**Minutes of the General Meeting of the**

**Association of British and Irish Lusitanists**

**Reed Hall, University of Exeter,**

**Monday 8 September 2015 at 5pm.**

Present: Members of the Committee: Prof P. Rothwell (Chair) (PR), Dr David Frier, Dr Tori Holmes, Ms E. Jones, Dr A. Martins, Dr M. Sabine (Treasurer) Dr Claire Williams (substitute Secretary) and around 30 delegates.

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| 1. | The Chair welcomed members who had joined since the last Meeting in Oxford. |
| 2. | **Apologies for absence**: Dr C. Fouto (Secretary) (CF) was attending a family funeral. The meeting unanimously accepted PR’s suggestion that the former Secretary, Dr C. Williams could take the minutes. |
| 3. | The **Minutes** of the last meeting were approved, with corrections to two points:   1. 5 (i) The city where the Polish Association of Lusitanists conference took place was Krakow 2. 5 (iv) The query about whether the Conference Organiser wanted to thank any more people should be erased. |
| 4. | **Matters Arising**:  There were no matters arising that would not be dealt with later in the agenda. |
| 5. | **Reports of Officers**:  (i) President:  PR thanked the organisers of the Exeter conference.  He reported that he had represented the Association at a number of meetings and conferences:   1. In April, he attended the European Association of Hispanic Languages. The meeting discussed the shared concerns of the various national Hispanic Associations, and particularly the reduced funding available from the European governments for cultural and educational activities. 2. In April, he attended the AHGBI Annual Conference, where he congratulated Prof Trevor Dadson on the Association’s sixtieth anniversary. Prof Dadson conveyed his congratulations on ABIL’s tenth anniversary. 3. Throughout the year, he attended several meetings of the Modern Language Associations at UCL, at which the heads of fellow language organisations, except Spanish, have noted a general decline in student numbers. There has also been discussion about whether REF assessors should be appointed from abroad, and some languages had issues with this. 4. Links between ABIL and the Associação Internacional de Lusitanistas are being strengthened. Dr C. Pazos Alonso, one of the Vice Presidents of AIL, is a current member of ABIL (and former Treasurer). She encouraged members of ABIL to attend the upcoming AIL conference in Macau in 2016. PR will meet the current President, Prof R. Vecchi (Bologna) in November. 5. The President of APSA, Prof A. Ferreira, sends ABIL congratulations on its tenth anniversary and invites members to attend the next conference, to be held at Stanford University in October 2016. 6. PR held meetings with the President of the Instituto Camões, Prof. A. Laborinho, and Dr M. Arrojo, the Diretora de Serviços. He informed them how the field is growing in the UK and thanked them for the IC’s continued support of the Association, and the conference. He also thanked Regina Duarte, representative of the IC in London, for her work, and for attending this conference. 7. In January PR attended a meeting of the UCML where the REF results were discussed. PR and Prof Naomi Segal lobbied for, and will continue to lobby for full status for Portuguese at the next REF. He thanked Prof H. Owen for her hard work on the 2014 REF. He thanked CF for deputizing for him at another meeting of the UCML (see Secretary’s report below). 8. PR announced that the Anglo-Portuguese Society had generously given ABIL a £500 donation that enabled the Association to provide equal grants for all UK postgraduates who had applied for funding to attend the conference. He thanked Dr Juliet Perkins for her help in brokering the deal. He also expressed ABIL’s thanks to the Anglo-Portuguese Society for their generosity, and to the secretary of the Anglo-Portuguese Society, Jane Cliffe, for her assistance. 9. PR attended a meeting with the Editorial Board of Portuguese Studies. He noted that the Board had been restructured and that there were a number of new members.   PR voiced the Association’s sadness on the death of Prof Clive Willis (Emeritus, Manchester), and spoke of his generosity and wide intellectual curiosity. He commented that there were a series of panels at this conference that had been organised in tribute to Prof Willis. The Meeting observed a minute’s silence.  PR noted the retirements of Dr David Frier (Leeds) and Dr Stephen Parkinson (Oxford), and acknowledged their special contribution to the field and to ABIL.  (ii) General Secretary:   1. CF reported that she has maintained the mailing list, which currently stands at 130 members (an increase of 30 members since the last conference in 2013). She reminded members to continue to pay their membership dues and advised new members that confirmation of payment must be sent to the Secretary to ensure membership of the list. 2. CF reported that the Association website went live in February 2015: http://www.abil-lusitanists.org. She thanked David Frier, Eleanor Jones and other members who shared their photos. She thanked members for their positive reactions but also asked that they send her any comments or corrections, and check that their institutions are represented correctly on the links page. She asked that if members’ institutions update or change their websites, please contact her so that the changes can be made on the ABIL webpages. 3. CF noted that ABIL now has an effective presence in social media and thanked Eleanor Jones for keeping the Twitter account updated. 4. CF represented ABIL (on behalf of PR) at a UCML meeting, following which she launched a survey into the growth of Portuguese Studies in the UK. In due course, she intends to broaden the survey, which will become part of a project on Language Teaching in Less Widely Taught Languages. She urged members to help the field by filling in the survey, because the data will be helpful to show the growth in Portuguese student numbers when we need to lobby our institutions.   PR offered a Vote of Thanks to CF for her hard work over the last two years: especially for efficiently maintaining the mailing list, and for putting up the new ABIL website and maintaining it; the cost to the Association is £7.56 per month and £10 for every 3 years for the domain name.  (iii) Treasurer:  Dr Sabine explained that the Association is growing steadily in terms of membership and that the finances are generally healthy. NatWest bank have been unhelpful in making changes and updating the signatories to the account, which has meant no statements were received for 15 months. He thanked those who had paid their arrears during the conference and confirmed that some small amounts would be paid to those who had overpaid. He explained that his intention was to sign up to online telephone banking as soon as possible.  The accounts have been audited by a chartered accountant up to the closing date of the last statement received (June) and given a clean bill of health: the balance was then £6521.01. At the beginning of September, due to support for the conference, the balance was £7629 and more (from outstanding membership dues) would be paid in shortly. However, a significant amount would be drawn very soon in relation to conference expenses, speakers’ travel expenses and student bursaries, which should leave a post-conference balance £4000-£4500.  (iv) Conference Secretary:  Dr Martins would provide her report in writing and it would be made available on the ABIL website. |
| 6. | **2015 Conference**:  PR reported that venues had been proposed for the next ABIL Conferences: Sheffield (2017) and Edinburgh (2019). The proposals were agreed. Dr C. Ramos Villar would be the local conference organiser. She has already made enquiries about reserving rooms and facilities for early September 2017. PR expressed his thanks.  PR announced that every attempt would be made to offer childcare to delegates with young children attending the Sheffield conference. The meeting agreed to the proposal to offset the costs of onsite childcare with ABIL funds. Dr C. Williams thanked the committee for this initiative, which is very welcome to those members with young families. |
| 7 | **Election of New Officers**   1. Member without Portfolio   Dr Raquel Ribeiro was nominated by Dr Williams and Dr Pazos Alonso. She was duly elected.   1. Conference Secretary   Dr Carmen Ramos Villar was nominated by PR and CF. She was duly elected. |
| 8 | **Changes to the Constitution**  Some changes were agreed to at the last AGM but the by-laws had not been reworded.   1. **6:** **Officers, Committee, and Decision-Making Procedures**   **Item vi)**  “A postgraduate representative, who shall be a registered Postgraduate student at a British or Irish university at the time of election, shall be elected for a two-year term, with the possibility of re-election for a further two-year term subject to continued postgraduate status.”  There was a short discussion about the nature of the role of the PG Representative. The current PG Rep explained that there was a summary of the role on the website, but that it involved maintaining a list of PG members, liaising with them, organising a PG training session at the conference, and representing them on the Committee.  There was more prolonged discussion about avoiding conflicts of interest when the allocation of funding to PGs was decided by the Committee. It was thought appropriate to make it clear that the PG Rep should be involved in discussions about funding allocation criteria, but not decisions on individual allocations. The proposed change was to add the sentence:  “The postgraduate representative shall be excluded from decisions about the allocation of postgraduate funds to individuals by ABIL.”  PR noted that there was one candidate for PG Rep (Gui Perdigão, nominated by Simon Park and Simão Valente). He asked any other candidates to make themselves known to him as soon as possible and by 11am on Tuesday 8 Sept at the latest so that an election could be held if necessary.  NB: There were no other candidates, so Mr Perdigão is elected.   1. **Paragraph 6**, continued   It was proposed that the following item be added in order to facilitate decision-making procedures:  “c) Where there is no consensus, decisions of the committee, including budgetary decisions, shall be taken by vote with the president having a second, casting vote when there is an equality of votes.”   1. **Paragraph** **10**   It was proposed that Paragraph 10 be amended to update the election procedure, particularly the fact that nominations and endorsements can be made by email and not necessarily on paper:  “Nominations for the committee open at least fourteen days before the General meeting. Nominations must be endorsed by the nominee and two other members of the Association. They must be communicated to the General Secretary and may be received up to and including the General Meeting. If two or more candidates are nominated for any office, an election will be held at the General Meeting.”  All proposals were approved unanimously. The online version of the Constitution will be amended accordingly.  The Committee proposed that the role of Conference Secretary could be made more flexible. It should be possible for members who would like to be a local organizer not to have to take on the wider role of Conference Secretary. The Conference Secretary could stand for re-election for a second term if they wished.  This proposal was approved by anonymous support. |
| 9 | **Discussion about Postgraduate Funding**  At the 2015 Conference each of the ten UK-based PGs who applied for funding assistance was offered the same amount, to cover the conference fees and travel costs (a conference fee waiver and up to £50 towards travel and accommodation costs).  A generous donation of £500 from the Anglo-Portuguese Society off-set the costs of this arrangement.  The Meeting discussed whether at future conferences funds should be distributed: (i) equally between all eligible post-grads who apply or (ii) by competition (with a scaled structure). The discussion covered what form a competition might take, the fact that ABIL is a small and relatively young association, what the baseline should be (conference fee, accommodation, travel), whether the bursaries should be restricted to UK and Irish PG students and whether they could include recently-qualified PGs, those on temporary contracts, and Early Career Researchers. The problems associated with defining the last of these categories were also discussed.    The PGs present, and the rest of the meeting, AGREED that distribution should be equal across all eligible applicants, and not based on any competition.  The majority VOTED to include, not restrict, international students, but agreed that they would not receive more than their UK or Irish counterparts.  The meeting AGREED to the incoming Executive Committee working out appropriate eligibility criteria particularly for bursaries for Early Career Researchers without access to university funds.  The Meeting AGREED to a number of proposals regarding the Conference in 2017. It was AGREED that the year’s income from membership should be set aside for PG support at the next conference. It was AGREED that applications to other funding bodies must be declared on the application form and that in the case of receiving funding from elsewhere the ABIL bursary not be claimed. |
| 10 | **Support for Proposal that Translations Should Count as Valid Research**  Prof Nick Harrison (KCL) has appealed to Modern Languages colleagues via MLO for support in lobbying for translations to count for the REF. Translation is a valid research.  The meeting AGREED that PR should lobby on behalf of ABIL in favour of this proposal. |
| 11. | **AOB**   1. Dr C. Pazos Alonso reminded the Meeting that the next AIL conference takes in Macau in July/August 2017, and a call for papers is forthcoming. She encouraged members of ABIL to attend. 2. In partnership with the Gulbenkian Foundation, AIL has started Plataforma 9, a weekly bulletin with information about news, jobs, conferences and events to which interested parties can subscribe. 3. Dr T. Holmes reminded the Meeting of the upcoming REBRAC (Brazilian Cultural Studies Network, organised by Tori Holmes, Stephanie Dennison and Sara Brandellero) conference and meeting on 25 September at Senate House in London. Registration is open and the programme available online. 4. Dr A. Martins informed the Meeting of the upcoming symposium ‘Portuguese Film: Colony, Postcolony, Memory’ taking place at Senate House in London on 14-15 January 2016. 5. Dr Lingna Nafafé informed the Meeting that there was no representative of Portuguese in the Southwest Consortium. 6. Dr Williams encouraged members to publish in *Portuguese Studies*.   PR declared the Meeting over at 7.30pm. |