

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR CHAIRMAN ...

Dear Friends

At our (virtual) AGM in May, a member commented about the lack of information about our activities etc in recent months. Obviously, much of this was down to Covid when little could actually happen during lockdown etc. – but the point was taken.

Welcome, therefore, to our new **Newsletter**, which we plan to issue twice yearly, in November and May. This will be augmented by emails about University activities to which the Friends are invited, such as the Vice-Chancellors *Fireside Talks* and *Tales from the Riverside*, which you should already have started to receive. You will also by now have been invited to our *Annual Dinner* on 25 November, and I look forward to meeting many of you there.

Mike Smith Chairman

But now let's bring you up to date ...

Celebrate Buckingham Day

We attended this Town Council event on 4 September in order to let the world know that the Friends were still in business, and received quite a lot of interest.

Freshers' Day

A couple of Committee members attended on 6 October, mainly to promote *Easy Gourmet* (see below) but also to speak to incoming students to see what they might like by way of support.

A Calming Influence ...

On 22 May 2019 the Friends were responsible for the inaugural visit by *Nesta's Ark* as part of the University De-Stress Festival program. *Nesta's Ark* provided animal interaction opportunities for students (and staff) and this is known to help provide a calming influence ahead of exams, etc. Over two hundred students attended the event and building on this success, a return

visit was organised for the 13 November 2019, which also attracted over two hundred students.



Post-Covid, both the Friends and the University were keen to re-start the animal interaction events and the next one will take place on Friday 19 November.



Unfortunately, *Nesta's Ark* are no longer able to provide the service and we will be welcoming **Oreo and Friends** to the University. A wide range of creatures will be available for interaction, some more cuddly than others!

Monthly Lunches

Tanlaw Mill is currently being refurbished, but we hope to resume these popular monthly get-togethers in the new year.

Medical School Visit

We know that many of you are keen to visit, and those of us that have been fortunate enough to attend already can certainly recommend it as an eye-opening experience (but no gore, we promise!)

For now, however, more stringent covid precautions are in place at the Medical School, which make group visits out of the question. The Committee are keeping an eye on this and will let you know when a visit can be arranged. In the meantime, you will have received information about their *Public Involvement Forum* – if you are interested in taking part, please ask for a full information pack via fmhs-pif@buckingham.ac.uk.

Conversation Club

Prior to the pandemic, one of our Committee members, a former teacher, helped students with their conversational English.



This included:

- helping groups of Japanese students with their pronunciation and practice in conversational skills
- teaching a group of wives of PhD Iraqi students who needed language for everyday life such as shopping and speaking to mothers outside the school gates
- taking a group of Japanese students here on a 4 week course to a local cafe

This year, the only opportunity to support students was via two on-line groups studying British Politics 1945-1985, where the tutor's lecture was supported with her memories of each decade.

We hope to restart the *Conversation Club* and expand support to offer students one-to-one conversation with members of the Friends over a cup of coffee. We already have one enthusiastic volunteer and now invite interested members (no teaching experience is necessary!) to contact us via the email address below.

Easy Gourmet

Prior to March 2020, the *Easy Gourmet* programme had proved very popular. The aim was for Friends to introduce the students to the skills necessary to prepare tasty, nutritious and simple meals. Student feedback indicated that they had not only appreciated the recipes but had also enjoyed the experience. As one student put it, he learned that “cauliflower doesn't have to be boring.” We are now collaborating with



the Student Union on re-starting this programme, putting recipes on the university website, possibly including video cooking demonstrations, as well as moving towards actual face to face sessions. The response at the recent Fresher's Day was promising with many students keen to be involved. This was something that met a real need. We would love to hear from members willing to share their skills. It is a wonderful opportunity to interact with the students.

AND FINALLY ...

Your Committee is always keen to receive suggestions about how we might further support our members, the University and the students; and offers of help are, of course, always welcome. Please feel free to contact us via email at fubsecr@gmail.com.