

A hello from Sophie



Hello, everyone, Sophie here. It's been a while since the last e-newsletter and I wanted to get in touch to say hello to everyone. I'm delighted to have been appointed President of the OW Club for this year and time is already flying. There have been one or two changes at the Club and the School Foundation which explains the hiatus. Debbie Whittemore, Foundation Secretary and OW Liaison, and who has been such a great asset and friend to the Club over the last 16 years, has decided it's time to retire. We will miss Debbie hugely and were delighted to be able to say goodbye to her properly at the OW lunch in

November. We also very much hope she will stay in touch and I am delighted that she will be attending the London dinner in March.

Taking over the reins from Debbie and from Neil Lyon before him, Graham Papenfus joined the school as Foundation and Development Director in January. Graham has a wealth of experience working with schools and alumni clubs in the UK and internationally and has lots of exciting plans. See below where Graham introduces himself and talks about his priorities and focus areas.

So what's been happening and what's ahead?

Well, first of all, the November get-together. This was in a different format to usual and 55 of us met at the school for a fabulous lunch where we heard from Jon Morris-Smith, the then President, as well as the Headmaster, Andrew Holman. It was great to see so many OWs and past teachers there too and, as having a lunch avoids the problems of dark Winter nights and as the school isn't open on Saturdays, we have decided that we will continue to host a lunch in November before the AGM so please keep Saturday 9th November 2024 free for the next one!

I've also been busy thinking about my priorities as President and I'm keen to make the Club more modern, varied and attractive to ex pupils across the generations. While we all have special memories of different eras, the overriding sense I get is that the grounding and foundations that Wellingborough School gave us is the silver thread that binds us and I hope I can help keep and nurture new links. I'm also a massive believer in the power of networks and think the paths we have taken since leaving the school are fascinating and could be hugely inspirational, to each other as well as to younger generations including current school pupils. I'm keen to spotlight that and bring us together as well as offer support to people facing career and academic choices in an increasingly uncertain world.



So, the first big opportunity to do that is at the **London dinner on 15th March**. I've booked The King's Fund which is a lovely venue not far from Oxford Circus. With just over a month to go, tickets are selling fast but some are still available so please don't miss out. Although it's a formal dinner, I promise to keep it as informal as possible and make sure there is plenty of time for networking and catching-up. To view the details, please click on the booking form link below.

[London Dinner Booking Form](#)

Oxbridge Dinner

We are pleased to have over 10 OWs already signed up for the annual Oxbridge dinner which this year will be held at Somerville College Oxford at 7.00 pm on 1st March. We look forward to other Oxbridge undergraduates and graduates attending so please click on the link below and book your place if you are keen to attend.

[**Oxford Dinner Booking Form**](#)



OW Golf

I did also want to highlight the OW Golf Club, who will be taking part in the Halford Hewitt Golf Tournament in its special centenary year at the Royal Cinque Ports Golf Club, Deal in Kent. I'm sure the players would welcome the support from fellow OWs so why not come along. Wellingborough are playing Fettes School in the first round on 11th April, 12:25. Good luck Wellingborough!

There will be a number of opportunities to get together throughout the year and I hope to be able to communicate more regularly on news and what's coming and making sure that digital media is our friend! If you don't follow the Club on social media, we are now on:

- LinkedIn [\(14\) Wellingborough School - Old Wellingburian - Network | Groups | LinkedIn](#)
- Facebook [\(4\) Facebook](#)
- X (formerly Twitter) <https://twitter.com/WboroAlumni>
- Instagram [Old Wellingburian Club \(@oldwellingburian\)](#) • [Instagram photos and videos](#)

As well as, of course, the website, www.wellingboroughschool.org/alumnae-supporting-us/welcome



Finally, you may have heard the sad news of the death of Richard Dyson, former Headmaster of the Junior School. We will be doing a full obituary in due course but I did just want to share my own personal reflections on this. Mr Dyson was headmaster when I was in the Junior School and also the Dad of my friend, Helen. I have seen so many tributes to him over recent months and it is clear that he was truly one of a kind. He had a calmness and an aura that just made you respect him and not be a disappointment and he undoubtedly had a

lasting impact on many of the pupils fortunate to be in his care. My thoughts and those of the Club go out to his family and we are delighted that his wife, Margie, has accepted honorary membership of the Club. Picture taken of Richard during his visit to the School for the Memorial of Graham Garrett and Mickey Prall.

I will leave it there but hope to hear from you and see many of you soon.

Sophie

A hello from Graham

One month in and I am loving getting to know the Wellingborough Community. I am very grateful to Debbie for helping me settle in before she heads off on a very well-deserved retirement at the end of March and Neil for sharing his experience with me as I settle into my new role as Foundation and Development Director at Wellingborough School.

I grew up in South Africa, lived in Zimbabwe and for the past 22 years in the UK. I established one of the first Development Offices in a school in South Africa in 1995 at St Stithians College in Johannesburg. Wellingborough School is my seventh school after establishing offices in the UK at Claremont Fan Court School in Surrey, Haileybury College in Hertfordshire, Ipswich School in Suffolk, Dean Close in Cheltenham and, for the past seven years, at Kingswood School in Bath.



My role has a dual focus to it:

- **Development** – my initial, and ongoing, focus will be getting to know and support the wider Wellingborough Community. The largest member of this Community is Old Wellingburians and I look forward to supporting Sophie and her committee in creating opportunities for OWs to meet up at events, keep connected and informed and welcomed back to their old school.
- **Foundation** – the Foundation focuses on securing significant and ongoing gifts to support the vision of the Headmaster and Governors in growing the number of transformational bursaries (100%+) we can offer, as well as the campus development under Project Copernicus – more details to follow on our plans and how you can get involved.

Please do get in touch if you would like to find out more or if I can help in any way. I look forward to meeting OWs in the months and years to come.

Kind regards

Graham Papenfus
Foundation and Development Director
Tel: 01933 222427
Email: gnp@wellingboroughschool.org