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The Australasian Society for Classical Studies 2014

Secretary’s Report

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#### A Year of Living Dangerously

Before I begin to describe my first year as secretary I would once again like to thank the former secretary Bruce Marshall for his assistance in a year of change. More than once I have called upon him for assistance and he has always been generous with his time and his advice. It has not always been easy for him to let go of the reins, but over the course of the year I have grown to appreciate in a new way all he did for the Society. I am very sorry that for the first time in many years that due to ill-health we are missing him at our conference in Palmerston North. I wish him a speedy recovery and hope to see him back with us in Adelaide in January 2015.

Last year, Bruce’s final report as secretary utilised the theme of the *res gestae divi Augusti*. However, a Pompeian has taken over. I have a different mantra. ‘I grieve’, said Cicero in his speech on behalf of Marcellus, ‘that the state, which ought to be immortal, depends on the breath of a single individual’. My task this year has been to involve as many people as possible in the running of the society. Bruce began this process before I was elected by suggesting the appointment of Nathan Leber as Messages Secretary and to propose that Tim Scott take on the role of membership secretary. Nathan has been a wonderful addition to the team and I thank Tim and all those, especially the departmental representatives, who assisted with the revision of the membership lists at the beginning of the year. The Vice-Presidents, Alison Griffith and Patrick O’Sullivan, have taken up or continued significant responsibilities and both have more to do in the future as Alison assumes responsibility or the early career award and Patrick the monitoring of the ASCS website. John Penwill, the business manager of Antichthon, has carried out all the negotiations with Cambridge University Press concerning the future of the journal in an electronic age. Their efforts, along with those of the rest of the executive, and the treasurer William Dolley in particular, have meant that ASCS has been able to develop a new team spirit. John Davidson and his team have further refined the Program Review Committee’s processes and plans are underway to produce clearer guidelines and more efficient processing of the abstracts for our general meeting. By the end of this meeting I hope that the proposal to have two postgraduate representative positions will receive formal ratification.

Amid this change, the customary work of the Society has continued. In 2013, ASCS provided funding to the seventh Amphorae Postgraduate conference, held in July at the University of Sydney, and to occasional conferences hosted at Macquarie (Scribal Practice), ANU (Homer Symposium) and Queensland. ASCS has already been informed of requests for occasional conference funding requests for 2014 from Newcastle (Reception), Sydney (Augustus 2014) and Victoria, Wellington (Athens to Aotearoa). Committees overseeing essay prizes, translation competitions, the early career award and the Optima award have completed their tasks or have them in hand.

Membership stands at 2 life members, 436 financial members, 44 unfinancial members and 40 resignations.

Congratulations to the editors of Antichthon (including the 2013 guest editor Paul Burton) for producing a fine volume of the journal and once again for keeping the production in its own year. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank Bruce Marshall for his efforts as production manager and general proof-reader. John Penwill, as business manager, has been immensely active on the journal’s behalf and whatever we decide on the future of the journal our decisions will be better informed because of his efforts.

ASCS 34, hosted by Macquarie University and convened by Blanche Menadier and Ken Sheedy was not just a success but a useful precedent for rethinking the conference format. Holding the conference in conjunction with the Australian Museum and the Alexander Exhibition was a great experiment. I hope others might seize similar opportunities in the future.

The critical challenges facing the Society as I see them revolve around the level of professionalism we deem to be appropriate to the representative peak association for Classical Studies in Australasia. Today we will be debating the future of the journal and I invite all members to contribute to that important debate. There are other issues as well, principally in my view the broadening of our financial base so that the Society can make a greater contribution than it currently does to supporting its ongoing commitments and even to assist new initiatives. One item on my personal agenda for 2014-5 will be to find ways to assist members to make tax deductible contributions beyond and above the cost of membership if they are willing and able to do so. The introduction of the ‘superdelegate’ category of conference registration allowed ASCS to be considerably more generous in its postgraduate subsidies than might otherwise have been the case but we have a long way to go before we can match the British Classical Association which grants full bursaries to postgraduate and in some cases undergraduate delegates. I would like to see a calendar of conference dates which ensures that members know three years in advance where the conference will be held and on what dates. ASCS 36 in Adelaide (Jan 28-30 2015) is in train. Victoria University at Wellington has promised to host ASCS 38 in 2017. We are still working on 2016, ASCS’ 50th anniversary year, but hope sooner rather than later to be able to advertise the host campus for that meeting. We have been approached by a body in contact with FIEC as to whether ASCS wishes to bid to host the FIEC (International Federation of the Societies of Classical Studies) conference in 2024. This prospect is still a mirage on a distant horizon, but indicates the extent to which ASCS will have to deliberate on new issues and possibilities.

In November, I met with the proposed conveners of ASCS 36, Han Baltussen and Jacqueline Clarke, to discuss the 2015 conference and the logistics of hosting it in Adelaide. At this meeting we decided to propose that the call for papers must close at the end of July rather than the end of August. Such a move will allow the review committee to do its work in better time and for delegates to know well in advance if their paper has been accepted or not. A long lead-time is normal for conferences such as ours and is especially important to international participants whose opportunities for applying for funding are limited. This year, with the best will in the world to expedite the process, it still took months before the committee convener could confirm the acceptance of papers, thus restricting the chance to take advantage of funding possibilities and more economical modes of travel.

I come back to the beginning. ASCS needs strong leadership, especially from its experienced members, but in my view every member has a role to play if the Society is to continue to grow. I urge all those who have ideas as to where they want to see ASCS go in the future to send those ideas to me. They may not all get up, but even the resulting discussions will help to set the agenda of the future.