

From the desk of **Graham Whitty**



## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO THE OLD ALBANIAN CLUB ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 14 NOVEMBER 2023

### Introduction:

The Old Albanian Club has continued its steady progress towards its goals during the course of 2023. It is gratifying to observe that much of the ground work done in previous years to lay solid foundations has paid off. These foundational aspects rested on three pillars; communications/database, events organisation, organisational structure and administration.

To a greater or lesser degree much of the objectives we set ourselves in these key areas have been achieved. There remains ongoing work and opportunities for improvement, however we are now in a position to think more creatively about the future of the club.

### Our Mission:

The mission to build **a leading Alumni organisation for our members where ever they may be in the world** remains intact. In the 60<sup>th</sup> year of the College it is clear that St. Albans is coming of age and as a consequence so is the OAC. We now have members of our club spanning some 6 decades, spread out across the globe, and engaged in every conceivable career and profession. This gives our club the kind of diversity and scale that is needed to become a leading alumni organisation.

Earlier this year the OAC committee conducted a strategy session. We are planning a follow-up session in early 2024, however we have settle on a strap line for the OAC; **A Brotherhood for the Journey of Life.**

We are a brotherhood and all that this implies. We consider ourselves part of a family that will be there for each other. We are both able to offer our help and support as much as we are able to ask for help and support. There is a bond that binds us together, and even if we have not crossed paths for many years, when we do, there will be an instant connection and recognition of shared values and the bonds of brotherhood.

The word "Journey" has powerful connotations at St Albans. Since 2003 the College has sent its form 3 boys on a 23 day Journey. In small groups they transverse more than 450 kms of wilderness, with all that they need on their backs, while relying on each other in order to get from start to finish. If you are from the generation of boys that have completed the Journey you will know the power of this event. In 2024 we will celebrate 20 years of "THE JOURNEY" and it is fitting that we now draw parallels with the larger journey of life which we will all walk once we leave school. This journey is filled with highs and lows, successes and failures, and a constant striving to reach one's potential and find opportunity to enhance one's personal circumstances. It is this journey that the OAC wishes to play a part, to help put opportunity in each of our paths, to enhance our careers and professional lives, as well as bring like minded men together in order to build lasting friendships and make a difference in this world.

With this in mind, the OAC committee of 2024 will strive to build on our foundations to ensure that we take the activities of the club to a new level and make a difference in the lives of our members and an impact in the world in general.

### 2023 Events

In the 60<sup>th</sup> year of the College, the OAC has hosted some significant events. In general our events are growing in attendance and we hope to continue this trend. This growth is largely due to the improved communications with our Alumni and the enhanced event organisation capacity provided by the Alumni Liaison Office at the College. The following is a summary of the events hosted in 2023:



- **Summer sports day:** Successfully hosted old boys in competition with the College in cricket, water-polo and basketball. Our numbers were significantly up in 2023 with very competitive games being played and a large number of spectators. The College's sports department has taken an active role in driving this event and this is really assisting it to grow.
- **Reunions:** The 2023 reunion was termed the MEGA reunion. We attracted nearly 300 guests back to the College for the Diamond Jubilee reunion event. It was a resounding success and I believe we now have a formula for this event which will continue to attract our Alumni back to the College.
- **Derby Day:** This was without doubt the most successful derby day event ever hosted. Several thousand guests and old boys packed into the College to watch the sporting teams take on St Stithians. In addition we hosted WHPS, in their centenary year, while they took on the St Stithians prep school. The atmosphere at the College was incredible and a true reflection of the wonderful place that St Albans is.
- **London Old Boys Event:** Our headmaster hosted an event in London in early July for our old boys. Once again we enjoyed very good support from our UK based Alumni. Once again we co-hosted the event with WHPS and it is pleasing to see how well this has worked for both schools.
- **USA Event:** Hot on the heels of the London event, we hosted with the generous support of our old boys in the USA, a magnificent event in New York. This has sparked a whole new level of activity in the USA and Canada and I believe we will now be able to grow our reach in North America significantly with an annual event.
- **Our annual golf day in September.** This golf day is now so popular that we sell out in a matter of weeks! 2023 was no exception. We continue to be blessed with generous sponsors for the event and together with the full field the OAC raised nearly R200,000 towards our bursary fund.
- **Cape Old Boys Events:** Successful events were hosted in Hermanus, Cape Town, and Stellenbosch. Our Cape Chapter is growing fast and we are planning to extend our events in this region in 2024.
- **Brothers of the Sword Reception:** If there is one event that you attend at the College each year it should be this. The Matric group have their final assembly which is a unique and emotional experience, followed by our Brothers of the Sword event where the matrics are formally welcomed into the OAC. This event is firmly established as a tradition at the College and is designed to create an early connection with the OAC and form a right of passage for the matriculants.
- **JHB Old Boys Event:** This event was hosted in early November. The event is now gaining some traction and we had our most successful event to-date this year. It was extremely gratifying to see such a cross section of generations represented and the ease with which these generations interacted with each other.

## Alumni Office

The establishment of this office and its full time staff has made all the difference in the growth and development of the activities of the OAC. The club is limited in what it can achieve when it is solely reliant on the services of volunteers on a committee. Funding and capacitating an office with full time staff focused on driving our strategy and organising our events has been pivotal in creating the momentum in the OAC.

## Financial Report

The OAC remains in a healthy financial position. Our main source of revenue is our membership fees which are derived from each boy that attends the College. These fees are then allocated as follows:

- 1/3 is used to fund an annual bursary for the son of an old boy
- 1/3 is allocated to be invested in the St Albans Trust's endowment fund, which in turn uses its surpluses to fund bursaries
- 1/3 is allocated to the operating expenses of the OAC.

The second main source of revenue is our annual golf day. The net proceeds of this day are used to bolster the bursary to the son of an old boy. In 2023 the OAC provided a total of R293,000.00 towards this bursary



The financial position of the OAC can be summarised as follows:

- Total Cash on hand R1,090,434.00
- Income from membership fees in 2023: R353,900
- Net profit from golf day: R189,841.00
- FY Net surplus (estimated) – R142,000.00

Financial management: In 2023 the main committee took the decision to retain the services of a bookkeeper who in addition acts as the treasurer for the OAC. I am happy to advise that this has proved very successful and we will be continuing the arrangement in 2024.

## 2024 Budget:

I present a budget for 2024 with the following main points:

- Revenue: R535,000
- Expenses: R149,500
- Bursary Donations: 326,000
- Surplus: 59,500

## OAC Bursary Fund & Endowment Allocations:

The committee in agreement with the College has committed 1/3 of our membership fee income towards an annual bursary. This is revenue that the OAC can rely on with a high degree of certainty, and therefore it is able to make the commitment. The funds collected from the golf day will also be allocated to the bursary fund. The funding for the 2024 Bursary will amount to R326,000.00.

A total of R118,000 will be allocated to the OAC endowment in 2024. This will be added to the R250,000 approved and allocated in the 2023 budget.

## OAC Participation at Council & Other College Structures

As the chairman of the OAC, I represent the OAC at Council. This involves 4 council meetings a year as well as involvement in strategic reviews and direction for the College. This involvement is essential in aligning the OAC and the College and to ensure that the interests of the Alumni are reasonably represented at Council level. I believe that there is a strong degree of alignment at present and that this is assisting the OAC and the College to achieve their respective strategic objectives.

## Final Words

Linda van Wyk, who has been Director of Advancement at the College for the past 4 years will be retiring at the end of 2023. Linda has been instrumental in the development of the Alumni Liaison Office and aligning our activities within the OAC with the greater vision for Advancement at the College. She is the first person to hold the position at the College and has launched us all in a path that will add a huge amount of values over the year ahead. She has been a great friend of the OAC and on behalf of all of the committee and the members I wish to thank her sincerely for all she has done. At the same time we all wish Linda the very best in this next phase of life and trust that she will fill her days with family, friends, and good times.



The success of the OAC is now very much dependant on the capacity of the Alumni Liaison office to drive our strategy forward on a daily basis. The OAC committee is deeply grateful for the incredible work that Donne Roebert has done as the Alumni Liaison Officer. The success of our engagement with our old boys community is in no small part due to her hard work and invaluable skills.

Lastly I would like to make mention of the support and encouragement received from the College under the leadership of headmaster Shane Kidwell and Warwick van Breda the chairman of council. It is the sense of common purpose that is propelling us forward and it is gratifying that the College is in safe and innovative hands, driving it forward to ever greater heights.

**Graham Whitty (Class of '90)**  
**Chairman of the OAC**