

Minutes of the 25th (110th) Annual General Meeting of the St Beghian Society
held in the Whitelaw Building on Saturday, 29th September 2018 at 11.00am.

There were 38 people present, including Peter Lever (President), Pam Rumney (Secretary) and David Lord (Treasurer).

- 1) **Welcome** – Peter Lever, the President, opened the meeting by reflecting that when he took over from Dacre Watson a year ago, he recalled that Dacre had previously described his Presidency as having a vertical learning curve. Peter went on to say that he regarded this last year as President as feeling more like being at sea in a hurricane and that it had been an extremely interesting challenge being President of the St Beghian Society, a Director of the Joint Venture Company and also a Trustee of the St Bees School Trust. However, he was confident that progress was being made.
Peter recounted the eight excellent OSB Dinners which had taken place, despite the number of attendees at some diminishing. He also reported that the Singapore Lunch group had formally established themselves as an OSB Branch and would be holding annual meetings. In addition, the Hong Kong and China group was flourishing as an Asian Branch of the Society.
Peter concluded by drawing members' attention to a paper produced by Laurence Gribble, which had been circulated to those present and outlined the primary responsibilities for the St Bees School Management Company (JVC), and in addition he highlighted the 75% Full Circle and 25% Charitable Trust interest in the project.
- 2) **Brief Silence in memory of departed OSBs** – Pam Rumney read out a list of OSBs who we had been advised had passed away since the last AGM in September 2017.
- 3) **Minutes of the 109th A.G.M. held on Saturday 23rd September, 2017 (published in the January 2018 Bulletin)** – Laurence Gribble requested an amendment to item 10b to say that 'The St Bees School Trust does have charitable status but the St Bees School Management Company (JVC) does not'.
The amended Minutes of the previous meeting were agreed and were proposed by Mike Brandwood and seconded by Don Williams.
- 4) **Matters Arising** – There were no matters arising from the minutes.
- 5) **Election of Officers:**
 - a) **President Elect - vacant.** Peter reported that he would be retiring in September 2019 and that a successor was required to take over the Presidency. He requested that all members gave the matter some thought and contact the office with any suggestions or proposals.
 - b) **Committee – retiring this year were Roy Calvin, Darryl Davies, Andy Haile and Andrew Johnston.** It was reported that all but Andy Haile had been contacted and that they were all willing to continue.
 - c) **Treasurer** – David Lord agreed to continue as Treasurer for the time being.
 - d) **Secretary** – Pam Rumney also agreed to continue as Secretary.
 - e) **Golfing Secretary** – Tom Wright was happy to continue as Golfing Secretary.
 - f) **Accounts Checker** – Jason Spires was willing to continue in this position.A proposal to re-elect all the officers as above was made and unanimously agreed.
- 6) **The re-opening of the school – It was agreed to leave this item until the end of the meeting.**
Mark George (Chair of the School Trustees) and Gareth Seddon (Acting-Headmaster) joined the meeting following the completion of all other items of business.
Mark commenced by proudly announcing that on September the 6th St Bees School had re-opened and that sincere thanks were due to many people for this achievement, including the OSBs. He went on to introduce Gareth Seddon, the current Acting-Headmaster.

Gareth began by describing recent weeks as an extremely tumultuous time. He emphasised his commitment to the project and said it was absolutely key that the school had re-opened in September this year as planned. Whilst talking to parents, he had flatly refused to accept that the school might not open, but instead had given his all to reach the point of seeing children come through the doors at the beginning of the month. Gareth indicated that there had been a desire to celebrate and mark the occasion, but that arrangements had deliberately been low key in order for the new intake to get established as quickly and normally as possible in their new environment.

Gareth stressed the importance of having a group of children who really understood the spirit of St Bees School. He reported that they had already played Fives and carried out geological work on the beach, the latter being in school uniform, which had received recognition and admiration from visitors. He went on to report that the school had held its first parents' evening during the previous week and that the feedback had been overwhelmingly positive with one parent stating 'This is far better than I could ever have imagined'. Gareth emphasised the need for this to be standard and for promises to be kept as the school moved forward.

With his personal love of history, Gareth drew some appropriate parallels between 100 years ago today when the Hindenburg Line was broken, it having been stated that it couldn't be done, and the opening of the present school. He concluded his analogy by stating that he was very much looking forward to moving onward, whilst ensuring that everything was better for everyone. He was confident that the enthusiasm shown by parents and pupils to date would encourage others to come forward and be part of the developing school.

Peter Lever expressed his sincere thanks to Gareth for a very impressive overview of the school. He indicated that the school was in very good hands and wished him the best of luck in the development of the school.

A Question and Answer session then followed:-

Mike Brandwood (FS 61-66) asked about the number of pupils currently in the school and the future of boarding at St Bees. Gareth Seddon stated that there was no boarding at present as the Boarding Houses were not currently available. However, there was money being spent on School House which would enable boarding accommodation to be available from next year.

Anthony Wills (F 60-64) enquired as to whether there were any other full-time teachers in place, other than Gareth. Gareth confirmed that all teachers were part-time and that during the recruitment process he had had a key idea of the areas that needed covering. He went on to say that out of the 42 applicants, eight were interviewed and the three who were finally appointed covered, between them, all the various subjects required. One applicant, a Biology and Chemistry graduate, also offered Outdoor Education and D of E, plus taught Geography to A' level. Another, an Engineering graduate, taught Maths and IT, plus Physics to A' level. The third covered English and Drama and Gareth himself also offered History, PE and Outdoor Education. In addition, a Mandarin teacher had been employed on a part-time basis. He went on to advise that Art would be covered, for one full day every six weeks and Home Economics on a similar basis.

John Hewitson (SH 52-57) continued with a 2nd WW analogy, the 'End of the Beginning', and suggested that the most critical thing as the school entered the second phase would be the marketing, and in particular how the school would be marketed in China. Gareth confirmed that Mary Young, the school's new Marketing Manager, had just started and that a good relationship was developing with Sara Wang, Full Circle's marketing representative in China. Gareth advised that during a recent TV Talent Show in China, the 10 year old winner had 'chosen' St Bees School and was therefore spending the next two weeks at the school with a view to attending in the future. However, Gareth expressed his concerns over ensuring that there was no inappropriate marketing with regard to the required Tier 4 licence, which relates to the admission of overseas pupils.

Gareth concluded by confirming the success of using social media, which had produced several recent enquiries, resulting in potential parents being shown around the school. A significant number of these had already registered for September 2019.

7) Lonsdale Terrace.

8) Society Accounts – 2016-2017.

It was felt appropriate that items 7 and 8 should be dealt with together.

David Lord, the Society Treasurer, began by recalling that initially, when the school closed in 2015, the OSB Guarantee Trust Fund (GTF) had covered the ongoing Lonsdale Terrace running costs for the two years up to the 31st August, 2017. From the 1st September 2017 up to the 31st August 2018 the school used the Terrace for staff accommodation, for which rent was paid to the GTF on a monthly basis. The school also covered the running costs of the Terrace during this period. As the Terrace was now no longer needed by the school, a decision to sell the houses had been made. In order to satisfy the planning approval, two parking places for each property had to be created and quotes had been obtained to complete this work along with other conversion work needed to make the properties saleable. This cost was estimated to be in the region of £200k+. David advised the Meeting that the GTF did not have sufficient funds to complete the work and an application for a loan facility had been submitted to the Cumberland Building Society. Once the work had been completed, all the properties would be sold, apart from No.1, which would be retained, the downstairs being a possible base for the OSB office in the future, and the upstairs flat could be rented out. David reported that three different valuations had been received since the school closed and all valued the properties at around £2.1/2.2m in their present state. After the payment of Capital Gains Tax on all the properties it was hoped that the GTF would end up with between £1-1.5m.

In response to a query regarding the necessity of providing parking places, Peter Lever confirmed that it was a condition of planning consent that had been imposed by Copeland Borough Council. It was suggested that perhaps it was worth appealing against the decision, which David Lord agreed to consider along with a further suggestion to evaluate financially the impact of a reduction in the number of parking places per property.

Frank Messenger asked if Lonsdale Terrace would possibly be required by teaching staff, but Peter Lever advised that the school did not have the funds in the budget to be able to offer free accommodation to teachers in the future.

David Lord drew members' attention to the **Old St Beghians' Club Guarantee Trust Fund Account** and mentioned again the fact that Lonsdale Terrace had been occupied by school staff since September 2017, during which time the school had paid rent to the GTF. Following an approach to Tom Milburn with regard to the possible borrowing of funds to help the school at this difficult time, a valuation was obtained costing £3k. The cost of the valuation was initially paid by the GTF but would be reimbursed by the school in due course. David observed that the accounts indicated a small profit of £15k+ and that the outstanding mortgage on No.8 Lonsdale had reduced by £12k.

The **St Beghian Society General Account** showed a loss of just over £22k, mainly due to two one-off items of expenditure. The school had a real need to employ Sandy Rogers as a Site Manager but were unable initially to fund this appointment. The Society therefore had agreed to pay £25k over an eighteen month period to assist the school with his salary. In addition, £1850 had been required to launch the new Edmund Grindal Appeal. Whilst being prepared to help the school through these difficult times, the Society's cash reserves, as a consequence, had deteriorated significantly. Pam Rumney's salary, together with the Bulletin and postage costs, still needed to be paid, but with no income currently coming in from school pupil Life Membership subscriptions (or rental income to the GTF to assist), the future would continue to be difficult and David concluded by stating that the Society needed to be very careful with the remaining cash currently held and that he would be extremely relieved when some of the Lonsdale properties were sold to provide some much needed liquidity for the GTF and the St Beghian Society. To assist in a small way David advised that funds from the 200 Club might need to be diverted.

David thanked the JVC and School Trustees for all that they had done to achieve the re-opening of the school and was pleased that the Society had been able to help in a small way. He continued by saying that there were many challenges ahead for the school but that while the Society must try to do everything in its power to help, he was extremely anxious about the Society's possible financial situation beyond the summer of next year.

Steve Lees asked when the Lonsdale work would be completed and the properties ready to sell. David replied that he hoped marketing could start early in the New Year and that some properties would be sold by this time next year.

Frank Messenger mentioned the recent negative reports about Whitehaven School and wondered if this could help St Bees at all. Peter Lever indicated that when asbestos had been found there the Trust had been approached and, at the time, agreed to take 90 pupils if required. However, Alastair Lord confirmed that Whitehaven School had now received investment themselves and were no longer in need of assistance. Peter Lever indicated that the school was always looking for revenue-making initiatives and that all ideas were treated seriously.

9) The Edmund Grindal Society – Peter Lever advised members that nearly £100k, including gift aid, had been raised to date from OSBs. Initially the target had been £400k. Since this time the school’s running costs had significantly increased and Peter confirmed that contributions would still be greatly appreciated.

10) Branch Activities – Peter Lever gave an overview of the various gatherings which had taken place throughout the year. He thanked the organisers of the events and also Members for attending, but expressed his concerns over the dwindling numbers at some of these functions.

11) The 200 Club Draw – Darryl Davies reported that a figure of just over £2600 was held by the club but that the number of members had fallen in recent years and hence new participants were needed. It was agreed that due to the limited time available before the Chapel Service, the scheduled 200 Club Draw would take place later during lunch in the Foundation Dining Room. The draw identified the following winners:

PRIZE	Ticket No.	WINNER
£160	6	PJ (Philip) and S Etchells
£60	46	DW (Darryl) Davies
£60	62	DT (David) Johnston
£60	42	WS (Bill) and J Affleck
£60	14	GC (George) Robson

12) Any Other Business –

a) During the meeting Peter Lever made a presentation to Laurence Gribble (SH 02-09) of an old sixpence minted in the year that the school was founded. The coin had been donated to the school by an OSB and Peter felt it appropriate to present to Laurence, an employee of the Full Circle Group, for his significant contribution in the achievements to date with regard to its re-opening.

The President thanked members for attending and closed the meeting at 12.30pm.