

OB Chairman's Report 2021

Fellow OBs - welcome to the annual general meeting of the Old Blundellian club for 2021. I'm particularly pleased that we have people joining us, in the room and via video links from not only all around the country but planned from around the world.

Before I start and in light of us not being able to enjoy a normal day of celebration, in OB Day - and a chapel service - I want to toast absent friends:

Those who can't be here. Those we have lost and we truly miss.

Those we remember and those who we wish could be here.

All are in our thoughts.

Absent friends.

Over a period when, for many, life has stood still, or at the very least slowed down dramatically, I am delighted to be able to report that in the last 18 months or so, the OB club and its activities has probably been more relevant than anyone could have imagined.

Whilst we would normally judge ourselves on the number of social and sporting activities that take place in a year, during the last period some of the non-social activity and support has been vital for many OBs.

I will cover more of these activities later.

Before I go on any further I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank a number of individuals for their hard work over the last period. Particularly, I would like to thank the committee members, those who continue to serve and also those who have stood down or not stood for re-election. I thank them all for their time, energy, commitment and enthusiasm in supporting the work of the Old Blundellian Club and the committee over a number of years. It is this enthusiasm and commitment that makes a very real difference to the work the committee does on the committee and Club's behalf. Thank you all. I also want to publicly thank Janet Wooff, our secretary, for her particular effectiveness, drive, enthusiasm and cheerfulness over what has been a very testing period. She has shown considerable initiative and has maintained contact with a significant number of people. I want to thank her very much.

In delivering on our stated aim to support the School, the committee, myself and Janet have been working closely with the School, the head, the development office, the community team (through Charlie Olive - himself an OB), the Blundell's Association, the careers and mentoring team and with continued excellent interaction with the governors and the new Chairman, Nigel Hall. With the chairmanship baton effectively and safely passed to Nigel from Cedric Clapp, our work in supporting the governors' intent and strategic vision remains as strong as ever.

If you look at the Impact Report 2019-20 (available on the website), you will see the very practical way we are all working together and keeping all parts of the Blundells's community engaged and busy. The OB club remains a key component of this work, its interactions and delivery.

Back to the OB activities over the last few months and here is a flavour of the range we have supported, delivered or been a key part of:

Telethon Calls. Over 500 calls to OBs and the Blundell's community made in total, including some made by pupils, committee members and staff.

Total minutes 8000, average call duration 16 minutes

Janet made approx. 400 of 500 made.

Including: birthday calls, singing happy birthday (once by 3 OB members of household) and included repeat check-ups. We know these were all highly welcomed and valued.

Tea Parties. Janet used her own garden and local venues for local members of Blundell's community. There is still a demand for these lovely events.

Development Office, Ben Boswell and Janet during Lockdown. Regular online meetings, in person meetings and to send out community letters with help of members of the community (Jenny Park, Dagmar Armstrong). This element has been a key part of supporting each other and keeping people busy and feeling fulfilled.

OB Events. Despite the rules, we took advantage of breaks in the lockdowns and since to foster a significant range of events: Community Touch Rugby, Golf, Ted Crowe Cricket box plans to reopen to OBs and be put back in good use, Fives Tournament for the Reichwald Trophy, first winter lunch (Charlie Olive) with a garden tour and full programme up to Spring 2023. The first of the reinstated year group reunions is also planned for the November. In addition, we are working with Kate Wheatley and the Blundell's Association - where parents (especially OB parents) can take advantage of the sporting and enrichment activities on offer.

Touch Rugby Practice. The Braves will meet regularly in Beale Centre for post-match drinks. New committee member Tom Crowle is to be thanked and has the detail if you want it. Contactless payment to be initiated - so no need to carry cash!

Mentoring. We have been liaising with Pippa Bucknell, in the careers office and updating mentoring the list on the website. Our President has also been looking at post-Uni mentoring and wellbeing/ life coaching opportunities for OBs - again using OBs and informed experts. With DO collaboration we plan to send communication to the OB community to expand the number of mentors available.

But what of further plans for the coming year - it is important at the moment that we look forward and look to revive our social calendar; as well as continue the good work we have been doing.

In addition to this range of good work and building on advice from committee members, we will be using the expertise and knowledge of the recent heads of school, Maddie Cotton and Joe Du'Gay, co-opted onto the Committee, to help us consider the best way to keep OBs at University and other recent leavers involved and planning social events. We encourage OBs to contact us if they want to run OB events at their University or where they live.

We will be running another of our successful induction evenings for year 13 (or in old-fashioned language 'Upper 6'), where Mr Bailey (W housemaster) and ourselves will be putting on a quiz, beer and pizzas for the year 13s and explain about the role and the purposes of the OB club and how they can be a key part of the club and its activities. We also work with the School and Prep School to remind all leavers, in all years that the OB club is their club, not just for senior school leavers.

We also plan to reinstate the always appreciated committee hosting the Schools' senior leadership teams and local governors in the New Year.

And next year we hope to have an OB Day - as we all remember them, but we will be seeking to make it just that extra bit special.

We also plan to work with the School to update the Beale Centre with modern, wireless IT and ensure it is a place where OBs and the School can take advantage of its unique setting and invaluable space.

So on reflection, you can see we've been busy, innovative and relevant and we can now look to the future with optimism and build on everything we've done recently; to continue the important collective and supportive work of the Old Blundellian Club to its members and to the School.

Richard Swarbrick

Old Blundellian Club and Committee chairman

October 2021