

St Catharine's College MCR Committee Meeting

Wednesday, July 18th 2007

Minutes

Present: Richard Jones (President), Tiffany Bogich (Treasurer), Martina Diep (External Officer), Rosie Fera (Welfare Officer), John Keightley (Formal Hall Officer), Cameron Rye (Green Officer), Mark Hopkin (Computer Officer)

Apologies: Amy Digout (Secretary)

1. Previous Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting have not yet been circulated to the Committee.
[Action: Amy]

2. Vacant Positions, By-Election and Co-Opting

Following her position of Secretary not being stood for in the election, Amy had offered to continue in the role. Therefore the role is now considered to be filled. This has already been discussed by email, and is included in these minutes for completeness.

The remaining positions vacant following the election are as follows: one position of President, Social Secretary, Events Officer and Food and Beverages Rep.

Richard suggested that the available means to cover these roles were via by-elections and co-opting. According to the constitution, the responsibility for co-opting lies solely with the President(s). However, Richard would like to follow the lead set by Dan and Roy last year, and seek opinion from the Committee on co-opting decisions before taking them.

Richard added that he thought it would be inappropriate to fill the vacant Presidential role by any means other than a by-election. Asked when the by-election would be, Richard suggested that in the apparent absence of further candidates at the present time the by-election might take place in November after the new MCR members had joined and had a little time to settle in. However, he was open to having the by-election sooner if the Committee felt this was a better option. (There was no suggestion for this to be the case)

On the co-opting side, Richard revealed that Dan Friess had approached him about being co-opted onto the Committee, and taking the role of either Social Secretary or Events Officer. Richard circulated copies of a representation from Dan to the Committee, which focused on Dan's preferred option of becoming Social Secretary.

After everyone had read the representation, further comments were invited. Martina commented that several of Dan's ideas had been suggested within the Committee

during the past year. They were ideas we hadn't got around to implementing, rather than being new ones.

Richard asked if the Committee could vote on whether or not he should co-opt Dan onto the Committee. There were six votes in favour with none against. Richard agreed that he was also in favour, and that he would co-opt Dan immediately.

At this point Dan Friess (Social Secretary) joined the meeting.

Rosie asked if there had been any developments in terms of Lizzie Perdeaux rejoining the Committee as Events Officer, which Lizzie mentioned to Rosie in the bop after Midsummer Dinner. Richard has not heard from Lizzie since Midsummer Dinner (she mentioned it to him then too). He has spoken privately to a couple of ongoing Committee members, to get their thoughts should this possibility arise, and a number of good and bad points for the idea have been raised. He genuinely isn't sure what the overall balance of these points would be, should the matter be discussed at a future Committee meeting.

As a final remark on the constitutional roles, Richard said that he didn't see why there need be only a single social secretary or events officer, as these roles would be suitable for sharing, so long as occupants were found who could work well together.

Regarding co-opting more generally, Richard said that he would be interested in coming up with some extra positions in November, if there were not many existing roles to be filled at that time. This would ensure new students had a chance to become involved in the Committee, without necessarily wishing to be a President. The extra roles would tend to be small roles which give people the chance to get involved, without too much pressure.

At the Michaelmas Term Open Meeting this year, Dai Morgan raised the idea of creating a position on the committee for someone to liaise with the JCR committee and with the college sports teams. This could be very useful since the sports teams tend to be undergraduate dominated, to the extent that many captains may even forget to publicise themselves to the graduates. The suggestion went down well at the Open Meeting concerned. Along similar lines, Richard has been interested in bringing back the position of Sports Officer, which was removed from the Constitution a year ago having been unfilled for a while before that. His idea for the role would be that the key tasks would be to encourage people to join College sports teams, and to make use of the College's sports facilities (such as the badminton courts) on a casual basis too. This has a strong cross-over with Dai's ideas as presented before. It is also slightly different from the role which has previously been stated in the Constitution, which involved tasks like organising internal sports competitions such as badminton and squash ladders.

Richard has recently discussed this situation with Dai, who raised the point that not only the college's sports teams but also other societies such as music could benefit from better publicity among the graduates. Richard felt this was a reminder that Dai knows better than anyone what is needed in the role and how it should be carried out.

Tiffany also commented that she thought Dai would be excellent in this role.

Richard has provisionally asked Dai if he would consider joining the Committee and filling the role. Dai has not as yet given a definite answer, as he wants to make a fair choice and not give a commitment he cannot keep. If Dai were to take on the role until November, that would at least cover the period of Freshers' Week, which is the most important time of year for this type of role, demonstrate how the job should be done and allow it to be offered for someone else to carry on as part of the November by-election.

Richard asked what the Committee's opinion was on the subject of co-opting Dai onto the Committee, should he decide that he was willing to join. All eight members present were in favour of Dai being co-opted immediately with no further discussion needed at a later meeting. Especially strong comments in support were made by several people. It was noted that the probability Dai will be willing to join is uncertain, since he has not responded to encouragement to join the MCR Committee in the past.

Martina asked if we had enough Committee members currently for running Freshers' Week. John agreed we might find things easier with a couple more people on board. Last year there were eight people on the Committee for Freshers' Week, and currently we have nine. However, Freshers' Week was quite hectic last year. It was agreed that extra hands could be useful, albeit they are not absolutely required. It also depends on finding people who want to take on the roles.

3. MCR Events Programme 2007-2008

Richard asked if we could discuss the programme of event formals for the year, so that he could take steps to booking rooms, late licenses and so on.

Last year, the programme was something like:

- Parents' and Childrens' Formal (in Freshers' Week)
- Hallowe'en Formal (close to 31st October)
- Christmas Formal (end of Michaelmas Term)

- Burns' Night Formal (close to 25th January)
- Valentine's Formal (close to 14th February)
- Easter Formal (end of Lent Term)

- Midsummer Dinner (end of Easter Term)

It was agreed to keep the same three formals in Michaelmas Term as last year, as they are popular and fairly evenly spaced.

The question was raised as to whether Thursdays or Saturdays are better for event formals. It was felt that Saturdays are better for the Committee, for the purposes of coming in during the day to set up, and for everyone, in terms of not having to get up the next day. However, many MCR members often seem to disappear at weekends so attendance might be better on a Thursday. The two best attended formals of last year were Christmas and Burns' Night, which were both 200-sell-outs, both took place on Thursdays. However the worst attended event formal (Valentine's) also took place on a Thursday. No real conclusion was reached. Continuing with a mixture of Thursdays and Saturdays was suggested.

John asked whether we knew when the Fellows' and Graduates' Dinners for the year would be, so we could avoid our event formals being too close. The calendar on the college website has not yet been updated for the new year. Richard will look into the dates of these dinners **[Action: Richard]**

Richard wanted to talk more about the programme for Lent Term. The Valentine's Formal was an extra event formal for this year, compared to the programme from previous years. Although it was better attended than an average formal, it was the poorest attended event formal and Richard suggested that he felt the theme was weak, which was one thing which let down attendance. Another problem could be that there was another MCR event the day after the formal, which may have split potential attendees. This latter event was a Chinese New Year event held in the MCR.

With regard to the theme of the formal and bop, Richard had had the idea of changing that to a Chinese New Year theme. The event held last year in the MCR for Chinese New Year combined Chinese song, poetry, take-away food, decorations and a film. The event had been felt to draw out some MCR members not seen so often at other events.

Decorations are an integral part of event formals and bops, while song and poetry could form nice interludes between courses. The College catering manager has suggested that while the canteen might not be able to produce a truly authentic Chinese meal with their facilities, they could certainly produce a meal with a 'Chinese feel', and add some genuinely authentic touches such as crackers and things which they could buy in and put out on the tables.

There was some discussion about how this would be perceived differently by students from different backgrounds. In particular, opinions differed about whether south-east Asian students would be disappointed by the cuisine, or appreciate the effort.

Secondly, there was concern about not running the Chinese New Year event in the MCR again, when it had been a success last year.

Richard suggested that the options as he saw them with regard to the Lent Term formals were to revert back to having only two event formals (Burns' Night and Easter), have a Chinese New Year themed formal and bop around the 7th February or have a Valentine's themed formal and bop around the 14th. Dan questioned whether the Dean had been completely happy to allow a mid-term MCR bop in Lent

Term this year. Having said that, the bop had gone smoothly, and the MCR does have a mid-term bop in Michaelmas Term on an annual basis. The JCR typically have three bops in the bar in both Michaelmas and Lent terms.

Richard said he would speak to the Dean regarding approval of all major events. **[Action: Richard]**

Rosie suggested having an event formal in the mid-Lent Term period which wasn't tied to a particular date. An Indian/Bollywood theme was suggested. Nikant Ailawadi has expressed interest in organising a Bollywood event this year, however it has never quite happened. Unfortunately Nikant will no longer be here by next February. Nonetheless, it was provisionally agreed to make the mid-Lent Term themed formal and bop Indian/Bollywood themed, should we be able to get permission for such an event.

It was agreed that Midsummer dinner needs to be earlier next year than it was this year, due to the problem of quarterly rent agreements being up on June 30th.

Thursday was agreed to be preferred for both Hallowe'en and Burns' Night, and Saturday was seen to be the only day for a Midsummer Dinner. No decision on a day preference for Easter or Christmas was made.

Richard will contact the catering manager again to get dates for all the event formals. **[Action: Richard]**

4. Graduates' Matriculation

Graduates' Matriculation will be on October 8th, with the photograph, speeches from the graduate tutors and library tour being organised for the afternoon and the dinner being in the evening. Heather Green (the Graduate Tutorial Administrator) has asked if the MCR Committee can help out to give college tours to coincide with the library tours, and then provide an activity to fill the time until dinner. This was done last year, with the time being filled by taking people to the pub. The time under discussion is expected to be something like 4pm-7pm.

One alternative to taking the matriculands to the pub would be to show a film on DVD in the MCR, however this did not seem to capture anyone's imagination.

Richard proposed to take everyone over to the nearby Graduate Union (GU), show them the facilities there, and arrange for a brief talk to be given by a member of the GU Executive (probably the President). Following this, we could head on to the University Centre, which goes undiscovered by many students, and show them the facilities there (bar, dining hall, grads café). Assuming its refurbishment will be complete by October, the bar in the University Centre could then be the one chosen to spend time until dinner.

Everyone agreed taking the group to visit the GU was an excellent idea, particularly as it is very close by. Since it isn't much further in the same direction, going on to

tour the University Centre also seemed acceptable. No decision was taken on which bar/pub to go to in the remaining time before dinner.

Richard will contact the GU Executive to arrange the visit in due course. **[Action: Richard]**

Heather has informed Richard that the entire MCR Committee will be invited to attend the Graduates' Matriculation Dinner, as last year.

5. Freshers' Week Brainstorming

The first event to timetable for any Freshers' Week is the formal hall, as we have to fit in with when the hall is available. Richard has already booked the dinner for the Tuesday (October 2nd), which will be the same as the last Freshers' Week. We need to make sure the bar is not in any way monopolised by the JCR that evening, so graduates get a good impression when going to the bar after dinner. **[Action: Richard to liaise with the JCR committee.]**

It was never going to be in question that we should open with Welcome Drinks on the evening of the first Sunday! We also agreed to have the informal pub trips on the evening before again too.

Last year we began in two groups and then joined up at the end. Richard suggested he didn't think it was necessary to join up as everyone would meet in one group the next day anyway at the Welcome Drinks. This pre-Freshers' Week activity would just be a chance to meet people from your own residence. This also saves logistical problems of getting people together from pubs at two ends of Cambridge.

No strong objections were raised to this.

The question was raised of whether we could use the Ramsden Room to reduce crowding in the MCR for the Welcome Drinks. Unfortunately, the JCR have a tradition to use the Ramsden Room at this time for their own welcome speeches. However, we may be able to expand into the room after they are finished.

Richard suggested he would like to have the MCR's welcome speeches in the Ramsden Room after we expand into it, because the upper MCR is very crowded for the purpose, and people tend not to all fit in and be crowded outside the doorways too. The question was raised about how Richard would get everyone to go across to the Ramsden Room at the same time. Shepherding them across might become a drawn out process. The speeches have taken place in the MCR for the last few years – has it really been such a major problem?

The next event up for discussion was the pub crawl, which had been another popular event last year. On that occasion it was not organised by the MCR Committee, however this year it would probably have to be. Richard suggested he didn't have a problem with this, so long as the crawl kept away from College in its later stages in case of any 'mishaps'. It was agreed this was a sensible plan. Drinking on the crawl will anyway be kept in moderation.

Last year, the GU held an event at Po Na Na. Would they be doing so again? Currently the GU have no known plans for Freshers' Week.

[Action: Richard to keep an eye on what the GU plans are.]

Last year, on the second weekend of Freshers' Week, we held a barbeque and Frisbee session at Whichcote House on the Saturday, then went for brunch and the Cambridge Bus Tour on the Sunday. It was felt we should do these events again, with Mark keen to give the freshers the chance to check Whichcote out during Freshers' Week, and Tiffany remembering the Sunday event particularly fondly from last year.

This left three days free, one of which would be expected to incorporate the college sports and societies squash.

A repeat of the Russell Street games night (with a new game or two), a bowling trip, and punting (with a new twist to replace the pirate ambush) seemed to be the preferred options, although a scavenger hunt was also suggested.

Cheese and wine is another event which has taken place in the past, which could be brought back.

It seemed the ghost tour would be dropping out from last years schedule. Maybe the punting could be a ghost tour in some way?

The exact timetabling of the events might be weather dependent. Also, we might consider booking the Ramsden Room as a wet-weather alternative to certain events.

Finally, it was discussed whether people needed to be taken over to the Freshers' Fair at Kelsey Kerridge, or whether to include it in the programme for people to go individually. Going in a group would keep people more entertained in the queue, and help them find the venue. However, it would need to be stressed that those who can't make the Catz MCR trip should still go under their own steam at another time. Having one group trip on each of the two days was suggested. It shouldn't be expected to keep the groups together once inside the Fair. Only one or two Committee members would be needed for each trip.

6. Summer Socials

We already had one summer social at South Green Lodge, which was a barbeque and sports day. Last year, there were no further summer events from the similar barbeque until a dinner in college in September. Richard has provisionally booked the SCR for the 6th of September, for this year's similar dinner. John confirmed this date would be fine for him to do the duties as formal hall officer. The Catering Manager has suggested the price will be slightly more than for a normal formal, because it is out of term. This is felt to be a bit cheeky on his part.

It was suggested at least one additional event in the intervening period might be nice this year. Richard suggested a barbeque at Russell Street sometime in August.

Some kind of 'feature' or theme of the barbeque was discussed. The barbeque at South Green had fun sports events. One idea was to project a film, possibly onto the wall of Russell Street, or onto a sheet hung from an upstairs window. Maybe this is the chance to do Nikant's bollywood evening while he is still around? The logistics of the projector, sufficiently loud speakers, bright sunshine or rain, and not annoying anyone with the noise were issues raised. The film should not have any overly adult content in case it can be seen by children in nearby houses or gardens. Dan agreed to take charge of this social, including any possible theme **[Action: Dan]**. No doubt there will be several other committee hands to help out on the day. **[Action: All who are available]**

A second idea proposed was for a walk or punt to Grantchester and meal in a Grantchester pub. Punts would need to be booked in advance, however it would be hard to guess numbers accurately. For this reason, a walk may be simpler. Walking is also a lot quicker, if Dan is punting. Dan will also be organising this social **[Action: Dan]**.

It was agreed these two extra events would be plenty.

7. Leaving Present for Dr Marina Frasca-Spada

We really must get a leaving present for Marina, who has done a wonderful job as a Graduate Tutor. Patrick has suggested getting something similar to what his Committee got the outgoing Master a year or so back, which was an old book, which had its faceplate written out by a professional calligrapher to say that the book was from the MCR. He said the total cost of book and inscription was around £100.

Rosie suggested she thought Marina might like such a gift, and would look into what book we would get in this instance. **[Action: Rosie]**

Martina raised the idea of getting something arty. From her facebook profile, Marina would seem to have a particular liking for shapes, colours, and geometric patterns.

The rest of the committee agreed to think hard about possible present ideas. **[Action: Committee]** Ideally we should finalise the gift choice at the next meeting, as it may take time to order and receive.

A leaving dinner for Marina was discussed. It was proposed to find out if Marina would be free and willing to come to the dinner already arranged for the 6th of September. **[Action: Richard]**

8. Any Other Business

8.1 Website Update

Mark plans to tackle the MCR website when he returns from holiday in August. However, the Committee page could do with being updated sooner, as people are

still being contacted regarding their old roles. Mark agreed he could do this soon, leaving the rest to his originally suggested time. **[Action: Mark]**

In order for Mark to do this fully, everyone needs to have sent a photo and some text about their role to Mark. **[Action: Everyone]**

Heather would also like a photo of everyone on the Committee for the freshers' page she maintains on the college site. Mark can presumably pass these on once he has them all. **[Action: Everyone/Mark]**

8.2 Cover of Secretary's Role

Amy will be away for seven weeks in total, so we need to make sure her role is covered. Richard has already offered to compile agendas and to minute this meeting. The success of Richard trying to chair and minute at the same time is open to comment. We may decide to have a different minuter next meeting.

It was felt the MCR plants were in such a bad state, they should generally be replaced once the MCR redecoration is complete. More effort needs to be taken to care for the plants in future!

Rosie offered to deputise for Amy in making sure the MCR stayed supplied with tea and coffee, once it reopened. **[Action: Rosie]**

8.3 Bench at Brookside

The residents of Brookside have been promised a bench for their garden by the college, but it has not showed up as yet. This needs to be chased with the graduate tutors or college consultative committee. **[Action: Richard]**

9. Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place in the newly redecorated MCR.

Monday 13th August, 7.30pm.

10. Addendum

In the pub after the meeting, the possibility of having cheese and wine combined with the punting in Freshers' Week was raised. This could be part of the surprise element. Could the Committee members show up to the event in black tie to serve it? People not used to Cambridge might not realise we are being ironic?