OS Club AGM – Minutes

Date: Sunday 9th November 2025
Time: 11:30am
Location: School Library

Present:
Duncan Berry (Chair), Nick Barker, Ben Collins, David Calvert, Jan van der Velde, Stephen Whitehead, Karen Bruce-Lockhart, Andrew Robertson, Patrick Birkbeck, Penny Aubrey, Katherine Barker, John Barraclough, Robin Wild, John Morris, María Gallego-Calderón (minute taker).

Apologies:

Sara Hirst, Freya Findlay, John Walford, Dan Harrison, Baz Bennett, Dan Harrison, Mark Richardson and John Guthrie.

Welcome
Ben confirmed that the meeting could begin and that any late attendees could join as proceedings continued.

Nick Barker welcomed everyone who was present.

Main Agenda

Point 1 – Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence presented by Ben, as per above.

Point 2 - A minute's silence for all those OS who have sadly passed away in the last year

Nick Barker opened with a few words to commemorate those OS who died in WWI and WWII, and those who died over the last year, following with a minute's silence.

Point 3 – Approve the minutes from the last OS AGM on 28th September 2024.

Nick asked attendees to confirm whether the minutes of the September 2024 meeting were an accurate record (copies had been provided to all attendees). The minutes were ratified by those present.

Point 4 – Review of the last 12 months.

Ben provided a summary of key alumni events over the past 12 months. Ben highlighted the increasing engagement from previously unconnected OS to these events:

- **OS Weekend (October 2024)**: Held in Sedbergh with guest speaker Will Carling; a sell-out event.
- **1960–74 Reunion in London (October 2024)**: Attended by 90 OS, with one-third being first-time attendees.
- **York Event (November)**: 44 OS attended; strong engagement from the Yorkshire region.
- **1975–89 Reunion in London (March 2025)**: Over 100 attendees. 50% of the guests were first timers.
- **Wilson Run Dinner (March 2025)**: Record attendance with 204 guests; live stream of the race reached 6,200 viewers; pre-race lunch hosted over 200 guests. Very nice

feedback received from OS about the streaming. Many OS came back for the 500th celebrations for the Wilson Run events.

- **Drinks at Life Kitchens, Waterloo, London (March 2025)**: London drinks reunion for young OS
- **May Gala Dinner**: 350 guests came to Sedbergh to celebrate this occasion. Very good feedback from OS.
- **OS Shooting Event at Bisley (July 2025)**: Strong camaraderie between the OS shooters and the School team, with the latter gaining motivation and inspiration from the participation of the OS members.
- **Arnhem OS history tour (September 2025)**: 80 OS came to Ypres, where they were joined by the School. Ben highlighted the positive involvement of younger OS performing in the choir at Ypres Cathedral and the Menin Gate.
- **Lord's Cricket Ground dinner (October 2025)**: 160 attended this event. Great location.
- **Black Rock Dinner (October 2025)**: Celebrated at Powell Hall. Around 120 people attended. Guests were sitting at long tables, and there was very good feedback about this setting, which made the conversation easier amongst guests.

Nick noted that it was nice to see Jan was present, having stepped down during the year. At the recent OS Committee meeting, Neil McKerrow spoke warmly of Jan's long-standing service to the School and the OS Club—as a pupil, as Chairman, and in his more recent role. Nick thanked Jan for his dedicated contribution over the years and noted that the Committee would seek an appropriate way to recognise his service.

Jan thanked the OS community for their support and expressed gratitude to Ben, Maria, Helen, and Emily for their assistance in recent years.

***Point 5 – OS events over the next 12 months*.**

Ben outlined key events for the next 12 months:

- **Hong Kong OS Event (17th November 2025)** – 40 OS to attend this event.
- **York Minster Dinner (8th December 2025)-** This event is fully booked with 180 attendees and a waiting list of 40+. Additional drinks event planned in the Undercroft at the same time of the dinner for extra guests.
- **Wilson Run dinner (23rd March 2026**) aiming to exceed previous attendance records to the dinner (204+), with long table format.
- **Wilson Run lunch & streaming (24th March 2026)**
- **Rugby Dinner (26th March 2026)** at Victory Services Club, continuing with the 500th celebrations and in recognition of the rich rugby heritage in the School. Will Carling will host the dinner and will be joined by other international players. Abbie Ward may join virtually. Ben mentioned how Sedbergh is the only school to have a female and a male World Cup rugby winner.
- **U.S. OS Dinner** – Planned for late January 2026.
- **Reunion events** – End of April/May 2026. Dates TBC.
- **OS Cricket (May bank holiday weekend)** – OS cricketers to get together to play a match against the School at Sedbergh.
- **OS Weekend (date TBC)**.

Ben mentioned that the Club is looking at other sport related events outside the OS weekend, for example, creating an OS 7s Team.

Discussion Points:

- Nick observed that 2025 has been an unusual year in terms of event scheduling, with the main event taking place in May. He noted that the next OS Weekend would presumably return to its normal timing. Ben confirmed this.

- John Barraclough enquired about the situation with OS music. Ben confirmed that plans are underway to promote greater OS musical involvement, including bringing OS musicians together for a dedicated weekend event. John noted that he had previously started an OS band with Ben Crossland to initiate musical activities. They need more alumni to participate and get involved.

Point 6 & 7 – The Four Pillars/ OS Connect platform

Ben offered an update on this point

- **Events:** already covered in the points above.
- **Careers & Networking:** Careers programme with OS speakers for Year 12 pupils running on Mondays. Great to have OS delivering these talks to pupils.

Ben linked point 7 on the agenda to this pillar - OS Connect Platform. The renewal cost is £6,000+VAT; exploring alternatives:

  - Option 1: Build own platform (lower setup and running costs).
  - Option 2: Use existing School system Zello to integrate OS and sixth form, saving around £7,000 annually. Zello allows the OS Club and the School to work together. Tom Robinson, Head of Pathways in the School, will launch this platform and we can look at how to get the best of it.

- **Marketing & Communication:** Newsletter issued twice per term (6/year); open rate improved from average 52% to 64%. Newspaper – Floreat Sedberghia (3rd edition) to be published in November 2025.

- **Data:** 1,192 updates in past 12 months. The more accurate our data is, the more the open rate for our online communication will increase, as well as engagement.

Point 8 – Updates on the School

Ben mentioned the Headmaster confirmed the current numbers in the Schools: Senior- 550, Prep-178. Numbers forecasted for September 2026 are around the same figures – Senior 560, Prep - 190. These are very good projected numbers

- Leadership:
    - Interviewed candidates for Headmaster of the Senior School on Wednesday (5th November); outcome pending but promising.
    - Dan will become Executive Officer. The dual role in the School is not new (Andrew Fleck- Principal; Dan Harrison -Headmaster). The new role will allow Dan to focus on more on the School's group.
    - Ian Durrans will become the new Chair of Governors in January 2026.

- Group Expansion:
    - The School is looking at different means of income streams. Growth strategy includes international schools, UK nurseries, and prep schools. The Headmaster has implied that conversations are ongoing for this purpose.
    - Sedbergh School has a very good relationship with Dean Close, which has a lot of nurseries generating income. Sedbergh is looking at this model.
    - Sedbergh is looking at other Prep Schools apart from Casterton.

Point 9 – Election of the next OS President

Duncan thanked Nick Barker for serving over the past two years as OS President and informed the group that Sir Richard McCombe has been approached to take on the role for the next term. Richard is thrilled to have been asked and will take the role.

Nick shared that Sir Richard attended the Lord's dinner and had previously served briefly on the governing body, showing his support for the School. He noted that Sir Richard is an eminent judge, with a prominent legal career.

The attendees officially ratified this nomination.

Point 10 – Financial Report

David Calvert reported a small deficit of £150 for the financial year ending 31st July 2025. Main costs were due to the free events (reunions), the Old Castertonian lunch in London and the Wilson Run streaming (£14,324).

Main costs :

- Free events :1960-74 Reunion Lunch in London Oct 24 £6,683, 1975-89 Reunion Lunch in London Mar 25 £7,574, Summer Solstice Stride £3,655.
- Old Castertonian lunch £1,560. Wilson Run streaming £14,324 – this one is partly funded by the School and Foundation
- -£15,634 from the Foundation towards events consisting of £6,500 Wilson Run streaming, £7,574 Reunion at Browns March 25, £1,560 Old Castertonian Lunch.
- £10,000 from School made up of £6,000 for Reunion in London Oct 24, £3,500 towards Wilson Run streaming, £500 OS Weekend.
- WR lunches – very busy in QH. Lunches and Dinner surplus of £3,126 towards streaming costs.
- Annual Raisers Edge fee - 50% of shared cost with Foundation - £4,400
- Graduway - £2,800 shared cost with Foundation – this platform was paused in March 2025, and it is now for review.

Budget for next year £152 surplus.

- £3,500 – Lord's Cricket Ground Dinner
- £2,000 – Blackrock Dinner
- £3,300 – Arnhem Tour
- £1,000 - Merchant Adventurers' Hall Dinner
- £11,000 – Wilson Run streaming
- £1,200 – contingency for possible further event

Discussion points:

- Robin Wild was surprised to hear that the Wilson Run streaming was not paid for by the School, as this is huge cost to the Club. David explained that both the School and the Foundation had contributed £10,000 to the streaming. David also pointed out that the Foundation had made contributions towards various other events.
  Robin also queried if the price of trackers used by the children during the race were included in the streaming quote. Ben clarified that the trackers are an additional cost to the School.

- Stephen Whitehead suggested a cost (£1) to log in onto YouTube to view the streaming. However, Patrick Birkbeck mentioned that a payment for watching could be a deterrent. Ben added that we are looking at sponsorship for the streaming and what is required. Do we need cameras all over the course, can it be more of a show rather than streaming making it possibly more appealing to the OS audience? Ben finished by saying that the feedback from the OS community about the streaming is very positive and we need to find the right balance.
- Robin Wild noted that, since the two main events in the School calendar are the Wilson Run and the Remembrance Service, the latter should also be streamed. Nick Barker agreed, and Ben commented that this could be explored further.

Accounts were accepted by those present.

Point 11 – Membership of the Committee

All the decisions approved by the committee regarding re-election/re-co-option of current members were ratified by those present at the meeting:

- Re-election of David Calvert as Treasurer of the Club.
- Re-election of Ben Collins as Alumni Director/Secretary of the Club.
- Re-election of María Mendoza to the committee.
- Re-co-option of Katy de la Rivière to the committee.

The elections of David Pearce and Sarah Long to the committee, and Molly Barrett as Junior member of the committee were also ratified by those present at the meeting.

Point 12– Constitution

Duncan mentioned that this point was discussed at the OS Club committee meeting on 06.11.2025, The current Constitution is outdated and needs reviewing. Proposal: sharing it with everyone for feedback. The goal is to explore revisions to make the committee structure more agile and possibly smaller in size, as the current committee seems to be bloated in numbers.

Duncan mentioned that the value of junior members needed to be re-considered and have a look at other ways they can support. He also suggested allowing non-committee members to support events in ambassadorial roles, stating that there is a large amount of experience and knowledge from OS members who have been involved in the School life for a long time and do not need to be part of the committee to support.

Nick Barker supported Duncan's views and agreed the constitution is aged and it needs revision.

Discussion points:

- John Morris asked where a copy of the constitution can be found. Ben mentioned that it will be shortly on the Sedbergh Association website, as it needs to be added again after the revamping of the website.

- Patrick Birkbeck asked if the constitution stated the presence of a current parent in the committed. Nick Barker answered that is not currently included in the constitution.

Point 13 – Election of Honorary OS

Nick Barker mentioned that the committee had proposed Ian Christy for his contribution to School shooting, and Simon Mulholland, in recognition of his service to School rugby and the School. Ben to contact Ian and Simon with this proposal.

Nick added that Baz Bennett and Kate Martin had also been proposed as Honorary OS.

Discussion points:

- Stephen Whitehead asked what criteria is followed to propose an Honorary OS. Nick Barker answered that long association with the School and having a significant role were the usual criteria.

Point 13– Date of Next OS AGM.

This date is TBC.

Point 14– AOB

- Robin Wild mentioned that he had been Chairman of the OS Club over 20 years ago, and one of the first Foundation trustees, and it is important to keep the OS Club and Foundation as two different functions. However, now that Jan has left and Ben is Acting Director of Development it is not clear that they are two separate entities. Ben added that the situation in the department has not changed, and his role has changed only from Associate to Acting Director of Development, and within the office there are 2 different roles with clear functions.

  Robin added that it was important to have two separate entities to take the pressure of fundraising from the OS community, and that the Summer Solstice event was superb, but it was clearly fundraising. Nick Barker agreed that we want to encourage OS to be part of the Club without feeling they are being tapped for money. The membership to the OS Club does not imply financial contribution. However, alumni are a source of revenue.

  Ben mentioned that the OS events were purely to bring the community together, not to ask for money. John Barraclough added that he had no problem in fundraising being part of activities of OS events. John did not believe there is pressure to give money when attending OS events, it is just awareness that fundraising is required for various projects.

  Duncan added that the message the Club wants to transmit is of no pressure to fundraise at OS events. These are for engagement with the community and School.

  John Morris added that there were 2 different entities when Jan van der Velde was Director of Development. Ben added that the situation has not changed since Jan left.

  Nick Barker asked if, going forward, the fundraising will be more in Dan's hands than in Ben's, but Ben did not know the answer to this.
  Andrew Robertson added that it was a fundamental point to keep the Foundation separate to raise money for particular purposes and only release the cash for these specific purposes. This way the Foundation can ensure the integrity of the donations and maintain credibility.

Nick Barker thanked Ben, María and David for their work in the office, and Ben thanked Nick for his contribution as the President of the OS Club over the past 2 years.

Meeting concluded.