

SOMERVILLE COLLEGE

OXFORD

The Annual General Meeting of the Somerville Association was held on Saturday 10th March 2018 at 2.15pm in the Flora Anderson Hall, Somerville College.

Susan Scholefield retired as the President of the SA at the end of the last calendar year and her replacement is due to be elected at this meeting. SA Committee member Natasha Robinson (NR) welcomed everyone to the AGM. NR used this opportunity to thank Susan for her unwavering commitment to the SA and in particular, her support for the eMentoring and Year Rep initiatives, both successfully launched during her tenure.

1. The minutes of the AGM held on 11th March 2017 were approved
2. There were no matters arising.
3. Election to the Committee:

NR thanked the outgoing longstanding Committee members Nick Cooper (2008, 6 years) and Richard Forrest (1994, 7 years) for their commitment to the group and their support to the College.

Alison Wolf (Potter, 1967 PPE), Baroness Wolf of Dulwich, CBE, Sir Roy Griffiths Professor of Public Sector Management, King's College, London, Honorary Fellow of Somerville was elected as President of the Somerville Association and Chair of the Committee (proposed and seconded by the Committee).

Elected to the Committee:

- (a) **Pia Pasternack** (1982, Philosophy and Mod. Languages) proposed and seconded by the Committee
- (b) **Joanne Magan** (Ward, 1984, PPE) proposed and seconded by the Committee
- (c) **Tim Aldrich** (1994, History), proposed and seconded by the Committee

4. President's business (NR reported)

In June 2017, we held the annual Commemoration Service when we remembered over 60 Somervillians who died during the previous year. This is a key event in the College's annual programme, is much appreciated by alumni and relatives and as far as we are aware, not a common event in other colleges.

During the year, College hosted successful year group reunions to mark 10, 40, 50 and 60-year anniversaries for the relevant year groups. These single year group reunions have proved popular and NR suggested that if any alumni would like a reunion lunch/dinner they should get in touch with Liz Cooke or Lisa Gygax.

The Public Policy Group was re-established with a Brexit-themed launch event and we are looking forward to holding more events for this group in the near future.

The London Group continues to thrive with many, well-attended meetings throughout the year.

The eMentoring project is now up and running with almost 300 mentors – a useful resource for students and alumni in the Somerville community at all stages of their lives and careers.

5. Future events

A list was circulated.

6. Address by the Principal

Jan was delighted to have met so many alumni at other gatherings and events. Having been in the role for 7 months, she was keen to let alumni know that she “absolutely loves it!” The students, staff and alumni are all integral to contributing to the vibrant Somerville community. During the last few weeks, meetings with first year students made it abundantly clear how appreciated the tutorial system is and two terms in they expressed genuine enthusiasm for their subjects and loved their tutors. The College has a responsibility to help students obtain the best possible degrees and Jan is keen to focus on academic excellence and improving our Norrington table ranking. That said, she is mindful of the need to remember that physical and mental health are equally important and the overriding aim is not to place too much pressure on these talented young people.

Thanks to the Margaret Thatcher Development Programme both MTST scholars and all students have access to extracurricular sessions designed to enhance their educational experience and equip them with skills to face all challenges in the ‘real’ world – far greater for young people these days.

In addition to academic excellence/rising up the Norrington table, there is a need to focus on all things access-related. We have a long way to go in terms of encouraging students from state schools and BME backgrounds to have the confidence to apply. For many of these students Oxford still represents a world that is too ‘posh’ for them. Our current students are passionate about access and their forthcoming Access Roadshow will take them to a number of schools where they will undoubtedly prove our best advocates for an Oxford education.

The Treasurer, Andrew Parker, is chairing a committee to develop a new strategic plan to reflect these priorities and which will provide a roadmap for the next 5 years. This will then be presented to Governing Body for ratification.

Over the course of the next year Jan is planning a series of events – Somerville and Suffrage; Somerville and Refugees. Members of the local community will be invited/included in these events in an attempt to break down barriers and build good relationships.

In collaboration with the Welsh National Opera, Somerville is hosting an opera/musical entertainment at the Oxford Playhouse (9th October) celebrating our alumna who was a Welsh Suffragette, Lady Rhondda.

On the buildings front, work has already started on the Catherine Hughes building. As of October 2019, all undergraduates can be accommodated on site for the duration of their degree course.

Despite the various stresses and strains all universities are facing, we are doing a very good job. Many fellow heads of houses complain about difficult and intransigent governing bodies. Somerville is fortunate to have an engaged and positive Governing Body, which can confidently lead the College to an even more successful future.

The meeting closed and was followed by the Winter Meeting with guest speaker Professor Alex Rogers, Somerville's Professor of Conservation Biology.