

FITZWILLIAM SOCIETY
SECRETARY'S REPORT FOR THE AGM
ON SATURDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 2020

In this unusual year, there has unsurprisingly been less visible Society activity than in previous years. However, things have been happening behind the scenes.

Your committee has met twice in the last year, in accordance with the Society's constitution. These have been virtual meetings, adopting *Zoom* videoconferencing technology, which is also being used for this AGM. The committee are grateful for the help of the Development Director, Dr Nicola Jones, and her colleagues in the College's Development Office, in setting up and hosting these meetings.

Two sub-committees have been active. The Strategy group, chaired by our President, Judith Bunting, had an excellent and wide-ranging online meeting earlier this month. The discussion covered several topics, with a particular focus on future social events and increased opportunities to bring students and alumni together. The Grants sub-committee used email to discuss the applications it had received under the Student Grants programme. More about these later.

The annual Careers Fair was held in November last year. It attracted 38 alumni from a wide range of sectors and occupations, and it was particularly pleasing to see more younger alumni this time. The fair was attended by over 100 undergraduate and postgraduate students, who welcomed the valuable opportunity to meet alumni and to discuss, and obtain informal guidance on, their thoughts about potential career paths and openings. Feedback from both students and alumni was again very positive. The Development Office team make the arrangements for the fair, and particular thanks are due to Dr Millie Papworth for her hard work in running this event and obtaining and analysing the feedback

The Society's programme of grants for student activities and projects started in the academic year 2014-15. A sub-committee of the Society, chaired by Rachael Webb, liaises with the MCR and JCR Presidents in the Michaelmas term each year to discuss the process and timetable for applications for grants, and the criteria to apply to them. A deadline of mid February is set for applications, which the sub-committee then considers and discusses by email. For the last few years, a maximum of £2,000 has been made available each year; this is likely to be increased to £3,000 for 2020-21. This year we received eight applications, and the panel decided to approve awards in all cases except one, although at the moment it has become clear that one project cannot go ahead because of the pandemic and another is looking doubtful. Particular thanks are due to Rachael Webb for her hard work in driving this programme and for providing feedback to the applicants.

The topics covered by the Strategy sub-committee's recent discussion included enhancing the Society's profile, especially among students, and promoting the grants programme more energetically. To help achieve these aims we discussed co-opting a student representative onto the sub-committee, as well as continuing efforts to attract younger alumni onto the main committee. We also discussed arranging more activities, not necessarily confined to London, which might increase opportunities for students and alumni to meet socially.

The Trust Sub-Committee has not met in the last year. It was formed to liaise with the College about the annual programme of awards from the Fitzwilliam Society Trust Fund. The College administers this programme in accordance with details agreed with the Society in December 2007, when the charitable company which had previously administered the awards

handed over to the College the custody and management of the trust fund and the administration of the awards. The trust fund was built up over many years from donations, and its income is used to make the awards. These typically total between £10,000 and £11,000 each year, although fewer awards were made in this unusual year. They include academic scholarships and prizes, a grant to the library, prizes for debating and grants for music and arts projects. The role of the sub-committee is to consider, and if thought fit to approve, any changes to the awards programme proposed by the College. A detailed report on the Trust Fund awards for 2019-20 has been provided separately.

It was sadly necessary to cancel the two social events in London which had been arranged for earlier this year, and both of which had seemed likely to attract a good attendance. The London Drinks Party was to have been held on 12 March at the *George and Monkey* pub and for the annual London Dinner on 14th May we had booked the Livery Hall of the Company of Watermen and Lightermen. When these were cancelled, there was some hope of re-arranging similar events for the autumn, but it currently seems unlikely that restrictions on social gatherings will permit this.

These restrictions have also of course affected the Reunion weekend. It has not been possible to hold the usual dinners and programme of events in College and on the sports field and the river to which several hundred alumni and guests and other College members look forward each year. But the University-wide Alumni Festival which has been taking place over the last week has included a number of talks and other events, some featuring Fitzwilliam people, and hopefully this will have proved some consolation for those who would have come to Cambridge for the Reunion in a normal year.

Thanks are due to many people for their support of the Society during the year, including Dr Nicola Jones, the Development Director, and her team, Dr Paul Chirico, the Senior Tutor and the Master, as well as two others who are stepping down at the end of this month and deserve particular mention. Dr John Cleaver has been producing excellent editions of the *Journal* for 16 years, and will be a very hard act to follow. The Bursar, Andrew Powell, has been generous in his support of and advice to the Society, notable in connection with the progressive reduction in the Society's contribution towards the costs of producing and circulating the *Journal*, enabling the Society to set up the highly successful student grants scheme. And finally, we must thank our energetic President, Judith Bunting. She did much to encourage good turnouts at the two London events before they had to be cancelled, and has been enthusiastically driving forward the work of the Strategy group. Because her opportunities have been unexpectedly limited by the pandemic, the Society plans to propose at the AGM that she should serve a second year as President

Peter Howard
Secretary