



OLD CATERHAMIAN'S  
ASSOCIATION

## **OLD CATERHAMIAN'S ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**Monday 1 March 2021**

### **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

What a year. Or perhaps more appropriately....What? A Year? 12 months since our last AGM and time seems to have speeded up and slowed down simultaneously. In some ways it is difficult to believe that we are a year on and in others almost impossible to comprehend that it is only 12 months since we went into the first lockdown.

Whilst this has been a year like no other, I am delighted to report that your Association has been far from inactive and has continued to drive forward with as many initiatives as we could deliver, both on our own and in conjunction with the School and the wider Caterham Community.

We are continuously looking for ways in which we can focus the skills and experience of the OCA to benefit pupils.

A key development initiated by the OCA (more specifically Karin Schulte – Vice President) this year, is the inception of a Shadow Board. The role of the Shadow Board is to provide advice and guidance to the Board of Trustees on topics from a future-focused perspective as selected by the Trustee Board.

Drawn from OCs under 30 and reporting directly to the Trustee Board, members of the Shadow Board will benefit from the School's vision and commitment to 'an education for life', by receiving continuous professional development opportunities on corporate governance, organisational decision making and leadership experience, whilst delivering real input to the future direction of the School.

The selection process was overseen by the Trustee Board and included the OCA President and both OCA Vice-Presidents and has resulted in a Shadow Board with 10 outstanding members.

This is such a forward-thinking approach that will have long-term benefits not just for those involved but, primarily, the School. It has also highlighted the benefits of the Trustee Board and the OCA Committee working closely together – something that we would like to ensure happens on a regular basis.

We are looking forward to working alongside the Shadow Board and to benefitting from their fresh and creative approach.

The Innovation and Collaboration Prize is now in its 3<sup>rd</sup> year. The winners last year astounded the judges with their submission and were truly deserving of the prize. The resultant software platform will be utilised by the School to help assess where pupils would like charitable donations to be focused through the application of sophisticated analytics in Natural Language Processing indicating the charities most likely to be supported by the person writing the text. The OCA is continuing to mentor the winners as they look to develop commercial applications for the technology.

The digitisation of the school records has moved on significantly since last year. Our archivist Colin Bagnall has continued to lead this critical project which has left us with one of the richest and most impressive digital archives of any school in the country. I urge everyone to visit <https://www.caterhamschoolarchive.co.uk/> to look at the wealth of history that our school can justly be proud of and would like to thank Colin for driving this forward so successfully.

It is particularly gratifying that the advent of the digital archive has been the catalyst for young minds within the School, with the Junior History Society delivering two outstanding research pieces on William Wilberforce and John Townsend in the first two months of 2021 alone. This is just the sort of initiative that we had hoped the archive would promote and we are actively looking at how we can support their research now and in the future.

The OCA desire to provide insight and opportunity to the community by leveraging our collective experience and skills has been evident in the Caterham Connected webinar series. Although not run by the OCA, OCs have featured heavily in subjects covered, ranging from the arts/drama to sports and international politics. More of these outstanding webinars are planned and, from first-hand experience, if you miss them you have missed out as the content, candour and opportunity to learn has been first-class.

The eagle eyed of you will have noted that OMNIA appears to grow in size every time it hits the doormat. The wealth of content and the eagerness of OCs to contribute is most welcome and we know from the feedback we receive that it is a popular publication. My thanks go to Annie Hebden for masterminding all aspects of the production of OMNIA and bringing it all together – productions of this magnitude simply do not ‘just happen’ – and we can all look forward to learning more about the fascinating and diverse lives that our peers have carved out for themselves.

Like many from the Caterham Community, we took part in (and on occasion the OCA provided prizes for) the excellent quizzes, masterminded by resident quiz master, Nick Crombie. These regular events have become essential Saturday night entertainment and, I suspect, will be resurrected from time to time as well as entering into Caterham folk lore, to be spoken of in hushed tones in decades to come!

Our sports and social calendar has been something of a casualty of the pandemic, as much of what we had hoped to do had to be cancelled (or at least postponed). That said, we did manage to hold a lively over 60s wine tasting reunion on Zoom in December – run by OC Charlie Waud of Waud Wines. This was extremely successful and we are working on what our next themed reunion should be!

Please rest assured that we intend to reinstate face-to-face reunions just as soon as we can do so legally and safely. With that in mind, a date for your diaries is Saturday

11 September 2021 when we will be holding an informal OCA BBQ at the School for no other reason than we can! More details to follow...

OC sport remains an area where the Committee would like to do more in terms of development. The Sports Club remains strong – if a little frustrated at truncated and patchy seasons for all sport. I should like to thank Bill Broadhead for his support and dedication to the club.

The Old Caterhamians Golfing Society also continues to flourish and whilst they too have been forced to cancel events, the numbers of golfers that they are attracting when they can hold them – particularly from the sub-30 age group - is really encouraging.

In order to develop OC sport as an opportunity for greater inclusion and development, I am delighted to announce that Andrew Patterson has agreed to take up the new honorary post on the OCA Committee of OCA Sports Development Officer with immediate effect. Andrew is a teacher at the school and so will be familiar to many of you. The role is in the title to be honest – we want to encourage and develop OC sport (in whatever guise that takes) and having a dedicated role on the Committee will ensure that we can focus on and achieve this goal.

So that rounds things up for another year. My thanks to; my Vice-Presidents Karin Schulte and Mark Mear, whose input, enthusiasm and 'getting things done' has been exceptional; our treasurer Paul Sharp who does a fantastic job of quietly keeping enthusiasm from becoming exuberance and to the entire committee for their time and service to the OC community.

Without the support provided by the School, we would struggle to get so much done and my heartfelt thanks to our Headmaster, Ceri Jones for his support and wise counsel.

Annie Hebden – our Alumni Officer- is adept at getting things done and we simply could not function without her. Huge thanks also to Hannah Graydon and Emma Collings who attend the executive team and committee meetings and who play such a vital role in ensuring that the OCA plays such an important part in the life of the School. We are very lucky to be working with all of you.

And finally, thanks to all the OCs who 'get involved'. We love hearing from you and we want to create a closer and more vibrant alumni network – so if you have ideas for how we can or should do that please let us know.

Clive Furness

1<sup>st</sup> March 2021