

GAT Page Oxford 2005



The Group of Anaesthetists in Training is holding its 38th Annual Scientific Meeting (the largest and longest running specific annual trainee meeting held in the UK) in Oxford from June 23rd to 25th next year. Over the last few years it has attracted an average of 300 delegates to the lectures and workshops. With the central location of Oxford, we are anticipating large numbers, despite the changes to our work patterns.

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With a step into the unknown, I offered to help out with the organisation of the conference when the pleading email was sent out in March of this year; Dr Ward seemed so pleasant in theatres.

What does it involve? Having volunteered to help out, I found myself on the Local Organising Committee (LOC) in Oxford together with Prof Sear (his third time at organising the scientific programme for a GAT conference) and Dr Michael Ward. A number of other trainees will be harangued into helping out in the coming months. My initial role is to liaise with the GAT committee in London (and via them, the AAGBI), but probably my most important job is keeping on the good side of Jo Barnes, Education and Membership Services Manager at the Association'.

The brief: an entertaining and informative educational conference combined with a lively social programme. Certainly not mission impossible you'd think, but despite Oxford being a seat of learning since 1100AD and home to 17,000 students, conference facilities for 300 delegates for three days? Not a chance – so much for the tutorial system. Compound this with the dates clashing with Encaenia Day (the presentation of

Honorary Degrees to international notables) and that's the Colleges of out of bounds – probably a good thing considering Prof still thinks GAT is banned from Christchurch following the 1990 meeting! He of course denies any wrongdoing. Incidentally, those 1990 delegates are now respected consultants and college tutors.

With less than a year to go, the LOC's first task was to put forward the scientific programme, primarily utilising the vast amount of expertise in the Oxford region, but also involving nationally recognised speakers. Developing a programme that hasn't had subjects covered in the recent past, whilst trying to keep it fresh and interesting, took a little time and work. The programme still needs final approval by both GAT and the AAGBI, hopefully a formality. All the speakers will have been approached by the time of publishing this and contingencies planned for those unable to make it.

With the programme sorted out, it was time to turn to looking for venues for the conference, accommodation and, oh yes, the social side. After many frantic phone calls and much time on the Internet, a short list was produced. I can now proudly recite the number of seats in each lecture theatre in Oxford! On a gloriously sunny Friday in July, myself, the LOC and Jo Barnes toured the potential venues of Oxford and in the space of a couple of hours, everything fell into place. The conference venue is stunning and the accommodation exceptionally good, being a few hundred yards away from the conference venue, the workshops, the shopping centre and the Royal Oak, the Spread Eagle, Downtown Manhattans nightclub.....

Now that this first frenzy of activity is over, it's time to concentrate on work for the Final. My involvement and input will obviously increase the nearer June gets – Study Leave already booked, please note. For now however, I'm committed to the GAT meetings every three months in London to update and inform the committee. The vast amount of work that goes into promoting the conference and the logistical running of the three days is dealt with superbly by Jo and her team at the AAGBI, thus removing a large amount of time, work and pressure from both the LOC and myself.

I can honestly say that I've had no regrets in offering to help out with the ASM. The last couple of months have provided a working insight into the organisation of a national conference but it has also opened my eyes to the workings of GAT and the AAGBI. The amount of work put in by both these groups on our behalf is huge and probably underestimated by most of us trainees. With so much change taking place, with new working patterns to the hospital at night, both GAT and AAGBI are representing us to the best of their abilities.

Despite the changes to our working patterns, the increasing difficulty of getting approved study leave, and the threat of some deaneries to remove funding for study leave altogether, we believe that Oxford will be a great success in terms of numbers of delegates attending, the provision of educationally relevant lectures and a lively social programme. We look forward to seeing you next year.

Michael Parris