

A message from David Bridges - *OTA President*



I was extremely humbled and honoured to be invested as your Old Tauntonian Association President last month and I look forward to serving you in this capacity for the next two years.

A number of you have voiced concerns regarding statements made in the recent *OT Review* as well as from various Facebook posts. Yes, there will be changes but this should be thought of as good practice to make the OTA a fit-for-purpose organisation in the 21st Century. You will continue as an important member of the worldwide OT community for life.

For many years now I, as a fully-paid employee of Taunton School, have been managing events and communications on behalf of the OTA and my retirement next month has led to meaningful dialogue between senior figures within the School and your Association. A working party met in April to arrive at firm proposals for approval by your OTA Committee and AGM. Chaired by Michael Button (*OTA Vice President*), other members of the group were David Jenkins (*OTA Vice President*), Henry Keeling (*OTA Trustee/Chairman TSEC*), Richard Kennedy (*OTA Treasurer*), Nadine Latte (*Foundation & Alumni Director*) and myself (*OTA Secretary, Foundation Manager and President Elect*).

At this meeting it was agreed that your OTA Committee is committed to change and that, having satisfied its own requirements, income from accumulated OTA Funds should be made available to support the TS Foundation. Bearing in mind that £850k+ is held by the OTA, it is only just, right and proper that we should be looking to support bursaries through the TS Foundation following wise and considered dialogue.

As from September, your Association will see the first recipient (a talented cricketer from Cornwall) of a 100% OTA bursary enter the 6th Form. Two years ago, your Association agreed to invest £5,000 per annum for 7 years, through the TS Foundation, in this young man's education and I am sure you will agree that, given the accumulated funds held by the OTA, we should be doing more along these lines. I am not advocating for one moment that we drain the OTA funds, but with prudent investment we could, and should be willing to invest more of our income to help change the lives of young people through a fantastic Taunton School education. After all, this has been the underlying reason for the Association's existence for the past 130 years.

The Taunton School Foundation, in which I have played a substantial part over the past 20 years, is working hard to change young lives through bursaries and, as an Association, we should become more receptive to embracing the ways and means of developing young talent in order that the reputation of Taunton School continues and its young people enter the world of work challenged, nurtured and inspired.

There is a great wealth of goodwill and talent amongst our former pupils but we forget, at our peril, the talent and goodwill of our current and former parents – those who have given their utmost to put you through an education at Taunton School. In light of this thinking, a new ‘umbrella’ organisation to be named the ‘Taunton School Community’ will be established. The management of this new vehicle, led by Nadine Latte (*Foundation Director*) and her expanded team of Dr Hannah Jones and George Cockburn, will have its base within the School. As your President I remain part of this team, albeit in a voluntary capacity. Just to confirm: the OTA will continue in all its guises as part of the ‘Taunton School Community’ alongside the Parent Teachers’ Association and the Foundation.

We recognise that due process must be followed in order to change and so an EGM will be held mid-May 2020 to update the OTA Constitution and give effect to any proposed changes. You will be kept fully-informed and I very much welcome your considered opinions on any proposed changes.

There are many other ways in which you can get involved and the new office will be looking for Career Mentors able to give practice interviews, personal work advice or come and chat to current pupils about their line of business.

Please help us to help you help yourselves - get involved and become engaged!

As from 3rd July, Dr Hannah Jones will be your OT point of contact:

hannah.jones@tauntonschool.co.uk / ots@tauntonschool.co.uk / +44 1823 703158

I look forward to catching up with you at various events throughout the year – keep an eye on the OTA website <https://taunton.alumni-online.com>

With every good wish

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David." with a long horizontal stroke underneath.

David J Bridges

OTA President

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