

SOMERVILLE COLLEGE

OXFORD

The Annual General Meeting of the Somerville Association was held on Saturday 18th March 2023 at 2.15pm in the Flora Anderson Hall, Somerville College.

The President, Dr Nermeen Varawalla (NV) joined the meeting remotely (via Teams), welcomed everyone to the AGM and explained the reason for the short AGM, which was to maximise time for the stellar guest speakers.

NV reflected on her first year as SA President. What has been hugely valuable has been the ability to meet with and connect with Somervillians across the generations, working in different sectors and also living in different parts of the world; the common thread is that we all love our College, remain deeply appreciative of the education we received at Somerville and continue to be bound by a common ethos and set of values. One of the highlights of NV's first year was the organisation of the first all alumni dinner which coincided with the University's Meeting Minds weekend. The evening was a terrific success and was rounded up with a lively bop that was held in exactly the space where this AGM was taking place! NV expressed deep gratitude to Liz Cooke and Lisa Gyax, the Somerville Association Committee and the Development Team, headed by Sara Kalim (SK), for their support. She is very much looking forward to meeting more alumni in the year ahead.

NV took this opportunity to congratulate Somervillians recognised in the 2022 Queen's Birthday Honours and the 2023 New Year's Honours lists:

QB Honours:

Nia Griffith MP (1975, Modern Languages) made a Dame for political and public service.

Sue Barratt (1974, History and Mod. Langs.) awarded MBE for services to the Library Sector

Hilary Winchester (1971, Geography) awarded an AM in the Queen's Birthday Honours (Australia).

NY Honours:

Dr Joel Meyer (2000, Medicine) received an MBE for services to the NHS during Covid-19

Dr Ann Olivarius (1978, DPhil Social Studies) received an OBE for services to justice and to women and equality

Dr Philippa Tudor (1978, DPhil Modern History) was made CBE for services to Parliament

NV then closed the AGM and introduced the Principal.

The Principal (JR) highlighted that this is an important year for Somerville as it celebrates the 10th anniversary of the Margaret Thatcher scholarship Trust and over 50 fully funded scholarships over the last 10 years. It is also the 10th anniversary of the Oxford India Centre for Sustainable Development. JR and SK are travelling to Delhi (on 19th March) to celebrate

this milestone. While there, they will be launching a scholarship for Dalits and other people from marginalised parts of Indian society. JR is very proud of Somerville's College of Sanctuary status. Two years ago when we became a College of Sanctuary it would have been impossible to have imagined there would soon be a war on our continent. At that time the hope was to fund one sanctuary scholar; in fact, there are five this year and in all likelihood eight next year. Of the five fully funded scholarships this year two have been awarded to Ukrainians.

JR has been reading Timothy Garton Ash's recently published book *Homelands* and was drawn to the chapter on Ukraine. In WWII there were approximately 8 million displaced Ukrainians living in other parts of the world and a further 6 million displaced internally. Shockingly, those numbers are the same today. It is timely to be having this afternoon's discussion with our brilliant speakers.

At Somerville, there are currently two Ukrainian masters students and a Ukrainian academic at risk who, with her daughter, will be in Oxford for two years. In addition to these, and thanks to the efforts of Almut Suerbaum (Somerville Fellow and Tutor in German), Somerville has a Ukrainian writer in residence. Almut has ensured that they have a flourishing academic life with the University, despite not being able to be in Oxford in person.

It is fair to say that Somerville is thriving. That said, it is a very difficult time for young people. Somerville has many students from all over the world but for those from Europe, they are facing war on their continent for the first time and this is bound to weigh heavily on them. Unsurprisingly, climate change also weighs heavily on the shoulders of all of our students.

JR then introduced Dr Margaryta Klymak, Somerville's Fellow and Tutor in Economics. Since Margaryta joined Somerville, the level of attainment of our economics students has risen, in particular that of female students. JR praised Margaryta for being a brilliant tutor and colleague despite the challenge of joining Somerville during Covid. It has also been exceedingly difficult for Margaryta to be here at a time of war in her country with her family still in Ukraine and JR expressed her immense gratitude for Margaryta's dedication.

The Spring Meeting followed:

The War in Ukraine and the Changing Face of Europe

Chair: Dr Margaryta Klymak, Fellow and Tutor in Economics

Speakers:

Catherine Royle (1982, PPE, Honorary Fellow)

Dr. Sergiy Maslichenko, (2002, Post-Doc Research, Transitional Economies)

