

President's Final Report 2017

Leicester City win the Premiership, Trump voted President of the United States, Britain votes to leave the EU, Watsonian President serves two terms in office, earth shattering events. I considered carefully the implications of a second term. I took notice however of comments from one or two recent Past Presidents' who stated that they felt that they were just getting into the role when it ended and their experiences ended suddenly. With that thought in mind I settled into my second year and without question it has been the correct decision. We must remember however that it is not a given that a second term will be accepted by a President but I repeat for continuity it is well worth the effort.

Dinners

It has been a privilege to represent the Club at our various Branch Dinners. In my time I have attended all our formal events in the UK, each different in many ways but all highlighting the strength in our common tie that makes us one!

There are some worries and some heartening progressions in our branches. Highland, London and the Borders are all boasting increasing numbers with a pleasing influx of younger members getting involved in the administration. Some such as Yorkshire and the South West have changed to running a lunch reflecting the older age range in that area. Every Branch however receives excellent support for their event from the Development Office and their continuation is pleasing. Further afield, Toronto, Sydney, Cape Town, are strong and I am delighted to inform you that we have a new Branch started in Dubai, where many of our younger members find themselves. Add to this the network of Watsonian contacts worldwide we are in very strong heart as a Club and indeed, the envy of many like Schools. Our Principal has been outstanding in visiting almost every Branch outside the UK and I believe by October after visiting Australia he will have visited the complete set.

I have enjoyed very pleasant evenings at our kindred Clubs Heriots and Stewarts Melville, and of course our own successful Watsonian Club Dinner.

Sections

If the Branches give us a litmus test as to the state of the Club firth of Edinburgh, so the Sections tell the world that the name Watsonian is strong equally in Sport. I have popped in to all our sections at some point over my tenure and have received a warm welcome on each occasion. It is pleasing to report the good heart our sections are in. Rugby is back where it should be and although not leading a very strong league their position gives hope of survival in the top league. Hockey, both men and women's teams are strong and mention should be made of the large numbers of children attending Watsonian hockey and rugby on a Sunday. Our thanks also to the many adults giving up of their time to allow this to happen. Cricket enjoys a very committed group of men and women enjoying their sport and indeed our congratulations go to the Bryce sisters in their achievement in reaching the highest level in their sport. Add to the mix Curling, Rifle, Squash, Swimming, Golf and Angling and you then appreciate the depth of interest offered by our Sections coupled with the high level that most perform at. A credit to all concerned. I do have to mention also the Success of Grace Reid and James Heatly in the diving world, both Commonwealth Games participants and Grace in the GB team at the Rio Olympics. Also to Sarah Wilson, a Watsonian who is performing at the highest level as a Hockey umpire. Sarah officiated at the Olympics and has recently been included as one of the top eight Umpires in the world. Sarah is a PE teacher at the School. I will no doubt have missed people and I apologise but want to record the thanks of the Club to all to perform under the name Watsonian.

Council

The Watsonian Council is the strongest I can remember in all my years involved with the Club. I hesitate to say they are broken down by sex and age but you get my drift. We have enthusiastic members willing to move the Club to be relevant to the times we find ourselves in. Trying to project the needs of our future members is difficult but I am especially pleased that the two members of the Sixth Form Caitlin Grant and Harris MacLennan keep our minds focussed on the needs of our youngest members especially in this fast moving world of Social media. Tonight sees the end of the road on Council not only for myself but after many years of effort David Mieras will retire from Council. David has served the Club so well both as Secretary, then ensuring a smooth transition to devolving the administration to the School and finally as a committed member of Council. Earlier tonight I had the pleasure of presenting a small token of our appreciation for all his efforts and I repeat our thanks now. In the words of a fellow Borderer Sir Walter Scott, well done thy good and faithful servant.

Obviously this creates vacancies on Council and I am delighted that Tim Bunker and David Ferguson have agreed to serve on that Council. Both are well known in Watsonian circles and I have no doubt will steer the ship well over the next few years. Add to this the inclusion of our new Vice President John Bacigalupo, we are well placed to move forward strongly.

To all on the Council I extend my grateful thanks for your support.

School

The relationship between the School and the Club is of great importance, indeed the *raison d'être* of the Club is to support the School in whatever way is appropriate at the time. As I highlighted we now have a great way to feel the pulse of the pupils who are about to join our membership. We have a Principal who totally understands the need for a strong bond between the School and its former pupils and I take this opportunity to thank Melvyn for his unstinting support of the Club both here and abroad.

For me the indicator of the relationship is the vast numbers who return for their reunions and the feel good factor I witness so often from the groups on their return. I have been so fortunate to be invited back into the School to witness the highest level of music, art, debating, sport, Prize Giving and the haunting and extremely humbling Remembrance Service. I see a vibrant, exciting Watson's with pupils proud of their work, all carried out with confidence but not arrogance. Our Club is in safe hands in the future with the quality of pupils I witness on every visit.

Development Office

I find it hard to believe that the Development Office has been operating for some 20 years. I know from personal experience just how hard this team works on our behalf. I doubt if there is another Former Pupil Club in the country that receives greater support from its administration team. Nothing is too much work for the team, be it organising events, reuniting old friends or just keeping in touch they are extremely professional and on your behalf I thank them. A reorganisation of the office sees Morven Skirving as the go to person for us to contact in Watsonian matters and I wish her well in that role.

Items worthy of note from the Development Office are:-

- Reunions continue to be successful, in addition to the regular year group reunions there have been 'Golden Oldies' reunions in the Cricket Club and plans are well underway for next month's Rowing reunion.
- The MacQuarrie Fellowship has now been established thanks to the generosity of Ian MacQuarrie's legacy, and interviews will shortly take place to select the first Watsonian recipient.
- At this year's Remembrance Day service, Lauchlan MacLean's pipes that he donated to the School were played at the War Memorial. The pipes were refurbished by the School and an appropriate plaque added.

- Foundation term is currently taking place at School where all the pupils have the opportunity to support the Foundation, this year's bake off has been the most successful to date with over £1000 raised.
- The School has appointed the much respected Graham Pelton consultancy to undertake a feasibility study in which myself and Vice President Robert Heatly took part. Strategic discussions with a small working group have taken place and those involved have been invited to the Usher Hall next month for the School music concert to receive an update. The next stage is the creation of an action plan to implement the study results and put the School in the best possible position for a sector leading fundraising campaign.
- The formation of a Watsonian Choir moves closer with interested parties invited to be part of a choir at the Usher Hall concert and then an evaluation as to how to progress thereafter.
- The School appreciates all the support it receives in so many ways from the Watsonian community.

Benevolent Fund

My plea as ever is to ask members to think of any Watsonian who may have fallen on hard times and if the need is there to contact the Development Office in the first place and where appropriate help will be given.

Funds

The funds of the Club are healthy with £37,725.06 in the bank. Council has debated the best way to use these funds wisely and new ideas are constantly under review.

Gilbert Kennedy

My tenure saw the death of Past President Gilbert Kennedy. When I arrived at Watson's, Gilbert was one of the first Watsonian's who made himself known. Throughout my time at the School Gilbert remained a huge supporter of everything Watsonian, a proud man and more importantly a gentleman. He is sorely missed.

I must inform you that today we received the sad news that Sir Roger Young has passed away. So much will be said about Sir Roger in the future but he was certainly the most significant Headmaster in recent times. We owe him a great deal.

The Future

As I sail my particular ship into the sunset I must record my thanks for the opportunity to serve the Club as President I am proud of the progress made and confident that with the team now in place we have the strongest Club in the country.