

The Future of the John Carpenter Club

(This article was written by our President Bruce Todd and published in the Autumn 2008 issue of the Gazette)

As reported at the last AGM and through interim updating articles in the Gazette, your Committee has been working, in conjunction with the Headmaster, to consider ways to re-shape the JCC to ensure it continues to fulfil its objective “to preserve the traditions and further the interests and prosperity of the School and to promote friendly intercourse among Old Citizens”. This review has been undertaken at the same time as the School has itself been seeking to build stronger links with its Old Boys, reflecting similar activity in other schools, and indeed colleges and universities, which, as many of you will know, have successfully sought to reinforce their “alumni network” in recent years.

In due course it will undoubtedly be necessary to seek members’ approval to some changes in our Constitution, but the Committee is not yet in a position to table these for consideration. In the meantime, however, it is both timely and appropriate to provide members with a full progress report and to seek, via a vote at the AGM, an endorsement in principle of the changes the Committee are making to the way the Club functions.

The Club is in a sound financial position and this review has not been prompted by any financial concerns. Rather more it has been undertaken in recognition of the fact that a reducing proportion of the current membership is engaged with the Club and there are many Old Citizens who are not members at all.

The plan for the future which the Committee has been considering is defined by the principle that boys become “Citizens” when they join the School and all are “Old Citizens” when they leave. The Club should be relevant to both Citizens and Old Citizens and all past pupils should be members of the Club for life. This concept contrasts with current Club rules regarding membership and subscriptions and, to be implemented, will require a revised approach to the funding of membership. Discussions are advanced with the School to convert the current 10 year membership scheme for leavers to a Life Membership at an appropriate level of funding.

Underpinning successful future administrative management of the Club will be three key elements, namely the database system, the website and paid administrative resource.

The Database

The Club has purchased a database management software package on which it is intended to build a comprehensive file of information on both existing Club members and other Old Citizens. Work has already started on bringing together the data held by the Club and the School, as well as tracking down details of other Old Citizens. The Club is very grateful to three recent leavers who have worked on this project over the summer. There is much still to do to make the database the foundation it should be for both the Club and the School to use for communication, event organisation etc but a good start has been made. A major feature of the software package is that will be much easier in the future to make contact with specific groups of Old Citizens, eg by year group or profession.

The Website

The School has now re-launched its website (www.clsb.org.uk) and the Club’s site has become a part of this. Again there is still much work to be done to develop the full Club content but the new platform is in place. As with the database the website is a critical part of the plans for improving communication and making the Club more accessible.

Administration

The Committee has determined that delivery of these plans and the running of the Club in the future will best be achieved by the appointment, as in other Old Boys clubs, of an administrator. It is envisaged this will be a part-time paid post and be based, when office space can be created, at the School. The post holder will work alongside a part-time Development Officer whom the School is hoping to appoint (subject to approval by the Governors). The shared objective of these two new posts will be to develop an effective and inclusive alumni organisation, meeting the needs of its members and supporting the aims and objectives of the School (see the original stated objective of the JCC set out above). Funding for the administrator’s post will be allowed for in setting the level of the Life Membership fee (again see above).

With these key elements of the change programme in place the Club and the School will be in a much improved position to work closely together to achieve the objectives that have been set i.e. to keep Old Citizens in touch with the School and the Club through improved communications; to arrange events targeted at different leaver groups and professional groups (eg lawyers, medics, financial services etc); to support Old Citizen and School sports; to arrange the Annual Dinner and AGM supper; to engage Old Citizens as advisors or mentors to pupils and younger Old Citizens and to encourage Old Citizens to support the School’s scholarship and other funding needs.

As was reported in the last Gazette, the aim is to “unify” the City of London family and to make the Club relevant, useful and responsive to both pupils and all Old Boys.