



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF

Ashford School Association

Friday 3 July 2020, 15:30, via Zoom

Committee Attendees: Carolyn Chamberlain (ASA President, CC), Julie Piper (ASA Chair, JP), Hannah Pinney (Alumni Officer, HP), Nicky Brightling (ASA Treasurer, NB), Norma Smyth (Vice-President, NS), Tom Vafidis (TV), Toby Harris (TH), John Abadom (JA), Sarah Kershaw (Director of External Relations, SK) & Mike Hall (Headmaster, MH)

Committee Apologies: Alexandra Playford, Helen Fairley & Callum Thomas

A recording of this meeting can be viewed on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/U92msgDm03g>

1. Welcome & Meeting Business

JP welcomed all to the ASA 2020 AGM and thanked everyone joining the Zoom call. **JP** thanked **HP, SK & MH** for keeping everything running smoothly over the past few months, with a special thank you to **MH** for all he is doing for the School and his continued support of the ASA.

JP reminded all that we hoped to run the ASA President's Lunch on Saturday 14 November at the Royal Academy in London.

- **Hon. Secretary Approval of 2019 ASA AGM Minutes (HP)**

The minutes of the 2019 ASA AGM were approved as an accurate record and will be signed by **JP** at the next available opportunity.

- **Hon. Treasurer's Report 2019 Accounts (NB)**

Ashford School assists with all the ASA's running costs. In reserves, the ASA has just over £9,300 which has been accrued over several years from past ASA membership payments (these were previously £6 a year and covered the printing and postage of the School Tie). The ASA are still receiving a few standing orders but have been unable to contact those involved. In 2019, these standing orders totalled £88 and the monies have been transferred to the Ashford School Foundation (which supports the School by raising money for bursaries and capital projects). The income for the year was just over £100 & the interest from the Savings account was £21. The ASA Committee have proposed that some of the money is spent on plaques around the School. However, this project has been put on hold due to lockdown.

2. Alumni Office Report

HP (Squires, 2011), the Alumni & Development Officer, reported on the work of the Alumni & Development Office over the past year.

- The recent focus has been to build connections with the ASA community and to reconnect with lost alumni. The ASA now has over 3000 alumni on the database, in over 60 countries around the world.



- **HP** appealed to all alumni to keep spreading the word about the ASA, and to encourage their peers to share news, let the ASA know what events they'd like to see, and to keep their contact details updated.
- HP noted they are also keen to keep building the Friars alumni network too.
- The Year 13s leaving Ashford School are part of the alumni community, and HP wants them to know that they can utilise the alumni network moving forward and to be proud to be part of the ASA.
- There has been lots more engagement across the board especially during the lockdown months across social media.
- It has been wonderful to share achievements of our alumni community. There have been too many to name them all, but HP highlighted a few individuals. HP appealed to attendees to encourage their fellow alumni to tell the Alumni & Development Office of any exciting news!
- Since lockdown, the Alumni Office has been running a campaign to highlight the work of those alumni who are working hard in the fight against the coronavirus. So far, they have featured Helen Ryan (Squires, 2010) & Alex Blincow (Squires, 2011), both of whom are Nurses. It is inspiring to hear about their experiences, and to read about the positives that they are finding at this time.
- This year, the Alumni & Development Office have also had events featuring alumni speakers.
 - Lou Johnson (Franklins, 2010) returned to School to give a talk to Year 8s about her career in Motorsport Photography, which tied into their topic of movement in art.
 - Breakfast Networking sessions were launched in March, with the first hosted in Ashford by Karina Hulstrom (Pilgrims, 2001) who spoke about mindset and reaching your goals.
 - These were then pivoted to virtual networking zoom sessions. The first was hosted by Sinead Hanna (Knights, 1996), a PR and communications consultant, who spoke on how to make the most of your social media. The next session will be led by Helen Fairley (Yeomen, 2003) and will discuss remote working.
 - The Alumni & Development Office wish to develop more sessions like this as it is wonderful to be able to share expertise and knowledge. Please let HP know if you would like to give a talk or who have suggestions for alumni who could do, either to current students or to fellow alumni.
- A few events were held during 2019-2020 before lockdown commenced.
 - We welcomed alumni back for Carols by Candlelight in December 2019, held in St Mary's Church.
 - There was a lovely Lilian Brake Legacy Club Lunch at Eastwell Manor in March 2020.
 - HP has also hosted several tours around the School with alumni. HP noted if you would like to come back and visit, she would love to show you around.
 - Off-site events included a reunion in Nigeria hosted by MH & SK hosted event for Nigerian (which resulted in the formation of a What's App Group for our Nigerian alumni) from that we formed a What's App Group), a Friars London lunch with former Headmaster Mr John Stevens, and the annual ASA President's Lunch at the Royal Academy.
 - HP appealed to alumni to share with the Alumni & Development Office any reunions they were having personally.



- HP noted that the last few months have highlighted the importance of community and being connected. There has been more engagement with the Alumni Office, particularly on social media, and we want to keep this dialogue going.
- Share your ideas, reconnect me with friends, let us know what events you'd like to see, and venue suggestion.

3. School Report (MH)

MH noted that it was wonderful to see such a well-attended AGM and provided attendees with a summary of the past academic year at Ashford School.

- By February 2020 the School was in a very strong position, with the strongest number of pupils on role for nearly 20 years, a reflection of Ashford's popularity and success. The Stables Nursery opened at Great Chart and the School was on track to hit its financial targets and make a strong surplus. Full planning permission had been received for the development of a new Sixth Form Centre, which is crucial for the School's future development and strategy. The Year 11 & Year 13 students were working exceptionally well, with the Year 11s on track to be the strongest year groups for the last 6 years.
- Brexit did have an impact on the School, but it was mainly felt by local families rather than the International market.
- The second half of the year has put life into perspective, and the last 3 months have been exceptionally tough, as in so many sectors of the economy. MH is very proud of the way Ashford School has responded to the crisis.
 - In February, a boarder was taken ill with a suspected case of Coronavirus (Ashford School was possibly one of the first boarding schools in the UK to have a suspected case). The student did test negative, but that started a period of concern and uncertainty for School.
 - The School was forced to close in March, along with all Schools, which could have been potentially damaging for students' academic, pastoral, and social development.
 - Ashford School's online learning provision has been exceptionally strong, and from a technology and pedagogical point of view we were very well advanced. The transition to online learning was relatively seamless, although challenging for our staff. We have been praised by parents, pupils and have also received recognition nationally – including being profiled within central government and on national radio. MH is very proud. Teaching staff are reporting that Year 10 & Year 12 students are ahead of where they would normally be. The School is in a strong position to move forward into the next academic year.
 - However, the School has been blown out of the water on the financial side, losing income overnight from the closure of the nurseries and boarding houses.
 - All capital expenditure has been frozen, and so the planned Sixth Form Centre is on hold.
 - Year 11 & Year 13 students were denied the opportunity to sit their exams, and their grades are at the mercy of an Ofqual algorithm.
- MH is confident that the School will bounce back and moving forward he has 4 main priorities.
 - First, to sustain and innovate with online learning.



- Second, to ensure Ashford School breaks even financially.
- Third, to ensure the long-term financial strength of the School.
- Fourth, to ensure the safe return of all students and staff to the School.
- In summary the last few months have been very tough, but we are resilient.
- Ashford is expanding demographically as a town, and as a School we fully intend to benefit from this. We know the International market will be tough, but we have a strong marketing and recruitment strategy.
- MH is confident that the good work done has not been lost and that Ashford School is poised to blossom and develop over next few years.

4. School Captains Report

Outgoing School Captains, **Gaby Gorasov (Knights, 2020)** & **Jonathan Zhu (Franklins, 2020)** joined us to share their experience at Ashford School & what becoming a part of the alumni community means to them. Please watch their speeches on the YouTube recording.

5. Development Office Report (SK)

Sarah Kershaw, Director of Admissions, External Relations & Communications gave an overview of Development plans at Ashford School:

- It is Great to see so many attendees.
- While the last 4 months have been difficult, we have noticed that alumni have had more time to engage with the School. It is often in times of troubles that people tend to gravitate to things that make them feel safe and secure, and it's wonderful that Ashford School can provide such a sense of comfort, and it is evident that the School is regarded highly in peoples' hearts.
- It has given others the opportunity to reflect, and we have had a growing number of alumni and parents who are now helping us: with events; with networking; with the archives; or by donating. There have been lots of alumni willing to share their stories about the work they are doing on the front line during the pandemic (SK said to please look at stories on the website). Thank you for this involvement and engagement over last 4 months.
- In terms of development and fundraising it is a very difficult time, but the School has a clear vision and wants to develop further its diverse and close-knit community.
- One of the ways we can do this is through Bursary Awards to pupils who wouldn't be able to afford the fees.
 - This year, we will be launching several different channels for people to donate, so they can find a way of contribution that suits them.
 - The School have helped 38 families by awarding children with means tested bursaries.
 - The School want to increase these awards, and ensure that they attract deserving, well-motivated, hardworking and bright young children who wouldn't normally have the opportunities that Ashford School can provide.
 - SK appealed to alumni who would like to help with this campaign to get in touch, whether that be to find out more about donating or to assist in attracting donors.



- SK noted that there have been a great number of alumni who have benefited from bursaries, and if they are now in position to help with future bursaries we would like to know.
- The School's second focus is to support the commitment to the local community through the Swimming programme.
 - We have a huge community outreach that we work on through our swimming programme, which benefits swimmers from across the county. The School's swimming pools are relied upon by 1600 swimmers on a weekly basis. There are 12 primary schools that come in for lessons, and we offer 'Learn to Swim' courses during the holidays which are attended by around 1000 children. We have 19 staff all trained as level 2 coaches, and local swim clubs that come to the School to join us for training. We also run teacher training courses.
 - For current students, we offer swimming in curriculum time, and have Swim Squads in both the Senior (30 students) & Prep School (24 students), who train every morning at 6am. We currently have 19 elite swimmers who regularly compete in galas, and 2 national swimmers. We run several other courses including lifesaving.
 - SK noted that the pool has been closed these past few months due to lockdown, but they hope to be able to open it again soon.
 - The swimming programme is very big, but we are now at capacity, and the swimming provision and offering have outgrown our facilities.
 - We have commissioned a feasibility study into building a new, 25 metre pool.
 - This project cannot be supported by United Learning. However, the Ashford School Foundation have identified this as an area where we could make a huge impact. SK reported that a fundraising campaign was due to be launched a few months ago, but unfortunately has been paused due to lockdown.
 - This campaign will be the focus in the coming few years and will be one of biggest fundraising tasks that we have set ourselves.
- SK appealed to alumni that if any of these projects sparks an interest, and you would like to talk to her about helping to please get in touch.

6. Guest Speaker: Q&A with Liv Boeree (Franklins, 2002)

Please view the YouTube recording to listen to the full Q&A with Liv Boeree and HP.

7. AOB & Close

JP thanked Liv Boeree, Gaby Gorasov and Jonathan Zhu for speaking, to all the attendees, with a special thank you to **MH**, **SK** & **HP**, and to **MH** for steering the School through turbulent waters these last few months.

HP thanked all the ASA Committee members for their support over the past year.

JP drew the 2020 ASA AGM to a close.



Contact Emails:

- **Hannah Pinney, Alumni & Development Office / ASA Hon Secretary:**
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- **Sarah Kershaw, Director of Admissions, External Relations & Communications:**
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We would like to thank the following guests for attending the ASA AGM 2020:

- John Abadom (ASA Committee, Friars, 1987)
- Lucinda Allen (Former Teacher of French & German)
- Liv Boeree (Franklins, 2002)
- Tom Bragge (Teacher of English)
- Laura Brightling (Knights, 2018)
- Nicky Brightling (ASA Treasurer, née Clarke, Knights, 1986)
- Angela Burrill (Former Teacher of English & Drama)
- Carolyn Chamberlain (ASA President, née Nelms, Nightingale, 1960)
- Katie Floyd (née Webb, Merchants, 2003)
- Joanna Godfree (née Robertson, Alfred, 1969)
- Gabriela Gorasov (Knights, 2020)
- Mike Hall (Headmaster of Ashford School)
- Toby Harris (ASA Committee, Franklins, 2013)
- Colin Howard (Former Teacher)
- Louise Jessup (Somerville, 1976)
- John Jones (Former Teacher of Chemistry)
- Sarah Kershaw (Director of Admissions, External Relations & Communications)
- Georgina Lapsley (EAL Teacher, née Power, Brooke Place, 1987)
- Gina Loughlin-Sims (née Kemp, Former Teacher of French)
- Carolyn Ludlow (Former Teacher of Chemistry)
- Pauline Mantell (Former Teacher of Physics)
- Irene Martin (Teacher of Physics)
- Carol Mearles-Pay (Former Teacher of SEN & Sport)
- Gill Miles (Former Maths Teacher)
- Caroline Morris (Head of Girls' Games)
- Albane Oulé (Knights, 2010)
- Hannah Pinney (Alumni & Development Officer, ASA Secretary, Squires, 2011)
- Sophie Pinney (Squires, 2017)
- Julie Piper (ASA Chair, Knights, 1979)
- Gail Pussard (Cranmer, 1967)
- Max Simpson (Squires, 2012)
- Norma Smyth (ASA Vice-President, Former Deputy-Head, 1998)
- Rae Stollard (née Sasson, Brooke Place, 1963)
- Tom Vafidis (History Teacher, ASA Committee, Friars, 2006)



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- Bob Wordsworth (Former Maths Teacher)
- Jonathan Zhu (Franklins, 2020)