

OMS COMMITTEE MAY 2024

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

April saw the end of my year in office as president, concluding with the Annual Supper, where I passed the mantle to Jason Tarry. I wish him the best of success in the role, and hope he enjoys it as much as I have.

The Supper seemed to be a resounding success. We expected attendance to be higher due to the 475 celebrations, but they turned out to be record breaking. This is enormously gratifying. We had made some efforts to make the Supper more appealing and more streamlined, without losing it's 'traditional' qualities, and the feedback has been excellent. I hope those that attended will come back again next year, and perhaps bring other OMs along. As I said at the Supper, though we have large numbers on paper, the Society only really exists when we gather in person, and reunions are the way to keep the OMS thriving. General 'outreach' from the Committee and the membership should be encouraged to continue to bring more OMs back.

It was also my great pleasure to announce the artwork commissioned by the Society from MGS student Amelia Lee. This work, hung in the school's reception area, is the society's gift to the school for 475, reflecting (rather wonderfully, I think), the character and personality of the school in a series of connected portraits. Amelia's done some tremendous work. Mr Hanratty, the deputy head, must also be congratulated for his help in making this project happen.

I'd like to thank the Society and the Committee from allowing me to president for the past year. It has been a rewarding, amusing and often informative experience and has, I feel, also renewed my bonds with the school and its community. Thank you for the opportunity, and I look forward to seeing you all at future reunions and events.

Dan Abnett
President

OLD MAIDSTONIAN SOCIETY

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 16 MAY 2024

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Much of the Committee's efforts during the past year have been directed towards the school's 475th anniversary celebrations, and it is gratifying to report that the Society's Annual Supper, which was the first of a week of events, saw a record attendance for recent times, with 154 people filling the marquee that was erected in the Quad. Changes made to the traditional format were well received and we shall continue to listen to feedback with the aim of attracting more 'first-time' guests in future years.

As the Society's representative on the Governing Body, I had the honour of being invited to speak at the concluding event of '475 week' which was a whole school service also in the marquee.

Thanks are due to Dan Abnett who sponsored the creation of a superb piece of artwork by current student Amelia Lee, which has been installed in Reception for all to enjoy. Dan now becomes Immediate Past President and will be an ex-officio member of the committee for the year ahead.

Incoming President Jason Tarry's speech, as Dan's guest, was interesting, amusing and inspirational and I look forward to his year being a great success.

Members of the Committee have joined many other Old Maidstonians in contributing to the new Mentoring Scheme, which is proving an invaluable resource to students and recent leavers.

Members of the Society responded generously to the Appeal to fund the provision of a large screen in the school's reception, and although the installation is not yet complete due to factors beyond the school's control, I look forward to seeing the finished project which will be huge step forward in visual terms.

Once again we hosted a successful London Event at The George in Southwark, with many Old Maidstonians reconnecting for the first time since leaving the school.

As always, I thank all my fellow committee members for their input over the last year. We are all volunteers and bring a wide range of professional and life experiences to the table. Recently we have welcomed Chris Hipkins (1969) as Treasurer, succeeding Graham Walker who becomes co-Archivist. Deputy Head James Hanratty has provided valuable expertise on social media communications.

We always welcome hearing from any members interested in joining the committee. In particular we need someone to take on the role of Co-Editor of our newsletter 'The Old Maidstonian.' Brian White has fulfilled this role outstandingly well for several years and needs to hand over to someone new, to work alongside his fellow Co-Editor Nancy Powell. We also need a volunteer to act as Co-Webmaster to work with Malcolm MacCallum.

Olim Meminisse Juvabit

John Clayton

Chairman

May 2024

OMS AGM May 2024 SECRETARY'S REPORT

Once again it has been a pleasure to be involved in operating the “engine room” of the Society during what has become a historic year for the School and the Society in the celebration of the 475th anniversary of the founding of the School.

In addition to the hum drum secretarial routines of preparation of Agendas and Minutes the arrangements for the Supper involved more deliberations and discussions. These all paid off so that we celebrated in fine style at the end of April in the launch of “475”.

It has been a pleasure to work, once again, with such a committed team that forms the Committee and I especially single out our Chairman John Clayton, who has led us brilliantly through the year and maintained an excellent dialogue with the School. The latter task has been made easier perhaps because he has continued to represent the Society on the Governing Body and is thus close to the “action”. As the Vice-Chair of Governors he has been a dedicated influencer and the Society is grateful for the time he has put against this work.

During the coming year of continuing “475” celebrations the initiatives will continue and our President Jason Tarry, as a prominent businessman in the retail sector, will no doubt use every opportunity to assist with lifting the profile of the School and the Society.

Richard Ratcliffe 1956 – 1964
Hon Secretary

Old Maidstonian Society – Accounts up to 31 December 2023

General Account

General Account Income

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total in a/c at the beginning of year	1,630.87	2,191.01	2,513.41	2,444.59	1,546.83	1,907.69
Donations into account	313.25	215.75	255.75	192.51	186.50	210.50
Easyfundraising / Amazon Smile	-	-	22.28	18.81	-	61.69
Income from Annual Supper 2023					1,970.00	2,210.50
Income from Annual Supper 2024						112.00
Income from 'George' Event					462.00	260.00
Donation for annual Turner Prize					250.00	250.00
Transfer from Trust Fund (Clifford Award)					39.40	39.40
Income from Quiz					180.00	90.00
September Event Income	-	-	-	799.00	-	-
Total income	-	-	-	1,010.32	3,087.90	3,234.09

General Account Expenditure

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Royal British Legion	30.00	30.00	30.00	30.00	30.00	30.00
Information Commissioner	35.00	35.00	35.00	35.00	35.00	35.00
Postage/Envelopes/Labels	8.20	26.46	25.48	44.54	64.35	102.60
Hostpapa/Namesco	241.95	14.29	14.39	360.75	14.39	112.28
Annual Membership Register	95.00	135.00	186.00	135.00	162.00	180.00
Presidents Chain engraving	-	60.00	-	-	-	32.98
Flyer printing	-	-	-	-	-	27.50
'George' London get-together	-	105.00	-	-	387.00	374.75
Annual Supper bar licence	-	-	21.00	-	21.00	21.00
Annual Supper Food Cucina					1,440.50	1,690.50
Annual Supper Drinks Refund	-	-	-	-	24.00	-
Annual Supper Refunds					50.00	28.00
September Event Expenditure	-	-	-	858.20		-
Alec Stewart Award	-	-	34.98	-	39.40	39.40
Clifford Award					39.40	39.40
Turner Prize Payment to MGS					250.00	250.00
Quiz (cancelled) Refunds					170.00	80.00
Transfer to Trust Account	-	-	-	444.59	-	400.00
Total expenditure	410.15	405.85	346.85	1908.08	2,727.04	3,443.41

The Alec Stewart Award is normally included in the Annual Supper accounting, but no event 2020 & 2021.

Hostpapa UK Web Hosting oldmaidstonians.co.uk (3 Years) Valid till Nov 2026 + Annual Registration for Domain Name Valid till 22.12.24; Namesco Registration Oldmaidstonians.org.uk (3 years) Valid till Nov 2024.

General Account Profit and End of Year Balance

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Profit from Annual Supper	546.74	699.94	-	-	391.25	431.60
Profit from 'George' event	110.30	-	-	-	75.00	-114.75*
Total in a/c at the 31.12.23	2,191.01	2,513.41	2,444.59	1,546.83	1,907.69	1,698.37

*George Event was subsidised this year to keep the price to £10 per head.

Business Reserve Account

Trust Fund Income

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total in fund at the beginning of year	12,057.96	12,684.55	3,674.18	3,183.39	3,657.00	3,227.06
Donations into Trust Fund	60.00	40.00	-	454.59	55.00	65.00
Interest	12.03	45.62	9.21	0.48	10.06	105.91
475 th Fund Raising						18,561.25

<i>Amazon Europe Core</i>	-	-	-	18.54	5.00	18.41
<i>Transfer from General Account</i>						400.00
<i>Profit from Quiz Night</i>	554.56	713.00	-	-	-	-
<i>Total Income</i>					70.06	19,150.57

Trust Fund Expenditure

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<i>Donations from Trust Fund</i>	-	10,000.00	500.00	-	500.00	-
<i>Total Expenditure</i>					500.00	-
<i>Total in Trust Fund at 31.12.23</i>	12,684.55	3,674.18	3,183.39	3,657.00	3,227.06	22,377.63

Clifford Award Fund

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<i>Total in fund at the beginning of year</i>					1,283.69	1,244.29
<i>Expenditure Trophy & Engraving</i>					39.40	39.40
<i>Total Clifford Award</i>				1,283.69	1,244.29	1,204.89

<i>Total in Business Reserve Account 31.12.23</i>				4,940.69	4,471.35	23,582.52
--	--	--	--	-----------------	-----------------	------------------

The Business Reserve Account Total £23,582.52 includes the Trust Fund (£22,377.63) plus the Clifford Award which currently stands at £1,204.89.

The OMS accounts are independently examined annually by a qualified accountant.

Treasurer's Report 2024 YTD for the OMS AGM & OMS Committee 16TH May 2024

Firstly, I would like to apologise for not being present at the AGM meeting but I am on a trip to Scotland which has been booked for nearly a year and predates my appointment as Treasurer.

I would also like to give my sincere thanks to Graham Walker for the kind and helpful way he has handed over the Treasury Function to me during the last couple of months.

The figures for the calendar Year 2023 have been prepared by Graham Walker.

The account balances as at 30th April 2024 are as follows:

The OMS General Account stands at £7142.10

This includes all the revenue for the Annual Supper held on 20th April. The Caterers have yet to be paid, £3850 is the expected figure, and the presentation for the 475 Art Work of £475 has yet to clear the Bank A/C. I still await one payment of £32 and I have received £20 which I was not expecting. I have enclosed a spreadsheet for the April 20th 2024 Supper.

The Trust Fund (Business Reserve Account) stands at £24,089.73

Please note this figure of **£24,089.73 includes £1,204.89** which is ring-fenced for the Clifford Award, and the donations for the 475th Anniversary Fund (foyer refurbishment) totalling **£18,936.25** which will be transferred to the school at their request expected to be in May 2024.

Chris Hipkins

OMS Treasurer (Subject to AGM ratification)

1st May 2024

2023 – 2024 AGM Membership Secretary Report

OMS – Membership up to 31st December 2023

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<i>Total membership at 31/12/2023</i>	1510	1694	1859	2003	2131	2159	2338	2414	2491
<i>Lost contact</i>	5	6	15	30	20	15	10	3	5
<i>Removed by request</i>	1	4	2	4	3	2	2	7	1
<i>Deceased</i>	12	6	11	10	8	12	7	11	8

The last 12 months have been as busy as ever, with plenty more interactions in person as well as via email (notwithstanding our ongoing Hotmail bulk mailing issues). I continue to enjoy putting OMs in touch with each other online and at events. Massively enjoyed our third Supper since COVID and seeing many many more familiar faces, the size of the event was double what we are used to, so some facets may have been lacking, but feedback has been received and we shall make sure lessons are learnt and details improved for 2025.

The mentoring scheme is utilised by the School, thanks again to the efforts of Graham Walker, our new archivist. I remain grateful for his passion for the mentoring scheme but also for his previous co-operation as our Treasurer too. Chris Hipkins has a tall order ahead of him but he has coped admirably with his first Supper, especially with twice as much work as most years, baptism of fire! Grateful for the continuing help and input of everyone within the Committee, more additions are welcome, but the team we currently have is improving what we do, year on year, and that is shown in the numbers of members we now have.

More growth in our society member numbers over the last twelve months, 77 new members (1 more than 2022, mostly from the class of 2023), hoping these larger joiner numbers continue, 67% increase in the last 8 years(!), even if it means more emails for me to send!

Here's to another successful twelve months for all associated with the society.

Sean Scurr

May 2024

Old Maidstonian Society Webmaster's report for 2024 AGM

The year started after the last AGM uneventfully, with just routine postings and updates. Unfortunately pressure of work led my then Co-webmaster, Alec Clews, to resign: he had been a great help and has so far not been replaced.

However, that calm was disturbed in several ways later so this is a somewhat lengthier report than usual. Fortunately in several of the steps mentioned below the technical support people at our hosting service, Hostpapa, have been very helpful.

I reported at the 2023 AGM that the Membership Secretary had started to use the email service Sender, with substantial reduction in the time taken to email members. Two issues with Sender have become clear. One is that one cannot attach documents such as this report. Documents for members are now posted on the website with a link to them given in email. The other, which took some time to become clear, is that Microsoft's email systems (outlook, hotmail) reject email from Sender. This affects about 800 of our over 2500 members. Action to counter this is mentioned below.

Another issue was that our domain registration did not have the necessary DMARC/SPF/DKIM records (which recipient systems for email check), and therefore some sites rejected our emails. The mysterious initials stand for Domain-based Message Authentication, Reporting, and Conformance, Sender Policy Framework, and Domain Keys Identified Mail. I was able to fix the DMARC change myself but needed Hostpapa's technical support to complete setting the SPF/DKIM records.

Last year it was also reported that our host service, Hostpapa, had flagged a number of resource usage problems where we exceeded our allowances (especially the number of 'entry processes'). The measures suggested by Hostpapa relieved this significantly. These included optimising our images for faster transmission, removing the default 'admin' account (hackers' favourite target), hiding the actual login point using wps-hide-login, and adjusting the settings on the Heartbeat plugin.

A major one was joining the free Cloudflare service, which is in effect an intermediary between the net and our site (it provides the nameservers for our site rather than Hostpapa itself doing so). It controls traffic coming into our website that could look suspicious, such as high bot hits, DDOS attacks and similar, resulting in the site being more secure against high numbers of requests.

Hostpapa also suggested a change in our legacy hosting plan to one which is in fact cheaper (over 3 years) and has produced only one resource warning. Under this plan we can send only 50 emails per hour but the limit can be reset temporarily to 300. Making use of this the Membership Secretary has emailed those members who were not receiving Sender emails.

In negotiation of that rise in the limit it emerged that I was not able to give correct answers to their security check questions. The rather irritating reason turned out to be that Sean had quite correctly reset these when taking over his role as Hostpapa's primary contact but I did not know what he had set. This is now resolved.

The one resource issue under the new plan was related to storage usage but investigation was considerably delayed by the problem that the previous method of using FTP (File Transfer Programme) to download and upload files no longer worked. It took some time to get this resolved but we now have a working set of credentials enabling investigation of current problems.

The resource issue turned out to be that while there is no limit on file space there is a limit on space used for backup. In December 2023 I had created a backup exceeding this limit (now copied to my own machine and deleted from the site). Had I been able to access the site by FTP this would have been discovered and fixed sooner. We do have two problems I have not yet resolved – the mysterious loss of large parts of our 'media library' and of our header slideshow. I have made a backup to compare with the December one and hope to be able to sort those issues out in the next weeks.

The creation of a members' contributions page enabling the Society to provide links to material from members unsuitable for the 'Old Maidstonian' (e.g. too long) has gone ahead but is so far unpopulated.

The mystery of why our online forms fail with some browsers has not been cleared up but we now have some evidence of which browsers fail. The forms now include a note explaining that some browsers can give problems. I may trial a different contact form programme in the coming year.

Still hanging over us is the issue that our existing site design (its 'theme') is not compatible with the latest version (8) of the programme PHP which interprets scripts on the site that do the work of providing the end user with the screens he or she asks for. This was mentioned last year but has not yet become an issue because Hostpapa (and the provider I use for other sites) is still using PHP 7.4 as its default (although they do offer PHP 8), and that gives us no problems. If/when use of PHP 8 will become a live issue I do not know. The amount of work needed to rewrite our theme will be significant and if we reach that point I will propose we hire a professional designer.

Malcolm MacCallum
May 2024

Social Media Report 2024

- **Facebook** - there are currently 1,344 members of the Facebook page (an increase of 20 since the last meeting) – and a flurry of activity! NB: by way of a comparison, there were only 320 members back in 2014 when I took over the Facebook page!
 - o We have recently promoted the OMS 475 Merchandise, Annual Supper, Super Saturday. Sean has also uploaded photos post-annual supper.
 - o We've also promoted the Spring 2024 Newsletters (reached 800 people)
- **Twitter** – again, there are a handful of 'followers' on the Twitter page. As always, Twitter is not used as much as Facebook, but all updates that are posted on the Facebook page are also mirrored on the Twitter account.
- **LinkedIn** – we have also promoted the same posts from Facebook (i.e. OMS 475 Merchandise, Annual Supper, Super Saturday)

Sam Coppard