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## **BAJS Annual General Meeting 15 July 2020 Online**

**Present:** Helen Spurling (President), David Tollerton (Secretary), Lindsey Askin (Treasurer), Andrea Schatz (President elect), Ben Gidley (Social Media), Eva Frojmovic (Bulletin co-editor), Yulia Egorova (Bulletin co-editor), Hannah Ewence, Mia Spiro, Susannah Rees (Studentship holder), plus 8 BAJS members.

**Apologies:** James Renton, Jaclyn Granick

**Minutes of previous meeting:** Link to the minutes provided. No corrections

**Matters arising:** No matters arising

### **Committee and Officers:**

François Guesnet reached the end of his term as an ordinary member of the committee and Hindy Najman reached the end of her term as President Ex Officio. Both were thanked for their work on behalf of BAJS. Four committee changes were approved by the meeting:

- James Renton as President Elect for 2022-23
- Ben Gidley as Social Media Officer
- Lindsey Askin as Treasurer
- Jaclyn Granick as ordinary member of the committee

### **President's report:**

HS was pleased with the online BAJS event also held on 15 July 2020 and thanked all of the speakers and organisers. The online format and focus on ECRs may provide a template for future events.

HS outlined plans for the 2021 conference. The 'World in Crisis' theme continues, and both Hindy Najman and Stefanie Schüler-Springorum have agreed to deliver their keynotes in 2021. 190 abstracts were received for the cancelled 2020 conference, so there is a question of how to proceed. The process agreed by the committee was to (i) ask those who submitted abstracts whether they would like their submissions carried over to 2021, (ii) launch a new open call in the autumn, and (iii) combine the outcomes but, when assessing the submissions, give preference to the 2020 applicants. HS noted that there remains uncertainty about whether an in-person conference will be possible in 2021 and this will need to be assessed in an ongoing manner.

HS was pleased to announce that Philip Alexander will represent Jewish Studies in REF panel 31. She emphasised that in the next REF cycle we should start an early campaign for recognition of Jewish Studies, especially in terms of it not being categorised in terms of ancient religion. The 'Intentions to Submit' form that institutions had to complete early in the process was the sole method of deciding what expertise was needed, so we have to make sure that Jewish studies is included at this stage.

DT thanked HS for all her work on the REF and conference, especially with regard to disruptions surrounding the latter.

### **Treasurer's report:**

LA shared her screen and provided an overview of the accounts, also explaining that handover of account access from Holger Zellentin is ongoing. Sacha Stern queried the large size of the deposit account. HS noted the size of the book prize and the increased size of the student essay prize, and that these would be outgoing soon after the conference. EF suggested that we might increase bursaries given to students to participate in the conference. HS warned that the BAJIS accounts had been low in previous years and that we should be wary of over-committing to expenses. AS also stressed the need to keep current actions sustainable. EF suggested that we revise the manner in which membership is applied for – using a form rather than writing to DT and LA by email. EF also proposed setting up a system of institutional membership. HS supported EF's proposals.

### **Secretary's report:**

DT thanked the committee and members for support during the disruptions of 2020, especially HS and all of those involved with the online ECR event. He noted that BAJIS newsletters are continuing to be widely distributed, currently to over 360 members. The BAJIS studentship holder, SR, had during 2019-20 made major structural revisions to the website and begun to a new project examining how BAJIS might best contribute to the teaching of Jewish studies-related subjects in schools and colleges. She is currently compiling a report on this matter and would welcome any input from BAJIS members. DT thanked the student essay prize panel and book prize panel for all of their work in reading and judging submissions.

DT stated that the BAJIS committee has discussed a proposal to change the society's name to 'The British and Irish Association for Jewish Studies'. There are several reasons for this:

- The BAJIS constitution already states that the association aims to promote and defend Jewish Studies 'in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland'. In this regard, the proposal simply brings the association name into line with its constitution.
- With the United Kingdom leaving the European Union but the Republic of Ireland remaining a member, it is felt that there is benefit to the association signalling its status as an organisation that exists in both domains.
- A minor point is that the proposed name change would mean we no longer share an acronym with the British Association for Japanese Studies.

This is the first announcement of this proposal. DT noted that he will continue to disseminate news of this proposal with the idea of it being brought to a vote at the 2021 AGM.

### **Web officer's report:**

DT conveyed ZR's short report. She thanked SR for her work on the BAJIS website and also those members who sent information about online teaching resources during the early weeks of the pandemic. Members were encouraged to keep sending ZR online teaching resources so that these can be included on the BAJIS website.

### **Bulletin editor's report:**

EF, co-editor in 2020 during HE's maternity leave, provided an overview of this year's bulletin. Some reformatting has been required because of the pandemic, though EF also noted several positive innovations, including the emphasis on European associations.

### **Social media officer's report:**

BG thanked JR for his work in the role. BG has just started the role and was pleased with the success of promoting the ECR online event on 15 July.

### **Postgraduate / Early Careers report**

KK noted that she started the role earlier in the 2019-20 academic year and has been active regarding the promotion of conferences and PG/ECR advocacy. The 15 July BAJIS ECR event was an especially positive response to the pandemic and

its specific challenges for PGs/ECRs. KK noted the plan for the mentoring scheme to be moved to a rolling application process.

**AOB:**

DT and HS highlighted Catherine Hezser's petition to ring fence a Jewish Studies Chair at SOAS.

Sacha Stern noted the passing of former BAJIS President Ada Rapoport-Albert. Laliv Clenman suggested we may send an obituary to *The Guardian*, though there was brief debate on whether the family should take the lead in this regard. Sacha Stern supported Joanna Weinberg and Piet Van Boxel's active work in providing a reflective celebration of her work in Jewish studies.

HS noted her concern at the lack of non-modern topics among the student essay prize submissions. It is not clear why this pattern had emerged.

**Date of the next AGM:** July 2021

Provisional minutes by DT 15/07/2020 and updated 15/12/2020