

## The Old Alfredians' Club Summer Dinner & AGM 2019 MINUTES

The President welcomed all to the dinner in the new Dining Hall on Centre site. Mike Haddrell said grace before a splendid buffet dinner provided by the school catering team.

After dinner Des Williams recalled Simon Gordon Walker, Peter Clipsham and staff member John Bateman who, sadly, have recently passed away before we stood in silent memory. A number of Simon's contemporaries during Des's tenure as Head of The Boarding House were in attendance. Mike Haddrell proposed the Penney Toast to absent friends.

Jon Smart, Deputy Headteacher, accompanied at the dinner by Assistant Headteacher Sarah Martin gave the Report from The School and proposed the Toast to The Alfredians. Jon Smart welcomed the chance once again to reconnect with The Alfredians and so much school history, referring to the 30 or so who had toured the old boarding house and the new creative arts and science buildings before dinner. He passed on apologies from Headteacher Rick Holroyd who was unavoidably absent because of family circumstances. Three hundred Year 11 students had attended the Leavers' Ball the previous day and five of the departing Year 13 students have offers from Oxford or Cambridge. Jon paid tribute to the staff of King Alfred's and all their work with 1600 students, engagement with the local community and responses to the Action Plan which has been steering the progress of King Alfred's since the last OFSTED Inspection. 275 pupils will be joining Year 7 in September and "Open School" induction events for prospective joiners have been taking place recently. Expectations are high for good Year 11 results with the prospect of outstanding scores for Year 13. The Three To Two Building work concludes in July this year and the refurbished and developed Sixth Form Building will be open for business in September, accommodating 350 students. The weather unfortunately put paid to the annual Ridgeway Charity sponsored Walk, but individual and team sporting events, educational visits and The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme continue to engage large numbers of students. Over 75% of KAs students see the DoE through to an award in comparison with the national average of 55%. There are currently 106 on The Bronze Award, 131 preparing for silver and over 80 Gold Award students. 1070 students have been on educational visits, including to The Brecon Beacons, Barcelona, Morocco, The Alps and the USA. The U16 Basketball team have won the County Championships for the fifth consecutive year and the U13 Girls soccer team made the last 64 nationally. A total of 281 team sports fixtures have been completed over the academic year. The school production of "In The Heights" sold out three evenings and two matinees with large numbers involved backstage and on stage, acting and playing music, reflecting the schools enduring high standards in the performing arts.

Stephen Mears, outgoing President responded with customary humour and two recitations (see below) recalling times past. He alluded to the boarders present with the observation that day boys had little understanding of the lives they led beyond the fact that they didn't go home to watch Scooby Doo. The Minutes of the 2018 AGM, previously circulated and tabled were accepted on the proposal of Andrew Mathewson, seconded by Paul East. Stephen Smith gave the Treasurer's Report which was accepted on the proposal of David Mabbett, seconded by Paul East. The Vote of Thanks was given by Steve Mears and after a collection from those present Mike Haddrell passed on our grateful thanks to Claire Green and her team.

Steve Mears passed the Presidential Chain of office to Neil Doody who left King Alfred's sixty one years ago and who will, for the third occasion, serve as President for two years, as is now the practice, until July 2021. "Thank you all for the honour of electing me as president of Old Alfredian's for the third time in 42 years. I am delighted to receive this honour on behalf of all former pupils of the school which I attended in the fifties. At the November dinner I will introduce those far off days and look ahead to the fine institution we see today here at King Alfred's School. But tonight is the stage for immediate past president Steve Mears and to thank him and acknowledge his presidency and all it has stood for. It is fitting also that we have here tonight past presidents of recent years - Dan Ross, Des Williams and Mike Haddrell. So I thank you all and of course all Alfredians including the excellent gathering tonight. Your attendance is fitting tribute to our determination to continue as an enjoyable and important function for we former pupils at the school. Tonight as I assume the presidency I can give the toast to King Alfred's School. We are pleased to see here tonight Jon Smart – deputy headteacher and Sarah Martin – assistant head teacher. I ask them to give our very best wishes to head teacher Rick Holroyd and to all at the school. Many of us appreciated the tour of the school before this dinner and for me to tour the building called "The annexe" where I was a boarder 66 years ago when I arrived in 1953!! I take great pleasure in proposing the health of the school. It has a remarkable history with the dates of 1434 and 1597 indelibly on the records. We cannot go back to 849 when King Alfred was born here in Wantage but can be comforted that he reformed education and religion with Old English and Latin so is with justification titled "Alfred the Great". With real pleasure I ask you all to raise your glasses to King Alfred's School Wantage."

Mike Haddrell asked that any Alfredian's wishing to be considered for the post of President Elect make themselves known to The Committee. There being no nominations for new members, the Committee was re-elected en bloc on the proposal of Andrew Mathewson, seconded by Paul East. (Sec. & Archivist M. Haddrell, President Elect Vacant, Treas. S. Smith, Auditor G. Holliday, Membership Secretary R. Taylor. Committee: D. Gibbons, G Mabbett, D Ross, N Doody, Marcus Haddrell, Andrew Mathewson.) Members who wish to stand down and Alfredians who wish to join should contact Mike Haddrell. Paul East reported on another successful weekend of golf and presented the trophy to Des Williams. For next year there might be the opportunity to spice up the contest with an invitation to participate to the staff of King Alfred's. The next dinners will be on **November 23rd 2019** [PLEASE NOTE NOT, ON THIS OCCASION, "THE LAST SATURDAY IN NOVEMBER") and **July 4th 2020**.

**The Summer Dinner 2019 was attended by** M Stevenson 1943-48, J Haddrell 1943-48, R Overall 1944-48, D Harrison 1944-50, A Lines 1944-50, R Harris 1952-58, N Doody 1953-58, R Kearvell 1953-59, W Downs 1953-60, J Nichol 1954-59, J Wilkins 1954-59, J Moland 1954-59, D Williams 1957-65, A Downs 1958-62, A Snowdon 1964-71, I Mitchell 1965-72, P East 1965-72, N Wain 1966-72, G Chippendale 1967-74, D Ross 1968-71, N Mercer

1968-73, R Martin Guest, A Mathewson 1969-76, S Smith 1969-76, M Haddrell 1969-76, C Haddrell Guest, J Brett 1969-76, D Mabbett 1969-76, S Mears 1970-77, G Stainer 1972-5, K Stainer Guest, D Edbrooke-Stainer 1973-5, R Edbrooke-Stainer Guest, N Bennet 1973-78, Mark Tooze 1973-78, Julian Smith 1973-80, S Blore 1973-80, Sue Smith Guest, A Punter 1973-80, Rory Howlett 1973-80, F Bower 1963-72, M Rolph Guest, S Smith 1976-81, I Begg 1976-83, P Begg 1977-83, N Phillips 1977-84, S Martin Assistant Head, J Smart Deputy Head. **Apologies were received from:** R Holroyd Headteacher, J Holroyd, G Wall 1943-46, P Clare 1947-52, D Robson 1948-53, R Evans 1949-54, F Moland 1958-63, C Denney 1965-72, D ichardson 1964-72, I Greensmith 1965-72, P Nias 1968-75, G Keene 1968-75, M Hainge 1968-75, N Dunn 1969-76, S Trinder 1971-78, R Taylor 1976-83, M Haddrell 1994-01, L Martin (Haddrell) 1996-03, P Moren, J Weir.

### **'Skinbird' by Graham Fellows**

Forgive me, young lady,  
For prying into your world  
When I went to the car boot sale I was looking for a record  
Sandwiched between Free, and the Partridge Family,  
I saw a faded notebook,  
The diary of a skinbird.  
Just to have a quick peek, that was my intention  
But '75 came back to me, with everything you'd mention.  
The runaway tube train, the heiress in the drain,  
The day you wore your platform shoes for school, and got detention.  
January's cold and February bitter  
Her folks don't understand, none of her clothes will fit her  
She's become a baby sitter  
One night she bought ten cigarettes, cut her hair short,  
She wants to be a skinbird.  
Forgive me, young lady,  
For prying into your world  
But March was the month, it seems,  
When off the rails you hurtled  
Waiting in the rain, for a boy who never came,  
On the terraces at Bramall Lane, you were a skinbird.  
April she's as hard as nails in Doc Martens and Crombie  
May, she stays out every night,  
At school she's like a Zombie  
Her story's growing on me,  
I should put it down, but I can't, get enough, of the diary of a skinbird.  
In June she runs away, and when she comes back she is grounded,  
Spends July and August in her bedroom feeling hounded  
September's looking bare, there's really nothing there,  
Just a lot of doodles of a girl with crazy hair  
October, she is thoughtful, and mood's captured in fine prose  
November, she's immortal in different coloured biros,  
December, every line shows, that she's in love, with the world,  
Had enough, of being a skin bird.

### **Harrow-on-the-Hill by John Betjeman**

When melancholy Autumn comes to Wembley  
And electric trains are lighted after tea  
The poplars near the stadium are trembly  
With their tap and tap and whispering to me,  
Like the sound of little breakers  
Spreading out along the surf-line  
When the estuary's filling  
With the sea.

Then Harrow-on-the-Hill's a rocky island  
And Harrow churchyard full of sailor's graves  
And the constant click and kissing of the trolley buses hissing  
Is the level of the Wealdstone turned to waves  
And the rumble of the railway  
Is the thunder of the rollers  
As they gather for the plunging  
Into caves

There's a storm cloud to the westward over Kenton,  
There's a line of harbour lights at Perivale,  
Is it rounding rough Pentire in a flood of sunset fire  
The little fleet of trawlers under sail?  
Can those boats be only roof tops  
As they stream along the skyline  
In a race for port and Padstow  
With the gale?