

Friends' School Saffron Walden, Old Scholars' Association

148th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING/SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING, held at 2.30pm on 19th May 2018 at the Friends' Meeting House, Saffron Walden

Nigel McTear presiding and 31 members present.

1. Nigel McTear welcomed those present and a short silence was observed.
2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were received from Mark Bertram, Tom Dickinson, Clare Thompson, Bidy Vousden, Andrew McTear, Tessa Brown, Malcolm Pim, Richard Hughes, Oliver Hughes, John Ashby, Margaret Collison, Gordon Langford, Rajan Chetsingh, Charlie Deller, Lucy Garnett, Rachel Ashton, Hilary Halter, Michael Rossmann, Duncan Wood, Jeff Stevens, Clive Eiles, Barbara Brann, Ron Daniel, Gillian Godwin, Carey Godwin, Pauline Wilsdon, Alex Garden, Peter Arter, John Veit-Wilson, Janet Chamley and Robert Dunstan.
3. MINUTES: The meeting agreed that the minutes of the previous meeting on 25th June 2016 were a true and accurate record. The minutes can be found in the members' section of the Old Scholars' website.
4. MATTERS ARISING: None
5. OBITUARIES: The Chair read the names of those whose deaths have been reported since the last AGM in June 2016 and a short silence was observed: Alan Jennings, Eleanor Littleboy, Susan Toplis, John Goddard, Leslie James Allward, Matthew Evans (Lord Evans of Temple Guiting) Paul Fordham, Peter Dunstan, Alan Chapman, Diana White, Heidi Chalkley, Janet Stone (née Fellows), Audrey (Molly) Glover, Christopher Watt, John Kemp, Lenon Beeson, Annetta (Libby) Morris (née Duffill), Donn Webb, Paul Verity Smith, David White, William (Tim) Evens, Elisabeth Francis (née Collison), Godfrey (George) Pratt, Mary Rose Sargeant, Amanda Cowan (née Cooper) and Roger Browning. Judith Foster also informed us that Gillian Pitt (nee Whittick) had died in July 2017.
6. REPORTS:

a) Chair

(Nigel McTear): Last year's AGM was cancelled by the school at short notice which was a shame as it would have given many Old Scholars the chance to see the school for one final time before it closed. Nigel expressed his sadness that the school that was a part of all OS lives for so long is no more.

In terms of some background, the school had struggled to make a profit for several years and had "sold off some of the family silver" to keep it going but the overdraft with Barclays became untenable. At Easter it became clear that the number of pupils due to start in the main school and 6th form in September meant that the losses would go from bad to worse. Senior management looked at ways to boost numbers but they were unfortunately not successful before Barclays announced that they would not extend the overdraft.

The OS committee was later made aware of a bid from parents to run a new school along Quaker lines and the committee supported that bid but a month ago we found out that the bid was not successful and that the administrators Grant Thornton had sold the site to Chase (SW) Limited, part of the Chase New Homes group, a housing building company.

In terms of the OSA, when Graham Wigley was Head closer links were forged between the school and the OSA but we wanted to retain some autonomy and not relinquish all of our long term investments to the school. We did make a number of gifts to the school and our annual donations helped the school for several years but looking back we were wise to hold on to our investments.

b) Treasurer

(Andrew McTear, read by Nigel McTear)

TREASURER'S REPORT FOR FINANCIAL YEAR ENDING 31ST AUGUST 2016

The accounts for years ending 31 August 2015 and 31 August 2016 have been audited and were available at the meeting and have also been on the members section of the website for some time.

The unaudited accounts for year ending 31 August 2017 were also available at the meeting and have also been on the members section of the website.

(Note - In the accounts for year ending 31 August 2017 the £6,000 donation to the school was made earlier in the year as a late payment of our annual donation to the school for the year ending 31 August 2016.)

In short, we still receive subscriptions from around 400 Old Scholars who did not change their annual subscriptions to the OSA to a regular gift aided donation to the school. This amounts to around £4,000 per year.

We also receive interest from investments such as the life fund which results in a total income of around £6,000 per year.

Our net assets are just under £24,000 but at the current market value could be worth around £75,000.

c) Old Scholar Governor Final Report for 2016/7

(Douglas Kent): This is a copy of Douglas Kent's report:

At the Old Scholars' Association's most recent AGM in June 2016 Anna Chaudhri, at that time Head of Walden School, spoke optimistically about its future and new direction linked to the school's rebranding and change of name. Yet, just eleven months later, in May last year, the planned closure of the school was announced. There has been much speculation subsequently about why and how this situation arose: I offer you this afternoon my perspective on the school's demise.

I speak as a former Governor who resigned in April 2017 when the Board rejected viable strategies to keep Walden School open, but also as someone who has been involved closely since with efforts to retain the site for education while continuing, throughout this time, as a member of the committee of the Old Scholars' Association.

In recent years the school has had a great deal going for it. It was located in a region with a rapidly expanding population close to both Cambridge and London and benefitted from attractive and impressive red brick buildings set in leafy green spaces; it had extensive grounds and excellent sports facilities. The school performed well at multiple levels but, above all, was recognised for its superb pastoral care, strong Quaker ethos and well-rounded education offered to pupils. A three-year plan commenced in autumn 2016 to put the school onto a sustainable financial footing and, with the hard work of the staff, many positive changes were taking place.

The Board, nevertheless, entered 2017 with a sense of foreboding. Pupil numbers had been declining over many years for a variety of reasons and it had become more difficult to sell off parcels of land from time to time to balance the books. Projections showed that the modest rise in pupil numbers required to meet our immediate targets was failing to materialise sufficiently quickly.

In this respect, it has to be acknowledged that competition from other independent schools was fierce and that good state schools exist locally. There are those who say also that the change of name, from the Friends' School to Walden School, discouraged its promotion at this most critical time, causing possible confusion and both obscuring and diminishing the school's strongest selling point: its Quaker ethos and pastoral care.

Though there are elements of truth in these explanations for the school's decline, I for one do not subscribe to the view that closure was inevitable or, as someone put it recently, the school 'really had reached the end of the road'. Early in the year, however, various options for the school's future, occasionally muted in the past, began to be talked of more seriously; these included its sale. At this time, the Senior Management Team and a Governor met the bank, Barclays, to discuss its ongoing financial support and it was agreed Grant Thornton be appointed to review the school's situation.

I urged the Board to explore a sale-and-leaseback arrangement as an alternative to the other options under consideration. This plan could have enabled the school to continue trading while providing much-needed funds for marketing, time to implement deep-seated changes to improve efficiency and, ultimately, the chance to reacquire the premises. My idea, though, received little support from fellow Board members.

A body blow came shortly afterwards in February 2017 when Barclays Bank demanded the school commit to a two-year financial turnaround, instead of the three-year one put in place the previous autumn. Governors considered this demand unrealistic and felt it would place intolerable further strain on a Senior Management Team already run ragged. Consequently, on 23rd February, the Finance Committee decided that an accelerated sale should be investigated. Ominously, this meeting coincided with Storm Doris and the travel disruption that day prevented some of the committee, including me, from attending.

Grant Thornton, already appointed in an advisory capacity, was engaged next to market the school discreetly to potential purchasers or merger partners, from whom intentions of serious interest

were sought by 31st March. Governors met on 25th April to consider the offers submitted and this Board meeting would, it was to turn out, be my last. Of the five bids received, three were for purchase as a functioning independent school; a fourth was by the Department for Education (DfE) for vacant possession; and the fifth a sale-and-leaseback proposal - no less.

Even at this stage I remained convinced that sale-and-leaseback was the best way forward. Two of the three offers for outright purchase of the site, however, seemed entirely credible and acceptable to me (unlike the third which was clearly from an asset stripper). I was, though, extremely uncomfortable with the DfE offer, which was merely tentative and was for the acquisition of the premises in a vacant state. Each of us was given a few minutes, in turn, to state our preference. To my incredulity, as we went around the table, the consensus of opinion that emerged was in favour of accepting the DfE bid.

To me, this made absolutely no sense. It was the one offer that necessitated closure of the school, and we were far from certain that it could proceed, particularly given the risk of Government policy changes after the pending General Election. Not only was there this uncertainty but it had to be acknowledged that our main building was Victorian, and the state had disposed of many of its schools of a similar age in the post-War era; presumably it did not require a boarding school and inevitably would face high conversion costs to bring the premises up to the criteria likely to be required if it was to be used for state educational purposes.

In trying to understand the Board's preference, perhaps it has to be accepted that Quakers as a whole have long been ambivalent about independent schools. We had a strong Quaker element on the Board but an underrepresentation of Governors with business experience. One Quaker Governor had said to me a while back that it would be no bad thing if the school closed so that the money could be spent on another cause. The decision by the Board to support the DfE offer was also swayed by the view of the Senior Management Team, who, we were told, would resign *en masse* were another option pursued. As this momentous meeting ended, I received a pat on the arm and an expression of sadness from a Governor who had been sitting on one side of me, and a handshake and comment that 'It was good while it lasted' from my neighbour on the other side.

We had met on this occasion at St Mark's College, Audley End, because of the need for strict confidentiality. I left to consider my future on the Board while others stayed to begin planning governance issues related to the closure. An email arrived afterwards from one Governor informing us that he had mislaid his papers from this meeting – these highly sensitive documents could become dynamite in certain hands and must have done nothing for the frayed nerves already being experienced by many!

My instinct normally would be to try and fight to reverse a bad decision but I concluded fairly quickly that there was little I could realistically achieve now by remaining a Governor. I had joined the Board to help my old school, not to bury it. I would not be able to look people in the street in the eye and pretend to support a decision that I fundamentally disagreed with. The following weekend, as I prepared my resignation email, a message came through to say that another Board member had resigned. Like me, she disagreed profoundly with the closure decision.

I was working away on 10th May 2017 when the announcement of the school's closure came. On my return home to Saffron Walden I heard of the reactions of shock, disbelief, tears, anger and

bewilderment that had met the announcement. Someone had suggested to me when I resigned that the senior management would bear the brunt of the impact arising from the closure. I begged to differ. Staff could, ultimately, obtain new jobs but the pupils' education had been abruptly and unexpectedly discontinued, and it would be difficult for them to obtain comparable schooling elsewhere. The closure of the school would have the greatest impact on the pupils.

It is fair to say that the waves of regret expressed over the school's fate both nearby and further afield far exceeded anything imagined by the Board. I overheard numerous school-related conversations around the town and on the train to London. The Quaker ethos was valued widely by non-Quakers and the end of the school would leave a significant gap in the range of education provision available locally and deprive Saffron Walden and its surrounding community of an institution integral to its identity. For many local people it seemed that the school's buildings and surroundings were a valued part of the town's historic connections with the Quakers.

Knowledge of my connections with the school led to me receiving a lot of emails and phone calls in the wake of the closure announcement. These included enquiries from the media. Contact with one journalist led to me agreeing to speak to a particular parent. This was the start of my association with a remarkable group of people who were keen to set about saving the school from closure.

We arranged to meet and I endeavoured to encourage this parent-led group with their plans. The group's proposals met less favourably with the Governors, who still apparently remained wedded to the unrealistic idea of the DfE acquiring the site and wished the closure to proceed unimpeded. The pre-election purdah that prevented the Government from making any major new announcements had effectively stalled the DfE's progress, however. It gave the parent-led group the opportunity to approach a number of education providers to see whether any would be interested in mounting a bid to keep the school open.

Negotiations with the school and its business advisor, Grant Thornton, proved difficult. The parent-led group lacked essential information and encountered much obfuscation. The Senior Management Team and Governors viewed the group with a great deal of suspicion. There had been some harsh criticism of the school governance and management, with certain comments attributed unfairly to the parent-led group. Some staff also believed it in their best interests to simply accept closure and redundancy. One of the parent-led group, in particular, faced serious animosity and even the threat of legal action. The tensions that existed apparently led to the cancellation of Friends and Families Day on 1st July.

Other members of staff, however, supported our rescue efforts. In fact, a network of informants inside the school fed our group real-time updates – with at least one staff member making clandestine calls to us from the loos! The invaluable information we received helped us to gauge how many pupils and staff might remain should a rescue attempt succeed and, therefore, the continuing viability of our plans. With each day that passed, though, those affected inevitably were making alternatives plans.

An offer to rescue and reinvigorate the school was submitted in June 2017 by the Diagrama Foundation. The intention was not only to inject major new funding to ensure that the number of pupils and staff at the school was sufficient for it to continue in the immediate plus longer term but

also to retain the unique ethos and strengthen links with the local community. Diagrama's offer was accepted in principle.

The Mayor, Deputy Mayor and MP all gave us their encouragement. Various members of the public, though – unaware of the background to date – called for the DfE to intervene by taking over the site. And a representative of the local Labour Party was openly hostile, expressing his 'disgust' at how the negotiations had been conducted and claiming, unhelpfully, that the DfE had been 'gazumped' by Diagrama.

As negotiations dragged on, the parent-led group became increasingly impatient. Diagrama, too, was finding the process frustrating, thought the school's senior management uncooperative and withdrew on 5th July. Soon afterwards, on the 13th, the DfE confirmed it would not be proceeding either. The school, which had closed on 7th July, was placed into administration on the 17th and most of the 135 staff were made redundant.

A smaller group came together to advance an alternative plan to set up a new independent, Quaker-inspired school on the former Walden School site. This group comprised: Charlotte Phillips and Andrew Law (ex- Walden School parents); Richard Smith (a former member of staff); and me. We were convinced a new school on the site would be feasible and met regularly throughout the summer and autumn. A bespoke meeting was held with a number of extra ex-teachers to develop ideas for the curriculum and we were also invited to address the Town Council.

The progressive new school would place 'the whole rounded development of the child at its heart' and cater for pupils aged 3 to 18. The school would also have a strong emphasis on working with the Saffron Walden community to give much greater access to the site for sports, the arts and adult educational activities. Backed by a local investor, the proposals specifically excluded housing on the site. Our new school would be named Gibson House School in acknowledgement of George Stacey Gibson, the Quaker so instrumental in bringing the Friends' School to Saffron Walden in 1879.

We gained widespread backing, not just from many former staff but past Governors, Old Scholars, local Quakers and other members of the Saffron Walden community.

Our bid was submitted in December 2017 to Savills, who was by now marketing the site for the administrators from Grant Thornton. Ours was not the highest offer but after another educational bidder withdrew we received serious consideration. Unfortunately, the administrators' costs had sky-rocketed to unanticipated levels. In the face of this situation, our offer for the site fell through and it was confirmed last month that the vacant premises had been sold to a property speculator. We are, nevertheless, extremely grateful to all those who supported our plans over many months, not least, of course, members of the Old Scholars' Committee.

The past year has been a tremendous rollercoaster of ups and downs. The fact is that more than one entirely credible bid to purchase the school as a going concern was rejected by the Governors last spring in favour of what was, even at that time, merely a tentative offer by the Department for Education to acquire the premises in a vacant state. This weighty and incautious gamble failed: which was sadly ironic, given the abhorrence of many Quakers towards gambling.

The irony is further compounded in that the decision to sell the school and subsequent chain of events leading to the appointment of the administrators last summer was triggered by an inflexible

Barclays Bank; it leaves a somewhat bitter taste in that one of the various banks that amalgamated to create Barclays originally was that owned by the family of the school's principal Victorian benefactor, George Stacey Gibson.

The repercussions of the school's closure rumble on but the premises themselves have lain eerily empty until the recent sale. I will end with a few slides taken during my visits over the past twelve months. To quote Hamlet, 'The rest is silence.'

Questions/Comments:

Judith Foster: "Has there been any threat of legal action against the school for disruption to the pupils' education?"

Douglas Kent replied that he had not heard of anything. There had recently been a letter in the local newspaper stating that the Governors had not filed any accounts for the past year which is illegal so there may be some action as a result of that.

Nigel McTear added that the school was supposed to give a minimum of a term's notice so there could be grounds for legal action but he questioned the likely outcome of any lawsuit.

Another Old Scholar asked: "If George Gibson bequeathed the land and school to the local community to be used for educational purposes how can it not be used for this?"

Tony Watson replied that this was not actually correct. In 1877 a trustee donated the land to the London and Middlesex General Meeting for the land to be used to run a school as long as a school existed. When a school no longer existed trusteeship of the land would revert to the board of governors. The benefit of the trust was transferred to Saffron Walden Meeting and any surplus funds will now go to the (Quaker) Britain Yearly Meeting.

Jeremy Buncombe thanked Douglas Kent for his report and added that he was a trustee of an Italian university which was looking to set up a base within commuting distance of London. They had put in a request to look at the site but never heard anything back from the administrators.

Roger Bush: "What has happened/will happen to the historical items on the site?"

Douglas Kent replied that the grounds are included in the conservation area so the developer has to obtain planning permission to remove or sell fixtures such as the 18th Century Croydon Gate.

Geoffrey Weaver (1948-57): "We have not addressed the central question which is why did parents not want to send their children to the school? If other Quaker schools can be healthy why couldn't Friends' survive? Were the staff lost in complacency?"

This was answered by Chris Spencer who explained that location is key and there are a lot of good schools in the area – private schools in Cambridge and state schools such as Saffron Walden County High. Parents are less likely to pay for their children to go there when the state option is good.

Carey Dickinson: "Having worked for the Independent Schools Association and now as Assistant Head at Stoke College I feel that there is definitely a need for a niche school in this area. The independent schools world is very difficult to fund and in my opinion the management of the school was deeply ignorant to think that the rebranding was going to work and that the Department for Education had money.

How did the governors get there as they were clearly incompetent?"

Douglas Kent replied that there had been a strong governing body but of late it had become dominated by a more inward-looking group of Quakers who were in a particular age bracket (mostly retired). Meetings were often held at times that made it hard for governors of working age to attend. This not only reduced the spread of skills available but narrowed the pool of potential recruits to the Board.' Martin Hugall also replied to say that he taught at the school for 37 years, joining when John Woods was Head, and soon after almost half the pupils were in assisted places which were paid for by the government. The assisted places scheme came to an end in 1997 and it then became very difficult.

The school had been struggling from the 1980s onwards and the decline happened over many years. The school offered a lot of bursaries, hoping that this would attract others but the last head realised that the school was overstretched as there were too many bursaries.

Jess Dickinson (1992-2010) shared a poem that she had written about the closure of the school. See below:

FOR SALE

Affordable housing for the rich
On the grounds of an old Quaker school
New development
Outstanding! Pre-eminent!
We boast energy efficient appliances
Designed by a baffling bachelor in sciences
Stainless steel and chrome throughout
Oh madam, why the cynicism?
We've got high gloss handleless doors
With soft close mechanisms

Outstanding architecture
Innovative design
Dine alfresco
Sip a glass of wine
On your balcony the size of a tea tray

Soft close seated toilets
Heated chrome towel rails
Tap-less taps with tapping mechanisms
Can't work them? Well that's modernism

Each house painted in neutral emulsion
Oh yes and did we forget to mention?
We built on the bones of the school on the hill
Yes we built on the bones of a school

The Quaker school
With a heart that was beating
'til it's burnt out, breathless sighs we're fleeting
'til we stole their grounds and now thy stand

With old knocked knees on a square foot of land

But there are those who remember

There are those who remember the old days
Who now stand stunned and completely amazed
As the ribbon is cut on the steel chrome abodes
Chemically clean kitchens fill the nose
Of a woman

(But once a little girl)
Reminded of the smell of freshly mopped floors and
Running down shiny polished corridors

Her stomach churned for the autumn term
As she danced down the leaf filled avenues

My dear girl, the trees are now but embers

But once they glistened in a new shoed September
Once she learned in wide eyed wonder
Once there were friends who couldn't be fonder
Of one another
Of peace, equality, simplicity and truth
Of freedom

Of hours roaming grassy acres
She couldn't forget those hazy days and
Her heart now ached for the old art gallery
Oh yes, been knocked down
Paid a teacher's salary

She longed for the old, gnarled, wooden desks where she sat
Etching Plath into woodwork
God, she remembers that.

Yes thank you madam
That's all very well
But we've got these new houses to sell
The children are happy on their smaller site
The woman stares, the wind starts to bite

And the children, though they are face to face
Talk through their tablets, play interactive chase
On a piece of grass no bigger than a postage stamp.

Glynn Abrey:" Has the deal with Chase New Homes been completed?"

Douglas Kent replied that as far as he was aware the school had been sold and there must have been plans of some sort that had been encouraged before the deal had been agreed.

Chris Spencer added that as yet there were no plans on the Uttlesford District Council Website.

Gisèle Searle-Barnes: "Can the school building be knocked down?"

Douglas Kent replied that the senior school building was not listed at present but it may be listed shortly. If this happens there will be a degree of protection.

The difference between conservation area status and listing is that the former prevents demolition and protects external features whereas the latter protects both the exterior and interior.'

In a final comment Tony Watson quoted former Head Andy Waters who said that a school is like a stool with three legs – the Bursar, Head and Chair of Governors. If any one of the three wobbles, then the school will fall over.

Douglas Kent shared a collection of slides taken recently since the school closed.

7. REPORT ON THE FUTURE OF THE SCHOOL SITE BY DOUGLAS KENT

(Douglas Kent): My preceding Governor's/former Governor's report this afternoon covered the 22 months from the Old Scholars' Association's most recent AGM in June 2016 up until the announcement last month that the Walden School site had been sold to a property speculator. This report now focuses specifically on issues regarding use of the school site and is given partly from my professional perspective as a chartered building surveyor. You'll be relieved to hear, no doubt, that the current report is much shorter!

Confirmation of the site's sale came in a media release from the administrators' PR firm Genesis on 23rd April 2018. This stated that the former school's land and buildings had been sold to Chase (SW) Ltd, part of the Chase New Homes group based in Hertfordshire. It is understood the intention is to develop the school's grounds for new housing (a figure of 500 homes has been mentioned to an Old Scholar in passing by someone purportedly from Chase Homes). The MP for Saffron Walden stated recently in public that the former Friends' School 'was not a good site for new homes'. I agree, as do a great number of local people.

At least one representative from Cambridge Leadership College (CLC) visited the school on 7th March, the same day as a land buyer for Chase Homes. We do not know, however, whether CLC still has any interest in being involved with the site. Various local sports associations were able to use the facilities until shortly before the sale was announced. It is believed that the developer is in touch with members of the sporting communities in Saffron Walden. Some sports facilities may be provided within the plans for the development of the site, no doubt as a sop to the local community.

The Gibson House School team very much hoped to be able to retain the site for 100% educational use but has been alert all along to the risk posed by a firm bidding to develop all or part of the former Walden School grounds for housing. We have been involved in the initiative locally to increase the statutory protection of the buildings and site by pressing for the Conservation Area to be extended to cover the entire grounds (beyond the section already so designated nearest to Mount Pleasant Road); and we have assisted the Town Council with an application to Historic England for the main building to be listed.

Conservation Area status and listing does not, of course, prevent change but does help deter the most unsympathetic developers from purchasing historic buildings and we had no idea of who was bidding against us. Such designation would also have helped to protect the premises from harmful changes. As far as our own plans for Gibson House School were concerned, Conservation Area status and listing would have benefitted them by acknowledging the quality of the school's architecture and surrounding environment. Should our bid not ultimately succeed, we felt that we would want to ensure the site was protected as much as realistically possible.

We were delighted when Uttlesford District Council decided to extend the Conservation Area to include the entire grounds. A document detailing the representations made to the council during its review of the Conservation Area shows many statements from the public in favour of extending the Conservation Area but only one against: on behalf of Grant Thornton! Conservation Area status imposes a requirement on the developer to apply for planning permission before demolishing any substantial building or structure (including the fine early 18th-century gates within the grounds that came from Croydon, the school's previous location).

Historic England's decision on whether or not the main Victorian building will be listed or not is imminent. Listing would confer a much greater degree of protection than Conservation Area status alone.

My earlier report today ended with silence and despair. In contrast, this report ends with a mood of expectation. I am delighted to share with you the news that plans to establish Gibson House School continue but now with a view to securing a new site somewhere in the vicinity. A day and boarding school with a Quaker ethos, the school would accommodate pupils aged 3-18. The timescale has yet to be determined and there is more work for us to do before any public announcement is made.

There is no question, though, that the Friends' School Saffron Walden Old Scholars' Association would be welcomed into our new school and offered a base from which to continue. The old site has gone but the spirit and intention that Friends'/Walden School held will, and can, endure.

8. REVISION OF THE OSA CONSTITUTION AND RULES

There are some minor changes to the Constitution that in essence involve removing any reference to the school. These were proposed by Jeremy Buncombe and seconded by Roger Bush. Copies of the revised Constitution and Rules were available at the meeting and are also on the OS website.

9. FUTURE OF THE OSA AND ARCHIVES

Nigel McTear stated that the OSA has 2 purposes in the former Constitution: the first to promote fellowship amongst Old Scholars and the second to support the school. The school no longer exists and there will be no new Old Scholars coming through but there is still a lot of goodwill and the OSA still has funds.

Two former Quaker schools – Great Ayton and Wigton – both closed but have active alumni websites and it is hoped that we will be able to keep the OSA going and organise reunions in the future, even though the impact may be lost without a school to hold them in.

The new GDPR regulations come into force on May 23rd so the committee have drafted a privacy notice which will be available on the website. The database that we use for mailshots etc is only on one computer and all information is encrypted so we do not need to make any changes, except that there will be an 'opt-out' option on all future mailshots.

Nigel asked what everyone would like in the future and the consensus seemed to be that some sort of reunion, possibly once a year would be good. This would need a considerable number of people though to make it work and we would have to find a venue as we no longer have the option of the school premises.

Possible options that were suggested included St Marks College in Saffron Walden, Cambridge, London and Birmingham.

John Searle-Barnes suggested that Old Scholars could apply to the OS Committee for funds to organise an event. Nigel McTear said that this had been offered previously but the offer had not been taken up, however it was still an option so we will look to advertise this possibility on the website.

Martin Hugall updated everyone on the archives, the remainder of which will go to the Essex Records Office in the autumn.

10. ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS; APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS AND TRUSTEES: In the Constitution only 3 Officers need to be appointed at the AGM: Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. These are currently Nigel McTear, Andrew McTear and Stef Godfrey. Both Chair and Treasurer were happy to continue in their roles however Stef Godfrey is no longer able to commit as much time to the role of secretary, having taken on another job upon the closure of Walden School and would like to step down as soon as a replacement is able to take over.

We note with sadness that Tony Watson, after many years on the committee, has decided that it is time to retire, but we are very pleased that he is willing to continue as a trustee. Tony has contributed much to the OSA over the years as a trustee, active committee member and archivist. His legal background has been invaluable in advising on the various changes to our constitution and rules over the years.

There are five other Committee members who were confirmed as Douglas Kent, Sarah Westerhuis, Tom Dickinson, Biddy Vousden and Martin Hugall. The Committee had also agreed to co-opt John Searle-Barnes as an additional member.

The above was proposed by Peter Clark and seconded by Sabbie Rawana.

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.

The above was proposed by Carey Dickinson and seconded by Joanne Pearce.

11. AOB: Roger Bush proposed a vote of thanks to Nigel McTear for chairing the meeting. Tony Watson thanked Douglas Kent for his detailed reports.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING: The proposed date of the next AGM is at 2.30pm on Saturday 11th May 2019 at the Friends' Meeting House in Saffron Walden.

The meeting closed with a period of silence.