

Birmingham International Student Homes

Annual Review
2023



Supportive

Caring

Safe

Friendly

Comfortable



Chairman's Message



Another twelve months has passed and BISH has shown that our approach to international student accommodation focused first on ethical standards regardless of faith is also founded in good business acumen.

Both our houses have had full or near capacity throughout the 2022/2023 financial year which meant the reserves which had been previously depleted could now be utilised for further improvements and refurbishment.

A fire broke out in August 2022 which was the result of a resident charging a back up phone battery which was non CE certified.

An independent consultant for Health and Safety was commissioned and completed his report in Autumn 2023.

The report concluded that changes were needed for the existing induction for new tenants to ensure more knowledge of their building along with food hygiene, electrical equipment, asbestos and fire evacuation procedures.

The improvements to our Health and Safety policy along with our new processes were put into place immediately with monthly meetings for new residents agreed to be the most effective way of administering the induction process.

The board also implemented the checking and PAT testing of all residents electrical items to ensure safety for all residents.

Chairman's Message

To further comply with the findings of the report Fire Marshalls were identified and trained for both houses and drills completed. Electrical testing was completed in July 2023 and as part of our longer term plan the upgrading of alarm bells to electronic sounders to the fire alarm system at Wesley had also been completed.

Along with the annual maintenance plan refurbishment of bedrooms and bathrooms were planned and these have now been completed with more information and photos on our Refurbishment and Maintenance page.

Energy prices and the cost of living had been a challenge throughout the past year for both ourselves as a business and also our staff with high inflation and rising energy costs putting pressure on families everywhere. The board agreed to a small increase in rents which in turn enabled us to ensure a living wage for all our hardworking staff.

On a sadder note two of our longest serving board members Bob Dauncey and Malcolm Evans have retired. Bob was instrumental in the setting up of BISH in 2002 and Malcolm was the driving force behind our previous Annual Reviews. A retirement lunch was held for Bob and Malcolm and we would like to thank them both once again for their service to BISH and wish them well for the future.

As one door closes another one opens and we are pleased to announce and welcome Ian Howarth to the BISH Board. We would also like to extend our gratitude to our staff for the last twelve months of hard work and dedication to providing a Home Away From Home and we look forward to the opportunities and progress we will have together in 2024.

Malcolm Evans



Malcolm retired this year from BISH and tells us below in his own words about his experience being a Trustee.

Shortly after retiring, I was asked by Lawrie Rumens, the Chair of BISH, if I would consider joining the Board of BISH and becoming a Trustee.

This appealed to me as it would be a new experience and I had been associated with the Methodist Church at Solihull. I joined in late 2011, about a decade after the formation of BISH from two independent student houses and through prudent financial management, the charity was on a firm footing.

At this time, many of the students staying with us had gained knowledge of BISH by word of mouth but global factors were coming into play with the rapid development of IT, the need for British universities to attract more international students and the easing of restrictions on movement of young people in the Far East, particularly China.

As a result, we set about developing the Annual Review document which had included financial information and some detail about students and staff into more of a marketing document which could be used internally within the Methodist organisation, but one that could be used to attract students and to be used with potential new sources of students.

A key highlight in compiling the Annual Review was the collection of students' academic stories and experiences of living at BISH. I was always amazed by the breadth of studies undertaken, the expertise acquired and the personal stories of students and a number of their families.

Malcolm Evans

Having a large number of flats at Asbury House enabled families of some students to stay with us and the sound of young children was always a joy. I also enjoyed sampling food from different nations when International Evenings were arranged. All of these factors gave us confidence that we were and are providing a true 'Home away from Home'.

BISH invested heavily in the upgrading of IT facilities for the students, primarily improving connectivity via hard wiring and through wifi. In conjunction with this, we updated the website and improved the information content also.

A further important area for me, slightly dissociated from student life, was the challenge to help the refugees associated with the conflict in Syria. The Board stated a desire to help if possible and this led to work with Rev. David Butterworth on a new scheme in the UK called Community Sponsorship. This scheme had been developed in Canada and was introduced to the UK by Theresa May, the then Home Secretary.

After a long gestation period, BISH and the Methodist Birmingham District were able to bring a family to Birmingham and to house them in a BISH flat and to help in their integration into life in the UK. The stay was successful and the family are now living an independent life elsewhere in Birmingham.

As ever with running a business, there are also some difficult times and challenges. The accommodation of students in Birmingham is a major market with a large number of tertiary education establishments in and near the city. As a result, the universities and private companies have built modern facilities which compete favourably with the older buildings at BISH.

This competitive environment has led to self examination at BISH and a continued and enhanced determination to provide 'A Home away from Home' that continues to attract many post-graduate students.

Malcolm Evans

Covid also proved to be a major challenge. Tireless work by some of the staff and a number of the Board members enabled BISH to survive but inevitably there was some loss of staff.

Once the pandemic receded, it was encouraging to see some staff successfully take on much greater responsibility and new staff have a marked effect on BISH's success.

It has been a privilege to be part of this organisation and I wish BISH every success in the future.

Refurbishments and Maintenance

Asbury 110 Before and After



The kitchen was thoroughly updated with new flooring, worktops, cupboards and appliances then painted a nice bright white to match the new tiles.



Refurbishments and Maintenance

Asbury 110 After



The bedroom now looks modern with white and grey tones to provide a calm and soothing environment for rest and study.



Refurbishments and Maintenance

Wesley Before and After



The shower room was thoroughly updated with new flooring, shower cubicle and shower and then tiled from the floor to ceiling giving a crisp clean new look that was much more appealing and very much welcomed by our residents.

Our team – 2023 news



Welcome to **Paula Morris** who joined us this year and tells us a little more about herself below.

Hi, I'm Paula. I enjoy walking, gardening and love spending time with my wonderful family.

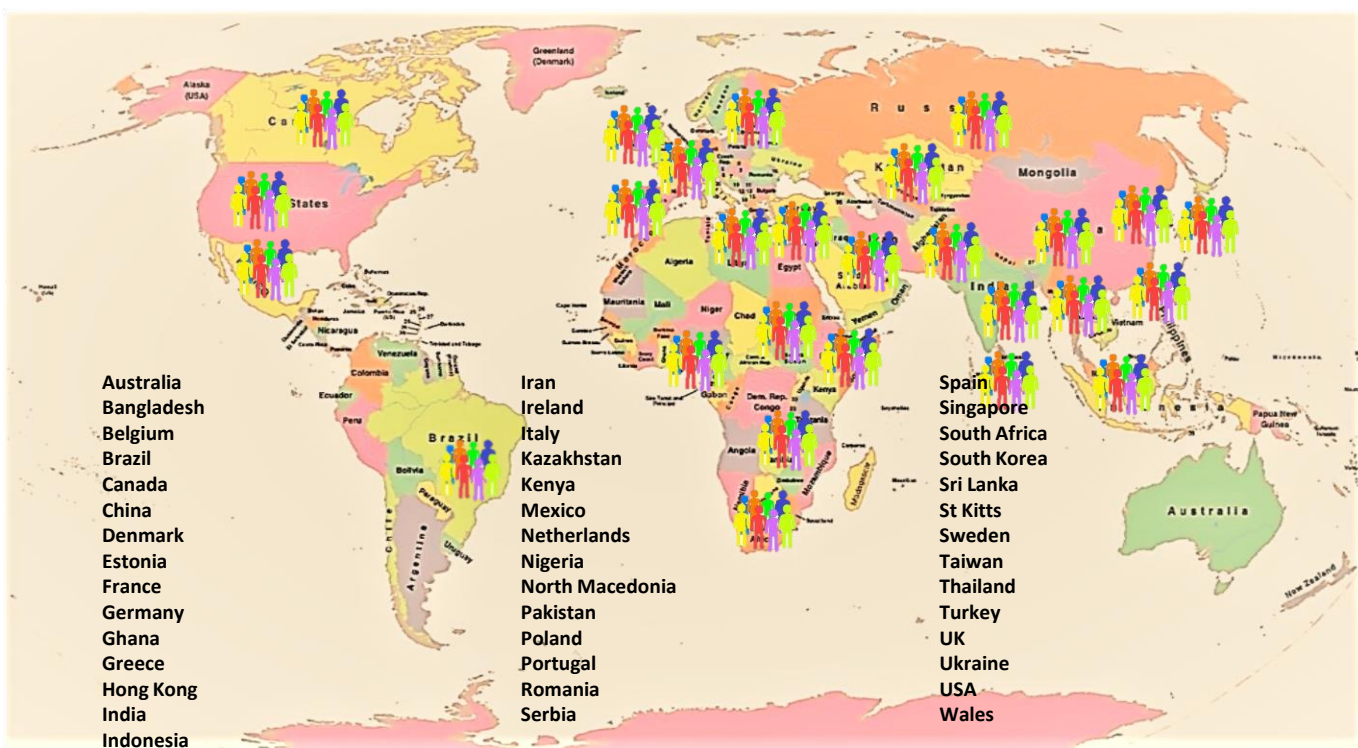
I started at BISH in the domestic team at Wesley but I have now moved over to the Asbury domestic team.

Directors

Andrew Steel - Chairman
Peter Johansen - Hon. Treasurer
Carolyn Humpherson- Secretary
Stuart Burgess

Ian Howarth
Robert Dauncey (Ret)
Malcolm Evans (Ret)

Where are our residents from?



The last twelve months have returned BISH to a sense of normalcy with both houses near capacity throughout this period and the numbers of international students back up to pre pandemic levels.

The war in Ukraine and inflation has still had an impact on the cost of living in the UK during this time and BISH has done our best to limit the impact to our residents to ensure they can concentrate on their studies.

Our residents have come from 41 different countries over the past year, a total of 233 people staying in our accommodation of whom 17 were children.

Our residents

In the past year we have seen:



43 nations



233 residents
136 at Asbury
97 at Wesley



17 children

Life at BISH

Memories of The Missionary Guest House

1961

-

1973



Great to see the old 'Missionary Guest House' is still providing such appreciated 'homes from home'. My parents, Mrs Mary & the Rev. John Mudd were 'wardens' of the MGH from 1961-1973 & I and my sister spent most of our childhood years there.

In the 60's most of the accommodation was already taken up by overseas students, but usually there were a few missionaries 'on furlough' (my parents had previously stayed there on a short furlough from China).

There was a common room at the centre entrance (with a small office next to it), a larger common room on the floor above, and our family flat above that. The 4 side stairs had 6 flats on each, although one ground floor one was occupied by the caretaker (a stalwart old Shetlander by the name of Johnny Johnson, in whose workshop I spent a good portion of my childhood & teens).

The rear centre block then housed a massive central kitchen with adjacent scullery, and above that a (largely hand operated) laundry. I think there were initially about 4 other live-in staff on the top floor, but the rest of the single rooms there were occupied by students.

Life at BISH

Memories of The Missionary Guest House

1961

-

1973



Two hot meals a day were served up to the flats, a trolley that rattled and clattered took 6 trays along to each floor and 4 of them were loaded onto a hand-pulled 'dumb waiter' at the centre of each stair, and all the doorbells rung (often by us kids).

The central heating was a must for many of the residents in those days, and for a while it was not unusual for the families accompanying the students to arrive in a state of total culture shock from their small villages to arrive in bustling Birmingham !

In about 1969/70 there were major alterations with renovations carried out over about 6 months. The 4 old rope-pulled dumb waiter lifts and the bigger goods lift at the centre stair were all removed (despite them being obviously lethal devices in the hands of young children, none of us ever plummeted to our deaths!), a central passenger lift was installed, and the kitchens & laundry transformed into additional accommodation.

Once I was off at university my parents retired down to Somerset, but I still have fond memories of the freedom of both the workshop and the (then) acre or so of overgrown grounds and orchard.



Adrian Mudd

Life at BISH

Christmas at BISH 2023

As life at BISH slowly returned to normal over the last year so did the desire to socialise again which Pre Covid included International evenings, trips to Birmingham City Centre and surrounding areas and of course strong and lasting friendships formed between neighbours.

Christmas is celebrated in many countries around the world now regardless of religion and many families in the UK view it as a special time. At Christmas catching up with friends and family sharing food and stories is a big part of our combined UK culture and family tradition. In contrast it can also be a very difficult and lonely time for our residents who may be away from their own families and countries whilst they are studying.

We were delighted then that our Asbury residents and children in December decided to take advantage of the unique community that exists within BISH and attended a small Christmas celebration in December 2023 arranged by Anita.

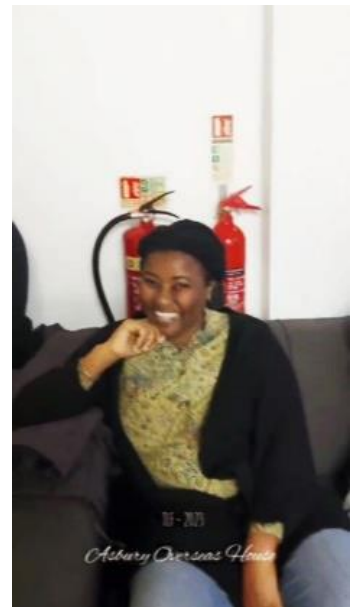
The opportunity to chat and get to know each other better whilst sharing food was held in our Common Room at Asbury Overseas House which is ideal for this type of get together and fully encapsulated the spirit of BISH and a home away from home.

One of our residents Natalia kindly managed to capture some moments from the Christmas party with some photo highlights below and we have shared a video on our main page that we hope you enjoy.



Life at BISH

The full video is now available on our website



Future developments and finance

Financial position

The Statement of Financial Activities shows total income for the year ended 31 August 2023 of £721,488 (2022 - £586,462) and total expenditure of £587,153 (2022 - £478,172), thereby increasing by £134,335 (2022 - increasing by £108,290) the Charity's total funds as at 31 August 2023 to £670,097 (2022 - £535,762).

During the year ended 31 August 2023 there was an overall surplus of income over expenditure before property costs of £240,124 (2022 - surplus £126,045). Expenditure on property costs during the year ended 31 August 2023 totalled £105,789 (2022 - £21,716) of which £41,039 (2022 - £3,961) of property improvements were capitalised as fixed assets with the balance of £64,750 (2022 - £17,755) expensed as property repairs and maintenance.

There has been a net cash inflow during the year ended 31 August 2023 of £184,945 (2022 - net cash inflow totalling £112,789) and at the year end the Charity had £617,859 (2022 - £432,914) of cash balances available to meet its day-to-day operational requirements.

The total funds retained in the balance sheet as at 31 August 2023 amounted to £670,097 (2022 - £535,762).

The financial year of Birmingham International Student Homes runs from 1st September to 31st August. The following information has been extracted from the audited financial statements for the year ended 31st August 2023. A full copy of these financial statements can be obtained by contacting The Company Secretary at 52 Oakfield Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham, B29 7EQ.

Future developments and finance

Future plans

Our challenges in the future are significant but remain little changed. Our prime purpose is to support people from overseas who are here to develop themselves and gain vital knowledge to take back to their own countries. These people, of all cultures and faiths, come together in friendship to live and work together whilst they are here in Birmingham. Their support of each other is vital to our purpose.

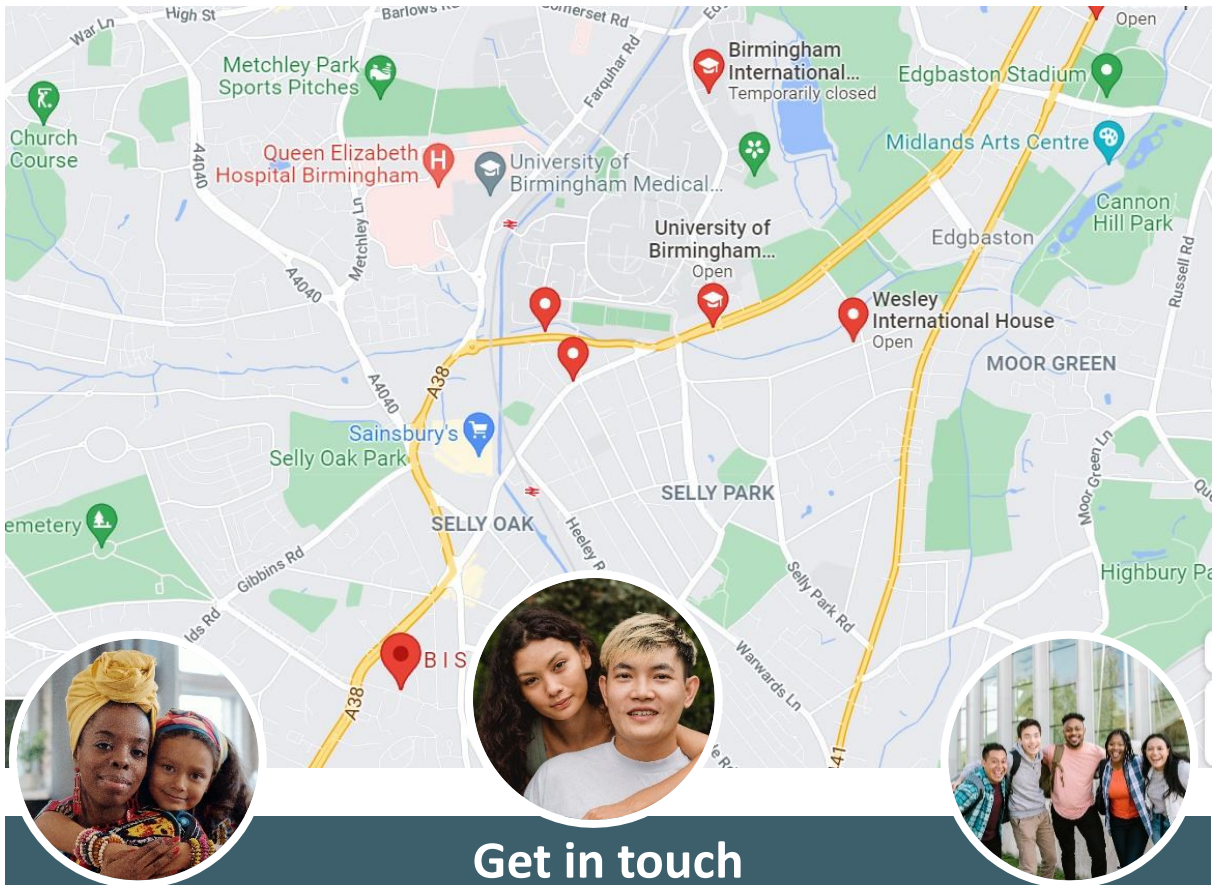
We will continue to invest in our accommodation in keeping with the demand for rising standards and to reduce our environmental footprint. Our attitude to reserves reflects that we are conscious that our infrastructure is aging and may need significant work in the future.

The beneficial ownership of Asbury Overseas House currently rests with the Global Relationship Division of the Methodist Church. Discussions have taken place to transfer, for administrative purposes, the beneficial ownership of Asbury Overseas House to the Birmingham District of the Methodist Church which already holds the beneficial interest of Wesley Overseas House. Any such reorganisation is not expected to affect the operations of either property but will simplify the reporting structure within the Methodist Connexion. The legal ownership of both properties will continue to be held by the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes.

The Trustees will continue to seek to broaden our client base of students and trainees within our prime purpose of caring for the stranger in our midst.

We will continue to invest in staff development to strengthen the work that we undertake to support our guests and equip ourselves for a new future. In short we will do all we can to continue to offer a “Home Away from Home” for all nations, all cultures and all creeds who seek to come to the Midlands to improve themselves and the lot of others back in their home countries.

Where to find us



Get in touch

We promise that staying with BISH for your education in Birmingham will be life enriching, providing an experience that will never be forgotten.

Our homes are in easy reach of the universities in Birmingham with short rail and bus connections to the City Centre.

For flats, double and single rooms at Asbury Overseas House and for single rooms at Wesley International House get in touch



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enquiries@bish.org.uk

Have a look on our website!

www.bish.org.uk

Company limited by guarantee no. England 4428382

A Home Away From Home