

University of Edinburgh Graduates' Association – AGM 2023 Minutes

Minutes of the UEGA Annual General Meeting held at 12 noon on Thursday, 10 April 2023 in the Raeburn Room, Old College, EH8 9YL.

Present: Mr David Gilmour, President in the Chair; Ann Henderson, Vice President; Mr David Lamb, Hon Secretary; Mr T. Finlay Marshall, Hon Treasurer; Prof. Stephen Hillier, Interim Editor; Mr John R. Sutherland, Production Editor; Mrs Oonagh Gray, Mr Tom Gray, Mr Hamish McKenzie; Ms Elizabeth Owens; Mr Ritchie Walker; Mr Malcolm Wylie.

The President welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that the delay in holding this meeting was due to unforeseen industrial action at the University in February 2023.

Apologies: These had been received from Mr Peter B. Freshwater, Editor Emeritus; Dr Margaret Alexander; Dr S. Michael Langdon; and Lady Lucinda L. Mackay.

1. The Minutes of AGM 2022 and Matters Arising: The AGM 2022 was held on 10 February 2022. The minutes of that meeting were approved with the adjustment that Mrs Oonagh Gray had attended via Zoom. DG would sign a copy at a later date.

2. Finance, Presentation of Accounts: The accounts were presented by FM with the following comments. In general, UEGA is in a slightly poorer position than at the last AGM; annual subscription income had dropped by ~£2,000 but a slight boost had been provided by an increased attendance at events. UEGA remains heavily dependent on donations and on our Annual University Grant of £4,500. Without the grant, UEGA is almost out of money.

Wages and salaries are slightly up due to the effect of furlough payments being received. Due to 3 years of COVID-19, there has been a noticeable change in membership habits; events are not supported as well as they used to be.

Regarding the future, the principal change was that there is currently no Assistant Secretary in the office, which means that wages are significantly less. Without a significant increase in subscriptions, UEGA may not be able to afford to employ an Assistant Secretary and/or an Assistant Treasurer. The current Office Bearers were volunteering their time to assist JS in taking up the slack left by the death of Mrs Joan Meikle. This is workable short-term arrangement, but will not be sufficient in the long term.

Annual income is holding up for the next year, but events are not producing income. Events remain essential to UEGA's ongoing work. There has also been a significant drop in donations received. In short, UEGA needs new members urgently. We need the co-operation of D&A, within the bounds of GDPR, and in keeping with their objectives, to recruit new members to UEGA.

FM was concerned with the future direction of UEGA, and suggested that the current reduced expenditure may be a short respite while we regroup. He indicated that the Honorary Accounts Examiner, Mr Eric Brown, had raised questions about UEGA's future. FM had informed EB that these questions would be addressed. DG thanked FM for his report.

3. Editorial Committee Report: The following report was delivered by SH and JS. The year leading up to this AGM has been one of change for the *University of Edinburgh Journal* and its Editorial Team. Mr Peter B. Freshwater, who has served as Honorary Editor of the *Journal* for more than 11 years, stepped down after the publication of the Winter 2022 issue. SH, with the approval of the Editorial Committee, and the blessing of PF, stepped away from his role as Vice President of UEGA to take up the post of Interim Editor. SH will remain in post until a process by which a new Editor can be formally appointed in the lead up to the relaunch of the *Journal* ahead of its 2025

centenary. PF has agreed to remain in contact with the Editorial Team as Editor Emeritus in order to smooth the transition and provide important advice and contacts for the *Journal*.

Perhaps the most significant development in the past year has been our progress in developing a stronger relationship with the University of Edinburgh through D&A. At the outset of this process, the Editorial Team sought to address three basic questions: 1) What is the purpose of the *Journal*? 2) Who reads the *Journal*? 3) What is the impact of the *Journal*? We also identified some fundamental needs for the continuance of the *Journal*, including ongoing engagement with D&A; logistical support in the form of IT help, social media engagement, and website support; and financial support until such time as the *Journal* is again self-sufficient. Three meetings of the *Journal* Working Group, comprised of representatives from the *Journal*'s Editorial Team and D&A, have taken place at which these questions and needs have been discussed. Our progress has included agreement on a mission statement for the *Journal*:

Established in 1925, the *University of Edinburgh Journal* is an editorially independent, scholarly, and multi-disciplinary journal with two main aims. First, to publish academic and creative writing by students, staff, alumni, and friends of the University of Edinburgh. Second, to continue to build a detailed archive on the history and heritage of the University and of its people. Topics covered relate to any relevant aspect of University life – past, present, and future – and are of interest to diverse specialist branches of the academic community, at home and abroad.

Further, areas of co-operation and support have been agreed, including support in distributing the *Journal*, website and social media consultation, and agreement for ongoing engagement with the *Journal* in its future development. Further meetings are planned, and the Editorial Team will continue to report progress to the Executive Committee in its regular meetings and at the AGM in 2024.

The Editorial Team has also held several meetings with sabbatical officers from EUSA in order to strengthen the *Journal*'s relationship with students. These have resulted in *Journals* being distributed to current students in union buildings to increase its profile and cultivate engagement. Internships for students, including an Assistant Student Editor, were being investigated, and calls for submission of material were also being considered in the form of posters and items in EUSA's regular newsletter. Lastly, the Editorial Team has begun developing a permanent contact at EUSA to avoid losing momentum when sabbaticals end their term of office.

SH and JS, now Production Editor of the *Journal*, have been working steadily to increase membership of the Editorial Committee and to form a new Editorial Advisory Board, which would oversee the operations of the *Journal*. Dr Shenxiao Tong, recently retired Academic Support Library for the Main University Library, had been approached to join the Editorial Committee and it is hoped that he will attend at their next meeting in August 2023. AH has also agreed to join the Editorial Committee. Meetings have also been held in November 2022, and January and March of 2023 to discuss the future of the *Journal*. The Editorial Team has also drawn up a list of potential Committee and Board members from across the University community and has begun reaching out to these individuals.

The Summer and Winter 2022 issues of the *Journal* were published successfully and distributed to all subscribers by print and PDF according to their listed preference in our records. This was done at a cost of **£2,654.77** for 400 copies of the Summer issue, and **£3,337.72** for 750 copies of the Winter issue. The additional number of Winter issues were printed in order to provide a surplus for use in promotional endeavours, such as our meetings with D&A and EUSA.

The Editorial Team is moving forward with a selection of articles and reviews for the Summer and Winter 2023 issues, including the beginnings of our Legacy Articles Project. This project aims to use old articles from the *Journal*'s archive to solicit modern commentaries on issues that remain

relevant to today's readers. Old and new articles will be published side by side in the *Journal* to provide proper context for the legacy article, and the best possible comparison point for the modern-day commentary. Several of these new articles have been solicited and are in the process of being written. Along with these, we have continued to solicit fresh articles on a range of topics, and are grateful to receive reviews of books and other media, and obituary clippings for inclusion at the end of each issue.

The *Journal's* archive and website operations have been scaled back while JS helps to cover the duties normally covered by the late Mrs Joan Meikle. Until a new Administrative Assistant can be appointed, scanning of back issues and significant updates of the website and Facebook page have been placed on hold.

The fourth issue of *The Almanac* was published in January 2023, containing the papers for this event amongst other items. It also included events information for our wider Spring programme. We encourage our subscribers to engage with *The Almanac* and the website as much as possible in terms of booking tickets for events and sending in news of themselves or other items of interest. It is important to restate that ordering tickets through our website is the most efficient, cost-effective, and practical method of tracking attendance at events, informing subscribers en masse of changes or cancellations, and tracking data associated with our events for future planning. Furthermore, any subscribers who haven't already provided our team with an email address for future communications, we encourage you to do so.

SH recorded his thanks to JS and PF for their assistance in producing the *Journal*. He also reiterated that ongoing talks with D&A are constructive. AH asked if the *Journal* could be brought to the wider attention of University Court, possibly supported by EUSA – JS confirmed this would be investigated. DG thanked SH for delivering the report.

4. President's Report: The report was delivered by DG, focussing on events. Firstly, the membership number was reported as **788** at the time of this meeting.

On 22 March, the Annual Reception and Dinner was held with guest speaker, Deborah Kayembe. On 22 June, the visit to Abbotsford House was planned. However, due to COVID-19, and several members pulling out of attending, the event was cancelled.

DG comments on the loss of Joan Meikle, saying that he didn't realise how much was done by JM until she was no longer with us. He confirmed that an appreciation would appear in the *Journal*, and that the funeral was well-attended. DG thanked JS for taking on some additional duties in the short-term, and commented that the future staffing situation of UEGA was still uncertain.

On the death of HRH Queen Elizabeth II, DG wrote to the Patron to express condolences on behalf of UEGA. He had received a very warm response.

On 22 October, the members lunch with guest speaker Dr Elizabeth Cumming was held. This was widely reported to be a huge success. On 11 November, DG laid a wreath at the Old College remembrance service on behalf of UEGA. He reported that the service was now back to normal after COVID-19.

On 12 December, the UEGA Christmas Lunch was held. This was well attended, and resulted in very positive relations between members. One comment was made to ensure that soft drinks were made available as an alternative to wine at future events. Coffee morning had been restarted in the Balcony Café at the National Museum of Scotland – DG encouraged members to attend.

The next event is due to be the Annual Reception and dinner. The Lord Lyon King of Arms, Joe Morrow, was due to speak at the event. However, due to unexpected surgery, this had to be cancelled. Iain Gordon Brown was approached to speak on 'Auld Greekie', but cannot make it. FM

has enlisted Mhari MacPherson, winner of Martha Hamilton prize for creative writing, to give a short informal talk instead.

On 23 May, a Tour of St Mary's Song School is due to be held, led by DG who volunteers for the school. The cost per ticket is £10, which includes a donation for St Mary's. DG encouraged members to attend.

RW thanked DG for delivering his report and for writing to the Patron. He asked if news of this could be relayed in the *Journal*. He also asked if events information could be included with the *Journal* in the future. SH responded that this question raises the issue of the separation of interests of UEGA and the *Journal*. This would be discussed at length with D&A. JS commented that events information would be contained to *The Almanac* for the time being, but that the issue, with DG's approval, would be brought back to the Editorial Committee for discussion.

5. Relations with the D&A Department: See Editorial Committee Report for details on this.

6. Election of Honorary Office Bearers (President, Vice President, Honorary Treasurer, Honorary Secretary, Interim Editor): The following individuals were nominated for, and accepted the posts of **President:** David Gilmour; **Vice President:** Ann Henderson; **Honorary Secretary:** David Lamb; **Honorary Treasurer:** T. Finlay Marshall; and **Interim Editor:** Steve Hillier.

7. Appointment of Accounts Examiner: FM confirmed that Eric Brown would continue as the Accounts Examiner.

8. Executive Committee Elections: DL proposed Hamish McKenzie for the Executive Committee. This was accepted by HM, seconded by FM, and approved by the meeting.

9. AOCB: JS commented on the need to hold an event to celebrate the tenure of PF. DL and SH supported this, suggesting it could be an opportunity to invite significant members of the University community to participate. JS would investigate further with PF to determine his wishes. RW asked that a membership event be considered for this if appropriate.

10. Date of Next Meeting: It was agreed that the next AGM should begin an hour earlier at **11.00 am** on **Thursday, 8 February 2024**. A vote of thanks was proposed to DG.