

# TRANSACTIONS OF THE BURGON SOCIETY

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# The Burgon Society

## Officers

(as at 1 August 2017)

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# Burgon Society Events in 2016

**14 May**

## **Spring Conference and AGM**

OFFICES OF DELOITTE Athene Place, 66 Shoe Lane, London

Programme included the AGM and the following talks:

Alex Kerr — *1770 and All That: Crisis and Controversy at Oxford*

Philip Waters — *How to Hold a UK Degree Ceremony Abroad*

Peter Clarke — *A Velvet Revolution: Creation of the Academic Dress of the University of Bradford*

Martin Lewis — *Exploring the Academic Dress of Eton College: Weaving the Fabric of Success since 1440*

**23 July**

## **Garden Party**

CATHEDRAL GARTH, ST EDMUNDSBURY CATHEDRAL Bury St

Edmunds, Suffolk

Hosted by Richard Baker

**8 October**

## **Congregation**

THE QUEEN'S CHAPEL OF THE SAVOY London

Installation of Professor Graham Zellick as President of the Society by  
Colin Fleming (Chairman)

Admission to the Fellowship of the Burgon Society

Ir Dr Peter P. K. Chiu (by submission — Academic Dress in China  
from 1994 to 2011)

Peter Clarke (by submission — McKinley's People: A Study of the  
Academic Dress of the University of Bradford)

The Revd John Harding (by submission — Academical Dress and the  
Old Testament Prophets' Gowns: Some Observations on the  
Nature and Propriety of Academical Dress)

Dr John Lancaster (by submission — Dressing by Degrees: Academic  
Dress in British Columbia)

Programme included the following talks:

Paul Jagger — *Livery Companies of the City of London*

John Lancaster — *Research on the Academic Dress of British Columbia*

Nicholas Jackson — *The Society's Reprint of Academic Dress Plates  
from Ackermann's Histories of Oxford and Cambridge*

# Fellows & Members

(as at 1 August 2017)

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Dr Nicholas Groves	Mr John Venables
The Revd John James Harding	Mrs Sandra Wearden
Mr Seamus Addison Hargrave	Mr Stephen L. Wolgast
Dr Thorsten Hauler	Professor Graham Zellick
Lieutenant Nicholas A. Hoffmann	
Dr John Horton	

### Deceased Fellows

Dr John Birch, *died 2012*  
Mr Leonard Brown, *died 2007*  
Professor Bruno Neveu, *died 2004*  
Dr George Wenham Shaw, *died 2006*

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## Editor's Note

When my wife and I were planning our wedding, one of the questions to answer was how many hymns we should ask the congregation to sing. We both enjoy choral music, and as much as we wanted our friends and family to sing with us we wanted to keep from expecting more of their vocal enthusiasm than was realistic. The church's music director helped settle the matter. He pointed out that when wedding guests sing together, they support the couple with one voice.

Something similar can be said about wearing academic dress for a ceremony. Recently my university installed a new president, for the second time since I have been teaching there. The basics of the ceremony remained the same, but with two big differences. First, this year's ceremony moved to the campus auditorium, a setting far more fitting than the basketball arena where the previous installation had been held. The second change, however, reduced the ceremony's pomp.

When the new university president was installed in 2009, the faculty were asked to participate in their academic dress. We lined up for the procession—actually, the typical American shuffle—and were seated in front of the platform along with representatives of about a dozen nearby universities. The audience sat around us. In a photo of the event, at least one hundred faculty members and visitors were in cap and gown.

By contrast, eight years later the invitation to the faculty to participate in the procession stipulated that no academic regalia would be worn, even though the faculty participants would be ushered in as a group. There was no explanation for the instruction, which seemed particularly odd considering the new president was a retired Air Force general whose last job as an officer was serving as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to President George W. Bush. In other words, a person fully accustomed to serving amid uniforms. The decision to forgo university uniform was probably made, as at most institutions, by a committee and then approved by the honoree.

Reading the instructions again, I tried to imagine how the procession of faculty would appear. All I could think of was a funeral, with the family of the dearly departed being escorted to the first pew just before the service begins.

The actual ceremony was not so melancholy as a funeral, of course. But from where I sat, with the rest of the guests, the look was similar: the ceremony got underway and the participants were introduced as they entered. At the appropriate time, the emcee announced the faculty and dignitaries from neighbouring universities, and in came the group. The first eight were in cap and gown, a surprise to me until I realized they were the visitors, who apparently were permitted to wear the symbols of their degrees. The university faculty, on the other hand, wore standard office dress — and numbered all of about a dozen—out of a faculty of more than twelve hundred.

Why was the group so small? I would like to think that they enjoy the show of unity that cap and gown create and were put off by the instruction not to wear it. Without academic dress to unite them, they were just part of the crowd. In its absence, academic dress was all the more noticeable. Those who were permitted to wear it supported the university visually, with their dress. Had the faculty been allowed to wear their academic dress, the array of their robes would have represented greater support for the university, represented by one of the centuries-old traditions that universities share.

—*Stephen Wolgast*