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## **BAJS Annual General Meeting – 6 July 2015**

University of Manchester

**Present:** Charlotte Hempel, Daniel Langton (President), James Renton, Zuleika Rodgers, Helen Spurling (Secretary), Holger Zellentin (Treasurer) and members.

**Apologies:** Nathan Abrams, Maria Diemling (Bulletin Editor), Francois Guesnet, Hannah Holtschneider (Web Officer), Larry Ray and Andrea Schatz

### **1. Welcome, Apologies and Matters Arising**

Helen Spurling opened the meeting and welcomed members.

### **2. Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes were confirmed as an accurate record of the previous AGM at Trinity College Dublin.

### **3. New BAJS members**

Helen Spurling reported that 26 new applications had been received since the AGM at Dublin, including 15 student applications. The list of applicants approved by the committee for membership was circulated for information.

### **4. Committee and Officers**

The approval of the AGM was requested for the election of Eva Frojmovic to the committee for a period of five years and the re-election of Larry Ray for a second five-year term, which was granted. Hannah Holtschneider was approved for the position of President Elect 2017. Holger Zellentin was approved as the new Treasurer, who had taken over from Maria Diemling in January. Helen Spurling thanked Maria Diemling for her commitment as Treasurer over many years and welcomed Maria as the new Bulletin Editor.

### **5. BAJS Essay Prizes**

Helen Spurling reported that there were 12 entries for the essay prize this year, which consisted of 6 UG entries and 6 PG entries from a range of institutions in the UK. First prize and two joint-second prize UG winners were announced and no PG award was granted this year. 1st place was Molly Whyte 'Women in Britain and the Jewish Refugee Crisis, 1933-1945' (Southampton); joint second prize was David Clarke 'The British Government, The Palestine Question and Orientalism, 1945-1948' (Edge Hill) and Nathan Taylor 'A Crisis of Identity: Reflections on the York Massacre of 1190 and the Account of William of Newburgh' (Nottingham).

### **6. President's report**

Daniel Langton reported that the conference had gone very well, with some interesting panel sessions and thanked contributors. DL explained that the conference had a different format this year and the academic programme was condensed over two full days rather than three days. This was an attempt to reduce costs for members in light of increasingly expensive conference costs. DL welcomed feedback on the two-day format.

DL also reported on the status of Hebrew teaching at Manchester. In 2014-15, the University found itself at the centre of an international protest when a number of degree programmes in the subject area of Middle Eastern Studies, including a BA(Hons) in Hebrew and Israel Studies, and a number of course units, including undergraduate Modern Hebrew, were withdrawn and/or phased out. Support for the Manchester academics who argued in favour of continuing the provision of undergraduate Hebrew language teaching was received from a wide variety of individuals, learned societies, and subject associations, with the BAJS online petition receiving over 1000 signatures from 45 countries within 10 days. DL was delighted to announce that management has agreed recently that the credit-bearing undergraduate teaching of Modern Hebrew at all levels will continue (albeit in a reduced capacity), on condition that it be partly paid for by external funding. As a result, among other things, the Centre is currently developing an innovative hybrid approach to language learning that

will facilitate the virtual participation of individuals from around the country in regular classes in Modern Hebrew at Manchester. While disappointed that the withdrawn degrees will not be restored, the Centre is extremely grateful for the assistance that BAJIS and others provided, especially considering the inauspicious economic circumstances and the practical and ideological challenges that face university language teaching in the UK more generally.

#### **7. Treasurer's report**

Holger Zellentin presented a financial report for the year, which showed that BAJIS is in a healthy position financially. HZ noted that subscriptions are often unpaid by members, or the amount of money paid does not reflect current subscription rates. HZ requested that anyone with outstanding subscription dues should get in touch with him. HZ noted that he was glad to be invited to join the committee.

#### **8. Secretary's report**

Helen Spurling thanked the membership for their support of the Manchester petition. HS reported on the new BAJIS studentship that had been approved at the previous AGM. The committee had received some outstanding applications and four candidates were interviewed during the conference. The outcome would be announced once all candidates had been notified of the outcome. HS thanked members who had updated their subscriptions rates as BAJIS relies on the income from subscriptions to fund projects such as the BAJIS studentship. HS asked the AGM for their views on the establishment of a new postgraduate representative role to encourage a new generation to engage with BAJIS. The new committee position was approved. HS reported that the committee had discussed to what extent the specific theme of the conference was a draw to members and whether a broader theme might result in higher attendance. There was some discussion amongst the membership with Yulia Egorova, Sarah Pearce and Alex Samely agreeing that a specific theme was helpful, and more likely to lead to publications. It was also agreed that the annual CFP was clear that there would be open sessions. The AGM agreed to continue with a specific theme each year. HS closed by asking members to get in touch with up-to-date contact details and to sign up for email notifications and announcements.

#### **9. Web officer's report**

Helen Spurling reported on behalf of Hannah Holtschneider. Everything is going well with the website, and there is a healthy amount of traffic. Members are encouraged to pass on announcements to HH for posting on the website. Members are also reminded to sign up for automatic notifications at <http://britishjewishstudies.org/>.

#### **10. Bulletin editor's report**

Helen Spurling reported on behalf of Maria Diemling. HS noted that the Bulletin was available on the registration desk for collection and the committee hoped that members enjoyed reading our news and successes over the last year. MD had made a huge effort to improve the Bulletin and include more news articles. MD would welcome any feedback and future contributions. For members not at the conference, the Bulletin would be sent out with the next mail circular and the new policy would be continued of sending copies only to members who have paid their subscription. HS thanked MD for all her hard work in producing the Bulletin this year.

#### **11. Conference 2016**

Charlotte Hempel presented the CFP for the 2016 conference to be held in Birmingham. The conference will run from 11-12 July 2016, with a non-academic programme on Sunday 10 July, and the current theme is 'The Text-ure of Jewish Tradition: Investigations in Textuality'.

#### **12. Social Media**

James Renton reported that the new Twitter account was going well and reaching different constituencies. BAJIS has approximately 110 followers. In order for it to work well, we need to have contributions from members and JR encouraged members to send material to him.

#### **Any Other Business**

- Alex Samely thanked BAJIS again for all the support regarding Hebrew provision, and stated that it was eye-opening how effective such support can be.
- Yulia Egorova suggested that women are often under-represented as keynote speakers at BAJIS and that this should be addressed. Zuleika Rodgers pointed out that the BAJIS committee has a good gender balance, and Charlotte Hempel noted that the keynote speaker in 2016 will be Judith Newman, who works on early Judaism at the University of Toronto.
- On behalf of the membership, Helen Spurling thanked Daniel Langton for a highly successful conference.

#### **13. Date of next meeting**

The next AGM will take place during the 2016 conference in Birmingham.

provisional minutes, 20/08/15