

THE CHOLMELEIAN SOCIETY
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
128th Annual General Meeting of The Cholmeleian Society
Held remotely at 5 pm. on Tuesday 1st June 2021

1. Welcome RDB

Richard Brewster, OC President, welcomed OCs to the meeting.

The President covered the rules of the meeting, and asked participants to raise their hands to confirm their vote. Questions will come at the end of the reports.

2. Minutes of the 127th Annual General Meeting.

The minutes of the 127th AGM were agreed and approved.

Matters arising will covered in the meeting.

3. Reports and accounts: Rule 8 TF

Tony Friend, the OC Treasurer, presented the income and expenditure account and balance sheet for the year ended 31 December 2020. He covered the voluntary disclosure made about the OC tax status (we do not believe we are a charity, and therefore exempt from some taxation, as was believed to be the case some years ago) and we are awaiting a reply from HMRC.

The Treasurer informed the meeting that the OCBS portfolio has increased from a value at 31 December 2020 of £335,836 to £370,153 as of end of May 2021.

The resolution to adopt the income and expenditure account and balance sheet for the financial year to 31st December 2020 was proposed by Pritpal Singh, seconded by Andy Savva. The resolution was adopted unanimously.

4. To elect Officers: Rule 7a ESC/RDB

The Treasurer kept the chair, to propose extending the President's time in office (Rule 9). The Treasurer stated the precedence for this, in such an unusual period: the Lord Mayor and the President of the MCC have had their term of office extended. This was proposed by Tony Friend, seconded by Nina Sorensen, and accepted by OCs unanimously.

The President then retook the Chair, thanking OCs for his re-election and emphasising his pride at being able to represent such an engaged and diverse society.

The OC Committee play a key role, and three new members have joined the Committee since the last AGM: David Green, Martin Pyrke (who gives his apologies) and Paul Davies. Richard welcomed these OCs and outlined their various responsibilities. The resolution for their election was proposed by Alberto Fraquelli, and seconded by John Zani, and approved unanimously.

The President then informed OCs that Martin Pyrke has agreed to act as Deputy President.

Three members are being re-elected at this meeting. Alberto Fraquelli, Tony Friend and Jon Polledri. The resolution for their re-election was proposed by Adam Benson, and seconded by David Green, and approved unanimously.

The President stated that there are two retiring members: Ruth Khaw, Nick Friend. The President thanked them for the work they had done whilst on the Committee.

5. To receive the following reports.

President's Report

Richard Brewster, The President, delivered his report, after such an extraordinary year.

The President began by offering his sympathy to all those who have lost loved ones during the pandemic, and by thanking OCs in critical worker roles. He welcomed those young OCs who became members of our Society last year and is looking forward to meeting them in person in due course.

The report then covered the engagement OCs have had with the society, despite Covid, and the advances in communications which have been made this year. Lockdown has expedited this – online events and email communications – but this has also brought to light the fact that we need to know ‘who’ is sending which message. The President’s report covered how branding is key to ensure OC communications are easily and recognisably different from the School’s communications, something which became apparent during communications around recent allegations, as will be covered by Bob Rothenberg at the end of the meeting.

The report then covered the workings of the OC committee. 9 OC online events were held and nearly 1,000 OCs and pupils attended. We are keen to build on these in the future, alongside in person events. Many of these have been Business Section events, covered in greater detail in the OCBS report.

After many years, the Society has a new website which is due to be launched in due course. The report also covered the conversion of Highgate Connect to OC connect with the main objective of providing a mentoring service by OCs for OCs, the use of the Highgate LinkedIn page to encourage many more OCs to find each other and the fortnightly themed emails from the Development Office, highlighting OCs in different sectors and different happenings within the Society and the School.

The report then highlighted the fact that the Society’s 2004 Agreement with the School has been updated. This new Co-operation Agreement has now been signed, together with a data sharing agreement that fully reflects the GDPR need to protect members privacy.

It has not been an idle year, and the President then thanked those who had contributed towards this. The level of activity mentioned above would not have been achieved without a massive contribution from very many OCs, especially those on the committee or those who took part in the many on-line events.

The President also extended his thanks to the Development Office, especially Stuart Evans and Emily Clarke, and to the Head, for his work on the Agreement, which respects the OCs self-governing independence but also provides personnel and financial support for the Society to have a sustainable future.

He ended his report by announcing the OC Annual Lunch on 8 October, at Cutlers' Hall and asking all members to save the date.

The Business Section Report

David Green, as chairman of the Business Section said that he and Dein Harry have recently taken over the OCBS and look forward to a more active OCBS post-Covid. This will include the launch of an Accelerator programme, for all OCs – especially younger OCs – to tap into knowledge of other industries; the Mentoring programme and events.

All activities encourage collaboration between older and younger OCs: an open forum. David encouraged all OCs to share ideas and lend their skill sets – the more varied industries and backgrounds the better, with a particular emphasis on tech. David stressed that he is happy for his details to be shared.

The President thanked David for his report

The Sports Section Report

The President introduced Alberto Fraquelli as chairman of the OC Sports Committee and Nina Sorensen, covering OC women's sport. Alberto began by thanking OCs for their participation during a year when activity has been difficult. With the help of the Development Office, many activities have taken place, and he thanked the leaders of individual sports clubs for their connections with their participants. Lockdowns have impeded activity, but July-November and March onwards has seen some amateur sports activity and some great highlights.

Nina Sorensen then covered Netball and Fives:

Netball

- Hannah Rapley appointed Netball Captain in March 2021 and joined the OC Sports Committee
- Entered their first mini league in the spring finishing in 6th position.
- Through constant communication with Steph Pride (Head of Sport at School) and Stuart Evans the netball team has managed to recruit many new 21 – 26 year-olds who have finish university.
- The team will be entering a summer league, playing on their courts in Angel

Fives

- Short return to Fives between mid-August and November 2020, which included Emily Scoones reaching ladies National Final again this year. Joe Marks won 20/21 Men's University (representing UCL) and Marjolaine Briscoe Women's University (representing Oxford)
- Although Fives club has not yet been able to use Highgate courts for practice due to COVID restrictions, the team has been practicing in Mill Hill
- Reached the semi-finals of the Alan Barber Cup

Bank holiday weekend saw the return of the first major tournament (Kinnaird Cup) which saw Jonny Ho reach the semi-final to be played in July and many OCs in attendance.

Alberto then covered the remaining sports:

Football

- OC 2nd XI reached final of DWT cup only to lose 2-0 to Old Albanians
- 1st XI reached quarter final of the Arthur Dunn Cup, after beating Old Radleians 2-1 in the 3rd round.
- OC vets reached quarter final of Vets Cup, with a thrilling 2-1 victory over Charterhouse, only to be knocked out by eventual winners Chigwell in semi-finals.

Golf

- Spring Meeting saw a return to an old OCGS venue Old Fold Manor Golf Club in Barnet on 24th May, despite the poor weather 14 OCs attended.
- Winner of the scratch cup on the day for the fourth time was Mark Walton. Mark Walton partnered with James Lloyd-Davies also won the Foursomes event for the HF Edwards Cup.
- Many events planned for June with 6 days in a row of OC Golf lined up between 11th – 16th.

Cricket

- The OCs continue to field 2 sides in the Hertfordshire league. The start of the season has been plagued by horrific weather throughout May with 90% of fixtures cancelled so far. We hope for a better summer to come.
- On 13th June the OCs have been drawn away to Harrow in the 1st round of this year's Cricketer Cup competition

Alberto then covered an update on Hendon Wood Lane, the OC Sports Club

School governors confirmed in May that the School expects, after giving plenty of consideration and taken professional advice, to proceed on the basis of a new 'state of the art' clubhouse with an extended footprint rather than just a refurbishment. The new plans to be drawn will be submitted to Barnet in due course. Whilst this will mean further period of delay, the School has offered further assistance to the OCs in the interim, with regards to maintaining the pitches and clubhouse. The School's head groundsman Neil Sheppard met with Stuart Evans at HWL recently to assess remedial works required. Furthermore the school has also commissioned a separate report in mid-May from their preferred ground specialists for a comprehensive, extensive programme of work needed for all areas of the ground, albeit this may not be in operation until the assignment of the lease is affected.

The President thanked Alberto and Nina for their full reports

6. Amendments to the Rules and change of name

An amendment and a resolution were proposed:

- a) Approval of the name change, reverting to The Old Cholmeleian Society
- b) Amendment to Rule 7(h) to facilitate video meetings

Members are entitled to attend General Meetings in person, by proxy or to submit a written vote in accordance with the Rules. Attending in person shall include attending by suitable electronic means, such as conference telephone, video conferencing facility or similar communications equipment, which allow all persons participating in the meeting to hear each other.

This resolution was proposed by Hazem Megerisi, seconded by Paul Davies, and approved unanimously.

7. Any Other Business: Rule 7(a) (iv)

One question was submitted to be dealt with at the meeting:

‘Cholmeley Lodge No 1731

Like most Public schools Highgate has a Freemasonry lodge. It is actually the oldest and most senior of all the public Schools.

Cholmeley Lodge would like to introduce and promote Freemasonry to both old boys and old girls of the school.

What can be done for Cholmeley lodge to have a closer relationship with the school

The President replied by saying that he had recently had the pleasure of writing to the Tony Selkus at Cholmeley Lodge in which he had been able to state the Society’s wish to cooperate with the Lodge whenever it was in the interests of both parties to do so. He felt there was not much the Society could say additionally to this.

A question was asked about the declining number of OC Cricket teams and what could be done to encourage more young OCs to play: John Zani explained that we hope Cricket will have a resurgence with the redevelopment of HWL, when pupils and young OCs see the facilities on offer.

8. Coronavirus and school life – update from Adam Pettitt, Head

Adam Pettitt gave an update on school life during the lockdowns: year group bubbles, face masks, contact tracing, distancing from others, one-way systems, virtual assemblies, online chapel and ‘blended learning’ so pupils did not miss out on lessons. Sport continued even if fixtures did not.

11+ and 7+ exams fell between lockdowns, and thus took place. GCSEs and A Levels were cancelled and replaced by Teacher Assessed Grades. Pupils have taken this seriously and marking will be sent off by 18 June.

Year group bubbles continue, which is difficult for the House system.

Lots has been learned: technology plays a crucial role, and some things can be done better remotely. Pupils are now more independent but we now all value our communities more.

Adam echoed the President’s pleasure at the signing of the Agreement, and for the President’s role in agreeing this. The Head looked forward to many more years of positive cooperation.

The President thanked the Head for his kind words and fascinating snap-shot into school life in a Covid-19 world.

9. ASSV – update from Bob Rothenberg, Chairman of Governors

The Chairman agreed with the President that it would be proper to refer to the issues raised on the Everyone's Invited website and expressed his gratitude to Richard for this opportunity to do so. The Chairman thanked Richard and the Committee for the support they have given to the Governing Body and the school in this period.

It is appropriate to signal that this item will be dealing with misogyny, sexual harassment and sexual violence – a 'content warning' to allow anyone who would prefer not to listen to these matters (or any younger children who are in earshot) have a moment to put this part of the meeting on silent.

The Chairman was aware that OCs had received information from the School, and indeed from the Committee itself, and thus did not explain the context of the testimonies of sexual harassment and sexual violence, principally (but not exclusively) against girls and women on the website Everyone's Invited or in the open letter to Highgate's Governors. They are harrowing reading.

The Governors have ultimate responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of all pupils (and staff) and take these responsibilities seriously. As you will know, an independent review, led by Dame Anne Rafferty, a retired Appeal Court Judge, has been commissioned, to investigate the testimonies and the School's safeguarding – processes and culture – over the last ten years; OCs, pupils, parents and staff (current and former) have been invited to make additional submissions; deadline extended to 11 June to do so.

The review is underway; we want the review to be concluded as quickly as possible, but need to allow it time to be done properly and thoroughly; late summer or autumn. The date has not yet been disclosed to us.

The Chairman stressed that we haven't wanted to pre-empt the findings of the report and have deliberately not answered questions in the press, for example: answers will come from the review; The Chairman explained that we felt it critical to acknowledge and to apologise for hurt, and to show in our actions what we will do to find answers and to make changes.

The Chairman explained that we will be implementing its recommendations: the publication of the report will not be the end of our work on sexual harassment and sexual violence, but a marker on a journey which all of us will need to go on.

Parallel to the Independent Review is the work the School has got underway which you may have seen, summarised in the Anti-Sexism and Sexual Violence plan: an emphasis on the re-working of our teaching of personal, social and health education and relationships and sex education (e.g. working in liaison with specialist agencies, using outside speakers, looping in pupil voice to evaluate the effectiveness of these programmes) and on staff training

The Chairman explained that we are increasing the staffing to deliver the plan – an additional Head of Sixth Form (Pastoral), and the invaluable input of our new Diversity and Inclusion Project Officer, Dr Enya Doyle whom some of you will have already heard from or met

We will continue to update you and are very grateful for the interest so many of you have shown and the support you have offered to the School

The Chairman explained that he hopes that the offers of help and support which the School has made will continue to be taken up, and that survivors and their friends will continue to be in touch with us.

These are very difficult issues but we are as Governors utterly committed to ensuring that young people grow up safely and happily.

Conclusion

The President spoke on behalf of the committee to thank the Governing Body and the School for the ways in which this issue has been professionally and thoroughly examined by the School.

The President thanked Bob Rothenberg, fellow OC and Chairman of Governors, for his support of the Society and comfort of knowing that his wise counsel is available if needed.

The President thanked all those OCs for attending the AGM. and thanked all OCs who have participated in the AGM.

Meeting ended at 6:06pm

Honorary Secretary
1 June 2021