



Annual General Meeting

12.30pm, Saturday April 9th

TR2, The Graduate School, Queen's University Belfast

MINUTES

In Attendance: Philip McGowan, Alan Gibbs, Dara Downey, Jennifer Daly, Rosemary Gallagher, Katie Ahern, Kate Smyth, David Coughlan, Ron Callan, Nerys Young, Hilary Bracefield, Johanna Hoorenman, Adam Kelly, Tim Groenland, Jonathan Creasy, Clare Hayes-Brady, Leah Reynolds, Emily Bourke, Eve Cobain

1. Apologies

Apologies received from Bernice Murphy and Liam Kennedy.

2. Minutes & Matters Arising

Minutes of the 2015 AGM were circulated to the membership in advance and are accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

3. Chair's Report (PMcG)

Since Dublin last year, a lot of the attention of the Association (as well as my own) has been focused on this joint conference with BAAS: and now only two parallel sessions separate us from the close of the conference and Richard Ford's reading at Titanic Belfast this evening.

So the headaches are at last abating. And while I would not suggest it should be another 25 years before we hold a joint annual conference with BAAS again, I think we've done our bit for the next while. I'd like to thank my immediate colleagues in the School of English here at Queen's – and also in the School of

History – who have done a lot of the heavy lifting for this conference. And the support of the Eventus team as well as Visit Belfast over the previous two to three years has been critical to the success of these three days. I also need to thank Sue Currell, the outgoing chair of BAAS, for all her help and support, particularly the sanctioning of an initial payment to Titanic Belfast to secure tonight's Gala Dinner booking.

Some of you were in this room last month when Stephen Matterson delivered the WA Emerson Lecture on Mark Twain: Stephen has indicated he will revise this essay for publication on *IJAS Online*, so if you missed it in March hopefully you will see it online before the year's end. It was great to have it here in Tony Emerson's *alma mater*, indeed in the library where he would have researched and written much of his undergraduate degree in Ancient and Medieval History. We had both a good turnout on the night and superfluous supplies of wine: Tony would certainly have been pleased by at least one of these facts.

It would be a good, indeed a promising, thing if jobs in American subjects were in superfluous supply on this island. The long outworkings of the economic recession are still being felt in academia both north and south of the border. This institution in which we sit has positioned itself strategically to appeal to STEM subjects and has restructured Arts, Humanities and Social Science subjects in such ways that we must continually fight our corner, maintain our relevance, and insist upon our centrality in any proper, fully-functioning university worth the name. The two NI universities are in part victims of a financial decision to cut the third level block grant but at the same time not to raise student fees as we have seen elsewhere in the UK. There has been something of a flurry of jobs across the water, the dividend of higher fees and the lifting of recruitment caps, but no similar matching activity across this island where it is the contraction of our subjects that has defined a worrying trajectory for the past six, seven or eight years. I've not made the tally of all the losses, but if we consider that History at Ulster has had to lose 5 posts this academic year, on top of a 25% cut in the Department of English & History at Ulster 3 years ago; or that English on its own here at Queen's has undergone a 20-25% reduction in staff over the same period, you can begin to see the extent of the issue. And a management mantra of 'no-like-for-like' replacements in reality means no replacements at all in the current environment.

These have been hard economic times, as well as hard academic times in the arts and humanities. Despite all of this, the IAAS has not succumbed; indeed, we have raised our membership levels each

year, with paid memberships now at an all-time high. We had to experiment a bit to do this. Our first initiative, giving all MA students in American subjects across Ireland free membership for a year, was a decent idea that brought in the numbers, but then backfired somewhat when we had to pay out over €1100 in subscription dues to the EAAS. I hold my hands up over that one, and we've since rethought the tactic: now, new MA students receive a three-month free membership (covering October, November and December – and, importantly, the annual postgraduate symposium) before being encouraged to sign up as concession members at €15 per year.

We need every penny and cent, every euro and pound of the membership fees that we bring in so that we can continue to finance our postgraduate and early career bursaries, the joint initiatives with BAAS, the Book Prize, as well as the annual conference and postgraduate symposia. We only continue for as long as you continue to sign up year upon year. I've asked in previous years for us to redouble our efforts to recruit new members, and I ask it again this year. If all that each existing member does as a result of this conference is to recruit one new member to the Association, we would double our membership.

At the AGM two years ago in Galway we raised the membership fees to €40 for full members and €15 for postgraduate students. Looking across the other member Associations, these rates seem appropriate to me and I don't think we should consider raising them for the foreseeable future. That said, we do send €6 per member (whether a full member or a concession one) to the EAAS each year. Since the 2010 EAAS conference in Dublin, the IAAS has contributed over €4000 to the European Association. At the EAAS Board meeting in Constanta on 21 April I will be asking, with the consent of this assembled membership, for a number of things:

- what do the IAAS and other member Association receive in return for these annual contributions?
- full financial accounts of the EAAS in terms of trusts, income and expenditure;
- a revision to the annual €6 per member subscription rate: the IAAS Committee has discussed this issue a few times and proposes that a two-tier subscription level be introduced - €6 for full paying Association members, €2 for concession members – across all EAAS member associations.

The EAAS has a pretty arthritic website (so the monies aren't being spent on that), an out-of-date postgraduate forum (e.g. it still lists Julie Sheridan as the IAAS postgraduate representative), so nor are they being thrown at supporting or developing postgraduate and early career scholars and initiatives. For an Association of our size, in which approximately two-thirds of our membership falls into the postgraduate and early career category, the monies we send out to EAAS could very readily be spent on the many activities we have here.

Of course, not everything would be cured if the EAAS were to revise their subscription system, but I will be making the case for a change to the current system. As I indicated last year we do need to do what we can to secure other sources of funding. I attended a workshop here in Belfast on 8 February delivered by the Ireland Funds in relation to Small Grant applications and Flagship Investment applications. I had submitted an unsuccessful application for a Small Grant last year to do with 2016 as the 240th anniversary of the American War of Independence and the significance of this event here in Northern Ireland. The feedback on the application was supportive enough that a revised submission on behalf of the IAAS was submitted by the deadline of Monday past, the 4th April. The project, while it has broadened its scope, has specified its audience:

a cross-community programme to bring together Year 10 pupils (i.e. 14 year-olds) from four secondary-level schools in Belfast; the project is wholly educational. It will bring together up to forty secondary-level schoolchildren from both sides of the community to analyse, discuss and learn about a Northern Irish history most likely unknown to them and not on their curricula: the history that connects this part of Ireland in particular to the United States of America since the Declaration of Independence in 1776.

The project will focus on four historical periods:

- i) the American Revolution and the Declaration of Independence;
- ii) the history of the Titanic;
- iii) World War Two;
- iv) the US and the Peace Process in Northern Ireland in the 1990s.

The grant applied for totals £6,100; the maximum that can be applied for under the Small Grants round is £10,000.

It's not big money. It may not succeed. Success rate for applications between 2011 and 2015 sits at 17.2%, with a general 75/25 split between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland in terms of awards given. The average small grant award is currently £4,448 in NI and €4,556 in ROI.

I think if we keep knocking on these kinds of doors, one of them will eventually open. One of the things about the Ireland Funds is that only a very small proportion of the monies they donate comes through their grant schemes. 90% of their funds are apportioned through donor-advised giving: a donor just sees something that interests them and they fund it. To be on the radar at all for such windfalls, we need to keep applying to the Ireland Funds which supports not-for-profit associations like ours in 4 areas: arts & culture; education; community development; peace & reconciliation.

I should hear the outcome in early July.

So, there is much work ahead after this conference and into 2017:

- the renewal of the joint BAAS & IAAS biennial postgraduate conferences in Dublin in the autumn of 2017;
- the return to a smaller IAAS annual conference (at a venue yet to be determined);
- the third awarding of the Peggy O'Brien Book Prize following on from Alan's success last year with *Contemporary American Trauma Narratives* and Catherine's in 2013 with *Muriel Rukeyser and Documentary: the Poetics of Connection*; entries are being received currently for monographs by IAAS members published in 2015 and 2016;
- the third WA Emerson Lecture, wherever that shall be delivered and by whom, again to be decided in due course;
- hopefully a successful application to the Ireland Funds or similar funding body;
- the next phase in the evolution of the Association under a new Chair and a potentially reshuffled executive committee, though the Elections later will determine the extent of those changes.

But we do need to change if we are to stay relevant and we must try new things; we need not necessarily change radically, though we all play our own part in this. By turning up, here at the annual conferences, at the AGM and the quarterly committee meetings, at the postgraduate symposia and the Emerson Lecture: by turning up we ensure our Association maintains itself and rethinks itself, brings new people onboard and moves with the currents of academic work that is being undertaken across this island.

The Association has changed considerably over the past five years and that is thanks to the postgraduate and early career members who have redesigned our website, reinvigorated our journal, formed strong links with their BAAS counterparts, and indeed asked us to provide an Association relevant for them. They are the backbone of the Association as well as its future, and long may that continue.

Round of applause from those in attendance for PMcG's final report as Chair.

4. Treasurer's Report (DD)

The Association is in good financial health. Since the last AGM, the Association has brought in €8,402.49 in membership subscriptions, conference fees, and other sources. Expenditure in the same period has been €5,115.72, leaving the Association comfortably in the black for now. A cautious approach is still to be taken given uncertain economic times. Income from memberships continues to increase and is a really positive thing for the IAAS. A payment of €1,775.82 was received from JSTOR this year for the hosting of the print editions of the journal. This payment is now also being processed by electronic transfer as opposed to cheque which eliminates the possibility of penalties for delays in lodging it. Other points to note include the money received from Adam Matthew for the new essay prize which will be awarded tonight. Increased income means we have been able to pay out €1,000 in travel bursaries alone this year as well as essay prizes and support for conferences and symposia, something DD notes that TE was always very anxious that we do.

5. Membership Report (JD)

The Association currently has 105 paying members. There was a little flurry of memberships leading up to IBAAS. Paying members have almost doubled since 2014. Also should be noted that between January and April 2016, the Association processed as many memberships as it did in the whole of 2014. One point to note is that there is still reluctance on the part of academic staff in Ireland to join up as full paying members. JD appeals to the membership to evangelise those in need of a reminder that the Association is available to them to join.

6. EAAS representative report (PMcG)

The biennial conference will take place in Romania at the end of April. Several IAAS members will be attending and presenting including PMcG and CG. The Association also provided two bursaries to assist PGs to attend the event, which were awarded to Eve Cobain (who notes her thanks!) and Hilary

McLaughlin-Stonham. The 2018 conference is a joint event across several London institutions and will in all likelihood be an extremely large event.

7. PG & Early Career Caucus report (RG/KS/KA)

Since the last AGM, the PG Caucus has been very active, including:

- Hosting IAASPG15, "Out of Many, One" in UCD in November. We had 16 speakers, around 35 delegates, and about 1,000 cups of coffee.
- Published a Special Issue of IJAS in Summer 2015 arising out of the papers from our 2014 conference in TCD, "New Wave Coming."
- Awarded a host of prizes and bursaries for our PG and ECR members including the Adam Matthews Digital Essay Prize, to Carmel Lambert of NUI Galway; the IAAS EAAS Biennial Conference Bursary, to Eve Cobain of Trinity College Dublin, and Hilary McLaughlin-Stonham of the University of Ulster; the WTM Riches Essay Prize, to Ciarán Kavanagh of University College Cork; the IAAS Postgraduate Research & Travel Bursary to David Deacon of UCD and James Cronin of UCC
- Following IAASPG15 a new Facebook Group was set up so members of the PG and ECR Community could get to know each other a bit better and this has worked really well, especially in the run up to events.

The PG reps note their thanks to the Committee and Association for the continuation of bursaries and prizes. Also grateful for ongoing low conference and membership fees. Have already begun thinking about the 2017 joint event with BAAS, although this will be the responsibility of new reps should it go ahead. A special issue of IJAS will also be published later this year from the proceedings of IAASPG15. The location of the 2016 PG symposium is still to be decided. In advance of this, the reps are aiming to establish some kind of PG taskforce to strengthen the network for PGs in all of our member institutions.

8. IJAS Online report (DC)

Since the last AGM a new editorial board has been formed consisting of DC as Executive Editor, DD and CHB as Assistant Editors, and JD as Marketing & Reviews Editor. The journal is moving to a rolling publication format which means that once articles have gone through the review process they will be published on the website straight away, then collected into an issue at the end of the year. The journal is also still doing special issues, including one arising out of the 2015 PG symposium and one from the

Marilynne Robinson symposium in June.

9. IAAS website (www.iaas.ie) (JD)

Not much to report on the website. The conference hashtag was embedded on to the homepage along with a general tidy up of menus and appearance. Any items will be posted so please do send them along. Also notes that we have a mailing list with over 300 subscribers so items can be circulated to the wider membership via this avenue as well.

10. Prizes Subcommittee (AG)

Two EAAS bursaries awarded to EC and HM-S. The Adam Matthew essay prize was also awarded and will be presented at the gala dinner this evening.

11. IBAAS Conference report (PMcG)

Great relief is expressed that it is the last day of the conference! IBAAS has gone very well, despite some minor glitches behind the scenes. The Alan Graham lecture will be presented by Richard Ford which is a huge coup for the Association. No financial reports to present yet but will be provided at the next committee meeting; it is unlikely the conference will make money. Lots has already been paid out to Titanic to hold the booking for the gala event. Also notes that BAAS have changed their relationship with the US Embassy and now have a block grant to farm out rather than applying for little bits when needed, which meant that somewhere in the region of £7,000 was provided for conference expenses, some of which will have to be paid back for the Titanic deposit.

12. Elections to Executive Committee

PMcG steps down as Chair. JD to run elections.

One nomination received for the position of Chair: Alan Gibbs. Proposed by PMcG. Seconded by RC. AG Deemed elected unopposed.

Position of Vice-Chair is now open. DD indicates willingness to stand as VC. Proposed by PMcG. Seconded by AG. DD Deemed elected unopposed.

Treasurer position is now vacant. All in attendance agree to proceed with rest of elections before filling that position.

Two nominations received for Ordinary Committee Member: Bernice Murphy and Nerys Young. BM proposed by DD. Seconded by DC. BM deemed elected unopposed. NY proposed by PMcG. Seconded by RG. NY deemed elected unopposed.

JD proposes to co-opt Katie Ahern to the PG caucus for a further year. Seconded by RG. KA deemed elected.

Due to DD's election as VC, position of Treasurer is now vacant. PMcG proposes NY as Treasurer. Seconded by RC. NY deemed elected unopposed.

Due to NY's election as Treasurer, position of Ordinary Committee Member is now vacant. JD proposes Tim Groenland. Seconded by DD. TG deemed elected unopposed.

13. AOB

- AG takes the podium as Chair and begins by asking about the venue for the 2017 annual conference. Mentions there is a proposal for UU. NY notes that Coleraine is coastal and a tourist destination, IAAS conferences tend to be around Easter so accommodation will be hard to come by owing to peak tourist season. Suggests Belfast campus or Derry/Magee as alternatives but also notes that this would mean two Belfast conferences in a row. NY is happy to take on the conference if it is agreed to bring it to UU. RG had noted concerns about distance and cost of travel, and proposes moving the 2016 PG symposium to Cork to balance out travel concerns as there is a very strong PG presence at UCC. AG mentions Dublin as an option, but PMcG notes lack of movement at UCD. CHB confirms that new Americanist hasn't started work yet due to visa issues. It is agreed to park the issue until the summer committee meeting when a decision can be made.
- JD notes that RC would like to say a few words in his capacity as President:
RC suggests that, as PMcG's tenure as Chair ends, the IAAS might consider instituting a formal review of recent developments in the Association, in particular considering some of the following:
 - the promotion and development of IAAS-BAAS links (evident dramatically in this 2016 conference)

- Similar connections between IAAS and EAAS
- Relationships with the American Consulate in Belfast, and the American Embassies in London and Dublin
- Innovations to increase membership and, significantly, the involvement of members
- Creation of bursaries, fellowships, prizes, grants, etc.
- Support for conferences which relate to IAAS interests
- Many and varied initiatives to develop Postgraduates' and Early Careerists' involvement in the IAAS. The benefits of these should be noted in all aspects of the work of the IAAS, not least in the extraordinary contributions made to the work of the Committee of the IAAS
- The dramatic and impressive changes made to the IJAS

While short of an inclusive sense of the terms for such a review RC pauses to say that we *could* institute such a review, or we could simply take time to thank Philip McGowan for his vision, creativity, energy, commitment, exceptional devotion to and efficient use of his Smart Phone, his care and attention to details, and his honouring of the past and his sensitive awareness of the future as the IAAS changes to face new challenges and opportunities. Importantly, all of his dedicated work has been defined by good humour and openness to discussion. The committee presents a token of their appreciation to PMcG.

AGM is drawn to a close.