Transactions of the Burgon Society
Volume 14 (for 2014)

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Burgon Society Events in 2014

29 March  Visit to the University of Hull

UNIVERSITY HOUSE (The University of Hull Student Union)
arranged by Richard Baker
Programme included:
Richard Baker — The Academic Dress of the University of Hull and the Hull York Medical School, with examples of robes designed by Charles Franklyn and the University’s officers’ robes
Nicholas Groves — Afternoon Tea with Dr Franklyn: biographical and archival revelations

10 May  London Spring Conference

OFFICES OF DELOITE  Athene Place, 66 Shoe Lane, London
Programme included:
Talks
Alice Hynes — Academic Dress in the Modern University: A Personal Perspective
Seamus Hargrave — The Cap and the Church
Sandra Wearden — A Brief History of Lancaster’s Ceremonial Robes
Bruce Christianson — Portrait of a Time-Travelling Nobleman
Petr Jan Vinš — Academic Dress in the Czech Republic and Former Czechoslovakia
Nicholas Groves — Lambeth Degrees and the Historical English Robes
Jonathan Cooper — The Academical Dress of the Ionian Academy, 1824–1864

4 October  AGM and Congregation

THE QUEEN’S CHAPEL OF THE SAVOY  London
Annual General Meeting
Display of academic robes from the Burgon Society Archive
Admission to the Fellowship of the Burgon Society
Seamus Addison Hargrave (by submission — The Church and the Trencher: An Examination into How England’s Changing Theology and Church Has Influenced the Evolution and Design of the Square Cap Causing its Use as Academic Attire)
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Mr Leonard Brown, died 2007
Professor Bruno Neveu, died 2004
Dr George Wenham Shaw, died 2006
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Editor’s note

How does something so old stay relevant today? Academic dress lives in the present at ceremonies because it lived—thrived, even—in the past. When we see new graduates wearing it we know it has survived over the centuries not simply because of tradition, but because it carries emotional meaning to those who wear it and to their parents and family too.

Academic dress hasn’t always been associated with celebration. In centuries past, politicians have forbidden it, religious leaders have challenged it, and in rough economic times, such as those during the World Wars, less rigorous dress standards saw a decline in its use. Student uprisings in the 1960s changed styles of dress tremendously and tore away most of the dress standards that had survived until then.

Despite it all, academic dress is still worn on campuses around the world. This volume makes that case especially clear. The most recent example comes from Melbourne, where the University of Divinity sought gowns that incorporate ancient symbols in modern design. A much older example is the square cap, which arrived at its current shape after centuries of evolution and no small amount of religious sparring. For something so widely used, the source of the square cap has long been obscured. Our article on square caps traces the square’s history, answering questions about the source of its shape that have been posed far longer than the Society has existed.

Even older is the tale of dress for scholars in China, which dates to the eighth century and was last updated in 1994. Keep reading to find out how Chinese graduates today are permitted a rather remarkable degree of freedom to trim their gowns as they wish.

Ancient Greece also makes an appearance in the pages that follow, though an anachronistic one, at the nineteenth-century Ionian Academy, where the college rules used the term toga to refer not to the academic gown but to an actual toga.

You will also find articles about a Glasgow gown, Spain and Japan, the latter rounding out a typographical novelty for us: a single volume that calls into use three non-Latin alphabets. My thanks to the handful of translators who helped clarify terms and text here and there: Charles Tsua, FBS (for his help with Chinese), Anna Minton and Martin Pickles (Greek).

The Transactions would not come together without their help and the help of many others. Here’s my tip of the (square) cap to the editorial board, who helped our authors strengthen their prose, patiently reading and re-reading succeeding drafts, and who reliably answered my calls for help when I needed it—which was not infrequent. Special thanks for the help I had in making smooth our transition from using one citation style (humanities) to two (by adding social sciences).

Of course, we all owe our greatest thanks to our authors. Their dedication to their topics and their willingness to submit to what must seem like endless rounds of modifications and emendations produces the scholarship that advances our field and enhances the Society. The people who keep academic dress alive help it survive and even thrive.

—Stephen Wolgast