

OBC Chairman's AGM Report

Committee members and OBs,

As ever, it gives me great pleasure to be able to give The Chairman's update to the AGM and celebrate the opportunity for us all to get together. No C-words here!

Since we held our AGM in late Autumn last year, you will not be surprised that the Club and Committee has been busy across a number of areas.

The Club, working with the Development Office (run by OB, Ben Boswell), the Community Office (run by OB, Charlie Olive) and the Blundell's Association (run by OB, Kate Wheatley) has been able to deliver directly, or in support, or in collaboration, a number of development, engagement, social and associated occasions. These have been in addition to the ever-popular Winter Lunches and a number of continuingly successful Year-group reunions - always very popular. The recent London Drinks, organised by Ben's team, in Brixton were well attended and allowed a wide age-range of OBs to get together and, no doubt, reinvigorate long standing friendships and forge new ones.

The sports clubs continue to meet and enjoy the comradeship and competitions wherever they take on oppositions. Golf, Touch Rugby, Shooting, Cricket, Tennis, Fives, amongst others, all enjoy good support and a chance for OBs to show skills, tales of excellence and sportsmanship.

Some key areas are worth recording and mentioning in a bit more detail:

We are working closely with The School to update the IT and some key infrastructure in The Beale Centre. The BC is an extremely popular venue, not just for us; and the ability to conduct meetings, interviews, lectures, schooling and even social (sporting and entertainment events) with modern IT is essential. At the same time we will update the decor and the new School Archivist, Cathy Flavelle, is reviewing and will be updating the pictures and portraits, etc. Judicious selection of photos and modern IT should allow us flexibility to show a much wider range of our people and events. We aim to also look at the lighting and make the whole building even more relevant to us and all who benefit from us sharing this fantastic venue and facility.

The OB club has now built on the sponsorships we have awarded sporadically to now set aside a set fund to support up to 3 OBs per year to develop talents and early careers. We have supported sports, arts, music and drama already and we work with the School Heads' of Departments and the applicants to help define where we can add value and in where we can focus the awards. This is all very much in the spirit of the OB Club actively supporting The School's 'Giving Day' fundraising process, which we are supporting.

Over the year we will be continuing to deliver a number of social occasions and we ask OBs to read their emails, The Popham Post and keep checking the website for details and events - your OB Day programme has a list of events and you will see how busy things are. It goes without saying that we really need people to keep their own details updated on the website

and database - the "I haven't heard for ages" followed by "have you moved/changed email address", "Yes", can test even the ever-patient Janet!

I really want to thank the Committee for their support and input and please remember this is all done in their own time and voluntarily. We have a number of sub areas that small groups lead on and whether it's the BC update work, sponsorships, or community areas, all add value and expertise in their own way. The hybrid meetings we hold allows busy people to attend and contribute. As ever, the input of the immediate outgoing Head Girl and Boy adds vital support and input and, this year, Maddy Cotton and Joe de Gay have added real value, their time and informed ideas - ones that we are already putting action. I hope you agree with me that this vital link is really important and we all benefit.

I especially want to thank Janet. Not only has she kept our show successfully on the road for some time, adapting to others' needs, but our boat is rarely in troubled waters, even if others are feeling choppy, gunwale-testing weather. On behalf of the committee, I am very grateful. Mixed metaphors, I know, but appropriate ones. She has, to all extents put today on and done all the key organisation, coordination and preparations. I also want to put on record the invaluable support of Sue Beale and other vital helpers. All their time, to help make the range of activities we seek to deliver happen, is a testament to their dedication. We are blessed.

What of the future?

I have asked Tom Cowle to lead on a strategic review of the Club, it's interactions and interests, including and especially with The School, and to do so across this year. Tom is engaging with a number of people and areas we work closely with and will report in the late Autumn; so that the Committee can review and see where we are, where we may want to be, or where we may need to evolve, and where and how we operate.

In 3 years we will be celebrating a key milestone that few mixed schools can match. We are going to be able to recognise half a century from the first 6th form girl pioneer at School. And we will be able to recognise and celebrate the many, various and important achievements OB girls and ladies have contributed to - at School and across society and, indeed, the globe. I have asked a few appropriate OBs to start thinking about how we might make 2025 a really special occasion and really seize the moment to celebrate. If you have ideas or want to contribute, please let us know. We want this to be an inclusive and memorable occasion and we have so much to feel proud about in this regard.

Today we recognise our President for the day, Leigh and, whilst we should have done this 2 years ago, it is important that we celebrate Leigh (and Ali's and the family's) role and legacy. His 'Everyman' and highly supportive approach to education (let alone his humour and infectious laugh) are tenets OBs will recognise as part of the core ethos of The School and we are delighted that we are able to celebrate his time at Blundell's and the impact he has had on two decades of Blundellians and staff.

I want to mention the new Chair of Governors and Head particularly. Nigel Hall and Bart and I speak regularly and the interaction between the Governors, the School and the OB Club, in

the spirit of mutual cooperation and where the Club has, as its headmark, the well-being of The School, is an enduring feature of our highly effective relationships. Having Jessica on the committee keeps all the discussions up to date and effective - those Grose genes in action!

You will all know that this only a snapshot of our work and I continue to urge all OBs to take advantage of the variety of events on offer and - should you want to get even more involved - we are always open to ideas, suggestions and even a helping hand.

Many thanks.

Richard Swarbrick
OB Committee Chairman
June 2022