



OLD PALACE ALUMNAE
AGM
26 September 2026

OLD PALACE ALUMNAE

2026 AGM

Agenda

1. Apologies
2. Election of committee and office-bearers
3. Minutes of previous meeting
4. Chairman's report
5. Treasurer's report
6. Approve accounts
7. Any Other Competent Business
8. Date of next AGM
25 September 2027 TBC

Old Palace Alumnae Committee 2025 - 2026

Hannah Guerin 1997 - 2008
Jean Loh 1973 - 1980
Joanna Jayarajan 1989 - 1999
Karen Sayers 1973 -1980
Karina Thorne 1990 - 1997
Liz Forrest 1972 - 1980
Sophie Filon 1975 - 1982
Tracy Lee 1976-1981
Veronica Barnes 1970-1977
Jacqueline Derbyshire
stepped down 8/2025
Sue Bettie stepped down 2026



Some of the committee at Founders Day 2025

OLD PALACE ALUMNAE

Annual General Meeting

1st July 2025 3-4pm

Chair's welcome.

Following on from the today's very successful Open House event, Katherine welcomed over 45 members to the final Annual General meeting to be held at Old Palace of John Whitgift School. On 2nd July the Old Palace Alumnae will leave the umbrella of The John Whitgift Foundation & will stand on its own. The entrance gates of the school will close for the last time on 4th July.

Apologies for absence.

Nicola Hawes, Liz Forrest, Janet Jones, Maxine Adams, Francesca Mellor.

Minutes of the last AGM

They were contained in the pack & circulated to members beforehand. They were approved by the members & signed by Katherine.

Chair's Report - See attached report

Treasurer's Report.

A copy of the accounts were contained in the AGM pack & made available to members beforehand.

As of 30th April 2025 the accumulated funds were listed as £23,319.

Tracy reminded members that over the last 2 years the associate membership income had dwindled owing to the small number of pupils in the school.

Extra funds were spent to ensure that the final summer lunch, Founders day & Carol service were extra special for members. A laptop had been purchased to hold the members' database & future committee needs.

Tracy thanked Janis Sinden our accountant for preparing the accounts along with for her many years of devoted service to the Alumnae. Janis has advised us that she has stepped down. As no questions were forthcoming from the members prior to or at the meeting, the accounts were approved & signed by Tracy & Katherine.

Members Questionnaire

Katherine said a questionnaire was sent to members last year requesting their views on the future of the OP Alumnae after the school closure. It was the majority wish of the members that the Alumnae Association continue for 5 (five) years when the decision to continue would be reviewed.

Database, Membership & Social Media.

In line with GDPR guidelines, members consent has been obtained in the past year to agree for their contact details to be transferred to the "new" database.

(Around 3,500 contact details held by The Whitgift Foundation database were painstakingly cross checked by Helen Richards to avoid duplication.) Currently, there are over 900 members registered on the database & around 1000 that are signed up to the social media accounts. Further new members names were being collected at today's Open House to be added to the database, LinkedIn & Facebook by using a QR code on Jean's (Loh) tablet & printed slips.

As of 2nd July 2025 the database will be transferred by The Whitgift Foundation into Alumnae ownership.

Access codes to the social media accounts will also be transferred by the Whitgift Foundation on 2nd July.

Website

Jean (Loh) reported the chosen domain name had been leased. The name is similar to name on the new Google mail account. Vicky Burley of Smarter Reach has been appointed to build the website. Currently, the landing page has the last newsletter & social media links. Jean said it is hoped that "the new website will be the heart of Old Palace in future years."

Archives. See attached PDF

Election of Officers.

Katherine reported the she would be stepping down after this meeting, so would Tracy Lee our Treasurer.

Other members who indicated they were stepping down were: Alison Botham, Janet Jones, Cindy Hedmann, Zoe Sexton (RIP), Maxine Adams, Janet Jones & Hilary Gadd.

Jacqui Derbyshire (Deputy Chair) indicated she was content to be nominated as new Chair. She was seconded by Maureen Bunn & Gill Bailey.

Jean Loh was content to be nominated as Deputy Chair. She was seconded by Maureen Bunn & Gill Bailey.

Sophie Filon was nominated by Tracy & agreed to be Treasurer. She was seconded by Emma Brook & Gill Bailey.

Any other business.

Katherine reported that a new constitution had been compiled to meet the future needs of the OPA. It was circulated to members prior to the meeting & was in the AGM pack. No questions had been received from members prior to, or at the meeting.

A privacy policy had also been circulated to members prior to the meeting & was in the members pack. No questions were received prior to, or at the meeting.

A recent letter (attached) from Roisha Hughes, CEO of The Whitgift foundation was read out by Katherine. "The sale of part of the OP site, by The Curwen Group was taking longer to get to the exchange of contracts but they were working on the fact it would complete in a couple of weeks. A small charity had expressed interest on the (smaller) remainder of the site & we would be kept updated on this".

Roisha confirmed that some of the archives would be stored at Whitgift School & the remainder in one of the Foundation buildings in George Street. She confirmed that "they have found a solution that will enable access if/when necessary."

Requests to access archives can be made to:

enquiries@johnwhitgiftfoundation.org

Roisha thanked Katherine for her hard work & commitment as Chair & looked forward to working with her successor.

Gill Bailey & Maureen Bunn expressed their vote of thanks to Katherine for all her hard work & dedication to the OPA over her years as Chair, saying that she'd (Gill Bailey) enjoyed her own school days at OP.

Helen Richards thanked Katherine & the committee on behalf of the students & teachers. She stressed the importance of the OPA & its precious archives. From the visitor comments at the Open house event today they also sent best wishes for the future.

Katherine thanked Janis Sinden on behalf of the committee & wished her well.

Members were assured that their wishes for a more permanent solution where the archives could be displayed, rather than left in boxes, would carry on after the school closure.

Jacqui Derbyshire reminded members that "leaving The Whitgift Foundation wasn't the end, it was the beginning."

Forthcoming Events

Founder's day Service, Croydon Minster 27th September 2025, 2pm.

Tea to be served after the service.

Members were invited to sign up for the scratch choir.

The meeting closed at 15.45pm with a final vote of thanks to all past, present & new members of the committee.

Helen Richards, Deputy Head of the School was presented with a gift from the OPA in recognition of all the extra work she'd undertaken on our behalf over the years.

Chair's Report July 2025

The Old Palace Alumnae held their final Summer Reunion on Saturday 20 June. As 11am approached, a long queue was seen outside the school gates, Hilary rang the school bell and the gates were opened. Around 250 OPAs', Old Palace pupils, members of staff and guests attended the event. It was a wonderful occasion and blessed with good weather and thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended. The Annual OPA AGM was held after the event and roughly 100 Old Palace Alumnae attended.

A final Founder's Day Service was held on Monday 30 September with Father Andrew conducting the service. Alumnae and their families were invited to attend. The Croydon Minster was full of OPAs', Old Palace pupils, friends, families, members of staff and invited guests.

The music was conducted by James Griffith, Director of Music at the school with many Alumnae joining with the dwindling school choir numbers to create a full Choir. Under the directorship of Veronica Barnes the choir sang specially chosen anthems for the occasion in three parts.

On behalf of the OPA, Hilary gave a wonderful speech entitled "A goodly heritage have we" and interestingly enough it echoed almost the same experiences that I had at the school for my 10 happy years there. A special VIP Reception was held in the Chapel for the OPA committee, former staff and the Sisters of the Church. The Sisters were delighted to be invited and thoroughly enjoyed the service and a guided tour around the school afterwards.

Cindy Hedmann and Zoe Sexton resigned from the committee due to work commitments however the committee welcomed four new members, Veronica Barnes, Jean Loh, Sophie Filon and Liz Forrest.

The OPA Committee meeting was held in Grindal on Wednesday 16 October.

The OPA held their final Carol Service in the Banqueting Hall on Monday 9th December. Tours and refreshments were served from 4.30pm with the service commencing at 6pm. It was very well attended. It was conducted by Maria Kolpaktchi (OPA) along with Marion Holmes (OPA) and Veronica Barnes. Veronica conducted the large Choir, made up of many Alumnae and the remaining choristers at the school. A rousing and emotional end to the service came when the school song that had been written & composed 106 years earlier in 1918 was sung.

The OPA Committee held three further meetings and two working party meetings. They have been working hard to produce a new OPA database, which is now operational, a new OPA constitution which I will present to you today and we are in the process of setting up a new OPA website which is work in progress.

I would like to pay tribute to the Old Palace Alumnae whom have very sadly passed away in the last year: Karen Sorensen, Jo Tuck, Pam Gill (Alum), Maggie Anderson and Zoe Sexton. All were committed and

dedicated members of the OPA, with Jo and Zoe being former members of the OPA committee. Jo was our much loved and highly respected OPA Newsletter Editor for many years.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the committee members for their commitment, dedication and hard work throughout the year and all their support for myself. Also I would like to thank the school for their continued support for the Old Palace Alumnae.

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FINAL REPORT ON THE OLD PALACE ARCHIVES - September 2019 - 1ST JULY
2025

Looking back at the records, work started in earnest on the Archives by a group of Volunteers & OP members in September 2019. The group was led by Esther Mann, Archivist & Heritage Manager recruited by the Whitgift Foundation. She told us that out of three Whitgift Foundation school archives, OP was in the worst state by far! Over the months & years we spent days finding & recording items, their locations along with the general state of wear and tear. Some of the unique archives had also been catalogued on the general school asset list. The team worked in the school holidays so as to avoid any disruption to the school. Upper Porch was selected as the only suitable, safe room for storage of the smaller items, registers, Head's diaries & school photos etc.

In 2020 there were pauses during the Covid outbreak when both the school & world stood still. By September 2020 we received the good news that the long awaited scanner had arrived at the WF offices in George Street. This would be used to scan in the documents, pupil registers & photos etc for them to be eventually catalogued, digitized & put on cloud storage, ready to be accessed by all.
(NB: The dedicated scanner is now housed at Whitgift school!)

Up until October 2021 work continued under the guidance of Esther Mann; we were all saddened to learn that her job had been made redundant. Our other non OP volunteers left with her leaving Katherine & I to carry on with the indexing during the school holidays. Upper Porch could only accommodate 2 people!!

In 2023 the announcement was made of the school closure; by 2024 the Prep school in South Croydon had been closed & the building sold on. Archives from the Prep school were placed into Upper Porch & not indexed by us owing to GDPR guidelines.

Katherine & I had a joint meeting with the Whitgift & Trinity Archivists in March 2024. It was inferred that the final, ideal destination of all the OP archives would be in the climate controlled facility at Whitgift School.

A further area of archives were located in Cathedral building. A large draughtsman cabinet housing a vast variety of photos, photo boards of historic school events, plays, Royal visits & retirement of the Sisters of the Church to name a few. More came to light as teachers left the school as pupil numbers reduced.

We continued to hope that along the way we'd find a document to confirm official ownership of the Archives & past pupil & teacher memorabilia in the grounds of the school; sadly no documents were forthcoming. During that time most of the members of the Court & CEO of JWF & staff had left. Gradually, appointments were made for the key staff positions. Work on the archives continued. The senior school site was put up for sale in lots, in December 2024.

It was decided that the OPA committee should write to the current CEO, Roisha Hughes in April to ascertain ownership of the Archives& memorabilia in the school grounds, requesting future access & terms of any loan agreements. In her reply of 19th May 2025 she stated they were owned byJWF &we were "Key Stakeholders". Conservation of them & appropriate access to them was their responsibility.

A letter on the same day confirmed that a prospective buyer had been found for some of the OP siteby The Curwen Group. Roisha Hughes stated that sales negotiations were underway with arrangements that could(possibly) give Alumnae access for the annual event & peace of mind for families & wider community around the memorials.

As no museum had been found to house the Archives long term, the decision was made by the John Whitgift Foundation to move the items into different storage facilities by June - before the closure of the school in July. The committee expressed concerns over;the future suitability of chosen temporary school storage facilities, hoped that good archival practice would be followed& requested thatan Archivist be employed to oversee the storage sites, packing,removal& final destination. The responsibility of moving the Archives was delegated to Helen Richards (Deputy Head) with the help of a temporary, volunteer archivist; sadly not directly by the Whitgift school specialist Archivist mentioned by Ms Hughes in the letter.(The OPA digital copy with additions from 2021 - 2025 was transferred to JWF Archivist)

As of 26th June, Helen informed us that: Headteacher log books, student record cards/record booksin approximately 10 boxes were sent to the dedicated Archive storage at John Whitgift school. The other 90+ boxes and photos will be moved (professionally) to the top floor of the Foundation offices in the next week or so. (Framed photos are remaining in their frames). Plus, Helen has a digital file to send through to the Google drive, with some photos etc.

The committee are aware that many of you have asked as to the whereabouts of the Head Girl & Head of House boards since the early days of the school - sadly they have not been found.

Katherine & the committee join me in thanking Helen Richards & the closure team for their hard work to date endeavouring to safeguard our precious history & memorabilia.

As we represent past & present "key stakeholders" to the archive, we hope that the CEO & Court of John Whitgift will assign some of the proceeds from the sale of both school sites to provide a dedicated Museum space for our archives &to employ an Archivist to fully digitize the archives so they may be accessible to us all in the future.

Inthe interim any enquiries relating to the archives/memorabilia canbe made to David Clifford: enquiries@johnwhitgiftfoundation.org

HCGadd (nee Anderson -Class of 1973)

Chair report August 2026

It is now over a year since the Old Palace closed its doors as a school as we all knew and loved. It has been a time of adjustments as we all get used to this and I am sure we all miss the chance to return and visit as we have done in the past.

Committee meetings (all on Zoom as we live all over the country) were held in July, September and November 2025 and May, July and August 2026. Your committee has grown with members being coopted during the year to make a viable committee and consists of Veronica Barnes, Sophie Filon (treasurer), Liz Forrest (secretary), Hannah Guerin, Joanna Jayarajan, Tracy Lee, Jean Loh (chairperson), Karen Sayers and Karina Thorne.

The alumnae have now taken over maintaining the new database, though we are missing being able to contact many of our 'old girls'.

The new website is now also fully functional, and we are now managing this ourselves.

In September 2025 we held our first Founders Day service without any current pupils. The service was well attended, and we were able to sing many of the favourites from years gone by not forgetting the school song. There was a very successful scratch choir conducted by Veronica Barnes and accompanied by Marian Holmes on the school piano which is now permanently housed in the Minster. Refreshments followed the service and a great deal of chatting and catching up. We were fortunate to be able to display a copy of the school song which was loaned to us by The Whitgift Foundation for the day as well as using the beautifully repaired / refurbished school banner which is held by the Minster.

As a committee we are working on creating an oral history archive about our times at Old Palace, please ask for more information after the service. We are also looking into working with Trinity school to support the education and opportunities of girls.

Your committee has been working establish links with the new occupiers of the school site and also developing links with The friends of Old Palace who previously ran the tours of the building.

Find out all the latest information on our website and social media.

Does anyone know of any venues for us to hold events as mentioned in the treasurer's report?

Save the date for Founders Day and our AGM next year on the 25th September 2027.

Jean Loh

Pro Ecclesia Dei!

Treasurer's Report. 2026 : Treasurer Sophie Filon

I am the current Treasurer of the OPA following the resignation of Tracy Lee from the role and my appointment at the last AGM on 1st July 2025.

In terms of the current financial position of the OPA, as of 30th April 2026, the funds in the bank account were £18, 958.98. This is down from £23,318.55, as at the previous end of year on 30th April 2025.

Unfortunately, income has dwindled following the closure of the school in July 2025.

The main expenditure up until 30th April 2026, relates to the Founder's Day service on 27th September 2025, payments to the Whitgift Foundation and to the company hosting the website.

Payment was made for the hire of Croydon Minster for Founder's Day and the provision of refreshments to those attending after the service. Some alumnae generously gave donations towards our funds on that occasion. The purchase of a Sum Up machine beforehand facilitated this, as donations could be made by card as well as cash. Total donations amounted to £331.53.

This Founder's Day, we would encourage those attending to make a voluntary contribution of at least £5 to go towards the cost of the refreshments and of hiring the Minster for the occasion.

In terms of funds, going forward, the focus needs to be on fundraising so that the OPA can continue to run events, including the annual Founder's Day Service in September. Ideas for suitable events are most welcome from the Members!

The alternative is that the funds will eventually run out and the OPA will be unable to continue in its present form. At the present time, the former Old Palace School building is not accessible for tours or events. Although this may change in the future, alternative venues may be required in the meantime.

I would like to welcome Jonathan Whitby of XTB Solutions Ltd as our new accountant following the resignation of Janis Sinden last year. Jonathan is a Certified accountant with many years of experience both in commercial and private work. He also undertakes pro bono work for charities, such as the Thames Estuary Partnership. We are very grateful to have the benefit of Jonathan's professional expertise.

Old Palace of John Whitgift Schools Alumnæ (OPA)

Unaudited Accounts

for the Year Ended 30 April 2026

**Report of the Independent Examiner to the Committee of
Old Palace of John Whitgift School Alumnae (OPA)
for the year ended 30 April 2026**

I have independently examined the attached accounts of the Committee.

Respective responsibilities of the Committee and the examiner

The Committee is responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The Committee considers that an audit is not required for this year and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to examine the accounts and state whether any particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's statement

My examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the Association and a comparison of the accounts with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the Committee concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently, I do not express an audit opinion on the accounts.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirement to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records has not been met.

No other matter has arisen in connection with my examination to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be made.

Jonathan Whitby FCCA
XTB Solutions Ltd
1 The Creechurch
4-8 Creechurch Lane
London
EC3A 5AY

**OLD PALACE OF JOHN WHITGIFT SCHOOL
ALUMNAE
(OPA)**

**Income and Expenditure Account
for the year ended 30 April 2026**

	30 April 2026 £	30 April 2025 £
Turnover		
Annual	5	5
Life	-	-
Associates	-	1,519
	5	1,524
Other income		
AGM / Summer Event	327	3,255
	332	4,779
Total income		
Expenses		
AGM / Summer Event	-	(16,429)
Founder's Day	(682)	(2,486)
Carol Service	-	(808)
Managing database and digital communications	(2,124)	(891)
Newsletter design and distribution	-	(1,080)
School Prizes	-	(1,250)
Laptop and software	-	(361)
Sum up Machine	(30)	-
Printing, postage and stationery	(30)	-
The Whitgift Foundation	(1,050)	-
ICO (data protection)	(47)	-
Charitable donations	(75)	-
Committee Expenses	(517)	-
Sundry expenses	(37)	(480)
Accountant - thank you	(100)	-
	(4,692)	(23,785)
Net deficit	(4,360)	(19,006)

**OLD PALACE OF JOHN WHITGIFT SCHOOL
ALUMNAE
(OPA)**

Balance Sheet as at 30 April 2026

	2026 £	2025 £
Current assets		
Cash at bank and in hand	18,959	23,319
Represented by		
Accumulated funds brought forward	23,319	42,325
Deficit for the year	4,360	19,006
Accumulated funds carried forward	18,959	23,319

These financial statements were approved on.....

We approve the accounts and confirm that we have made available all relevant records and information for their preparation.

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Jean Loh
Honorary Chair

.....
Sophie Filon
Honorary Treasurer