

Alumni Update - Summer 2023



Dear Friends

On behalf of the BRA community I wanted to thank the many alumni who have supported the School over the past year, and also take the opportunity to update you on events at school as we come to the end of another academic year. I hope you enjoy reading this alumni update and continue to feel part of the BRA family. The features in the newsletter share common themes – pride in our school, a clear sense of community and belonging, and the embracing of opportunity.

The 2022 / 23 academic year has been a busy and exciting one for everyone at BRA. As you know, life at school never stays still! We wish our pupils who have recently sat public examinations all the best for their futures – they are a tribute to our wonderful staff who ensure the children are well prepared and confident in their ability. We wish our Class of 2023 Middle Sixth a fond farewell and we look forward to seeing them return to school as alumni of the future. We have taken great pride in this year's academic and sporting successes, achievements in music and drama, and the many activities undertaken and competitions entered by Academy pupils throughout the year. School trips were reintroduced during this year, and we are very grateful to those staff

who provided opportunities for pupils to participate in a wide range of overseas visits.

We have enjoyed alumni gatherings large and small, formal and informal over the past 12 months, at which the warmth of our friendships and the BRA sense of community has been evident. We recently welcomed four groups of alumni back to the Cliftonville Road at this year's series of reunions, reuniting former pupils and teachers from across the generations, each one sharing their memories of happy times at school.

Despite the ongoing financial constraints and our reduced budget granted by the Department of Education, the School continues to invest in its site, and in addition to essential upkeep and repairs to the School estate, we are very pleased to have started construction of our new Pavilion at Roughfort which will assist in our aim of making the Roughfort site our Centre of Sporting Excellence. We also were delighted to unveil the new Middleton Gallery which was so generously curated and installed by former pupil Dr Brian Metcalfe. I encourage you all to take time to view it on your next visit to the Cliftonville Road. At a time when funding for schools is a real challenge, it highlights that we now rely more than ever on the support and generosity of the School community to help us to be able to continue to provide the quality educational experience and extensive range of extra-curricular programmes and pastoral support that we have become recognised for and which you all benefited from.

So as another school year comes to a close, we look forward with optimism to the year ahead. I would like to wish you all happiness and good health and an enjoyable summer, and look forward to welcoming you in person back to a school event in the near future.

Kind regards

Hilary Woods
Principal

**Alumni Reunions for the Classes of 1973, 1983, 1993
and 2003**

In the Summer Term we were delighted to host a series of four alumni reunions for the milestone anniversaries of the 50, 40, 30 and 20 year groups. Over the course of the four events we were joined by over 200 former pupils who all enjoyed a celebratory lunch and tour of the school. The buzz of old acquaintances renewed felt very special and even some former teachers made guest appearances and joined in the celebrations. We were thrilled that so many people made the effort to attend these events, many of whom had travelled from afar, and we look forward to hosting a similar series of reunions next year for the classes of 1974, 1984, 1994 and 2004. Further information and dates will be confirmed in due course.



BRA Class of 1973 - 50 Year Reunion
Lunch in the BRA Library - 19/May/2023



BRA Class of 1983 - 40 Year Reunion
Lunch in the BRA Library - 26/May/2023



BRA Class of 1993 - 30 Year Reunion
Lunch in the BRA Library - 9/Jun/2023



Alumni Business Breakfast

The Alumni Association recently hosted a Business Networking Breakfast, giving Alumni and former staff the perfect opportunity to meet up with colleagues and friends, whilst enjoying breakfast and networking before short talks from fellow Academy Alumni **George Armstrong, CEO of Scanmatix** and **Lisa Strutt – Leadership Coach**. There was a good attendance from Alumni and all who attended agreed it was a great success. Keep an eye out for details of the next event later in the year!

Pictured (L-R) are George Armstrong - CEO Scanmatix, Hilary Woods - Principal, Lisa Strutt - Leadership Coach, Joanne Harvey - Communications & Development Manager, Michael McDowell - Old Boys' Association.



The 1785 Foundation

Our 1785 Foundation continues to grow, and with nearly 100 members we would like to thank all our alumni who support the School in this way. With the ongoing cost of living crisis, the Foundation plays an increasingly important role in school life and the donations we receive allow us to continue to fund a range of programmes in school, including complimentary breakfast snacks and fruit as well as pastoral support through counselling sessions for pupils in need. It also supports a range of educational experiences, such as new equipment for The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, new kit for sports teams and travel assistance to enable pupils to participate in trips and events that they would otherwise be unable to attend. The support of our alumni and friends enables us to provide a strong, supportive and enjoyable community for all our pupils.

If you would like to find out more about the Foundation or how you can join or give a one-off gift donation, please [click here](#) to visit the Support Us section of our website.



#RoleModel Campaign

It has been wonderful to hear your stories and learn of your achievements over the past year since we launched the #Rolemodel campaign. This has been a hugely successful initiative, which has provided immense positive feedback from both our current pupils and the Careers Department, as well as the wider school community. We are proud to learn what our former pupils have done after leaving the Academy and how their stories and accomplishments inspire the next generation of pupils with ideas and suggestions from the world of work. There is nothing more powerful than our pupils seeing the paths you have taken and how to make the most of the opportunities that are available after leaving BRA.

If you are interested in participating as a **#Rolemodel** please do contact **alumni@belfastroyalacademy.net** as it is always lovely to hear positive feedback from our wonderful alumni and how their experiences and education here at Belfast Royal Academy have shaped their lives.



Belfast Royal Academy Gala Ball

We are very excited to announce that we will be hosting a **Gala Ball on Saturday 27th April 2024** in the magnificent **Titanic Suite** at Titanic Belfast. This is a major new event in the School calendar which encompasses all areas of the School community, including **The Old Boys' Association, The Old Girls' Association, Friends of the Academy (FOTA)**, all our **Alumni** and of course our **current parents** and **staff**. Tickets are now on sale and we encourage you to please save the date and plan a table with your friends!

Tickets are **£100 per guest**, to include a Sparkling Drinks Reception, Four Course Gourmet Dinner (including 2 bottles of wine per table), and dancing to live music from "The Liberals". **Platinum Corporate tables are also available.**

For tickets and further information please contact
developmentoffice@belfastroyalacademy.net



SAVE THE DATE

We look forward to you joining us at our

Gala Ball

Saturday **27th** April 2024

in the *Titanic Suite*
at Titanic Belfast

Tickets - £100

Black Tie

Drinks Reception from 7pm
4 course Gourmet Dining Experience

A night of celebration & fundraising

The Colin Middleton Gallery

In May we were delighted to welcome guests to the official opening of our new **Colin Middleton Gallery** in school. This stunning new gallery of eleven fine art reproductions of some of Middleton's most iconic works is displayed on the walls of the **Darbyshire Building** stairwell, and is a very fitting tribute to one of the School's most illustrious artistic alumni. Colin Middleton (MBE) was born in 1910 near Cavehill in North Belfast. He attended Belfast Royal Academy, leaving in 1927 to work in his family's damask design firm of Page and Middleton in Belfast. Middleton went on to become one of Ireland's most outstanding artists of the Twentieth Century. He was a landscape artist, figure painter, and surrealist and his artwork covered an eclectic variety of modernist styles.

The Gallery was very generously curated and gifted to the School by another former pupil, **Dr Brian Metcalfe**, who has a personal interest in Middleton's work. Dr Metcalfe has a broad family connection to the Academy, with many members of his family receiving their education here, including his mother, Beattie, our oldest alumna at the grand age of 101, who also enjoyed the gallery opening. Over forty guests heard a talk from Middleton's daughter, **Jane Middleton-Giddens**, who came especially from Barcelona to attend the event which honoured her father's work. It was a wonderful sunny evening, enjoyed by all who attended and was the ideal opportunity to showcase this special tribute to this former pupil.

Be sure to take time to view the Gallery on your next visit to school, or to find out more about this famous artist and his work you can visit our website <https://www.belfastroyalacademy.com/colin-middleton-gallery>

Pictured below (L-R) are Dr Brian Metcalfe, Mrs Jane Middleton-Giddens and Mrs Hilary Woods (Principal)



New Roughfort Pavillion

We were very pleased to officially commence work on the new additional Pavilion building at Roughfort in May, where Principal Mrs Woods cut the first sod! This new multipurpose building will sit adjacent to the existing Pavilion and provide much needed additional space for hosting and providing hospitality for visiting teams, classroom space and a venue for sports team analytics and diagnostics, in addition to all access toilets for visitors. The project is due for completion in the Autumn term and will bring a hugely beneficial resource to our facilities at Roughfort.

Pictured are (L-R) Architect Jason Bosket from Whittaker & Watt Chartered Architects, Geoff Simons, Governor, Jill Lambert, Estates Manager, Mrs Hilary Woods, Principal and Patrick Griffin, Hugh Griffin & Sons Contractors.



Sponsorship of 1st XI Cricket Team

Our 1st XI cricket team are delighted to have recently taken receipt of their new team kit, jointly sponsored by local company **Scanmatix** and by funds from the School's **1785 Foundation**. Scanmatix is the leading multi-disciplinary stock management company in the UK and Ireland. Their complementary software solution works alongside existing ERP/EPoS systems. It helps retailers, wholesalers and manufacturers to improve their bottom line through efficient counting and tracking of stock levels within their business. The School and team are very grateful for this generous support and have been proudly showcasing the new kit in their recent matches.

Pictured are (L-R) Alex Armstrong (1st XI team), George Armstrong (Managing Director Scanmatix), Michael Harte (Head of Cricket), Oliver Scott (1st XI team).



New School Ties Initiative

The School is most grateful to both the Old Boys' and Old Girls' Associations for their recent financial support for a new initiative which is being introduced this year for the new intake of Form 1 pupils in August. All new Form 1 pupils, plus all other new pupils to the School, are to be presented with their new House tie at their induction day in June, with the compliments of OBA and OGA. It is hoped that this initiative will become an annual tradition, helping increase our new pupils' sense of belonging and marking a poignant induction to the School. It is felt that this is a worthwhile project to help welcome future generations of BRA pupils into the Academy family.



Coronation Commemoration

The School's Horticultural Society planted thirty beautiful azaleas at the entrance to the Crombie building to commemorate the King's Coronation in May. The group were keen to use plants to symbolise the personal connection the new monarch has for nature. Charles III has long been an advocate for conservation and biodiversity and the new plants will not only serve as a tribute to his dedication to protecting our planet but also as a representation of our commitment to enhancing the beauty of the Crombie and school estate for future generations of pupils.



Congratulations to former pupils on their recent achievements

BAFTA Win for BRA Alumnus

Huge congratulations to former pupil **Peter Anderson** (class of '88) on his recent amazing accolade of winning a **BAFTA**! Peter and his team at **Peter Anderson Studios** were winners of the **Titles and Graphic Identity Award**, for their work on the creation and design of the opening credits on Apple TV's **Bad Sisters** show. Peter is one of our recent **#RoleModels** to help inspire future generations of pupils about what opportunities life can bring after leaving BRA.



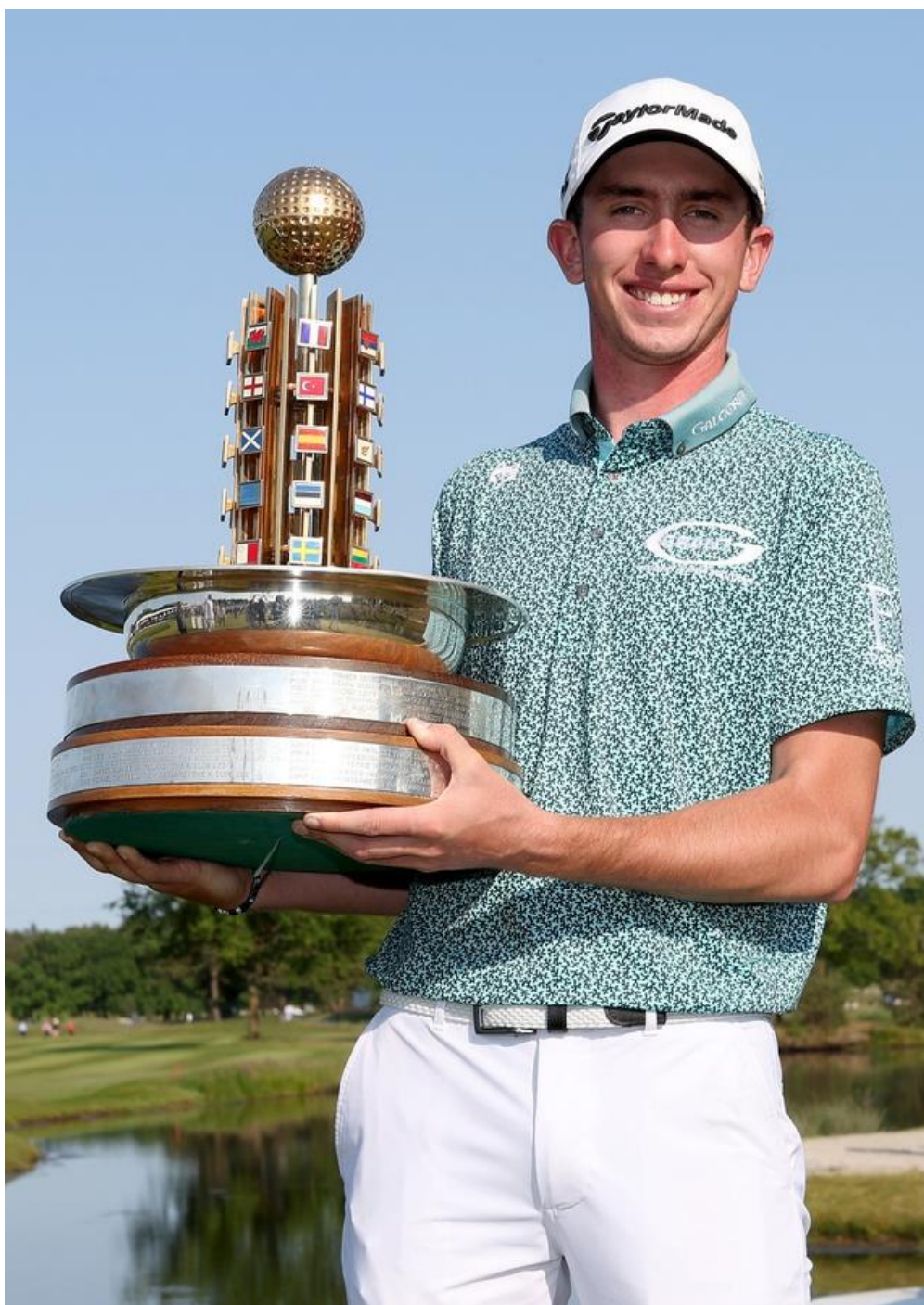
Rugby Stars

Two leading rugby alumni, **Tom Stewart** and rugby giant **Iain Henderson**, have been selected for the 42 man Irish Summer Training Squad ahead of the Rugby World Cup this autumn. The Ireland Rugby Coaching Team have selected an extended panel of players to assemble at the IRFU High Performance Centre in mid-June for the first block of pre-season training. Tom is one of only four uncapped players in the squad, which includes seven Ulster players, including Iain. Further congratulations must also go to Tom who was named **Ulster Rugby Supporters' Club Player of the Year** in the recent **Ulster Rugby Heineken awards**.



Golfing Glory

Former Ben Madigan and BRA pupil, **Tom McKibbin** must be congratulated on his recent amazing win at the Porsche European Open in Germany. This was Tom's first win as a professional on the DP World Tour. This is an immense achievement and at only 20, he's the youngest Irish winner on the DP World Tour since Rory McIlroy won his maiden title at the Dubai Desert Classic at 19 in 2009. We look forward to a bright golfing future ahead for Tom!



Following his win, Tom also played in the Old Boys' Golf Day at Malone Golf Club in early June - it was wonderful to have him along for the day and chat with fellow Old Boys before they played. The photo with **Tom** includes Old Boys, **Ken Knox** and **Tim Reid** with their guests **Derek Irvine** and **Philip Carvill**.



Football Crazy

Hats off to former pupil **Callum Marshall** who recently played on the winning West Ham FA Youth Cup team and scored a great goal in the final. Callum joined the West Ham Academy of Football on a full-time Scholarship deal in January 2022 and is already making his mark!



Ulster Public Schools Golf Society Annual Competition

A Team of five BRA Old Boys' - **Iain Knox, Stephen Minford, Greg Henry, Tim Weir and Richard Martin** - represented the Old Boys' Association at the recent Ulster Public Schools' Golf Society Annual Competition at Royal Belfast Golf Club. Seven schools competed against each other in this, the 89th year of the competition. The BRA team had a 'clean sweep' of the trophies, winning the Team Best Nett Shield, the Team Best Gross Trophy, the Best Individual Nett and Best Individual Gross Trophies. Well done to everyone involved!



Old Girls' Afternoon Tea at the Ulster Reform Club

A gathering of Old Girls' and friends enjoyed a sumptuous Afternoon Tea in early June in the stunning surroundings of the Ulster Reform Club. The event was kindly sponsored by Senior Vice President of the Reform Club, BRA alumna Mrs Diana Fitzsimons. Everyone enjoyed a wonderful afternoon of fine food, friendship and laughter, and all proceeds raised on the day go towards helping support the School.



Donation of new Chromebook Computers

The School has recently been able to purchase an additional **40 new Chromebooks** due to generous donations from both the **Old Girls' Association** and from **FOTA (Friends of the Academy)**. These new computers were much needed in both the Business Studies and Modern Languages Departments and their introduction into daily lessons has already benefited many pupils. We are hugely appreciative of the funds raised for the benefit of the pupils by all members of the School community and especially thank everyone involved in raising money for the improvement of our IT offering as part of this project.



Dates for you Diary

FOTA – Annual Quiz – Friday 29th September - Jackson Suite at School

Old Boys' Annual Belfast Dinner - Saturday 25th November 2023 - The Belfast Hilton Hotel

Former Pupils' London Dinner - Friday 8th March 2024 - The Royal Air Force Club, Picadilly, London

Former Pupils' Edinburgh Dinner – date to be confirmed

BRA Gala Ball – Saturday 27th April 2024 – Titanic Belfast

For further information or reservations contact the Alumni office
alumni@belfastroyalacademy.net

Keep in Touch

We very much want to develop further our alumni network and community and are interested to hear your ideas of how we might engage with you in the future. Whether you are a recent alumnus or left school many years ago, your continued interest, support and involvement with the school is of huge importance to us and very much appreciated.

We love to hear about our alumni's lives and achievements after they've left the Academy. If you wish to send us your news, or to find out more about having an active role in supporting the School with regards to careers advice, please contact [**alumni@belfastroyalacademy.net**](mailto:alumni@belfastroyalacademy.net)

Please also do take the opportunity to visit the alumni section of our website - [**https://www.belfastroyalacademy.com/alumni/keep-in-touch**](https://www.belfastroyalacademy.com/alumni/keep-in-touch) or follow us on [**Facebook**](#) or our [**Alumni LinkedIn page**](#)