

Minutes for the Annual General Meeting of the Oratory School Society 2018

The East India Club at 7.15pm on Friday 14th December 2018

Committee Present:

D Connolly
M Hasslacher
J Sehmer
H Gilbert
T Williams

School Present:

R Rawlings
J Smith

With the dull thud of David Connolly's pen against a not very resonant tumbler, the room fell slowly silent and the meeting began. Welcome from David Connolly (DC) to everyone, in particular, Rachel Rawlins (RR), Bishop Robert and Joe Smith (JS).

1. Minutes of last AGM (1st December 2017)

There were no comments.

Proposer: Jamie Sehmer

Seconder: Michael Hasslacher

2. Matters Arising

The issue of honorary membership was raised at last year's AGM. Since then the committee made contact with the school for a list of staff who have either retired or still employed with a good length of service to discuss who could be eligible for honorary membership. Some concerns were raised regarding data privacy associated with sharing individuals length of employment. DC and RR had a brief interaction regarding this issue to get it back on track. The School will need to contact any staff given honorary membership due to the data issues.

DC was asked if honorary membership is by invitation or an automatic right. DC responded that it is by invitation, some other schools have a more formulaic process by virtue of a staff member's length of service. However, within our society an individual is chosen according to their contribution to the School and Association, they are then invited after being approved at an AGM to accept the invitation to become an Honorary Member. DC added that this is a process that needs to be looked at in more detail and could be streamlined somewhat as there is no clear process.

3. Officers for 2018/19:

DC highlighted that the only change to the committee is the welcome addition of Ross Cullen

(RC) who has been proposed as the new Honorary Secretary and accepted that role.

Proposer: Christopher Bacon

Seconder: Michael Fallowell

4. Financial Accounts

Our esteemed Treasurer, Henry Gilbert (HG), took to the floor to enlighten us on our finances. Thanks was given to Jamie Sehmer (JS) for his role as Honorary Auditor of the accounts. We had a good year on the investments and a healthy income. We spent £500 sponsoring James Richardson for performing the mighty impressive feat of completing a number of marathons in a very short amount of time and a couple of Pereira Awards, that will be discussed later.

Proposer: James May

Seconder: Malcolm Coury (MC)

5. Future of OSS

DC provided us with the exciting key update that the school has created a new position, the role of Head of Development and Alumni Relations, taken up by Rachel Rawlings. Having worked at St. Hughes College at Oxford University in a similar role, RR has significant experience in this field. Since Rachel joined in late summer (August), we've had a number of conversations between different committee members to discuss what we as a committee, a society and the School want to achieve. We've discussed issues such as the website, database, reunion events, OO sport, Pereira Award, etc. A hugely positive sign is the total alignment between what we were hoping to achieve and Rachel's plans. Rachel will be spearheading many of the initiatives, will communicate with us what she's working on, use us as a sounding board and to help spread the word. It's an exciting time now that there's a dedicated role at the School.

DC noted that it will be reflected in the accounts of this year that as a one-off gesture of support we agreed to partially fund the setting up of this role and Development Office. This will be done by writing off a loan to the Foundation of £15,000 for them to provide to the School. This is a real step-change in the future of the Society and engagement with Old Oratorians.

Christopher Bacon (CB) asked what the aims of the OS Society are. DC responded, that over the years we've achieved a fairly limited set of outcomes. We've held the AGM and annual dinners, supported OO sporting events and other endeavours through the Pereira Award and held the occasional city drinks, much of this helped by Dora Nash (DN). Going forward, now with Rachel at the School, we are looking to broaden our sphere of influence and reconnect with more Old Oratorians. One of the longer-term aims of the Society should be supporting the School financially through fundraising initiatives, but also in many softer ways such as mentoring, careers advice, careers opportunities and more. With Rachel as a resource we've never had previously, we're in a very positive place.

Michael Fallowell (MF) enquired what the Societies funds are for. DC responded that 4-5 years ago, the Foundation proposed whether the Society should gift its surplus funds to the Foundation to help with its charitable purposes, such as scholarships/bursaries/facilities at the School/etc. However, the issue was raised of how would the Society still run without any funds. MF added that he didn't believe we should be giving our funds up but that we should use our surplus income to do a little more than we're currently doing. HG added that our investments are subject to Capital Gains Tax and therefore the funds we look to utilise each year are only the £10k or so dividend income. If we look forward into the future this will easily be used up with more young dinner attendees subsidies, increased numbers of Pereira Awards, sports team subsidies and supporting more events organised by Rachel.

6. OSS Sport

HG passed the thanks from the shooting team for the donation from Society for their tour to Jersey. They successfully beat Jersey and the UK league team and also picked up a number of individual awards. Charlie Dar has also been chosen for the under-21 World Championships team which will be competing in New Zealand in January. Congratulations were wished by all and a round of applause. Well done.

DC added that football was organised but unfortunately cancelled due to inclement weather at the start of January and an Old Oratorian cricket match occurred in June. MC added that he had attended the last three but was unsure how to actually play, he added that not many of the Old Oratorians looked very old. Michael Hasslacher (MH) mentioned emailing Steve Tomlinson to secure a place. DC noted that we should make the process clearer and ensure that these opportunities are made available to the entire Society through the new online network and emails that Rachel is working on.

7. Any other business

Logo

A question was raised regarding the rebranding of the Oratory logo and its more modern font. DC added that this was a decision of the School and not the Society. MH added that the new font is used in certain marketing areas but that the old font and logo is still used by the Association.

Alumni Network and the OPS

DC then enlightened us with a few details of the new network the School is looking to build to connect Old Oratorians (boys and girls) and parents of the Oratory School and the Oratory Prep School. He continued that the Society is specific to the Oratory School in its founding deeds. The Society is funded by a small levy given per pupil for the Oratory School but not the Oratory Prep School. DC posed the questions that as the School looks to develop its alumni network, should the Society look to expand cover both men and women of both schools. It was pointed out that from the Prep School you can move on to anywhere, even Rugby, where you would then fall under that alumni association. Perhaps it is a little premature to look at inviting the Prep School leavers into the Society. There was general agreement with this point and that the rules could be altered if the situation ever arose of a woman from the Prep School expressing a strong desire to join the Society.

Pereira Award

Tommy Williams (TW) gave us an update on the Pereira Award 2018. We had two applications this year, one from Shoichi Sado (who was in attendance) for a research grant to dive into the great architectural masterpieces of Le Corbusier. TW commended the application for its professionalism, the best application we've ever received. Max Lau (ML) also applied for a research trip to south-eastern Turkey to the classical region of Cilicia, and survey surviving buildings from the twelfth century in order to establish whether they are built in Komnenian style. His trip was delayed due to the sensitive political situation in Turkey and will be heading off early next year instead. DC added that with the improved effectiveness of the new website and network we should be able to advertise the Pereira Award more widely going forward.

The End

And with that, the meeting drew to a close and DC announced that dinner is being served in the East India Room.