

Old Cottonians' Association United Kingdom



President's Newsletter
Vijay Bhalai MRCS FRCS

Dear Old Cottonians

I am delighted to take over the reigns of the Old Cottonians' Association (UK) and hope that I will be able to do justice to the office. The school is very dear to me and I feel privileged to be representing the Old Boys in the United Kingdom. Thank you for your support.

I have been off and on attending the Old Cottonians' lunch for over 30 years. During this time, the association was brought together by Peter Stringer, Gay Niblett and Kuljinder Bahia. I must thank Kuljinder for his spirited leadership of the UK chapter. He has very successfully kept the organisation going and contributed significantly to the school, for which he must be congratulated. Kuljinder has been supported by Gursant Sandhu who has, as the Secretary of the Association, kept contact with the membership and Puneet Singh, Treasurer, who has kept the organisation financially afloat. I am very grateful for their unrelenting contribution.

The last three years have been very challenging for everyone, and the OCA brotherhood was unable to meet during this difficult time. As a healthcare professional myself, I was in the middle of the action, but was able to arrange a Zoom meeting with my colleagues during the extreme lockdown in the UK. Sukhminder Sehbey, Iqroop Chopra, Raju Singh, Sundar Sidha, Gursant Sandhu and Kuljinder were a great source of strength in those difficult times.

Since taking over the role of President in October last year, I have had regular meetings with the core committee of the association, which includes Gursant and Puneet. We have been planning the year ahead to strengthen the association. The main aim of the association is to support Old Cottonians in the United Kingdom and liaise with our alma mater. Going forward there are some key areas of development which we will be working on:

- Updating our membership directory. This will improve our communication with the membership. I am keen to capture all Old Cottonians in the United Kingdom. My secretary, Pam Palphreyman, has kindly agreed to support the organisation during my term as President and has already started to work on this. I would be grateful if you could forward your details or anyone new in the UK to Pam (pamelapalphreyman@nhs.net) so that the membership directory can be updated. The organisation will be GDPR compliant, and your details will not be passed on to anyone outside OCA UK.
- Financial stability of the Old Cottonians' Association UK. It is important for an organisation to be financially viable and there are a few models we are working on, and this is an area I am familiar with due to my role at Health Education England and Charities Trust. We will discuss this matter at the next AGM in London.

- Develop a framework and touchpoint for old boys in the UK. The thought behind this is that the association has a link person for every school decade, e.g., 1950-1960 etc. This will hopefully strengthen the organisation. If this is something that you would be interested in helping with, then please get in contact. The OCA UK would love to have you onboard.
- Supporting our alma mater. As Old Cottonians, we are very proud of our parent school and there are many ways we can support it. The OCA UK under Kuljinder supported many projects at the school and I would hope that this can be strengthened. I am aware that our membership has very successful businessman/financiers/bankers/doctors and writers. My plan is to link up with the mentorship programme at the school, so that the headmaster, Mr Simon Weale can approach you. If you are willing to mentor a young Cottonian, either during his school time at Bishop Cotton School or after leaving school, please get in touch with myself or Pam.
- Develop the OCA UK website. This work is ongoing, and we are looking for an enthusiastic volunteer/volunteers who would be willing to take on the challenge of developing this. The role would mainly be for content delivery. I am grateful to our last President, Kuljinder, who is funding the website development. If you have an IT/journalism/content editor background, please consider getting in touch with myself or Gursant.
- Supporting the Old Cottonians' Association. I would hope to strengthen the relationship between the various chapters in India and abroad.
- Annual lunch. We will continue with the tradition of our annual OCA UK lunch on the last Saturday of June. This falls on the 24 June this year and will be held at **Bombay Palace, 50 Connaught Street, London, W2 2AA**. All Old Cottonians and their partners are invited, and the cost will be £50 per head. This is a great social gathering when the younger members of the Association can network with the senior members. I would encourage everyone to attend if they are able to. Please RSVP to Puneet (puneetsingh932@hotmail.com or **07841590990**).

Sadly, over last few years, we lost many of our older members. I thank Gay Niblett for his assistance in collating the below information.

Peter Stringer (Lefroy 1941-1947). Peter was the most spirited Old Cottonian I have had the privilege of meeting. He had great enthusiasm and reminisced his time in school, sharing his experiences with the members. His leadership kept the association together for the last 20 years. He will be sadly missed by all.

Dr Humayun Khan (Rivaz 1941-1947) used to regularly visit us from Pakistan. Humayun was one of the old boys who left school on the 3 June 1947 during the partition of India and later joined the Pakistan Superior Services. In 1984, he was appointed Pakistan High Commissioner to India.

Sanjiv Talwar (Rivaz 1968-1974). Sanjiv was a brilliant academic student. He topped the Delhi University in Economics following which he came to the UK and studied chartered accountancy. He subsequently did a PhD in International Finance, after which he worked in international banking for many years and then became a very successful independent consultant and finance director of e booker.com.

John Phillips (Curzon 1939-1944). John was a good sportsman and apparently had an eye for Joyce Sinker, the Headmaster's elder daughter, and was a friend when both were back in England. He was by then a senior member of the Farmers Union in the UK. A stalwart of the OCA(UK)

Bob Myers (Ibbertson 1936-1944) Bob was House Captain of Ibbetson. He was a Prefect and boxed for the school. He later got a Blue for boxing at Cambridge University. Bob was a great supporter of OCA UK and regularly invited OCs to his home in Somerset to stay for a couple of nights before the Annual Lunch, even inviting an Old Sanawarian to his dining table at the same time.

Allan Bapty (Rivaz 1936-1944). Allan was a doctor who did a lot of missionary work looking after people suffering with leprosy, mainly in Nepal and Africa.

Clive Hardy (Lefroy 1940-1945). Clive was House Captain of Lefroy and an all-round sportsman. He was a keen supporter of OCA UK

Arthur Jones (Lefroy 1942-1945). Arthur was a keen cricketer and played for BCS. He always attended the Annual Lunches.

Lance Jones (Lefroy 1935-1939). Lance served in the Indian Police Force and when he returned to London he was a fervent Arsenal supporter. Despite being rather frail in his last years, he was full of spirit.

Douglas Reed (Rivaz 1940-1946). Doug (Dhumchu) was House Captain of Rivaz. He was a formidable long-distance runner and unbeatable marathon performer.

Robert (Bobby) Reed (Rivaz 1940-1946). Bobby was an outstanding sportsman and academic. We OCs, however, must thank him and his wife, Sheila, and their family for hosting many lunches at their home. Sheila continues to attend and was present on an overseas trip to the school. They are in our thoughts and the OCA UK fondly remembers their association with the membership.

I was fortunate last year to meet the Headmaster of Bishop Cottons School, Simon Weale, along with his charming wife Rebecca, and the schoolboys on their cricket tour to the UK. The OCA UK, under our President, Kuljinder, hosted the boys and staff during this visit and it was a delight to meet the boys and watch them play cricket. Some of the old boys were able to follow and attend as the Cottonians continued their tour. The school will be visiting the UK again this year for a cultural tour. Again, this would be an ideal opportunity for the OCA UK membership to meet and support the school. Cottonians plan to visit Strafford-upon-Avon, Rugby, Bath and London during this period. I am hopeful that the headmaster and his wife will be able to attend the OCA UK lunch on the 24 June. Their programme is as follows.

18th June - Arrive in London - transfer to Oxford.

19th June - Visit to Stratford Upon Avon and then Rugby School - visit Cotton House and meet the Rugby archivist who will show us the archives on George Cotton.

20th June - Tour of Oxford and Oxford University - transfer to Bristol

21st June - Sightseeing in Bristol then interaction with pupils and staff at Bristol Grammar School.

22nd June - Morning in Bath with visit to Kingswood School. Evening tea/BBQ at Cotton House, Marlborough

23rd June - Visit to Harry Potter World

24th June - Sightseeing in London

25th June - Sightseeing in London including production of Comedy of Errors at the Globe

26th June - Sightseeing in London including visit to Westminster School

27th June - Return

The school has appointed a resident teacher in charge of alumni affairs- Deepa Kennedy. She will be the point of contact with Bishop Cotton School. She can be contacted by email- aluminibishopcotton@gmail.com. Please contact her for any help required. This is a welcome step for old cottonians all over the world who can now keep in touch with their alma matar.

I look forward to seeing you all on the 24 June.

Kindest regards, Vijay