

ODA 2016 WORKING PARTY RECOMMENDATIONS – A FRESH LOOK IN 2022/3

BACKGROUND.

During 2016, a Working Party led by ODA President Ted Nield addressed the Future of the Old Dy’Vorians Association. At the heart of the working party’s report was recognition of the distinction between “institutional loyalty” and “cohort loyalty” – the former felt rather more by Dy’Vorians of the grammar school era, the latter felt generally by people for old friends.

The ODA will welcome all former pupils, and efforts to encourage membership and involvement of pupils from the comprehensive era (beginning 1971) will be prioritised.

The report made a series of practical recommendations (1 to 9, below) which were agreed by the ODA committee. One further recommendation was modified, to maintain both the print and online forms of the ODA magazine, in order to continue to incentivise overseas members to maintain their membership.

In January 2022, five and a half years later, the ODA committee agreed to assess progress on the nine-point plan, and to draw up a balance sheet of progress, and degrees of success. These may be summarised as follows.

PROGRESS SINCE THE WORKING PARTY OF 2016

- 1 The ODA shall **define itself** as being for ‘any pupil or member of staff who attended Dynevor Grammar School or Dynevor ~~Senior~~ Comprehensive School’.

Achieved. The ODA also includes staff of UWTSD working within the old Dynevor premises, plus the University students recognised for their endeavour and commitment to their courses in spite of significant difficulties in their circumstances. Note, the word ‘Senior’ has been deleted from the above definition, as the school continued after the Senior Comprehensive era as an 11-16 Comprehensive School until it closed in 2001.

- 2 The **image** of the ODA shall be updated to make this inclusive spirit more explicit.

Much practical effort has been made to draw in pupils from the comprehensive era (starting 1971), but it continues to be an uphill-task. Many are simply not interested in current ODA activities. The website in itself is insufficient to attract pupils of the comprehensive school era, even after individuals on photos have been directly approached to date photograph.

Nevertheless, the number of viewings of Find Your Years (Photos) on the web-site is usually one of the most popular, possibly enhanced by the addition of ‘Photos’ to the menu heading. It is also evident that the Facebook page receives a number of responses when new material has been posted, although follow-up enquiries about joining the ODA have been consistently ignored. In March, 2023, the Dynevor Revisited Facebook page had 581 followers, 68.1% male and 31.9% female, the number of followers is significantly higher than the 392 members we are reaching through Mailchimp.

Highly successful Rock Nights were held at the Hyst; in 2018 independent of the ODA by two 1989 school leavers and in 2019 by the ODA (featuring the “Dynevor Scratchers”). Both attracted many former pupils and staff, but these did not convert them to ODA membership. Similarly, the Coffee Mornings at Dynevor Café introduced in 2023 attracted some interest from non-members, but again, converting these into members remains difficult.

3 The Association shall henceforth refer to itself as ‘Dy’vorians’ in informal usage.

This change has been adopted informally. Our society is still the ODA.

4 The magazine TOD shall re-brand itself ‘The Dy’vorian’.

Achieved - from edition No 31, summer 2017

The Working Party felt that TOD may need to move beyond the present model of ‘print-first, PDF loaded online later’ to ‘online first, print after’ model, running both online and print versions of the magazine together for a while, and keeping an open mind on whether there would be any use going ‘online only’.

During the Covid pandemic we transferred to ‘online first’; copies were eventually printed and circulated to those who requested them. Our predominantly older membership continues to make it unlikely that an ‘Online Only’ policy will be implemented; however, members have been gently encouraged to opt for online copies as a preference. This will remain under scrutiny. One significant change from the summer of 2023 is that all editions of TOD will be password protected, ensuring that only ODA members can access PDF copies. We are keen that members see value for their membership fee, additionally, non- members who may wish to read the magazines might be encouraged to join that ODA in order to do so.

5 The ODA Website shall be renamed ‘Dynevor Revisited’.

Achieved - The website dating from 2004 was already being reshaped and enlarged (e.g. to include the full sequence of school magazines) by AWGraphics, and was relaunched as “Dynevor Revisited”. The use of WordPress to host the website has enabled committee members Pam Bashford and Phil Stone to undertake training as administrators, to ensure material is updated in a timely fashion.

6 TOD shall try to source articles written by and for pupils of the post-Grammar School era.

Achieved - Apart from the cover featuring 1978 Senior Netball Team (No 33), there have been articles by Gareth Jones (No 32), Gary Joyce (No 32), Steve Guard (No 34), Leighton Jones (No 34), Mal Pope (No 35), Kevin Johns (36), Behnaz Akhgar (No 37), and Steve Richards (No 37).

A regular TOD article titled ‘Where are they now?’ has been considered, but identifying ex-pupils willing to do so is proving difficult.

7 The **Annual Dinner** is highly successful and shall be left in its current format.

The annual dinners up to 2019 took place in Swansea University. The Covid epidemic precluded a dinner in 2020, but it was resumed in the Village Hotel SA1 with excellent and exuberant attendance, and formalities were pared back, to give people more time to socialise. **After requests from some of the members an after dinner speaker is to be reintroduced at the 2023 Dinner.**

8 The ODA shall seek to ensure that the **archive of records** and achievements of Dynevor and predecessor schools (Municipal Secondary, etc.) are preserved as a resource for future researchers in local history.

Achieved. The archive of written documents passed on by the school's final headmaster has been preserved for use by members and future researchers. Confidential documents are considered the property of the Local Government Authority and are held in the Local Authority Archive. The non-confidential records, including a virtually complete sequence of School Magazines, are held in the house of the ODA archivist. A rich archive of Old Dy'vorian documentation was held by the ODA Secretary.

9 While accepting that its life is likely to be limited to perhaps another 20 years, the ODA recognises that the key to its future development lies in facilitating the creation and activities of **cohort groups**.

Our society continues to thrive and develop, despite the Covid-epidemic, and despite the inevitable declining numbers of older members. None of Dynevor's contemporary secondary schools of the post-war grammar school or comprehensive school eras has an equivalent society of old pupils. The web-site Dynevor Revisited undergoes continuous enlargement and improvement; it is widely used by the membership and is open to all others. It includes full sequences of school and ODA magazines, catalogues of year-group photos, forthcoming events etc.

The successful development of self-organised cohort groups continues. Reunions of former pupil groups have been recorded for starting-years years of 1941, 1951, 1953, 1955 (twice), 1958 (twice) and 1959. Golf-competitions have been organised in conjunction with the Annual Dinner, but the well-attended Balconiers club at St Helens came to an end with the last Glamorgan match there.

FURTHER STEPS UNDER DISCUSSION IN MARCH 2022

1 Raise the profile of the ODA in the press, especially on-line, including through the use of social media.

2 Advertise events on our Facebook page, submit articles, or letters to the Editor, at the SWEP.

3 Increasing the ODA membership remains an objective, but should it be our main aim? We may have to accept that ODA membership per se will not attract many of the younger generations of ex-

pupils, but they may still enjoy participation in looser arrangements on Facebook, through the web-site, at Rock-Nights etc.

4 The use of *ZOOM* during the pandemic enabled a wider participation in meetings, lectures etc., and is expected to continue. We are working to introduce blended lectures where people attend either in person or online in 2023.

5 The 2016 Working Party envisaged the active life of the ODA may be limited to 20 years viz around 2035. With the ODA centenary in 2030, we should begin to plan toward this nearer horizon, including a sound financial foundation for a viable web-site as an archive for the future.

Authors: Roger Williams and Pam Bashford

Contributor: John Walters

Reviewed by Ted Neild

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