

Chairman's Report to the AGM 2025

Over the past year, the Club has flourished, marked by a vibrant calendar of events, new initiatives, and milestone celebrations.

Professional networking has been a particular success, thanks to a collaboration with the School's Futures Department. There have been informal networking events for property, legal and finance professionals and a dinner organised by the OS Property Society. Plans are already underway for insurance and technology drinks, as well as a finance dinner at the East India Club in March.

The Salopian Connect platform continues to thrive, now boasting over 3,000 members with increasing evidence of engagement between young and old Salopians seeking and offering careers advice online.

The annual University Tour once again proved popular, visiting Edinburgh, Durham, Oxford, Exeter, Bristol, Manchester, and – by popular demand- Newcastle.

Social gatherings also flourished. The Birmingham and Shrewsbury drinks parties in November and December were well attended, while the Summer Party at Shepherd's Bush Cricket Club drew a lively young crowd despite sweltering June heat. In the arts, the Old Salopian calendar included an inspiring Epiphany Service and a superb evening of musical entertainment at the Open Mic Night at The Pheasantry in Chelsea.

A major highlight of the year was the centenary celebration of the Shrewsbury Saracens. Nearly 100 members gathered for a dinner at The Kia Oval to honour a century of cricketing tradition. Fittingly, the Club's President this year is former cricketer and ECB CEO Tim Lamb (SH 1966–71), who organised a memorable dinner in the Long Room at Lord's in October. The 137 attendees enjoyed a speech by broadcaster Nick Owen (R 1961–66) and a lively auction conducted by Lord Archer, which helped subsidise the event.

On Old Salopian Day we welcomed back more than 200 Old Salopians including four OSFC teams. A new formula for the reunion dinner led to an increase in uptake and over 80 members of the Class of 1985–90 returned for the event. There were two lectures (one by Robin Brooke-Smith SS 1961-66) and the other by Tim Willasey-Wilsey (M1967-71), musical entertainment from the pupils and an OS ladies' hockey match. A highlight was an impressive art exhibition by Ruby Read (MSH 2019–21), celebrating the personalities that shape Shrewsbury's enduring culture.

The Salopian Drivers Club expanded its membership to 165, enjoying scenic tours, an annual dinner, and a display of twenty-three cars on Central. Meanwhile, the newly founded Salopian Natural History Society held its inaugural summer walk through the School's conservation projects, accompanied by a talk from rural affairs journalist Anna Jones.

Because the Club was rendered largely inactive for the duration of the epidemic, its overheads dropped significantly for about two years. This resulted in the build-up of unexpected reserves of about £250,000.

Over the past year, the Club allocated about £85,000 of these towards the enhancement of the Moss Gates, the restoration of the war memorial on Central, the installation of the new flagpoles at the end of the fives courts and the building of the new golf studio.

With the imposition at the beginning of the year of 20% VAT on school fees, a 5% increase in employers' National Insurance contributions and increases in the minimum wage rate and business

rates, the School's Governors asked us if we could donate some of our reserves to help meet the School's sharply increased outgoings.

The Club currently costs about £295,000 a year to run. Some £165,000 of this comes from the parents of current pupils (to secure their children's lifelong membership of the Club) and the School pays the balance of £128,000, covering the cost of employing the Club's Director, her administrator and various other outgoings.

In January, the Governors asked us if we would be prepared to donate to the School a sum equivalent to what it is paying towards the cost of running the Club this year. After considering the position, we agreed to do this.

In deciding how much the Club is able to donate to the School, it has to retain a sum of money for its own cash flow purposes and to preserve its financial stability. This inevitably affects the amount available to give to the School.

We have told the Governors we expect to be able to make another donation to the School early next year when we know what we can afford. We hope that the Club may be in a position to donate at least £110,000. Equally, we have told them that after that, unless circumstances change, the Club will not be in a position to make any further donations for the foreseeable future.

In talking to us in January, the Governors also asked that the Club should try to contain or reduce overheads, where possible. I explained that significant cuts would not be possible but that we would do what we can without deterring our members from wanting to participate in the Club's activities.

All in all, therefore, the Club is doing all it can to support the School through the unsettled waters in which it finds itself but without undermining its stability and excellence.

As is apparent from the length of this report, it has been an active year for the Club. This activity would not have been possible without the enormous amount of work that has been done by our Director, Holly Fitzgerald and the Club's Administrator, Christine Stephens and all the fantastic volunteer helpers, ranging from the members of the Executive and Main Committees and all those involved in running the club's numerous clubs and other groups. Thank you all for your invaluable support and hard work.

We are always looking for more volunteers either to help with the Club's existing operations or to start up new projects for the benefit of our 8,500 members. If you would like to offer your services, please don't hesitate to get in touch with me or Holly Fitzgerald.

Miles Preston

Chairman

November 2025