

CARDIFF SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held in the Wallace Lecture Theatre

Wednesday 6th March 2024 at 6:15 pm

1. Committee reports:

a. Chairman

Professor Malcolm Wheeler (MW) welcomed members and reported that the Society had enjoyed a very successful year during 2023/24 with an excellent and diverse lecture programme. The return to the Wallace Lecture Theatre in Cardiff University's Main Building as the meetings venue had been generally successful, as had the live recording of lectures for members to access subsequently online. MW thanked members for their continuing support at the Society's meetings; it had been particularly encouraging to see so many student attendees, in no small part due to the hard work of John Ivins, the Schools Liaison Officer.

MW thanked Corey Smith (CS), our secretary, for her tremendous hard work. She had been the glue that had kept the Society together during some challenging times over the last few years, not least during the COVID pandemic. She was about to go on maternity leave and MW expressed to her the Society's grateful thanks and good wishes. He also thanked the other members of the Executive Committee for their contributions, including David Clarke (DC, Treasurer), Tony Williams (TW, Membership Secretary), Geraint Williams (GW, Minutes Secretary), David Webb (DW, Sponsorship Officer), John Ivins (JI, Schools Representative), Judith Foy (JF, Events Secretary), David Webster and Charles Twining. He also thanked Cedric Mumford for auditing the Society's accounts.

Finally, it was a particular pleasure to thank our President, Professor Robert Pickard (RP), for his contribution, guidance and wise counsel. His predecessor, Professor Sir Richard Catlow, will soon be leaving the Executive Committee at the end of his one-year term as Past President.

b. Secretary

Dr Corey Smith thanked members for attending the AGM and for their support for the year's programme of lectures that had been delivered by excellent and prestigious speakers. Attendance had varied between 40 and 60 but the International Lecturer initiative had been particularly successful. This year's inaugural lecture was delivered by Prof Jacques Marescaux from Strasbourg and had attracted a very large audience indeed. It was hoped that the initiative would continue as an annual feature of the programme. She encouraged the membership to propose future speakers for this and the lecture programme overall.

CS reported that the return of the Society's meetings to the Main College Building had suffered from a few teething problems that had hopefully now been ironed out (see below).

CS thanked the Royal Society of Chemistry and the Institute of Physics for generously co-sponsoring the final lecture of this year's programme. We look forward to their continued collaboration during the 2024/25 session and hopefully to developing further links with other potential sponsors.

CS concluded by reporting that the 2024/25 programme of 12 lectures was at an advanced stage of development. Confirmed topics include drug development, forensic ecology, global health, black holes and semiconductors. The Committee had decided to make

a small amendment to the overall lecture schedule to address some members' concerns about dark winter evenings and competing City Centre activities around Christmas and the New Year. Accordingly, the mid-winter lecture break will be extended to eight weeks. The new programme of fortnightly lectures will now run from 18th September to 27th November 2024 (inclusive) and from 29th January to 9th April 2025 (inclusive).

CS confirmed that she will be stepping down from the role as Secretary at the end of the current programme; she will be working with her successor to ensure a smooth transition. She thanked Committee members for their welcome, support and hard work over the last four years and hoped that she could be involved with the Society in some capacity in the future.

c. President

RP began by thanking CS and MW for doing a brilliant job in guiding the Society and holding everything together despite many challenges including COVID recovery, changes to the meetings venue and problems with car parking in Cathays Park. He felt that the year's lecture programme had been uniformly excellent and singled out the talks on machine learning, personalised tumour immunotherapy, robotic surgery and the birth of galaxies that had particularly excited his personal interest. RP reminded members that scientists are educated and trained to look for the truth and that this could be tested by predicting the future, citing the precision with which the striking of Jupiter by the Shoemaker Levy comet had been predicted. He was concerned about the relative lack of scientists in politics and positions of authority to guide the applications of scientific discovery, and believed that Societies such as ours have an important role in informing the public of the fundamentals of science, quoting Andrea Sarti from Bertolt Brecht's play *The Life of Galileo*:

“May you now guard Science ‘Light’
Kindle it and use it right
Lest it be a flame to fall
Downward to consume us all.”

d. Treasurer

Before reporting on the accounts for the year 29th February 2024, David Clarke (DC) thanked:

- Tony Williams (TW), Membership Secretary, for collecting subscriptions and maintaining our membership database, and
- Cedric Mumford (CM), Auditor, for checking our accounts in triple quick time once more.

DC reported that the Society has had a successful year financially, generating a surplus of £505 and increasing its reserves to £6,650. Nevertheless, membership numbers have fallen from 173 to 158 adult members, resulting in subscription income falling by 9%. In addition, there are 71 student members and 2 honorary members. On a positive note, the Society's overall income increased by 20% as a result of a surplus from the field visit to Bristol, visitor's fees, bank interest and lecture sponsorship.

Expenditure at £3,161 was 17% lower than the previous year as a result of some speakers being very generous in not claiming travel and subsistence expenses. However, Cardiff University has introduced a security charge for using the venue (£891 for the year) and the

Society is now insured for Public Liability, Trustees' Liability, Volunteers' Liability and Crisis Containment at a total annual cost of £106.

A proposal to adopt the accounts for the year ending 29th February 2024 was carried without dissent.

e. Membership Secretary

In the unavoidable absence of TW, this was covered in the Treasurer's Report (above).

2. Membership Fees

The Hon. Treasurer's proposal to retain the subscription fee at £15 per annum was endorsed unanimously.

3. Election of Officers

A recent invitation to the general membership had not resulted in any nominations and the existing members have indicated their agreement to serve for another year. Accordingly, a proposal to re-elect the Committee for a further year was carried unanimously. MW urged members to consider joining the Committee in that it was important that there should be 'new blood'.

MW announced that Dr Yi-Lin Wu from Cardiff University's Department of Chemistry had very kindly agreed to succeed CS as the Society's Honorary Secretary.

4. Parking arrangements

Car parking had been an issue of concern for many members since the Society's relocation to the University's Main Building, largely due to the removal of parking spaces in the quadrangle in front of the university building and the consequent necessity to pay £2.60 for on-street parking in the vicinity after 6:00 p.m. Frequent malfunction and poor lighting of parking meters, along with a paucity of parking spaces in December due to City Centre festive activities, had added to the irritation. CS has pointed members to a mobile phone application for payment of parking charges which has helped significantly, as will the decision not to hold meetings in December and most of January (see above).

It was reported that free car parking is available after 6:00 p.m. adjacent to the Blackweir Ambulance Station on North Road, but this necessitated a 20-minute walk to the Wallace Lecture Theatre.

5. Lecture Recordings

The Committee had some concerns that the online provision of video recordings of lectures one week after the live event might be having a detrimental effect on members' physical attendance at meetings. This, if it were true, was probably not in the best interests of the Society. RP emphasised the added value of attending a live lecture in the presence of the lecturer and believed in developing a culture of physical attendance at meetings whenever possible but supplemented by subsequent access to recordings. A questionnaire circulated to the membership found that 77% of responders reported viewing the recordings, mostly because they had not been able to attend the original lecture, but the number of members choosing not to attend solely because of the availability of recordings was unknown.

It was reported that attendance at meetings of the Cardiff Archaeological Society had dwindled considerably since providing live Zoom access to its members.

MW's suggestion to continue with our current practice for another year was accepted, after which the situation would be reviewed, perhaps with a more focussed questionnaire. In any case, the Society was developing an excellent archive of previous lectures that could be accessed by members at any time on request.

6. Any Other Business

MW strongly encouraged all members to let the Committee know their ideas for the Society and its future, suggestions for potential subjects and speakers for talks and proposals for visits and other activities.

7. Date of Next AGM

To be confirmed (March 2025).