



A message from our Chairman

As I enter my second year as Chairman of the OFA I cannot tell what a blast I am having and am looking forward to another fun packed year of OFA Events. I must thank my Committee first off – a tremendous team of people giving up their discretionary time



to deliver on the various activities and societies that they are part of. A BIG thanks must also go out to our President, Headmaster Ian Cooksey, who has been tremendously supportive of the OFA and has attended just about every event we have hosted. Along with Ian my thanks also go out to Donna Connelly who similarly supports us on every event we host and provides a strong umbilical cord between the School and the OFA...I can honestly say that our association with the School is the strongest it has ever been.

With that in mind I must also extend a huge thank you to you all our members who support us in the various events and societies. I have met very many old and new faces in my tenure as Chairman AND hope to meet many more. On that note we would love to see many more of you join us throughout the year and if you feel you could add something or give back something to our wonderful School, just make contact with me and we can make introductions. I might add that we are actively growing our membership and so we would ask you to encourage your School friends to join us as almost all of membership money goes to assist the School in its various project investments. Membership is only £25 per year so please ask your friends to join up via the website.....it is very easy.

Where to begin in my last year.....obviously the Dinner was fantastic success, specially for me as a long time Hornet's fan, as one of my legends Steve Palmer spoke at the Dinner. He was superb and brought back so many great Watford Football Club memories. Please see our secretary's report on the dinner.

Prior to the to Dinner I attended the Business Club event at the RAC in Pall Mall where our guest speaker entertained us with the business world of Porsche – Lotus – Alpine sports cars and how the automotive sector is grappling with EVs for the coming years. It was a superb event, organised brilliantly by Jim Chaudry and was a wonderful evening. If you would like to Network amongst OFs in the setting of the RAC please join us on June 19th where we have another superb guest speaker lined up.

I enjoyed my golf as always and enjoyed both the Spring and Autumn Meetings along with a run of summer matches against our old enemies – Habs and OMTs. To any golfers out there wishing to get involved, I am sure Russ would welcome you along to our Spring Meeting on the 23rd May at the delightful Brickendon Grange GC, reportedly designed by the same architect as Augusta and probably the closest I will ever get to playing Augusta!

I cannot thank Bobby Shome enough for his resurrection of Dragons Den post Covid and the ideas from the teams of boys was simply breathtaking.....your money of £2000 was donated for the best project and we look forward to its implementation. We are always looking for Dragons to assist us and you don't need to invest your own monies.

As a long time amateur thespian, it was a delight for me to attend the School's version of the Wizard of Oz and I was chuffed to bits that we could make a £5000 donation to the School to upgrade the lighting and sound in the James Theatre. In fact I would like to do more to see the plays and events in the theatre prosper because we are one of the few Schools around to have this wonderful facility.

My Chairman's diary is full again of OF events already so please hunt me down to say hello when you come along to the next event, be that Business Club, Golf, Dragons Den, Annual Dinner or School event and we can catch up properly.

Thanks again for all the support I get from my Committee Team and look forward to speaking with you again in the Autumn Newsletter.

Tim Constable

From our Treasurer.

In my role as Treasurer, it is incumbent upon me to ensure the Association's funds are properly managed and used to the best of their, and my (!), ability. One of the main aims and purposes of the OFA is to further the interests of The School by giving it every assistance - and this is something I feel that the Association and I have done successfully over recent years (and consequently I have hit my marks too as Treasurer!).

The Association's only real source of income is membership subscriptions and so you, as Members, are vitally important to ensure the OFA can continue to assist the School financially. Since I have been Treasurer, the OFA has donated more than £53,000 to the School across a wide range of initiatives such as:

- £6,600 - Dragons' Dens;
- £3,100 - Sports Tours;
- £2,000 - Scrum machine;
- £9,000 - Chairs for the Main Hall;
- £5,000 - STEM Centre;
- £4,500 - Sports Development Appeal;
- £7,500 - Minibus;
- £3,000 - Production of "Oliver";
- £5,000 - Refurbishment of The James Theatre.

And, none of this would have been possible without your membership and support - so thank you and please do spread the word!

In addition to the above, and looking forward to 2024, the OFA will be making further Donations of £2,500 for this year's Dragons' Den and at least £2,000 for the purchase of much needed trestle tables which will also be used at our flagship event, the OFA Annual Dinner (OFAD), held in the School Hall in January each year.

That leads me nicely on to OFAD25 to be held on Saturday 11 January 2025 and, as the liaison officer for this event, it is crucial we have all the right elements in place. These include caterers, bar and, of course, a Guest Speaker. Our catering partners, Preece Burditt, are tried and tested and provide an amazing four course meal, Fullerians Rugby Club are our partner for running the bar (and do a superb job too) and I am delighted to say that, consequently, recent Dinners have been huge successes. This has been augmented by our Guest Speakers with Luther Blissett DL OBE, Mark Ramprakash MBE and Steve Palmer (former Watford FC legend) all enthraling us with their speeches and, with the addition of a Q&A session at the end of the speech, the event has proved more popular than ever. Another top-quality Guest Speaker is waiting in the wings for OFAD25 (more details to follow in due course) so remember to save the date and purchase your tickets as soon as possible.

With my best wishes
Michael Groves

From our Secretary

My report for OFA AGM 131 covering the period 22nd March 2023 to 20th March 2024 summarises many of the items in this newsletter and can be accessed via the members' area of our website.

OFA Annual Dinner

We felt the 2024 Annual Dinner, held on Saturday 13th January, was one of our best and this seems to have been born out by the very generous feedback we received from a number of attendees.

Whilst the evening retains its traditional feel there has been an effort to streamline proceedings to allow more time for those attending to spend time with each other and renew acquaintances from across the school years.

The sporting theme set in the two previous Dinners (Guest Speakers Luther Blissett and Mark Ramprakash) continued with the Watford Football Club legend Steve Palmer providing the keynote speech.

The traditional feel to the evening is retained with contributions from the Headmaster, School sports captains and the OFA Chairman. The MC keeps the event moving and introduces a number of toasts identifying significant groups amongst those attending. The bar, again provided by Fullerians RFC continued the excellent service seen in 2021 and 2022.

I will not sing the OFA's own praises, too much, but acknowledge its efforts in providing a team to drive, plan and deliver an entertaining evening. I should, however, like to highlight the contributions of the following:



1. The former Watford FC player (1995 to 2001), Steve Palmer, who entertained us with his thoughts on football at Watford and the wider professional environment. This was followed by a stimulating Q&A session chaired by OF and arch Watford fan, Geoff Wicken. Steve is the only contemporary player to have graduated from Cambridge university, and Geoff, himself a Cambridge University graduate, is a renowned "statto" about all things Watford FC;
2. the Headmaster for allowing us to use the School Hall and adjoining classrooms and providing an update on the schools development and achievements in the past year;
3. Donna Connolly (External Relations & Fundraising at WBGs) and the School's admin team for supporting us and liaising with the OFA team;
4. The Site team at the school led by Mr Shaun Ditchfield who set up the tables, facilitated deliveries of bar and catering supplies and then worked late in the night to put the hall back ready for use the following morning;
- 5 Fullerians Rugby Club who provided an excellent bar. As my son observed "it just ran, it was seamless". Thanks are owed to Malcolm Harrison the Rugby Club Chairman, an OF himself, and his team;
- 6 The caterers, Preece Burditt, who do a great job setting up from scratch in a classroom adjoining the hall and providing an appetising meal to the assembled throng.

Mike England

School Matters - from our President

Greetings Old Fullerians!

I was delighted to once again begin the new year, and start 2024 in style, at the OFA Annual Dinner. The event is now embedded in the school calendar and it is always a pleasure to see Old Boys gather, reminisce and see the embodiment of our School's rich history via its alumni. Events such as the Annual Dinner are a crucial part of helping forge a positive network with Old Fullerians and I am most appreciative of the time and dedication from the OFA Committee in ensuring its continual success.

performances, truly made this production a resounding success.

I am delighted to announce my gratitude to the Old Fullerians Association for their generous contribution of £5,000 towards the James Theatre. Thanks to their support, we surpassed a fundraising target of £25,000 for Drama, enabling us to implement crucial technical improvements for the benefit of our entire school community. This tangible demonstration of support underscores the impact of alumni involvement on the enhancement of our facilities and programmes.



In the weeks leading up to the February half-term, our school was alive with energy and enthusiasm as we presented our spectacular production of *The Wizard of Oz* in the James Theatre. This production, with a shared cast from Watford Grammar School for Girls, showcased the incredible talent of our students, resulting in four sold-out shows and rave reviews. Mr. Champion, our Dramatist-in-Residence (who has recently been appointed Head of Theatre and is also an Old Fullarian himself), alongside Mr. Mehta, provided exceptional direction and dedication to excellence. The tireless efforts of our students, evident in their outstanding

The stage of the James Theatre was brought to life once again in February, this time with Old Fullerians. The much-awaited '*OFA Dragon's Den*' event unfolded, showcasing the creativity and ingenuity of our Year 10 students. The event offers a platform for students to pitch their innovative ideas aimed at enhancing our school environment. Much more than just a competition; it was a celebration of innovation,

teamwork and the spirit of giving back. Thank you again to the OFA, particularly Bobby Shome for helping bring this event to life and for the OFA's generous £2,000 donation which will bring the winning pitch to fruition.

A standout event from the recent term was our highly successful inaugural Futures Fair, held in the STEM Centre. With an impressive lineup of over 40 exhibitors, with representatives including industry giants such as IBM, Tesco, and the NHS, alongside educational institutions such as Imperial College London and the University of Birmingham.

School matters continued

The fair provided invaluable opportunities for our students in years 9 to 13 to explore potential career paths and further education prospects. Organised by Mr Horner, our Head of Upper Sixth, along with Mrs Bertram Pastoral Lead of Sixth Form and Mrs Groves, Assistant Head, their meticulous planning ensured the success of this enriching event.

Across all departments, our school continues to buzz with activity, with students engaging in a diverse range of educational experiences beyond the classroom. From adventurous hiking expeditions to immersive language trips, our curriculum endeavours to inspire curiosity and develop character. Trips and excursions this term have been plentiful, with our boys embarking on exciting excursions, including skiing expeditions to the USA and the Italian Dolomites, a tennis tour in Portugal, Classics Trip to Italy and

coming up in May, a trip to Dallas, Texas by our VEX Robotics team. This is a notable achievement by two groups of students, led by our Technology and Innovation Lead Dr Hedges, who have fought competition from some of the best schools in the UK to secure a place at the Robotics World Championships.

The continued engagement with alumni, especially thanks to opportunities facilitated by the OFA, is an asset to the School. I am confident that the spirit of excellence and exploration that defines our school lives on in our alumni and is a key part of celebrating Watford Grammar School for Boys' history and ensuring its continual success in the future.

Ian Cooksey

From our Vice Chairman

Happy spring all. I'm sure like me you're craving the longer days and balmy evenings. The engagement with our alumni network continues to grow with over 1,500 members on Linked-In getting early awareness of OFA events and a chance to reminisce on previous ones. For our recent joiners, the OFA social networks are there to be leveraged, so please use them to engage with old boys in your industry area. They can be a great source of guidance and potentially open some doors for you which may have previously felt shut.

On a personal note, it was wonderful to be a judging dragon at the Dragons Den event. The calibre of entries from the boys was superb. After being struck down with illness and missing the '24 Annual Dinner, I'm thoroughly looking forward to attending the '25 event on the 11th January next year and MC'ing for our illustrious chairman, Tim. In the meantime I hope to attend an OFA Business Club dinner during the summer and see some of you there.

All the best,
Rob Hiscocks

OFA Dragons' Den Returns for 2024

It was fantastic to re launch the OFA Dragons' Den in 2024 after a few absent years.

This year's event was held at the James Theatre on 16th Feb with 4 final teams from year 10 presenting their ideas to improve the school from a list of over 20 idea submissions to win £2,000 from the OFA for their idea to be implemented.

The scene was set with the Dragons Den music and iconic seats projected to the theatre screen (many thanks to Yassir Sultan for setting up the IT needed for this event).

The finalists' ideas were a Zen garden that would be a place for students to be able to contemplate and improve their mental well being, A futuristic Idesk that had inbuilt computers to allow students to work during lessons, Improvements to the library process by introducing a scanning mechanism / website to allow students to view what books were available in the library; and an App for mental well being for students to be able to connect with other students.

All the finalists had 10 minutes each to impress the dragons with their idea. They had to present a compelling reason for their idea, the benefits it would achieve and how they would be able to fully fund it with the prize money.

All four finalists gave excellent and well thought out pitches which made for a difficult decision for the dragons. But the dragons were unanimous in voting for the **"Library website team"** comprising Sidney Spinage, Jaanav Dhanasekaran, Lokan Bavisi, Eevan Pennant-Shah.

What stood out for the dragons was they way the team explained the problem statement by conducting video interviews with the Librarian Mrs Waterman and students which was included as part of their pitch.



Ian Cooksey who has been fully supportive of the OFA Dragons' Den said a few words on how this initiative helps developing skills needed in future working lives of the students and our Chairman Tim

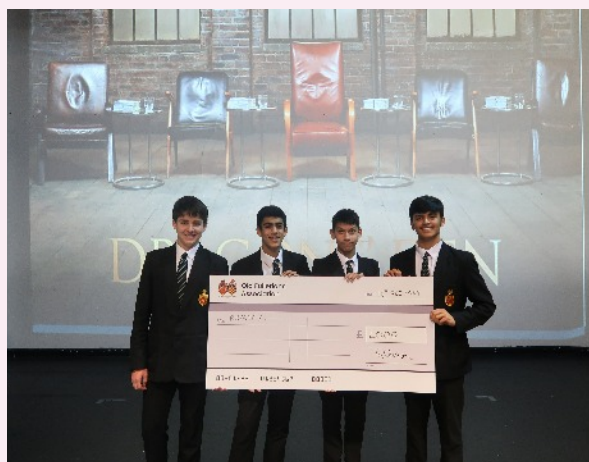
Constable presented the cheque to the winning team and talked about the vital role the OFA plays for students once they leave Watford Grammar School for Boys.

Many thanks to Baljit Bains, head of year 10 for planning this with the OFA and getting all the entries collated and overseeing the presentation process. Thanks also to Donna Connolly, external relations & fundraising coordinator to help get this initiative back into the school calendar.

My final thanks are to the OFA dragons, Tim Constable, Mike England, Rob Hiscocks and Russell Deane for asking great questions and encouraging the teams during their pitches.

The OFA are committed to run this fabulous initiative again next year.

Bobby Shome



From our Registrar and Webmaster

Currently we have 391 members. Of these 68 are Life Members and four are Honorary Members who all pay no subscription. The year 2023 saw two applications from prospective members from the current school leavers and twelve applications with leaving dates from 1967 to 2021. So far in 2024 we have had two applications for membership. Since the start of 2023, eight members were reported as having died, and one member resigned. He said that he did not wish to remain a member at present but might rejoin at a later date!

I notice that our Vice Chairman refers to over 1500 members on linked-in. It's a pity that they are not all members of the OFA. That would even allow us to reduce our annual subscription!

There are two problems regarding subscriptions. The first is that new members are tardy in setting up their subscription payments. We have eleven members who have paid no subscription and eight who have made only one payment. Three of these paid via the web.

The second problem is that although we increased our subscription rate from £15 to £25, active for existing members from 2023, 124 members are still paying £15. Of these 63 have provided neither an email address nor a telephone number.

The 69 who have email addresses have been contacted and four responded. The remainder will be contacted yet again. If you are one of these, please update your subscription and also make up the arrears.

A further 17 banker's orders have failed or been terminated without any communication from the member, making a total of 37 in the last three years

To summarise, during the year we gained 12 members, we had eight deaths and one resignation giving a total gain of three. However we may have 28 to strike off for non payment giving a total loss of 25.

Currently we have 235 valid email addresses and 108 valid postal addresses with no email. If you think that I do not have your email address, please send a short email to: **registrar@oldfullerians.org.uk** so that we may add you to the list. Remember also to let us know if you change your email address. Currently three members' email addresses have failed.

The website has been running for over three years on the new host. All of our recent membership applications have come via the website. Reports from the Golf Society and the Business Club can be seen there. Unfortunately we have no reports these days from the football club.

We have a members area which holds a list of members, committee information, a "Memoirs & Reflections" section and a shop with ties and hopefully further items at some stage. Documentation for the AGMs and subscription information can be found there.

We would welcome any interesting material from members for either the members' area or the general area as preferred. Note that so if you have anything please send it to the registrar (email address as above).

We have provided facilities on the website which allow members to settle arrears or to set up regular payments of subscriptions although banker's orders remain the preferred method.

Peter Holden

Golf Society

Dear **OFGS** members, we are looking forward to the golfing season ahead so please see the fixtures for 2024 below.

10 th May - Past Captains Evening	Aldenham GC
23 rd May - Spring Meeting	Brickendon GC
21 st June - Quadrangular Cup	Hammonds End
4 th July - Centurion Cup	Centurion Golf Club
10 th July - P.Ausden Cup	West Herts GC
13 th Sept. - Autumn Meeting	West Herts GC

We start the season with the fun meeting of OFGS Past Captains at Aldenham GC on the 10th May.



Captain Dave 'Rod' Rogers is looking forward to welcoming four ball teams to the lovely Brickendon Grange Golf Course in Hertfordshire

Rod has been a great supporter of the OFGS over many years and is seen here on his left in this photo, taking over captaincy from Steve Shannon in '23 who in '22 had taken over from Mark Pattinson. All three had been in the same school year at WBGS.

Rod is also the President of West Herts Golf Club and gives over a tremendous amount of his free time to the smooth running of the Golf Club.

This year Liam Meredith and Bradley Ausden have joined me in organising our golf fixtures and this will ensure that the Golf Society continues to grow and prosper for many years to come.....they are doing a great job.

Next year will be the OFGS's 60th anniversary and we are planning a BIG year to celebrate this milestone. *Watch this space.*

We are always keen to meet OF's and guests who would like to join our merry golfing band and if you would like to play in any of the golf events please get in touch:

– Meredith, L <MeredithL@watfordboys.org>; Brad Ausden <bradley_ausden@hotmail.com>; Russelld@srdtechnical.com



Russ Deane

The OFA Business Club.

The OFA has now run two very successful and well attended BC dinners at the RAC on Pall Mall with 25 and 22 attendees respectively on the July and Nov dates.

The format has been based around guest speakers (Edward Stringer RAF in July and Nicola Burnside Alpine Cars in November) who as senior leaders, spoke about their industry sectors and their areas of interest, and provoked thought and debate.



Our next BC dinner is scheduled for June 19th once again at the RAC when our guest speaker will be Matt Bird the Founder and Chief Executive of PublishU, a company that is transforming the publishing world.

Matt is a professional speaker and book coach, enabling hundreds of people to write and publish their books to a global audience each year.

Kind regards
Jim Chaudry

The Old Fullerian Masonic Lodge No. 4698.

On Friday 12th April, Father David Eugene Stevenson will be installed in the Chair of King Solomon and become the Worshipful Master of the Lodge in our 99th year. Father David is the Rector of St James' Church in Bushey, the resting place of our Foundress Dame Elizabeth Fuller.

We have meetings scheduled for the second Fridays in October, November and February (2025). As always, I am happy to discuss all aspects of our activities in confidence.

Mark Pattinson
Past Master, Old Fullerian Lodge.