

Trustees' Annual Report 2012/13

ESPERANTO-ASOCIO DE BRITIO

(also known as Esperanto Association of Britain, EAB, Esperanto UK)

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Trustees

The Management Committee of the Association are the trustees of the charity. Those who served from 1 November 2012 to 31 October 2013 were:

John Wells (President until 12 May 2013) | Paul Gubbins (President from 12 May 2013) | Edmund Grimley Evans (Vice-President) | Tim Owen (Hon. Secretary) | Clare Hunter (Hon. Treasurer) | Ed Robertson | Michael Seaton | Hugh Reid (until 12 May 2013)

Staff and volunteers

Staff and key volunteers who assisted the Association during the year were as follows:

Director of Operations and Events: Viv O'Dunne | **Co-ordinator for Research and Development:** Angela Tellier | **Admin Assistant:** Emma Hudson | **Publicity Consultant:** Brian Barker | **Honorary Librarian:** Geoffrey King | **Editor of La Brita Esperantisto:** Paul Gubbins | **Compiler of La Brita Esperantisto:** Simon Davies | **Editor of EAB Update:** Geoffrey Sutton | **Webmaster:** Bill Walker

Accountant and Independent Examiner

Dains LLP, St John's Court, Wiltell Road, Lichfield, Staffordshire, WS14 9DS.

Solicitors

Tinsdills, Hays House, 25 Albion Street, Hanley, Staffordshire, ST1 1QF.

Bankers

Santander, 62 Hagley Road, Birmingham, B16 8PE | CAF Bank Ltd, 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent, ME19 4JQ | Barclays, PO Box 738, London, W6 9HY

Governing document

The charity was founded on 13 March 1976 and is an unincorporated organisation, governed by a constitution which was last amended on 16 May 2010. Members of the Management Committee (trustees) are elected individually by the Annual General Meeting, to serve until the end of the next Annual General Meeting. The trustees are incorporated as a body.

Induction of trustees

A handbook for trustees, detailing their responsibilities and the current policies of the Association, is available on the Association's website and is regularly reviewed and updated. New trustees are sent copies of recent minutes. The first full committee meeting after the election is a residential planning weekend where induction is completed.

Objects of the Association

The objects of the Association are to advance the education of the public in the international language Esperanto in the furtherance of international communication without discrimination, and of the natural right of all people and peoples, their languages and cultures, to be treated equally.

Public benefit

In setting objectives and planning activities, the trustees complied with the duty in section 17 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to the public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission. The activities undertaken by the Association during the year to further its charitable purposes for the public benefit are detailed below.

Activities undertaken to achieve the objects

The main activities undertaken by the Association to achieve its objects are as follows:

- Providing free postal/email and subsidised residential courses for students of all levels with experienced Esperanto teachers, as well as the option to take examinations.
- Promoting a language-awareness course for primary school children with Esperanto teachers and support as required (*Springboard to Languages*).
- Liaising with other Esperanto foundations such as Buchanan and NOJEF to promote the teaching and application of Esperanto.
- Operating a *Telephone Buddy* system to help learners practise their spoken Esperanto language skills
- Maintaining the Butler Library as a study and research facility for Esperanto culture and history.
- Raising awareness of Esperanto as an international language through attendance at language shows.
- Keeping a comprehensive website up to date with information for enquirers and links to other Esperanto organisations.
- Issuing press releases to raise the media profile of Esperanto.
- Supporting local committees to organise the annual British Esperanto Conference.
- Encouraging members to participate in local groups and national and international congresses.
- Providing a book service to encourage the reading of Esperanto literature.

Summary of the main achievements during the year 2012/13

Education

- Courses and examinations continued to have a steady, if small, uptake.
- A successful Ni Muzikumu, Drondo and Course-you-Can weekend was held at Shallowford House in February 2013.
- Somera Festivalo also took place at Shallowford House during August 2013. The Association is grateful to Jack Warren for coordinating the event and Erin Piatetski, whose teaching added an international flavour. Positive feedback was received from those who attended.
- Professor Wim Jansen of Amsterdam University delivered his Buchanan lecture on ‘Language degradation, obsolescence, death, revitalization. How can we reverse the trend?’ at the University of Liverpool in October 2013. He was supported by Dr Federico Gobbo who put forward ideas on ‘Esperanto and minority languages: challenges and opportunities’. Angela Tellier gave a short presentation on the history of the Buchanan lectureship, followed by a language taster session by Paul Gubbins. Approximately 35 people attended, and the event – a taster session for the three-day workshop planned for March 2014 – was very well received.

Research and Development

- Several small research projects were successfully completed. Others are currently ongoing.
- Summary results of the Springboard to Languages programme, background theory, and related research are now publicly available.
- An illustrated narrative account of the John Buchanan lectureship (‘Dr John Buchanan – an Esperanto Legacy to the University of Liverpool’) was written and published. Copies were offered to libraries and organisations related to Buchanan.
- A targeted information campaign to support the inclusion of Esperanto in schools took place.

Publicity

- The Association had a prominent presence at the International Language Festival which took place at the University of Sheffield in March 2013. Six taster classes in Esperanto took place over the course of the weekend.
- Work has commenced on renovating the Association’s web presence. A new style of website which works on small-screen devices such as tablets and smartphones has been trialled at britakongreso.org, an essential feature in the modern world.
- A new contemporary logo has been commissioned to ensure that the public receive a positive first impression of both the Association and Esperanto when they come into contact with us. Esperanto logos in use throughout the world are traditionally quite dated in appearance, which can undermine publicity efforts.
- The Association has funded the use of an Esperanto account on the site meetup.com, which has facilitated the organisation of regular get-togethers in the Birmingham area. This model has the potential to be expanded to other local groups if interest is shown.
- One notable achievement was coverage in media with large audiences, including CNN International, during summer 2013. This stemmed from one of our press releases, which was picked up by The Independent, who turned it into a full-page article. This content was then used by other media outlets as a basis for their own articles and news clips. Comparable advertising space in The Independent would have cost the Association £15,500.
- Our Facebook page now has 702 (2012: 663) fans, while the Twitter feed has 723 (2012: 545) followers.

British Esperanto Conference

- 58 Esperantists participated in the conference in Ramsgate in May 2013.
- The trustees are grateful to Terry Watts, who was the only person to respond to a public plea for volunteers to organise future conferences in EAB Update.

Butler Library

- There are now 8,116 items in the main catalogue and the Sonbanko contains 1,400 items.
- Work has started to install an integrated library system (Koha) to EAB's web server and transfer the catalogues to it. When completed, this will improve access and ease of use for both the Honorary Librarian and library users.
- Additional shelving has been ordered to accommodate the Houghton Archive more permanently in the Butler Library.
- The Bendoteko (archive of recordings on cassette tapes) has been acquired after many years' service in curating it from Ben Gosling, for future digitisation and inclusion in the Sonbanko.

Plans for 2013/14 and beyond

- Organise a session of the Esperanto CEFR examinations in the UK and encourage greater participation by Esperanto-speakers in Britain.
- Encourage the use of more modern media and approaches in distance learning.
- Support the organisation of a three-day Buchanan Workshop at the University of Liverpool in March 2013 ('Esperanto language and literature').
- Adapt and revise materials to suit the changed primary educational context.
- Focus on moving to a web-based presentation of children's materials.
- Continue to inform selected people and organisations about the propaedeutic potential of Esperanto through journal articles, talks and conference papers.
- Publication of a Scottish-Gaelic translation of the Esperanto Mini-Course.
- Support the organisation of the British Esperanto Conference, which will take place in Sheffield in April 2014.
- Complete the installation of an integrated library system (Koha).
- Continue to obtain formal permission for the Association to sublicense the republishing of works by British Esperanto authors who are willing to give such permission to the Association, thus ensuring that it will be possible to republish those works in future.
- Continue to explore publicity opportunities.
- Work on updating the Association's web presence, to include a community area and Amazon-style shop.
- Remind the members that the Association cannot function without trustees and make general requests for others to think about becoming trustees.

Closure of Wedgwood Memorial College

Wedgwood Memorial College, on whose Estoril site the Association has its headquarters, has remained closed throughout the year. The Association has sole use of the Butler Library and three Esperanto bedrooms as well as the Esperanto office in accordance with the terms of its lease, and will continue to enjoy this for the duration of the lease irrespective of the future of the College.

Membership

Life members = 22 (2012: 22), full members = 295 (2012: 294), family members = 11 (2012: 11), supporters = 41 (2012: 39). Total = 369 (2012: 366).

A few members of venerable age died during the year. New recruits and people re-joining after some years' absence were welcomed, such that the total membership figure is slightly higher than last year's. Members and supporters receive *EAB Update* newsletter (English and Esperanto) quarterly. Full members also receive *La Brita Esperantisto* – an all-Esperanto journal – twice a year, and are automatically affiliated to *Universala Esperanto-Asocio*. Full members are entitled to vote at the Annual General Meeting. Membership services include assistance with international payments via the UEA credit system and discounts to attend the annual conference and our events.

Financial review of the year

Income

Income is derived from investments, membership subscriptions, sales, bequests and donations, and spent on the Association's charitable objects. The unfavourable economic climate has continued to result in low investment income.

Investments

The trustees continue to monitor the performance of the Association's investments on a regular basis. Quarterly income payments to investors in the COIF Charities Fixed Interest Fund fell from 1.80p to 1.375p in early 2013, reflecting a fall in market yields and the maturity of some high-yielding bonds. The trustees therefore decided to sell the £200k of units which the Association held in this fund. Following consultation with investment advisors, it was decided to reinvest £100k in the COIF Charities Global Equity Income Fund and £100k in the COIF Charities Ethical Investment Fund. A £32k legacy received from the estate of the late June Miles was also split equally between these funds, as was £80k previously held in the Association's deposit account with Scottish Widows. The interest rate on that account fell from 1.85% to 0.40% during the year, prompting the trustees' decision to reinvest the majority of funds elsewhere.

Reserves

The trustees have agreed a reserves policy which requires reserves to be maintained at a level that, when prudently invested, will generate sufficient income for the charity to continue operating. £20k is currently held on deposit with Scottish Widows and can be accessed with seven days' notice in the event of unforeseen expenditure arising. The total level of free reserves, being total reserves less the endowment from John Brownlee and designated capital fund was £805,768 at 31 October 2013.

Investment policy

The constitution states that the trustees have the power to make investments as they see fit. Their duty is to seek adequate income and capital growth. Capital is invested in deposit accounts and unit trusts specifically designed for the charity sector, which are for the greater part socially responsible. The split between asset classes is shown in the notes to the financial statements.

The Association's investments have performed well during the year, mostly outperforming their relevant benchmarks. The Charities Property Fund, for example, has produced a total return of 6.7% for the year compared to 4.2% for the IPD All Balanced Funds Property Index. The COIF Charities Investment Fund and COIF Charities Ethical Investment Fund have also performed well, with gross dividend yields of 4.06% and 4.1% respectively compared to an average yield of 3.41% from the FTSE All-Share index over the same period. The COIF Charities Global Equity Income Fund produced a gross dividend yield of 4.62% compared to an average yield of 2.57% from the FTSE All-World index over the same period. The trustees are aware that income from the Association's holding in BlackRock's Charinco Fixed Interest Fund will fall by 20% from November 2013. Arrangements have been made post year-end to sell the Association's units in this fund and reinvest the money in BlackRock's Charishare Restricted Fund, which promises better returns than otherwise and explicitly avoids investment in firms trading in defence and tobacco.

Risk review

The Trustees have examined the major internal and external risks which the Association faces and confirm that systems have been established to minimise these risks.

Responsibilities of the trustees in relation to the financial statements

Law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the trustees to prepare financial statements at the end of each financial year which give a true and fair view of its financial activities during the year and of its financial position at the end of the year. In doing so the trustees are required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- Make judgments and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- State whether applicable accounting standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed, subject to any departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention of fraud and other irregularities.

Approved by the trustees and signed on their behalf on 8 February 2014 by Tim Owen.

Tim Owen
Hon Secretary