

Fellow Old Blundellians,

It is once again my pleasure to report on the Old Blundellian Club's activity over the last year, where, working alongside the Foundation Office has been able to deliver directly, or in support, a significant number of development, engagement, social, and awareness occasions.

Before I report on many of these events, I must mark 2 auspicious occasions today. Firstly, with thanks to Cathy Flavelle, school archivist, we now know that the first recorded meeting of the OB Club was 1725. 300 years ago. You will spot today on documents, programmes and name tags the new OB Club logo. Designed to; highlight the longstanding history of the OB Club, formalise the OB Club's brand (away from a faded sign on the outside of the Beale Centre) whilst helping to reiterate the club's ever-important independence from the school.

Secondly, and the more widely known anniversary - we gather on OB Day in 2025 to celebrate 50 years of girls at Blundell's school. In September 1975, Blundell's welcomed its first female pupil, Arabella Ashworth, marking the beginning of a transformative journey towards coeducation. A timeline wall celebrating milestones of Blundell's coeducation journey has been installed in main school. I encourage all to try to visit and appreciate the barriers that women and girls have smashed through over the last 50 years. Additionally, Tom Cowle and his colleagues in the Foundation Office have been busy recording a series of 'Blundell's voices' videos which will be released throughout the year and which have and will highlight a few members of the OB committee - the first of these can be viewed on the dedicated 50 years of girls page on the [school website](#). I am delighted to welcome Arabella back to Blundell's this OB Day to take up the role of President for the day.

The ever-popular Winter Lunches held in the Beale Centre have this year shone a light on a fascinating selection of female speakers. An intentional choice to support this year's celebrations, which will continue from October.

The annual London drinks reception saw a guest list of former pupils, parents and staff spanning over 7 decades. The incredible diversity of age, life and career stories on show at this event never fails to astound, with connections forged and friendships rekindled over stories of years gone by. Once a Blundellian, always a Blundellian.

Despite some OB Sports fixtures being cancelled, those that did go ahead were enjoyed immensely. I encourage OBs, just as you would have in your school days, to give it a go & throw your hat in the ring for these sport events. It is a fantastic opportunity to engage with current pupils, reconnect with your former teammates, and once again play on the fields and pitches on which you grew up.

In what is now a firm fixture in the OB Club's calendar, we hosted the outgoing Year 13 for a quiz, beer and pizza evening to introduce them to the Old Blundellian Club and the work we do. This year was the most successful in memory and was standing room only. Multiple members of the committee, and local OBs joined the fun, with the Beale Centre pushed to capacity with over 45 Year 13s attending. The Beale centre also played host once again to the Senior and Prep School's Senior Leadership Teams for a drinks and canapés reception. This always proves to be a delightful occasion, and one of the only times the two SLTs are able to gather socially. We will again host OB parents and grandparents on Speech Day, with spaces very limited in recent years.

You will, no doubt notice that the Beale Centre has had a rather decent facelift. It is not quite finished, with soft furnishings, furniture, signs and pictures to go back up alongside the redecoration of the Abram room. The space is now more fit for purpose, and able to be used for a wider variety of events. The Beale Centre sub-committee are leading on a checklist of actions to move the space into a 'finished' state.

More OBs than ever are returning to offer their expertise to current pupils, with notable OBs Ben Coen, England U20s rugby, and star of netflix's 'The Crown' Ed McVey both returning recently. But it isn't just those whose names are widely known returning. Recent (and not so

recent) leavers have been back to give careers and futures options talks, providing current pupils with inspiration and information.

There have been multiple reunions enjoyed this year. A reunion held in FH welcomed Old Fransiscans young and slightly less young back to their former house. The 70s and 80s reunion was one of the first events held in the newly refurbished Beal Centre, and September saw the 1974 1st XV rugby team back on big field for a reunion. As always at such reunions, memories, laughter and stories were shared and reminisced over. There were even some classic photos reenacted. An OB catch-up across the globe in New Zealand took place with plans to make it a regular event. Today, in Hong Kong, OBs will gather to mark OB Day from afar and we will raise our glasses knowing they too are celebrating the occasion and remembering their years at school. It is fantastic to see OBs self-organising, and as always, if you want to host a reunion, event or catch-up whether you became an OB in the last year or 80 years you are welcome to ask for our support.

I want to take the opportunity to remember a number of our OB community who have sadly passed away in the last year. Notably the Reverend David Hamer who, for nearly thirty years, David was a cornerstone of life at Blundell's - not only as Chaplain, but as a teacher, mentor, philosopher, and friend to countless students and colleagues. I record our deep sympathies to families and friends of all Old Blundellians lost this year.

I want to thank the Committee for their support and input, remembering this is all done in their own time and done voluntarily. Much of the committee's, and my, focus this year has been investigating and determining how the OB Club should move forward with regards to its structure and formal relationship with the Foundation Office. These conversations are ongoing, and I know the committee has always and will always act in the best interests of Old Blundellians. The committee is full, and the most diverse I have seen it in terms of age and gender, truly representing our OB community.

I especially want to thank Janet, our Club Secretary, for all the hours she puts into making so many of the events mentioned happen, but also for her continued commitment to building and sustaining our community of Old Blundellian. Thanks also to Sue, Jenny and many others who support and give their time at events throughout the year. I thank former heads of school, Georgia Withey and Jack Ramsay for joining the committee this year and for their valued contributions. I thank the ever-patient catering staff, cleaners and porters that ensure our events and building run smoothly. Last but not least, i'd like to note my never-ending gratitude to Tom Cowle for his support not only to me, but to Janet and OBs.

Finally, we note today that OB, former governor and OB committee member Jessica Mannix steps down today from the committee. Jess was the committee's governor liaison for a number of years, a position now held by Anna Crosse, who we have been pleased to welcome to the table. Following Jess' retirement as governor last year, Jess stayed on as a committee member, and has now decided it is time to step down. Jess's contributions to Blundell's have been immeasurable, and I know she will continue to support and champion the school and OB Club in any way she can, despite taking a well-earned rest from holding a formal role.

Katharine Sendell
Chair of the Old Blundellian Club
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