

## **Friends' School Saffron Walden, Old Scholars' Association**

### **147<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, held at 4pm on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2016 at the School**

Nigel McTear presiding and 12 members present.

1. Nigel McTear welcomed those present and a short silence was observed.
2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were received from Jo Willmott, Tom Dickinson, Clare Thompson, Douglas Kent, John Jossaume, Andrew McTear and Elizabeth Bryan.
3. MINUTES: The meeting agreed that the minutes of the previous meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2015 were a true and accurate record. The minutes are on the Old Scholars' website and no longer in the Annual Report as this has been replaced by a whole school magazine.
4. MATTERS ARISING: None
5. OBITUARIES: The Chair read the names of those whose deaths have been reported since the last AGM in May 2015 and a short silence was observed: Roger Blackshaw, Bryan Stanger, James Dutton, Jane Gibbs (née Pennell), Regina (Gina) Ross (née Gosling), Patricia (Paddy) Carter (née Thomas), Richard (Dick) Palmer, Gwyneth Dutton and Roger Baily. Tony Watson and Oliver Hughes remembered Bryan Stanger as he taught them woodwork. Dick Palmer ran Gray Palmer and sons in Saffron Walden and sent his sons Robert and Alan to the school. James and Gwyneth Dutton were remembered fondly by Judith Foster, Jenni Burnett and Gillian Pitt.
6. REPORTS:

#### **a) Chair**

(Nigel McTear): Nigel reported that the Old Scholars' Association has had another hybrid year. As discussed at the last AGM, the OSA is now more integrated into the school, as is the case for most alumni associations, with a professional database which the committee are looking at making more use of.

Nigel reiterated that the two objectives of the OSA are still to encourage fellowship between past pupils and teachers and to help the school.

The committee meets three times a year and is working hard not to be a cost to the school but subscriptions are not increasing, following the decision to make membership free, and donations are growing slowly so we are somewhere in the middle of our journey between these two objectives.

#### Questions/Comments:

Martin Hugall explained that the £6000 that the OSA gives to the school just about covers the running costs and we would like to be in a position to be able to help the school more. The OSA is not a charity but the school is, so it is better to donate money to the school and gift aid it if possible rather than giving it to the OSA.

Although we don't want to be pushy we need to drive this initiative forward by encouraging donations and we are open to any ideas on fundraising without turning people off.

Richard Hughes: "Where are the funds required?"

Nigel replied that there are targeted projects such as the purchase of more musical instruments and other wider areas such as sport (changing rooms, new cricket nets etc.) and the bursary fund.

Judith Foster suggested that we look at fundraising events around school anniversaries.

**b) Treasurer**

(Andrew McTear, read by Nigel McTear)

**TREASURER'S REPORT FOR FINANCIAL YEAR ENDING 31<sup>ST</sup> AUGUST 2015**

Unfortunately Andrew McTear was unable to produce the accounts for this date but Nigel McTear read out a brief statement outlining the financial situation of the OSA:

The financial affairs of the OSA are pretty much as reported last year. We have received approximately £6,000 in income in the past year and have given £6000 to the school.

Our life fund investments of originally around £13,000 are invested in stocks and shares which are worth in the region of £48-49,000 (slightly higher than last year) but the income from these investments is expected to be similar to last year, around £1,650.

What is important now is that we are not a burden to the school.

Details of the accounts ended 31<sup>st</sup> August 2015 will be uploaded to the Old Scholars' website once they have been audited.

**c) Old Scholar Governor/Head's Report for 2015/6**

(Anna Chaudhri)

Douglas Kent was unfortunately unable to attend the AGM so Anna Chaudhri presented her report: Anna briefly mentioned the new direction of the school with the change of name to Walden School from September but she didn't go into any great detail as the majority of the Old Scholars present also attended the speeches in the morning where she had already talked about this.

The main aim of the new branding project is to get our name better known as we are in an area of fierce competition and a lot of people within a 20-30 mile radius of the school had not even heard of us, according to our recent market survey.

Also, 50% of the target market would also not look at us because of the name of the school and we need more people to come to the school & see how special it is.

The brand has been modernised and it has gone down well with parents and current students so Anna hoped that the Old Scholars will agree in time.

Susan Garratt, Clerk of the board of Governors, had confirmed in the morning that the school will not be cutting its links with the Society of Friends so Anna hopes that this will reassure all Old Scholars.

On a general note, Anna thought that the Old Scholars Association was starting to build up again and there was still a lot of goodwill amongst Old Scholars. The committee are working well together and she thanked all Old Scholars, especially those who had made a donation to the school. We had a

very successful OS lunch in May and the new school magazine was a success and will be produced again in December. Last year the OS had 20 pages so Anna wanted to encourage us to contribute to this again.

There are a few things that she would like our help with. The first is the bursary fund as this would relieve the school's bursary burden but this would need a large chunk of money.

There are also several projects around the school: this year we have had the musical instrument fund which has resulted in all Year 7 students playing an instrument.

In terms of sport, builders have quoted to refurbish the changing rooms and the school will be changing the lockers and wet flooring this year. Future projects include cricket nets and a new cricket pavilion, ideally with a small gym.

A development plan for the OS was written in January with the aim of promoting fellowship and of fundraising. The OS Committee had agreed to try and match the £10,000 that the PTA have previously raised but we will probably not meet this target.

One future project that Anna would love to initiate is the restoration of the dining room by taking the mezzanine out. Douglas Kent specialises in the restoration of old buildings and has confirmed that it can be done but experts need to be consulted on how it can be achieved.

In terms of the date for Friends and Families Day/the OS Reunion, Anna said that the day is essentially for the leavers and early May was not a good time as it was before exams and there was not the requisite feeling of celebration. Therefore the date will remain at the later time in June/July. However, there were very few Old Scholars this year and the Reunion Dinner had to be cancelled so there needs to be a decision as to whether to keep the Reunion to the same day as F&F in future. Friends and Families Day next year will be on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> July 2017.

#### Questions/Comments:

Judith Foster: "Who are the beneficiaries of the bursaries?"

Anna replied that Quaker children get priority but also those children who cannot afford the fees but who have something special to offer the school.

There is a generous ceiling of 25% of the fees, all applications are looked at together and allocated proportionately.

When Anna started at the school £850,000 a year was spent on bursaries which was both far too high and unsustainable as this was coming out of fee income.

The Independent Schools Council recommends that schools do not spend more than 5-6% in bursary funding and Friends' was spending 12%.

Independent schools cannot keep increasing the fees so the Senior Leadership team is trying to keep a tighter control of this.

#### Comments about the Reunion:

Tony Watson felt that for his generation it was easier to come to events at lunchtime when you could also see the school on a working day.

Nigel McTear said that for at least 10 years the Reunion has been on the same day as F&F. A lot of year groups also meet up independently of F&F Day so there is still a lot of loyalty but the draw of the school is not enough to get them back every year.

The Committee needs to discuss how to encourage this goodwill and camaraderie between school friends and we should be open to alternative ideas as to how to meet up as this year there were a lot fewer Old Scholars than in previous years. Fellowship is the most important element & the venue doesn't really matter.

Richard Hughes said that for him part of the attraction of coming back was to visit the town as well as the school so he did not think that the Reunion needed to be on the same day as F&F Day. Also, having the Old Scholars and the school together at the same time was possibly too much as the queue for the barbeque was excessively long.

Martin Hugall described how the Reunion used to take place over the Whitsun weekend but the numbers gradually dropped and Nigel pointed out that a lot of the boarders are now weekly so there is less of a sense of community that there used to be to draw them back.

Martin also explained that the benefit of holding the Reunion on the same day as F&F Day is that the school is buzzing so you can see the school at its best but we need to find out if there is the demand for a different day.

7. ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS; APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS AND TRUSTEES:

In the revised Constitution only 3 Officers need to be appointed at the AGM: Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. These are currently Nigel McTear, Andrew McTear and Stefanie Godfrey. As all Officers were happy to continue in their roles so this was agreed and seconded by Tony Watson and unanimously agreed.

The Committee members were confirmed as Douglas Kent, Stephen Welch, Tom Dickinson, Clare Thompson, Jo Willmott, Bidy Vousden, Anna Chaudhri, Tony Watson and Martin Hugall. This was seconded by Judith Foster and unanimously agreed.

An auditor from one of Christopher Hickling, Graeme Johnston and Charles Mills was also approved for the following year.

Andrew McTear, Martin Hugall and Tony Watson were also re-appointed as trustees.

8. AOB:

Judith Foster expressed her thanks to Andrew McTear, Nigel McTear, Tony Watson and John Jossaume who have been faithful members of the OSA for the past 20 plus years.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING: In the absence of any change by the Committee, the next AGM will take place on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> July 2017.