



History of the Old Buckwellians Association - Part 7 - Topics

Sport

Sport was the lifeblood of OBA until the 1970s, though only the three major sports really thrived :- football, cricket, and hockey.

The aim of the Association had always been to provide a network for former pupils to keep in contact, and to provide sporting opportunities similar to those available at the school. Membership of one of the sporting divisions used to incorporate membership of the main Association.

In the 1950s a lot of OBA recruits were footballers, but the majority of members were not necessarily sportsmen. Nevertheless OBA progressively became perceived as essentially a sports club with a social side based around the bar. By the mid 1960s, for most of those not interested in either playing sport for OBA (or not in a position to do so), or drinking cheaply in the clubhouse bar, there seemed little point in joining.

Cricket faded away in the late sixties. It had always struggled to attract players against competition from other successful local cricket clubs. The hockey side was absorbed in 1971 into the 'The Farmers' Club'.

The football club however carried on regardless, and by 1971 was based at a new HQ in Bradwell Road, Buckhurst Hill. The club has sometimes had up to six teams on the go. If it had not been for football, then perhaps OBA might have folded in the mid 1970s.

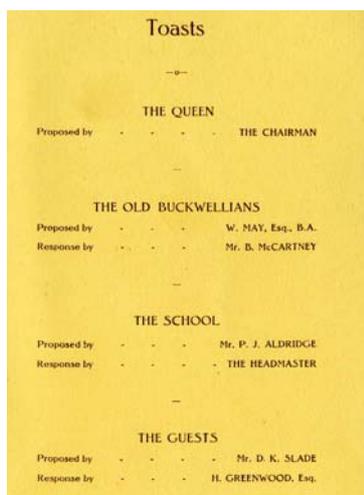
OBFC's fortunes continued to be regularly reported in OBA News through the 1970s and 1980s. Over the years it was based at various venues including the Old Foresters ground at Theydon Bois, and Loughton Cricket Club.

From 1977 membership of OBA and OBFC became separate, with separate subscriptions. In 1993 OBFC became an open club, accepting players who were not Old Bucks. Now there are of course relatively few former BHCHS pupils, although the present Chairman, Simon Burnage (1971) and President, Trevor Lebentz are Old Bucks. OBFC currently fields four teams and plays in the Amateur Football Combination at Roding Valley Recreation Ground, Loughton.



Annual Dinners

The annual dinner is a long-standing and valued OBA tradition. It has experienced varying levels of support, from as few as 60 people, to record attendances in the region of 150 during the mid 2000s.



Part of the 1952 OBA Dinner Programme

A number of different venues have been used, including a couple of times in a central London location. Mario's restaurant in Ilford was used for most of the 1950s and early 1960s. Then for a time from 1965 the dinner was held at OBA's own clubhouse in Woodford Green.

After the sale of the clubhouse in 1975, Chasney's restaurant in Chingford was a popular base for over twenty years.

In the early years at Chasneys attendances of 100 or more were common, boosted by guests from other local old boys' Associations, such as Old Foresters and Old Bancroftians. These in turn received Old Bucks as guests at their dinners. In the late seventies the dinner at Chasney's was referred to as the 'Stag Dinner', though there is no indication of any additional entertainment provided in that connection.

By 1997 it was felt that a change of venue was in order. The dinner was moved to the Metropolitan Police Sports Club at Chigwell, which offered a good financial deal, and where the OB football club was already holding its dinners.

A number of eminent members of staff have been guests of honour over the years, including Messrs : Taylor, Colgate, Nicholson (all three being present in 1988), Whaler, Franklin, Sillis, and Leek. Guests speakers have included some of the more famous/infamous Old Bucks, including MPs Stan Newens (1941) and Mike Gapes (1964), sports promoter Barry Hearn (1959), and former football administrator Keith Harris (1964).

In 2010 the venue was moved to Woolston Manor at Chigwell, which also hosted the 2011 dinner. In 2012 the event was held at Theydon Bois Golf Club for the first time.



Barry Hearn (1959) speaks at the 2004 annual dinner



Subscriptions & Finance

The basic annual subscription has changed only relatively infrequently over the years:

1945	~ 5 shillings (25p)
1958	~ 10 shillings
1961	~ £1
1967	~ £2.10 (equivalent of)
1975	~ £1.00
1976	~ £1.50
1984	~ £2.00
1986	~ £3.00
2011	~ £4.00

The Association appears to have been in serious financial difficulty only when it had the ill-fated Roding Lane North site on its hands.

The money obtained relating to the relinquishment of the clubhouse has remained invested safely ever since, and has earned a substantial amount of accumulated interest.

Annual dinners and other functions have generally been more or less self-financing, and the cost of publishing newsletters and general administration were generally covered by subscriptions.

However, by the late 2000s increasing costs had overtaken income, and a standard UK subscription of £4 was settled upon, effective from 2011. This maintained the long-held and prudent principle written into the OBA constitution that subscriptions should cover running costs — no more no less.



Newsletters & Magazines

The first OBA newsletter was published in 1951 —unfortunately no known copy survives.

A regular newsletter has been a vital feature of OBA throughout its history. Originally it comprised just a few typewritten sheets. But from about 1968 it became a professionally printed affair, called

'OBA News', under the editorship of Dick Thomas (1958). The typewritten format was reverted to in 1979, presumably for cost reasons, but the newsletter continued to keep members abreast of OBA affairs, meetings, dinners, and events.

The varying fortunes of the sporting divisions were invariably covered in some depth. But most importantly there was news of Old Bucks who had written to OBA, or to the school, outlining where they were and what they were doing. This helped to maintain the network. Frequency of publication was sometimes spasmodic but it always continued, and eventually caught up with news.

From time to time there were messages from the former headmasters. In one such letter JHT made the immortal remark :

I am still hoping to read an obituary in the Times with the words "educated at BHCHS".

After many years as editor, in 1983 Dick Thomas handed over to Mike Carter (1953) and John Berrett (1955), and they in turn in October 1990 to Brian Hughes (1962). Brian kept publication going during a quiet period for OBA, after the school had closed.

Graham Frankel (1961) took over producing the newsletter in 1999, renamed it *Old Buckwellians News*, and developed it into today's comprehensive, full colour, high quality, professionally printed magazine, with a readership of over 1,700.



Organisation & Governance

OBA is a not-for-profit, unincorporated association. It operates under a Constitution, the original version of which was lost in the 1970s. The current constitution was approved in 2010. The stated aims are simply to encourage membership of the Association, and to foster and promote camaraderie within that membership.

As far as is known an Annual General Meeting has been held every year. Attendance has almost invariably been very low, even when the meeting has been held at venues with alcohol and/or food readily available. At some AGMs in the past only the committee turned up.

The AGM agenda offers the opportunity for members to question the committee and to air views. It can result in lively discussion and provides a useful source of feedback.

Recent AGMs have been held mostly at Guru Gobind Singh Khalsa College — the former BHCHS building. Opportunities for a tour of the school have attracted substantially more than the usual numbers, such as in 2007 (guided tour conducted by Peter Murch (1962)) and in 2011. The school is likely to continue as the AGM venue, especially since GGSKC is kind enough to provide use of the facility without charge.

Management of OBA affairs has always been conducted by an elected Committee, including a Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer. At various times Vice-Chairmen and honorary Presidents and Vice-Presidents have also been appointed.

The sporting and social sections originally had their own committees — operating under the umbrella of the main committee until the mid or late 1970s - but the remaining football and golf sections are now separate clubs.

Old Buckwellians News is in effect a wholly owned subsidiary of the Association. Administration and accounting are not however separated, so subscription to the newsletter automatically confers membership of the association, and vice-versa.

In recent years the committee has comprised no more than six members, with four or five being considered ideal. Some comparable associations have large, and potentially unwieldy structures, but OBA believes in keeping it lean and efficient.

