

Annual report 2007 -2008

AGM Wednesday 15 October 2008, Mechanical Engineering Building, Imperial College

1. Overview

We continue to increase our membership at the rate of about ten per cent per annum. We have increased the surplus over last year and we have attracted more to our events.

We therefore fulfil our aim of helping the College with one of its five strategic intents "to communicate widely the significance of science in general, and the purpose and ultimate benefits of its activities in particular."

Through our programme of promotion many of the people attending our events are new to the College and we have continued to attract a number of school groups. In this way we help to promote science to broad spectrum of people and to young people as a future career.

Winton Capital Management Ltd has made a generous donation for the second year running and this has allowed us to hold another very successful Summer Party which the new Rector and one of our previous lecturers, Sir Roy Anderson, attended. He spoke warmly about the contribution Friends made to College life. This was his first public speech since becoming Rector and he outlined some of the areas of development he expected that the College would take over the next few years.

The donation from Winton Capital Management Ltd has also allowed us to reduce the prices of our tickets for members, alumni, staff and students in the coming year. We hope this will lead to an increase in those attending our events.

We continue to receive a great deal of support from the College in the provision of lecture theatre, technical support and promotion of our events. We are very appreciative.

This year we are able to increase our contribution to the Students Opportunities Fund from £1000 last year to £1500 this year.

I also have to report the sad death of Philip Temple who has been a member of Friends for many years. He worked unstintingly for Friends for a number of years as secretary. There is little doubt in my mind that without his enthusiasm Friends would not have developed to its present level of activities.

2. Organisation

This is the third year that your committee has taken on the responsibility for the organisation of our membership and activities. We are responsible for our own finances, arranging lectures, organising food and drink, managing bookings and membership.

The College has continued to support us in a number of ways: through promoting our lectures to the 80,000 or so to their database of alumni; featuring our events prominently on the College website; providing the lecture halls and the attendant security and technical staff at no cost.

The Chairman has developed a new website for Friends which allows easy updating of material. It also allows members and others to register for events, and update their membership. We can now accept payments by PayPal.

Our administrator Jill Cook has continued to provide excellent support during the year and her enthusiasm and energy has helped us increase membership and audiences at our events.

Our administrative website which keeps our membership and events up-to-date has been updated during the year by committee member Richard Tang who has succeeded in supporting us no matter where in the world he is working on major IT projects for his company.

3. Committee

Your committee consists has met six times during the year. Committee members Rodney Allen, Manu Duggal (Hon Treasurer), Rita Leek, Morten Olesen, Rod Rhys Jones (Chairman) and Richard Tang were joined by two co-opted members in November.

John Sanderson, an alumnus, was co-opted to the committee in November and has taken on the responsibility of Hon Secretary.

Liz Gregson, who works for the Office of Alumni and Development also joined the committee in November providing a very useful conduit for information and collaboration.

Morten Olesen retired from the committee when he was posted by his company to Berlin.

At our meeting in September 2008 we were joined by three of the four new candidates for committee membership, Bill Blackburn, John Nuttall, and Riittaa Soininen. James Lovely was unable to join that meeting.

4. Finance

We are financially independent of the College and therefore aim to make a small surplus on all our events which, together with our membership subscriptions, provides sufficient funds to cover administration and promotion. We have also received some donations directly from members for which we are very grateful.

This year our surplus on the year was £1634.35 before donating £1000 to the College Students Opportunity Fund. The £634.35 remaining has been added to our reserves bringing them up to £3,973.35. Manu Duggal our Treasurer is to be congratulated on the handling of our finances and for acting as the SW7 postal address for our mail.

5. Donation to the college

We are making a donation of £1500 to the Students Opportunities Fund which helps to promote sciences amongst schools, supports needy students and contributes to new facilities at the College.

The College has created a club called the *Imperial 1000* to honour an elite group of about 100 supporters who make leadership gifts in excess of £1000. Friends is a member of this club and we received a badge of the College Crest. Our members are to be congratulated for the support they have given us over the years.

6. Benefactors to the College

There are about 60 members of *Imperial 1000* in the UK of which 40 members live in and around London and we will be offering them guest places at our lectures for two years with the intention of recruiting them as members in the future.

In addition to the *Imperial 1000* there are about 1800 people, mostly alumni, who made a donation to the College last year. We are intending to provide an invitation to all those who donate this year to become members. We will be offering a free membership for a year to this group of College supporters and they would pay membership rates to attend our events.

We believe that those that are already supporting the College financially are very likely to be interested in becoming members of Friends and it is for this reason that we are providing them with incentives. Having made a donation to the College we thought it might appear forward if we asked them for a membership subscription by return of post!

7. Using the Friends' surplus

During the year a sub-committee was set up consisting of Rita Leek and Liz Gregson under the chairmanship of our treasurer Manu Duggal to look at how best we should spend our surplus with the objective of increasing membership and attendance at our events.

The ideas that the committee plan to implement are:

- Encourage members to circulate information about events to their friends and contacts
- Investigate advertising on-line through Google and other search engines
- Improve meta data on web pages of the new web site.
- Advertise and offer editorial in relevant magazines including Prospect magazine, Knightsbridge Association Newsletter and Brompton Quarterly magazine.
- Increase the promotional link between membership cost and the support of the Student Opportunities Fund
- Make event notices more accessible through email, phone technology and e-diaries.

It was decided that we would not reduce costs of events further and that we did not plan to increase donations to the College. Our thanks to Manu, Rita and Liz for initiating this task and contributing so much to our future plans.

8. Membership

Our membership is growing steadily at about 15 per cent per annum with 133 members as against 114 members last year. We continue to attract many guests, alumni, staff and members of the public to our events, who are not members. We now have a database of 500 people who have come to our events in the last two years. We are adding to that list with each event.

Almost all our members receive information about our events by email and therefore your committee has decided that we should give a discount of £5 on the £25 membership fee to only those who have signed a standing order. Previously those that provided an email address also had a £5 discount.

9. The year's events

We organised eight events during the Academic Year 2006 to 2007 and cancelled one through lack of support. Our attendance numbers are outlined below.

- Great technologies that shaped the 20th Century, Prof David Edgerton 52
- New spin for old memories - the nanotechnology of magnetic materials, Prof Russell Cowburn, 47
- Switching genes, Prof Richard Festenstein – cancelled
- The biology of belief, Prof Lewis Wolpert 139
- How Americans play baseball and the rest of the world plays soccer, Prof Stefan Szymanski 36
- Behind-the-Scenes @ The Energy Futures Lab, Prof Nigel Brandon 64
- Behind-the-Scenes @ The Institute of Mathematical Sciences, Prof Philip Hall 37
- Summer Party 126 members including 67 members and their guests.

This shows that well known speakers (for example, Lewis Wolpert) attract the bigger audiences; key subjects (Energy) are also particularly attractive. The success of last year's Summer Party and the presence of the new Rector also proved to be a big draw.

I would particularly like to thank Rita Leek working with Jill Cook to put on an outstanding Summer Party and also their work at the reception desk of our events supported by John Sanderson. **This is crucial work and any of our members who think they might help at some events would be welcomed.**

10. The programme 2007 -2008

We launched our programme at the Centenary Summer Party in July. It is listed below.

Great technologies that shaped the 20th Century Thursday 27 September, 7.00pm

David Edgerton, Hans Rausing Professor of History of Science and Technology Founding Director of the Centre for the History of Science, Technology and Medicine.

Which inventions have made the biggest social and economic differences? Did the V2 have more impact than the mule in WW2? Professor Edgerton, historian and author, revealed some old, some rediscovered and some new technologies that are the real movers and shakers in our world.

New spin for old memories - the nanotechnology of magnetic materials Wed 31 October, 7.00pm

Russell Cowburn, Professor of Nanotechnology,

At extremely small scales materials exhibit unexpected characteristics and functionality. Nanometre-scale magnetic materials can be used to build a new generation of microelectronic devices that use both the spin and the charge of the electron. Applications for such devices range from the battlefield to MP3 players.

Switching genes Thursday 29 November 2007, 7.00pm Cancelled

Richard Festenstein Clinical Professor of Molecular Medicine

An understanding of how individual cells make the decision to switch genes 'on' and 'off' during the development of specific cell types and how they 'remember' this decision through cells.

Six impossible things before breakfast: the biology of belief Tuesday 5 February 2008, 7.00pm

Lewis Wolpert, Professor of Biology as Applied to Medicine, UCL, Imperial Alumnus

Biologist, engineer, author, broadcaster, columnist Prof Wolpert talked about the nature of belief and its causes. He looks its psychological basis and its possible evolutionary origins in physical cause and effect. How did tool making drive human evolution? What is the evolutionary advantage that belief provides?

How Americans play baseball and the rest of the world plays soccer Thurs 13 March 2008, 7.00pm

Professor Stefan Szymanski, Tanaka Business School

Industrial economist and author specialising in the business of sport, Stefan Szymanski took a somewhat irreverent look at how these two sports have developed economically and socially around the world.

Behind-the-Scenes @ The Energy Futures Lab Wednesday 7 May 2008, 6.15pm

Nigel Brandon, Shell Professor of Sustainable Development in Energy, Department of Earth Science & Engineering, Director of the Energy Futures Lab.

The Energy Futures Lab is developing new renewable and cost-effective methods of producing hydrogen which can be used to operate fuel cells. After an introduction to the work of the labs we visited various laboratories in College to see at first hand what is going on and meet the engineers and scientists working on the far reaching projects.

Behind-the-scenes @ the Institute of Mathematical Science Tuesday 10 June 2008, 6.15pm

Professor Philip Hall Director

We were introduced to the problems that are being tackled by the newly founded Institute of Mathematics and the sort of results that might be expected in a diverse range of subjects including biology and medicine; string theory, banking and finance, turbulence in rivers, air and the cosmos, quantum information theory, and multiscale dynamics of biosystems.

Summer Party, 170 Queens Gate. 2 July 2008, 6.30pm

A large turnout greeted the new Rector Sir Roy Anderson who gave his first public speech since taking over as Rector, outlining research plans for the future.

11. Thank you

I would like to thank our members who have given us great support during the year and particularly members of the committee who have contributed so much to the smooth running and success of the our year.

Roderick Rhys Jones,

Chairman, 15 October 2008