



THE ALICE OTTLEIANS AND OLD ELIZABETHANS' ASSOCIATION

Autumn Circular 2020

Dear Member,

Ordinarily at this time of year, we would be sharing with you here notice of events leading up to Christmas, including the hard-fought annual Modus Cup rugby match between RGSW and KSW, the School Carol Service in Worcester Cathedral and our own AOOE Annual Dinner. Needless to say, given the current and ongoing Government restrictions, none of these will be possible this year and we will very much miss the opportunities to gather together in person.

We are optimistic that it may be possible by next year to hold our AGM, and have a provisional date for your diaries. As always, formal notice of the AGM will be issued in the Spring.

The Association's AGM at School: Saturday 22 May, 2021

We have chosen a Saturday in the hope that we might be able to combine the AGM with a social event of some kind to make up for all those that have been missed. As time progresses and the situation evolves, we will shape our plans accordingly and keep you all informed.

With this in mind, could we take this opportunity to issue another plea for email addresses? It would greatly increase our ability to communicate with members – particularly in times such as this, when plans often need to change at short notice – if we could do more of this by email. Of course, we understand that not all our members use email, and will continue to mail printed correspondence to those who need or prefer it.

If you already have login details for the Members' Area of the AOOE website, you can update all your information, including email address details, there. Alternatively, please contact our new Joint Membership Secretary, Sarah Barr, on membership2@aooe.org.uk or by telephone **07970 627525**

We hope you find this Autumn Circular interesting and informative, that you stay safe and well through the winter and that we will be able to see many of you in person at events next year.

Barrie and Shelley

Subscriptions: Did you leave in 2000 or 2005?

Members who were in the **RGS 20 Year Membership Scheme and left in 2000** and those who were in the **AO 15 Year Membership Scheme and left in 2005**, please note your membership will expire **at the end of 2020**. We hope you will wish to continue your Association membership. You can do this by downloading and completing a PDF copy of the Membership Renewal Form and payment details from the website. Alternatively, please contact the Membership Secretary either by email to membership@aooe.org.uk or by post to Jacky Hollis, Flat 30 Brookside Terrace, 32 The Lane, Barbourne, Worcester, WR1 1AF.

Members whose memberships are due to lapse and have not chosen to renew will receive the Spring 2021 mailing and will then be removed from the database in order to comply with data protection requirements.

Election of Officers and Committee Members

You will recall that we were unable to hold an AGM in May this year. Our constitution includes provision for extraordinary events such as this and, accordingly, elected officers remain in post for a further year. Barrie Rees remains President of the Association, now for his third year! The Committee (and all members of the Association, we are sure) thank him for his willingness to continue to give us his time. He is being ably supported throughout the year by President-Elect, Shelley Evers, who will succeed Barrie at the next AGM.

The Committee has two new co-opted members: Sarah Barr (*Hobbs* (AO 1981–90)) as Joint Membership Secretary and Alison Candlin (AO 1983–90).

Would you like to join the Committee?

The Committee is always looking for newcomers to bring fresh ideas and experiences to our team. In particular, we would welcome someone as **Archive Secretary** to help us to make better use of some of the wonderful material and artefacts we have. Our long-serving **Membership Secretary**, Jacky Hollis, plans to step down at the next AGM, so Sarah Barr, who is currently supporting Jacky would greatly appreciate a partner in this key role. And we are also in urgent need of a **Digital Manager**. You'll find more information about these roles below; if you think you can help or would like to join as a member without portfolio, we would be delighted to hear from you.

Committee membership is not as onerous as it may sound. We tend to meet every other month and since face-to-face meetings became impossible in March, we have been doing so very successfully via Zoom. An unexpected upside to this is that it has proved possible to include committee members from outside easy commuting distance of Worcester. Alison has been dialling in from rural Wiltshire and Sarah from Cornwall.

Joint Membership Secretary

The Membership Secretary is often the first point of contact for former pupils wanting to join or re-join the association, or for current members wishing to amend personal details or with other queries and enquiries. The Membership Secretary also updates and maintains the database of members and works closely with the Digital Manager and mailing production process in dealing with alumni mailings and providing address details, so an understanding of GDPR regulations would be a benefit.

This is currently a joint position, so the workload can be shared or split, as preferred. Please contact Sarah Barr on **07970 627525** or **membership2@aooe.org.uk** for more information.

Digital Manager

The Digital Manager supports and liaises with the Membership Secretary in helping to maintain the members database, including extracting names and addresses for mailings and responding to members' enquiries received via the Association website. The Digital Manager also maintains and updates documents held on the website and liaises with the website developer if changes are required. Ideally, the position requires a knowledge of:

- Website maintenance and management (rather than initial design) using WordPress, including minor changes to website layout/appearance, adding pages/notices etc
- CiviCRM Database management and maintenance
- Microsoft Excel for manipulation of reports from database
- The Webmail system

Archive Secretary

The Association currently does not have an Archive Secretary, so anyone with an interest in cataloguing, sorting and finding creative ways to share and make use of our archive material could make this position whatever they want it to be! It presents a wonderful opportunity to deepen our engagement with current pupils and their families as well as contributing to the Association's website and 'The Hole in the Wall' magazine.

Articles and news for The Hole in the Wall Magazine, 2020–21

As ever, we would welcome contributions from members to the forthcoming edition of 'The Hole in the Wall'. This is your magazine, and we want it to reflect what you would like to read. We'd be happy to include any news, articles or memories you would like to share – however brief. In particular, we are inviting contributions on 3 specific themes:

The number '3' In recognition of the addition of a third school (Dodderhill) to the RGSW senior school family, we're wondering what ideas the number '3' sparks with you. Do you have memories of something that happened in a year with a '3' in it, such as 1983? Maybe you're one of a group of 3 school friends who have remained close, have dined out for years on tales of an epic 3-try rugby match, or remember falling foul of the '3 black marks for a detention' rule ...

Class of 2007 WRGS and The Alice Ottley School merged in 2007. If you're one of the class of 2007 – the last cohort to leave from either individual school – we'd love to know where you are now and what you are doing. We'll be talking to some students who started in Reception class at the new RGSW in 2007, too, as they approach the end of their career at the school and head off into the world.

Lockdown news We know we have a wide range of talents and occupations in our membership and we'd like to hear about what you have been doing during 'Lockdown' and the wider period of the Covid-19 pandemic. Perhaps you've been juggling working from home with home-schooling children? Delivering lockdown babies or officiating over lockdown weddings? Sewing scrubs or making masks? Decluttering the house and preening the garden? Learning sign language? Some of the committee have shared their lockdown tales below. We'd love to hear yours.

Please send your contributions, including any photos, to magazine@aooe.org.uk or by post to Kay Meredith, 17 Dorothy Crescent, Worcester WR3 7DD. It would be greatly appreciated if you could make electronic submissions in Microsoft Word and photographs as .jpg files.

The deadline for contributions is 31st January, 2021.

The Committee in Lockdown

Lockdown for me has been a little traumatic. Holidays to Malta, Austria, Belgium and the US all cancelled or optimistically postponed! Enforced home working – who had heard of Zoom and Teams in March? On a positive note, my 93-year-old Dad (also an AOOE) remains well. Have done lots of walking, all those parks I never knew about in Cheltenham culminating in a 21-mile circular walk, cooking much improved and house much tidier having gone through all those cupboards. Definitely won't be buying any more clothes for quite some time! Roll on 2021. **Michael Bourne**

I spent Lockdown trying to live as normally as possible. With no underlying health problems and having no family or friends to get my shopping, in spite of being at the lower end of the supposedly more vulnerable age group, I continued to do my own shopping but only a couple of times a week when I could face the queues, and went for a walk when I felt like it – although the Canal towpath that runs alongside the development of flats and houses on the former Worcester City Football Ground where I live was extremely busy with dog walkers, constitutional walkers, runners and cyclists. **Jacky Hollis**

Lockdown was sudden in the Breakwell household. At work, within 48 hours, we went from discussing revised budgets and pay cuts to 40% of our workforce on furlough – myself included. Karen was furloughed, too, and we felt very lucky to have two months at home with our little boy William. Extra gardening and daily long walks ensued, happily pausing in the garden of the President-Elect's house for a socially distanced chat and beverage, when guidelines allowed. Unfortunately, the Mervs have not graced a cricket field in 2020, however a dozen of our class of '90 did manage a social round of golf at the end of August. Discussion for Mervs 2021 includes Spain in January, South Africa in July and Surrey in August; watch this space. **Pete Breakwell**

I celebrated my 70th birthday at the beginning of lockdown – many flowers and afternoon tea were received via the internet – very enjoyable. In between walking, gardening and sewing (some items for NHS), I started looking at boxes of photographs – maybe will give me inspiration for my article for 'The Hole in the Wall'! **Penny Smith**

Lockdown came as we were in the midst of clearing my mother in law's house in Worcestershire after her death in January and gave us time to continue sorting those boxes that we had brought home to Cornwall to go through: A task that I'm glad to say is now complete. My husband, Alistair, started working from home, and my volunteering ceased, so both being at home together all day was a new experience for us both, and one that we muddled through together. However, lockdown did give us precious time together that we would otherwise not have had, and for that I'm grateful. It has enabled us to do jobs together, such as digging a new vegetable and fruit garden and harvesting our ensuing glut of courgettes, beans and blueberries. We're now both back going our separate ways most mornings as things start to get back to normal, but the winter veg is still being planted! **Sarah Barr**

I can't claim to have played any part in the "Covid effort" other than staying at home and doing what I was told.....that's the Alice Ottleian in me....though, in bizarre attempts to keep up the spirits of my various god-children, nephews and nieces, I did find myself taking part in spoof music videos dressed up and performing as, on one occasion, a rapper – my "bling" and wealth denoted by a huge stack of loo rolls! I didn't learn another language, nor read the works of Dickens, but I did find creative ways to make the most of Tesco's online shopping 90-item limit to ensure we, together with various elderly relatives we were shopping/catering for, all had the groceries we needed, and I now make a mean Bread Pudding. Mrs Ackroyd would be proud! **Shelley Evers**

Keeping in Touch

As well as this Autumn Circular and the wonderful 'The Hole in the Wall', there are a number of other ways to keep up to date with news of the school. If you are able to, we urge you to subscribe to the school's digital newsletter: RGS Times, which brings a weekly dose of impressive positivity and achievement to your email inbox. You can subscribe via the School website: rgsw.org.uk Our Facebook group, The Alice Ottleians and Old Elizabethans' Association, is a great way to make contact with old friends and keep up with Association news. And as well as being the place to go to amend personal details, the Association website (www.aooe.org.uk) holds the current and past issues of 'The Hole in the Wall' as well as back issues of The Elizabethan and White and Blue and other archive material.

How would you like to read the magazine?

We'd like to remind members that, in a drive to become more sustainable in our use of paper, we are no longer going to print and mail paper copies of 'The Hole in the Wall' to all members. The magazine will be available in electronic form on the home page of the Association's website – you won't need a membership login to access it – but we will continue to print paper copies for any members who would prefer this. We will still be in touch with all members in spring, as always, with details of the AGM and will remind you then to go to the website to find the latest edition of the magazine.

If you haven't already done so, please let us know if you would prefer to receive a printed copy. You can do this by filling in and returning the slip below by post to **Sarah Barr, Joint Membership Secretary**, by email to membership2@aooe.org.uk or telephone **07970 627525**, or by amending your details in the database on the Members' Section of the Association website.

Please cut off and return to: Sarah Barr, Trevarren Woolas, Trevarren, St. Columb, Cornwall, TR9 6PJ

Yes, please send me paper copies of 'The Hole in the Wall' until further notice

Name (please print) **Date**

Postal address and post code.....
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If you have an email address and you would like updates on future events from the AOOEs sent to you in this way, please include your email address below:
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Life at The Alice Ottley School in the 1950s

New on the Association website is a wonderful video, produced from original cine films taken under the direction of Miss Roden and the School's Bursar, Miss Barrow. As part of the Alice Ottley School's Centenary celebrations in 1983 the cine films were edited by Christopher Roland of the BBC and transferred to VHS Video tape. There was also a separate audio cassette which had a commentary by the Head of English at the time, Ann Garrod.

The VHS tape and the audio cassette commentary were merged and synchronised by a member of the Association, Ian Cranston, in 2019 to produce a combined audio / video production. Despite good storage conditions, time had taken its toll on the magnetic video and audio tapes which are now over 35 years old. Consequently, the quality has been somewhat compromised. However, we are sure that this will not spoil your enjoyment of the final production. To view the video, go to the archives section of the Association's website or scan the QR Code on the right.



The RGS Worcester Family of Schools Hardship Fund

The School community and the Trustees of the RGSW and AOS Foundation are extremely grateful to those Association members who supported the Hardship Fund Appeal which was launched during April in response to the Covid-19 economic shutdown that seriously impacted some RGS families. Almost the first offer of support came from the AOOE Committee which donated an extremely generous £25,000 on behalf of the Association. This was followed by an offer from a former pupil to match fund donations up to a total of £20,000 and more than 170 people contributed to the Appeal.

To date, a total of £90,000 has been donated by alumni, staff and parents which is a wonderful testament to the School community. Consequently, 20 pupils have received Hardship grants already to support their fees for the Michaelmas term enabling them to retain their places at our School while their families have time to recalibrate their finances.

Unfortunately, the ending of the furlough scheme and the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions mean that there are likely to be further calls on the Hardship Fund so the School and the Foundation would very much welcome further donations, which can be made via the alumni website:

www.rgswandaos.foundation or by sending a cheque made payable to 'The RGSW and AOS Foundation' to the Foundation Office, RGS Worcester, Upper Tything, Worcester, WR1 1HP. If you would like to explore sponsoring a pupil at RGS, please contact the Foundation Director, Scott MacDonald: scm@rgsw.org.uk or 01905 613391.

Thank you very much indeed for all your support at this difficult and challenging time for everyone.

Data Protection

The Association maintains records of members for the sole purpose of facilitating communication with its members. In order to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), members must be given the opportunity to object to some or all of the data relating to them being held and used. The membership database is controlled, monitored and updated by the Membership Secretary and authorised members of the Membership Sub-Committee.

Your personal information will not be sold, swapped or shared with any person or organisation outside of the Association, its members or the School. If any member objects to some or all of their information being held on the membership database, or if they object to this information being made available to other members of the Association, or to the School, or if they wish to know exactly what data the Association holds in their record, please contact the Membership Secretary, Jacky Hollis, by emailing her at membership@aooe.org.uk or writing to her at Flat 30 Brookside Terrace, 32 The Lane, Barbourne, Worcester, WR1 1AF.

The full Data Protection Statement is available on the Association's website.

Headmaster's Report, from John Pitt

We are very pleased to be able to return to School on-site at the RGS Worcester Family of Schools this Michaelmas term. Everyone is facing a challenging time with the COVID-19 pandemic and the safety of our pupils and staff, together with a determination to maintain continuity of education for our pupils, have been our top priorities.

We have responded to the 'Black Lives Matter' national campaign by reviewing what is discussed and taught across our four Schools. We really appreciated Alumni engaging with this campaign and contacting us. We were pleased to be able to demonstrate that 'de-colonising the curriculum' has been taking place at the RGS Schools in recent years and that issues of equality and diversity are very important aspects of the curriculum across age groups. These issues do need to be a continuous priority and we will be conducting a further review and look forward to engaging pupils, staff, parents and Alumni in this discussion.

The last academic year saw many achievements and successes at RGS before the country went into 'lockdown' and schools were closed. We were fortunate to be able to move straight into remote learning due to the development of our own Digital Learning Programme since 2014 which meant that teachers and pupils knew exactly how to use technology to support learning. As a consequence, we have taught over 18,500 online lessons during 'lockdown' and set and marked work for our pupils throughout. We have even set examinations and held Parents' Evenings online. With Public Examinations cancelled, Year Eleven pupils completed new 'bridging' courses introducing them to the Sixth Form early and Upper Sixth students participated in a skills-based course designed to prepare them for life after school.

Continuity of education also meant providing Pastoral Care and the pupils were well supported throughout this period. Most remarkably, we were able to develop virtual Co-curricular activities with Music Lessons, Drama rehearsals, Debating and countless Clubs and Societies continuing for the pupils. Sports activities moved online and we even held a virtual Sports Week in place of Sports Day. The House trophy was awarded in our end of term assembly to Whiteladies as all Four Houses competed in the term's online activities. The virtual concerts performed by our musicians and choirs rang out across Worcestershire and were reported in the local press.

So successful was the remote learning across the RGS Worcester Family of Schools during 'lockdown' that the School was asked to present at two online global conferences run by Apple. RGS Worcester staff told educationalists across the world how best to provide remote learning during the pandemic.

The most impressive of all aspects of our response was how the RGS community came together to support the national effort. We supported the local branches of the NHS by producing PPE (face visors, scrubs and scrubs bags); we provided Key Workers' children with supervision right through the period including holidays; our pupils and staff donated to the Foodbank and raised funds for local charities. We called upon our alumni and parents to assist those who might struggle financially in the short term with school fees and you responded by donating to the Hardship Fund, which you will read about elsewhere in this letter. We are so grateful for your support and your commitment to RGS at this difficult and challenging time.

The Academic results, based upon both Ofqual's algorithm and the Centre Assessed Grades gave our pupils the grades they needed for University and other courses and the A Level, BTEC and GCSE Results Days saw our pupils very pleased by their strong results: the outcome of hard work on their part and commitment by the teachers throughout the year.

The new academic year begins with continuing restrictions and we are all learning to adapt. We started the term with the summer sports since they require less contact and some of our events have had to be put 'on hold' as we adhere to social distancing. Safety for all members of our community remains our priority and we have all learned so much. At the same time, the reputation of our Schools continues to grow with more pupils across Worcestershire wanting to join the RGS Family.

As summer starts to turn to autumn, I wish you all good health and stay safe. I am immensely proud of all that has been achieved by working together and we look forward to a time when we can welcome you back to your School and enjoy all the opportunities that RGS provides.

Thank you for all your support.