

# **The University of Birmingham Guild of Graduates and Alumni Association**

**Minutes of the One Hundred & Eleventh Annual General Meeting held Saturday, 30 September 2017 in the Aston Webb Building, University of Birmingham at 10:38 a.m.**

**The President, Sheila Oxspring, was in the Chair.**

## **Minutes**

### **Present**

A list of those members present was collated by the Alumni Office and can be found in Appendix A to the minutes. Staff from the Director of Development and Alumni Relations Office (DARO) were in attendance and are also listed in Appendix A.

### **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Steve Gregory, Nick Emery, Marcia Davies, Lesley and John Payne, Joe and Anne O'Meara and Billie Major.

### **Minutes of the 110<sup>th</sup> AGM**

These were approved as an accurate record of the proceedings of the 2016 AGM.

### **Matters arising from the Minutes**

There were no matters arising from these minutes.

### **President's Report**

The President gave her report which is attached at Appendix B.

### **Treasurer's Report and Annual Accounts**

The Treasurer, David Rigby, presented the annual accounts to 31 August 2017, which were circulated with the papers for the meeting. The GGAA's assets comprise £4,110.65 at the bank and £26.50 in petty cash. The only expenditure was for the Forum in 2016 and bank charges of £18/ quarter, totalling £72.00. The Treasurer explained how the account had now been moved to a Lloyds Bank Treasurer's account which does not incur recurrent charges while the account remains in credit.

There were no questions for the Treasurer.

Norma Broadbridge proposed and Steve Tomlinson seconded that the accounts be accepted and the proposal was passed unanimously.

## **Report from the Development and Alumni Relations Office**

Kerrie Holland, of DARO, reported on some of the highlights of the previous year.

Below is a summary of Kerrie's report to the meeting:

Introduction:

Some of the University's highlights will be shared throughout today – strong performance in the National Student Survey, Gold in the Teaching Excellence Framework and other commendations, and the opening of the University of Birmingham Dubai campus in 2018. Alumni in the Emirates and beyond are already supporting the University with recruiting students, and we are planning how to welcome those first students into our alumni community when they complete their courses.

The overview from the Development and Alumni Relations Office over the past 12 months:

- It has been another busy year at the University. The alumni teams welcomed over 2,500 to alumni events with a programme ranging from our ever-popular annual House of Lords reception to newer events – including academic research on the impact of Brexit, or air pollution in our cities in exclusive pods on the London Eye. We held our first event specifically for young alumni – asking 4 alumni to speak for 4 minutes each on their biggest mistake, in Birmingham city centre. In addition, more than 1800 people attended Book To The Future to hear alumni writers like Jed Mercurio (Line of Duty) and Clare Morrall (Astonishing Splashes of Colour).
- Alumni and friends have mobilised in force this year, with more than 1100 volunteers giving over 10,000 hours of time. This includes hundreds of mentors paired with students to give them advice, support and professional insight. As well as mentoring, volunteers have given invaluable support delivering guest lectures and seminars, providing internships, answering questions from prospective students and helping us access their networks around the world. I'd like to thank all our volunteers for their support.
- We are also incredibly grateful to all our supporters who collectively donated more than £6million to charitable projects at the University in the last year. This has funded research which matters - our appeal this summer for research into miscarriage will help find the causes of recurrent miscarriage and develop new, targeted treatments and was supported by more than 500 donors. As you would expect from a University founded on philanthropic principles, we are enabling bright young people to access the education they deserve and will be celebrating the generosity of donors to our Access to Education fund by featuring their names on a brick pathway in the new green heart of campus. I can't say too much about it (although some of you may have been involved in the filming for the launch video) but we will be building on the wonderful volunteer and charitable support and launching a very special appeal designed to change the lives of young people in just over a month's time. This will happen at the House of Lords on 3<sup>rd</sup> November.
- More than 8,000 alumni filled out the survey sent in October designed to evaluate the Economic, Social and Cultural Impact of the University - 94% indicated that their time here had improved their ability to do their job. 85% said they had got a better job.

University is a time for making friends and 91% confirmed that they had developed friendships and met new people here at Birmingham. And 81%-86% of alumni experienced increased self-esteem or increased self-confidence as a result of their qualification.

- We achieved 40,000 followers across the four alumni social media channels. We launched Instagram this year having seen all the new graduates switch from Twitter to Instagram in the six months between winter and summer degree congregations, and just reached 1,000 followers last week during Welcome. Graduation celebrations remain the busiest time for interactions, with almost 2million page impressions this summer. Thank you to all of the GGAA members who carried out ceremonial roles during the congregations.
- Finally, the print edition of Old Joe magazine is nearly complete – we are just waiting for photographs from the Reunions to be included before going to print. It will start to land at the beginning of November and gives a snapshot of just how fascinating Birmingham alumni are – from a Scottish clan chief to the guardian of the world’s largest biobank of samples of human genetic diseases (and one of nine members of the same family to study here!); the British Middleweight boxing champion and a group of graduates from 1967 who have made a human pyramid whenever they’ve met for more than 50 years.
- To close, one final update – we had alumni in all but 15 countries in the world but I can confirm that with the graduation of students from Cape Verde and Djibouti this is now just 13!

The President thanked Kerrie for her report and the support she and her colleagues have provided to the Guild throughout the year.

### **Report of the Alumni Awards Administrator**

Steven Gregory, GGAA Alumni Awards Administrator, was unable to be present. His report was delivered by Norma Broadbridge and is attached as Appendix C. The award of £1000 was divided equally between two recipients, Meera Burgess and Robert Parkinson. Since Steven completed his submission, Robert Parkinson has produced a report on his experiences at Dorset County Museum, and this is also attached as Appendix D. Meera Burgess, whose award was made for travel to Copenhagen to participate in a seminar on the use of language in healthcare, has not yet submitted her report.

### **Election of Officers and Committee**

The following were elected unopposed for the Offices indicated having been nominated in accordance with the GGAA Constitution.

President: Joe Cane

Vice-President: Sheila Oxspring

Secretary: David Rigby

Alumni Awards Administrator: Stephen Tomlinson

Committee: Lesley Payne, Norma Broadbridge, Joe O’Meara, Nina Waddell, John Akers, Jo Bentham

The Committee may also co-opt three additional members and will consider potential co-optees at its first meeting in October or November.

**Any Other Business**

Joe Cane proposed a vote of thanks to the retiring President, Sheila Oxspring, which was carried with acclaim.

The meeting closed at 11:02 a.m. and members dispersed to take part in the activities organised for the reunion day, including three GGAA lectures held in the afternoon.

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## Appendix A - List of people attending the 111<sup>th</sup> AGM

### Members

Janet C Emery  
Maureen Edge  
Judy Chow  
Joe Biddlestone  
David Rigby  
Mary Haire  
Brian McDonald  
Steve Tomlinson  
Sheila Oxspring  
Joe Cane  
Norma Broadbridge  
David Hazel  
Michael Parks  
Shelagh Facchini  
Heather Cannon  
Gail Tutcher  
John Akers  
Joanne Bentham  
Nina Waddell  
Ros Reynolds  
Sydney Richards

### DARO Staff

Simon Lerwill  
Claire O'Sullivan  
Kerrie Holland  
Anne-Marie Vassiliadis

## **Appendix B: President's Report 2017**

First of all, I would like to introduce myself. I'm Sheila Oxspring and I graduated in 1966 in Zoology and Comparative Physiology. I have been President of GGAA since Sept 2015.

### **November- Court nominations**

One of the first issues to arise this year, was GGAA Nominations for Court. The GGAA committee nominate 5 representatives to be members of Court. This last year 4 nominations had to be made (one of our representatives was not due for re-election). Putting in the nominations was not straightforward, and I got involved in some protracted correspondence with the Chair of Council.

It took a long time but in the end, we did achieve our full entitlement of 5 GGAA nominated members of Court who are Norma Broadbridge, Joe Biddlestone, John Craggs, Arthur Lee and Lesley Payne.

### **November - House of Lords Reception**

The House of Lords Reception in November was a lovely occasion hosted by our Chancellor, Lord Bilimoria and Professor Sir David Eastwood, both of whom gave very interesting talks. The event was held in a beautiful setting in a room at the House of Lords, overlooking the Thames. Many donors had been invited. Wine and canapes were excellent! Tickets for this event go on sale at the end of August but frequently sell out in 24 hours.

During November and December – GGAA developed a new and much improved method of working with DARO – Development and Alumni Relations Office. I met with Simon Lerwill (Director of DARO) and Claire O'Sullivan (Head of Supporter Engagement) in November and we agreed a number of ideas in order to improve communications between GGAA and DARO. Simon and then later Claire attended our GGAA Committee Meetings. More recently Claire has been travelling overseas on a regular basis, on behalf of the University, so Kerrie Holland (Head of Engagement) has been nominated to attend GGAA Committee Meetings in the future.

This new working relationship has proved mutually very helpful and we are now working much more closely together.

### **December and July Degree Congregation Processing**

GGAA representatives again processed at the December and July Degree Congregation Ceremonies. These are most enjoyable occasions and involve the GGAA representatives performing the important role of processing and of leading out the new graduates at the end of the degree congregation ceremonies. Many thanks to all of you who processed at both of these ceremonies.

We have also developed a closer working relationship this year, with the Graduation and Awards Officer who is responsible for the degree ceremonies. He has given us freedom to do on the spot training for the marshals and has also facilitated the printing of a written briefing about our processing role, in the degree congregation booklets. The ceremonies went very

well this year and we had very few hiccoughs during the processions.

### **December - Carol Service 5th December 2016**

Norma and I represented GGAA at the Annual Carol Service in the Great Hall, which is always a magnificent occasion and this year was no exception. As always it was extremely well attended. Very nice mince pies and mulled wine were served at the end of the service.

### **Annual Meeting – 9th March 2016**

In March, the university Annual Meeting is held in Bramall, following the meeting of Court. Together with other GGAA Committee Members, I attended this meeting which was hosted by the Chancellor, Lord Billimoria of Chelsea. The theme for this year's meeting was The Economic, Social and Cultural impact of the University of Birmingham.

There were 2 speakers: the Vice Chancellor, Sir David Eastwood and Francesca McDonagh, Head of retail banking at HSBC, wealth management UK and Europe. Sir David Eastwood spoke about the wonderful achievements and status of the University, the new buildings and developments at the University. Francesca McDonagh spoke about what bankers and the university have in common.

The meeting ended with a drinks and canapes which provided an opportunity to catch up and network with GGAA colleagues.

### **Midlands Branch**

There is not such good news about the Midlands Branch. Unfortunately, the Branch is seriously struggling because of lack of members and officers. Matters came to a head in June, following the resignation of the Branch Chair who also acted as Branch Secretary. Due to a lack of active volunteers coming forward, the Branch is now being forced to consider the possibility of closure.

### **GGAA Section of the Alumni Website**

This year, the GGAA Website has been reconstructed and is more user friendly. You will see a new look to the site which gives details of our constitution, activities and interests. It is much easier to access the site, either through a Google search or from the University Alumni website, home page.

### **Volunteering**

One of the very positive things to come out of our improved working relationship with DARO, the Development and Alumni Relations Office, has been to put us closer in touch with volunteering. I met with the Volunteer Relationship Manager, Lucy Partridge, who highlighted a variety of ways in which we can all get involved in volunteering. I got involved in one activity – helping to judge the annual competition for post graduate research. It was an interesting day judging posters, assessing presentations and undertaking question and answer sessions.

### Planning for today

One final function of GGAA committee is to help to plan for today. Our new working relationship with DARO has made this much easier. This year the reunion event is a much bigger affair than last year and a lot of effort has been put in to making today a very special. So, I do hope that everyone will enjoy the day and find that everything runs smoothly.

### THANK YOU

I am standing down as President this year due to excessive commitments elsewhere so before I finish I just want to say a few 'thank you's'. Firstly, to the GGAA committee who have been very supportive to me over the last 2 years. I feel I want to give special thanks to Norma Broadbridge who has kept an eye on me during my 2-year term of Presidency. She has always been there to help and advise me with her wealth of experience and wisdom. Thank you also Simon, Claire and Anne-Marie and your teams at DARO, without whose support we would find it difficult to function effectively. Thank you for working more closely with us.

Finally, a big Thank You to all of you for joining us today and I hope that you have a most enjoyable day. Congratulations to those of you who are celebrating your 40th, 45th, 50th and Golden anniversaries.

PLEASE make sure that you have signed in for this AGM and don't forget if you would like to get further involved, do make yourself known to myself or one of the committee.



## Appendix C – Report of Alumni Award Administrator, 2017

On Tuesday 28th March, the ‘Student Development and Graduate Travel Scholarship selection panel’ met to consider a total of 68 applications for the various classes of Student Development Bursaries for 2017.

Once again, many of the proposals related to what may be described as ‘ready-made’ packages provided by one or another commercial organization. While these may be beneficial for the participant to varying degrees, the primary aim seemed likely to be that of financial gain for the organizing body. Moreover, the panel felt that participation in such schemes would not likely offer an applicant the opportunity to advance their personal skills in the research and planning element expected to form part of the travel experience and thus were, for the most part, not suitable for an award.

Some proposals, however, did show a little more originality indicative of the requirement for more personal effort on the part of the applicant with regard to the planning of the project, as well as offering rewarding experiences during the period of travel. Of these, two in particular stood out as candidates for the Alumni Travel Award:

**Ms. Meera Burgess**, studying for her MA in Applied Linguistics, applied for a total of £740 to fund a visit to Copenhagen, Denmark, to take part in a seminar at which, together with her co-authors, she had been invited to give a presentation relating to their research on a project focusing on language use in healthcare in line with a new perspective currently emerging at the interface of cognitive science and figurative language use.

**Mr. Robert Parkinson**, studying for his MA International Heritage Management, who applied for a total of £510 to help finance a six-week stay at the Dorset County Museum where he had been invited to co-lead a project involving researching and interpreting museum objects currently in store, giving assistance in the building of an associated database, and helping with the production of a catalogue of objects.

Each of these schemes seemed to involve activities which would likely take the applicant beyond the sphere of their studies within the University in pursuance of a genuinely worthwhile activity of benefit to both the applicant and the wider community in a manner likely to reflect positively on the University of Birmingham. Both candidates were well supported by excellent references from their academic tutors. Therefore, each was awarded £500 of the total £1,000 available from the alumni fund.

At the time of preparing this report the projects outlined should have been completed, with reports being forwarded to Student Services in accordance with award criteria. I have written to Jessica Bates, Funding, Graduation, and Awards officer, but as yet I have received no response. Should reports be forthcoming I will forward them to the GGAA secretary upon receipt. [PMN: Report from Robert Parkinson subsequently received and follows at Appendix D]

**Steven Gregory Alumni Awards Administrator, 27 July 2017**

## Appendix D - Report from Robert Parkinson, recipient of an alumni travel award

### Heritage placement as part of MA, International Heritage Management, funded by the Student Development Scholarship

This Easter and summer period I undertook a heritage placement at the Dorset County Museum as part of the requirements for the MA International Heritage Management. The project ran intermittently to fit around my academic and employment needs, lasting from April till July 2017.

The Dorset County Museum is currently undergoing a period of broad change due to a multimillion pound rebuild. As part of this museum expansion there shall be a new collections management system installed at some point in the near future. This project came about as the current catalogue required updating, in preparation for the new catalogue. Catalogue management is an important factor in the successful running of a modern museum, and a necessary requirement of the museum's accreditation standard.

The placement principally involved a project to build a database/catalogue to industry standards. This involved researching the large numbers of museum objects currently in store across numerous locations and their historical interpretation. Many of these objects once deposited and accessioned to the museum were left in one of the various storage locations. As a consequence of the large numbers of accessioned museum items, funding issues over the years and the deemed lack of importance of many objects, a significant quantity of museum objects in storage were in a poor condition, with unclear or out of date referencing according to current collections management practice.

There were challenges that I came across during this placement. Because most museum staff are involved in overseeing the considerable change currently occurring at the museum, I was attached to two volunteers. Although this was an independent project, I required training and periodical guidance throughout to make sure project goals were regularly met. These two volunteers came to the museum for a few hours a week and were not easy to contact outside of work hours. This made asking questions and organising meetings a challenge. As a consequence, I had to devise methods to making certain I could progress forward until contact could be made. This allowed parts of the project to proceed until one of the two volunteers came to the museum.

During this placement, unexpected outcomes occurred. Additional small jobs needed attending to. One of these was to apply wood worming mixture to pieces of agricultural machinery that were infected. Although this was not part of building a digital catalogue, it is part of collections care, a fundamental part of running a museum.

This project has advanced my knowledge of collections management and the successful running of a modern museum. I have gained skills of working with volunteers and using my initiative of how to best manage my time to proactively reach targets and objectives. My ambition to enter the heritage sector has been aided no end by being funded to go on this placement through the skills I've attained.

I'd like to thank the University of Birmingham for the Student Development Fund, and the opportunity it gave to me to take up this placement, which has aided my professional development.

**Robert Parkinson 25/08/2017**

