

**Hello, folks! It's your guest editor here. Rico's absolutely fine and will be back next time.**

We had a bit of a chat when it became clear to me that this issue was probably going to be full of charity-related information from the top of page one to the bottom of page four. I wouldn't like it if I'd put together an issue of *Update* and then had to jettison all of my own work when important charity-related material

appeared afterwards, so the fairest option seemed to be sticking me in the editor's chair as a one-off.

I wasn't wrong in predicting how much charity-related content there would be: we're full from top to tail! You'll know from *La Brita Esperantisto* that I love my whitespace and large images, but you wouldn't think so to look at this issue of *Update*, which resembles a wall of text rather more than I would like. Needs must, I'm

afraid. I haven't added a signature to every article: you can assume it came via my fingers if there isn't one.

All being well, normal service will resume in the next issue, with a return to colour images dotted throughout, and a new board of trustees. Perhaps uniquely in Esperanto, it should consist of four times as many women as men! ■

**Tim Owen**

## TRUSTEES TO BE ELECTED VIA POSTAL VOTING

**The cancellation of last year's AGM owing to the restrictions on gathering in public spaces meant that the annual election of trustees didn't take place. This year there will be an election, carried out by postal voting.**

On April 19 last year, the trustees held a meeting in which Simone Davis, who was a new candidate for trusteeship, was co-opted to the board, and Rich Smith and Damon Lord, existing trustees who were not standing for re-election, were recorded as having stepped down. The thinking was that this is what the board composition would have looked like for the next year had the AGM originally scheduled for April 20 not been cancelled.

With this issue of *Update* you'll find enclosed a ballot for the five members of EAB who are standing as candidates for trusteeship. Please read the instructions carefully since your vote will not be counted otherwise. The ballot is secret and we need to ensure that each member votes only once, so we ask you to place your voting slip within a *blank* envelope which, in turn, is sent to Esperanto House within another envelope on the back of which you write your name and address. When Viv receives this, she will mark off that you have submitted a vote, and then add your sealed blank envelope to a collection of others, meaning that when they are all opened, votings forms won't be identifiable to any individual.

### ATTEMPTS TO HOLD AN AGM

You'll notice in the report of the trustee meeting in February that the trustees were keen to try to hold some form of AGM this year rather than go a second year without one. Ultimately, we haven't been able to come up with a workable scenario within the constraints imposed by the constitution, which mandates that the AGM must be a physical meeting attended by at least 20 members, and the restrictions faced by the whole country.

One solution which we thought might have some mileage would be to designate a location, say Esperanto

House or a trustee's home, a workplace, and then have some of the trustees and staff travel there for a meeting, which could be joinable online if members were willing to appoint one of us as their proxies so that the required 20 people would technically be present. Ultimately, though, I'm afraid our planning didn't seem feasible; we weren't able to identify a location in which a handful of people could sit alongside each other in a socially distanced manner and which also had a reliable internet connection, and anybody online would have been a spectator rather than a participant, since the constitution doesn't allow for hybrid meetings, so there wouldn't have been scope to hold votes or receive live questions.

### PURPOSES

The AGM serves a handful of purposes. It provides the environment in which the members can elect the trustees for the next year, and offers them a say in changing the membership subscription and appointing the independent examiner, and grants an opportunity to share opinions and ask questions. It doesn't allow members to approve or make changes to the accounts or annual report; they are signed off by the independent examiner and filed with the Charity Commission well before the AGM takes place, since EAB's financial year ends on October 31 and the examination takes place shortly afterwards. The AGM does, however, ask the members to approve the draft minutes to the previous year's meeting.

### THE BALLOT

I'm not aware that the membership subscription has changed at all during my years with EAB, and the AGM has consistently agreed to grant the treasurer discretion regarding which firm to appoint as independent examiner. The trustees don't intend to make any changes to these two areas, so the lack of an AGM won't have an impact here.

The draft minutes of AGM 2019

could be signed off at the next AGM to be held, presumably in 2022. Nonetheless, that will be three years after the event concerned, so there might be merit in signing them off already: in the pre-AGM *Update* last year, with which the draft minutes were circulated, we asked that anybody wishing to propose substantial changes submit them to the office. As far as we're aware, no comments were received, suggesting that the draft minutes were very likely to be approved as substantially accurate. With this in mind, we've adapted the voting form so that you can offer an opinion on whether the draft minutes should be considered as accepted or held in abeyance for a further year.

As for asking questions and sharing opinions ... well, this is the modern world, and so the lack of a public meeting isn't a showstopper. The trustees are contactable individually, and Viv and I are happy to forward messages to them. In turn, the trustees can respond in some appropriate manner, be it a personal reply in email, a comment in *Update*, and so on.

### SCRUTINEERS

We normally have two people counting the votes, typically Viv and Bill Walker. Both have agreed to assume their usual roles, this time virtually.

To help keep things simple, the ballot form contains a tickbox in which you can indicate that you wish to vote for all five candidates. The regular grid is found below that if you don't wish to vote for everybody but which you would otherwise leave blank.

### CAN'T POSTAL VOTE?

If you're unable to use a postal vote but would still like your voice to be heard, please contact Viv ahead of the deadline, April 18, to name somebody as your proxy, and she will know to expect an extra ballot from that person. Alternatively, if you're happy to waive your privacy, let her know your voting intentions and she will fill in a slip on your behalf. ■



# TRUSTEE NOTES FROM FEBRUARY

**EAB's Zoom account got one of its periodic outings in February for the trustees' traditional final meeting of the year. That sounds strange, doesn't it? A 'trustee year' is from one AGM to the next so the February meeting comes at the end of a particular board's tenure, followed by another meeting shortly after a new board, often consisting of the same people, is elected.**

This final meeting could not be attended by EAB's president, Ian Carter, who has sadly been experiencing poor health, particularly in recent months. Ian will not be able to stand as a candidate again, with Edmund Grimley Evans, president from 1999 to 2004, stepping into the role once more. All of us, trustees and staff, who have worked alongside Ian over the previous six years are very sad that life has taken the turn it has.

## BEA LTD

The directors of British Esperanto Association, Ltd convened and signed off the company's accounts for the year, showing that the company has remained dormant.

## TREASURER

Clare Hunter had distributed a report prior to the meeting, including financial results for 2019-20. They showed a hefty surplus of £55,283. The true surplus was even higher: the charity's investment holdings lost value over the year, pulling the surplus down from £80,439. Clare elaborated that £58,300 of this was a gift from NoJEF, meaning that the effective operating surplus was a more realistic £22,139.

This is still a huge figure, and is mainly attributable to the pandemic meaning that budgeted expenditure didn't take place, as well as releasing a £7,000 creditor to Stoke-on-Trent City Council, which had been held for over seven years. The trustees made a point of noting that the pandemic hadn't necessarily meant a cessation of activity; transitioning to online delivery meant that we still provided our customary educational courses but at nearly no cost compared to the thousands of pounds which are usually spent in a year providing them in a classroom. The trustees then agreed to sign off the accounts, a summary of which Clare has written for this issue of *Update*.

Clare reported that the charity's holdings with BlackRock had been sold in December 2020, realising a gain of £61,224, and that the £427,046 from that sale plus a £50,000 surplus in EAB's cash account had since been invested in CCLA's Global Equity Fund, as agreed in a previous meeting. She informed her colleagues that the transfer of NoJEF's investment account with EdenTree to EAB's name was now underway, with NoJEF's trustees in the process of what they believed to be the final paperwork.

## OFFICE

Viv O'Dunne, who was present for the meeting, had circulated a report in advance, which provided the foundation for the following part of the programme. She raised the point that we customarily offer participants at our Barlaston courses free copies of *Mil Unuaj Vortoj* and *Wells* dictionaries if they haven't already got one but that we haven't done so in the virtual environment. The trustees agreed that doing so could serve as an incentive to participate, authorising Viv to offer them as appropriate to online participants, starting with *MUV* for the first session, perhaps complemented with the *Mini-Trio*, and *Wells* in the second.

The UK's withdrawal from the EU had been in the press around the time of the meeting as the transition period had come to an end, with the emergence of complications regarding trading with the EU. Fortunately, for us, Viv had diligently booked a free consultation session with our examiners, Dains LLP, about the implications. Viv and I, having seen horror stories about people being hit with customs charges, had in January discussed whether we should potentially cease selling to people living in the EU to spare them the unpleasant experience. In the end, we decided that the best approach would be to have a banner in the shop alerting customers in the EU to the possibility, even though the chance of being one of those people selected is small. Speaking of the shop: you'll notice that there are far more goods listed there than before, thanks to Bill Walker's efforts to add more to the catalogue. Thanks, Bill!

Viv had informed us at a previous meeting that there had been some vandalism at Wedgwood Memorial College. (This was at the *Limes* site, a couple of hundred metres down the road from the *Estoril* site, where Esperanto House is based.) The site had been vandalised again recently, and a suspicious person had been spotted on site closer to home too, pressing his face against the office door. The trustees had therefore authorised Viv to source quotes for shutters, one of which she presented to the trustees. It seemed reasonable, and so the trustees were happy to go ahead but suggested that Viv should attempt to source a second quote just for prudence's sake.

One small thing: the *Gift Aid* appeal in the previous issue yielded only one response. It means that EAB can claim 25% of your membership subscription, costlessly to you. If you pay income tax then you're eligible to complete a Gift Aid declaration, which we've sent out with this issue. Just make sure that it goes inside the outer envelope, not the plain one which contains your voting slip!

## PUBLISHING

Prior to the meeting, I had distributed a report on our various publishing ventures.

In a few weeks, I'll be taking delivery of another book in the same style of *La Krubalo* and *Spaco sur la Balail'*, this time translated by Ian Carter and Edmund Grimley Evans. We'll also be bringing to the Esperanto market a well-known children's book, one which Edmund translated himself over a decade ago to read to his daughters. We've secured the rights and it's beautifully pageset: we're now awaiting several quotes for printing it, since we believe it deserves the full-colour/hardcover treatment, which does have the unfortunate consequence of raising the printing costs quite a bit. If we can find printers who will do it cheaply enough, then we'll be able to lower the sale price commensurately, so it's worth taking the time to look elsewhere.

We have some other books which we intend to bring to life shortly, including the complete poetry of Marjorie Boulton, which Edmund has been diligently curating over years, and we have procured the rights to translate some popular works into Esperanto.

## AGM

The trustees acknowledged that the constitution did not allow for an AGM to be anything other than a physical meeting at which at least 20 members were present, and that there was no suggestion about when the restriction on gathering in public would be lifted. They grappled with ideas for how to avoid not holding an AGM for a second year, determining that, at the very least, there would be trustee elections by postal vote this year. We decided to continue the discussion after the meeting to try to work through the logistical challenges as best we could.

## EDUCATION

Simone Davies reported that she and I had been discussing ideas for improving EAB's online delivery, which we will report on more fully in the working weekend.

The trustees were impressed with TEJO's new event *Retoso*, and decided that EAB would for the first time issue grants towards the cost of participating in online Esperanto events. I had earlier outlined some principles for setting up a grant-allocation system within EAB similar to NoJEF's, which I'll tighten up into a more formal policy for the trustees to discuss at their next meeting.

We briefly discussed some challenges regarding the advanced course which EAB offers. It's pricey at £100, £5 of which goes to EAB, and involves us sending the request to an external provider, who doesn't necessarily respond as quickly as students might like, resulting in our fielding complaints and issuing refunds, and then having to claim back the remaining £95 ourselves. We should probably do better than just forwarding requests elsewhere, so considered an alternative approach. ■

# CANDIDATES FOR TRUSTEESHIP

FROM 2021 TO AGM 2022

CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT

## EDMUND GRIMLEY EVANS



I started learning Esperanto around 1985 and have been a member of the Management Committee of EAB since 1997. Over the last twenty years I have often been responsible for EAB's publications. I am currently helping with several books that are due to appear in 2021, including the complete edition of Marjorie Boulton's poems, which I have edited.

My other Esperanto activities include writing, editing and proof-reading for *Monato* and the occasional translation: my Esperanto translation of Cory Doctorow's *Little Brother* appeared online in 2020 and I am hoping to soon start work on translating another modern novel. Since 2013 I have been a member of the *Akademio de Esperanto*. I speak Esperanto every day because I speak Esperanto to my daughters, now aged 14 and 16.

Professionally, I work in a software research group for Arm Ltd, the UK-based 'chip designer'.

EAB's main activities are education and publicity. I think it is important for EAB to remain focused on those activities, and to continue looking to the future. However, we must also look after the Butler Library and our archives. When the pandemic subsides I hope to be able to help with improving the organisation of the library.

*Proposers: Simon Davis, Ed Robertson*

## ANNA LANGLEY



I started the Esperanto course on Duolingo the day it was released, then later attended EAB courses at Barlaston. EAB's generosity and kindness impressed me in so many ways, from their free courses to bursaries to attend Esperanto events. As a trustee, I would like to support all the great things that EAB does and help to reach a broader and younger audience on digital platforms. EAB is already doing good work in this area. I hope to help it go further.

I work as a service manager in IT at the University of Cambridge. It would be a

## LAURA MILLER



As one Trustee of EAB I am constantly learning. Being involved in an organisation with a specific language focus and at the same time with such a complex and widespread history is an awesome experience for a history teacher. I have begun reading (my favourite activity) both in English and Esperanto about the history of Esperanto.

Because of my growing understanding of how entwined Esperanto was with political movements in the 20th century, I have taken on developing an archive of memories for EAB of those whose parents were involved in the early development of the movement and who are themselves still involved. I believe that collecting the memories of those who went before us can add to what is already published, and be a small contribution to EAB's archives.

I continue to learn from the trio of excellence, Tim, Clare and Viv. Their patience in answering questions, kindness individually, incredibly hard work and constant erudition demonstrate what true devotion means. I feel privileged to be a part of this Board and hope to continue working within it.

*Proposers: Ed Robertson, Ken Keable*

privilege to use the skills I acquired working in IT for thirty years in the Esperanto community's service.

I love that the Esperanto community welcomes queer people like me so warmly. I want to help EAB reach out to the LGBT+ community. Both groups value difference and diversity, and both are international movements. This is an opportunity I want to explore.

I would be honoured to join and work with this fantastic team.

*Proposers: Simone Davis, John Parkinson*

## SIMONE DAVIS



Having initially come to Esperanto via Duolingo, both the language and the community have since become a hugely important part of my life. I have now

## CLARE HUNTER



I have been a trustee since 2009 and worked as treasurer since 2011. Professionally I am a chartered accountant and currently work as a senior audit manager in a large professional services firm. This enables me to keep up-to-date with the latest developments in financial reporting and Charity Commission guidance.

While legally all trustees are equally responsible for the charity's finances, I believe it is important for the charity to always have one trustee who can take practical responsibility on a day-to-day basis, and believe that the role of treasurer has two parts. Firstly, to ensure that the charity continues to live within its means, with income being spent on charitable activities and excess funds being prudently invested. Secondly, to explain the finances to trustees whose expertise lies in other areas in a way which they can understand, so that they have the financial information which they need to make decisions. If re-elected for 2021/22, I would be happy to continue working as treasurer.

*Proposers: Ed Robertson, Joyce Bunting*

attended Lernu Plu, Postplu and Somerl-ernejo courses run by EAB, for which I am very grateful. They are a great opportunity, and I hope we can bring these and other learning opportunities to even more people in the future.

In my working life I was both an auditor (so well versed in business and finance) and a university lecturer (so familiar with delivering ongoing adult education).

I am active in several Esperanto Facebook groups which encourage and support *komencantoj* and *progresantoj* as they extend their reading, writing and interactions beyond Duolingo.

I was co-opted last April when the AGM at which I was due to stand for election was cancelled due to Covid-19. I have spent the past year working with the director and other trustees as we seek to update some of our charity compliance processes, look at extending our print publications and branch out into offering online courses and material as well as continually improving our more traditional offerings. I would like to continue working for and with EAB this year.

*Proposers: Mark Wootton, John Parkinson*

# CLARE EXPLAINS THE ACCOUNTS

I know that the format of the formal accounts as sent out with *Update* can be a bit confusing for those who are not familiar with them. I would normally try to add some context to the figures during the AGM so, in the absence of the opportunity to do that this year, I thought it would be useful to include some explanation in *Update* instead.

The Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) shows that the charity's total income for the year was £161,539. This includes a donation from NoJEF of £58,300, so our normal underlying income was £103,239. Last year's income looks significantly higher at £289,426, but this is not a cause for concern; the 2019 income included one-off legacies received of £195,145, so the underlying income remains similar year on year.

## MONEY IN AND MONEY OUT

The greatest proportion of EAB's income (£80k) continues to come from its investments. Other income is generated from book sales (£14k) and membership subscriptions and Gift Aid (£7k). The 2020 income also includes £59k of donations and £1k of "other income", the biggest component of which this year is prize money received following *La Krubalo* being awarded the title 'Children's Book of the Year' in the *Belartaj Konkursoj*.

What about expenditure? You will remember from explanations in previous

AGMs that the expenditure figures shown in the SOFA are after the independent examiner has apportioned a proportion of our staff costs and office running costs (support costs) to each category of charitable activity. The actual amount of money spent directly on each area of activity is therefore lower than the figure in the SOFA.

## THE PANDEMIC

In some areas, the figures really do look low this year. The pandemic has meant that we only incurred £1k of direct expenditure on education, for example. We had obviously budgeted to spend multiples more than we did, running courses at Barlaston, providing grants for learners to attend SES, and subsidising the CEFR exams. We had also invited Katalin Kováts to travel to the UK and run a "teach the teachers" weekend course for EAB's teaching staff and invited volunteers, with EAB subsidising everybody's travel, accommodation and food costs. Ultimately, the cancellation of these events meant that these budgeted thousands of pounds went unspent.

One area where we were more successful with expenditure was books and publishing, with a total of £11k spent on a mixture of purchasing new books for sale in the book store and bringing our own publication projects such as *La Krubalo* and *Spaco sur la balail'* to fruition.

## THE FINE POINTS

Total expenditure for the year was £81,100, leading to a surplus of £80,439 before the impact of unrealised losses on investments. Remember, of course, that £58,300 of this surplus has arisen due to a one-off donation from NoJEF, so the surplus of normal income over normal expenditure is £22,139. That's predominantly money which was earmarked for our core activities but which we were unable to spend owing to these one-off circumstances outside of our control.

Whilst it's nice to finish the year with a surplus, we would much rather have been able to spend all of this money on things like educational courses, attendance at the Language Show, and the annual conference in Leicester, as per our original budget. It is disappointing to have had to cancel plans, but important to remember that reduced expenditure isn't the same as reduced activity, and our educational courses, for example, have been able to continue successfully and virtually cost-free via the Internet.

Here's hoping that the financial year ending 31 October 2021 will be one in which some of 2020's cancelled projects can go ahead and it will soon become possible to spend money on in-person charitable activity again! ■

Clare Hunter

## THE SPEED-READ

One quick round-up, and then that's another issue done and dusted!

I'm finalising *Update* on March 19. At this point, nothing has changed regarding the *Universala Kongreso* in Belfast in July, so consider it to be going ahead. I'm still no more capable of predicting the future than I was back in November when I was first asked by somebody whether it would "definitely" take place, and I would have no role in making that decision anyway: this is UEA's event, completely independent of EAB. If we receive any news to the contrary, we'll pass it on promptly. ★



Two of our current trustees aren't standing for re-election. **Ian Carter**, EAB's president, is unable to carry out the

role because of a very sad turn of events regarding his health. All of the current trustees and staff have been in touch with Ian to express that he'll be missed: no longer one of the team but still one of the family.

The second departure is **Ed Robertson**, who has served for ten years and, quite reasonably in my view, feels that he's done his fair share. Ed has always made a point of stating that he feels happy to be part of a "forward-looking team" when standing for re-election: he's been a good, sensible part of it, and has made a considerable contribution to Esperanto in recent years through his work as a course developer with Duolingo. ★



EAB has just promoted a scheme for young people to participate in TEJO's new online event, *Retoso*, free of charge, in exchange for a report afterwards. We'll be inheriting and expanding NoJEF's role.

What we believe is the final paperwork required to transfer one of NoJEF's investment funds to EAB has been submitted, following which NoJEF will wind down having passed its funds to EAB. ★

I received a request from my equivalent in UEA, **Martin Schäffer**, to ask for somebody willing and capable of being UEA's independent examiner to come forward. It's necessary to be fluent in Esperanto and have experience in the area, of course, but Martin underlines that the person fulfilling the role doesn't have to be a professional auditor. The role doesn't necessitate a trip to Rotterdam, and UEA will repay associated costs and offer a small payment. If you're interested, you can drop him a line at [direktoro@uea.org](mailto:direktoro@uea.org). ★

We've just received formal notification that Wedgwood Memorial College, on a site of which Esperanto House is located, is under new ownership. WMC was closed in 2012 and hasn't been in use since. We haven't yet had any contact with the new owners and don't currently know what they plan to do with the two sites. ■