



ASHFORD SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

Ashford School Association Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday 1 October 2020 at 19:00, via Zoom

Attendance: Julie Piper (ASA Chair, JP), Nicky Brightling (ASA Treasurer, NB), Norma Smyth (Vice-President, NS), Hannah Pinney (ASA Secretary, HP), Mike Hall (Headmaster, MH), Sarah Kershaw (SK), Callum Thomas (CT), Alex Playford (AP)

1. Welcome & Apologies

JP welcomed all to the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.

Apologies from **HF, TV, TH & JA**.

2. Approval of Minutes of last meeting

JP asked that "Chaucer Knights" be added in the Matters Arising section on origin of House names. *HP has now amended.*

The minutes of the Committee meeting held on Monday 4 May 2020 were agreed as the correct record. They will be signed and dated by **JP** when we are able to meet in person again.

3. Matter's Arising

NS had been asked to investigate the origin of House names & reported back to the Committee:

- Alfred House: NS believes that the name is linked to the railway. In 1850 railway sheds were built for locomotives, and a housing estate built for the workers which was named Alfred Village (but known by locals as Newtown).
- Brooke Place: NS has not been able to discover the origins of the name. It is not named for the poet Rupert Brooke, contrary to popular opinion.

4. Treasurer's Report

NB reported on the ASA finances:

- NatWest Account Balance (as of 01/10/2020): £221.08.
- Santander Savings Account Balance: £9148.11
- Since the last meeting, we have received another 3 Standing Orders, totalling £22.
- In total cash, we have at least £9369.19 available.

Plaque Project



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See additional document provided for the meeting by HP, detailing the proposed plaque designs.

- **NB** noted her support for the plaque project. She felt it brought together alumni from across the generations, and that the ASA did not need a 'rainy day' fund, due to the support from the School, and so it would be nice to spend the money, as the ASA could always fundraise if they want to do anymore projects.
- **NS** has proofread the copy, and noted some grammatical errors, and differences between American English & British English. **HP** will review.
- **SK** proposed a subcommittee was formed that would move the project forward (and be responsible for final designs and proof reading). All Committee members agreed. **AP** offered to work on this with **HP**.
- **HP** will call **CC** to share the plaque designs.
- The Committee debated the number of plaques to produce - **JP** suggested that we do a good number of plaques now to save money in the long run. The Committee agreed.
- **SK** proposed plaques could be a sponsorable item on pages of the website. **HP** agreed, and noted that an alumna had already been in touch about sponsoring a plaque. **HP** will add this as an option to the website.

5. School Update

MH updated the ASA Committee members:

- There have been lots of positives from the last few months:
 - Both the Prep & Senior Schools continued to provide a full timetable for all pupils.
 - Teachers were teaching live for most of the time and engaging live with pupils throughout.
 - The School carried on providing pastoral care, and the pastoral team was in weekly contact with all pupils, providing 1-2-1s for those who needed help.
 - The School continued the co-curricular programme, which had mixed results, but was extremely important, as staff wanted to inspire children to challenge themselves with new interests/activities, and to keep active.
 - Hosted several virtual weekend fixtures with other schools which worked well.
 - Staff have come back positively and some of children who found school difficult, have come back engaged and positive!
 - **MH** incredibly proud of the continuity of learning, and that in terms of content coverage, the team feel they are ahead. Academically, the School is in a good place moving forward.
- A Level & GCSE results
 - This was a very challenging time for students.
 - The School had to submit grades based on what teachers thought their students were going to get, and the School were cautiously optimistic.
 - The results were good:



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- Half grades at GCSE were 7 or better (A or better)
- 52% of all grades were A or A*
- 75% of students got into first choice university
- 26% went off to top 10 universities
- Now the School is fully reopened and offering a full curriculum to students, and most of the co-curricular programme (but this side of school life is difficult due to having to operate in year group bubbles).
- The School is planning, and is ready, for a return to lockdown, which MH thinks is likely.
- There have also been some negatives, in particular The School has taken a hit in terms of revenue, primarily due to loss of boarding income. 35 Boarders have still not returned as they are unable to travel.
- Day pupil numbers have gone up and interest in school has not be stronger. MH feels this is due to our reputation for online learning (and fears of another lockdown), and our commitment to the co-curricular life of the school. There has also been a strong presence on social media, and the new Ashford School Live events have been very well attended.
- Staffing Update:
 - The School recruited a lot of new strong staff members
 - Tom Wilding has sadly departed us, and we hope that he has a successful future. A replacement will not be appointed, and instead MH will be supported by the Senior School Deputies Team.

JP thanked **MH** and the School team for all they had done steering the school through the last few months.

JP asked **MH** for an update on the Covid Hardship Fund

- MH reported that several families had been severely impacted by Covid. UL had allocated a pot of money to the School which has been used to support these families (not all the money was used last term, so that there were funds remaining for this term). This fund has been invaluable and has helped to keep several families within the school and has also engendered good will amongst the Ashford School community. Awards were means tested and assessed against clear evidence.

6. Alumni Office Update

HP updated the Committee:

ASA Events:

- Due to Covid, the decision had been taken to postpone indefinitely a number of ASA events, including: ASA Summer Lunch; ASA Sports Tournament; Welcome BBQ; and the ASA President's Luncheon. The team are not planning to schedule in any live events until it is safe to do so. However, there will hopefully be a number of school-led events online which the alumni can participate in.



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- Despite this, there have been positives during lockdown, in particular increased engagement online
- There has been a successful programme of virtual events, including:
 - ASA AGM: HP thanked all who attended. There were over 40 attendees, made up of alumni, former staff and current staff. HP noted it was lovely to have such a variety of speakers from outgoing School Captains, to notable alumna Liv Boeree.
 - Virtual Networking Talks: in June held one with alumna Sinead Hanna on social media marketing, and in July one with HF on how to thrive in the remote working environment.
- Upcoming Events:
 - “How to Make Friends with Fear” with alumna Rose Berry, a life and health coach. This will be a workshop around building your confidence with public speaking, networking and 1-2-1 conversations. It also ties into the School’s work around mental health and wellbeing, and is going to be co-hosted by Deputy Head and alumna Nicky Timms.
 - Former Head of English, Jenny Watson will be giving an online talk on Chaucer & the Canterbury Pilgrims. **HP** hoped that in the future she would be able to run in person events, as she is a blue badge tour guide for London and Canterbury. **NS** thought this was a very good idea.
- **HP asked Committee for suggestions of speakers or topics for future virtual & in-person events.**

Engagement & Communications

- #ThrowbackThursday posts on social media have created lots of engagement. **NB & AP** agreed that they really enjoyed these.
- HP has been working within the marketing team to run ‘Inspiring Minds’ campaigns featuring staff, students & alumni,
 - The Summer Term featured alumni who were key workers
 - This term is a Spotlight on Sport, and so far, have featured Hamish Roberts (Scotland U23 Hockey Player) and Max Nicholls (GB Mountain Runner).
 - The Spring term will focus on those within the music industry, the Summer will focus on Art, and then Autumn 2021 will be Drama.
 - **HP asked the Committee for suggestions of alumni who could be featured in these campaigns.**
- **HP** is working with different departments throughout the School to organise alumni talks to help inspire our students (currently, all are likely to be virtual) **HP** excited about forging these relationships within school.
- **AP** will revisit her spreadsheet of alumni peers to help improve the information on the ASA database.
- **HP** added that she was looking into more ways the ASA can support alumni businesses, through social media and the website. **AP** noted that she had had more interest in her business from the post that had gone on the ASA social media channels.



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- **SK** added that we need to ensure we have stories and articles from the boys too, and that we are reflecting the school's diversity.
 - **CT** will think of alumni to approach.
 - **JP** suggested **JA** could work with ex-Friars alumni to get more articles.
 - **HP** added she had been working to reconnect with Friars alumni.

The ASA School Tie

- Currently working on the ASA School Tie and collating content. **HP** is planning that it will be released in December. It will be posted to UK addresses, and emailed out to all on our database.
- **HP** asked the Committee to share with her any news or suggestions of alumni to contact.
- **SK** noted that there would be more content from current students within the magazine.
- **AP** noted it was lovely to be able to reminisce, but that alumni also wanted to know what is happening with the School now.

7. AOB

JP closed the meeting and thanked all for attending, and thanked **MH**, **SK** & **HP** for their continued support, and thanked all the teaching staff of Ashford School.