



A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE OLD CHIGWELLIANS

Old Chigwellians' (OCs) Alumni have technically been around since the first ever pupils of 1629 left the school. However, the first official iteration of the OCs was the Old Chigwellians' Society (OCS), formed in 1910. Before this, alumni still met at traditional OC events such as Shrove Tuesday and played sports together. Shrove Tuesday has formed an occasion for the gathering of OCs since at least 1868, where the Headmaster (HM) at the time also introduced Speech Day and the school motto.



Samuel Harsnett, Archbishop of York founded Chigwell School in 1629. He is buried in St. Mary's Church nearby. This Foundation Plaque can be found at the school today.

Old Boys associations/societies date back to around the early 1800s and were started by former pupils of public and grammar schools. These clubs emerged as part of the wider culture of alumni associations, created to maintain social and sporting links after leaving school. Many Old Boys societies formed football clubs, and some of these sides were among the earliest organised football clubs in the country, playing a key role in shaping the amateur game and early competitions like the FA Cup.

Rooted in the ethos of sportsmanship and camaraderie, these clubs helped maintain moral and social values associated with amateur sport in Victorian society. These clubs remain active today, blending sporting tradition with community engagement, and while professional football has moved in a different direction, Old Boys football preserves the amateur spirit.



Beyond football, Old Boys networks became an important aspect of British social life, reinforcing and encouraging shared identities and connections across education, business and personal life. This is reflected at Old Chigs by the number of OCs who span generations from the same family.



The King's Head Public House in Chigwell High Road c.1895. The inspiration for Charles Dickens' 'Maypole Inn' and now 'Sheesh' Turkish Restaurant.

Football is believed to have been formally introduced at Chigwell School from around 1876, and nearby Forest School quickly became our greatest rivals – a rivalry which very much continues today!



John Dutchman (in white shirt), an old Chigwell School Geography teacher, scoring the winner for Pegasus vs. Hendon in the 1951 FA Amateur Cup semi-final replay at Selhurst Park. He would later win the final in front of 100,000 fans at Wembley.



The Old Chigwellians' Football Club (OCFC) was officially formed in 1924 and we celebrated our Centenary anniversary in 2025, although an Old Chigwellians side in some form played in the Old Boys Cup (which is still played today) in 1913.

An announcement in *The Chigwellian* stated: "For the last few years there had been a feeling at the OC Club that the Club should run permanent football sides, and at a recent meeting of the Club Committee, it was decided to do so as from next season."

One of the early OCFC stars was Ken Skinner, who played for the club before the war. He survived as a Japanese POW working on the Burma railway and would return to the side as centre-half. Ken played for the Vets until 1968 when he eventually retired and became Club President – such is the dedication and passion of many OCs.

OCFC were a founder member of the Arthurian League in 1962, only for the inaugural season to be abandoned as a result of Arctic weather conditions. At the time when the season was abandoned in April 1963, Old Chigs were sitting at the top of the Senior Division, with five wins and a draw from the six fixtures they had managed to complete. We had scored 26 goals and conceded just six. A case of what might have been!

Both the OCS and the OCFC ran in parallel for many decades until the late 1970s when, led by OC Keith Mitchell, the OCFC merged with the OCS to form the new Old Chigwellians' Club (OCC). During this time, the OCFC played their home games at Buckhurst Hill Cricket Club (BHCC) on Roding Lane, having previously played on a ground near to what is now Debden Railway Station.

Even though the football and cricket seasons did not clash, the joint usage of the single Clubhouse didn't work. Eventually another OC named Stanley Reed called a meeting of OCC Members to discuss leaving BHCC and proposed buying freehold land upon which we could build our own Clubhouse. By all accounts at the meeting there were several negative voices but the result of the vote was to push ahead.



Stanley Reed, Former OC Chairman and later President, played a pivotal role in the OCs moving to our current site

The OCFC soon left BHCC and shared the Old Foresters' ground in Theydon Bois for a few years. During this time very active fundraising commenced.

In 1977 an area of land off Roding Lane became available when New Barnes Farm was broken up by the construction of the M11. This adjoined the school and was perfect in size, location, potential and cost, so the OCC seized the opportunity and purchased the plot.

Over the next couple of years the OCC funded the construction of the Clubhouse, a car park and football pitches. Work was completed for the start of the 1979/80 season – amazingly the first year we won the historic and prestigious Arthur Dunn cup – and this is where we still reside today. At this time we had six teams playing weekly, including four regular teams and two Vets teams. In 1984 an appeal was launched for further funds to create three tennis courts for OC Tennis, expand the car park and develop two further football pitches along with improving the heating and electrical supply.



While the school HM and Governors at the time were supportive, the school did not contribute any funds towards the endeavour. Instead, the funds required for the land acquisition, landscaping and construction were raised entirely by OCs and friends.

The project was described from the outset as the creation of a true home for all OCs, where they could play sport and socialise in a safe, friendly, private and personal environment.

In the 1980s the Clubhouse and grounds became the very active home for all OCs, as originally hoped. At its peak the OCC had over 800 members!

OCFC won the 1979/80 Dunn final 4-2 (after extra-time). David Dutchman, the son of John (former Chigwell School teacher, pictured earlier) was a member of the winning side, along with Miles Taylor (whose sons Will and Rory both play for OCFC, with the latter becoming Club Captain), and brothers Howard (Captain) and Ross Berndes.



The 1979/80 Dunn-winning side, captained by Howard Berndes and including Miles Taylor, Ross Berndes and David Dutchman

Howard Berndes: “We were a happy side and I think that is so important, but mainly we were a good team. Stanley Reed was our Chairman and he had a passion about winning the Dunn. He loved everything about it, so I suppose that was always going to be our aim. We celebrated in a Turkish restaurant after the final, which was paid for by Stanley, who combined it with his son’s 21st birthday. He was quite a character. The night we won it, I remember sleeping with it under my bed.”



Another important OC figurehead to mention is Nigel Davies, who was an active, passionate and loyal supporter of all things ‘Chigwellian’. He became arguably the most successful ever captain of the Vets while steadfastly supporting a wide range of OC events, particularly the much-loved End of Season Club Supper, where he insisted all guests (including non-OCs) must wear an Old Chigwellians’ Club tie. Nigel was determined that they would never forget where they’d been for the evening. Nigel was passionate about the Clubhouse and nobody left the Club without saying goodbye to him, after first being greeted with ‘Hi I’m Nigel Davies, Old Chigwellians, Home of Football’.



Nigel Davies, OCFC President for nearly 30 years (Club’s longest-serving President).



Derrick Moore Veterans Cup 1997/98 winners, including seven former Dunn winners.



To financially support the (former) OCS, the Pupils' Life Membership Scheme (PLMS) was started under school HM Brian Wilson as an 'opt in' scheme, where parents voluntarily had a small amount added to each term's fees. This was changed under HM Tony Little to an 'opt out' model, and the funds increased significantly as a result. The OCC also charged modest membership fees in order to cover the costs of running the clubhouse facilities and grounds.

The OCC has always fostered a constructive relationship with the school, but unfortunately during the early 2000s the relationship between the OCC and the School HM at the time deteriorated and saw the withdraw of the PLMS around 2006. He then started the school's own Old Chigwellians' Association (OCA), which all OCs automatically became members of for free upon leaving school. This decision effectively rendered the OCC financially unsustainable and it has only survived due to the commitment of a small group of OCs who have stuck together over the past couple of decades or so to ensure its longevity for the benefit of current and future OCs.

As OCC funds ran out and debt grew, its members (led by a Committee) looked for a solution to secure its future. The Committee considered several options, including a sale to a third party investor, but finally agreed to a long-term arrangement with the school in 2012, whereby the ownership of the grounds, Clubhouse, running of the facilities and OCC debt was transferred to the school. This was deemed the optimum solution for the interests of both parties.

As part of this deal, a Service Level Agreement (SLA) was drawn up and signed by both parties. The SLA is effective for a minimum of 100 years and lays out the responsibilities of both parties and provides levels of guarantees to the OCC, including the use of the Clubhouse and football pitches as well as being able to contribute to decisions that would impact us.

Since 2012 OCC membership fees have not been charged and the OCC Constitution has been changed so that all OCs are now also automatically members of the OCC (as well as the OCA). Discussions about how we can best combine the two groups are ongoing.



Though often dominated by the OCFC (including in this History!), the OCC is not just football. The OCC also includes tennis, golf, the Wednesday Lunch Club and more – all continue to thrive and welcome new members.

A contributing factor behind previous OCFC success is that rugby isn't played at the school, and historically hockey wasn't either, so football was played for two terms. In addition, in the past the majority of pupils lived locally, meaning fewer leavers went to university and instead were able to play for the OCFC at 18. A further advantage which we still enjoy today was being able to play fixtures close to the school. When in 1997 the School became fully co-educational, this arguably diluted the pool of footballing talent from which the OCFC were able to draw upon.

Today the OCC is managed by a Committee of which any OC can apply to join. The Committee meet regularly to discuss current OCC affairs and upcoming developments and to secure the longevity and future of the OCC and its Members. Senior positions include, General Secretary, Chairman, School Liaison, President and OCFC Club Captain.

The Clubhouse is to this day our home and a vital part of the OCC – only made possible by the vision, enthusiasm and dedication of past OCs. It's a home where friends and family can gather and socialise, and a community hub for all OCs.

The future of the OCC is in the hands of our current active members, and it's up to all of us to ensure that the work put in by past OCs does not go to waste. The main draw and heart of the OCC is its sports teams, which is why recruitment for new joiners is vital and we urge all Members to contribute by inviting new OCs and friends to join us.

Though we look to the future we must not forget our past. The history of the OCs is a long and storied one where the School's motto '*aut viam inveniam aut faciam*' – '*find a way or make a way*' – has been put into action on many occasions to the benefit of OCs.



Contributions from:

Pat Ward, OCC General Secretary

Miles Taylor, OCC President

John Conolly, OCC Vice President

Aegean Simpson, Former OCC President

Cole Crossman, OCC Committee

Special thanks to:

David Bauckham <https://dbauckham.exposure.co/old-school-ties-part-18>

OCFC Honours (across various teams):

Premier Division – 1985/86, 1989/90, 1991/92, 1994/95, 1998/99

Division 1 – 2009/10, 2014/15, 2002/03

Division 2 – 1965/66, 1981/82, 1983/84, 1987/88, 1988/89, 1990/91, 1995/96, 1996/97, 2002/03, 2006/07, 2008/09

Division 3 – 1982/83, 1989/90, 1996/97

Division 4 – 1977/78, 1981/82, 2005/06

Division 5 – 1980/81, 2003/04

Arthur Dunn Cup – 1979/80, 1991/92, 1993/94, 2001/02

Junior League Cup (JLC) – 1981/82, 1982/83, 1984/85, 1988/89, 1989/90, 1991/92, 1994/95, 1995/96, 1996/97, 1998/99, 2002/03, 2008/09

Jim Dickson 5-a-side – 1981/82, 1983/84, 1990/91, 1991/92, 1995/96, 2001/02

Bill Chivers Sportsmanship Trophy – 1986/87, 1996/97, 1999/99, 2006/7

London Old Boys Senior Cup – 1990/91

Derrick Moore Veterans Cup – 1997/98, 2020/21

London Old Boys Drummond Cup – 2002/03

SAL Veterans Junior Cup – 2021/22



Timeline

1629 – Chigwell School founded

1868 – First Shrove Tuesday dinner

1876 – Football first played at Chigwell School

1910 – Old Chigwellians' Society formed

1913 – An Old Chigwellians football team plays in the Old Boys Cup

1924 – Old Chigwellians' Football Club formed

1962 – OCFC are founding member of the Arthurian League

1970s – Old Chigwellians' Club formed

1977 – Roding Lane land purchased

1979/80 – First season at our new home and first Arthur Dunn cup win

2012 – Land and management sold to Chigwell School