

Minutes of Beshara Trust Annual General Meeting (Public Section)

19th July 2014

Mead Hall, Chisholme House

Trustees present: Elizabeth Roberts (retiring Chairman), Gill Williams (Chairman – elect), Michael Cohen, Julia Dry, Daniel Hirtenstein, Jenny Martin, Michael Tiernan.

Apologies: Janet Bowers

There were about 30 other attendees.

1) Retirements and Elections

Elizabeth Roberts retired as Trust Chairman. She was unanimously elected as a Trustee.

Gill Williams was unanimously elected as new Chairman.

Gill Williams then took over chairmanship of the AGM.

Michael Tiernan announced his retirement as a Trustee.

Julia Dry announced her retirement as Trust Secretary, and was unanimously re-elected.

Martin Lam was elected unanimously as a new Trustee.

2) Financial Report

Julia gave a presentation based on the financial report for the year ending 31st March 2014.

There was some discussion concerning the Trust's funding of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society's Young Writer's Award. It was explained that there was no commitment to fund the award for future years.

3) Events

a) Beshara Lecture in London and Talk Forum in Edinburgh

The lecturer this year was Jane Carroll. The events were generally judged a success.

Discussion centred mainly on the Edinburgh event and the pros and cons of the new format were aired. There was some discussion prompted by questions from the floor as to how the speaker was selected.

b) Seminars and Study Groups in London and Bristol

Michael Cohen presented a report on these events for 2013-4.

c) Happiness Conference in Edinburgh

Daniel and Elizabeth reported that this was the first time the Trust had collaborated with another organisation on a major event. They said the conference had been an experiment and was very successful as a networking occasion for the Beshara Trust that brought together a wide variety of speakers and subject-matters in relation to the topic of Happiness. The fact the conference took place over 2 days meant there was a tendency for participants to gravitate to sessions on their own interests rather than to try something new. In discussion from the floor a number of people who had attended the conference said they had enjoyed it greatly.

d) Fez International Conference on Ibn 'Arabi

Elizabeth reported on this event, which she had attended together with Janet Bowers and read out a short piece Janet had written in appreciation of it. Elizabeth gave a talk on Beshara at the conference. An idea was floated at the conference for the foundation of a "University of Sufi Culture" or "Sufi Sciences" in Fez.

4) Communications

a) Website

Michael Tiernan gave a presentation on the development of the website, with particular reference to the Trust pages. He felt there is scope for someone with an eye for graphics to make the pages look livelier. There was some discussion concerning the development of a Trust YouTube channel.

b) Beshara Development Office and the Database

Daniel gave a progress report on the database. He reported that in order to facilitate communication between the Trust and the BDO, and for many other reasons, it was necessary that the database be online, as it used to be. The aim is that the online server be set up properly and that the Trust have joint ownership of this with the Chisholme Institute. At present the server is only accessible from the Chisholme office. Unfortunately this project has hit some significant problems and it may be necessary to find an expert to deal with these.

5) Training Day

Elizabeth reported on the Trust Training Day, facilitated by Mhairi MacMillan, which took place in Hawick in February. Elizabeth formulated the conclusions of the day under three headings: “What the Trust Does, “Guiding Principles” and “Looking Ahead to the Future”

6) Trademark

Elizabeth reported on registration of the name “Beshara” as a trademark by the Trust. This only protects us against non-authorized use of the name in the UK. It also prevents other bodies from trying to prevent us using the name “Beshara.”

7) Beshara Edinburgh

Elizabeth reported on events in Edinburgh. There has been a revival of events at the Salisbury Centre, with a monthly zikr, a Rumi study group and Discovering Unity course. There are also six seminars planned in the period Nov 2014- March 2015) .