

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT AGM 2021

The year is finishing in much the same way as it started with the activities of us all still very much governed by the presence, or otherwise, of Covid. Although our Annual Reunion Dinner is held in October, preparations and planning would normally commence in March, but this year, right up until July, my repeated requests to Glenmore House for menu and wine choices, and significantly prices, were unable to be answered, if for no other reason, many of their foodstuff suppliers had either gone into administration or were unable to make deliveries. Additionally the restrictions that were just about to be lifted were still very fragile and subject to immediate change with little or no notice; in March, for instance, there would have to have been no queuing at the bar, table service only, masks on the moment you rose from your seat, no hugging, kissing, hand-shakes, singing or speeches....certainly not the joyous, care-free & happy occasion that we have come to expect at Reunion Dinners since the day that they first started and a dinner under those potential constraints would have been a misery. With deep regret, it **had** to be cancelled. BUT...Friday 7th October 2022 is very much on.

Under the circumstances, very little has happened within RPFPS in the last 12 months, although Epsom-based Members have seized the opportunity to organize a mini-reunion dinner in February 2022 which currently has 24 committed attendees, including our very own President, Kirsten Heard....so out of the jaws of adversity arises triumph....we hope! I shall be sending a circular to all members currently not signed up to our GDPR (privacy) policy to encourage them all to do so, as that will allow me, with their written permission, to forward a full list of Members and their contact details and give them a greater opportunity to maybe set up similar localized or regional meet-up groups, which can only make the Society more tightly bound for the future. I have also gone through our data base and identified all but two of the names that kept bouncing back as "undeliverable" whenever I sent out emails. Relieved to report that only one of the thirteen or so original names was through a death, the others were all as a result of an enforced change of email as a consequence of hacking. A good opportunity to remind you all that if any of your contact details change at all for any reason, please do let me know.

We have had a very modest increase in membership numbers, but because of Covid restrictions, unlike previous years, Ian and I have been unable to visit the school in the way that we did in 2018 & 2019 to sell the concept to the upper years. Mickey Duus joined the Committee almost at the same time that he left the School (when he was then Head of Year) and it was always hoped that because he retained such a high and well-respected reputation at the school that he might be able to tap into a few good contacts and facilitate a few feeds into the RPFPS. That hope was dashed by Covid restrictions, but is still a very viable possibility for the future.

I was most grateful for an email I received advising me that Corinne Hall would be acting as “pilot” for Lora Fachie in the Paralympic games; all of her races were televised, which I watched into the small hours of the morning to witness them tasting both gold and silver medals. Our congratulations to them both and possibly the School will be able to enlarge on that success during their reports at the AGM.

Ian Newman and myself have, for at least 3 years, been involved in attempting to realize Kirsten’s dream of resurrecting a permanent and properly designed stage in the main hall; something you will recall we have been collecting for at the more recent annual dinners; but after visiting numerous schools and theatre groups within the area to glean a few ideas on what we could do, along pops up Marc Robinson from within the School’s own teaching staff, no less, with some amazing ideas and plans! I will not say any more at this stage but leave it to Marc in his report at the AGM. Please, please get behind the School on this as initial quotes suggest that it could well be within our reach to achieve a wonderful outcome with relatively modest financial pain, if we can all manage to contribute just a little. What you might have spent on your first round of drinks at the Reunion Dinner that never was is all that we are asking. Thank you.

Regrettably we have to announce the deaths of the following members: Ken Whittaker (48-52), Mike Gleed (59-99) and David Giles (66-74) the last two being highly respected members of the teaching staff as Head of Biology and then IT whilst David Giles was Headmaster. We shall of course have a minute’s silence for them all at the next Annual Dinner as a mark of respect, backed up with several anecdotal experiences, I’m sure which Ian is still pleased to receive if anybody wishes to contact him.

On a similar note, it would appear that several members during lockdowns were emptying out and generally decluttering their lofts, in the process, discovering considerable Raynes Park memorabilia which Ian would be delighted to receive to add to our archives cupboard at the school; please don't throw it away. One member came to Wetherspoons with a handful of term reports covering his entire time at the School. Seeing the one-line comments on exam results, as hand-written by Masters (that wouldn't be allowed to see the light of day now!!) were priceless and had us rolling in the aisles. ".....found every single question in the examination paper as a supreme challenge which he was notably unable to overcome..." springs to mind! Of course, I can't reveal his name here (can I Steve?) but at next year's Reunion Dinner, after a few drinks, who knows?!

Until Friday 7th October 2022, play safe and stay well.

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