

President's Report 2023

Welcome everyone to the AGM, the first since 2020 due to the pandemic and the subsequent lockdown. At the end of the lockdown we all thought that was it and the world would go back to normal and life would continue unchanged. However there has been changes since the lockdown and we have not returned to what has gone before.

Since 2020 when we had an AGM we have not been dormant but have been working behind the scenes to ensure the FPA continues and thrives. We have also continued to support the school in a number of different projects from the purchase of a new 3D printer to more recently outdoor gym equipment. When I became President in 2020 I stated that I would ensure communication and strong links between the School, the FPA and the fledgling Baines Alumni. We all need to work together at this time in order to survive any upheaval from the threat of a multi-academy. We also have to embrace new technology and think to the future. The membership is changing; it is becoming more tech savvy therefore we have to embrace this if we are to survive. The FPA has a great deal to offer the school.

One of the innovations over the Covid years was an increase in communication. How to stay in touch when we cannot meet. Therefore the Alumni newsletter with elements of the FPA was created. This regularly produces 6 or 7 pages. I also created the Baines Alumni website which incorporates the FPA directory and has pages dedicated to the FPA to relate news of its members to its members. Over the Covid years I have had some comment from FPA members regarding the newsletter therefore the April newsletter will be exclusively (nearly) for the FPA. It will include news and stories sent in from the members. I have also set up a separate section in the website to incorporate members news and stories and this report will be posted on there.

We are at crucial time in the history of the FPA and possible change is in the air regarding the school. Looking back in the Poultonian the FPA and the School did a great deal together this seems to have waned recently. It is possible that sometime in the future the school may become a multi-academy. A multi-academy is one where several schools are part of the same academy. When this happens what will happen to the FPA? We must prepare for its future and that may mean some hard decisions need to be made.

We need to get the enthusiasm back in the FPA and give it a new stance in the position of the school. The Alumni covers all pupils and staff in the school and is non fee paying but the FPA goes beyond this and is a fee paying organisation therefore can be open to more specialist events.

This year was moving along nicely when disaster struck during the Christmas holidays. The main header tank at the front of the main building burst and sent gallons of water down through the ceilings in to the front office and staff toilet area. As the toilet area is adjacent to the hall and more especially the School War Memorials then we may have an issue. The floorboards in the hall have been removed for drying out. However on removing the boards rot was found in the joists and these also have had to be replaced. The Roll of Honour Books have been saved and are safely stored. The War Memorials escaped the deluge and are also safe. As to the organ and stage area these are also safe but I fear the organ being at ground level may have suffered as well. The Steinway Piano is in safe storage also. There is a tunnel from the boiler room (below the front office) to the stage and any water ingress could have affected the organ.

The other change that has happened recently is the leaving of the current headteacher, Alison Chapman. Alison has been in post nearly six years and is moving this Easter onto pastures new in training position at an academy trust. Her place will be taken temporarily (1 year) by Claire Docherty. So a new chapter begins in the school and a new link with the FPA. We wish Alison all the best in her new post and also wish Clare all the best in a daunting task of taking over the school, be it temporarily.

After all the doom and gloom we come to some good news. When the lockdown hit I started to realise something that had been muted in the School Magazine, the Poultonian in 1919. A listing of all those boys that fought in the Great War. This mammoth piece of work is now complete and going through the first proofread. This is currently 140 pages and lists all the boys and masters who fought in the Great War. Ultimately this piece of work will be stored in the School archive and at the Commonwealth Graves Museum.

This leaves me with thanking the members of the FPA committee who have weathered the storm and continue their sterling job of supporting both the FPA and the School. I would also like to thank the members of the FPA for their continued support. I would like to thank Paul Bamber for his work as secretary in keeping us all in check, Mick Baron the treasurer who retires this year after 49 years. and Muriel Ryding who keeps me on the straight and narrow. I think we should all thank the Helen Kenyon who is the link between the FPA, Alumni and the School. She has done a fantastic job in helping us all. Thank you

David

David J Astall, President