



Charity numbers 313115 and SC039950

Principal's Report for the AGM 2021

This report should be read in conjunction with the Trustees' Report. As much of the activity since the end of the financial year is covered in Section 5.7 of the Annual Report, Post-Audit Events, this report is briefer than usual.

This time last year, we were coming up to the end of our first term purely online and preparing for the September term. None of us foresaw that lockdown would continue for as long as it has and, even at the time of writing this report, the future is still unclear.

Some in-person activities have resumed, with occasional groups meeting at various locations. Meditation initiations have resumed. By the time of the AGM we hope to have held our first short residential at Waterperry House. We had hoped for more residentials but the delay of the final relaxations in England meant that the first four had to be cancelled.

In the first half of July a series of open mornings around the country had been planned for those students who have joined the online courses since April 2020, with the aim of letting them know that the school has a physical presence, and of giving them an opportunity to meet students other than those in their individual Zoom group. Again, unfortunately, these have had to be postponed until next term. There was some interest in attending these so, hopefully, even planning them has gone some way to introducing the online students to our locations around the country.

Plans are well underway for groups to resume at many of our locations for the September term, both for established groups and for new Part 1s. At the same time the national online courses continue. As with just about everyone else, we cannot predict what the take-up will be for online, in-person or some mixture of both. The arguments for different types of meetings are well rehearsed and the advantages and disadvantages are well understood.

The use of online for regular groups, study groups and residentials has been invaluable while in-person meetings have not been permitted. For many people it has allowed participation to continue; for some it has facilitated joining in, when in-person meetings had previously been challenging. For many, missing the personal contact has been a real sense of loss and for a few online has been impossible.

The aim of the Executive is to support the Senior Tutor and the Branch Leaders as they navigate a path through the uncertain future of online and in-person meetings.

As you will know from the meeting on May 8th members of the Executive, together with senior members from the tutoring faculty, with the support of Mr Lambie are working through a number of initiatives that could impact on the day-to-day operation of the School. It is too early to give any further update, but we will keep the Fellowship and the wider school community informed of developments in due course.

We were encouraged by the support given by many School members for the May meeting, as well as by the significant number of people who have volunteered to help in various ways. We are grateful for that support.

I would also like to express my personal gratitude to the members of the Executive, all of whom have stepped up to the challenges that we have been facing since the Covid pandemic and lockdown arrived on the scene. The demands have increased beyond what any of us were envisaging this time last year. At the same time, however, using online meetings has enabled us to respond quickly, without the overhead of travel.

We have a number of vacancies this year on the Executive Committee, primarily due to current members needing to devote more time to their other important activities in the School. Therefore, we need nominations from amongst the Fellowship to take up this important service to the School community. The commitment required of the members of the Executive is not to be minimised but the work, in good company, is rewarding. I would be happy to discuss the role with any member who is interested.

Finally, I would like to extend gratitude, on behalf of all of us, to the staff and students across the UK for their commitment and support over the past year. Without that we would not have weathered the choppy waters as well as we have done.

Because of the work of so many people we are, I believe, in a good place to face the challenges ahead.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Stephen Silver". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

Stephen Silver
Principal

28th June 2021