

Arborfield Old Boys Association

Minutes of the 60th Annual General Meeting

Held at 16:15 on 15th June 2024 at Delta by Marriot Hotel, Warwick

Committee Members:

Chair	Geordie Wright-Rivers (GWR)
Vice-Chair	Mike Tizard (MT)
General Secretary	Nigel Canning (NC)
Treasurer	Bob McKeegan-Brown (BMB)
Recruitment Officer	Bruce Leslie (BL)
Membership Officer	Bob Cassidy (BC)
Data Protection Officer	Jeff Baker (JB)
Bereavement Officer	Ian Scurr (IS)
Webmaster	Mark Jobes (MJ)
OBAN Editor	Andy Dickson (AD)
Cenotaph Officer	Steve Thornes (ST)
Committee Advisor	Bill Cleasby
AOBA Standard Bearer	Dave Merrick

1. Apologies. Apologies have been received from Bob Cassidy, Andy Dickson & Mark Jobes.

2. Minutes of previous meeting.

The minutes of the AGM 59 were presented and passed as read. Proposed by Steve Thornes, seconded by Mike Tizard. Carried.

3. Matters arising.

There were no matters arising.

4. Committee Members' Reports.

(a) Chair

1. GWR welcomed all members, and anyone associated to the AOBA.
2. Ex-apprentice Lt Gen Simon Hamilton has been appointed as Director General Land, effectively the 2ic of the Army.
3. Succession Planning. New committee members and volunteers are always welcome and needed to replace longer standing members.
4. Chairman's Charitable Donations. It was proposed by GWR that two ex-apprentices, Mark Wilding and Eddie Roper be given £750.00 each. Mark towards his charity raising awareness of brain tumour injuries and Eddie towards his project to get football kit for Ukrainian children (following on from the work done by John Preston (77C) that the AOBA supported last year). Seconded by MT. Carried

5. It was further proposed by GWR and seconded by NC that £500 be donated, through Nigel Wickenden's Frontline Walk, to the Army Benevolent Fund. This is in the 80th Anniversary of the ABF. Carried. (**Agenda Item 5**).
6. Afternote: The Sancto Award for outstanding service to the Association for 2024 is awarded to Andy Dickson for not only continuing to produce the excellent Old Boys Association Newsletter (OBAN) but done, over the last couple of years through extreme health issues.
A gift of £50.00 was gratefully received from Chalky White.

(b) General Secretary

1. NC reminded members that if you have any issues of Benevolence, AOBA Procedures, or any other issues regarding the running of the AOBA please contact him via the AOBA website.
2. All members are reminded that Full Life Membership of the AOBA has had two levels for a few years now. "Active", for those who pay their annual subscriptions and "Non-Active" for those that do not. Members who have not paid their annual subscriptions will lose their access to the "Members' Area" on the AOBA website and will not receive copies of OBAN. They are entitled to attend the AGM but have no vote. A reminder will be sent to non-payers. This will also help to identify members who may have passed away or moved or chosen not to rejoin. **Action: NC to advertise on social media.**
3. In days gone by the AOBA committee was very top heavy by military rank but this has and continues to change to reflect more current times. People's perception of the AOBA however would appear (from comments in social media) to not reflect this. NC suggested that we might need to revisit a name change (again) from "Old Boys" to make us more inclusive. As a charity our official title is The Arborfield Association so perhaps the inclusion of the word Apprentice is a possibility. MT asked that evidence of feeling being gathered before any action was taken. **Action: GWR & NC to canvas and poll members.**
4. NC drew attention to an instruction from The Charity Commission reminding charities that they must remain independent and not support a political party or candidate. This includes the use of social media to criticise or support any proposed policy or policies.

(c) Treasurer

1. As of 1st June 2024, there is £6982.70 in the Current account and £58462.85 in the Business account. The accounts are not as healthy as previous years due to the withdrawal of funding from the REME Charity of about £k7 per annum.
2. Our main income in January from subs is £9190 with a slow dribble from PayPal & STRIPE through the rest of the year. It cost £697.00 to collect the Direct Debit payments this year.
3. The 2024 reunion will effectively wipe out the current account and money will have to be transferred from the business account for the first time in many years.
4. The STRIPE method of payment has been introduced as a method of paying annual subs and is preferable to PayPal. Members with non-recurring PayPal accounts are encouraged to change to STRIPE. New members will also be encouraged to use it.
5. The finances of the Association were agreed to still be in good order and healthy.
6. BMB reminded all members that a new Treasurer was required as soon as possible.
7. A question was asked from the floor if subs needed to be increased. It was generally felt that, as the bank balance was still healthy this wasn't necessary, but GWR will look at options. **Action GWR.**

(d) Recruitment Officer

1. Recruitment this year for 74ers was very poor with no one from that intake year attending the reunion. It is not known why this is the case as all were contacted through their own Facebook group.
2. Next year is 75C's 50th anniversary and there is already a healthy response from that intake, and many are at this reunion.
3. BL will be resigning the post at next year's reunion and so a new Recruitment Officer is needed, ideally from the early 1980's intakes.

(e) Membership Officer (minutes from notes provided)

1. New membership down in 2023 compared to previous two years
2. New members for 2024 (so far) slightly down on this time last year
3. Total Active membership is 704
4. All members queries dealt with in 3 Days average
5. Members welcome to contact BC about any aspect of AOBA
6. New members for 2024 so far - 13

(f) Data Protection Officer

1. JB reported that he is still really enjoying his role on the committee. He commented that any job is as busy as you want to make it and, as he keeps finding something new to look at it certainly beats watching daytime TV!
2. All spreadsheets are up to date.
3. We have not had any security issues.
4. We currently have 8 spreadsheets in our database.
5. All exist for different reasons.
6. The largest has 18,016 names on it.
7. The smallest has 53. This is historical data of members who have not signed a consent form.
8. Data Protection Bill No 2 will be replacing 2018 legislation and went through the House of Commons passage in November 2023 with the House of Lords committee stage in January 2024. The latest reading was in May 2024 but with the General Election ahead it is difficult to predict when it will become law.

(g) Bereavement Officer

1. A few members have mentioned in the past that some deaths have not been recorded and no crosses were placed on the Army Apprentice Memorial.
2. Although majority of the names mentioned were found to be from a previous year and had been correctly recorded, there were however a small number that had not been recorded.
3. The main reasons why we miss some are because we have insufficient information to confirm the death, or we had not been informed.
4. Members are reminded to report deaths as and when they are aware of them.
5. If you know of an ex Arborfield boy or permanent staff member who has passed away and is not listed on the AOBA Roll of Honour, then please let me have the details. (The Roll of Honour lists can be seen on the AOBA website by clicking on the "Roll of Honour" tab)
6. IS reminded members that Remembrance Scrolls are not automatically sent when a death is notified. They are only sent out when requested by whoever has made contact with the family of the deceased and only then when the next-of-kin (n-o-k) has confirmed that they would like to receive one.

7. If a death has been reported by BACs or from an unconfirmed source, IS will endeavour to chase it up.
8. Remembrance Scrolls can be requested for all deceased ex apprentices and permanent staff, and they do not have to be a member of the Association.
9. The minimum information required before a remembrance scroll can be sent is listed in the sub paragraphs a, b & c below:
 10. a. Full name of the deceased, intake number, or for PS date posted in, and date of death.
 11. b. The n-o-k or family member's full name, ensuring that we have their first name, and the address to where the scroll should be sent.
 12. c. If a member of the AOBA his membership number, if available.
13. When it has been confirmed that the n-o-k of the deceased has requested a Remembrance Scroll, IS will only send one if all the detail as listed in sub paragraphs a. & b. above is available. A scroll will not be sent without all the information to avoid mistakes and additional grief to the bereaved.
14. Another task of the Remembrance Officer is to purchase wooden crosses for the annual AOBA Drumhead Memorial Service and to prepare a cross for every notified death with the deceased name and intake number. **NC Action: Place notice on social media to remind members of the procedure(h) Webmaster (minutes from notes provided)**

(h) Webmaster

1. The website is currently running without any known issues.
2. There are at present 679 users registered on the website.
3. The screenshots show some insight as to the use of the AOBA website over the past few years. Months and Years, Average per Day
4. The time has come for MJ to step down from the Webmasters duty but will continue for the next 12 months to assist in the training and handover of all the elements of the website to a new "Keeper".
5. If no person comes forward, then the website will no longer be available to members.
6. The site is built on a WordPress framework which is easy to use and has a very comprehensive personal support system in place.
7. The help system to be excellent and any problems have been resolved very quickly by the support staff.
8. If anyone is interested, then please get in touch with MJ at the earliest opportunity so that a comprehensive handover can take place.

(i) OBAN Editor (minutes from notes provided)

1. OBAN Production back on plan after a nine-month hiatus
2. Stories with photographs are still needed. This is a constant issue. There is a struggle with every issue to fill the pages. Don't be shy!
3. Anyone/everyone who takes photos this weekend please contact AD via the AOBA website.
4. The September 49ers website is finally getting some attention.
 - i. <https://www.arborfield-september49ers.co.uk>
5. AD sent thanks for all the support during his time in hospital and hopes to be at the 2025 reunion.

(j) Cenotaph Officer

1. AOBA received 35 tickets for the Cenotaph parade for 10th November 2024, an increase in allocated ticket numbers from 30 in 2023 to 35 this year.
2. To date we have filled 29 of these 35 tickets.
3. ST will be approaching the members at the AGM to fill the remaining 6 vacancies for the parade. If all places are not filled by AOBA, then the remaining tickets will be offered to the REME Association. These places need to be filled to retain the number of tickets allocated to the AOBA.
4. It is proposed again that a £25.00 per head subsidy be donated to offset the cost of a remembrance dinner on the Saturday evening 09th November 2024 at the VSC. Seconded John Darwent. Carried.

5. Request for Chair's Charity Fund Donation – Nigel Wickenden (see Item 4 (a) 5).

6. Members' Voice

1. David Williams asked if the reunion is at the same venue next year?
GWR said that 2025 was the third year previously agreed with the hotel & loW Tours and unless there were any reasons why not, would be re-negotiated again for future years.
2. Gordon Bonner said that he had found loW Tours to be extremely helpful when dealing with enquiries. Other members agreed.
3. GWR reported that Arborfield has completely closed but Army Apprenticeships have continued albeit in other ways.
4. Bill Cleasby proposed a vote of thanks to the committee for continuing the good work done with the reunion and association.
5. Alec Burt explained that TAAPAD is now the only REME badged Pipe Band in existence. The band is happy therefore to play at other REME functions. There is now a need to recruit more drummers especially as members were informed of the very poor health of Tony (TC) Church. It was agreed that other, currently non-AOBA members could be recruited, and it was suggested that, as allowed in the Constitution, they could be granted Honorary Membership.
Messages of support for TC were asked to be passed on by Alec when he visited.
6. GWR highlighted some drawings donated by the family of an ex-apprentice of the school in the 50s. unfortunately they are not able to be displayed in the REME Museum so would be auctioned to members at the dinner. There was also a bottle of the King's Crown port with two goblets and a further bottle of the port to also be auctioned.
7. GWR briefed the meeting about REME Responders. These are volunteers around the country who are available to support members in need. If anyone is interested in becoming a REME responder contact GWR.

7. New committee

The following members have offered to stand on the committee. Carried.

Geordie Wright-Rivers	Chair
Mike Tizard	Vice – Chair
Nigel Canning	General Secretary
Bob McKeegan – Brown	Treasurer
Bruce Leslie	Recruitment Officer
Bob Cassidy	Membership Officer
Jeff Baker	Data Protection Officer
Ian Scurr	Bereavement Officer
Mark Jobs	Webmaster
Andy Dickson	OBAN Editor
Steve Thornes	Cenotaph Officer
Dave Merrick	AOBA Standard Bearer
Bill Cleasby	Committee Advisor

8. Next Meeting:

The next AGM will be on Saturday 14th June 2025.

The meeting closed at 17:39.

Signed:

Date: