



## **Annual General Meeting**

**Jonathan Swift Theatre  
University of Dublin, Trinity College  
25 April 2015, 14.00**

Present: Philip McGowan, Clare Hayes-Brady, Rosemary Gallagher, Jennifer Daly, Kate Smyth, Dara Downey, Alan Gibbs, Katie Ahern, Ron Callan, Kevin Power, Nerys Young, Julie Sheridan, Hilary Bracefield, Johanna Hoorenman

### **1. Apologies**

Alex Runchman.

### **2. Minutes and Matters Arising**

Minutes of 26 April 2014 AGM, NUI Galway were circulated in advance. Names of Ron Callan and Adam Kelly added to the list of those attending, then accepted as true and accurate record.

### **3. Chairperson's Report (PMcG)**

The last twelve months have seen the Association consolidate its position and the gains that it has made in terms of its profile, membership and general activities:

- i) New Wave Coming, held on 22 November here in Trinity, was a sharp, smart and well-attended event that signalled once more the strengths of our postgraduate and early career researchers;
- ii) It's been good to note the involvement of our younger scholars with USSO (U.S. Studies Online), a pg & early career blog & researcher network steered in the main by BAAS postgraduates;
- iii) the reappearance of IJAS Online and congratulations to all involved for producing such an attractive, easily navigated and most importantly academically strong online journal for the Association;
- iv) and here again, in another excellently conceived and organised conference, with speakers from 21 different universities and institutions from across the US and Europe. Many thanks to Dara and Clare and Jenny for what has been a really stimulating and important event.

This conference has seen the award of the 2nd Peggy O'Brien Book Prize: Alan Gibbs' *Contemporary American Trauma Narratives* published by Edinburgh University Press last year came through a strong field which gave our prizes subcommittee a number of headaches no doubt. We can only hope for as strong a field for the 3<sup>rd</sup> O'Brien Book Prize in 2017. Submissions, of course, are now open for all IAAS members with forthcoming monographs.

We came from events in Cork & Galway last year to Dublin for much of our work together this one. Dublin serves still as something of a spiritual home for the Association: many of us studied here, many still do their work here, but a pleasing

aspect of recent times has been the involvement of other parts of the island in the work of the IAAS.

Next year we will convene for an annual conference in Queen's Belfast again, following recent ones there in 2006 and 2011. But 2016 as you all know will be a bit different: a joint conference with BAAS, across three days (7-9 April), will draw a large crowd and I'm beginning the campaign to have the IAAS well represented now. The cfp is on the IAAS website, with a closing date of 1 November 2015 for proposals. Organisationally it will be a bit of a headache, so all offers of help and enthusiastic initiative-taking are gratefully received.

We do already have a number of things in place: the social programme is pretty much arranged, the plenaries have been agreed (Deborah Willis, John Howard, and, of course, Richard Ford). I was at BAAS's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference 2 weeks ago at Northumbria University at which this joint 2016 conference was launched and I raised an IAAS glass in honour of BAAS's latest milestone. In her chair's report, Sue Currell noted a number of developments that have meant that BAAS has been able to re-negotiate its contractual arrangements with Cambridge University Press for the publication of the *Journal of American Studies*, a long and at times difficult process. Financially, BAAS is looking at a much sounder immediate future than appeared the case two years ago. With in excess of 470 members, BAAS will always have more economic clout than the IAAS, but it has been particularly pleasing in recent times to see our members match their BAAS counterparts when it comes to intellectual ability. So it is with confidence that we will take our place alongside BAAS at Queen's next April at what promises to be a conference not to be missed.

To that end I have held preliminary discussions with the US Consulate ahead of next year's conference. Established by George Washington in 1796, the Belfast Consulate will celebrate its 220<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year and the idea is to integrate that celebration into what the conference and, more broadly, the IAAS will be doing next year.

Excitement about 2016 was expressed to me by numerous people at the Northumbria BAAS conference. One consequence of the joint conference's scheduling has been a lapse in the biennial joint postgraduate conferences with BAAS with both associations holding separate pg events this year (BAAS's will be in Glasgow in December) but we will look to take up this arrangement again in late 2017 when it will be our turn again to host.

As it was BAAS's 60<sup>th</sup>, there was something of a retrospective feel to things and a roundtable of the current chair and 4 previous BAAS chairs reminded me of the 2007 Clinton Institute conference Ireland's America at which Denis Donoghue and Peggy O'Brien were present to recall some of the early history of the IAAS. BAAS holds an archive of its work since 1955 at the University of Birmingham and Sue Currell has suggested a funded postdoctoral research position to work on the history of both BAAS and the IAAS and, with your accord, I will continue investigating how we might go about this.

Of course, this will mean getting some heads together as well as physically pulling together what archive material we have at our fingertips. When I served as Secretary under Aoileann's chairship, I do recall a ring bind folder of old minutes and odds and ends. Am not quite sure who has possession of that now, but we should locate it and other IAAS memorabilia so that we can shore up these fragments from across 45 years of our Association's existence.

Last year we agreed at the AGM to raise the membership fees, though other ideas about the possibility of discretionary/voluntary contributions or a new membership rate open to companies or institutions wishing to support our work have yet to be actioned. While membership is buoyant, it could be more so; and yet, our ability to fund postdoctoral and early career research will always be tied to what can be a volatile membership level. We need to reach out beyond the immediate academic community to secure funding support for our activities.

This may be easier said than done of course. Given the recent grim news from the North, in particular regarding Arts funding cutbacks and the retraction of the Department for Employment and Learning grant to the two universities (Queen's for example is losing £8m this forthcoming year, with a consequent fall in the student intake numbers of 290 in September and a total of 1010 over the next three years; 236 posts are to be lost to accommodate the shortfalls). The STEM agenda does not appear to be altering course, so all of us in Arts & Humanities subjects are awaiting the expected bloodletting. I know for example that my own School faces a 21% cut in undergraduate intake this September ahead of further reductions in the next two years. There can't not be implications for staffing levels. Coming after the removal of Queen's funding for the Belfast Festival and the loss of Arts Council funding for long-established pillars of the NI cultural economy such as Blackstaff Press, these are again dark and uncertain times for the arts and for humanities subjects north of the border.

Despite such obstacles to our immediate growth, this last year has also been one of celebrating the careers of two mainstays of the IAAS. Back on 14 November, many of us gathered for the launch of *Maintaining a Place* in the Royal Irish Academy, a collection of essays in honour of our esteemed colleague and friend, Ron Callan. Ron's achievements are well-documented and it is our pleasure that Ron has accepted the position of President of the IAAS, an idea mooted at last year's AGM. There had been some debate about whether we needed to change the Constitution of the IAAS to accommodate this new role; indeed, we will be looking at other changes to the Constitution in a few moments.

Of course, mention of the Constitution and amendments to it leads me to the last but not largest issue for the IAAS this last year, the loss of Tony Emmerson in December after a short illness. A committee member from the very start – a date we learned at Bank of Ireland Montrose was 1970 (when we were required to change the mandate signatures on the Euro account) – for 45 years Tony lived and breathed the IAAS. Having inaugurated the IAAS Lecture series at UCC last year, it seemed the least we could do, in recognition of Tony's commitment to the IAAS, to rename that series in his honour and it was pleasing that Mary and her sons Alan and Christopher were in attendance at JoAnne Mancini's talk in NCAD last month.

It has taken a few meetings and numerous phonecalls with Bank of Ireland personnel in the North to close our sterling account, held in Tony's name, at their Coleraine branch, without having to trouble Mary any further with the finer details. On 13 April, I received the new bank and Visa cards for a new sterling account housed at the University Road, Belfast branch of Bank of Ireland. I propose that, once our Treasurer & Membership Secretary position has been filled in today's elections that, at the first opportunity, their name and that of one other committee member goes on the sterling mandate. We need to keep these mandates up-to-date, and it was an oversight on my part last year that, when myself and Clare's names were added to the euro account, that a similar procedure was not carried out on the sterling account.

Hindsight is obviously a useful thing. Tony's rapid decline was not something any of us could have expected, but we do need to be more prepared for such eventualities in future. I'd like to acknowledge Dara's stepping in to oversee the euro account and, along with Clare, general membership issues. It is only when someone like Tony is no longer here that we possibly realise how much he did for us. Sue Currell closed her BAAS report a fortnight ago marking Tony's death and his loss both to the IAAS and the wider European American Studies community. I think he would have been really touched by that and by the warmth of affection from across the academic community occasioned by the news of his untimely death.

Tony's death gave us all I think pause for thought, to take stock of where we are now as an Association, where we've come from and where we want to be headed. Most immediately in the next year we have two large events to prepare for, the joint conference at Queen's and the next EAAS conference in Constanta, Romania, from 22-25 April 2016. With new issues of *IJAS Online* to come, a thriving and energetic postgraduate community, and opportunities for further beneficial collaborations with BAAS and other European associations available, we have all the elements necessary to build on Tony's legacy.

Notes activities of PG membership and involvement with USSO. Congratulates all involved in reappearance of IJAS, and in organisation of 2015 conference. Will gratefully accept offers of help with 2016. Important to encourage as many members as possible to participate in the conference. BAAS Chair Sue Currell has suggested postdoc position to work on history of BAAS and IAAS which means everyone will have to do some digging. Archival material for research may come from Tony's effects, and we will have to consider what to do with it. TCD library may take it on. RC suggests putting material online. RG indicates she would be happy to take on this project. Membership solid but could be better, need to explore more avenues to support activities, especially in light of budget cuts everywhere. Odd year for association – celebrating RC's career and achievements, but also dealing with loss of TE. Many unforeseen issues have arisen which are slowly being dealt with. Opportunity to assess where the association is going.

#### **4. Changes to the IAAS Constitution**

Proposed changes to IAAS Constitution: changes were circulated. PGEC rep was changed to PGEC Co-Chairs and all further references will be changed. Some non-elected positions have been separated from elected positions for reasons of clarity. Article 4(h) is to be deleted, relating to membership of the association for speakers at the conferences or symposia. Amendment on meeting quorum for meetings raises issue that more members should attend AGMs. 'Due to ill health or death' to be removed from 6(o). 6(p) to be changed from 'ceases' to 'fails.' With these amendments, the new Constitution is accepted. Extra line added into 4(c) clarifying that certain positions are non-elected.

#### **5. Acting Treasurer/Membership Secretary's Report (DD)**

148 members, partly due to MA membership. Some problems with the system given EAAS dues of €6 per member. Membership to be reviewed at the conference each year. Question arises as to MA membership of EAAS, which JH suggests could be dealt with by asking interested MA students to pay the EAAS due. Similarly, honorary members may be in this position. Money in a state of flux, but stands at about €2000 in the Irish account. Conference has also made a profit and JSTOR money is (probably) still on its way. Sterling account is still in the process of transfer, but stands at approximately STG1064. PayPal balance stands at €1511.41. Accounts still in state of flux as handovers are completed but a more detailed report will be forthcoming.

## **6. EAAS Representative Report (PMcG)**

Could not go to last meeting due to teaching commitments, but EAAS chair is concerned by the low number proposals. Closing date mid-June and members are encouraged to submit. JD suggests EAAS bursary to cover registration.

## **7. PG & Early Career Caucus Report (JD & RG)**

Since last AGM an excellent PG symposium was hosted in TCD. Brilliant response to CFP and there was a real difficulty choosing proposals. Lack of theme invited much larger pool. There are many options to deal with this such as an extra day, parallel panels, etc. This is something to consider at a later date but is a good problem to have. The Symposium this year made a profit. The reps thank the Committee and especially the Chair of the Prizes Subcommittee for their assistance. Next year's symposium will happen in Ireland and suggestions are invited as to venue. The next joint event with BAAS will be Dublin in 2017. Change of submission date to WTM Riches prize has been positive. Both reps wish to note their pride at having served such a vibrant community. IJAS special issue emerging from last symposium is under way with scheduled publication in the summer.

## **8. IJAS Online Report (SM/AR)**

Absent; nothing to report.

## **9. IAAS website ([www.iaas.ie](http://www.iaas.ie))**

Suggestion from Barry Gildea that the IAAS website is due for a revamp and a proposal has been sent in for this. Proposal will be circulated for discussion.

## **10. 2015 Dublin Conference Report (DD)**

32 speakers, 21 institutions. Notes success of social media for publicising the CFP and conference. Event has so far been a great success and the Conference Committee congratulates Alan Gibbs on the receipt of the Peggy O'Brien book prize. All nominated books will be reviewed for the IJAS, and having the books available for inspection at the conference was very positive. In terms of continuity for conference organisers, it would be useful to have a sort of handover each year to ensure smooth transitions. Conference has turned a profit of about €500 (pending final confirmation). Thanks to the Clinton Institute and the Humanities Institute for support. 2017 idea: Dublin is a spiritual home of sorts – Newman house might be an option for space. Thanks to all delegates for making this a great success.

## **11. 2016 IAAS & BAAS Conference, QUB, 7-9 April 2016 (PMcG)**

R Ford confirmed. Fliers in circulation. Margot's poster design again commended. CFP is up, needs to be circulated and advertised. General theme of revolution given the year. It's going to be busy and great. City Hall reception. 2017 BAAS conference organisers hosting second night reception.

## **12. Prizes Subcommittee (JS)**

Thanks to all nominees for Peggy O'Brien book prize. A lovely position to be in to have such excellent nominations to choose from. Seven postgrad travel applications, with David Deacon and James Cronin awarded funding. Both will submit reports to the website. WTM Riches deadline was extended to 31 May but no applications as yet. Worth encouraging applications by email and social media. No applications received for the BAAS Conference bursary. PMcG notes that this is because no IAAS PGs presented. Thanks to all subcommittee members, Catherine Gander, Dara Downey, David Coughlan, Ron Callan and Tony Emmerson. Thanks also to the PGEC caucus for Twitter presence and help in advertising bursaries.

### **13. Elections to Executive Committee**

Positions Open – Vice Chair, Treasurer/Membership Secretary, Secretary, Postgraduate & Early Career Caucus Co-Chairs

Vice Chair: Alan Gibbs nominated by RC, seconded by DD. AG deemed elected.

Treasurer/Membership Secretary: Dara Downey nominated by RC, seconded by JD. DD deemed elected.

Secretary: Jenny Daly nominated by RC, seconded by AG. JD deemed elected.

Postgraduate & Early Career Caucus Co-Chairs: Rosemary Gallagher, nominated by JD, seconded by KA. RG deemed elected. Kate Smyth nominated by JD, seconded by RG. KS deemed elected. Third position co-opted for one year: Katie Ahern nominated by RC, seconded by AG. KA deemed elected.

PMcG notes thanks to JS for all her excellent work as Vice-Chair over her tenure, and also to CHB for work as Secretary.

### **14. Any Other Business**

Prizes subcommittee question – a science application for funding came in. Should we make clear that the funding is associated with American Studies, not just study in America? Should a definition of American Studies be developed? It may be clear enough from the website. Others suggest that it may be the fault of the applicant for not checking what kind of work the IAAS supports.

Brief discussion of potential speakers for the W.A. Emmerson Lecture in 2016. Tentative suggestion from PMcG of Belfast as venue. Possibility to invite suggestions for speakers from the membership? To be discussed further at a committee meeting in June.

AGM drawn to a close.