Welcome everyone to this year’s AGM of the Former Pupils’ Association.

The year has progressed in much the same way as in previous yars. At a time when FPAs are vanishing or closing in on themselves we need to survive. Other FPA operate as we do but it is rare that we find out about them, we are all very much in isolation. This year we have run the Christmas Lunch and the St Georges Day lunch although this was held later due to the Coronation. We were also blest with the sun for the Annual Presidents BBQ, hosted once again by the Bamber family – and I would like to thank Paul and his family for doing this and would like to thank the serving of the trifle, Muriel especially would.

The moving of the Annual AGM dinner due to the King’s coronation and the flood in the school meant that we could look at this event and modernise it in order to attract younger members. We moved its venue to the cosier room, brought the timings earlier and changed it to a hot buffet therefore relaxing the atmosphere. But we did retain some of the old traditions. We need to work on this more in order to increase the numbers attending the event. The school organised a golf day but due to circumstances this was not a hole in one – lets hope for better this year. We also need to reintroduce sonme of the other porting events if only to burn off the calories from the lunches and dinners !

I need to say that the school is undergoing a great change in the next 12 months; it has undergone a lt of change in its 300 year history but it is important that we continue to work as a community to assist in that change. And don’t worry the change will not affect the FPA and its assets nor the archive or the Alumni. The school we know will still survive but in a different guise.

I want to look back to the time I took over as President and the promises I made then. The world is changing faster that we would like to think. Many people, not just young people are embracing new technology and moving towards social media and digital technology and away from face to face communication and social gatherings. More often than not nowadays people prefer to hold electronic meetings rather than sit in a room together and then socialise afterwards. That world as we knew it has gone mostly from COVID. So having said that we need to look to the future too. The FPA needs to embrace new technology if it is to survive and attract new blood.

One of the promises I made was to keep the FPA and the Alumni communicating with the school and each other, this has been achieved through the newsletter and the website. I also made a promise to preserve the FPA for as long as it was viable and this is working as the FPA continues ,uch as it did before but has a foot in the modern camp. I also made a promise to help preserve the school archive, this is ongoing but progressing well.

The remit of the FPA is to preserve the family of Baines and to allow former pupils and staff to use their skill set in order to help today’s school, we still have some way to go on this.

It is sometimes seen as a cliché the Old Boy Network but my plan is to take this and use its strength to take the skill set of our FPA to help the pupils of today and to help each other. In a world where being a young adult is more challenging and pressurised than ever before. It is important that the whole family of Baines continue to guide the school not just to excel in their studies but as people, adults and contributors to the family. These members of the family need to then return to help others. Thi is achieved as the moment with the FPA giving monies to the school perhaps we need to extend this.

This year the Association has given back to the school in monetary terms, monies for DofE and other items. We have continued to try and keep the members of the FPA informed with the newsletter although now reduced in number and with the website, which continues to develop. Although with only myself contributing it is hard. The archive also continues to grow and it is hoped that in the near future more materials can be digitised and placed on the website.

The FPA could be said to be a thing of the past but it need not be. We have to be positive in what we do, we need to show enthusiasm and drive to encourage more to do their bit. Attracting new members is difficult but the enthusiasm shown by those younger members of the Baines family is strong, we as a group need to channel this enthusiasm. What we need to do is bridge the gap. You may think ‘he is preaching to the converted, but this report will be soon placed on the website for others to see’. We perhaps need a new approach to the way the FPA operates.

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, Fred Vickers the treasurer, in his first year as treasurer and Muriel Ryding who keeps me on the straight and narrow.

David J Astall

President Baines FPA