



Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> November 2015

## St Aidan's College Alumni Association

### Minutes from the AGM held on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> November 2015

Time: 2pm

The Lindisfarne Centre, St Aidan's College

#### 1. Apologies

Paula Dawson

#### 2. Introduction – Susan Frenk

This meeting is being held with the aim to re-launch the Alumni Association. The Association has been run by a small committee recently but has still managed to produce a newsletter every two years. The annual reunions have had a less powerful response in recent years. The hope is that there will be an opportunity to hold a successful reunion for the College's 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in July 2017. 2017 also marks another Lumiere festival, which has proved a popular time for the 'Graduates Weekend'. It is agreed that meetings using Skype and other technology may now be most practical for the Association, rather than just face-to-face meetings.

#### 3. Review of the Constitution

A copy of the Association's current constitution was then circulated for the attendees to review and discuss. Some time was spent discussing the membership requirements of the association, in particular:

- Currently all new undergraduates pay a £30 association membership fee as part of their first College bill. Undergraduates who don't live in are not charged this fee. It was debated as to whether they should also be asked to pay the £30 fee, perhaps being a choice as to whether to opt in/out. [Publicity for the association in active groups in College and for them to play part in this raising its profile among current students.]
- The fee structure for postgraduate students is more difficult due to the different lengths/ types of courses. (e.g. 1 year master's programme and overseas students). The consensus was that the same £30 membership fee should be charged for all postgraduate students.
- There was some discussion on the exact eligibility requirements for membership. In particular clarification was sought on whether it is necessary to have graduated to be a member, for example some undergraduates come to study on a one year programme. It was agreed that any former member of the College rather than "any graduate" or "learning with a qualification" can be a member.

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At this point it was decided that although the constitution did need updating, a full review would take too long to be done at this meeting. Instead it was agreed that a review would be undertaken by the Association Committee, with the aim of presenting a revised constitution at the next AGM for potential adoption by the Association.

#### 4. Election of a chair

There was a call for a volunteer to chair the rest of the meeting. George Thomas was nominated, seconded and elected on a general aye.

#### 5. Welcome and update from Emma Fisher (nee Barley)

**Emma Fisher provided an update on the Association's activities over the past year, coupled with a bit of background on the Association. This update covered the four main areas of Reunions, Archives, the Website and the Newsletter:**

- **Reunions:** The last Reunion was 2012 with lower attendance than previously. Following that it was decided that all energies should be focused on the College's 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2017. The dates for this reunion have already been set for Friday 7<sup>th</sup> July- Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> July 2017. A program of events needs to be put together.
- **Archives:** The Association has already put together a significant collection of archive material. This is stored in climate-controlled and protected environment up at Palace Green. The current plan is to ensure that this archive is kept up-to-date by ensuring that a selection of College memorabilia is collected and added to it for each year group. There are plans afoot for a permanent display case to be purchased by the Association and erected in the College foyer. The intention is then to use this to display archive material on rotating basis.
- **Website:** The person who built and maintained the current website left the Association's committee a few years ago. Since then no one has taken the website on. Three volunteers came forward to Emma earlier this year, but having been sent information about the website, Emma has heard nothing more from them. Emma believes we need a volunteer(s) with some IT expertise to take on the website. There are also several alumni email addresses that have been set up that we no longer have access to. There is also a dormant Flickr photo page and a twitter page. There is also a digital Archive folder on line where some archive material has been scanned & stored.
- **Newsletter:** This is produced as a magazine. Historically it has been produced annually, but due to a shortage of help the frequency has dropped to every two years for the most recent two editions. It is hoped that publication will revert back to being annually. Emma is producing the newsletter for the first time this year. It had been hoped to have it all ready to send to the publisher at the end of November, but Emma is still waiting on a lot of promised content, so it likely to be later than that. The format for this edition will be identical to the previous few editions, this is due to Emma's inexperience in producing it and a lack of feedback on what alumni would like to see changed. Emma would appreciate some feedback on what people want to see in future editions of the magazine.
- Emma asked that it be minuted that the Alumni Association thank Jan Collinge and all the others that have helped her with the running of the Association over recent years

## 6. Financial Report

The current Treasurer, Matthew Spencer was unable to attend the meeting, but had emailed a brief report along with a copy of the accounts for the last financial year. These were shared with the AGM:

- There was confusion over the dates given on the accounts and hence the exact periods covered. There was also some uncertainty over whether the accounts showed actual or predicted expenditure. It was agreed that the accounts need to be discussed in more detail with the Treasurer and that this would be done by the new Committee
- There were questions raised around logistics e.g. account signatories. Emma Fisher was of the understanding that Matt was in full control of this. It was agreed that confirmation of the account signatories was needed.
- Ben Fisher asked if there was any formal process/protocol in place for capital spending from the Association on projects (e.g. how could the JCR apply for a grant and was there a policy of contribution matching). Emma Fisher was unaware of such protocols. It was decided that perhaps the new committee could investigate this.
- It was noted that the expenditure on the newsletter exceeded the annual income from subscriptions. So if the newsletter switched back to being annual rather than biennial, as planned, the Association would move to a negative annual cashflow position.
- This instigated a further discussion on the levels of membership fees that should be charged to new students. It was commented that the fee has been at £30 for at least 20 years. Based on this there were suggestions that the fee could be due an increase. However it was also noted that given the high levels of tuition and maintenance fees for Durham students it would be unpopular to raise the Association's membership fee, especially as currently the Association's profile is very low within the JCR.
- It was decided that the new Committee should review the production of the 2016 newsletter with a view to reducing costs if possible.
- It was also suggested that maybe persons who wished to receive a print copy (rather than just an electronic copy) should be asked to pay for it. Again it was agreed that this was to be investigated by the new Committee.

## 7. Feedback from Members

The meeting was opening up for a general discussion about the Association. The major points discussed were the newsletter and other methods of communication:

### **Newsletter:**

- Following the accounts review, there was discussion on the cost of the Newsletter. It currently seems large; the template is already designed, the only costs are printing and postage. Discussion around the need to mail them or could they be issued on request.
- Further discussion on the number of members affiliated with the Association. We currently have around 7000 accountable members, with 800 people interested in printed newsletters. Should members be charged for postage in the future?
- It is agreed that everybody should receive a digital PDF copy via email with an opt-in system for printed copy.

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- It is agreed that copies should be put onto the website and we should re-email the last newsletter.
- For the benefit of new Alumni Emma recapped the **newsletter content**:
  - o letter from the Principal,
  - o reports from JCR President,
  - o Reports form recipients of travel bursaries and conference awards,
  - o Degree results,
  - o College officer reports and an SCR report.
  - o Alumni can send reports/news in.
- Emma notes that any extra contributions to the newsletter would be fantastic and she encouraged everyone to provide feedback on it.
- It is agreed that a sports report, boat club report and report from clubs and societies to be included.

#### **Discussion moves onto other methods of communication:**

- **Newswire** is the University-wide email publication, giving University-wide news, coupled with news from the Colleges.
- Many questions are raised around the logistics of communication; it is clarified that DARO (Durham Alumni Relations Office) administers the contact lists.
- Debate around if Newswire communication is sufficient to provide College/Alumni updates; DARO have given guidelines to prevent 'bombardment' of alumni.
- It was agreed that having our own short email newsletters would be useful and permission from DARO would be sought.
- Further questions of access to email address, data protection issues, the 'quality' of the addresses i.e updated email addresses, number of bounced emails etc. It is agreed that Alice Dee will meet with DARO to clarify the email and communications status.
- Discussion moves onto networking methods of communication. A **Facebook** group for the Alumni plus a **LinkedIn** network would allow easy opt-in access and attract people who may have unsubscribed from DARO.
- It is agreed that the Dunelm emails are not being used. Concerns are raised around social media accounts but it is agreed that traditional methods of communication need to be reviewed.
- Website: it is acknowledged that the website is out of date. It is agreed that a Digital strategy is needed and this will be discussed once the website team have made some progress.

## **8. Committee Structure**

A potential new committee structure has previously been discussed by Emma Fisher, Alice Dee and Susan Frenk.

- It is agreed that the College Bursar should be added into the structure as an ex-officio member.
- It was agreed that a vice-Treasurer is required to allow access to the accounts in the absence of the Treasurer when needed and to enable the work load to be split.
- Discussion around the need for an assistant or vice-Secretary but this is not agreed.
- Marketing and media roles are required, discussion on omni-channel marketing.

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- Discussion around a student representative on the committee. Further to this, representatives of year blocks of graduates, e.g one rep for 2000-2005 students.
- It is acknowledged that the creation of links with professionals for careers progression advice would be useful for current students. Perhaps a role for getting people to talk about careers. There is an 'After Aidan's' initiative for the Alumni to support existing students. This idea includes a database for use across the Colleges to cover a full range of careers. To form communications and raise Alumni awareness.

The following committee structure is agreed:

- Ex-Officio positions:
  - Principal,
  - Vice-Principal
  - Bursar
  - JCR President
  - SCR President
- Elected positions:
  - Treasurer
  - Vice-Treasurer
  - Secretary
  - Reunion officers x2
  - Newsletter officers x2
  - Web manager
  - Digital communications officer
  - Archivist
  - Current student representatives (maximum of 1 per year group and to include undergraduates and postgraduates).

## 9. Election to Committee Positions

Nominations were then sought from the floor to fill the elected committee positions which were filled as follows:

- Treasurer: Matthew Spencer
  - Vice Treasurer: Charlotte Liles
  - Reunion Officers: Michael Benbow, Edward Smith and Ben Fisher.
  - Newsletters Officers: Emma Fisher and Hannah Futter
  - Web manager: Kenneth Sandman
  - Digital Communications Officer: Ethan Tamlyn
  - Archivist: Josh Stocco
  - Secretary - Alice Dee
- Discussion around defining some roles, in particular Secretary. It was agreed that roles may need to be revisited in the future when it becomes clearer just how much work will be involved with each of them.

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- It is agreed that the Archivist should be in charge of memorabilia kept at the Place Green Library. They should liaise with the JCR to ensure that publications, like the Freshers' handbook, are added to the archive.
- It is discussed that having somebody based in College/an existing member of staff as a point of contact would be needed. However Susan Frenk & Stefan Klidzia confirmed that there was currently no capacity for existing staff to take on such a role.
- It is agreed that for AGMs we should elect a rolling Chair.

## 10. Association Aims

There was much discussion about how the Association had operated in the past, and how we think that could/should change going forwards, which involved lots of "big" ideas for the future. Included within this it was agreed that a well attended Reunion weekend in 2017 should be a focus of the Association.

However it was decided that perhaps it would be more beneficial, given the infancy of the new committee, to set five short term goals, that we would look to achieve in the next six months. They were:

1. Continue on building up the Association's archive of College memorabilia
2. Look to arrange an "informal" alumni event - perhaps away from Durham
3. Update the Association's website and develop its social media presence
4. Move forward the planned Alumni careers mentoring service for current Students - "After Aidan's"
5. Review and update the Association's constitution

In addition to this 2015 edition of the Newsletter, the first for two years, was nearing completion and planned for publication in January 2016.

## 11. Any Other Business

Please feel free to raise any other business here.

- Edward Smith (who is Durham Cathedral patron) suggests working with the Cathedral, perhaps a partnership. It is agreed any work should be an informal agreement as we are a multi-faith College.
- There is a discussion on the role of the Association in fundraising for the College. Some present felt that this should not be a primary aim of the Association. Instead it is argued that if the Association becomes more active and visible, funding will indirectly be generated.
- Discussion around increasing the membership to £40 in the short term. It is agreed that it is already expensive and students now are already paying the highest level of fees.
- Discussion of possible fundraising events (e.g. auctions, selling of college memorabilia/clothing.)
- Overall, communication is a main aim for improvement.
- The option of Committee stash is floated.
- Thanks are given to Alice Dee and Emma Fisher for the organisation of the AGM

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- It is unanimously agreed that thanks should be given to Jan Collinge for the huge amount of work that she has done for the Association over many years.
- All present at the AGM Thanked George Thomas for chairing the meeting.
- Matthew Mack was also thanked for taking a minute of the meeting

The meeting was closed at 4pm.