

## Minutes of the East Midlands AGM

Tuesday 10 November 2020

Convened at 7pm on Zoom



### Introduction and welcome:

The Chair Professor Philippe Wilson (PW) extended a warm welcome to all and asked that since 2020 continues to be a year like no other, a short tribute should be paid to those who, for whatever reason, are no longer with us. In particular, Professor John Peberdy, an eminent mycologist and former branch chair.

### Apologies for absence:

Mrs Rosemary Hall (RH), the branch secretary introduced herself and reported that no formal apologies had been received. In the event of any technical problems a backup meeting ID and password were given out to all attendees.

### Minutes of the AGM held on the 13 November 2019 at the University of Nottingham:

The minutes were duly accepted as a true record of events – proposed by Dr Cas Kramer and seconded by Dr John Hall.

### The current committee and nominations for the forthcoming year:

Prior to the AGM itself, the committee had proposed that Philippe Wilson as Chair and Marc Vastenavondt as Vice Chair remain in post for the next three years. Marianne Overton too will continue as a member for a further 3 years. Rosemary Hall has agreed to continue as secretary for one more year only, whilst Benita Percival becomes a fully-fledged member for the next three years.

The committee were delighted to formally welcome **the following postgraduate students** who are keen to help where they can and, as such, **become co-opted members for the year:**

Mr Emilio Aldorino, Miss Stephanie Bean, Miss Jolanta Beinarovica, Miss Hannah Betts, Mrs Elena Budennaia and Miss Jessica Mackie.

Name	Post	Until Nov.
Professor Philippe Wilson	Chair	2023
Mr Marc Vastenavondt	Vice Chair	2023
Dr Geoff Buck	Treasurer	2021
Mrs Rosemary Hall	Secretary	2021
Dr Ron Dixon	Member	2021
Dr Cas Kramer	Member	2021
Cllr Marianne Overton	Member	2023
Dr Benita Percival	Member	2023

Finally, on behalf of all of the committee, RH gave thanks to Mr Rob Simpson who had stepped down earlier in the year due to health concerns. Rob will be remembered for his good company and his valuable contributions to the branch, particularly as a judge for the postgraduate competitions held at both the University of Lincoln and De Montfort University.

#### **Annual report by the chair, Professor Philippe Wilson (PW):**

PW expressed his gratitude to the committee for their hard work during what had been a very challenging year. The lockdown put many constraints on planning and for one event it meant rethinking how it could be delivered. The Regional Schools Competition was postponed just days before it was due to happen, but nevertheless the move online enabled posters and essays to be judged and prizes to be awarded. As Marc Vastenavondt remarked – it went rather better than we had hoped! Some high quality work was produced and the event drew praise from several quarters.

Good news too - Jolanta Beinarovica, a newly co-opted committee member, was now an official ambassador for the RSB.

#### **Branch Accounts for 2018-2019 by Treasurer Dr Geoff Buck (GB):**

GB presented the branch accounts for the year, sharing his screen so that all present could see the breakdown in expenditure. No additional funding from HQ was requested since lockdown had prevented any live events. However, as autumn approached and with enthusiastic newcomers to the committee, it was decided to join in with the online Freshers Fairs that undergraduate students would be encouraged to attend. There were costs involved, of course, but the branch remained within budget and was able to make good use of almost all of the basic allocation for the year.

#### **A brief look at future events by the chair Professor Philippe Wilson (PW):**

Planning for the new year continues even in the face of huge uncertainty. The branch hopes to run another postgraduate poster competition, but online early in 2021.

PW was especially pleased to announce that Professor Alan McNally has agreed to give the Charter Lecture in May. A well respected figure, Alan was instrumental in setting up the Lighthouse Laboratories.

By summer 2021, it is fingers crossed for a live event – a much anticipated Family Day at Nottingham Trent University with animals present as well as the small human kind!

Freshers Fairs in person perhaps? An opportunity to extend a warm welcome to the tentative new cohort and to encourage membership of the RSB so that they might gain from the opportunities on offer.

As with all of our events, emails will be circulated and details will appear on the Royal Society of Biology website.

#### **6. Any other business:**

Professor Nigel Brown, Chair of the College of Individual Members gave a brief address illustrating the make-up of the RSB Council and the many and various bodies that work together to develop science policy. Input from the branches is much valued for both the expertise and skill base represented there.

Although the move to online working had slowed everything down, on a positive note he thought it had allowed engagement with diverse groups and individuals, some of whom may not otherwise come to a meeting.

The meetings celebrating the 10 year anniversary were well received although some have been deferred until 2021. There are moves afoot to increase the professional standing of the chartered status (CBiol) and efforts continue to strive for equality, diversity and inclusivity in all activities. With no time for questions, Nigel left his email address and encouraged members to get in touch.

With no further issues to address, PW moved to introduce **Professor, Joanna Price**, Vice Chancellor of the Royal Agricultural University, who would give the third **Colin Leakey Memorial Lecture entitled:**

**'The myth behind the alpha male and other reflections of a career with animals'**