

**DOWNING COLLEGE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION****97<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting****Howard Theatre****Saturday, 28 September 2024, 5 pm****1. Minutes of the 96th Annual General Meeting**

*The Minutes were approved.*

**2. Matters Arising**

*There were no matters arising*

**3. President's Review**

*The President reminded those at the meeting that the Development Office now produces the Association newsletter, which is now known as the Downing Column. He thanked Jo Finnie Jones and her team for their hard work in putting the magazine together. The President added that 75% of the income of the Association as derived from the annual membership fee is now retained by the College to contribute towards the cost of producing the magazine. The College also covers the Association's administrative costs, and this is all set out in the Memorandum of Understanding between the College and the Association, and which is available on the College website.*

*The President went on to say that earlier this year the College proposed to the Association that the membership fee should come to an end, and the Association agreed with this suggestion. The costs of producing the magazine will still be borne by the College as will the Association's administrative costs. This proposal has necessitated a change to the Memorandum of Understanding and the Rules of the Association. This change has prompted a wider discussion between the Association and the College about the role of the Association. This*

*has led to the creation of a three-year implementation plan, which is being developed by the President-Elect, Julia Harrison.*

*The Association intends to continue to raise funds to support the Student Hardship Fund but it also wants to increasingly facilitate communication between the College and alumni, and between alumni. The Association is presently looking at ways in which it can improve its presence on social media, for which the President thanked Elizabeth Bostock and Sadie Hubbard for their work in that area.*

*The President said that discussions are underway about reinstating an annual or biannual event in London and possibility some regional events too. The London event could be built around a talk by an alumni. The Association has also focussed on enabling students to seek assistance on career development from alumni. Last year, the Downing Career Path was launched whereby alumni have volunteered to speak to students and offer advice on how to pursue their chosen careers. Earlier this year, the Downing Alumni Professional Network was launched on LinkedIn to provide in-career counselling for alumni, over 1,000 of whom have signed up to the network already. The President thanked Sadie Hubbard and Lydia Donaldson for their work on this.*

*The President pointed out that the balance of undergraduates and postgraduates in the College had changed substantially in recent years, with the result that the Association is keen to ensure that postgraduate alumni are properly represented on the Executive Committee. To that end, a proposal is in place to increase the number of elected members on the Executive Committee from 6 to 8 provided that two of them are postgraduates.*

*The President invited those at the meeting to speak to any member of the Executive Committee with any ideas for further initiatives the Association could engage in.*

*Finally, the President acknowledged the recent passing of two outstanding former members of the Association. Roy Farmer was President in 2005 / 2006 when the Student Hardship Fund was set up. He continued to attend Executive*

*Committee meetings long after his term of office had ended, and, indeed, he was at a meeting only a matter of days before he passed away. Martin Mays was involved with the Association from 1977 to 2019, first as Treasurer, then as President, and finally as auditor. This is the longest period of continuous involvement that any person has had in the life of the Association. The President expressed the gratitude of everyone to the immense contributions made by both Roy and Martin.*

#### 4. Treasurer's report and Accounts for 2023 – 2024

*The Treasurer informed the meeting that the accounts and his report had been circulated in advance. He noted that overall the Association broke even this year with a £23,000 surplus and underlying reserves of £37,341. In response to a question from the audience about the income of the Association, the Treasurer pointed out that the Association's income comes from the endowment, interest in reserves and merchandise sales. He added that income from merchandise is down from the previous year but above the average for the past five years. The endowment currently stands at £62,000. In response to another question from the audience, the Treasurer said that the Association does not have to maintain reserves of £37,000, and could lower the reserves to £17,000 thereby using the difference to support further engagement with the student body. The meeting approved the report.*

#### 5. Report on sales of merchandise

*Sharon Gimson, the head of the Merchandise Working Group, informed the meeting that today the Association had made sales of around £1,000, following from sales of £5,359 in 23/24. She said that the Association's merchandise was available for sale on its website, which has been updated, and the new version will be live very soon. She praised the work of the volunteers who give up their time to sell merchandise. She singled out the late Roy Farmer and Peter Whittington in particular. Sales of merchandise have enabled the Association to provide 61 grants to students totalling £921.00. Ms Gimson said that if anyone at the meeting would like to help with merchandise sales in the future they should speak to her.*

*In response to a question from the audience about overseas sales, Ms Gimson said the Association could not do that because of the cost of postage. Another audience member suggested the Association could produce a Downing golf cap. Ms Gimson said the group would look into that at its next meeting. A different audience member asked if the Association could enter into an arrangement with an official supplier of merchandise who could sell these items on behalf of the Association and take a cut of the profits. Ms Gimson said the Association had its own margins which would make it difficult to have an arrangement like that. Finally, an audience member queried whether the College had protected its coat of arms to prevent it being used by any other person or organisation. Jo Finnie Jones said that was indeed the position and the coat of arms was appropriately protected from being commercially exploited by others.*

## 6. Address by the Vice Master

*The Vice Master paid tribute to the former Master, Alan Bookbinder, and his wife, Vicky. She also welcomed the new Master, Graham Virgo, who will be at the helm of the College for 10 years. She noted that the fellowship of the College is growing, as is the student body, with the result that the College's local footprint was expanding too. The College aims to provide as much accommodation on site for the student body as possible. The Vice Master said that the College has a new finance bursar, and that a new senior bursar will be in post in November. She added that the College is fully staff when it comes to housekeeping. The Vice Master acknowledged the contributions that Dick Grove and Martin Mays had made to the College during their lives. An event will be held in College to mark Martin's life. The Vice Master said that there will be a financial shortfall of around £1m this financial year, in part because of over optimism around the revenues that would be generated by the summer schools, but also because of a deliberate decision to invest in the promotion of resilience within College. That said, income from conferences was up and the College had received a considerable government grant to review the College's energy policy. The result of the review was that it would cost around £29 million for the College to become carbon neutral, which is unaffordable. However, there was much arising from the review that could be implemented to*

*improve the carbon footprint of the College. The Vice Master said that significant building works in and around College were underway to provide 200 additional rooms. The first of these works will be above the Cuba Libre bar and restaurant opposite the main gates of the College. Planning permission is in place to create 27 rooms in that space. That would should be completed by Michaelmas 2026. The next stage of the works will be Singer 2 and Singer 3. Thereafter, it is possible the College could develop Mandela House, where the Council offices are, or even the Royal Cambridge Hotel. If all of those projects came to fruition the cost to the College would be in the region of £40 million. Some of that could be funded by donations, but the College would also have to consider taking loans. The College has recently purchase Bennett Place, opposite Tennis Court Road, to provide new supervision rooms, rooms for the fellows and even storage for the Association. A member of the audience asked why the College did not simply build on the fourth side of the quad. The Vice Master said that many people did not want to build on the paddock, and the Master added that building a fourth side would be prohibitively expensive. Other projects would provide much better value for money. Another audience member asked if it would be possible to read the results of the review mentioned by the Vice Master. She said the report could be published on the College website. The Master reiterated that many of the elements of the report could be implemented more cheaply than the review suggests in order to move towards net zero.*

## **7. Election of Officers**

*Proposed:*

*President Julia Harrison (1981)*

*President Elect Dominic Reid (1981)*

*Honorary Auditors Dr JSL McCombie*

*Mr RK Taplin*

*Election of member of Executive Committee*

*Proposed Katie Marshall (2007)*

*All of these appointments were approved.*

## 8. The Rules of the Association

*The following amendments were proposed:*

- *The deletion from Rule 2: “to publish and circulate an Annual Newsletter*
- *Rule 6 shall read: members of the Association shall not be required to pay a subscription. As at 1 October 2024 there will be no refunds of subscriptions to members.*
- *Rule 8 shall read: The management of the Association and the election of members shall be in the hands of an Executive Committee which shall consist of a President, the immediate Past President, a President-elect, one or more Secretaries, a Treasurer and eight elected members, provided at least two are post graduate student members. The Vice Master, Senior Tutor, the Development Director and the Presidents of the JCR and MCR shall be members ex-officio. Any person co-opted to chair a sub-committee shall be deemed to be an ex-officio member. Ex-officio members may nominate a person to attend any meeting of the Executive Committee in their place.*
- *Rules 11A – 17 shall be renumbered 12 – 18.*

*Those changes were approved.*

## 9. The Annual Dinner

*To take place in Hall this evening at the conclusion of Evensong*

## 10. Any Other Business

*None*

## 11. Date of Next Meeting: **Saturday 27 September 2025**