

## **OB DAY CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2023**

PLEASE NOTE THIS WAS WRITTEN TO BE DELIVERED AT THE CANCELLED AGM ON OB DAY.

*Our thoughts and prayers remain with those involved and affected by the events in mid-June.*

Fellow Old Blundellians, their better halves and the wider Blundellian community,

It is with great pleasure that I have this last opportunity as your Chairman to report on our activity over the last year and give a snapshot of the year ahead.

The Club, working with the Development Office (run by OB, Ben Boswell), the Community Office (run by OB, Charlie Olive) and the Blundells Association (run by OB, Kate Wheatley), as well as with the Marketing team (Dylan Smart) has been able to deliver directly, or in support, or in collaboration, a significant number of development, engagement, social, awareness and associated occasions. These have been in addition to the ever-popular Winter Lunches, tea and coffee events and a number of continuingly successful Year-group reunions – always very popular. The Spring and Summer Bristol and London Drinks, organised by Ben's team with a clear focus on OBs in Bristol and London (the latter held at Rag Squire's venue in The Department Store, Brixton) were very well attended (7 generations of OBs and partners) and allowed a fabulous get-together and, no doubt, reinvigorated long standing friendships and forged new ones. Even the youngsters were telling tales of yore. Ben and Bart also travelled to Australia to meet with OBs as part of a charm and keep in-touch offensive and the Klinkenbergs to the Far East.

The sports clubs continue to meet and enjoy the comradeship and competitions wherever they take on oppositions. OB Golf flourishes, the weekly and community Touch Rugby, Magpies and the Ladies Shooting club events, Cricket, including spectating from the Ted Crowe Box at Taunton, Tennis, Fives, amongst others, all enjoy good support and a chance for OBs to show skills, share tales of excellence (and injuries) and sportsmanship. This year we used some funds to support young OBs to attend national golf events to represent the OBGC – a gesture that I know was appreciated by the OBGC and our impressive young golfers.

I also want to note the sad passing of a number of our OB community (including former staff) and whilst I will not name anyone, I do record our deep sympathies to families and friends and recognise lives that have been well-lived and influenced, impacted and informed others within and out with our community.

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

We are still working closely with The School to update the IT and some key infrastructure in The Beale Centre. The BC remains an integral and popular venue, not just for us, but for The School 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 the decor and update to the pictures on display will make the place more relevant in the 21st century – truly reflecting our more diverse OB community. Not all photos will go. You can't have a Beale Centre without a photo of CLB.

The OB Club has now built on the sponsorships we have awarded (I mentioned the OB Golf just now) and we have 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 have also supported directly.

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 – a quick email to Janet will ensure your details are correct.

We continue to host the Senior Leadership Team and governors from both Senior and Prep School for drinks and canapés and this January fixture is an important and well-received one in our busy diaries. We host year 13 (Upper 6 in old money) for a quiz and beer/pizza to introduce the OBC in the Spring Term and the recent OB community event in Charlie Olive's delightful community garden was ever popular. During 6 Nations, the bar is opened and this year's final Saturday was noted for its thirstiness. We will again host OB parents and grandparents on Speech Day (an over-subscribed event these days).

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. I want to thank Lauren Mitchell, who stands down today, for her input and dedication. Her passionate views and demands for inclusivity have been vital and I am particularly grateful for her support – we wish her well in her work, new home and forthcoming marriage. 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. More on some of this work in a moment. The hybrid committee 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 we are already set up for next year. I hope you agree with me that this vital link is really important, and we all benefit.

I especially want to thank Janet, Sue, Jenny, Jenny and others who support and give of their time. Janet has continued to contact OBs, made important phone calls to those we know value these calls – especially on birthdays, she has attended memorial and funerals on our behalf, as well as organise the ever-popular Winter Lunches, tea parties and coffee mornings and run the bar at numerous sporting and social events. Our daily links to the DO and other key School areas remains so important, as is the coordination of the use of the BC. In addition, the ever-patient catering staff and cleaners ensure the swan appears to glide gracefully. We remain blessed by all these activities.

What of the future?

Tom Cowle has completed a key strategic review of the Club, its interactions and interests, including and especially with The School. This has informed both a forthcoming review of our Rules (to support greater inclusivity and relevance) as well as inform how we work with the various School development, marketing and community areas. With thanks to Tom and Nick Soul and the team that have worked very diligently on this, The Committee are in the final throes of this vital (if seemingly bureaucratic) work and any changes will be brought to

appropriate attention for consideration. Evolution of our work to support our alumni membership and the School is crucial.

In 18 months' time we will be celebrating a key milestone that few mixed schools can match. As I mentioned last year, we are going to be able to celebrate half a century from the first 6th form girl pioneer at School. We will want to recognise the many, various and important achievements OB girls and ladies have contributed to – at School and across society and, indeed, the years. We are already scoping how this might look and about how we might make 2025 a really special occasion and 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 celebration and we have so much to feel proud about in this regard.

In this regard I am delighted that, subject to approval, as I stand down from 7 years as Chairman, we can welcome Katharine Sendell as our new Chair – which in itself sees the baton handed, in my opinion, to someone who ably and rightly reflects our current OB community and alumni. We also have new committee members to be elected and bring fresh perspectives to our work on your behalf.

Today we welcome and recognise our President for the day, Olivia Pinkney. The day's programme has a précis of her achievements, but I am proud to call her a dear friend (someone who we grew up with in that very long-standing Blundell's way; where families are a part and parcel of teaching, support and campus life). Her policing achievements, senior leadership and influence are of particular significance and as she embarks on her next career (see the notes), we can applaud yet another successful OB. We welcome her and Julian today, and I know she is delighted that the Lesson reader is her old friend Ellie Freeman (née Swarbrick).

I want to mention the Chair of Governors and Head particularly. Nigel Hall and Bart and I can 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 Mannix on the committee is a vital part of those interactions.

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 (September) 2023

**Key Events JLW:** SLT Drinks, OB Sport WE, Parent/G parent Speech Day Lunch, Winter Lunches, coffee mornings, Community Touch Rugby, Reichwald Tournament, Live Six Nations, Tea Parties, Westlake Quiz, OBCC Blundell's Community Open Day, Locals Shooting practice, Committee meetings

**Events JLW attends:** Magpie Spring Lunch, Staff Xmas Lunch, OB events nationally

**DO with JLW involvement:** Regional Drinks Reception, Reunions

**JLW Actions:** Birthday card greetings to key members, attend funerals, occasional phone calls, database updates, correspondence, international interactions, Teams/Zoom calls, first point of contact and secretarial duties.