquired whether undergraduates are members of the Society. John Wells said that all students are student members and fellows are fellow members unless also graduates of the College when they are full members. Only alumni have voting rights at General meetings.

4.4.6 - Changes to responsibilities for producing the Society Magazine

The Chair invited Roger Stratford to address the meeting.

4.4.6.1 Roger said that many members had known for some time that he was seeking to reduce his workload. Whilst not the longest serving, the honour going to Captain Benstead he has been editor for nineteen years which is a considerable shift. The next magazine will follow same pattern as previous years and be the last where Hamish does the layout. For the first time the College did the bulk of the work associated with the formal part of the College Report. Thanks are due to Kat Steer and to Chris Thorne for pulling together the student related content and briefing the new student representatives.

The new Editorial Board is now appointed, and Roger will step down once the current magazine is published. He then invited the new Editor in Chief, Chris Catling to speak to the future.

4.4.6.2 Christopher noted that Roger will be a hard act to follow with the new Board of 11 needed to fill all the roles! The new Board will not meet until early in 2022 and he hoped it would not be like herding Cats! He opined that it will be no easy task to find the quality and range of content as in the past but is receiving great support from Deborah Loveluck and the College. The new arrangement is a big vote of confidence in the importance of the Magazine as a printed record of the annual activities and history of the College. The Wheel will continue to be published focusing on developments within the college and more ephemeral matters. Both are important and will be also available online.

4.4.7 – Charitable Status

It has been suggested as part of the review of the Society and its governance that there could be significant advantages in having Charitable Status. David Way believes that the process is not unduly onerous. It was proposed to establish a committee to investigate and evaluate the proposal and report back to the 2022 AGM with a recommendation.

5 Resolutions:

The specific resolutions thus brought to the AGM were:

5.1 To approve the changes to the rules of the OMSF to permit greater flexibility in the use of its income and change of the date to which the accounts are made up.

APPROVED – with 2 against and 3 abstentions

5.2 To note the Committee's intention to provide specific grants to the College from the assets of the Society to be paid immediately after approval at the AGM of £5,000 in respect of support of students and £5,000 as a contribution to the general costs of the College.

5.3 To approve the change of the name of the Society to add the word "Alumni" for purposes of greater clarity.

APPROVED – with 1 against

5.4 To approve the establishment of and appointments to an Editorial Board to produce the Society Magazine and the Editor in Chief will be an ex officio member of the Committee of the Society.

APPROVED – nem con

5.5 To approve the evaluation by the Committee of the implications of achieving Charitable Status for the Society.

APPROVED – with 1 abstention

5.6 To Approve the change of the rules of the Society including provisions to allow a valid General Meeting to be held by audio visual conference.

APPROVED – nem con

6 President's Remarks - The President thanked John Wells as retiring Chair, who had been a pleasure to work with, for all his considerable efforts and skill in securing the changes and putting the Society on a sound footing. She also noted that the Society greatly appreciated the enormous contribution that Roger Stratford had made and especially for his services over so many years to production and publication of the Society Magazine. She also thanked Dr John Little as retiring Treasurer for his contribution over so many years and acknowledged the generous support of Wendy Little.

7 College Review - There was insufficient time for Deborah Loveluck to give her normal College review.

8 Any other business:

8.1 Dr Garth Wilson drew the meetings attention to his interest in creating a college flag and enquired whether there might be interest from the alumni as he is in touch with a designer who can produce flags relatively inexpensively. It was noted there is an official College flag that is flown regularly but it is not available for sale to Alumni.

8.2 Herb Bate asked the meeting to consider making a gesture to the former secretary, David Peace who despite his travails remains in good spirits and reports positively via his Blog. The Chair was supported by Joanna who agreed to consider how to implement this thought.

9 Closing – There being no other matters raised the President closed the meeting wishing all those who attended and the remainder of the alumni body the very best and noting that her final duty as President will be to host the Reunion Dinner.

The 2022 AGM will be held on 17th September at 16:00 with the Reunion dinner at 19:00. It is to be fervently hoped this will be an in-person event.

The meeting closed at 17:30

Michael Roberts (1967)

Secretary