

OLS President Report for 1st December 2025

President's Report

The forward planning is so incredibly efficient that it was some years ago that the OLS Committee very kindly asked me if I would consider being your President in 2025, 40 years after I left The Leys in 1985.

Identifying OLs some forty years or so after leaving School has stood us good stead in providing several suitable candidates to become President of the OLS, including next year's President James Middleton who left School in 1987.

Going forward, as the equilibrium of the intake between boys and girls aligns, it is an ambition of the OLS to rotate the candidate every other year, with an old boy/girl being President.

Furthermore, due to Karen Sears being both Vice-President of The OLS and a current member of the Common Room, we have through her endeavour developed a closer working relationship with the School's SMT and Foundation, for which we are most grateful.

Following discussions with the Bursar, Karen has reaffirmed that the OLS President will be invited to become Governor of The School both for their Presidential year and the following year.

The invitation will be made at the August OLS meeting prior to The Presidents appointment, thereby allowing time for the designate to complete their induction on taking office.

This year was the 150th Anniversary of The School, which of course has led to an extensive calendar of events with the highlight being the Anniversary weekend in April where 250 Old Leysians and 50 former Common Room returned to School.

There was a Chapel service with a rendition of "Xaipete" and a selection of sporting showcases, including the 1st XI beating The Perse in a 20/20 cricket match whilst an OL rowing eight of all different shapes and sizes, and branding a collection of different kit, took to The Cam once again!

A chance meeting with the OLS Cricket team at the OL 'Hub' that is The Panton Arms, demonstrated how the society's sporting clubs both meet and bond on a regular basis.

An illustration of this is the OLGS, who I joined at The Halford Hewitt competition in April at Royal St Georges, and where, as a recognition of Nigel Washbourne's retirement after being the OLGS Secretary for Sixty Years, a dinner was held in his honour.

The established Calendar of events includes the Cambridge Drinks event in August which brought together not only a good number of OLs (not all from the local area) but also new, current and former members of the Common Room as well of course, as the Development Team.

Likewise, the London Drinks in November, with its more London-based profile and for which we were again grateful for the use of One Moorgate Place, was a real success with 95 there, prompting that the suggestion that the Annual Dinner might be held in London in 2026.

There was the OL Communion in May at Wesley's Chapel and just last week, on a much larger scale, the Festive Celebration (Carol Service) which has grown to about 50 attendees including OL's from as far as Huddersfield, parents, local parishioners and staff.

My late father Martin, an OL himself, was highly committed to the school, the OLS, and The Leysian Mission and would have been proud that I was offered this role.

Indeed, the role afforded me the honour of retracing his footsteps by marking a critical period of the school's history in its 150th year, when along with the sons of two of my father's contemporaries, Andrew Holt and Michael Holden we recreated a 1940 film that captured the school's evacuation to Pitlochry in Scotland.

The production wouldn't have been possible without the support and hard work of the OLS team, and The School's Development and Marketing Teams.

A reminder of those times happened when, in November, I attended the Remembrance Day service at School, to join with pupils, staff and parents in remembering those OL's who gave their lives in both World Wars.

The special events of the 150th Anniversary and those from the established calendar, illustrate how fortunate we are to have Liz Walden as The Alumni Relations Coordinator/OLS Secretary

The hard work, commitment and attention to detail demonstrated by Liz and her colleagues ensure the both the President and the whole OLS community are well supported.

A fitting example of this was the care that Liz and the team showed in assisting Caroline Chamberlain with Peter 'Chippy' Chamberlains memorial service held in The Chapel in October with 150 in attendance.

My OLS Presidential year will come to an end this Saturday with the Annual Dinner at St Johns College and I am delighted that we have 85 signed up.

My guest, Sir Matthew Rycroft is both an OL and the Chair of The Leys & St Faiths foundation and a former Ambassador to The UN and Permanent Secretary to The Home Office.

Matthew is then a well-informed speaker and will reflect on the big changes in the world, country and school since we both left school, 40 years or so ago and if we continue with 40-year rhythm, how this year's leaver might see the world & school as OLS President in 2065!

I will then pass the baton to James Middleton, who in putting his own stamp on his Presidential year, will carry it through 2026, overseeing amongst other things, the reunion of leavers from 1990-1999 in May 2026

It's been a very enjoyable year, and I have attended some great events, and I value enormously the many friendships that I have made and retain within the Old Leysian Community.

Indeed, it's been pleasure and an honour to be your President in this landmark year for The Leys.

Thank you.

Stephen Ludlow

