



جمعية الصداقة البريطانية اللبنانية
THE BRITISH LEBANESE
ASSOCIATION

Registered in England and Wales as a Limited Company
Registration No: 1934028 VAT No: 444021491 Registered Charity No: 294578

1 Hyde Park Gate
London SW7 5EW
T: 0207 370 2572
F: 0207 370 6476
E: mail@britishlebanese.org
W: www.britishlebanese.org

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting
of
The British Lebanese Association Ltd.
held on
Monday the 5th of July 2010
at
The Royal Thames Yacht Club
60 Knightsbridge, London SW1X 7LF**

Those present:

Sir David Miers - Chairman
Mrs. Maria Shammas - Vice Chairman
Mr. George Shweiry - Hon. Treasurer
Members of the Executive Committee
Members of the Association

1. The Chairman called the meeting to order at 11 a.m

The Chairman confirmed that the meeting had been convened in accordance with the companies act 1985, with written notices sent to all British Lebanese Association members, and public announcements were made in the Times and Daily Telegraph. He welcomed all members present and confirmed that with the attendance of 8 members of the Executive Committee, and 6 proxies received, there was a quorum for the meeting.

2. Minutes of the previous AGM

The Chairman reported that copies of the minutes of the previous AGM were sent individually to all the British Lebanese Association members, and that no objections had been received. The chairman put to the meeting that the minutes of the previous AGM be declared a true record of the proceedings of that AGM. The motion was proposed by Maria Shammas, and seconded by Anthony Dawton, agreed by the meeting, and the minutes duly signed by the chairman.



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3. Chairman report

The Chairman began: The Year 2009 – 2010 has been our 25th anniversary jubilee year and we have been celebrating and will be celebrating this achievement over the course of the year.

Our first anniversary event was a reception held at the House of Lords on 10 February by the kind invitation of our former Chairman, Lord Eden of Winton. The intention was to renew contact, which it was felt had declined, with British parliamentary personalities with an interest in Lebanon, as well as to mount an occasion in an attractive location which would be enjoyed by our membership. The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the UK Lebanon Parliamentary group, Mr Andy Love and Mr Hugo Squire respectively, spoke to the assembled guests about their perspective on Lebanon and a good number of Peers and MPs from all parties attended the event, providing an opportunity for our members to meet them and exchange views. The successful financial outcome of the event was assured by the kind and generous support of Shukri Shammass. This was a very popular event and we should consider whether it should be repeated from time to time and how else the BLA can best maintain contact in the future with Parliamentarians

It was planned that our silver jubilee should also be celebrated by the BLA staging our first ever event in Beirut. This would have been a high-profile fund-raising event in May similar to the successful fund raising events organised by the BLA in London in recent years. Unfortunately it had to be postponed for reasons beyond the control of the BLA. However it has been re-scheduled for 2011 and we hope that many of our British members will find the time and opportunity to join us.

The David Roberts Memorial Lecture in this jubilee year will be given on 6 September, as has been widely publicised, by Robert Fisk. As an extremely well-known British journalist, who has been based in Beirut over three decades or more, and has unrivalled experience and understanding of Lebanon and the region, he is an ideal choice to give this lecture. He has given us a title, Lebanon, State of Denial, that is certain to provoke the lively interest of our membership.

You will also know by now that we are supporting the Caracalla Dance Company's two days in August at the London Coliseum. Caracalla Dance is a Lebanese institution with a worldwide reputation and by all accounts the production going to the Coliseum is set to raise that reputation to greater heights.



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In November we hope to be able to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the birth of Khalil Gibran (the original aim of the Beirut event) in conjunction with the Khalil Gibran Chair at Maryland University, here in London. This should be a warm and sociable event with of course a great deal of wonderful poetry and, all being well, a very distinguished guest list.

A notable event this year was the dinner given by the Said Foundation for their and our scholars. This was, for us, an opportunity to celebrate the first year of the BLA's co-operation with the Said Foundation in the selection and funding of scholars. Several of our members, including myself attended and were deeply impressed by the maturity and confidence of the scholars. It bodes well for the future if they are indicative of the calibre of scholars coming to our country from the region. I should like to take this opportunity of congratulating our scholarships committee on their conscientious and successful work.

On perhaps a more mundane note, but of significant interest and importance nonetheless, is the increasing role of The BLA web site allowing us rapidly (and cheaply) to promote our activities, and those of sister organisations, and to attract membership. We are in the process of setting up merchant services on our site. This ought to have been up and running by now but PayPal thwarted us at the last hurdle. When operational the system will allow us to sell tickets and other merchandise on line including memberships. It will also allow us to take credit card payments electronically at our events.

Comments on the Chairman's report

Leila Tannous suggested that a vote of thanks be recorded in these minutes to Shukri Shammas for his generous donation to the BLA 25th anniversary reception at the house of Lords. That was agreed by the Chairman and the meeting. Leila's proposal was seconded by Hisham Al Solh and a vote of thanks to Shukri was duly recorded.

Leila also proposed a vote of thanks to David MacLennan for the tremendous achievement of bringing the BLA Scholarship Fund together with the Said Foundation Scholarships, which was proving to be an excellent collaboration. Maria Shammas seconded the proposal and thanks were duly noted. David MacLennan said that thanks were due very much to the hard-working and incredibly supportive scholarship team, particularly our colleagues in Beirut: Dr. Saeb Jaroudi and Ghazi Joumbat.



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4. Treasurer's report

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is with pleasure that I submit to you the accounts of the Association for the year ended 31 August 2009.

Like everyone else in this country, and indeed around the world, the BLA has had a tough year in 2009. With the general climate being one of austerity, no fundraising events were staged during the year, and consequently, revenues were significantly down on last year. These revenues were £3,081, comprising mainly of subscription income compared to £45,429 last year.

Our investment income was also impacted by the continued low interest rate climate. This fell from £15,115 in 2008 to £6,494 in 2009.

In response to the above squeeze on our finances, our support team has further tightened its belt reducing costs to levels not seen for many years. These support costs are now £23,806 compared to last year's figure of £31,541. Last year's figure was already significantly lower than in previous year, so a word of congratulation has to go to Anthony Dawton and his colleagues for this achievement.

Another ray of light comes from our balance sheet, which although down from last year continues to be healthy with cash on hand totalling £302,089.

All this meant that our charitable donations have had to decline to £23,916 compared to £60,725 in the previous year. But with our administrative infrastructure streamlined and highly cost-effective and our balance sheet intact and strong, I believe we are well positioned to look to the future with optimism.

Mr Chairman, I take the opportunity of this report to recommend the re-appointment of our auditors Raffingers Stewart, who continue to provide us with a very good service at a reasonable cost.

5. Appointment and remuneration of auditors

The Treasurer recommended in his report, the reappointment of our auditors, Raffingers Stewart, who continue to provide us with a very good service at a reasonable cost.

The reappointment was proposed by George Shweiry, and seconded by Hisham El Solh and approved unanimously.



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6. Resignation and Election of Committee Members

The chairman stated that in conformity with article 35b of the articles of association of the British Lebanese Association, the resignation of half the members of the executive committee takes place with effect from this announcement. Those resigning are eligible for re-election.

Nomination forms were individually sent with the announcement of this annual general meeting to all British Lebanese Association members, inviting them to offer candidates for election to the executive committee.

The Chairman suggested that with the agreement of the meeting, the Executive Committee members currently willing to be re-elected, be re-elected to the committee en bloc. Consideration will be given later in the year towards possible co-options to fill vacancies. Proposed by Leila Tannous and seconded by Pauline Chakmakjian and agreed by the meeting.

The Chairman also suggested the full inclusion of Mark Oufi co-opted from last year onto the Executive Committee. Proposed by Joumana Karouni, seconded by Pauline Chakmakjian. Marc Oufi was duly welcomed as a new executive member.

7. Any Other Business

Hisham Solh suggested that subscription charges might be waived for MPs and peers, as incentive to attend our events. It was generally felt that wavering of subscription charges should always be at the discretion of the Chairman. However, with proper research there was no reason why MPs and peers, whom it was thought might find our activities of interest, should not be freely added to the mailing list. The Chairman said that the Executive Committee would probably want to give this further consideration and mentioned that procedural obligations should not be forgotten in the light of the constitution.

8. Closure of meeting

The meeting was closed by the chairman at 11:45 a.m.

Please note: The Financial Statement is available online at: www.britishlebanese.org

Signed:

Date: